

MARIAN MINDED

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*The Marriage of
Philosophy and
Theology in the
Human Person*

Introduction

“What is life?” It is obvious enough that certain laws can reliably predict the movement of matter in the universe and that life exists within this context. That is not the question. “What is a person; what am I? What am I doing on this microscopic planet, in just one of billions of galaxies in a monstrous emptiness called ‘space?’ What are my options?” Being is a phenomenon taken for granted in the West. The nature of *human*-being is rarely questioned by the mainstream culture, as if it were apparent that humans are just another animal. Yet, what other creatures can see with a third-eye the world as a whole, having ideas much bigger than their sense data and memories? Within the perception of the human mind there is space vaster than the cosmos itself. To be able to see his limitations man must be able to see beyond them. How can this be? What does it mean? For at least 40,000 years, homo-sapiens have been trying to answer these questions through various artistic and religious expressions. Shockingly, the fundamental answers, or the preliminary options, have not varied much at all, regardless of era or environment. These questions have been posed in thousands of unique ways, but they are all subtleties of the same essential question. The human soul struggles even to put this question into words to ask it (because the experience is inexpressible), but it does for the sake of social communion. “Is the human person a material anomaly, or is matter just ripples on a spiritual sea?”

Every action of human life is grounded, implicitly or explicitly, in an assumption about or attempted response to this question. The universality of religion in human cultures testifies to this (there is no society that has ever been emptied of religion, even when governments have enforced atheism). Religious language has too much value for people in its propensity to explain the human condition. The Judeo-Christian tradition in particular illuminates man to himself with remarkable clarity. When philosophy wonders at the meaning of life it cannot avoid taking a religious position. A Christian exercises the power of religious language to philosophize in the following way: There is a Creator. Once there was nothing. Now there is something. Once there was no material life. Now there is material life. Once all material life was deterministically governed. Now some material life has creative freedom. The first free material life-form was a male human being. From man came woman, by the power of God. This man and woman spawned the human race, the only creatures who recognize and value their freedom. Freedom is God, God is love, and love is freedom. Hell results from the existential reality of the freedom, even the freedom not to be free, for only God is wholly free because only God loves perfectly. The evil-doer is a slave. He chooses to surrender his choice in order to be determined by the law of sin. By removing freedom, sin destroys love, but also makes life ‘easier’ for an unredeemed person. Thus, this life is a battle between Christ, who is God’s redemption of humanity, and the power of sin which is the freedom to reject God’s Love. Whether you consider this story as a theological reality or a philosophical allegory, the truth is the same, the explanatory power is the same. Every human person finds himself or herself pulled between a desire for constancy and a desire for change. Because this is the fundamental experience of being human, it is also the starting point for every thought and expression. The relationship of philosophy to theology is like the relationship between the desire for constancy and the desire for change. They are inseparable.

One might say that if God existed, there would be evidence of Him in the world. But, at least in the case of God, would not the evidence be life itself – not only the existence of life in

general, but the journey of every individual human person from womb to tomb? What kind of evidence does an immaterial, timeless, omnipotent Being leave behind? Either nothing at all or all of existence. *And it is the great pride of human persons that anyone can claim to objectify life itself.* Where is the man who sees the fullness of himself, let alone a holistic picture of nature or of human society? Men and women are perpetually confusing the parts for the whole, taking real or perceived patterns in their lives and making them absolutes. The materialist is just as guilty as the Buddhist. Science cannot claim superior relevance over religion just because it deals with seemingly independent and predictable forces. This would be equivalent to the claim that the subconscious mind is superior to the conscious mind because the former is relatively autonomous and routine, while the latter is impulsive and rebellious. But in human life, stability is not generally considered a superior quality to creativity. If it were, mankind would still be in the bronze-age. Innovations arise out of risk-taking... so does love. Physical laws do have a degree of authority based on the fact they have existed in the universe for the longest period of time, as far as we know. However, the authority of physics does not supersede the authority of love, at least for the great majority of people who have ever lived. And even physics has its creative moments. The big-bang, the appearance of life, and the birth of self-conscious beings: these are the three great prodigies of matter. Transfinite set theory, quantum non-locality, the relativity of time, black holes, and “paranormal” human events also reveal how the universe rebels against the label of absolute determinism. Reality is simply not subject to total predictability or static absolutes.

The prophetic proposition of Christianity’s doctrine of the Trinity is that making absolutes *is* the absolute. One Absolute is breaking out into new absolutes held together by their essential absoluteness: God the Father is absolute creativity, God the Son is absolute active-receptivity, and God the Holy Spirit is absolute femininity (all in a very limited analogy). Reality is a logical consistency interrupted by moments of inexplicable newness. Every injection of a new absolute comes with its own logic, yet somehow falls into place with what came before. Reality and God act less like the predictable gears of a clock and more like the volatile history of civilization. The universe is less like an absolute law by itself and more like an absolute relationship between absolutes. This hypothesis is so profoundly relevant to human life precisely because the human mind is made for absolutes, and yet must be in relationship with other minds who have their own absolutes. Contemporary materialists know this as well as Plato did, but are reluctant to call their absolute “God” because of the cultural implications connected to the word. But what the word “absolute” symbolizes for the materialist, the word “God” symbolizes for the genuine Christian. It is one’s chosen meaning for life. It is the reconciliation between the past and the present, between permanence and novelty. Thus, the great question about man finds little solace in the answer of materialism. If logical or rational or mathematical or physical coherence was all a person needed to understand life, then every sane person would want to be a physicist and men would worship computers. Here is the first of two great lies which have been repeated and redressed a million times since man began his questioning. Exercising abstract thought will never answer the great question by itself because it is never actually found by itself; it only exists in organic persons who have already been informed by some transcendent truth. Only in the humble recognition of the limitations of human life and human ability does one begin to see the spark of an answer. The question itself becomes an answer. *The quest for meaning can be nothing other than the gravity of Divinity.* Every human being has a womb which only God can impregnate, and most traditions call it the soul. God’s proposal to the soul is the universal noetic experience.

Apart from the skeptical thinkers, believers of all types fall victim to a second great lie that faith *alone* is sufficient.¹ The quest for meaning cannot end with the acceptance of an Absolute Deity, for there is another force at work in human life: concupiscence or evil. Although, in a certain sense, openness to God really does answer every question about life and offer total fulfillment of desire, the challenge that plagues the human journey is how subtly and frequently that openness can be forgotten or ignored. This is the most obvious doctrine of Original Sin. For this sickness there is only one available remedy, that is, submission to God *Incarinate*. Not God in the mind alone, but God in a tangible form, God who literally shares in the human experience and becomes sacramentally demonstrable. When love is not followed naturally the next best impetus is obedience, and obedience requires direction for the whole person, body and soul, individually and socially. Obedience is paradoxical, a mystical union of independent freedoms. Every system of law and punishment since the beginning of civilization has understood this truth, because moral authority must always be grounded in some transcendent Being who can resolve the paradoxical tensions of finitude and temporality. When people will not listen to absolute love, they *will* listen to absolute power. The utterly unique proposition of Christianity, revealed only through the historical life of Jesus of Nazareth, was that Absolute Power *is* Love.² “Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:8). *The Incarnation of God reveals the true pattern of love*. Although the language here does not seem particularly unique, *it could not be over-emphasized* how intimately the pattern of rightly-ordered-love is united to and delineated by the historical life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. Catholicism’s claim to truth is not a matter of any mere linguistic association to the word “love.” It is the way that Christ defined love by his actual words and deeds that is so remarkable and without parallel in human history. His actual physical life continues to unfold and bear fruit. Another way of understanding the Incarnation is that God allows the human person to grasp His omnipotent Being in a logical, mathematical, psychological, and physical way. Only Jesus can bridge the gap between absolute knowledge and absolute existence. That is why “faith alone” fails to see Christ as He intends to be seen, because it is His *Physical Presence* that is supposed to be the object of Christian faith. Rather than being a one-time event which occurred two thousand years ago, this Incarnation is an infinitely verifiable template into which Love will always fit. Jesus Christ imprints into the earth His Church, a living brandmark of Divinity, an interpreting tool for every physical system in existence. God’s *humanity* is the answer-key to every single conceivable human question about reality. So, the first part of this essay will explore in more depth the original lie, exploring the question: What is Truth? The inescapable answer being that man needs Truth *to first tell him* what It is. This is what will be called the axiomatic, noetic, feminine experience. The second half of this essay will look at the Theology of Mary as the supreme example of how faith and knowledge should be married in the human person. Because Active Receptivity is the essence of Absolute Love, femininity is the primary characteristic of the human-part of the analogy of love.³

¹ “Faith alone” is a reference to Martin Luther’s doctrine of *Sola Fides*

² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 268.

³ Heart of the World, Center of the Church. “The Method of Metaphysics: Person and the Relation between Philosophy and Theology.” 292-309. Schindler also offers “childlikeness” as model of the receptive, or feminine, perfection in the being of God. The childlike possesses a sense of wonder, of thanksgiving, of existence as play, and of being as gift. If Christ is the incarnation of these virtues, certainly he learned them, in a uniquely hyper-human way, from his immaculately conceived mother.

The Noetic Experience in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy

In the great book *Meno*, Plato made one of the most important discoveries in the history of human thought. In his discussion with Meno, Socrates is asked “whether virtue is acquired by teaching or by practice?”⁴ In his characteristic style, Socrates answers by returning to the major question which preoccupied his earlier dialogues: *What is virtue?* Realizing that virtue in general cannot be defined by any of its particular manifestations or parts, Meno makes a serious objection. “And how will you enquire, Socrates, into that which you do not know? What will you put forth as the subject of enquiry? And if you find what you want, how will you ever know that this is the thing which you did not know?”⁵ The very possibility of learning anything is here put into question. What knowledge can one ever expect to discover except that which one already knows, because if he did not already know it in some sense, how would he know he had something to look for? The revelation which this question inspired in Plato was an advance which no philosopher after him could reasonably ignore. As Balduin V. Schwarz said in a commentary on the *Meno*: “It marks Plato’s breaking through to his greatest discovery, that there is a type of knowledge which is absolute in character and which is realized by the human mind within itself: the cognition of essence... It has proved so thought-provoking that one has called the whole history of Western philosophy ‘footnotes on Plato.’”⁶ Such a statement can be made because of how essential this discovery is to the nature and experience of *every* human person. Although others had certainly had this realization before him, Plato was the first to articulate the experience and disseminate it. The language which Plato uses to explain the event is of secondary importance to the experience itself, as it is the purpose here to illustrate. What needs to be understood is that this encounter is universal in human persons, whether recognized through reflection or implicitly assumed (even though, the way it is expounded varies with the theologies and worldviews of history).

What Plato proposes, to answer the question of how knowledge is attained, is that *all philosophical understandings are recollected memories dug-up from within the human person’s immortal soul*. “The soul, then, as being immortal, and having been born again many times, and having seen all things that exist, whether in this world or in the world below, has knowledge of them all; and it is no wonder that she should be able to call to remembrance all that she ever knew about virtue, and about everything; for as all nature is akin, and the soul has learned all things; there is no difficulty in her eliciting or as men say ‘learning,’ out of a single recollection, all the rest, if a man is strenuous and does not faint; for all enquiry and all learning is but recollection.”⁷ Plato’s answer is followed by the famous demonstration of innate geometrical knowledge ‘remembered’ by one of Meno’s slave-boys. Through a guided lesson, Socrates helps the slave-boy discover for himself that the diagonal line of any square is equal to one side of a square which has exactly twice the area. The point of the lesson is that what the boy discovers is an absolute truth already inherent to his mind, but needing to be ‘rediscovered’ by practice. It is different from empirical or observational knowledge because the mathematical truth is not physical or sensual and has infinite potential applications. Here Plato’s philosophy of perfect forms, or divine ideas, first began. Neo-Platonists would later name this connection

⁴ *Meno*. Benjamin Jowett, Plato. <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/meno.html>

⁵ *Ibid*.

⁶ *The Great Books*. “Plato: Meno” Balduin V. Schwarz. 43.

⁷ *Meno*. Benjamin Jowett.

between human nature and eternal ideas *noesis*, the intuition of the mind. The absolute standards, which the human intellect knows by itself, reveal the noetic disposition of man, the openness of the human person to communing with the divine. These premises are called divine because they do not seem to be mutable or contingent in any way. *Nous* is the *experience* of the divine truth, while the *logos* is the expression of truth through reason and language.

