Widening Horizons in Philosophical Theology: A Vision

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Contents

Introduction 1
Part 1: Theology and Progress 1
The Orientation of Theology 1
Engagement with Philosophy as a Driver of Progress 2
Part 2: Why Continental Philosophy? 3
Openness and Revelation 4
Methods and Impact 4
Humility and Progress 8
Part 3: Widening Horizons in Philosophical Theology 8
Continental Philosophy in Theology: Risk and Promise 8
Asking the Big Questions 9
Strategic Areas of Attention 11

Introduction

This paper presents the intellectual vision underlying *Widening Horizons in Philosophical Theology*, a five-year collaborative initiative to advance philosophical theology by mobilizing the resources of the continental tradition of philosophy. The initiative is generously funded by the Templeton Religion Trust. Its basic aim is to empower philosophical theology in the continental tradition to pursue constructive and field-building work in theology, and to expand its potential. It pursues this aim by offering funding for up to twelve research projects between 2021 and 2023, and putting the project teams in conversation with each other and with other scholars. Through its work, the initiative also aims to show that continental philosophy can illuminate and develop Sir John Templeton's vision of theology as continuous discovery in unexpected but striking ways.

This paper proceeds in three parts: Part 1 presents theology as an approach to the world that works with other disciplines to achieve intellectual progress, arguing that philosophy has been a particularly important partner discipline in this endeavour. Part 2 acknowledges the split, dominating the twentieth century, of philosophy into analytic (Anglo-American) and continental (European) streams. It presents continental philosophy as an open, discovery-oriented discipline whose questions, approaches and methods make it an important partner for a theology that is open to continual revelation in Sir John Templeton's unusual sense of the ongoing discovery of a world that is not self-enclosed, but communicates the divine. Part 3 lays out a vision for a philosophical theology critically engaged with the continental tradition, and outlines strategic areas of attention. The initiative proposes to fund up to twelve projects within these strategic areas of attention. The Call for Proposals can be found at https://philosophical-theology.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/call-for-proposals. Its closing date is 31 May 2021.

Part 1: Theology and Progress

The Orientation of Theology

Theology is the study of God and of all things in relation to God. As such, theology represents both a particular subject matter and a way of approaching reality as a whole. This theological approach can be summarized in three core assumptions about the world:

- That in God, all things hold together, and can therefore be investigated with courage and tenacity.
- That humans and all created things have dignity, and can therefore be approached with humility and empathy.
- That creation is not yet finished, and can therefore be engaged with openness and creativity.

Theology is, in other words, committed to realism, to inquiry, and to a refusal to set the scope of discovery any narrower than God and all things in relation to God. These commitments create the space and enable the virtues that are necessary for progress through discovery: through what Sir John Templeton calls 'revelation'. As he puts it in *The Humble Approach*: 'While God does not need the universe to be God, the universe may need to be unceasingly supported and enfolded in His presence and power to be what it is. Maybe it can only exist in and through God. The excitement

and importance of scientific study of nature and the cosmos are enhanced (not reduced) if we conceive of each discovery as a new revelation of a reality deriving from and grounded in God.'[1]

The theological approach is oriented towards revelation in this sense of the progressive discovery of a reality grounded in God. At the same time, it leaves open the question by what methods such discovery is best achieved. Theology is methodologically pluralistic: It embraces whatever means best serve the study of God and all things in relation to God. Theologians work with and as historians, linguists, psychologists, artists, and scientists to understand their objects of enquiry.

For theologians, in other words, there are no walls within which they safely pursue strictly delimited work. Rather, because theology relates people and fields to each other, it is responsive to their questions, discoveries, and challenges. In seeking to understand not just one narrow subject matter but a shared whole, theology is always accountable for its understanding of the world which it seeks to illuminate. And such understanding can only be achieved by open, critical and constructive conversation with people from a range of disciplines and backgrounds. One such key discipline is philosophy.

Engagement with Philosophy as a Driver of Progress

The endeavour to advance theology through critical dialogue with philosophical sources and methods is called 'philosophical theology'. Throughout Christian history, philosophical theology in this sense has been an important driver of theological progress. In the early church, philosophical concepts such as participation and personhood became tools of discovery, allowing Christian thought to expand from recapitulation of biblical witness to defensible hypotheses about divine reality. In the Middle Ages, Aristotelian physics and metaphysics enabled theologians to formulate a unified understanding of physical and intellectual realities in their relationship to God and each other. In early modernity, rigorous investigations of the roles of reason, authority, and empirical investigation challenged an unwarranted reliance on unexamined sources of belief.

Such philosophical theology did not and should not aim to incorporate philosophy in its entirety, or to adopt its theories uncritically. It did and should focus on approaches, methods, concepts and discoveries relevant to theological discovery, engaging them critically with the aim of mutual challenge, correction and advance. In the twentieth century, this task has been complicated by the aftermath of the crisis experienced by philosophy in the 1910's and 1920's. The perceived complicity of Idealism and other dominant forms of nineteenth-century philosophy in the catastrophe of the First World War led both philosophers and theologians to seek radical repristination. In philosophy, opposing strategies split the discipline into analytic (Anglo-American) and continental (European) streams, which tried to reconstitute philosophy on logical analysis and on rigorously observed experience, respectively.[2] In theology, leading thinkers repudiated philosophy altogether in the face of a radically alien God. All these discourses shared a profound scepticism of metaphysics, which muted philosophical theology (at least in Protestant circles) in the early and mid-twentieth century.

By the later twentieth century, however, both analytic and continental philosophers began once more to take seriously the possibility that religious and metaphysical questions might arise naturally from philosophical practices, rather than being effectively bracketed by them. This renewed openness to spiritual questions prompted turns towards religion in both fields, led by

Richard Swinburne (*1934) and Alvin Plantinga (*1932) in analytic and by Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995), Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005), and Jean-Luc Marion (*1946) in continental philosophy.

In the early twenty-first century, a number of theologians and Christian philosophers, including Michael Murray, Michael Rea, and Oliver Crisp made a strong case for analytic philosophy as a particularly useful method for theological discovery, because of its commitment to epistemological realism and methodological clarity, rigour, and transparency. This advocacy has resulted in the emergence of analytic theology as a fruitful and influential strand of philosophical theology. This paper argues that alongside analytic philosophy, continental philosophy is also needed to fulfil theology's capacity for progress, and to allow philosophical theology to breathe with both lungs.

Part 2: Why Continental Philosophy?

The prominent American philosopher Thomas Nagel observes: 'It is not exactly correct to say that Anglo-American philosophy avoids the big questions…. Nevertheless, the fear of nonsense has had a powerful inhibiting effect…. It is understandable that an attachment to certain standards and methods should lead to a concentration on problems amenable to those methods…. But it is often accompanied by a tendency to define the legitimate questions in terms of the available methods of solution.'[3]

Continental philosophy is necessary for theology because theological realities, like all realities, can be discovered and described only by methods that are attuned to their structures. Some key types of information – about the nature of God, of humans in relation to God and each other, and about the world they inhabit – systematically elude traditional analytic or scientific examination. This is because God, humans, and the world are not merely data points or objects of scrutiny, but are related to each other in ways that fundamentally affect how each can be understood and described.

