S|T|K INNEHÅLL 4 2020

Ledare

MÅRTEN BJÖRK & JOEL KUHLIN

Den 16 september 2019 samlades en grupp forskare från olika delar av landet, Europa och Nordamerika för att diskutera frågan om livet efter döden, spektralitet och uppståndelse. Under rubriken "Spectres of the Resurrection" genomfördes ett heldagsseminarium vid Centrum för teologi och religionsvetenskap, Lunds universitet, där olika konstruktiva förslag och läsningar presenterades i relation till denna tematik utifrån en rad olika perspektiv, källmaterial och frågeställningar. I detta temanummer av *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* publiceras fem av de sju bidrag som presenterades vid seminariet.

Mårten Björk, som är forskare vid Centrum för teologi och religionsvetenskap, lyfter fram tematikens aktualitet genom en kritisk bearbetning av Martin Hägglunds uppmärksammade böcker *Radical Atheism* och *This Life*, vilka kritiserar den teologiska idén om odödlighet. Odödlighet är enligt Hägglund inte blott en filosofisk omöjlighet utan även något som vi inte kan begära på rationella grunder, eftersom allt liv är ändligt liv – liv med en början som måste röra sig mot sitt slut. Utifrån Hägglunds perspektiv skulle odödlighet och evigt liv innebära ett avskaffande av den konstitutiva och temporala ändlighet som gör livet till liv och vore därför inget annat än ett avskaffande av livets möjlighet. Tanken på odödlighet måste därför sekulariseras till hoppet om överlevnad för detta liv, vårt ändliga temporala liv, för att kunna vara en legitim längtan. Därigenom kan man säga att Hägglund vill sekularisera den troendes förhoppning om odödlighet till en ateistisk affirmation av detta liv. Mot detta argumenterar Björk för att evigt liv inte innebär en förhoppning om tidslöshet utan ett begär efter en ny jord och en ny himmel och därmed en längtan efter ett nytt liv, ett annat liv än detta liv. Odödlighet handlar därför mindre om att föreviga detta liv än att hoppas på en förvandling av livets betingelser. Genom att diskutera olika teologiska

föreställningar om odödlighet och evigt liv menar Björk att dessa tanke-gångar närs av en förhoppning om ett nytt slags liv, ett liv som är befriat från den kamp för överlevnad som enligt Hägglund är möjlighetsbetingelsen för allt levande.

Laurence Hemming, professor vid Lancaster University, vänder sig mot en av Hägglunds stora influenser, nämligen den franske filosofen Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), och argumenterar för att dennes så kallade "haunt-ologi" eller "spektrologi" reproducerar den typ av närvarometafysik som Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) angrep i sina senare verk. Hemming menar att Derridas spektrologi omöjliggör Heideggers tanke om livet som radikalt ändligt och hävdar att Heideggers affirmation av döden är nödvändig för en teologisk teori om uppståndelse. För, som Hemming skriver, "if we do not really die, it would be impossible for us really to rise again: a true res-urrection depends on the irresolvable finality of death". Hemming menar därför att Heideggers tes om tillvarons radikala *Sein-zum-Tode* inte på något sätt omöjliggör tanken på uppståndelsen. Det är nämligen bara om vi vågar tänka på de döda som döda, och inte som några vilka hemsöker oss genom derridianskt efterliv, som vi kan ta uppståndelsen på allvar.

Denise Kimber Buell är professor vid Williams College i USA och un-dersöker i artikeln "The Mediumistic Secret" hur bibelkritikens flaggskepp, den så kallade historisk-kritiska metoden, tycks luta sig mot en estoterisk epistemologi. Särskilt spiritualismen och "mediets" relation till det förgång-na och dess sätt att uttrycka denna relation i språk fungerar för Buell som en teoretisk inramning av den klassiska exegetikens användning av källor, dess inneboende auktoritet samt representation av olika former av temporali-tet. Särskilt intressant är Buells kritiska sammanställning av hur historisk-kritisk exegetik gör gemensam sak med modern spiritualism och kritiserar nutida former av kristendom vad gäller exempelvis avståndstagandet mot föreställningen om en ursprunglig och renare form av religion, som tros ha existerat i antikens urkyrka. Spritualismen som tankefigur lyfter härmed fram väsentliga aspekter av hur dåtiden sägs hemsöka nutiden för klassiska bibelforskare.

Joel Kuhlin, doktorand vid Centrum för teologi och religionsvetenskap, undersöker frågan om huruvida retoriken och framställningen av Jesus i Markusevangeliet är spöklik. Trots att de nytestamentliga författarna överlag undviker spöktermer, finns spår av diskussioner från senantiken både i Nya testamentet och hos antenicenska teologer, vilket aktualiserar frågan om hur Jesus besynnerliga beteende och agerande efter döden kan förstås. Diskus-sionen rör främst Mark. 6, där Jesus går på vatten, och Mark. 16, där vi fin-ner andra typer av spektral aktivitet. Det första fallet innehåller termer som

påminner om antika spökhistorier från grekisk-romersk hellenism, varför diskussionen av det andra textstället uppehåller sig vid de antika skribenter som vägrar låta det ursprungliga slutet och uteslutandet av den uppståndne Jesus i Mark. 16:1–8 fullborda framställningen. I slutändan är evangeliet inte särskilt spektralt i bokstavlig bemärkelse, då det inte innehåller antika spökhistorier om Jesus eller den uppståndne Jesus. Snarare handlar det spektrala draget i texten om hur retoriken tillskriver Jesus spöklika egenskaper på en mer abstrakt nivå. Jesus kan sägas hemsöka läsaren av evangeliet på ett retoriskt snarare än ett narrativt plan.

Bruce Rosenstock är professor vid University of Illinois och vänder sig i sitt bidrag till de två filosoferna och logikerna Ernst Mally (1879–1944) och John Niemeyer Findlay (1903–1987) för att försvara föreställningar om efterlivet som Heidegger rimligtvis skulle beskriva som sannskyldiga exempel på teologisk närvarometafysik. Rosenstock visar hur Mally och Findlay använder sig av husserliansk fenomenologi och framför allt logikern Alexius Meinongs (1853–1920) så kallade *Gegenstandstheorie* för att utveckla spekulativa filosofiska system om efterlivet. Mally undersöker hur den mänskliga föreställningsförmågan kan lägga grunden till ett slags filosofisk mytologi, medan Findlay utvecklade en märklig kartläggning av de dödas värld i sina *Gifford Lectures*. På detta sätt skildrar Rosenstock hur Derridas mer metaforiska spektrologi har sina föregångare bland viktiga, men i dag sällan lästa, filosofer som ämnade leda den mänskliga föreställningsförmågan bortom gränserna för vad Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) skulle kalla vår möjliga erfarenhet.

Bidragen förenas i hur livet efter döden, evigheten, spektralitet och uppståndelse utgör ett fortsatt levande spänningsfält för kritiska och teologiska undersökningar av världen. Uppståndelsen kan därmed inte hänvisas till ett slags historisk dåtid, utan insisterar på att skapa nya öppningar för samtida typer av tänkande och tro. ▲

A World of Innumberable Inactivities

Martin Hägglund and the Economy of Non-Existence

MÅRTEN BJÖRK

Mårten Björk is a research fellow in systematic theology at Lund University.

marten.bjork@ctr.lu.se

The Swedish philosopher Martin Hägglund's work is a gift to theology since it is centred, perhaps surprisingly, on the relation between politics and immortality. For him, the hope for immortality must be detheologized and transformed to a hope for the survival of finite life in order to be legitimate.[1] The inherent finitude and mortality of life makes the desire for immortality not only illusionary, but inherently irrational by annulling the finitude that constitutes life: "To live is to be mortal, which means that the opposite of being mortal – to be immortal – is to be dead. If one can no longer die, one is already dead."[2]

From Hägglund's perspective, an atheism that only denies the possibility of God, and even more immortality, is not enough. For "in traditional atheism mortal being is still conceived as a lack of being that we desire to transcend. In contrast, by developing the logic of radical atheism, I argue that the so-called desire for immortality dissimulates a desire for survival that precedes it and contradicts it from within".[3] What is needed is an atheism so radical that it can prove the illegitimacy of the belief in immortality as something else than desire for survival.

In this text, I shall confront Hägglund's critique of immortality with a text seldom read as a tractate on the afterlife, namely John Maynard

---

1. See Martin Hägglund, *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life*, Stanford, CA 2008.
2. Hägglund, *Radical Atheism*, 48.
3. Hägglund, *Radical Atheism*, 1.

Keynes's (1883–1946) essay "Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren".[4] In this classic text, the economist cites "the traditional epitaph written for herself by the old charwoman: 'Don't mourn for me, friends, don't weep for me never / For I'm going to do nothing for ever and ever.'" "This" inactivity, Keynes continued, "was her heaven. Like others who look forward to leisure, she conceived how nice it would be to spend her time listening-in [...]: 'With psalms and sweet music the heavens'll be ringing, / But I shall have nothing do with the singing.'"[5] Keynes shared the worker's desire for a world beyond drudgery. What he could not understand was the wish of the dying proletarian to "do nothing for ever and ever" since life for this Darwinist economist was a vital activity with an inevitable economic form.[6]

The inactivity of merely listening-in, as the charwoman called the state she hoped to enter, was incomprehensible as a description of a blissful existence for Keynes. For according to him, "the economic problem, the struggle for subsistence [...] has been hitherto the primary, most pressing problem of the human race – not only of the human race, but of the whole of the biological kingdom from the beginnings of life in its most primitive forms".[7] The economic activities that seemingly differentiate us from the rest of the biological world are, in fact, what make humanity part of the life world of animals and plants which also need to care for their existence. And if life is this reproduction of mortals fighting, loving, and struggling for existence, who in their right mind could exhort the living to not mourn the dead since they would "do nothing for ever and ever"?

In this essay, I will answer this question by confronting Hägglund's so-called radical atheism, actualized by his new defence of a secular faith in the book *This Life*, with the charwoman's longing for a perpetual sabbath.[8] I argue that the latter is not only legitimate but ultimately reveals the philosophical and even political weakness of the Swedish philosopher's critique of immortality, and why his atheism is anything but radical.

The Never Dying Struldbrugs

Only one year after the Great Depression, and in the middle of a deep economic crisis, Keynes argued that if one looked at the technological process of the modern capitalist system, human civilization was entering a post-scarcity world beyond work. However, if liberated from labour, our species would react against the spread of the *otium*, idleness, which once was

---

4. John Maynard Keynes, *Essays in Persuasion*, Basingstoke 2010, 321–332.

5. Keynes, *Essays in Persuasion*, 327.

6. See John Laurent, "Keynes and Darwin", *History of Economics Review* 27 (1998), 76–93.

7. Keynes, *Essays in Persuasion*, 326–327.

8. Martin Hägglund, *This Life: Secular Faith and Spiritual*, New York 2019.

previously monopolized by the leisure classes. The development of the productive forces would generate "a general 'nervous breakdown' already visible" in "the wives of the well-to-do classes" since our species is habituated by work to the point of being a *homo occupatus* or *homo faber*.[9]

The turn to the charwoman's desire for a never-ending sabbath was so uncompromising, that it gladly abandoned the liturgy of the heavenly choirs for the inactivity of listening-in. Keynes used the epitaph to argue that the development of an economy liberated from toil would challenge "the old Adam" with the existential angst of doing nothing: "we have been expressly evolved by nature – with all our impulses and deepest instincts – for the purpose of solving the economic problem. If the economic problem is solved, mankind will be deprived of its traditional purpose."[10]

What is frightening about the charwoman's vision of the afterlife is that it deprives humanity of its traditional purpose – work as the means of survival – to the point that life can no longer be viewed as activity, and even more specifically the activity of survival. For, as Hägglund has recently argued with great insight: "To be alive is necessarily to have a self-relation, and any self-relation consists in the activity of self-maintenance. Nonliving entities do not have any form of self-relation because they are not doing anything to maintain their own existence."[11] The charwoman's desire becomes a wish to put life itself, or at least life as we know it, to rest. She envisions an existence that is neither self-relational, nor self-maintaining, but one that is rather involved in an economy beyond the work for survival. Her prayer describes a state completely foreign to what Hägglund would call this life as it would imply an absolute inactivity. The epitaph therefore seems to confirm Hägglund's thesis that immortality is "not only unattainable but also undesirable, since it would eliminate the care and passion that animate my life".[12] By arguing thusly, Hägglund takes part in a long critique of the belief in immortality and reveals that his work belongs to this venerable tradition.

Already in 1882, the evolutionary biologist August Weismann (1834–1914) insisted, in *Über die Dauer des Lebens*, that even if there are no physiological arguments against the thesis that an organism could have what he called eternal duration, "ewige Dauer", immortality would nevertheless create a life not worthy of existence.[13] Through evolution, death becomes a necessary pre-condition for multicellular life. Without death, life would be trapped

---

9. Keynes, *Essays in Persuasion*, 327.
10. Keynes, *Essays in Persuasion*, 327.
11. Hägglund, *This Life*, 182.
12. Hägglund, *This Life*, 4.
13. August Weismann, *Über die Dauer des Lebens*, Jena 1882. All translations from this and other works originally composed in German, Spanish, and French are mine.

"in old and decrepit, yet immortal individuals" that "take the place or the resource of those who are healthy".[14] Life needs, in other words, death to be healthy and, in the end, valuable.

The same argument is repeated by the famous biologist Leonard Hayflick.[15] He defended in 1961 what would come to be known as the Hayflick limit, which implies that a normal cell population can only divide a finite number of times until its cell division stops and it starts to die. In 2000, after a group of American biologists showed that one could prevent cellular death, Hayflick recognized that the discovery had profound implications for the discussion on cellular immortality. However, he added: "The fact that immortality, in its stricter definitions has never been demonstrated, even in unicellular forms, provides strong support for the likelihood, if not the hope, that it will not be found to occur in higher forms."[16] Hayflick not only thought it unlikely that immortality will be demonstrated in higher forms, he also hoped that it never will be demonstrated. Mortality was nothing he lamented since death, once again, made life valuable and worth living. A life that was not survival would be horrific.

Hayflick concluded by recalling the classical story of "the Trojan Tithonus [who] loves Eos, the Goddess of dawn. At her request, Zeus makes Tithonus immortal but, unfortunately, Eos neglects to also ask that he not age. Jonathan Swift rediscovered this theme in his immortal, but continuously aging, Struldbrugs".[17] Tellingly, this myth corresponds to Weismann's view that immortality is undesirable even if it is not impossible for more complex forms of life. Immortality would annul the evolutionary benefits of natural death by aging or sickness. Following Hägglund, one could insist from a somewhat similar point of view that the charwoman's desire for immortality is either a perverse desire to end all life, or a hope in need of a demystification or enlightenment that can turn it to a longing for the survival of this, finite, life.

The Prejudice in Favour of the Real

The irrationality of the hope for immortality is the belief that an annulation of death is desirable. Yet Hägglund does not seek to dismiss religion or even the hope for immortality as such. He argues "that there is an irreducible atheism at the 'root' of every commitment, faith, and desire" and even more, that there is "a constitutive violence that is at work even in

---

14. Weismann, *Über die Dauer*, 52.
15. Leonard Hayflick, "The Illusion of Cell Immortality", *British Journal of Cancer* 83 (2000), 841–846.
16. Hayflick, "The Illusion of Cell Immortality", 845.
17. Hayflick, "The Illusion of Cell Immortality", 845.

MÅRTEN BJÖRK

the most peaceful approach to the world, whether 'secular' or 'religious', 'atheist' or 'theist'".[18] This inevitable violence is the violence of time itself. We see it in the process of senescence and death that characterizes all finite life, and which several religions view as a sign of a cataclysmic catastrophe in the cosmos; a fall from a world without death.

Thus, for Hägglund, the "desire for salvation is rather a desire for survival that is essentially autoimmune, since the death it defends against is internal to what is defended".[19] With the Derridean concept of the autoimmunity of life, Hägglund is indicating that, like an autoimmune disease, everything living must be threatened by the death that is immanent to life. For, as stated, "if one can no longer die, one is already dead".[20] This is why the desire for immortality has to be transformed to a desire for the survival of mortal life or, in other words, the survival of a life that is constituted by a form of inherent stalling of death through its self-maintenance.

And yet, the desire of the charwoman was precisely the yearning for a life that no longer has to be lived according to the iron law of such an auto-immunity. Her idea that death is not worth lamenting, is part of a long eschatological tradition describing God's life as a putting to rest or a resting place, κατάπαυσις (Heb. 3:1, 4:1, 4:3), of the work for survival that, for Hägglund, defines life.[21] From the charwoman's perspective, heaven can be described as a perpetual sabbath where "all the members and organs of the incorruptible body, which now we see to be suited to various necessary uses, shall contribute to the praises of God; for in that life necessity shall have no place, but full, certain, secure, everlasting felicity".[22] In this description of the sabbatical state, as a transformation of the resurrected body as possessing members no longer "suited to various necessary uses [*usus necessitatis varios*]" needed for survival, Augustine (354–430) indicates why it is impossible to translate the charwoman's desire into a simple affirmation of the survival of what I with Hägglund define as this life.[23]

What the charwoman is challenging is the view that it is impossible to transform the basis of nature and organic existence. Since I do not know the religious tradition to which she belonged, I would insist on a general theological quality of the epitaph in order to argue that it contests what

---

18. Hägglund, *Radical Atheism*, 128.

19. Hägglund, *Radical Atheism*, 130.

20. Hägglund, *Radical Atheism*, 48.

21. Otfried Hofius, *Katapausis: Die Vorstellung vom endzeitlichen Ruheort im Hebräerbrief*, Tübingen 1970.

22. Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans: Books XXI–XXII*, Cambridge 1998, 373.

23. Augustine, *City of God*, 372, writes: "Omnia membra et viscera incorruptibilis corporis, quae nunc videmus per usus necessitatis varios distributa, quoniam tunc non erit ipsa necessitas, sed plena certa, secura sempiterna felicitas, proficient laudibus Dei."

Leo Strauss describes as the defining characteristic of atheistic discourse in *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*: nature as the limit concept for human thought.[24] The idea of a creator God, or some other form of transcendence of the realm of time and space, makes nature, if not a contingent phenomenon, at least something which cannot exhaust all of existence. I do not deny that theological discourse often has aimed to give a philosophical argument for what is physically or ontologically possible, and thereby legitimized and even naturalized specific historical conditions and societies. But since such an ontological argument of what is and can be, is often related to a theory of redemption, such as with karmic cycles of sin (and not mere biological death), theological traditions tend to conjure states that are foreign to what we take to be the basis of reality, at least if we believe atheists.

The inner logic of this redemptive type of theology is, by necessity, a critique of what Alexius Meinong (1853–1920) in 1904 called "the prejudice in favour of the real [*des Wirklichen*]".[25] What I mean is that theology cannot only be a philosophy that describes the cause or ground of what is or what might be. Theology is, as it has been alleged, a "science of nonexisting entities".[26] By being theological, thought is pushed to imagine non-existing states, such as the heavenly bodies altering the *usus necessitatis* of survival that Augustine described. And therefore, the longing for immortality is, from the perspective of Hägglund, not only illegitimate, but also undesirable precisely because it exceeds the limits of what is by refusing to be loyal to the prejudice in favour of the real. The imaginative power of even the most conservative theology is that it can habituate the human mind to refuse the given as the epitome of reality. This is certainly what the charwoman is exhorting the living to do.

The charwoman turns a natural fact, the necessity of dying, into a theological locus. From her perspective, the main problem with Hägglund's critique of immortality is that it uses the immanence of existing life as a regulative standard for what we can desire. This makes the Swedish atheist come close to Weissmann's and Hayflick's position that only a life fit for survival would be a desirable existence. In contrast, the charwoman legitimizes the desire for other forms of life since her hope is based on the theological belief that existing life, even existing reality, does not exhaust the modality of being. This is why the charwoman can transform death from being a simple natural fact to a theological locus that can help explain how temporal life

24. Leo Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, New York 1982, 43.
25. Alexius Meinong, *Über Gegenstandstheorie: Selbstdarstellung*, Hamburg 1988, 3.
26. Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, London 2004, 322.

becomes immortal and thereby moves beyond the self-maintenance of this life.

Referring to Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) essay "Das Ende aller Dinge", where Kant is lingering on the German expression "he goes out of time into eternity", Hägglund agrees with the Prussian philosopher that one must separate time from eternity. But if Kant wants to keep the eternal as an essential concept for moral thought even if eternity itself is something "we certainly cannot […] conceptualize",[27] Hägglund argues that the desire for the eternal would eradicate life itself, since time, and therefore finite life, and eternity are impossible to reconcile. For as Kant writes, if the angel in Rev. 10:5–6 is not to be taken to be saying nonsense when he shouts "that there shall be no time any longer" – ὅτι χρόνος οὐκέτι ἔσται – "he must be taken to mean that from now on no change will happen; for if there was still change in the world there would also be time".[28] Eternity can only be an eternal present, a state where no change is possible, so the charwoman's listening in would be a nightmare world where everything is frozen into a never-ending and never-changing now. If eternity is such a fossilization of life to an ever present now then, Hägglund writes, "life must be open to death […] an absolute life that is immune to death, an absolute goodness that is immune to evil, or an absolute peace that is immune to violence is […] the same as an absolute death, an absolute evil, or an absolute violence".[29] Life necessitates time, and since eternity is void of time, eternity is empty of life.

There is, for Hägglund, nothing outside the temporal domain since "time is an 'ultratranscendental' condition from which nothing can be exempt […] because it is the condition for everything *all the way up* to and including the ideal itself".[30] By being ultratranscendental, and not only a transcendental that structures thought, time forces everything to enter the nothingness of the past. All that is present is (1) the interval between the past and the future and (2) the spatialization of the time here and now: "Given that the now can appear only by disappearing – that it passes away as soon as it comes to be – it must be inscribed as a trace in order to be at all. This is the *becoming-space of time*. The trace is necessary spatial, since spatiality is characterised by the ability to remain in spite of temporal succession."[31] Thus, for Hägglund, the "now cannot first be present in itself and then be affected by its own

27. Immanuel Kant, *Schriften zur Anthropologie, Geschichtsphilosophie, Politik und Pädagogik*, Frankfurt 1964, 175.
28. Kant, *Schriften*, 182.
29. Hägglund, *Radical Atheism*, 43.
30. Hägglund, *Radical Atheism*, 19.
31. Hägglund, *Radical Atheism*, 18.

disappearance [...] Rather, *the now must disappear in its very event*. The succession of time requires not only that each now is superseded by another now, but also that this alteration is at work from the beginning".[32] Here one can find, to use a tired picture from popular culture, a crack in Hägglund's theory where eternity might come in. There is something in his theory which is neither temporal nor living, and therefore not marked by the constitutive violence that the autoimmunity of life entails. This is the past itself since the world of that which was is the limit to the work for self-maintenance that Hägglund identifies with being alive.

By defining life as self-maintenance in the violence of time, Hägglund helps us to see that the past is forever that which it turned out to be, since the past is the trace of that which was in the here and now. This is why, for Hägglund, time is radically one-dimensional; an irreversible flow from the past towards the future which gives time and space the structure of an infinite finitude of temporal beings forever dying away and entering the nothingness of the past since "*the now must disappear in its very event*", and this disappearance is the world of that which was – the domain of the dead. It is, in a sense, the spacing of time as space itself.

Hägglund uses Jacques Derrida's (1930–2004) concept of *différance* to describe this endless spacing of time as a world of mortal and finite beings, and writes that "the movement of temporalization, which is the spacing of *différance* [...] can be described as an *infinite finitude*".[33] However, by being the past of an irreversible time that can only move towards the future, if only by endlessly producing the infinite finitude of time itself, the trace reveals that the preceding that has been exhausted in the nothingness of the past shall forever be that which it was. For even if "there is no limit to the generality of *différance* and the structure of the trace applies to all fields of the living", this *différance* cannot change the past since that which was no longer is marked by the time of survival.[34] The past is characterized by the self-identity that life makes impossible because while the living is in becoming, the past is dead. It is the nothingness of what once was. It is, in a sense, self-identical by simply being what it was.

It is from such a perspective that the historian of philosophy Xavier Tilliette (1921–2018) can write that "the immensity of memory was the image of divine immensity. *The wonder of remembrance*; it is [the] latent God [*c'est Dieu latent*]".[35] The latency of the divine is given to memory since the past is a form of quasi-temporality, tied to what one of Tilliette's many

---

32. Hägglund, *Radical Atheism*, 16.
33. Hägglund, *Radical Atheism*, 93.
34. Hägglund, *Radical Atheism*, 19.
35. Xavier Tilliette, *La Mémoire et l'Invisible*, Geneva 2001, 19.

MÅRTEN BJÖRK

subjects, Friedrich von Schelling (1775–1854), describes as a pretemporal eternity, a "vorzeitliche Ewigkeit".[36] I define this pretemporal eternity as *the eternalization of the past as that which was*. The tracing of *différance* spatializes the world as a universe to the point that a theological imagination can wager that time and space themselves have been brought forth from something that transcends the cosmic violence of *différance* that the spacing of time entails for mortal creatures. For, as we will see, the eternity of that which was, the invisibility of the eternalized past which may be defined as the latency of God, is something radically other than the infinite production of finitude that the world age of *différance* implies. This is the cosmos and eon belonging to the old Adam, which Keynes knew was habituated to work for survival for every living being. But perhaps the rest of the dead point to a new cosmos and a new eon; a new Adam able to enjoy the listening-in that is so troublesome for a humanity which only can view life as activity and survival. Let me follow this thought and see how it can perhaps make the desire of the charwoman comprehensible as a desire that exceeds the eon of *différance*.

The Desire to Do Nothing for Ever and Ever

In his book *Tod* the German theologian Eberhard Jüngel makes the following interesting claim: "When the human is dead she is only that which she once was."[37] Death does thereby not exclude being, and does not imply a pure nothingness, since death is – as the Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929) insisted in 1921 – always the death of *ein Etwas*, a something, rather than a nothing.[38] Death implies the eternalization of life as that which was, according to Jüngel, and the past indicates for Rosenzweig, in a Schellingian manner, the possibility of thinking time in relation to what he called the form of the preceding or the form of the past – "*die Form der Vergangenheit*" – since time always is already there for us as the spatialization of the trace of the past.[39]

Hägglund comes close to argue that the trace of the past in the present indicates the nothingness of what once was. But the theological traditions that Jüngel and Rosenzweig defend imply that time is already there since it is created as the form of the world: "The world is foremost [...] there. This being of the world is its already–there [*Schon-da-sein*]."[40] The trace is this *Schon-da-Sein* that for Jüngel and Rosenzweig reveals that if we follow the

36. Friedrich von Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, Frankfurt 1977, 274.
37. Eberhard Jüngel, *Tod*, Berlin 1971, 145.
38. Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, Frankfurt 1988.
39. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 146.
40. Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, 146.

arrow of temporality, we enter a world of the past which is not only exempt from death by, paradoxically, already being dead, but is also resting with the eternal as that which it was and, as we will see, could and even more should be. This is the reason why Tilliette views the wonder of remembrance as the latency of God; the dead signify the invisibility and eternity of the divine, and why the charwoman can hope that the dead are not gone but embedded in the life of the eternal by being bestowed an immortality that does not abolish but rather transforms time to something that is marked by the eternal.

What Hägglund cannot accept is that if time is the production of an "infinite finitude", due to the violence of *différance*, it is also the transformation of that which is finite to what can be called a *finite infinitude* or what Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) would call the good infinite. When a life – or for that matter an event – is given "*die Form der Vergangenheit*" through its death, destruction, or disappearance (I take that a living being can die, a non-organic thing or creature can be destroyed, and an idea or event can disappear or be forgotten) it transforms from being part of the infinite finitude of this-worldly time – the time of *différance* – to a finite infinitude resting with the eternity of God. This transformation is given by the tracing of the past, the presence of the spectres of the dead in the here and now, since time receives self-identity by excluding itself from the alterity of the present and the future. The form of the preceding is a finite infinitude for ever and ever. Thereby, by disappearing in the now as something belonging to the past the present receives the form of existence as that which now is what it forever shall be, since all present time becomes self-identical with its own past in the moment it dies, destructs, or disappears in the world of the past. However, this eternalization of the past as that which was is also countered by a new eternity of that which should be through the hope of the resurrection or, at least, redemption of the dead.

Since past time is structured as the trace of what was in the here and now, the past is a finite infinitude, for the trace is the production of time as an instantiation of an infinite finitude of temporal beings on the border of the eternity that will be given to them when they disappear from the realm of the living. It is in this manner that I argue against Hägglund that the trace of the past in time does not merely reveal that every event disappears into nothingness. More importantly, every present time exists after itself in the form of the preceding since the trace is the spatialization of the past in the present. Presence is not merely or simply an event towards death. For the living, it is also a coming self-identity, a form of eternalization, since the present is only given by its disappearing in the past where it becomes that

which it was. Every "now" exists after itself by having had a history already there. This is the *Schon-da-Sein* of the present that Rosenzweig defended in *The Star of Redemption* and which implied a speculative vision of eternal life as something else than the survival of this life.[41]

As stated, what Hägglund calls *différance*, the production of an infinite finitude, does not touch the past and thereby does not in any sense contradict the fact of what I call a finite infinitude, and which now can be described as a being in time marked by the eternal to the point that it can be said to be immortal. The form of the preceding itself indicates such a finite infinitude or immortal being since that which is dead is forever, in all infinity, what it was. One could say that in the past, time is really petrified into the eternity, which the angel of Revelation exclaims as the end of the world.

Often this form of eternity is described as hell, rather than heaven, in the religious traditions, and the myth of the harrowing of Hades when the triumphing Christ liberates the dead and redeems the past, reveals that at least Christians distinguish an eternity of that which was – hell – from an eternity of what should be – heaven. In other words, that which was can be liberated from what it became in time since it participates in the eternal, and this liberation is called eternal life or the redemption of the dead.

If we return to the charwoman's desire for "doing nothing for ever and ever" it is now evident that what she is longing for is something that is completely illegitimate from Hägglund's perspective. It would at best push our life into what Hayflick would see as a world of Struldbrugs. At worst, it could imply an eternalized past where life is ossified into that which it forever will be: something dead, something that forever is what it became by entering the past. This would certainly be nothing but a living hell. But the theological tradition that the charwoman belongs to is legitimizing the hope for a form of evolution of life itself and thereby indicating that the ultratranscendental conditions of this life, our mortal and finite life here and now, with all its splendour and clamour, may be transformed and altered. For the charwoman hopes that time itself can become something other than a domain of self-maintenance for the living. Moreover, the desire for eternal life is not a desire for survival of the mortal. It is a desire for the redemption of the dead and therefore a respatialization of the past through the resurrection of that which was. Thereby, the charwoman's desire is not a hope to end time *per se* – that would be hell. What she hopes more specifically is that we, at least through death, can leave the world age of *différance* and enter a world unknown to a species habituated to view life as the

41. See Mårten Björk, *Life Outside Life: The Politics of Immortality*, Gothenburg 2018, 63–140.

self-maintenance of finite and temporal life. We can therefore now see that the hope for immortality is the hope for a life that no longer needs to work for its survival and even more a hope not for survival but for the resurrection or the redemption of the dead.

