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John Milbank and the Mystery of the Supernatural : His Postmodern Engagement with Henri de Lubac

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Remerciements

« Qu'as-tu que tu n'aies reçu? » (1 Corinthiens 4.7). Cette question de l'apôtre Paul résume la pensée théologique de John Milbank aussi bien que de son maître théologique, Henri de Lubac. Quelques années de mon travail n'était pas imaginable sans les nombreux dons surprenants : ma santé, ma capacité intellectuelle, mon financement, ma communauté chrétienne, ma famille, mon directeur de thèse et même mon sujet de recherche. Ces dons ont rendu possible ma recherche, ne viennent pas de moi, mais sont des dons de Dieu. Le coeur reconnaissnat ne suffira pas, parce que derrière cette attitude elle-même, il y a peut-être mon égoïsme que Milbank a dévoilé dans la pensée moderne. La reconnaissance dans le sens authentique est que je dois être un don pour tout le monde, car mon existence elle-même est un don de Dieu. C'est ce que Milbank veut nous dire en fin de compte.

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Abbreviations

RO Radical Orthodoxy

[John Milbank]

BR *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon* (London: Routledge, 2003).

FL *Future of Love: Essay on Political Theology* (Eugene Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009).

RDGV *The Religious Dimension in the Thought of Giambattista Vico* (1668-1744), Part I, II (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991-1992).

MC John Milbank and Slavoj Žižek, *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectics*? (Cambridge: MIT, 2009).

PCA *Postmodern Critical Augustinianism* in **FL** 337-351 (n° x).

RONT R*adical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, ed. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward (London: Routledge, 2009).

SM *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate concerning the Supernatural* (Michigan/Cambridge, Grands Rapids/U.K: W.B.Eerdmans, 2005).

TA John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2000).

TPGB John Milbank, Graham Ward, *Theological Perspectives on God and Beauty,* ed. Wyschogrod (Harrisburg/London/New York: Trinity Press International).

TST *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

TST² *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason,* 2nd edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

WMS *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

[Henri de Lubac]

ATM *Augustinisme et Théologie Moderne* (Paris: Cerf, 2008).

C *Catholicisme: Les Aspects Sociaux du Dogme* (Paris: Cerf, 2003).

CM *Corpus mysticum: L'Eucharistie et l'Église au Moyen Âge: Étude historique* (Paris: Cerf, 2009).

DHA *Le Drame de l'Humanisme Athée* (Paris: Cerf, 2010).

EM *Exégèse Médiévale: Les quatre Sens de l'Écriture* (Paris: Édition Montaigne, 1959).

ET *L'Écriture dans la Tradition* (Lyon/Paris: Édition Aubier-Montaigne, 1966).

FC *La Foi chrétienne: Essai sur la Structure du Symbole des Apôtres* (Paris: Cerf, 2008).

HE *Histoire et Esprit : L'Intelligence de l'Écriture d'après Origène* (Paris: Cerf, 2002).

ME *Méditation sur l'Église* (Paris: Cerf, 2003).

MSu *Le Mystère du Surnaturel* (Paris: Cerf, 2009).

P *Paradoxes* (Paris: Cerf, 1999).

PC *Proudhon et le Christianisme* (Paris: Cerf, 2011).

PCNG *Petite Catéchèse sur Nature et Grâce* (Paris: Fayard,1980).
PM *Pic de la Mirandole* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne,1974).
PME *Paradoxe et Mystère de l'Église* [suivie de *L'Église dans la crise actuelle*] (Paris: Cerf, 2010).
RCN *Résistance Chrétienne au Nazisme* (Paris: Cerf, 2006).
S *Surnaturel : Étude Historique* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne,1946).
SCD *Sur les Chemins de Dieu* (Paris: Cerf, 2006).
THI,II *Théologie dans l'Histoire I, II* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1990).
TO *Théologie d'Occasion* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer,1984).

[Translations of Henri de Lubac]

AMT *Augustinism and Modern Theology*, trans. Lancelot Sheppard (NewYork: Crossroad, 2011).
ASC *At the Service of the Church*, trans. Anne Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993).
BCNG *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*, trans. Richard Arnandez, F.S.C (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1980).
C *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, trans. Lancelot C. Sheppard/Sister Elizabeth Englund, OCD (San Francisco: Ignatius Press,1988).
CC *The Catholic and His Church* (Sheed and Ward, 1956).
CF *Christian Faith: the Structure of the Apostles' Creed,* trans. Illtyd Trethowan and John Saward (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986).
CM *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, trans. Gemma Simmonds CJ (London: SCM, 2006).
CPM *The Church: Paradox and Mystery*, trans. James R. Dunne (Shannon: Ecclesia Press, 1969).
DAH *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, trans. and ed. M. Riley, Anne Englund Nash, Mark Sebanc (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995).
DG *The Discovery of God*, trans. Alexander Dru (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1996).
HE *History and Spirit: The Understanding of Scripture according to Origen* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007).
ME 1,2 *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, volume I, II, trans. E. M.Macierowski (Michigan: Eerdmand, 2000).
MP *More Paradoxes*, trans.Anne Englund Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002).
MS *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Crossroad, 2012).
PF *Paradoxes of Faith*, trans. Ernest Beaumont (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987).
SC *The Splendor of the Church*, trans. Michael Mason (London: Sheed and Ward, 1979).
ST *Scripture in Tradition*, trans. Luke O'Neill (New York: Crossroad, 1912).
TH *Theology in History,* trans. Anne Englund Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius

Press, 1996).

TF *Theological Fragments*, trans. Rebecca Howell Balinski (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989).

Introduction

> *I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen. Not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.*[1]

1.The motivation of this study

John Milbank (1952-) is, without a doubt, one of the most controversial and most discussed Anglo-Catholic theologians in the contemporary theological arena. In his review on Milbank's principal work, Gareth Jones estimates John Milbank as the most important British theologian in the world over the last ten years.[2] And Jeff Sharlet appraises the Radical Orthodoxy (RO) that Milbank leads as "the biggest development in theology since Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the church door."[3]

In the introduction to his *The Word Made Stange: Theology, Language, Culture* Milbank directly asserts that "today, theology is tragically too important" (WMS 1). Why is theology tragic for him? And why is it also important if it is a tragic discipline? Given his theological conviction which we shall explore in this study, we might imagine that it is *tragic*, because theology is responsible for the birth of modern secularity and its accompanying nihilism. For him, the secular reason that shapes the modern world was already anticipated by Duns Scotus and nominalism. This tradition, which assigns primacy to will over reason, makes a categorical distinction between philosophy and theology, and between reason and faith. As such, theology allows for the autonomy of human reason, and so suggests that anti-Christian secular reason was shaped within theology itself. The secular realm is gradually formed by the erosion of the participatory link between creation and the creator, as the secular claims its autonomy. More importantly, Milbank sees secular reason as nothing more than theology in disguise, and while being treated as equally valid, is not called into question as such. As Paul Tillich rightly points out, the claim to the autonomy of human reason was not, by the Enlightenment thinkers, considered as a revolt against God but as legitimated by God himself: "Man's autonomy does not stand against the word or will of God – as if God's will were something opposed to man's created goodness and its fulfillment. We could define autonomy as the memory which man has of his own created goodness. Autonomy is man's living in the law of reason in all realms of his spiritual activity."[4] In this sense, theology turns out to be a *too important* discipline because theology itself is responsible for healing the modern political, cultural and spiritual disease it has caused.

Given its marginalized position at the university as well as in the public sphere, Milbank's assertion might sound strange to us. Milbank is, however, convinced that only Christian theology, grounded in his Trinitarian metaphysics,[5] can provide a harmonious

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[1] C. S. Lewis "Is Theology Poetry?" in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.,1980), 92.

[2] See Gareth Jones, "Review of *The Word Made Strange*," *Journal of Theological Studies* (April 2001), 467-470.

[3] Jeff Sharlet, "Theologians Seek to Reclaim the World with God and Postmodernism," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (June 23, 2000), A 20.

[4] Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought: From its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism*, ed. Carl E. Braaten (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968), 321.

[5] See John Milbank, "Can a Gift be Given?: Prolegomena to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysics," *Modern Theology*, 11:1 (January 1995), 119-161. In this article Milbank engage with Jean-Luc Marion, and

vision of the world that until now has been shaped by modernity into conflict and violence. Furthermore, only the Church's practice of imitating Jesus's life, as found in the Gospels, is the key to overcoming the crises of the modern world.

When my doctoral supervisor professor Karsten Lehmkühler introduced John Milbank and his Radical Orthodoxy as my doctoral research subject, indeed, my Protestant mind made me hesitate to accept this new Anglo-Catholic theologian. Surprisingly, however, I discovered a deep affinity between Milbank and a Protestant theological current which has influenced my own reflection. This theological current is the Dutch Calvinist tradition which I encountered by reading the works of the Dutch Christian philosopher Hermann Dooyeweerd, while I was a young university student. I realized that Milbank shares the same theological core conviction with this Christian philosopher. Dooyeweerd is well known by his disclosing of the myth of "the pretended autonomy of theoretical thought."[6] This philosophy was transmitted to the 'Reformed Epistemology' in the United States of America. This school of Christian philosophy, which is inspired by Calvin's idea of *sensus divinitatis*, holds that theistic belief is most basic in the operation of human reason.[7] The core conviction shared by Milbank and the Dutch Reformed tradition is that there is no reserved realm independent of God's grace. What surprised me again is that Milbank's theological reflection is largely imbued with the ideas of the French Jesuit theologian Henri de Lubac, a representative figure of the nouvelle théologie which Dooyeweerd regarded as a laudable development in Catholic thought.[8] This affinity between de Lubac-Milbank model and my own theological tradition encouraged me to delve into this subject. My focus in this study is to articulate the relationship between de Lubac and Milbank, first, because in my view de Lubac is

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Jacques Derrida with regard to the question of the gift. For Milbank, the divine gift does not precede Being (Marion). And it is not an impossible possibility (Derrida). Through this engagement with contemporary debate on the gift, Milbank's trinitarian metaphysics is made plain. It is characteriszed by the participation between persons (*perichoresis*) and the participation of creation in the trinitarian life. Milbank extends this idea to social theory.

[6] See Hermann Dooyeweerd, *In The Twilight of Western Thought: Studies in the Pretended Autonomy of Philosophical Thought* (Lewiston, N.Y: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999); *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, 4 vols (Edwin Mellen Press 1997); *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular, and Christian Options* (Toronto: Wedge, 1979). The basic theme of Dooyeweerd's Christian philosophy is that in the history of Western thought human theoretical reason is determined by 'religious ground motifs' such as *form and matter* in Greek philosophy, *nature and grace* in medieval philosophy, and *nature and liberty* in modern philosophy. So the 'pretended autonomy of theoretical thought' is operated by these religious ground motifs. This idea is resonated by John Milbank and Henri de Lubac.

[7] See Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason with the Bounds of Religion* (Grand Rapids. Mich: Eerdmans, 1976). According to Milbank this line of thought is also found in the Russian sophiological tradition (Bulgakov, 1891-1940). See John Milbank, "Sophiology and Theurgy: The New Theological Horizon," in Adrian Pabst and Christopher Schneidr (eds.), *Encounter Between Eastern Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy: Transfiguring the World Through the Word* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 45-85; Milbank also points out that this tradition is alive in Jonathan Edward (1703-1758) in the Calvinist tradition (Milbank, "Foreword," in James K.A.Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*: *Mapping a Post-Secular Theology*, foreword by John Milbank [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004], 20).

[8] He writes: "It is a heartening symptom of a re-awakening of biblical consciousness that, under the influence of Augustinianism, an increasing number of Roman Catholic thinkers, belonging to the movement of the so-called nouvelle théologie, have begun to oppose [the] dualistic view [of nature and grace]. They agree with the Reformed philosophical movement in the Netherland in advocating the necessity of a Christian philosophy" (Hermann Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought* [Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen, 1999], 97).

Milbank's theological source without parallel, and second, because the safest reading of Milbank is to read Milbank with de Lubac.

2.Milbank's engagement with Henri de Lubac and the nouvelle théologie

De Lubac represents the *ressourcement* movement which aims to rehabilitate the biblical and patristic sources as a center of the Church's life.[9] The publication of his *Surnaturel* (1946) was like a bombshell within traditional neo-scholastic circles and is considered as powerful as Barth's *Commentary on Romans* (1919) was on the playground of the liberal Protestant theologians. In his work, Henri de Lubac repudiates the questionable idea of pure nature (*natura pura*) in arguing that there is, in creation, no area not permeated by divine grace and that human beings have a natural orientation toward this grace. This is what we call the *surnaturel* thesis in this study.

As a historical theologian, one of de Lubac's main concerns was with tracing the theological origin of Western secularization and its attendant nihilism. Growing within a neo-scholastic climate, he became dissatisfied with neo-scholasticism, which distinguishes between the supposedly natural order and the supernatural order. Deeply influenced by Maurice Blondel (1861-1949), a Catholic philosopher who challenges the extrinsic understanding of the relation of grace to nature, which he calls 'extrincism,' he delved into the process of the bifurcation of the natural and the supernatural order. At the anthropological level, he sought to demonstrate that man has only one supernatural finality against the neo-scholastic claim of twofold finality of man. In *Surnaturel*,[10] de Lubac clearly articulates his *surnaturel* thesis through his exhaustive historical study. This work spawned numerous controversies within Catholic theology and made neo-Thomists nervous. His works were prohibited in the theological faculty library, and he was even suspected as being associated with modernity.[11] The main target of De Lubac's

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[9] This refreshing theological revival is pejoratively coined the *nouvelle théologie* by its opponents. For a general introduction to the nouvelle théologie, see Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie & Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); idem,"*Néoplatonisme belgo-français*": *Nouvelle théologie* and the Search for a Sacramental Ontology," LouvStud (2007),333-60; Marcellino D'Ambrosio, "Ressourcement Theology, Aggiornamento, and the Hermeneutics of Tradition," *Communio* 18 (Winter, 1991); Brian Daley, "The Nouvelle Théologie and the Patristic Revival: Sources, Symbols and the Science of Theology," *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 7:4 (October, 2005), 362-382; Fergus Kerr, OP, "French Theology: Yves Congar and Henri de Lubac," in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century* ed. David F. Ford (Oxford: Blackwell,1997),105-117; Ted Mark Schoof, *Breakthrough: Beginning of the New Catholic Theology* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillain, 1970); For the discussion around the nouvelle théologie in French context, see Jacques Guillet*, La Théologie Catholique en France de 1914 à 1960* (Paris: Médiasèvres, 1988).

[10] For the background of this work, see É. Fouilloux, "Henri de Lubac au Moment de la Publication de *Surnaturel*," in *Revue Thomist* 101 (2001),13-30. For discussions around this work, see G.Chantraine, " Le Surnatuel, Discernement de la Pensée Catholique selon Henri de Lubac," *Revue Thomist* 101 (2001), 31-51; H. Donneaud: " Surnaturel au Crible du Thomism Traditionnel," in *Revue Thomist* 101 (2001), 53-72. For a useful introduction of de Lubac's idea of the supernatural see B. Sesboüé (1992), "Le surnaturel chez Henri de Lubac, un Conflit autour d'une Théologie," *Recherche de Science Religieuse* 80 (1992), 373-408; H. Bouillard (1964), "L'Idée de Surnaturel et le Mystère Chrétien," in *L'Homme Devant Dieu*, *Mélanges Offert au Père Henri de Lubac, tome 3, Perspectives d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Aubier, 1964), 153-66; Noel O'Sullivan, "Henri de Lubac's Surnaturel: An Emerging Christology," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 72:3 (2007), 3-31; Olivier Boulnois "Surnaturel" in *Dictionnaire critique de Théologie,* ed. Jean-Yves Lacoste (Paris: Quadrige /PUF, 2007), 1358-62.

[11] For critical reactions of de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis see Charles Boyer, "Nature Pure et Surnaturel dans le Surnaturel du Père de Lubac," *Gregorianum* 28 (1947), 379-96; Marie-Rosaire Gagnebet, "L'Amour naturel de Dieu chez saint Thomas et ses comtemporains," *Revue Thomiste* 56 (1948), 394-446; Louis-

surnaturel thesis was the problematic notion of pure nature (*natura pura*). Historically, the notion of pure nature came to the forefront with a view to safeguarding the gratuitous nature of God's grace, when Baius, denying the state of pure nature, characterizes the God-Human relationship in purely natural and legal terms. According to Baius, before the Fall, Adam's innocence is not a supernatural gift, but understood sheerly in natural terms. Influenced by the nominalist tradition, Baius views the God-man relationship in terms of human and divine will. He thinks that Adam could freely choose to obey or disobey God's will without the intervention of divine grace. So he understands grace as a right before God simply due to his obedience to God's will. After the Fall, Adam lost his natural capacity to obey God's will. In this case grace is regarded as a necessary response to human sin. In reaction to Baius's idea, Catholic theology accentuates the idea that God's grace is conceived as externally added to the natural order. Against Baius's distorted Augustinism, de Lubac asserts that God's grace is not added to nature, but already present within natural order. Baianism is for him is simply a "new stoicism" (S 23).

In contrast to Baius's position, de Lubac's theology preserves both the gratuity of grace and the integrity of nature without appealing to the hypothetical state of pure nature, due to his paradoxical account of the relationship between nature and grace. In other words, nature has its own integrity, but is not sufficient in itself. In keeping with this integrated account of nature and grace, human reason is regarded as linked to grace. Consequently, from de Lubac's viewpoint the Enlightenment claim to the autonomy of reason is problematic because there is, for him, no such thing as autonomous reason without supernatural grace.

With de Lubac, Milbank shares the idea that there is no such thing as pure nature. This means that the autonomy of reason is a myth. Milbank situates himself in the patristic tradition where faith and reason are understood in a participatory framework. So, for him "true reason anticipates revelation" (RONT 24). He strives to retrieve the Augustinian theory of illumination in a postmodern context. From this perspective, on the one hand, Milbank criticizes Karl Barth in that Barth privileges the revelation of Christ in order to safeguard the purity of grace, and in so doing, refuses the possibility of knowledge of God in natural theology. On the other hand, he also criticizes liberal theology's strong confidence in secular reason, which expels the domain of the supernatural in their theological approach.

Milbank is often considered to be Barthian,[12] but he insists that he, despite his affinity with Barth, distances himself from Barth and neo-orthodoxy. He believes that

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Bertrand Gillon,"Aux Origines de la 'Puissance Obédientielle'," *Revue Thomiste* 55 (1947), 304-10; P. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange.O.P, "La nouvelle théologie, où va-t-elle ? "*Angelicum* 23 (July-December, 1946). I am indebted to Boersma for these references concerning the critical responses to de Lubac's thesis.

[12] Douglas Hedley states: "The neo-Barthian Milbank sees God as wholly other or 'strange,' and he sees the only possibility for a meeting of God and man as not metaphysical speculation but theological practice." (Douglas Hedley, "Should Divinity Overcome Metaphysics? Reflections on John Milbank's Theology beyond Secular Reason and Confessions of a Cambridge Platonist," *The Journal of Religion*, 80:2 [2000], 273); Ross Thompson, "Postmodernism and the Trinity: How to be postmodern and post-Barthian too," *New Blackfriars*, 83 (2002), 173-87; Gregory Baum describes Milbank as follows: "He [Milbank] is not Karl Barth *revivivus*…Milbank is an 'Anabaptist or Mennonite Barth' (Gregory Baum, "For and Against Milbank," in Gregory Baum*, Essays in Critical Theology* [Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1994], 52). In addition to these estimations, I suggest that Milbank is Erasmus *revivivus.* This suggestion can be

Barth was not radical in his critique of modernity due to his preoccupation with the revealed Word, which does not have any contact with human natural reason. Milbank finds fault with Barth's theology for its lack of an ontological claim, a lack which reveals Barth's confinement within modern philosophy.

In contrast, Milbank regards Henri de Lubac as a more revolutionary theologian than Karl Barth.[13] For him, de Lubac differs from Barth, as the latter shares the assumptions of modern theology, whereas the former surpasses the duality between nature and grace, and between reason and faith. Milbank therefore estimates that de Lubac is the real inaugurator of postmodern theology[14] in that he maintains that there is no such thing as autonomous and universal reason. According to Milbank,

> [De Lubac] transcended, unlike Barth, the common background assumption of all modern theologies. In this way one could say, anachronistically, that he inaugurated a postmodern theology. The radical implication of de Lubac's work (which he himself had to hedge round with immense caution) is that, faith and reason are not essentially distinct since both are but differing degrees of participation in the mind of God.[15]

If de Lubac's theology aims to recover the idea of the supernatural, Milbank calls for the recovery of the idea of participation. By the word *participation*, Milbank means the total dependence of creation on the creator in the sense that everything is engraced (BR 115). Milbank explicitly admits that his approach is directly linked to theurgical neo-Platonism (Proclos, Iamblichus). And he thinks that de Lubac is aligned with this tradition. In this philosophical tradition, the material is given value unlike Plotinus's idea which identifies the material with evil. It is therefore possible that the material can be theologically affirmed, for it is suspended from the transcendent. In this perspective, human reason, material, and culture can be enframed by the idea of participation. And Milbank and RO hold that the material/the spiritual duality can be overcome by this idea of participation.

According to Milbank's genealogy, the idea of participation began to disappear with Duns Scotus, who separated theology and philosophy. Milbank considers this separation as the true beginning of onto-theology. However, de Lubac places the nominalism of Duns Scotus within the context of the formation of pure nature in medieval theological thought (S 150). Duns Scotus introduced the notion of the univocity of being, according

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justified on the following grounds: First, both Milbank and Erasmus emphasize the necessity of linguistic mediation in articulating theological thought. See Erasmus *Lingua, sive de Lingua usu et abusu: Liber utilissimus* (1649) (A French translation of this work is available; Érasme, *La Langue* [Genève: Labor et Fides, 2002]); Second, they prefer a rhetorical approach to theology to dialectical one. See Jacques Chomarat, *Grammaire et Rhétorique chez Érasme* (Paris: Les Belles-Lettres, 1981), and see also Manfred Hoffmann, *Rhetoric and Theology: the Hermeneutic of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Third, at the heart of their theology is the mystery of Christ. See George Chantraine, *"Mystère" et "Philosophie du Christ" selon Érasme* (Gembloux, Belgium: Editions J. Duculot, 1971). See also Henri de Lubac, "Preface to George Chantraine's 'Mystery' et 'Philosophie du Christ' selon Erasmus," in TH 44-8.

[13] Milbank, "The Programme of Radical Orthodoxy," in *Radical Orthodoxy?: A Catholic Enquiry*, ed. Laurence Paul-Hemming (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 35. De Lubac serves as a theological mentor for Milbank. Milbank considers him as the real theological revolution in the twentieth century (TA 38).

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid. For a comparison between Barth and Milbank, see Neil Ormerod, "Milbank and Barth: Comparison and Contrasts from a Catholic Perspective," in *Karl Barth: A Future for Postmodern Theology?* ed.Geoff Thompson and Christiaan Mostert (Adelaide: Australian Theological Forum, 2000), 276-89.

to which God exists in the same manner as the creature. It means the breakdown of the medieval analogical vision of the world which both de Lubac and Milbank endorse. From then on, God is represented as a supreme will. Milbank and RO consider that the Reformation theology, especially Martin Luther's theology, is of this nominalist tradition. Furthermore, the Reformation laid the foundation for modern philosophical thought. In consequence, the tragedy of modernity is generated by the oblivion of the idea of participation.

For our examination of Milbank's relation to de Lubac, it is necessary to examine RO's relation to the French nouvelle théologie in general, in which de Lubac plays a prominent role. According to Milbank, even if Barth rehabilitates the patristic method of biblical interpretation,[16] his theology does not offer a global Christian cultural vision. Compared to Barthianism "radical orthodoxy mingles exegesis, cultural reflection and philosophy in a complex but coherently executed *collage*" (RONT 2).[17]

Milbank finds this broad cultural vision in the French nouvelle théologie. Indeed, Milbank's programmatic description of Radical Orthodoxy echoes Henri de Lubac's student, Jean Daniélou's programmatic article, "Les Orientations Présentes de la Pensée Religieuse" (1946).[18] By the publication of this article, so-called *le ressourcement* which reminds us of Erasmus's *ad fontes* (to the sources), was brought to light. In this article Daniélou points out two influences of modernism on Christian life: First, the loss of the sense of transcendence by rationalization of the knowledge of God which gives rise to agnosticism; second, the paralysis of human thinking which he calls "mummification of thinking." By this ossification of thinking Christian faith cuts off all its contact from philosophy and science. And this separation amounts to the abuse of the critical exegetical method in biblical research.[19] A more serious problem that modernism causes is the separation of theology and life. In order to surpass theological modernity, he suggests three remedies: First, it is necessary to regard God as the Subject, not simply a scientific object; second, Christinity has to respond to the experience of modern man; third, theology has to take into consideration the new dimensions that history, science, literature, and philosophy give to present time and space.[20] For this, he advocates the return to the theology of the Church Fathers, in which biblical exegesis and the liturgy occupied a central place and were connected to spiritual life. However, the theologians associated with le *ressourcement* (de Lubac, Danilélou, Balthasar, Brouillard, Congar etc) did not think that their theology was the simple republication of the Church Fathers, but the creative retrieval of their theology in dialogue with contemporary thinking.[21]

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[16] For Barth's hermeneutics, see Benoît Bourgine, *L'herméneutique Théologique de Karl Barth: Exégèse et Dogmatique* (Louvain-Paris: Leuven University Press, 2003).

[17] According to three editors of RONT (Milbank, Ward, Pickstock), "Much of [RO's] perspective is in profound continuity with the French nouvelle théologie which partially undergirded the reforms of Vatican II, but where radical orthodoxy wishes to reach further is in recovering and extending a fully Christinised ontology and practical philosophy consonant with authentic Christian doctrine. The consequences of modern theological decadence for philosophy and the wider culture were never fully considered by the nouvelle théologie" (RONT 2).

[18] Jean Daniélou, "Les Orientations Présentes de la Pensée Religieuse," *Étude* (Avril 1946).

[19] Ibid., 6.

[20] Ibid., 7.

[21] This position is echoed by RO's understanding of the tradition which makes us associate Gadamer's concept of the "fusion of horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung*): "Radical Orthodoxy does not led us into how

Hans Boersma sees the fundamental feature of the nouvelle théologie as its sacramental ontology. By sacramental ontology he means "the relationship between the sacramental sign (*signum*) and the reality (*res*) of the mystery served as the key to questions concerning the nature-supernatural relationship, the historical and spiritual meanings of Scripture, secular and sacred history, the development of doctrinal truth in human language, and the Eucharistic character of the Church."[22] And this sacramental ontology can be best understood from its neo-Platonic background as we will see later. The nouvelle théologie shares in the idea that the world is not sufficient in itself, and that the final end of the human being is beyond this world. That's why nouvelle theologians drew attention to the Greek Fathers such as Gregory of Nyssa. It is not without warrant that Fr Louis-Bertrand Gillon designated this theological current as "neoplatonisme belgo-français."[23]

Milbank explicitly acknowledges the close affinity of RO to the French nouvelle théologie, in stating that "the alliance to the nouvelle théologie is stronger than that to neo-orthodoxy."[24] Echoing the nouvelle théologie, Milbank does not hesitate to proclaim the contents of RO as follows: it is 'radical' because first of all, it seeks to return "to patristic and medieval roots, and especially the Augustinian vision of all knowledge as divine illumination-a notion which transcends the modern bastard dualism of faith and reason, grace and nature," and because it seeks to "deploy this recovered vision systematically to criticize modern society, culture, politics, art, science and philosophy with an unprececented boldness" (RONT 2) and it is more 'orthodox' [probably than neo-orthodoxy] not only because it is committed to "creedal Christianity and the exemplarity of its patrix matrix", but it reaffirms "a richer and more coherent Christianity which was gradually lost sight of after the late Middle Ages" (Ibid.).[25] However, although Milbank shares the theological core conviction with the nouvelle théologie, Milbank's theological project, first and foremost, is nurtured by de Lubac's thought through and through. His engagement with de Lubac is consistent throughout his entire theological career, and ranges from ontological to political issues. Common to de Lubac and Milbank is the conviction that Christian truth has an ontological significance. This implies that they reject the modern theology that has been distorted by the opposition between subject and object since the Enlightenment, an opposition which produced the

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"rethink the tradition", rather it presents us with a vision of what the tradition looks like when it has been re-thought" (RONT 2). Stephen Long, a radical orthodox theologian states also the same understanding of tradition: "Theologians have no neutral, objective, and universal standpoint outside of the tradition from which to assess the performance of its transmission: we theologians are ourselves part of this performance." (Stephen Long, *Divine Economy: Theology and Market* [London: Routledge, 2002], 1).

[22] Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie & Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7.

[23] Louis-Bertrand Gillon, "Théologie de la Grâce," *Revue Thomiste* 46 (1946), 604. Lyons-Fourvière and Le Saulchoir are usually regarded as the two centers of the nouvelle théologie in France and in Belgium.

[24] Milbank, "The Programme of Radical Orthodoxy," in *Radical Orthodoxy: A Catholic Enquiry*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming, 35.