As T.F. Torrance noted, it is 'the nature of the particular object itself which must prescribe the relevant mode of knowing, and thus the form and content of whatever knowledge arises'.[4] Taking this challenge seriously is a key priority of continental philosophers. They therefore approach their studies through four hermeneutical questions:

- What kinds of objects does an enquiry have in view?
- Who does the enquiring, and how are they related to these objects?
- What form does knowledge or understanding take within this dynamic?
- How is such knowledge acquired, expressed, assessed, and passed on?

Adequate responses to these questions demand methods that take seriously the need for openness to God as object and goal of enquiry, and the significance of humans' relations to Him, to each other, and to the world. The following sections introduce continental philosophy's actual and potential orientation towards revelation and newness, as well as some of its key methods and ideas. The sections also note where these methods and ideas have played significant roles in the course of scientific progress in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This will lay the groundwork for Part 3, demonstrating the potential of philosophical theology in the continental tradition.

Openness and Revelation

The questions that guide continental philosophy require a rigorous attentiveness to reality. It is a hallmark of continental thinkers including Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), Jean-Luc Marion, and William Desmond (*1951) to understand Being not as closed or inert, but as revelatory, and therefore as requiring *openness*, both in the sense of receptivity and of reciprocity. Their methods are designed not only to understand this claim in the abstract, but also practically to enable the openness it demands.

Since its early origins with Henri Bergson's (1859–1941) focus on newness and creativity in his philosophy of time and free will, Edmund Husserl's (1859–1938) account of the dynamic and open structure of our conscious engagement with the world, and Martin Heidegger's description of 'the open' as the space where we encounter reality – or as Heidegger would put it, where Being reveals itself to us –, an embrace of openness has been at the heart of the continental philosophical tradition.[5] This embrace continues to be evident in the 'post-structuralist' stream of continental philosophy, including Michel Foucault's (1926–1984) creative re-interpretation of political and intellectual history to discover previously unseen insights and dynamics, Gilles Deleuze's (1925–1995) interpretation of reality as an ongoing flow of different events that are always unfolding and changing, Jacques Derrida's (1930–2004) early emphasis on the open possibilities of interpretation and meaning, as well as Derrida's later quasi-religious account of 'the future' (*l'avenir*) that is ever-arriving and yet always open to new possibilities.[6] 'Openness' is also a hallmark of the responses to these ideas formulated by recent religious philosophers and theologians, such as Jean-Luc Marion, who adapted many of his former teacher Derrida's ideas to develop a new philosophical account of revelation, William Desmond, who against Deleuze argues that a true openness or porosity to reality must not rule out but embrace the spiritual and indeed the transcendent, and John Milbank (*1952), who has deployed Foucault's genealogical method to uncover previously neglected dimensions and understandings of spiritual realities within the traditions of Christian theology and exegesis.[7]

Methods and Impact

The signature methods of continental philosophy are fine-tuned to enable a rigorous pursuit of this openness to revelation in the widest sense. 'Method' here refers to a characteristic approach or mode of investigation or enquiry. The most significant such approaches are phenomenology, hermeneutics, transvaluation, genealogy, and engagement with the arts.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the study of the structure of human consciousness from a first- and second-person point of view. Insofar as this consciousness is always directed toward objects, it is not self-enclosed but always already open. Pioneered by Edmund Husserl, phenomenology was extended by Martin Heidegger to an approach not only to particular experiences but to existence as a whole. In that approach, human existence is marked by its vulnerable but also creative openness: to the surrounding world and community, to its own unsurveyable past and future, and to being as a whole. Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) and others developed phenomenology into the influential intellectual movement known as 'existentialism'. The 'existentialist' movement embedded in academic philosophy fundamental questions such as how to live an authentic meaningful life, the finite character of human existence, and the nature of time and temporality. It also produced many

significant literary works (with Sartre and Albert Camus [1913–1960] respectively awarded Nobel Prizes in Literature), and provided the philosophical inspiration for a number of political and social reflections on the issues of freedom, race, and gender (most notably through the works of Simone de Beauvoir [1908–1986] and Franz Fanon [1925–1961]).

Aside from its contributions to social engagement and the arts, philosophical phenomenology has also played a decisive role in shaping scientific theories about both the macro- and micro-levels of reality. The phenomenological theories of Husserl and Heidegger had a formative impact on Heisenberg's formulation of quantum mechanics, and continue to influence its interpretation.[8] The phenomenology of perception developed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) inspired and shaped dominant scientific models both of the body-world relation (e.g. embodied/embedded cognition, enactivism, and motor intentionality) and of the 'upsurgent' and integrated quality of the world of perception (e.g. multisensory/multimodal integration, synaesthesia, stereopsis, and visual haptics).[9]

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is the study of methods appropriate to understanding human actions and creations, especially texts. Because of the nature of their subject matter, these methods involve an irreducible circularity. As Charles Taylor put it: 'we are trying to establish a reading for the whole text, and for this we appeal to readings of its partial expressions; and yet because we are dealing with meaning, with making sense, where expressions only make sense or not in relation to others, the readings of partial expressions depend on those of others, and ultimately of the whole.'[10] Philosophers working in hermeneutics, such as Martin Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Paul Ricoeur, directed the study of human beings beyond abstract notions of 'consciousness' and 'mind', towards the ways in which human identity and self-understanding are shaped by inheriting their world and language from a community, and creatively developing them.

Hermeneutics also played an important role in contemporary understandings of the nature of scientific progress, both in itself and in relation to other forms of progress. In his late work *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936), Husserl highlights the *hermeneutical* conditions of scientific inquiry through the notion of the 'life-world' (*Lebenswelt*): the cultural-linguistic basis of knowledge which a scientist inhabits and shares with colleagues and interlocuters.[11] This notion anticipates the account of '*world*' in Thomas Kuhn's influential theory of 'paradigm shifts' in scientific research.[12] As Kuhn famously writes: 'paradigm changes…cause scientists to see the world of their research-engagement differently. In so far as their only recourse to that world is through what they see and do, we may want to say that after a revolution scientists are responding to a different world.'[13] In his later work, Kuhn explicitly relates his theory of scientific progress to hermeneutics, calling scientific paradigms 'the hermeneutic basis for the science of a particular period.'[14] His 'discovery of hermeneutics', he asserts, was 'decisive' for his 'view of science.'[15] 'The natural sciences of any period are grounded in a set of concepts that the current generation of practitioners inherit from their immediate predecessors. That set of concepts is a historical product, embedded in the culture to which current practitioners are initiated by training, and it is accessible to non-members only through the hermeneutic techniques by which historians and anthropologists come to understand other modes of thought.'[16]

The hermeneutic interpretation of parts in relation to wholes, and vice versa, also resists an overemphasis on scientific and technological progress at the expense of growth in other domains. Industrial progress relies on the breakdown of organisms into their component material and

energy, and the manipulation of these components for defined ends. However, as Heidegger and others argue, such exploitation is at once 'true' to reality (as proven by the fact that it succeeds) and 'false' to what these organisms are, destroying their particularity, integrity, and interrelations.[17] This means that progress in science and technology cannot be understood as progress *per se*, but must either be intentionally segregated from progress in other spheres, or weighed against it. Heidegger and other continental thinkers enable us to confront this challenge by developing hermeneutics as a basic category of interpretation.