If Hägglund insists that "the absolute immunity that religions hold out as the best (the immutable, the incorruptible and the inviolable) [is] 'the worst'", this is because he cannot envision a desire for a life with no need to struggle for its self-maintenance. The undesirability of immortality is entailed, according to Hägglund, by the fact that eternal life "would eliminate everything that can be desired. If one removes what threatens life – one removes the object of desire itself".[42] This is true if one can desire only that which is, or that which one can comprehend, though it seems that much religious discourse proves that the human animal has the capacity to desire beyond the parameters of what is or even could be. Our species has the ability to cultivate a desire for the impossible and the non-existing. This capacity of the human mind to transcend the given is evident in the practice of prayer which is often a desire for a change in the existing life, be it for a miraculous healing or, as with the charwoman, for a change in the structure of life itself. These desires cannot be viewed as undesirable in themselves, for then desire would be confined to the existing or to what we can comprehend. The human imagination can move our desire deep into the domain of the world that Meinong called *Aussersein* – the set of objects for thought that has no being, such as for instance square circles, resurrected bodies, or a life beyond the work for self-maintenance.[43]

Beyond the Law of Scarcity

The fundamental problem with Hägglund's perspective is that it confuses *Sein*, what is, with *Sollen*, what ought to be. Here, we should recall Hermann Cohen's (1842–1918) claim in *Ethik des reinen Willens* that by differentiating *Sein* from *Sollen*, Kant's critical project converges with the rich tradition of Platonism: "*In this slogan, Kant agrees with Plato. It is the path of idealism that frees itself from the bondage of nature and from the tyranny of experience.*"[44] In *Religion of Reason*, Cohen invokes prayer in order to describe such a state liberated from the bondage of nature. In prayer, we refuse to be "engulfed in the stifling present" by cultivating "the ability to anticipate the future and to make if effective. This power of anticipation is, in general, the power of the consciousness of time".[45] Here Hägglund

---

42. Hägglund, *Radical Atheism*, 9.
43. Meinong, *Über Gegenstandstheorie*, 9.
44. Hermann Cohen, *Ethik des reinen Willens*, Berlin 1923, 13.
45. Hermann Cohen, *Religion of Reason: Out of the Sources of Judaism*, Atlanta, GA 1995,

would intervene and argue that because it is an anticipation of a change of life in time, prayer can only be a desire for the survival and care of mortal life. But if Hägglund is right that "whatever one may posit as a value, one has to affirm the time of the survival, since without the time of the survival the value could never live on and be posited as a value in the first place", then he is arguing that time can only be the homogenic time of this life and that we cannot desire something else than the desire of what we are.[46] Desire cannot move beyond what Cohen calls the bondage of nature and the tyranny of experience. Desire cannot desire that time could be structured by something else than scarcity nor that we do not need to evaluate life as a pool of finite choices. We can only desire the reduction of life to survival.

When we confront the fact that Hägglund refuses to believe that we can affirm time as something else than as a time of survival, and therefore that we can desire something else than this life, this world, this cosmos of *différance*, the question necessarily arises if Hägglund's atheism is radical or if, as the Argentinian philosopher Fabián Ludueña Romandini has argued, "radical atheism is the most adapted and complete Christianity that can be conceived, namely one that has deconstructed itself entirely in order to fit our age".[47] Immortality is, in the end, reduced to the survival of this life by Hägglund. This is why it seems impossible to define his atheism as radical. It is a restorative atheism, a secular faith seeking to defend life as it is, a *laissez-faire* atheism that wants to keep the *différance* running since it is only in time that something can become valuable.

This is also why Hägglund cannot envision what Ludueña Romandini calls a spectral community – *comunidad de los espectros*. The arrow of time is irreversible. The dead cannot be redeemed since life is, and must be, survival. By contrast, the charwoman relativizes the relation between the living and the dead by promising redemption even for the living: "Don't mourn for me, friends, don't weep for me never / For I'm going to do nothing for ever and ever." These are the last words of a dying woman who, seemingly, had lived a long and hard life. But the message of her prayer is not exactly that the living do not have to care about the dead. Since the charwoman's exhortation to not be sad over the fate of the dead (for even those who have disappeared from the world of the living can be redeemed), comes from a dying woman, the epitaph legitimizes the hope for the redemption of the dead by reconceptualizing the difference between existence and non-existence. It implies an ontology, a new conception of being beyond the

---

375.
46. Hägglund, *Radical Atheism*, 164.
47. Fabián Ludueña Romandini, *La comunidad de los espectros: 1. Antropotecnia*, Buenos Aires 2010, 178.

law of scarcity and thereby it brings good news – a kind of εὐαγγέλιον. For the living are given the hope that what is, and the past as well as the future *is* from this perspective, might change to the point that those who live may dare to begin to transform their self-maintenance and struggle for another form of life – even before death. In this sense, the epitaph teaches us how to die by showing us how we can live for something other than the work for survival. We should try to become dead for the value system of *différance*, and we should try to formulate a conception of being and existence from the point of view of an eternal abundance, rather than a murderous scarcity that forces us to identify life with survival and time with the one-dimensional time of this life.

What we take to be good, or what Hägglund calls "valuable", is structured by the law of scarcity that defines the spacing of time through the violence of time which cuts all life short and makes all abundance and eternity impossible. But what the charwoman desires is that her death entails an end to what life has been for her. She does not seek survival, but the abolition of the numbing drudgery that, according to the myth of the fall from paradise, is the curse of death. Her misery offers a perspective of liberation that moves beyond Hägglund's affirmation of the time of survival by not seeking to give value to anything possible in this life. Her prayer is a desire for the liberation of life from bondage of nature. It is a desire for the transformation of this life that would blur the distinction between life and death by craving an abundance impossible for a life structured by the scarcity of *différance*.

Jüngel has insisted in his essay "Wertlose Wahrheit", that the Abrahamic tradition can give us a perspective on being beyond the notion of value that the structure of time forces upon human life: "The Christian experience of truth is the radical questioning of value and value thinking".[48] This is not only because Logos, the truth and word through which everything is created, according to Jüngel's tradition, hanged on a cross, but primarily since the negation of the time that God's eternity entails is the negation of the time of survival rather than a negation of time as such. In his essay "Die Ewigkeit des Ewigen Leben", Jüngel quotes Thomas Aquinas' (c. 1225–1274) suggestive axiom, *aeternitas non est aliud quam ipse Deus* ("eternity is not other than God himself") and writes: "Although eternal life is promised to the human, human life as such and on its own accord is not eternal life. Eternity is given to him only if God gives him a share in his eternity."[49] This is what it seems that the charwoman's listening-in to the inactivity of God entails; not death, but neither life as we know it. It is a share of the eternal

---

48. Eberhard Jüngel, *Wertlose Wahrheit*, Tübingen 2003, 100.
49. Eberhard Jüngel, *Ganz werden*, Tübingen 2003, 345.

life of God, and such a share implies a valueless existence since God's radiant abundance makes the scarcity of life, and therefore valuation itself, impossible.

Against Jüngel, I would argue that it is not the Christian experience *per se* that makes value thinking impossible. It is rather the cultivation of the toil for survival that the Charwoman was subjected to into a prayer for an eternal sabbath and, even more, a hope for a world age beyond the laws of *différance*. This is surely close to the slave morality, or the Platonism of the masses, that Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) feared. But perhaps, as Cohen indicated, there is a richness here that unburdens the desire of our species from the care of survival, by letting us think beyond the limit of this life. For to share God's eternity is not to become one with his timelessness; it is to experience a radical transformation of this life, and thereby to be liberated from not only death but also work and value. Life, in other words, is no longer self-maintenance.

Hägglund's politics of survival is, by contrast, an ontologization of value through death, not unlike Sigmund Freud's (1856–1939) pathologization of Rainer Maria Rilke's (1875–1926) and Lou Andreas-Salomé's (1861–1937) lament over the finitude of existence. Their sorrow over the death of flowers on a mountain side makes them blind for the simple fact that death gives life meaning and even more value: "Transience value is scarcity value in time. Limitation in the possibility of an enjoyment raises the value of the enjoyment."[50] Yet, for Jüngel, this would be to dismiss the valueless truth of that which defies the existing by promising an eternal life so abundant that the desire for the survival of what is no longer can be intact. For Freud just as for Hägglund, life must be activity, but the charwoman seeks something greater than the praxis of stalling death that characterize present life.

In fact, Cohen saw prayer as a messianic hope that articulates the correlation of creaturely time, which is certainly prone to death, with the eternity of God. By doing so, he came close to arguing that prayer seeks to incorporate us in God's pleromatic abundance. Such a correlation, Hägglund insists, would be nothing but a correlation of life with death: "If to be alive is to be mortal, it follows that to not be mortal – to be immortal – is to be dead. If one cannot die, one is dead. Hence [...] *God is death*."[51] To an extent, Cohen could prove Hägglund right. For according to Cohen, "messianism degrades and despises and destroys the present actuality, in order to put in the place of this sensible actuality a new kind of supersensible actuality, not supernatural, but of the future. The future creates a new earth and a new

---

50. Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Freud*, vol. 14, London 1957, 305.

51. Hägglund, *Radical Atheism*, 8.

heaven and, consequently, a new actuality".[52] We can now see why Cohen helps us understand the charwoman's epitaph. By craving "to do nothing for ever and ever", she is not desiring survival but a new actuality, a new future, beyond the world age of *différance*.

Hägglund shows that what Keynes calls "the old Adam" cannot enter this future world without dying away from the world of finite life. But this hope for what could be called *another life and temporality* – "a new earth and a new heaven" – is what makes it possible for the living to hope that the dead are unburdened by the struggle for survival, and thereby given a life outside life. This is significant. Hägglund appears not to know that the terms for eternity in Christian religious discourse, such as the Greek αἰώνιον or the Latin *aeternum,* should not be understood as completely separated from time.

On the contrary, these and other concepts for eternity designate a way "to take [*zu nehmen*] a creaturely incomprehensible world- or human age as a limit symbol for what we call 'divine eternity'".[53] According to this classical interpretation of biblical and theological conceptualizations of the eternal and immortal we can state that immortality denotes an age, a period, a way to exist in the coming, future world. Hägglund fails to see that immortality and eternal life do not necessarily imply an abolishment of time. On the contrary, the hope for immortality for many of those authors he falsely thinks champions timelessness, such as Augustine, is nurtured by a belief in the possibility of a new kind of space-time continuum structured by what can be called the economy of non-existence, such as the events that never took place in the past. The belief in God as a redeemer that can change the parameters of life, and thereby liberate time from the fetters of survival, makes it possible to hope for the resurrection of the dead and, as Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) remarked in 1921, "the hope of redemption that we nourish for all the dead [...] is the sole justification of the faith in immortality, which must never be kindled from one's own existence".[54] The hope for immortality is therefore not necessarily a hope for survival nor for timelessness. It is a hope for the redemption of the dead and for a new actuality where we do nothing for ever and ever since life no longer is activity but a share in the eternal.

In the meanwhile, when the living hopelessly are becoming extinct in the world of *différance*, and those few still yearning for the resurrection of the dead are still only yearning, the charwoman's desire might be understood

---

52. Cohen, *Religion of Reason*, 291.
53. Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, Einsiedeln 1962, 511.
54. Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings: Volume 1, 1913–1926*, London 1996, 355.

as a hope to inhabit a world of innumerable inactivities that not only the future, but also the past, as the strange world of what once was, indicates. For the past, as that which came before the present, and which the living becomes a part of by dying, is not only the domain of that which was for the living. It is also the realm of what could have been. The past is a part of an economy of uncountable activities that never took place in actual history and becomes the site of what should have been for those who long for the redemption of the dead. That which was belongs to Meinong's *Aussersein* since it is part of a much wider realm of potentiality and, from the char-woman's perspective, it is this domain that can be given a new life by being bestowed immortality by the eternal God. By dying, she hopes to not become what she always was, but rather, to be liberated from the struggle for survival. By dying she hopes to enter into another life where doing nothing entails doing something else and far more important than the activity to uphold this life.

The desire of the charwoman is the completely legitimate desire of a mortal being who has been crushed by life and thereby craves another existence. To put her hope in a secular *Index librorum prohibitorum* would deprive this life one of its most beautiful expressions – the power of human imagination to move beyond a simple affirmation of the time of survival. To transform her hope to such an affirmation would even become an exorcism of the trace since the charwoman's hope for a new life is born from the fact that the living are haunted by the spectres of the dead.

The charwoman craves a world beyond death, and even more so, a body unburdened by the *usus necessitatis* needed for survival. She craves an abundant life liberated from the slaughter-house of *différance*. The existence she wants is not a life that has to maintain its self-relation, an existence subdued to be a subject that must struggle for survival simply because it is existing. It is, rather, a life that complicates the division between life and death by entering the economy of non-existence of the *Aussersein*. Such an existence may certainly be impossible from the lenses of this life. But, as we have seen, Hägglund does not primarily discuss the impossibility of immortality. He more radically refuses its desirability and cannot understand that one can yearn for more than the merely possible, and therefore much more than survival. Yet it is certainly not irrational, or at least impossible, to desire a change so radical that life no longer is forced to reproduce its self-maintenance, and this is what immortality implies from the charwoman's perspective.

Human thought, and human desire, may legitimately move beyond that which we deem to be possible, and why should we not urge for an age

liberated from the drudgery of *différance*? The charwoman craves a change of the parameters of the given. She wants a new form of life. She seeks, in the end, a world beyond value. Hägglund, on the other hand, wants to defend this life and this is why his ontology can easily be separated from his politics and become, against his will, a defence of the *status quo* that biological existence is increasingly intertwined with. For his radical atheism is built upon the eternalization of this life as the horizon for not only possible experience but politics as such.

In sharp contrast, the charwoman articulates that the *otium* of heaven, or for that matter of the leisure classes, is desirable for ever and ever and she suggests the possibility for a politics that aims to transform, rather than eternalize, life here and now. The lasting power of her epitaph is that it instructs us, as finite and mortal beings, to live for something greater than the value system of *différance*, which comes dangerously close to reducing Hägglund's philosophy to a pyrrhic defence of present life. It seems that a truly radical hope must seek "what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, and no mind has imagined" (1 Cor. 2:9). It must, just like the charwoman, desire that which is beyond the confines of a life destined to be governed by work, value, and survival and therefore by our notion of what time, space, and life is in this dying and decaying world that may, or may not, be our last.

Conclusion

When read in relation to Hägglund, the charwoman's epitaph can be said to express the rationality of the hope for immortality. Firstly, it renders the desire to do nothing for ever and ever meaningful by conceptualizing life as something other than an activity or a struggle for survival. Secondly, by conjuring a state beyond the struggle for survival, her hope indicates the fluidity of the border between existence and non-existence. The charwoman thereby invites us to revisit the problem of being by reminding us that immortality, at least for the Christian tradition, does not imply the end of time but the resurrection of the dead and therefore a new earth and a new heaven. Thirdly, the charwoman's epitaph can be seen as an expression of what a long tradition has described as the purpose of philosophy: to teach us how to die and therefore how to live in relation to our coming death. The hope for a world beyond drudgery is the hope that the world of the living can reflect the eschatological bliss of the afterlife to the point that humanity may begin to redeem itself from the reduction of life to a struggle for survival. ▲

SUMMARY

This essay challenges Martin Hägglund's interpretation of the hope of immortality as a longing for death and his identification of life with survival. It does so by interpreting the epitaph of the charwoman, which John Maynard Keynes refers to in "Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren", as an eschatological speculation on what the dead are doing in the afterlife. The epitaph expresses a sabbatical hope "to do nothing for ever and ever" and by putting it against Hägglund's understanding of life and immortality I show how a theology of immortality, rising from the charwoman's desire, (1) conjures a state beyond the struggle for survival in order to make the desire to do nothing for ever and ever plausible, (2) reconceptualizes the difference between life and death, and indicates a fluidity of the border between existence and non-existence to the point that the problem of being has to be revisited, and (3) expresses what a long tradition has described as the purpose of philosophy and theology: to teach us how to die (and therefore how to live in relation to our coming death). The author argues that the hope for immortality is not a hope for timeless existence *per se* but rather a hope for a life unburdened by the struggle for survival. Against Hägglund, the charwoman legitimatizes the hope for immortality as a desire that goes beyond the confines of this life.

The Mediumistic Secret

Reconsidering Historical Criticism in Light of Modern Spiritualism

DENISE KIMBER BUELL

Denise Kimber Buell is the Cluett Professor of Religion at Williams College.

dbuell@williams.edu

At least since classical antiquity, writers have invoked ghosts and spirits to symbolize the discomfiting resurgence of the past into the present. And if literary texts, human beings, culture itself, are ineluctably haunted by the past, then historians, literary critics, biographers, even psychoanalysts, function as spirit mediums of a sort: their task is to make the dead speak.[1]

Whereas linear, secular history demands the transcendence of the past, Spiritualist practice collapsed time and refused to accept the past as over.[2]

During the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries many see ghosts, seek ghosts, refuse ghosts, and are trying to figure out what to do about them. Academics of various disciplinary stripes since the early 1990s have become seemingly "haunted by the idea of haunting".[3] Our contemporary fascination with spectrality in popular culture, literature, and critical theory is indebted to modern spiritualism in ways that are often unknown or unacknowledged. Molly McGarry and Helen Sword's works begin to

---

1. Helen Sword, *Ghostwriting Modernism*, Ithaca, NY 2002, 164–165.
2. Molly McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past: Spiritualism and the Cultural Politics of Nineteenth-Century America*, Berkeley, CA 2008, 6.
3. McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past*, 8.

connect the dots between spiritualism as a religious movement that centres communication with "ghosts" and the work of specters in hauntology.[4] This piece builds on their insights and extends them as part of a larger project exploring legacies of modern spiritualism (and its esoteric offshoot, modern Theosophy) on the study of religion, especially within biblical and early Christian studies.[5] Here, I argue that historical criticism is indebted to a mediumistic relation to the past, one that needs to be understood in the historical context of the flourishing of modern spiritualism.

Modern spiritualism, sometimes called séance spiritualism, emerges and flourishes in the second half of the nineteenth century in the United States, Britain, and Europe, precisely at the same time as historical criticism, which became and remains the dominant approach to biblical studies. Historical critical methods minimize, if not erase, the present conditions of the interpreter in the act of focusing on ancient sources. As a result, scholars of the New Testament and early Christian history rarely pause to interrogate either the contexts in which their interpretive approaches were forged or the inheritances accompanying them, for good or for ill. My point is not that spiritualists directly influenced the shaping of the historical critical method but rather that a focus on spiritualist claims and practices illuminates a largely hidden or suppressed aspect of historical criticism. As movements that emerge contemporaneously, we can see historical critics and spiritualists making overlapping but also contrasting choices about authority, agency, temporality, and knowledge production.

This essay's title is a play on William Wrede's (1859–1906) influential *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*.[6] Wrede uses the lens of historical criticism to argue that gospel depictions of Jesus as God's messiah are the products of those shaping what became early Christianity rather than records

---

4. Along slightly different lines, John Lardas Modern traces the role of spiritualism and fascination with haunting in the emergence of secularism. John Lardas Modern, *Secularism in Antebellum America: With Reference to Ghosts, Protestant Subcultures, Machines, and Their Metaphors; Featuring Discussions of Mass Media,* Moby-Dick*, Spirituality, Phrenology, Anthropology, Sing Sing State Penitentiary, and Sex with the New Motive Power*, Chicago 2011.

5. See Denise Kimber Buell, "The Afterlife is Not Dead: Spiritualism, Postcolonial Theory, and Early Christian Studies", *Church History* 78 (2009), 862–872; Denise Kimber Buell, "Hauntology Meets Posthumanism: Some Payoffs for Biblical Studies", in Jennifer Koosed (ed.), *The Bible and Posthumanism*, Minneapolis, MN 2014, 29–56; Denise Kimber Buell, "This Changes Everything: Spiritualists, Theosophists, and Rethinking Early Christian Historiography", in Taylor G. Petrey (ed.), *Re-Making the World: Categories and Early Christianity. Essays in Honor of Karen L. King*, Tübingen 2019, 345–368. My deep thanks to Joel Kuhlin and Mårten Björk for organizing and hosting the stimulating symposium at which the original version of this essay was presented and to Karen King and the anonymous reviewers at *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* for their insightful feedback.

6. William Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien: Zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markusevangeliums*, Göttingen 1901.

DENISE KIMBER BUELL

of Jesus' historical ministry. He develops his argument by interpreting the Gospel of Mark, notably passages in which Jesus admonishes recipients of exorcisms as well as disciples not to tell others that he is the Messiah and to keep his messiahship a secret until after his death (Mk. 9:9), a motif known as the "messianic secret". Wrede proposes to reveal a different secret, that the concept of Jesus as God's messiah is not original to Jesus or even to others interacting with him during his lifetime. Wrede distinguishes between theology and history, arguing that "the idea of the messianic secret is a theological idea" belonging to the late first century CE, rather than a historical claim arising during Jesus' lifetime, as the gospel narratives suggest.[7] The form of secular history writing that historical critics promote is indebted to making a cut not only between past and present, but also among pasts; the past as narrated in the Gospel of Mark is distinguished from the past of the gospel's composition. These distinctions imply that reading as a historian requires skills to interpret the ancient texts in a way that resists surface meaning; a different truth can be discerned within and through the body of the ancient text, if the scholar is properly trained. Even as this method was widely accepted by the turn of the twentieth century, Wrede's views on Jesus' messiahship as a belated attribution were controversial. Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) largely praised Wrede while other biblical critics disagreed about whether Jesus understood himself to be God's Messiah (and if so, what that meant to him) or whether such an understanding only arose after his death.

Such debates turn on presumptions about how to read ancient sources and how to engage contemporary perspectives on biblical interpretation and Christian origins. The historical critic has to navigate the demonstration of expertise to have one's interpretation viewed as viable while avoiding the charge of imposing meaning on the ancient sources. Conventionally, this challenge has been characterized as the problem of interpretive bias or the impossibility of objectivity – the historical critic, no matter how assiduous, cannot escape her locatedness, the questions she asks will inevitably shape the meaning she can make of the past. Within biblical studies, this insight has been extremely productive and enabled work that embraces forms of standpoint epistemology, making a virtue out of what might appear to be a flaw.

Placing historical criticism in relation to its historical contemporary movement of modern spiritualism helps us to notice a different kind of challenge: namely, that historical criticism relies on the premise that the historical critic actually has a way to access and successfully channel the

---

7. William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, London 1971, 67.

authentic past into the present, even as the method insists on a sharp distinction between the present and the past. In other words, historical critics ideally serve as reliable mediums for the ancient past to be brought to light or life in the present; it is this function that is called into question when the interpreter's "objectivity" is questioned.

Like many historical critics, spiritualists strongly criticize what they view as problematic theological views in the Christian churches of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But spiritualists offer a modern alternative distinct from secular history.[8] In contrast with historical critics and more like claims within Christian churches, spiritualists posit an ongoing connection between the past and the present. For spiritualists, mediumship offers an alternative to clerical authority for authorizing claims about the ways that the past is meaningful in the present. Furthermore, spiritualists emphasize the empirical, locating spirit communication within the realm of science: each individual is invited to experience or witness spirit communication and decide for themselves about its truthfulness.

Whereas historical critics could critique or seek to reform present Christian doctrine or practices by claiming to be able to discern the truth about the difference of the past thanks to painstaking acquisition of expertise undertaken in increasingly professionalized contexts, spiritualists ground their claims both in a deliberate cultivation of receptivity rather than mastery and in an appeal to each individual to examine spiritualist claims for themselves. Spiritualist expertise is cultivated by individuals to be sufficiently "sensitive" to receiving and transmitting messages from spirits for whom the temporal bounds of past, present, and future do not apply. Such spirits, under the proper conditions, may provide information that also corrects, educates, and informs present humans about both the past and the future. The next section explores spiritualist claims about mediumship in relation to biblical interpretation before returning to consider historical critical claims in their light.

As I discuss in the final section, spiritualism anticipates, almost uncannily, recent interventions into historiography under the moniker of "hauntology" and recent biblical studies work informed by queer and trans-critical approaches, affect theory, and race-critical theory that foreground non-linear temporalities and the openness, if not passivity, of the interpreter, even as these recent works seem largely unaware of the ways that their interventions resonate with the historical terms of debate in which historical critical methods and their contemporary alternatives emerged.

---

8. See Daniel Cottom, *Abyss of Reason: Cultural Movements, Revelations, and Betrayals*, New York 1991.

Modern Spiritualism and Jesus the Medium

For spiritualists, Mk. 9 reveals not the secret of a late first-century rendering of Jesus as the expected Messiah, but rather the secret of Jesus' power as a medium to channel the biblical predecessors Elijah and Moses. The transfiguration scene important for Wrede's argument to de-historicize the messianic secret in the Gospel of Mark is, for most nineteenth-century spiritualists, adduced as proof that spirit communication is a practice with ancient roots.

In an anonymous pamphlet published in 1884, structured as a dialogue between a Christian minister (known as "Rev. Dr.___") and a former member of his congregation (known as "Mr. Smith"), the principles of modern spiritualism are directly linked to claims about Christianity's origins.[9] Late in the dialogue, the spiritualist ex-parishioner deals a rhetorical blow to the anti-spiritualist minister:

> When you repudiate Spiritualism you give up the very foundation of Christianity – the "signs and wonders" of Christ and his reappearance after his crucifixion. The latter event is especially vital, because you must admit that, had not Christ reappeared, there would have been no such thing as Christianity. When he was condemned and executed as a malefactor, "all forsook him and fled". [...] Hence, if he had not shown himself to his disciples they would have given it all up as a delusion. This, probably, was the reason that Paul laid so much stress upon the "resurrection", as the foundation-stone of Christian faith, and especially as evidence of a future state. Thus, you see, *Christianity rests upon a spirit manifestation.*[10]

Resurrection for spiritualists, however, does not mean physical resurrection. The core spiritualist ideas are that human personality persists after the death of the body as spirit, that "discarnate" souls can communicate with those still in the body, and that the human condition is one of spiritual progression (enabled by learning from spirits and improving the condition of one's soul, even while still embodied). For many modern spiritualists, almost all of whom had been raised Christian, the figure of Jesus is central as an exemplar for the kind of human life one ought to cultivate. They understand Jesus as a "highly-gifted psychic" or fully developed medium rather than an incarnated deity and/or one who saved others by his sacrificial death.[11]

---

9. *The Biblical and Theological Objections to Spiritualism Answered in a Colloquy between a Clergyman and an Ex-Parishioner*, New York 1884.

10. *Biblical and Theological Objections to Spiritualism Answered*, 37. My italics.

11. Abraham Wallace, *Jesus of Nazareth and Modern Scientific Examination: From the*

Spiritualists do not all draw the same conclusions from their engagement with spirits and biblical texts. Some "identify true Christianity, as taught by its founder, with the religion of Spiritualism" and hold that "Primitive Christianity and Modern Spiritualism are identical".[12] For others, spiritualism leads to a rejection of Christianity, which can take the form of positioning spiritualism as a successor to Christianity. "Mr. Smith" articulates this third view: "I must cling to the New Dispensation, which I know to be true, without regard to the Church or the Bible; for modern Spiritualism does not depend upon the Bible for support, though it demonstrates the plausibility and reasonability of many statements contained in that book."[13] The implications of this latter claim are profound and will be considered in the next section.

Among the many biblical passages that spiritualists cite to support the existence and antiquity of spirit communication, they especially appeal to what they refer to as a "divine séance", also known as the transfiguration (Mk. 9:2–8), in which Moses and Elijah appear next to and speak with a transfigured Jesus in front of the disciples Peter, James, and John (9:2–4). In a work that was influential for spiritualists as well as Theosophists, William Howitt (1792–1879) characterizes this scene as follows:

> The Lord of life, who was about to become the Prince of the spirits of the dead, broke the law prohibiting the intercourse with the spirits of the dead, and in no other presence than that of the promulgator of the law, who had long been a spirit of the dead, and at the same time in the presence of those selected by Christ to teach this great act to posterity.[14]

This characterization of the transfiguration scene positions Jesus as a medium whose goal is to authorize and instruct his disciples to become mediums themselves. Spirit communication is the lesson being imparted. The voice from the clouds that states "This is my beloved Son; listen to him" (Mk. 9:7) is here interpreted to proclaim Jesus as a trustworthy medium rather than God's Messiah. "Mr. Smith" explains:

Spiritualist Standpoint, 2nd ed., Manchester 1920, 13. See also Buell, "Hauntology Meets Posthumanism", 45–52.

12. E. Louisa Thompson Nosworthy, "Christ a Guide to the Poor and Illiterate as well as the Cultured", *The Herald of Progress* 2 (1881), 204.

13. *Biblical and Theological Objections to Spiritualism Answered*, 37–38.

14. William Howitt, *The History of the Supernatural in All Ages and Nations, and in All Churches, Christian and Pagan: Demonstrating a Universal Faith*, London 1863, 197. See also *Biblical and Theological Objections to Spiritualism Answered*, 11.

DENISE KIMBER BUELL

If [Jesus] could cause the appearance of holy spirits of the departed and talk with them, then his disciples, or those who believed on him, could and can do the same. Else why was he careful to have certain selected members of the twelve present at this divine séance as witnesses of the example which he set?[15]

For spiritualists, spirit communications are a primary source of knowledge, even as they insist that each person must decide for themselves the veracity of spiritualist claims and that not all spirit communications are truthful or accurate (i.e., individuals must employ reason to discern truth from falsehood even if they accept the principle of spirit communication).[16] A common "conversion" narrative among spiritualists is of a transition from scepticism about spirit communication to interest to amazement and persuasion in the context of witnessing mediumship (such as at a household séance or public demonstration), sometimes leading to the experience of being a medium for spirits oneself. Although many sceptics of spiritualism delight in exposing fraudulent mediums, spiritualists accommodate the presence of both fraudulent mediums and deceitful spirits into their worldview. "Mr. Smith" does so by interpreting gospel texts, asserting that Jesus

did not claim to exercise special powers of God in casting [daimones] out. You remember that the man who brought to Jesus his son that had a dumb spirit stated that the disciples had failed to cast him out. [...] [Jesus] did not tell them that [their failure to cast out the demon] was because they were not of the same divine nature as himself, that they were not God, *but because their spiritual powers had not been properly developed.* The word demon does not necessarily mean a low or bad spirit. You will find, if you investigate this subject, that *the spirits (Greek, daimones) who control mediums are of various grades, some as pure as angels, other as low, ignorant, and depraved as many of the spirits whom we see in the flesh.* This is what we might expect, since disembodied spirits pass into the future life with their earthly characteristics.[17]

In other words, for spiritualists, the reliability of spirit communications depends on two critical factors: the relative development of the communicat-

---

15. *Biblical and Theological Objections to Spiritualism Answered*, 11–12.

16. "Mr. Smith" says this held true in antiquity as well, citing 1 John 4:5–6 to support his point that "the spirits who manifested then were like those who manifest now [...] 'good, bad, and indifferent'" and that one must "judge of the character of the spirits by our reason and intuition". *Biblical and Theological Objections to Spiritualism Answered*, 28.

17. *Biblical and Theological Objections to Spiritualism Answered*, 20. My italics.

ing spirit and the relative level of the human instruments through which a spirit communicates.

Spiritualists stress the potential of all humans to be and become Christ-like (human "eternal progression") and that Jesus taught and exemplified a potential in all humans. This perspective aligns with spiritualist critiques of the current state of human existence and a concomitant optimism that humans have the capacity to transform the world for the better, even while still embodied. Spiritualists offer communications from spirits as the means for acquiring and passing on knowledge of this capacity for positive transformation.