Following Plato, Aristotle also made it clear in his *Metaphysics* and *Analytics* that there are first principles of logic which are understood through insight or intuition and that cannot be deduced or demonstrated. “It is impossible for the same thing both to belong and not to belong at the same time to the same thing and in the same respect.”⁸ The law of non-contradiction and excluded middle states that a thing cannot be and not be at the same time and in the same respect, and one of two contradictories must be definitely true. Likewise, the principle of identity says that no thing can be itself and something else at the same time and in the same respect, while the principle of intelligibility infers from the first three principles that all things are intelligible and *can be* known (intellectually). Similarly, in his teachings on substance, Aristotle shows how material things are often unified by a form which is immaterial but that is, nevertheless, a concrete reality. “For being separable and being a this seem to belong to substance most of all; that is why the form and the <compound> of both <matter and form> would seem to be substance more than the matter [alone] is.”⁹ The “I” of the self-aware human person exhibits this concept of “substantial form” most clearly.

The ancient Islamic philosopher Al-Farabi seemed to recognize a harmonization of Plato and Aristotle here. “His argument is that while Plato discusses the concept of substance in his metaphysics and his “divine statements” (theology), Aristotle discusses it in his logic and physics, where conditions nearest to sense are considered. According to Farabi, their aims and intentions are different in the two inquiries, but they do agree on the priority and primacy of the substances.”¹⁰ In other words, Aristotle and Plato agree that the ultimate object of knowledge is the necessary and unchangeable, since there are no degrees of apprehension of the principles of non-contradiction and substantial form, or limitations to their application, and their source is entirely mysterious. These are self-evident truths, like Plato’s universal ideas, vital principles for any discipline of logic and for critical thinking in general. Although Aristotle went out of his way to deny universal ideas, he only succeeded in creating a more elaborate system for explaining what is still axiomatically assumed, that is, the immaterial meanings assigned to material experiences. Aristotle disagreed that all knowledge was reminiscent, and that the soul was immortal, but he did not argue against a spiritual element in the intellect’s “abstraction” process. Therefore, the thesis that homosapiens are noetically-moved creatures is again demonstrated by their having access to these truths which surpass rational analysis. One might call this a *natural* religion of axioms. This kind of universal faith refutes the claim that rational deliberation is the only dependable method of attaining knowledge, because rational discourse, and all sane thought, presupposes the above foundational truths from the start. Why this misunderstanding about the origins of knowledge is so common might be for the same reason Al-Farabi thought Plato was so fond of allegory and myth: “To protect philosophy from the

⁸ Irwin, Terence, and Gail Fine. *Aristotle: Introductory Readings*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub., 1996. Print. “Metaphysics” (Book IV, Chapter 3, 1005b, 19-21). 134.

⁹ *Ibid.* (Book VII, Chapter 3, 1029a, 27-30). 153.

¹⁰ Najjar, Fauzi M.. "Al-Farabi's Harmonization of Plato's and Aristotle's Philosophies." *The Muslim World* 94 (2004): 29-44. *Religion and Philosophy Collection*. Web. 1 Oct. 2012. 35.

indolent while making it accessible only to those willing to exert themselves in the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom.”¹¹

Add *Actus-Essendi*, and dual-ultimate-ends

Thomas Aquinas, in the 13th Century, definitively Christianized the philosophy of Aristotle (as far he thought it could be assimilated). Aquinas took the first principles of logic and extended them to include the innate precepts of the moral law. “The precepts of the natural law are to the practical reason, what the first principles of demonstrations are to the speculative reason; because both are self-evident principles.”¹² Man is privy not only to mathematical and logical first-premises, but also to moral first-premises. “Now as ‘being’ is the first thing that falls under the apprehension simply [speculative reason], so ‘good’ is the first thing that falls under the apprehension of the practical reason, which is directed to action: since every agent acts for an end under the aspect of good. Consequently the first principle of practical reason is one founded on the notion of good, viz. that ‘good is that which all things seek after.’ Hence this is the first precept of law, that ‘good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided.’ All other precepts of the natural law are based upon this: so that whatever the practical reason naturally apprehends as man's good (or evil) belongs to the precepts of the natural law as something to be done (or avoided).”¹³ Postponing the discussion which must arise about the definition of ‘good’ and ‘evil,’ it is enough here to point out that man and woman have an inclination towards some perceived end which cannot be examined rationally. It cannot be demonstrated for this reason: the end transcends the intellect’s powers. The *nous* in man is intrinsically more than a logical mechanism; it is self-referentially super-logical. Undoubtedly, this is an uncomfortably mysterious phenomenon. Whereas all other intelligent animals seem capable of only very limited concrete and immediate motivations (deterministic behavior), the human animal can strive after ends which are ‘immaterial’ and may even extend to a period of ‘afterlife’ (self-determining behavior). Thus, Aquinas agrees with Plato and Aristotle that there is a noetic disposition of the human person: a unique openness to absolutes, to eternity, and to the divine as yet undefined. The question about the meaning of existence is a question about this first movement of being. Before one decides what the movement is like, he or she must become aware that the movement is necessary for human life (even if “first” refers to an eternal action). Defining the context for interpreting this first movement is a personal and theological endeavor – one might reject the label of religion/faith but participate in religious thinking nonetheless – while the rationalization of one’s chosen starting point is the philosophical side of thought. Thus, a complementarity between philosophy and theology is unavoidable. Although, theology is called the philosophy of God, *no philosophy is actually possible* without a metaphysics which assumes God, at least in the broadest sense of ‘Absoluteness.’ To make the same point in different language: human reason relies upon a conscious or unconscious faith in some non-contingent Reality. The notable shift in Aquinas’ philosophy was to interpret that first absolute movement as a movement of Love, rather than as a ‘logical’ movement as in Aristotle’s first-

¹¹ Ibid. 33.

¹² Aquinas, Thomas, and Fathers of the English Dominican Province. *Summa Theologica: Prima Secunda*. Benziger Bros., 1947. Electronic. Q.94 A.2.

¹³ Ibid.

principles, or as a material movement such as modern atheistic philosophies of macro-evolution.¹⁴

One might take issue with giving Love (as the Divine Essence) too much power in this view, after all, the implication is that Love is not subordinate to reason. For many, making Love superior to reason would only make Love unintelligible, and if not that, it would presuppose that this life is already Heaven. However, there is another solution to the problem. Thomas Aquinas' contemporary, Bonaventure developed an "illumination theory" that simultaneously preserved the dignity of the human person and the nobility of rational knowledge. In Bonaventure's view, empirical knowledge alone would be knowledge without objective meaning. Likewise, a human being who only rationalized sense data would be a common animal. Instead, Bonaventure advanced the theory that mankind was created in a special way, apart from all else, to have access to immutable and infallible knowledge. The light of "eternal reasons" was built into human nature to inform, or "contuit," along with the lower animal reasoning about the essence of things as they are in themselves.¹⁵ This natural capacity was present in all men and women regardless of their awareness or acceptance of it. Only a Divine potency within the human person could explain the comprehension of unchanging truths and allow for genuine certitude. "Everything that is immutable is superior to that which is mutable. But that by which we have certain knowledge is the immutable because it is necessary truth. But our mind is mutable. Therefore, that by which we know is superior to our mind. But there is nothing above our mind except God and the eternal truth... Again, everything that is infallible is superior to the fallible. But that light and truth by which we know with certitude is infallible while our mind is capable of being deceived. Therefore, that light and truth is above our mind. But this is eternal light and truth."¹⁶

As a final example of the noetic theme in philosophy, it is worth reflecting on the importance of William of Ockham. Philosophers of every color have claimed him for their own: Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, Rationalists, and Atheists. For example, Sharon M. Kaye suggested that "Ockham never concedes that faith ultimately prevails over natural reason, nor even that the two approaches are on equal footing," and goes on to say that maybe he could, "be considered a precursor to Darwin," since, "it was all too easy for Ockham to imagine being an atheist."¹⁷ Nevertheless, Ockham regarded himself as a faithful Catholic, and the Church has not disagreed, but there is something to be said for the vastly different interpretations of his work. The sharpness of his logic cut so deeply through human thought that many have had difficulty discerning the implications of his dialectic. Even his superiors in the Church had him brought

¹⁴ See this New York Times book-review for an example of a very recent atheist's argument for quasi-divine matter. Albert, David. "A Universe From Nothing by Lawrence M. Krauss." *The New York Times*. 23 Mar. 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/25/books/review/a-universe-from-nothing-by-lawrence-m-krauss.html?_r=0>.

¹⁵ Bonaventure stressed that this knowledge from the eternal reasons was only "contuited by us *in part* as is fitting in this life" (cf. 1 Cor 13:12). Hayes, Zachary. *Works of St. Bonaventure: Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ*. Reprint of 1992 ed. St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, 2005. Print. (Question 4). 134.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 121.

¹⁷ Kaye, Sharon M.. "Was There No Evolutionary Thought in the Middle Ages? The Case of William of Ockham." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 14.2 (2006): 225-244. *Religion and Philosophy Collection*. Web. 7 Aug. 2012. 226.

before the Inquisition for heresy, though he was eventually exonerated. Ockham is probably best known for what is called “Ockham’s Razor.” Something like: ‘Plurality is not to be posited without necessity.’ Having a special allergy to Platonism, Ockham thought it ridiculous to suppose that universal categories had any real substance outside of the mind itself.

Ontologically, only individuals can have real existence. This particular tree and that particular person exist, but the form or essence of “tree” and “person” are mere representational categories in the mind (God’s ideas, or categories of mind, however, would be an exception to this rule since God’s essence *is* existence).

Although, Ockham is frequently referred to as a “nominalist,” the proper term to describe his epistemology would be “terminist.” It is in this philosophy of knowledge that “Ockham’s Razor” is best modeled. Ockham said: “Nothing must be affirmed without a reason being assigned for it, except it be something known by itself, known by experience, or it be something proved by the authority of holy scripture.”¹⁸ Thus, literal “nominalism” is ruled out by his openness to reasons which go beyond sensory data (i.e. something known by itself, or something proved by the authority of scripture). But whatever reason there is for the existence of universal concepts outside the psyche, it is not apparent to Ockham. This is relevant for how well it foreshadows the materialist sensibility which will dominate philosophy in the coming centuries. However, similar to Aristotle, Ockham’s solution to the question of cognitive abstraction never actually resolves the problem of where the universal ideas come from in the mind, if they are not truly part of some objective being through which they are experienced. Apart from the obvious comparison of similar particulars, there is a standard of perfection which cannot be said to reside merely in the mind of the observer, nor merely in the object of observation, because it *adds* something to the perception which is not contained in either the subject or the object. So, *there is a reason*, to suppose the real existence of some kind of spiritual essence informing the intellect, and if this is true, than universals cannot always be reduced to generalizations. Ockham himself would not deny that there are spiritual/theological truths which are natural to the human person, he just did not consider universal concepts to be such an instance.

Like Aristotle, what William of Ockham denied in his epistemology, he attempted to reestablish in his ontology and metaphysics. In his ethics, Ockham states: “God can command that he be not loved for a certain time... If God could command this – *and it seems that he can do it without contradiction* – then I maintain that the [human] will in this situation cannot perform such an act, because merely by performing such an act the will would love God above all and consequently would fulfill the divine precept.”¹⁹ Thus, in one argument Ockham both affirms that what is contradictory to man is not necessarily contradictory to God, and also that God would never actually command such a law – since He would know that it is impossible and meaningless to man. The vital point for this essay is that *human logic supports the belief that God can break the law of non-contradiction*. To such a claim not much can be said, because one can barely understand the statement, *except as an open question*. Breaking the law of non-contradiction is completely unintelligible to the human mind, like a square circle. This claim can still be believed, but it has to be through the greatest kind of faith, that faith which submits to

¹⁸ Boehner, Philotheus, and Stephen F. Brown. *Ockham: Philosophical Writings*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub. Co., 1990. Print. (Ordinatio d. 30, qu. IE).

¹⁹ *Ibid.* (Physics and Ethics). 146-147. Emphasis added.

God's transcendence over linear time – the idea of eternity itself supersedes the law of non-contradiction.

