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EDITORIAL STATEMENT

The editorial philosophy of *Element* is to provide a forum for philosophical and theological reflection as it relates to the beliefs and practices of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The journal takes seriously both the commitments of faith and standards of scholarship by encouraging academically productive dialogue between various theoretical perspectives both within and beyond the Latter-day Saint community.

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SOCIETY FOR MORMON PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

ELEMENT is the official publication of the Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology. More information on the Society can be found by at <WWW.SMPT.ORG> or by contacting Benjamin Huff, Secretary/Treasurer of the Society, at <BENJAMIN.HUFF.11@ND.EDU>

The Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology brings together scholars and others who share an interest in studying the teachings and texts of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It facilitates the sharing and discussion of work by sponsoring an annual conference, and publishing a journal entitled *Element: A Journal of Mormon Philosophy and Theology*. Its statement of purpose reads as follows:

"The purpose of the Society is to promote disciplined reflection on Latter-day Saint beliefs. Its aims include constructive engagement with the broader tradition of philosophy and theology. All its publications, conferences, and other forums for discussion will take seriously both the commitments of faith and the standards of scholarship."

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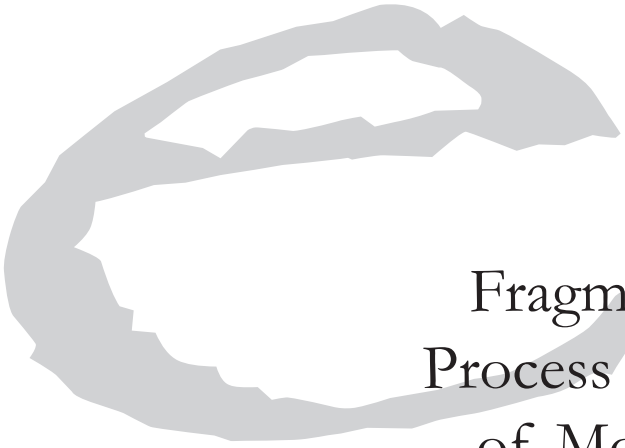
EDITOR'S NOTE

The formation of an academic journal is not an easy task and requires the good will, cooperation, and hard work of many different people. As we release the second printed issue, it is important that we acknowledge and express our appreciation to those who assisted in getting this project started. *Element* began as the brain-child of Dennis Potter, Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Utah Valley State College, who, while a graduate student at the University of Notre Dame, created the journal in electronic form and edited the first issue. The Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology owes him our thanks for not only his work in co-founding the Society, but for conceptualizing *Element* and bringing it into existence. The Journal would also like to thank Elaine E. Englehardt, David R. Keller, and Bradley J. Cook from Utah Valley State College for their generous support. Finally, appreciation should be extended to the Executive Committee of the Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology for continued cooperation and support.



Fragments for a Process Theology of Mormonism

by James McLachlan

I. SOME TENSIONS

I want to offer an interpretation of the ongoing revelation that is Mormonism from the point of view of Process Theology. This will be a fragmentary interpretation because I cannot develop all of the possibilities in the space of one paper. Beyond the fragmentary character of this project there are at least two important tensions that will result from this attempt.

A. Religion and Theology

First, there is always the possibility that one might take the theological reflection as the Mormon revelation and reduce it to that. This is the mistake that theologians have made for millennia and is certainly the mistake that Sterling McMurrin makes in his pioneering classic of Mormon Theology: *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion*. I believe that Ninian Smart is correct when he says that the theological/doctrinal is only one element of the religious which includes other elements; they are social, material, ritual, narrative/mythological, ethical, and perhaps most

importantly experiential.[1] Thus theology is certainly not the foundation of a religion, but when we approach the religion through theoretical reflection it certainly appears to be. But when we are involved in concrete praxis, whether it is in temple work, working in the cannery, or just looking at a friend, the idea of our theological reflections as the foundation of our religion fades into the background. But it is far too simple to simply split the theological from the other elements of religious life and say (as I have done in the recent past) that religious experience and narrative precedes everything. The theological element is intertwined in all of these, as anyone knows who has read the writings of Joseph Smith, Paul, or the Buddha. Still Mormonism cannot be reduced to any of the few theological interpretations that have been made of it. Revelation is more than the theological interpretations we make of it. The process theologian and philosopher David Griffin recently argued that privileging revelation is a contradiction in Mormonism. He argues that privileging revelation is inconsistent with the scriptural claim that God is not coercive.

> From my perspective as a process theologian, it appears that there is a contradiction between Mormonism's doctrine of divine persuasion, on which it and process theology agree, and its appeal to a type of revelation that process theology could not support. On the one hand, says McLachlan, Mormonism "appeals to the extrinsic authority of a particular revelation." As I use "extrinsic authority," it means that certain doctrines can be taken to be true solely or at least primarily because of the mode through which they allegedly came to us: namely, through a (relatively) infallible revelation from God. On the other hand, says McLachlan, Mormonism accepts the "idea of God as non-coercive," which means that the insistence by process theologians that "the creature has a degree of self-determination in relation to divine power" is endorsed by Mormonism.[2]

Professor Griffin uses "extrinsic authority" in the sense of God's revelation of the eternal, timeless reality. Although Mormons might use the word "eternal" they would not understand God as an atemporal being.

God, as a personal being, is not outside the game. Mormons do not attribute infallibility to the scripture because the scripture is filtered through human understanding, whether by the prophets who received and wrote the message or by us who are attempting to understand it. Even here the "external authority" of the scripture comes from the "call" of God. In seeing God as another person Mormons understand God's revelation as "one person speaking to another" whether this is "face to face" as in Joseph Smith's first vision, through a messenger, as in the visitation of the Angel Moroni, or, what is much more common, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But Joseph Smith, or Paul, or anyone receiving inspiration is not understood as completely free from their environment.

I think Mormons understand God's revelation as a call from another person who is awaiting our creative response. God is an infinitely wise and compassionate being who indicates through servants or directly through inspiration the basic guidelines which should govern our existence. But the message is always through the filter of human understanding and God asks for creative, loving, response on our part, not mere compliance. I would liken it to the call I see in the face of a loved one. In a sense they present me with an "external authority," a demand for a response. Whether and how I will respond is up to me.

My point is that religious people in general, and Mormons in particular, who see themselves as participating in a faith tradition hold certain elements of that tradition as essential and are under obligation to interpret them. For Mormons the situation is different from Moslems who hold that the Koran is a copy of a book that exists eternally with God, or many Hindus who see the Vedic texts as Sruti, the sound by which the universe came into being; it's also different from traditional Christians who hold that God stands outside of history. For Mormons, God, at least God as a person, is within history with us. The communication from God is always to a particular person in a particular historical situation, in a particular language. And as we learn from Moroni and the *Doctrine and Covenants* none of this is without mistake, we have weaknesses. God speaks to us in our own language, situation, and weakness that we might come to understanding (D&C 1:24, Moroni 12:27).

B. Process Theology(ies)?

The second tension in writing a process interpretation of Mormonism is which process theology to use? Process theology is usually understood as dependent on the two giant figures, Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne. In this sense it is seen as both Anglo-American and Christian. But the Catholic anthropologist/theologian Pierre Teillard de Chardin was also a pioneer thinker for process philosophers. Contemporarily, there is a diversity of Process thinkers who don't always agree on some crucial issues. Donald Sherburne has argued that it is possible to apply the Whiteheadian metaphysical system without God. David Ray Griffin and John Cobb follow Charles Hartshorne in arguing that God is a personally ordered society of actual entities. Marjorie Suchocki follows Whitehead in arguing that God is a single actual entity different from all others in that the mental pole, or primordial nature of God, precedes the physical pole or consequent nature of God.[3] Robert Neville argues for an *ex nihilo* interpretation of process theology. I don't mention these disagreements to point to any disarray in the school, but to the great diversity and richness in process thought. But one can, as Charles Hartshorne and others have, point to an even broader tradition of process thought.[4] This tradition includes thinkers often associated with other traditions such as, among others, the vitalist Henri Bergson and the postmodernist Gilles Deleuze. Also, the idealists F. W. J. Schelling and G.W.F. Hegel, and the existentialist Nicholas Berdyaev who develop their position in relation to the original intuitions of the German mystic Jacob Boehme can be seen as process thinkers. Stepping out of the Western tradition, contemporary process thinkers have shown considerable interest in the Kyoto School of Japanese Buddhist philosophy, which includes such philosophers as Nishida Kitaro, Nishitani Keiji and Maseo Abe.

What all these positions have in common is that they abandon substance metaphysics. They oppose the idea that a static being is at the basis of reality. Process metaphysics is always relational. There is no complete self-sufficient being, all beings are mutually interdependent. Process thinkers replace this static, self-sufficient, metaphysical ultimate with creativity. What is interesting about this move is its sympathy with anti-metaphysical thinking that has dominated the 20th Century. Process thought is

metaphysical yet Whitehead also argued that it was only a model, a way of talking about reality that should be discarded as its inadequacies to experience become evident. I believe that process thought avoids the brunt of Heidegger's critique of metaphysics as onto-theology because it does not see Being as a being and instead sees creativity as an ultimate characteristic of all beings and God as the ultimate example of creativity. Creativity is not a being, but the activity of all beings. Creativity, relation, change, freedom, the di-polarity of existence, the importance of internal relations, and the notion of two ultimates are characteristics of process metaphysics and present fruitful ways for presenting a Mormon theology.

In this discussion, I wish to appeal to this broader tradition for a process interpretation of Mormonism. In this way I will avoid much of the technical vocabulary associated with process metaphysics as it is derived from Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne. In my discussion, I will consider four points where I think process thought can contribute to our understanding of the Latter-day Saint revelation. First, that God, us and the rest of the universe are related internally as well as externally. Second, creativity and freedom are metaphysically ultimate. Third, all creatures possess the power of creativity and this has important implications for the traditional problem evil and suffering. And fourth, that process thought posits two ultimates and that this would be a fruitful way for Mormons to think about the divine in LDS tradition. In each of these sections I will draw on different thinkers from the broadly conceived tradition of process thought to illustrate each point.

II. SOME BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROCESS ORIENTATION

A. Whitehead and Hegel on Internal Relations

With the acceptance of creativity as an ultimate principle underlying and within all beings, process thinkers see freedom and agency as the fundamental aspect of human activity. The relations between the myriads of entities that make up this universe are di-polar in that they have both objective and subjective aspects. Process thinkers also empha-

size perception as being more than just sensory. Relations between beings are "internal" as well as "external." For Whitehead this is explained via the category of causal efficacy. One way to think about this is to think of reality as made up, not of objects, but of an infinite number of occasions, what Whitehead calls droplets of experience. Each of these has an objective or external, and an internal or subjective pole. Each entity or occasion of experience, and this means from God to the most insignificant puff in far away space, is what it is via two activities: its objective relations to its past which includes other entities, and the subjective "decision" it makes out of that past toward the future. The entity takes the objective reality into its very being and either repeats it or modifies it. Since the idea of substance has been rejected, things are not merely externally related to each other as say two billiard balls on a table. We usually don't think of one ball being changed internally by being struck by the other. In the process view of the world even at this level one ball is constantly, though usually minutely, modified by its relation to the other, the table, the cue, me, a butterfly in El Salvador, everything in existence. Though we aren't in the habit of thinking this way of billiard balls, contemporary physics pushes us in this direction of seeing objects more as occasions than permanent substances. But understanding internal relations is perhaps easier on the level of human consciousness, and for this we can look to the wider tradition that might be called the process approach. One of the more famous examples is Hegel's discussion in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* of the relation between a master and slave. It's not just that I am placed in chains and beaten by another that has made me a slave; I am internally modified in my consciousness through my relation to another being. I am a slave in relation to my master. My master is also modified. He depends on having us slaves in order to be a master. The process world is interrelational, every being is what it is in relation to others. Even God is modified by God's relation to a world and others. God is only God because of this relation to a world. William Ernest Hocking, an American Hegelian and Whitehead's colleague at Harvard described love as an example of internal relation. Hocking refers to his wife, his comrade and the internal relation that overcomes the external relation of two objects:

> I have sometimes sat looking at a comrade, speculating on this mysterious isolation of self from self. Why are we so made that I

> gaze and see of thee only the Wall, and never Thee? This Wall of thee is but a movable part of the Wall of my world; and I also am a Wall to thee: we look out at one another from behind masks. How would it seem if my mind could but once be within thine; and we could meet and without barrier be with each other? And then it has fallen upon me like a shock – But I am in thy soul. These things around me are in thy experience. They are thy own; when I touch them and move them I change thee. When I look on them I see what thou seest; when I listen, I hear what thou hearest. I am in the great Room of thy soul; and I experience thy very experience. For where art thou? Not here, behind those eyes, within that head, in darkness, fraternizing with chemical processes. Of these, in my own case, I know nothing; for my existence is spent not behind my Wall, but in front of it. I am there, where I have treasures. And there art thou, also. This world in which I live, is the world of thy soul: and being within that I am within thee. I can imagine no contact more real and thrilling than this; that we should meet and share identity, not through ineffable inner depth (alone), but here through the foregrounds of common experience; and that thou shouldest be – not behind that mask – but here, pressing with all thy consciousness upon me, containing me, and these things of mine. This is reality: and having seen it thus, I can never again be frightened into monadism by reflections which have strayed from their guiding insight.[5]

For Hocking the relation is beyond mere sensual stimulation; I am in my very being changed by my relation to the other because I share the world of experience with the other. I am what I am, in part, through relation to the beloved. This is true of the many types of relations that make up the world I share with others. What is significant about this passage is that love is not merely an epiphenomenon. It is not merely my external relation to another who is the object of my desire, but is an expression, perhaps the truest of the very nature of the universe. We are related to and modified by all others and especially by those to whom we are closest, not just physically but spiritually.

The doctrine of internal relatedness gives us one way to interpret those passages of LDS scripture where God is described as in and

through all things and Christ as having become in and through all things. For example, *Doctrine and Covenants* 88:6-13:

> He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth; Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made; As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made; And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand. And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings; Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space – The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things.

Christ, because he descended below all things, ascends on high and becomes "in and through all things." Apparently, despite the famous Mormon materialism, matter is not impenetrable or even exterior to Christ who becomes in and through all things, but rather he is within them and they are within him. One way to understand this passage is to see the relation between Christ and others as internal as well as external, but this demands we move beyond a substance oriented metaphysics where Christ confronts various bits or unchanging matter and just reconfigures them in various ways to produce you, me, the chair, my dog Idefix, and the universe. One way to do this is to see prime matter not as matter or substance at all but as creativity (Whitehead) or freedom (Berdyaev).

B. Berdyaev on Creativity and Freedom as Ultimate

Quite early in his philosophical career, the Russian philosopher and theologian Nicolai Berdyaev was attracted to the German Mystic Jacob Boehme's myth of the Ungrund because through the myth Boehme formulated questions about the relation of the divine and the human, freedom and determinism, and creation and destruction, in a radically different manner than had occurred heretofore in the West. Jacob Boehme's ideas came into this tradition as mainly original creations of an independent and non-academic mind, largely uninfluenced by the Greek and Latin traditions.[6] The basic difference between Boehme and the previous Christian mystics of the Neo-Platonic tradition is that he did not regard the Absolute primarily as Being but as will.[7] This dialectical voluntarism is based on the image of groundlessness which is the beginning of the development of Being. The Ungrund is all of the antimonies, but they are unrealized and only potential: Boehme calls the Ungrund the "eternal silence." It is the actualization in Being of these potentialities that is the source of life.

Using the myth of the Ungrund, Berdyaev begins from the initial intuition of freedom and creativity as fundamental metaphysical principles and seeks to create a metaphysical vision in harmony with that intuition. Strictly speaking, the Ungrund is not anything, not a concept, but a myth, a symbol whereby is expressed a fundamental truth about existence that is incapable of being expressed in an objective conceptual arrangement.[8] This incapacity concerns knowledge itself. All novelty, all uniqueness, is inexplicable unless freedom is prior to Being. And Freedom is no-thing. It is the undetermined.

David Griffin has criticized Berdyaev for making the Ungrund the beginning and founding principle of his metaphysics, Berdyaev, like Sankara and Bergson, ends up with an amoral conception of God as pure creativity.[9] But this is to misunderstand the way Berdyaev, like Whitehead, views creativity. It is true that for Berdyaev, like Sankara, the Absolute is not the personal, creator God. In his thought the absolute cannot be a person, it cannot relate to other persons, but is only the undeveloped potentiality of freedom. The Ungrund, freedom, is the Absolute, the primary basis of the existence of God, but this freedom is also at the depths

of all that is. Thus, in response to Griffin's charge that Berdyaev's God is not wholly good, Berdyaev would argue that God, as a person, is wholly good but the possibility of evil is present in the absolute, and thus present in God and in the world. The "absolute" itself neither is a person, God, Being, nor even a perfection. In fact, Berdyaev sees this as the great advantage of German mysticism over Greek philosophy and Neo-Platonic mysticism.[10] The absolute in-itself is valueless, but this fecund ground provides for the possibility of the creation of persons and value.

But Griffin's objection is still important, for merely to say that God is a person and the absolute is not, does not answer Griffin's point that the absolute power in Berdyaev's scheme may be morally neutral. If the ultimate is creativity, can God be seen as a creator of forms who runs roughshod over individuals? Is creativity like Hegel's history "a slaughter bench" where the ideal comes into being? Or, is it like Griffin's contention that Berdyaev's *Ungrund* resembles the Advaita Vedantist philosopher Sankara's *Brahman* which is beyond all the suffering of the world and beyond all categories of good and evil? Griffin contends that if Berdyaev equates God with creativity then the problem is that creativity can be exercised in evil ways. We might say that the writings of the Marquis de Sade are creative though we would not like to think that God is creative in the same ways. Creativity is the source of all good, but it is also the source of killing, lies and depravity.[11]

Griffin's contention that Berdyaev's thought has some similarities to the Advaita Vedantist tradition is correct, but he does not note Berdyaev's specific reservations about Sankara. In Boehme's metaphor the Ungrund is blind will toward creation – that which cannot remain nothing.[12] That is to say, creativity or freedom is the most fundamental feature of reality, it represents the genus of entities from the merely potential, the emergence of novel forms which are more than what is contained immanently in antecedent efficient causes. The new is different and not reducible to that which preceded it. But this creation from nothing is very different from the traditional Christian theological formulation of creation *ex nihilo*. The no-thing of the Ungrund is not the nothingness of the tradition. But Berdyaev moves away from Sankara in differentiating God from creativity. As in LDS doctrine, God is different from the chaos from which God forms the world. Berdyaev's God calls potentiality to being from the

non-being of freedom. A part of this creation is God's self creation in relation to the world. This might be a way to see Christ's development from the elder brother of the pre-mortal existence and the word by which the chaos comes to order, to Jehovah of the Old Testament, to Jesus of Nazareth, and finally to the risen Christ. This entire *Theogonic* process involves a movement from chaos to cosmos, a triumph over disorder and the possibility of evil.

Using the Ungrund myth, Berdyaev works out his conception of *meonic* freedom on which he bases his anti-substance position. Since freedom, will, and creativity are at the basis of reality, even God has an interior life. God's creation of the world is preceded by the theogonic process through which God emerges from the Ungrund. And the creation of the world is a part of the theogonic process as well. By the theogonic process, God is made distinct from the Ungrund which God did not create. Then from the *meonic* freedom of the Ungrund, God creates the world. Berdyaev still uses the term creation from nothing to describe the creation of the world from the abyssal freedom which he calls *meonic*, or non-being. To understand *meonic* freedom as non-being in the traditional sense would be to misunderstand Berdyaev. He returns to the Greek ways of saying non-being which can be expressed in two ways as *ouk on* and *me on* and have quite different meanings. "There is nothing more sad and barren than that which the Greeks expressed by the phrase *ouk on*, which is real nothingness. The words *me on* conceal a potentiality, and this therefore is only half being or being which is not realized."[13] *Meonic* freedom is not something and it is not nothing, it is not a thing. In this sense it may be even closer to the *Upanishadic* expression of non-being as *netti netti*, than to Greek and Western uses of non-being.[14] *Meonic* then is not to be understood in the sense of non-being as opposed to Being, but as the undetermined, the no-thing, the pure potentiality of the Ungrund. Indeed the distinction in *The Upanishads* and later developed by Sankara and *Advaita Vedanta*, between an impersonal absolute *Nirguna Brahman* and its manifestation as a personal God, *Saguna Brahman,* resembles Berdyaev's distinction between the absolute and the personal God. In *Spirit and Reality,* Berdyaev noted this affinity for certain of Sankara's ideas but is sharply critical of the Hindu thinker.[15] Berdyaev's emphasis on the creation of fellow creators in relation with God differentiates this posi-

tion from that expressed in the *Advaita Vedantist* tradition. The *Ungrund* is the source of Being but not the goal of existence. Will aims at creation but the creation of a community of persons. For Sankara the goal of humanity is to overcome the realm of *maya* (illusion) and return to the oneness of the ground of existence, *Nirguna Brahman* which is characterized as being, consciousness and bliss. Brahman is also characterized as *lila* or playfulness. Creation is the play of Deity that also includes the destruction of the world in a continual cycle for creation, preservation and destruction. This is not Berdyaev's ideal of *Sobornost*: the community of persons and God at the end of history. God's creative activity is the creation of meaning and order in the chaos of potentiality and Being from non-being. This meaning stands under the constant threat of blind irrationality, of the collapse back into chaos; but God's aim is creation of other creators, other persons, and God becomes a person in relation to them.