Even as spiritualists adduce biblical texts as precedents for communications between the living and spirits, they cite spirit communications to interpret biblical texts. In one of the most popular and enduring works of spiritualist writings, John W. Edmonds (1799–1874) reports that, in his presence, spirits communicated the following interpretation of a passage from the Gospel of John: "'Whoso believeth in him shall not perish, but have eternal life,' means to believe in the doctrine of Christ, not his person, in the spiritual condition of man and his eternal progression, which Christ came to teach and did teach."[18] This interpretation clearly supports the key spiritualist principle of eternal progression, that is, of human potential for spiritual development in contrast to the belief in Christ's person (or death) as the source of human salvation.

Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930), an avid spiritualist best remembered for his fictional character Sherlock Holmes, makes a very similar point, reporting on what a certain "Mr. Miller of Belfast" learned when he asked the spirit of his deceased son "about the exact position of Christ in religion". The father was apparently in regular spirit communication with his son through a medium, but at this question, the son "modestly protested that such a subject was above his head, and asked leave to bring his higher guide to answer the question".[19] The arrival of this more advanced spirit is registered physically:

> Using a fresh voice and in a new and more weighty manner the medium then said: "I wish to answer your question. Jesus the Christ is the proper designation. Jesus was perfect humanity. Christ was the God

18. John W. Edmonds & George T. Dexter, *Spiritualism*, 4th ed., New York 1853, 56–57. Those attentive to the rhetoric of the Gospel of John have long noted that one of its features is a call for readers to believe in Jesus, not simply in what Jesus has to say. The spirits communicating to Edmonds and his fellow sitter George T. Dexter counsel an approach to the Gospel of John that subordinates its narrative rhetoric of belief in the person of Jesus to that of the synoptic gospels, with their foregrounding of Jesus' actions and teachings.

19. Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Wanderings of a Spiritualist*, New York 1921, 26.

idea in Him. Jesus, on account of His purity, manifested in the highest degree the psychic powers which resulted in His miracles. Jesus never preached the blood of the lamb.[20] The disciples after His ascension forgot the message in admiration of the man. The Christ is in every human being, and so are the psychic forces which were used by Jesus. If the same attention were given to spiritual development which you give to the comfort and growth of your material bodies your progress in spiritual life would be rapid and would be characterized by the same works as were performed by Jesus. The one essential thing for all on earth to strive after is a fuller knowledge and growth in spiritual living."[21]

In this fascinating passage, Conan Doyle first frames the context for us, that he is personally persuaded by this account, that it comes from a father who has been communicating with his dead son via an unnamed medium. In the course of these communications, the dead son (the "young soldier") demurs on a Christological question and instead his "higher guide", meaning another spirit, answers through the medium.

The answer that the spirit provides through the medium defines Jesus to be the Christ in a way that challenges contemporary Christian dogma: "Jesus was perfect humanity" and "the Christ is in every human being, and so are the psychic forces that were used by Jesus". Jesus is thus not unique as Christ, but rather each human has comparable potential, since "Christ was the God idea" in Jesus.

Mediumship Haunts Historical Criticism

Spiritualists' embrace of mediumship appears to contrast sharply with historical criticism. There are indeed important distinctions. Without claiming direct causation, I nonetheless think we have not reckoned adequately with the fact that nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historical critics worked in contexts awash with spiritualists, the psychical researchers who took an interest in them,[22] as well as a range of other people participating in and developing forms of mystical and esoteric practices. Thus, it should not surprise us to find biblical scholars using imagery that recalls these practices

---

20. This is a typical spiritualist position against the doctrine of atonement. For example, John W. Edmonds claims that "there is no vicarious atonement which is to redeem us, but we are to work out our own salvation". Edmonds & Dexter, *Spiritualism*, 64–65. See also discussion in Buell, "This Changes Everything", 345–368.

21. Doyle, *The Wanderings of a Spiritualist*, 26.

22. On psychical researchers, see Courtney Raia, *The New Prometheans: Faith, Science, and the Supernatural Mind in the Victorian Fin de Siècle*, Chicago 2019.

even when they avoid equivalencies.[23] We find a shared vocabulary of concern across spiritualist and historical critical scholarship about inspiration, authority, and ability to bring into the present ideas from other temporalities. Juxtaposing spiritualism with historical criticism lets us discern a dimension of historical critical approaches that has been forgotten, rendered invisible, or suppressed.

As noted above, William Wrede sought to distinguish between the ideas and perspectives that had become layered onto biblical texts and the ancient (somehow also timeless) truths lurking in them to be excavated by trained experts. Take also this example from the first quarter of the twentieth century, by American biblical scholar Shirley Jackson Case (1872–1947):

> The reformers gave the New Testament books life by freely injecting into them the vital interests of the age of the reformation. Social emphasis, on the other hand, calls for the revitalizing of the literature, not by reading into it the life of a subsequent age, but by visualizing in realistic fashion the very life of the place and time in which the various New Testament books were produced. *One infuses them, not with the spirit of the modern age, but with the living spirit of the ancient world.* Whether the interests of the present are in strict agreement with those of the past may often be open to question. But the function of interpretation is, at all costs to modern wishes, *to allow the life of the ancients to throb afresh through the veins of the historical documents.*[24]

Although Case contrasts the efforts of Protestant reformers with the social historical analysis he is promoting, his imagery brings him close to spiritualists, even with some important distinctions. The goal of activating the "living spirit of the ancient world", so that "the life of ancients" will "throb afresh" through a textual body, makes the biblical scholar a catalyst, like a spirit medium, for ancient living spirits. Unlike spirit mediums, however, who function as the embodied channel for spirit communications, the biblical scholar is positioned as the one who can interpret such communications, while the biblical (or other ancient) text serves as the physical medium. This distinction deploys metaphors of modern séance spiritualist practices but implies that the biblical scholar is more akin to those who sought to study spiritualist phenomena as psychical researchers than to spirit mediums themselves.

---

23. For an in-depth study of how and with what effects biblical scholars adopt metaphors from the biological sciences in the nineteenth century, see Yii-Jan Lin, *The Erotic Life of Manuscripts: New Testament Textual Criticism and the Biological Sciences*, Oxford 2016.

24. Shirley Jackson Case, *The Social Origins of Christianity*, Chicago 1923, 31. My italics.

DENISE KIMBER BUELL

Historical criticism emphasizes the gap between the present and the past in a manner that places paradoxical demands on its practitioners: on the one hand, one must attempt not to impose anything of the present upon the past; on the other hand, one must have cultivated the expertise to engage with the past and thus be an authorized and trustworthy means by which the past can speak to the present. Both of these demands resonate with the way that spiritualists speak about the development of mediumship, as a process in which one learns to become a reliable instrument through which spirits can speak and has developed the ability to discern the reliability and meaning of spirit communication, however it is transmitted. In other words, historical criticism promotes cultivating the historian as a kind of medium, one through whom the past can speak while minimizing the impact of the historian upon the source(s). However, as Case's phrasing indicates, the professionalization of historical critics means that the attribution of mediumship is displaced, such that the biblical scholar is properly the interpreter of mediumistic transmissions, with the medium itself being identified as the ancient sources under interpretation. Nevertheless, in practice, the scholar acts much like a medium: The scholar stages the conditions for the "séance" in which the ancient spirits may "speak" through the otherwise inert ancient documents and then interprets these ancient voices for a wider audience.

This kind of mediumistic relation to the text is a modern way of interpreting the past, as Helen Sword puts it, "historians [...] function as spirit mediums of a sort: their task is to make the dead speak". Moreover, historians and others seek ways to demonstrate their credibility for this task: "Contemporary critics have a strong professional interest in proving themselves indispensable as the messengers and interpreters of voices from a remote 'other world': of literature, the unconscious, the past."[25]

At the same time, as Ward Blanton observes, historical critics do not make explicit connections between their work and mediumship:

> There is no modern historical criticism of the Bible without the implicit assumption that the scholar is able to identify and translate religion into something that is essentially *other than* religious history, whether "historical rationality" or "modern" or "critical" thought [...] Without the convincing, performative embodiment of this difference, the scholar becomes just another shaman, prophet, or scribe, a possibility that self-consciously modern scholarship found quite intolerable.[26]

25. Sword, *Ghostwriting Modernism*, 165.
26. Ward Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins: Philosophy, Secularity, and the New Testament*, Chicago 2007, 11. Italics in original.

In this respect, as Blanton notes, historical critics aim to contribute to a secular form of history writing in contrast to religious or theological writing, thereby participating in the creation of what Courtney Raia describes as an "emerging institutional and epistemological boundary between science and religion".[27] But in the mid-late nineteenth century, what being modern and scientific could look like are under active debate. Although spiritualists are regularly denigrated as gullible sops, their own self-positioning claims the language of the modern and the scientific.

A correlation between spiritualist mediumship and historical criticism becomes clearer if we explore approaches to biblical authority, and specifically the question of the Bible as an inspired text. The challenge to the idea of biblical inspiration is one often linked with the rise of historical critical methods. In their review of the history of New Testament interpretation, Stephen Neill and N.T. Wright describe Christians in Britain as "almost in a state of panic" after 1860 as a result of the Tübingen school publications – especially those of Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860) – and their uptake by Joseph Barber Lightfoot (1828–1889), Brooke Foss Wescott (1825–1901), and Fenton John Anthony Hort (1828–1892) in Britain: "Put in the simplest words, the question orthodox Christians had to face was this: 'Is the Bible to be treated like any other book or not?' [...] Traditional Christian reverence held a view of biblical inspiration which separated it off from every other book; these were the authentic words of God himself."[28] But it was not only historical criticism that called biblical inspiration into question. Perhaps ironically, so too did those who themselves sought and received teachings from spirits.

Spiritualists connected the principle of spirit communication with divine revelation, but their insistence on continuing communication with spirits led them to challenge the Bible itself as an inspired text. As we saw above, "Mr. Smith" claims that "modern Spiritualism does not depend upon the Bible for support, though it demonstrates the plausibility and reasonability of many statements contained in that book".[29] The Bible contains examples of spirit communications, but spirit communication rather than the canonical content of the Bible is the source of authority. E. Louisa Thompson Nosworthy, writing for the spiritualist periodical *The Herald of Progress*, makes this point by citing another spiritualist author:

---

27. Raia, *The New Prometheans*, 36.

28. Stephen Neill & N.T. Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861–1986*, Oxford 1988, 33–34.

29. *Biblical and Theological Objections to Spiritualism Answered*, 37–38.

"We do *not* believe that God once spoke and has for ever since been dumb. We do *not* believe that He inspired both the Jewish and Christian Bibles, both in the original and the translations, and that we have there an infallible record of the Divine Word [...] But we *do* believe that in the Bible we possess a strange and tangled, but most deeply valuable, record of the dealings of God with divers men in divers ages. [...] We *do* believe in a present God operating in our midst now as of old; in the same God using similar means for a similar end."[30]

Spiritualists, Nosworthy insists, "profess the highest reverence" for Jesus and his work; they "declare their mission to be but the complement to His, and where they seem to contravene or to traverse some part of Christian faith, they say that it is man's addition, and not God's revelation, or the real teaching of the Christ, that they contradict".[31] This position also, rather radically, means that new spirit communications may be of equal value to those contained in biblical texts.

The importance of assessing a spirit communication thus extends also to critical assessment of texts that purport to contain transcripts of spirit communication, including the Bible. Abraham Wallace explicitly aligns the goal of spiritualism with historical criticism:

We are not bound to accept as divine truth all communications given by an ancient or modern seer, because he chooses to ascribe to some exalted personality what, perhaps may have originated in his own deeper self, or from some discarnate intelligence external to his own; so that a "Thus saith the Lord" prefaced to any communicated does not necessarily guarantee its divine origin. Many such messages are scarcely worthy of ordinary human intelligence, and indeed may not be in accordance with fact. Therefore all so-called "inspired" writings must be submitted to critical investigation, as is being done at the present day by "higher criticism" in regard to the Gospels.[32]

Wallace here references higher criticism in a manner that might seem to draw on its prestige for some readers (he elsewhere cites Alfred Loisy [1857–1940] and Adolf von Harnack [1851–1930]). Nonetheless, the context ironically grants its authority and exposes a key way in which the historical critic is as subject to critique as the spiritualist. Historical critics are not the only

---

30. Nosworthy, "Christ a Guide", 204. Italics in original.
31. Nosworthy, "Christ a Guide", 204.
32. Wallace, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 11–12.

ones engaging in "critical investigation" of scripture; spiritualists view themselves as the ones with the sharpened critical capacities to discern truth and, indeed, to access it from external discarnate intelligences.

Spiritualists emphasize the pastness of the biblical text as an ancient document. And yet the principle of spirit communication means that the same spirits communicating in biblical texts may still communicate today and, moreover, that the site of authority is revelation and its interpretation rather than static textual content. In other words, whether or not they understood themselves to be Christian, spiritualists take two things from the spirit communications they were receiving in the nineteenth century. First, spirits offered spiritualists access to the "real teaching of the Christ" or those of other early Christians. Knowledge acquired through spirit communications was knowledge that was not bound by linear temporality and thus temporarily collapsed the differences between the present and any possible past (or future). Second, the content of spirit communications offered spiritualists a means to challenge the authority invested in biblical texts per se by their still incarnated contemporaries who interpreted the Bible differently. Discarnate spirits, with access to all temporalities and without the constraints of embodied existence, could provide knowledge to discerning mediums and their audiences that was viewed as superior to that produced by clerics or this-worldly academics.

Both spiritualism and historical criticism offer challenges, in different ways, to various aspects of Christian dogma and doctrine, and both are embraced by some Christians seeking reform to existing Christian structures as well as by those seeking alternatives to Christianity. Both spiritualists and historical critics argue that modern forms of Christianity had diverged (usually for the worse) from primitive Christianity, and that the Bible is not an infallible record of the Divine Word but rather a deeply valuable, if "strange and tangled", document. Both the historical critic and spiritualists prioritize acquisition of knowledge from a distant source through a medium whose own agency is understood to consist of being a reliable conduit of this knowledge. Modern spiritualism enables us to understand better what haunts normative biblical studies, including suppressed participation in nonlinear temporalities that characterize mediumship.

Spiritualist Afterlives in the Present: Of Hauntology and Queer Temporalities

I began this essay by observing the recent proliferation of popular and scholarly fascinations with ghosts, spectrality, and hauntings. Those who have advocated for approaches that pay attention to what haunts regularly do so with a view to accessing minoritized, marginalized, or suppressed

perspectives.[33] Biblical scholars have also begun to entertain hauntological approaches, often in a manner that intersects with queer theory, to critique perceived shortcomings of historical criticism.[34] Although this scholarship shows little awareness of the ways that spiritualist practices anticipate recent challenges to linear temporalities and calls to attend to what haunts, further consideration of what this new work might unknowingly inherit from spiritualism could be valuable both to make this work more powerful and to avoid potential pitfalls.[35]

Historian Carla Freccero sketches an approach to the writing of history that deliberately seeks to cultivate a mediumistic-like modality, using the metaphoric language of being willing to be haunted: a "willingness to be haunted is an ethical relation to the world, motivated by a concern not only for the past but also for the future, for those who live on the borderlands

---

33. Without attempting to be comprehensive I have in mind work such as Kathleen Brogan, *Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Literature*, Charlottesville, VA 1998; Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, Minneapolis, MN 1997; Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, New York 2005; Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern*, Durham, NC 2005; Hershina Bhana Young, *Haunting Capital: Memory, Text, and the Black Diasporic Body*, Hanover, NH 2006; Elizabeth Freeman (ed.), *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 13:2–3 (2007); Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts", *Small Axe* 12:2 (2008), 1–14; José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, New York 2009; Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, Durham, NC 2010; Grace Kyungwon Hong, *Death Beyond Disavowal: The Impossible Politics of Difference*, Minneapolis, MN 2015.

34. See, for example, Laura Donaldson, "Gospel Hauntings: The Postcolonial Demons of New Testament Criticism", in Fernando F. Segovia (ed.), *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism*, New York 2007, 97–113; Tat-siong Benny Liew, *What Is Asian-American Biblical Hermeneutics? Reading the New Testament*, Honolulu, HI 2008; Denise Kimber Buell, "God's Own People: Specters of Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in Early Christian Studies", in Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza & Laura S. Nasrallah (eds.), *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies*, Minneapolis, MN 2009, 159–190; Denise Kimber Buell, "Cyborg Memories: An Impure History of Jesus", *Biblical Interpretation* 18 (2010), 313–341; Buell, "Hauntology Meets Posthumanism"; Joseph A. Marchal, "'Making History' Queerly: Touches across Time through a Biblical Behind", *Biblical Interpretation* 19 (2011), 373–395; Peter N. McLellan, "Specters of Mark: The Second Gospel's Ending and Derrida's Messianicity", *Biblical Interpretation* 24 (2016), 357–381; Stephen D. Moore, *Gospel Jesuses and Other Nonhumans: Biblical Criticism Post-Poststructuralism*, Atlanta, GA 2017, 85–106; Matthew J. Ketchum, "Haunting Empty Tombs: Specters of the Emperor and Jesus in the Gospel of Mark", *Biblical Interpretation* 26 (2018), 219–243; Jacqueline M. Hidalgo, "No Future for Biblical Studies? Or, Still Living with a Contingent Apocalypse as *Biblical Interpretation* Turns 25", in Tat-siong Benny Liew (ed.), *Present and Future of Biblical Studies: Celebrating 25 Years of Brill's* Biblical Interpretation, Leiden 2018, 133–155; Kent L. Brintnall, Joseph A. Marchal & Stephen D. Moore (eds.), *Sexual Disorientations: Queer Temporalities, Affects, Theologies*, New York 2018; *Biblical Interpretation* 28:4–5 (2020).

35. As Molly McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past*, 154, 157, has shown, not only is it the case that "spiritualism as a practice offered historiographic techniques that challenge secular history itself", but also spiritualism as a form of religious experience may reveal "an alternative history of nonsecular sexualities". See pp. 154–176 for her larger argument about the relevance of spiritualism for the history of sexuality.

without a home". Such an orientation is "characterized by a penetrative reciprocity, a becoming-object for an other subject and a resultant joy or ecstasy".[36] Although Freccero locates this in relation to queer theory and politics, the effect sounds a lot like becoming a medium who does not reduce self to the other but rather opens oneself to the temporary penetration by spirits in order to enable them to communicate with those in the still-embodied material world.

As she concludes, Freccero calls specific attention to the passivity a hauntological approach entails:

> If this spectral approach to history and historiography is queer, it might also be objected that it counsels a kind of passivity, both in [a] sense of self-shattering and also potentially in the more mundane sense of the opposite of a political injunction to act. In this respect it is also queer, as only a passive politics could be said to be. And yet, the passivity – which is also a form of patience and passion – is not quite the same thing as quietism. Rather, it is a suspension, a waiting, an attending to the world's arrivals (through, in part, its returns).[37]

Again, Freccero's reference points are not spiritualism, but the queer passivity she counsels resembles discussions of mediumship.

Within biblical studies, Peter McLellan offers an example of a scholar taking up Freccero's call. He links the transwomen of colour displaced by the "prostitution free zones" in Washington, DC and the possessed Gerasenes living in the imperial cities known as the Decapolis as portrayed in Mk. 5:1–20. But his argument is not to read the latter through the former (or the converse) but to challenge the historical critical conventional "cut" between temporalities, calling for an "alliance" across "temporal-spatial divisions" and "between past spaces and present spaces, between sacred texts and lived realities. [...] This alliance, therefore, calls attention to the biblical interpreter's act of understanding the Decapolis as 'over there' and 'back then' as the same violence that would push the transwoman of color out of their own neighborhoods".[38] If we embrace this passivity as a way to do biblical studies we do not simply enact a queer temporality, a refusal to straighten time into a linear progression of past, present, and future; we also re-enact, even if in an apparently secular form, the kinds of unsettling of linear time sought after at each séance or sitting with a medium. We might benefit from

---

36. Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern*, 75, 102.
37. Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern*, 104.
38. Peter N. McLellan, "Queer Necropolitics in the Decapolis: Here and There, Now and Then", *Biblical Interpretation* 28:4–5 (2020), forthcoming. Quotation from the conclusion.

DENISE KIMBER BUELL

further consideration of what it means to call for scholars to act more like mediums. Mediumistic relations to the past may perhaps contain positive ethical possibilities but I am unsure that they guarantee such: spiritualists themselves exhorted the importance of assessing whether a spirit communication was fraudulent, either due to the medium or the level or nature of the spirit. The answer may not be to reaffirm historical critical principles but even there, as I have shown, the spectre of the medium persists. ▲

SUMMARY

This essay posits that historical criticism is indebted to a mediumistic relation to the past, one that needs to be understood in the historical context of the flourishing of modern spiritualism as an alternative modern critical modality. Spiritualist views of Jesus and Christian origins shed light on the formation and occlusions of historical criticism and how it incorporates, but also suppresses, forms of knowledge and temporality central to modern spiritualism. We find a shared vocabulary of concern across spiritualist and historical critical scholarship about inspiration, authority, and ability to bring into the present ideas from other temporalities. Both historical critics and spiritualists prioritize acquisition of knowledge from distant sources through a medium whose own agency is understood to consist of being a reliable conduit of this knowledge. Many spiritualists and historical critics argue that modern forms of Christianity had diverged (usually for the worse) from primitive Christianity, and that the Bible is not an infallible record of the Divine Word but rather a deeply valuable, if strange and tangled, document. By centring modern spiritualism, we can explore how its practices, ideas, and tropes have been inherited, activated, or suppressed in the forms of biblical interpretation that became and remain dominant and better assess these legacies and their alternatives.

Death's Presents

Derrida – Haunting Hegel

LAURENCE PAUL HEMMING

Laurence Paul Hemming is an honorary professor in the Philosophy, Politics and Religion Department and the Management School of Lancaster University.

l.p.hemming@lancaster.ac.uk

If we do not really die, it would be impossible for us really to rise again: a true resurrection depends on the irresolvable finality of death. If the "soul" of any given being is already eternal, then death is (however unpleasantly accomplished) a mere transition-point to the eternity not that awaits it, but that is in some sense already present for it. For, as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) himself argues, eternity cannot come "after" time, or else eternity would be a point in time. Eternity must already be in some sense present *to* time.[1] Thought like this, exactly as Hegel thinks it, eternity is a function of the absolute: it *is* how the absolute *is*. Eternity is therefore understood through being, not time. Karl Ludwig Michelet's (1801–1893) *Zusatz* to Hegel's text explains that "the true present is thus eternity".[2]

In "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials", Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) addressed Martin Heidegger's (1889–1976) well-known comment "if I *were* yet to *write* a theology – which I am sometimes tempted to do – the word 'being' *would* not occur in it". Among many other things Derrida says of

---

1. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1830)* (GW20), Hamburg 1992, 248: "Der Begriff der Ewigkeit muß aber nicht negative so gefaßt würden, als die Abstraction von der Zeit [...] ohnehin nicht in dem Sinn, als ob die Ewigkeit nach der Zeit komme; so würde die Ewigkeit zur Zukunft, einem Momente der Zeit, gemacht."

2. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften II* (TWA9), Frankfurt 1986, 55: "Die wahrhafte Gegenwart ist somit die Ewigkeit." All translations from German, French, Greek, and Latin are mine.

this remark, one stands out. Derrida asks, if Heidegger were to write a theology, "where does this then take place?"[3] When Derrida turns to Heidegger to understand the meaning of such a remark, he does so assuming that such a theology would be beyond metaphysics, and so outside the history of metaphysics as it has unfolded, and taken into its folds Christianity itself. It is significant that Derrida tells us what this means: "Here, the dimension of being open to the experience of God who is not or whose being is neither essence nor ground."[4] It seems to me with this phrase Derrida falls back into the very place from which Heidegger wants to depart. For to speak of a God "whose being is…", even if that being is *neither* this *nor* that, is to speak of God *and* being together, all over again.

I want to propose that Derrida has, perhaps, mis-heard what Heidegger has said. For Derrida does not ask the obvious question: if you (Heidegger) will write a theology without the word "being" appearing in it, who has already written such a theology, and why? Who already says "being" is the essence of God? And Derrida has, perhaps, not attended sufficiently to the sharpness of his own question: where, indeed *when*, would such a theology as Heidegger's take place? For it must take place "presently", but I will suggest, not in the present as conceived by those who wrote being into the essence of God, but rather, such a theology must reveal itself in *present* being, being as it discloses itself, not somewhere else, not "in eternity", but in the "here" that "is" (*Da-sein*). It must disclose itself in finite life, and to do that, it must confront the question of death. I want to suggest that Derrida's "hauntology" is the last, ghostly, moment of a persisting ontotheology, which, if abandoned, will allow us to read all over again two things in Heidegger to which Derrida did attend with care. One is the meaning of *Sein zum Tode* (being towards death), the other is Heidegger's "striking through" of be**X**yng. My suggestion is that if we do so, we can uncover that place from where Heidegger believed a theology after metaphysics could be written.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Ontotheology is a word at least as old as Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). When it appears late in the *Critique of Pure Reason*,[5] Kant says little to

---

3. Jacques Derrida, *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre*, vol. 2, Paris 2003, 196: "Si je *devais* encore *écrire* une théologie, comme je suis parfois tenté de le faire, le mot 'être' *devrait* ne pas y apparaître. […] Où cela a-t-il-donc lieu?" Italics in original.

4. Derrida, *Psyché*, 197: "Ici, la dimension de l'être ouvre à l'expérience de Dieu qui n'est pas ou dont l'être n'est ni l'essence ni le fondement."

5. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (AA3/AA4), Berlin 1911, A632/B630.

LAURENCE PAUL HEMMING

amplify what he means by it. The word appears more often in his notes on metaphysics, but receives a full discussion in his lectures on rational theology.[6] Kant's most ontotheological text, however, is a so-called "pre-critical" text written in 1763, eighteen years before the publication of the First Critique, *The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God*, in which the word ontotheology does not appear even once. However, Kant later refers to the argument he presents in this text as "my ontotheological proof",[7] and Heidegger, considering this text in detail in "Kant's Thesis about Being", speaks of ontotheology at the very point where he names Kant's text. Heidegger explains that "through the course of the history of ontotheological questioning the task has arisen not only of showing what the highest being is but to prove that this most beingful of beings *is*, and that God exists. The words existence, *Dasein*, actuality, name a mode of being".[8] Heidegger argues that the thesis about being in the First Critique (that "being is not a real predicate") concords with the thesis in this earlier text – indeed that the earlier text explains what is meant by what the *Critique of Pure Reason* says about being as a real predicate. Kant grounds being in logic, not formal logic, but, as Heidegger says, the logic in which transcendental philosophy has its ground, and so "from that logic determined as the original synthetic unity of transcendental apperception. In such logic ontology is grounded".[9] Being is not a real, "ontic", predicate because it is the pre-eminently ontological predicate. It is properly not used relatively, that is of particulars, but absolutely, and so of the *ens realissimum*, the most real being – God.

Heidegger ordinarily uses the word ontotheology not referring to Kant, but to Hegel. Although Hegel knows the term, he never uses it of himself. Commentators who have noticed ontotheology's long history argue that Heidegger speaks of it differently compared to Kant.[10] Markus Gabriel claims that "Kant [...] understands 'ontotheology' as the proof of the

---

6. Karl Heinrich Ludwig Pölitz, *Immanuel Kant's Vorlesungen über die philosophische Religionslehre*, Leipzig 1817. See Immanuel Kant, *Vorlesungen über Metaphysik und Rationaltheologie* (AA28.2.2), Berlin 1972, 993–1120.

7. Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysik Nachlaß I* (AA17), Berlin 1926, 624: "Mein ontotheologischer Beweis."

8. Martin Heidegger, *Wegmarken* (GA9), Frankfurt 1976, 450: "Im Verlauf der Geschichte des ontotheologischen Fragens entsteht die Aufgabe, nicht nur zu erweisen, was das höchste Seiende ist, sondern zu beweisen, daß dieses Seiendste des Seien den ist, daß Gott existiert. Die Worte Existenz, Dasein, Wirklichkeit nennen eine Weise des Seins."

9. Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, 462: "Die aus der ursprünglichen synthetischen Einheit der transzendentalen Apperzeption bestimmte Logik."

10. Tom Sheehan, "Heidegger's *Lehrjahre*", in John C. Sallis, Giuseppina Moneta & Jacques Taminiaux (eds.), *The Collegium Phaenomenologicum: The First Ten Years*, Amsterdam 1988, 131, n. 98, says of ontotheology: "that word was first used by Kant, but in a different sense."

existence of God [...] On the other hand, I understand with Heidegger [...] that 'ontotheology' fundamentally means the reduction of theologic and ontology".[11] It is clear that Heidegger derives his understanding of Kant's use of ontotheology from Kant's "proof", and likewise Heidegger associates ontotheology in the first instance with Hegel's lectures on the proofs for the existence of God.[12] There is not space here to consider the question in the close detail that it requires, but there can be no doubt that Heidegger understood ontotheology to be the pinnacle of metaphysics to think the *ens realissimum*, the most real being, as that thinking of being which understands the world to be mere appearance, and which understands being as other than, and the negation of, presence. Ontotheology argues that being can only be thought of as some absolute plenitude, some "more" than immediate presence: some place where *present* being attains final fulfilment. Gabriel leaves unclarified the reduction he names with "theologic" and ontology. On the basis of a centuries-long theistic thinking, we presume that theology reduces and overcomes ontology. In fact the reverse is the case, and even from the outset. For the *ens realissimum* is not a name for God, but God is merely a name for the highest and most real form of being. This means that even when "God" is dead, what has been accomplished in the description of the *ens realissimum* remains. Being reduces theologic to itself, and this *is* the history of ontotheology. "God" need only be a secondary, dependent, name for the absolute.

What has this to do with death? In Hegel's lectures on the proofs for the existence of God he states quite early that the real purpose is to take particular being *up*, and so into absolute being. Simultaneously the fulfillment of metaphysics is equated with the Christian ideal. In *Faith and Knowledge* Hegel had mocked Kant for his failure to show how the resolution of the idea of the highest subjectivity is an absolute objectivity that does not "terminate in faith, but is the only possible departure point of philosophy".[13] In the lectures on the proofs Hegel's purpose – the goal of his entire philosophy – becomes clear: logic, thought itself, must and will elevate itself from the particular to the absolute. He argues that "this elevation of the thinking

11. Markus Gabriel, *Der Mensch im Mythos: Untersuchungen über Ontotheologie, Anthropologie und Selbstbewußtseinsgeschichte in Schellings "Philosophie der Mythologie"*, Berlin 2006, 196, n. 52: "Kant [versteht] unter 'Ontotheologie' den Beweis des Daseins Gottes [...]. Dagegen verstehe ich mit Heidegger [...] unter 'Ontotheologie' grundsätzlich die Engführung von Theologik und Ontologie."

12. See Heidegger's remarks on ontotheology and Franz Anton Staudenmaier's (1800–1856) 1836 critique of Karl von Hegel's (1813–1901) posthumous publication of his father's lectures on the proofs for the existence of God in his preparatory notes for the 1930 lecture "Hegel und das Problem der Metaphysik" in Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge* (GA80.1), Frankfurt 2016, 32.

13. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Jenaer kritische Schriften* (GW4), Hamburg 1968, 325: "Statt [...] im Glauben zu enden, ganz allein die Philosophie anzufangen."

LAURENCE PAUL HEMMING

Geist [the particular subject] to that of which it is itself the highest thought, to God [absolute subjectivity] is thus what we wish to consider".[14] In holding out how the particular subject could elevate itself to think absolute subjectivity, Hegel evacuated death, because the thinking subject always has a path to the eternal through the elevating activity of thought itself.

Death, for Hegel, is the moment of absolute negation of particular subjectivity become absolute subjectivity as final freedom and universality.[15] Death resolves nothing, and is the harbinger of nothing in particular (the pure concept). Derrida, in *Spectres de Marx*, recalls the lines in Hamlet that mark a divide between two worlds: Hamlet's present (on the one hand) and the "proper" world (on the other) from where alone the truth is whole, the world where his father in some sense now "is", and whose ghost has come to call those inhabiting the present to a wider truth. Hamlet is forced to acknowledge a limit when (Derrida says he says): "I'll go no further", to which the ghost replies "I am thy father's spirit".[16] Derrida speaks of the ghost as a repetition: to be "thy father" and "thy father's spirit" are not identical, but how? Derrida speaks merely of the way in which "each time it is the event itself, a first time is a last time. Entirely other. Composition for an end to history. We call this a *hauntology*. This logic of haunting would not only be more ample and more powerful than an ontology or a thinking of being", it would "*comprehend* them, but incomprehensibly".[17] To comprehend is to stretch the hand right over and engulf, as well as to understand. Only a ghost could make such a vastness comprehensible.

Derrida raises here the spectre of what we think is "really" real. For we, who live not yet "comprehended" (not yet finished, not yet dead, not yet confided to the shame of the whole, and all our untruth within it) can "see" this whole only without full comprehension. The spectral character of ghosts, therefore, draws us to comprehend our own spectrality and

---

14. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungsmanuskripte II (1816–1831)* (GW18), Hamburg 1995, 234: "Diese Erhebung des denkenden Geistes zu dem, der selbst der höchste Gedanke ist, zu Gott, ist es also, was wir betrachten wollen."

15. See Hegel, *Jenaer kritische Schriften* (GW4), 448: "So ist [die Einzelheit schlechthin] der Begriff ihrer selbst, also unendlich und das Gegentheil ihrer selbst, oder absolute Befreyung, und die reine Einzelheit, die im Tode ist, ist ihr eigenes Gegentheil, die Allgemeinheit." ("Thus [i.e. in death] is this pure individuality its own concept, and therefore infinite, and the contrary of itself: or absolute liberation, and sheer individuality, which when in death is its own contrary, is universality.")

16. William Shakespeare, "Hamlet", 1.5, 1.9.

17. Jacques Derrida, *Spectres de Marx: L'Etat de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale*, Paris 1983, 31: "Chaque fois, c'est l'événement même, une première fois est une dernière fois. Toute autre. Mise en scène pour une fin de l'histoire. Appelons cela une *hantologie*. Cette logique de la hantise ne serait pas seulement plus ample et plus puissante qu'une ontologie ou qu'une pensée de l'être. [...] Elle les *comprendrait*, mais incompréhensiblement." Italics in original.

provisionality, the present's ghostly kind of being-true, before the end of history, which the fuller world beyond this one already fully knows, and knows as whole. Ghosts, the messengers of amplified finality, of the all as *all*, appear from this perfected place only as (for us) evanescing spirits, fracturing and blurring the stability and certainty we think as being our own. These spectres are mirrors (their silvering worn), whose indeterminacy, partial transparency, render us not only transparent to ourselves, but as confused, as comprehending-incomprehensibly. They rob me of the certainty I think my self is. It is impossible not to see in these ghosts of Derrida's the personifications of Hegel's negations. Indeed, it is impossible not see the pure trace, as *différance*, as that which does not exist, as the placeholder of the metaphysical understanding of nothing, the μὴ ὄν. Derrida describes the trace as "*in effect the absolute origin of sense in general*" even if "*we must return to saying, yet again, that there is no origin of sense in general*".[18] Is this not how metaphysics marks all present presence with a nullity, a nothingness that deprives it of its originary power, and yet is greater than anything we have so far and up to this present point yet owned?[19]

Derrida through his hauntology manages to capture, however fleetingly, the apocalypticism of Karl Marx (1818–1883) and make his (Derrida's) own the claim (incomprehensibly) to comprehend the end of history. Derrida is well aware of the meaning of his gesture: *Spectres de Marx* is peppered with references to Francis Fukuyama and to Hegel, and Derrida himself reminds us in *Spectres de Marx* of his 1980 lecture and essay "The Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy".[20] He knows (rather better than the editors and introducers of the English translation, *Specters of Marx*)[21] that Fukuyama's reference to the "end of history" is a reference to a certain reading of Hegel, and to, not an event (that "history" is "done"), but the manner of a *continuing* presence (that history is, before our very eyes, fulfilling itself as present doing). Fukuyama's "end of history" *is* itself the hinting, teasing, ghost of Hegel's metaphysics, following its Marxist adventure, now in more classically liberal attire. This presence takes a multitude of names: this ghost is not

---

18. Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, Paris 1967, 92, 95: "*La trace est en effet l'origine absolue du sens en général. Ce qui revient à dire, encore une fois, qu'il n'y a pas d'origine absolue du sens en général. La trace est la différance.*" Italics in original.

19. Is this not why Hegel says we are never yet "subject", and why Heidegger says we have never yet been *Da-sein*? Not, in other words, that "we", subjecthood, *Dasein*, have so far scored low marks in the test that life itself *is*, but that the presence of the present as such is always somehow provisional and incomplete, even in its origins?

20. Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, 37.

21. Who, oddly, persist in the belief that the phrase "the end of history" means that history has come to an end, when Derrida's own reading is clearly attuned to Fukuyama's actual sense. See "Introduction" to Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, New York 1994, vii.

LAURENCE PAUL HEMMING

nameless on account of having no name, but is impossible to name simply because it can own so many (its subject is multiplicity). Derrida cites Maurice Blanchot (1907–2003) as calling it the "end of philosophy" (but he was not the first),[22] but to this name we could add Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844–1900) will to power, or eternal recurrence.[23] Hegel himself, according to Eduard Gans (1797–1839), called it "the path of God through the world",[24] and Fukuyama "Hegel's non-materialist account of history",[25] drawing attention all over again to the immateriality, the phantasmagoric being, of *Geist*.[26]

Derrida, as much as he does not admit, cannot really conceal, that this amplitude which is greater than ontology, and from which ultimate truth flows (incomprehensibly), is the metaphysical ground of presence as such. As an end, it allows the beginning to come into view all over again, and yet does not admit of beginnings or ends (we comprehend we cannot comprehend "it all"). Derrida's suggestion "could one *address one's self in general if* already some phantom did not come back?",[27] concedes that what Fukuyama names as Hegel's "struggle for recognition" is dependent, not only on presence as such, but on presence-in-general, the presence that lies beyond the present, the only possible source of "final" truth (even if such a "possible" is really an "im/possible"): the truth to which ghosts witness, the truth of *Geist* as such, a truth whose certainty we must dis-own. Here one would have to concede that the "metaphysics of presence" is not quite as Derrida had named it in *De la grammatologie*, as the "ambiguity of the Heideggerian situation" which encompasses "all the metaphysical determinations of truth and even that beyond metaphysical onto-theology which Heidegger evokes".[28] What is it Derrida had failed to name? What remains uncomprehended, outside Derrida's playful, but still otherwise total, grasp?

Derrida's assault on "the metaphysics of presence" – logocentrism, onto-theology, the origin of grounds – does not itself escape from understanding presence in a very specific way, since it is an attempt to comprehend every kind of presence, even the fictional presence of im/possibility. This is not

22. Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, 67, citing a text of Blanchot's of 1959.

23. In which being (*das Sein*) itself is no more than steam and a vapour.

24. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (TWA7), Frankfurt 1986, 403, note: "[Die] Gang Gottes in der Welt."

25. Francis Fukuyama, "By Way of an Introduction" to the 20th Anniversary Edition of *The End of History and the Last Man*, London 2012, xvi.

26. A point also not lost on Derrida. Comparing the spectre of communism ("das Gespenst des Kommunismus") with Hegel, Marx notes that "la sémantique du Gespenst hante elle-même la sémantique du Geist". Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, 175.

27. Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, 279: "Peut-on *s'adresser en général si* quelque fantôme déjà ne revient pas?" Italics in original.

28. Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, 21: "Toutes les déterminations métaphysiques de la vérité et même celle à laquelle nous rappelle Heidegger, par-delà l'onto-théologie métaphysique."

"criticism" of Derrida, and far less than that, any kind of refutation. It is inherent to presence itself that we are both bound to presence and seek escape from what is binding. This is not a mere "failure" in our psychology, or cleverness, or capacity to think, but belongs to our becoming present. In the drive to escape what threatens to bind us, it is world itself (and not *self*-presence) that opens up; all our certainty is gone when we are faced with mortal threat. For Derrida's constant drawing us back to the instability, the playfulness, *différance*, and the provisionality of presence is itself the mark of a metaphysics that both draws attention to its overcoming, and to our inability to bring this overcoming about merely because we might "will it" to be so. For the concern with the metaphysics of presence *is* the persistent presence of ontotheology, or rather, is indicative of not being able to step away from the persistence in philosophy of that understanding of presence that ontotheology itself *is*. The only way we find out how to step away is when we are driven off. Mortal threat is one such drivenness. It is not *what* presence *is* that is ever in question, but, had we enough time to begin the question, the *how?*, the manner of presence's presencing. Ontotheology assigns the meaning and ground of presence to somewhere else, "beyond present being in importance and power",[29] whether that is to "the good" for Plato (c. 428–c. 348 BCE), or "becoming" for Nietzsche, or "negation" for Hegel. Indeed, Hegel makes explicit that "the world heads towards a being which is only illusory, not the true being, not absolute truth", and so not the "absolute" of ontotheology, towards which the world can only point.[30] In each case, as Heidegger has indicated, the basic tendency of metaphysics is a place or a concept of permanent presence that understands present presence as non-being and less-than-being. Does the *trace* escape this description? The consequence of this, Heidegger argues, is to be found in Aristotle's (384–322 BCE) understanding of θεωρεῖν, wisdom (σοφία) itself, or an "abiding with what is eternal" such that "there exists for humanity, therefore, a certain possibility of ἀθανατίζειν, a mode of being for humanity in which it has the highest possibility of not coming to an end".[31] Ἀθανατίζειν means here both "becoming immortal", divine, and "deathlessness". Heidegger remarks that this is the extreme position which Plato and Aristotle foresaw for human existence. Metaphysics has at its very origins, and in its end, in speculation (θεωρεῖν) and in absolute subjectivity, the

---

29. Plato, *Republic* VI.509b: ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας πρεσβείᾳ καὶ δυνάμει.

30. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* (GW20), 88.

31. Martin Heidegger, *Platon: Sophistes* (GA19), Frankfurt 1992, 177–178: "Sich Aufhalten beim Immersein, das θεωρεῖν [...] Darin besteht für den Menschen eine gewisse Möglichkeit des ἀθανατίζειν (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1177 b 33), eine Seinsart des Menschen, in der er die höchste Möglichkeit hat, nicht zu Ende zu gehen."

LAURENCE PAUL HEMMING

grandiose purpose of overcoming death, and providing access to an eternal, immortalizing mode of being. Moreover, mortality, the advance of death, manifests as an outermost, an extreme, of presence, within which finally we struggle to the utmost to hold fast. A metaphysical deferral of death and mortality, and its capacity for making absence present, is hardly difficult to understand in such an age as ours, which refuses the "beyond" of where we might live "after" death, and so clings fervently, either to present presence, or resigns itself to negation, nothing at all.

If we find the totality of presence itself assigned *somewhere else*, other than within present presence, what would this mean for death? Surely it would mean that death is not really death: say, if death were the mark, not of an impassable limit, but a to-whence, a place "beyond", at which a different kind of presence were assigned – let us say, in an eternal life (elsewhere), or even eternal punishment (eternity of a kind, however nasty). If we abandon this other place, does this mean that all there is, is immediacy of the moment, eternal presencing of the "now"? Or does it not rather mean what the Greeks originally meant by the allotted time of a life: αἰών, which Aristotle once said was first identical with what was also said by means of ψυχή, a life, a soul.[32]

When we do not stand over-against the totality of presence (which is the mark of metaphysics' presencing, the co-appearing and yet irresolvability of the particular *with* the universal which points to something more than either of them, and yet cannot point to *how*), presence-as-a-whole makes itself present in a way quite other. Mortal death, which threatens to tear the presencing of present presence away from me, and so presences *as* this threat, as absence presencing, brings forward this *how*. *How is it* that this befalls me, or befalls another, *without escape*?

If the recognition that death is a central concept in Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* is a commonplace,[33] no one, to my knowledge, has recognized that Heidegger's phrase "Sein zum Tode", "being towards death", is not a neologism or innovation, but quite the contrary, a return: to the originary Greek understanding (at least from Homer out) of the human being as θνητός. The dictionary definition for this word is not only "mortal", for which θνητός is shorthand, but more properly means "liable to death", death as "what comes towards us".[34] θνητός stands out as alongside and belonging

32. Homer in several places equates soul (ψυχή) with αἰών, which Aristotle discusses at length in *De caelo*, 279 a 5–279 b 5.

33. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (GA2), Frankfurt 1977.

34. Definition from Henry George Liddell & Robert Scott, *A Greek–English Lexicon*, 9th ed., Oxford 1996, 802. Johann Gottlob Schneider, *Handwörterbuch der Griechischen Sprache*, vol. 1, Leipzig 1819, 712: "einem Menschen zukommend" ("what comes towards a man").

to that other name for those, central to the Greek understanding of world, ἀθάνατοι, the deathless gods. Of this, Heidegger has nothing specific to say in *Sein und Zeit*, although well aware of it. Why does a particular possibility of understanding death enter philosophy with Heidegger? Or rather, why is it possible for Heidegger to allow an understanding of death to re-emerge, from having already been there at the beginning? Many commentators who have understood especially the period from the early modern thinkers up to Romanticism as a period preoccupied with death, a "necrophiliac time", have singled out Heidegger's "being towards death" as evidence of the death-drive that they find at the heart of Western, modern, thought. These observations often heavily depend on the history of literature. They do not help us: even if literature lends form to thought, thinking far exceeds the genealogy of literary form.

What Heidegger *does* say in the course of the long preparation for what became the publication of *Sein und Zeit* is that only since Nietzsche's proclamation of the "death of God" has a return to an understanding of human existence as "being towards death" been reopened for thinking. It is this that Heidegger means when he announces that "philosophical research is and remains atheism",[35] connecting this argument directly with Nietzsche's *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, in which his death of God first came into print.[36] The death of God means the end of a manner of presence: that is to say, *that* understanding of presence that says in the *mens Dei* all being and all time are held and comprehended in the simultaneity of a single act of knowledge.[37] What makes Heidegger a singular reader of the Greeks is that he recognized in the completion of metaphysics, in the coming into its end of a centuries-long way in which presence itself had unfolded, the way was newly opened for thinking to experience all over again the inceptual place from out of which that metaphysics had itself begun, and, taking sight of that place, to ask what it would mean to open up this beginning again. It asks this question not as a genealogical task, a history and litany of erudite

---

35. Martin Heidegger, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs* (GA20), Frankfurt 1979, 109–110: "Philosophische Forschung ist und bleibt Atheismus." See also p. 110: "Und gerade in diesem Atheismus wird sie zu dem, was ein Großer einmal sagte, zur 'Fröhlichen Wissenschaft'."

36. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Chemnitz 1882.

37. Aquinas formulates this in the following way: "Deus autem omina videt in uno, quod est ipse. [...] Unde simul, et non successive omnia videt." ("God therefore sees all things in one, which is himself. Therefore he sees them simultaneously, and not successively.") *Summa Theologiae* 1a, 14, art. 7, resp. He adds: "Deus [...] cognoscat omnia simul." ("God knows everything simultaneously.") *Summa Theologiae* 1a, 14, art. 12, ad 2. Aquinas, citing Boëthius (c. 480–c. 524), similarly argues that eternity is an act of being, not of temporality: "Quia eternitas est mensura esse permanentis." ("Since eternity is the measure of permanent being.") *Summa Theologiae* 1a, 10, art. 4, resp.

LAURENCE PAUL HEMMING

forms, but as a *demand*, the demand that the present *is*, and so "presents". We do not, idly, think up new ways of thinking; rather thinking makes on us a thoughtful demand.

Essential is the possibility of a renewed appropriation of the meaning of being as such. Being is always understood by Heidegger as presence, *Anwesenheit*, which he continually and repeatedly asserts is the basis of the Greek experience of being. This understanding of presence returns us to the *Da*, the "here", of *Da-sein*, here-being. What preoccupies Heidegger, and what causes him at a certain point in *Sein und Zeit* to hyphenate the ordinary German term *Dasein* ("existence") as *Da-sein*, here-being, is the emphasis on the *Da* of *Da-sein* as the meaning of the present "being" of presence, *Anwesenheit*.[38] It is within this *Da*, this present-presence, that death advances towards and comes to befall each human being in turn. From this understanding Heidegger explores with patient care in the pages of *Sein und Zeit* the horizon of the finitude of being, as the way in which the death of another opens each one of us to the limitation to our own future existence, and this at death.[39]

Other than *Sein und Zeit*, the phrase *Sein zum Tode* is mentioned once, in only one other work published in Heidegger's lifetime, and hardly ever in his Freiburg lecture courses (two brief references only, from what we know). In contrast, in several places in the *Nachlaß* material of his unpublished writing from the same period (now almost all available in print), the enduring importance of "being towards death" in his later thinking is very clear.[40] Perhaps the most fundamental transition in Heidegger's thought over this period is from the notion of *Dasein* as the being of being-human, to Da-*sein*, as the enquiry into presence that constitutes the being of the "here", or *Da*.[41] Around 1936 it appears Heidegger prepared a recapitulation, or set of "current remarks", on the text of *Sein und Zeit* in which he sets aside the notion of "being towards death" as the "concealed ground of the historicality of *Dasein*" as an enquiry that is "metaphysical" in its intention, in favour of the enquiry into Da-*sein*, "here-*being*", as the transition that is

---

38. See, for a full discussion of this, Heidegger, *Platon: Sophistes* (GA19), 466–467.

39. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (GA2), 314–331. This is the opening of the discussion of "*Dasein* and Temporality".

40. The reason for the disappearance, Heidegger suggests in many places in the *Nachlaß* material, has to do with the taking over of *Sein zum Tode*, not as a determination of presence and *Da-sein*, but through *Weltanschauung*, a "world-view". See especially Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie* (GA65), Frankfurt 1989, 282–286.

41. It is too little noticed that the hyphenation of *Da-sein*, in all its forms, with all its different italicizations, is an attempt to explicate a mode of *being*, of *present-being* (*Da-sein*), *not* a masked "anthropology" of the "human being".

in itself historical, the unfolding of "the event" (*das Ereignis*).[42] These notes are often written in an almost cryptic shorthand, difficult to decipher, and revolving around the central formulations of the later Heidegger.

It is startlingly clear from a little-known text of three lectures from 1925 that by *Dasein*, Heidegger had originally meant the specific "being" that the individual human being "is", even if this being can only be defined as "a living being that always has before it a not-yet-being".[43] The understanding of *Dasein* elucidated in *Sein und Zeit* is this specific "being". It is this "being" that Heidegger specifically defines as "being towards death", as only completed *at* death, and therefore to be mortal, oriented on death, is to fulfil one's "being" (*das Sein*). What is "metaphysical" in this understanding, however, is that there remains in this understanding the continued and explicit tendency for "presence" (*die Anwesenheit*) to be understood as what this being (*ein Seiendes*) brings to presence "for itself" even as a "not yet", as something not yet fully accomplished, because the completion of this presence lies in the future (at death). At this point Heidegger's understanding of *Sein zum Tode* depends, yet again, on a "not yet", a deferral, an ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας or "beyond present being" (we see immediately the parallels between the earlier Heidegger and Derrida's thought of the trace). Quite the reverse, however, turns out to be the case: the "not yet" is itself dependent on immediate presence, on the presencing of present presence. But *I* am not the presencing of present presence, but rather, my mortality, and even more the present understanding of it, is only possible because of the compelling and always-emerging presence of *present* presence itself.

It is with this understanding that we can make sense of the only other reference to "being towards death" published in Heidegger's lifetime, in the 1949 publication of an *Introduction*, added to the text of Heidegger's lecture on the nothing of 1929, *What is Metaphysics*. Here Heidegger talks of "the standing-out within the openness of being", which is characterized by the twin poles of "the sustaining of standing-out (care), and enduring in the outermost (being towards death), together and as the full unfolding of existence". The German of "standing-out" is "das Innestehen", which has the resonance of *innerste* ("innermost") of taking into care, but actually means a "standing-fast", so that Heidegger characterizes existence as the stretch across an opposition, and so between what is most inward and what is

---

42. Martin Heidegger, *Zu eigenen Veröffentlichungen* (GA82), Frankfurt 2018, 133: "S. 386: 'der verborgene Grund der Geschichtlichkeit des Daseins': 'das eigentliche Sein zum Tode', 'die Endlichkeit der Zeitlichkeit.' Was ist damit gemeint? Metaphysisch! Das Da-*sein* als Übergang in das Ereignis ist *in* sich *geschichtlich*, genauer – das Da-sein." Italics in original.

43. Heidegger, *Vorträge* (GA80.1), 128, 138: "[Das Dasein] immer nur bestimmen als ein Lebendiges, das immer noch ein Noch-nicht-Sein vor sich hat." Surely, this is what Heidegger means when he says several times in later texts that no one has ever yet been *Dasein*.

LAURENCE PAUL HEMMING

outermost. A note added to this sentence records a remark in Heidegger's own edition of the text: "Letting death come towards oneself, composing oneself for the arrival of death within the com-pass of be**X**ing."[44]

"Being towards death" means the preparedness for being able to die, and so preparedness to bear the finitude that death brings. Again, there is much that could be said here, if we had the time. Derrida himself had noted the connection Heidegger had wanted to indicate between the crossing-through of be**X**ing and *das Geviert*, the fourfold of heaven and earth, mortals (*die Sterblichen*, θνητοί) and divinities (ἀθάνατοι), that Heidegger had first introduced to a public audience in the 1949 lecture "Das Ding".[45] In a note from around 1936, Heidegger identifies a series of connections between "being towards death", the 1929 essay "On the Essence of Ground", and Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843), which together prepare the ground for "the originary and unvocalized relations that are to be grasped – between the unfolding (*Wesen*) of *beyng* (*das Seyn*) and its grounding within *Da-sein*".[46] These connections effectively name a path of the development of his own thinking. They begin with "being towards death", the original exploration of the different ways in which in *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger had developed an understanding of the differing modes of the presencing of presence for "oneself", and "for another". The reference to "On the Essence of Ground" represents the culmination of Heidegger's working-out of the meaning of the "nothing" and of the "not" in the explication of the finitude of *Dasein*, and what Heidegger calls the "abyss" of freedom. What of the final step, named here with Hölderlin? In ways that have hardly yet been paid sufficient attention, it becomes clear that Heidegger found in Hölderlin the possibility for developing the original elucidation of the inter-relations of the fourfold. Heidegger does not ever say that Hölderlin *is* the source or origination of the thought of the fourfold, rather he shows what Heidegger himself has found. He says, "presumably" in Hölderlin the paired pair of earth and heaven, mortals and deathless ones, is constantly in play.[47]

---

44. Heidegger, *Wegmarken* (GA9), 374: "Das Innestehen in der Offenheit des Seins, das Austragen des Innestehens (Sorge) und das Ausdauern im Äußersten (Sein zum Tode) ᵃ zusammen und als das volle Wesen der Existenz." The note [a] adds: "Auf sich zu-kommen lassen den Tod, sich halten in der Ankunft des Todes als des Ge-Birgs des SeiXns." We should note how close what is said here is to the definition of θνητός in Schneider, *Handwörterbuch der Griechischen Sprache*.

45. Jacques Derrida, *De l'esprit: Heidegger et la question*, Paris 1987, 82. See Martin Heidegger, *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge* (GA79), Frankfurt 1994, 12.

46. Martin Heidegger, *Überlegungen II–VI (Schwarze Hefte 1931–1938)* (GA94), Frankfurt 2014, 290: "Die ursprünglichen und unausgesprochenen Bezüge zu begreifen – diejenigen zwischen dem Wesen des *Seyns* und seiner Gründung im *Da-sein*." Italics in original.

47. Martin Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (GA4), Frankfurt 1981, 163: "Wir achten jetzt nur auf die Worte 'wirklich / Ganzem Verhältniß, samt der Mitt' und

Heidegger vocalizes what lies unvocalized (*unausgesprochen*), unthematized, in Hölderlin, but still presences within what he has to say, and so is "there" (*Da*). Heidegger names how he became aware of a persisting presence. Not one that has a "rationale", one that could have been predicted in advance, but the very opposite: one that simply unfolds itself and waits to be vocalized, and yet is determinative for world. This presence, however, reaches all the way back to the Greeks themselves. For Heidegger argues repeatedly that Hölderlin far surpasses even Hegel in elucidating the very origins of Western thought through his engagement with the Greeks. It is this that is "unvocalized", but nevertheless present. The fourfold is this founding, ever-present, presence.

The fourfold, for which early sketches appear in Heidegger's *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, and whose elements are discussed in the 1935 lecture course published as *Einführung in die Metaphysik*,[48] can indeed be seen already present in its elemental relations in the fragments we have of the poet Sappho (c. 630–c. 570 BCE), and also, for instance, in the *Iliad*.[49] Heidegger's later consideration of "being towards death", hidden from public view and so barely present in his published works, continues apace throughout the *Nachlaß* notebooks, and its connection with being-mortal (θνητός) is at times made absolutely explicit, and with direct reference to the crossing through of be**X**ing: "As world-fourfold humanity in-dwells, if it becomes properly joined to it as mortal. Human *Dasein*, experienced as being towards death, is the thoughtful intimation of the presence of being-mortal."[50] This is to some extent a loose translation. What is said here only makes sense if it is understood as also a comment on *Sein und Zeit*, and so on the passageway from the conceptualization of "being towards death" to a return to an originary understanding of θνητός, being-mortal.

Derrida was intrigued by Heidegger's practice of the striking-through of be**X**ing. He had available to him only a few scattered occasions in print where Heidegger had made the gesture. During his lifetime, and in published work, Heidegger made reference only to being as *das Sein*, but in the extensive, indeed almost ubiquitous, uses in the *Nachlaß* material Heidegger strikes through only his archaic use, *das Seyn*. There has been some

---

verstehen sie vermutungsweise als den Namen für jenes Ganze von Erde und Himmel, Gott und Mensch."

48. Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie* (GA65), 310; Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (GA40), Frankfurt 1983, 17.

49. Homer, *Iliad* III.276–279.

50. Martin Heidegger, *Vier Hefte I und II (Schwarze Hefte 1947–1950)* (GA99), Frankfurt 2019, 116: "Welt-Geviert erwohnt der Mensch, wenn er zum Sterblichen eigens geeignet worden. Menschliches Dasein, als Sein zum Tode erfahren, ist der gedachte Wink in das Wesen des Sterblichen."

LAURENCE PAUL HEMMING

debate among Heidegger scholars about what difference Heidegger intended to indicate between *das Sein* and *das Seyn*, with some even claiming that Heidegger is confused. There is, in fact, no confusion: by *das Sein* Heidegger means that understanding of being that belongs to the difference between *das Sein*, being, and *das Seiende*, which is often translated (in order to distinguish it) as "beings". It is this that he had originally characterized as the "ontological difference". *Das Seiende* does not mean "beings" in their thingliness, it means the being of what is here-present: in short, *Anwesenheit*, presence as such, the presence of the present, which can manifest in *a* present being, but can also manifest as what the Greeks mean by τὰ ὄντα (which is a plural), or just (singular) τὸ πάν, "the singularly all that is present". *Das Seyn*, in contrast, is a shorthand, and really means "Wahrheit des Seyns", the originarily unfolding truth of beyng, that *lets* presence "presence". With the emergence of the fourfold, Heidegger allows the interpretation of the ontological difference to fall back, in favour of what emerges through the fourfold, namely the "in-between" (*Inzwischen*), the "relation" (*der Bezug*) that *is* the clearing (*die Lichtung*) that opens out within the fourfold. Presence presences, as the emerging of whatever emerges, in this "relation". The most originary name of this emerging is φύσις, the presencing of the self-emerging, what unfolds for itself and brings itself out and into the light. The other name Heidegger finds among the Greeks for this is τὸ ζῆν. As this place (relation), it is also the place where what emerges and presences also passes away, a place of presence as γένεσις and φθορά.

Derrida interprets the striking-through that came to prominence in "Zur Seinsfrage"[51] (and that the *Nachlaß* notes of the period is shot through with) in contrast to a much earlier striking-through of Heidegger's (that in fact just precedes the first of the *Nachlaß* notebooks), and that appears in a lecture course of around 1929. What interests Derrida is a certain "erasure of the name", whereby the "the striking-through speaks not only of something other and taking something as other: but generally not accessible *as present being*".[52] Derrida wants to interpret the two strikings-through as radically opposed to each other. It would seem he is in a particularly strong position to do so, especially since the first relates to Heidegger's claims about animals and poverty of world (even worldlessness), and the second concerns the fourfold. However, in 1929 Heidegger is actually drawing attention to the phenomenological access to what presences in presence, and this is

---

51. Heidegger, *Wegmarken* (GA9), 385–426.

52. Derrida, *De l'esprit*, 83: "Rature du nom." Derrida cites Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt, Endlichkeit, Einsamkeit* (GA29/30), Frankfurt 1983, 291–292: "Die Durchstreichung besagt nicht nur: etwas anderes und als etwas anderes genommen, sondern: überhaupt nicht *als Seiendes* zugänglich." Italics in original.

also what is at issue in the striking-through of be**X**yng in the fourfold. In 1929 what Heidegger is concerned with is our capacity to see that there are both poorer and richer ways of the appropriation of presence, in its self-emergence. In each case, both the poorer and the richer sense relies on the full presence of the emergent, but on a presence that is to varying degrees marked by absence. We have already seen what it means, mortally to be faced with death and seek to escape its grasp, to run away from death even as it presences before us, as that presence that threatens to tear us away from life itself. What, however, of when, confronted with presence, we succeed in escaping, or, more to the point, when, confronted with presence, we do not recognize the how, the character of the presence itself? Even in 1929 it is not really what the animal sees that is at issue, but what *we see, in watching the animal*. Seeing the manner in which the animal is deprived of the full meaning of the presence that presences, what we actually notice is the presence of world, not of the thing that has emerged within that world, such that the animal can only take it in a limited way. Since we see a *different* way in which presence is less present ("poorer"), this time, however, without the fright and terror of mortal death. Such a recognition would be our own preliminary access to a phenomenon that also confronts us, namely the capacity of presence not only to present itself, but also to hide and withdraw from – not the animal so much – as us, ourselves.