[25] Laurence Paul Hemming simply articulates the crux of radical orthodoxy as follows: "it [RO] does… seek to restate a powerful Trinitarian and Christological orthodoxy, largely by appeal to Christological orthodoxy, largely by appeal to Catholic authors. It achieves this orthodox position, however, by an entirely postmodern performance and citation" (Laurence Paul Hemming, "Introduction: Radical Orthodoxy's Appeal to Catholic Scholarship," in *Radical Orthodoxy: A Catholic Enquiry*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 7.

individualistic understanding of the Christian faith. So their theological task lies in the rehabilitation of the Church as the Body of Christ.

However, Milbank tries to differentiate RO from the nouvelle théologie, even if RO shares its theological vision. Milbank suggests the following reasons: First, "Radical Orthodoxy, if Catholic, is not a specifically Roman Catholic theology, it can equally be espoused by those who are formally 'protestant', yet whose theory and practice essentially accords with the Catholic vision of the Patristic period through to the high Middle Ages"; second, "Roman Catholic theology actually finds it hugely difficult to come to terms with de Lubac's legacy."; third, "Roman Catholicism can be seen…as profoundly colluding with a modernity it helped to construct."[26] Furthermore, Milbank notes that compared with liberation theology, de Lubac and Balthasar were not completely faithful to their integrist account of nature and grace insofar as it did not develop a social and political theology (TST 209).[27] He thinks that their failure comes from two reasons: First, their unwillingness toward critical engagement with the secular order; second, their refusal to fully acknowledge the humanly constructed character of cultural reality" (Ibid).

Milbank thinks that his theological task consists in articulating the cultural and political implications of the nouvelle theologie's theological vision. That is, RO wishes to go further than the nouvelle théologie in "recovering and extending a fully Christianized ontology and practical philosophy consonant with authentic Christian doctrine" (RONT 2).

3.The place of Henri de Lubac in Milbank's intellectual itinerary

It might seem early to describe Milbank's intellectual journey, for he is an ongoing theologian. Probably he has many books left to write. But the thrust of his theological argument is already revealed in his early scholarly works. In this section, our goal is not to retrace Milbank's intellectual journey for its own sake, but to find the traces of Henri de Lubac's thought in the development of Milbank's theology.

While studying in Cambridge and Oxford, Milbank was influenced by the ex-Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams (2002-2012) in England.[28] But his first scholarly work was on the 18th century Italian thinker, Giambattista Vico in the form of a doctoral dissertation at the University of Birmingham. This thesis was published later as volume I of *The Religious Dimension in the Thought of Giambattista Vico* (1668-1744).[29] In this study, Milbank places Vico in the Christian neo-Platonist tradition in describing him as a "Baroque*, Catholic*, and humanist" (RDGV 2) in saving his image as

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[26] John Milbank, "The Programme of Radical Orthodoxy," in *Radical Orthodoxy: A Catholic Enquiry*, 36.

[27] Milbank directly criticizes de Lubac in his passive attitude toward established papal hierarchy: "De Lubac belongs to a particular generation and within that generation he was incomparable. Yet this generation scarcely prepared him to deal with all the many problematic dimensions of patriarchal authority.. Nevertheless, the radicalism of his own account of the supernatural suggests that it must be faced more critically than he ever imagined" (SM 107).

[28] For Rowan Williams' estimation of Milbank's theology, see Rowan Williams, "Saving Time: Thought on Practice, Patience and Vision," *New Blackfriars* 73:861 (June 1992), 319- 326.

[29] *The Religious Dimension in the Thought of Giambattista Vico* (1668-1744) (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991-1992), *Part I: The Early Metaphysics* (1991), *Part II: Language, Law and History* (1992).

a secular thinker.[30] We can already see several themes for Milbank's theology. First, for Vico *homo creator* is the core of his understanding of the human being and this understanding is supported by biblical and patristic tradition. Second, Vico's anti-foundationalist account of human knowledge is based on his understanding of human linguistic creativity. For Vico, there is not a predetermined blueprint for the human being. It is through human-making (*poesis*), which man makes truth by linguistic performance such as poetical composition. And this linguistic creativity is understood as aesthetically participating in the divine. In this sense, for Vico, *factum* (the made)-*verum* (the true) and *bonum* (the beautiful) are interchangeable concepts. Moreover, Milbank finds that Vico's linguistic participation happens at the collective level as well as at the individual level.[31] Third, by his insight into the creative character of human linguistic performance, especially narrative performance, Vico undermined the Aristotelian demarcation between *praxis* and *poesis*, because in our linguistic performance 'doing' and 'making' happen at once. This insight is important for our understanding of Milbank's ethical thought, which we shall examine in chapter 6. As a consequence, Milbank already holds that Vico offers "an alternative version of modernity" (RDGV 7), which is the very theological goal of RO.[32] In this work, we cannot see any direct influence of Henri de Lubac. He never cites de Lubac's words. Nontheless, from the themes he developed in this research, his thought is already near to de Lubac's. The themes such as the indeterminacy of human nature, the importance of human making in ethical behavior and the importance of metaphorical language in theological reflection are also de Lubac's main theological themes.

After his doctoral studies on Vico,[33] despite the publication of several theological articles, he did not begin his career as a theologian until the publication of *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (1990).[34] Addressed to both theologian and sociologist, this book constituted a bold challenge to contemporary theology insofar as it calls into question the neutrality of secular reason which has permeated Christian

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[30] This line of interpretation is also found in Henri de Lubac's interpretation of another Renaissance thinker, Pic della Mirandola. See Henri de Lubac, *Pic de la Mirandole: Étude et Discussion* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne,1974).

[31] This insight is treated principally in the volume II RDGV: Language, Law and History (1992).

[32] "Radical Orthodoxy, although it opposes the modern, also seeks to save it. It espouses, not the pre-modern, but an alternative version of modernity" (John Milbank, "The Programme of Radical Orthodoxy," in *Radical Orthodoxy: A Catholic Enquiry*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming, 45).

[33] After doctoral work, he had a teaching career at the University of Cambridge and Lancaster in England, and then at the University of Virginia in the United States of America. And then he was appointed professor of ethics and religion at the University of Nottingham where he is currently the director of the center of philosophy and theology. See the official site of the center of philosophy and theology at *http://theologyphilosophycentre.co.uk/* (accessed June 12, 2013).

[34] See John Milbank, "William Warburton: an Eighteen Century Bishop Fallen among the Post-Structuralist." *New Blackfriars* 64:757 (July/August 1983),315-324 and *New Blackfriars* 64:759 (September 1983), 374-383; "The Body of Love Possessed: Christianity and Late Capitalism in Britain," *Modern Theology* 3 (1986), 35-65; "An Essay against Secular Order," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 15 (1987), 199-224; "On Baseless Suspicion: Christianity and the Crisis of Socialism," *New Blackfriars* 69:812 (January 1988); "Between Purgation and Illumination: A Critique of the Theology of Right," in *Christ, Ethics and Tragedy: Essay in Honour of Donald MacKinnon*, ed. Kenneth Surin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 161-96, etc. For an introduction and critical response of this work, see David Burrel, "An Introduction to Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason," *Modern Theology* 8:4 (October 1992), 319-29; See also John Milbank, "Theology and Social Theory: Responses to Responses," in FL, 133-220.

theology since the Enlightenment. According to Kieran Flanagan, "[TST] is an orthodox Christian assault on secular philosophy and sociology that seeks to restore the meta-narrative of theology to an *ecclesia* that provides an ontology of peace within an Augustinian vision."[35] Comparable to Augustine's *The City of God* [36] or Dante's *The Divine Comedy,*[37] this is a seminal work which foreshadows his subsequent theological themes. This work might be also compared to Henri de Lubac's *Catholicism* (1938) in that both aim to attack the individualist notion of salvation in Christianity. Although de Lubac's direct influence is already seen in his article "Against the Secular Order," (1987)[38] it is in this work that Milbank's thorough engagement with de Lubac is clearly revealed. Here Milbank traces the development of Western secular reason by focusing on sociological thought built on a Kantian metaphysical framework. His aim is to theologically dismantle this secular reason, and reconstruct it within the Church. As with Barth, Milbank demands that theology serve as a function of the Church, and not a maid of secular reason.

In *The Word Made Strange* (1997), which was published seven years after TST, he presents his theological vision more concretely. As its subtitle indicates, this work, in emphasizing the linguistic mediation of theological reflection, is concerned with the relation of theology to language and culture. This means, for him, theology is not a speculative science, but is directly linked to human culture. Milbank's Christian cultural outlook is based on de Lubac's symbolic theology, in which the sign plays the role of mediating creature to God. However, Milbank resituates de Lubac's symbolic theology in the context of the discussion of postmodern view of language. This will be made clear in chapter 3.

Interestingly, in this work we can observe the overall fabric of his theology. The order of the subjects he treats best describes the process of development of his theological reflection. At the structural level, this book is organized as follows: *Arche* (ch1-2)- *Logos* (ch 3-4)-*Christos* (ch 5-6)-*Pneuma* (ch 7-8)-*Ethos* (ch9-10)-*Polis* (ch 11-12). Attentive readers will recognize this study follows the same movement as that of Milbank's theological reflection manifested in this structure. In *Arche*, he treats the participatory ontology which undergirds all his theological subjects. In *Logos*, he applies his ontological model to human language in order to show the inescapability of the linguistic mediation of theology. In *Christos*, he reinterprets traditional Christology in light of his understanding of human language. In *Ethos*, he examines the ethical significance of his participatory model. In *Pneuma*, he presents the Holy Spirit as a mediator between divine language and human language. In *Polis*, he considers the participatory nature of the Christian community, as well as its social, political significance. As such, we can observe that Milbank's participatory ontology penetrates his whole theological reflection and that the ultimate goal of his theology lies in the Church. Likewise we can see that

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[35] Kieran Flanagan, "Preface" in *Special Issue on Theology and Social Theory*, *New Blackfriars* 73:861 (June 1992), 302.

[36] Fergus Kerr, OP, "Simplicity Itself: Milbank's Thesis," *New Blackfriars* 73:861 (1992), 307; "Theology and Social Theory is essentially a creative retrieval of Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*."

[37] See Graham Ward, "John Milbank's Divina Comedia," *New Blackfriars* 73:861 (1992), 311-8.

[38] John Milbank, "An Essay Against Secular Order," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 15:2 (1987), 199-224.

the idea of the supernatural dominates de Lubac's works and that his ultimate goal of theology is the Church.

In 1999, with Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward, he edited *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*. This work was something of a theological manifesto which shaped Milbank's theological vision more specifically. Having different theological and national backgrounds,[39] the twelve contributors to this work articulated the specific theological themes that Milbank had already elaborated in his precedent works.[40] These theologians, based at Cambridge University, constitute the radical orthodox circle that develops and deepens Milbank's main theological motifs. In this study, the works of these radical orthodox theologians will not be utilized for their own sakes, but for supporting Milbank's argument. In each article we can see that each contributor explicitly or implicitly appeals to de Lubac's idea in support of their argument.

His *Truth in Aquinas* (2000), coauthored by Catherine Pickstock, marks a turn in his interpretation of Thomas Aquinas. Whereas in RDGV[41] and TST, he had followed the mainstream interpretation of this scholastic theologian, an interpretation according to which Aquinas melded Christianity with Aristotelianism, in this work, however, he aligns himself with de Lubac's Augustinized and Neo-platonized Aquinas. Here Milbank challenges the generally received notion of truth in Aquinas, contending that Aquinas' notion of truth is not epistemological, but ontological: truth, for Aquinas, is not something we know, but something in which we participate.

In *Being Reconciled* (2003) he attempts to illuminate his whole theology in terms of his idea of the gift which is one of the theological key words which characterizes Milbank's theology. As Wendy Dackson perceptively notes, "Milbank engages the concept of 'gift' because he claims that there is an analogical likeness of gift to giver, and thus to see creation as gift means that one sees God in creation."[42] In this work Milbank seeks to expose the ontological, Christological and ecclesiastical problematic by way of his concept of *gift-exchange*. By this *gift-exchange*, Milbank means that all reality is to be brought into light in terms of the union of creation with God. As we shall see later in detail, Milbank describes the God-man relationship as gift-exchange in pneumatological terms, and the goal of this gift-exchange is the deification of the human being by the Holy Spirit. He extends this model to his Christological and ecclesiological reflection. Milbank's understanding of the gift is largely indebted to Henri de Lubac's gift theology. The core of de Lubac's gift theology is that he obliterated the distinction between the giver and its gift, because the giver himself is the live gift. This is to say that the gift is

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[39] According to the acknowledgements of RONT, "seven of the contributors to his volume are Anglicans, all of a High Church persuasion; five contributors are Roman Catholics. Eight of the twelve are British; four of them are American. Three teach theology in the Cambridge University Divinity Faculty; five are graduate theological students in the same faculty; of the others, two were educated in theology at Cambridge and two are Americans who owe much to Cambridge influences. It is, therefore, very much a Cambridge collection" (RONT xx).

[40] The contents of this work is as follows: Knowledge (John Milbank), revelation (John Montag SJ), language (Conor Cunningham), nihilism (Laurence Paul Hemming), desire (Michael Hanby), friendship (David Moss), erotics (Gerard Loughlin), bodies (Graham Ward), the city (William T. Cavanaugh), aesthetics (Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt), perception (Philip Blond), Music (Catherine Pickstock).

[41] See RDGV, 22-30.

[42] Wendy Dackson, "Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon," *Journal of Church and State*, 47:1 (January 2005), 163.

for the union between the giver and the receiver. So for Milbank, the divine-human relationship is defined in terms of asymmetrical gift-exchange, since God the giver takes the initiative of giving himself to man and at the same time man does not passively receive this gift, but has the desire for it, a desire which is itself a gift. His model serves as the basis of de Lubac's and Milbank's creation theology, Christology, pneumatology, etc.

In *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate concerning the Supernatural* (2005) we find a profound and comprehensive study on Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis, according to which nature has one supernatural vocation. It explores the background of de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis, the anthropological basis of this thesis, the relation of this thesis to de Lubac's other theological themes, and the debates around his thesis, etc.

In 2009 Milbank published *The Future of Love: Essays in Political Theology*. As Milbank notes, while composed of eighteen articles written over twenty-five years, this work sets forth Milbank's consistent theo-political vision. This work is Milbank's attempt to develop Christian political theory grounded in de Lubac's idea. In fact, Milbank laments that de Lubac did not develop a Christian political theology. So this attempt can be understood as Milbank's continuation of de Lubac's theological endeavor. In his preface, he makes plain his main concern: "Here I engage with a tradition of British political reflection, largely Anglo-Catholic and Catholic, which has a great deal in common with that of Catholic Social Teaching on the continent, and which, like that tradition, has been in continuous debate with secular socialism and Hegelianism-Marxism" (FL x). However, this work has a global vision beyond British context. The ultimate goal of this work is to show that Christianity can offer an alternative politics beyond left and right politics. So for him, "political theory and ecclesiology must…be of one piece" (FL xv).[43] And he believes that "only the Church has the theoretical and practical power to challenge the global hegemony of capital and to create a viable politico-economic alternative" (FL xi).

4. The purpose of this study

Milbank creatively appropriates de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis throughout his entire theological project in resituating it in a postmodern context. De Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis functions as an interpretative key to understanding Milbank's overall theological endeavor. So this study is primarily concerned with illuminating the influence of Henri de Lubac on John Milbank in focusing on Milbank's appropriation of de Lubac's central notion of the supernatural in its diverse aspects ranging from ontological issues to political ones. According to Milbank, de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis serves as a "theological grammar" in his various theological reflections.[44] This study applies his

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[43] This position echoes famous American Methodist theologian Stanley Hauerwas's vision of 'Church as polis'. See Stanley Hauerwas, *In Good Company: The Church as Polis* (Notre Dame, Ind: Notre Dame University Press, 1995).

[44] According to Milbank, "Most of de Lubac's writing, which in a sense works out the thesis of *Surnaturel* in relation to ecclesiology, exegesis, inter-religious dialogue, and secular social and scientific thought, is of a similar character. It does not often contribute directly to the detailed development of doctrine. Nor, on the other hand, does it directly contribute to a metaphysical or a foundational theology. Rather, it offers

insight to Milbank himself. That is, it attempts to read him through de Lubac's theological grammar.[45]

In my view, many misreadings or simplistic readings of Milbank stem from the negligence of Milbank's appropriation of de Lubac's sacramental paradigm. In the course of our exploration, it will be made plain that Milbank conceives of his theology entirely through the lens of Henri de Lubac. And this lens will give a coherent interpretation of Milbank's theology. In other words, I place Milbank in the Christian humanist tradition to which Henri de Lubac belongs. However, the situating of Milbank in this tradition is not sufficient in our reading of Milbank's theology. So it is necessary to draw attention to how Milbank recontextualizes de Lubac in postmodernity. Moreover, in order to see de Lubac-Milbank's model more clearly, it is necessary for us to critically examine this model in several directions. In so doing I will employ the outcomes of the dialogues between RO and other theological traditions with my own critical view on Milbank.[46] The goal of our examination of many critical issues is not polemical but constructive. That is, by this critical dialogue, the de Lubac-Milbank model and other theological models will learn much from each other. My treatment of the critical issues in each chapter are reserved for the critical responses to Milbank. Yet these critical responses are also applicable to Henri de Lubac, because I understand Milbank's theology as a continuation of de Lubac's. Often these critical responses are used for a simple survey of current responses to Milbank's theology. Yet, we will, if necessary, defend against the criticism addressed to Milbank with de Lubac's theological logic.

5.The status of research of John Milbank and RO

Since his publication of *Theology and Social Theory,* Milbank has received many critical reactions from numerous sources. Immense literatures around Milbank's theological works have been documented since then. Already a comprehensive bibliography on Milbank and RO has been elaborated by James K.A Smith.[47] In comparison to a number of responses, specific studies on Milbank's theology are very few. While several works are devoted to introducing RO, their aims are to provide a global vision of the movement.

For example, James K.A. Smith's *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy* : *Mapping a Post-Secular Theology* is of great value in that it offers a general topography of the movement of RO in comprehensively exploring radical orthodox theologians as well as Milbank. So

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something like a 'grammar' of Christian understanding and practice, both for the individual and the community" (SM 4).

[45] If we could agree with Balthasar that de Lubac's works are organic, we could also say that Milbank's theological works is equally organic, since the idea of the supernatural which imbues de Lubac's thought, also imbues Milbank's entire theological reflection. See Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri de Lubac: An Overview* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 23-4.

[46] See *Encounter between Eastern Orthodoxy and Radical Orthdoxy,* ed. Adrian Pabst and Christopher Schneider (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2009); *The Gift of Difference: Radical Orthodoxy, Radical Reformation*, foreword by John Milbank, ed. Chris K. Huebner & Tripp York (Winnipeg. MB: CMU Press, 2010); *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition: Creation, Covenant and Participation*, ed. James. K.A.Smith and James H. Olthius (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2005); *Radical Orthodoxy? : A Catholic Enquiry*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

[47] See *http://www.calvin.edu/~jks4/ro/robib.pdf* (accessed 18 July 2013).

it constitutes a best guide to Radical Orthodoxy. However, since it is a general guide to Radical Orthodoxy, it does not focus on Milbank's theology itself.

Stephen Shakesphere's *Critical Introduction to Radical Orthdoxy* has for its goal to illuminate Radical Orthdoxoy in terms of three theological themes: desire, language, and community. The advantage of this study is to highlight the major themes of Milbank's theology and to reveal the content of radical orthodox theologians. Equally Shakespeare devotes a section to critical evaluation of this movement. However, the limit of this study, like Smith's study, is not to delve into Milbank himself, while he comprehensively utilisizes Milbank's works. Nevertheless it is indeniable that Smith and Shakespeare have made enormous contributions to the research on Milbank and RO. Without their endeavours, my study would have fallen into confusion.

With numerous critical responses to Milbank, there have been not a few articles written to critically analyse Milbank's theology. We cannot detail these short studies here. However they will be treated in the course of this study.

In a sense, the *Routledge Radical Orthodoxy Series* are specific studies on Milbank's theology in that these series profoundly develop Milbank's major theological motifs already forshadowed in *Theology and Social Theory*. We might read these series as a good commentary on Milbank's theology. Until now not a few studies have been published.[48] Likewise there are several works of radical orthodox theologians which were not published in this series, but contain the same theological vision as that of Milbank.[49] However, the weakness of these series is that they are discussions confined within RO itself. While there are different degrees to which radical orthodox theologians engage with Milbank, most of them are very faithful to Milbank's theology. Hence their faithfulness is itself both an advantage and a weakness of these authors.

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[48] *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology,* ed. John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward Graham Ward (London Routledge, 1999); Graham Ward, *Cities of God* (London: Routledge, 2000); John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2001); Stephen D. Long, *Divine Economy : Theology and Market* (London: Routledge, 2002); Daniel M. Bell, *Liberation Theology After the End of History: The Refusal to Cease Suffering* (London: Routledge, 2001); Conor Cunningham, *Genealogy of Nihilism* (London: Routledge, 2002); James K.A Smith, *Speech and Theology: The Language and Logic of Incarnation* (London/New York: Routledge, 2002); Michael Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2003); Robert C. Miner, *Truth in the Making: Knowledge and Creation in Modern Philosophy and Theology* (London: Routledge, 2003)); Tracy Rowland, *Culture and Thomist Tradition: After Vatican II* (London: Routledge, 2003); Adam C. English, *The Possibility of Christian Philosophy: Maurice Blondel at the Intersection of Theology and Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2006; *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader*, ed. John Milbank and Simon Oliver (London: Routledge, 2008).

[49] See Graham Ward, *Barth, Derrida, and the Language of Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); idem. *Theology and Contemporary Critical Theory: Creating Transcendent Worship Today* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); idem. *Christ and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005); idem. *Cultural Transformation and Religious Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing : On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998); *Post-Secular Philosophy*, ed. Philip Blond (London: Routledge, 1998); Stephen D. Long, *The Goodness of God: Theology, Church and the Social Order* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2001); James K. A. Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophical Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic* (Downers Grove, IL: Interversity Press, 2000); idem. *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Adacemic, 2006); William Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination: Christian Practices of Space and Time* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2003); idem. *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998); Frederic Christian Bauerschmidt, *Holy Teaching: Introducing the Summa Theologia of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005).

Besides these studies above, there are few works specifically devoted to John Milbank's theology. Until now, only a few doctoral theses have been devoted to the subject of Milbank's theology.

In his doctoral thesis entitled *Christology in a Postmodern Context: John Milbank's Sacrifice and Gift*,[50] Sung Il Yoo critically reads Milbank's Christology in terms of two main postmodern themes: sacrifice and gift. Prior to his critical evaluation of Milbank's Christology, he reads Milbank's theology in terms of its theological key word, participation. Yoo's criticism is focused on Milbank's appropriation of the pagan neo-Platonic model in his theological project. In his view, the fundamental problem with this model is to blur the boundary between God and creature, and between Christ's divinity and Christ's humanity. Yoo thinks that this blurring leads Milbank to reject the sacrificial understanding of Christ's death. Likewise, in Yoo's account, Milbank's understanding of the gift stems from this breakdown of the chasm between God and creature. He concludes that Milbank fails to achieve his theological goal of recovering the autonomous secular realm into its original state of grace due to Milbank's appropriation of neo-Platonic monistic ontology. For him, Milbank does not maintain a radical distinction between God the creator and creatures, a distinction indispensible for the gratuity of God's grace. This dissertation is of great value for understanding Milbank's Christology as well as his oveall theological project. However, we can read this work as a typical Barthian criticism of Milbank's Christology. His criticism has its own value as such. However, in my view, taking Milbank as simply an anti-Barthian theologian is not fair reading. Despite Barth's emphasis on God's radical otherness, Milbank's project has much more in common with Barth's than Yoo thinks. Probably his misunderstanding comes from his reduction of neo-Platonic tradition into a simple monistic ontology. In fact, Christian neo-Platonic tradition always maintains the radical transcendence of God. I suggest that Milbank's appropriation of de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis, which will be explored in this thesis, serve to correct Yoo's simplistic reading of Milbank.

In his doctoral dissertaion Peter Samuel Kucer[51] compares de Ratzinger's and Milbank's political theology in relationship to their understanding of truth. Ratzinger clearly distinguishes Christian faith and all political ideology, because if Christian faith is subject to a political position, it risks losing its integrity. Milbank holds that socialism is the political expression of Christian faith in the Trinity. Kucer sees their different political theologies stem from their different understanding of the notion of truth. For Ratzinger, although he has the integrated view of nature and grace, truth is considered as stable and directly accessible to human reason. That's why he objects to Vico's idea of truth, which suggests that truth is made. If truth is something to be made, Christian faith can be identified with secular ideology. In contrast, Milbank embraces Vico's notion of truth. For him, truth is not *a priori* given, but what we make. Therefore, he holds that Christian faith makes its truth by its practice. As a result, for him, Christian socialism

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[50] Sung Il YOO, *Christology in a Postmodern Context: John Milbank's Sacrifice and Gift* (Ph.D. Diss, University of Virginia, May 2009); Sung Il YOO, Ruth Huang Miller, *Christology in a Postmodern Context: John Milbank's Sacrifice and Gift* (BiblioBazaar, 2011).

[51] Peter Samuel Kucer, *Truth and Politics: A Theological Comparison of Joseph Ratzinger and John Milbank* (Ph.D, Diss, Catholic University of America, 2012).

is inherently Christian in character, not an ideology outside Christian faith. This thesis impressively compares two theologians who have different conceptions of the world. By this comparative study, he makes clear the distinctive character of Milbank's Christian socialist vision based on his pragmatic view on truth. However, a weakness of this study is that Kucer's utilization of Milbank is very limited. Since his work is focused on Milbank's specific theme of truth, he principally uses Milbank's study on Vico (RDGV) and Milbank's study on Aquinas's notion of truth (TA).

Finally, Gevin hyman's *The Predicament of Postmodern Theology: Radical Orthodoxy or Textual Nihilism?*[52] originally written as his doctoral dissertation, compares two orientations of postmodern theology: one is represented by Mark C. Taylor and Don Cupitt, and John Milbank's Radical Orthodoxy. While two models grasp the opportunity of the breakdown of foundationalism in postmodernity, two models envison different postmodern theologies. For the former, postmodernism means the disappearance of theology, whereas for the latter, postmodernism means the return of theology. Both models endorse a postmodern account of narrative character of human knowledge. However, the two models have different views on the nature of narrative. For Taylor and Cupitt, narrative is trapped within an immanent world picture and Hyman calls this model 'textual nihilism'. In contrast, Milbank's understanding of narrative is theologically undergirded. Hyman attempts to correct these contrasting postmodern theological approches in order to overcome the predicament of postmodern theology, a predicament in which we have to choose between Taylor's and Cupitt's textual nihilism and Milbank's RO. On the one hand, Hyman holds that Cupitt's version of postmodernism is still modern in character, because his postmodernism is based on his distinction between realism[53] and anti-realism, a distinction which for Hyman is a modern one, not postmodern. So Cuppitt's critique of RO's anti-realism is unfair. Hyman states: "Cupitt's modern postmodernism must be developed into an accomplished postmodernism. Only then will the postmodern paradigm shift be recognized for what it is, and only then can the challenge of radical orthodoxy be confronted effectively and without distortion."[54] On the other hand Hyman suggests that Milbank should correct his view on the nature of nihilism. For Milbank, there are only two contrasting visions of the world: Christian theology which can uniquely offer a harmonious vision of the world, and nihilism based on the ontology of violence. However, for Hyman, it is rather theology that can be the cause of violence, because it is subject to becoming a totalizing discourse. That is, by positioning all other discourses, Christian theology can be a metaphysics which Milbank wants to overcome. Hyman maintains that nihilism is not always associated with violence and conflict in appealing to the contemporary thinkers such as Vattimo, Derrida. This kind of nihilism, which he calls 'fictional nihilism'[55] is

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[52] Gevin Hyman, *The Predicament of Postmodern Theology: Radical Orthodoxy or Textual Nihilism?* (Louisville: Westminster John Know Press, 2001).

[53] Philosohically, the theory of realism means that there is a correspondence between our percetpion and the reality outside our mind. So anti-realism means there is no reality outside man's perception of the world.

[54] Ibid., 64.

[55] Fictional nihilism is contrasted with metaphysical nihilism. Metaphysical nihilism is associated with Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche as the last metaphysician which suggested what the reality is as such. However, another interpretation was suggested by the postmodern philosophers such as Derrida,

not violent, because it is not metaphysical. This benign nihilism makes recourse to narrativity which defers the final meaning of reality without lapsing into violent metaphysics. In this way, Hyman wants to correct both Cupitt's textual nihilism and Milbank's Christian meta-narraitve in a postmodern nihilistic direction.

Hyman's work is grounded in his deep understanding of Milbank's theology itself. And his critical engagment with Milbank is thorough and consistent. Moreover, his criticism of the totalizing tendendy of Christian meta-narrative is not without reason. Yet, he misunderstands Milbank's argument of the nature of Christian meta-narrative. As Milbank asserts, Christain metaphysical claim is fundamentally different from ancient and modern metaphysics and it is therefore not violent, it is based not on secular reason, but Christian *logos* itself. This *logos* is backed up by the difference in harmony within the Trinity. So Christian metaphysics is not totalizing because it embraces differences. In the course of our study, this point will be made plain.