Transvaluation

Transvaluation, normally associated with Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), is a mode of critical reflection which calls into question the systems or measures by which goods are evaluated as desirable or significant. Nietzsche associates both the rise and the demise of Christianity with 'transvaluations of all values': the Christian faith transformed humanity's value system by positing a God of weakness rather than power, an inversion Nietzsche regards as pernicious.[18] Conversely, the modern loss of faith or 'death of God' signifies the loss of an ultimate norm of value, and thus requires a new re-evaluation of all things.[19] In recent continental philosophy, the method of transvaluation has fostered new ways of critical thinking that call into question the assumed neutrality of secular ways of thinking.[20]

In approaching the naturalistic, materialist outlook that dominates modern secular society as a specific and historically contingent value system, continental philosophers have opened up what is sometimes called a 'post-secular' space in which to explore fundamental questions that are explicitly or tacitly out-of-bounds in contemporary philosophy.[21] For instance, Deleuze's discussion of the scholastic theological distinction between 'univocal' and 'analogical' accounts of being has stimulated much interest in how theological and religious insights could speak to contemporary philosophical inquiries into the nature of reality.[22] Derrida's work has generated much interest in how the awareness of 'absences' in our structures of thought reintroduces the question of God.[23] Similarly, in his final works, Foucault calls attention to the ancient understanding of philosophy as a spiritual exercise, critiquing the contingent secular assumptions underlying the way in which philosophical thinking is currently conducted.[24]

The 'post-secular' fascination with religion and spiritual knowledge is even more evident in the generation of continental philosophers following Deleuze, Derrida, and Foucault. The philosophical interest of fundamental questions of religion and reality is manifest in the influential writings of Alain Badiou (*1937), Giorgio Agamben (*1942), and Slavoj Žižek (*1949) on concepts such as grace, the Trinity, and the incarnation.[25] More radically, the transformative power of these questions is evident in the 'theological turn' both of recent French phenomenology and of deconstruction. Phenomenologists including Michel Henry (1922–2002), Jean-Louis Chrétien (1952–2019), and Jean-Luc Marion have directed increasing attention to phenomena such as revelation, prayer, and liturgy.[26] Deconstuctionist philosophers like Gianni Vattimo (*1936), John D. Caputo (*1940), Mark C. Taylor (*1945), and Richard Kearney (*1954) have produced critical works on 'weak theology', 'religion without religion', and 'anatheism', which interpret various religious and theological motifs in new light to reverse the seeming obsolescence of religion.[27]

Genealogy

Post-secular philosophical responses to modern secularity and its dogmas often take the form of 'genealogical' critique. Like transvaluation, 'genealogy' as a critical philosophical method is often

traced to Nietzsche, who argues that many secular Western moral values find their philosophical origins in Judeo-Christian religious ideas. Contemporary secular philosophers such as Foucault and Agamben continue this tradition.[28] Nietzsche's critical use of genealogy has also been adopted in a number of critical 'post-secular' works by Christian thinkers such as John Milbank and Charles Taylor (*1931) to show the enduring influence of theological ideas on the emergence of modernity, and the dangers of truncating these ideas.[29]

While many of these critical genealogical accounts of modernity are focused on the power relations and dynamics which underly modern society and politics, the genealogical method has also informed recent works in the history and philosophy of science, and the emerging academic field of 'science and technology studies'.[30] Bruno Latour (*1947) has demonstrated, through genealogical analysis of the development of the natural sciences, that the modern division of nature and culture, which separates the sciences from the humanities and structures the modern university, has never been sustained. His analysis of the practice of science, its objects and its methods, opens new areas of engagement with hermeneutics and religion, particularly in the analysis of the environmental crisis and what he terms 'political ecology'.[31]

Along with transvaluation, genealogy has provided continental philosophy with tools and insights to reflect critically on the historical contingency of widely held intellectual positions in contemporary society and academia, and to progress beyond these presuppositions towards a fuller and more holistic understanding of the world. By examining how contemporary positions relate to and differ from the past, genealogical enquiry not only shows what advancements have been made in and through intellectual inquiry across time, but also calls us to consider and appreciate these advancements with an attitude of humility, reminding us that progress does not come from nowhere, but always builds on previous efforts and failures, and that the quest for knowledge is never complete, but an ongoing and constantly evolving endeavour.[32]

Engaging the Arts

Through intellectual currents such as existentialism, continental philosophy has shared a particularly strong affinity with the arts: In addition to the literary works of existentialist philosophers such as Sartre, Beauvoir, and Camus, who were also high-accomplished novelists and playwrights, continental philosophers have also engaged closely with visual art, notable examples ranging from Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of Cézanne and Michel Henry's explication of Kandinsky in the phenomenological tradition to Foucault's commentaries on Manet and Magritte as well as Deleuze's landmark study of Francis Bacon's dynamic paintings in the post-structuralist tradition.[33]

Continental philosophers engage with the arts not simply because many believe that artistic creations can be a more powerful medium than theoretical prose to capture the realities of life and existence. Continental philosophers also believe that art and poetry can inspire and foster a mode of thinking that allows us to discover dimensions of reality that are not easily accessible through other methods. In addition to the contrast Heidegger draws between 'poetic' (or sometimes 'meditative') thinking and 'technological' (or sometimes 'calculative') thinking,[34] one notable example is the distinction between 'durational' thinking and 'spatialised' thinking made by Henri Bergson (another Nobel Prize laureate in literature). As Bergson observes, when we are listening to music, what we experience in an uninterrupted melody is fundamentally different from the same notes disjoined. Melodies are not reducible to abstracted series of musical notes (as they appear spatially on a musical score), which Bergson associates with spatialised thinking.[35] The experience

of the 'flow' of time we encounter when we are playing or listening to music gives us access to a non-representational mode of durational thinking which reveals to us that time is, as Sir John (indirectly influenced by Bergson through Teilhard de Chardin [1881–1955]) says, 'a constituent of everything'.[36] For Bergson, this durational mode of thinking opens us up to the spiritual dimensions of the world: it is, as Bergson puts it, 'what attains the spirit…. Its real domain being the spirit, it would seek to grasp in things, even material things, their participation in spirituality'.[37]

Humility and Progress

Through these methods, continental philosophy takes a humble approach to human beings, knowledge, and language. Its understanding can be summarized as follows:

- *Humans as embodied and desirous*: Continental philosophers treat human beings not primarily as rational agents, but as creative and receptive actors shaped at all levels by their embodiment, relationships and desires.
- *Knowledge as inhabitation and technique*: Continental philosophers conceptualize knowledge not primarily as the amassment of facts and their arrangement in logical propositions, but as the capacity to inhabit and shape a world.
- *Language as conversation and poesis*: Continental philosophers understand language not primarily as a vehicle of information, and therefore as ideally univocal and technical. Rather, they understand it primarily as a medium of conversation and expression, and therefore as inherently multifaceted and malleable.

