

‘A Thoughtful Love of Life’

A Spiritual Turn in Philosophy of Religion

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‘being here is sumptuous, wonderful, magical’

Duino Elegies VII, Rainer Maria Rilke

Introduction: ‘life’, ‘thought’ and ‘love’ in time¹

‘Life’ refers, in the first instance, to a biological phenomenon; but life can become more than biological once it is interpreted, narrated and put into the account of ‘a thoughtful love of life’.² Here ‘thought’ is meant in the sense of thinking which is broader than knowing – a sense to which I will return (below) in discussion of Kant’s distinction between knowing and thinking. Once this thought is applied to life, life becomes a way of living – about which we are able to tell stories and for which we are able to become accountable; that is, we narrate the actions and events of our lives, while also giving an account of ourselves confronted by the others who,

in living, we are called to love.³ This is the love of life for which the thinker will be responsible.

But here, we confront a philosophical problem. Can one make sense of one’s own life, while living it? The nineteenth-century philosopher Soren Kierkegaard captures this dilemma as follows:

It is quite true what philosophy says: that Life must be understood backwards. But that makes one forget the other saying: that it must be lived – forwards. The more one ponders this, the more it comes to mean that life in temporal existence never becomes quite intelligible, precisely because at no moment can I find complete quiet to take the backward-looking position.⁴

‘Philosophy’, the love of wisdom, ponders such problems as the unintelligibility of ‘life’ as lived by a human subject. A philosophy of life would be, in one sense, constrained by the philosopher’s life; it could only really be a love of life’s wisdom once time has passed and it can be understood. But, in another sense, a philosophy of life must be lived in new tales of love that constantly move the philosopher forwards - into the unknown future. Neither the subject nor the ob-

¹ For an earlier essay which introduces some of the themes picked up in this lecture, see Pamela Sue Anderson, ‘A Turn to Spiritual Virtues in Philosophy of Religion’, in John Cornwell and Michael McGhee (eds) *Philosophers and the Gods: At the Frontiers of Faith and Reason*. London: Continuum, 2009, pp. 167-186.

² I appropriate this phrase from Robert Solomon, *Spirituality for the Sceptic: The Thoughtful Love of Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002.

³ Adriana Cavarero, *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*. Translated and Introduced by Paul A. Kottman. London and New York: Routledge, 1997, pp. 85-93, 97-105.

⁴ Soren Kierkegaard, *The Diary of Soren Kierkegaard*. Edited by Peter Rohde. New York: Philosophical Library, 1960, section 136 (1843), p. 111.

ject of a philosophy of life is outside the time which keeps them on the move.

Life as lived is temporal – but the nature of life in time has not, in my opinion, been adequately considered by the Anglo-American field of philosophy of religion. Instead the latter is currently constrained by an exclusive focus on the knowable, prove-able, yet eternal God, and not on human living or our relations to the others to whom the response is love. However, it is my contention that the field of philosophy of religion is being transformed by feminists and should be changed by a love of life.

A thoughtful love of life would be a love which is informed by thinking about life, perhaps about the biological, but even more about a way of life for relational subjects who in living generate a collectivity of thinkers.⁵ Admittedly this thinking cannot be wholly coherent in the sense of a complete(d) thought of (one's) life because there is no God-eye's view outside of time. Elsewhere I have argued that a human subject is wrong to suppose a God's eye-view, since this would suppose one's own apotheosis, that is, a self-deception. The human thinker remains in time and so her or his life continues to change without any absolute identity. This grounding in life, not death, frees the thinker in her thoughtful love insofar as life can be lived and understood. But this requires awareness of one's finitude. Here I am reminded that in the 1950s Paul Ricoeur claims that 'Man is the Joy of Yes in the sadness of the finite'⁶.

Near the end of his own life Ricoeur expresses this claim with the help of Rainer Maria Rilke's poetic description of joy: '*being here is sumptuous, wonderful, magical*'. Life as a way of being here is joyful as long as 'sadness' – in the sense of 'a passion by which the soul moves

to a lesser perfection'⁷ - and death do not debilitate human interactions. Maintaining a focus on life as joyful involves a turning away from those judgments that inhibit freedom to a practice that liberates in unbinding thought for attention to life as it is lived forward, i.e. towards a *telos* which is a thoughtful love of life. This may resonate, for some, with Aristotle's *eudaimonia*.

The opposite of the joy in a thoughtful love of life is melancholia, or the more ancient term, *acedia*, for slough or loss of creative energy. Ricoeur interprets Albrecht Durer's engraving, *Melencolia I* (1514), as follows: '... a woman sits with her chin in her hand, staring ahead, surrounded by unused tools, a despondent winged figure of genius, an empty scale... and an hour-glass shows that time is running out.'⁸ This is a state of being in which inertia replaces energy. This means a static condition of deathly despair in which loss of genius damages living. Arguably, the philosophical remedy for such deep sadness is a new beginning, a new encounter, a new birth of relationship(s).