This position of Ockham is still much different than the “agnostic-atheist” position – most atheists reserve an element of agnosticism and most agnostics live as practical atheists. Ockham is not offering mere skepticism about God; his position is more like a reverence, wonder, or humility. This seems to be what Thomas Osborne Jr., at the University of St. Thomas, appreciates about Ockham. The answer Ockham gives in his ethics shows that he makes a distinction between God's *absolute will* (divine command) and his *ordained will* (right reason). “Although right reason dictates that an obligation be fulfilled, alone it does not indicate the ultimate source of an obligation... Ockham emphasizes that, in order to act virtuously and not in ignorance or for a non-moral reason, someone must make and obey a judgment that the act should be done.”²⁰ The absolute will of God is utterly limitless and transcends all logical categories; God Himself defines Virtue. This must be the case by the very meaning of the word “God.” The ordained will of God, however, preserves the accessibility of God to man, and reveals *how* virtue is to be done. “In order for an act to be virtuous someone has to will that it be done because right reason indicates that it should be done.”²¹ God's absolute will gives Him the power to make Himself sacramental, that is, to put His image in the mind and soul of man, through which man makes judgments about Goodness, Truth, and Beauty. Certainly, God has the power to do so, the question of revelation is the question of *how* He chooses to do so. The noetic experience exposes that some part of God is already innate to man allowing him to ask that question. This is the heart of the matter, and the importance of Ockham's later influence, that the knowledge of virtue depends entirely on the loving initiative of God, the divine pull, or the voice of conscience. The *nous* is an experiential truth, not a rationalization which follows observation, as would be the *logos*. The agnostic-atheist-secular-humanist equivocates God's absolute will and ordained will, the *nous* and the *logos*, because he does not entertain the idea of Incarnate Revelation, through which God defines His ordained will. Thus, physics become god, and the natural sciences are the only revelation which a materialist might concede. In this way, the agnostic-atheistic unintentionally implies that science has no more insight into reality than religion, because reality to him can have no absolute human intelligibility without a noetic experience of, the non-physical, Absolute from which to garner it.

The pure-agnostic philosopher will assert that it is illogical to presume that reality is logical. From this proposition, intellectual honesty would require that one become a complete lunatic (literally), or live in intellectual dualism. The latter is the case for the secular-humanist who says science should operate on the assumption of materialism, while social life must assume a purpose, but there is no reconciliation of the two.²² Contrarily, if a person can make the transition from noetic openness, having faith that the first principles, which are required for science, religion, and sanity alike, do actually apply to reality itself, then it logically follows that the human mind is capable of transcending itself and connected-to, at least partially, Reality Itself. If man has received knowledge in his finite and limited mind which is true in an Absolute sense, then this seems the necessary conclusion. It is to the credit of the theist, then, that he

²⁰ Osborne, Jr., Thomas M.. "Ockham as a Divine-command Theorist." *Religious Studies* 41 (2005): 1-22. *Religion and Philosophy Collection*. Web. 7 Aug. 2012. 3.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Kurtz, Paul. "A Secular Humanist Declaration". Council for Secular Humanism. April 5, 2010 <<http://www.secularhumanism.org/index.php?section=main&page=declaration#introduction>>

prefers logical consistency to breaking off from logic whenever the implications become too burdensome, as the secular-humanist or agnostic-atheist does when he or she refuses to be logical about ultimate meaning and objective morality. Is it not *more* fanatical to propose an unintelligible meaning to the universe than to propose a purpose man can understand and make good use of? If the first-premises are only being anthropomorphized onto Reality, and logic is only relative to human beings, then why do/should people *ever* live under the assumption that Reality operates in a logically consistent way? From another perspective, if mankind has largely failed to live virtuously up to this point in history (the monstrous majority having assumed that morality is Absolute/Divine), does it really make sense to think mankind could become more virtuous if it accepted a morality that is man-made instead? Even assuming that altruism is an evolutionary advantage, what would be the purpose of cooperating with evolution in a meaningless context?

These questions illustrate the experiential-metaphysical problem which runs throughout the history of philosophy – which becomes even more relevant precisely when it is no longer acknowledged as a problem. William of Ockham’s philosophy in particular embodies the type of confrontation with truth that any proud mind desperately needs to re-capture. Although Ockham might appear to stress God’s absolute will to the degradation of his ordained will, that judgment fails to account for his faithfulness to Christian Dogma, which essentially *is* God’s ordained will to a Christian. While it is in theory “possible” (in a sense beyond rational coherence) that God could will that men must hate Him, such an idea is not intended to offer any substantially new content to the mind because it simply accentuates, in an extreme way, God’s transcendence and mystery, and the inability of human categories or language to capture God’s essence. Nevertheless, however distasteful and obnoxious it may seem, Ockham’s point is correct: *the absolute will of God cannot be uttered or conceived or limited by logic in any way!* Ockham has been derided for making this point with such controversial phrasing, but the ugliness of the statement serves the purpose of intensifying the confrontation with one’s very real and very humiliating impediments, namely that he or she is not God. Ockham was certainly aware of the self-referential fallacy in his statement, as he makes clear in his ethics, for to hate and to obey are clearly at odds pragmatically speaking. The human contradiction is part of the lesson. It also seems doubtful that God was offended much by this particular argument of Ockham, since its goal was primarily to renew the air of piety which should pervade over speculative theology. To speak of God is really *an astonishingly pretentious act* that is all too easily taken for granted. The only excuse believers have for this arrogance is their appeal to the historical fact of God’s own self-revealing. *God spoke of himself*, in the evolution of mankind, in creation, in the journey of Israel, and definitively through Christ (see Hebrews 1:1-12). In the same way as God cannot be captured in human logical analysis, so too He cannot be denied the ability to communicate Himself to man if He so desires. How this happens need not be fully understood, so long as it is accepted as possible. If it has happened, it can only be through a paradoxical and sacramental use of signs and analogies, as epitomized in the Christian claim that God became Incarnate – the greatest of all conceivable contradictions. William of Ockham believed, without heresy, that this is precisely what God did in, through, and for his Word (Colossians 1:15-18). In the end, Ockham’s statement is not too different from the words of Christ himself: “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). If even God does not know what God wants sometimes, then perhaps every person should think twice before they assume to know His limitations. The analogies of theology are food for the quest, but the test of obedience retains its impenetrable mystery, as it

did in the Garden of Eden and does with the question of evil. A love which is free from logical barriers is still a love which can understand, but understanding must always come *after* faith. Thus, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom” (Psalm 9:10, 111:10).

Atheistic Denials of the Noetic Experience

The idea of the noetic, the natural connection between humanity and the Absolute, is of great importance to the skeptic of religious truth. While these scientists and philosophers tend to have an enormous respect for the logic of empirical sciences, they have a strange lack of concern for logical consistency in their *non-empirical* conclusions. The logical bridge from scientific data to a materialist worldview is riddled with structural weaknesses, but this fact is often hidden by its lavish-decorations: the bright lights of new technologies and the emotional appeals of poetic rhetoric. Ultimately, the real grounding for belief in God, one way or another, rests on the trust and investment one has in the reality of love, not on the amount of evidence one can produce to rationalize his or her belief or non-belief. Since the question of God is really a question of axiomatic principles and chosen absolutes, which every sane person has to engage and choose from, the question is not really about belief in God, it is about which god one chooses to believe in. For all intents and purposes, *the laws of physics are god* for most secular-humanists. The noetic disposition cannot be rationally denied, but the authority of one's particular definition of god/God can. That is why this metaphysical problem is a problem about love and value, more so than it is a problem of "truth." Every person has an implicit or explicit metaphysics, but not every person cares to think about it or is brave enough to live out its logical implications. By keeping their metaphysics amoral, and sometimes arational, the secularist avoids trusting too much in a non-physical reality, but sacrifices his or her ability to appeal to any objective standard of value. So the issue, in extreme terms, is a choice between faith in the security of empirical facts versus faith in omnipotent love, not a choice between faith or no faith as the definition of atheism often pretends. To be fair, there are immense existential complications between these two extremes, but it should at least be clear what the real choices are.

Another transitional figure between the Christian West and the Modern West, Immanuel Kant, often championed as a great agnostic-atheist thinker, said that humanity, and every rational being, should always be treated as an "end in itself," no person should be treated as a mere means to an end.²³ But does not a materialist worldview propose that man is much less than an end, a meaningless means within an amoral end, and at best a subjective and arbitrary end? The Council for Secular Humanism declares "we believe in the central importance of the value of human happiness here and now. We are opposed to absolutist morality, yet we maintain that objective standards emerge, and ethical values and principles may be discovered, in the course of ethical deliberation."²⁴ As already stated, being opposed to absolutes is impossible, except as a kind of meaningless rebellion; it is a self-referential fallacy. Moreover, how can a healthy moral life be rooted in a principle-less soil? How does the secularist explain loving another for the other's own sake and the joy that clearly flows from the ecstasy of self-forgetting? How does she explain that element of love which seems to be completely unattainable by effort, but that is simply received as a gift? Where are these values coming from in the first place, if not an Objective Source? How can "objective standards emerge" from relativistic deliberations? The secular-humanist wants to deny the hypothesis that morality is a characteristic of Objective

²³ Guyer, Paul (1998, 2004). Kant, Immanuel. In E. Craig (Ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. London: Routledge. Retrieved April 23, 2010, from <http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/DB047SECT9>

²⁴ Kurtz, Paul. "A Secular Humanist Declaration". Council for Secular Humanism. April 5, 2010 <<http://www.secularhumanism.org/index.php?section=main&page=declaration#introduction>>.

Reality, without rejecting the legitimacy and necessity of a moral standard. But the moral standard *assumes the moral authority*.

Richard Dawkins, a proponent of secular-humanism, exemplified this view when he said people need to, “lead society away from the nether regions of its Darwinian origins into kinder and more compassionate uplands.”²⁵ Yet Dawkins believes that our Darwinian origins are the higher truth and ultimate end of life. What could possibly inspire Dawkins to preach against what he calls the highest principle force in the universe, unless there is Something yet higher still moving him? Dawkins proposes that society should hold onto moral practices which science has allegedly shown to be inconsequential. The fact that Dawkins values morality over even the laws of nature, either implies that science itself is really the arbitrary thing, or that the laws of nature are *subordinate* in some way to the values of humanity. Proposing a split reality, in which one disconnects the truth of evolution from the truth of moral knowledge, is intellectually dishonest and ultimately unsustainable. Human life leads to constant choices between these two supposedly contradictory truths, and, in each instance, one would be forced to betray the truth on one side or the other. There is a clear danger then of truth itself becoming arbitrary and people slipping into relativistic rationalizations for selfishly-motivated behavior. Would it not be a superior philosophy if one could reconcile objective moral law with scientific truth, such as Christianity (and only Christianity) has done?²⁶

All philosophical arguments for God fail in this way: that they must presume the existence of a non-contingent Truth in order to even consider the evidences which might support them. This is equally true of the secular and of the religious arguments; they must presume (have faith) God does or does not exist in order to see reality in a God-filled or godless light. Either side can *always* look at the same “fact” and see it as support of his or her own hypothesis. This is because “facts” are always *potentially* reducible to the choice of the subject observing them, that is, giving meaning to facts is a task only a personal subject can perform. Such is the nature of man’s limited state; he has little more than Blaise Pascal’s 50/50 odds to bet on when it comes to the ultimate meaning of things. Responding to “Pascal’s Wager” in *The God Delusion*, Richard Dawkins criticized it as a dishonest feigning of belief.²⁷ “What if God is a scientist who regards honest seeking after truth as the supreme virtue? Indeed, wouldn’t the designer of the universe *have* to be a scientist? Bertrand Russell was asked what he would say if he died and found himself confronted by God, demanding to know why Russell had not believed in him. ‘Not enough evidence, God, not enough evidence.’ Was Russell’s reply.”²⁸ Russell’s response, of course, is only relevant to what/who *he thinks* God is. One of the insights of Pascal’s argument, and the mistake of Dawkins and Russell, is that the evidence is imbued with the value of an already chosen belief. Therefore, believing in God for the sake of the value it provides is *no more* a feigning or pretending than all the rest of life is. In the exact same sense as Dawkins

²⁵ Dawkins, Richard. "Atheists for Jesus." *The Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science*. Web. 1 June 2010. <<http://old.richarddawkins.net/articles/20>>.

²⁶ The reconciliation between logic, empirical science, and a God of Love was only philosophically achieved by the doctrines of the historical Incarnation as progressively defined since the first Christian Council in Jerusalem, 51 A.D.

²⁷ One articulation of Pascal’s Wager was: “I would be much more afraid of being wrong and finding out that the Christian religion is true than of being wrong in believing it to be true.” Dawkins, Richard. *The God Delusion*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2006. 103. Pascal, Blaise, and Roger Ariew. *Pensées*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub. Co., 2005. Print.. 2.