These approaches do not intend to minimize the mental capacities of humans, the penetration and reliability of knowledge, or the clarity and revelatory power of language. Rather, they seek to be true to their forms and operations, so as to maximize our understanding 'not just…of what is to be understood but also of the fundamental nature of spiritual understanding itself'.[38]

Although these approaches problematize certain constructions of progress, they do not oppose progress as such. Rather, they regard progress as rooted in the *vitality* of traditions of conversation, practice and inhabitation: the energy generated by such traditions ever to widen the horizons of conversation and discovery, equipped and willing to venture 'into the vast unseen'.

Part 3: Widening Horizons in Philosophical Theology

The questions, methods, and impact of continental philosophy described in Part 2 demonstrate its potential for discovery, enabled by a basic openness to the world and resistance to reductionism. These questions and methods, and the orientation they embody, are indispensable for a theology that is open to continual revelation, in Sir John Templeton's unusual sense of the ongoing discovery of a world that is not self-enclosed, but communicates the divine. This final part, Part 3, discusses the risks and promise of continental philosophy for such a theology. It concludes by outlining some strategic areas of attention for the coming years.

Continental Philosophy in Theology: Risk and Promise

The potential of continental philosophy is not unknown to theologians. Some of the most influential theological ideas of the last twenty-five years have been developed in collaboration with continental philosophers, as the next section shows. At the same time, the characteristic strengths

of continental philosophy can also intensify characteristic temptations of theology. Because continental philosophy attends closely to the ways in which both the questions we ask about the world and the frameworks within which we answer them are shaped by traditions, it can exacerbate tendencies in theology to be overly self-involved. Similarly, in focusing on the living, multifaceted and malleable character of language, continental philosophy can sometimes encourage emotivism, equivocation and imprecision. The stereotypical temptations of a continental philosopher are to sideline questions of truth in a continual loop of reiteration and contextualization, and to abandon clarity of style for willful obscurity and self-indulgence. Theologians face these temptations within their own traditions, and are at risk of compounding them by adopting certain nervous ticks of continental philosophy.

However, these risks are far from inevitable. It would be inexcusable timidity to let their threat prevent a full exploration of what can be one of the most energetic, courageous and incisive ways of approaching big questions in the contemporary world. As already quoted, Thomas Nagel writes: 'It is not exactly correct to say that Anglo-American philosophy avoids the big questions…. Nevertheless, the fear of nonsense has had a powerful inhibiting effect.' Though no longer committed to logical positivism, he explains, analytic philosophers tend towards caution and technical incontestability. 'It is understandable that an attachment to certain standards and methods should lead to a concentration on problems amenable to those methods…. But it is often accompanied by a tendency to define the legitimate questions in terms of the available methods of solution.'[39]

'Interesting things,' Nagel concludes, 'happen when new methods and their appropriate standards have to be developed to deal with questions that cannot be posed in terms of the already existing procedures of inquiry. Sometimes the questions cannot be fully understood until the methods have been developed. It is important to try to avoid making claims that are vague, obscure, or unfounded, and to maintain high standards of evidence and argument. But other values are also important, some of which make it difficult to keep things neat.'[40]

Asking the Big Questions

These 'other values', which are 'important' but 'make it difficult to keep things neat', are the driving concern of theologians engaging continental philosophy, and constitute their unique contribution to a joint pursuit of knowledge. By critically engaging the best of the continental tradition, theologians are equipped to make new discoveries not only by refining existing analytic approaches, but by developing new methods that will enable them to address big questions they had not previously known how to ask.

This capacity is already being built. As illustrated above, some leading continental philosophers exemplifying an open approach, including William Desmond, Emmanuel Falque, Vittorio Hösle, Richard Kearney, and Jean-Luc Marion, have turned to theology as an important partner discipline.[41] Similarly, some of today's leading theologians owe many of their key insights to critical conversations with continental philosophy.[42] The following subsection outlines one such ongoing conversation and its fruits, highlighting the roles of the philosophical methods introduced in Part 2, and demonstrating the power of philosophical theology both to formulate big questions and to address them with radical openness, widening the horizons of vision not just for theology, but for wider society.

Case Study: The Gift

In a series of work in the 1990s, Jacques Derrida analysed the concept of selfless love, which was then gaining a high status in philosophy and culture, through one of its emblematic gestures, namely gift-giving. He argued that the manifestation of a selfless love as advocated by philosophers and cultural prophets would be what one might call a 'pure' gift – one which would be given utterly selflessly, without requirement or even permission for any reciprocity. However, Derrida argued, such a notion was nonsensical. A 'pure gift' (or, by extension, a completely selfless love) would have to bar not only reciprocation but also acknowledgement, since even the recognition of receipt may be counted as a reciprocal act, thereby contaminating the gift as 'pure gift', and turning it into a mode of transaction or exchange.[43] Yet without acknowledgement, a possession no longer has the quality of a gift at all. For Derrida, this raises questions about the notion of 'selfless love' and its conditions.

Derrida's former student Jean-Luc Marion extended this analysis of the gift (*le don*) into a **phenomenology** of revelation, in which he argued that humans encounter the world precisely as 'givenness' (*donation*).[44] Theologian John Milbank has recently adapted this analysis to address the metaphysical questions underlying Derrida's account, whether love at its purest is selfless, that is, unilateral. He argues that this is not the case for creaturely love, which is always a response. For Milbank, the entirety of the created world as we know it is fundamentally a gift from God. Not only is created existence a gift, creatures' very ability to receive this gift is itself also a gift from God: God creates the gift *and* the recipient of this gift. According to Milbank, to be a creature is first and foremost to be a recipient of God's gift of being. But to receive this gift most properly is acknowledge the gift in thankfulness or indeed in thanksgiving: In giving thanks for being created, creatures return to God the 'gift' of thanksgiving as an act of exchange – yet one whose possibility is given by God in the first place. As Milbank puts it: 'The Creature only *is*, as manifesting the divine glory, as acknowledging its own nullity and reflected brilliance. To be, it entirely honours God, which means it returns to him an unlimited, never paid-back debt.'[45]

This understanding of being or existence as a revelatory 'gift' is also found in the work of William Desmond. Desmond observes that to receive and recognise 'the gift of being' is to be open to the transcendent, or even the divine giver of all being.[46] In this regard, like Milbank, and echoing Heidegger, Desmond understands the mystery of being as a kind of revelation, always showing something of what God is. The more fundamentally one enters into what Desmond calls 'metaphysical mindfulness' of one's own existence as a gift, the more one comes to be able to appreciate and discover within the world what points beyond the world.[47] In the philosophical-theological works of Desmond and Milbank, the notion of the gift impels a **transvaluation** of what we often take for granted, such that we see the world anew in terms of revelation. In David Bentley Hart's theological aesthetics, this renewed vision is presented as a radical challenge to modern secularity.[48]

This philosophical analysis has provoked fruitful new discussions of St Paul's notion of grace in New Testament studies. John Barclay's influential book *Paul and the Gift* (2015) amplifies Milbank's thesis by arguing **genealogically** that the philosophical notion of selfless love and unilateral gift-giving is incongruent with biblical ideas and their early reception.[49] While gift exchange that is built on reciprocity and mutual recognition can certainly debase gifts into barter, the New Testament authors commend an economy of gift exchange that is rooted in God's infinite generosity.