The studies above contributed to our understanding of Milbank in several directions. They are of great value as such. I expect that my study will likewise contribute to the study of Milbank's theology. However, my conviction is that Milbank's appropriation of Henri de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis can best illuminate Milbank's entire theology. I hope that by a lubacian reading of Milbank many misunderstandings of Milbank's theology will be corrected and that our understanding of Milbank will be deepened.

6. Structure

For our purposes, this thesis is divided into two parts. And before bringing Milbank into engagement with Henri de Lubac in earnest, in chapter 1 we shall situate Milbank and de Lubac in a postmodern context so that we might grasp the postmodern background of Milbank's theology and Milbank's recontexualization of de Lubac's theology in the postmodern. In part I, I shall examine the contents of the idea of the supernatural and of participation in situating them in a postmodern context.

More precisely, in chapter 2, we shall explore Milbank's reception of the idea of the supernatural through several themes such as nature-grace relationship, faith-reason relationship, the gift, *poesis*, etc. These concepts are not only the interpretive keys to Milbank's theology, but also that of de Lubac's.

In chapter 3, we shall see how de Lubac's emphasis on the historical nature of Christian revelation influenced Milbank's focus on the narrativity of Christian theological discourse. Milbank clearly asserts that only theology can overcome

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Deleuze, Vattimo, etc. In contrast to metaphyscisl realism, fictional nihilism accentuates the narrative character of nihilism itself. That is, there is no pure nihilism. The way the postmodern Nietzscheans suggests their nihilism is to narrate it. By narrating it, it does not lapse into metaphysical nihilism, but open to new meaning, that is always postponded. Hyman states: "Metaphysical nihilism was not an accomplished nihilism because it was a metaphysical nihilism, that is, a representation, a philosophical realism. In taking leave of this metaphysics, of this frustrated attempt at representation, nihilism is accomplished. It is also an overcoming of nihilism, however, because nihilism is now fictionalized along with everything else. Here, insofar as the nihilist story is still told, it is told precisely as a story. The absoluteness of nihilism is thus overcome, its privilege dissolved; for now nihilism is a story just like any other. Thus, the nihilism that once relativized everything else has now relativized itself (Gevin Hyman, *The Predicament of Postmodern Theology: Radical Orthodoxy or Textual Nihilism?*, 105).

metaphysics. Behind this bold assertion lies de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis according to which grace is organically related to nature. Therefore, the reduction of God into modern conceptuality is for Milbank a conceptual idolatry. We shall see that for Milbank, narrative is the proper mode of representing the Christian God in bringing him into engagement with postmodern narrative theorists.

In chapter 4, we shall trace the genealogy of the secular in following Milbank and de Lubac. Despite the risk of simplification of the history of the idea, their story of the secular would be instructive in our understanding of the emergence of modern secular space. Of course, Milbank's genealogy is not exactly the same as de Lubac's. However it is undeniable that there exist in large part parallels between their two stories. Milbank's story and de Lubac's story complement each other. What counts does not lie in their similitude, but in the fact that the secular emerged within theology itself.

In part 2, entitled 'Practicing the supernatural,' we shall see the practical significance of the *surnaturel* thesis as manifested in Milbank's theology in relating de Lubac's Christology, ethical thinking and ecclesiology. More precisely, in chapter 5, we shall see Milbank's Christological approach which he describes as 'Christological poetics'. With the insights acquired from his research on the nature of language (see chapter 3), Milbank tries to revisit and renovate traditional Christology in good postmodern fashion. That is, Milbank understands Christ as a linguistic being. This means that Milbank's Christology gives symbolic value to the historical Christ. In this regard, unlike traditional Christology, his is neither 'Christology from below' which seeks to reconstruct the portrayal of the purely historical Jesus, nor 'Christology from above' which concerns an eternal and pre-existent Christ. For him, as for de Lubac, Christ is a *sacrament* of God. That is, he is a metaphorical figure who reveals God's character.

In chapter 6, we shall see the ethical significance of the *sunaturel* thesis for Milbank. Here we shall see, Milbank's critique of the modern autonomous moral agent is based on de Lubac's ethical reflection which is closely linked to his theological hermeneutics. De Lubac emphasizes moral integrity in union with Christ. The goal of man is to become supernaturally virtuous, formed by sanctifying grace. In this respect, Christian ethics for Milbank fundamentally has a distinctive character. Moreover, de Lubac's emphasis on the sanctification/deification of the believer leads Milbank to criticize Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian realism, for his realism is not rooted in the fullness of Christian revelation, but a stoic, immanentist worldview, grounded in lack, contrasted to the fullness of creation in the Christian worldview.

In the final chapter, we shall see the ecclesiological significance of the *surnaturel* thesis, where for Milbank and de Lubac the Church is nothing other than the Body of Christ. The Church as the Body of Christ is, therefore, the sacrament of God in the world. It is not one institution among many, but the supernatural community where forgiveness is practiced, because in the Eucharistic celebration the member and the Body of the Christ come into communion with Christ and with one another.

In conclusion, we shall recapitulate de Lubac's influence on Milbank's theological reflection. Then we shall evaluate Milbank's reception of de Lubac. I shall argue that his reception of de Lubac in a postmodern context is both positive and negative, for his too postmodern theology risks weakening the identity of orthodox Christian theology, even if his utilization of postmodern philosophy is laudable.

I. Situating Milbank and de Lubac within the Postmodern

Theology is best done without apology.[1]

The safest reading of John Milbank is to read him by situating in the wider context of twentieth century anti-modern intellectual shift. Throughout Milbank's theological endeavour, Milbank has been in interaction with the postmodern thinkers such as Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault, etc. In his engagment with postmodern philosophy he always has recourse to Henri de Lubac, be it implicit or explicit. In this section, first of all, we shall situate de Lubac and Milbank in the French revival of neo-Platonism which is their common intellectual source. Common to the thinkers who contributed to this revival is their shared anti-modern spirit. That is, they seek to recover premodern sources in order to overcome modern immanent philosophy.

1. Placing de Lubac and Milbank in neo-Platonic tradition

1.1 A postmodern retrieval of French neo-Platonism

According to Wayne Hankey, "A retrieval of neo-Platonism is essential to Radical Orthodoxy."[2] In his instructive study on the revival of neo-Platonism in France, Hankey treats Maurice Blondel and Henri de Lubac as important figures in this revival. These two figures are the main sources of Milbank's theological reflection. Alongside this revival which Hankey traces, the so-called 'theological turn of French Phenomenology'[3] is intimately intertwined with Milbank's theology. Milbank admits that the Cambridge School (R.Williams, N.Lash, J.Milbank, G.Ward) embraces the French phenomenologists associated with this turn (J. L.-Marion, J.-L.Chrétien, P. Ricoeur, M. Henry). [4] Decisively influenced by Martin Heidegger, these phenomenologists share in common the idea of the end of metaphysics.[5] According to Hankey, by their endorsement of Heidegger, these French phenomenologists "reproduced neo-Platonic position in order to get around Heidegger's critique of Western metaphysics as onto-theology."[6] However,

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[1] Stanley Hauerwas, *Wilderness Wanderings: Probing Twentieth-Century Theology and Philosophy* (Boulder.CO: Westview Press,1997), 1

[2] Wayne J. Hankey, "Philosophical Religion and the Neoplatonic Turn to the Subject," in *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy: Postmodern Theology, Rhetoric and Truth*, ed. Wayne J. Hankey and Douglas Hedley (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 17. For a detailed account of the revival of Neoplatonism in France, see also the same author's instructive article, "French Neoplatonism in the 20th Century," *Animus* 4 (1999), available at www.swgc.mun.ca/animus (accessed May 22, 2013) and *Cent Ans De Néoplatonisme En France: Une Brève Histoire Philosophique*, *Librairie Philosophique* (Paris/Quebec: J.Vrin/ Presses de l'Université Laval, 2004). See also Hankey's "The Postmodern Rtrieval of Neo-Platonism in Jean-Luc Marion and John Milbank and the Origins of Western Subjectivity in Augustine and Eriugena," *Hermathena* 165 (Winter 1998), 9-70.

[3] See Domnique Janicaud, *Le Tournant Théologique de la Phénoménologie Française* (Paris: Éditions de l'Éclat,1991). In this work he treats the philosophers who contributed to the theological turn of phenomenology (Jean-François Courtine, Paul Ricoeur, Jean-Louis Chrétien, Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Henry). See also *Phénoménologie et Théologie*, ed. Jean–Louis Chrétien (Paris: Critérion, 1992).

[4] John Milbank, "Postmodernité," in *Dictionaire Critique de Théologie*, ed. Jean-Yves LaCoste (Paris: PUF, 1998), 916-7.

[5] Ibid.,916.

[6] Wayne J. Hankey, "Philosophical Religion and the Neoplatonic Turn to the Subject," 17. For the influence of Neoplatonism on Heidegger, see, Edith Wyshogrod, *Saint and Postmodernism* (Chicago: University of

while being influenced by the French phenomenologists, Milbank's neo-Platonic source is not Plotinian neo-Platonism, but rather *Imablicean-proclean theurgical platonism* as mediated by Henri de Lubac, among others.[7]

1.2 The characteristics of theurgical neo-Platonism

At this juncture, it would be helpful to examine the characteristics of theurgical Platonism for a better understanding of Milbank's and de Lubac's postmodern theology. According to a study by Gregory Shaw, Iamblichus' Platonism emerged in protest against the rationalizing tendency within Platonism which seeks to set the human mind above the sanctity of the world. Against this human hubris, Iamblichus prefers *theourgia* (god-work) to *theologia* (god-talk) because gods are not the objects of human reasoning.[8] Shaw makes clear the distinction between theurgy and theology: "For theology was merely *logos*, a 'discourse about the god,' and however exalted, it remains a human activity, as did philosophy. Theurgy, on the other hand, was a *theionergon*, a 'work of the gods' capable of transforming man to a divine status."[9] This difference distinguishes the theurgical Platonism of Imamblichus and Proclus, which seeks the union with the gods by way of liturgical practice (hymn, prayer, etc.), from the non-theurgical Platonism of Plotinus and his disciple, Porphyry. While Plotinian neo-Platonism privileges the intellectual contemplation of the divine,[10] Iamblichus and Proclus seek to incorporate philosophy into religion. In the words of the radical orthodox theologian, Catherine Pickstock, this synthesis is expressed as the "liturgical consummation of philosophy."[11] For our purposes, it would be instructive to recapitulate several features of this current Platonism to which Milbank and de Lubac submit.

Chicago Press, 1990), 90-92 (I thank to James K.A. Smith for this information). In this work, the author notes the similarity of the notion of time between Plotinus and Heidegger.

[7] In "Truth and Vision," Milbank indirectly reveals his affiliation to theurgic Neo-platonism in his discussion of Aquinas which he endorses: "Aquinas follows through the *Dionysian legacy of theurgic neoplatonism*. For this tradition (*Proclus and Iamblichus*), since the forms are only 'recollected' through ever-renewed reminders in time, the soul cannot be elevated above time and the body [as for Plotinus, less faithful to Plato's texts and the esoteric traditions of the academy]" (TA 58, emphasis mine). A specific study on the relation of Henri de Lubac to theurgical neo-Platonic tradition is necessary.

[8] Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1985), 4-5.

[9] Ibid.,5, cf. E.R.Dodds*, The Greek and the Irrational* (Berkely: University of California Press, 2004), 283-4.

[10] Connor Cunningham, a radical orthodox theologian, classes Plotinus as a nihilist. See his *Genealogy of Nihilism*, 3-9.

[11] See her *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998). Pickstock's understanding of philosophy is consonant with what de Lubac designates "eucharistic realism" (CM 251). In other words, the Eucharistic sign provides a most corresponding model for the reality as it is. According to Pickstock, "the Eucharistic body of Christ is a fundamental sign which gives meaning to all other signs thanks to the uniquely supernatural character of the sign of Jesus. Not only is the Eucharist invoked as an example of the coincidence of sign and body, death and life. It is also claimed that only a realistic construal of the event of the Eucharist allows us to ground a view of language which does not evacuates the body, and does not give way to necrophilia. Since such an evacuating and necrophiliac account language also amounts to the claim that meaning is indeterminate and abyssal, my claims about the Eucharist also imply that it grounds meaningful language as such… I suggest that liturgical language is the only language that really makes sense…The event of transubstantiation in the *Eucharist is the condition of possibility for all human meaning*" (Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing,* xv, emphasis mine). This position also echoes Milbank's philosophical position which is summarized as "historicist and pragmatist, yet *theologically r*ealist," a position suggested particularly by Maurice Blondel (TST 6).

1.2.1 Neo-Platonic causality

First, neo-Platonism understands creation as a series of emanations from the absolutely transcendent One. This model has several important implications for de Lubac's and Milbank's theology. Above all, this model of creation suggests a different kind of causality from the Aristotelian conception of causality. For Aristotle, God is designated as the 'unmoved mover' which "moves while itself unmoved."[12] In this sense, the Aristotelian God is detached from nature, which is, in consequence, conceived as sufficient in itself. In contrast, in the neo-Platonic understanding of causality, the first cause has a permanent relation with each outcome at every level of the universe, because the produced have emanated from the One.[13] This means that each outcome has the primordial cause in itself and at the same time the produced remain within the One which produces, but is not produced. In the words of Milbank, "between God and creation.. there is no between"[14] From this perspective, we can see a participatory relationship established between the producer and the produced.[15] This participatory relation has several implications. Above all, because everything proceeds from the One, an analogical relationship exists between things, a relationship that Arthur Lovejoy calls the "great chain of being (*scala naturae*)."[16] And at the same time, there is a difference between the producer and the produced. As a result, there is a harmonious relationship among different things because they participate in the One.[17] Furthermore, because of the unity, the produced have an appetition toward the One (*appetitus Dei*). According to Milbank, this pagan neo-Platonic thought is manifested in a Christianized form in Dionysius the Areopagite, Augustine, Nicolaus Cusanus, Aquinas, Pierre de

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[12] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII 7, 1072a 27 trans. W. D. Ross in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

[13] In "Truth and Vision" Milbank, drawing on Jean-Luc Marion, argues that Thomas Aquinas' notion of cause is not Aristotle's but that of neo-Platonism: "Aquinas consistently takes a neoplatonic view according to which an effect is like its cause, indeed pre-eminently exists in its cause. As Jean-Luc Marion astutely suggests, this causal origin is really for Aquinas less Aritotelian 'cause' than the Dionysian 'requisite' (*aitia)*, or attribution to the original source of the 'gift' of the effect in its whole entirety as effect" (TA 31).

[14] John Milbank, "Sophiology and Theurgy: The New Theological Horizon," in *Encounter between Eastern Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy: Transfiguring the World Through the Word*, ed. Adrian Pabst and Christopher Schneidr*,* 64.

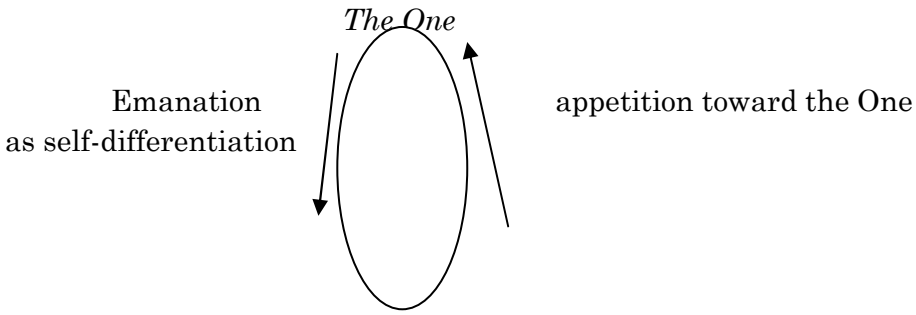
[15] In his *The Elements of Theology*, Proclus describes this neo-Platonic world picture as follows: "For if in every procession the first terms remain steadfast (proposition. 26), and if the procession is accomplished by means of likeness (proposition.29), like terms coming to existence before unlike (proposition.28), then the product in some sense remains in the producer. For a term which proceeded completely would have no identity with that which remained: such a term is wholly distinct from the prior. If it is to be united by a common link with its cause, it must remain in the latter as we saw that the latter remained itself. If, on the other hand, it should remain only, without procession, it will be indistinguishable from its cause, and will not be a new thing which has arisen while the cause remains. For if it is a new thing, it is distinct and separate; and if it is separate and the cause remains steadfast, to render this possible it must have proceeded from the cause. In so far, then, as it has an element of identity with the producer, the product remains in it; in so far as it differs it proceeds from it. But being like it, it is at once identical with it in some respect and different from it: accordingly it both remains and proceeds, and the two relations are inseparable" (Proclus, *The Elements of Theology, A Revised Text with Translation, Introduction and Commentary by E.R.Dodds* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963], 35).

[16] See Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*: *A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1936).

[17] This Platonic dilemma is the dilemma of how many instances of one form can participate in the one idea without harming the oneness of the idea. Due to this dilemma the Platonic doctrine of form is trenchantly criticized by Aristotle. We shall see this specifically in the following chapter.

Bérulle and more recently Claude Bruaire, Lucien Laberthonnière, and Henri de Lubac.[18] In this Christianized Procleanism, as Milbank expounds, "the divine cause, as alone creative of being as such, remains the cause that is the most powerfully operative even at the lower levels of reality."[19]

This neo-Platonic vision serves for Milbank as a fundamental model for his articulating theology. This model supposes that the world has a difference in harmony, because the un-differentiated One diversifies itself in the process of emanation. According to Reno, "neo-Platonism treats the world as a differentiated realm of beings and events knit together, not in spite of or against the discrete identities of things, but in harmonious order and toward a common purpose."[20] Milbank's accent on the "the ontological priority of peace to conflict" (TST 363) and his affirmation of difference as constitutive of a harmonious whole can be rightly understood against this neo-Platonic backdrop. For him, peace, not chaos and violence, is the primordial state of the universe. Futhermore, for Milbank creation is understood as a gift (including human being) by God's self-giving. For this reason, creation has the appetite toward God. In short, Milbank conceives of the God-creation relation in terms of 'gift exchange.' And this gift exchange happens in an asymmetrical way due to the infinite chasm between Creator and creation. This vision stands in contrast with Aristotle's worldview. As de Lubac states, "For Aristotle nature was a center of properties and a source of activity that was strictly delimited and enclosed within its own order" (S 435).[21] We might draw a diagram to roughly describe this model as follows in comparing Aristotle's world view.



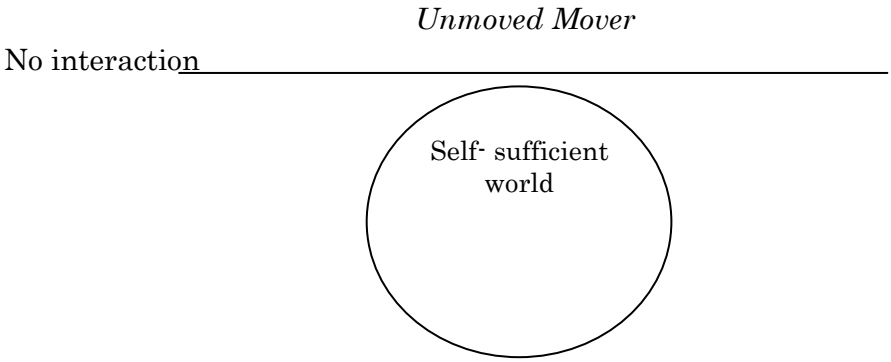
[Diagram I] Neoplatonic model of the world

[18] Milbank, "Foreword," in *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy,* 19.

[19] Ibid.,19-20. Kirkpatrick's comparison between Aristotle and Plotinus is pertinent: "Where Aristotle offers us a cosmos of causes and effects, always open to the line of logical investigation, Plotinus portrays a cosmos of circles or interconnected spirals where contradictions are resolved in the vision of a unity beyond all being and becoming. Truth is measured by the extent of our participation in that unity (Robin Kirkpatrick, *The European Renaissance: 1400-1600* [London: Pearson Education, 2002], 89).

[20] R.R.Reno,"The Radical Orthodoxy Project," *First Things* (February, 2000), available online at http://www.firstthings.com/article/2007/01/the-radical-orthodoxy-project-42 (accessed 21 may, 2013).

[21]This translation of Henri de Lubac is Hans Boersma's in his *Nouvelle Théologie & Sacramental Ontology*, 92.



[Diagram II] Aristotle's model of the world

1.2.2 The affirmation of materiality and embodiment

In theurgical neo-Platonism, the material is affirmed because it is the vehicle to reflect the nature of God. For de Lubac and Milbank, this is an important point in their elaboration of theology. John Milbank, Graham Ward and Catherine Pickstock describe this idea as "suspending the material."[22] The affirmation of the materiality stands in contrast to Plotinus' idea of the materiality as something essentially bad from which one is to be saved.[23] In this sense, the Plotinian soul has no contact with the body in an almost Gnostic manner. It follows that Plotinian Platonism admits no sacramentality of the cosmos by desacralizing it. In contrast, the affirmation of the material in theurgic neo-Platonism makes possible the knowledge of God even in the trivial things around us because they are emanated from the One.[24] This worldview bears a strong affinity with the Christian affirmation of the goodness of Creation. We can easily presume that this model can be easily Christianized by patristic theologians.[25]

1.2.3 The importance of divine and human *poesis*

This tradition places an importance on divine and human *poesis* (making). For Iamblichus and Proclus human intellect is creative. This is because human beings participate in the divine creativity. That is, this tradition gives to the human being the demiurgic status in the universe. It is for this reason that despite Plato's stricture against poetry, they give value to the poetry. Poetry plays the mediating role of linking

[22] See John Milbank, Graham Ward and Catherine Pickstock, "Suspending the Material: the Turn of Radical Orthodoxy," in RONT 1-20.

[23] Cf. Plotinus, *Enneade*, I, 8,3, 38-40.

[24] See Gregory Shaw, "Theurgy as Demiurgy: Iamblichus' Solution to the Problem of Embodiment," *Dionysius* 12 (1988), 39-40; idem, "Theurgy: Rituals of Unification in the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus," *Traditio* 41 (1985), 1-28.

[25] See Jason B. Parnell, *The Theurgic Turn in Christian Thought: Iamblichus, Origen, Augustine, and the Eucharist* (Ph.D diss: University of Michigan, 2009), available at *http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/64788/jasonbp_1.pdf?sequence=1* (accessed 10 July 2013).

the natural to the supernatural. This neo-Platonic affirmation of human creativity as a participation in divine creativity runs through the history of Western thought.[26]

Milbank's appropriation of these crucial features of neo-Platonism can be understood within the French revival of Neo-Platonism. Milbank's reception of a neo-Platonic framework filtered by Henri de Lubac enables him to engage with contemporary philosophical and theological currents. As Jens Zimmermann rightly points out, "RO's effort to reclaim Neoplatonism for Christianity forces theology and philosophy into dialogue on the question of ontology."[27] Of course, this neo-Platonic revival is not the only source of Milbank's thought, but it is undeniable that his theological reflection is directly or indirectly influenced by this revival in which Henri de Lubac plays an important role. In short, we might say that the French revival of neo-Platonism is a broad context in which de Lubac's and Milbank's theology was forged.

1.3 Platonist-Christian synthesis

In fact, Milbank places his theology in the Platonic line of thought in describing his theological project as "Platonism/Christianity" (TST 290), which is a surprising pair for the Protestant mindset. This synthesis is surprising because of the Protestant allergy to Plato, who is understood as categorically making a distinction between the sensible and the intelligible, a distinction which is incompatible with the Christian doctrine of creation and its inherent goodness. Nevertheless Milbank envisions more Platonic Christian theology with a view to overcoming the secularized world through the resacralization of the world. But how could one overcome modernity on the basis of Platonism's other-wordly orientation, when it depends on such a dualist worldview? As we have seen just above, it is a particular current of Platonism, called theurgical Neo-Platonism, developed by Iamblichus and Proclus[28] and absorbed by the Church Fathers. So he argues that "the neo-Platonic/Christian infinitization of the absolute, the Christian equation of goodness, truth and beauty with Being itself, combined with the introduction of the relational, productive and responsive into the Godhead, all give rise to an ontological scenario which is no longer exactly Greek" (TST 295). That is, pagan

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[26] For a study of this tradition, see Robert Miner, *Truth in the Making: Knowledge and Creation in Modern Philosophy and Theology*, *Radical Orthodoxy Series* (London: Routledge, 2003). Catherine Pickstock states that RO belongs to this tradition: "A minor tradition (illustrated by the Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa and a number of Augustinian humanists) interpreted human creative capacity as a participation in the creative utterance of the Logos by the Father. In this perspective, human creative intelligence rests conjectural and approximative. Far from claiming for itself any autonomy of power, it seeks to realize the totality of human *telos*, and render the divine revelation manifest. The Radical Orthodoxy joins this minor current, which represents a kind of counter-modernity" (Catherine Pickstock, "L'orthodoxie est-elle radicale?" in Adrian Pabst, Olivier-Thomas Vernard, *Radical Orthodoxy: Pour une Révolution théologique* [Paris: Ad Solem, 2004], 26, translation mine).

[27] Jens Zimmermann, "Radical Orthodoxy: A Reformed Appraisal," *Canadian Evangelical Review* 26-27 (Spring 2004), 68.

[28] For the thought of Iamblichus and Proclus, see A.H.Armstrong, *An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy* (London : Methuen,1957); A.J.Festugière, *Proklos et la Religion Traditionelle*, Mélanges de Piganiol (Paris, 1966); *Soul and the Structure of Being in Late Neoplatonism: Syrianus, Proclus, and Simplicius,* ed. H.J.Blumenthal and A.C.Lloyde (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1982); Jean Trouillard, *L'Un et l'Âme selon Proclus* (Paris : Les Belles Lettres, 1972); idem, *La Mystagogie de Proclos* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982); W. Beierwaltes, *Proklos: Grundrüge seiner Metaphysik* (Frankfurt:Denken des Einen, 1965).

theurgical Platonism was Christianized particularly by Augustine[29] and Dionysius the Areopagite, and influenced the subsequent Christian and secular philosophers such as Nicholas of Cusa, Boethius, Berkeley, Vico, Hegel, etc (Ibid.).[30] Milbank is convinced that Thomas Aquinas is supported by this line of Platonism. Likewise Milbank thinks that his theological mentor, Henri de Lubac stands in the same line.

De Lubac, in turn, confirms Milbank's Platonism/Christianity thesis in the context of his discussion on the Church Fathers' attitude toward the pagan religions. Here de Lubac holds that in spite of the Church Fathers' sharp criticisms, they did not abandon all elements of pagan religions, but rather purified and absorbed them into Christianity.[31] This was due to their conviction that all man is created in the image of God, which means that, for de Lubac, men's dispositions prepare them to welcome the Gospel. De Lubac summarizes the Fathers' position on the pagan religion:

> We may say that the final judgment of the Fathers on the religious phenomenon, insofar as it can be deduced from the mass of documentation and the variety of attitudes, is a judgment of the dynamic order—if we may so call it. It is part of a theology of history. It is formulated as a function of the sole Church of Christ that bears the Absolute, Christ. Everything true and good in the world must, as St. Paul advises, be taken up into and integrated in the Christian synthesis where it undergoes transfiguration. The Fathers knew that even the anterior 'revelation' (cosmic revelations and those of Moses and Abraham) lapse and at the same time are accomplished in Christ (CPM 75).[32]

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[29] Cf. John Milbank, " Sacred Triad: Augustine and the Indo-European Soul," *Modern Theology* 13:4 (October, 1997), 451-74 ; Catherine Pickstock, "Music: Soul, City and Cosmos after Augustine" in RONT, 243-77.

[30] For Neoplatonism's influence on Western thought, see W.Beierwaltes, *Denken des Einen. Studien zur neoplatonischen Philosophie und ihrer Wirkungsgeschichte* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1985). See also Random Baine Harris (ed.), *Neoplatonism and Contemporary Thought* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002).

[31] See Henri de Lubac, *Histoire et Esprit : L'Intelligence de l'Écriture d'après Origène* (Paris, Montaigne, 2002).

See also Mark Edward, "Christ or Plato?": Origen on Revelation and Anthropology," in Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones (eds.) *Christian Origins : Theology, Rhetoric and Community* (London: Routledge, 1998), 11-25; idem. *Origen against Plato* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002). In this study, Edward shows that Origen's appropriation of Plato is limited in his Christian theological framework. His position is close to Milbank's and de Lubac's. MacIntyre also confirms Milbank's thesis: "Love, as Augustine understands it, is not the Platonic *erōs*. It consists in the first instance of the sum total of our natural desires and our desires to achieve happiness in achieving the satisfaction of those desires. We have to learn, however, that the satisfaction of *all* our desires will not in itself achieve happiness. It is only the satisfaction of desire for what it is right to desire…. So our desires need to be directed and ordered hierarchically. The direction and ordering of human desires is the work of the will (*voluntas*), and because human desire are in whatever state they are because of either the direction of or the failure to direct the will, human desire unlike the desires of other animals are voluntary (*De Libero Arbitrio* III, 1, 2). This Augustinian psychology, which in the place that it assigns to the will is strikingly different not only from Neo-platonism but from any ancient psychology, provides a new account of the genesis of action (Alasdaire MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press,1988], 154). Robert Jenson also supports de Lubac's and Milbank's thesis: "The fathers did not, as is still often supposed, Hellenize the evangel; they labored to evangelize their own antecedent Hellenism, and succeeded remarkably if not fully" (Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology vol 1: The Triune God* [Oxford:Oxford University Press, 1997], 90.