Natality: life must be lived – forwards in new beginnings

Hannah Arendt conceives of the remedy for this deathly despair as 'the fact of natality':

The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, 'natural' ruin is ultimately the fact of natality... It is ... the new beginning, the action [we] are capable of by virtue of being born.⁹

Arendt's 'natality' is a metaphor. It has both a literal sense of 'being born' and a latent sense of 'the miracle that saves the world', i.e., the new

⁵ I owe this idea of a 'collectivity', or collective thought, to the vision for women and/in philosophy found in Michèle Le Doeuff, *Hipparchia's Choice: An Essay Concerning Women, Philosophy, Etc.* second edition with an Epilogue. Translated by Trista Selous. New York: Columbia University Press 2006.

⁶ Paul Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*. Translated by Charles A. Kelbley with an Introduction by Walter J. Lowe, second edition. New York: Fordham University Press, 1986, p. 140.

⁷ Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics* [1677]. Edited and translated by G. H. R. Parkinson. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000.

⁸ See 'Memory, History, Forgiveness: A Dialogue Between Paul Ricoeur and Sorin Antohi', *Janus Head* 8 (1) 2005, p. 21 .

⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1958; second edition. With an Introduction by Margaret Canovan, second edition. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 247.

beginning. In a different context, Arendt explains 'the language of thinking' as 'essentially metaphorical':

If the language of thinking is essentially metaphorical, it follows that the world of appearances inserts itself into thought quite apart from the needs of our body and the claims of our fellow-men, which will draw us back into it in any case. No matter how close we are while thinking to what is far away and how absent we are from what is close at hand, the thinking ego obviously never leaves the world of appearances altogether. ... Language, by lending itself to metaphorical usage, enables us to think, that is, to have traffic with non-sensory matters, because it permits a carrying over, *metapherein*, of our sense experiences. There are not two worlds because metaphor unites them.¹⁰

But, then, as a metaphor natality is an odd sort of 'fact' uniting our sense and non-sensory experiences. In more contemporary terms, Arendt's natality seems to be a 'thick (ethical) concept':¹¹ it is both descriptive and prescriptive. In one sense, it is a 'fact', describing a specific thing, i.e. a birth. In another sense, it is much more than the fact of a birth prescribing a value for life. Natality is arguably more than a metaphor insofar as a *thick ethical concept*, it both guides action and is guided by the world in which it functions.

At this stage, it is important to notice the philosophical role played by metaphors, like natality, that function like concepts with associated imagery in the arguments of philosophers; this imaginary can surprise us with a genius for the new; images surge up like sparks from a fire. The feminist philosopher Michèle Le Doeuff teaches us to rethink the role of the imaginary in philosophical texts for what this can tell us about women and/in philosophy. Le Doeuff herself uncovers the images, asides, stories and un-thought elements of texts in the history of philosophy,

¹⁰ Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, one-volume edition. London and New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1977, p. 110.

¹¹ I appropriate this conception of a 'thick ethical concept' from Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, with a Commentary on the Text by A. W. Moore. London: Routledge, 2006, pp. 128-30, 142-55, also see Moore's 'Commentary', pp. 217-219. Also, see endnotes 35 and 36 (below).

especially the negative imagery that has excluded or condemned women and other subjects to 'the un-thought'.¹² Any un-thought figure is not thought precisely because it remains on the margins of, especially, so-called 'great' philosophy. But the positive point is that once thinking can be freely attributed to a woman's life it can liberate. Ultimately, freely thinking human subjects - including women - can re-imagine what has been both expressed and unthought about life in the history of philosophy.

Take Spinoza's wisdom for the free thinker, whether a woman or a man, of any age or location:

A free man [sic] thinks of nothing less than of death, and his wisdom is a meditation, not on death, but on life.¹³

Now, compare this line from Spinoza's *Ethics* to the assertion from Arendt's *The Human Condition* that action is "an ever present reminder that men, though they must die, are not born in order to die but in order to begin"¹⁴ It follows that this philosophy of life would be about living forward in order to begin again. What would Kierkegaard have said about this fact of natality - that we are born for new beginnings? Kierkegaard told stories, authoring new philosophical narratives under always new pseudonyms.

¹² Le Doeuff, 'Preface: The Shameful Face of Philosophy', *The Philosophical Imaginary*. Translated by Colin Gordon. London: The Athlone Press, 1989; London: Continuum, 2002, pp. 4-20.

¹³ Spinoza, *Ethics*. Trans. Parkinson, p. 276 (Part Four, prop 67).