The philosophical-theological understanding of 'the gift' also presents a **hermeneutic** for our engagement with people and the products of human culture. Its basic confidence motivates a sustained curiosity about how the 'given' of revelation relates to what Ben Quash calls the 'found' elements of changing present contexts, trusting that it is in the contingencies of life, language and culture that God's Spirit is at work.[50] This openness to what is new, corrective, or even interruptive is a landmark of theologies of culture such as Lieven Boeve's or David Brown's.[51] At the same time, the theological hermeneutic of the gift has catalysed resistance to dominant environmental, economic and political practices, and has underwritten new paradigms in political theory, economics, and theological ethics, including environmental ethics.[52]

This case study exemplifies the working methods of philosophical theology in the continental tradition, and a vision of reality characteristic of its perspective.

Integrating Analysis and Interpretation

To strengthen theology's partnership with continental philosophy is not to pit one form of philosophical theology ('continental' theology) against another (analytic theology). Rather, it is to create a strong basis for their reintegration.[53] Progress in both philosophy and theology has been compromised by the division, dominating the last hundred years, of analytic and continental philosophy. This split not only prevents fruitful collaboration but weakens philosophy's grasp of its own core subjects. As Thomas Nagel puts it: 'Philosophy covers an immense range of topics, but part of its concern has always been with mortal life: how to understand it and how to live it…. Some of the[se] topics have not received much attention from analytic philosophers, because it is hard to be clear and precise about them…. Such problems must be attacked by a philosophical method that aims at personal as well as theoretical understanding, and seeks to combine the two by incorporating theoretical results into the framework of self-knowledge. This involves risk.'[54]

Attention to the theological dimensions of these core topics, as well as to the spiritual horizons of both analytic and continental thought more generally, can be a major driver of the integrated philosophical method Nagel seeks. The final section below lays out some of the strategic areas of attention that will build the capacity of philosophical theology in the coming years.

Strategic Areas of Attention

Achieving the vision of this paper will require strategic attention to areas in which philosophical theology in the continental tradition has the potential to enable new discoveries, but which need to be intentionally built up. These areas fall under three overlapping headings: methods, practices, and concepts.

- *Methods*: In addition to the continental methods outlined above, two distinctive methods are emerging in philosophical theology which require strategic attention to become more clearly discovery-oriented: **apophaticism** and **ressourcement**.
- *Practices*: In most academic disciplines, concrete methods of enquiry are embedded in wider practices that shape practitioners' use of materials, methods, and arguments. Three areas of practice in philosophical theology require strategic development. Two are areas of notable vitality: the recent return to **metaphysics**, which is often approached as a set of claims, but in fact requires examination as a practice; and the role of **spiritual practice** in forming the dispositions necessary for discovery. The third is an area of relative weakness:

the paucity of practices of **constructive conflict** in philosophical theology, despite the resources that the tradition would offer for such practices.

- *Concepts*: There is a range of foundational concepts whose clarification cannot be achieved by conceptual analysis alone, but requires the integrative thinking characteristic of the continental tradition. These concepts are critical to understanding and shaping the future, as well as clarifying the relationship between theology and philosophy. We highlight five: the scope of **freedom**, the definition of **life**, the role of **sin**, the nature of **information**, and varieties of **truth**.

In all these areas, progress requires the virtues of humility, clarity, fairness, and courage. To be congruent with its roots, it also requires creative engagement with the approaches and methods of continental philosophy, as laid out in Part 2. Crucially, progress requires an orientation towards discovery: the identification of hypotheses that can be tested and evaluated.

The following subsections introduce each of these areas of strategic attention.

Method 1: Apophaticism

The theologian Karl Rahner asks: 'What if there be an "unknowing" [which] is not a pure negation, not simply an empty absence, but a positive characteristic of a relationship between one subject and another? What if it be essential and constitutive of true knowledge, of its growth, self-awareness and lucidity, to include precisely the unknown, to know itself orientated from the start to the incomprehensible and inexpressible, to recognize more and more that only in this way can it truly be itself and not be halted at a regrettable limit?'[55]

Traditional apophaticism, beginning with kataphatic speech concerning creaturely perfections that are rooted in divine perfections, beckons human discourse deeper into the mystery of God and creation. That mystery is not to be overcome; rather, it abides and encourages further enquiry. Indeed, for the theological tradition the apophatic is not simply a matter of epistemic concern; it is the very form of prayer and contemplation through which one enters the inexhaustible mystery of God.

The continental philosophical tradition has long identified 'the unsayable' as a deep undercurrent in the western intellectual tradition, characterising important strands of art, literature, and music, as well as philosophy and theology. Investigations into apophaticism in its various modalities can help us to understand better the constitutive (rather than contingent) character and limits of reason, both in itself and in specific contexts, whilst at the same time encouraging further exploration of divine and created mysteries. Apophaticism that is appropriate to different disciplines depends upon the nature and scope of those disciplines, and how they relate. The natural sciences, too, have appropriate apophatic moments which need to be identified more carefully, perhaps with the help of philosophical theology. This is often construed as a constraint upon the natural sciences. However, clearly identifying the appropriate boundaries and subject matter of the natural sciences – what can be said positively yet not exhaustively, and what must remain unsaid – increases their power to inform and persuade.

In the field of theology, attention to continental philosophy's identification of apophatic moments can help locate the true scope and character of certain doctrines whilst at the same time recognising their kataphatic roots. The character and extent of what can be said concerning, for example, the incarnation, the atonement, or theological anthropology, can be illuminated significantly by attention to the culture of apophaticism that characterises much artistic, literary,

and philosophical enquiry, against the background of the apophatic movement of prayer and contemplation in Christian theology.

Method 2: Ressourcement

The theologian David Brown writes: '[S]o far from undermining the search for knowledge and understanding, being aware of the traditions upon which one inevitably draws is what makes progress possible, provided that these traditions are allowed to function as open, both towards their past and to the wider context within which they are set.'[56] *Ressourcement* ('returning to the sources') is a theological method with roots in the mid-twentieth century, which, similarly to genealogy, evaluates the assumptions underlying contemporary outlooks by critically comparing and contrasting them with previous intellectual positions in the history of thought. Through its impact on academic theology and conciliar church documents, *ressourcement* has emerged as the most significant theological method of the twentieth century. By rethinking tradition not as dead weight but as a vital force, it liberated theology from conceptual constraints that turned out to be the blind spots of an age rather than necessary limits. However, *ressourcement* has been primarily concerned with retrieving the past. Theologians now need to build on these gains in a fresh way, shifting in a more constructive direction towards a second phase of the *ressourcement* movement, which is directed to the future rather than a defence of the past.