[32] [Original text] "En conséquence, nous dirons que le jugement définitif des Pères sur le fait religieux, pour autant qu'il est possible de le dégager d'une masse de textes et de comportements, est un jugement d'ordre, si l'on peut dire, dynamique. Il s'insère dans une théologie de l'histoire. Il est formulé en fonction de la seule Église du Christ, porteuse de l'absolu du Christ. Tout ce qu'il y a de vrai et de bon dans le monde doit, suivant le conseil de saint Paul, être assumé, intégré, dans la synthèse chrétienne, où il se trouvera

In the end, for Milbank and de Lubac, it turns out that Harnack's *hellenization thesis* is out of date, for pagan thought did not assimilate Christian revelation, but inversely Christian revelation absorbs pagan thought in accordance with the Christian principles.[33]

2. Milbank, de Lubac and postmodernism

2.1 Modernity and its illness

Modernity has shaped our lives over the last several centuries.[34] Enlightenment philosophers came to conceive human knowledge as capable of being stably founded on human consciousness without divine illumination (Descartes). Knowledge was identical with power (Bacon). Their faith in reason led them to be convinced that they could establish a universally valid system of knowledge set apart from religion, tradition and community. This ideal is well-expressed in Immanuel Kant's definition of the Enlightenment. He writes that "Enlightenment is man's emerging from his self-incurred immaturity [*selbst verschuldeten Unmündigkeit*]. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another."[35] This appeal to the autonomous use of human reason constituted the basic motif of Enlightenment thought. Alongside the universal claim of human knowledge based on autonomous human reason, they sought to establish a universal morality (Kant). Naturally the Enlightenment came to have faith in the moral and intellectual progress of humanity.[36] Philosophical modernity has been extended to all area of human lives. Legally, a human being has been considered to be the subject of rights of life, liberty, and property. Capitalism has been regarded to be a natural economic system. Politically, the nation state and its sovereignty were legitimated in the name of natural law. The progress of science and

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transfiguré. Les Pères savent que même les 'révélations' antérieures (cosmique, abrahamique, mosaïque) se trouvent périmées en même temps qu'accomplies dans le Christ" (PME 132).

[33] Harnack's hellenization thesis is that the dogmatic formulations developed in the early Church are the 'hellenization' of the historical Christianity. This move absorbs Christianity into the static, atemporal Greek worldview. Harnack briefly expresses his idea as follows: "Dogma in its conception and development is a work of the Greek spirit on the soil of the Gospel" (*History of Dogma* vol 1 [New York: Dover Publication, 1961], 17). Stephen Long states: "Harnack's hellenization thesis can best be understood as an intensification of Protestantism's principle of 'sola fide'" (*Speaking of God: Theology, Language, and Truth* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001], 183). In his book, Long draws on Robert Louis Wilken to support his argument in citing him: "The notion that the development of early Christian thought represented a hellenization of Christianity has outlived its usefulness. The time has come to bid a fond farewell to the ideas of Adolf von Harnack, the nineteenth-century historian of dogma whose thinking has influenced the interpretation of early Christian thought for more than a century. It will become clear… that a more apt expression would be the Christianization of Hellenism, though that phrase does not capture the originality of Christian thought nor the debt owed to Jewish ways of thinking and to the Jewish Bible (Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*, [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003], xvi. In *Speaking of God*, 6).

[34] See Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-garde, Decadence, Kitsch* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987).

[35] Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?"(1784), in *Kant: Political Writings*, ed. H. Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 54.

[36] Paul Tillich describes the nature of Enlightenment as four key words: autonomy, reason, nature, harmony. See his *A History of Christian Thought*, 320-341. For a detailed analysis of Enlightenment philosophy, E. Cassier, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966); Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation* (New York: Knopf, 1967).

technology has markedly portrayed modern history. Catherine Pickstock characterizes modernity as a "substitution of the spatial to the temporal" which is prominently expressed in Descartes's philosophy.[37] Milbank insightfully perceives that beneath these modern phenomena lies an immanent ontology. In his view, "modernity is metaphysical, for since it cannot refer the flux of time to the ungraspable infinite, it is forced to seek a graspable, immanent security" (WMS 44). Milbank is convinced that this immanent ontology was generated by Duns Scotus's univocal account of being which in turn gave rise to the philosophy set apart from theology. In other words, the collapse of Platonist-Christian synthesis was at the origin of modernity. Further, modernity for Milbank was invented for a certain purpose, that is little more than the blind will to power. Naturally, modernity is marked by violence and conflict in a limited modern immanent space.

Christian theology was not immune from this vast tendency. On the one hand, Christian theology responded positively to modernity in making a compromise in its truth claim. This response was manifested as so-called liberal theology. It sought to ground religion in human reason. And the religious was reduced to morality. Theologians sought to find the pure historical fact in order to unveil the essence of Christianity. History was absolutized and unhooked from the supernatural. On the other hand, faced with the crisis of modernity, neo-scholasticism and Protestant fundamentalism sought to rescue Christianity from the contamination of modernity by reformulating the content of Christian faith in untouchable propositional forms in a systematic way. For Milbank, these responses were erroneous ones in that both were trapped within modern rationalism. To be more precise, despite their position opposed to modernity, they both embraced the basic proposition of modern philosophy which supposes that our knowledge has a one-to-one relationship to reality. In this sense, these two theological currents are still modern in character in the sense that they conceive modern philosophy as legitimate. Milbank thinks that this compromise with modernity results in fatal consequences not only to Christian theology itself, but to the Christian attitude toward the world. In leaving its place as a meta-discourse for secular reason, Christian faith lost its public voice. So it came to be relegated into private and personal affairs. De Lubac and the nouvelle théologie emerged as an orthodox Christian response to modernity and its illness. Sharing this anti-modern sentiment with de Lubac and the nouvelle théologie, Milbank and RO resist against modernity and postmodernity which is nothing other than hyper-modernity.

2.2 Postmodernism as good/bad news

Due to the discontent that modernity gave rise to, many thinkers began to resist it already at the time of the rise of modernity (Hamann, Herder in 18th century, and Kierkegaard and Nietzsche 19th century). And many French neo-Nietszscheans (Deleuze, Lyotard, Foucault, etc.) in the 20th strongly criticize the project of modernity.[38] Jean

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[37] Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing*, 58.

[38] For the account of crisis of modernity, see Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); Max Horkheimer, *The Eclipse of Reason*, trans. J.Cumming (New York: Seabury Press, 1974); Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum, 1993).

François Lyotard, against Habermas's affirmation of the modernity as an unfinished projet, argues that "the project of modernity (the realization of universality) has not been forsaken or forgotten but destroyed, 'liquidated'.. 'Auschwitz' can be taken as a paradigmatic name for the tragic name for the tragic 'incompletion' of modernity."[39]

Lyotard defines postmodernism as "incredulity toward meta-narratives."[40] Although Lyotard's target is the Enlightenment narrative of progress, we can easily think that Christianity shaped by a grand narrative of creation, fall and redemption can also be the object of Lytard's incredulity. In this regard, postmodernism is both 'good' and 'bad' news to Christianity in that while postmodernism dethrones the meta-narrative of secular reason, it also attacks Christain truth. What is the response of a postmodern Christian theologian in the face of this dilemma? Not a few Christian theologians regard postmodernism as a good friend of Christian theology insofar as it opposes the universalism of Enlightenment philosophy. Merold Wesphal responds well to this questioning. He points that in philosophical discourse 'meta' does not means the size of discouse, but rather a 'difference of level.' That is, it does not directly concern the world, but 'first level- discourse.'[41] While meta-narrative in Lyotard's sense primarily concerns modernity's self-legitimation, because modernity, which cuts off from tradition, in need of a narrative which can justify itself. In contrast, Christian story is so deeply rooted in history that a legitimation is not necessary. That is, no apologetic is needed. Thus Christian meta-narrative is not a meta-narrative as Lyotard understands it. It is rather a proclamation (*kerygma*) of the origin of the world and its end.[42]

Milbank's engagement with postmodernism can be understood in the same direction. He still thinks "the end of a single system of truth based on universal reason," is not accomplished (PCA n°1) In this situation, for Milbank, the advent of postmodernism and its radical criticism of the modernity have set a new stage for Christian theological reflection. Postmodernism is a notoriously complex notion, but for our purposes we might roughly understand it as a challenge to the foundational account of human knowledge characteristically articulated by René Descartes.[43] Milbank himself recapitulates several characteristics of postmodernity as follows:

First of all, the modern notion of nature is called into question. In modernity, nature is considered as a fixed and quantitatively calculable entity, grounded in the laws of nature. The human being is also considered as subject to the laws of nature. In postmodernity, this notion of nature becomes questionable because nature itself is regarded as a cultural artifact. In other words, the frontier between nature and culture

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[39] Jean François Lyotard, "Apostil on Narrative," in *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence 1982-1985* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 18.

[40] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv.

[41] Merold Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology: Toward a Postmodern Christian Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), xiii.

[42] Ibid. See also James K. A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 59-79.

[43] Paul D. Janz describes the characteristic feature of this phenomenon: "the most defining characteristic which all of these noetic dispositions share in common is best described in terms of *a move away from the human subject*, or more specifically, as a move away from any sort of thinking that *puts human consciousness, intention and reference at the center of discourse and meaningfulness*." Paul D. Janz, "Radical Orthodoxy and the New Culture of Obscurantism," *Modern Theology* 20:3 (July 2004), 364.

comes to be blurred. So "no longer is human auto-creation regarded as operating within given parameters" (BR 188).

Second, coupled with the merging of nature and culture, the distinction between the interior and the exterior has become undermined. In modernity, the self is understood as a self-sufficient, self-transparent entity distinct from the exterior world. In contrast, in postmodernity, the self is no more considered as stable entity. But in postmodernity, it is always in interaction with the exterior. Private and public life are difficult to distinguish. Milbank takes an example of internet space: "My website, my informational contributional has already decided certain things for others, in a space that is theirs as well as mine, like a common grazing ground" (BR 190). This tendency concurs with the Christian idea of the human self, according to which the self is not an isolated entity but always in relationship to God and other human beings. In postmodernity, we can maintain that the identity of a Christian is to be shaped by the Christian community, not by liberal ideology.

In keeping with this tendency, globalization, which is supported by cyber technology, is strikingly a postmodern phenomenon. By this tendency, the sovereign modern nation-state system suffers significant changes. That is, capitalism goes beyond the modern nation-state system because it has the tendency of subjecting the power of the nation-state system into capitalist world order. The power of the market requires legal, financial support by controlling nations. Milbank regards this globalization of the market as related to the "new sort of postmodern empire" (BR 192). He compares this empire with modern imperialist empires: "This is not, like the old British and French empires, an empire of centre and subordinated colonies, but instead an empire of endlessly expanding frontiers, an empire of inclusion, not remote control, and an empire able to distribute power to its peripheries. Its expansion is enabled, in part, by the constitutional division of powers" (BR 192). In this situation in which the American empire plays a pivotal role, the political and the economic are merged. As we shall see in the final chapter, the globalization is the weakening of the nation-state which Milbank considers as a pseudo-Church.

Although these features furnish good ground for a postmodern theologian's criticism of theological modernity, Milbank thinks that there is a fundamental continuity between modernity and postmodernity as follows: 1) "They explain and evaluate without reference to transcendence"; 2) "they see finite reality as self-explanatory and self-govering"; 3) "they see this finite reality which is the *saeculum*- the time before the eschaton for Christian theology" (BR 195). Milbank treats "the writings of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Deleuze, Lyotard, Foucault and Derrida as elaborations of a single nihilistic philosophy" (TST 278). Therefore, for Milbank, his attitude toward postmodernism is "not outright refusal, nor outright acceptance" (BR 196). In other words, he refuses both Christian orthodox repetition of dogmatic formulas and liberal adaption to postmodern assumptions. Rather he attempts to a "critical engagement with post-modernity to force us to re-express our faith in a radically strange way, which will carry with it a sense of real new discovery of the gospel and the legacy of Christian orthodoxy" (BR 196).[44] From

[44] Milbank is not the sole theologian who engages with postmodern thought. There emerged various versions of postmodern theologies in the 20th century as theological responses to the postmodern.

this perspective, for Milbank, postmodernity offers a historical opportunity in which theology can surpass the modernity complex. In introducing RONT Milbank states with regard to RO: "What emerges is a contemporary theological project made possible by the self-conscious superficiality of today's secularism. For this new project regards the nihilistic drift of postmodernism (which nonetheless has roots in the outset of modernity) as a supreme opportunity" (RONT 1).[45] This means that postmodern theology can exploit 'the spoils of the Egyptians' for the retrieval of Christian theology.

However Milbank's project of critical engagement with postmodernism follows Milbank's theological mentor, Henri de Lubac.[46] For example, in TST Milbank attempts

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Postmodern theologians share in common their objection to the modernity's universalist claim and its violence. For the postmodern theology in general, see Graham Ward, "Postmodern Theology," in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology since 1918*, ed. David Ford and Rachel Muers (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 322-338. In this article, Ward distinguishes two types of postmodern theology: liberal postmodern theologies (Mark C Taylor, Thomas J.J.Altizer, Robert P.Scharlemann, Charles Winquist, and David Ray Griffin) and conservative postmodern theologies (George Lindbeck, John Milbank, Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Certeau); John Milbank distinguishes four types of postmodern theology: theology of the death of God (Marc C. Taylor); theologians who attempts to reconcile orthodox Christology and Derrida's principal notion of *différance* (K. Hart, G. Ward); theologians who embrace Heidegger's overcoming of onto-theology, but rejects his theory of being and Derrida's idea of *différance* due to its nihilism (J.-L.Marion, J.-L. Chrétien, P. Ricoeur, M. Henry); the Yale school which is influenced by Wittgenstein's linguistic philosophy (H. Frei, G.Lindbeck) and the Cambridge school that integrates French neo-Nietzscheans and French phenomenology just above (J. Milbank, G. Loughlin, G. Ward), see John Milbank, "Postmodernité," in *Dictionaire Critique de Théologie*, ed. Jean-Yves LaCoste (Paris: PUF, 1998), 916-17; *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, ed. Kevin Vanhoozer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). In this book several different types of postmodern theology are presented: postliberal theology, postmetaphysical theology, deconstructive theology, reconstructive theology, feminist theology, and radical orthodoxy; See also David R. Griffin, William A. Beardslee, Joe Holland, *Varieties of Postmodern Theology* (Albany.NY: SUNY Press, 1989).

[45] Milbank thinks that nihilism offers a more honest description of the state of affairs as such than modernity's artificial desciption of it: "Through [Christian] belief in creation from nothing, [Christinaity] admits temporality, the priority of becoming, and unexpected emergence. A reality suspended between nothing and infinity is a reality of flux, a reality in the end without substance, composed only of relational differences and ceaseless alterations (Augustine, *De Musica*). Like nihilism, Christianity can, should, embrace the differential flux (PCA n°8). However, for Milbank "postmodern nihilism remains in continuity with liberalism and the Enlightenment" in that nihilism's affirmation of the indeterminate nature of the reality is also undergirded by ontological violence like modernity (PCA n°9). For Catherine Pickstock "postmodernism appears to have foreclosed the possibility of a benign universal, rationalist humanism, while, on the other hand, it does not seem able to refute the suggestion that it is itself irredeemable nihilistic. Radical orthodoxy, however, has offered a third alternative: while conceding, with postmodernism, the indeterminacy of all our knowledge and experience of selfhood, it construes this shifting flux as a sign of our dependency on a transcendent source which 'gives' all reality as a mystery, rather than as adducing our suspension over the void" (Pickstock, *After Writings* xii).

[46] In his *Le Drame de l'Humanisme Athée* (1944) Henri de Lubac engages with modern thinkers spanning from Ludwig Feuerbach to Friedrich Nietzsche in confronting his *surnaturel* thesis with their modern nihilistic ideas. John Milbank takes the baton from de Lubac in continuing the engagement of theology with secular thinkers. While de Lubac's critique is mainly focused on modern thinkers, Milbank is engaged with not only modern philosophy in 19th century (Marx, Hegel, Nietzsche), but also contemporary continental philosophy (Lyotard, Foucault, Deleuze, Badiou, Žižek). James K.A.Smith states that continental philosophy provides "something of a launching pad" for RO (James K.A.Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 43). In addition to this I would like to state that de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis serves a regulatory function in his engagement with continental philosophy. De Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis makes possible both Milbank's theological appropriation and criticism—this will be made plain in the course of this study. More precisely Milbank, taking up the main themes of this philosophical current, employs them in favor of Christian theology-For example, the radical linguisticality of human being (Heidegger, Gadamer, Derrida), the importance of narrative in the account of the world (Lyotard), the affirmation of difference (Deleuze), genealogical account of history of idea (Foucault). In other words, he embraces continental philosophy in order to overcome it. Graham Ward expounds Milbank's strategy as follows: "Employing the tools of critical reflexivity honed by continental thinking, taking on board the full

to trace back to the theological root of secular reason in unveiling the hidden myth in modernity. In so doing he has recourse to Foucault's archaeological method.[47] Milbank explicitly declares his embracing of this method for a theological purpose in TST: "I have adopted an 'archaeological' approach and traced the genesis of the main forms of secular reason, in such a fasion as to unearth the arbitrary moments in the construction of their logic" (TST 3). Foucault's so-called archaeological method aims to disclose the unconscious structure of human thought which is culturally shaped in a certain epoch and society.[48] Foucault calls this discursive formation *epistémé*. Like Nietzsche and Heidegger, he holds that human knowledge is bounded by human temporality and historicity. The ultimate goal of this method is for Foucault to unmask the myth of universal reason of the Enlightenment. In this sense Foucault's philosophy serves as a good philosophical apparatus for Milbank's overcoming secular reason.

Before Milbank, we can find the same approach in Henri de Lubac in his critique of modernity. Although de Lubac did not explicitly manifests his embracing of an archaeological or genealogical method, he appeals to Nieztzsche's insight in his critique of Enlightenment reason which is devoid of myth. De Lubac concurs with Nietzsche to the extent that he recognizes the importance of myth in the sustaining of civilization. According to Nietzsche, "for want of myths, every civilization loses the healthy fruitfulness of its native energy; only a horizon circumscribed on all sides by myths can ensure the unity of the living civilization it encloses."[49] This means that a mythological worldview is more fundamental to human nature than the rationalist account of the world. Nevertheless, while admitting the priority of myth over reason in our understanding of the world, he opposes Nietzsche's irrational Dionysian myth. He contrasts Nietzsche's myth with Christian mystery. According to de Lubac, these represent two different types of sacredness which are irreconcilable in nature. That is, de Lubac conceives Nietzsche's myth as a kind of religious worldview.[50] Therefore,

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implications of what has been termed the linguistic turn, Radical Orthodoxy reads the contemporary world through the Christian tradition, weaving it into the narrative tradition." (Graham Ward, "Radical Orthodoxy and/as Cultural Politics," in *Radical Orthodoxy?: A Catholic Enquiry*, 97-111). Reinhard Hutter manifests similar idea: "RO's most positive service to theology is the uncovering of 'hidden theological and/or antitheological assumptions of modern, late modern, and postmodern thought and aggressively re-theologizing this territory" (Reinhard Hutter in Jens Zimmermann, "Radical Orthodoxy: A Reformed Appraisal," 68, Hutter's words was originally written in his email for Zimmermann and Zimmerman cites them in his article with Hutter's permission).

[47] In his *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Loytard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), James K. A. Smith interestingly engages with postmodern thinkers (Lyotard, Derrida, Foucault) in taking up their main philosophical themes so that the Church may overcome the modern secularity. For an evangelical response of this approach, see "A Critical Review of James K. A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Loytard, and Foucault to Church* (Baker Academic, 2006)," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 83:4 (2011), 347-351. For a similar approach to postmodernism, see also Merold Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-theology: Toward a Postmodern Christian Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[48] See Michel Foucault's three books in which archaeological method is employed: *Naissance de la Clinique: Une Archéologie du Regard Medical* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963); *Les Mots et les Choses: Une Archéaologie des Sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966); *L'Archéologie du Savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969).

[49] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Naissance de la tragédie*, 115, cited in DHA 88 ; [Original text] "Faute de mythe, toute culture perd la saine fécondité de son énergie native, seul un horizon ciconscrit de toute part par des mythes peut assurer l'unité de la civilisation vivante qu'il enferme " (DHA 88).

[50] De Lubac regards Nietzsche as a mystic. See "Nietzsche as mystic" in DAH 419-509.

"there is the pagan myth and the Christian mystery" (DAH 91).[51] The same insight is equally found in Milbank's challenge to the secular. As for de Lubac, for Milbank the secular turns out to be but a pagan religious myth. "While the Nietzschean tracing of cultural formations to the will-to-power still results in a 'suspicion' of religion, it also tends to assert the inevitably religious or mythic-ritual shape that these formations must take. In this mode of suspicion, therefore, there ceases to be any social or economic reality that is permanently more 'basic' than the religious" (TST 2).

As a consequence, it is revealed that secular reason is not a conveyer of neutral and universal truth, but a historical product which is artificially formed since 18th century (more precisely since Duns Scotus) and that the secular is based on the illusion of the Enlightenment's supposedly autonomous and neutral reason. From this perspective, for Milbank and de Lubac the reason/faith, nature/grace, private/public, the profane/the sacred duality is contingently shaped in a certain historical moment. This is what the three editors of RONT call the "modern bastard dualism" (RONT 2). According to him, all intellectual and cultural activity of human beings are religious, that is theological.

3. Dismantling modern theology

Postmodern philosophy, which relativizes all human knowledge, enables Milbank to dismantle modern theology in general that has recourse to the universalism of Enlightenment reason. For him, the crisis of modern theology is caused by its correlationist strategy (Tillich, Bultmann, Niebuhr, Gutiérrez, Tracy, etc) in which purely the theological category is accommodated to secular reason's conceptuality. This strategy is characteristically illustrated by Paul Tillich's view of the philosophy-theology relation. According to him "the difference between the philosopher who is not a theologian and the theologian who works as a philosopher in analyzing human existence is only that the former tries to give analysis which will be part of a broader philosophical work, while the latter tries to correlate the material of his analysis with the theological concepts he derives from the Christian faith."[52] This is to say that Tillich regards modern existential philosophy as the neutral account of modern man to which theology is to be accommodated. This strategy is also found in Rudolf Bultmann's theology grounded in Heidegger's supposedly neutral account of modern man. For Henri de Lubac this method of correlation is incompatible with his *surnaturel* thesis, because there is no such thing as neutral and autonomous account of man.[53]

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[51] [Original text] "il y a le mythe païen, et il y a le mystère chrétien " (DHA 91). Milbank in his turn writes: "While the Nietzschean tracing of cultural formations to the will to power still results in a 'suspicion' of religion, it also tends to assert the inevitably religious or mythic-ritual shape that these formations must take" (TST 2).

[52] Paul Tillich, *Sytematic Theology I* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 63.

[53] According to de Lubac: "Bultmann seems to claim at the outset a quite factitious sort of radical opposition between the idea of a revelation made 'outside our sphere' without, in order to concern us, would not and could not tell us about anything except our actual existence. Revelation, he declares, 'can tell us absolutely nothing' if we expect it to inform us of some doctrine inaccessible for man, mysteries which become sealed books from the moment when they are communicated to us; but it tells us everything if we expect it to enlighten man about himself and help him to understand himself fully. It is not the 'communication of knowledge', but 'something which happens to us'. Faith, then, is no sort of 'theoretical statement' or 'dogmatic information'; it is a 'personal confession' and an 'act of decision'. By such a dichotomy, it would seem, at least if one systematized it, in trying to escape an imaginary Charybdis (or one imagined by certain 'extrinsicists' who do not know what they are saying), the whole reality of

In his turn Milbank, challenging the method of the correlation of modern theology, audaciously argues that "if my Christian perspective is persuasive, then this should be a persuasion intrinsic to the Christian *logos* itself, not the apologetic mediation of a universal human reason" (TST 1). He thus declares: "The pathos of modern theology is its false humility" (Ibid.). This criticism echoes de Lubac. Faced with modernity and its concomitant nihilism caused by its immanent philosophy, de Lubac estimates modern Christian apologetics in a lecture entitled "Apologetics and Theology" as follows: "It is a fact that there exists an apologetics that is small-minded, purely defensive, too opportunistic or completely superficial—not from temporary necessity, but from principle—and thus, its value is meager" (TF 92).[54] And in citing Fr.Charles, he lamented the false humility of modern theology–to use Milbank's words: "The shortcomings of yesterday's—or the day before yesterday's—apologetics are only too evident and provide ample justification for the theologian's disdain. It seems that its excesses, deviations and blunders never held such sway as they did during the last century when, according to the original expression of Fr. Charles, 'Apologetics engulfed theology' " (TF 93).[55]

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revelation. For Christianity would then be reduced 'a transcendental condition for the understanding of man by himself, whether one is concerned with thought or life, knowledge or action'. To reduce it thus would be to 'abolish' it "(CF 42-3); [Original text] "Rudolf Bultmann semble mettre d'abord une sorte d'opposition radicale, toute factice, entre l'idée d'une révélation qui s'accomplirait 'en dehors de nous' sans nous concerner en rien, et celle d'une révélation qui, pour nous concerner, ne nous dirait rien et ne saurait rien nous dire que sur l'actualité de notre existence. La Révélation, prononce-t-il, 'ne nous apporte absolument rien' si nous attendons d'elle qu'elle nous fasse connaître quelque enseignement inaccessible à l'homme, des mystères qui devraient rester intangibles dès le moment où ils nous sont communiqués; mais elle apporte tout, si nous attendons d'elle éclaire l'homme sur lui-même et l'aide à se comprendre. Elle n'est pas 'communication d'un savoir', mais 'événement que nous atteint'. La foi n'a donc rien d'un 'énoncé théorique' ou d'un 'savoir dogmatique': elle est 'confession personnelle' et 'acte de décision'. Par une telle dichotomie, nous semble-t-il, si du moins on la systématisait, en voulant éviter un Charybde imaginaire (ou imaginé par quelques 'extrinsécistes' qui ne savent pas ce qu'ils disent), on n'éviterait pas de tomber dans un Scylla où s'engloutirait toute réalité de révélation. On réduirait en effet le christianisme 'à une condition transcendantal de la compréhension de l'homme par lui-même, qu'il s'agisse de la pensée ou de la vie, de la connaissance ou de l'action'. Le réduire ainsi, ce serait l'"anéantir"'(FC 108-9).

[54] [Original text] "Le fait est qu'il y a une apologétique mesquine, purement défensive, ou trop opportuniste, ou tout extérieure,-non par nécessité provisoire, mais par principe - dont la valeur est mince " (TO 98).

[55] [Original text] "Ces defauts de l'apologétique d'hier-ou d'avant-hier- ne sont que trop réels, et ne justifient que trop les dédains des théologiens. Jamais les excès, les déviations, les maladresses qu'on vient de dire n'ont sévi, semble-t-il, autant qu'au dernier siècle, au cours duquel, selon l'originale expression du P.Charles, 'l'apologétique a submergé la théologie'[*Recherches de science religieuse*, 1928, 240]" (TO 99). De Lubac's citation is in Fr. Charles, *Recherche de science religieuse*, 1928, 240. De Lubac points out that this accommodation to modern mind is due to the erroneous understanding of Christian dogma in which one separates dogma and history. He states: "The error consists in conceiving of dogma as a kind of 'things in itself', as a block of revealed truth with no relationship whatsoever to natural man, as a transcendent object whose demonstration (as well as the greater part of its content) has been determined by the arbitrary nature of a 'divine decree'. According to these theologians, when the apologist wishes to pass from reason to faith, he has only to establish a completely extrinsic connection between the two, just as one builds a footbridge to connect separate banks" (TF 93); [Original text] "Cette erreur consiste à concevoir le dogme comme une sorte de 'chose en soi', comme un bloc révélé sans rapport d'aucune sorte avec l'homme naturel, comme un objet transcendant dont la manifestation (aussi bien que la plus grande part du contenu) n'a été réglée que par l'arbitraire d'un 'décret divin'. Si bien que, selon ces théologiens, l'apologiste ne peut avoir pour tâche, lorsqu'il veut faire passer de la raison à la foi, que d'établir entre elles un lien tout extrinsèque, telle une passerelle de fortune entre deux rives étrangères" (TO 99-100).

4. Participation and hermeneutics

4.1 Making matter really matter: theological materialism

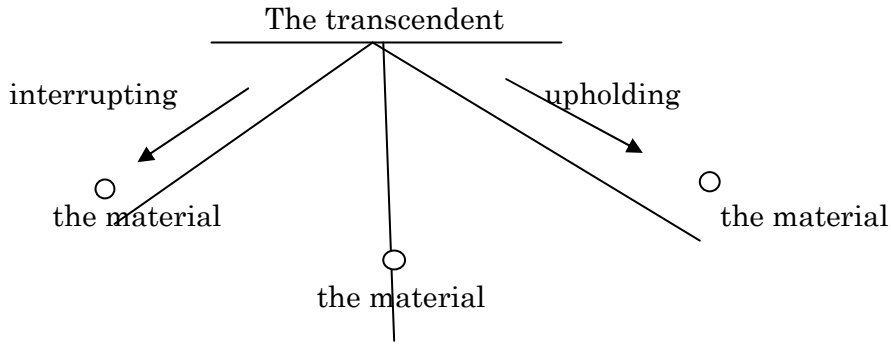
In general, philosophical or theological attitudes toward materiality are divided into two extremes. On one extreme, it is considered as something to be avoided in order to achieve spiritual perfection. This position is commonly associated with other-worldly religious and philosophical currents, such as Platonism, Gnosticism and Buddhism. On the other extreme, it is considered as the only entity in the universe by materialist philosophers who reject the existence of the spiritual. This attitude is seen prominently in ancient and modern atheistic philosophy. Modern secularity represents this idea in its wholesale and extreme form. In both cases we can see the idolization of one aspect of the reality.