¹⁴ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 246. Feminist philosophers have found great significance in Arendt's conception of natality; see Grace M. Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Towards A Feminist Philosophy of Religion*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998, pp. 128-157 and 231-247. Paul Ricoeur made birth, or natality, a focus in his philosophy well before it became the focus of feminist debates in philosophy of religion; see Paul Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*. Translated, with an Introduction by Erazim V. Kohak. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1966, pp. 433-443 [*Philosophie de la volonté. I. Le Volontaire et l'involontaire*. Paris: Aubier 1950]; and Ricoeur in Arendt *Condition de l'homme moderne*, p. 32.

Arendt herself draws significant ideas and images from Walter Benjamin's 'The Storyteller'.¹⁵ One image in particular captures what Arendt recognizes as the relationship between telling stories about human experience and writing philosophical history: all great philosophers – when recounting life's stories – have in common the freedom with which they move, in Benjamin's imagery, 'up and down the rungs of their experience as on a ladder.' This ladder extends downward to 'the interior of the earth' and disappears 'into the clouds,' representing a 'collective experience' to which – according to Benjamin – 'even the deepest shock of every individual experience, death, constitutes no impediment or barrier'.¹⁶

Collective experience explains the thinker and yet...

More strongly stated, Arendt argues that storytelling, or narrative, is a fundamental human activity. And yet, with Benjamin she acknowledges that the horrors of the twentieth-century (e.g. World War II) broke up any continuity with the past due to a decisive breakdown in the continuity of religion, authority and tradition.¹⁷ Nevertheless, Arendt admits that even when the past is no longer authoritative simply because it has been, it lives within us and we cannot avoid locating ourselves in relation to it: 'who we are' at any moment depends upon a story, or narratives, uniting past and present. Arendt argues that, unlike things, objects or the natural world, human actions live only in the narratives of those who perform them and the narrative of those who understand, interpret and recall them. Thus, Arendt acknowledges the significant in-

fluence of Benjamin's 'The Storyteller' upon her 'fragmentary historiography': the latter is essentially a form of storytelling which requires a creative act of rethinking to set 'free the lost potentials of the past'.¹⁸

Arendt would agree with what is said about Spinoza's wisdom: 'only life explains the thinker',¹⁹ insofar as the past necessarily shapes her or him. Yet the thinker can equally break with the past in the freedom which retrieves unacknowledged potentials. So Arendt recognizes the philosophical problem that Kierkegaard had captured so brilliantly in his notebooks in 1843: 'that Life must be understood backwards. But that makes one forget the other saying: that it must be lived – forwards'.²⁰ The fact that we live forward and reflect background is evident in the endless postponement in completing our thought of life. 'Life' changes us and our stories; our stories might end very different to what is expected. We are not, in the end, the authors of our own life. Yet, to repeat, our action can be guided by natality: the miracle which saves us in making us capable of acting, narrating and being accountable for our actions, including the stories we tell for others to retell.

Jonathan Rée points out that the collective historical experience of the philosopher raises similar problems as does the great tradition of storytellers.

a ladder stretching from far below us, through our own finite vantage-point, and stretching on until it disappears from sight, is a natural metaphor not only for story-telling but for philosophy, too; [this is] the image, as Benjamin saw, 'for collective experience'.²¹

The philosophical significance of thinking about, interpreting or narrating life does not end in a historical or factual story about one person's

¹⁵ Hannah Arendt, 'Introduction: Walter Benjamin (1892-1940)', in Hannah Arendt, ed. *Illuminations*. Translated by Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken, 1969, pp. 1-58 [London: Jonathan Cape, 1970]

¹⁶ Benjamin, 'The Storyteller: Reflections on the Words of Nikolai Leskov [1936]', in *Illuminations*, p. 102.

¹⁷ Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, vol. 1. *Thinking* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), p. 212. Cf. Arendt, 'Introduction: Walter Benjamin (1892-1940)', in *Illuminations*, pp. 1-58.

¹⁸ Arendt, 'Introduction', especially pp. 38-51.

¹⁹ I appropriate this phrase from Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. Translated by Robert Hurley. San Francisco: City Lights, 1988, p. 14.

²⁰ Kierkegaard, *The Diary of Soren Kierkegaard*, p. 11.

²¹ Jonathan Rée, 'Narrative and Philosophical Experience', in David Wood (ed.) *Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation*. London: Routledge, p. 83; cf. Benjamin, 'The Storyteller', in *Illuminations*, p. 102.

life. In any case, a philosopher cannot explain her or his whole life in anything like a complete or coherent manner without self-deception. But Benjamin and Arendt will remind us that the other who reads our philosophy or tells our story is not so constrained. Any continuous relation to the other can be destroyed by death. And yet the thread of life continues, however fragile, in being remembered. Consider Benjamin's words,

... the statement that makes no sense for real life becomes indispensable for remembered life. The nature of the character in a novel cannot be presented any better than is done in the statement, which says that the 'meaning' of his life is revealed only in his death. But the reader of a novel actually does look for human beings from whom he derives the 'meaning of life'.