For Berdyaev, like Hegel, God and the world presuppose each other. Creativity is not reserved exclusively to God. God does not create unilaterally, but calls others to create themselves, and in turn God is created in relation to them. It seems to me that Mormonism differs from traditional theologies on this point and resembles that more non-traditional theism of German idealists and the process theologians. In process thought, God is the great artist creating beauty out of the chaotic world. The eternal cosmic ideal entails God's reciprocal relation to creatures which means that God is capable of change and growth. God is the ultimate example of a relational being drawing persons toward self-creation. This creativity is the *imago dei*. God and creatures are mutually dependent. God is a part of the universe and not ontologically different from creatures. God's glory is increased through his relation with man. This is a way to understand what God tells Moses: "And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof, even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words. For behold, this is my work and my glory – to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:38-39). God's very purpose in existence can only be fulfilled in relation to others. Berdyaev describes the necessity of relation in terms of love and friendship, "This is the real tragedy of the world and of God. God longs for His 'other,' His friend; He wants him to answer the call to enter the

fullness of the divine life and participate in God's creative work of conquering non-being."[16] The tragedy to which Berdyaev refers is the fact that love requires a free response. The ultimate purpose of creation is the creation of real relationships. God, as a person, presupposes his other. But the other can choose not to respond or to rebel. Love is a free response, it cannot be forced. As the 17th century German mystic and dialectical theist, Jacob Boehme, was fond of saying "God wanted children, not serfs."

Berdyaev's *Ungrund* and the description of the theogonic process that follows could be used to interpret such passages concerning intelligence in Section 93 of the Doctrine and Covenants, and Lehi's discussion of opposition in 2 Nephi 2. Berdyaev's *Ungrund* provides a potential solution to the continual debate among Mormons as to whether we existed as independent persons from eternity or were created from a primal soup. Berdyaev's position synthesizes both positions. Everything that "is" has its basis in freedom or creativity. We are called to higher degrees of perfection and eventually to personhood and even Godhood by God. We are not persons from eternity but become such in relation to responsiveness to God's call. But neither are we an inert substance that God mixes together to produce spirit children. But free response presupposes the possibility of refusal, and in process thought the higher the level of freedom the greater the possibility of evil.

C. Schelling and the Problem of Evil

My favorite description of the problem evil does not come from David Hume or Epicurius; it's from Mark Twain on the final page of his indictment of an omnipotent, all determining deity, *The Mysterious Stranger*. Here the angel explains that such a notion is simply insane:

> "Strange! that you should not have suspected years ago – centuries, ages, eons, ago! – for you have existed, companionless, through all the eternities. Strange, indeed, that you should not have suspected that your universe and its contents were only dreams, visions, fiction! Strange, because they are so frankly and hysterically insane – like all dreams: a God who could make good

> children as easily as bad, yet preferred to make bad ones; who could have made every one of them happy, yet never made a single happy one; who made them prize their bitter life, yet stingily cut it short; who gave his angels eternal happiness unearned, yet required his other children to earn it; who gave his angels painless lives, yet cursed his other children with biting miseries and maladies of mind and body; who mouths justice and invented hell – mouths mercy and invented hell – mouths Golden Rules, and forgiveness multiplied by seventy times seven, and invented hell; who mouths morals to other people and has none himself; who frowns upon crimes, yet commits them all; who created man without invitation, then tries to shuffle the responsibility for man's acts upon man, instead of honorably placing it where it belongs, upon himself; and finally, with altogether divine obtuseness, invites this poor, abused slave to worship him! . . .[17]

This sentiment is common in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century literature. The most well known to introductory discussion of the problem of evil in intro to philosophy classes is Ivan's decision to return his admission ticket to God in Dostoevsky's *The Brother's Karamazov,* but it's also part of Ahab's rebellion against God and nature in *Moby Dick,* in Rieux's objections to Paneloux's sermon on suffering in *The Plague.* The mistake philosophers make in introductory courses is to cite these literary examples and then move to J.L. Mackie and H. J. McClousky on the logical problem of evil and from there to Alvin Plantinga, William Hasker, and Peter Van Ingen's able defenses of traditional theism against the logical problem of evil. But the logical problem of evil is not really the concern of any of these writers. Ivan Karamazov even says he accepts the existence of God, even accepts the logical proof of his goodness, but still wishes to return his ticket. Ahab rebels against God. Rieux only contends that in practice no one can believe in an omnipotent God, he says if he believed in such a God:

> [H]e would cease curing the sick and leave that to Him. But no one in the world believed in a God of that sort; not even Paneloux, who believed that he believed in such a God. And this

> was proved by the fact that no one ever threw himself on Providence completely. Anyhow, in this respect Rieux believed himself to be on the right road – in fighting against creation as he found it. . . .
> . . . Since the order of the world is shaped by death, mightn't it be better for God if we refuse to believe in Him and struggle with all our might against death, without raising our eyes toward the heaven where he sits in silence.[18]

In *The Rebel*, Camus explains Rieux's position as "metaphysical rebellion."

> The metaphysical rebel is therefore not definitely an atheist, as one might think him, but he is inevitably a blasphemer. Quite simply, he blasphemes primarily in the name of order, denouncing God as the father of death and as the supreme outrage. . . . If the metaphysical rebel ranges himself against a power whose existence he simultaneously affirms, he only admits the existence of this power at the very instant that he calls it into question. *Then he involves this superior being in the same humiliating adventure as mankind's, its ineffectual power being the equivalent of our ineffectual condition.* (emphasis added)[19]

Two points come out of Camus' critique of God. The first is that we cannot live as though we are unfree – as though what we do is totally in the hands of either providence or determinism. This supposes that we live as if we had power as real as God's. Process thought rejects predestination and affirms "theological freedom," in relation to God. Theological freedom assumes that the creature has a degree of self-determination in relation to divine power and at least some "axiological freedom," which is the freedom to actualize ideals that the soul wishes to actualize. David Griffin says that to believe in axiological freedom is to believe that one can consciously decide "to live more fully in accord with the divine will".[20] Like Process theologians, Mormons would go beyond traditional theists in affirming some degree of theological and axiological freedom.[21] The second is that Camus' description of the rebel's relationship with God echoes William James' earlier contention that God "be no gentleman," that "His menial services are needed in the dust of our human trials, even

more than his dignity is needed in the empyrean."[22] God is not simply transcendent of the universe but is also "in" the creation. Both of these are important to a process solution to the problem of evil. We are free in relation to God, we can really do things that are contrary to the divine will, and God is affected by the actions of creatures. What appears in all these examples are not so much logical criticisms of the traditional Judeo-Christian-Islamic theological conception of God, as pragmatic and ethical critique. For Ivan Karamazov and Dr. Rieux, for Mark Twain, Albert Camus and William James, the question is not whether or not we can conceive of an omnipotent, omnipresent deity removed in Its metaphysical perfection from all finite worldly cares, but why we should want to, and whether we morally should? It may be that creaturely suffering is but the dark speck, the contrast that makes for the greater beauty of the whole; but to forsake the suffering individuals for the beauty of the whole, is a betrayal of those who must sit in that part of the picture. As Patrick Masterson wrote in 1971:

> [A]theism of our day consists chiefly in asserting the impossibility of the coexistence of finite and infinite being; it is maintained that the affirmation of God as infinite being necessarily implies the devaluation of finite being, and, in particular, the dehumanizing of man.[23]

Masterson's characterization seems to be correct of the writers I have mentioned. The concern among these thinkers is that traditional ideas of God and the theodicies they generate are demeaning to the existential situation of suffering creatures. This is not only true among Camus' "metaphysical rebels" but even among some theists.

Holocaust philosopher Emil Fackenheim has noted that among Western philosophers only Schelling really deals with the idea of radical evil.[24] In his essay "The Encounter with Evil" Gabriel Marcel declared that philosophers have never been more impotent than in their explanations of the question of evil. They have usually evaded the concrete problem of human suffering by turning it into a set of concepts. Through a metaphysical *"legère de main"* the real suffering of real beings disappears, as a magician makes his assistant disappear in a black box. But

unfortunately as the assistant is still in the theater, suffering is still in the world – we just don't see it anymore. But Marcel saw Schelling differently, as one of the few exceptions to the tradition.[25] Schelling's most radical treatment for the problem of evil is located in his 1809 essay, *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom and Related Matters, The Stuttgart Seminars,* and the first two drafts of *The Ages of the World* in which he locates the possibility of evil within the Absolute itself.

Schelling's solution to the problem of evil is to oppose *"essence, in as much as it exists to essence in so far as it is the principle (Grund) of existence."* He thinks this served as a new and concrete theory of becoming. For Schelling, evil resides, not in any lack or privation of being, but in the radical reversal of God's creative order. Radical evil is possible because freedom to create or to return to chaos is at the foundation of Being and beings. This formulation seems obscure but is central to Schelling's consideration of the mystery of evil and freedom. Schelling sees indeterminate freedom as the essence or ground of both God and creatures. God only becomes God through determining her/himself through freedom. This is a non-platonic understanding of God and eternity which sees time as an advance on eternity with time as the creation of meaning through the creation of the possibility of dialogue with others. Schelling describes God as the ideal person; human persons reflect the struggle within the divine life, for in the divine life itself is an irrational, brute creativity that can never be completely made transparent. This can only make sense for Schelling if reality is interpreted as personal. A person contains within his/her being possibility. Berdyaev might say the person is his/her possibility and the actualizing of those possibilities. By a person Schelling means a being that is in relation with others and experiences growth and opposition. God is not complete at the beginning but only becomes complete through relation to other persons. Schelling sees cosmic history as the process of the personalization of God.

> Already, then we can note that the entire process of the creation of the world–which still lives on the life process of nature and history–is in effect nothing but the process of the complete coming-to-consciousness, of the complete personalization of God.[26]

This concept is opposed to any notion of God as eternal, changeless, or timeless; as not simply egotistical, but meaningless. This is not to say that God is in time but that God's self-creation and creation of others creates time. Time is inevitable and an advance on eternity. Schelling's notion of self creation in God relates to self-creation in human beings. Science, art and morality are the raising to consciousness what exists in us in dark unconscious form. The abyss of freedom is the absolute indifference in which there is no direction or focus. It is the whirling rotary motion of the chaos of possibilities. One might say it is something like pure thought thinking itself. Why does God move beyond this type of navel gazing narcissism? Schelling's response to Leibniz' famous question why are there beings rather than nothing seems to be that there is no absolute reason, no absolute reason for the universe, only perhaps an ethical one. Neither is this a temporal sequence because time only begins with creation and direction toward another. One can only be a person in relation to another person. Recently, Slavoj Zizek has argued that for Schelling, human persons, like God, have to disengage themselves from the primal indifference. The universe begins with a choice:

> Man's act of decision, his step from the pure potentiality essentiality of a will which wants nothing to an actual will, is therefore a *repetition* of God's act: in a primordial act, God Himself had to 'choose Himself'. His eternal character – to contract existence, to reveal Himself. In the same sense in which history is man's ordeal – the terrain in which humanity has to probe its creativity, to actualize its potential – nature itself is God's ordeal, the terrain in which *He* has to disclose Himself, to put His creativity to the test.[27]

It is this act that creates both time and eternity that breaks of the primal indifference of the vortex of the possibilities of the groundless abyss. Zizek asks how can an act that is unique by definition and a happenstance be eternal. In Schelling's unpublished essay, *The Ages of the World,* it is this act that creates time; it also creates the past and eternity. Before this action Schelling says that God is "a pure nothingness which enjoys its non-being."[28] The abyss of freedom precedes the vortex of the

real. It is the light of freedom that breaks the chain of natural necessity, breaks out of the vicious circle of natural drives, and illuminates the obscure ground of being. It is only if necessity is not the original fact of the universe that this is possible. Necessity results from the contraction of the primordial abyss of freedom. Zizek illustrates the point by comparing and contrasting Schelling's version of God's creation of the world with Leibniz's. He describes Leibniz' idea of possible worlds out of which God creates one and the actual world as better than any possible worlds. But Schelling modifies this idea. To illustrate the point Zizek uses an example from popular culture, Bill Murray in the Harold Ramis' film *Groundhog's Day*.

> The 'Schellingian' dimension of the film resides in its anti-Platonic depreciation of eternity and immortality: as long as the hero knows that he is immortal, caught in the 'eternal return of the same' – that the same day will dawn again and again – his life bears the mark of the 'unbearable lightness of being', of an insipid and shallow game in which events have a kind of ethereal pseudo-existence; he falls back into temporal reality only and precisely when his attachment to the girl grows into true love. Eternity is a false, insipid game: an authentic encounter with the Other in which 'things are for real' necessarily entails a return to temporal reality.[29]

Time begins with decision on the part of God to become a person. One can only be a person in relation to other persons. Unlike traditional theists Schelling rejects creation as creation *ex nihilo* because it separates God from creation in a timeless eternity. The created world has added to God; in a significant way it has created God through God's creation of the world. The mistake arises in seeing the no-thing of creativity (*Ungrund*) as nothing.

> As a result of the misconstrual of this concept, the notion of a creation *ex nihilo* could arise. All finite beings have been created out of nonbeing yet not out of *nothing*. The *ouk on* is no more *a*

> *nothing* than the *me pheinomena* of the New Testament; it is only the non*subjective,* the Non*being*, yet precisely therefore *Being itself*.[30]

The finite is no longer a fall or descent from God but is seen as an ascent. It is the process through which God finds Him/Herself in another. Thus the fall is not a fall but a *Beginning*. This can be thought about LDS terms. Consider Moses 1:39 "This is my work and my glory to bring to pass the immorality and eternal life of man". The LDS God is God through His/Her task of bringing children to immortality and eternal life. God cannot be thought in other terms. Section 130 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* tells us that "When the Savior shall appear we shall see him as he is. We shall see that he is a man like ourselves. And that same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy" (D&C 130:1-2). Sociality is not just between the members of an eternal trinity, but between God and all persons. This is God's project and it is ours. A personal God in eternity without others is unthinkable. Against Aristotle and Thomas, Zizek even refers to it as a kind of insanity where the impersonal God thinks itself round and round again.

Schelling had seen that evil does not come from a limitation, he broke with the traditional neo-Platonist interpretation that the source of evil is privation. One of Schelling's contemporaries, the English poet and theologian Samuel Taylor Coleridge, was heavily influenced by Schelling but could not see more than a verbal difference between his neo-Platonic interpretation of evil and Schelling's, since in both reason determines the will. What Coleridge did not seem to grasp, or would not because of its radical implications for traditional theology, is that Schelling's understanding of nothingness in relation to the will is not to see nothingness as a privation but as indeterminacy.[31]

In his essay *Of Human Freedom*, Schelling also appropriates Boehme's image of the *Ungrund* as the primal indeterminacy of the will that is at the basis of both God and Being. Schelling's use of the undifferentiated will represented by Boehme's image again places freedom at the heart of being. The binding metaphysical principle of the essay is love. Through love, God comes into Being and creates the world. Love is the gathering together of being. What this amounts to is a romantic metaphysical inter-

pretation of the Kantian categorical imperative. The ethical/metaphysical basis for respect for human and divine persons as ends in themselves is located in their ability to choose or create. Since the most primal element of God and human beings is their undetermined freedom, all are, in this basic respect, equal persons.

For Schelling, love is grounded in both feeling and in understanding. This common origin in freedom is only expressed in creative activity. Love is the ultimate form of creative activity in that it overcomes the distance that the self-will, necessary to individuality, perpetuates. Love demands the existence of individual self-conscious beings that are capable of freely overcoming the distance between them. God calls humanity to this creative act. The possibility of evil is embedded in the very possibility of love. Love can only be through free response; it cannot be coerced. Radical evil lies in the refusal of love in radical self centeredness. Milton's Lucifer, Shakespeare's Iago, and Dostoevsky's Stavrogin are examples of this demonic self-centeredness. This is the way that Satan is presented in the LDS scripture as the "Father of lies." Satan desires power; God calls us in toward the fullness of being, sociality, and personhood. Cain learns from Satan the great secret "that I may murder to get gain." He believes that the destruction of his brother makes him free and claims to not be his brother's keeper (Moses 5:31-35). But the great secret is the great lie. It is the denial of sociality, of relatedness. The tradition from Augustine to Reinhold Neihbuhr was correct in seeing the sin of pride, of self-centered egoism, of the desire to be omnipotent God, as the great evil. Where they have been mistaken is not including their conception of God in the mix. From the process thinkers, God seen as absolute unrelated power provides us not with an idea of God, but of evil.

But evil is not just the radical evil of pride and greed, it can also be tragic as in God's own acceptance of the possibility of evil in creating others who also have real freedom, enough to rebel against God's intention. The "opposition in all things" of 2 Nephi 2 can be interpreted through Schelling's description of the movement from eternity to time. Certainly in both cases time is seen as superior to eternity if eternity is described as changeless. Lehi says that without opposition "if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death,

nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery neither sense nor sensibility" (verse 11). This can be interpreted as the movement from pure potentiality, which exists only as the chaos of possibility, to being. But the tragedy and the joy of existence is that the possibility of good brings with it the possibility of evil. All things become possible including the natural evils that come along with opposition: disease, earthquakes, and the fact that one creature is food for another. It also brings the possibility of radical evil, of rebellion against God. This is not a Manichean dualism however. Neither Lehi nor Schelling posit evil as an eternally existing actuality *vis-à-vis* good, only as a possibility that is actualized through the choice for liberty; which is the recognition of the relationality and creation of relation through love to God and others, or bondage following the father of lies who tells us that in order to be God we must attain power for ourselves over others. This is the hell Jean-Paul Sartre describes in *No Exit*, the place where "hell is others," that Jacob Boehme described as the place where I blame everyone else for my being there. Hell is others because they constantly interfere with my project to be God, to make it to the top of the food chain. The irony here is that God and Christ call us all to be gods, but this is a cooperative relation of the perfect community of love described in D&C 130, whereas Godhood for Satan and those who choose eternal death (2 Nephi 2:29) is the chaos of billions of would be gods/liars who see themselves as the unmoving center of all existence.

One strength of the broader tradition of process thought is that it contributes the notion of God's own internal struggle with the possibility of evil which I believe is implied in the teachings of the prophet Joseph Smith and necessitated by the ethical relation between God and humanity. This is not admitted by Whitehead or Hartshorne, for them God goodness is metaphysically guaranteed. David Griffin points this out in his response to the author in our discussion of Mormonism and process theology for an upcoming volume on Mormonism and Twentieth Century Theology.

> In discussing the relation between God and morality, McLachlan finds problematic process theism's contention that God naturally and hence necessarily loves all creatures. The implication is, con-

> tends McLachlan, that the holiness of process theism's God "prohibits God from being moral". The issue here revolves around what we *mean* by being *ethically good.* As I had pointed out in the passage to which McLachlan refers *(God and Religion in the Postmodern World,* 143-44), Hartshorne says that, if it necessarily involved the idea of resisting temptation, then we could not say that God is ethically good. But, Hartshorne suggests, we have a broader notion of moral goodness, according to which it "means being motivated by concern for the interests of others," and this idea *does* apply to God. Indeed, Hartshorne says, in this sense "God alone is absolutely ethical".[32]

God is metaphysically guaranteed to be ethical. But Process philosophers like Griffin, Whitehead, and Hartshorne argue that God is affected by world and are strongly critical of traditional theism which makes God the *ex nihilo* creator of the world and places God outside the fray of life. Besides the philosophical reasons that they reject this view process thinkers have put forward religious reasons as well. Consider David Griffin's discussion of Anselm on God's compassion which he begins with the following quotation from Anselm:

> Although it is better for thee to be…compassionate, passionless, than not to be these things; how art thou . . . compassionate, and, at the same time, passionless? For, if thou art passionless, thou dost not feel sympathy; and if thou dost not feel sympathy, thy heart is not wretched from sympathy for the wretched; but this is to be compassionate.[33]

Griffin's point is that in Anselm's eagerness to preserve God's immobile eternity above and beyond the world, Anselm has taken from any way of really seeing God as compassionate. To be compassionate is to be moved by another, but this would imply that God changes, a point traditional theology could not accept. Griffin continues with a discussion of Thomas Aquinas' discussion of love as a passion. A God who is passionless cannot love as we do, God, says St. Thomas "loves without passion." But this solution is contradictory. Love is a passion; it is to be moved by

the call of another. How else can we understand love?[34] Hartshorne and Griffin have done an admirable job in their critique of the tradition showing that God must be moved and must be in relation to others. But they stop short on the potentiality of evil within God. God's goodness is metaphysically guaranteed.