As Oxford philosopher A.W. Moore puts it: 'There is *no reliving the past.* And even if there were, there would be no clear motive for doing so. No; what those voices do is to disrupt our living of the present, and thereby to help us find better ways of living the future. The right response to them is not to try to join in with them, any more than it is to turn a deaf ear to them. The right response is to connect what they are saying with what is being said now, and to search for ways of saying something that makes creative use of both. This is just the kind of thing that Deleuze has in mind. It is part of what he means when he suggests… that the metaphysician should be working in a way that is "untimely", attempting to create concepts for a time to come.'[57] This re-orientation of *ressourcement* towards the future will catalyze new paradigms, including scientific paradigms, by interrupting ways of thinking that are assumed to be universal but in fact historically contingent.

Practice 1: Doing Metaphysics

Analytic philosopher A.W. Moore argues that metaphysics 'matters not principally because of whatever intrinsic value it has, but because of the various ways in which it can *make a difference*', and 'the most important and the most exciting way in which it can make a difference is…by providing us with radically new concepts by which to live'.[58]

For much of the twentieth century, philosophers and Protestant theologians regarded the classical philosophical practice of metaphysics as outdated because non-veridical: owing to the impossibility of proof at the most general levels of reasoning, metaphysics – abstract rational theorizing about the fundamental nature of reality – seemed condemned to be no more than cloud-castle-building. In recent years, recovering their confidence in Christian doctrines including Trinitarianism and creation, theologians have begun to reassert the possibility and importance of metaphysics.

This is a significant development, which has catalysed bold new thinking that may lead to new discoveries. However, its pursuit often evades rather than confronts criticism. The result can be competing models of reality which are difficult to compare or evaluate, let alone operationalize. This does not make the revival of metaphysics inept. Instead, it invites reflection on metaphysics

as a *practice*, as the continental tradition does well. It is only as a concrete practice that metaphysics connects reality as experienced and reality as abstractly described. Reflection on metaphysics as practice is therefore a necessary aspect of maintaining the contact with reality which the abstract formulations of metaphysics claim and are intended to provide. This reflection cannot replace metaphysics, but must be an integral part of its work. It will also clarify the relation of metaphysics to scientific theories of reality, precisely because these theories too are revelatory of reality within a context of practice. It is thus that the two can challenge and extend one another.

Practice 2: Spiritual Practice

The notion of 'practice' is of wider significance for philosophical theology. Continental philosophy's characteristic emphasis on the human as embodied and desirous, knowledge as inhabitation and technique, and language as conversation and poesis means that philosophy is never a purely theoretical task, but always also a practice of *philosophizing* which engages the enquirer. Philosophy is thus not reducible to a set of questions and arguments, but always also a disciplined activity. An ancient notion of philosophy as a way of life grounded in spiritual practice has been recovered by Pierre Hadot and reconceptualised in the work of figures as diverse as Simone Weil, Michel Foucault, and William Desmond.[59]

This development is especially relevant for philosophical theology, whose central subject matters – God and divine revelation – are understood to be transformative for the enquirer. It is therefore necessary to investigate how spiritual practice, conceived as a conscious self-orientation to the divine, interacts with intellectual enquiry.

Attention on philosophical theology as an engaged practice also opens the task of philosophy to the possibility of experimental studies and empirical engagements, particularly for the understanding of religious experiences and spiritual practices. For instance, in her recent Templeton-funded work, the continental philosopher Clare Carlisle conducted qualitative research, interviewing religious practitioners in order to develop and refine the theoretical category of practice, and to identify and analyse different types of spiritual practices and religious experiences.[60]

Practice 3: Fostering Constructive Conflict

Because it often organizes itself around leading figures, continental philosophy sometimes lacks a robust tradition of constructive conflict. Philosophical theology that engages continental thought also faces this challenge, which is exacerbated by tendencies to large metaphysical claims that are not easily scrutinized, or rhetorical appeals to peaceableness that can suppress generative disagreement. It is therefore important to foster practices of constructive conflict among philosophical theologians. This may be achieved (a) by developing and testing theories of conflict such as Wesley Kort's discourse analysis-based model[61]; (b) through practical exercises such as 'adversarial collaborations' (as proposed by Nobel Memorial Prize winner Daniel Kahnemann[62]) or forms of interdenominational or interreligious engagement that aim not at superficial agreement but at constructive disagreement; (c) through case studies, for example of the achievements and failure modes of ecumenical dialogue as reflected in ecumenical documents; or of the ways in which 'new things' are articulated in different religious traditions at the point where they are just becoming available for articulation.

Such constructive conflict also includes robust engagement between continental and analytic philosophical theologians. As analytic philosopher Dan Zahavi notes: 'It is a mistake to carve up

the philosophical landscape into two distinct (and incommensurable) traditions. The mistake is both one of over-simplification and reification…. Acknowledging the diversity allows us to recognize the presence of unexpected similarities as well as fruitful and productive differences.'[63]

This is also true of collaboration, including adversarial collaboration, between theologians and scientists. Joint attention on subjects that are of mutual interest may produce new clarity about the corroborations, mutual challenges, and potential extensions that theoretical and scientific approaches can offer one another. As Henri Bergson notes, philosophy or theology is not 'the systematic work of a single thinker. It needs, and unceasingly calls for, corrections and re-touches. It progresses like positive science. Like it, too, it is a work of collaboration.'[64]

Concept 1: The Scope of Freedom

The resources of philosophical theology are able to transform and augment the range of conceptual options open to us when thinking about freedom, beyond the standard division into positive and negative freedom, and libertarian, deterministic, and compatibilist accounts. The deep background for the most influential contemporary conceptions of freedom (for example, those that cascade from Kant) is, in fact, a notion of perfect and divine freedom.[65]

(a) Divine and human freedom: Divine freedom, according to one mainstream account, involves God's delight in, and contemplation of, God's own nature and activity. This is because for God, there can be no dependence on anything external to God. Created human freedom can then be indexed to such divine freedom in one of two ways: either through *participation* or *imitation*. Either option opens up vital elements in our background thinking about freedom, in ways that can do positive or destructive work. The former approach ('participation') involves working out a model of non-competitive agency (a 'concurrence' account), which has begun to command the attention of analytical philosophers also. The latter approach ('imitation') involves human beings in some way imitating divine freedom, embodying and exemplifying it themselves. Kantian paradigms arguably occupy this position. This is significant, and, arguably, problematic, manifesting itself in the most sophisticated secular appropriations of Kant (for example, John Rawls and Christine Korsgaard).