²⁸ *The God Delusion*. 104.

criticizes Pascal's Wager, an atheist can *only pretend* that the world is empty of evidence for God because he is looking at the evidence from the perspective of an assumed belief-premise that there is nothing beyond the material. "Super-natural" means beyond nature, beyond material data, so material data cannot be evidence against its existence. Philosophies like Russell's and Dawkins' assume groundlessly that scientific experiment is the only legitimate method for seeing truth, without realizing that truth divided from human persons is empty of value. As Chesterton retorted in *Heretics*: "Having come to doubt whether humanity can be combined with progress, most people, easily pleased, would have elected to abandon progress [science] and remain with humanity. Mr. Shaw [as well as Dawkins], not being easily pleased, decides to throw over humanity with all its limitations and go in for progress for its own sake. If man, as we know him, is incapable of the philosophy of progress, Mr. Shaw asks, not for a new kind of philosophy [as Jesus did], but for a new kind of man."²⁹

Traditional Christianity believes that God chose to become logical for man's sake, so that He could be known and loved by him. This was the intuition of John the Apostle when he said, "And the *logos* became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). Divinity and intelligibility, theology and philosophy, metaphysics and epistemology were married in the person of Christ. To a Christian, evolution is simply a method of material growth that God instituted to express his own genius. There is no real contradiction between evolution and creation.³⁰ The Christian sees science *as* evidence of God, revealing the divine order and beauty in creation. The Christian assumes the opposite premise of the secular and reaches the opposite conclusion with the same evidence, because the first-premise is a faith which necessarily decides how one will see *everything else*. The assertion that "scientism" (faith in science) has been slowly replacing religious-faith since the 1800's may be true, but it does not necessarily follow that science must therefore be contradicting religious dogmas. Those who think so have simply failed to investigate the question deeply; they have already made up their minds about the answer they will accept. Such a person betrays the scientific method of observation just as much as they betray the religious-method of humility. To preserve a sense of wonder and mystery about life is absolutely essential to growth in truth, from either angle. The purported revelation that God's Being is in essence a self-sacrificing Personal Love, is an original proposition, developed by Christianity, that is as "un-disprovable" as an infinite material-causal-chain, because they are both a first-premise response to the noetic experience. Men like Dawkins simply choose to believe in an un-disprovable faith in material laws, rather than an un-disprovable faith in undetermined love (which does not have to be exclusive from material laws). All Christian Dogma focuses on preserving one central truth, which can only be accepted or denied on faith, that God is Love. There is nothing about this idea which science has contradicted. People who leave Christianity because of scientific discoveries, misinterpret a description for an explanation; they equivocate physical reality and spiritual reality, and forget that the latter always gives context to the former. Only faith in an Absolute can provide meaning, real objective meaning, even to evolution, even to physics. Therefore, nothing is characteristically anti-God about natural selection. It is a masterful system of corporeal refinement, rhythmic beauty, and climactic creation – all qualities one would expect from God. Dawkins' inability to see it as such is a mere prejudice, not the conviction of evidence.

²⁹ Chesterton, G. K.. *Heretics*. Sandy, UT: Quiet Vision Pub., 2003. Print. 23-24.

³⁰ Unless one takes a literal, as opposed to *literary*, interpretation of *Genesis*, which the Christian Tradition *did not* support until the "Fundamentalist" reaction against historical-critical exegesis in the 20th Century.

While skeptics like Dawkins do not seem to understand the significance of metaphysical consistency, others who comprehend this philosophical subtlety prefer to adopt a kind of loosely deterministic model for meaning and value. Atheist, neuroscientist, and philosopher Sam Harris believes that moral questions deal with the same kind of material facts as physical or neurological questions. “Indeed, I will argue that morality should be considered an undeveloped branch of science.”³¹ Like Dawkins, the scientific method is Harris’ god, but unlike Dawkins, Harris does not think science and morality are at odds with each other. With the admirable intention of quelling religious violence and injustice in the world, Dr. Harris rejects “faith” altogether. He pretentiously dismisses the thought that faith reveals any truth which would contribute to the ultimate questions of human meaning and value. Moreover, he considers faith the main source of human suffering. Harris thinks he sees religion for what it is: a primitive use of imagination and a justification for evil. Seeing “faith” through the eyes of contemporary politics, he has crucially failed to engage the history and philosophy of religion on its own terms. The way that religion appears in the mind of Harris is but a spot of light in a massive cavern. Harris succeeds in criticizing “extremist” faiths, but avoids exploring the immense depths of the Christian intellectual tradition.

The weakness of Harris’ position can be summarized as a lack of understanding about human relationship. As he says: “Values are a certain kind of fact; they are facts about the well-being of conscious creatures.”³² “Human well-being entirely depends on events in the world and on states of the human brain.”³³ This idea of “well-being” immediately presumes that people do not have any desire or capacity for objectives beyond this world. “Well-being” refers to a predetermined definition of “being” that apparently cannot be questioned. If then one searches for what Harris’ definition of being is, he or she will find that it is merely the deterministic forces of natural science.³⁴ The noble dream that Harris chases is an objective measure for moral behavior that can be applied with mathematical precision. However, he has already destroyed any appeal to moral-truth by asserting that mathematics is the only language that morality can use. But if truth does not mean something more than mathematics, how can it be presented as authoritative to human persons? In other words, if people are determined by physical laws, and not free in any metaphysical or ontological sense, then no one can be held morally responsible for his or her choices. This is a mistake about relationships precisely because it does not acknowledge that “responsibility” is a term which has no meaning outside of human interaction. No one has any responsibilities or duties in a world where it is not possible to choose to love or not. If the universe forces every human action through a complex causal chain of colliding atoms and chemical reactions, then love and morality are human myths, and machines represent “well-being” better than men. On the contrary, human “well-being” cannot exclude freedom because *free* is an essential element of what people want to *be*, and usually think they *are*. If Sam Harris truly desires the end of human suffering, he is going to have to find another way than beating people over the head with the *absolute* authority of science. Coercion through scientific strong-arming will not bring agreement or peace any more than Divine-Command politics will,

³¹ Harris, Sam. *The Moral Landscape: How Science can Determine Human Values*. NY: Free Press, 2010. Print. 4.

³² *Science Can Answer Moral Questions*. Perf. Sam Harris. TED: Ideas Worth Spreading, 2010. Film. 1:10. <http://www.ted.com/talks/sam_harris_science_can_show_what_s_right.html>

³³ *The Moral Landscape*. 2.

³⁴ *Does Good Come from God? Are the Foundations of Moral Values Natural or Supernatural?*. Perf. William Lane Craig, Sam Harris. Notre Dame University Debate, 2011. Film. 7:25-8:19.

as history attests. However, a loving and relentless proposal might succeed as Jesus Christ still does. The “moral landscape” cannot be leveled out by trading the control mechanism of religion for the control mechanism of science. What is required for moral “evolution” is not newer and sharper intellectual swords with which to destroy one’s moral opponents, but rather, the courage to live one’s moral ideal in the face of radical freedom for disagreement, letting the example of saintly-living defend and advance itself through one’s embodiment of value more than one’s evidence of value. Persuasion is an art for lovers, and its danger is its strength – Love allows freedom.

Thus, every human person who feels the power and vastness of the need for freedom in relationships is bound to reach a state of maximum combustion within the finitude of natural science. If he cannot interpret empirical facts as expressions of his loves, than he will interpret them as a reasons to rebel against life. If he cannot interpret his finite loves as facets of Love Absolute, than he will interpret them as objects to be used. Even the wisest, most knowledgeable man ever born, or even the most comprehensive database of collective human understanding, all this value and accomplishment would still be contingent upon the universe’s laws or whatever created homo-sapiens. If man wants to regard himself as anything more than an animal, or a determined machine, *he requires the assistance of God*. Every discovery and every revelation leads to this admission and to the free-choice that follows: to submit to its truth or to rebel against it. One embarks on the quest for truth doomed to failure if he does not first commit to an answer of this fundamental question. Is personhood an imitation of the universe or is the universe an imitation of personhood? Are physical laws merely Mystery’s jewelry or are the equations of physics really all there is? Does matter create mind or does Mind create matter? Is reality a dead formula or a living relationship?

Leaders in the secular-culture, like Sam Harris, argue that God is an unnecessary, and dangerous, hypothesis. The determined laws of physics are the only gods men should entertain, because they allow *control*. The truths of scientific discoveries are considered by them to be the most stable foundation upon which to build-up to the larger questions about life. Science can explain almost everything about the universe, in clear, verifiable, mathematical formulas, save for a few ominous mysteries. In due time, science will probably solve these unknowns as well, or so the argument goes. The Council for Secular-Humanism says, “We believe the scientific method, though imperfect, is still the most reliable way of understanding the world. Hence, we look to the natural, biological, social, and behavioral sciences for knowledge of the universe and man's place within it.”³⁵ Addressing religious believers they also comment, “We view with concern the current attack by non-secularists on reason and science. We are committed to the use of the rational methods of inquiry, logic, and evidence in developing knowledge and testing claims to truth.”³⁶ Yet, no one seems to ask the question: “If life is only about gathering knowledge and controlling nature, what will preserve the dignity of the human person and keep logic or science from making people’s choices for them?” They would probably say “nothing” and be content with that response, but this is because they do not see how two different rational philosophies can have dramatically divergent applications simply because of the axioms upon which the different logical systems are built. One need only look at the history of ideas to see that logical consistency does not lead to truth by itself. Ironically, the secular-humanist values,

³⁵ "A Secular Humanist Declaration".

³⁶ Ibid.

of scientific method and critical-thinking, were originally institutionalized on a wide scale by the scholastic movement of the Catholic clergy in Middle Ages. “Ever since the work of historian Pierre Duhem in the early twentieth century, the accelerating trend among historians of science has been to underline the Church’s crucial role in the development of science. Unfortunately, little of this academic work has penetrated popular consciousness.”³⁷ A defensible claim can be made that no real antagonism exists between faith and reason, except where either method is taken beyond its limitations. But in the end, the only “faith” which can be defended is specifically a Christian Faith, defined by Catholic Doctrine, which has lived in a fruitful marriage with genuine science for most of its existence and continues to live it – bound by the same vows of faithfulness to Objective Truth and Morality. Most atheists, like Sam Harris, unfortunately only know “faith” as it is lived by other traditions.

As another very relevant and modern-world example, one could examine the argument for atheism which claims the idea that God was unconsciously invented by ancient man in response to high stress situations and inexplicable environments. Editor of Skeptic magazine, Michael Shermer, in a talk entitled, “The Pattern Behind Self-Deception” (and in his book “The Believing Brain”), discussed the human brain’s innate tendency to find patterns. There are two types of errors in human pattern recognition. “A Type I error, or a false positive, is *believing* a pattern is real when it is not (finding a nonexistent pattern). A Type II error, or a false negative, is *not believing* a pattern is real when it is (not recognizing a real pattern).”³⁸ “Patternicity,” as he calls it, is the affinity for believing a pattern is real and occurs whenever a Type I error ‘cost is less’ than a Type II error. In other words, man’s normal state, or “default position,” is to believe every perceived pattern is real. Shermer goes on to assert that “agenicity,” or attributing intentionality to patterns, is also a natural human tendency. Belief in gods, God, spirits, aliens, and conspiracy theories can *all* be reduced to evolution’s selection of this functionality in the human mind. How this is an evolutionary advantage to survival is not very clear except for the vague idea that it made people feel better about the parts of life they could not control. How much better it made them feel, and how that feeling may have been translated into superior vitality was not addressed. The obvious fact that many instances of “patternicity” and “agenicity” must have been quickly abandoned was also not discussed. After all, even if these inclinations are subconscious, there would have to come a point, for every self-aware homosapien, where he or she realized what his or her mind was doing, and at that point, they would *make a choice* to continue believing in the pattern/agent or not. Many previously believed patterns would be proven false through experience and dropped. Shermer goes too far when he levels all religious ‘myths’ to the same plane, because it was precisely the differences between Christianity and its mythological predecessors that made it so influential in human history. The strength of the historical claim, that the events actually happened, as well as the way they unfolded, in an utterly humble and minimalistic divinity, is totally unique and unparalleled in other religious myths.

When asked why he did not believe God created the world, Michael Shermer responded: “the null hypothesis states that your hypothesis [that God created the world] is not true unless

³⁷ Woods, Thomas E.. *How the Catholic Church built Western Civilization*. Washington, DC: Regnery Pub., 2005. Print. 75.