What is it to be holy and what is it to be ethically good? Can one be good who has never been tempted, who really does not know what it is to make a moral choice? Hartshorne is correct in his critique of Anslem's explication of compassion and St. Thomas' explication of God's love. In each case it is their inability to see that being moved by another is key to these virtues. But Hartshorne does not seem to see that it may be the same as being morally good. Being morally good is to feel, or as least have felt, the temptation to evil and resisted it. This is the power of Christ's prayer in the Garden that the cup be taken from him, or the note of despair on the cross. It is in these moments that we perhaps feel the greatest solidarity with him. This is certainly the case in LDS scripture in Section 122 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* when Joseph Smith prays for his relief and that of his people. The effectiveness of Christ's response that this experience will be for his good depends on the assurance that "The Son of Man hath descended below them all, Art thou greater than he?" Since LDS doctrine holds that Christ is the Jehovah of the Old Testament I believe the contrast between the answer given by Christ to Joseph Smith and Jehovah to Job is important. Jehovah seems almost perplexed by Job's complaints, demonstrates his power over the forces of evil and chaos, the Leviathan and Rahab, and Job is silenced. Jehovah seems not to understand why Job complains and is tempted to despair. One might interpret this passage to say that Jehovah has not yet become the embodied Christ. He is not yet perfect. He must do what Alma says he will do. He must suffer our infirmities to understand us; this is a part of his perfection.

> And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities. (Alma 7:12)

The need of the experience of embodiment, including temptation to do evil, seems to play an important part of perfection and may be the difference between Matthew 5:48 and 3 Nephi 12:48. Jesus does not claim perfection until after the resurrection. The experience of life, suffering, despair, death, temptation, and the victory over them is, far more than power, the reason for the worship of Christ and God the Father and Mother. In fact in Section 88 and 121 of *Doctrine and Covenants,* it is the source of Their power.

What makes Dostoevsky's *Grand Inquisitor* so powerful is that it attacks Christ on the point that traditional Christianity has made so important, his difference from us. Christ as God possesses a freedom and power of will qualitatively different than humans, so he turns down the temptations of bread, power, and security – all actions that the Grand Inquisitor believes no human is capable. It is God's "holy will" that Ivan attacks in the story. The Inquisitor asks Christ how can a God, for whom temptation is hardly real because he is so strong, demand the free response from humans who are not powerful enough to resist the temptations of bread, security, and power. If one is naturally good and has no understanding beyond an abstract one of alienation, fear, and the temptation to despair, can we say that He/She really understands the other person and can demand moral goodness of them? Eighty years after the *Grand Inquisitor*, Albert Camus returns to the same story asserting that Dostoevsky's religious solution is a betrayal of solidarity within humanity. We must remain with the suffering creatures in the dark part of God's beautiful painting. My point is that if God is to be good in any really human sense of the term, God has to have experienced temptation and overcome it. Goodness is a matter of will and not being. Hegel saw this in his critique of Kant; a holy will is neither holy nor a will. In a "perfect" being that is untroubled by bodily impulses the moral struggle vanishes, and with it, all real goodness.

> The pure moral being, on the other hand, because it is above *struggle* with Nature and sense, does not stand in a negative relation to them. . . But a pure morality that was completely separated from reality, and so likewise was without any positive relation to it, would be an unconscious, unreal abstraction in which the concept of morality, which involves thinking of pure duty, willing, and

> doing it, would be done away with. Such a purely moral being is therefore again a dissemblance of the facts, and has to be given up.[35]

Hegel follows Boehme and introduces potential for evil into the absolute itself.[36] Boehme, Hegel, Schelling, and Berdyaev have all seen the importance of the moral choice as the essential act in creation. It is strange that Whiteheadians who are so acute in their critique of Kant's cutting off of the world from direct prehension would not also see this critique of Kantian morality which cuts the Holy will from nature.[37] This is the strength of Joseph Smith's teaching God was once human. God remembers what it was to be tempted. In becoming God, God has overcome temptation, but this is a question of will and not being. When Alma says that were God to coerce our repentance, even though acting out of His mercy, mercy would rob justice and God would "cease to be God" (Alma 42:13, 22, 25), it seems that it must be possible for God to do it. It is metaphysically possible that God could *coerce* our response but God *will* not do it. Will is more fundamental than being. This is not to say, like John Hick and the traditional free will theologians, that God freely limits His power so we might be free, but rather, though it might be possible for God as person to coerce, with that act God would cease to be God; for to be God is to have become morally perfect.

This brings us to what I think could be one of the most fruitful possibilities offered to LDS Theology by process thought – the notion expounded by John Cobb and David Griffin that there are two ultimates.

D. The Two Ultimates: Whitehead, Cobb, Griffin on God and Creative Experience

One element of the process position that has already shown up in the discussion of Berdyaev's notion of creativity and Schelling's solution to the problem of evil is the process notion of two ultimates, one impersonal the other personal. The key to understanding the two ultimates is to realize that which might be called the metaphysical ultimate; what Berdyaev calls the absolute or *Ungrund,* and Whitehead calls creativity. One cannot say that the *Ungrund* or creativity exists. In this respect both

concepts resemble Paul Tillich's discussion of Being. To exist is to stand out over against the world. It is to be a being. But, Tillich explains, Being is not a being, thus God is beyond God, beyond any personal characteristics. Tillich's error from Berdyaev's or Whitehead's perspective is to associate Being with God. Berdyaev has insisted that the Absolute is not God. God is a person, a being. The tradition attempts to skirt this problem by making God completely transcendent. God is not a part of the universe but is in eternity; but this creates all the problems of the relation between God and the world and the problem of evil. It also gives God a monopoly on all power and leads to the doctrine of predestination as the ultimate guarantee of God's power. As Berdyaev says: "The logical conclusion is that God has from all eternity predetermined some to eternal salvation and others to eternal damnation. Calvin's horrible doctrine has the great merit of being a *reductio ad absurdum*."[38] Berdyaev solves the problem by arguing that creatures participate in the same freedom as God.

In *Process and Reality* Whitehead speaks of three ultimate notions, "creativity," "many," and "one." Creativity is not reserved to God, it is the fundamental characteristic of every entity. Because creativity is not reserved to God alone, there is no notion of *creatio ex nihilo* which guarantees the monopoly of power that God possesses in traditional theism. Creation is from a chaotic situation. Since God for Whitehead is the chief exemplar of metaphysical principles and not the sole exception, God is "the soul of the universe." God is the aboriginal instance of creativity. Though creativity is one ultimate, it is nothing, or rather no-thing; we cannot say that creativity exists, only that it is a characteristic of each actual entity. God is the *informed ultimate* "in which creativity is in-formed by the chief or perfect exemplification of the metaphysical principles that in-form all actual entities."[39] God is the source from which forms enter the world. Creativity is the *un-formed ultimate*; it replaces Aristotle's prime matter or primary substance. But process philosophy has dropped the idea of substance and replaced it with the process of creation. Beings are not things, they are events. Whitehead describes creativity in the following terms:

> In all philosophic theory there is an ultimate which is actual in virtue of its accidents. It is only then capable of characterization through its accidental embodiments, and apart from these accidents is devoid of actuality. In the philosophy of organism this ultimate is termed "creativity".[40]

And,

> Creativity is without a character of its own in exactly the same sense in which the Aristotelian "matter" is without a character of its own. It is that ultimate notion of the highest generality at the base of actuality.[41]

Creativity is the "ultimate behind all forms," the "universal of universals."[42] In order to describe creativity David Griffin borrows Hegel's term, the "concrete universal." By concrete universal Griffin means that creativity is "that which makes something a concrete thing rather than a mere possibility." Creativity does not act and does not experience; only entities do this.[43] In *Process and Reality* Whitehead names God as the "primordial created fact," and "primordial creature," and a "creature of creativity." He even says that God is the "primordial, non-temporal accident" of creativity.[44] David Griffin explains that on the basis of these statements some critics of process thought have said that God is a mere creature. This has also been the case with Berdyaev's statements that the personal God is not the absolute this is to misunderstand that creativity is not a thing or a creator. Creativity, like Berdyaev's *Ungrund,* is not a being; one can not say that creativity exists. One might say that it is the is-ness of anything. God is self created, but is always created in relation to others who are self-created in relation to God and others. Whitehead says of God

> The non-temporal act of all-inclusive unfettered valuation is at once a creature of creativity. It shares this double character with all creatures. By reason of its character as a creature, always in concrescence and never in the past, it receives a reaction from the world; this reaction is its consequent nature.[45]

God cannot be the creature of creativity, in the sense of being created by creativity, because creativity is not actual. Whitehead says that "creativity is not an external agency with its own ulterior purposes."[46] Because Whitehead does not hold to a doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, the meaning of creature is changed. Everything and everyone is both creature and creator because they depend internally on each other. In this sense God is both the creator and the creature of the world. This is the basis for the inter-relational character of process thought.

John Cobb has argued for the two ultimates of process thought. He has described God as the ultimate actuality, and creativity as the ultimate reality. These cannot be ranked because hierarchy can only exist among beings, but it also works against hierarchy because the ultimate is the basis of all entities.

> Between reality as such and actual things there can be no ranking of superior and inferior. Such ranking makes sense only among actualities. Among actualities God is ultimate. . . [God] is ultimate actuality, and ultimate actuality is just as ultimate as ultimate reality. Although it is true that there can be no ultimate actuality without ultimate reality, it is equally true that there can be no ultimate reality without ultimate actuality. Between the two there is complete mutuality of dependence.[47]

One of the difficulties in talking about two ultimates in process thought has been naming them. David Griffin suggests the possibility of calling God the religious ultimate and creativity the metaphysical ultimate, but rejects the idea because God is no less metaphysically ultimate than creativity. Griffin favors the terms ultimate personal reality for God, and ultimate impersonal reality for creativity, or to just avoid using reality and call it the formless ultimate and the form giving ultimate, or personal ultimate and the impersonal ultimate. Griffin likens the distinction between actual entities and creativity to Heidegger's ontological difference between beings and Being.[48] God gives the initial aim, such that there is an appetition in formless being for the realization of the good, true, and beautiful. Of course this does not have to happen and can be distorted in practice in hundreds of ways.

One great advantage of Cobb and Griffin's explicit assertion that there are two ultimates, is that it provides a basis for dialogue between two basic kinds of religious experience. For example, in the Vedas, The Upanishads, and in Hindu philosophical literature both an impersonal ultimate without form, *Nirguna Brahman,* and a personal ultimate with form, *Saguna Brahman,* are described. Indeed the two have become important in the entire Hindu religious and philosophical tradition.[49] This is also the case for Buddhism, where the impersonal formless ultimate can be termed *nirvana* or *sunnyata* (emptiness), but where there are also strong traditions of Bodhisattvas and Celestial Buddhas. Shinran, for example, claimed that emptiness is primordially characterized by Amida's vow and thereby by wisdom and compassion. And yet Shinran affirms that Amida Buddha embodies the vow (*Sambhogakaya*). In fact, the infinite number of Buddhas and Bodhisattva's in Mahayana Buddhist tradition embody perfect enlightenment. But it would be a Western distortion of the Pure Land traditions in Mahayana to say that this is polytheism; for all embody the ultimate Dharmakaya. John Cobb writes:

> All Buddhists expect that Buddhas will be wise and compassionate. In standard Buddhist teaching this wisdom and compassion express their full realization of ultimate reality. There is no apparent evidence of a higher state in which wisdom and compassion are left behind. Hence it is not clear how this attainment can be used to argue for the superiority of the *Dharmakaya* as such to the *Dharmakaya* as characterized by wisdom and compassion, that is, to the *Sambhogakaya* or Amida.[50]

Thus we have two ultimates or two bodies of the Buddha; the impersonal *Dharmakaya* and the personal *Sambhogakaya*. The impersonal ultimate would not have to be regarded as an inferior type of religion, and certainly not wrong, as has often been maintained by theists. Or vise versa, Theism would not need to be seen as a stopping point on the road to impersonal reality.

> On the one hand, we can avoid the exclusionary position of traditional personalistic theism, according to those who say that ulti-

> mate reality is an impersonal, infinite reality, with which we are identical ("Atman is Brahman"), are simply wrong. They are *not* wrong, because we are each instantiations of creativity, or creative experience, which is the impersonal ultimate reality.[51]

On the other hand we also see the import of the personal deity. We never experience creativity as such, but always as embodied by God or worldly actualities. I think the notion of two ultimates is a particularly fruitful notion for the theological interpretation of LDS doctrine. For example I have long thought that the LDS notion of God bears a striking resemblance to Mahayana Buddhist understanding of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who are human beings who have become perfect through their compassion for suffering creatures. It may well be more helpful for Mormon theologians and philosophers to look to Buddhist understandings of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for help in interpreting Mormon revelation than to look only to a theistic tradition that has been hostile to anything like LDS theism.[52] Looking beyond the Western tradition would also help us to understand the beliefs and practices in many of the countries where we practice missionary work. For example Chinese and African traditions of ancestor veneration may be helpful in interpreting our LDS understanding of God and the divine character of our dead.

The fact is that B. H. Roberts already put forward something like the two ultimates in asserting that Joseph Smith's doctrine of the co-eternality of God and persons is not polytheism.[53] He develops an idea of the oneness of God through what he calls the "generic idea of God," in which humanity participates in the Divine Nature. In this sense, God is defined as human beings who have arrived at identification with basic reality, beings who have become morally perfect. The Divine Nature is One:

> Man being by the very nature of him a son of God, and a participant in the Divine Nature—he is properly a part of God; that is, when God is conceived of in the generic sense, as made up of the whole assemblage of divine Intelligences that exist in all heavens and all earths.[54]

Elsewhere Roberts notes the interrelationship between God, the supreme intelligence, and other intelligences, God's children. This relation is mutually dependent; God cannot be perfect without them, nor they without God.

> To this Supreme Intelligence are the other intelligences necessary? He without them cannot be perfect, nor they without him. There is community of interest between them; also of love and brotherhood; and hence community of effort for mutual good, for progress, or attainment of the highest possible. Therefore are these eternal, Divine Intelligences drawn together in oneness of mind and purpose – in moral and spiritual unity.[55]

Robert's distinction between Gods and the Generic idea of God makes sense of passages like Alma 42 that refer to the logical possibility of God ceasing to be God. That God is God is a matter of a good will of choice; not being, not genes, but love. It is logically possible that the personal being(s) that is(are) God(s) could choose not to love, but at that moment they would cease to be God. Being God occurs in relation to other beings. In the words of the prophet Joseph Smith:

> The first principles of man are self-existent with God. God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself. The relationship we have with God places us in a situation to advance in knowledge. He has power to institute laws to instruct the weaker intelligences, that they may be exalted with Himself, so that they might have one glory upon another, and all that knowledge, power, glory, and intelligence which is requisite in order to save them in the world of spirits.[56]

It is not that ideals exist from eternity, but that persons and beings exist in relation to others. God finds himself "in the midst of spirits and glory." God did not create them *ex nihilo*, but is related to them from the very beginning and calls them from chaos into the sociality of communi-

ty. The revelation is that God desires the others to enjoy the same fullness that He does, that they too may be exalted. The freedom or creativity they possess, that they are, is what makes possible the response as to how fully they enter that community.

III. CONCLUSION

In these fragments I have tried to indicate a few possible elements of what I have labeled the broader tradition of process thought that may be helpful to Mormons who wish to reflect theologically on their beliefs. Though there are other fruitful paths that LDS philosophers and theologians might take, I think that Process thought provides one of the most fruitful ways available. I don't claim that this exposition of the possibilities of process thought for Mormonism is anything close to complete, but I hope I might encourage other LDS thinkers to explore the possibilities offered to us by process thinkers and by what I have called the broader tradition of process thought.

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NOTES

[1] Ninian Smart, *The Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Random House, 1970), 12-14.

[2] David Ray Griffin, "Mormon and Process Theology: A Reply to James McLachlan," in *Mormonism and 20th Century Theology*, ed. David Paulsen (Forthcoming).

[3] This introduces some of the technical vocabulary of Whiteheadian metaphysics. I want to avoid an in depth discussion of technical vocabulary in this paper because I believe it has done more to inhibit the philosophical consideration of process metaphysics than to help it. Suffice it to say here that for Whitehead the universe is made up of temporal "droplets of experience" that he referred to as "actual occasions" or "actual entities." Actual entities are not substances like Leibniz' monads but temporal occasions of experience that go in and out of existence. Objects are aggregates of these; persons are ordered societies of actual entities. For Whitehead and Suchocki, God is a single actual entity that never goes out of existence. For Hartshorne, Griffin, and Cobb, God is a person, an ordered

society of actual entities spread over time. For a more technical discussion of process thought and its relation to Mormonism, Dan Wotherspoon's dissertation done under the direction of Professor Griffin at Claremont is an excellent discussion of Mormonism and process theology. Daniel W. Wotherspoon, "Awakening Joseph Smith: Mormon Resources for a Postmodern Worldview" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1996). See also Truman G. Madsen, "Are Christians Mormon?" *BYU Studies* 15 (Autumn 1974), 75. See also RLDS theologian Garland E. Tickemyer, "Joseph Smith and Process Theology" *Dialogue* 17 (Autumn 1984), 75-85.

[4] Charles Hartshorne, *Philosophers Speak of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953). George Lucas, *Two Views of Freedom in Process Thought* (Missoula Montana: Scholars Press, 1979). George Lucas ed., *Hegel and Whitehead: Contemporary Perspectives on Systematic Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986).

[5] William Ernest Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1912), 265-266.

[6] Though opinions vary on Boehme's importance and place in the history of Western thought, he has earned the acclaim of some of his most important successors. Hegel called his thought barbarous but also thought he was the founder of German Idealism because the principle of the notion was living in Boehme. G.W.F. *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E.S. Haldane (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955), 3:188. In his study on Boehme, Alexandre Koyré also calls attention to his influence on Fichte and Hegel as well as the second philosophy of Schelling and Boehme's disciple Franz von Baader. Alexandre Koyré, *La philosophie de Jacob Boehme* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), 506-508. Koyré also points out that Boehme was read by such divergent minds as Newton, Comenius, Milton, Leibniz, Oetinger and Blake. See also Andrew Weeks, *Boehme: An Intellectual Biography of the Seventeenth-Century Philosopher and Mystic*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991). Rufus Jones, *Spiritual Reformers of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959). M. L. Bailey, *Milton and Jacob Boehme: A Study in German Mysticism in XVII Century England* (New York: Haskell House, 1964, Reprint). Nicholas Berdyaev points to the importance of Boehme's influence (via Schelling) on the Slavophiles and says that the metaphor of sophia is found in the second generation of Russian philosophers beginning with Soloviev and including Bulgakov, Frank, the Symbolist poets Blok, Beyli and Ivanov. He also acknowledges his own debt to Boehme. Nicholas Berdyaev, "Deux études sur Jacob Boehme" in *Mystérium Magnum*, ed. Jacob Boehme (Paris; Aubier, 1945), 1:39. In *The Refiners Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), John Brooke attempts to link Boehme and the Behmists to the creation of Mormon cosmology.

[7] Boehme is not the first voluntarist in Western thought, but the manner of his voluntarism is quite new. Unlike Duns Scotus and Medieval voluntarists, Boehme's voluntarism more closely resembles that of the *Vedas*. The primal beginning is not

a personal God but the nothingness.

[8] Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit*, trans. Oliver Fielding Clarke (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1972), 73.

[9] The comparison with Bergson is simply a mistake; for though Berdyaev admires Bergson, he is sharply critical of Bergson on exactly this point. He sees Bergson's élan vital as a kind of worship of sheer impersonal creativity. This is true from quite early in Berdyaev's philosophical development. In this he resembled other Russian dialogical thinkers like Mikhail Baxtin. It will be obvious from what follows that Berdyaev applies the same personalist critique to Sankara. Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, trans. Donald Lowrie (New York: Collier Books, 1960), 40. Nicolas Berdyaev, *Solitude and Society*, trans. George Reavey (London: Geofrey Bles, 1938), 60.