In a late note, Heidegger argues the fundamental connection between death itself, and "being towards death", hints at the seemingly difficult to grasp connections between *Sein und Zeit* and *das Seyn* and the striking-through of be**X**yng. Heidegger asks: "Can humanity think the outermost? Does it stand already, as human-essence, in such recollection? How does it stand with a correctly experienced thinking of death? Is not this uttermost recollection 'being towards death' itself?" After repeating the phrase "death is the compass of be**X**yng", he concludes (in parentheses) "why did *Sein und Zeit* deal with 'being towards death'? In order, perhaps, to give some thoughtless time to nihilism? Or rather, or *only*, so that *Sein und Zeit* could think about be**X**yng?"[53] Heidegger names here the fundamental conundrum of the text *Sein und Zeit* itself, both for him and all its subsequent readership. Is it to be read as "earlier" Heidegger and metaphysics? Or could it only say what it said because it was already so much on the way to

53. Martin Heidegger, *Anmerkungen VI–IX (Schwarze Hefte 1948/49–1951)* (GA98), Frankfurt 2018, 140: "Kann der Mensch das Äußerste denken? Steht er schon, als Menschenwesen, in solchem Andenken? Wie steht es mit dem recht erfahrenen Denken an den Tod? Ist nicht dieses äußerste Andenken das 'Sein zum Tode'? Tod aber ist das Gebirg des SeyXns. [...] (Warum handelt 'Sein und Zeit' vom 'Sein zum Tode'? Vielleicht um einer gedankenlosen Zeit zum Nihilismus zu verhelfen? Oder gar, oder *nur*; um in 'Sein und Zeit' an das SeXyn zu denken?)." Italics in original.

LAURENCE PAUL HEMMING

naming, not being (*das Sein*), but beyng (*das Seyn*) and the fourfold relation of presence's present? How you answer this question will determine who you are as a thinker, even if you yourself are Heidegger.

Is death, finding ourselves ones living from out of death's advance towards us, living as mortals (ordered towards death), precisely *what* allows us to understand the truth of being at all? Was it "being towards death" itself, the re-emergence of humanity as θνητός, that enabled *Sein und Zeit* to reach beyond the language of metaphysics (in which, to some extent, it still spoke)?

In one of the texts I cited earlier Heidegger describes the striking-through of be**X**yng not only in the way we have already encountered, but as an opposition between "scrimping" and an "originary freeing".[54] The "scrimping" and withholding that characterizes an impoverishment is also a human experience of worldlessness, of the *loss* of the meaning of being-mortal and the flight of the gods, of the expenditure of the earth and the dullness and dreariness of a sky long emptied of the dazzling sun. In such a world-impoverished world presence is marked by a not-ness, by a deathliness that is not death itself, but a life in death. In such a world the originary truth of being withdraws and is covered over, struck-out. In such a world things emerge or are wrested into presence in an only ghostly way, shadows of themselves. Only such a possibility of being can explain how presence presences across a twofold, from both the splendour of its emerging, to what can only emerge by remaining hidden and covered over. Are ghosts the harbingers of our poverty in the presence of the present?

Indeed, this is how Heidegger describes the unfolding of the fourfold. In his spoken preface to a public delivery of his lecture "Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry", Heidegger offers to bring those who listen (and I translate here very freely) "out of the conscripted technological word (*das Ge-stell*) which is the self-withdrawing eventuality of the fourfold".[55] The fourfold must also be the originary ground, not only of the paired pairs of mortals and immortals, earth and heavens, but *also* world's withdrawal, as the will to will and the "essence of technology". These too, must be explained and stand on an originary fourfold ground which is present in poverty, present in withdrawal.

Presence hides itself from us as ones surrounded by ghosts, or allows us to stand out within a world, but only as fully mortal. How we encounter mortality is never a direct path, for the path itself is beset with flight and

54. Heidegger, *Vier Hefte I und II* (GA99), 116: "Das Zwischen von Erde und Himmel durchkreuzt die Nachbarschaft von Sparnis und Freye."

55. Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (GA4), 153: "Aus dem Ge-Stell als dem sich selbst verstellenden Ereignis des Gevierts."

distraction, until we have no choice but to be caught, and caught up, in dread mortality (which is always most of all my own, *jemeinig*). Only when dread mortality is uncovered for me and I cannot elude it, do I encounter our mortality, do we prepare for death and let death advance upon us *in* and *as* the splendour of life itself.

To write a theology requires an adequate account of being. Being, however, belongs only to the unfolding essence of *present* presence, its only place; it does not occur "elsewhere", "beyond" or even as the place of the eternal or absolute, as the essential ground of gods, or God. Being, *present* being, is that place alone wherein gods and God appear. Being would not appear in the description of gods, or God's essence, since essencing, being, is the wherein of their coming-forth and appearing (and withdrawal and flight). ▲

SUMMARY

This paper examines the ontological question that persists in Derrida's conception of a "hauntology", proposing that it is the last echo of the very "metaphysics of presence" that Derrida himself proposes to leave behind. The paper suggests that in the phrase "metaphysics of presence", Derrida had presumed that what was to be overcome was "presence", whereas for Heidegger all thinking is in fact an overcoming of "metaphysics" that allows presence (*Anwesenheit*) to be understood in both its most originary (as the "truth of beyng" or *Wahrheit des Seyns*) and its most futural (as the *Da* of *Da-sein*) senses. The paper re-examines two phrases central to Derrida's reading of Heidegger: one is the meaning of *Sein zum Tode* (being towards death), the other is Heidegger's "striking through" of beXyng, and proposes that, through our being unable to evade the most extreme moment of having to face death as the ineluctability of being-no-longer present, we are able finally to unveil the meaning presence for itself.

LAURENCE PAUL HEMMING

Neither God nor Ghost

Rhetorical Spectrality in the Gospel According to Mark

JOEL KUHLIN

Joel Kuhlin is a doctoral student in New Testament exegesis at Lund University.

joel.kuhlin@ctr.lu.se

Phaedo and a Ghostly Grammar

In *Phaedo*, Plato (c. 428–c. 348 BCE) allows us passage into an ancient discourse on ghosts in Greco-Roman antiquity. In the dialogue between Socrates (c. 469–399 BCE) and Cebes (c. 430–350 BCE), souls too attached to the corporeal are believed to result in ghosts hovering around their tombs:

> You must suppose, my friend [Cebes], that this corporeal element is weighty and heavy, earthy and visible. Indeed such a soul that has this is weighed down and dragged back to the visible world by fear of both the invisible and Hades, so it's said, circling aimlessly among the tombstones and graves (τοὺς τάφους), among which indeed some shadowy apparitions of souls have actually been seen (περὶ ἃ δὴ καὶ ὤφθη ἄττα ψυχῶν σκιοειδῆ φαντάσματα), the kind of images that such souls produce that have not been released in a pure state, but having a share in the visible can thus be seen.[1]

Plato's spectral theory posits that the soul (ψυχή) can create a phantom presence (φάντασμα) when involved in unhealthy clinging to the corporeal (σωματοειδής) in its previous life, which in turn hinders the reincarnation

---

1. Plato, *Euthyphro; Apology; Crito; Phaedo; Phaedrus*, Cambridge, MA 2017, 389.

of the soul.[2] The sighting of souls is centred around monuments and tombs (μνήματά τε καὶ τοὺς τάφους). In short, Plato here develops a theory of the popular belief that ghosts, for various reasons, were particularly active around (their own) tombs. When turning to the New Testament archive with *Phaedo*'s spectral grammar in the background, a handful of loci stand out as more haunted than others. The Gospel According to Mark in particular looks promising as spectral themes appear through its use of a rhetoric of paradox.[3] The entire Markan text can be thought of as drawing out a diagram of the empty tomb that early theologians, and in particular the anonymous scribes of antiquity, can be seen encircling in different ways.[4]

This paper will focus on (a) the uses of apparition (φάντασμα) in the New Testament archive and Jesus walking on water in Mk. 6 and Mt. 14, and the appearance of Jesus in the shape of a phantom.[5] Further, (b) the site of the empty tomb (τάφος) and the enigmatic (non-)resurrection of Jesus in Mk. 16 emerges as a possible spectral site. Not only is (the oldest version of) the Markan ending centred around a frightening occurrence around the empty tomb, but in contrast to the other canonical gospels, Jesus never appears as resurrected. But most importantly, (c) early Christian scribes and copyists (theorized under the moniker of "ghostwriters") would not stop

---

2. Daniel Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Sourcebook*, New York 2002, 147–148.

3. I will in this paper use "the Gospel According to Mark" when referring to the ancient, living, textual text tradition in early Christian manuscripts, rather than "Mark's Gospel". (I will, for the sake of the readability, however, use "Markan" and "Lukan" when citing or referring to specific portions of the textual traditions texts.) It is more or less a consensus among scholars that the gospels initially circulated as anonymous and without authors, which in the case for the Gospel According to Mark is significant with relation to its multiple endings, as well as other textual issues. The main reasons for the current non-standard abbreviation are (1) to highlight the actual paratextual titles used by the textual tradition's ghostwriters and scribes to describe the Markan text in late antiquity (as κατὰ Μᾶρκον) and (2) to emphasize the fact that the Gospel According to Mark during its early transmission, prior to Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 130–202), was transmitted *without designation to a single authority*. In a sense, the Gospel According to Mark was originally authorless. In short, the ghostwriters of the Gospel According to Mark are as close as one possibly can get to a textual indication of "authorship" in this period. The fact that the Gospel According to Mark was originally read without an original author allows the textual tradition to provide a space or invitation for the ghostwriters, and ghost-writerly activity. For a discussion on the importance of not using "Mark" or "Mark's Gospel" as referring to a stable text of "book" in antiquity, see Matthew D.C. Larsen, "Correcting the Gospel: Putting the Titles of the Gospels in Historical Context", in Abraham J. Berkovitz & Mark Letteney (eds.), *Rethinking "Authority" in Late Antiquity: Authorship, Law, and Transmission in Jewish and Christian Tradition*, London 2018, 78–103.

4. Jakub Zdebik, *Deleuze and the Diagram: Aesthetic Threads in Visual Organization*, London 2012, grounds the use of diagram as coming from διάγραμμα, meaning "a figure marked out by lines". The Gospel According to Mark's figure and image-of-thought is found with the lines drawing out the empty tomb.

5. The notion of the New Testament as archive derives from Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse of Language*, London 2002.

re-writing this particular section of the gospel. The ghostwriters and their activity point to the larger question of the Gospel According to Mark as a spectral text *en toto*. An image of thought in the Gospel According to Mark is that of a tomb that the ghosts encircle. In conjunction with the ghostwriters (c), Mk. 6 (a) and Mk. 16 (b) raise the problem of a phantom Christ, as well as other spectral overtones in relation to its oldest and perhaps primary readers.

Under the rubric of "larval Christ" a rhetorical spectrality of the Gospel According to Mark (a–c) will be explored through the paradoxical rhetorical make-up of its Jesus and the nomadic theology that follows. Spectrality of the Gospel According to Mark is at present primarily approached through the means of rhetoric, and in the way that the stylistic obscurity and porosity of the text conjure ghosts and ghostwriters.

The New Testament Archive and Ghosts

The spectrality of Jesus the Nazarene in general and the resurrection in particular seems to have simultaneously troubled and enthralled theologians of second- and third-century Christianity. One can perhaps approach the issue of the resurrection in much of early Christian discourse as standing in antagonistic tension to the idea of "the ghostly".[6] In Κατὰ Κέλσου ("Against Celsus"), Origen of Alexandria (c. 184–253) reports that "[Celsus] supposed Jesus to have been a phantom [φάσμα] when he appeared to his disciples after his resurrection from the dead, as though he had merely made an appearance to them in a stealthy and secretive manner".[7] Tertullian of Carthage (c. 160–c. 225), on his end, repeatedly blames Marcion of Sinope (c. 85–c. 160) for using the term phantom (in Marcion's own version of the Gospel According to Luke: φάντασμα) when describing the resurrected Jesus.[8] In light of the overall sparse use of ghost-language in the New

6. In this paper, I will look at Jesus' resurrection and stories of the resurrection of Jesus as separate and distinct from ancient ghost stories, following the clear resistance that many early theologians had to their juxtaposition. One could, of course, equally approach the same topic by underlining the concepts' similarity and how they overlap. This would, however, miss the interesting suspension of a "phantom Jesus" that the Gospel According to Mark, in particular, allows to hover over its narrative. The distinction between the ghostly and resurrected is therefore made for the sake of pointing to aspects of the Markan text rather than saying something general about the nature of the resurrection.

7. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, Cambridge 1980, 423. For more on the resurrection, see pp. 112–114.

8. Judith Lieu, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic: God and Scripture in the Second Century*, Cambridge 2015, 374–375. For an interesting connection between Jesus' resurrection, christology, and Marcion's use of phantom/φάντασμα, see the fourth book of Tertullian's *Adversus Marcionem* in Arthur Cleveland Coxe (ed.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: 3. Latin Christianity. Its Founder, Tertullian*, Buffalo, NY 1885, 354–355. The entire chapter is full of anti-phantom christology.

Testament archive, the second- and third-century popularity of a spectral Christ is somewhat surprising. Does the New Testament archive supply resources for the second-century production of a phantom theology of Jesus and the resurrection?

It is primarily within the Gospel According to Mark, and the passage of Jesus' walking on water in 6:45–52, that we encounter explicit ghost-language (φάντασμα) and the possibility of a spectral christology.[9] The other synoptical gospels recontextualize this usage of spectral terminology and thereby disarm the problematic idea. The Gospel According to John, with its so-called "High Christology" emphasizing Jesus' divinity, is never really interested in a spooky Jesus. The Gospel According to Luke in a similar manner avoids this terminology altogether.[10]

It is primarily with the rhetorical mixture of paradox, irony, and obscurity in the Gospel According to Mark that the New Testament canon conjures something like a phantom christology. And as will be seen, this remains more of a possibility than anything like a developed theology. Following a spectral line-of-flight offered by Celsus and Marcion above, this paper follows a ghostly larvae detected within Mk. 6 and the haunting absence of Jesus' resurrection in the earliest manuscripts of Mk. 16, asking the question, does the Gospel According to Mark produce a spectral theology of Jesus' resurrection?

Returning to Celsus once more, is his reading of resurrection-accounts in the canonical gospels credible? What may lie behind it? In order to evaluate Origen's discussion above, we need to look closer at what the New Testament archive has to say about ghosts. There are only rare sightings of ghosts in the New Testament archive. Following a Homeric index and vocabulary

---

9. Marcion's use of φάντασμα in relation to the resurrected Jesus relies on his own textual variant of Lk. 24:37, interestingly shared with Codex Bezae, but ultimately replaced with the less menacing "πνεῦμα" in stronger witnesses. For more on Marcion's text and φάντασμα from the perspective of text criticism, see discussions in Daniel A. Smith, "Marcion's Gospel and the Resurrected Jesus of Canonical Luke 24", *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum/Journal of Ancient Christianity* 21 (2017), 41–62; Lieu, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic*, 372–380. The lower-case c of christology here and elsewhere is intentional.

10. The current article does not take into account Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) as a resource for looking at the Gospel According to Mark. From a Derridean perspective, Andrew P. Wilson, *Transfigured: A Derridean Re-Reading of the Markan Transfiguration*, New York 2007, has looked at Mk. 9 and the transfiguration. Peter N. McLellan, "Specters of Mark: The Second Gospel's Ending and Derrida's Messianicity", *Biblical Interpretation* 24 (2016), 357–381, is yet another example of a Derridian analysis of spectrality, looking specifically at Mk. 16. Matthew James Ketchum, "Haunting Empty Tombs: Specters of the Emperor and Jesus in the Gospel of Mark", *Biblical Interpretation* 26 (2018), 219–243, also works within the same theoretical tradition, yet with a clearer focus on the ancient ghost grammar, and touching on the same Markan texts as the current article. Ketchum looks specifically to the figure of the Emperor to define Jesus' spectrality, but along the way makes many observations about a more general spectrality in the Gospel According to Mark, not least in chapters 6 and 16.

for ghosts,[11] σκιά (shadow) occurs in the New Testament archive a handful of times, but never comes close to a ghostly situation. Εἴδωλον, sometimes used to denote a phantom, is employed by Paul in 1 Cor. 8:10, but here refers to food devoted to "idols" and false gods. This is the only time Paul comes close to the term ghost. The common noun ψυχή (life, soul) is never employed as ghost, nor is δαίμων (god/godess, and sometimes: ghost). Celsus' term φάσμα (apparition, phantom) never occurs in the New Testament archive. The cognate, φάντασμα (phantom) does, however, appear in the synoptic gospels, and in the aforementioned passage of Mk. 6 (with its parallel in Mt. 14). The only case of a real ghost story in the New Testament archive thus seems to occur in the Gospel According to Mark where Jesus walks on water.[12]

In Mk. 6:45–52, Jesus wants to be alone, in the wake of the miraculous feeding of five thousand followers (6:30–44). After commanding the disciples to take a boat to Bethsaida without him, Jesus prays on a mountain-hill nearby. However, as the night approaches, Jesus watches as the disciples fight winds and waves in the middle of Lake Tiberias, and decides to help them out. At the fourth watch, just when the first rays of the morning sun hit the landscape, the disciples see Jesus walking over to them, on the water, and scream out of fear, believing Jesus to be a phantom (ἔδοξαν ὅτι φάντασμά ἐστιν).[13] Jesus tells them to have no fear and reassures them that it is truly him (ἐγώ εἰμι· μὴ φοβεῖσθε).[14] However, as Jesus gets into the boat with them "they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand [...] their hearts were hardened" (6:52). Although Jesus seems to reveal crucial aspects of his identity and messianic role, confirmed with the "I AM-saying" (ἐγώ εἰμι) in the wake of the unfolding event, the disciples are unable to shake the idea of the Nazarene as a φάντασμά, it seems.

This story bears many marks of a Greco-Roman ghost story. Jason Combs has summarized the overlaps between Mk. 6:45–52 and the essential features of ancient ghost stories as follows: "(1) ghosts appear at night; (2) though difficult to see, they look as they did in life, yet pale or shadowy; and (3) they cause fear and terror for the living whom they encounter."[15] And even though the story does not stick to the script of a ghost story, certain aspects of the phantom Jesus lingers on, as the narrative continues. For instance,

11. N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, London 2003, 43.

12. For an interpretation of the passage as ghost story in antiquity, see Jason Robert Combs, "A Ghost on the Water? Understanding an Absurdity in Mark 6:49–50", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127 (2008), 345–358.

13. Mk. 6:49 reads: οἱ δὲ ἰδόντες αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης περιπατοῦντα ἔδοξαν ὅτι φάντασμά ἐστιν, καὶ ἀνέκραξαν. The New Testament texts in this paper is taken from NA28.

14. Other Markan ἐγώ εἰμι-sayings: 13:6; 14:62.

15. Combs, "A Ghost on the Water?", 350.

Mk. 6:45–52 results in a suspension of Jesus' identity. The would-be Messiah appears to the disciples as a phantom walking on water. This messianic "apparition" is integrated into the overall collection of stories about Jesus in the Gospel According to Mark, without a further explanation of its relation to an overarching idea of Jesus' identity, and more specifically, of a purported messiahship. Jesus assures his followers that it is him, and no one else, but the disciples are not able to process this experience fully, or translate the apparition into their horizon of understanding. Jesus' powers are presented as spectral and eerie, and yet the Christ cannot be a ghost, can he?

In the Matthean parallel of the same material, chief ambiguities are exorcized from the passage, as the disciples in this version do not believe or hold to be true that Jesus is a phantom (ἔδοξαν ὅτι), but instead in fear says that he is one (λέγοντες ὅτι φάντασμά ἐστιν).[16] A spectral grammar is only momentarily put in the minds and mouths of the disciples as a fleeting fear, which in the end subverts this event by shifting the focus to a defusing occurrence. Instead of ending the scene like the Gospel According to Mark, with a clear focus on the ignorance and ambivalence of the disciples, the Gospel According to Matthew has Peter walking out to Jesus on the water, the rest of the disciples worshipping "the Lord" and in chorus chant (the Markan centurions' confession of) Jesus as the Son of God.[17] The Gospel According to Matthew therefore effectively short-circuits Markan obscurity and paradox, attempting to exclude anything like a spectral christology.

However, even after this theological fortification and revision of the Markan material of a ghostly Jesus, i.e. with a clearer christology and not to mention Matthean robust resurrection account, second-century philosopher and critic of emerging Christianity – Celsus – was still able to attack Jesus' resurrection as the result of a spectral Christ. The Gospel According to Matthew, along with the other canonical gospels, seemed to have failed to convincingly erase the possibility of a spectral christology for the emerging Christianity. Why is this?

If attention is briefly turned towards to the Gospel According to Luke, and in particular Marcion's version of the Lukan text, we are perhaps given a glance into how the canonical gospels tried to resist Celsus' reading. In most ancient textual witnesses of Lk. 24:36–43, a resurrected Jesus appears in the midst of the disciples and is "mistaken" for a πνεῦμα (spirit), as they are frightened "and supposed that they saw a πνεῦμα". According to Tertullian, Marcion's early edition of the Gospel According to Luke has the

16. Mt. 14:26: οἱ δὲ μαθηταὶ ἰδόντες αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης περιπατοῦντα ἐταράχθησαν λέγοντες ὅτι φάντασμά ἐστιν, καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ φόβου ἔκραξαν.

17. Mt. 14:33 "And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God'."

disciples echo Mk. 6, believing Jesus to be a φάντασμα, a phantom.[18] Tertullian forcefully attacks this reading and overall tendency, claiming that Marcion is using this terminology of a ghost grammar to conceptualize Jesus' resurrection, only to end up with an illusory and deceptive take on the risen Christ.[19] Ghosts are, according to Tertullian, false copies of real bodies and the Gospel According to Luke avoids all forms of mimicry of Jesus, emphasizing how the resurrected Jesus ate and broke bread, for instance. There was nothing fictive about Jesus post-mortem, Tertullian proclaims. Either way, Marcion's version of Lk. 24 is outmatched by a plethora of ancient manuscripts exorcizing any ghost grammar form the section, and pointing to the conclusion that the transmission of the Gospel According to Luke either erased the use of a ghost grammar of the resurrection, or that it was never a prominent reading, even in Marcion's day and historical context. Further, with or without Marcion's use of φάντασμα, the passage is probably to be paralleled to Mk. 6 (and Mt. 14) and thus seen as derivative, since the Gospel According to Luke curiously omits the episode of Jesus walking on water, yet still includes many of the same elements of this story in Lk. 24:36–43.[20]

In the end, Mk. 6:45–52 comes out as the single contender for a proper ghost story in the New Testament archive. We do not, however, get a phantom christology from the Gospel According to Mark, since Jesus does not appear or rise from the grave. Further, the Markan text leaves this "phantom-passage" and its implication for an understanding of Jesus' identity and mission silently hovering above, or perhaps within, its story line. This ghost story is not really a ghost story, but a spectral, rhetorical echo. The pericope does point the way to how the Gospel According to Mark as a whole is a haunting literature of sorts, and ghostly on another level. On this note, one interesting feature of the Gospel According to Mark's peculiar end is how it seems to have attracted textual creativity from its most ancient audience: some developed and elaborated the entire gospel (the Gospels According to Matthew–Luke) and at other times simply added new material to the already existing Markan manuscripts.

The Gospel According to Mark as Ghost Story

In contrast to the other canonical gospels, there is something "off" about the Gospel According to Mark. In terms of rhetoric, the text seems more interested in ambivalence, paradox, and irony than the narrative linearity

---

18. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed., Stuttgart 1994, 187.

19. Lieu, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic*, 374.

20. Lieu, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic*, 375.

of developing a single, overarching idea of Jesus the Nazarene. Ideas, too many ideas, are often allowed into the same passage or section. As we already noticed in Mk. 6, this text has no problem leaving its audience with conflicting notions of Jesus, the disciples utterly confused, and the meaning of Jesus' entire ministry hovering in the air.

In what ways does the text use paradox, irony, and obscurity? One need only to think of the paradoxical portrayal of the disciples as ignorant, and Peter as most thoughtless of all. Or the mysterious tendency illuminated through William Wrede's (1859–1906) idea about a "Messianic secret", correctly noting that the Markan Jesus is consistent in refusing the title of Christ throughout the text.[21] Or the ironic scene of a Roman centurion, standing at the foot of the cross, declaring Jesus' divine sonship, post-mortem.

During the second and third centuries, Markan rhetoric for various reasons became problematic, and the existence of the entire gospel text came into question. Contemporary gospel writers (the Gospels According to Luke–Matthew) and patristic theologians (for example Irenaeus) for different reasons all recognized the Markan tendency to include paradox, irony, and mystery as producing potential, theological problems. At least if the Gospel According to Mark was left to stand on its own, as an independent and self-sufficient record of Jesus' ministry and mission. As a result, the Gospel According to Mark was for instance not well received among the influential second- and third-century patristic theologians, and can as a result be described with Michael Kok as a "marginal gospel". The Gospel According to Mark was, however, still included in the emerging canon. In contrast to the Gospels According to Matthew and John, the Gospel According to Mark only received minimal attention in defining theological discourses of late antiquity (in terms of citation). Kok phrases the marginality of the Gospel According to Mark in the following manner: "Given Mark's lackluster reception in the patristic period, it is astounding that it survived at all once its contents were almost completely reabsorbed in Matthew and Luke. It could have disappeared without a trace like the other Synoptical sources lost to the dust of antiquity."[22]

The text did survive late antiquity. What does the reception of this gospel text tell us? It was locked in the attic of the New Testament archive and left to howl in the wind. Partially as an effect of Irenaeus's argument of a "four-fold gospel", the Gospel According to Mark survives as part of the

---

21. William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, London 1971. I do not subscribe to Wrede's results, but agree with the problem description grounding this classic study. The Markan Jesus is not interested in the title "Christ", preferring "Son of Man" instead.

22. Michael J. Kok, *The Gospel on the Margins: The Reception of Mark in the Second Century*, Minneapolis, MN 2015, 11.

canon.[23] What would happen to the text's Matthean incorporation, consisting of approximately eighty to ninety per cent of the Markan material, or the Lukan inclusion of about sixty per cent of the same text, if this particular gospel version became heretical? A clear rift or tension exists in the biblical archive between the synoptical gospels and the Gospel According to John, on the one hand, and the Gospel According to Mark on the other, where the presence of the Gospels According to Matthew and Luke reduces the Markan text into something like a material source, and the Gospel According to John into an instance of undeveloped theologizing.

At the same time, scribal activity surrounding manuscripts of the Gospel According to Mark reveal a slightly different story. In fact, the Gospel According to Mark and, in particular, its ending gathered an ensemble of nameless writers, all trying to salvage and possibly finish this story. The Gospel According to Mark is quite unique in the New Testament archive, in the sense of having a number of different endings circulating, all responding to the non-resurrection of Mk. 16:1–8. The Markan text was an empty tomb haunted by ghostwriters and their attempts to raise Jesus.

The Ghostwriters of Antiquity and the Endings of the Gospel According to Mark

Violence and a grammar of suffering are never far away when one speaks of death. This is true of Jesus' death and Christ's resurrection. On one level, the production of Jesus' resurrection in the Gospel According to Mark is a form of hidden grammar of suffering, since ghostwriters returning to this locus, struggling with the task of finishing this text, often see their efforts completely forgotten or ignored. In a sense, ghosts wrote about Jesus' resurrection, and in particular the multiple Markan endings.

Individuals of Greco-Roman antiquity tasked with the role of writing up documents and composing text held a variety of positions in society. A scribe could be found in different administrative positions and for instance writing legal documents or marriage contracts, or for that matter writing literary texts in a private household or copying similar texts for a bookseller.[24] Kim Haines-Eitzen writes, "scribes in Hellenistic Greek or Roman

---

23. For more on "the four-fold gospel" and Irenaeus, see Francis Watson, *Gospel Writing: A Canonical Perspective*, Grand Rapids, MI 2013.

24. On the Greco-Roman scribe as bookseller, see William A. Johnson, *Bookrolls and Scribes in Oxyrhynchus*, Toronto 2004, 159: "The problem seems to be that terms like 'book trade' or 'bookseller' carry with them a sort of creeping anachronism. In antiquity, a 'bookseller' engaged in the 'book trade' need be no more than a scribe on a public corner with his chest (*scrinium*, Catullus 14). Shops also existed that maintained a certain number of master copies (cf., e.g., Horace *Ep.* 1.20 for an early example, Martial 1.117 for a later), but these too surely made most of their profit not from pre-made copies, but from making copies to order. The centrality of the scribe in the idea of a 'bookseller' is encapsulated in the Latin word *librarius*, which continues to signify both copyist and bookseller throughout classical Latin."

antiquity did not [...] constitute a distinct and recognizable 'scribal class' with significant prestige". Due to how it was used the rival cultures of ancient Mesopotamia or Pharaonic Egypt, where a scribal-class held a respected societal position, the term "scribe" can be deceptive. Haines-Eitzen refers to Peter Parson, and that "the book-transcriber of Roman Egypt has a low profile: anonymous, uncommemorated in art, featureless expect in the rare aside to the reader".[25] In short, the faceless and nameless scribe of late Greco-Roman antiquity was more or less a ghost: a ghostwriter.

This is equally true of the writers copying the New Testament archive from the first to the fourth centuries. Although these ghosts of the New Testament archive left few traces of their social identity, they most probably either acquired their skills as writers from both informal and private (formal) schooling, or from apprenticeship, preparing for the work of a professional scribe or bookseller.[26] The majority, if not all, of these ghosts were slaves, or freed slaves, and/or came from the very lowest strata of Greco-Roman society.[27] Textual transmission and scribal activity of this period was often grounded in different forms of slavery, and thereby actualizing the importance of Orlando Patterson's use of "social death" in describing and defining this antique form of labour and existence.[28] In the end, textual

25. Kim Haines-Eitzen, "The Social History of Early Christian Scribes", in Bart D. Ehrman & Michael W. Holmes (eds.), *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis*, 2nd ed., Leiden 2013, 482–483.

26. As such, they were trained to master different styles of handwriting and so-called "bookhands". The biblical ghostwriters were familiar with "the bookhand appropriate of literary books", since the New Testament archive over all is a literary collection of texts. Haines-Eitzen, "The Social History of Early Christian Scribes", 483.

27. Johnson, *Bookrolls and Scribes*, 159–160: "In terms of book production, the proper distinction seems then not between individual and 'trade', or between 'private' and 'public', but between 'private' and 'professional'. Even here, the lines of demarcation are not as sharply drawn as we might like. Large estates of the culturally ambitious did undoubtedly sometimes have freedmen or slaves who were trained as scribes in the art of making a bookroll, and who were then 'private' in the sense of belonging to a personal estate, but 'professional' in the sense of having gone through the necessary apprenticeship. Perhaps the best distinction would then be between 'trained' and 'untrained' copyists, where the training implies a level of attainment suitable for guild membership." Haines-Eitzen agrees: "While the scribes of the Roman Empire operated at a number of different socioeconomic levels and within a variety of social and cultural contexts, scribes can most often be found among slaves – who, according to Roman law, were forbidden to own anything – and lower to middleclass professionals." Kim Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters: Literacy, Power, and the Transmitters of Early Christian Literature*, New York 2000, 7. See the entire introduction (pp. 3–20) of the same book for more on the identity of scribes and slavery in early Christianity.

28. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, Cambridge 2018, 38, defines social death in the following manner: "If the slave no longer belonged to a community, if he had no social existence outside of his master, then what was he? The initial response in almost all slaveholding societies was to define the slave as a socially dead person. [...] The slave is violently uprooted from his milieu. He is desocialized and depersonalized. [...] [Claude] Meillassoux writes: 'The captive always appears therefore as marked by an original, indelible

JOEL KUHLIN

transmission was usually a form of slave work, and as such belonged to the realm of the socially dead.

In a fundamental material sense, the New Testament archive would not exist without the labour of this anonymous multitude, without its ghosts.[29] One cannot find a record of who they were. And even though the ghosts' identities are most often completely absent from early Christian memory,[30] scribes always leave marks for those with eyes to see. When looking closer at the available manuscripts of the period for instance, textual critics now emphasize the copyist-scribe as invested users of texts, and their function as "interested readers, exegetes and writers"[31] and marking out the produced copies through wording, commentary in the margins, and their readings as interpretation of previous copies. Most interesting for the present purposes is that one of the most intense sites for ghostly remains of this multitude is the Gospel According to Mark, and in particular its endings. And again, the possibility of a spectral christology hovers above this story line.

In the following section I will very briefly review the contents of the different endings to the Markan gospel and different versions of the resurrection, of which there are (at least) four:

1. The abrupt ending of 16:1–8;
2. Codex Bobiensis (it^k) expanding 16:1–8 with a "Short Ending" (SE), via interpolation after 16:4 and adding on a verse to 16:8;
3. The "Longer Ending" (LE) seen in 16:9–20, and finally;
4. Codex Washingtonianus (W) and what is known as the "Freer Logion" expands the Longer Ending by interpolation after 16:14.[32]

1.

Two of the oldest Greek codices, Vaticanus and Sinaiticus (c. 325–350), the Old Latin Codex Bobiensis, the Sinaitic Syriac manuscripts of different age, the approximately one hundred Armenian manuscripts, and the two

---

defect which weighs endlessly upon his destiny. This is, in [Michel] Izard's words, a kind of "social death". He can never be brought to life again as such since, in spite of some specious examples (themselves most instructive) of fictive rebirth, the slave will remain forever an unborn being (non-né).'"

29. Regardless whether one presumes a Christian identity or not, the New Testament ghosts should be thought of as ὄχλος or a multitude, rather than a people (λαός) or a distinct group.

30. As an exception to the rule, Rom. 16:22 records the name of its scribe: "I Tertius, the writer of this letter, greet you in the Lord."

31. Haines-Eitzen, "The Social History of Early Christian Scribes", 489.

32. One could also include the Gospel According to Matthew in this list, since it includes some eighty to ninety per cent of all Markan material, and revises Mk. 14–16 in order to ensure that Jesus would rise and show himself to his disciples, post-mortem.

oldest Georgian manuscripts, all show no knowledge of a Markan ending beyond Mk. 16:1–8. Further, Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–c. 215) – as well as Origen – are unaware of a continuation of the Gospel According to Mark beyond this point, and joined by Eusebius of Caesarea (263–339) and Jerome of Stridon (c. 345–420) they "attest that the passage was absent from almost all Greek copies of Mark known to them".[33] There is at present a consensus among critical biblical scholars that the abrupt ending with Jesus' non-resurrection presents itself as primary.

<div align="center">2.</div>

Four Greek seventh- to ninth-century manuscripts, and other manuscripts in Latin, Harclean Syriac, Sahidic, Bohairic, and Ethiopian,[34] continue from 16:8, and its enigmatic ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ ("For they were afraid") in the following manner: "And all that had been commanded them they told briefly/promptly to those around Peter. And afterwards Jesus himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation."[35]

However, while the other manuscripts above continue with the Longer Ending, Codex Bobiensis (it[k]) alone stops after this expansion. Bobiensis' Markan end is known as the Shorter Ending. Interestingly, it[k] also adds the following to 16:4: "But suddenly at the third hour of the day there was darkness over the whole circle of the earth, and angels descended form the heavens, and as the [Lord] was rising in the glory of the living God, at the same time they ascended with him; and immediately it was light."[36]

There are many features of the passages above worth spending time on, for instance the introduction and meaning of theological vocabulary otherwise foreign to the Markan matrix, which I will return to below. Worth pointing out is also how it[k] displays a synthetic, single event out of the separate happenings of the resurrection and ascension.[37] The passages both have the character of summarizing and paraphrasing.

---

33. Metzger, *Greek New Testament*, 122–123.

34. Metzger, *Greek New Testament*, 123.

35. Translation by James A. Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission: The Authentication of Missionaries and Their Message in the Longer Ending of Mark*, Tübingen 1999, 1, n. 3. Πάντα δὲ τὰ παρηγγελμένα τοῖς περὶ τὸν Πέτρον συντόμως ἐξήγγειλαν. Μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ ἀνατολῆς καὶ ἄχρι δύσεως ἐξαπέστειλεν δι᾿ αὐτῶν τὸ ἱερὸν καὶ ἄφθαρτον κήρυγμα τῆς αἰωνίου σωτηρίας. ἀμήν.

36. Translation by Metzger, *Greek New Testament*, 121–122.

37. Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*, New York 1993, 232.

A very large number of ancient manuscripts, most notably the fifth-century codices Alexandrinus and Bezae, along with patristic sources in Irenaeus and the *Diatessaron*, give reason to date the Longer Ending sometime to the first half of the second century.[38] James Kelhoffer argues that Justin Martyr "points to the existence of the LE at the time he wrote the *First Apology* (ca. 155–161 CE)" and therefore dates the Longer Ending "within a range of a few decades in the first half of the second century. The author of the LE wrote after the NT Gospels were collected – probably not before 110–120 – but before Justin's *First Apology*. With confidence one may thus date the LE to ca. 120–150 CE".[39] Irenaeus's interest in the Longer Ending tells us something about the popularity of this addition to the abrupt ending, which in many regards saves the Gospel According to Mark from the ruins of marginality:

> Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it. After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them. Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover." So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it.[40]

---

38. David C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels*, Cambridge 1997, 132.
39. Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission*, 175.
40. Translation from the New Revised Standard Version.

The first sentence summarizes 16:1–8 while also harmonizing the Gospel According to Mark with the other synoptic gospels.[41] At the same time the ghostwriter(s) add unique elements, such as details about exorcisms of Mary Magdalene and the signs of God's kingdom bursting forth by drinking of poison and handling snakes and so on. The Longer Ending also adds other foreign elements to the Gospel According to Mark, such as glossolalia and the phrase lord Jesus (κύριος Ἰησοῦς).[42]

4.

The fourth- or fifth-century Codex Washingtonianus stands out through its dialogical character:

> And they excused themselves, saying, "This age of lawlessness and un-belief is under Satan, who does not allow the truth and power of God to prevail over the unclean things of the spirits [or, does not allow what lies under the unclean spirits to understand the truth and power of God.] Therefore reveal your justice now" – thus they spoke to Christ. And Christ replied to them, "The term of years of Satan's power has been fulfilled, but other terrible things draw near. And for those who have sinned I was delivered over to death, that they may return to the truth and sin no more, in order that they may inherit the spiritual and incorruptible glory of justice which is in heaven."[43]

This resurrection-elaboration is more speech and argumentative than narrative,[44] breaking with the other ghosts' attempts to add a resurrection appearance.

---

41. See Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission*, 243–244.

42. In the Gospel According to Mark, Jesus is never referred to as Lord, with the exception of Mk. 2:28 where Jesus uses the title about the Son of Man as the lord of the Sabbath. And here, Jesus emphasizes the validity of healing on the Sabbath rather than claiming divinity. I consider that Mk. 2:28 proves how careful the Gospel According to Mark is about the title of κύριος, essentially reserving it to the Lord of lords, God. If one claims that the Gospel According to Mark only uses Lord as a christological title, it is only through mediation and as a sub-category of the Son of Man's authority to heal on the Sabbath, and never as directly as the Gospel According to Matthew, where the disciples openly call Jesus Lord long before his resurrection (for example in Mt. 14:28).

43. Translation by Metzger, *Greek New Testament*, 124.

44. Larry Hurtado claims that one should read this as an interpolation, and consider the texts as unsuccessful, since it only survives in Codex W. It gives witness to textual fluidity as failure, readings that did not convince readers to keep copying. But it is also a strange argument from near-silence, because we do have this reading, which did survive. In light of the sparse amount of literature surviving antiquity, I would deem Codex W a successful failure. To speak of it as unsuccessful is to try to undermine its existence as periphery and keep it on the margins, as if there was a reading of the Gospel According to Mark that was absolutely

Ghostwriters and Spectral Theology

Do the ghostwriters of Mk. 16 construct a spectral christology out of their resurrection accounts? In a discussion on the Longer Ending and Shorter Ending as responding to Mk. 16:1–8, Bart Ehrman states that "what we have in these traditions [...] are corruptions that emphasize the physical character of Jesus' ascent, useful material for proto-orthodox Christian bent on opposing docetic forms of Christology".[45] The endings are not capable of or interested in expanding the ghostly possibilities of Mk. 6. The abrupt ending (i.e. the "original ending" 16:1–8) is more of a story about the angelic visitation than a ghost story. As mentioned above, this is perhaps to be categorized as eerie rather than spooky. Angels are terrifying, as they represent the mouth of God, but they are not ghosts. With the Shorter Ending's interpolation to 16:4, "suddenly at the third hour of the day there was darkness over the whole circle of the earth", the passage becomes more spooky, indeed. Yet nothing is said about Jesus other than that he "sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation" (16:8).[46] This is more of a summary, and a bringing together of what the ghostwriter(s) thought was unconnected Markan themes, in the "originary" version. This writer introduces new theological terms to the Markan story, such as "the imperishable" (ἄφθαρτον), "kerygma" (κήρυγμα), and "salvation" (σωτηρία); all attempts of suturing the story into a rich, unified theological texture. Instead, rather the opposite is achieved as the attentive reader notices that something new is happening with this closing passage. A spectral theology is still, however, nowhere to be found.

Codex Washingtonianus' dialogue is not very spooky in itself, and seems more doctrinally invested in eschatology than spectrality. However, with the Longer Ending's 16:12–13 ghostly intensity increases: "After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country." These ghostwriters come close to a ghostly apparition, even if something is missing. I will return to the spectrality of the Longer Ending in the next section.

In light of the ghostwriters activity above, the dead are not interested in burying the dead. Yet, the ghostwriters of Mk. 16 are not able to bring the dead back to life. They display exegetical creativity and theological innovation, and therein a unique contribution. Without going too far into issues of the textual history of the canonical gospels, one can without too much

---

normative. Larry Hurtado, "Introduction", in Larry Hurtado (ed.), *The Freer Biblical Manuscripts: Fresh Studies of an American Treasure Trove*, Leiden 2006, 6.

45. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 232–233.

46. See note 35.

effort notice the plethora of theologies and christologies that emerges from the ghostwriters attempt to finalize this text and give it a respectable ending.

What exactly is a lasting effect of the ghostly production of the Markan endings? First, the Longer Ending, Codex Bobiensis, or Codex Washingtonianus would not, and possibly even could not, "fully" enter into the mode of pseudo-epigraphy. That is, the texts are not shy of the fact that they do not attempt to write in "the persona" of a particular Markan writer(s), in contrast to the Pauline pseudo-epigraphic literature for instance. Including new terminology, or story lines, was not out of bounds.

Following Michel Foucault's (1926–1984) distinction, the Gospel According to Mark can be theorized as lacking an author and displaying a non-standard form of literature written by a writer rather than an author.[47] The question of authority is here not attached to a named person of the past, but to a nameless tradition. This idea has been developed recently by Matthew D.C. Larsen, arguing for the possibility of considering the activity of the Gospel According to Mark in its many shapes and forms as that of a particular kind of living, "unfinished" tradition.[48] Following Larsen, the ghostwriters' will to obtain the "authority" of an original author was never then an option in the first place, as the Gospel According to Mark is something like an authorless text. Further, there is a conceptual link in the obscurity of the originary nameless writer(s) of the Gospel According to Mark and its many ghosts, but that remains a question for another time.

Secondly, the Longer Ending, Codex Bobiensis, and Codex Washingtonianus also do not shy away from writing in their own distinct, rhetorical styles and introducing new (non-Markan) key theological terms, christological titles, and occurrences to the overall story. In terms of finishing the Markan story or closing the gaps left by a primary ending (Mk. 16:1–8), the ghostwriters failed. Instead of actually sewing shut the wound of Markan obscurity, the attempt to re-write Jesus as resurrected ironically only unsutures the Markan texture even further. The many attempts by the ghostwriters reveal the impossibility of convincingly adding a final, risen Christ to the Markan story. And as an effect, the Gospel According to Mark remains unfinished as a gospel because of the discrepancy produced by their non-linear attachment to Mk. 16:1–8, and each other.[49]

The Gospel According to Mark functioned as a site of gathering for ghost-activity, precisely because this gospel text seems to avoid the finality of a resurrection. A particular theology of resurrection or phantoms does

47. Michel Foucault, "Authorship: What is an Author?", *Screen* 20 (1979), 13–34.

48. Matthew D.C. Larsen, *Gospels Before the Book*, New York 2018, especially 1–10.

49. The theme of unfinished potential of the Gospel According to Mark is developed at length in Larsen, *Gospels Before the Book*, 99–120.

not surface. Attracted by the empty tomb, ancient ghostwriters attempted to sow on multiple resurrection appearances onto the Markan text. As we have seen, some succeeded only to reveal that the story of a resurrected Jesus in the Gospel According to Mark resists fixation.

Rhetorical Spectrality and the Larval Christ

When Apuleius (c. 124–c. 170 CE) in *De Deo Socratis* develops a taxonomy of ghosts, one section contrasts between spectres affiliated with homes or the homely, and a post-mortem vocation of watching over relatives, with a type of ghost who "has no fixed abode and is doomed to aimless wandering in a kind of exile, a bogeyman powerless against good people but dangerous to wicked ones, the traditional name for his class is often 'larva'".[50] In light of Apuleius's taxonomy, it is the wager of the current paper that the unfinished character and marginal nature of the Gospel According to Mark's rhetoric summons a spectral christology, in the form of a "larval Christ". In line with Apuleius's interesting class of phantasma known as "larva", Jesus' ministry and mission according to the canonical gospels is defined precisely by an *unheimlich*, nomadic existence. Jesus simply does not have a place to lay down his head. In the words of Apuleius, Jesus is doomed to "aimless wandering in a kind of exile". Particularly in the Gospel According to Mark, a nomadology of Jesus translates into a restless theology and rhetoric, where theological lines travel unhindered by coordination from a hierarchical christology, for instance.[51] In contrast to the other New Testament gospels, Markan portrayal produces paradox, irony, and obscurity to the degree that it results in an unsutured texture and theology of the Christ. Theology in the Gospel According to Mark is here spectral, in the sense that it portrays a larval Christ, destined to roam within the multiplicity that is Markan textuality and theologizing. As discussed above, this nomadology was certainly uncanny for early readers of this text in one way or another.

What happens when the rhetorical larval Christ of Mk. 6:45–52 (of a phantom-Christ) is allowed to wander off and interact with the ghostwriters' larval Christ of 16:9–20? Mk. 6:45–52 is often defined through the category of "epiphany" in line with the revelatory "Take heart, it is I: have no fear" (θαρσεῖτε, ἐγώ εἰμι· μὴ φοβεῖσθε).[52] This "I-am saying" of Mk. 6:50 is often considered to be echoing the power of YHWH to control the

---

50. Apuleius, *Apologia; Florida; De Deo Socratis*, Cambridge, MA 2017, 377.

51. Again, one needs only here to think of the aforementioned suspense of Jesus' identity, known as the "Messianic secret". It is never presented in a clear manner just how the audience is to respond to Jesus' unwillingness to the titles of Christ and the self-designation as Son of Man.

52. Combs, "A Ghost on the Water?", 345.

chaotic primal ocean of Genesis 1. However, the disciples' reaction point in a different direction, with their φάντασμα-exclamation: the apparition of Jesus is ghostlike to them, not theophany. Interestingly, gods and demi-gods (heroes) were believed to have the ability to walk on water in Greco-Roman mythology. This was not the case with ghosts or the spirit of a deceased person.[53] Combs frames this tension in the following manner:

> Mark, then, has set the scene for a classic tale of a hunting specter through the word φάντασμα, the nighttime hour, the faint light of an approaching dawn, and the disciples' fearful response. Yet Mark diverges drastically from one component of ancient ghost stories that involve water: ghosts cannot walk on water.[54]

When Jesus walks on water he is, in strict terms, neither god nor ghost. What is then affirmed when Jesus says "Take heart, it is I"? A sense of paradox, uncertainty, and secrecy. The rhetoric of the Gospel According to Mark here presents some spectral traits, seen in a Markan fondness of nomadology of a "larval Christ".

If we look at the same question through the lens of the ghostwriters' account of Jesus' resurrection in the Longer Ending, the body of Christ is for them haunting for the same reason. Christ's body is threatening because of the lack of rhetorical clarity the apparition produces. Considering 16:12–13 as a spectral passage, and Jesus appearing *ex nihilo* in the midst of two of the disciples "walking into the country", the question of corporality intensifies this passage and highlights larvae of paradox and obscurity. In contrast to the parallel of this story in the Gospel According to Luke (that the Longer Ending most likely is paraphrasing: the "road to Emmaus" passage in 24:12–34), Jesus is not described in clear, corporeal terms such as sitting down with the disciples, or breaking bread and eating with them (Lk. 24:30). Rather, the specific larval Christ of the Longer Ending never breaks with Plato's description in *Phaedo* of the ghost as a shadowy simulacrum of a living body, punished for the unnatural, pre-mortem clinging to the body (σωματοειδής). In passages of Lk. 24, Jesus is explicitly described through a post-mortem physicality, and here moves away from identifying Jesus with the category of ghost.[55] In this sense, the ghostwriters create a resurrection

---

53. Combs, "A Ghost on the Water?", 349.
54. Combs, "A Ghost on the Water?", 353.
55. In Deborah Thompson Prince, "The 'Ghost' of Jesus: Luke 24 in Light of Ancient Narratives of Post-Mortem Apparitions", *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 29 (2007), 287–301, one sees an argument that Luke uses ancient, available literary tropes of ghosts (disembodied post-mortem apparitions) and revenants (embodied post-mortem apparitions),

that is uncanny but not specifically spectral, and in effect sustains a nomadic tendency of the Markan text.

Although the ambition of the Longer Ending, and the addition of Jesus' resurrection and ascension, could have re-territorialized a paradoxical and abrupt Markan ending, the end result of their juxtaposition is a continuation of the Gospel According to Mark's nomadology of Jesus. The larval Christ of Mk. 6 meets the ghostwriters' resurrection stories of Mk. 16:9–20, which allows this Christ-tendency to roam even further, through paradox and uncertainty. The question of the corporeal capacity of Jesus and the ultimate identity of Christ is not answered.

Jesus is spectral in the Gospel According to Mark in the form of a nomadic, larval Christ, too restless to find any particular home anywhere.[56] The Gospel According to Mark does not present itself as a clear-cut ghost story (if there ever existed such a thing). Instead, the Gospel According to Mark's account of Jesus is spectral through rhetorical paradox and obscurity, pushing against any attempt to give a concrete account of Jesus' identity, before and after death. The "neither god nor ghost" is spectral in its pushing away of any presence of a linear, christological reasoning.

Conclusion

For the sake of clarity, the ghostly aspects of the Gospel According to Mark above are thought under the category of nomadological tendencies, resulting from the aimless wandering of Jesus through the *rhetorical* terrain of mystery, suspense, and secrecy. The Gospel According to Mark does not follow the structure of a Greco-Roman ghost story. It spooks on a different level. It is the "neither–nor"-tendency of Mk. 6 (neither god nor ghost) and Mk. 16:1–8 (neither resurrected nor in the grave) that probably inspired ghostwriters to allow Jesus to wander further into more text. The nomadology of the Markan Jesus constructs the empty tomb for Christ to resurrect from, yet does not go there itself. Or at least not in a linear and straight forward manner.

---

and ends up subverting them both. The point is that the Gospel According to Luke claims a "Christian superiority" of Jesus as resurrected, that overcodes the literary techniques used by Luke to describe the resurrected life of Jesus.

56. A similar sense of spectrality in the Gospel According to Mark, but from a rather different angle, can be seen in the work of George Aichele, *The Phantom Messiah: Postmodern Fantasy and the Gospel of Mark*, New York 2006, 139: "Jesus is not a ghost or phantom in the popular sense of a restless spirit or soul of a dead person – that is, a clearly supernatural being. Jesus is a living, human being, but he is an uncanny one, continually stretching or even breaking accepted bounds of humanity, perforating the borders between the natural and the supernatural."

The spectral character of the Gospel According to Mark's nomadic, larval Christ is something like a transcendental condition for the production of the resurrected Christ in other gospel versions, along with the work of anonymous scribes of late antiquity. The possibility of a phantom-Jesus exists, or perhaps subsists, only as a Markan larva. The particular "larval Christ" is never developed in the New Testament textual archive, neither by the Gospel According to Mark nor in any of the attempts to rehash the Gospel According to Mark. Yet this larva inspires and crawls in the theological imagination of friend and foe of this gospel version. A different larva, equally underdeveloped in the gospel, overcodes any "phantom-Jesus" in the New Testament archive through the resurrection accounts of the canonical gospels. Texts about the resurrected Jesus do not use terms of an ancient spectral appearance, a choice that should be seen as quite deliberate. In the end, "Jesus the ghost" and a spectral christology remains an unactualized line of flight and a virtual possibility.

On the other hand, the Markan Jesus is intensively spectral, in a different sense. It is clear from ancient reception that this particular gospel text was highly problematic for an ancient audience. Jesus virtually hovered around the Markan empty tomb. The ending was abrupt, producing ghost-like literature about a resurrected Messiah. Passages like Mk. 16:1–8 haunted early readers and writers into producing a multiplicity of accounts of a resurrected Jesus. The empty tomb and non-resurrection of Mk. 16:1–8 was not accepted as an endpoint. Death could not be the end. The unfinished character of the Gospel According to Mark's abrupt ending both bothered and inspired its audience into conjuring forth a re-appearance of the crucified Christ. ▲

SUMMARY

In this paper, the Gospel According to Mark is investigated in search for its ghosts and phantoms. In particular, Mk. 6 and the scene of Jesus walking on water, as well as the story about the empty tomb of Jesus in Mk. 16, are considered as haunted sites. However, rather than finding straight forward ghost stories, following Greco-Roman standards of late antiquity, we are confronted by a different sort of spectrality. In this study the activity of ancient scribes are explicitly thought of as ghostwriters, and connected to their intense hovering around Jesus' tomb, which I see as the production of numerous alternatives to the most original Markan ending (codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus and Mk. 16:1–8.) The ghostwriters' unwillingness of letting Jesus remain among the dead is then theorized from Apuleius' *De Deo Socratis* and the ancient ghost category "the

JOEL KUHLIN

Larva". Jesus can be treated as a "larval Christ", haunting early Christian writers, which thereby opens up a kind of spectral theology in the Gospel According to Mark. The aforementioned obsession of the ghostwriters with Jesus' death highlights how the nomadic tendency of the Markan Jesus can be seen as having a theological valency, and that Jesus' death is as paradoxical and enigmatic as his life. In the end, Jesus' ghostly activity in the Gospel According to Mark is found in the unwillingness of the larval Christ to be fully present and available for the Markan audience to fixate on as a static identity or clear theological position.

The Afterlife of Object Theory

Towards a Logic of Spirits

BRUCE ROSENSTOCK

Bruce Rosenstock is professor of philosophy of religion and Jewish philosophy at the University of Illinois.

brsnstck@illinois.edu

Two of the most influential theories to emerge in German thought before the First World War were the object theory (*Gegendstandstheorie*) of Alexius Meinong (1853–1920) and the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (1859–1938). Both theories descend from the work of their teacher, the Austrian psychologist and philosopher Franz Brentano (1838–1917). In this essay I focus on object theory, although a similar story can be told about the development of phenomenology.[1] I will explore the way that Meinong's object theory provided the foundation for a realist account of the afterlife as a form of personal conscious existence in a realm of transcendental intentional objects. The philosophers who develop this account of the afterlife are Ernst Mally (1879–1944) and John Niemeyer Findlay (1903–1987), Mally's student. Mally provides the theoretical groundwork for a theory of the afterlife, and Findlay gives the theory its full-fledged exposition. Both philosophers base their work on Meinong's intensional logic, the heart of object theory. My presentation of their views is intended to provide a glimpse into a relatively unstudied aspect of modern philosophy, what could be called the logic of the afterlife.

---

1. The work of Husserl's student Hedwig Conrad-Martius (1888–1966) presents an example of a theory of the afterlife like the one I am exploring in this essay. See James G. Hart, *Hedwig Conrad-Martius' Ontological Phenomenology*, vol. 2, University of Chicago Divinity School PhD thesis, 1972, 1298.

Object theory and phenomenology have been aptly described by the philosopher John Passmore (1914–2004) as representing twentieth-century philosophy's "movement towards objectivity". This movement, Passmore explains, runs counter to the entire temper of nineteenth-century philosophy, whose central thesis he sums up in the following terms: "If there were no mind there would be no facts."[2] The nineteenth century, Passmore explains, is the century where the question of objective truth was superseded by the question of the origin of our belief in the truth, in large part due to the influence of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831). The movement towards objectivity seeks to restore the rights of objects and facts as having a reality independently of the mind. Rather than putting a premium on the progressive narrative underlying the nineteenth century's emphasis on the historical nature of truth, the movement towards objectivity placed its emphasis on an "originary" experience of objects themselves in their truth or *Wirklichkeit* (actuality). This emphasis on the independent, objective reality of what the mind holds in its grasp led to a conception of the mind as itself capable of independent reality, apart from any intentional content whatsoever. This contentless mind is not some kind of blank slate or Nirvana state. Rather, it is the powerfully active condition of the mind as it stretches itself outward into reality, seeking new kinds of contents. This active mind is motivated by different modes of yearning for what is not presently available to it as a content. The valuing mind seeks for an "ought" content that it hopes will be actual at some time. In Meinong's picture of actuality, then, there are things that do in fact exist and can become the object of the perceiving mind, and there are things that do not in fact exist but are possible objects of the mind's power to have many different kinds of content, things like values that the mind desires.

The step from this conception of the active mind seeking or yearning for nonexistent but real objects to a belief in the afterlife is not too difficult to imagine. The mind is seeking objects that are real but not in the here and now of the existing world. It is the nature of the mind to be actively in search of what is transcendentally real. The realm of the transcendentally real is infinite, including all possible values in ever more complete form, of greater and greater scope and inclusiveness. The highest value that the mind seeks is *seeking itself*. The universe is so constituted that the mind's nature and reality are correlated: infinite seeking is the root reality of both the mind and the values after which it strives. The root reality of the universe expresses itself in the infinite life of each mind and in the infinite diversity of

---

2. John Passmore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy*, 2nd ed., Harmondsworth 1968, 174–202. Quotation from p. 174.

BRUCE ROSENSTOCK

the possible forms in which the mind's content can be found. Since there is a fundamental distinction between what exists in space and time and what the mind's active yearning looks for beyond what exists, the mind stretches between its material embodiment and its transcendental disembodiment, but there is no fixed boundary between these two forms of the mind. The afterlife is also the afterdeath. Forms of the mind's disembodiment may include transitional states that we call "ghosts" or even repeated incarnations with more or less recollection of past lives.

The broad-stroke picture of how the phenomenological "movement towards objectivity" can lead to the thesis that the mind is deathless now needs to be fleshed out in its logical and metaphysical specificity. I will devote the following section to the foundational work of Ernst Mally and, in the second section, I will describe the theory of the afterlife developed in the work of John Niemeyer Findlay. Mally is one of the most important theoreticians of object theory, and Findlay is the thinker who first introduced object theory to the English-speaking world. The point that I want to make is that we have before us a chapter in modern post-Hegelian philosophy that reveals linkages to religious and mystical traditions even as it expresses itself in the language of Gottlob Frege (1848–1925) and Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), the language of propositional logic and existential quantifiers. Modern philosophy after Hegel has not altogether severed itself from its deep roots in the imaginative sources of religious experience, one of whose primary expressions is the belief in the power of the individual to survive death. This fact is not proof of the existence of ghosts or the immortality of the soul. It is, however, a proof of the irrepressible need to think beyond the limits of the given, even to imagine the possibility of the impossible.

Ernst Mally

Before I turn to Ernst Mally, a word about his teacher Alexius Meinong is in order. Meinong was a prolific Austrian philosopher of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As I have mentioned, Meinong, in parallel with the closely related work of Edmund Husserl, carried forward the fundamental insight of his and Husserl's teacher Franz Brentano. Brentano argued that the distinguishing mark of the psychical in contrast with the non-psychical is its "auf etwas Gerichtetsein", its "being-directed towards something". This "something" towards which the psychical is directed is, according to Brentano, immanent to or "in" consciousness (this is known, somewhat confusingly, as Brentano's "inexistence" thesis, which is not a denial of the existence of these immanent objects), although it is not a merely mental phenomenon. Just exactly what the ontological status of

the "in-existent" intentional object is, Brentano wrestled with throughout his career. Meinong for his part simply dropped Brentano's immanence or "in-existence" thesis about the intentional object, while retaining Brentano's thesis about the "directedness towards something" of every psychical act. Of course, a "representation" (*Vorstellung*) or "presentation" (*Präsentation*) is part of every psychical armature, but nothing "in" the mind is the "goal-object" (*Zielgegendstand*) of the mind's directedness (except in the act of introspection when consciousness considers its own content or activity as its "object-goal"). For Meinong, the "something" towards which psychical acts are directed is a mind-independent object, and object theory is devoted to examining the nature of the "Gegenstand als solcher", the "object as such", in all of its expressions and modalities, from abstract ideas, propositions, imaginary entities, objects of desire, or ethical valuation, to the tree outside my window. John Niemeyer Findlay, in the first full-length study of Meinong in English, puts it nicely when he writes that "the world we live in does not phenomenologically consist simply of existent things, but includes states of affairs, absences, possibilities, risks, and dangers, things half-formed and things vaguely universal, and also obviously many accents of value and exigency which we certainly do not *seem* to have imposed upon it".[3]

Despite object theory's historical connection with Brentano's studies in "empirical psychology", Meinong denied that his theory was merely concerned with psychological phenomena. Meinong insists that while psychology may very well provide us with knowledge about the ways that psychical acts are directed towards objects, it is really not interested in the objects as such. But that is exactly what Meinong says his object theory is interested in: whatever can possibly be targeted by a psychical act. He compares the relationship between psychology and object theory to that between classical philology and classical history: the philologist is interested in reconstructing the documents that the historian will then use to reconstruct the realia of the ancient world.[4] Object theory is an ontological enterprise whose goal is to map all the possible kinds of objects that can "exist" (in empirical space-time) or "subsist" (as transempirical, *überdingliche* entities), and even impossible objects like the round square.

Before turning to Mally, I need to make one last point about Meinong's object theory. Meinong's ontology includes many kinds of entities that we might normally characterize as purely mental or fictional. But an entity's fictionality does not mean that it is mind-dependent. In line with his radical rejection of any kind of correlationism, Meinong embraces the reality of

3. John Niemeyer Findlay, *Meinong's Theory of Objects and Values*, 2nd ed., Oxford 1963, 22.
4. Alexius Meinong, *Untersuchungen zur Gegenstandstheorie und Psychologie*, Leipzig 1904, 15.