³⁸ *The Pattern Behind Self Deception*. Perf. Michael Shermer. TED: Ideas Worth Spreading, 2010. Film. <http://www.ted.com/talks/michael_shermer_the_pattern_behind_self_deception.html>

proven otherwise, and I don't accept the arguments for God's existence, therefore, the null hypothesis is affirmed; we know of no God, we have to assume that there isn't [one]."³⁹ The "null hypothesis" is, of course, a prejudice which is unsubstantiated. Most of the human beings who have ever lived assumed the opposite "null hypothesis," that God does exist, and therefore, the argument that God *does not* exist is the argument which should be treated as "not true unless proven otherwise," and the evidences for His *non*-existence are just as weak if not weaker than the arguments on the other side. Shermer wants to divide human reasoning from the inherent act of belief, but he cannot. Most people believe what they think makes logical sense and will change their minds if it is proven otherwise. The reason Shermer cannot see his error in thinking is because he is looking for a way to rationalize his atheism, which is another way of saying he has already decided on a faith-based-premise that God does not exist, and he interprets history on those grounds. Shermer offers nothing much more than an interesting elaboration on the parts of the brain which correlate to certain human experiences. *The causation of the experiences has not and cannot be reduced to material explanations.* The way the mind operates might just as likely be the way God intended it to, the "patternicity" and "agenicity" being good and necessary affinities which helped man avoid natural disasters, hunt prey, romance a partner, raise a child, discover the laws of physics, and invent the personal computer. But who is to say that belief in God is a Type I error (believing a false pattern)? Atheism might just as likely be a Type II error (missing a real pattern). Maybe "patternicity" is really part of the habit of seeing God's order in the world, and maybe "agenicity" is the unfolding of a real relationship with a Personal God. If God is "that which nothing greater than can be conceived," then the metaphysical problem of God's existence can be summarized by a single question: "Do you want to believe in total perfection, that is, eternal freedom to love, or not?" The only legitimate evidence against belief is the fact that some people do choose against it, at least at certain moments in time. Human freedom is cloaked in mystery, but its presence and power in the world is as tangible as the sexual tension of a teenager.

Reason alone, or scientific method alone, cannot operate except upon a premise; and when all premises are traced back to *the first premise*, that premise upon which all others rely, faith/belief becomes absolutely necessary and unavoidable. Most atheists even admit this need for certain axiomatic beliefs.⁴⁰ This is the noetic element of the human person. The question of God's existence is generally formulated as whether it is wiser to have faith in Faith, or faith in skepticism, faith in God, or faith in science. Skepticism and scientism both have the major flaw of being insufficient for all the basic functions of human life and relationship, like assigning meaning, trusting witnesses, or loving another for their own sake. A skeptic must be skeptical even about skepticism, and a scientist must acknowledge that science has no explanation for the existence of the hypotheses that it tests (though many would say it *will be* able to explain intuition/insight in material terms someday).⁴¹ Christian-like Faith, on the other hand, cannot provide the ego-security of scientific skepticism, because it opens people to Truth as if Truth were a person they love, and as everyone who has lived much knows, persons (at least human persons) can mislead and be deceived, intentionally or unintentionally, especially about love.

³⁹ *The Great Debate: Has Science Refuted Religion?*. Perf. Sean Carroll, Michael Shermer, Dinesh D'Souza, Ian Hutchinson. Skeptic Magazine, 2012. Film. 1:26-1:27 <<http://www.skeptic.com>>

⁴⁰ *Does Good Come from God? Are the Foundations of Moral Values Natural or Supernatural?*

⁴¹ Kreeft, Peter. "What is Religion? Why is it Worth Thinking About?." *Questions of Faith: The Philosophy of Religion*. Barnes & Noble: Portable Professor Series. 2006. Audio Lecture.

Nevertheless, the perspective of persons bound in social relationship is the only perspective anyone has access to, scientists and religious alike, and “faith-first” is generally accepted as the proper method for human interaction. History is an example of a field of human life which would be completely incomprehensible, or else non-existent, if a faith-first approach was not taken in relation to historical sources – very few events in history can be verified empirically, or reproduced by experiment. Multiple corresponding sources may reduce doubt, but the data is still much more susceptible to error when compared to established scientific theories.

So, the argument that begins with a statement like, “believing in God is an illogical hypothesis,” makes no sense. In this particular statement, the meaning cannot be that the data of experiment does not fit the proposed hypothesis, but rather that the hypothesizing of God in itself was never a reasonable step. This is an obvious error. The act of hypothesizing, or having an insight, is a prerequisite of reasoning, and is always present before logical analysis takes place. Every hypothesis arises out of a governing worldview. Even to assert that reason is necessary to know truth is itself a hypothesis. Abstract, creative thought, or hypothesizing, cannot be judged logical or illogical until after it has already acted, otherwise it is simply there *a priori*. Reason can only test what intuition has already proposed. Both sides of the debate are unavoidably guilty of assuming premises and making rationalizations about those premises which they have already chosen, but this is simply the nature of the argument, after all it is an argument about the very origins and purposes of thought and existence. It would be far too extreme though to fall into “universal methodic doubt” concerning *everything*, as is the general approach of rationalism. No child would ever learn anything, if he had to understand intellectually all his experiences before trusting them. There is a stage in development where children do not learn through reason at all; they learn through a kind of pure receptivity which is incredibly important to their development. So obviously, there is a method of knowing which precedes reason, and necessitates faith. It is a self-referentially false argument to say the scientific method, or rational deliberation, or logical analysis, is the only reliable way to know truth. Scientific method/reason/logic was not used to know scientific method/reason/logic. Some truths are simply “self-evident.” Again, this is the noetic experience of human nature, the primarily receptive relationship (“listening”) of man and woman to Reality.⁴² Philosophy is the love of wisdom, and the human person is like the seat of wisdom, because Wisdom comes to whom She wills in utter freedom. Man can ask for Truth but he cannot control it.

⁴² Ibid.

The Noetic in Mariology

“Vanity of vanities,’ says the Preacher,
‘Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.’
What advantage does man have in all his work
Which he does under the sun?...
All things are wearisome;
Man is not able to tell it.
The eye is not satisfied with seeing,
Nor is the ear filled with hearing.
That which has been is that which will be,
And that which has been done is that which will be done.
So there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:2-3; 8-9).

According to Biblical tradition, King Solomon, Son of King David, authored the book of *Ecclesiastes*. Solomon was granted by God more wisdom than any man who had ever lived or ever would (see 1 Kings 4:29-34; 2 Chronicles 1:7-12). If this is true, than Solomon may have been the greatest of all philosophers – philosophy being the “love of wisdom.” Yet, Solomon’s vast treasuries of knowledge came to the anti-climax: “All is vanity.” Could there be some correlation between love of wisdom and boredom with knowledge? Perhaps in the end, every ego longs to be released from its prison of self-reflection. Knowledge, in its contemporary meaning, is the reflection of one’s “self” in nature. Thus, man in the world is haunted by mirrors, trapped in the loneliness of subjectivism. Empirical experience alone is mere self-love, idolatry of the senses, pride of life. But every honest person yearns to live inside an Absolute which completely consumes the self, not destroying individuality, but taking a person’s focus away from his own being and onto the beloved’s. Unfortunately for some, and gratefully for others, the Almighty Beloved refuses to submit to empirical measurement. Thus, the human person must make a metaphysical choice. Is it easier or harder to love the uncertain? Is it even possible to love something that cannot be replicated or observed? Is love merely the perception of another in one’s own mind? Is reality a true relationship between potential equals or is reality merely a determined energy playing out its impersonal destiny? These are forms of that one great metaphysical question that has life-altering implications for all people, scientists, philosophers and theists alike.

As Peter Kreeft said in his lecture series, *Questions of Faith*:

So here’s our dilemma. The study from the outside seems like the only fair approach, it’s neutral and unprejudiced. But religion’s data is largely an inside affair, like love; and unless we have inside data, unless we have experience, we are bound to talk nonsense, like a two-year-old talking about sex, or a tone-deaf person about music. But to speak from inside is not to be neutral and unprejudiced, the lover is not neutral and unprejudiced about his love, he shouldn’t be if he’s a real lover; neither is the believer unprejudiced about his religion and he shouldn’t be... Somehow we need to combine both approaches.⁴³

⁴³ Kreeft, Peter. "What is Religion? Why is it Worth Thinking About?." *Questions of Faith: The Philosophy of Religion*. Barnes & Noble: Portable Professor Series. 2006. Audio Lecture.

Kreeft goes on to propose empathetic “listening” as a common method of knowing, valid in both empirical sciences and personal relationships. Only by unselfishly and imaginatively entering into the subjective experience of the object or other can the actual data of experience be received and processed. These are the two parts, in order, that make for intellectual honesty: first listen, then question. What is reality saying about itself? Do educators really teach how to listen to facts, or do they just force facts into an established worldview? Does reality speak more clearly through reason, or through relationship?

If the thesis of the above sections can be summarized by the statement that *every human person, in accordance with his or her nature, constructs their logic upon a theological premise*, then, the thesis of the following section is that the fullness of what it means to be human is embodied by the person whose life perfectly conforms to that theological premise which corresponds to Reality Itself. Orthodox Christianity claims this perfection was only realized by a woman, the Virgin Mary of Nazareth, the Mother of God Incarnate. Immaculately conceived, Mary is the garden in which humanity and Divinity are consummated totally. The self-gift of God to mankind is fully received in her by *Christ’s Grace*, and the self-gift of humanity to God is perfected by *her choice*. No male reached the fullness of human-personhood, except that male who’s Person is Divine (although some traditions hold that Joseph, foster father of Jesus, was sinless after conception). The focus of this section is to investigate the actualization of human potential in Mary Immaculate, and to understand why this Catholic Dogma is vital to a philosophy of the human person. It is precisely a lack of vigilance in “listening” to one’s experiences which makes for mediocre truth-seekers, mediocre Christians, and mediocre professionals of any kind. If humility is the governing virtue of life, than the history of femininity is the vein of civilization closest to the heart of Truth, and to Christ. The *noetic* experience is like the feminine because it is submissive to Grace, it is still and receptive to the gentle drawing of God’s hand. The *logos* is the like masculine because it initiates Truth, it is the free-action of man and woman, rowing through the currents of Grace, creatively manipulating circumstance. The Immaculate Conception summarizes the whole situation of humanity since Adam and Eve, free in every way except to be uncreated, free to choose anything except not to choose, free from all Dogmas except the *noetic* absolute. The Annunciation of Mary represents mankind’s choice (if it were perfect as she was and is); it is the choice which Eve failed to make, the choice to be ‘overshadowed,’ to accept the darkness because the voice of God has said it will be best (cf. Luke 1:35). Eve, Mary, and the feminine are first in the intentions of God, the crowns of creation. It is Eve’s choice through which sin had to pass, it was Mary’s choice through which salvation has come, and it is the “feminine-preference” of each individual by which sanctity is achieved. All masculine actions must defer to her, who is Wisdom, the “fear of God,” the active-receptivity of man. Theologian David Schindler explicates:

Here, then, is how we can draw out the full richness of the (supra-)feminine dimension of the Son’s mission, while not confusing it with the (supra-)masculine dimension (both of which are ultimately rooted in the trinitarian processions). . . .the Son generates from within himself the Woman who freely receives him and who thus, in the economic dispensation, permits his “masculine” mission (representation of the Father) to come to fruition. If one might express it this way, the traditional “*ex opere operato*” requires the infallibility of a presence that is not only effectively offered but also initially *received*. This infallibility is guaranteed in its effectivity by Christ whose (“feminine”) *fiat* has been inscribed within that of Mary and the Church. Thus the “feminine” dimension of Christ is best retrieved, not by blurring his distinctly “masculine” role as priest (as representative of the Father in and for the world) but, on the

contrary, by drawing out more fully the intimacy of his spousal relation with the Church (through Mary). The intimacy is precisely that of a unity which does not eliminate distinctness: in the economic order, Christ shares himself so completely with Mary, and Mary's receptivity is so unconditional, that he thereby creates an "equality" (through infallible presence) that nonetheless does not eliminate difference. The Bridegroom becomes truly one with the Bride, even as they remain ever distinct.⁴⁴

In *Man and Woman He Created Them: a Theology of the Body*, Pope John Paul II mined the *Book of Genesis* for its theological treasures. John Paul II saw in the creation narratives an explanation for the human condition, as well as a map of life. The importance of the stories is not found in the details of the physics and cosmology, but in the relationship between God and man, man and creation, and man and woman. In Genesis, the "original solitude" of man represents the recognition that man has of his own subjectivity as an "I," and his radical separation from the rest of the animals in mind and in flesh.⁴⁵ Man is self-conscious as well as self-determined. His "commandability" reveals his self-determinability in the passage: "You may eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for when you eat of it you shall certainly die" (Genesis 2:16-17). The fact that man is given rules – far from being a manifestation of God's frivolity – is really a sign of His desire to be in covenant with man. "It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will. His will was that men should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature."⁴⁶ The death with which man is threatened, is probably not, as is often supposed, merely the separation of body from soul, but rather the loss of God's Spirit, the *Life* which animates man. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that Adam and Eve do not die physically when they eat from the tree of knowledge. Even though they do not avoid the Original Sin, the implication of God's command was also the possibility of a life even greater than that which they possessed in "original innocence," namely the Life of the Divine Nature, which is distinctly superior than the "image and likeness" man and woman's shared through the initial creation (Genesis 1:26).

Woman was created to be a "helper" to man (this word "man" in Hebrew refers to all mankind) in realizing his full identity and to clarify for them both a mutual destiny (Genesis 2:18).