[10] In the following passage Berdyaev relates Eckhart's Gottheit and Boehme's Ungrund and explains that the Ungrund, will or freedom, is the basis of both God and beings:

> The conclusions of German mysticism are that neither the Divine Nothing nor the Absolute can be the Creator. The Gottheit is not creative; It escapes all worldly analogies, affinities, dynamism. The notion of a correlative Creator and creature is a category deriving from cataphatic theology. God-the-Creator comes and goes with the creature. I should state this as follows: God is not Absolute, for the notion of God-the-Creator, God-the-Person, God in relation to the world and man lacks the complete abstraction which is necessary for a definitive concept of the Absolute. The concrete, revealed God is correlative to the world and man. He is the biblical God, the revealed God. But the Absolute is a definitive mystery. . . This conception, which can hardly be called pantheistic, is best of all expressed in Boehme. (Nicolas Berdyaev, *Spirit and Reality*. New York: Charles Scribners, 1939. p. 141)

[11] David Ray Griffin, *God & Religion in the Postmodern World* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), 38.

[12] In Berdyaev's metaphysical explanation of eschatology he gives what is about as good a definition of the Ungrund and meonic freedom as can be offered. From the explanation below it is apparent that freedom is necessary to creativity in Berdyaev's thought:

> The *Ungrund*, then, is nothingness, the groundless eye of eternity; and at the same time it is will, not grounded upon anything, bottomless, indeterminate will. But this is a nothingness which is `*Ein Hunger zum Etwas*'. At the same time the *Ungrund* is freedom. In the darkness of the *Ungrund* a fire flames up and this is freedom, meonic, potential

> freedom. According to Boehme freedom is opposed to nature, but nature emanated from freedom. Freedom is like nothingness, but from it something emanates. The hunger of freedom, of the baseless will for something, must be satisfied. (Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Beginning and the End*. London: Geofrey Bles, 1952. p. 106-107)

[13] Berdyaev, *The Beginning and the End*, 97.

[14] The notion of meonic freedom is Berdyaev's creation. "Meonic," a term constructed from the Greek words *me on*, "not being" expresses conditional negation, in a similar way to the Sanskrit term, *netti netti*, "not thus, not thus," which is so often met with in the Upanishads. *Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad* 2.3.6; 3.9.26; 4.2.4; 4.4.22; 4.5.15. On non-being as primal ground, see *Chandogya Upanishad* 3.19; 6.2; *Taittiriya Upanishad* 2.7; *Mundaka Upanishad* 2.2.1; *Prasna Upanishad* 2.5; 4.5. See also Robert Ernest Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads translated from the Sanskrit, with an Outline of the Philosophy of the Upanishads and an Annotated Bibliography*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press. 1931). James Sheldon indicates Berdyaev's use of the term differs considerably from the Western theological sources uses:

> The phrase "*eis to me on*" occurs at least as early as St. Gregory of Nyssa, with whose works Berdyaev was intimately acquainted. But in the only instance of St. Gregory's use, he employs the phrase to indicate the place where phantasms and hallucinations go when not present to a mind. This is a notion hardly compatible with Berdyaev's use of "*meonic*" as signifying conditional negation. He says himself that he is not using "*meonic*" in the usual Greek sense (*Spirit and Reality*, 145). On St. Gregory's use, see Jerome Gaith, *La conception de la liberté chez Gregorie de Nyssé*, Études de philosophie médiévale, ed É. Gilson, no, 43 (Paris: J. Vrin, 1953), p. 140. In Greek, *me* is distinguished from *ou (ouk, oukh)* which expresses complete and absolute negation, total non-existence or non-being. Liddell and Scott, Greek-English Lexicon, 7th ed., s.v. *"ou": "ou"* is the negative of Fact, Statement, as me of the will, and thought; *ou* denies, *me* rejects; *ou* is absolute, *me* relative; *ou* objective, *me* subjective. (James Gail Sheldon, "Berdyaev's Relation to Jacob Boehme, Frederich Nietzsche, Henrik Ibsen and Feodor Dostoevsky." Dissertation, Indiana University Department of Comparative Literature, l956)

[15] Berdyaev, *Spirit and Reality*, pp. 138, 150-151.

[16] Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960) p. 26.

[17] Mark Twain, *The Mysterious Stranger,* in *The Portable Mark Twain,* ed. Bernard DeVoto (New York: Viking Press, 1974), 743-744.

[18] Albert Camus, *The Plague* (New York: Random House, 1991), 116-118.

[19] Albert Camus, *The Rebel* (New York: Random House, 1991), 100-103.

[20] Griffin, *God and Religion in the Postmodern World*, 113-115.

[21] The discussion of the council of heaven in the third chapter of the Book of Abraham talks of eternal intelligences who are free in relation to the divine will. Not only are the beings that are present in the Council of heaven participating in the creation of the world, some led by Satan rebel against God. This will eventually lead to their destruction but is certainly not willed by God.

[22] William James, *Pragmatism*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1981), 35.

[23] Patrick Masterson, *Atheism and Alienation: A Study of the Philosophical Sources of Contemporary Atheism* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), 1.

[24] Emil L. Fackenheim, *To Mend the World: Foundations of Future Jewish Thought* (New York: Schocken Books, 1982), 234.

[25] Gabriel Marcel, *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond,* trans. Stephen Jolin and Peter McCormick (Evanston, WY: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 132.

[26] F.W.J. Schelling, "Stuttgart Seminars," in *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory*, trans. and ed. Thomas Pfau (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 206.

[27] Slavoj Zizek, *The Indivisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and Related Matters* (London: Verso, 1996), 21.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., 53.

[30] Schelling, "Stuttgart Seminars," 209.

[31] Gabriel Marcel, *Coleridge et Schelling* (Paris: Aubier, 1971), 78.

[32] Griffin, "Mormon and Process Theology."

[33] David Ray Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism: A Process Theology of Religion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 149.

[34] Ibid., 150.

[35] G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit,* trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 383.

[36] Ibid., 468-469.

[37] At least one process thinker in the tradition of Whitehead and Hartshorne does introduce the possibility of evil within God. This is Bernard Loomer in his important essay "The SIZE of God," in *The Size of God: The Theology of Bernard Loomer in Context*, ed. William Dean and Larry Axel (Atlanta: Mercer University Press, 1987). Loomer asserts in the essay that the effort of many process theologians to make God transcendent of the ambiguity of the world makes God an abstract being without concrete reality.

> In process-relational modes of thought the being of God is not independent of the being of the world. Thus whatever unambiguity may be ascribed to God in this way of looking at things, this quality cannot

> derive from God's ontological transcendence. Yet some representatives of this philosophy seek an unambiguous God. They are concerned with transcending the ambiguity of the world. They, too, believe that the answer to ambiguity is found within the unambiguous. They attempt to do this by one or another type of abstraction.(45)
>
> The specific qualities and dimensions of an individual's goodness reflect the qualities and dimensions of his spirit. These features embrace all the interdependent facets of his personality and character, including his capacity for evil. The qualities of goodness are inseparable from these divers elements. This ambiguous and composite goodness, which arises out of the ambiguity and the dimensions of his spirit is the only concrete goodness he possesses. He has no other goodness.(48)
>
> From his study of the history of theology Whitehead concluded that the church "gave unto God the attributes which belonged exclusively to Caesar. Whitehead, like Wieman, wanted to disassociate God from evil. He wanted to absolve God from any responsibility for the destructive and inertial forces at work in the world. Whitehead opted for an unambiguous deity, God who is single-minded, unsullied and clean.(50)

For Loomer this is the meaning of the separation of God from creativity. God is not the creator of the world but the principle of order. God is necessary to the world because without order there would be no world. "But the efficacious creation of the world of actuality is not part of God's action or responsibility" (50). We don't experience the physical pole of God for Whitehead but only the mental pole. Were we to experience the physical pole we would experience God as causally efficacious and God would be involved in the evil of the world. Loomer moves us away from the quest for perfection which he sees as only an abstraction, as a movement toward vacuity, "a protest against the vitalities of concrete life" (51). It is a yearning for death. This is different from the movement toward greater stature. Greater stature demands the presence of ambiguity. It cannot be eliminated and the creative advance occur. Ambiguity thus becomes a metaphysical principle.

My difficulty with Loomer's position is that it seems to move toward pantheism in which God is totally beyond good and evil. A position no Mormon and I suspect few Christians would like to accept.

[38]Berdyaev, *Destiny of Man*, p. 40.

[39] Griffin, *Reenchanttment*, 261.

[40] Alfred N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 7.

[41] Ibid., 31.

[42] Ibid., 20-21.

[43] Griffin, *Reenchantment,* 262-263.

[44] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, pp. 31, 7.

[45] Ibid., 31.

[46] Ibid., 222.

[47] John Cobb, "Being Itself and the Existence of God" in *The Existence of God: Essays from the Basic Issues Forum,* ed. John Robinson and Robert Mitchell (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), 19.

[48] Griffin, *Reenchantment*, 269.

[49] Michael C. Brannigan, *The Pulse of Wisdom:The Philosophies of India, China, and Japan* (New York: Wordsworth, 1994), 14-17. The idea that Hinduism is a single religion or that it is monistic and pantheistic is a Western imposition. Many Hindus regard the *Bagavadgita* as theistic. It is certainly a devotional text in which the highest form of religious activity is held to be devotion to a God, in this case Vishnu of whom Krishna is an avatar or earthly incarnation. Hindu writers seldom use the term pantheism, but the term has been applied by Western scholars to the idea of the divine as it appears first in the *Upanishads* as Nirguna Brahman, which is Brahman (ultimate reality) without manifestations. But the *Upanishads* are not univocal about this. Brahman is also referred to as Saguna Brahman, Brahman with characteristics of Ishvara (Lord). One is not clearly favored over the other in all of the *Upanishads* and the latter interpretation is clearly closer to Western theism than to pantheism. These religious interpretations of ultimate reality in the Vedic writings of Hinduism are perpetuated in the six major philosophical schools and there is no single philosophical interpretation of Hinduism. In the past, some Westerners have seen *Advaita Vedanta* as the Hindu philosophical system; as "the" Hindu system. But it is only one division in the *Vendanta* school of Hindu philosophy, and the *Vedanta* makes up only one of the six orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy. These include widely different views of ultimate reality. *Samkya/Yoga* is atheistic and dualistic, it posits the reality of both spirit and matter, Purusha and Prakriti. Vaisheshika is pluralistic and primarily attempts to examine the nature of the universe. It argues that physical reality consists of invisible, indestructible atoms. This way of explaining the physical world is used to support the Upanishadic thesis that Atman is Brahman. In all these schools, the authority of the sacred texts of the *Vedic* tradition is upheld. Within the Vedantist school Madva, founder of Dvaita Vedanta, is an out and out theist in the Western sense of the term. There are even important divisions among disciples of this school about whether or not the Lord's grace is resistible of irresistible. Ramanuja is a qualified nondualist who contends that the soul is the same substance of Ishvara but different always different in manifestation. Sankara's famous Advaita Vedanta system, though popular, is the ***only*** thorough going monism among Hindu philosophical systems. Yet in the West the popular conception is that all of Hinduism, not even just philosophical Hinduism, is monistic.

[50] John Cobb, *Beyond Dialogue: Toward a Mutual Transformation of Christianity and*

Buddhism (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1982), 127.

[51] Griffin, *Reenchantment*, 282.

[52] A Bodhisattva vows to strive for the release from suffering of all beings and to forego personal nirvana in order to share his or her merit with others. *Bodhisattvas* see that in a universe that is totally interdependent there is no release without the release of all others. They also see that if the goal of life is selflessness the path to attain it must also be selfless. All human beings are potential Bodhisattvas and Buddhas. The Bodhisattva takes four vows:

1. However innumerable beings are I vow to save them.
2. However inexhaustible the passions are, I vow to extinguish them.
3. However immeasurable the Dharmas are, I vow to master them
4. However incomparable the Buddha-truth is, I vow to attain it.

[53] B. H. Roberts, *The Mormon Doctrine of Deity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1903), 163. Quoting Mormon scripture, Roberts affirms that "Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence…was not created or made, neither indeed can be" (Doctrine and Covenants, Sec. 93: 29ff).

[54] Ibid., 166.

[55] B. H. Roberts, Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2:399; 6:310.

[56] Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City, Deseret, 1977), 312.

The Gospel as an Earthen Vessel

by Adam S. Miller

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. (2 Cor. 4: 6-7)

I. INTRODUCTION

A simple question prompts this essay: is Mormonism thinkable? I do not mean to ask: has Mormonism *ever* been thinkable. I leave aside the question of whether or not Mormonism has been thinkable in past dispensations or in previous historical epochs. I mean instead to pose the question in its most rigorously contemporary form: is Mormonism thinkable *today*, is it thinkable according to thought's modern symbolic configuration?

By thought I mean here something unusually strict and narrow. I am not asking if Mormonism is imaginable – I have in mind here something like the psychoanalytic distinction between the imaginary and the symbolic, or a Marxist distinction between ideology and science – clearly Mormonism is imaginatively accessible. But more narrowly, an idea is

thinkable – in the sense that interests me – only if it, in principle, has formal, public intelligibility. It is possible to *imagine* nearly anything, but for an idea to be *thinkable* it must be potently universalizable.

As a result, to ask if Mormonism is publicly thinkable is to ask if it is possible to articulate the essence of Mormonism within the horizons of the contemporary public space for thought. Thus it is both a question about Mormonism's potential political efficacy and a question about the possibility of Mormon theology. The horizons of thought's contemporary situation may not be strictly definable, but we can, at the very least, say that the symbolic shape of thought's public space is today largely determined by two extraordinarily dominant factors: (1) science, and (2) capital. To ask whether or not Mormonism remains thinkable is to ask: does the essence of Mormonism become irremediably obscured if it submits itself to the twin conditions of science (in particular to materiality and temporality) and capital (in particular to its universalizing, *denaturalizing* operation)? Must Mormonism refuse to submit its essence to these conditions - and thus remain simply imaginable - or is it capable of traversing our modern symbolic order?

Clearly, however, it is not possible for Mormonism to be simply assimilated to the world's perspective and horizon. Were this possible, it would become identical with the world and lose its redemptive capacity. But if the essence of Mormonism can only be accessed imaginatively, if its essence is not capable of engaging with sufficient traction the order of the world, then, again, it risks losing its redemptive capacity. As a result, what is needed in order to pursue my question is a way of addressing Mormonism that allows it to be both inside and outside the world. We need a way to conceive of Mormonism that allows it to be bound to its social/practical context *while at the same time* allowing it to challenge and transform that context. Or, to borrow Paul's language from 2 Cor. 4:7, we need a way of addressing Mormonism strictly as an "earthen vessel." Simply put, in order to pursue this question, we need a way of conceiving Mormonism without reference to any kind of strong transcendence.

Contemporary thought offers us a conception of an *immanent* transcendence – as opposed to something that is strongly transcendent or transcendently transcendent – in the figure of an *event*. If Mormonism were to show itself thinkable on the model of a thoroughly immanent

event, if its essence were not obscured by such a translation, then it might show itself thinkable in relation to thought's contemporary symbolic configuration. Thus, to ask if Mormonism remains thinkable as an immanent event – as (1) subtracted from anything transcendently transcendent (that is: submitted to science, to its materiality and temporality), and (2) subtracted from any natural particularity (that is: submitted to capital, to its denaturalizing universality) – amounts to asking if its essence can be thought in God's absence. Can Mormonism appear as what it is if God does not appear? Can Mormonism be thought as a genuinely earthen vessel?

My thesis is that Mormonism can be productively thought according to these conditions and that, in fact, *because* of our unique horizons, the essence of Mormonism is more immanently thinkable in our time than in any previous epoch. When subtracted from any strong transcendence and from any private authority, Mormonism's essence shows up with razor sharp simplicity as an inflection of the event of Christ's redeeming love into an entirely new conception of the family. Further, from such a perspective, it becomes possible to view the events of the past two-hundred years not as an anxiety producing process of "watering down" Joseph Smith's inaugural revelations in the wake of a fading charisma, but as the process of purifying and applying with ever greater potency the truly universal, immanent effects of Mormonism's inaugural events.

II. HOW TO THINK AN IMMANENT TRANSCENDENCE: THE FIGURE OF AN EVENT

The first order of business is to sketch, in the simplest possible terms, what it would mean to think Mormonism as an event. What, in the technical sense intended here, is an event?[1] *An event is that which is immanently transcendent.* An event is immanent insofar as it always occurs in relation to an immanent situation of which it is a part and without which it is strictly inconceivable. An event is transcendent insofar as it is capable of escaping, shattering, and reconfiguring the horizons of the situation to which it belongs. An event's immanent transcendence can be elaborated in terms of the three primary conditions of contemporary thought as determined by science and capital: materiality, temporality, and universal-

ity. That is to say, the nature of an event can be described ontologically, temporally, and epistemologically. In order to make intelligible such a conception, I will explore the nature of an event from each of these three perspectives. In each case I will offer a formal elaboration followed by a scriptural exemplification. It should be kept in mind, however, that though it is possible to offer relatively discrete conceptual descriptions of an event in terms of its ontological, temporal and epistemological aspects, every event will, in practice, necessarily involve the interpenetration of these three aspects.

A. Thought's Material Horizon: The Event Conceived Ontologically

First, thought's contemporary configuration demands that ontology be conceived in a manner that is profoundly and monistically material. For us, science sets the stage of being. Though such a material ontology should not be conceived in a way that is narrowly positivistic, its content must at the very least be thoroughly immanent. The result is that neither metaphysical speculation, nor appeals to anything transcendently transcendent here remain publicly intelligible. However, of particular import is that which plays at the limits of this immanent materiality: the event.

An event both does and does not belong to a given immanent situation – hence its immanent transcendence. But what makes this paradoxical pairing possible? How is it possible for an event to be both immanent *and* transcendent? An event belongs to a situation insofar as the elements of which it consists are all materially *present* in the constitution of that situation. However, an event does *not* belong to a situation insofar as the elements of which it consists are not *re-presented* by the situation to itself. Every situation is composed of an infinite number of material elements, but any given situation will only be able to define itself and represent itself to itself through a limiting and finitizing operation of counting. That is to say, a situation can only constitute itself as such by excluding certain elements that are present in it from representation by it. Simply put, the constitution of every social context is accomplished by exclusion. A genuine event always irrupts from this site of exclusion. An event, then, is a presentation of the unrepresented that forces the situation to which it belongs to reconfigure its symbolic order to allow for it to be

counted. Thus, every truly revolutionary event is rooted in a presentation of whatever has been constitutively excluded from a given context.

This formal description of an event, abstract as it may be, ought to strike a familiar cord. Despite its subtraction from everything strongly transcendent, its logic is profoundly Christian. Paul's description of the gospel's redemptive operation in 1 Cor. 1:18-31 brilliantly illustrates the point in question. Verses 26-29 in particular address the gospel-event in explicitly ontological terms:

> For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called:* but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea,* and things which are not [*ta me onta*, non-beings], to bring to nought things that are [*ta onta*, beings]: that no flesh should glory in his presence.

The redemptive operation of the gospel involves, as Paul describes it here, a profound ontological reconfiguration. The gospel message here consists of God's call, of God's calling all of the things that are present in the world but un-represented by it - of all those who count for nothing in the constitution of their material situation despite the necessity of their presence - from non-being into being. Central to the gospel-event, thus conceived, is the redemptive presentation of those whom the world counts for nothing: the weak, the foolish, the poor, the base, the mad, and the outcast. Those who are not (*ta me onta*), the world's non-beings, are called into the light of their situation in order to "bring to nought" those beings that are (*ta onta*). Exemplary, for Paul, of this kind of reversal is the event upon which the whole of God's redemptive act hinges: God's calling Jesus out of death (non-being) and back into life (being). For Paul, Jesus' resurrection is the event *par excellence.*

What we must see, then, is that those who are designated non-beings by the world occupy a unique position vis-à-vis their material situation: they both do and do not belong to that situation. They are immanent to it even as their representational exclusion sets them beyond it. Simply put,

they are immanently transcendent. For God to call them into the light of being is to force the re-composition of the entire situation. The world's horizons are forced to bend and twist in ways that reconfigure the rules according to which things get counted. The laws according to which the situation was previously ordered – the laws of wealth, wisdom, and power – are inflected in such a way as to simultaneously bring non-beings into being *and* beings into non-being.

B. Thought's Temporal Horizon: The Event Conceived Historically

Thought's contemporary configuration is profoundly temporal. The world in which we live can be thought only within the frame of history's movement. The combination of our historical consciousness with our understanding of evolutionary biology solidifies the contemporary necessity of thought's temporal conditioning. Eternity, classically conceived, is thus excluded from thought in the same manner as anything strongly transcendent. Similarly, however, though a strong conception of eternity may be excluded, an immanent conception is not. Under the figure of the event both an *immanent* transcendence and a *temporal* eternity remain thinkable.