(b) Freedom and autonomy: It is illuminating if surprising to talk about the *relationship* between conceptions of freedom and the notion of autonomy, because in the richest strands of philosophy and theology, these concepts are not *identical*. Rather, freedom, and, in particular, freedom of choice, is just one element of a properly functioning autonomy. Philosophical theologians are able to demonstrate that the conceptual and historical roots of the concept, going back into classical philosophy, lead us to a notion of 'rational self-government', in response to the Socratic question of 'how should one live?'. Within these diverse philosophical strands, one finds complex, enlarged, and rich conceptions of the rational (beyond the procedural and instrumental), the self (embodied, and enculturated, and open to transcendence), and of what constitutes 'government' (in vulnerable, multi-layered, and relational settings). Autonomy involves a whole cluster of practices, values, and relationships, of which freedom of choice is only one part. This becomes evident when thinking about ethical issues in relation to poverty, migration, trauma, climate change, end-of-life care, and a global pandemic.

Concept 2: The Concept of Life

A previous section outlined the philosophical-theological recovery of the concept of 'gift'. A similar approach to the concept of 'life' would be a fruitful line of enquiry for at least three reasons.

First, although the concept of 'life' has been explored by Templeton-funded projects engaged with the natural sciences, it has not been investigated in conversation with continental philosophy and the *Lebensphilosophie* movement. Bergson would be an important interlocutor, alongside Heidegger, Arendt, Jonas, Hadot, Deleuze, Henry, and Agamben. In a theological mode, life is a kind of transcendental, for God is life (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a.18.3) and Christ is *the* life (John 14:6) who comes to bring life in all its fulness (John 10:10). Can we give an account of this transcendental in a way that informs the understanding of created life, both human and non-human?

Secondly, whilst the concept of life is contested in contemporary biology and ecology, it is liberally extended in various technological fields in ways that are not *simply* metaphorical, including the notion of artificial life. The increasingly popular view of life as an emergent property of complex systems introduces new dimensions to the debate. The fluidity (or incoherence) of the concept of life significantly influences ethical debates surrounding life's beginning and end, its dignity and limits, as well as understandings of agency and freedom. Can a philosophical theology of life contribute to those debates, perhaps with reference to the current revival of Bergsonian panvitalism?

Thirdly, the concept of life is conceived in subtly different ways in the world's religious traditions. Can those insights concerning divine and created life be harnessed towards a theology of human and non-human flourishing?

Concept 3: The Role of Sin

The Christian doctrine of sin has played a significant and contentious role in continental philosophy: Friedrich Nietzsche identified it as the seed of Christianity's erosion of humanity; Martin Heidegger sought to reframe it as a sense of ineradicable 'debt' (*Schuld*) which humans must embrace rather than contend with. Yet as Stephen Mulhall and others have shown, many continental philosophical accounts of humanity turn on secularized narratives of sin and salvation. More acutely, current indictments of various forms of systemic bias closely follow rhetorical and practical models traditionally associated with religious accounts of (original) sin. Philosophical theology has the intellectual resources to intervene in these and other debates through phenomenological, hermeneutic and theological approaches.

Concept 4: The Nature of Information

Although the term 'information' is often associated with technology and computational data, 'information' in fact finds its conceptual and etymological roots in the notions of '*informare*' and '*informationem*' in medieval scholastic theology and philosophy. While the idea of 'form' and *informare* (to introduce 'form' into some material thing) is obviously key to the neo-Aristotelian hylomorphism (i.e. the metaphysics of matter and form) that dominates medieval scholasticism, it is also worth noting that medieval theologians speak of God's act of giving goodness and beauty (and not just being) to creation as an act of 'information' (*informationem*).[66] As such, for these Christian theologians, as for advocates of the emerging field of 'the philosophy of information' in analytic philosophy (e.g., Luciano Floridi at Oxford), 'information' is a dimension of reality that is irreducible to physical matter.[67] To this extent, 'information' may be regarded as a notion which reveals the immaterial or even spiritual aspects of the world. In light of the increasing presence of information technology in our everyday life, a study of the nature of 'information' and its theological or even spiritual aspects will foster a way of exploring Sir John's conception of 'spiritual information'. Moreover, the philosophical-theological *and* scientific-technological notion of

‘information’ can provide us with a key into understanding and interpreting the immaterial dimensions of reality, and facilitate new and important conversations across different trends within theology, philosophy, and science. With continental philosophy’s attention on the genealogical roots of concepts as well as the progression of their interpretation,[68] a philosophically engaged theology is particularly suited to undertake such an inquiry into the spiritual nature of ‘information’.

Concept 5: Varieties of Truth

Philosopher John Cottingham writes: ‘[T]he struggle to reach the truth is never a purely intellectual matter. The truth, or at least the interesting truth, involves, as Heidegger famously remarked, the disclosure of what is hidden; and what is hidden, as Freud so acutely saw, cannot be revealed by logic alone.’[69]

The concept of truth marks a major division between theology, continental philosophy, and analytic philosophy: their understandings range from truth as a ‘transcendental’ to truth as a redundant concept to be supplanted by ‘what is the case’. An investigation of truth that begins from practice (‘truthfulness’) rather than abstraction (‘truth’) may point a way forward. Such an investigation could focus on various areas, for example: (a) the negotiation of questions of truth in a pluralist context, without falling into a subjectivism or relativism that cannot take seriously the questions of truth at stake in theological enquiry; (b) the truth and meaning of a human life, understood (or perhaps not understood) in its relation to God.

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[4] T.F. Torrance, *Theological Science* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 13f, as summarized by Trevor Hart, *Between the Image and the Word* (London: Routledge, 2013), 25.

[5] By Henri Bergson, see esp. *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977 [1932]). ‘Openness’ is articulated by Bergson variously through this work, including the notions of ‘open morality’ and ‘open society’. But, above all, it refers to an ‘attitude [which] is that of the open soul’ (ibid., 38). By Edmund Husserl, see esp. *Logical Investigations*, trans. J.N. Findlay (London: Routledge, 1973 [1900/1913]). By Martin Heidegger, see esp. *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962 [1927]).

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[11] Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), esp. 137–141.

[12] Although Kuhn himself did not study with Husserl directly, he was influenced by Husserl's former student, Alexandre Koyré (1892–1964).

[13] Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 111.

[14] Thomas Kuhn, *The Road Since Structure* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 218.

[15] Thomas Kuhn, *The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), xiii.

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[17] See esp. Martin Heidegger, 'The Question concerning Technology', in *The Question concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 3–35.

[18] See esp. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, trans. H.L. Menken (New York: Knopf, 1918 [1895]), conclusion.

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[32] Cf. Templeton, *Humble Approach*, esp. 35–7.

[33] See, respectively, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Eye and Mind', trans. Carleton Dallery, in *The Primacy of Perception*, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 159–190; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Cézanne's Doubt', in *Sense and Non-Sense*, trans. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston, IL Northwestern University Press, 1964), 9–25; Michel Henry, *Seeing the Invisible: On Kandinsky*, trans. Scott Davidson (London: Continuum, 2009); Michel Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe: Illustrations and Letters by Rene Magritte*, trans. James Harkness (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983); Michel Foucault, *Manet and the Object of Painting* (London: Tate Publishing, 2009); Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (London: Continuum, 2004).