Despite the diversity in constitution tied to the sexual difference, *somatic homogeneity* is so evident that the man, on waking up from genetic sleep, expresses it immediately when he says, 'This time she is flesh from my flesh and bone from my bones. She will be called woman because from man has she been taken' (Gen 2:23). In this way, for the first time, the man (male) shows joy and even exaltation, for which he had no reason before, due to the lack of being similar to himself. Joy for the other human being, for the second "I," dominates in the words the man (male) speaks on seeing the woman (female).⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Schindler, David L.. *Heart of the World, Center of the Church: Communio Ecclesiology, Liberalism, and Liberation*. Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1996. Print. 251-252.

⁴⁵ Waldstein, Michael, John Paul II. *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*. Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media, 2006. Print. 146-156.

⁴⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2nd ed. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000. Print. 51.

⁴⁷ *Man and Woman He Created Them*. 161.

Woman does not take away man's solitude, but reaffirms and consoles it; it is primarily a solitude of exclusivity between himself and God, an exclusivity woman and God also have. But Adam rejoices that he and Eve might be "alone together."⁴⁸ It is not until the revelation of woman that humanity's purpose is finally unveiled to him. By "the inner dimension of vision," man's sight of the woman "opened up vistas closed to human reason, for [their unity] implied a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons, and the unity of God's sons in truth and charity. This likeness reveals that man [the human person], who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself."⁴⁹ The Divine Command in the Garden of Eden, therefore, might have been intended by God to be an opportunity for the final consummation of Adam and Eve's covenant and self-gift back to God. Instead, Original Sin broadened the distance between mankind and God reducing the "inner vision" and destroying the integrity of body and soul which mankind had in its innocence.

The "probation period" (after the Divine Command and before the Fall), was like the noetic experience. Here God awaited man's choice of acceptance which would *alter his entire experience of life*. The choice to disobey God, and grasp at "the knowledge of good and evil," essentially limited man's ability to judge truth, but it did not cut him off completely from knowing that Truth exists. In this way, the intensity of the human person's sense of solitude was amplified after sin by a particular frustration within the self. Life after sin became a quest to regain the clarity which was lost by disobedience, the vision of reality cleansed of selfish reductionism. "For now we see in a mirror dimly" (1 Corinthians 13:12). Because of Original Sin, God's Reality became more like an abstract metaphysical Absolute than a physical presence, looking at the beloved-one through the barred and foggy window of fallen-self. So, there opened two main paths on the journey beyond self, two doors that have, since the dawn of man, promised to reunite him to God. They have been spoken of in countless ways, but continuing the themes of post-modernism here, these options are "relationship" and "technology."

Technology is the intellectual pursuit, embodied by the rationalism that followed the French Enlightenment. Man invents time-saving tools and builds comfort-inducing environments because he feels that each of his creations is a movement toward the Perfection he seeks. "Perfection" is another word for the Absolute which drives all human behavior, which in itself implies a flight from subjectivism. Since logic is, theoretically, a masterable means, it is easy for man to confuse the tool for the table. This is the error of scientism pointed out in the previous discussions. But what is the meaning of making tools that make better tools that make better tools that make better tools, ad infinitum? Does not a tool imply some ultimate creative objective? Man can grow immensely in technology without ever advancing in relationship or purposefulness. Even when relationships are cultivated, they can often be reduced to another type of trade or work. If human persons are just another product of material movements, then this is consistent behavior. Hypothetically, one could become a relationship-expert using the same methodology applied to mastering metal-work. Once one learns the laws that rule the discipline, sheer conformity and repetition will yield a well-formed product: "true-love." If, however, one concedes that the laws that govern people are much more mysterious than the laws of nature, a whole new realm of gods and devils can invade the imagination. What the gods and

⁴⁸ "Alone-together" was a phrase Bishop Fulton Sheen used to describe the sacrament of marriage.

⁴⁹ *Man and Woman He Created Them*. 176. *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1998. Print. 24.

devils represent are the potentially eternal consequences of human decisions, emphasized in *Genesis*. It is at once horrifying and magnificent, since this freedom can fly to either extreme. But, “there is nothing new under the sun” unless Eternity is real, unless people are incommunicable, and unless technology can serve relationships. The realization that relationships deserve to be approached with wonder and trust results from the acceptance of the noetic experience, from the choice to be submissive to God.

If one will concede the premise that “to love is a greater power than to know,” new dimensions of understanding become accessible. Suddenly, the world no longer revolves around the small-steps of logic that govern day-to-day business, but instead, all purpose and happiness relies upon investing in the right cosmic-seed. Worldviews rule the world, not perpetual activity. Experiential knowledge of one’s lover, which is more holistic than theoretical knowledge, still does not empty the beloved of his/her mystery - to think so would be a destructive arrogance. Rather the intimacy of lovers accentuates each other's infinitude, for if it were ever possible to determine through behavioral laws the limitations of a man or woman then one could simply fabricate or imagine a person and fall in love with ‘it’ in his/her own mind or technology. But an irrefutable characteristic of the human experience is the encounter with the “wholly other,” who is also absolutely necessary to man's constitution.⁵⁰ Just as “it is not good for man to be alone” in the social sense, it is not good for humanity to be alone in a metaphysical sense (*Genesis* 2:18). In other words, knowledge ought to be a relational experience. “In a relationship of love, it is not the case that a growing unity – and hence a deeper knowledge – between the partners entails a lessening of the difference – hence mystery – between the two.... On the contrary, they are simultaneous with each other. In short, the analogy of being, and of knowing, can thus be best understood in terms of the analogy proper to love.”⁵¹ Spirit and matter, unity and difference, the mysterious and the intelligible, are married like Adam and Eve. The reason for protecting the mystery of persons is to defend the Being of love. This is why the natural, noetic, experiential-orientation of the human person, opens a ‘category’ – or womb – in the mind and soul of man and woman which can only be filled by God.

Recognizing this innate quality, however, is only the first step in the evolution of man's relationship to the Divine. It is what Plato would have called stepping out of double-ignorance into single-ignorance. Characteristically, God takes the first step on His own initiative with total creative control. Yet, what His creation yields, the fruit of the choices of humanity, appears radically opposed to Goodness and Beauty – especially if one looks at an obvious example like the history of war. What Adam and Eve failed to choose, what many living persons still fail to choose, Jesus and Mary accomplished at the perfect moment in human history (cf. *Galatians* 4:4). What began as the noetic openness to the divine, was fulfilled by the “obedience of faith” (*Romans* 1:5; 16:26). As in the Garden, *obedience* is the key that unlocks freedom. There are two parts to man's freedom, the freedom of God in man and the freedom of man alone. As all philosophy begins with a theological-worldview, so the growth of divinity must begin with the gift of divinity, as light precedes sight. Freedom is powerful enough to create and destroy, but not to remove the Spirit of God. The natural creation was made for God, and if mankind chooses against Him, it can only be choosing its complete destruction. The choice of Satan and union

⁵⁰ “Wholly other” is a term coined by Rudolph Otto in his famous and influential text, *The Idea of the Holy*, referring to the nearly universal experience of a transcendent being.

⁵¹ *Heart of the World*. 305.

with Satan is the annihilation of created existence. Mary is the image of resurrected-creation as Jesus is the image of resurrected-God.

“The Virgin Mary most perfectly embodies the obedience of faith. By faith Mary welcomes the tidings and promise brought by the angel Gabriel, believing that ‘with God nothing will be impossible’ and so giving her assent: ‘Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be (done) to me according to your word.’ Elizabeth greeted her: ‘Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.’ It is for this faith that all generations have called Mary blessed.”⁵² As the manifestation of Eve shows Adam his purpose through the “spousal meaning of the body,” so the Virgin Mary proclaims the spousal meaning of the resurrected body to all mankind. She shows man that he is more disconnected from his masculinity than his femininity, because he is a receiver above all else. The masculine archetype is God the Father, the first and total giver of self. While the human person can never be perfectly masculine in this life, he or she can be perfectly feminine, as revealed in Mary. “Created being as a whole is ‘feminine’ with respect to God. The first act of created being, in other words, is *receptive*. What the creature first ‘does’ is receive its be-ing: what is first ‘does’ is ‘be.’ In technical philosophical terms, the creature’s *agere* (or ‘second act’) thus consists most properly in its freely taking over and recapitulating the receptivity that its always-already inscribed in its *esse* (or ‘first act’).”⁵³

The last in execution is the first in intention, thus in Christian tradition, Woman is called the “the crown of creation.” Femininity represents the reception of God’s free gift as well as the proper “being” of creature, while masculinity represents man’s mediate imitation of God’s creativity. The Woman, therefore, embodies purity, wholeness, and perfection. She is less divided by the game of playing God, she is humble in her natural state. Masculinity, creative initiative, and guardianship of truth, is humiliating in its natural state, because nothing should feel more ridiculous than imitating or standing-up for an Omnipotent God. The Virgin Mary embodies the feminine-before-masculine element of the Incarnation. As sin begins from the initiative of woman (and the sinful inaction of man), so salvation begins, in time, with the initiative of Mary (and the Grace of Christ outside of time). The “new creation” began with the Immaculate Conception (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15). The Immaculate Conception illustrates that Christ’s merits have transfigured the noetic openness of human nature into an encounter with the *numinous*.⁵⁴ Identification with Mary’s complete humanity is at the same moment the acceptance of the Divine pull and the Revelation of Love as the puller. In Plato’s philosophy, the wisdom-seeker must break away from double ignorance into single ignorance, by simply realizing that he is ignorant. This is that noetic openness which allows Truth to reveal Itself. But Mary, by the power of the Holy Spirit, bridges over double and single ignorance at the same instant, born right into Wisdom – she is completely receptive to relationship in all the details of experience and also infused with all the knowledge of every scientific discipline.

“The book [of Wisdom] portrays Israel’s sage-king praising Wisdom as a most radiant mother: ‘The Spirit of wisdom came to me...I loved her...and chose to have her...because her radiance never ceases. All good things came to me along with her...because wisdom leads them;

⁵² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 148

⁵³ *Heart of the World*. 256.

⁵⁴ Otto, Rudolf, and John W. Harvey. *The Idea of the Holy: an Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1958. Print. 5-7.

but I did not know that she was their mother” (Wisdom 7:7,10-12).⁵⁵ In some sense, it might be said, the Holy Spirit favors women. They are like Him, the last in a procession, albeit an infinitely different kind of procession; He is the “last” of the eternal procession of Persons, while she is the last of the created procession. Women like the Spirit, often serve in a feminine capacity; both are called man’s “helper” (cf. Genesis 2:18,20; John 14:16, 26). Both give birth through water, provide “spiritual milk,” and both are associated with the pangs of labor.⁵⁶ In Mary, the relationship of the Spirit and Woman is emphasized to the highest possible degree. Edith Stein, the philosopher and martyr, wrote: “In this womanhood devoted to the service of love, is there really a divine image? Indeed, yes... Such love is properly the attribute of the Holy Spirit. Thus we can see the prototype of the feminine being in the Spirit of God poured over all creatures. It finds its perfect image in the purest Virgin who is the bride of God and mother of all mankind.”⁵⁷ Maximillian Kolbe originally proposed that Mary and the Holy Spirit share the same name. As Mary said of herself, “I am the Immaculate Conception,” so Kolbe called the Spirit of God “the uncreated eternal immaculate conception.”⁵⁸ Mary is Spouse of the Holy Spirit:

Mary is the supreme masterpiece of Almighty God and he has reserved the knowledge and possession of her for himself. She is the glorious Mother of God the Son who chose to humble and conceal her during her lifetime in order to foster her humility. He called her "Woman" (Jn 2:4; 19:26) as if she were a stranger, although in his heart he esteemed and loved her above all men and angels. Mary is the “sealed fountain” (Song 4:12) and the faithful spouse of the Holy Spirit where only he may enter. She is the sanctuary and resting-place of the Blessed Trinity where God dwells in greater and more divine splendour than anywhere else in the universe, not excluding his dwelling above the cherubim and seraphim. No creature, however pure, may enter there without being specially privileged.⁵⁹

From her Immaculate Conception to the Annunciation, Mary reaps the fruit of a choice she has not yet made. Her feminine noetic-openness combined with her redeemed embodied-soul gave Mary a union with the Spirit so real that their “two wills act as one.”⁶⁰ “As we have seen, there is already in [God] the Son the perfect *fiat*. At the same time, in becoming Incarnate, the Son freely chooses to make himself dependent on the *fiat*, the receptive womb, of a woman. The *fiat* of the Son, in other words, both precedes *and is dependent upon* the *fiat* of Mary. Mary’s response is both utterly free and unconditionally receptive.”⁶¹ This gift should be considered particularly appropriate to the “woman” whose role in Original Sin put her in greater enmity with evil, and assigned her an essential maternal role in the mediation of Grace (cf. Genesis 3:15; John 19:26). Eve and Mary are both “the mother of all living” (Genesis 3:20).⁶²

⁵⁵ Hahn, Scott. *First Comes Love: Finding your Family in the Church and the Trinity*. New York: Doubleday, 2002. Print. 131.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 136.