Phenomenologically, an event is always a surprise. It is always an interruption of time's smooth homogeneous flow. Its capacity for disruption marks precisely that which is evental about an event. The necessary difference may here be identified in terms of Walter Benjamin's distinction between homogeneous history and heterogeneous history.[2] Homogeneous history is composed of a situation's actualized possibilities (what it counts as being) and is conceived of in terms of an inexorable movement from cause to effect to effect. Homogeneous history is history as any given situation is capable of representing its movement to itself. Time here appears as flat, two-dimensional, and determinative. In homogeneous time, both the present and the future groan under the full burdensome weight of the past.

Heterogeneous history, on the other hand, includes not only those actualized possibilities represented by a situation to itself, but the unrepresented wealth of possibilities that have failed to be actualized in the past and that appear to be unactualizable in the present or future. An

event marks the moment in which these present but unrepresented possibilities burst the context's chain of cause and effect and reveal the possibility of the previously impossible. Here again, just as in the case of ontology, the crucial difference, the gap that allows for the possibility of the event, is the difference between those possibilities that are both present *and* represented in a situation and those that are merely present. An event is the exposition of this gap, a recovery of lost possibilities and forgotten relics that interrupts time's homogeneous flow. As a result of this recovery and exposition, an event is capable of momentarily shocking time and freezing the chain of causality, creating space for the possibility of something absolutely new. Thus, we can say, an event is an immanent irruption of the eternal in time.

In broad terms, the temporal operation of an event follows the logic of an immanently conceived Christian eschatology. But of particular interest here may be the way in which the Book of Mormon exemplifies this temporal operation. The Book of Mormon not only instantiates this temporal logic but, further, it explicitly conceives of its own operation in these terms. For instance, drawing on Isaiah 29, Nephi describes the coming forth of the Book of Mormon in the following way:

> For those who shall be destroyed shall speak unto them out of the ground, and their speech shall be low out of the dust, and their voice shall be one that hath a familiar spirit; for the Lord God will give unto him power, that he may whisper concerning them, even as it were out of the ground; and their speech will whisper out of the dust. (2 Nephi 26:16)

The Book of Mormon is a voice from the dust. It is a voice from the past that speaks in hushed tones about the destruction of a people, the end of their world, and the loss of the limitless possibilities that once belonged to them. The Book of Mormon is a stubbornly recalcitrant remainder of what was and, more importantly, what might have been. The Book of Mormon is a remnant of love and redemption unrealized, of lost possibilities excluded by the actual constitution of our present situation.

Because the Book of Mormon does not belong to this world, because the configuration of our present situation renders it archaic and/or

anachronic, it occupies a profoundly redemptive position with respect to our situation. The recovery and inclusion of its lost possibilities can shatter the hegemony of actualized history. The past, weighty as it is, need not remain as it was. The Book of Mormon is capable of interrupting the relentless flow of cause and effect and of creating, even if for only a moment, a time in which something entirely new can take place. Because the Book of Mormon is both (1) materially present (there is, irremediably, such a thing), and (2) materially unrepresented (it belongs to a past that is, for our situation, both lost and excluded), it can serve as the site for an event that is capable of puncturing our homogenous temporality with an immanent eternity.

C. Thought's Horizon of Universality: The Event Conceived Epistemologically

Thought's contemporary configuration is universal and global. Capital is responsible for this universalizing globalization. The operation of capital is nowhere more profoundly apparent than in its capacity to dissolve all natural and local bonds in – to paraphrase Marx's famous formulation – the icy waters of pure exchangeability. Such a dissolution leaves us in a difficult position. It leaves us stranded in a flatly profane world in which every apparently necessary "natural" identity and relation is revealed as, in fact, contingent.

This position may be properly described as profoundly difficult because, however much we might wish it to be otherwise, there is no going back. Capital has only made plain what has been true all along: we are human precisely because our identities and social relations are *not* strictly bound by nature or by the limitations of our bodies. To attempt to turn back the hands of time, to un-show what capital has revealed, to retreat in search of some kind of primordial nature – this is to retreat from our humanity as such. Attempts to continue to think natural and local bonds as primary either paradoxically feed the universalizing operation of capital or fade into obscure unthinkability. The denaturalizing universality of capital cannot be opposed by a valorization of the "natural" or the particular; it can only be successfully opposed by that which is itself genuinely universal. That which traverses and opposes the ubiquitous, denaturalizing operation of capital is the event in its capacity for

universal revolution. Or, to frame this question in an explicitly epistemological way: that which opposes the reductive and banal universality of a situation's representation of itself, that which opposes the given totality of knowledge, is the presentation of the universal truth of an event.

The key to delineating the epistemological operation of an event is the subtraction of truth from knowledge. Truth and knowledge must be conceived as wholly distinct. By knowledge I mean: every kind of understanding that a situation is capable of representing to itself about itself. Knowledge here coincides neatly with all that has been classically categorized as *doxa*. Knowledge consists primarily of our everyday understanding of the world, the taken for granted horizons of intelligibility within which we live and eat and breath. It encompasses the social context of interpretation and communication that represents to a situation the manifold of what it knows of itself. In short, knowledge bears within itself all the facts, particularities, and assumptions out of which daily life is woven.

Truth, on the contrary, is conceivable only in terms of an event. Truth always relates to that element of a situation that is everywhere present, but nowhere represented as such. Truth is a break with knowledge, an interruption of interchangeable meanings that challenges the legitimacy of the manner in which the horizons of knowledge are currently constituted. If, when prompted by an event, you subtract from a situation all that is representable, then the residual, generic excess that remains is truth. The truth of a situation is thus always properly universal: it is everywhere present, but nowhere represented. The truth of a situation, the evental element excluded from representation, is part and parcel of *pure* presentation itself – bare-boned, formal, and generic. This to say, truth is universal because it has to do with that element of a situation that is excluded *for the sake of* the constitution of the situation itself.

As a result, truth is not hermeneutic, nor is it contextual. It is universal precisely because it is not bound to any interpretive context. Hermeneutics, the business of negotiating meaning, occurs only at the level of representation and only within the parameters of the circulation of meaning. Truth occurs, instead, at the level of formal, generic appearance. Truth is not that which is assimilated by and organized according to the interpretive horizons of a situation. Truth is that which traverses and

restructures those interpretive horizons. Truth requires a bare, generic formality in order to operate as a universal truth capable of re-ordering a situation.[3]

We should note, however, that an evental truth, prior to the operation of its transformative reinsertion into a situation, always appears as non-sense (or, ontologically, as non-being) when examined from within the unchallenged horizons of representability. A truth is an event that breaks with knowledge, interrupts the circulation of meaning, and restructures the situation as a whole. As a result, it cannot be intelligible from within the horizons that it is challenging and reshaping. But this, of course, does not mean that *anything* that is unintelligible from within the context of situation is capable of producing an event. In order to be authentic, an event *must* relate to an element of a situation that is genuinely, materially present, though un-represented, in that situation. The test of any event's authenticity is straightforward enough: its authenticity is manifest in its capacity to *universally* revolutionize the whole of the situation to which it belongs.

The task that remains, then, is to give some indication of the way in which such a stark, immanent conception of truth finds expression in scriptural language that is more familiar. In this connection, Paul again presents himself as one of our most profound thinkers of the gospel as an event. Paul expresses his conception of the gospel as a unique kind of truth, as an entirely new kind of discourse, in the following way:

> For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. (2 Cor. 4:6-7)

This passage explicitly brings our attention to an issue around which we have circled from beginning: the logic of an event, of an immanent transcendence, is profoundly Christian because it is, after all, the logic of incarnation. There is a transcendent light, Paul argues, that shines in our hearts, there is a light of truth now illuminating the world, only because that light was immanently manifest in the face of Jesus Christ.

The logic of an immanent transcendence informs the whole of the Christian message. It shapes not only the sense of Jesus' own incarnation, but the nature of our redemption as well. It supplies not only the content of the gospel message, but also the efficacy of its declarative form. We have the transcendent treasure of the truth, Paul tells us, but the very nature of this truth demands that we bear it only in a strictly immanent, earthen vessel. Were it otherwise, we could claim the excellency of its power for ourselves and thereby undermine its excellency all together. To wish to bear the truth in something other than an earthen vessel is to have never grasped (or been grasped by) that truth in the first place. This, however, is exactly why the truth, as an earthen vessel, necessarily appears in the context of an untransformed world as a kind of foolishness.

Alain Badiou's powerful reading of Paul makes this point with great precision. The Christian declaration of truth, Badiou argues, is a declaration that is potent only in its immanent weakness. It is a declaration that, "without proof or visibility, emerges at the points where knowledge, be it empirical or conceptual, breaks down."[4] That is to say, for Badiou, the Christian proclamation is characterized above all by the efficacy of its purely generic eventality. God operates here not as the God of being or as being itself but as the impossible event that traverses and re-structures the ontological horizons.

This conception of truth, however, finds itself in an extremely difficult position: every truth must be entirely self-supporting. Truths must never rely on any external support. Because a truth, by definition, is independent of the interpretive context from which it has been excluded, it cannot call upon any representable elements of that situation as evidence of its potency. Nor, however, can a truth appeal to anything beyond the situation, to anything strongly transcendent, for evidence of its veracity. Because a truth is only a truth insofar as it is genuinely immanent to a situation, truths must never seek support in either signs or miracles. Every truth, in order to operate as a truth, must rely solely on the self-evident efficacy of its pure presentation. This is its weakness.

Because Christian discourse, Paul insists, necessarily appears so profoundly foolish in the eyes of the world, it is always tempting to prop up a truth with appeals to mystical experiences and miracles. For instance, though Paul has had his share of private mystical experiences, Badiou

argues, it remains Paul's conviction that "Christian discourse must, *unwaveringly*, refuse to be the discourse of miracles, so as to be a discourse of conviction that bears a weakness within itself."[5] Paul, Badiou adds, "refuses to let addressed discourse, which is that of the declaration of faith, justify itself through an unaddressed [that is: private or mystical] discourse."[6] A truth is a truth because it bears its own efficacy, and, with respect to its dissemination, "there is *never* occasion to try to legitimate a declaration through the private resource of a miraculous communication."[7] Truth, in order to maintain its efficacy, must unflinchingly abide in its weakness, in the pure presentation of its universal declaration.

Citing our passage from 2 Corinthians 4:7, Badiou summarizes the issue with great care: "the treasure is nothing but the event as such, which is to say a completely precarious having-taken-place. It must be borne humbly, with a precariousness appropriate to it."[8] As a result, Christian discourse must necessarily "be accomplished in weakness, for therein lies its strength. It shall be neither logos, nor sign, nor ravishment by the unutterable. It shall have the rude harshness of public action, of naked declaration, without apparel other than that of its real content. There will be nothing but what each can see and hear. This is the earthen vessel."[9] This is the potent weakness of a genuine truth.

III. MORMONISM CONCEIVED AS AN IMMANENT EVENT

We must now finally pose the question for the sake of which this entire investigation has been conducted. Does Mormonism remain thinkable within the horizons of thought's contemporary configuration? Does it remain thinkable if its operation as an event is thought strictly according to the limits of an immanent transcendence? If Mormonism is submitted to the harsh conditions of public action, naked declaration, and pure content, what appears as its essence?

A. An Immanent Atonement

Mormonism consists, first and foremost, of fidelity to the event inaugurated by the declaration of Christ's resurrection. It is a re-affirmation, a re-inauguration, of the gospel-event. Moreover, Mormonism is itself an

event of fidelity to the Christ-event. Its re-inauguration of the gospel-event is accomplished primarily through the publication and dissemination of the Book of Mormon's uncompromising declaration of hope in Christ. But is it possible to conceive of this event, this event of all events, without reference to anything strongly transcendent? Would not such an attempt eviscerate its potency? What is left of the atonement if it is wholly subtracted from metaphysical claims, cosmological speculation, and divine machinery?

Thought under the figure of an event as a strictly immanent transcendence, the generic declarative essence of Christ's resurrection appears as the possibility of an entirely new life in an entirely new kind of world. We might say: Christ's atonement testifies to the possibility of the event *as such*. It is an event whose content consists primarily in declaring the possibility of eventality itself. As such, it is an infinite and irreducible protest against the world's perpetual reduction of every life to a purely immanent animality. Christ's resurrection testifies to the possibility of lost possibilities. It proclaims that our lives need not be wholly determined by the tyranny of the world's contemporary configuration, by the weight and burden of a history without hope or redemption, or by the brutal reign of pure causality and merciless economy. In a word, the event of Christ's resurrection promises the possibility of *repentance*. Repentance marks the possibility of a new life and a new world. It reveals the world to us as free from its veneer of necessity and inevitability and shows us life in all of its dazzlingly positive contingency.

This is all to say: an immanent atonement promises possibility as such. It promises agency amidst determinism and freedom amidst fatalism. Few things in the world manage such freedom, but when something *is* genuinely free, we call it a gift. Because the logic of the gift, of a giving that exceeds reason, is the logic of love, freedom and love coincide. Thus, the name given to this evental revelation of contingency, to this excess of freedom, is love. We can say, then, that Christ's atonement simply and precisely marks the intervention of love in the world. It marks the possibility of an act that is without cause, precedent, or explanation, of a gift that defies economy, reward and recuperation, and of a love that gives simply to give itself, always excessively and always gratuitously. Thus, love and freedom coincide necessarily in gratuity and there is, of course, no

better one-word summary for Christ's atonement than grace. Mormonism, first and foremost, is a faithful declaration of the infinite potency of grace. This remains true even if such a grace is conceived in terms that are strictly immanent.

B. Immanent Revelation

As we have seen, it is possible to say that the essence of an event of truth *is* its revelatory power. An event of truth is what it is because it reveals that which has gone un-presented. A truth is a revelatory exposition of that which has been excluded. If revelation is thus conceived as an event, then it follows that every revelation is, by definition, an operation of love and redemption. The elements of love, freedom, and revelation here coincide inseparably. As an event, every type of revelation, every kind of truth, implicates the gospel-event.

Another consequence of conceiving revelation as evental is that, on this model, truth is necessarily epochal or dispensational. An immanently transcendent truth, because it belongs to a particular situation located in a particular time and place, will always manifest itself in the transformation of a given historical epoch. Truths, then, insofar as they remain strictly distinguished from knowledge, are relatively rare phenomenon. An event is a brief, spectacular burst of light, the consequences of which we must then, with infinite fidelity and tenacity, work out with respect to the whole of the situation to which it belongs. An event is a dispensational flash in the pan, a pure presentation, the truth of which must then be carefully applied to each and every element of the situation to which it belongs until the whole of that situation has been transformed by the inclusion of what had been excluded.

There are, of course, on this model of truth, many different kinds of truths, be they scientific, political, artistic, or religious. Mormonism appears here, in its dispensational particularity, as a truth among truths, as a kind of truth that does not claim to master the totality of knowledge. However, despite its subtraction from the urge to totalize, in its generic affirmation of eventality as such, in its reaffirmation of Christ's atonement, it also serves as a shelter for every conceivable kind of truth or event. Mormonism does not itself produce such scientific or political

truths, but it is necessarily called to shelter and protect every truth. Mormonism is thus both a truth among truths and a sheltering affirmation of the possibility of universal truth as such.

In turn, insofar as every truth, by definition, bears within itself a universal potency, insofar as every truth works universally upon its situation as a whole, every truth is necessarily generic. This is to say that every truth, as a truth, refuses ownership. Truth can never be proprietary. Truth, because it belongs to everyone, belongs to no one. Mormonism is an act of communal fidelity to the task of working out the effects of the singular events which called it into being. But the events to which we belong, to which we are attempting to be faithful, do not belong to us. Their universal scope exceeds us in the same way that their potency calls us to ceaselessly exceed ourselves in their application and extension. Truth, even the truth of our own peculiar event, can never be said to be exclusively our own. Every truth is incapable of justifying any pretension or exclusion. Mormonism belongs to everyone or it belongs to no one at all.

C. An Immanent Priesthood

Priesthood, immanently conceived, is a formalized expression of the potency of an event. The authority of an immanent priesthood is bestowed wholly and completely by the veracity of the truth that it is called to apply. Priesthood is as priesthood does. It bears no authority in and of itself apart from the efficacy of the truth that it bears. Its strength consists entirely of the weakness of an event. This, I take it, is the sense of D&C 121:39-46. To exercise "unrighteous dominion" is to assume that priesthood authority bestows a power that is not exclusively dependent on the potency of a truth. "No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned" (121:41). The truth of the gospel-event calls upon no external support or influence to accomplish its ends. Its only power is the power of truth itself, a truth that persuades, suffers, and loves in all its immanent weakness without recourse to anything beyond itself. Only a truth is capable of reproving the world with its sharpness and in so doing showing forth an increase of

love. The truth of an immanent priesthood can be nothing other than truth itself.

D. The Uniquely Mormon Event

We must now finally turn our attention to an examination of Mormonism's own expressly unique evental truth. Apart from its reaffirmation of the event of Christ's resurrection, apart from its affirmation of eventality as such, what might we say of the event of Mormonism in and of itself? The event of Mormonism may be conceived in the following way: *Mormonism is an entirely unique inflection of the event of Christ's love into a profoundly new figure of the family*. With respect to the constitution of our contemporary situation, the family is situated in a singularly powerful way. Family is a name for something that is properly generic in relation to our contemporary situation. It is everywhere present, but nowhere represented as such. It grounds and constitutes our situation even as it is goes uncounted as mattering from within the horizons of this situation's self-representation. If the event of Christ's resurrection proposes a revolutionary new world, then the contemporary militant unit of this revolution is the family.

We must see, however, what is powerfully unique about the Mormon inflection of the event of Christ's love into the figure of the family. It is my argument that Mormonism is *not* proposing that the traditional family be preserved and sustained within and against the hostile horizons of our given world. It is a mistake, I would argue, to conceive of our efforts as an operation of *conservation*. No event is an event of conservation. No truth is a truth of perpetuation. The operation of all truths and all events is revolutionary. We are not attempting to preserve the family or return the family to some previously viable historical configuration. We are attempting to revolutionize and transform the family itself. Our aim is to traverse the family as it presently exists and convert it into something entirely new. We want the family to be something that it has never yet been. And in doing so, we want to reconfigure the horizons of our world as a whole.

The essence of the conversion is this: in the face of the relentless work of capital to dissolve all natural bonds in favor of pure exchangeability,

the event of Mormonism does *not* seek to reverse this operation, but to traverse it and carry it through to its completion. Mormonism does not seek to reassert the efficacy of the natural bonds that have to this point always characterized and structured families. *Mormonism's fundamental insight is that such local, natural, finite bonds have never been adequate or sufficient.* Local, natural bonds – bonds structured necessarily by interest and desire – have only ever configured the family according to variously destructive class and gender hierarchies. Were natural bonds sufficient, there would be no need to submit these bonds to the infinite conditions of an eternal marriage.

The family is not meant to be natural, closed, and finite. It is meant to be infinite. If marriage is infinitized, if it is reconfigured by submission to the infinite, generic and universal conditions produced by the event of Christ's resurrection, then something entirely new takes place. If marriage is rendered eternal, if it is submitted to the generic conditions of Christ's resurrection, and if marriage marks precisely the uncounted and unrepresented evental element of our contemporary situation, then the reconfiguration of the family marks the reconfiguration of our entire world. The infinitization of the family marks love's global intervention.

I will venture a final – though admittedly tentative – formulation of how such a revolution might operate. The family, as it has been naturally and traditionally constituted, has always broken by a fundamental contradiction. The "natural" family has always been organized by interest and desire. As a result, it has been consistently subject to the gender inequity attendant to any configuration of its relations by the operation of interest. The inadequacy of this configuration is strikingly apparent: these natural bonds are easily dissolved and revealed as contingent. Capital has accomplished few tasks so effectively. As a result, to advocate a return to "traditional" family values makes little sense; to characterize our own position vis-à-vis the family as "conservative" risks missing the essence of our own position. We are not conservatives, we are revolutionaries.[10] Though there is no space to elaborate its extensive implications here, we can say at the very least that, traditionally, this gender inequity has been characterized by a split within the family that designates the male as the public figure and the female as the private figure. The world's contemporary response to this inequity has been to attempt a subversion of this

public/private split by configuring the family in such a way as to move both male and female members into the public sphere. This, however, fails to address the fundamental problem. The mutual relocation of man and woman into the public sphere does not free the relationship from the tyranny of desire and interest, but instead exacerbates the problem by directly exposing both genders to capital's reduction of *everything* to desire.