The novel is significant, therefore, not because it presents someone else's fate to us, perhaps didactically, but because this stranger's fate by virtue of the flame which consumes it yields us the warmth which we never draw from our own fate. What draws the reader to the novel is the hope of warming his shivering life with a death he reads about.²²

A spiritual turn: 'as if' returning to 'a beloved'

Philosophical reflections on life's relations to self and to others led me to consider 'a spiritual turn' in philosophy of religion. The adjective 'spiritual' is meant here to describe relations of the self to itself, to other selves and to the natural, material and social worlds in which human subjects find themselves. 'Spiritual', then, applies to 'a turn' away from theoretical debates about traditional theism to a distinctive philosophical practice. This essentially spiritual practice has to do with the self's relations, and crucially, with the ongoing self-reforming narration of our actions, relations, lives and life - to which we each are to be accountable.

Robert Solomon makes a relevant and significant distinction about 'the self' in this context:

How we think and feel about ourselves has an impact on who we actually are. The grand thoughts and passions of spirituality do not just move us and inform us, or supplement... They change us, make us different kinds of people, different kinds of beings.²³

So my proposed spiritual turn requires philosophy to become, and philosophers of religion to develop a transformative practice of a fully embodied, reflective kind. In this way, a thoughtful reflection on our lives could be transformative - full of the energy of joy - as a thoughtful love of life. But this proposed spiritual turn is a challenge dependent on the willingness of philosophers, and philosophers of religion in particular, to change.

In appropriating Benjamin's imagery of ladder I have replaced 'storyteller' with 'philosopher of religion' as follows: 'a great [philosopher of religion] will always be rooted in the people... [But] there are many gradations in the concepts in which the store of human experience comes down to us.'²⁴ Despite the primary role, which philosophy plays as a spiritual practice in giving narrative coherence to life in, as Benjamin says, 'the household of humanity', the concepts through which the yield of life's narratives may be shaped are manifold. All great philosophers - insofar as they practice a spiritual art of story-telling - 'have in common the freedom with which they move up and down the rungs of their experience as on a ladder'. As part of the philosophical imaginary this imagery continues to provide us with the possibility of rethinking this past grounded in 'the earth.' 'A ladder extending downward to the interior of the earth and disappearing into the clouds'²⁵ is the imagery for a collective experience to which death constitutes no obstacle: life in its biological and collective senses goes on just as stories are told.

With this sketch of the collective experience of the philosophers who fulfill the expectations

²² Benjamin, 'The Storyteller', pp. 101-102 (emphasis added); also, see 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations*, pp. 253-264.

²³ Solomon, *Spirituality for the Sceptic*, pp. 6-7.

²⁴ Benjamin, 'The Storyteller', p. 102.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

of a thoughtful, or reflective, life while still grounded in the 'needs of the body' and 'claims of others,'²⁶ we begin to touch on a more *meta-physical* dimension of philosophy.²⁷ Life here is not undone by death as long as it remains connected to the living. Instead 'life' as a way of living as in a generic thread of being alive, is given expression, however fragmented, in our ongoing narration of human actions. Basically, a philosophy that gives a central place to 'life encompassing thought' would also appear to rely upon the fact that 'thinking encompasses life'. At this point, Gilles Deleuze's compelling portrait of Spinoza comes to mind:

Not that life is *in* thinking, but only the thinker has a potent life, free of guilt and hatred; and only life explains the thinker. The geometric method, the profession of polishing lenses, and the life of Spinoza should be understood as constituting a whole. For Spinoza is one of the *vivants-voyants*. He expresses this precisely when he says that demonstrations are 'the eyes of the mind'. He is referring to the third eye, which enables one to see life beyond all false appearances, passions and deaths. The virtues – humility, poverty, chastity, frugality – are required for this kind of vision, no longer as virtues that mutilate life, but as powers that penetrate it and become one with it. Spinoza did not believe in hope or even in courage; he believed only in joy, and in vision. He let others live, provided that others let him live. He wanted only to inspire, to waken, to reveal. The purpose of demonstration functioning as the third eye is not to command or even to convince, but only to shape the glass or polish the lens for this inspired free vision.²⁸

Only life explains the thinker. But the converse is also the case: the thinker explains life, even though his or her writing of this life remains incomplete.