Milbank chooses neither pure spiritualism nor pure materialism, because in his worldview materiality and spirituality can coexist without contradiction. How can it be possible? Milbank holds that this is possible by virtue of the idea of participation which has been forgotten since the Enlightenment. For him, the material is spiritual to the extent that it participates in the spiritual. Inversely, the spiritual cannot be really spiritual without the material. That is, the material cannot exist in its own right, but rather in paradoxical relation to the spiritual. Here Milbank uses the term 'material' in its broad sense which encompasses various human embodied dimensions such as "embodied life, sexuality, aesthetic experience, human political community" (RONT 3). The material realm has its integrity as such, but its ultimate end lies in the transcendent. Shortly, the material infinitely transcends itself. As Milbank states, "matter can only 'matter' if it expresses that which, unlike matter, has its cause in itself, which must be spiritual or trans-spiritual."[56] Moreover, "theology…could claim not only to save matter, but to be the only possible materialism."[57] Milbank uses the image of a pendulum with a view to elucidating his idea. With this image he intends to show the double aspect of the intervention of the transcendent. First, transcendence works to 'suspend' the material in the sense that it is 'interrupting' it and also in the sense of "upholding their relative worth over-against the void" (Ibid.3). This idea is coupled with de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis according to which nature is already in the state of supernatural grace. Both Milbank and de Lubac maintain that only the recovery of the transcendent can rescue us from nihilism which is generated by materialistic flattening. Milbank articulates this position on the relationship between the material and the spiritual as follows:

> The theological perspective of participation actually saves the appearances by exceeding them. It recognizes that materialism and spiritualism are false alternatives, since if there is only finite matter there is not even that, and that for phenomena really to be there they must be more than there. Hence, by appealing to an eternal source for bodies, their art, language, sexual and political union, one is not ethereally taking leave of their density. On the contrary, one is insisting that behind this density resides an even greater density— beyond all contrasts of density

[56] Milbank, "Foreword," in *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 16.
[57] Milbank, "The Programme of Radical Orthodoxy," in *Radical Orthodoxy?: A Catholic Enquiry*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming, 42.

and lightness (as beyond all contrasts of definition and limitlessness). This is to say that all there is only is because it is more than it is (RONT 4).



[Diagram III] Milbank's theological materialism

In his article, "Materialism and Transcendence,"[58] Milbank asserts that the material is to be subject to the theological in order that it is not to lapse into nihilism. To clarify his theological materialism, Milbank differentiates his position from the idealism, which puts the ideal above the material. Although he agrees with idealists that the material is not all that exists, he considers that idealism operates on the immanent horizon. For example, he takes up the example of pagan Greek thought which supposes that the cosmos is composed of two principles: form which is the organizing principle of the cosmos, and chaotic *hyle* (matter). For Milbank, these contrasting two principles are enclosed within immanent cosmos. This idea is prominently realized in German idealism (Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel), which supposes that human thought operates in an autonomous realm without recourse to the transcendent. As he rightly judges, "although this principle of autonomy stands in contrast to the alien self-enclosure of matter, nonetheless it is included with matter within the same cosmos, and for just this reason it is in a dualistic rivalry with the material principle. To assert the self-origination of immanent ideation is ultimately at the expense of the material ground."[59] According to Milbank, "the only way to save materialism from idealism is to invoke theology."[60]

As we have seen, this idea is derived from Milbank's reception of theurgical neo-Platonism which makes an affirmation of materiality and Christianized Platonism (Dionysius, Augustine, Aquinas, etc.).[61] Deeply rooted in the idea of the goodness of

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[58] John Milbank, "Materialism and Transcendence," in *Theology and the Political: The New Debate,* eds. Cheston Davis, John Milbank, and Slavoj Žižek (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). See also Phillip Blond, "The Politics of the Eye: Toward a Theological Materialism," in *Theology and the Political*, 439-462.

[59] Milbank, "Materialism and Transcendence," 397.

[60] Ibid., 409. In this sense, Stephen Shakespeare's reading of Milbank as a romantic theologian is false. See his "The New Romantics: A Critique of Radical Orthodoxy," *Theology* 103:163 (2000), 163-177.

[61] According to Milbank, "it is only the monotheistic doctrine of creation (to which nonetheless Proclean Neoplatonism closely tended) that allows a nonreductive materialism in theory and in practice, which allows us, for example, to value humanity above the cosmic and animal, and yet also in a more ultimate gesture to proclaim that the highest value lies in establishing all these three in peaceful harmonious perfection. This is exactly the gesture made by Dionysius the Areopagite's Christianizing of Proclus, who

creation, this model leads Milbank to affirm all material aspects of the human being in insisting theirs spiritual aspects. For him, "Christian understanding of 'creation', there is no 'spiritual' aspect of the world that in any way transcends our created (material, social and linguistic) condition" (WMS 155). This idea of materially mediated spiritulaity involves an important implication in Milbank's theology. If there is no spiritual reality set apart from the materiality, we canot have access to the reality without mediation of history, tradition, language, and community. For Milbank, the dismissal of this materialistic mediation is nothing other than gnostic approach to reality.

4.2 Hermeneutics and participatory ontology

Milbank's emphasis on materiality as a necessary human condition has several theological implications. For Milbank, the human being is situated and bounded by his historical conditions. De Lubac endorses this typically Heideggerian theme in approvingly citing this German philosopher: "One always believes that tradition is a thing of the past and that it is no more than a kind of object of historical awareness. One always supposes that it constitutes what is properly situated behind us, although we are, as it were, facing it—for it is our very destiny."[62] However, this hermeneutical understanding of the human being does not need to be associated with Heidegger's nihilistic account of being-in-the world.[63] For Milbank and de Lubac, if materiality is not something from which man is to be rescued, human finitude restricted by his material conditions should not be dismissed, but rather be valued as such, because human finitude is in harmonious relation to the whole universe. From this perspective, hermeneutics is an inherent and constitutive aspect in Christian theological reflection. James K.A Smith rightfully states that "Milbank articulates a 'Christian philosophical hermerneutics' in postmodern context."[64] Milbank's hermeneutical approch is consonant with de Lubac's theological hermeneutic generally called 'four fold senses of the Scripture.' In both approches, language plays an important role in theological reflection, for language is regarded as an inherent element constituting human finitude. Language plays a mediating role of linking the finite to the infinite by way of its symbolic function.

As is well known, language is the main concern of postmodern thought. Kevin J. Vanhoozer is right to say that "the postmodern turn from meta-narrative to narrative may also be viewed as a turn from subjectivity to language. Whereas Heidegger chided modernity for forgetting the question of being, postmodern thinkers contend that what

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had already insisted that the simplicity of matter in a way more reflected the simplicity of the first principle than did the reflexivity of intellect (Dionysius echoed this in his remarks about the apophatic suitability of seemingly gross symbols for the Godhead). And this perspective alone allows us the vision of a nonfascistic, non-anti-human ecology" (Milbank, "Materialism and Transcendence," 397.

[62] M. Heidegger, *Was heisst Denken?*, unpublished trans. M. de Diéguez, in MP, 103.

[63] Milbank and RO consider Martin Heidegger as a nihilist. See Conor Cunningham, *Genealogy of Nihilism,* 131- 54. In comparing Augustine's theory of evil as privation of being, Milbank thinks that Heidegger identifies human finitude itself a state of fall: "Heidegger's phenomenology of *dasein*.. is supposed to show that there is a 'guilt' more fundamental than moral guilt, and a 'fall' more basic than resulting from a willed rebellion against God" (TST 301).

[64] James K. A Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophical Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2000), 186, n 14. This viewpoint is confirmed by Pickstock's characterization of Radical Orthodoxy. "Radical orthodoxy is a hermeneutic disposition and a style of metaphysical vision; and it is not so much a 'thing' or 'place' as a 'task'." Pickstock, "Radical Orthodoxy and the Mediation of Time," in *Radical Orthodoxy? : A Catholic Enquiry*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming, 62.

has actually been forgotten is language."[65] Postmodern philosophy supposes that language is not an intrument of our thinking, but shapes reality. Hence, as Wittgenstein states, "the limits of my language are the limits of my world."[66] This so-called "linguistic turn" [67] of philosophy favored by the postmodern thinker, far from harming to Christianity, offers to it an opportunity to retrieve its status as a meta-discourse. Milbank even claims that the origin of this current lies in Christian thought itself.

According to Milbank, "The human mind does not 'correspond' to reality, but arises within a process which gives rise to 'effects of meaning.' It is a particularly intense network of such effects" (PCA n° 36). In other words, the human spirit is not justified by itself. It is always in relation with God or other creatures. Theologically speaking, there is a correlation between the human spirit and the divine spirit. Moreover, Milbank, following de Lubac, holds that desire is a central impetus for human knowing:

> The mind is only illuminated by the divine *Logos*, if also our 'preceding' energies, and our 'emergent' desires, correspond to the Father and the Spirit, respectively. We know what we want to know, and although all desiring is an 'informed' desiring, desire shapes truth beyond the imminent implications of any logical order, so rendering the Christian logos a continuous product as well as a process of 'art' (Ibid.).

Language is therefore supernatural in character and our linguistic expression reflects the divine creative act which is already contained in the Logos (*verbum*) as the Son (WMS 29). Language is the only way by which we can have access to the divine reality. So it is both the possibility and the limits of our knowledge of God. Milbank's approach is echoed by the counter-Enlightenment thinkers (Kierkegaard, Hamann, Vico, Herder). According to them, "we only think in language, and only grasp the world through language, it is impossible even to disentangle the knowledge we have of ourselves from our knowledge of the world (or 'nature'), or vice versa…, Linguistic expression, like art, brings into being its own specific, new content; before language, humanity is simply contentless" (TST 149). For Hamann, "the creation is the invented language by God to transmit his will to men."[68] According to Milbank, the 18th century thinkers had far surpassed an 'ontology of substance.' For them, "the reality is constituted by signs and their endless ramification" (WMS 85). In other words, they opposed Descartes' foundational account of knowledge which would be the origin of modern philosophy and theology. They highlight the radical linguisticality of thought which is secretly based on Christian semiology (WMS 84-5). Milbank enlarges his

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[65] *Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 12.

[66] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 5.6, trans. C.K. Ogden (New York: Hartcourt), 74.

[67] This terms was popularized by the book which Richard Rorty edited, *The Linguistic Turn Recent Essays in Philosophical Method* [1967] (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992). 'Linguistic turn' is first utilized by Gustav Bergmann in this work Rorty edited. See Gustav Bergmann, "Logical Positivism, Language and the Reconstruction of Metaphysics," in *The Linguistic Turn*, 63-71. Crucial feature of this linguistic turn is the idea that language is not an instrument which carries human thought, but actively constitutes reality. In fact, preoccupation with language is not simply a postmodern phenomenon (Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault, etc), but already began with modern philosophy (Locke, Leibniz, Humboldt, Condillac, Frege). See Michael Leonski, *Linguistic Turns in Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[68] Lukas K.Sosoe, "Kant et Hamann: Language et Critique de la Raison, " in *Année 1781-1801, Kant, Critique de la Raison Pure, Vingt Ans de Réception,* ed. Claude Piché (Paris: Vrin, 2002), 92.

thought to culture. On the basis of participatory ontology, Milbank claims that all reality is already engraced. He states: "I have always tries to suggest that participation can be extended also to language, history and culture: the whole realm of human making" (BR ix).

From this perspective, the creative/poetical activities of man as such are conceived as supernatural. It is from this understanding of language that Milbank's theology of culture is forged. He understands the incarnation as a linguistic event. The linguistic character of Christ qualifies culture as the gift of God in which man makes himself poetically. Graham Ward, one of the proponents of RO understands RO as a *Kulturpolitik*.[69] According to him, "Radical Orthodoxy is involved in reading the signs of the times... It looks at 'sites' that we have invested much cultural capital in- the body, sexuality, relationships, desire, painting, music, the city, the natural, the political – and it reads them in terms of the grammar of the Christian faith."[70]

According to Milbank, de Lubac echoes this perspective, for his theology is deeply engaged in culture via his sacramental ontology, in which the sign plays the mediating role between culture and theology. In this sense, de Lubac is, as Milbank holds, a postmodern Christian philosopher, for he maintains a Christian philosophy based on Christian semiology. According to Milbank, "De Lubac elaborated a 'discourse of the supernatural' that was neither dogmatics nor philosophical theology—although he would have insisted that this was a restoration of an Augustinian 'Christian philosophy' or a Thomist *Sacra Doctrina*." In Milbank's account, de Lubac works in postmodern direction, because de Lubac's paradoxical supernatural discouse needs a linguistic mediation. As a consequence, "De Lubac indeed declared that theology should be a mysticism and that mysticism was essentially a *reading of signs*."[71]

5. Conclusion

In beginning our research on Milbank's engagement with Henri de Lubac, we attempted to situate Milbank and de Lubac in a postmodern context in order to have a more global vision for our analysis of Milbank's relationship to de Lubac. No idea is born from a void. Milbank is not an exception. His theology is best understood in the context of postmodern neo-Platonic revival of twentieth-century French thought, which includes his theological mentor, Henri de Lubac. Milbank's Christianized neo-Platonism offers to him a theological stance on the issues raised by postmodern philosophy. That is, we might say that Milbank takes up postmodern idioms in order to utilize them for the sake of promotion of Christian truth. While postmodern philosophy in general is nihilistic in character, Milbank is convinced that their philosophical claim is more near to the Christian truth claim than modern philosophy. In this regard, postmodern philosophy offers to Christian theology a fertile soil which modernity had ravaged. Postmodernism shares many things in common with Christianity: the affirmation of human temporality,

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[69] See Graham Ward, "Radical Orthodoxy and/as Cultural Politics," in *Radical Orthodoxy: A Catholic Enquiry*, 97-111. See also his *Christ and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005); *Cultural Transformation and Religious Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); *The Politics of Discipleship: Becoming Postmaterial Citizens* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009).

[70] Ibid., 103.

[71] John Milbank "Henri de Lubac," in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology since 1918*, ed. David Ford and Rachel Muers (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 80, emphasis mine.

revaluation of the faith in human cognitive operation, mistrust of modern universal reason, etc. However, while Milbank takes issue with postmodernism, Henri de Lubac's theological thinking guides Milbank's thinking. Henri de Lubac is a courageous theologian who struggled with modernity and its nihilism in affirming that only Christian theology can be an authentic alternative in the secularized world. Milbank calls for de Lubac as a postmodern theologian in a contemporary context.

In the postmodern context, in which foundational account of human knowledge is challenged,with de Lubac, Milbank holds that Christianity is not a set of propositional formulations, but a radically new event in human history. Both de Lubac and Milbank oppose the systematic account of Christian truth, because, for them, this attempt is a compromise with modernity which pursues objectivity. For them history is of paramount importance. God is not beyond history without human concerns, nor only within history in being assimilated to an immanent historical process. God is absolutely transcendent beyond the world as well as absolutely immanent in the world. This paradoxical understanding of God's economy in the world provides the basis for Milbank's theological project. Milbank's emphasis on history is closely related to his affirmation of the material. The material is, for Milbank, conceived as participating in the spiritual. That is, the material and the spiritual cannot be divided. This affirmation of the material gives value to the hermeneutical understanding of the human being, a typical postmodern understanding of the human being. However, for Milbank, while the human being is determined by material conditions, this material conditioning does not lead the human being to being trapped within his finitude. For Milbank and de Lubac, the finite is analogically related to the infinite. So the conditioning by the material rather contributes to the harmony in diversity of God's creation. Their postmodern affirmation of the finite does not lapse into nihilism, because the finite is the diverse expression of the infinite. This understanding is undergirded by de Lubac's theological paradigm. In what follows, we will see that de Lubac's theology is a fundamental source for Milbank's engagement with the postmodern.

Part I. Anatomy of the Supernatural

When we read Milbank's works, we feel like walking in the jungle. Ordinary readers are perplexed by his encyclopedic knowledge and complicated arguments. In the course of my research I was decoding a complicated enigma. The goal of part I is to provide to the reader a manual for decoding the enigma. I think the key to decoding Milbank is to read him in the light of de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis. This *surnaturel* thesis functions as a lamp while we read Milbank. De Lubac's idea of the supernatural is a multi-faced idea. That is, we can illuminate this lamp from various perspectives. This is the task of chapter 2. Moreover, de Lubac's idea of the supernatural is closely linked to human language. So in chapter 3, we will examine the *surnaturel* thesis in relation to Milbank's understanding of human language. Finally, in chapter 4, we shall see the history of the breakdown of participatory ontology in focusing on post-Kantian space. For Milbank, this history is the process of forgetting of the idea of participation, while for de Lubac, this is the process of naturalization of the supernatural.

II. Participation and the Supernatural

> *Absolument impossible et absolument nécessaire à l'homme, c'est là proprement la notion du surnaturel: l'action de l'homme qui passe l'homme; et pour l'effort de sa raison, c'est de voir qu'il ne peut, qu'il ne doit pas s'y tenir* (Maurice Blondel).[1] [Absolutely impossible and absolutely necessary for man, that is properly the notion of the supernatural. Man's action goes beyond man; and all the effort of his reason is to see that he cannot, that he must not restrict himself to it.]

C. S. Lewis was one of the Christian writers who grappled with the theme of the supernatural desire of man throughout his whole literary career. His last novel, *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* (1956) best incarnates this theme which Lewis describes as *joy*. This joy is, for him, nothing other than the human *longing* for heaven.[2] In this novel, Lewis strongly defends his spiritual worldview through his figure, *Psyche*. When a severe famine attacks the city of Glome, the city's priest supposes that the famine is caused by the king's blasphemy and subsequent provocation of Ungit, goddess of Glome. The priest demands the king to offer his daughter, *Psyche,* as a sacrifice to the god of the Grey Mountain, the son of Ungit, in order to appease her. The night before her sacrifice, *Psyche* talks of her strange *longing* to her older sister Orual. Because Orual is obsessively attached to her beautiful younger sister, she cannot comprehend her sister's strange longing.

> [Orual] "Yes. What had I to look for if I lived? Is the world—this palace, this father—so much to lose? We have already had what would have been the best of our time. [Psyche] I must tell you something, Orual, which I never told to anyone, not even you."
>
> I know now that this must be so even between the lovingest hearts. But her saying it that night was like stabbing me. "What is it?" said I, looking down at her lap where our four hands were joined. "This," she[Psyche] said, "I have always—at least, ever since I can remember—had *a kind of longing for death*."
>
> "Ah, Psyche," I [Orual] said, "have I made you so little happy as that?"
>
> "No, no, no," she said. "You don't understand. *Not that kind of longing*. It was when I was happiest that I longed most. It was on happy days when we were up there on the

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[1] Maurice Blondel, *L'Action: Essai d'une Critique de la Vie et d'une Science de la Pratique* in Maurice Blondel, *Œuvres complètes*, tome I, 1893 *Les Deux Thèses*, texte établi et présenté par Claude Troisfontaines (Paris: PUF,1995), 422 [1893, 388]; Maurice Blondel, *Action: Essay on a Critique of Life and a Science of Practice*, trans. Oliva Blanchette (Notre Dame, Ind: University Notre Dame Press, 1984), 357.

[2] In his spiritual biography, *Surprised by Joy*, C.S. Lewis describes his surprising joy as follows: "My earliest aesthetic experience, if indeed they were aesthetic, were not of that kind; they were already incurably romantic, not formal. Once in those very early days my brother brought into the nursery the lid of a biscuit tin which he had covered with moss and garnished with twigs and flowers so as to make it a toy garden or a toy forest. That was the first beauty I ever knew. What the real garden had failed to do, the toy garden did. It made me aware of nature- not, indeed, as a storehouse of forms and colors but as something cool, dewy, fresh, exuberant. I do not think the impression was very important at the moment, but it soon became important in memory. As long as I live my imagination of Paradise will retain something of my brother's toy garden. And every day there were what we called 'the Green Hills'; that is, the low line of the Castlereagh Hills which we saw from the nursery windows. They were not very far off but there were, to children, quite unattainable. They taught me longing-Sehnsucht; made me for good or ill, and before I was six years old, a votary of the Blue Flower" (C.S.Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: the Shape of My Early Life* [New York: A Havest, Harcourt Inc., 1955], 7).

> hills, the three of us, with the wind and the sunshine…where you couldn't see Glome or the palace. Do you remember? The colour and the smell, and looking across at the Grey Mountain in the distance? And because *it was so beautiful, it sets me longing, always longing*. Somewhere else there must be more of it. Everything seemed to be saying, Psyche come! But I couldn't (not yet) come and I didn't know where I was to come to. It almost hurt me. I felt like a bird in a cage when the other birds of its kind are flying home."[3]

In this novel, *Psyche* symbolizes the natural human desire for the supernatural, that is, the desire for the union with God. As *Psyche* says, the supernatural attracts her, but she does not know where to find it. This remark shows well the paradoxical character of man's supernatural desire for God. This desire is granted to man as a gift, but cannot be satisfied by natural resources. It is to come from heaven as a surprising gift. This paradox is at the center of Milbank's theology and that of his theological mentor, Henri de Lubac. For them, (human) nature has a natural orientation toward the supernatural. This means that (human) nature is not self-sufficient and complete in itself, but rather completely dependent on the supernatural. As Henri de Lubac remarks, "there is something in man, a certain capacity for the infinite, which makes it impossible to consider him one of those beings whose whole nature and destiny are inscribed within the cosmos" (MS 110).[4] The goal of this chapter is to show in what way Milbank appropriates de Lubac's idea of the supernatural in his theological project, that is, to show how de Lubac's idea of the supernatural is linked to Milbank's major interrelated theological themes: participation, the nature/grace relationship, paradox, *poesis*, deification, etc. Indeed, these concepts provide us the interpretive key to understanding Milbank and de Lubac alike.

1.Participation

1.1 A brief overview of the concept of participation

Milbank's appropriation of de Lubac's idea of the supernatural is revealed in his understanding of the idea of participation (μέθεξις). In the preface to *Being Reconciled*, Milbank concisely defines the concept of participation: "*methesis* concerned a sharing of being and knowledge in the Divine" (BR ix). However, in fact, the idea of participation was not invented by Milbank, but has a long history in philosophy and theology since ancient times.[5] We begin by briefly sketching the history of the idea of participation in

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[3] C.S.Lewis, *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* (New York: Hartcourt, 1980), 73-4, emphasis mine.

[4] [Original text] "Il y a quelque chose en l'homme, un certain infini de capacité, qui ne permet pas de le confondre avec les êtres dont toute la nature et tout le destin s'inscrivent à l'intérieur du cosmos " (MSu 144-5). Elsewhere de Lubac state: "Deep in human nature (and so in every man) the image of God is imprinted, that is, a quality that constitutes in it- and even without it- a kind of secret call to the object of the full and supernatural revelation brought by Christ" (CPM 72); [Original text] "Au fond de la nature humaine, et par conséquent en chaque homme, l'image de Dieu est empreinte, c'est-à-dire ce quelque chose qui constitue en lui-encore sans lui- comme un appel secret à l'Objet de la révélation, pleine et surnaturelle, apportée par Jésus-Christ" (PME 127).

[5] For a historical survey of the idea of participation, see Kwon Hyuk Been, *A Story of Participation: The Postmodern Retrieval of an Ontological Framework with Particular Reference to the Transformation of Being* (Ph.D diss., University of Cambridge, May 2005). See also Jocob H. Sherman, "A Genealogy of Participation" in *The Participatory Turn: Spirituality, Mysticism, Religious Studies*, ed. Jorge N. Ferrer and Jocob H. Sherman (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008). This article suggests three kinds of participatory models (82): 1) formal or essential participation (Plato); 2) existential participation

Western thought. A notion similiar to the idea of participation is already found in Pythagoras's philosophy in the name of 'imitation,'[6] but it began to be distinctively appropriated as a philosophical term by Plato. Plato uses this idea of participation so that he may bring one universal form and many particular instances of it into relation. For example, there is one ideal roundness which cannot be given to our sense and so transcends many sensible instances of this roundness. Plato finds that the diverse sensible instances participate in the one suprasensible idea.

Aristotle is basically Plato's intellectual son in that he believes, like Plato, in the existence of immaterial universal knowledge. However, he disagrees with Plato that this universal exists beyond the sensible world. Aristotle thinks that reality is more dynamic than Plato. With Plato's static model, he could not explain the world in movement. That is, the world is, for Aristotle, the world of generation and change. So he suggests four kinds of causality (the material, formal, efficient, final causes) in order to explain reality in its diverse aspects. After all, for Aristotle, "to say that [the Forms] are patterns and the other things share in them is to use empty words and poetical metaphors."[7] Therefore Aristotle uses, instead of participation, the notion of *substance (ουσια)* as one of the basic categories for our understanding of the world. In this case, Aristotle rejects the Platonic connotation of the term, substance. For him, unlike Plato who thinks that substance is beyond the sensible, substance is immanent in things themselves. So it is individual and concrete. We do not see an apple as an example of the idea of the apple, but rather an apple as we see it from its seed to the ripe fruit. In this way, things are conceived as existing not by participation in the transcendent, but in their own right.

The notion of participation came to the forefront in neo-Platonism in its diverse forms (Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Proclus, Dioysius, etc.). Influenced by mystical religion, this current of Platonism accentuates the radical transcendence of the One. However, by virtue of the theory of emanation which conceives that everything is emanated from the One, the dilemma of participation is overcome.[8] That is to say, the produced are absolutely dependent on the One, because it receives its being from the One. Yet the products have their integrity because they have their cause in themselves, for the ultimate cause is emanated into the individual creation. As we have seen briefly,

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(Thomas Aquinas); 3) creative participation (the Romantics, contemporary theory). In my view, Milbank embraces all these kinds of participatory models. This will be clear in the course of this study.

[6] Christophe Rogue, "Participation," in Michel Blay, *Dictionaire des Concepts Philosophiques* (Paris: Larousse, 2006), 593-4.

[7] Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* I. 9. 991a, 19-26.

[8] The notion of participation is used by Plato as a conceptual apparatus which resolves the problem of the One and the Many in his philosophical system. Yet Plato himself recognizes the dilemma of participation. This problem could be shortly summarized as: How can the many participate in the One without the latter losing its oneness? In his dialogue, *Parmenides*, Plato has the title character raise the problem of the theory of Form (Plato, *Parmenides*, 130B1). According to the theory of Form, the part participates in the whole. In this case, Parmenides raises a question as follows: "The part participates in the whole, or a part of the whole?" (Ibid., 131E 3-5.) If the part participates in a part of the whole, the Oneness of the Form is undermined. That is the dilemma of participation. This is the very point on which Aristotle disagrees with his teacher, Plato. Aristotle's objection to Plato's theory of Form is illustrated by his famous 'the third man argument'. According to him, in Plato's doctrine, if there is a real man in existence, there must be an ideal man to which the former's identity corresponds. But Aristotle argues that likewise, for there to be an ideal man, there must be yet another one to which his identity would correspond: an ideal for the ideal. Thus, if Plato's doctrine were to be true, it would lead to infinite regression (Cf. Aristotle, *Topics* 178b 36; *Metaphysics* 990b17, 1039a2.).

this Neoplatonic framework exercised an enduring influence on Western philosophy and theology, in particular the Christianized version of this Neoplatonism (Pseudo-Dionysius, Augustine, Aquinas, Cusanus, Eckhart, etc.) essential to Milbank and de Lubac. In the Renaissance, thinkers such as Pico della Mirandola adopted a participatory framework.[9] Even in the time of the Reformation, Erasmus, and Calvin retain this idea in a limited sense (SM 34). Romanticism, which resisted the rigid Enlightenment, gave a central place to this concept (Vico, Herder, Jacobi, Coleridge[10], Schelling, etc.). And it is against this background that we can best understand Milbank's and de Lubac's theological framework.

1.2 Milbank's and de Lubac's appropriation of the idea of participation

If the supernatural is the key word which marks de Lubac's theology, participation is the defining notion which characterizes Milbank's entire theology. He declares explicitly the centrality of this concept in RO's theological project: "The central theological framework of radical orthodoxy is 'participation' as developed by Plato and reworked by Christianity, because any alternative configuration perforce reserves a territory independent of God" (RONT 3).

Similarly, de Lubac states: "The idea of the supernatural is as essential to Christianity as, for instance, the idea of creation, revelation, the Church or sacrament" (BCNG 9).[11] If Milbank develops his theology in focusing on the idea of participation, de Lubac focuses on the idea of the supernatural. In my view, de Lubac's choice of the supernatural as his central theological notion is intended to accentuate the overwhelming grace in creation in opposition to the immanentist view of nature in modern secular thought. The modern worldview supposes that nature can exist in its own right without any reference to the supernatural. De Lubac wants to supernaturalize nature. However, Milbank's choice puts the primary emphasis on the absolute dependency of creation on God against the assertion of human autonomy. In the end, although the idea of participation does not come to the fore in de Lubac's theology, the two ideas are interchangeable,[12] because they express the same reality in two different ways. Common to Milbank's idea of participation and de Lubac's idea of the supernatural is their shared claim that creation is not complete in itself, but paradoxically dependent on God.