⁵⁸ At the apparition in Lourdes, France, the Virgin appeared with this title. Manteau-Bonamy, H. M.. *Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit: the Marian teachings of Father Kolbe*. Kenosha, WI: Prow Books, 1977. Print. 18.

⁵⁹ De Montfort, Louis. *True Devotion to Mary*. Rockford, IL.: Tan Books, 1985. Print. 5.

⁶⁰ *Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit*. 45.

⁶¹ *Heart of the World*. 250

⁶² The Catechism calls Mary “our mother in the order of grace.” *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 967-970.

The Garden of Eden is a vineyard, which prefigures the paradise of the Virgin Mary's womb. In the vineyard is Christ the Vine, the Tree of Life (Genesis 2:9, 3:22; Revelation 2:7, 22:2,14,19). "If we desire a ripe and perfectly formed fruit, we must possess the tree that bears it. If we desire the fruit of life, Jesus Christ, we must possess the tree of life which is Mary. If we desire to have the Holy Spirit working within us, we must possess his faithful and inseparable spouse..."⁶³ St. Louie De Montfort's metaphor, of Mary as the Tree of Life and Christ as its fruit, finds no contradiction with Jesus as the Tree of Life in other traditions, for Jesus and Mary are consubstantial in *human* nature. It is fitting that the Incarnation of God should fill one person of both sexes with perfection. For, "it is not good for man to be alone," and Jesus is fully man. Blessed John Duns Scotus appealed in his defense of the Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception: "The Perfect Redeemer, must in some case, have done the work of redemption most perfectly, which would not be, unless there is some person, at least, in whose regard, the wrath of God was anticipated and not merely appeased."⁶⁴ Mary has the only soul pure and receptive enough to receive the full power and life of Christ's offering. Though Mary's personhood is created, this seems to be the *only* aspect of herself that is inferior to Christ. At the moment of her conception she is already consummately united to the Life of Holy Trinity. As with all the Saints in Heaven, Mary's perfection comes from the Grace of the Second Person of the Trinity, but His gift to her is unique in that she is saved without the test of Original Sin, saved by Christ's Eternal merit which is not bound to the chronology of creation. Mary's human nature is united to Christ's human nature so seamlessly that it is essentially one nature, like the "one flesh" of Adam and Eve, and like the One Nature of the Trinitarian Godhead. Moreover, Christ *receives from Mary* His human nature and body, through which He redeems the world. Likewise, all the Saints born into Heaven will receive their resurrected bodies through the Redemption of Christ *but never without* the co-redemptive suffering and universal motherhood of Mary. "In the interim just as the Mother of Jesus, glorified in body and soul in heaven, is the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come, so too does she shine forth on earth, until the day of the Lord shall come."⁶⁵

The Divine Feminine, espoused to and embodied in Mary, in a "one-flesh" union with Christ transcending the marital-union, restores humanity through a reordering of the human legacy. The whole vast history of patriarchal domineering and warring civilizations is overturned by the simple "yes" of a poor pious girl from a fringe religious community. What all the great empires of earth failed to produce with their immense resources and power, the little Virgin accomplished through a humble trusting of love that was the truest and most intelligent of all human acts. This is why Mary is the archetype of the Church and the New Creation. The entire creation was fashioned for her, and antiquity is full of preparations and prefigurings of her:

The links between our Lady and the Church are not only numerous and close; they are essential and woven from within. These two mysteries of the faith are not just solidary; we might say that they are 'one single unique mystery...' Both are the New Eve, Paradise, the tree of Paradise, whose fruit is Christ; the great tree seen in his dream by Nebuchadnezzar, planted in the center of the earth. Both are the Ark of the Covenant, Jacob's Ladder, the Gate of Heaven, the House built on a mountaintop, the fleece of Gideon, the Tabernacle of the Highest, the throne of Solomon, the

⁶³ *True Devotion*. 164.

⁶⁴"Bl. John Duns Scotus." *EWTN Global Catholic Television Network*. 21 July 2012. <<http://www.ewtn.com/library/mary/scotus.htm>>

⁶⁵ *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*. Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1965. Print. 68.

impregnable fortress. Both are the City of God, the mysterious City of which the psalmist sang; the valiant woman of the Book of Proverbs, the Bride arrayed for her husband, the woman who is the foe of the serpent and the great sign in heaven described in Revelation – the woman clothed with the sun and victorious over the Dragon. Both are – after Christ – the dwelling place of wisdom, and even wisdom herself; both are ‘a new world’ and ‘a prodigious creation;’ both rest in the shadow of Christ. There is in all this something much more than a case of parallelism or the alternating use of ambivalent symbols. As far as the Christian mind is concerned, Mary is the ‘ideal figure of the Church,’ the ‘sacrament of her, and the mirror in which the whole Church is reflected.’⁶⁶

Since the New Jerusalem, the new civilization of Heaven, is constructed around the model of Mary the Mother of God, the present world cannot fulfill its destiny except by imitating her, in order to imitate Christ. Adam was ‘helped’ into sin by the action of Eve, and so conversely, humanity will be saved from sin by submitting to Christ through the help of Mary. Man is the head of woman, only in so far as he signifies the masculinity of God the Father and His Son (cf. Ephesians 5:22-24). Every created male is firstly a son of Mary, and the Bride of Christ, and in this role he should be as feminine, receptive, submissive, pure, contemplative, and compassionate as She. Only in this principal humility will he co-redeem his soul and those of his children. The youth are often badly scarred by deficiencies in relational-receptivity from their parents, but the countermeasure of Heaven is that the children of God are perpetually reliant upon the Holy Family. The Holy Family is the “head” of the human family, the relationship that leads all relationships, adding yet another layer of femininity atop the masculinity of mankind.

The relational method of knowing was overruled by the deductive and inductive methods in the age of “Enlightenment” - herded into the tight corner of one's intimate relationships *only*. Because the novelty of empirical sciences offered such mathematically precise descriptions of the world, people began to believe in scientific method more than they believed in their own ancestors and their own traditions. Many probably did not realize the long-term consequences of this movement. The problem was, and is, that as soon as one assumes logic to be the supreme method for understanding reality, the unspoken implication is that knowledge is superior to freedom and therefore superior to love, that physical laws are superior to human persons. Logical syllogisms become more valuable than family stories. But the narrative of rationalism is no less a human story than the proposition of God's Incarnation. Likewise, a materialist might say that Christianity is no less a result of determined forces than the advancement of science. The point is that, for the time being, the human person is trapped at the crossroads of Philosophy and Theology with no masculine-technological escape, except through self-delusion. What the ancient philosophers discovered as the *nous*, the intelligibility of reality, is not really articulable; it is an understanding that surpasses words, because it is essentially a feminine-receptivity of truth. This is why the expression of reality's intelligibility, the *logos*, takes so many different forms in the history of philosophy, because man's attempts at masculinity are always much more contrived than his femininity. But at the moment of the Immaculate Conception, God begins to give language to the noetic experience through the re-harmonizing of the physical world to the rhythms of Heaven, and of the physical body to the Spiritual soul. In the material persons of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, and the story they tell, the Revelation of God is definitively declared,

⁶⁶ De Lubac, Henri. *The Splendor of the Church*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986. Print. 317-320.

and man is able to learn what it really means to be masculine through sacramental participation in Christ.⁶⁷

Faith plays an enormous role in everyday human life. Faith allows human beings to work together and to trust each other. Faith made societies stable long before scientific experiment became practical. Faith is about assigning meaning, a free but necessary task. Questions about the ultimate meaning of life are inevitably questions about God (whether God means Love or some idolatry). Since God is by definition the ultimate purpose for life and the end of all existence, all motivation and freedom must be rooted in Him. *Every sane person assigns a meaning to their actions: this often unconscious assignment always assumes the first-premise of God, and rests upon it, for any axiomatic assumption is God to the person who assumes it.* Thus one either tries to conform his freedom to his best developed understanding of God, or one ends up creating relativistic idol-gods to support every new circumstantial whim. Great difficulty arises here in dealing with first-premises; there are enormous consequences for these ground-laying decisions of faith, for all thoughts and actions will be more or less dependent upon them. According to a faith in Love, the Absolute Being must contain the fullness of what it means to be a person and what it means to be relational, and therefore, Faith is the only appropriate method for learning about who God is, just as it is the appropriate method with one's neighbor – the disposition towards other persons should always be feminine. Even if God's personal being is far greater than any human comprehension of it, one can still reasonably deduce that God cannot be limited in His capacity for anything which is possible for man, including this life of interpersonal relationship. If Love is the essential human value, then only Christianity defines God correctly, that is, relationally. Every proof, for or against, God necessarily assumes a prior noetic experience of God. The "way" to Truth implies a humble approaching which by itself is a share in the Divine image. Thus, femininity has always anticipated an important revolution in human understanding. "The Age of Mary" reaffirms that a new philosophy of the feminine is needed, in persons and in cultures.⁶⁸

In Catholic tradition, the Virgin Mary has been given the title "seat of wisdom" (among many others). No human being knew the darkness of mystery more intimately than her, yet neither was any human person more brilliant. Mary possesses the disposition towards knowledge that transforms information into an experience of transcendence and love, the marriage of the noetic and pneumatic. She personifies the movement away from overly abstract approaches to information, as if information is just to be used and manipulated. Mary never tries to use truth, she simply receives truth. She uses reason to understand, but never to control (cf. Luke 2:50-51). So long as there was no logical contradiction, Mary would always adopt the most loving and most creative explanation to fill the gaps of her factual knowledge. With intimidating intelligence and flawless consistency Mary discerns the meaning of her experiences according to the pattern of love, which is God Incarnate. By allowing her experience to lead her in a way that preserves the past without predicting the future, she is the archetype of faith and reason in the same person. Though, she may not understand exactly what is happening in the present moment, she knows exactly what she is supposed to do. In her body, as well as her

⁶⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 65.

⁶⁸ "The Age of Mary" refers to the time period after the revelation of the Miraculous Medal to St. Catherine Laboure (1830) to the present day, which awaits the Declaration of the Fifth Marian Dogma of Mary Mediatrix, Co-redemptrix, and Advocate.

psychology, she unveils to man the Trinitarian Nature of the Godhead. She is a logical genius, because she is able to reconcile every detail of natural-physics with the precepts of her covenantal faith. She is able to act with perfect love even when her emotional peace has abandoned her and while she ponders the paradox of Grace and Nature in her heart (Luke 2:19). In her body, she shows God's Beauty in her virginity, His receptivity in her femininity, and His Spirit in her motherhood.

Mary is significant to arguments about faith, and specifically belief in God because God has been universally conceived of as "Father" by every human culture. Why is God masculine? *Because human nature is feminine in relation to the Absolute.* Thus, God's femininity is not truly revealed until He takes a human nature. Mary is the perfect human being because she is the incarnate-archetype of empathetic, motherly love. By accepting the "son of God" into her womb, she also accepted the responsibility of walking with and feeling with every single one of God's children, past, present, and future. This is a responsibility that all people should share. Mary's *fiat* is a complete surrender of self, a total abandonment to Divine-providence, and it puts her at the most vulnerable position humanly possible. She is utterly naked of ego and paradoxically this makes her the greatest of all human persons. She is the wisest who ever lived, because she was the only one who never received knowledge as vanity. Mary interpreted every empirical and experiential fact as a gift from her Beloved, and all truth was bathed in a single Light: food for the children. The *Immaculata* never wasted a quark of energy or a moment of thought doubting the meaning of truth. Her first-premise was the perfect and irrefutable hypothesis that God is Love. The best qualification for the pattern of love is made manifest in Mary. She is the most charitable person who ever lived because her compassion for people surpassed all other human examples in quality and quantity. This is why Mary is "full of grace" and worthy to be the God-bearer (Luke 1:28). Jesus Christ, eternal Son of the Father, *chose her* to be His Church in the world, His teacher of the Faith, His nurturer in Love, and His Immaculate Bride. Mary and Joseph raised Jesus to be a man who could have so much trust in God that He would empty himself for others to point of persecution, torture, and death. Such is the motherly Faith in Love that reaches far beyond reason and science. The "obedience of Faith" follows a Hope in God not confined to rationality, but a gift of grace. The fruits of Love are its only proof. The progeny of the maternal-feminine bear witness to her superior beauty in humility, to the primacy of her judgment in wisdom, to the greater depth of her compassion in relationship, and to her power over man through inspiration. The Immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of God, is the aspiration of all creation and the crown of God's magnificence. "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). "Love bears all things, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (1 Corinthians 13:7). "The king rose to meet her, and bowed down to her; then he sat on his throne, and had a seat brought for the king's mother; and she sat on his right" (1 Kings 2:19).