A sort of broken, dialectical relation appears essential to the task for my thinker who, as a reformed (feminist) philosopher of religion,

reflects on lived experience. This essentially metaphysical relation of life to thinking and thinking to life equally resonates with Kant's claim in the first *Critique* where, despite his decisive critique of any transcendent metaphysics, he still asserts: 'We shall always return to metaphysics as to a beloved one with whom we had a quarrel.'²⁹

Philosophy of religion: thinking freedom and enlarging thought

In this light, I urge that philosophy of religion no longer focuses strictly on epistemological questions to do with belief, knowledge, or the truth of a claim that 'God exists', or that 'we are free agents'. Moreover, this remains consistent with Kant's insistence upon thinking beyond what cannot be known. In Kant's words, there is a distinction between knowing and thinking:

though I cannot *know*, I can yet *think* freedom; that is to say, the representation of it is at least not self-contradictory, provided due account be taken of our critical distinction between the two modes of representation, the sensible and the intellectual, and of the resulting limitation of the pure concepts of understanding and of the principles which flow from them.³⁰

Kant illustrates this with imagery:

We have now not merely explored the territory of pure understanding, and carefully surveyed every part of it, but have also measured its extent, and assigned to everything in it its rightful place. This domain is an island, enclosed by nature itself within unalterable limits.³¹

²⁶ Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, p. 110.

²⁷ On the significance of 'metaphysics' in an age when philosophers have been anti-metaphysics, see Paul Ricoeur, 'De la métaphysique à la morale', in *Réflexion faite: Autobiographie intellectuelle* Paris: Editions Éprit (Le Seuil), 1995, pp. 83-115.

²⁸ Deleuze, *Spinoza*, p. 14.

²⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Translated by Norman Kemp Smith. London: Macmillan, 1950, p. 664 (A850/B878).

³⁰ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 28 (B xxviii) underlining added.

³¹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 257 (A235f/B 294f).

In the above, Kant is clear: we cannot know beyond the bounds³² of empirical knowledge, i.e., 'our island'; but we can think beyond 'the island of understanding' on which Kant has mapped out 'the land of truth' and set the limits to human knowing.

So, why do Anglo-American philosophers of religion fear moving beyond certain narrowly defined cognitive questions concerning the truth of theism in order to think freedom? Why not, move to questions of life and to a spiritual practice which could generate 'love' minimally, as openness to others, to the world and to our natural being and 'trust' as a coming together of uncertainty and confidence?³³ Cultivation of such a practice would enhance a thoughtful love of life by enlarging our thought and expanding the self – towards a collective experience.

It is my contention that philosophers of religion after Kant should become bold by enlarging thought. They should not only concern themselves with knowing the empirical world, but with thinking freedom, acting virtuously and making reflective (aesthetic) judgments which would be creative spiritually. This would mean creativity for a world in need of a *love of life*. In an earlier essay written for a collection in feminist philosophy of religion, I advocated uniting knowledge and ethics, in order to cultivate certain intellectual virtues for the field. I argue as follows:

When it comes to women in relation to both epistemology and ethics [in relation to both knowledge and thought in Kantian terms] they have been excluded, notably, from being credible witnesses or informants, from demonstrating knowledge of their ethical practices, from seeing reality objectively, and from acting autonomously as equally rational agents. Yet my proposal is that these exclusions can be avoided with the free cultivation of four [feminist informed] intellectual virtues: *reflexive critical openness, care-knowing, strong objectivity* and *principled autonomy*. These virtues

are meant to unite ethical and epistemological components in a form of virtue epistemology; that is, our perspectives and practices would be shaped by the development of certain virtues with capacities for cognition. Guided by reflexive, imaginative and interactive capacities for discerning truth, a feminist philosophy of religion would aim for practical wisdom.³⁴

Yet my aim at the time fell short of any practice which might be called 'spiritual'. I now think that the above dispositions can only be cultivated by and with the practice which, I propose, should shape philosophy of religion. This practice is vital for thinking today. Admittedly, the idea of pursuing a spiritual practice in reflection on our moral and religious life has the potential to de-stabilize those thick ethical concepts on which we have relied for knowledge of right and wrong. Here I recall Bernard Williams' contention that reflection can destroy moral knowledge by revealing that we no longer believe certain things – our moral concepts no longer guide action. Despite and perhaps because of this danger of de-stabilizing the thick concepts which have rendered secure religion and morality, I would wager that a thin conception of love would survive critical reflection insofar as it is, in Williams' sense of 'thin', i.e. not embedded deeply in a social location and so not 'world-guided' in the manner which can be de-stabilized. This concept of love survives even the destruction of knowledge due to destabilization of the thick concepts which had been action-guiding and world-guided.³⁵

³² Kant distinguishes the 'bounds' (*Grenzen*) from the 'limits' (*Schranken*) of sense; the latter can be pushed further than where they now exist; the former cannot.

³³ 'Confidence' in the power to act is a focus of my current research which will appear in a collection of my essays; cf. Pamela Sue Anderson, *Goodness (God) and Gender: A Thoughtful Love of Life* (forthcoming).