In fact, the idea of participation is not absent in de Lubac's works. He supports the participatory ontology which supposes that creation ontologically participates in God. In

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[9] See Henri de Lubac, *Pic de la Mirandole: Étude et Discussion* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne,1974).

[10] See John Milbank, "Divine *Logos* and Human Communication," in FL 3-24.

[11] [Original text] "L'idée de surnaturel est aussi essentielle au christianisme que peuvent l'être, par exemple, les idées de création, ou de révélation, ou d'Église, ou de sacrement" (PCNG 9).

[12] De Lubac admitted that his use of idea of the supernatural is not of absolute necessity. He chose this word in order to oppose the immanent understanding of nature: "I should also have been more specific, with respect to "independent" thinkers and historians of philosophy even more than with respect to Scholastics, about the sense in which the word 'nature' was taken: it referred to a concept of the 'supernatural' and not to an idea that would be opposed, for example, within philosophic thought, to ideas such as that of person or history or culture, etc" (ASC 199). In retrospecting his writing career, he acknowledges that his choice of the terms 'supernatural' does not sufficiently consider the "historic revelation or of creation in Christ and for Christ" (Ibid). So de Lubac agrees with Father Henri de Bouillard that this terms should have been called 'the Christian mystery'" (Ibid).

the context of his argument of the possibility of knowledge of God, he uses the concept of participation. Above all, for him God is ineffable, because there is a radical chasm between God and the creature. However, this does not mean that there is no trace of God in creation. For De Lubac, "nothing is worse than a premature 'negative theology'" (DG 121). The notion of participation lays a bridge between radically transcendent God and the creature. However, de Lubac holds that each creature participates in God in a varying degree (DG 124). He states drawing on Pseudo-Dionysius: "The *degrees of participation* are real and various…The spiritual creatures is like God—but 'God in his total transcendence is unlike anything else'" (DG 125, emphasis mine).[13]

Then, why does Milbank propose the idea of participation as a central concept in opening RO's theological manifesto, *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology (1999)* ? We can suppose that Milbank shares the same motive with de Lubac when he published his work *Sunaturel* (1946). Confronted with the ravaging atheism that emerged since the 19th century, de Lubac gave a theological response to Western atheistic nihilism and its social, political and psychological consequences, in asserting that the retrieval of the idea of the supernatural could save the Western world from its ruins. At the end of 20th century, Milbank, faithfully inheriting de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis, challenged contemporary nihilism that began with the Enlightenment and has been extended in postmodern world. Milbank reads Western philosophy as a gradual forgetting of the idea of participation—we shall see this gradual process in detail in chapter 4. For Milbank, without participation, the world loses its meaning and depth. Only the retrieval of this idea can rescue the world from its death, because participation makes possible the restoration of the link between God and all creation without removing the integrity of creation. Milbank states: "Participation…refuses any reserve of created territory, while allowing finite things their own integrity" (RONT 3). This is a bold assertion in the context of Western society in which secularism is prevailing under the banner of modernity.

However, Milbank complains that the traditional understanding of participation neglects the cultural and political significance of the concept. So he holds that participation is to be re-envisioned in a postmodern context. That is, for him, the concern with the problem of language, culture, time and history is, far from harming Christian faith, to be embraced by a participatory framework. In this sense, he states that "my theological project has been primarily focused upon 'participation', but in a new way" (BR ix).[14] More precisely he explains his new participatory theological vision in the preface of *Being Reconciled*. He states:

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[13] [Original text] "Les *degrés de participation* sont réels et divers…La créature spirituelle est semblable à Dieu- mais 'dans sa totale transcendance, Dieu, lui, n'est semblable à rien'" (SCD 150, emphasis mine). De Lubac's citation is in Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, ch. 9,6.

[14] Here Milbank admits his indebtedness for this insight to Olivier-Thomas Venard in his article "Radical Orthodoxy: Une Première Impression," in *Revue Thomiste*, 101: 3 (2001), 409-44 (BR 212, n°1) (This article is also contained in Adrian Pabst, Olivier-Thomas Venard, *Radical Orthodoxy* : *Pour une Révolution Théologique* [Genève: Ad Solem,2004], 83-145). Oivier-Thomas Venard explains Milbank's originality at length: "Radical Orthodoxy concède que la participation de a connaissance humaine à la connaissance divine, decouverte *via* le travail d'abstraction de perfections pures dans les réalités connaissanbles, ne suffit pas à assurer la validité du discours théologique, en tant que discours dit avec des mots, et non pas pure pensée. Mais Radical Orthodoxy n'en tire pas la conclusion que la métaphysique ancienne s'est trompée ; bien plutôt, le mouvement estime qu'elle n'est pas allée assez loin dans sa pensée

> I have always tried to suggest that participation can be extended also to language, history and culture: the whole realm of human making. Not only do being and knowledge participate in a God who is and who comprehends; also human making participates in a God who is infinite poetic utterance: the second person of the Trinity (BR ix).

This bold theological vision is equally illustrated by his description of RO's theological vision undergirded by the idea of the participation in the introduction of *RONT*. Here three editors of RONT (Milbank, Ward, Pickstock) claim that human concrete lives are to be reclaimed by the idea of traditional Christian doctrine understood in terms of participation:

> The present collection of essays attempts to reclaim the world by situating its concerns and activities within a theological framework. Not simply returning in nostalgia to the premodern, it visits sites in which secularism has invested heavily—aesthetics, politics, sex, the body, personhood, visibility, space—and resituates them from a Christian standpoint; that is, in terms of the Trinity, Christology, the Church and the Eucharist (RONT 1).[15]

In short, Milbank's theological vision is to theologically reclaim all the realm of human lives in terms of participation, which has long been colonized by a secular spirit. As we shall see in part II, this challenge to secularity is made possible by the participation in the Body of the Church.

2. Nature and grace

We now turn to the problem of the nature/grace relationship, which is another key subject for understanding Milbank's theology. The way grace is related to nature has been one of the pivotal theological issues in Christian theology.[16] It is not an exaggeration to say that the way of articulating the relationship between nature and grace determines the overall nature of a theology. The result of this articulation spans from soteriological issues to political theology. According to Étienne Gilson, nature/grace, faith/reason, theology/philosophy and Church/State are parallel oppositions.[17] David. L. Schindler even notes that the nature/grace relationship determines Christian identity.[18]

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de la participation: à bien y réfléchir, ce n'est pas seulement la pensée mais la verbalité de la pensée elle-même qui est participée" (*Radical Orthodoxy: Pour une Révolution Théologique*, 117).

[15] We shall see that the theological themes such as the Trinity, Christology, the Church and the Eucharist are understood by Milbank in terms of participation.

[16] For the question of the relationship of nature and grace, see Stephen Duffy, *The Graced Horizon: Nature and Grace in Modern Catholic Thought* (Collegeville. MN: Liturgical Press, 1992).

[17] According to Gilson, "On peut poser comme une loi philosophique historiquement vérifiable qu'il y a corrélation nécessaire entre la manière dont on conçoit le rapport de l'État à l'Église, celle dont on conçoit le rapport de la philosophie à la théologie et celle dont on conçoit le rapport de la nature à la grâce" (*Dante et la philosophie* [Paris: Vrin, 1986], 200, cited in Denis Sureau, *Pour une Nouvele Théologie Politique*, 32).

[18] "The problem of nature and grace is not an arcane matter suitable only for in-house academic squabbling among theologians…. the problem reaches to the heart of what it means to be Christian" (David. L. Schindler, "Introduction: Grace and the Form of Nature and Culture," in *Catholicism and Secularization in America*, ed. David L. Schindler (Notre Dame: Communio Books, 1990), 10 cited in Jeter J. Bernardi, Maurice *Blondel and Social Catholicism*: *The Clash over the Church's Role in Society during the Modernist Era* (The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 4; For Balthasar, "the interpretation of the grace-nature distinction affects one's understanding of the structure of metaphysics, ethics,

In the course of the history of Christianity, various articulations between nature and grace generate different theological, ecclesial currents. According to de Lubac, "Nature (human nature) and the supernatural; nature (freedom) and grace; these two associated distinctions occupy a large place in traditional Catholic teaching" (BCNG 7-8).[19] In the framework of our study, I suggest three models of the articulation between nature and grace. In the first place, there is a model which separates nature and grace distinctively (the neo-scholastic model, Baius, Jansenius, Barth). In this case, nature is conceived as an autonomous and self-sufficient reality. Grace is, therefore, understood as an extrinsic and external reality added and juxtaposed to nature. There is no internal link between nature and grace. Of course, there can be different articulations of this model. For Pelagius, grace is granted through man's natural self- righteousness. By the same token, Baius understands grace as something granted from outside. He understands grace as what God owes man in exchange for his obediance. Jansenius argues that (human) nature is radically corrupted after the Fall. So it is only by efficacious grace that man can be saved from this fallen state. Despite his strong emphasis on the grace of God through the revealed Word, Barth remains trapped within this model, for while insisting on the overwhelming grace of God in nature, he, in fact, admits the autonomy of the natural sphere by abandoning it. In consequence, despite differing degrees, the proponents of this model understood the relation between nature and grace sheerly in extrinsic fashion.

In the second place, there is a model which accepts both the gratuitous nature of grace and the autonomy of nature. Karl Rahner illustrates this model. For him, in order to safeguard the gratuity of grace, the notion of pure nature is to be assumed. However, because this notion of pure nature is coupled with the extrinsic understanding of the relation between nature and grace, he devises the conceptual apparatus of the 'supernatural existential,' a notion which suggests that man can realize his supernatural vocation in his concrete lives even if he is in natural state.

In the third place, Henri de Lubac and Milbank propose an integrated model of nature and grace. It is similar to Rahner's model, but different in that it radically criticizes the purely natural state. In the case of de Lubac and Milbank, nature is paradoxically related to the supernatural. This means that nature is already graced, but at the same time in need of the supernatural, for nature is created in view of its divinization.

2.1 De Lubac's and Milbank's integrated model

2.1.1 Neo-scholastic model

Neo-scholasticism is the prevailing theological climate against which de Lubac starkly protested. Neo-scholasticism emerged during the latter half of the 19th century for the sake of protecting Christian faith from growing modernity, which threatened the

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apologetics, politics, and the entire praxis of human life" (H. U.von Balthasar, "Der Begriff der Natur in der Theologie," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 75 (1953), 452-61.,cited in Tracy Rowland, *Culture and the Thomistic Tradition,* 92).

[19] [Original text] "Nature (humaine) et surnaturel, nature (liberté) et grâce: ces deux distinctions associées tiennent une place considérable dans l'enseignement catholique traditionnel "(PCNG 7). Cf. Alfred Vanneste, *Natureet Grâce dans la Théologie Occidentale: Dialogue avec H. de Lubac* (Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1996).

identity of Christianity by incorporating Christian faith within universal secular reason. It was necessary for the Catholics to defend the rationality of Christian faith faced with a rationalist attack. For neo-scholasticism, Thomas Aquinas was an ideal model for the fulfillment of the reconciliation between reason and faith. Pope Leo XIII's Encyclical Letter *Aerterni Patris* (1879) (sub)titled *On the Restoration of Christian Philosophy* officially endorsed the neo-scholastic position on the relation between faith and reason, and between theology and philosophy. In this promulgation, he encouraged the proper use of philosophy for the preparation of Christian faith:

> Philosophy, if rightly made use of by the wise, in a certain way tends to smooth and fortify the road to faith, and to prepare the souls of its disciples for the fit reception of revelation; for which reason it is well called by ancient writers sometimes a stepping stone to the Christian faith, sometimes the prelude and help of Christianity, sometimes the Gospel teacher.[20]

This promulgation in fact allows the autonomy of philosophy, independent of faith. This has several implications. Theological truth and philosophical truth come to have same status. Natural laws become the criterion of social and ecclesial lives. The state and the Church are conceived as naturally linked to each other. Divine revelation is manifested as a propositional truth indifferent to history. For Henri de Lubac and the nouvelle théologie, this tendency brought ravaging consequences to the ordinary lives of Christians, because it granted autonomy to natural lives in cutting off their link from the supernatural.

The significance of the second Vatican council lies in its attempt to undermine the dualist structure of Catholic thought which distinguishes between reason and faith, and between philosophy and theology. It is well known that Henri de Lubac and the nouvelle théologie largely contributed to this theological revolution. According to Milbank, this revolution signifies that "in concrete, historical community there is no such thing as a state of 'pure nature'; rather, every person has always already been worked upon by divine grace, with the consequence that one cannot analytically separate 'natural' and 'supernatural' contributions to this integral unity" (TST 206).

2.1.2 Maurice Blondel's philosophical revolution

This theological revolution was prepared by a thought voiced in the French Catholic philosophy developed by Maurice Blondel (1861-1949).[21] Even though Blondel was

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[20] Pope Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris: On the Restoration of Christian Philosophy*, Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, August 4, 1879, in *The Heart of Catholicism*: *Essential Writings of the Church from St. Paul to John Paul II,* ed. Thoedore E. Janes, Huntington, Ind.:Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, 1997), 514.

[21] For an introduction to Blondel's Christian philosophy recently published, see H. Bouillard, *Blondel et le Christianisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1961); Henri Duméry, *Raison et Religion dans la Philosophie de l'Action* (Paris: Seuil, 1963); Marc Renault, *Déterminisme et Liberté dans « L'Action » de Maurice Blondel* (Lyon: Vitte,1965); Pierre De Cointet, *Maurice Blondel, Un Réalisme Spirituel* (Paris: Parole Et Silence, 2001). René Virgoulay, *Philosophie et Théologie chez Maurice Blondel* (Paris: Cerf, Philosophie et Théologie, 2002); Adam C. English, *The Possibility of Christian Philosophy: Maurice Blondel at the Intersection of Theology and Philosophy*, *Radical Orthodoxy Series* (London: Routledge, 2007); Emmanuel Gabellieri et Pierre de Cointet, *Maurice Blondel et la Philosophie Française* (Paris: Parole et silence, 2007; Oliva Blanchette, *Maurice Blondel, A Philosophical Life* (Grand Rapids. Mich: Wm.B. Eerdmans, 2010); Peter J. Bernardi, *Maurice Blondel, Social Catholicism & Action Française: The Clash over the Church's*

formed in the neo-scholastic climate in which philosophy is conceived as having no contact with the supernatural, he was dissatisfied with this extrinsic understanding of the relationship between nature and the supernatural and concomitantly between philosophy and theology. For him, philosophy is not an autonomous science, but open to revelation. That is why he is so uneasy with modern immanent philosophy which explains man and the world in sheerly natural terms. His integrated vision of nature and the supernatural leads him to reject Neo-thomist realism which holds that truth is *adaequatio rei et intellectus* and to adopt the view of the truth as *adaequatio mentis et vitae*.[22] It follows, for him, that theology is not to be apologetic. This idea is prominently echoed by Henri de Lubac and Milbank. We can read the traces of Blondel's thought which runs through the entire works of Henri de Lubac and John Milbank.

De Lubac explicitly acknowledged that Blondel paved the way for dismantling the dualist account of natura and grace, in stating "[Blondel] is the one who launched the decisive attack on the dualist theory which was destroying Christian thought" (BCNG 37).[23] De Lubac's strong resistance against the existence of pure nature is already present in Blondel's writings.[24] De Lubac's contribution to the dismantling of the dualist structure of nature and grace lies in his extension of Blondel's thesis to his detailed historical survey on the notion of pure nature. Further, de Lubac echoes Blondel's critique of modern immanentist philosophy and his emphasis on the indispensability of the supernatural in philosophical reflection.[25]

Blondel placed human action at the center of the comprehension of man, in characterizing the human will as the desire for the supernatural. Even though the works of St. Augustine were not known to him, he worked, in fact, in the vein of Augustinian tradition in which human action is understood in terms of the tension between human desire and the supernatural. For Blondel, human action, in its essence, cannot be explained without a link to the supernatural. According to him, "in revealing itself outside of time, action voluntarily remains for eternity what it is in time."[26] Human will is the key to the relation between God and man because "human will is 'never equal to itself, or never finds any satisfactory resting place in any of its natural

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Role in Society during the Modernist era (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009).

[22] Maurice Blondel, *Carnets Intimes* (1881-1894) tome I. (Paris : Cerf, 1961), 86. See J. Trouillard, "La Définition Blondénienne de la Vérité" in *Nouvelles, Institut Catholique de Paris* (décembre 1974), 38-44.

[23] [Original text] "C'est [Blondel] qui a porté les coups les plus décisifs à la théorie dualiste dont mourait la pensée chrétienne" (PCNG 29).

[24] According to Blondel, "En un sens, 'l'état de nature' n'est pas une possibilité irréalisée; car.. l'infirmité congénitale de la créature spirituelle reste effectivement sous-jacente à l'ordre même de la grâce. Mais, en un autre sens que nous considérons ici, l'état de pure nature n'a pas existé et n'existe pas à part, comme une donnée historique ou psychologique" (Maurice Blondel, *Le Problème de la Philosophie Catholique* [Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1932], 171).

[25] De Lubac states: "La pensée moderne considère la notion d'immanence comme la condition même de la philosophie; c'est-à-dire...qu'elle s'attache à l'idée... que rien ne peut entrer en l'homme qui ne sorte de lui et ne correspond en quelque façon à un besoin d'expansion.. et qu'il n'y a pour lui vérité qui compte.. sans être, de quelque manière, autonome et autochtone. Or, d'autre part, il n'y a de chrétien, de catholique que ce qui est surnaturel... c'est-à-dire qu'il est impossible à l'homme de tirer de soi ce que pourtant on prétend imposer à sa pensée et à sa volonté " (TH I 34).

[26] Maurice Blondel, *Action : Essay on a Critique of Life and a Science of Practice*, trans. Oliva Blanchette (Notre Dame, Ind: University Notre Dame Press, 1984), 341; [Original text] "en se révélant hors du temps l'action demeure volontairement pour l'éternité ce qu'elle est dans le temps" (Maurice Blondel, *L'Action*, 404).

intention or actions" (TST 120).[27] This thought is nothing more than a republication of St. Augustine's famous confession, "Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it repose in Thee."[28] Therefore, "action is a synthesis of man and God: neither God alone, nor man alone can change it, produce it, or annihilate it."[29] Milbank explains Blondel's phenomenological analysis of human action as follows: "the logic of action, of every action, demands the supernatural" (TST 214); "every action is entirely our own, yet entirely transcends us" (Ibid).

This approach is made possible by Blondel's philosophical method called the "method of immanence."[30] By way of this method Blondel parts company with Cartesian methodic doubt, which limits human intelligence to human knowing, and also the Kantian distinction between pure and practical reason, by placing human will at the center of human reflection. This method has nothing to do with immanentism, but rather opposes it, for the aim of this method is to demonstrate that finite human will is always in tension with the supernatural. The significance of this method lies in Blondel's emphasis on the supernatural character of everyday lives. Hans Boersma states this point well as follows: "When Blondel introduced the phrase 'method of immanence' he was hardly substituting immanence for transcendence. Instead, he was insisting that Christian revelation needed to touch base with the dynamic realities of people's daily lives."[31]

Blondel thought that human will is not self-sufficient. Inspired by the idea of the apostle Paul, he asserted that our will is inherently oriented toward the supernatural. Whether our will is accomplished or not, it presupposes the existence of the supernatural. By the same token, Milbank notes: "The task of philosophy, for Blondel, its truly scientific task, is to acknowledge its own inadequacy: for the least thought, as action, escapes it, in (implicitly) acknowledging the plenitude of supernatural superaddition, and the ever-renewed mediation of love" (TST 215). Blondel's claim to the insufficiency of philosophical thought had a profound influence to de Lubac's theological reflection, because this means the dismissal of the neo-scholastic distinction between nature and grace. Milbank in his turn estimates that Blondel rightly recognizes the close link between ontological problems and Christian practice.[32] Unlike Kant, whose universal moral vision is based on practical reason, Blondel locates moral reflection

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[27] According to Milbank, "Blondel's phenomenology concludes negatively, with the paradox that the human will, from its most native desire, demands a completion that goes beyond its own resources. In its immanent impulses it requires the transcendent, which, though necessary to it, can only be superadded, freely given" (TST 210).

[28] Augustine, *The Confession of St. Augustine*, trans. Edward Bouverie Pusey (New York: The Floating Press, 2008), 5.

[29] Marice Blondel, *Action*, 343; [Original text] "l'action est une synthèse de l'homme et de Dieu: ni Dieu seul, ni l'homme ne peut la changer, la produire ou l'anéantir" (Maurice Blondel*, L'Action*, 371).

[30] Blondel defines this method as follows: "[la method d'immanence] mettre en équation dans la conscience même ce que nous paraissons penser et vouloir et faire, avec ce que nous faison, nous voulons et nous pensons en réalité" (Maurice Blondel, *Les Premies Ecrit de Maurice Blondel* [Paris: PUF, 1956], 39).

[31] Hans Boersma*, Nouvelle théologie and Sacramental Ontology*, 61.

[32] According to Milbank, "Blondel is right: the ontological question is only seriously posed and answered in practice, and only the practice of a tradition like Christianity can now assume all the traditional tasks of philosophy as metaphysics. But philosophy cannot mark out the site for a necessarily Christian ontology. It is theology, rather, and not philosophy, which explains things, which discovers reality as mediating action, which is alone certainty, alone science… (TST 217).

precisely in the practice concretized within Christian tradition. "Blondel, more than anyone else, points us beyond secular reason" (TST 219).

2.1.3 De Lubac and Milbank on nature and grace

Under the strong influence of Blondel, Henri de Lubac sought to dismantle the double structure of nature and grace in neo-scholasticism. Against the extrinsic account of the relationship between nature and grace in neo-scholasticism, de Lubac adamantly argues that nature and grace constitute an organic whole. Despite an attack by Catholic conservative theologian accusing him of immanentism and association with modernity, he argues that nature is intrinsically and internally related to grace. For his opponents, his thought damages the gratuitous nature of grace. But he consistently maintains that his view defends the gratuity of grace.

The direct target of de Lubac's *sunaturel* thesis is the notion of pure nature (*natura pura*) which was recognized in the late Middle Age in order to safeguard the total gratuity of grace. [33] Milbank summarizes de Lubac's integralist revolution as follows: "The view that in concrete, historical humanity there is no such thing as a state of 'pure nature'" (TST 206). Having its origin in philosophy, the hypothetical notion of pure nature is already found in medieval theological literature as a natural area without grace. M.W.F Stone points out three sources of the acknowledgement of the concept of 'pure nature' as it was acknowledged in sixteenth-century: First, this concept stems from the late medieval distinction between *potentia Dei ordinata* and *potentia Dei absoluta* in nominalism. On the basis of this distinction late medieval thinkers suppose the hypothetical state in which God could have created a man who is destined not to sin; second, this concept was recognized for a practical reason, the problem of children who die unbaptized and so who are 'without fault and grace' (*sine cupla nec gratia*). In order to resolve this problem medieval theologians suggest an intermediate state called limbo. This means that Adam could have been dead before receiving sanctifying grace; the third source is the most decisive in the development of the notion of pure nature. In this stage, pure nature arose out of a necessity to guarantee the natural human end apart from a supernatural one. According to Stone, this use is prominently manifested in the work of Cardinal Cajetan.[34]

The idea of pure nature was decisively used as a key concept to respond to Baius's Augustinian theology in sixteenth century, especially by Bellarmine.[35] In denying sanctifying grace, Baius defined grace as a right for God due to his obedience. Catholic theologians opposed Baius in advancing the thesis of pure nature in order to protect the

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[33] See Henri Rondet, "Le Problème de la Nature Pure et la Théologie du XVIe siècle," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 35 (1948), 481-521.

[34] M. W.F. Stone, "Michael Baius (1513-89) and the Debate on 'Pure Nature': Grace and Moral Agency in sixteenth-century Scholasticism," in *Moral Philosophy on the Threshold of Modernity*, ed. Jill Kraye, Risto Saarinen (Dordrecht: Springer 2005), 69-70.

[35] De Lubac also holds that Bellarmine was the creator this fictive notion, see AMT *1*47-9. See also Karim Schelkens and Gielis Marcel, "From Driedo de Bellarmine. The Concept of Pure Nature in the 16th Century," *Augustiniana* 57:3-4 (2007), 425-48.

gratuitousness of God's grace.[36] That is, pure nature was considered to be a sphere to which graced is externally added.[37]

The reason why de Lubac starkly resists the idea of pure nature is its claim to human autonomy without reference to the transcendent. For de Lubac, who felt the Pelagian tendency implicated in this notion, modern tragedy originated from this hypothetical concept, because it paves the way for the autonomous realm without reference to God.[38] Several consequences which this concept produces can be spelled out. First of all, this generated a division between Christian faith and the ordinary lives of the believers. Likewise, this concept gave birth to the individualist account of salvation,[39] making us miss the notion of the Church as a political community usually called the Body of Christ. The very significance of the 'integralist revolution' of modern Catholic theology lies in the correction of the problems which the concept of pure nature generated.

For de Lubac, nature means simply the entire created universe. It is also conceived as human nature as a part of universe (PCNG 10). In this sense, it is not composed by eternal matter and form as Aristotle's philosophy envisages. Likewise, it is not a mechanical mechanism without spirit as Descartes supposes.[40] According to de Lubac, in theological usage, the term, nature, needs a correlative notion, the supernatural without which it cannot exist (Ibid. 12). That is, nature and the supernatural are correlative concepts which cannot exist without each other. However, this does not mean that there is no distinction between them. De Lubac makes clear that there is both distinction and union. He states that the denial of this distinction threatens the identity of Christianity itself. "To deny this fundamental distinction, if one truly understands what it means, to deny it regardless of the words in which it is expressed, would be to deny as well and in its very principle every notion of revelation, mystery, divine Incarnation, redemption or salvation. That would be to deny the Christian faith itself " (BCNG 20-21).[41]

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[36] For Baius' theology and its background, see M. W.F. Stone, "Michael Baius (1513-89) and the Debate on 'Pure Nature': Grace and Moral Agency in sixteenth-century Scholasticism," 51-90.

[37] According to Stephen A. Long, the doctrine of pure nature have two implications: firstly, "even here and now, the concrete order, there is impressed upon each human person a natural order to the proximate, proportionate, natural even from which the species of man is derived, which is distinct from the final and supernatural end. Second, "this ordering could have been created outside of sanctifying grace and without the further ordering of man to supernatural beatific vision (the famed hypothesis of Cajetan), although, from the beginning, the actual concrete order has been first one of man created in grace, and then subsequently fallen from grace and restored and elevated in grace" (Stephen A. Long, *Natura pura: On the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace* [Fordham University Press, 2010], 142-3).

[38] Tracy Rowland explains this point well: For de Lubac, the idea of a pure nature contained dangerous Pelagian tendencies, since it meant that it would be possible to sever grace from nature and marginalize it under the category of the 'supernatural'. The supernatural could subsequently be privatized and social life would then proceed on the basis of the common pursuit of goods associated solely with the 'natural order'. The next step would be for the perfection of the natural order to be treated as synonymous with the Christian project. Once the achievement of worldly perfection becomes an end in itself the 'Christian project' becomes indistinguiable from the Enlightenment project and humanity, once again, seek perfection by relying upon its own powers (Tracy Rowland, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition,* 94).

[39] In his seminal work, *Catholicism,* de Lubac made a sustained criticism of individualist notion of salvation.

[40] On the various usage of the notion of nature, see R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965).

[41] [Original text] "Refuser cette distinction fondamentale, si l'on comprend ce qu'elle signifie, la refuser en quelques mots qu'elle s'exprime, ce serait aussi bien refuser, dans son principe même, toute idée de

De Lubac's radical opposition between nature and the supernatural is illustrated by the transformation of the couple nature/the supernatural into the couple nature/grace. This transformation aims to put an emphasis on the radically transformative force of the supernatural. He states:

> "Grace" can also mean "forgiveness" [faire grâce]. Grace is also mercy and pardon. The distinction between nature and grace in this instance is much more radical than in the case of the general differentiation between nature and the supernatural. It no longer suffices to say that the supernatural is something altogether different from a prologation or a fulfillment or nature, something entirely different from the indispensible help nature needs to attain its profoundest desires. Between sinful human nature and divine grace we have not only a dissimilarity, a heterogeneity between two orders of being, an infinite distance that man alone cannot bridge. There is an antagonism, violent conflict ("natura filii irae" says St. Paul). Between grace and sin the struggle is irreconcilable. Consequently the call of grace is no longer an invitation to a simple "elevation", not even a "transforming" one (to use the traditional words); in a more radical fashion it is a summons to a "total upheaval", to a "conversion" (of the "heart", i.e., of all one's being) (BCNG 119).[42]

In line with de Lubac's understanding of the relation between nature and grace, Milbank argues that nature is not a complete concept as Aristotelism, Stoicism, Confucianism, etc. suppose. For Aristotle, "God and nature makes nothing at random."[43] This means that nature offers the best means to realize its function from its own resources. In this case, it is regarded to be a self-sufficient reality. For de Lubac and Milbank, this conception is a distorted one.[44] Milbank makes clear that "it is not the case that nature is an autonomous in-itself to which a relationship to the divine is super-added; rather, nature is always already graced in the sense it participates in the Creator" (BR 115). De Lubac's and Milbank's model could be roughly portrayed as a following diagram.