Mormonism does not attempt to preserve these traditional gender roles in terms of a public/private split. Instead, Mormonism is *also* an attempt to subvert altogether the public/private distinction. The difference is that its attempt takes the form of a relocation of both members into the previously private – but now generic and universal – space of infinite fidelity to one another. Mormonism's revolutionary reconfiguration of the family does not subvert the entire social order by having both genders identify themselves with the public operation of capital, but instead accomplishes this subversion by having both genders identify themselves with their genuinely infinite commitment to one another. This is the sense of the *Proclamation on the Family*. Fathers are instructed to identify themselves with their roles as a husband and father, not with their roles as an accountant or teacher. Mothers are similarly instructed to identify themselves with their roles as wife and mother. If both are accomplished simultaneously then the way in which both genders are actually "equal partners" appears in all its generic truth and the very social structures of desire and private interest that reinforce and perpetuate gender inequity are themselves transformed and reconfigured. The event of Christ's resurrection transforms marriage from something "natural" into something infinite and in doing so it transforms the structure of the entire world.

IV. CONCLUSION

Does Mormonism remain thinkable? Is its essential content immanently intelligible in relation to thought's contemporary configuration? Mormonism – as an inflection of the event of Christ's resurrection in the figure of the family – may be more amenable to thought than it has ever been. Its material, temporal, and universal aspects, as they appear in

the absence of any strong transcendence, may be more intelligible than at any previous point in time. Are we, however, under any necessity to render Mormonism thinkable? This is also a difficult question, but in my estimation all that need ultimately be required of Mormonism is the following: if Mormonism genuinely intends to universally revolutionize the world, then it must render itself sufficiently generic in order for the entirety of world to be transformed by it. This is, in my estimation, exactly what has been happening for the past 200 years. Mormonism has done nothing other than self-consciously and consistently purify and universalize its own potent inflection of our ultimately generic declaration of the universality of God's love for all his children. Mormonism has not been "watering itself down" and moving ever farther from its original impetus. Rather, it has done nothing other than move ever closer.

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NOTES

[1] This conception of an event, as I elaborate it here, draws philosophically on both (1) phenomenological descriptions of an event, and (2) Alain Badiou's conceptual formalization of an event. For additional reading see, for instance, Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002) or Alain Badiou, *L'etre et l'evenement*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1988).

[2] See Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1969).

[3] Similarly, it seems to me that the possibility for any genuine inter-faith dialogue resides here, at the level of an evental truth that challenges and transforms interpretive contexts. Only an evental truth has any communicative autonomy from such contexts. I would argue that genuine interfaith dialogue cannot occur *between* established interpretive contexts and that genuine interfaith dialogue can, instead, only occur in the precarious evental space of the radical transformation of those contexts.

[4] Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundations of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 45.

[5] Ibid., 51.

[6] Ibid., 52.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., 54.

[9] Ibid.

[10] One possible effect of this conception of the event of Mormonism is that Joseph Smith's early institution of polygamy takes on a new intelligibility. Polygamy might then mark clearly the ways in which Mormonism is not, nor has ever been, an attempt to preserve the traditional family. Polygamy would mark instead precisely the way in which our fundamental impulse has been, from the very beginning, to transform and reconfigure the family according to an entirely new pattern.

The Silence that is not Silence

by Blake T. Ostler

There is a certain sense in which I cannot speak the truth. It is not that the truth cannot be spoken, but only that *I* cannot speak it. The simple reason that I cannot speak this truth is that it is not my truth to speak. There is a sense in which in speaking I shall not have spoken. These words on this page must be seen through rather than looked at. The simple reason for this is that the truth of which I speak is not on this page nor is it before your eyes. You must look elsewhere. Yet in reading this you may discover where the truth is hidden. I cannot speak the truth that only you can speak.

The silence that I want to speak of is the two-fold attitude of subjectivity or passionate "inwardness" made famous by the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard – but Kierkegaard as seen through the optic of the Jewish Hasidic philosopher Martin Buber. The two basic words of relationship, of discourse between an "I" and an "other," are I-Thou and I-It. However, the two movements of soul that arise as fruits of these attitudes are not opposites of subjectivity and objectivity, or inwardness and outwardness. Rather, the two movements of these attitudes are, respectively, subjectivity and hidden-ness. These two movements are expressed in numerous different spheres of discourse, different ways of

being in the world, and different ways of life that play distinct language games. In the aesthetic mode of being, the hidden-ness is manifest as pre-tense, or choosing to not choose by choosing to not be present – literally not in this tense. In other words, it is a choice to not be conscious. In the ethical sphere of existence, the hidden-ness is manifest as pre-conceptions that precede our judgments. That is, the ethical sphere is characterized by a categorical schema that lays a matrix over the world and through which we judge right and wrong, true or false. Yet there are only two modes of discourse – authentic discourse that proceeds from the total person rooted in existence passionately, and inauthentic discourse which seeks to hide the truth about itself from itself, that runs from its own freedom, feigns no accountability for its own existence, and takes the meaning of itself from the other.

I emphasize that a mode of discourse is not talking, but a mode of being in the world, a way of standing (from Latin *stare* meaning both to stand and to exist) in the world with others. To exist in a mode of discourse is to be called forth to reciprocity by the other, to give wholly (holy) of one's entire being and to receive the mysterious revelation of the other in wholeness (holiness). My way of being in the world determines whether I am open to the other to receive the revelation, or whether I will force the other into the schema or categories of understanding that I have created.

SOCRATIC SUBJECTIVITY

The challenge of speaking as a Christian is that the goal is not to *convey* information that constitutes the truth, to impose it on you from the outside. The goal is a change of heart that opens to the truth. The goal is to find what cannot be found by searching. The truth that matters to Christianity cannot be given to you, it is something you must appropriate, something to be lived with passion in the living of it. The most difficult part of communication as a Christian is that what I speak to reveal to you, you already know – though it is hidden from you. In fact, it is the very fact that you already know it that may blind you to its truth. If you already know it, but you don't know that you know it, then how do we overcome your obstinate resistance to what you know? Worse yet,

why do you have this obstinate resistance?

There is an irony in knowing and giving meaning to what is said. Take for example Socrates who adopted a maieutic method to draw knowledge out of those he "taught." The Socratic method itself assumes that the truth is already possessed by the person questioned, or that it can be derived by what is already known. The *mythological* explanation for such knowledge is Plato's theory of the soul that pre-existed mortal existence. The soul had a vision of the truth, of the Forms, before birth and this knowledge remains latent in the mortal person. The knowledge is explained mythologically because it cannot be spoken directly. Why can't it simply be spoken directly? According to Plato, the soul is in resistance to what it knows because it is fooled by the appearances of the senses. Plato thought that the truths of Reason (writ large and with a capital "R") alone can pierce the veil of ignorance. Reason can lead us to the Forms or Ideas that are "out there" to give meaning to our statements. Our statements and propositions are true when they correspond to the universal Ideas. The problem of course is gaining access to the Ideas, for they are not phenomena to be experienced and we do not know through experience how to relate the Ideas to our world of experience. To access the Ideas we have to get what is "out there" in the world of Ideas somehow "in here" in our heads. Yet in principle it is impossible to get the out-there inside the in-here, for it is out there. The Platonic myth of the Ideas remembered from another life is thus a mockery of Socrates. In the place of drawing the truth out of his students, Plato would have it imposed on us from outside of us. Plato wanted to expose us to the truth without overcoming our resistance to it first. He thought he could talk us out of our resistance to the truth by reasoning with-in us, but all he succeeded in doing was making our resistance reason-able. However, the truth remains hidden because to grasp the truth, we first must become response-able.

And yet there is an irony within irony here. Socrates claims to be the wisest of all men because he doesn't know anything – but at least he knows that he doesn't know. Thus, he knows more than anybody else because he is aware of his ignorance. Yet his maieutic method assumes that in fact he knows, and that he knows that he knows. Whereas everyone else is ignorant of the fact that they know, Socrates' very actions

show that he knows that he knows and that they know what he knows and it is left for him to give birth to their knowledge. It is as if his ignorance is the source of his knowledge – and so it is. Ignorance silences the objective assertion of truth or the pretense that somehow we can convey the truth objectively by speaking it. If this is how we approach language, as an objective statement contained in propositions and sentences, then we are indeed ignorant. All knowledge is self-knowledge: to know, know thyself. Yet this claim that we already possess the very truth that we seek, that somehow the kingdom of God is already with-in us, is puzzling.

The key to this hidden knowledge is locked on the other side of the very door that we must unlock to find it. The knowledge of truth on such a view, nay, the very truth itself, is found by looking inward and not outward. As Søren Kierkegaard noticed in passing: "When subjectivity, inwardness, is the truth, the truth becomes objectively a paradox; and the fact that the truth is objectively a paradox shows in turn that subjectivity is truth.... The Socratic ignorance gives expression to the objective uncertainty attaching to the truth, while his inwardness in existing is the truth."[1] The truth that matters for an existing individual is not found by looking to the Ideas, but by existing inwardly. Kierkegaard is not saying that truth is ultimately paradoxical, but merely that for us as existing individuals the truth appears objectively paradoxical: "Socratically the eternal essential truth is by no means in its own nature paradoxical, but only in its relationship to an existing individual."[2] Yet I have already misspoken, for there is no truth "for *us*," for if truth is indeed inward, then there is only truth *for individuals individually*.

ETHICAL HIDDEN-NESS

The objective/subjective distinction opens a dichotomy of "in-here" and "out-there." Yet this opposition is a mistaken view. The opposite of inwardness is not outwardness, but hidden-ness. The counterpoint to subjectivity is not objectivity, but pre-tense. We are searching for an expression of the truth by speaking, and yet our search is in vain, for we have hidden from ourselves what we seek. We opened the door and then locked it, and then we threw the key in and slammed the door shut. And now we search for the key pretending not to know where it is hidden. The

fruit of our search cannot be found by looking for it; it cannot be spoken by speaking it; but only by surrendering to it. The fruit of our search must grow out of us, for if it is not in us as existing individuals, it cannot be given expression. Your refusal to know is a refusal to pierce your own soul. The truth is a gaping wound that has cut you to the heart.

Kierkegaard held that truth is subjectivity.[3] Søren Kierkegaard gives a tight definition of truth: "An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation-process of the most passionate inwardness is the truth!"[4] This assertion is literally non-sense. How can the "passion" – the subjectivity – with which a belief is affirmed vouch for the truth of that belief? The truth has to do with the way the world is, not the way I am. How can the beliefs in my head be true unless there is something "out there" to which my beliefs correspond, something other than the belief itself that makes it true rather than false? How could I presume by the mere fact that I have a belief that it is true? For I know that I can hold a false belief. Thus, it is not of the truth value of the words on this page that I speak.

And yet there is something that seems right about what Kierkegaard said. Within the range of a certain kind of belief, my way of being in the world, my "form of life" is precisely the truth that is at issue. Such truth claims exist in the sphere of the ethical and religious. For Kierkegaard, the truth of my belief is guaranteed precisely by its very passion, by the fact that I give myself to it heart, might, mind and strength. The truth is that the way of being in the world as a Christian is to commit everything to it or really to not commit at all, and *in* this commitment to have found the way, the truth and the life. I must risk everything – I must stick my head into the mouth of the Lion to know what is in there, and trusting that as I look he will not bite my head off. The greater danger is that whether or not the Lion bites my head off depends not on the Lion but on *how* I stick my head in: all the way or not at all. "Without risk there is no faith. Faith is precisely the contradiction between the infinite passion of the individual's inwardness and the objective uncertainty."[5]

There is a sense in which I hide the truth in the very act of trying to make it objective. That is, even if we wanted to speak of objective truth, the very use of reasoning and language defeats us and hides the truth that is actually spoken. If truth is indeed subjectivity, how could there be any communication of information in dialogue, in writing, in any human

action at all? By the mere act of writing, of speaking, I assume that you have certain capacities. I assume that you already have the capacity for truth. And yet *you* do not have the capacity for truth. One of the reasons I cannot speak the truth to you and that *you* cannot appropriate the truth is that *you* see the world through your categories of thought. By speaking to you I am also speaking from within my categories of thought. These words with which I communicate all assume that they refer to categories of meaning that we share in common in giving meaning to words. Even if the meaning is merely a "family resemblance," these words must belong to the same family to have meaning. These words represent a categorical range of meaning shared to some extent that we both grasp in our minds.

Yet the legacy of Western philosophy is to trap us inside of our minds with no escape. In his *Meditations*, Descartes writes: "Every idea is a work of the mind."[6] Such a statement is not so surprising. After all, we are the creators of our thoughts. Yet as Kant pointed out, such a view leaves us in a quandary: How can ideas that have their origin in the mind nevertheless give us knowledge of anything independently real? Descartes thought he could resolve the problem through proof of God's existence who surely would not allow us to be so deceived that our senses mislead us, at least not with respect to sense impressions that are clear and vivid. And yet Kant points out that God's existence cannot be established through Descartes' proofs, and even if the proofs were valid, such proofs could not guarantee sense experience. Thus, Descartes is stuck trapped all alone in his world of ideas. There is no connection with an other who is not an other one of his ideas.

Edmond Husserl takes Descartes' notion that ideas are the creations of our minds to its logical conclusion in his *Cartesian Meditations*: "Consciousness makes present a 'there-too, which nevertheless is not itself there and can never become an 'itself-there'."[7] Husserl concludes that the other is "there" for me in some sense to be present to me; but only in the sense that it has "for me." In other words, all I can really know of you is what I can grasp of you, and what I can grasp of you is only my own idea of you. Thus, the "other" referred to by Husserl is not a person who exists independently of me or an "extra-mental" other; rather, the other only *is* my interpretation that I constitute for it. The

"other" is therefore really the same – the same as my idea. If I add that my ideas are my invention, my creation alone, then I am stuck in a solipsism all alone. My ideas cannot get outside of my head to refer to any independently existing other persons or things. I am stuck all alone in my head with my ideas.

Kant does not rescue us from ourselves. Kant provides an elaborate map of the mental apparatus – the categories – by which we bring our sense experience to consciousness and interpret it. He adds that certain ideas must be present already in experience to make experience possible. Such ideas are therefore *a priori* or before experience, but they remain merely creations of our minds. These ideas do not give us contact with the phenomenal world to know things in themselves as noumena. All I really know according to Kant are the categories of understanding that originate in my own mind. I remain stuck in my head completely alienated from the world.

Now I am convinced that this way of describing human experience is a genuine problem for a certain way of being in the world. This way of being is the ethical orientation by which one "posits good and evil" categories for the world: "it is not so much a matter of choosing between willing good and willing evil, as of choosing to will, but that in turn posits good and evil."[8] In creating my categories by which I judge the world, I create my world. Kierkegaard refers to ethical judgments in a sense that is broader than "moral" judgment; rather, he speaks of judgments in the Kantian sense as judgments of the intellect that we lay upon the world. In a sense, we create our very idea of our self through such judgments, for the ethical individual chooses "the absolute that chooses me ... that posits me."[9] Yet the absolute that posits me in this ethical sphere of existence is not God, but me! The absolute is "myself in my absolute validity" or in other words freedom.[10] And yet at this level I choose in despair, for the choice is a burden upon me because I create the very world of good and evil myself: "I choose despair, and in despair I choose the absolute, for I myself am the absolute."[11] I am in despair because I have created my self, and in making myself I have made myself the absolute arbiter of all judgments of any kind whatsoever. I create the world of good and evil myself. If even God were to command me to do something contrary to my judgment, I would either conclude that "this is not God,"

or I would assert myself as the absolute and defy God. From the ethical perspective, Abraham is an attempted murderer and his faith is both an offense and non-sense. I can make no sense of a God who could violate my judgments of good and evil from this perspective.

By engaging in the act of judging our experience through the categories of thought, we are ultimately alienated and apart. Our every judgment is a judgment of ourselves only. When I judge you, it is really only my idea of you that I know, and that is what I judge. And yet this way of being is the way of judgment, for in judging I necessarily take a thing only partially and not in its wholeness. In the act of judging, I necessarily abstract this thing, analyze it and take it to fit into a category. It is as if I see the world through a filter of my own creation. Yet like the lens through which I take the picture, I cannot see my own lens – the lens that colors the photograph never appears in my picture.

It turns out that the "truth" as *you* and as *I* see it is thus precisely a subjective idea merely. *You* have created this elaborate schema of the world in your head, but of course you are hardly aware of your creation because it is before you - prior to your experiences. It is only in you and for you. It arises out of your way of being in the world and is a certain form of life. Yet if the truth, if the very meaning of the words I choose to use merely express the Ideal world created by my mind, then in attempting to speak I am merely feigning to convey to you, for in reality I cannot succeed in speaking at all. The truth is merely a subjective creation of my own that may or may not have contact with some outside reality, if any.

But this is not what Kierkegaard means when he says that truth is subjectivity, for this type of truth can be accepted while sitting in an armchair unconscious. There is no passion in it. It doesn't require all of you to appropriate it. In fact, what makes your categories possible is necessarily only a part of you, something less than you in your wholeness. The truth seen through your mind is abstracted, categorized, and separated from the whole. It is truth alienated from itself – which is to say, not truth at all.

It is not the truth that is located in the categories of thought in your head, arrived at through the act of judging, that is the truth that is in you. Saying that truth is subjectivity is somewhat misleading – in an indirect sort of way. The truth that I am speaking of is like light in the sense that

it is not what is seen, it is what illuminates reality so that it can be seen. And yet the light by which reality is seen is also the reality that is in fact seen. I am looking at a couch. I see it. And yet the couch has not entered into my eyes and into my head that I might know it. It is "out there." What I see and know is the light reflected off of the couch. I touch it, but it isn't the couch that enters my fingers, it is the resistance of the couch against my finger that I feel. What I feel is not the couch at all but the resistance of the couch. I experienced the resistance of the couch against the cells in my fingers. And yet the resistance is not in me, it is not what I experience when I experience the couch.

The categories of thought control what we experience, for they act as a filter through which our experience must pass. The categories pre-reflectively sift out of our experience what is irrelevant to experience even before we can reflectively assess our experience. Thus, we cannot assess the evidence based upon a phenomenological analysis to determine the structure or content of human experience because our pre-reflective categories have already sifted out everything that doesn't fit our pre-conceptions. The structure and meaning of our experience is already given to us. But the categories of understanding go beyond violence to pre-reflective experience, for they also dictate the outcome of reflective experience. For example, an argument concerning any point of logic must proceed according to the "rules of logic." But who wrote these rules of logic? For example, which is the appropriate geometry, Euclidian, Lobachevskian, Reimann's? Which logical system, Frege's, Russell's, Leibniz's? Once it is seen that there are various competing systems of logic, the discussion itself must collapse. Once we see that the rules themselves are subject to doubt, that they are not, as the realist assumes, inexorably written in reality, then we must assess arguments at the meta-logical level. We are left with comparing logical systems. Yet what rules will guide such a metalogical discussion, for the rules by which the argument may proceed are themselves in question? Every argument thus turns out to be either question begging or circular because it assumes a logic which is the very point to be proven.

Thus, the categories of understanding are hidden from my view. I cannot experience them, for they are before experience, they are the matrix that shapes experience itself. I do not experience them, rather, I experi-

ence *through* them. Nor can I reason about them, for they are the very schema of logic that dictates the outcome of the logical discussion. Thus, I do not argue for or about them, rather, I argue based upon them.

That is why I cannot speak the truth. It is obscured by the very act of experiencing me as speaking to you, by the very act of assessing what I say to you. The truth is something that must be delivered in the pains of birth from out of you rather than something I tell you. If I were to speak the truth to you straight out, you would sift it out of your experience, or you would decide that it doesn't fit within your rules of logic. Thus, the truth spoken straight out of necessity is paradoxical and offensive. It is paradoxical because the truth confronts the pre-reflective pre-conceptions that you have about the truth before it can speak the truth to you. This con-front-ation will appear not to be true because it won't fit what you take to be your experience and it will be contrary to what you take to be sound rules of logic. It will be offensive because the natural tendency is to preserve the categories of understanding as much as possible before abandoning them. To abandon the categories that give shape to your experience is uncomfortable because without them experience seems to be chaotic and even scary. To abandon the categories is offensive because the message is: the way you see the world is wrong – and it feels rotten to be wrong. Thus, the natural reaction to the suggestion that your categories of thought hide the truth is to resist the move, to avoid the cognitive dissonance – for the very suggestion must be seen as non-sense. It is easier to simply be offended and to shut off the whole discussion as beyond the realm of logical possibility – it is easier to just decide that the truth so spoken is not a live option.

When I say that truth is subjectivity I am not saying that you get to decide what the truth is. I am not saying that you are the measure of all things. If there is to be any truth spoken, if there is to be any truth heard, it must come about in an appropriation process whereby in our dialogical relationship this truth is created between us – drawn out of you by me and out of me by you. Yet to draw it out of you, you must let go of what you know. Unless I can persuade you to die to everything *you think you know*, you cannot give birth to this truth. For I am not your categories of thought, and no encounter can take place if we merely remain within the ethical sphere that is a creation of these categories.