³⁴ Pamela Sue Anderson, 'An Epistemological-Ethical Approach to Philosophy of Religion', in Pamela Sue Anderson and Beverley Clack (eds) *Feminist Philosophy of Religion: Critical Readings*. London: Routledge, 2004, p. 88. For highly impressive work in this area of epistemic practices, see Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

³⁵ On 'thin', as opposed to thick ethical concepts and on the world-guided nature of the latter, see Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, pp. 128-30, 142-55; Moore's 'Commentary', pp. 217-219; cf. A. W. Moore, 'Williams on Ethics, Knowledge and Reflection', *Philosophy: The Journal of the Royal Institute of Philosophy* 78 (2003): 338ff.

Reflective judgment and ‘the spectator’

This critical, destabilizing reflection would, in turn, allow for the cultivation of a new thick ethical concept such as natality. As discussed already, natality is a good candidate for an action-guiding and (new) world-guided concept in feminist philosophy of religion. To repeat, to be a thick ethical concept it must, by definition, be able to guide action. Similarly, each of the intellectual virtues proposed (in the last blocked quotation), but especially ‘care-knowing’,³⁶ are meant to be cultivated as thick concepts. Basically in repeating this I’m freely appropriating Williams’ definition for these concepts as potentially action-guiding and world-guided under fairly specific conditions. So, in my terms, as action-guiding the concept of care-knowing would function as an intellectual virtue aiming to eliminate epistemic injustice in local contexts.³⁷

In contrast, the concept of ‘love’ in the spiritual *telos* of a thoughtful love of life is ‘thin’ enough to be shared, despite various local differences in its conception and practice. Love embraced as a spiritual disposition (i.e., virtue or practical feeling) would be a quality of care-knowing characterized by its reflexive, imaginative and interactive capacities. This is to assume that love is already shared as a basic human disposition with cognitive and conative capacities; but it can be further cultivated as a vital quality for the thick concept of care-knowing.

An additional and crucial element of the philosopher’s practice is, as anticipated already, the spiritual power to expand or enlarge the self in relation to other selves and to a global world.

³⁶ Obviously there are concepts of love, say, *agape*, which like ‘care-knowing’ are thick ethical concepts; but I would like to maintain that love can be a thin concept, if taken in a sense that is not restricted to a ‘world’ or specific social location.

³⁷ Anderson, ‘An Epistemological-Ethical Approach’, pp. 88-94; ‘What’s Wrong with the God’s Eye Point of View: A Constructive Feminist Critique of the Ideal Observer Theory’, in Harriet A. Harris and Christopher J. Insole, eds. *Faith and Philosophical Analysis: A Critical Look at the Impact of Analytical Philosophy on the Philosophy of Religion*. Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. 2005, pp. 92-96; and Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, pp. 117-128.

This element of spirituality drawn from Solomon:³⁸

Spirituality... is ultimately social and global, a sense of ourselves identified with others and the world. But ultimately, spirituality must also be understood in terms of the transformation of the self. ...

Some brands of spirituality insist on the abandonment of the self. Conversely, I want to say that spirituality is the *expansion of the self*.³⁹

In the above, Solomon exhibits an affinity to a post-Kantian tradition insofar as the self has the capacity for (self)-expansion by thinking in relations to others. I turn to this capacity in further discussion of Kant’s principles of human thought – but this time in the *Critique of Judgment*.

A critical question surfaces in the relations between oneself and another which are at the heart of love. Arendt’s reading of Kant’s third *Critique* can help with these relations. His principles of human thought, from the *Critique of Judgment*, make communication from and between our different individual perspectives possible. Now, these principles are:

1. to think for oneself which is a necessary standpoint for any thought;
2. to think from the standpoint of everyone else which is necessary, as ‘an enlarged mind,’ for having sharable thoughts; and
3. to think consistently (i.e., in accord with oneself) as ‘the maxim of reason’ to be attained with the effort of bringing the other two standpoints together.⁴⁰ So, how does the standpoint

³⁸ Solomon, *Spirituality for the Skeptic*, especially chapters 2-3; and Robert Solomon, *True to Feelings: What Our Emotions Are Really Telling Us*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 268-269.

³⁹ Solomon, *Spirituality for the Skeptic*, pp. 6-7; emphasis added.

⁴⁰ See the three maxims of understanding, judgment and reason in Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* Translated with Analytical Index by James Creed Meredith. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952, Paragraph #40, pp. 150-151. Also see Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*. Edited and with an Interpretative Essay by Ronald Beiner. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1982, pp. 42-44; A. W. Moore, *Noble in Reason, Infinity in Faculty*. London: Routledge, 2003, pp. 87-89.

from which one thinks work with the standpoint of everyone else? Does Kant conceive of a third dimension which is not merely occupied by either oneself or another self alone?