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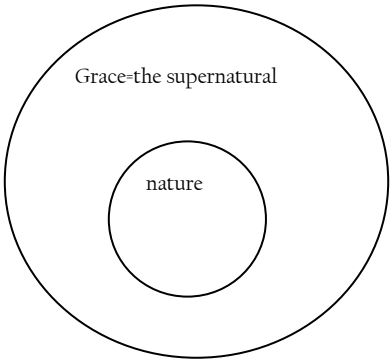
révélation, de mystère, d'incarnation divine, de rédemption, ou du salut. Ce serait refuser la foi chrétienne "(PCNG 17).

[42] [Original text] " Dans 'grâce' il y a aussi 'faire grâce'. La grâce est aussi pitié et pardon. La distinction de la nature et de la grâce est alors ici, dans un premier temps, un rapport d'opposition beaucoup plus radicale que dans le cas de la distinction générale entre nature et surnaturel. Il n'est plus suffisant de dire que le surnaturel est tout autre chose qu'un prolongement ou qu'un accomplissement de la nature, tout autre chose que l'aide indispensable à la satisfaction de son plus profond désir. Entre la nature humaine pécheresse et la grâce divine, il ne s'agit plus seulement d'une altérité, d'une hétérogénéité de deux ordres, d'une distance infinie infranchissable par l'homme seul. Il y a antagonisme, conflit violent (*natura filii irae*, dit saint Paul). Entre la grâce et le péché, la lutte est irréconciliable. Aussi l'appel de la grâce n'est-il plus maintenant un appel à une simple élévation même 'transformatrice' (pour reprendre les mots classiques); de façon radicale, c'est l'appel à un 'renversement' à une 'conversion' du coeur, c'est-à-dire tout l'être)" (PCNG 84-5).

[43] Aristotle, *On the Heavens*, I.4 [David Ross's translation].

[44] With regard to Aristotle, de Lubac lament as follows: "Aristote s'est trompé en pensant qu'il ne pouvait y avoir de mal dans les intelligences séparées. C'était la raison pour laquelle il ne voulait voir dans les vexations démoniaques que de simples maladies. Il est étrange qu'un si grand philosophe n'ait pas su reconnaître partout dans l'univers l'action si manifeste et si terrible des démons ! " (S 220).



[Diagram IV]

2.2 Critique of Karl Rahner's transcendental model

Like de Lubac and Milbank, Karl Rahner protests against the neo-scholastic model of the relationship between nature and grace. According to him, grace is not externally superadded to the nature, but already present in nature. In this sense, Rahner is, with de Lubac and Milbank, a defender of the integrated model of nature and grace. He also opposes the account of man independent of revelation. According to Rahner, in the extrinsic account of the relationship between nature and grace, "it is presupposed that the concretely experienced (contingently factual) quiddity of man squarely coincides with man's 'nature' as the concept opposed by theology to the supernatural. Supernatural grace then can only be the superstructure lying beyond the range of experience imposed upon a human 'nature' which even in the present economy turns in its own orbit (though with a relationship peculiar to itself to the God of creation)."[45]

With de Lubac, Rahner thinks that if the supernatural is given only as a superstructure added to nature, man is defined in purely natural terms. We are, then, to hypothetize the state of pure nature. Rahner's integrated model could be understood in terms of his concept of grace. On the one hand, in appropriating Kantian epistemology *via* Maréchal's transcendental Thomism, which claims that human experience is determined by an *a priori* inner condition of the human mind and that this *a priori* condition is regulated by infinite Being as an epistemological horizon, Rahner came to understand grace as the transcendentally infinite horizon of human concrete experience in which God's self-communication happens. That is to say, our concrete and everyday experience, be it conscious or unconscious, is already graced. However, unlike Kant,

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[45] Karl Rahner, "Relationship between Nature and Grace," in Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigation, volume I: God, Christ, Mary and Grace*, trans. Cornelius Ernst (New York: Seabury, 1974), 299; [Original text] "Man setzt also voraus, daß das konkrete erfahrene (faktische) Wesen des Menschen sich mit der "Natur" des Menschen adäquat decke, die in der Theologie Gegenbegriff zum Übernatürlichen ist. Übernatürliche Gnade kann dann nur der jenseits der Erfahrung liegende Überbau über einer menschlichen 'Natur' sein, die auch in der gegenwärtigen Ordung in sich selber kreist (wenn auch mit einer zu ihr selbst gehörenden Beziehung zum Gott der Schöpfung)." Karl Rahner, "Über das Verhältnis von Natur und Gnade," in *Schriften zur Theologie, Band I* (Zurich: Benziger Verlag, 1960), 325.

Rahner refuses an objective ground of our experience, because our knowledge of God is mysteriously given.

On the other hand, Heidegger's existential phenomenology offers a framework for Rahner to understand the mode of being of man as *Dasein*. *Dasein* means man's situatedness in his finitude which is expressed as 'being-in-the-world' and 'being-unto-death'. Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein* paved the way for Rahner's famous notion of the 'supernatural existential,' which is the theological reinterpretation of Heidegger's *Dasein*. Namely, while accepting Heidegger's analysis of the condition of human existence, Rahner opposes Heidegger's understanding of the human being as an 'existential' limited by the finite horizon of human experience. Instead, for Rahner, human pre-understanding [*Vorbegriff*] is already open to transcendence. Rahner's 'supernatural existential' plays the role of linking nature and the supernatural. This peculiar mode of human existence is 'supernatural,' because it is given as a gift. And it is 'existential' because it has the capacity of receiving grace. According to Milbank's definition, the supernatural existential is "an inner orientation to the beatific vision, which is given, along with the 'formal object' of this orientation, to every human being" (TST 221).

Rahner's position might be made more clear if we compare it with de Lubac's. The difference between Rahner and de Lubac can be explained by their different interpretations of the scholastic notion of obediential potency [*potentia obedientialis*]. Obediential potency means a passive potency through which God can elevate the human soul. It is passive because man cannot be elevated through his natural capacity. For de Lubac, the human soul has the paradoxical longing for God's grace, a grace which is not given as a debt. In contrast, Rahner cannot accept this paradoxical desire of the human being, because for him, grace should remain pure grace, something not required by man. This understanding leads to different attitudes toward the concept of obediential potency. According to Rahner, de Lubac scorned the concept of obediential potency,[46] Rahner did not reject this notion, because it guarantees the gratuity of grace. Rahner reinterprets the obediential potency in a positive direction in redefining it as man's active potency of receiving grace beyond 'non-repugnance' [*Nicht-Widersprüchlichkeit*] in order to coordinate this concept with his 'supernatural existential' [47] However, his idea of the obediential potency considered as being enclosed within pure nature. In Rahner's account, "It would be proper to speak with more precision of the *potential oboedientialis* of nature as such. It would be necessary to examine more closely how the supernatural existential is related to grace itself, and in what sense it is distinct from it."[48] In other words, he still admits the idea of pure nature formally distinguished by his supernatural existential. Of course, Rahner dismantles the distinction between nature and grace. But he needs at least a formal distinction between his supernatural

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[46] However, de Lubac notes that "I must..make it quite clear that I have never 'scorned' the conceptof *potentia oboedientialis* except in the very sense in which he himself resolutely rejects it" (MS 107); [Original text] " Précisons .. que nous n'avons 'dédaigné' le concept de 'puissance obédientielle' qu'au sens précis où lui-même l'écarte résolument" (MSu 142).

[47] Rahner, "Relationship between Nature and Grace," 315; Rahner, "Über das Verhältnis von Natur und Gnade," 342.

[48] Ibid.,316; [Original text] Es ware genauer zu überlegen, wie sich das übernatürliche Existential zur Gnade selbst verhält, in welchem Sinn es von ihr verschieden ist" (Ibid.343).

existential and pure nature for the protection of the gratuitous nature of grace. In this case, nature, for Rahner, is considered as the remainder [*Restbegriff*],[49] because despite our awareness of our supernatural end, there remains a natural realm. Basically Rahner agrees with de Lubac that there is the unlimited dynamism of the spirit. But Rahner argues that we should not confuse this dynamism and our concret experience of grace:

> All one must guard against is identifying this unlimited dynamism of the spiritual nature in a simply apodeictic way with that dynamism which we experience (or believe we experience) in the adventure of our concrete spiritual experience, because here the supernatural existential may already be at work –as subsequently emerges in the light of Revelation. And one will guard against asserting that this natural dynamism is an unconditional demand for grace."[50]

After all, we can see that Rahner's theological project oscillates between two theological motives. First of all, he wanted to safeguard the absolutely gratuitous nature of grace, that is to make grace a gift. For this, it was necessary for him to make room for the purely natural sphere without reference to the supernatural. However, this risks eliminating the supernatural character of nature. In order to resolve this impasse, he introduces the concept of the "supernatural existential". According to Milbank, "by preserving a pure nature in the concrete being, to save the gratuity of the supernatural, one lands up with extrinicist doctrinal formulas confronting an account of human aspirations and human ethical norms which is thoroughly naturalized" (TST 222).[51] While de Lubac approves Rahner's integrated understanding of nature and grace, he manifests his reservation: "I would basically have only one reservation about [Rahner's] text, a reservation of a purely historical nature: in reality, as we have seen, this 'scholastic' concept of nature, which borrows too much from the sub-human, is more the concept of a modern scholasticism" (MS 107-8).[52] Milbank roughly compares de Lubac's model, which represents the French version, and Rahner's model, which he represents the German version. According to Milbank, the French version is in the vein of pre-modern tradition, whereas the German version is a compromise with secular reason. So

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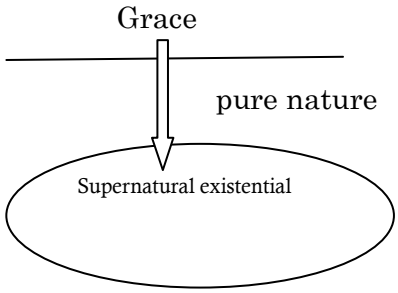
[49] Ibid., 315;Ibid., 342.

[50] Ibid.; [Original text] "Nur wird man sich huten mussen, diesen unbegrenzten Dynamismus der *Geistnatur* einfach apodiktisch zu identifizieren mit jenem Dynamismus, den wir in dem Abenteuer unseres konkreten geistigen Daseins erfahren (oder zu erfahren glauben), weil in diesem schon- wie sich nachtraglich von der Offenbarung her herausstellt- das ubernaturliche Existential am Werk sein kann. Und man wird sich huten, diesen naturalen Dynamismus als unbedingte Forderung für die Gnade zu behaupten" (Ibid., 325).

[51] Patrick Riches also points out Rahner's middle way: "His essay ["Concerning the Relationship between Grace and Nature"] is an attempt to steer a middle course between the so-called 'nouvelle théologie' and neo-Scholasticism, between the supernatural thesis and the neo-Thomist 'doctrine' of *natura pura* (Patrick Riches, "Deification as Metaphysics:Christology, Desire, and Filial Prayer," in Conor Cunningham and Peter M. Candler (eds.), *Beliefs and Metaphysics*, *The Veritas Series* [London: SCM Press, 2007], 356.

[52] [Original text] "Nous n'aurions essentiellement qu'une réserve à faire sur ce texte, et c'est une réserve d'ordre purement historique : en réalité, on vient de le voir, ce concept 'scolastique' de nature, trop copié sur le modèle de l'infra-humain, est plutôt le concept d'une scolastique moderne " (MSu 142). In the face of Rahner's refutation of *Surnaturel*, de Lubac states: "What Father Rahner argued in opposition to me, or rather thought he argued in opposition to me, corresponded rather closely, moreover, to what I myself was thinking, aside from a mixture of Heideggerian vocabulary that did not seem to me necessary or even opportune in a study of Scholastic tradition" (ASC 62).

de Lubac's integrated version bears significant affinity with Milbank's postmodern theology in that, unlike Rahner, de Lubac avoids the hypostasization of the human person (TST 209). Milbank notes: "Whereas the French version 'supernaturalizes the natural', the German version 'naturalizes the supernatural'. The thrust of the latter version is in the direction of a mediating theology, a universal humanism, a rapprochement with the Enlightenment and an autonomous secular order. While these themes are not entirely absent from the French version, its main tendencies are in entirely different directions; for the *nouvelle théologie*, toward a recovery of a pre-modern sense of the Christianized person as the fully real person" (TST 207). We might roughly outline Rahner's understanding of nature and grace with the following diagram:



[Diagram V]

2.3 Critique of Karl Barth's dialectical model

As is well known, Barth's strong repugnance toward natural theology, which generates an illusory self-sufficiency of human reason, is the clue to his understanding of the relationship between nature and grace. His strong emphasis on the interruptive character of the revealed Word leads him to devalue human natural capacity for the knowledge of God. In the preface of the second edition of his *Commentary on Romans* (1933), he declares that "if I have a system, it is limited to a recognition of what Kierkegaard called the 'infinite qualitative distinction' between time and eternity, and to my regarding this as possessing negative as well as positive significance: 'God is in heaven, and thou art on earth."[53] Equally in his controversy with Emile Brunner (1934), Barth asserted that there is no point of contact [*Anknupfungspunkt*] between humanity and God, and rather that a point of contact is established by the revelation of God alone.[54]

This position is reflective of Barth's personal experience of the devastating nature of natural theology without reference to the revealed Word as manifested in the World Wars. Understandably Barth expresses a strong mistrust of natural reason and its

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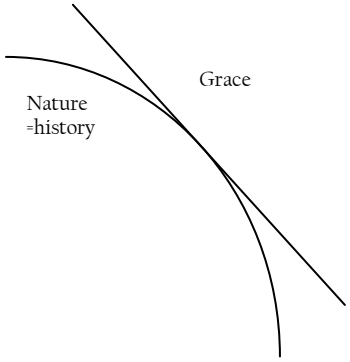
[53] Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. by Edwyn C. Hoskyns (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 10.

[54] Emile Brunner, Karl Barth, *Natural Theology*, trans. Peter Fraenkel (rep., Eugene, Or: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2002). Balthasar compares this model of revelation to a 'hourglass', where "the two contiguous vessels (God and creature) meet only at the narrow passage through the center" (Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, trans. Edward T. Oakes [San Francisco: Communio Books/Igantius, 1992], 92).

product, philosophy. He was always on guard against the divinization of nature. In line with the Reformed tradition, he claims that "*finitum non capax infiniti.*"[55] Futhermore, for him, "*homo peccator non capax verbi Domini.*"[56] He even notes: "I regard the *analogia entis* as the invention of antichrist, and I believe that because of it, it is impossible ever to become a Roman Catholic; all other reasons for not doing so being to my mind short-sighted and trivial."[57] Barth himself presents this theology in having recourse to a mathematical image. In his commentary on Romans, he dissociates the Resurrection with history in stating that "in the Resurrection the new world of the Holy Spirit touches the old world of the flesh, but touches as a tangent touches a circle, that is, without touching it."[58] This means that revelation has for God has no contact with natural and historical horizon, even though it infinitely has access to this horizon like a tangent.



[Diagram VI]

According to Milbank's interpretation of Barth, even if Barth protests against the claim to the self-sufficiency of natural reason of modern liberal theology, his theology is best understood against his Kantian background, which supposes the limit of the human mind's incapacity for the knowledge of God.[59] Because his theology is focused on

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[55] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1/1: *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 220.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid., xiii.

[58] Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 30.

[59] For the same line of interpretation, see Bruce McCormack, *Karl Barth's Dialectially Realist Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); In his *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, Dutch Calvinist philosopher, Herman Dooyeweerd notes: "Barth contrasts dogmatic theology and philosophy in a radical way. The former is instrumental in finding true knowledge of God in Jesus Christ. The principle of theological knowledge is the Word of God, and this Word is a consuming fire for all philosophy. For philosophy can only originate from autonomous human thought which is corrupted by sin. A Christian philosophy is a *contradictio in terminus* (Herman Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, 83); Gerhard Rödding, *Das Seinsproblem in der Schöpfungslehre Karl Barths* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964). See also his "Das Seinsproblem in der Schöpfungslehre Karl Barths," *Kerygma und Dogma* 10, 1964, 1-47; Gustav Siewerth, *Das Schicksal der Metaphysik von Thomas zu Heidegger* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1959, esp. 311-357; Henri Bouillard, *Karl Barth: Parole de Dieu et Existence Humaine* (Paris: Édition Montaigne, 1957); Seung-Chul Tae, *Die göttliche Ontologie des Menschen bei Karl Barth: zum "allein möglichen" Wen einer theologischen Lehre von Menschen* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1997).

revelation alone apart from human reason, he lapsed into fideism. After all, his understanding of the relationship between nature and grace is dialectical in that the penetration of revelation is necessarily accompanied by the negation of nature. This dialectical approach to revelation stands in contrast to the paradoxical approach to revelation of de Lubac and Milbank, for whom 'grace does not abolish nature, but perfects it,' in the vein of Thomas Aquinas. Nature has its own integrity despite its fallen state, but it anticipates the revelation of God. Milbank maintains that Barth's embrace of a post-Kantian philosophical framework led him to cut the link between the finite and the infinite in reducing theoretical reason into the sensible, phenomenal sphere. Likewise Milbank thinks that this dualistic view of the reality leads Barth to the fideistic approach to revelation:

> In the case of Karl Barth, a broad acceptance of a post-Kantian understanding of philosophy is turned to neo-orthodox advantage, in that he can insist that natural reason discloses nothing of God and yet that this opens the way to a renewed and, indeed, now more radical recognition that only God discloses God in the contingency of events as acknowledged not by reason but by faith (RONT 21).

This estimation of Barth's theology is also confirmed in his negative response to Balthasar's work on Barth[60] which attempts to reconcile Barth and Henri de Lubac. Milbank estimates:

However, in opposition to usual accusation of Barth for his failing to presenting a Christian ontology, Robert W.Jenson suggests that Barth's *Church Dogmatics* has an ontological claim. According to him, "in Barth's interpretation of reality, the life-history of one human person has taken the place held in the West's traditional metaphysics by- to use perhaps familiar language- the Ground of Being. The *Church Dogmatics* is the first grand system of Western metaphysics since the collapse of Hegelianism, but a thoroughly revisionary one. It casts a vision of reality founded in a particular temporal reality, the Crucified and Reason" (Robert W. Jenson, "Karl Barth." in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David F. Ford [Cambridge, mass/Oxford: Blackwell, 1997], 31). Once again in his *Systematic Theology*, Jenson states as follows: "Barth did not declare independence from 'the philosophers' because philosophy is something so different from theology that it must be kept at arm's length. His reason was exactly the opposite: he refused to depend on the official philosophers because what they offered to do for him he thought he should do for himself, in conversation with them when that seemed likely to help. The *Kirchliche Dogmatik* is an enormous attempt to interpret all reality by the fact of Christ; indeed, it can be read as the first truly major system of Western metaphysics since the collapse of Hegelianism" (Robert W.Jenson, *Systematic Theology, vol 1: The Triune God* [Oxford: Oxford University Press,1997], 21). Likewise Jenson see a strong affinity between de Lubac and Refomation theology. He laments that "de Lubac ever realized how close his positions are to those of much Reformation theology, notably those of Karl Barth" (Jenson, *Systematic Theology, vol II*: The Works of God [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999], 67). I think that Jenson's judgement is half right, because de Lubac himself much appreciates the reformed theologians such as Calvin and Barth. Stanley Hauerwas provocatively holds that Barth is a natural theologian in the Gifford Lecture. He states: "I will convince you that Karl Barth is the greatest natural theologian of the Gifford Lectures- at least he is so if you remember that natural theology is the attempt to witness to the nongodforsakenness of the world even under the condition of sin" (Stanley Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*-The Gifford lectures delivered at the university of St.Andrews in 2011 [Grand Rapid: Brozos Press, 2001], 20). See also Eberhard Jüngel, "Die Möglichkeit Theologischer Anthropologie auf dem Grunde der Analogie: Eine Untersuchung zum Analogieverständnis Karl Barths," in Eberhard Jüngel, *Barth-Studien* (Gütersloh: Benzinger Verlag, 1982), 210-232; Hugo Meynell, *Grace versus Nature: Studies in Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* (London: Sheed and Ward Ltd, 1965); Kenneth Oakes, "The Question of Nature and Grace in Karl Barth: Humanity as Creature and as Covenant –Partner," in *Modern Theology* 23:4 (October 2007), 595-616.

[60] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, trans. Edward T. Oakes (San Francisco: Communio Books/Igantius, 1992).

> No pure Barthianism has survived this encounter, even amongst insightful Protestants. For it became clear in the wake of this book Barth's theology, for all its apparent innovation, remained confined within a Baroque contrast of nature and grace, and of reason with revelation, and had failed to reckon either with the *analogia entis* or the surnaturel as governing both philosophy and theology according to a logic rooted in a non-idolatrous understanding of the Creator-created divide (SM 65).

The reason why Milbank resists against Barth's dialectical model of nature-grace is that by privileging the revealed Word in a fallen state of nature, he paradoxically left room for an autonomous space for philosophy, which is, for Milbank, a liberal tendency in Barth which he starkly opposes. According to Milbank, for Barth, it is not theological *logos* itself, but secular philosophy which explains the nature of knowledge and being.

Moreover, Milbank points out that his post-Kantian philosophical framework determines our understanding of Christ and God. If there is no contact between nature and grace, the Christ-event cannot fulfill its full meaning, because nature rests confined within its finitude. In the words of Milbank, "Barth is confined to a Christomonism, in which Christocentricity reduces to a focus on an enormous black hole" (RONT 22). In this way, the participatory, mediating role of Christ is lost sight of in Barthian theology. Christ is therefore considered as a personal conveyer who expresses the will of God. After all, Barth's Christ is, for Milbank, relegated to merely an object of theology. "What is lacking..[in Barth's Christology] is an older understanding of Christ as restoring to us participation in the mind of God: thus Christ himself as theologic (*logos*), not the 'object' of theology" (RONT 33). In this case God could be envisaged as the ground of man's projected image of himself as willing subject. "The inner truth of his theology is that by allowing legitimacy to a methodologically atheist philosophy, he finishes by constructing God on the model, ironically, of man without God" (RONT 22).[61]

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[61] We can find the same criticism of Barth's dialectical understanding of nature and grace in another radical orthodox theologian Graham Ward's criticism of French lay theologian, Jacques Ellul's Barthianism. In *Cities of God*, in which Ward develops a radical orthodox vision of culture in modern city, he reads Ellul's work on the city (*The Meaning of the City*, tr. Dennis Pardee [Grand Rapid: William Eerdmans, 1970]). Ward notes with regard to Ellul's theology of the city: "human murderous aspiration in the face of God" (49); "cities are founded on what Augustine would call the *libido dominandi*, the desire to conquer time, space and power and to mark that conquest" (Ibid.). Ward cites Ellul: "Like a vampire, [city] preys on the true living creation, alive in its connection with the Creator. The city is dead, made of dead things for dead people. She can herself neither produce nor maintain anything whatever… the city devours men" (Ellul: 1970, 150-1). For Ward, Ellul's position stands in opposition to the radical orthodox understanding of modern city, for RO holds that there is no autonomous realm apart from God's intervention, even if modern cities are corrupted by distorted desire. In his radical orthodox view based on analogical understanding of the reality, all social body is analogically related to Christ's Body. According to him, "theologically, it is an explicitly Christian analogical world-view in which, beginning with the physical body of Jesus the Christ, all other forms of body- sacramental, ecclesial, the gendered human body, the social –find their place in the continuity expansive Christological corpus" (257). Hence for Ward, the modern city is to be saved, not abandonded. In the case of Ellul, he holds that "there is no place.. for the central value of living theologically; incarnational embodiment" (50). Ward judges that Ellul's endorsement with the Reformed theology leads him to this idea: "An inheritor of Calvinist Biblicism and Barthian dialectics, Ellul's Protestant 'active pessimism' (Ellul: 1970, 181) finds no other function for theology in the city than prophesying its ruination" (50). In my view, Ward's judgment is highly questionable. Jacques Ellul never holds that Christians should abandon this world. In this sense, Ellul is not a pessimist as many think. He thinks that Christians are to be present in this world in order to change it in the light of the revealed Word. Even if Ellul's thought is dominated by Barth's dialectical

Milbank counters Barth in stating that "if we fail to redefine being and knowledge theologically, theological difference, the radical otherness of God, will never be expressible in any way without idolatrous reducing to our finite human categories" (RONT 22). Namely, unlike Milbank and de Lubac, Barth denies the possibility of a Christian philosophy which offers an overall Christian outlook for the whole world. In the end, for Milbank, Barth is a modern theologian who is trapped by Enlightenment philosophy, while de Lubac is a really postmodern since he overcomes the grace/nature duality : "The overcoming of a grace/nature duality (with Blondel, de Lubac and, in a very flawed manner, Karl Rahner), finally arrived at a theologically 'postmodern' questioning of modern assumptions, whereas Karl Barth remained basically within those assumptions and so within modernity" (TA 123).

3. Faith and reason

Milbank's integrated view on the relationship between nature and grace resonates with his articulation of the relationship between reason and faith, and philosophy and theology. Following de Lubac, Milbank refuses the duality between reason and faith as well as that between nature and grace. For him, reason without faith (rationalism) and faith without reason (fideism) is a perverted form of orthodox Christian theology. Throughout the history of Christian theology, one privileged reason over faith or faith over reason. Milbank redefines the relation between reason and faith in the framework of his participatory ontology. This means that he rejects the liberal theology which rationalizes Christian faith, all forms of neo-orthodox theology that dismiss any accommodation of revelation to human natural thought, as well as Protestant and fundamentalism which privileges faith in reaction against all forms of modernity.

According to Milbank, reason detached from faith lapses into chaos and nihilism. This does not mean that reason itself is the devil's halot (Luther), but reason is to be guided by faith. When reason is separated from faith, "reason's domain is nihilism" (BR 120). Milbank argues that "discovery of a meaningful world governed by a *logos* can only be made by faith (BR 120).[62] In other words, for the operation of human thinking, an Archimedean point is absolutely necessary. This point is a pre-philosophical commitment, that is, a religious faith. Graham Ward well describes Milbank's position in relation to the nature of language and narrative: "It is very important..for Milbank's argument that faith is not understood as reason's antinomy, but as reason's all-pervasive context. If reality is always and only invented by language and encoded in narrative, then all reasoning must subscribe to faith. All reasoning is an act of faith within a particular mythos, a particular story that transcends reasoning."[63] In this light,

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mode of thinking, this does not mean that he grants autonomy to modern city. See Jacques Ellul, *Présence au Monde Moderne: Problémes de la Civilisation Post-Chrétienne* in *Le Défi et le Nouveau. Œuvres théologiques*, 1948-1991(Paris: La Table Ronde, 2007), 19-116; [English trans.] *The Presence of the Kingdom*, trans.Oliver Wyon (Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard, 1989).

[62] Likewise, Milbank speaks of this relation of faith and reason in terms of the knowledge of God and the world. "Our knowledge of things of this world can always be qualified by knowledge of God as he is in himself (given by revelation), but equally, our knowledge of God, since it is analogically mediated, is always and only given through a shift in our understanding of the things of this world" (Milbank, "Foreword," in James K.A.Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 13).

[63] Graham Ward, "John Milbank's Divina Commedia," 313.

the claim to neutrality of Enlightenment reason is to be relativized. Against the claim of neutrality of Enlightenment reason, Milbank contends that it is but a kind of faith among many and is incorporated into Enlightenment *mythos*.

3.1 Reason within the bound of faith

The model of the relation between faith/reason to which Milbank submits himself is of the Augustinian tradition in which faith is conceived as a crucial moment for the operation of reason.[64] Like Milbank, de Lubac, standing in the same Augustinian tradition, maintains that an Archimedean point is necessary for human knowing, without which human knowledge is impossible.[65] In de Lubac's case, this point is the *intelligence of faith* which is linked to the mystery of Christ. He thinks that objective knowledge is impossible for the human being conditioned by time and place. All knowledge necessitates a particular point of view. De Lubac takes the example of religious research. There could be many approaches to religious phenomenon. De Lubac does not question the facts which the research treats. However, the readers who read the research need a point of view from which to understand religion:

> Since the facts are spiritual, it will.. be necessary to place oneself in a certain spiritual perspective. At this late date, anyone who would pretend that he still maintains a purely "objective" approach would either not understand himself or would mystify his reader. *Human knowledge is never without an a priori*. Man is made in such a way that he cannot give meaning to something without choosing his perspective (TF 39, emphasis mine).[66]

However, de Lubac states, drawing on Augustine that "faith, if it does not involve thought, is empty. Understanding is the obligatory result and usual reward of faith. Faith assures the contact that allows us to be brought to life by understanding" (CM

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[64] Anselm expresses this idea as follows: "For I do not seek to understand in order to believe; I believe in order to understand" (Anselm, *Proslogion with the Replies of Gaunilo and Anselm*, trans. Thomas Williams [Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2001], 6).

[65] Cf. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bound of Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).