BRUCE ROSENSTOCK

fictional entities even if they are not the object of any conscious intentional act. The embrace of mind-independent fictional entities leads Meinong to develop a novel propositional logic. Meinong's propositional logic is not extensional but rather intensional, meaning that an object's *Sosein* (so-being, the being of a property that is predicable of something) is enough by itself to anchor a well-formed proposition about the object. The being (*Sein*) or the non-being (*Nichtsein*) of the object is not relevant to the object as such, whose neutral ontic status is what Meinong calls *Außersein* (extra-being). As the contemporary Meinongian logician Dale Jacquette (1953–2016) puts it: "Meinong holds that an intended object has the properties predicated of it regardless of its ontological status. An object's *Sosein* is logically independent of its *Sein* or *Nichtsein*. The objects themselves enter into the Meinongian semantic domain as whatever can be thought of, whatever can be intended by thought."[5] Meinong argued that the description "the present King of France" refers to an object with "extra-being" but without *Sein*. Bertrand Russell, the most important advocate of extensional logic in the twentieth century, would have none of it. Russell argued against Meinong that if the present King of France is an object with extra-being, so also is the "round square", an object whose properties are such that there cannot be such an object. Meinong accepted this consequence. Extra-being is the baseline being of the "pure object". As the mid-twentieth century American philosopher Roderick M. Chisholm (1916–1999), along with Dale Jacquette one of the handful of analytic philosophers willing to do battle with Russell's extensional logic, puts it: "An object may have a set of characteristics whether or not it exists and whether or not it has any other kind of being."[6] Of course, besides extra-being, an object may also have being, which includes subsisting and existing objects. Importantly, as I have already mentioned, among objects with being are objects that are only possible, such as griffins, ghosts, and Sherlock Holmes. Again, as Chisholm puts it: "To say of an object that it is only a possible object is *not* to say that it is only possibly an object. For possible objects, as well as impossible objects, *are* objects."[7]

I hope from this very brief sketch of Meinong's object theory that it has become clear why its extraordinary ontological capaciousness in regard to objects traditionally consigned to the domain of subjective fantasy or even delusion provided such a fertile ground for the emergence of a philosophical theory of the afterlife. Husserl's phenomenology, a very close cousin of Meinong's object theory, also lends itself to this development, although

---

5. Dale Jacquette, *Alexius Meinong, the Shepherd of Non-Being*, Cham 2016, 373.
6. Roderick M. Chisholm, "Beyond Being and Nonbeing", *Philosophical Studies* 24 (1973), 245.
7. Chisholm, "Beyond Being and Nonbeing", 247.

Husserl himself did his best to warn his students away from what he deemed to be "mysticism". Neither Husserl nor Meinong were able to keep the philosophical paths that they opened "towards the things themselves" directed only towards "scientific" goals; the pressure to find a basis for mythic imagination in the "things themselves" was, it seems, just too powerful. Ernst Mally is an instructive case in point.

Ernst Mally was a gifted mathematical logician and philosopher, credited with having been the first to construct a formal system of deontic logic.[8] He also published a logical formalization of object theory and proposed some of its most important theoretical insights.[9] It is certainly remarkable that such an otherwise sober thinker would teach several university seminars on myth and magic (*Zauber*) in the early 1930s and soon thereafter publish a book that he would refer to as his *Zauberbuch*.[10] Mally's *Zauberbuch* is actually titled *Erlebnis und Wirklichkeit: Einleitung zur Philosophie der natürlichen Weltaufassung*. The title captures the seriousness of the task that the book sets itself: to provide the philosophical foundation for a naturalistic understanding of reality and the lived experience in which it comes to expression. At its heart is an exposition of myth and magic as the original domains in which reality had been grasped.

Mally's fundamental principle in his *Zauberbuch* is captured in the following statement: "In every intentionality, actuality is experienced [*erlebt*] as a striving towards sense."[11] If we put this in terms of the distinction between sense and the goal-object of intentionality, we could say that every possible object to which one might direct an intentional act – this table, an absent friend, the dream one had last night – becomes an object of an intentional act in so far as it has a meaning or sense in someone's lived experience (*Erlebnis*). If I bump into the table, the table is meaningful for me as the cause of my pain; if I use the table to write on, the table is meaningful for me as a support for my laptop. If I come across a picture of a friend I have not seen for some time and have forgotten, the absent friend again becomes meaningful for me because of the memories elicited by the photograph. If I awake from a dream that has disturbed my sleep, the dream is meaningful for me as a source of discomfort. In each case, an object has entered into my lived experience in so far as it has a sense or meaning for me. To be sure,

---

8. Ernst Mally, *Logische Schriften: Grosses Logikfragment – Grundgesetze des Sollens*, Dordrecht 1971.

9. Ernst Mally, *Gegenstandstheoretische Grundlagen der Logik und Logistik*, Leipzig 1912.

10. Markus Roschitz, *Zauberbuch und Zauberkolleg: Ernst Mallys dynamische Wirklichkeitsphilosophie*, Graz 2016.

11. Ernst Mally, *Erlebnis und Wirklichkeit: Einleitung zur Philosophie der natürlichen Weltauffassung*, Leipzig 1935, 69. All translations from German are mine.

BRUCE ROSENSTOCK

the goal-object has entered into my lived experience through a certain conscious presentation (*Vorstellung*) of it – pain, solidity, a visual image, a vague sense of unease upon waking. But the conscious presentation is not the goal-object of the intentional act. A table, another human, a dream, exist as objects independently of any conscious presentation, but they have no sense or meaning until they enter into someone's lived experience as goal-objects of intentionality. Meaning or sense [*Sinn*] mediates actuality's "striving", connecting a mind-independent object with a subject's lived experience.

It seems as if Mally were personifyng actuality (*Wirklichkeit*), describing it as a "striving" to express itself in some way, to convey a "sense" about itself to someone, to make someone aware of some significance lying as a possibility within itself. It is as if actuality strives to be brought to life (*erlebt*) and expresses this striving by making sense out of itself. And since one and the same object can be lived through by many different subjects' intentionalities, the striving on the part of actuality, taken in its totality, is not merely for a single "fulfillment", but for the most complete of all possible fulfillments, a *complete* sense inclusive of an infinite number of lived experiences. And this is just what Mally goes on to say, that actuality is, taken in its totality, a striving to be *completely* brought to life and to make *complete* sense out of itself. But this is a process that has no end point. Mally insists that there are no "things" in actuality that are the "complete" expressions of a set of "incomplete" properties (a *So-Sein*). In making this claim, Mally is reworking a distinction that had been central to Meinong and his own object theory. As Dale Jacquette explains, according to traditional Meinongian ontology, Sherlock Holmes is an "incomplete" object because it makes no sense to ask how many hairs are on his head, but a living human being is "complete" because such factual states of affairs exist in relation to them. But Mally in the *Zauberbuch* denies completeness to any object whatsoever, and he argues that this comports with the latest scientific theories of space-time and quantum physics.[12] Interestingly, this blurring of the line between incomplete and complete objects in relation especially to quantum physics is exactly the direction that Jacquette himself takes Meinongian ontology.[13] For Mally, the fact that actuality never contains complete objects means that any view of the world that is based upon the positing of complete elementary "things" (*Verdinglichung*) is a falsification of the essential nature of actuality.

What then *is* the underlying "substance" behind actuality's endless striving for sense? Mally argues that there is nothing that is striving for completeness of sense except the striving of actuality itself, whose entire sense is this

---

12. Mally, *Erlebnis und Wirklichkeit*, 100.
13. Jacquette, *Alexius Meinong*, 360–362.

striving. Striving to make sense, actuality makes sense out of itself by being experienced. Striving is therefore its own sense. Striving "grounds" itself, it is its own meaning. This self-grounding striving Mally calls "the absolute spirit". Here is the full passage following the sentence I have been trying to unpack, whose point, I believe, is that actuality is, at its deepest level, the impulse of "the absolute spirit" to make sense of itself, to be experienced, to be brought to life:

> In every intention, actuality is lived through as a striving towards sense. It itself is endowed with sense [*sinnhaft*] and it presages [*vorausnimmt*] in its goal-directedness [*ziemläßig*] a complete fulfillment of sense [*vollkommene Sinnerfüllung*] as its final goal. Sense requires out of itself the totality of complete sense. But sense can only be fulfilled completely if it both grounds itself and also grounds its fulfillment. In fact, one may recognize in the first place that the demand [*Forderung*] to ground sense presupposes the sense of that which grounds it and the demand is itself endowed with sense. And second: that we live through [*erleben*] a demand for sense when we live through it most deeply and earnestly, as a demand *for* it, directed towards it, and also a demand *of* it, arising out of it. We experience this demand in its effectivity prior to every sensory-psychical actuality. The demand springs from the effectivity of the complete sense. That is the absolute spirit. It is the source of all the striving for sense on the part of actuality and therefore of actuality itself, which is nothing other than a striving for sense. Also as a striving in its sensory-intuitive form, this striving is always endowed with sense; there is no senseless [*sinnfreie*] perception or sensory quality. There is no senseless materiality, and if one looks at striving as striving apart from its sense, one looks at something that is not actual. Actuality has arisen from the effective nature [*Wirkwesen*] of sense, from the spirit, and every actuality is directed to the totality of fulfilled sense within the encompassing spirit, which is the source and goal of all actuality and is that which is formative in it. In all actuality therefore it is possible to experience [*erfahren*] the divinity of the spirit; in every intention divinity can be lived through [*erlebt*].[14]

The self-grounding of the demand for sense is the absolute spirit, divinity, and the living through [*Erlebnis*] of this demand is, according to Mally, first expressed in myth in the history of the human species. The demand for meaning in myth is felt as a demand for the complete fulfillment of sense,

---

14. Mally, *Erlebnis und Wirklichkeit*, 69.

and therefore myth requires a community for its expression: "Only a community [*Gemeinschaft*] can express religion in the form of cult and myth".[15] Because myth is the originary expression of the demand for complete sense and because this demand is its own ground and goal, the theme of myth is always the origin of the world of the community's experience, and this origin is always experienced as meaning-full, as addressing one collectivity of lived intentionalities from another such collectivity, the "gods" or, as Mally puts it, the "powers" [*Mächte*]:

> Just as a human countenance meets us with expressiveness, in just this way the original perception perceives everything. Countenance [*Gesicht*] in its double meaning [countenance, something seen] is what everything seen is, voice is what everything heard is, feeling is what every touching is; whatever is to any degree worthy of being noted, is experienced [*erlebt*] in this way.[16]

Mally insists that this mythic form of experience is not a projection of human traits out on to a reality that is, when viewed "objectively", impersonal. What is expressed in the encounter with lived experience is actuality itself in its striving towards expressivity (we might say, towards *semiosis*):

> In each perspective of experience the dynamic, value-based arrangement [*Fügung*] of the spatiotemporal world is experienced by humans, fully and directly and not first "outwardly projected" and then introjected into one's "subjectivity". The arrangement is experienced before an Ego is constructed, long before the human being is conscious of his Ego and his lived experience. We experience the dynamic value-laden orientations of up and down, before and behind, right and left, not only in our body but in the world. The way these orientations are coloured with values is barely felt by us, but they were strongly felt by the magical human [*dem magischen Menschen stark fühlbar*].[17]

Every human community ultimately loses touch with the mythic-magical actuality. Religious communities fix lived experience in words and rituals. Expressivity becomes fixed as "things" (*verdinglicht*) rather than experienced as the absolute spirit's striving towards sense. But the divine cannot be encompassed within any set of properties (*Bestimmungen*) since these always

---

15. Mally, *Erlebnis und Wirklichkeit*, 71.
16. Mally, *Erlebnis und Wirklichkeit*, 12.
17. Mally, *Erlebnis und Wirklichkeit*, 23.

pick out a particular object that is the intentional goal-object of a particular judgment or feeling or wish, but the divine is the *striving* that expresses itself in every goal-directed act of intentionality towards a *completeness* of sense. No set of properties could possibly suffice as the completeness of the divine, since its essential property is to strive to be lived through, which requires, for this striving to be actualized, that there be an infinite number of properties, and also that each property be denied as the final or last one:

> There cannot be any pause; we must always be on the way to the totally-other. [...] The properties of the divine are always raised to the infinite, the unconditioned: to the all-good, all-loving, all-powerful, to the fullness of life, to the absolute darkness and emptiness, to the death of the soul. But these are more than properties. From out of them leads the path of negation [*via neagationis*]. Every property, even if it is raised to the Unconditioned, is denied.[18]

The expression of the divine within religion is not the only realm where infinite striving stands in permanent conflict with the tendency to reification (*Verdinglichung*). All the fixed forms within every cultural sphere – morality, art, poetry, science, and philosophy – struggle against actuality's "powers" and will ultimately be overturned. "It is part of the meaning [*Sinn*] of our lives that it does not lie stretched out before us in easy grasp from the outset; we must seek after it endlessly, each time it is found it must be transcended; we can never be content with any single meaning, but in searching for it we are always nonetheless inside meaning [*im Sinn*]."[19] To be "inside meaning" is to be open to that which remains constant within the changing forms of experience, namely the "ur-mythic" event of the direct eruption of sense, the original breakthrough of sense itself into lived experience. This breakthrough is not able to be reduced to this or that particular judgment or feeling or wish or moral obligation or religious idea. It is the breakthrough of the world as such, of space and time as providing the value-laden orientation of all lived experience. "There is nothing that in the strictest sense could be called the space or time of actuality. There is only an effective spatiotemporaltiy which is a manifold of – experienceable [*erlebbare*] – strivings in spatiotemporal forms."[20] In a section devoted to the cultural sphere of science, Mally, as I have already noted, argues that the most recent discoveries in physics show how science is finally approaching actuality in its

18. Mally, *Erlebnis und Wirklichkeit*, 72.
19. Mally, *Erlebnis und Wirklichkeit*, 77.
20. Mally, *Erlebnis und Wirklichkeit*, 97.

BRUCE ROSENSTOCK

dynamic value-laden striving. But only biology can provide an account of how electromagnetic force-fields in space-time are shaped into real unities: "The actual unity is the unity found in the intentionality directed towards an experienced unity of a holistic striving that gathers an amalgam of strivings into a singularity. A spatiotemporal extension is an amalgam [*Gefüge*], but wholeness [*Gestalt*] and unity are only found as the expression and unfolding of a striving-amalgam [*Strebungsgefüges*]."[21] The "striving-amalgam" unity is *alive* and can only be an object of cognition to the degree that it is *lived through* (*erlebt*) as an expression of the absolute spirit's striving. "Physics leads us sooner or later to metaphysics."[22]

In all of actuality's strivings on the part of incomplete objects for completeness, an agential, creative force comes into appearance. This force sometimes bears the form of a human person, sometimes it bears the form of a non-human personhood that addresses itself to the human. Since language is a feature of a human community and not of a single individual, Mally further argues, a human community also must bear the form of a striving with the character of personal agency. Each language is the expression of a particular human community, and each community gives shape to itself in its language and its myths. In its language, a community sees itself as a "person". Like a species, a "person" is not an object that can be completely described in a set of propositions:

> The essential meaning of personhood [*Persönlichkeit*] is not to be an object [*Gegenstand*] of judgments; judgments are not correct if they are ascribed to personhood in its unmediated and authentic form. [...] Personhood is not something that one is required to establish firmly in its place; rather, it is something one must experience and bring to fulfillment. [...] Personhood is spirit that fulfills itself in the body-soul of the person, in strivings and developments of itself, according to a rule, but giving itself (or choosing for itself) its own rule, always giving itself a new origin and a new decision, even if it seems already to have achieved success.[23]

Personhood is the kind of object that reveals the self-shaping character of actuality's striving for completeness. What is important for our purposes is to note that personhood, for Mally, transcends the "body-soul of the person", and thus he implies that personhood is capable of a continuing form

---

21. Mally, *Erlebnis und Wirklichkeit*, 120.
22. Mally, *Erlebnis und Wirklichkeit*, 117.
23. Mally, *Erlebnis und Wirklichkeit*, 104.

of subsistence even beyond the "fulfillment" (this is a technical term for Mally's intensional logic, referring to a variable that instantiates a function). Mally does not in fact pursue the possibility of afterlife "fulfillments" of an individual's personhood in his *Zauberbuch*, but it is explicitly pursued in the work of Findlay, as I will presently explain.

John Niemeyer Findlay

In 1932 a twenty-nine year old South African of British and German descent named John Niemeyer Findlay travelled to Graz to study under Ernst Mally and complete a book, for which Findlay received his doctorate in philosophy from Graz in 1934, on Meinong's philosophy. Findlay's book was published under the title *Meinong's Theory of Objects and Values*.[24] Findlay's book remains an essential part of any Meinong bibliography even today. The Meinongian philosopher Dale Jacquette describes Findlay's book as a "remarkable commentary".[25] Findlay went on to produce a number of important scholarly monographs on Plato (c. 428–c. 348 BCE) and Hegel and quite a few independent works of philosophy, his two most well-known being *The Discipline of the Cave* and *The Transcendence of the Cave*,[26] the Gifford Lectures at the University of St. Andrews for the winter term of 1964–1965 and 1965–1966. Like Mally, Findlay is credited with creating a subbranch of logic, in Findlay's case "tense logic", the logic of temporal propositions. After teaching in New Zealand and Natal, South Africa, Findlay taught at the University of London from 1951 to 1966, after which he came to the United States and taught at the University of Texas at Austin for one year and then finished his career as the Clark Professor of Moral Philosophy and Metaphysics at Yale University. Besides his independent work as a philosopher and historian of philosophy, Findlay was an able translator, giving us the English version of Husserl's two-volume masterwork, *Logical Investigations*.[27]

The second volume of his Gifford Lectures offers a full-fledged "mystical geography" in a chapter titled "The Life of God". To a large degree, Findlay is expanding upon Mally's *Zauberbuch*. Mally himself fell into disrepute after the Second World War because, from at least 1933 when Findlay was studying with him in Graz, he had begun to display an interest in the *völkisch* "Weltauffassung" that was gaining ground in German-speaking lands at that time. Mally did finally embrace Nazi race concepts, joining

24. Findlay, *Meinong's Theory of Objects and Values*.

25. Jacquette, *Alexius Meinong*, 370.

26. John Niemeyer Findlay, *The Discipline of the Cave*, London 1966; John Niemeyer Findlay, *The Transcendence of the Cave*, London 1967.

27. Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, London 1970.

the National Socialist German Workers' Party in 1938 and soon thereafter writing a proposal for a revision of the university curriculum with a decided focus on race.[28] Findlay, I would speculate, associates his ideas with those of Meinong rather than Mally in order to distance himself from his teacher's political views. Finally, in his later works, Findlay allows himself to draw explicitly from a variety of sources, ranging from Plotinus (c. 205–270) to Sanskrit scriptures.

In a short book, *Pysche and Cerebrum*, that was delivered as the Thomas Aquinas Lecture at Marquette University, Findlay makes a point that is at the centre of his book *The Transcendence of the Cave*. He writes: "Of all the riddles of the world, those which attend our involvement with brains are among the most intractable."[29] Findlay goes on to argue, briefly but quite convincingly, that the "psyche" is irreducible to the cerebellum and the cortex, however marvelously intricate may be their structure. His argument rests primarily on the capacity of the psyche to improvise new ways of thinking about the world. "The German idealists", Findlay explains, "attributed properties which they called 'infinity' and 'absolute negativity' to the conscious person: such a person could never be committed to anything wholly definite or finite, but could always revise itself further."[30] This is exactly what Mally says about "personhood", although he does not pursue his point about the relation with infinity that Findlay will, namely towards a theory of the afterlife. Findlay, in his short lecture, compares the reductionist view of conscious life, the one that claims a perfect isomorphism and dependence between consciousness and neuronal activity, a "philosophy *of* the cerebrum in more senses than one". What he means is that reductionism is itself the product of our attempt to adapt ourselves to the vast complexity of the world, a product of our attempt to simplify experience so that we seem to live "in a world of remote objects, all fully interpreted, which stand over against our subjectivity without needing to give us the sensations in which subject and object meet, and in which both what is in us and what transcends us are felt as in unity and not separated by a gulf". The philosophy of the cerebrum is a philosophy that attends only to the remote objects presented before consciousness for its ease of response and its adaptative success in a threatening world. Such a view of the world is what Findlay likens to Plato's cave: "On the whole it is arguable that if we live in a cave, seeing only broken and puzzling reflections of being, that cave is the cerebrum."[31]

---

28. Werner Sauer, "Mally als NS-Philosoph", in Alexander Hieke (ed.), *Ernst Mally: Versuch Einer Neubewertung*, Sankt Augustin 1998, 167–191.

29. John Niemeyer Findlay, *Psyche and Cerebrum*, Milwaukee, MN 1972, 4–5.

30. Findlay, *Psyche and Cerebrum*, 29.

31. Findlay, *Psyche and Cerebrum*, 32–33.

This takes us directly to the theory of the afterlife as it is developed in Findlay's major philosophical work, *The Transcendence of the Cave*. But, before turning to this theory, let me present a foretaste of Findlay's theory in this summation of it provided in *Psyche and Cerebrum*:

> To what do these reflections finally tend? To the suggestion that there may be forms of conscious being-in-the-world [...] which do not require mediation by all those infinitely elaborate mechanisms found in the cerebrum and characteristic of "our present state". They will be forms of conscious being in which we do not have to strike a compromise with the scrofulous tenantry who now make up our bodies. [...] Bodies we shall have, no doubt, having some of the features of our present bodies, and in them and through them we shall show ourselves to other beings similarly embodied, and act and be acted on by them and by an environment which will serve as a common background to us all, but these bodies and their common environment will have some traits of the imaginary as well as the compulsively real. [...] But as we progress up the scale, corporeality will be attenuated to a mere reminiscence, to the *commensurationes* with body which, according to Thomas [Aquinas, c. 1225–1274], attend upon and lend individuality to even the most disembodied spirituality.[32]

This is a pretty remarkable affirmation of life after death for a rather sober-minded Yale professor of philosophy who bases his affirmation on a Meinongian realism about the nature of consciousness and its objects.

In *Transcendence of the Cave* Findlay begins with five lectures that cover the most generous possible theorization of what human conscious life is able to attain within the limits of the assumption that conscious life is tied to the embodied existence as we know it in "our present state". This theorization unfolds the Kantian conception of a universe in which the world's messy contingencies are able to be accommodated within the intelligible bounds of rational order, a rational order that is fundamentally attuned with the conditions of possibility of our consciousness. This Kantian rationalism is hardly the same thing as the "philosophy of the cerebrum" that Findlay dismisses in *Psyche and Cerebrum*, but it bears a deep family resemblance with it. The way that the cerebrum presents consciousness with already interpreted sensory input parallels Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) notion about how the forms of space and time and the categories of the understanding give rational order to the intuitions presented by the senses. Findlay argues that

---

32. Findlay, *Psyche and Cerebrum*, 36–37.

the world as we experience it in our waking lives does, in fact, make sense and is intelligible to us. The mind has a capacity for bringing order to the welter of sensory data, organizing it into higher and higher order levels of abstraction. Being a (moderate) Meinongian, Findlay argues that intentional objects of higher order levels of abstraction "enjoy a bracketed, intentional inexistence".[33] In a nicely worded summary Findlay writes:

> The common life of the mind consists, therefore, in seeing the particularities of personal and environmental existence in lights that are universal and common as among objects, and likewise universal and common as among thinking persons, and it consists, further, in the use of these lights, by way of the words which give them a seeming thinghood, for the setting up, the hypostasis, of an endless hierarchy of abstractions, which preside, like a panel of magistrates, in their public majesty, even when what falls under their jurisdiction is variable and altogether lacking.[34]

Modern philosophy of mind has largely concerned itself, whether in the Anglo-American or Contintental traditions, with providing a taxonomy of the "endless hierarchy of abstractions" that lay down the law to our unruly and untidy encounters with the world, attempting to ascertain their origins and the scope of their rights. Because Findlay is essentially Meinongian in his philosophical predilections, he is quite generous when it comes to granting to all of the mind's creations a claim to some legitimacy, even if they are objects with no possible toehold in the spatiotemporal world. In all of the mind's intentionalities Findlay finds a common root: "The basic endeavor of the mind to burst the springs of its merely personal subjectivity, and to achieve understandings with its fellows concerning the common world which compulsively confronts them all." This endeavour, Findlay claims, "is nothing other than the thinking mind itself". We may certainly hear echoes of Ernst Mally's claim that the striving for meaning is itself "the absolute spirit". As Findlay puts it, "the eternal life of thought is its own end".[35]

The book I am discussing is titled *The Transcendence of the Cave*. Everything that I have so far said about the life of the mind, its creative power of intentionality to be directed towards objects of greater and greater abstraction or, when fused with our emotional being, to relate itself to valuations of higher and higher degree (freedom, love, happiness, and so on), all of

---

33. Findlay, *The Transcendence of the Cave*, 46.
34. Findlay, *The Transcendence of the Cave*, 46.
35. Findlay, *The Transcendence of the Cave*, 55.

this represents the mind's operations within the cave. Findlay argues that religion reveals the endeavour of the mind to finally "burst the springs of its merely personal subjectivity" and reach beyond the cave to an object that is no longer merely "common" to a number of personal minds, but is the point where the distinction between personal and common disappears. The object of religious veneration, properly understood, is just what would once and for all dissolve the differences between personal subjectivities, precisely because it answers to what every distinct subjectivity as a thinking being is seeking in every one of its intentional objects: reality, permanence, excellence, in the highest possible degree. No object within the cave can be a point where thinking stops, where everything else within the cave is fully grasped, every detail given its place and meaning, and every moment in time its direction and fulfillment. Rather than take this as an argument in favour of the groundlessness of existence, Findlay affirms the possibility that the life of the mind within the cave is not the final form of the life of the mind.

It may seem as if Findlay is merely making the existence of religious veneration of an absolutely perfect being into evidence for the possibility that the object of such veneration really exists, and then, repeating Anselm of Canterbury's (c. 1033–1109) ontological argument, concluding that such an object *must necessarily exist* since it is, as the mind necessarily conceives of it, the apex of all the mind's strivings, possessing all the perfections, including reality. In fact, Findlay spends a good deal of time defending Anselm's ontological argument for the necessary existence of an object answering to the mind's concept of perfection. It should not surprise us that a Meinongian philosopher would not wish to merely dismiss Anselm's ontological argument, since this would mean denying objective existence (mind-independent existence) to the one intentional object that includes *necessity of existence* as its salient characteristic. If this intentional object is merely a figment of the mind lacking all mind-independent reality, then no mind-independent object exists except contingently. This is a conclusion that Kant accepted, as Findlay points out. For Kant, "the idea of God, necessary existence included, is a flawless transcendental ideal in whose noumenal reality we can have good practical reasons to believe".[36] But the idea of God, of a necessary being who is the apex of the mind's striving for meaning and value, cannot really be the goal of the mind's striving if there is no real object to which the idea corresponds. Kant's solution, dividing phenomenal contingencies from a noumenal hoped-for necessary reality, leaves the mind's strivings trapped inside the cave. As Franz Kafka (1883–1924) is said to have quipped, "there is

36. Findlay, *The Transcendence of the Cave*, 85.

an infinite amount of hope, only not for us". Findlay finds in Meinongian intensional logic the resources to counter the Kantian dilemma where what humans most specially hope for cannot possibly exist.

Findlay says that the Kantian dilemma underlies modern extensional logic, the logic of Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell, the logic that Meinong rejected. Frege and Russell argued that the predicate "exists" only holds true for an object to which a general description ("the first president of the United States") might possibly apply. The key word is "possibly". A general description that *must* apply to a certain object (or to no object) is either a tautology ("the pink elephant that is pink") that is true about what is describes ("the pink elephant") whether it exists or not, or it is a contradiction ("the pink elephant that is not pink") which cannot be true of what it describes, whether it exists or not. Thus, "the perfect being is a being that necessarily exists" seems to be a mere tautology, asserting what is true about the perfect being whether that being exists or not. But in a Meinongian intensional logic, "the perfect being" as the object of religious veneration must have a mind-independent reality precisely because the mind necessarily strives towards it (intends it) by virtue of not finding it among the things that contingently exist (might not exist). Underlying this Meinongian logic is the assumption that there is an infinity of intentional objects (since the fact that something is an intentional object can itself be the object of an intentional act). Therefore, intentionality itself is infinite, which means that the mind's striving towards a non-contingent perfect being can be directed towards a real object, the goal of its infinite striving. Meinongian logic begins with an object and then asks whether an intentional act can be directed towards it, and what kind of act that is. The perfect object is precisely the goal towards which the infinite striving of intentionality is directed, what Mally called "the absolute spirit", and Findlay called more simply "the religious absolute". It is true that the perfect object, the religious absolute, would be in some sense beyond infinity, but this is in fact how religious veneration frequently understands God, and it also has an exact analogue in the Cantorian mathematics of transfinite numbers, as Findlay explains:

> Each case of some value or form of excellence may be capable of being surpassed by some other case, but something which is *not* a case of this value or form of excellence, but this very value or form of excellence itself, can very well be said to "surpass" all its cases, inasmuch as it is the general possibility and foundation of them all. [...] It surpasses them much as $\aleph_0$, number of the finite inductive cardinals, surpasses all those

finite inductive cardinals, among which it is not to be found, but *of* which it is none the less the number.[37]

Cantor himself believed that his proof of the existence of the transfinite cardinal $\aleph_0$ was evidence that the mathematical mind's striving to grasp the nature of the infinite since the time of Zeno (c. 495–c. 430 BCE) was all along directed towards a mind-independent actual infinity. In like manner, Findlay argues that the religious mind's striving to grasp the nature of an unsurpassably perfect being combining all excellences can be viewed as evidence of the existence of such a being, so long as existence is not something we grant only to particular cases of an excellence but to the "form of excellence itself", to use Findlay's Platonic phrasing. But such a form of existence, one that does not merely apply to a case falling under a general description, is impossible in the extensional logic of Frege and Russell (and most exponents of modern analytic philosophy). Findlay is not the only modern philosopher to defend a Meinongian intensional logic, but he is the only one to take it into the territory of the soul's post-mortem existence. Like Plato in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, Findlay argues that it would make no sense if the epistemic striving of the embodied mind had no hope of reaching closer to its intended objects than the particulars it encounters within the "cave" of this-worldly life:

> The great inversion of Platonism, whereby characters take ontological precedence over instances, has a deep and liberating hold upon our view of the world: it substitutes [...] the lucid and the graspable for the everlastingly obscure and elusive. Individuals there may well be, and we may at times indicate them with our physical fingers or hold them in our physical hands, but all that our minds can lay hold of in them is irremediably characteristic and universal. The great inversion is, however, unacceptable unless we can carry it further, relating the characters thus distinguished to a mind that embraces them and unites them, and which employs its intentions, not so much to mediate transcendent references to instances, as to put before itself ideal objects which exactly correspond to the scope of its intentions.[38]

I do not have time here to do justice to the lectures in which Findlay lays out the basic structure of the "noetic cosmos" that rests upon the foundation of the Meinongian-Anselmian ontological proof of the possible existence of

---

37. Findlay, *The Transcendence of the Cave*, 92.
38. Findlay, *The Transcendence of the Cave*, 153.

BRUCE ROSENSTOCK

a religious absolute. In these lectures Findlay, using all the resources of his training in analytic philosophy and logic, updates the metaphysics of Plato and Plotinus to provide what is probably the most coherent modern defense of this tradition that one can find or is ever likely to find, given the temper of most departments of philosophy in the world today. But a sketch of his theory of the afterlife in the lecture titled "The Life of the Soul" is in order before I conclude my essay with some final words about the overarching differences between the two works that I have been focused on, Mally's *Zauberbuch* and Findlay's *Transcendence of the Cave*.