Arendt helps by giving a role to 'the spectator' who brings together Kant's principles (1) and (2); so that (3) spectators possess an enlarged mentality which is not solitary. Again, achieving a collective, critical standpoint captures a crucial dimension of what I've elsewhere sought for a feminist standpoint.⁴¹ Consider Arendt's spectator:

The spectator's verdict, while impartial and freed from the interests of gain or fame, is not independent of the views of others – on the contrary, according to Kant, an 'enlarged mentality' has to take them into account. The spectators, although disengaged from the particular characteristic of the actor, are not solitary.⁴²

Arendt explains how Kant enables the enlargement of thought, invoking the imagery of the spectator and giving it a unifying role as metaphor in thinking analogically. A more recent translation of Kant's title as *Critique of the Power of Judgment* stresses the power of reflective judgment being under obligation to ascend from the particular in nature to the universal arguably by analogy. That is, in Paul Guyer's translation of Kant's words from the third *Critique*: 'If, however, only the particular is given, for which the universal is to be found, then the power of judgment is merely reflecting'.⁴³ For Kant, this *reflecting* (or, the earlier translation, *reflective*) power of judging is creative. And so, thinking precisely in this sense of the reflecting power of judgment is not a solitary activity.

⁴¹ Pamela Sue Anderson, 'A Case for a Feminist Philosophy of Religion: Transforming Philosophy's Imagery and Myths', *Ars Disputandi: The Online Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 1 (2001): p. 1-35.

⁴² Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, one-volume edition. London and New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1977, p. 94.

⁴³ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Translated by Paul Guyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 67 (5: 179); cf. Moore, *Noble in Reason*, p. 88.

Metaphors and concepts: a dynamic relationship for a collective vision

Elsewhere I have argued that there is a significant sense in which the imagery which Kant employs forces the reader to agree, stage by stage, with a certain philosophical relationship between metaphors and concepts. Le Doeuff helps this reading of Kant by establishing a dynamic, dialectical relationship in philosophical texts between metaphor and concept. Her use of the philosophical imaginary locates Kant within the long history of philosophers and their evolving imagery and conceptual scheme. Yet questions remain for Le Doeuff, but also for Arendt on Kant. How exactly does judgment move analogically from spatial imagery to conceptual thinking? How, in Kant's case, does the image legitimate the confidence of secure knowledge, while the understanding (or knowing) is rendered unstable by the constant striving of reason in its dangerous, yet creative and reflective pursuit of the unknowable? In one sense, reason threatens the loss or lack of ethical confidence in one's own secure knowledge of true-false and right-wrong. Yet, in another sense, this loss leads desire to draw reason out onto the sea of thought and to seek the fulfilment of an ancient promise, or *telos*. This historical imagery of fulfilling a promise recalls the metaphor of another island of (lost) bliss where confidence is not an issue.⁴⁴

With this retrieval of ancient metaphors to express the bliss of the south sea islands rather than Kant's northern island, let us return to Kant's *Analytic of Principles* in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant reflects back upon what he has demonstrated in his *Transcendental Aesthetic and Analytic*, while also looking forward to his *Transcendental Dialectic* to come. By the end of *Transcendental Aesthetic and Analytic* (A235-8/B 294-7), knowledge seems secure. But Kant anticipates that in his *Transcendental Dia-*

⁴⁴ For reference to this un-thought island in Kant, see Pamela Sue Anderson, 'Spatial Locations Understood After Kant: A Post-Kantian Debate about Thinking Space', Paper delivered to the Kant Society Conference, Sussex University, U.K, 24 August 2008 (forthcoming in publication of the Kant Society proceedings).

lectic this security will be lost as the limits of knowledge are overstepped:

If the understanding in its empirical employment cannot distinguish whether certain questions lie within its horizon or not, it can never be assured of its claims or of its possessions, but must be prepared for many a humiliating disillusionment, whenever, as must unavoidably and constantly happen, it oversteps the limits of its own domain.⁴⁵

In particular, we overstep our limits when we claim to 'know' freedom – a concept that Kant demonstrates is unknowable. And yet Kant agrees that we can *think* freedom and indeed we can imagine, by analogy, another space. For Kant, determinate judgments, i.e. claims to knowledge, depend upon a distinction between, on the one hand, the empirical employment of the concepts of understanding merely to appearances or phenomena: 'that is, to objects of a possible experience' and, on the other hand, the transcendental employment of a concept to things in general and in themselves.⁴⁶ But a third dimension of thought is informed by the analogical movement of the metaphor in reflective judgments which bridge the cognitive and the non-cognitive in the creative power of what remains indeterminate. His central example is that, although particular and lacking a universal concept, ideas of beauty rest in what we share as human; and this enables us to communicate and to create.