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[38] The John Templeton Foundation strategic plan for its Religious Cognition strategic priority.

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[42] See e.g. John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2nd ed., 2006); Kevin Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); David C. Schindler, *The Catholicity of Reason* (Grand Rapis, MI: Eerdmans, 2013); Rowan Williams, *The Edge of Words* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Cyril O'Regan, *The Anatomy of Misremembering*, 3 vols (Chestnut Ridge: Crossroad Publishing, 2014–2023); Kevin Hector, *The Theological Project of Modernism: Faith and the Conditions of Mineness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Andrew L. Prevot, *Thinking Prayer: Theology and Spirituality Amid the Crises of Modernity* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015); David Brown, *God in a Single Vision: Integrating Philosophy and Theology*, ed. Christopher R. Brewer and Robert MacSwain (London: Routledge, 2016); John R. Betz, 'After Heidegger and Marion: The Task of Christian Metaphysics Today', *Modern Theology* 34, no. 4 (2018), 565–597; Janet Soskice, 'Naming God: or why names are not attributes', *New Blackfriars* 101, no. 1092 (2020), 182-95; Christoph Schwoebel, 'The Concept of Revelation in Christianity', in G. Tamer (ed.), *The Concept of Revelation in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 57-141; Catherine Pickstock, *Aspects of Truth: A New Religious Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Karen Kilby, *God, Evil, and the Limits of Theology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

[43] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time I: Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); cf. idem, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). In addition to Heidegger, Derrida is also responding to the classic anthropological study of gift-exchanging in Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W.D. Halls (London: Routledge, 1990).

[44] Jean-Luc Marion, in 'On the Gift: A Discussion between Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion', in John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (eds.), *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 64. See also Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002); 'The Reason of the Gift', trans. Shane Mackinlay and Nicolas de Warren, in Ian Leask and Eoin Cassidy (eds.), *Givenness and God: Questions of Jean-Luc Marion* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 101–134; *Givenness and Revelation*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[45] John Milbank, 'Can a Gift Be Given? Prolegomenon to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysic', *Modern Theology* 11, no. 1 (1995): 135; cf. idem, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon* (London: Routledge, 2003).

[46] William Desmond, *Being and the Between* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 4: 'I am speaking of an indeterminate opening to being that is prior to any determinate question regarding this or that being, or this or that specific aspect of things. This indeterminate opening is not first determinately known as such; it is lived; it is simply our very being, as given to be mindful of being as given.'

[47] See Desmond, *Being and the Between*, *passim*; see also Desmond, *God and the Between* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008).

[48] See David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), esp. 260–269, where Hart explicitly acknowledges his debt to Milbank's critique of Derrida (and Marion) on the gift.

[49] John Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015). In addition to the discourse on the gift, Barclay's study also draws significantly on Badiou's *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*.

[50] Ben Quash, *Found Theology: History, Imagination and the Holy Spirit* (Bloomsbury T&T Clark: London, 2013).

[51] Lieven Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition: An Essay on Christian Faith in a Postmondern Context*, trans. Brian Doyle (Louvain: Peeters, 2003); David Brown, *Tradition and Imagination: Revelation and Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); David Brown, *Discipleship and Imagination: Christian Tradition and Truth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). See also the discussion of how Desmond's philosophy can be as a resource for developing a natural theology of the arts in Christopher R. Brewer, 'Rolling with Release into the Future: William Desmond's Donation to a Natural Theology of the Arts', in Christopher Ben Simpson and Brendan Thomas Sammon (eds), *William Desmond and Contemporary Theology* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 217–38.

[52] For economics, see e.g. Philip Goodchild, *Capitalism and Religion: The Price of Piety* (London: Routledge, 2003); Philip Goodchild, *Theology of Money* (London: SCM, 2007); Daniel M. Bell, *The Economy of Desire: Christianity and Capitalism in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012). For political theory, see e.g. John Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order: The Representation of Being and the Representation of the People* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014); John Milbank and Adrian Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue: Post-Liberalism and the Human Future* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016). For theological ethics, see Stephen H. Webb, *The Gifting God: A Trinitarian Ethics of Excess* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). For environmental ethics more specifically, see e.g. Simon Oliver, *Creation* (London: T&T Clark, 2017), 133–157; Norman Wirzba, *From Nature to Creation: A Christian Vision for Understanding and Loving Our World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015).

[53] Early attempts at such reintegration include the special issue 'Mashup of Philosophy of Religion', *The Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 14, no 2 (2015); Fiona Ellis (ed.), *New Models of Religious Understanding* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[54] Nagel, *Mortal Questions*, ix.

[55] Karl Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology" in *TheologicaI Investigations* vol. 4, trans. Kevin Smyth (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, I966), 41.

[56] Brown, *Tradition and Imagination*, 11.

[57] A.W. Moore, *The Evolution of Modern Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 588 (emphasis added).

[58] Moore, *Evolution of Modern Metaphysics*, 600.

[59] See Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. Arnold Davidson, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); Simone Weil, *Waiting on God*, trans. Emma Craufurd (London: Routledge, 2009); Ryan G. Duns, *Spiritual Exercises for a Secular Age: Desmond and the Quest for God* (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2020).

[60] See esp. Clare Carlisle, 'Spiritual Desire and Religious Practice', *Religious Studies* 55, no. 3 (2019): 429–446. See also Clare Carlisle, 'Habit, Practice, Grace: Towards a Philosophy of Religious Life', in Fiona Ellis (ed.) *New Models of Religious Understanding* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 97–115.

[61] See Wesley Kort, *Bound to Differ: The Dynamics of Theological Discourses* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 1992).

[62] See Daniel Kahneman and Gary Klein, 'Conditions for intuitive expertise: A failure to disagree', *American Psychologist* 64, no. 6 (2009), 515–26.

[63] Dan Zahavi, 'Analytic and Continental Philosophy: From Duality Through Plurality to (Some Kind of) Unity', in Sonja Rinofner-Kreidl and Harald A. Wiltsche (eds), *Analytical and Continental Philosophy: Methods and Perspectives* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 80–93; here p. 91.

[64] Henri Bergson, *Mind-Energy*, trans. H. Wildon Carr (London: Greenwood Press, 1975), 7.

[65] See especially Chris Insole, *Kant and the Divine: from Contemplation to the Moral Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[66] See Jan Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor to Francisco Suárez* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 190, 200–202.

[67] See Luciano Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); *The Ethics of Information* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); *The Logic of Information* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

[68] For an important (if dated) existing critical study of 'information' in continental philosophy, see Albert Borgmann, *Holding onto Reality: The Nature of Information at the Turn of the Millennium* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

[69] John Cottingham, 'What is Humane Philosophy and Why is it At Risk?', *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements* 65 (2009), 233–255, 253–254.