Central to Findlay's account of the afterlife is the distinction between the personal and the impersonal. This distinction is one that Meinong developed in his major work from 1917, *On Emotional Presentation*.[39] Findlay introduced this theory in an early lecture of *Transcendence of the Cave* ("The Realm of Values and Disvalues"), but he had also devoted two books to this topic.[40] The personal corresponds to the particular valuations characteristic of each individual, determined by his or her unique psychology and perspective, but the impersonal is the objective value towards which personal values can point. The life of the soul, Findlay argues, is a process of movement from the personal towards the impersonal, but not at the cost of the disappearance of subjectivity. To be sure, each personal subjectivity will cease to be divided so profoundly from the other as it is in its embodied, this-worldly existence:

> This-world contingencies will dissolve as such, but the interpersonal, aesthetic, intellectual, moral and other deposit they leave behind them will become richer and richer: in the end these alone will be informed by essential zeal, and all else will be done only for them. The process is nigh inevitable, and only extraordinary accidents or deeply ingrained perversities of attitude can resist it effectively: we fall more and more out of love with this world and more and more in love with what is yonder. [...] The innumerable damned whose wills are fixed at death in drear postures of evil are happily an unwarranted fantasy.[41]

I should like to end my presentation of Findlay's theory of the afterlife on this happy note. Reading Findlay's *Transcendence of the Cave* can be a somewhat jarring experience, on the whole. He writes beautifully, and in many places his prose stands up against the best of Ralph Waldo Emerson

---

39. Alexius Meinong, *On Emotional Presentation*, Evanston 1972.

40. Findlay, *Meinong's Theory of Objects and Values*; John Niemeyer Findlay, *Values and Intentions: A Study in Value-Theory and Philosophy of Mind*, London 1961.

41. Findlay, *The Transcendence of the Cave*, 177.

(1803–1882). But Findlay does not, like Emerson, hope to win one over to his vision by the power of language alone. There are serious arguments being advanced in *Transcendence of the Cave*, as I hope my discussion of the Meinongian reconstruction of Anselm's ontological argument makes clear. And this is the source of the jarring impression that one gets while reading the book. The mystical has become logical. But I believe that this is Findlay's intention. He rightly senses that the mystical element might easily come to predominate, the end result of which would be to throw a vague and nebulous shroud over the world's imperfections and injustices. This is a danger that I fear Mally's *Zauberbuch* falls victim to. I would like to borrow from the history of post-Hegelian thought and say that Mally and Findlay represent Right Meinongianism and Left Meinongianism respectively. Mally is convinced that the *Volk* have it within themselves to create in this world a politics of mystical ecstasy, of the loss of their separate personhoods in the larger personhood of the nation. Mally, unlike Findlay, does not imagine that this world can be so profoundly out of alignment with the transcendental world that it needs to be altogether repudiated rather than swooningly embraced. Mally could never have written these words in which Findlay roundly chastises the "Anglo-Saxon idealists" like Francis Herbert Bradley (1846–1924) or Bernard Bosanquet (1848–1923) whom Findlay otherwise holds in considerable esteem:

> What we have been saying has been in a distant way said by many late nineteenth century Anglo-Saxon idealists with their belief in a single, seamless "Reality", the subject of all judgments, all of whose nuances were "internally related". Only, if we may so put it, they sought absolute unity where it is not truly to be found, in the phenomena of this dirempted, alienated sphere, and their absolute reality accordingly assumed the painful form of a vastly extended total system, a sort of cosmic British Empire, with members bound together by strict Victorian causal determinism, beribboned with a few superadded links of sentimental teleology.[42]

I would like to conclude, then, by suggesting that what I have called Findlay's "Left Meinongianism" fits perfectly within the paradigm of a counter-biopolitics that Mårten Björk has described in his study of the theory of immortality in Germany during the first half of the twentieth century. Björk has identified a consistent refusal on the part of a number of German and German-Jewish thinkers to reduce psyche to cerebrum, as

---

42. Findlay, *The Transcendence of the Cave*, 212.

BRUCE ROSENSTOCK

Findlay puts it. What Björk says about the view of life these thinkers held is true for Mally and Findlay as well: "Life, as something curved into itself, is a factical phenomenon that has its own survival as horizon. Life can, from this perspective, only be said to have meaning beyond survival if the human creature opens itself to the domain of being that exists outside the parameters of biological and factical existence."[43] I hope that my study of Mally and Findlay has contributed another chapter to the contestation with a merely factical view of life that emerges out of Germany, this time in the context of Alexius Meinong's heirs, Ernst Mally and John Niemeyer Findlay. By examining these two thinkers together, we can see clearly how a politics centred on a mystagogue can mold a theory of "life outside life" as Björk calls into a theory where the "cave" has become an empire (or *Reich*) unto itself. ▲

SUMMARY

Two of the most influential theories to emerge in German thought before the First World War were the object theory (*Gegendstandstheorie*) of Alexius Meinong and the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl. Both theories descend from the work of their teacher, the Austrian psychologist and philosopher Franz Brentano. In this essay I focus on object theory, although a similar story can be told about the development of phenomenology. I will explore the way that Meinong's object theory provided the foundation for a realist account of the afterlife as a form of personal conscious existence in a realm of transcendental intentional objects. The philosophers who develop this account of the afterlife are Ernst Mally and John Niemeyer Findlay, Mally's student. Mally provides the theoretical groundwork for a theory of the afterlife, and Findlay gives the theory its full-fledged exposition. Both philosophers base their work on Alexius Meinong's intensional logic, the heart of object theory. My presentation of their views is intended to provide a glimpse into a relatively unstudied aspect of modern philosophy, what could be called the logic of the afterlife.

---

43. Mårten Björk, *Life Outside Life: The Politics of Immortality, 1914–1945*, Gothenburg 2018, 376.

Hans Boersma. *Seeing God: The Beatific Vision in Christian Tradition.* **Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. 2018. 467 s.**

Hans Boersma, känd för sina tidigare arbeten om bland annat *Nouvelle Théologie*, skrifttolkning och sakramental ontologi, tar i *Seeing God* sig an det mycket ambitiösa uppdraget att teckna synen på det saliga skådandet av Gud i kristen tradition. Boersma menar att läran om det saliga skådandet, som innebär att människans slutmål är att skåda Gud, har förlorat sin centrala plats i teologin. I den moderna tiden ses inte läran om det saliga skådandet som en förutsättning för att förstå människan och historien. Boersmas projekt ska alltså förstås som ett försök att lyfta fram det saliga skådandet i vår tid och åter visa lärans betydelse.

Den historiska genomgången sker kronologiskt och varje kapitel har sin egen frågeställning och ingång till ämnet. Bokens första del behandlar det saliga skådandet under den tidigkristna perioden. I denna del finns ett kapitel som berör lärans platonska arv, ett kapitel som beskriver läran hos Gregorius av Nyssa (ca 335–ca 395) och ett kapitel som utgår från Augustinus (354–430) behandling av gudsuppenbarelserna i *Om Treenigheten*. I andra delen, som tar upp lärans utveckling under medeltiden, ställs Thomas av Aquino (ca 1225–1274) och Gregorios Palamas (ca 1296–ca 1357), Symeon den nye teologen (949–1022) och Johannes av Korset (1542–1591) samt Bonaventura (ca 1220–1274) och Nicolaus Cusanus (1401–1464) mot varandra i tre kapitel och därefter behandlas läran utifrån Dante Alighieris (1265–1321) *Den gudomliga komedin* i ett kapitel. I den tredje delen beskrivs läran i protestantisk teologi. I denna del behandlas Jean Calvin (1509–1564), John Donne (1572–1631) och Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) i varsitt kapitel. Utöver dessa kapitel finns det ett ytterligare som tar upp läran i puritansk och nederländsk reformert tradition. I bokens sista del, som består av ett avslutande kapitel, lägger Boersma fram sin egen syn på läran om det saliga skådandet och utgår då från det han funnit i de tidigare kapitlen.

När Boersma själv får lägga ut texten betonar han kontinuiteten mellan skådandet och erfarenheten av Gud här i tiden, att skådandet ska förstås utifrån Kristus samt betydelsen av kroppens uppståndelse i skådandet.

För att förstå Boersmas projekt bör boken läsas som en fortsättning på hans tidigare arbeten. Även om det saliga skådandet analyseras från mängder av olika perspektiv och utifrån en mångfald av röster så är den överordnade frågeställningen för Boersma ändå hur det saliga skådandet relaterar till det som han kallar en sakramental ontologi. Detta, världens och människans deltagande i Gud själv, verkar mellan raderna vara Boersmas verkliga hjärtefråga. Både hans egen framställning av läran och hans historiska genomgång av den är formade av detta. Inte minst är betoningen på kontinuiteten mellan nuets erfarenhet och framtidens skådande en konsekvens av att Boersma arbetar med frågor om världens ontologi: hur vi här och nu ska förstå den värld vi lever i.

Det finns en ofrånkomlig konflikt inbyggd i själva idén om att människan ska kunna se Gud. Å ena sidan finns det klara och tydliga löften om att människan ska se Gud ansikte mot ansikte i det bibelmaterial som teologer utgår ifrån och arbetar med då de behandlar frågan. Å andra sidan ter sig idén strida mot den i Bibeln minst lika framträdande idén om Gud som oändlig, oåtkomlig och obegriplig. Utmaningen för teologen som arbetar med läran är att hålla ihop dessa två motstridiga idéer utan att den ena tar ut den andra. Boersma återkommer flera gånger till de två dominerande alternativ som utstakats genom historien, nämligen den västliga modellen som utgår från Thomas av Aquino – där en lösning på konflikten är att betona att skådandet av Gud inte ger fullständig kunskap om Guds väsen – och den östliga modellen – där man gör en skarp distinktion mellan Guds essens som är onåbar och Guds energier som går att se. När Boersma presenterar sin egen syn på läran tar

han inte direkt ställning för något av dessa två alternativ, även om han är kritisk till delar av den thomistiska förståelsen. Boersmas eget förslag, där betoningen ligger på Kristus centrala plats i det saliga skådandet, erbjuder i stället en annan lösning på konflikten. Människan ser Gud genom att se Kristus. Det finns något inte helt tillfredsställande med lösningen. I frälsningens ekonomi fyller Kristus funktionen att vara den osynlige Gudens avbild. Det oerhörda i läran om det saliga skådandet är att människan ska se Gud direkt och oförmedlat. Det verkar som att lärans anspråk blir nedtonat när Kristus, som förstås som mittpunkten för Guds självuppenbarelse, blir objektet för skådandet och inte Gud själv, oförmedlat.

Eftersom Boersma utgår ifrån olika frågeställningar i varje i kapitel i den historiska genomgången spretar boken något. I bokens andra del följs till exempel kapitlet om ljus och mörker hos Symeon och Johannes av ett kapitel om kunskap och kärlek hos Bonaventura och Cusanus. Efter det kommer ett kapitel som handlar om seende och tal hos Dante. Om alla kapitel haft samma ingång och frågeställning hade det som läsare varit enklare att följa vart undersökningen är på väg. Men Boersmas val av frågeställningar är väl avvägda och känslan efter att ha läst varje kapitel blir att ingången till varje tänkare varit den bästa. Det som skulle kunna anklagas för att vara en icke stringent undersökning blir både engagerande och tilltalande just för att det spretar. Läsaren ges en mångfald av betydande insikter och ingångar i ett ämne som även fortsatt bör vara central i teologin.

Anders Ek
TM, Malmö

Michael Agerbo Mørch (red.). *En plads blandt de lærde: Teologiens videnskabelighed til debat.* **Köpenhamn: Eksistensen. 2019. 195 s.**

Som titeln antyder är detta en dansk debattbok som tar upp frågan om teologins vetenskaplighet. Frågorna känns igen, men är för den sakens skull knappast ointressanta: Är teologi en vetenskap eller inte? Vad skiljer teologi från religionsvetenskap, och vari består den teologiska fakultetens legitimitet? Bokens inledning, författad av Michael Agerbo Mørch (som skriver en avhandling om teologins vetenskaplighet och institutionella placering), skissar upp en situation präglad av "teologins *aktuella* kris" som rör teologins status på västerländska, sekulära universitet i en tid då teologiska fakulteter antingen stängs ned eller ombildas under andra fakulteter. Därmed är boken intressant också utanför en specifik dansk kontext. Det är dock värt att notera att denna kris ramas in just som en fråga om teologins *vetenskaplighet*. Men man kan fråga sig om detta verkligen når till pudelns kärna. Jag återkommer till detta nedan.

Boken består av en inledning samt tio bidrag, alla skrivna av män, med undantag för den enda kvinnan som också råkar vara den enda filosofen. Föga förvånande påtalas den ojämna könsfördelningen inledningsvis med brasklappen att detta inte återspeglar den faktiska könsfördelningen inom teologiämnet i Danmark. Tur är väl det! Men vart tog kvinnorna vägen då? De var antingen för upptagna eller för ödmjuka för att vara med får vi veta. Bokens bidrag är skrivna av i huvudsak teologer och religionsvetare, från såväl statliga universitet och privata (konfessionella) utbildningsinstitut. Bokens olika bidrag spänner mellan ett försvar för teologins vetenskaplighet å ena sidan, samt teologiskt motiverade argument om att teologin aldrig kan bli en vetenskap å andra sidan. Ja, bokens sista text kulminerar i bön riktad till läsaren, vilket också säger en hel del om ytterligheterna i denna debatt.

Tyvärr blir läsningen lite lidande av att de olika bidragen upprepar en del vetenskapsteoretiskt och historiskt allmängods som visserligen är av relevans, men som med fördel hade kunnat redovisats i ett utökat inledningskapitel. En annan sak som man som läsare slås av är att bokens "pluralistiska grundsyn" trots allt endast hjälper att tydliggöra en ordning där teologi alltjämt kommit att förstås utifrån en förgivettagen kristen identitet. I en sådan ordning blir övriga religioner i stället föremål för religionsvetenskap eller religionshistoria. Jag slås också av att danska statskyrkan skymtar här och var bland bidragen, vilket blir en tydlig – ja, numera nästan lite exotisk – skillnad i förhållande till en svensk kontext.

Men vad kan man då utläsa på ett mer generellt plan av debatten i fråga? Utifrån ett kulturteoretiskt perspektiv vill jag hävda att teologin (och den religiösa tron) alltjämt under moderniteten kommit att förhålla sig till en erfarenhet som undflyr det sekulära förnuftet. Om förnuftet förhåller sig till det "synliga" (det som är objektifierbart) så förhåller sig trons och teologins begreppslighet till "det osynliga", det vill säga idén om en erfarenhet som undflyr det objektiva vetandet. Detta låter sig förstås som uttryck för en teo/logisk ordning på så sätt att storheten "gud" (*theos*) framstår som den rationella ordningens (*logos*) andre, antingen som något undflyende och irrationellt – det "numinösa" hos Rudolf Otto (1869–1937) – eller som något som måste objektifieras i en rationell (religionsvetenskaplig) diskurs.

Men kanske låter sig problemställningen snarare inverteras. Är teologins kris kanske ett symptom på något mer grundläggande som inte längre rör endast teologin som disciplin, utan som rör själva den teo/logiska dikotomiseringen av tro och förnuft? Är det inte som en fråga om en icke-objektifierbar livserfarenhet som vi i dag kan förstå och tolka det som traditionellt har tillhört den religiösa trons område? Ett intressant bidrag i denna riktning finner jag i Jakob Wolf som lyfter fram ett resonemang influerat av den nya fenomenologin. Som ett alternativ till de förhärskande objektiverande strategierna, erbjuder den nya fenomenologin resurser för att bättre förstå den typ av livserfarenhet som den religiösa tron måste svara mot för att inte komma till korta inför den moderna religionskritiken.

Men jag vill nu återvända till bokens inledande skissering av det som benämns som "teologins *aktuella* kris". Här hänvisas till en rapport från 2019 utgiven av British Academy om teologi och religionsvetenskap i Storbritannien. Enligt rapporten har studentgruppen inom dessa ämnen sjunkit drastiskt de senaste åren samtidigt som filosofiämnet är i stadig tillväxt. Rapporten tolkar detta som att studenterna är fortsatt intresserade av tillvarons stora frågor men att de söker svaren på annat håll. Här undrar jag om en reflektion över teologins vetenskaplighet verkligen förmår adressera *aktualiteten* i teologins kris. Är det inte snarare behovet av en förnyad teologi som bör bjuda till debatt i dag? Inte nödvändigtvis på bekostnad av traditionsbunden eller kristen teologi, och inte nödvändigtvis i konflikt med religiösa samfund. Men kanske behövs det i dag teologer som med djärvhet förmår förnya teologin inifrån genom att också bredda dess kulturella relevans i en tid där den traditionella religionen för en växande skara individer har förlorat sin relevans, aktualitet och livsbärande kraft, individer som kanske snarare är beredda att känna igen sig i diagnostiseringen av vår samtid som post-religiös (den bästa svenska introduktionen till den post-religiösa samtiden är nog Isabelle Ståhls generationsroman *Just nu är jag här*). Vad som snarare står på spel är frågan om vilka teologiska forskningsprogram som kan bidra till att bäst hålla liv i den akademiska teologin i vår egen tid, så att teologin kan blir relevant också för en post-religiös generation som, kanske utan att veta om det, törstar efter att få ställa de stora teologiska frågorna på nytt.

Simon Henriksson
Doktorand, Uppsala

Friedrich Schweitzer, Wolfgang Ilg & Peter Schreiner (red.). *Researching Non-Formal Religious Education in Europe.* **Münster: Waxmann. 2019. 296 s.**

Religionspedagogik är ett forskningsfält som rymmer religionsdidaktik och därmed en reflektion kring lärande och undervisning om religiösa fenomen, frågeställningar och andra uttryck för meningsskapande samt villkoren för desamma i såväl religiösa som icke-konfessionella sammanhang. I ett svenskt sammanhang finner vi i dag religionspedagogisk och religionsdidaktisk forskning och undervisning vid ett tjugotal lärosäten och det är ett ämne som växer i flera avseenden. Samtidigt kan vi i ett såväl svenskt som internationellt perspektiv konstatera att studier av konfessionella miljöer alltjämt är långt färre än de som genomförs i den institutionella skolans miljö. Studier av ett informellt eller icke-formellt lärande är också betydligt färre i jämförelse med mer formaliserad undervisning. Boken *Researching Non-Formal Religious Education in Europe* tar sin utgångspunkt i detta sistnämnda faktum och i en samtidig önskan om att vända trenden. Redaktörerna menar att det i dag redan finns en medvetenhet om den omfattande religionsundervisning som tar plats också utanför skolkontexten, men att forskning om den icke-formella undervisningen trots detta är liten. Boken rymmer bidrag och perspektiv från sammanlagt åtta europeiska länder och diskuterar också frågan vad icke-formell undervisning i sig kan betyda.

Bokens redaktörer gör en skillnad mellan den informella undervisningen som kan ske i till exempel familjen, den formella som vi ser exempel på i skolan och den icke-formella som finner sin plats däremellan. Undervisningen inom ramen för icke-formell undervisning kan ta sin utgångspunkt i en läroplan men är oftast mindre formaliserad och sällan betygsgrundande, till skillnad från förutsättningarna i skolan. Exempel på icke-formell undervisning är olika barn- och

ungdomsgrupper i kristna, muslimska och andra religiösa sammanhang.

Boken är indelad i fem övergripande teman och i sammanlagt sjutton kapitel. Det första temat presenterar ett antal mer generella studier och forskningsöversikter. De följande kapitlen lyfter studier som särskilt undersökt en avgränsad verksamhet som förskolan, söndagsskolan, konfirmandverksamhet och unga volontärer.

I ett kapitel i bokens första del presenterar Heid Leganger-Krogstad det arbete med lärande och undervisning som Norska kyrkan arbetat med sedan tidigt 2000-tal. Leganger-Krogstad visar bland annat hur fokus i Norska kyrkan flyttats från dopundervisning till "trosopplaering" och hur konfirmationen därmed inte längre utgör det slutmål för kyrkans undervisning som den varit tidigare. I stället talar man i dag om ett livslångt lärande. Exemplet från Norge visar också hur gränserna mellan formell och icke-formell undervisning kan vara svår att dra, då man i Norska kyrkan utformat en läroplan för undervisning i det icke-formella sammanhanget. Studien ger också exempel på hur graden av frivillighet utmanar forskarna, eftersom frivillighet i denna typ av verksamhet gör det svårt att genomföra systematiska och jämförande studier av verksamheten.

I ett kapitel om religionsundervisning i den reformerta kyrkan i Schweiz belyser Thomas Schlag och Rahel Voirol-Sturzenegger en utmaning som går att känna igen också i ett svenskt perspektiv, nämligen svårigheten för kyrkor och församlingar att möta uppväxande generationer. Schlag och Voirol-Sturzenegger konstaterar att medvetenheten om de utmaningar kring undervisning som man står inför som kyrka är låg bland de engagerade själva. Medvetenheten om hur undervisningen i skolan påverkar och skiljer sig från den undervisning som kyrkan själv erbjuder är inte heller självklar bland de över 300 medarbetare, barn och föräldrar som på olika sätt deltagit i studien. Författarna bedömer de insatser som den

reformerta kyrkan gör för undervisning som nödvändiga eftersom den undervisning som skolan erbjuder också framöver kan förväntas minska, med andra ord ett scenario vi kan känna igen också i ett svenskt sammanhang.

Judith Könemann och Clauss Peter Sajak presenterar i sitt kapitel en undersökning av romersk-katolsk religionsundervisning i Tyskland. Ett resultat av deras arbete är en efterlysning av fortsatta studier som undersöker betydelsen av och relationen mellan person–metod–innehåll men också kontextens betydelse för kristna kyrkors undervisning.

Ett tredje och i detta sammanhang sista exempel från boken är en presentation av tre empiriska studier av den tyska förskolan med fokus på interreligiös undervisning. Jämförelsen mellan de tre studierna använder författarna som argument för betydelsen av att använda såväl kvantitativa som kvalitativa metoder i studier av icke-formellt lärande. Genom jämförelsen argumenterar de också för den betydelse det kan ha för pedagoger själva att utbildas och få kunskap om hur man kan möta de olika behov och önskemål som de barn och familjer har som i dag möts i förskolan.

Bokens redaktörer Friedrich Schweitzer, Wolfgang Ilg och Peter Schreiner, har ambitionen att genom antologin stärka medvetenheten om den betydelse och det inflytande som lärande och undervisning utanför den institutionaliserade skolans sammanhang faktiskt har. Boken svarar väl mot den ambitionen, även om bidragen skiftar något i kvalitet. Ambitionen att få med exempel från de sammanlagt åtta europeiska länder vars forskning presenteras tycks ibland ha överskuggat kvaliteten på texterna vad gäller analys och fördjupning. Men tillsammans ger kapitlen en spännande bild av ett forskningsfält som har alla förutsättningar att växa.

Boken är av självklart intresse för forskare i fältet men också för de som arbetar och deltar i den icke-formella verksamhet som presenteras. Genom en bild av det arbete som görs i andra sammanhang och i andra länder

får man som medarbetare och deltagare ett spännande perspektiv på den egna verksamheten. Som forskare är det intressant att ta del av diskussioner kring studiernas genomförbarhet och de särskilda förutsättningar för forskningsdesign som det kan innebära att forska om icke-formaliserad undervisning. Boken ger exempel på ett internationellt intresse för denna typ av studier och inspirerar till fortsatt utveckling av frågor kring metod och genomförande i framtida internationella jämförelser.

Caroline Gustavsson
Docent, Stockholm

Anna Sjöberg. *En annan Abraham: Tre undersökningar av den kristna historiens kris*. Lund: Lunds universitet. 2019. 245 s.

Utgangspunktet for Anna Sjöbergs doktoravhandling er den utbredte forestillingen at moderniteten har ført til en form for krise for kristendommen og den kristne tradisjonen. En slik kriseforestilling kan avleses i Friedrich Nietzsches (1844–1900) kristendomskritikk, men har også satt sitt preg på teologers egen selvfortolkning, slik vi kan se hos Karl Barth (1886–1968). Sist, men ikke minst, har forestillingen om en krise for den teologiske tradisjonen preget litteraturen, som hos Franz Kafka (1883–1924), hvor forholdet mellom det filosofiske og det teologiske, mellom et innenfor og et utenfor tradisjonen, preges av ambivalens.

På den ene siden gir avhandlingen en filosofisk og idéhistorisk lesning av disse tre viktige stemmene i denne krisediskursen, men den trekker også inn tenkere som Augustin (354–430), Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945) og Edmund Husserl (1859–1938). Samtidig har avhandlingen et systematisk-teologisk formål, hvor Sjöberg spør hva kriseforestillingen innebærer for muligheten til å bedrive teologi i dag. En gjennomgående interesse er her metodiske spørsmål som angår den systematiske teologiens mulighetsbetingelser og

grenser – eller som Sjöberg formulerer det: "*hur ska vi förstå skillnaden mellan ett inre och yttre, ett innanför och utanför den kristna teologin? [...] när västerlandet försöker göra sig av med religionen?*" (s. 21). Boken har mange lag av spørsmål som Sjöberg innledningsvis oppsummerer i tre ulike problemkompleks: Det første handler om "föreställningen om moderniteten som synonym med kristendomens kris", det andre berører "konflikten mellan tänkande och vetande i sekulariseringens kölvatten", mens det tredje og siste problemkomplekset formuleres som "sekulariseringen som process: 'avmytologisering' eller cementering av ett kristet paradigm?"

Kapittelet om Nietzsche viser hvordan hans forståelse av nihilismens ulike aspekter har preget og fortsatt preger oss på fundamentalt vis: "Vi kan i dag inte närma oss frågan om religionens komplexa status i Europas intellektuella sfär utan att beakta hur Nietzsche och nihilismbegreppet förändrat spelplanen" (s. 82), skriver Sjöberg. På den ene siden fremhever hun hvordan metodologien i Nietzsches "aktive nihilisme" synes å gi et verdifullt bidrag til en distansering fra vitenskapens kunnskapssyn. Samtidig spør hun, med utgangspunkt i Nietzsches oppfatning av nihilismen som både sykdom og botemiddel, om dette også gjelder for kristendommen: om vi i kristendommen må "söka botemedlen mot den destruktiva form av post-kristendom som Nietzsche menar att vi nu befinner oss i?" (s. 98–99). Og i så fall: kan det etter Nietzsche finnes et legitimt kristent-teologisk innenfra-perspektiv? Disse spørsmålene bringes med over i et såkalt "Tröskel"-kapittel, hvor Sjöberg knytter an til Husserls analyser av modernitetens krise, men også til teologer som Schleiermacher og Bonhoeffer, hvis felles metodiske grep handler om at det som fremstår som en ytre trussel blir omtolket til et teologisk problem.

De metodiske refleksjonene utdypes i kapittelet om Barth, hvor Sjöberg ikke bare undersøker hvordan oppfatningen av moderniteten som krise for den kristne historien har betydning for Barth, men også hvordan

Barth i likhet med Nietzsche søker å forsvare en viss motvitenskapelig måte å tenke og være på, som er en metodisk innstilling Sjöberg også slutter seg til. Her påpekes det en tydelig affinitet til fenomenologien: "Barths inspirationsläroteologi svarar [...] i hög grad mot det fenomenologiska metodologiska perspektiv som 'släpper det kunskapande begäret efter tingen' för att 'låta världen hända och ta gestalt som ett meningsfenomen'" (s. 150). Det er muligheten for en fremmedhet – og et forandringspotensial – i forhold til verden som står på spill hos Barth, ifølge Sjöberg. Imidlertid stiller hun spørsmål ved om en slik fremmedhet – "troens hulrom i verden" – virkelig er mulig, etter Nietzsches innsikt at alt som trer inn i verden blir en del av den, som vilje til makt.

Dette spørsmålet leder over til analysen av Kafka, som er en av dem som for alvor målbærer tanken om en ambivalens mellom erfaringen av Guds død og en fortsatt lengsel etter kall. Det tredje problemkomplekset får her sin fyldigste gjennomgang, og særlig diskusjonen av kallets mulighetsbetingelse i sekulariseringens kjølvann. I motsetning til tradisjonens forståelse av kall – især hos Augustin, hvor troen når alt kommer til alt fremstår som en hermetisk lukket sirkel – viser Sjöberg hvordan Kafkas religiøse, eller muligens postreligiøse, skikkelser forstår seg selv ut fra forestillingen om et kall, dog uten en tydelig guddommelig avsender, uten kallelse. Denne erfaringen kommer til uttrykk i en fortelling som har gitt avhandlingen sin tittel, hvor Kafka tegner et bilde av "en annan Abraham", som i motsetning til tradisjonens Abraham rammes av en tvil på om det virkelig er han som er kalt.

Dette er bare noen av spørsmålene som Sjöberg berører i sin rike og meget ansporende avhandling. Selv om kombinasjonen av det idéhistoriske og det systematiske anliggendet stort sett fungerer greit, gir det også avhandlingen som helhet en kompleksitet som gjør at man ved lesningens slutt også sitter igjen med en del spørsmål, særlig når det gjelder implikasjonene av de

systematisk-teologiske ansatsene. Samtidig vitner kompleksiteten også om en betydelig kreativitet og intellektuell redelighet, samt en befriende vilje til å bevege seg inn i de store spørsmålene. Både innledningen og avslutningen gir dessuten god hjelp til å pusle brikkene sammen, og avhandlingen har et språk som flyter så lett at kompleksiteten ikke ødelegger for den gode leseropplevelsen.

Stine Holte
Førsteamanuensis, Oslo

David Davage. *7 myter om lovsång – och vad Bibeln egentligen säger*. Umeå: David Media. 2020. 214 s.

Gunnar af Hällström (red.). *Apologists and Athens: Early Christianity Meets Ancient Greek Thinking*. Helsinki: Finnish Institute of Athens. 2020. 166 pp.

Harry Nyberg & Per Berggrén (red.). *Stiftshistoria och prästhistoria: Kyrkohistoriska studier till minnet av Ragnar Norrman*. Karlstad: Per Berggrén. 2020. 143 s.

Lovisa Nyman. *Det konstruktiva beroendet: Feministisk teologi i ett individualistiskt samhälle*. Lund: Lunds universitet. 2020. 326 s.

Thomas Viggo Pedersen. *Grundtvigs Kirke og det aristokratiske primtal: En drøm fra det tyvende århundrede*. Köpenhamn: Vandkusten. 2020. 798 s.

Jesper Petersen. *The Making of the Mariam Mosque: Serendipities and Structures in the Production of Female Authority in Denmark*. Lund: Lund University. 2020. 371 pp.

Mikael Sörhuus. *En känsla för det heliga: En undersökning av den samtida emotionsforskningens möjliga bidrag till religionsfilosofin*. Uppsala: Uppsala universitet. 2020. 218 s.

Till redaktionen insänd litteratur