The central example of aesthetic ideas and beauty directs me back to Grace M. Jantzen's *Becoming Divine: Towards A Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (1998). In a published exchange of letters in *Feminist Theology*,⁴⁷ Jantzen writes

⁴⁵ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 259 (A238/B297).

⁴⁶ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 259 (B298/A239).

⁴⁷ Unfortunately our letters were published in the wrong order. Instead of my first letter appearing followed by Jantzen's response to it; and then, each of our replies to the other, my letter and reply to Jantzen were published together in September 2000 before Jantzen's first letter to me and her subsequent reply to my second letter. So the September 2000 issue of *Feminist Theology* (25) should be read alongside of the January 2001 issue (26) going from my first letter

to me: 'although we are different in approach we very much share the urgent wish for the discipline to be more life-giving and whole-making'.⁴⁸ Jantzen believes passionately that a western 'masculinist', philosophical and cultural preoccupation with death had displaced any concern with beauty.⁴⁹ Spiritual practices should be transformed, according to Jantzen, by the life-giving possibilities in attending to beauty.⁵⁰ Jantzen offers a legitimate, aesthetic dimension for my proposed spiritual turn in philosophy of religion with the *telos* in 'a thoughtful love of life'.

Jantzen's own voice on this is highly significant. She also provokes us constantly to pay attention to our spiritual practices. With this provocation in mind, I find support in transforming philosophy of religion, urging a new confidence in the power which we each have to affirm our own existence at the same time as approving of another's.⁵¹ Of course, this form of approbation, or mutual recognition, would be risky, if not wise in an ancient sense of practical rationality, but also in a modern sense of collective, i.e., communicable and creatively shared. Here an exercise in imagination is absolutely essential for the corporate picture emerging for philosophy in its practice of reflection on life: on life's

and then to Jantzen's and then back to my reply and Jantzen's (see Pamela Sue Anderson, *A Feminist Philosophy of Religion* Oxford: Blackwell, 2008; Jantzen, *Becoming Divine*; cf. Jantzen, 'Feminist Philosophy of Religion', pp. 102-7). Also see Pamela Sue Anderson, 'The Urgent Wish: To Be More Life-Giving', in Elaine Graham, ed. *Redeeming the Present: The Legacy of Grace M. Jantzen*. Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate Publishing, 2009.

⁴⁸ Jantzen, 'A Feminist Philosophy of Religion,' p. 102.

⁴⁹ Grace M. Jantzen, *Foundations of Violence. Death and the Displacement of Beauty*. volume 1. London: Routledge, 2004.

⁵⁰ Grace M. Jantzen, *Violence To Eternity. Death and the Displacement of Beauty*. volume 2. Edited by Jeremy Carrette and Morny Joy. London: Routledge, 2009.

⁵¹ For an account which supports this new confidence in our power to affirm ourselves and to approve others, I strongly encourage study of Deleuze on Spinoza and Spinoza's *Ethics*, see Deleuze, *Spinoza*; Benedictus de Spinoza, *The Ethics and Selected Letters*. Hackett Publishing Co., 1982.

beauty in attending to nature, to loved ones and to trusted others. In Kantian terms, imagination must take on a highly positive role in uniting particulars when the universal is lacking.

Another critical question persists: how does one ensure optimism in life, especially in the face of death, loss, suffering, and so, the ongoing struggle to discern and maintain communicable corporate relations between oneself and another? One answer would assert that the task for contemporary philosophy of religion is not only to become, but to remain life-giving and whole-making.

self's spiritual vision for women and men in philosophy today.

Conclusion

More than ten years of critical reflection on the field of philosophy of religion with feminist philosophers and more than thirty years engaging with a long line of philosophers in the history of western philosophy have inevitably made me thoughtful about life. How does joy replace sadness, goodness replace evil, and love continue in the face of loss and melancholia? A 'thoughtful love' comes with the honest manner in which we as philosophers respond practically and self-reflexively to life's disorders and disillusionment. We seek to make sense of life, even though our narratives are fragmentary, and perhaps more often, tentative. Our stories change but so do the world-guided concepts that guide our action. The very process of living and telling stories involves an indirect method of educating our emotions, passions and reasons for action; in turn, this education motivates reason to meditate on life and not merely on death or immortality: a philosophical imaginary focused on death would prohibit us to think life as it is lived joyfully in Spinoza's, or Le Doeuff's sense. The expression and cultivation of love through careful attention to life in response to otherness, but also the other's response to one's own stories generates philosophy of religion as a philosophy of 'that-which-binds-us-together' in a spiritual practice. This is to enlarge thinking beyond empirical knowing in a collective, thoughtful love of life. In this way, an enlarged mentality has to become practical and aesthetic, while also expanding the