Conclusion

Seeking the origins of virtue, Plato came to the realization that the human person has access to immutable truths, and he thought this to prove that the human-soul possessed *all* knowledge in a spiritual memory. Similar to Plato, the Virgin Mary, when confronted with the most confounding of mysteries, simply *remembered* that God is Perfect. Although he seems to have confused epistemology and metaphysics, Aristotle at least acknowledged that certain “first-principles” transcend analysis and limitation. The humble “handmaid,” followed up her fair epistemological-questioning, “How can this be?” with the definitive metaphysical-submission “Let it be done” (Luke 1:28,34,38). Thomas Aquinas honored Mary’s receptivity in his own philosophy of natural law, setting-up the first principles of practical reason as universal human insights. In this way, Aquinas emphasized what the baptized-Christian must experience differently from the un-baptized: *the noetic pull as a pneumatic proposal*. Perhaps more profoundly, Bonaventure saw the natural world and the human person illuminated with eternal reasons, reiterating what the Psalmist said about creation, “The heavens are telling the glory of God” (Psalm 1:19), and what Mary declared about the human person, “My soul magnifies the Lord” (Luke 1:26). Finally, the contributions of William of Ockham decisively unmasked the imperfections of the human intellect, forcing his listener to face the simple truth which the Immaculate Conception never had to learn: the human being is constituted to obey authority and to submit to God. When one refuses to obey God, she will obey her own absolutes instead. Absolute means complete, perfect, pure, and free from restriction or limitation; it is an axiom adopted without proof, no different than faith in God. Thus, the necessity of Theology for Philosophy resounds. The noetic experience is a theological presupposition, an ideal which moves and inspires philosophy, and whether one trusts it or not, it will still be in the mind, influencing thought and action. To shift from loving one’s ideal, to being *in love* with one’s ideal, is an obvious and necessary progression for anyone who agrees that human life is the most sacred of values. This is the choice to grow from the noetic to the pneumatic. Only Jesus Christ makes this a rational choice, because *only Christ incarnates the ideal of love*. Love cannot be rejected by an appeal to Truth, this is a simple and self-evident fact of experience. No one knew this better than the most Holy Mother, who witnessed the torture and crucifixion of her innocent and impeccable Son. If “truth” is one’s only value, than his love will die on the cross.

In general, people are extremists. New discoveries are either ignored all together, or turned into idolatrous maxims; hence the conservative/liberal dichotomy of American society. Maintaining a balance that assimilates novelty with tradition is the most difficult path, because it requires both openness to the future and reverence for the past. Either one finds it easier to cling to what was once reliable in stubborn spite of new technologies, or one abandons everything of the past in childish obsession with the fashionable. However, nature and life seem to operate in a humbler, more holistic way. The future builds on top of the past and the two are interdependent, both are necessary for actual progress, both are their own truth, and both define the whole truth. This is the precise balance struck by the Christian Tradition of a Personal God of Love. As G.K. Chesterton said, “The whole secret of mysticism is this: that man can understand everything by the help of what he does not understand. The morbid logician seeks to make everything lucid and succeeds in making everything mysterious. The mystic allows one thing to be mysterious,

and everything else becomes lucid.”⁶⁹ The mystic’s one preeminent mystery is Love. Love is neither passionately selfish, nor mechanistically selfless. Love has an identity rooted in the unchanging past, yet is always rediscovering itself and overflowing into new experiences. The danger of dogmatic materialism is that, in seeking to destroy the ultimate mystery of reality, one also destroys love’s freedom to grow. The pursuit of science, treated as an ultimate end in itself, will inevitably destroy the love of persons in the wake of its greed for answers and pride of control. Science is certainly a great good in this world, but it cannot and should not make presumptions or proclamations about the existence or nature of an Absolute Order, which it has already necessarily dismissed by its methodology. This is what makes the two hypotheses unequal opponents: the faith of materialism is an unnecessary rejection of possibilities, and ultimately an *inhuman* limitation on one’s relationship with Reality/Truth. Christian Faith, on the other hand, opens the door to the complete surrender of one’s self to Truth because that Truth includes the values necessary for “flourishing”⁷⁰ life, alive in Trinitarian Love. However, Christians must also revere logical scientific discoveries as the voice of this Love revealing Itself to them as well. Thus, the Christian view is more inclusive, it allows for more fulfillment, more appreciation, more passion, more imagination, more love, without ever having to deny anything science or philosophy legitimately proves. The atheist might propose that the “mores” proposed by Christianity are based on a lie, but he/she can only say so in the first place based on a premise assumed without evidence. No evidence humanly conceivable can contradict the idea, let alone the reality, of God. The choice will always remain open.

When investigating the hypothesis of God, one cannot simply approach Him as the rationalist. It is true that if religion is to be examined scientifically or logically that one must use a critical formula. However, one should not expect this method to reach any deeper than the *idea* of God – in the same way as impersonally observing someone’s actions provides only a superficial impression/idea about who that person is. And if God is the Absolute Being, there can be nothing in man’s being that is lacking in Him. It is not possible to get to know another person by treating him/her with the methodic doubt of dialectical thinking. No relationship can be established if nothing another person says is accepted until proven. The legal principle of “innocent until proven guilty” reverences this inherent dignity which persons deserve. Certainly God, who if He exists must be worthy of the most reverence, cannot be treated as less than a person. If knowing God is more like a relationship than a math puzzle, Faith *followed by* rational questioning is a more appropriate method than skepticism. Without denying the necessity of logical analysis in relationships, it can be understood that there should be a proper subordination of reason to openness, wonder, mystery, or faith, all which are due to persons. Man is told to have faith in God’s existence not because the evidence says His existence is likely or unlikely. There is no evidence in this first choice. Man is asked to have Faith as an offering of love. Ultimately, the decision of Faith is about love, and whether or not a person is willing to step outside of logic altogether, not ignoring logic or even contradicting logic, just simply reaching beyond it and believing in a Higher Truth, that is Personal Truth, whose Essence *is* Love. Love is about choice and a creative use of freedom, and thus enters the Doctrines of Free-will and Original Sin. All this makes logical sense, but only from the perspective given by the Christian’s first-premise: that the human person is made in the image of self-donative love, which *is* God.

⁶⁹ Chesterton, G.K.. *Orthodoxy*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1908. 33.

⁷⁰ Referring to Aristotle’s “*Eudemonia*”

Faith in God preserves mystery in order to preserve Love, while faith in materialism just eliminates the option: the free-choice of *absolute* Faith in Love.

The first-premise/hypothesis which the Catholic-Christian defends is this: God's essence, and the meaning of existence, is Perfect Love. Such a Divine Love cannot be fully understood, and so the first element of man's approach to Reality must be to question with reverence and trust, acknowledging the authority of mystery over man's limited state, while preserving a fascination with life and beauty that implies Objective Goodness. The closest illustration human beings could have of God's Love, if it exists, is found in the special intimacy of self-aware beings with absolute ideas, in creative thought, and especially in social relationships. This created expression of God's framework is best revealed in the moral traditions of the family, the primary building block of society, the members of which almost always treat each other as unrepeatable ends in themselves. All morality culminates in the ecstasy of self-giving charity, revealed most fully by Christ (and only possible through Him), which extends the reverence of familial love to all persons. This unifying charity is developed more comprehensively in Christian ethics and theology than anywhere else. These precepts, as offered by Catholic Teaching are, at least, rationally defensible against all the various attacks thus launched, and they offer a *more* humanistic worldview than secular-humanism, or any other alternative. Faith in Jesus alone can fulfill human potential.

Finally, to escape the self-loathing that accompanies his awakened state, man must be aware of himself, not as a finite creature, but as an everlasting son. The human person must look upon himself or herself as God the Father looks upon him or her, seeing not a dimly mirrored reflection, but a complete image and likeness. God looks at Himself, seeing his Son, and together loving His Spirit, and they are all Three full. Only if man has been invited to participate in this perfect life of the Trinity, is he free to love himself, because only then is he free to love the "wholly other." All of the history of human thought is a constant running away from the trap of determinism, but every route has been a dead end, except for the Christian "Way." Only a crucified God, who is Perfect Love, can make any semblance of "sense" out of human freedom and the experience of evil. God's crucifixion and resurrection is the consummation of the idea and the experience of love. Uniting earth with heaven like a wife with her husband. Assuming a nuptial essence behind *all* created things would prove to be the most enlightening experience of truth, as well as being a uniquely Catholic Christian experience (in terms of its proximity to a doctrinal description). It is no surprise that there must be a marriage of formula and freedom, because that paradox *is* the human condition. Objective Reality itself is *living* and must be romanced and adored like a lover, free to unveil its naked perfection only when *it chooses*.

There are the two essential experiences of human nature. The first is the noetic encounter with death, literally or perceived through contingency, and its consequence is the development of a personal theology. No human being who encounters death can remain a "non-believer" in the sense that principles of purpose are necessarily and unavoidably assumed by all self-determining, self-aware minds. The second experience is the recognition of a rational order, the *logos*, a kind of infinite feedback-loop, or philosophy of life – all in the same instant, conceivable and understandable yet unimaginable and mysterious, seemingly limited yet open to infinitude. Only a *living* theological definition of reality offers an absolute principle compatible with the feedback-patterns of science. That means, only faith in God Incarnate offers a sustainable metaphysics. Trinitarian Love is the only human idea that has ever mimicked nature's equation

for self-generating diversity, or self-organizing geometry, by presenting the choice of believing in three infinitely unique Persons united in the one essence of Eternal Divinity. These two experiences are characterized by two broad heresies: skeptical atheism and non-Catholic religiosity respectively. In general, skeptics and atheists represent the fallacy that all faith is irrational, while non-Catholic believers (including unauthentic ‘Catholics’) represent the fallacy that faith is an excuse to stop seeking rational coherence and integration. The longed for reunion of these complimentary heresies, which this paper hopes to suggest, is found through faith in the Divine Father, who draws all men to Himself through His Incarnation, for He is the origin and end of existence, the alpha and omega (cf. John 12:32; Exodus 3:14; Revelation 22:13).⁷¹ God the Father is the all-inclusive principle of harmony in which flows both faith and reason, mystery and science, the present moment and the past, the incommunicable individual and the indivisible universal, the perfect uncreated Father-Man and the immaculate created Mother-Woman. God in His absolute power represents an eternal fluidity that makes all things new in Himself, always growing and never changing at the same time, expressing the same Love in an infinite variety of marriages (cf. Ephesians 5:30-32; Rev 19:7-9, 21:5-6). God is Father because He is the purest archetype of masculinity, the origin of the nuptial proposal to which all of creation proclaims its everlasting “yes.” “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father” (John 6:65).

Freedom does not have the power to stop existing because Freedom is God and God is Existence. The will to non-existence therefore is the crucifixion of God, the height of contradiction, some idea not actually real or possible, but that is maximally opposed to God subjectively, and so a kind of subjective non-existence. Lucifer chose to become a determined power, no longer free, and so no longer truly alive. Being made in the image of God is beyond a mere hypothetical premise. If it is true, if reality is formed around it, then absolute freedom can only mean absolute self-gift, which is absolute love, which is absolute growth that never goes back or undoes what came before. Absolute freedom in the sense of allowing even a will to non-existence has no meaning beyond the possibility of becoming a determined thing that can no longer grow. *This is evil.* Evil is a will to be set free from the “burden” of change. Atheism, then, borders on the greatest of evils because it seeks to end the “delusion” of human freedom and transform persons into determined laws. In so doing, it destroys the possibility of love being anything real. Pure-agnosticism, contrarily, pretends to be exactly what faith really is, while in truth only providing an escape from taking responsibility for one’s faith. *Genuine faith simply fulfills the natural condition of contingency.* Non-belief reduces to either the fear of participating in creation because of the weight of owning what one creates, or a hatred for spontaneous-change and so an envy of God. The solution is to become a gift to others, by receiving God’s gift as fully as possible, and thus being free of the need to find happiness by one’s own power. What else is faith, but trust, and what else is trust but a personal relationship with reality, a hope that experiences can be more than what they appear to be sensually or psychologically. Because if one’s senses, as a method of knowing, cannot be transcended than love is merely a form of lying to one’s self, and therefore, necessarily subordinate in value to physical laws. The essence of trust is the feminine spirit, Wisdom “incarnate” in the Virgin Mary. This trust of a woman is acceptance and submission to the noetic experience, knowing herself espoused to the Spirit of God, a Lover unrestrained by any emotional or intellectual supports.

⁷¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church.* 34.

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