AESTHETIC HIDDEN-NESS

The aesthete is a person who experiences the world sensually. The sensual existence takes many forms. At its most developed, it is the reliance on evidence of the senses as the basis and justification of all beliefs and commitments. From Kierkegaard's perspective, such a mode of existence is a way of passing off response-ability for the beliefs that, at some level of our being, we choose into. Thus, I refuse to make a decision, to commit myself to any way of being in the world until the evidence is all in. I place the basis of a decision outside of myself on the evidence. I dispassionately assess the evidence, waiting for it to make my decision for me. There is no urgency. In fact, there is never a decision because all of the evidence will never be in – such a way of being is an endless approximation, an eternal waiting for the physical universe to cause me to decide.

The avoidance of taking accountability is thus a form of subjecting ourselves to a causal determinism that makes all of our decisions for us. It is what Jean-Paul Sartre called "bad faith." It is a form of pre-tense – a decision to not exist in any tense of time. Sartre famously tells the story of a woman, Lucienne, who is unhappily married to Henri. She is encouraged by her lover to leave her husband. Her friend, Henriette, sees that freedom from the prison of her existing marriage is the only way Lucienne will ever have a chance at happiness and urges to leave her husband for her lover. Yet Lucienne sabotages her escape from the marriage by insisting on meeting her lover in a part of Paris where she knows that Henri is likely to see her and stop her. When she runs into Henri, he seizes her by the arm and pulls her in one direction while her lover pulls on the other arm in the other direction, with Lucienne in the middle as "limp as a bag of laundry." Sartre observes that Lucienne has chosen, at some level of (un)consciousness, to not choose what to do. She hopes that one of them will pull hard enough to relieve her of the burden of having to choose for herself.[12] Lucienne knows that she is free to choose, but she attempts to hide her freedom from herself and pre-tend to not be free, but a victim of circumstances. Only a being that is afraid of its freedom and of the response-ability which arises with this freedom could seek to hide itself in this way.

Yet being a victim of circumstances as a way of being in the world is more common place than Sartre's literary devices. On the way home the other night, a jerk cut me off in the road as I was driving home. I reacted in a predictable (at least for me) manner. I felt a sense of anger rising in me. I became very angry and honked my horn and yelled in the silence of my car: "You jerk!" for that is how I experienced the person who so rudely cut me off in traffic. Yet in that moment I engaged in a form of hiding my response-ability. I could have chosen to ignore it. I could have chosen to see this "jerk" with compassion. Perhaps he was a father, a brother, a loved one. Yet I chose to give this "jerk" a power he would not have had without my complicity, without my giving it to him – the power to make me angry and upset. I chose to be "caused" by him to be angry. By being unconscious and not choosing to act with kindness I chose to not choose my choice, for I could have chosen to act in love and would have made *that* choice had I been conscious. Instead, I chose to merely re-act and become an effect. I chose to enter the world of cause and effect. He was the cause, I was the effect. I chose to see "the jerk" as a thing that caused me to think, feel, and act. Thus, I chose to be just another "thing" in the world, to be an effect. I first made him in my image, the image of thing in the world, and then I made myself in his image, another thing in the world; for like causes like. I chose to be his victim – and the irony is that the jerk is the last person in the world I would want to give this power to, this awesome power to choose how I think, feel, and act.

The moment I categorized the "jerk" as such, I engaged in a pre-tense. In other words, I chose not to be where and when I was. I feigned that I was not free to choose how to act and instead became a re-action. I gave away my freedom, my power over the basic act of human existence – the act of choosing my attitude toward the circumstances in which I find myself. But I chose not to find myself, but to engage in a pre-tense. Our language is wise beyond reason – for pre-tense is exactly living in the past – still reacting to incidents in my past rather than living in the present.

The aesthetic is inevitably a victim of the world, at the mercy of things. The world of senses is a world of causal determination. Consider that every sensation I have is caused by some thing in the world. I have sensations when things act upon my senses. Moreover, I am passible in

the process of sensation. I seem to simply be at the mercy of what is delivered to my senses by the physical world. By the time I experience any thing, it is already fixed in my past, it is beyond my control and my ability to change, already given in my experience of it, already seemingly beyond choice and accountability for it. When I experience things I see them as another link in the chain of causally determined events of which my sensation is just another link. Strangely, there is also a sense in which these things I experience, including human things, are also caused *by me*; for I prejudge them and place them in categories of my own making. Thus their place in the world for me is where I have caused them to be in my categorization of things. Moreover, what I experience through my senses are meaningless things – they have no meaning in and of themselves. It is a dead world of lifeless things. As Martin Buber observed:

> In the It-world causality holds unlimited sway. Every event is either perceivable by the senses and 'physical' or discovered or found in introspection and 'psychological' is considered to be of necessity caused and a cause. Those events that may be regarded as purposive form no exception insofar as they belong to the continuum of the It-world.[13]

In this way we inevitably see ourselves as victims of all that has gone before, as the mere causal effect of the way the world was before we got here and now. To live in this world is to regard myself as just another one of the objects, another thing in the world of things. Because this way of being in the world is a choice to not make a choice, every choice is foisted on me as "not my choice." The despair of this type of life is the despair that no matter what I choose, I refuse to own it, refuse to passionately appropriate it for myself. This way of being in the world is the ultimate lose-lose situation. Kierkegaard captured the aesthetic either/or in this message to himself:

> Marry, and you will regret it. Do not marry, and you will also regret it. Marry or do not marry, you will regret it either way. Whether you marry or do not marry, you will regret it either way. Laugh at the stupidities of the world, and you will regret it; weep

> over them, and you will also regret it. Laugh at the stupidities of the world or weep over them, you will regret it either way. Whether you laugh at the stupidities of the world or you weep over them, you will regret it either way. Trust a girl, and you will regret it. Do not trust her, and you will regret it. Trust a girl or do not trust her, you will regret it either way. Whether you trust a girl or do not trust her, you will regret it either way. Hang yourself, and you will regret it. Do not hang yourself, and you will also regret it. Hang yourself or do not hang yourself, you will regret it either way. Whether you hang yourself or do not hang yourself, you will regret it either way.[14]

The reason that whatever we choose in such a sphere of existence is regret-able is precisely that we have chosen to not choose it passionately. The choice means nothing to us because it is not our choice. Indeed, because we have foisted the responsibility for choice onto things outside of ourselves, I experience every choice as some thing I want to avoid. Thus, the subjectivity or truth of this mode of existence is precisely the freedom that is hidden to avoid accountability. And yet it is only because the knowledge of freedom is highlighted all the more brightly by the absurdity of this mode of existence that its truth is made manifest. All of the absurd actions and self-defeating behaviors we engage in to avoid responsibility for our freedom expose the truth about our freedom. The only person fooled by our self-deception is our self. In this sense, once again, subjectivity is truth.

SUBJECTIVITY AND EXISTENCE COMMUNICATIONS

Kierkegaard also uses the term "existence communications" to refer to truth as subjectivity. An existence communication stands in opposition to speculative theology and doctrine – or even to theology as it is done in the Western world at all:

> Christianity is not a doctrine but an existential communication expressing an existential contradiction. If Christianity were a doctrine it would *eo ipso* not be an opposite to speculative thought, but

> rather a phase within it. Christianity has to do with existence, with the act existing; but existence and existing constitute precisely the opposite of speculation.[15]

The truth of Christianity is thus a different sphere of existence than other kinds of truth. It is a kind of communication. But what kind of *communication* could possibly be subjective, for communication just is to engage the "other"? This fact, that communication is with an Other is precisely the existential contradiction. We cannot communicate to others the truth that is in us, that is known only by living a life, *my* life, filled with pathos and passion. Yet by immersing more deeply in existence and in so engaging life with inward concern, my very life becomes the message that is communicated. What is at issue is not the truth value of propositions, the establishing of facts, or the conveying of truths, but the very meaningfulness of human existence lived one life at a time. It is this truth that is involved in all real communications. All other "communications" are merely vibration of voice in the air and marks on paper. Yet this life, lived in passionate inwardness, becomes the only way to bridge the solipsism of objective communication by living as a dialogue that embraces the Other and crosses the threshold of the mind to enter the heart of the Other.

Existence communications have several features. The most prominent feature is that the truth of the communication is not established by the *what*, or objective content of the message, but by *how* the dialogue is entered – how we are challenged, con-fronted and called forth into interpersonal dialogue at the deepest recesses of our being. Take this proposition: Life is meaningful. As stated, this proposition could not have meaning, for it is life in the abstract, no particular life involved at all. Indeed, this assertion is lifeless. Propositions, assertions and sentences are abstractions. The very assertion is therefore the opposite of life, for life is life lived as a particular individual. There is no such thing as a communication in which my life is not involved, no dispassionate communication of anything. It follows that the very notion of a truth without passion, without my concerned involvement, is meaningless. Life lived in the abstract is also meaningless. Thus, for any statement to have meaning, it must be meaningful because it expresses my existential communication;

it expresses the meaning of my life. Thus the truth is not *what* is, but *how* life is lived.

The reason that this truth – *life is meaningful* – has any meaning at all is that it is *my* life. I cannot divorce myself from it; I cannot approach it without caring for what being an existing individual means. It follows that life lived subjectively cannot but be meaningful. This communication of truth – *life is meaningful* – cannot be demonstrated by looking somewhere in the world of empirical truths for it. Looked at empirically, the world does not yield any meaning. It is only because I exist in the world as an individual that the statement has any meaning – and yet as a statement it is the antithesis of what is asserted. Neither can this assertion be known to be true by thinking about it, for in such thinking I abstract it and kill it. If I stop to think about my life, I put my life on hold. It is as if I am on the down side of the roller coaster and I stop and ask myself: "Gee, am I having fun?" If I ask, I'm not! Only by abandoning myself to the thrill of the ride in the flow of life lived passionately in this very moment can the statement: "I am having fun" be true. By thinking of my life reflexively I make my life an object that is "Other" than me to be scrutinized and analyzed. Yet in dissecting my life I kill it like a frog on the dissection table being examined. I take my life and break it down to be swallowed one piece at a time. Thinking is parasitic on life and the parasite kills its host.

This truth is subjective because the tenor of my life lived inwardly brings it about. If I believe that life is meaningless, I prove myself right because the very belief establishes my life as meaningless. If I refuse to find any meaning, then what other meaning for my life could exist to be found? Yet if I believe *passionately* that my life has no meaning, then I have proven to myself that life has meaning after all, for now I have a cause, I have a passion that gives life to my meaning. If I rebel against life and the meaningless world with all of my heart, might, mind, and strength, then I have given this meaning to my life: to stand before life's meaninglessness and dare it to steal the meaning of my life from me. The simple truth is that single individuals create the meaning of this statement – life is meaningful – in the living of it. Without life lived one life at a time, there is no meaning – no meaning apart from life lived abstractly, which is to say, no real life at all.

The truth of this assertion – *life is meaningful* – therefore becomes true when I assert it with my whole being, with inward passion. It becomes false when I merely assert it. I hide the truth of the meaning of this statement – life is meaningful – when I speak of it as a mere object of discourse. Thus, the meaning of this statement depends on how I assert it. It is subjective because its truth value depends on whether I assert it with my entire soul or not at all. The truth value of this statement is something I cannot assert for you, on your behalf. I cannot convey the truth of this assertion to you, for you can know it only by choosing it passionately. Thus, the truth value of this assertion is subjective because it is found inside you. The truth value of this statement is a fact about the world only insofar as I am an existing individual in the world. If I assert this statement with my whole being, with everything that I am, then I have established that life has meaning because I am an existing individual that is in the world and this truth is in me.

Thus, existence communication is the very life I live, my being in the world. It is the "given" in all experience and all reasoning *that precedes and exceeds both experience and reason.* Thus, truth is subjectivity because it arises out of my being in the world. It is a "first principle" of meaning for everything in my life. By the very "firstness" of existence, it cannot be preceded by something more basic or justified by some other explanation. In this sense, existence communications are "regulatory assertions" which play a different role in thinking than evidence or speculative arguments. Thus, subjectivity is a truth claim that resists logical and experiential grounding. Existence communications are truth claims, but not the same type of truth claims as empirical and logical assertions. Rather, existence communications are the form of life that makes explanation or description possible wherever they apply. Everything that we experience and say is already conceived in a way that presumes the truth of our existence communications – the very passion for the meaning of life itself as life is lived one life at a time.

Truth as subjectivity is thus not merely in me, but transcends me and calls me to con-front the given in my experience, the basis of my reasoning, that exceeds me as a mere subject. Thus, subjectivity is not *merely* me as subject, for I am the subject merely in the ethical and aesthetic spheres of existence. Rather, my subjectivity transcends me. Once having found

myself, I am called by the given in my experience to go beyond my self, to trans-send that by which I am con-fronted, met in a face to face revelation with that which is truly Other than me. Thus, having found myself I am called by this absolute Other to lose myself. I am called forth by the avocation of my life, the excess meaning of my life that I have not created myself and which surpasses my freedom. If I am called merely by my freedom, then I posit the truth by my own act. When I am called forth by that which transcends my freedom, by that which I cannot account for by merely referring it to the ideas created by my own ego, then I confront a holy Thou which calls me in such a way that only the fullest passion of my life responding wholly in loving service is an adequate recognition. I am confronted by an Other who refuses to be reduced to a mere thing that calls me to encounter its holiness. As Emmanuel Levinas observed, the face of the Other shatters my ego-bound existence, the existence of a world I have created to satisfy my enjoyment. The fact that the Face of Other exceeds any idea or concept that I can have, beyond my categories of understanding, not already included in my past given experience, violates my ego-bound existence. Thus, in con-fronting (Latin *con frontare* – to be faced with) the Other, I (as ego) discover that "something has overflowed my freely taken decisions, has slipped into me [*s'est glisse*] *unbeknownst to me*, thus alienating my identity."[16] The Other is hidden in my experience and reasoning because it precedes them both as the ground that makes them possible.

Buber is broader in his discussion than Levinas because it is not limited to the ethical demand made by persons when we confront them; rather, the I-Thou relation extends to persons, nature, and God; all that is in its totality. According to Buber, there is no such thing as an isolated "I" in the world: "There is no I as such but only the I of the basic I-Thou and the I of the basic I-It."[17] This basic word pair is spoken with my being and the way I speak these basic words defines my way of being in the world. When I speak the basic word pair I-It, then I *experience* the world through my categories and uses of it. I experience everything in the world as a thing, as an object of knowledge, even if that object or thing be a person: "as he beholds what confronts him, its being is disclosed to the knower. What he beheld as present he will have to comprehend as an object, compare with objects, assign a place in an order of objects, and

describe and analyze objectively; only as an It can it be absorbed into the store of knowledge."[18]

Yet there remains a question: if I experience the face of the Other through my categories of thought, then how is it that I transcend myself to truly encounter the Other as Other rather than the same, that is, the same as my idea? Buber is careful in his language to distinguish between an encounter and an experience. I may *experience* the world, but I do not *encounter* the world through my categories of things. A Thou is encountered directly, in its wholeness, without being mediated through my categories: "The relation to the Thou is unmediated. Nothing conceptual intervenes between I and Thou, no prior knowledge and no imagination. . . . Every means is an obstacle. Only where all means have disintegrated encounters occur."[19] How then can I encounter the world without the means of my categories of thought that are necessary to make sense of it? The answer is: I do not do anything that could result in encounter. There are no formulas, for any attempt to manipulate the world to find the truth of it or any expectation of what I will encounter precludes true encounter. To manipulate the world is to deal with things. To have expectations is to overlay the world with how it looks for me – in so doing I preclude the revelation of the other as Thou. Then how does encounter occur? The Thou gives in grace as present before I formulate It: "The Thou encounters me by grace – it cannot be found by seeking. But that I speak the basic word to it is a deed of my whole being, is my essential deed."[20] Thus, I encounter a Thou that has intrinsic meaning to reveal to me and not a meaning that I posit for it. The Thou gives this revelation as a gift already present to me – if I look for it or expect it I lose, for I have no right to expect such a gift. The Thou is before me, precedes me, it is already in my life: "All actual life is encounter."[21] I encounter the Thou by speaking with my entire being, by standing before existence wholly, or holy, and give myself to be disclosed in return. In so doing, I have no preconception, no expectation or demand about how I am received by the Other; I simply dare to stand naked before the world in transparent transcendence. The truth is encountered by gracious giving and receiving of my life. In the words of Kierkegaard, I become subjective by immersing myself more deeply in existence.

For Buber, there is thus a "given" in my very being that is beyond me

and transcends my experience and ideas. There is a "gift" already present that reveals to me and that gives in self-disclosure and revelation to me, and the world opens to me as a realm of sacred life. In the revelation, what is disclosed is *how* I am being in the world with the Other. I am revealed in the revelation of the Thou to me. The encounter occurs only when I let go, give up my resistance, and surrender to receive the gift. Buber describes this surrender:

> The Thou encounters me. But I enter into a direct relationship to it. Thus the relationship is election and electing, passive and active at once: An action of the whole being must approach passivity, for it does away with all partial actions and thus with any sense of action, which always depends on limited exertion.[22]

The Thou remains truly Other, but it transcends by confronting me, encountering me, creating me anew. The moment of encounter is a moment of creation – of the creation of the I in the I-Thou relation, the creation of the Thou in the I-Thou relation, and the creation of the world of dialogue and intercourse that encompasses us in the creation of the relation itself. I cannot create this relation with Thee, and Thou canst not create it without me, together we create as co-creators: "Creation - happens to us, burns into us, changes us, we tremble and swoon, we submit. Creation - we participate in it, we encounter the creator, offer ourselves to him, helpers and companions."[23]

In existing, I find there already a "being-with," a given that exceeds and transcends me. Moreover, this knowledge of being-with is not merely my always already being in a world that precedes my experience of it, but being-with a knowledge that is part of my very consciousness. I am not merely in a world given before my experience, but confronted by a mysterious Other who dynamically challenges me to move beyond. I am already with an Other who is breathed into me with every breath, and receives me with every breath breathed. In confronting, encountering, being violated by the Thou, I am called forth to a fullness of reciprocity that is giving myself wholly without reserve and receiving the Other without restraint. It cannot be forced, it cannot be learned, it cannot be found by searching; for it is as natural and easy as breathing – thoughtless and

life giving.[24] Both Levinas and Buber speak of the "face" of the Other which confronts us and calls us out of ourselves as an encounter.[25] Both apparently have in mind the Hebrew word for "face," *'appayim*, having the sense of "to fall with the face against the ground."[26] The meaning is not merely "face" but an active encounter, a confrontation, a smack in the face. It is a sense of being slapped in the face by an Other to wake up to the Other's presence. When Moses speaks with God face to face, it is a revelation of God as an Other, as a holy Thou who lays demands upon Israel by his gracious presence (Deut. 34:10; Ex. 33:11). The Other, the holy Thou, calls me forth to enter into relationship – and in so doing spells out the nature and demands inherent in relationship.

Subjectivity is thus like a light that illuminates my experience and intellect so that I can see. It is like the back light that illuminates my understanding. The light shines in me and illuminates me; as also the light of the sun, the moon, and the stars. It is the light which shines which gives me light. The light shines through the Other to enlighten my eyes, both the light by which I see and the light that shines in my eyes; which light also quickens my understanding. This hidden light is in all things, gives life to all things, and is the law by which all things are governed. Without the light that illuminates my way before me, I could not abound. Yet it is a light that I hide from myself, and in hiding expose the fact that I am naked before the world. To live life as a Christian is to no longer hide my light, but to share it in a loving and gracious act of giving and receiving. Yet in the giving of myself, I discover that the Other has always given to me first, for I am drawn out of myself only because the Other draws me. I love because the Other loved me first. I am able to see the Other as a holy Thou, as not the same as me, only because I cease to judge and make the Other an object to be categorized for me. To engage in existential communication is thus to transcend myself as my light escapes me and I open to the light of the Holy Thou who discloses and exposes in a sacred revelation of a self.

The only way to believe subjectively is to passionately live life adhering to this meaning. For example, (a true story) – two women went to their car and discovered that the lights of the car had been left on all night. When they attempted to start the car it would not start. Because the lights had been on all night, their situation appeared hopeless. The

driver said a fervent prayer and then she said: "buckle up your seat belt, for I know that the car will start even though the lights have been on all night." She turned the key and the car immediately started. Only later did the driver learn that the car would not start unless the seat belts were buckled. Though objectively in the wrong, they were subjectively in truth. The truth that the prayer was answered is not in the *what*, but the *how*.

Subjective truths then are not propositions, sentences or analyze-able pieces of knowledge; rather, they are ways of arranging knowledge and giving it life as a way of being in the world. Such truths are not grounded in facts about the world, but the discovery of our way of being in the world. Subjective truths are not the categories of thought; they are the modes of existence that precede all thought and all categories – and in the spiritual stage of being escape all categories of judgment. However, I cannot talk about this spiritual way of being in the world by speaking or writing – it is beyond *mere* human language. Such truth can be expressed only in a life that existentially embodies the communication spoken. Subjectivity is a way of being that opens itself to be drawn out of itself by the Other, and in being so drawn to open the eyes of the heart. Thus, existence communications are silent, but they are what give voice to our dialogue. They are like the air that acts as the medium for the sound waves – they make dialogue possible. They give meaning not only to life, but to any act so speaking that is meaning-full at all.

Existence communications are expressed through the life lived by the Christian passionately in an appropriation process. In this life, the flow of the spirit eases all burdens. In the wind that acts as the medium of the sound waves of dialogue is the rustle of the spirit; and the stillness of silence becomes the mighty rushing wind and a voice that is as the roar of the great water. The silence becomes deafening as ears give way to listening and eyes surrender to seeing. In the stillness, that which I already know can be heard. The locked door to my heart opens only to the silence of surrender. In the silence, God speaks and in speaking he says....

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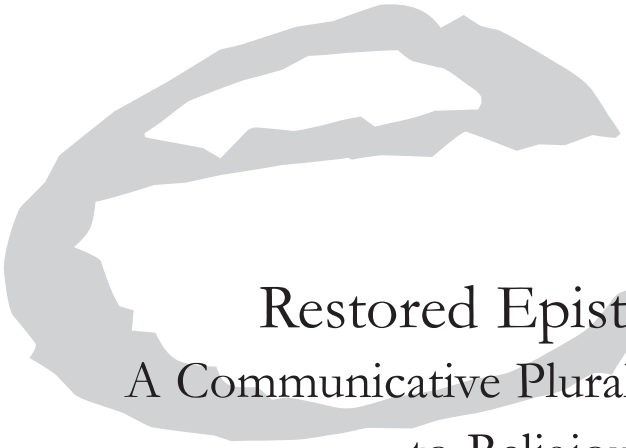
NOTES

[1] Johannes Climacus (Søren Kierkegaard), *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), 183.
[2] Ibid., 184.
[3] Ibid., 339.
[4] Ibid., 182.
[5] Ibid.
[6] *The Philosophical Works of Descartes,* ed. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. T. R. Ross., vol. 2, *Meditations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 162.
[7] Edmond Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: an Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1960), 139.
[8] Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), I:14.
[9] Ibid., II:213.
[10] Ibid., II:214.
[11] Ibid., II:213.
[12] Jean Paul Sartre, *Le Mur*, "Intimate."
[13] Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribeners, 1970), 100.
[14] Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, I:38-39.
[15] Soren Kierkegaard, *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), 339.
[16] Emmanuel Levinas, "Sans identite" in *Humanisme de l'autre homme* (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1972), 102 [English *Ethics and Infinity*].
[17] Buber, *I and Thou*, 54.
[18] Ibid., 90.
[19] Ibid., 62-63.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid., 130.
[24] Breathing just is to receive the other into me, for the oxygen is not of my making. Breathing just is giving, for the carbon dioxide gives life the very plants to give my life back.
[25] Buber, *I and Thou*, 131.
[26] Thorleif Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared to Greek* (New York: Norton & Co., Inc., 1960), 106.



Restored Epistemology:
A Communicative Pluralist Answer to Religious Diversity

by Dennis Potter

The problem of diversity has both propositional and practical components. There are many different religious traditions. The claims of these various traditions are often mutually exclusive. They cannot all express the truth about ultimate reality. Moreover, it appears that they cannot all be ways to fulfill the purpose of human life. For example, Christian salvation is very different from Buddhist enlightenment. The existence of different claims about ultimate reality and different paths to fulfill our lives' purpose is *the problem of diversity*.

Latter-day Saints claim that they belong to the one true church. By this, they often mean that there is more truth expressed by the texts, leaders, and members of the LDS Church than that expressed by any other religious tradition. But they also often mean that there is no way to fulfill the purpose of this life other than through the LDS Church. These claims are related. One appears to be a claim about the propositions expressed in Mormon theology. The other is a claim about the most appropriate life for a human being. Both are essential to the way Latter-day Saints understand their religion. I will call these doctrines *propositional* and *practical exclusivism* (respectively); together they constitute the current LDS answer to the problem of diversity.

In this paper, I want to make a philosophical argument against exclusivism and then proceed to offer an answer to the problem of diversity that is not exclusivist. However, the view that I will offer is also not pluralist in the sense advocated by John Hick.[1] That is, I reject the idea that there is a transcendent reality about which we can know nothing substantive and yet is the ground of all our religious traditions. Also, exclusivism and pluralism both assume that the propositional aspect of exclusivism is fundamental. I don't.

Instead, I argue that we need a "communicative pluralist" answer to the problem of diversity. There are several parts to this communicative pluralism. First, the propositional aspect of exclusivism encourages us to believe that persons do and should act based on the propositional contents of their beliefs. This view of the relationship between rational belief and action is flawed. People more often act based on non-doxastic bodily and mental affects than they do based on theoretical postulates about the world. The network of affect is more responsible for the production of religious faith and practice than its propositional component. Second, it is commonly assumed that the propositional content of a religious tradition is a fixed set of doctrines that give us, once and for all, the truths necessary for salvation. If affective interaction with deity and others in community is what matters then the propositional content of a religious tradition can be dynamic. In fact, it must be dynamic in order to better satisfy the type of affective tension that is productive of the relationship with the divine. Third, this doctrinal dynamism opens up the possibility for a real communicative interaction with those of other faiths – i.e., one in which we do not assume a privileged position. We follow, in the words of Imre Lakatos, a "method of proofs and refutations" in our interaction with those of other faiths: all "counterexamples" are entertained as legitimate contributions to the dialogue.[2] The revisions of the doctrinal components of our faith come from this communicative interaction.

The central problem with propositional exclusivism is its epistemological hubris. This hubris is harder to see from an externalist standpoint than from an internalist standpoint. The difference between internalism and externalism is how warrant, i.e., the collection of events that produce knowledge for a subject, is understood. According to the internalist, the events that produce knowledge for a subject must be restricted to events

within conscious access of the subject.[3] From an internalist standpoint, Mormons do not have conscious access to anything that puts them in a position of epistemic privilege. People of other religious faiths have religious experiences that bear witness that they are correct as well! Internally, there is no *epistemic* difference between being Mormon and being Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, or what have you. Therefore, there is no privileged ground on which to base the claim of exclusivism. If so, then propositional exclusivism manifests epistemological pride: unfounded confidence in one's beliefs.

From an externalist perspective, things are different. The epistemic privilege enjoyed by Mormons could be *that the Holy Ghost is indeed the origin of their experience*, even if they do not have conscious access to this fact. However, this epistemic privilege seems unimportant[4] as soon as Mormons encounter religious diversity in the world. The reason for this is that when we are dealing with propositional questions of great moral importance we must make sure that we are correct. The presence of persons who bear witness to a different truth is a reason to question our own witness. Such an encounter should be the start of a dialogue. This is especially true when we see the reinforcing[v] role played by religion in violent conflict.

From an externalist perspective, we can have knowledge without having the knowledge of how we know. But this unexamined status of first-order knowledge can only persist while we lie in epistemological innocence. Once we are faced with epistemological conflict we are forced out of the first-order garden into the world of second-order epistemic conflict. This epistemic "fall" up to second-order concerns comes because we must ask the question as to who is right. The externalist can give no answer; but the exclusivist must. Each of the agents involved in the conflict of religious belief has no recourse but to return to her faith tradition to buttress her claims. Indeed, there can be no common ground for discussion.

As the Reformation was an important corrective on the excesses of institutional Catholicism, externalism was an important corrective on the excessive rationalism and skepticism of internalism. The problem with internalism is this: if justification is entirely a matter of our internal states, and if those can be exactly as they are while the world is entirely

different than it appears to us in our internal perceptual states, then it seems that internalism has a difficult time avoiding skepticism. Externalism avoids this problem by avoiding the demand that the knower do all the work in producing knowledge. This is one reason it is appropriate to refer to the Christian variety of externalism as Reformed Epistemology. However, in my view, externalism spells an end to the epistemological project. The Reformation and externalism both push the epistemology of faith out of the public domain. The externalist's privatization of the economy of epistemology is not a better way of doing epistemology; it's a way of not doing epistemology at all. This is true if we understand the epistemology from its inside. Inside epistemology it is a methodological project: what can we do to come to possess knowledge about the world? However, externalism sees epistemology from the outside. Epistemology is reified in the metaphysical question, "what is warrant?" And it accepts an answer that tells us nothing about what we can do. Instead, it leaves the epistemological project in the hands of *what happens to be the truth*: if the Holy Ghost is *in fact* the reason for our experiences then we *do* know what we think we know. Our epistemological status is no longer up to us. The project is out of our hands.

The epistemological hubris mentioned above is manifested, not in the fact that we stick to our doxastic guns despite encountering diversity, but in the fact that the privatization of religious faith prevents real public dialogue.[6] Exclusivism, on the externalist's epistemology, leads either to evangelical imperialism (based on an elusive and transcendent privileged epistemic status) or to evangelical isolationism. I can have nothing to say to someone who insists that God talks to them and not to me, despite my profound religious experiences. Ultimately, those of other faiths must become one of *us* or must remain one of *them*. On the exclusivist and externalist view, there is no true public square of faith discourse: there is dialogue on *our* terms or not at all.

When epistemology is externalist, the exclusivist claim serves to divide a community along lines of religious ideology. This is not to say that *we* are not in material contact with *them*. *We* work, play, learn and live all aspects of our lives with *them*. *We* are the epitome of political correctness and tolerance in the "veneer space" of work, school and play. (To say that this is "a veneer space" is to say that it is a life in which we present a

façade of ourselves to others.) But the possibility of community with *them,* behind the veneer of tolerance, is precluded by *our* exclusivism. Discourse about anything and everything of importance to *us* is necessary for real community. Polite silence hides true division: the true division that *is* pride.

The exclusivist might counter that she can have real dialogue with her "friends" and yet continue to believe that she is right. Indeed, we rightly and necessarily do this with regard to many of our non-religious beliefs. But my contention is that exclusivism, on the externalist view, is more than the claim that *we* are right and *they* are wrong. It is the claim that *we* have a privileged and transcendent epistemic status, not open to any tool of public investigation. In other words, externalist exclusivism is gnostic. When I have the memory that the car is parked in section C and you have the memory that it's in section D, we can submit these claims to the public square of verification. Externalism says that we can't do this with religious belief.

To counter the problems associated with an exclusivist and externalist approach, we need more than a reformation of epistemology; we need a *restoration* of epistemology. The restoration of epistemology is based on the ideas that (i) there is no end to revelation from God, (ii) "by proving contraries truth is made manifest,"[7] and (iii) a seed of doctrine must be put to experimental (and hence public) tests.

If there is continuing revelation, then it is possible that we can be wrong in the way in which we have interpreted past revelation. Perhaps it implies that we can always be wrong about past revelation itself. This is because the distinction between the interpretation of past revelation and *what* the revelation is itself is problematized by the flexibility of meaning in human language. So, it would seem that fallibilism is the inevitable upshot of continuing revelation. This is the view in which we recognize that any of our beliefs might be false and those who disagree with us might be right. This view allows us to have true dialogue with others, i.e. wherein we really entertain the possibility of their being correct.

Next, what we should try to do is not find the truth in a cumulative way. Instead, we should prove contraries, i.e., we should use the method of proofs and refutations. This method entails that we should try to prove a doctrine as well as refute it. And this is true of any of the defini-

tions or postulates that we incorporate into our proofs and refutations. Thus, the historical process of reasoning that results is by its nature never-ending. So, our noetic structure is not foundationalist (like a building), nor coherentist (like a web). It is more like the search for the most fundamental physical objects. We always find that what we thought was most fundamental could be broken down further. This is what happens in thought as well. What we think is most fundamental can always be decomposed and modified further.

To clarify this let's think of one of the most traditional problems of epistemology: *the infinite regress problem*. The problem here comes from two assumptions: (i) every belief must be justified and (ii) justifications consist of arguments composed of beliefs. This leads to an infinite regress. So, epistemologists try to question (i) or (ii). But why not just admit that there could be an infinite regress? The main reason is that we think of justifications as something that we have before we are permitted to have the belief, i.e., something on which the belief is grounded. But if we lose this conception of justification, and realize that a justification is a historical response to a query on the part of someone who disagrees, then we can admit that the justification can come "after" the belief so to speak. If so, then it is not a problem that the request for further justification be potentially infinite in its structure. The infinite regress is only a problem if every belief must be grounded before it is challenged.

The third part of restored epistemology is that theory follows action (by this I do not mean "common theoretical practice"). We are primarily actors in a world and this is what matters to God.[8] Indeed, the occasion for theory is always worldly. Theory affects us and our environment. We choose to coordinate our theoretical propositions with certain worldly events. These coordinations can be more or less useful. Propositional knowledge of the world is secondary to affective knowledge. I know *how* to do *X* long before I know that *X* is such and such. Linguistic meaning itself must be determined by linguistic use, if we are to explain how we learn language. But we are already actors before we are speakers. We communicate affectively. If so, then linguistic meaning arises from coordinating affects in certain ways. The upshot is that propositional knowledge is ultimately an aspect of practical/affective knowledge and not the other way around.

It is clear that a doxastic practice that is dynamic, in constant tension, and primarily rooted in practical life is one that must be produced and maintained publicly. This allows that the vibrancy of our own religious perspective is increased by true public dialogue. It doesn't rely on a transcendent feature of Ultimate Reality to justify taking others seriously. The features of our practice themselves immanently lead to a communicative pluralism.

One objection to this very rough sketch of communicative pluralism may be that the important part of religious faith is propositional: what I believe is true and therefore what those beliefs tell me to do will bring salvation. On the contrary, I have argued above that religious faith, like every other aspect of our lives, is primarily *affective*. Linguistic discourse is just one type of bodily affect. And only in linguistic discourse does affect become propositional.[9]

Suppose that beliefs about theological reality are necessary for salvation. It follows that most are not saved because they are not "smart" enough. If the propositional view of religious faith is right, then there will be a final exam and most will fail. Moreover, most Mormons don't have the correct view of the nature of God. I don't say this because I think that I have the correct view. But I say this because of the differences in the logical implications about the views that most Mormons have. They cannot all be correct. If any of them are right, then most of them are wrong. And this doxastic indeterminism infects the most basic of doctrines as well. What is atonement, faith, repentance, baptism, and priesthood authority? The claims about these most basic "doctrines" are the loci of competing interpretations. Which among the various competing interpretations is correct?

This observation is not uniquely applicable to Mormonism. Christianity can be seen as defined by the increasingly precise doctrines it advocates in the creeds. But these creeds are the result of a process of excluding competing interpretations. In this way, Christianity is defined as much by its heresy as by its orthodoxy. Orthodoxy is a result not a beginning. Today this battle for Christian identity continues in the guise of the fight between mainline liberalism and evangelical conservativism over social issues such as the ordination of women, gays, and lesbians.

We now see that the problem of diversity is not just a problem for

inter-religious dialogue. It is a problem for *intra*-religious dialogue. In this way, it leads to a question about the ontological identity of a religion. What *is* Mormonism if there are competing interpretations of its most basic doctrines? The answer is that most religions are not defined by their doctrines. Instead, they can be defined by the tension that obtains in doctrinal disputes. Or, more generally, they can be defined by the tension inherent in certain types of affective interaction.

Defining affect is a difficult task. It is the subject of another paper. Herein it will suffice to give examples and gesture in the direction of affect's nature. The ways our experiences appear to us (i.e., "qualia") are affects. For example, there is something that it is like to see red. But subjective qualities are not the only affects. Bodily reactions are often affects. The expert mountain biker doesn't think about his line through the rocks on the trail, but his body "knows" where to go. "Body language", tone, mood, attitude, emotive response, and even "cool-ness" are all affects. Affective knowledge is the knowledge of how to control, change, or produce affects in one's self or others. Advertisers are affective experts.

Affect is at the core of how we produce relationships with other human beings. Similarly, affect is at the core of how we produce a relationship with God, or how God produces a relationship with us. The effect of the Holy Ghost on us is primarily affective. Responding to this relationship to which God calls us is what matters. The production of affective relations involves the knowledge of the appropriateness of certain affective reactions. Different religious practices produce different networks of affective relations. Contrast a Mormon testimony meeting with a charismatic Christian revival. Unlike propositional knowledge, which must avoid contradiction, affective knowledge can be in a state of fundamental tension. The tension of affective interplay is the nature of a religious practice.

Indeed, Mormonism is not a unified system of doctrines or even a system of affective relations acting in functional harmony. It is the site of competition over meanings, narratives, and interpretations. For example, there is a competition over whether God's embodiment means that God can also be infinite. Or, for example, Orson Pratt and Brigham Young famously argued about whether God progresses in knowledge. And, more mundanely, Mormons commonly dispute about whether tithing is

on the gross or net income.

Sometimes these competitions over the meanings of our narratives and traditions are analogous to the way inter-religious dialogue proceeds after the adoption of communicative pluralism. We come to each other as equals pursuing enlightening dialogue. This means that there is no assumption of authority or special knowledge on the part of either interlocutor. However, sometimes disputes over doctrine are the ideological site of a broader power struggle. Persons in positions of power employ doctrines as strategies of control. Persons outside of the locus of power employ doctrines as strategies of resistance to control. When this occurs, the point about communicative pluralism becomes even more important. A position of religious authority within a community is not necessarily a position of epistemic privilege. Indeed, religious authority may be interpreted as institutional authority and not epistemic authority. Such different notions of authority can be related, but need not be. If my arguments about communicative pluralism above are correct, then they apply within a religious tradition just as much as they do outside a religious tradition. And so, doctrinal power struggles must be conducted in the egalitarian way indicated by communicative pluralism—call it "epistemic democracy."

It is the (sometimes) competition between the center of institutional power and the margins that differentiates intra-religious diversity from inter-religious diversity in a pluralistic society. Communicative inter-religious dialogue and affective interaction *may* occur in a pluralistic society. If so, then the dialogue is not fundamentally hierarchical, but rather democratic. A discourse located in a site of hierarchical[10] competition will tend to undermine true relationships. This is because at the heart of a true relationship is love and love must be given freely, without coercion, by both sides involved. And since a community of co-equal gods is our goal, the hierarchical epistemic competition within Mormonism is detrimental to community.[11] This is why inter-religious dialogue is absolutely essential for the production of community. Thus, from the communicative pluralist point of view, both inter-religious *and* intra-religious dialogues are subject to the same democratic epistemic ethos. There should be no assumption of special epistemic privilege even by those who have ecclesiastical power and influence.

CONCLUSION

The mandate to engage in inter-religious dialogue is not based on any transcendental claim about the equal validity of all religions. Communicative pluralism is immanent pluralism. Our pluralism is based on commitments within *our* community that should be developed in the direction of epistemological humility. We have our own religious tradition and practice. We don't have to give these up to enter into a true community with those outside our faith traditions. As we build communities with those outside our institution, we build new dynamic networks of affect and dialogue. The division perpetuated by the hierarchical tension in the LDS practice can be replaced with a liberating unity created by an egalitarian tension in a community that proves contraries and manifests truth. The love of God is the love of the "least of these" and theological discourse is just one way to begin to engage in loving relations with others.

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NOTES

[1] See, for example, the pluralism offered in John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion* (New Haven, CN; Yale University Press, 1992).

[2] Imre Lakatos, *Proofs and Refutations: The Logic of Mathematical Discovery* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976).

[3] For further discussion of the difference between internalism and externalism, see Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1993).

[4] In fact, one may argue that not only does this privileged status seem unimportant in the face of diversity, but that it wanes when we confront something different from our cherished beliefs.

[5] Religion reinforces conflicts whose ultimate cause is not religious. Witness the conflict in the north of Ireland.

[6] In the sense used herein, evangelism is not public dialogue.

[7] Joseph Smith to Daniel Rupp in 1844, quoted in Eugene England, *Dialogues with Myself* (Salt Lake City: Orion, 1984), ix.

[8] Matthew 22: 37-9 claims that loving God and neighbor are the greatest commandments. As long as love is an action (as it clearly seems to be in this case), then action would seem to be most fundamental.

[9] It makes one wonder if there could be a theory of meaning that grounds

meaning in affective interaction. It is my suspicion that there could be such a theory, but this must be the subject of another paper.

[10] That is, competition wherein there is an asymmetry of power.

[11] See Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Co., 1979), 342-62.