[66] [Original text] "Il faudra bien se placer finalement, puisqu'il s'agit de faits spirituels, dans une certaine perspective spirituelle. Celui qui.. prétendrait s'en tenir encore à une pure 'objectivité', ne s'entendrait pas lui-même, ou mystifierait son lecteur. La connaissance humaine n'est jamais sans a priori. L'homme est ainsi fait, qu'il ne peut donner un sens aux choses qu'en choisissant sa perspective" (TO 41). According to de Lubac, "[Christian faith] can never be subjected to reason either by the intuitions of a genial intellect or by a collective effort, or even by history's slow maturing. Christian faith can be-and history shows that it was indeed- the promoter of reason; but it is not, itself, a science or a revealed philosophy; such expressions are devoid of meaning. To use Pascal's words again, it belongs to a *different order*. This does not mean that faith does not have a light proper to itself, nor that it completely lacks all rational justification, nor (and this is the point which interests us here) that it excludes all objectivation" (BCNG 66-7); [Original text] "Ni par la pénétration d'une intelligence géniale, ni par un effort collectif, ni par la lente maturation de l'histoire, [l'objet de la foi] ne saurait être rationalisé. La foi chrétienne peut être-et l'histoire nous montre qu'elle fut en effet- génératrice de raison ; mais elle n'est elle-même ni une science ni une philosophie révélée : de pareils termes n'ont aucun sens. Elle est (reprenons la formule de Pascal) d'*un autre ordre*. Cela ne signifie pas que la foi n'ait sa lumière propre, ni que toute justification rationnelle lui fasse défaut, ni (et c'est cela qui nous intéresse ici) qu'elle exclue toute objectivation" (PCNG 49).

231).[67] Likewise, Milbank holds that the only difference between faith and reason is the intensity of participation in God:

> The very duality of a reason-revelation duality, far from an authentic Christian legacy, itself results only from the rise of a questionably secular mode of knowledge. By contrast, in the Church Fathers, or the early scholastics, both faith and reason are included within the more generic framework of participation in the mind of God: to reason truly one must be already illuminated by God, while revelation itself is but a higher measure of such illumination, conjoined intrinsically and inseparably with a created event which symbolically discloses that transcendent reality, to which all created events to a lesser degree also point (RONT 24).

In this perspective, Milbank understandingly prefers Henri de Lubac to Karl Barth because despite his opposition to theological modernism, Barth was still confined within modern thought in allowing for autonomous human reason by way of rejecting it. In this sense, Barth is half right and not free from the Enlightenment assumption of the autonomy of reason. For Barth the only way to the knowledge of God consists exclusively in the divine Revelation which is manifested in the incarnation. Milbank states:

> In the case of Karl Barth, a broad acceptance of a post-kantian understanding of philosophy is turned to neo-orthodox advantage, in that he can insist that natural reason discloses nothing of God and yet that this opens the way to a renewed and, indeed, now more radical recognition that only God discloses God in the contingency of events as acknowledged not by reason but by faith (RONT 21). [68]

In comparison to Barth, Henri de Lubac criticizes the auto-sufficiency of human reason because reason is for him only truly reasonable when it is rooted in faith, and at the same time only true faith can produce truly reasonable ideas. According to Jean-Pierre Wagner, "[the] twofold theme - the intelligence of faith and of the intelligence by faith always- remains a major axe of de Lubac's thought".[69] Milbank estimates that the position of Henri de Lubac is more faithful to the patristic tradition insofar as he pursues both the intelligence of faith and intelligence by the faith. In this sense, for de Lubac, "the Augustinian doctrine of illumination is far more than the theory of a particular writer: it was the expression, and bears witness for us to a state of mind" (CM 236).[70] In the last analysis, Milbank thinks that de Lubac's theology provides the possibility of overcoming postmodern nihilism.

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[67] [Original text] "*Fides, si non cogitatur, nulla est*. L'intelligence est la suite obligée et la récompense normale de la foi. Celle-ci assure le contact qui permettra l'être vivifié par celle-là" (CM 259).

[68] Once again Milbank states: "Barth tends to embrace the post-Enlightenment notion of fixed ascertainable limit to human reason, and also, at times, the idea of a valid secular autonomy within those limits. The assertion of pure faith, pure unanticipated revelation over against reason, is the counterpart of an acceptance of an entirely secure but limited human reason, is the counterpart of an acceptance of an entirely secure but limited human reason, sovereign within its own terms of reference" (Milbank, "The Program of Radical Orthodoxy," in ed. Laurence Paul Hemming, *Radical Orthodoxy?: A Catholic Enquiry,* 34).

[69] Jean-Pierre Wagner, *La Théologie Fondamentale selon Henri de Lubac* (Paris: Cerf, 1997), 13.

[70] [Original text] "La doctrine augustinienne de l'illumination est beaucoup plus que la théorie d'un auteur particulier : elle fut l'expression, et elle demeure pour nous le témoin d'un état de l'intelligence" (CM 264). De Lubac's understanding of the faith-reason relationship is closely linked to his understanding of

3.2 Christological reason

As we have seen above, if one understands the relation between reason and faith in the participatory framework, reason, far from being independent from God, anticipates the divine *logos* who is the incarnated Jesus. From this fact, Milbank maintains that, "if reason is already Christological, then inversely, faith, until the eschaton, remains dispersed in all the different discourses of human reason."[71] Henri de Lubac, in turn, conceives the relation between faith and reason in the light of the Christ. For him, Christ as the incarnated Word is not indifferent to the world. The Christ contains all things, for the world is created by him, he who is the *Logos*.[72]

Milbank agrees with Balthasar's characterization of the works of Henri de Lubac as a kind of "suspended middle" (SM *1*3).[73] According to Barthasar, "de Lubac soon realized that his position moved into a suspended middle in which he could not practice any philosophy without its transcendence into theology, but also any theology without its essential inner structure of philosophy."[74] This "suspended middle" means "a discourse of the supernatural" (SM 12). The supernatural discourse is grounded in the Fact of the Christ, which philosophy anticipates and on which theology is based. It is the Christian *logos* itself that constitutes this "suspended middle." Without the incarnated Christ as the *Logos*, the realms of philosophy and of theology are not reconcilable. Outside the Christian *logos*, philosophy is susceptible to falling into natural theology, whereas theology tends toward dogmatism. Therefore, de Lubac's theological goal is to restore "Augustinian 'Christian philosophy' or a Thomist *Sacra Doctrina*" (SM 12).

Milbank finds this idea of Christian philosophy in anti-modern philosophers such as Hamann and Jacobi.[75] Against autonomous human reason which Kantian philosophy suggests, they believe that the finite and the infinite are inextricably intertwined. This is to say that no philosophy is to be neutral apart from theology. Therefore, they attempted "a theological critique of philosophy". For them, "if the truth of nature lies in its supernatural ordination, then reason is true only to the degree that it seeks to or prophesies the theoretical and practical acknowledgement of this ordination which,

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mystery. His conception of mystery is not anti-rational. Rather the Christian mystery reinforces human reason. See de Lubac, "Mystère et mystique" in TO, 37-76.

[71] Milbank, "The Programme of Radical Orthodoxy", Laurence Paul Hemming (ed.), *Radical Orthodoxy?: A Catholic Enquiry,* ed.Laurence Paul Hemming, 34.

[72] De Lubac states: "Notre foi n'est pas seulement une puissance de croire de certaines vérités d'ordre surnaturel : elle est encore, et du même coup, une nouvelle puissance d'interprétation du monde visible et de l'être naturelle ; une renaissance de la raison. C'est une perfection de l'intelligence qui la reprend, qui la restaure, l'approfondit et l'élargit... toute la catégorie de l'ens, forme objective des objets de l'esprit, est par elle élevée et surnaturalisée"(Henri de Lubac, *Lettre intimes de Teilhard de Chardin*, lettre 7, note 8, [Paris: Édition Montaigne, 1965], 51-2).

[73] According to David Grumett the phrase 'suspended middle' ascribed to Balthasar is false. Before Balthasar Pierre Teilhard de Chardin had used this phrase in a letter to de Lubac: "The whole theory of the supernatural… asserts itself in a sphere of thought that most moderns have deserted…We are totally and essentially *suspended* by divine attraction" (*Letter of 27 June 1934,in Letters intimes à Auguste Valensin, Bruno de Solages, Henri de Lubac, André Ravier, 1919-1955*, ed. Henri de Lubac [Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1972], 277-8, original emphasis, cited in David Grumett, *De Lubac: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum, 2007), 168.

[74] Hans urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri de Lubac*, trans. Joseph Fessio, Susan Clements (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1991), 15.

[75] See John Milbank, "Knowledge: The theological critique of philosophy in Hamann and Jacobi," in RONT 21-37.

thanks to the fall, is made possible again only through divine incarnation" (RONT 24). In consequence, "what Christ shows supremely is the world as really world, as creation" (Ibid.). In short, Milbank manifests his view on the relationship between theology and philosophy as follows: "Theology saves reason and fulfils and preserves philosophy" (RONT 37).

3.3 The problem of truth in Thomas Aquinas

The problem of truth is fundamental for Christian theology. For Milbank, this theme likewise constitutes an important theological motif in his elaboration of theology. Here, Thomas Aquinas is for him a referential model in this understanding of truth. This means he parts company with the usual interpretation of Aquinas in which he is considered as a proponent of the dualism between nature and grace, and between faith and reason.[76] In his refreshing study on Aquinas, Kergus Kerr, problematising the usual interpretation of Aquinas, states that "in the last hundred years or so, Thomas Aquinas has been treated as a model of how to deal with modern philosophy –modern philosophy understood, since Descartes, as principally conceived with epistemology."[77] This new perspective on Aquinas is not unique to him. This line of interpretation is already well documented.[78] Henri de Lubac and Milbank are the proponents of this interpretation. In this we shall see briefly de Lubac's interpretation of Aquinas with its motive and background. And we shall also examine Milbank's appropriation of de Lubac's understanding of Aquinas.[79]

3.3.1 De Lubac's and Milbank's postmodern Aquinas

Henri de Lubac opposes the recognized neo-scolastic interpretation of Thomas Aquinas, which portrays him as a great synthesizer of Aristotle and the Church Fathers, especially Augustine, in reconciling the autonomous natural realm and the supernatural revealed realm. He considers this line of thought as a serious distortion of the great scholastic thinker's work. According to him, this misreading stems from Cajetan's commentary on Aquinas in which Aquinas is portrayed as a supporter of the double finality of man: one is natural; the other supernatural. The core of the debate between de Lubac and neo-scholasticism lies in the purpose of man. According to neo-scholasticism, man has a natural end and a supernatural end alike in the framework of the dualism of nature and grace. In reaction against the neo-scholastic position, de Lubac affirms that Aquinas endorses only the supernatural purpose of man. De Lubac's affirmation of one end of humanity is undergirded by his conviction that Aquinas

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[76] Étienne Gilson represents this Leonine interpretation of Thomisme. Gilson thinks that neo-Platonic influence on Thomas Aquinas is limited.

[77] Kergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

[78] Rudi A. Te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden/New York: E.J.Brill,1995); Paul Rorem*, Biblical and Liturgical Symbols within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis* (Toronto:Pontifical Instituteof Medieval Studies, 1984); George Lindbeck "Participation and Existence in theinterpretation of St. Thomas Aquinas," *Franciscan Studies*, 17 (1957); Wayne J. Hankey, *God in Himself: Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); idem, "Deny and Aquinas: Antimodern Cold and Postmodern Hot," in *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community*, ed. Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones (London: Routledge, 1998), 139-84.

[79] This does not mean that de Lubac is the only source for Milbank's understanding of Aquinas, he is one among others.

supports the 'natural desire for seeing God' in his *Summa*. Daniel M. Bell, Jr states, "Thomas Aquinas' *Summa* is best read as the systematic working out of the dual claim that humanity naturally desires God and that its supreme good or happiness resides in the mutual pleasure of shared desire with God."[80]

In order to support his argument he treats the problem of the impeccability of an angel in a pure natural state. In opposition to the impeccability of the angel in this state, de Lubac affirms that the angel can sin (S 231). This case affirms de Lubac's thesis that all spiritual beings have one supernatural end. According to de Lubac, when Aquinas uses the expression, *beatitude supernaturalis*, *supernaturalis* is a simple qualitative, not determinative, "because, for St. Thomas, beatitude, without another determination, is always supernatural and can be only supernatural" (S 255).[81]

Milbank and de Lubac find their ideal theological model in Thomas Aquinas. Why did de Lubac choose Thomas Aquinas? According to the explanation of Milbank, "for de Lubac Aquinas represented the possibility of an East-West synthesis (Augustine plus the Dionysius/Damascene legacy) and even more crucially that the attempt to incorporate Aristotle was positive insofar as it meant a deeper reckoning with reflection upon the operations of nature and of this-worldly human behavior" (SM 23). Against the generalized idea that Thomas Aquinas is the pioneer of the dualism of nature and grace, formulated as "grace do not abolish nature, but accomplishes it,"[82] de Lubac affirms that Thomas Aquinas belongs to the medieval mystical tradition (Pseudo Deny, Proclos). According to Milbank, "for de Lubac, the distinct Aristotelian moment in Aquinas remains subordinate to an Augustianism blended with Procleanism (mediated by Dionysius and the Arabs). De Lubac explicitly endorses mid-century reading of Aquinas that stresses the neoplatonic and Augustinian dimension, while at the same time his Augustine is much more humanist and 'Thomistic' than that of the previous run of French tradition" (SM 19).

John Milbank, in his turn, takes up de Lubac's thesis and develops it in his work coauthored with Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (2000). In this work, as with de Lubac, the two authors maintain that Aquinas's Aristotle is adjusted to his neo-Platonic and Augustinian direction in combining two traditions in an entirely new way (TA 12).[83]

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[80] Daniel Bell, *Liberation Theology after the End of History*, 88.

[81] [Original text] "Car, pour saint Thomas, 'la beatitude', sans autre détermination, est toujours surnaturelle et ne peut être que surnaturelle" (S 255). Marie-Dominique Chenu confirme the neo-Platonician interprétation of Aquinas of de Lubac: " Dans la *Somme*, on le sait, le principle de sa démarche et le plan de sa synthèse sont expressément empruntés à la théologie dionysienne, au point que le fait historique de l'incarnation paraît à certains n'être plus qu'une pièce rapportée, ce à quoi évidemment ne consentirait pas l'évangélisme du théologien prêcheur. Il est d'ailleurs, sur ce thème platonicien, en accord avec saint Bonaventure, son frère en évangélisme et son collège à l'université, dont l'Itinerarium mentis est tissé, même pour ses analyses de l'univers de Denys" (Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Saint Thomas d'Aquin et la Théologie* [Paris: Éd du Seuil, 2005,] 72). According to Balthasar de Lubac's new reading of Aquinas was stimulated by Maurice Blondel and Joseph Maréchal and Pierre Rousselot (Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri de Lubac*, 12-13). The refreshing reading of Aquinas in the nouvelle théologie is largely indebted to Pierre Rousselot's *L'Intellectualisme de Saint Thomas* (Paris: Alcan, 1908).

[82] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa* Ia I, 8ad 2.

[83] According to John Montag SJ, at the heart of de Lubac's interpretation of Aquinas is the notion of the grace of Saint Augustine. He points out that "unlike Aristotle, who did not attempt to account for the origin of 'natures' themselves, Thomas recognizes the origin of all origins in the free giving of the Creator.

In other words, Aquinas appropriates Aristotle's philosophical terms in Christianizing them. For example, like Aristotle, Aquinas qualifies human soul as an animal soul which holds together a living material organism, but he does not see human intellect as an 'accidental power' of the soul rather than its essence (Ibid.)[84] This is to say that Aquinas rejects the Aristotle's substantial understanding of the human being in modifying it in the Christian direction. Therefore, for Aquinas, "the human animal need not 'think', but only when it does so is it human, and the more it exercises intellect the more it is human" (Ibid.).

John Milbank, relying on de Lubac, considers that Aquinas was on the threshold of the new modern world. According to Milbank, Aquinas's adoption of the Aristotelian system came from the necessity to elaborate a theology in the face of a new world: "Aquinas was an early Renaissance as much as he was a medieval figure: concerned to integrate into the Christian synthesis a new interest in nature and in urban civilization" (SM 24). We can see the same motive for Milbank who sees the necessity of a theology for the postmodern world. For Milbank, the postmodern suspicion of modern universal reason—this is the same situation of late medieval age—necessitates an elaboration of a new theology in a new context. For him, Aquinas filtered through de Lubac and nouvelle théologie [85] offers a pertinent model for the overcoming of postmodern nihilism. Furthermore, Milbank thinks that de Lubac's interpretation of Aquinas responds to RO's ecumenical orientation.[86]

3.3.2 Aquinas's vision of truth

Aquinas' notion of truth, Milbank's passion for Aquinas filtered by Henri de Lubac is well revealed in his work, coauthored with Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (2000).[87] This work aims at demonstrating that an epistemological approach to the notion of truth for Aquinas does violence to his authentic thought. According to Milbank and Pickstock, truth for Aquinas is not an epistemological concept, but rather is to be viewed in terms of a hierarchy of being, that is, in terms of ontology.[88] In general,

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Thus all beginning and ending, all birthing and dying, have their fundamental origin and end in God's act of giving" (RONT 45).

[84] Aquinas states: "The intellect is a power of the soul, and not the essence of the soul… In God alone is His intellect His essence; while in other intellectual creatures, the intellect is a power" (S.T.I.Q.79a, 1 resp, cited in TA 115).

[85] See Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Introduction à l'Étude de saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Vrin, 1993); idem, *Saint Thomas d'Aquin et la Théologie* (Paris: Seuil, 2005).

[86] According to Pickstock, " la plupart des théologies sont enracinées dans telle ou telle tradition ecclésiastique. L'orthodoxe radicale, elle, fait exception à cette règle dans la mesure où, dès l'origine, elle s'est voulu ou s'est découverte comme oecuménique. Ses premiers adeptes étaient des anglicans et des catholiques romains. Mais elle compte maintenant des sympathisants venus de tous les horizons de la famille chrétienne, orthodoxes orientaux, méthodistes, baptistes, presbytériens. L'intérêt de ces derniers venus a de quoi surprendre dans la mesure où notre Mouvement s'affiche comme ouvertement catholique" (Catherine Pickstock, "L'orthodoxie est-elle radicale ? " in *Pour une Révolution Théologique*, ed. Adrian Pabst, Olivier-Thomas, 28-9).

[87] For a comprehensive discussion and critique of this work, see Paul J. De Hart, *Aquinas and Radical Orthdoxoy* (London/New York: Routledge, 2012), esp. chapter 12: "Divine Revelation and Human Performance: Milbank's Aquinas on the Trinity," 167-80.

[88] Equally, de Lubac supports Milbank's idea of identifying truth with being: "The thesis placed on the threshold of traditional philosophy which is so clear seems to be forgotten. Ens et verum convertuntur (Being and truth are convertible terms) For this corollary at once follows from it that the possession of the true can be perfect only in the possession of being" (P 116).

Aquinas' notion of truth is interpreted in line with Aristotle's concept of truth. For Aristotle, truth is understood as the correspondence between thought and reality.[89] This Aristotelian approach is distinct from that of Plato, for whom truth is of suprasensorial reality because there is only one true reality which is immutable, eternal and absolute beyond human sensorial experience. However, for Aristotle, truth and reality are two sides of the same coin.

Milbank and Pickstock's provocative argument in *TA* is that truth for Thomas is not that of Aristotle, but a neo-Platonic one. According to Milbank, "for Aquinas the difference of *esse* from essence in the *ens commun* of creatures, and yet its real finite occurrence only in essence, is 'read' in entirely theological terms as the site of the internal fracture of creatures between their own nothingness and their alien actuality which is all received from God" (WMS 44). This approach turns down the usual interpretation of the truth for Aquinas. They say:

> We have turned to Aquinas because, in his writings, one can discover an entirely different approach to truth which allows one, first of all, to recover correspondence without a sense of redundancy; secondly, to regard truth as at once theoretical and practical; thirdly, to demonstrate that all truth is a matter of faith as well as reason, and *vice versa*; and, fourthly, to indicate that truth is immediately accessible to the simplest apprehension, and yet amenable to profound learned elaboration (TA xiii).

In a chapter entitled "Truth and Correspondence," Pickstock diagnoses the actual crisis of epistemological realism and proposes a remedy. This crisis is provoked by the breakdown of the faith that our intellect corresponds to external reality. First of all, Pickstock criticizes Bruce Marshall's concept of truth, according to which it is not necessary that one puts truth and reality into correspondence. [90] According to him, our simple everyday experience is truth without reference to reality. For example, in the phrase "it is true that one is in Oxford" "It is true" can be omitted, because " the world simply 'is' as it presents itself to us, or as we pragmatically takes it to be" (TA 2). Marshall's theory is "ontologically neutral" (TA 2). However, Marshall leaves a place for the correspondence theory of truth in invoking that the incarnated Christ is the truth and that the Christian participates in this truth by imitating Christ. It follows that there is, for him, a dualism between the secular truth and theological truth. According to Pickstock, Marshall's misunderstanding comes from his ignorance of the theological dimension of Aquinas' truth. Pickstock maintains: "Aquinas's fundamental theory of truth is as theological as it is philosophical, and is only a correspondence theory in a sense which depends entirely upon the metaphysical notion of participation in the divine Being." In other words, for Aquinas "truth is neither epistemological nor primarily a property of statements.. it is convertible with Being, that is a mode of existence and that it is related to a particular aspect of Being, which, according to our modus, is received as a kind of analogical or beautiful assimilation between things" (TA 9). This interpretation

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[89] Aristotle defines truth as follows: "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true" (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IV 7).

[90] See Bruce D. Marshall, "We shall Bear the Image of the Man of Heaven: Theology and the Concept of Truth", in *Rethinking Metaphysics*, ed. L.G.Johnes and S. E. Fowl (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 93-117; *Trinity and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 108-41, 242-75.

of Aquinas' truth comes from the participatory ontology which characterizes Aquinas' theology. Therefore, Aquinas appropriates the conception of Aristotelian truth, but he utilizes it in an Augustinian direction instead of an Aristotelian direction. She states: "It seems to suggest that when one knows a thing, one does not know that thing as it is by itself, but only insofar as one meaningfully grasp it as imitating God." (TA 10).

In a chapter entitled "Truth and Vision" in *TA*, Milbank attempts to apply Aquinas' theory of truth to the problem of reason and faith. As we have seen above, reason and faith are harmoniously framed by participatory ontology. Milbank, contrary to the dominant interpretation, seeks to show that reason and faith for Aquinas do not oppose each other, but interpenetrate each other in the illumination of God. Hence, a philosophical approach is grounded in a theological approach. "For Aquinas, revealed theology supplements metaphysics with history and requires a completion of the theoretical ascent to truth with a meeting of the divine descent in liturgical practice" (TA xiii). In this article, Milbank begins with raising a fundamental question. "If truth, for Aquinas.... is inherently theological, then is the theology involved, an affair of reason or of faith? Or is it first an affair of reason, and later an affair of faith?" (TA 19). Usually, we distinguish the domain which reason can reach (for example, the existence of God) from the domain which only faith can reach (for example, the trinity, the incarnation, etc). An advantage of this distinction consists in the fact that it accords autonomy to the natural domain and simultaneously warrants the integrity of faith. It is this dualist understanding of faith and reason that Milbank seeks to destruct in this article. Seemingly, we can see that Aquinas distinguishes faith from reason in the *Summa.* But Milbank affirms that faith and reason are "but phases within a single extension" (TA 21). For Aquinas, our natural and supernatural capacity is impregnated by divine illumination through grace. Therefore, "the 'light of faith' is for Aquinas simply a strengthening of the *intellectus* by a further degree of participation in the divine light" (TA 23). Milbank takes the example of prophecy. In prophecy, supernatural phenomena come about by means of sensorial experience. This is to say that the miraculous (revelation) occurs in a normal state of mind. However the meaning of revelation is interpreted by virtue of faith as well as reason. In consequence, "reason and faith are at the very least construed by Aquinas as successive phases of a single extension always qualitatively the same. That is to say, always conjoining inner illumination of the active intellect by God with formation of the passive intellect by species received from creatures, whose being, equally with our intellect, is formed and measured by participation in the divine understanding" (TA 24).

4. *Poesis*

Aquinas' notion of truth, Milbank's passion for Aquinas filtered by Henri de Lubac is well revealed in his work, coauthored with Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (2000).[91] This work aims at demonstrating that an epistemological approach to the notion of truth for Aquinas does violence to his authentic thought. According to Milbank

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and Pickstock, truth for Aquinas is not an epistemological concept, but rather is to be viewed in terms of a hierarchy of being, that is, in terms of ontology.[92] In general, Aquinas' notion of truth is interpreted in line with Aristotle's concept of truth. For Aristotle, truth is understood as the correspondence between thought and reality.[93] This Aristotelian approach is distinct from that of Plato, for whom truth is of suprasensorial reality because there is only one true reality which is immutable, eternal and absolute beyond human sensorial experience. However, for Aristotle, truth and reality are two sides of the same coin.

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4.1 *Poesis* as deification (de Lubac)

For de Lubac, the concept *poesis* (human making) does not come to the forefront in his major works. However, *poesis* is not a negligible aspect in our understanding of his idea of the supernatural. And it is this aspect of the supernatural that Milbank wants to

accentuate in his postmodern theology. De Lubac's understanding of *poesis* is best manifested in his later work on Pico della Mirandola, which was published with the title, *Pic de la Mirandole: Étude et Discussion*.[95] In this work he sought to save his subject from the image of being a secular Renaissance thinker.[96] Against this misunderstanding, he insists that Pico della Mirandola is a Christian humanist who influenced Erasmus. "From the beginning of his carrier, we saw that he was not of the literary and moralistic humanism after Petarca, nor the philological humanism of Valla. He was a philosopher and theologian 'recognized as such' (Kristeller) by elite minds and sought new ways" (PM 393).[97]

In this study de Lubac attempts to situate Pico della Mirandolla within the neo-Platonic Christian tradition to which he himself submits.[98] According to de Lubac, Pico's Christian humanism is well shown in his anthropology. Unlike other creatures, man's dignity lies in his liberty from the necessity of nature. According to Pico, God does not have a preconceived idea for man, while other creatures were made according to a pre-established blueprint. That is, man's distinctive character lies in his indeterminacy.[99] De Lubac compares Pico's Adam to a cameleon who metamorphoses himself into whatever he wants (PM 65). This indeterminacy itself constitutes the nature of man as the image of God. Man's indeterminacy is oriented toward the likeness of God, that is his *deification*.[100] Does this mean that Pico's Adam claims his independence from God? That is, is he a Pelagian? For de Lubac, this is not the case, because Pico admits the infinite distance between God and man. For Pico, man's liberty is, according to de Lubac, not conceived as an arbitrary will, but rather in tension with the supernatural. He can choose his destiny, but he cannot invent it. De Lubac explains well Pico's Adam:

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[95] Henri de Lubac, *Pic de la Mirandole: Étude et Discussion* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne,1974).

[96] See Henri de Lubac, "Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Pedro Gracia," in Henri de Lubac, TH 40-3.

[97] [Original text] "Dès le début de sa carrière, on avait pu voir qu'il ne s'en tiendrait ni à l'humanisme littéraire et moraliste issu de Pétarque, ni à l'humanisme philologique d'un Valla. Il était philosophe et théologien, 'reconnu comme tel' (Kristeller) par les esprits d'élite, et cherchant des voies nouvelles " (PM 393, translation mine).

[98] For the same line of interpretation of this thinker, see Louis Valcke, *Pic de la Mirandole: Un Itinéraire Philosophique* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2005); Pierre-Marrie Cordier, *Jean Pic de la Mirandole ou La Plus Pure Figure de l'Humanisme Chrétien* (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Debresse, 1958); Fernand Roulier, *Jean Pic de la Mirandole (1463-1494): Humaniste, Philosophe, Théologien* (Genève: Slatkine, 1989); Heinrich Reinhardt, *Freiheit zu Gott: Der Grundgedanke des Systematikers Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, 1463-1494* (Weinheim: VCH, Acta humaniora, 1989).

[99] This reminds us Sartre's existentialist philosophy in which man does not have any predetermined essence and is free in this sense. However, Pico's philosophy is opposed to Sartre's atheistic philosophy, since the liberty is understood by Pico in terms of participation in divine nature. In distancing himself from modern false notion of human creation of his essence and pointing out its self-destructive character (represented by existentialist philosophy) de Lubac states: "Jean Pic n'est le prophète d'aucune 'modernité' de cette sorte. Dans sa celebration de l'homme et de sa liberté, l'auteur de l'*Oratio* manifeste assurément 'l'originalité des esprits créateurs' qui, sans même y penser, nuancent 'un lieu commun d'une empreinte personnelle'. Mais nous n'en conclurons pas qu'il ait institué une 'métaphysique délirante de liberté.' Il ne peut à aucun titre être compté parmi les précurseurs d'aucun des Prométhées moderne-sérieux ou fous. Malgré son image du 'caméléon', il n'y a pas davantage chez lui le moindre culte de la mobilité et du changement érigés en valeurs suprêmes, substitués à la sereine immobilité divine dont l'admiration régnait jusqu'alors dans le monde chrétien,- ce qui serait encore une manière, sinon d'inaugurer, du moins de préparer la substitution de l'homme à Dieu" (PM 226).

[100] According to Milbank, "Vico always stressed, following Pico de la Mirandola (but ultimately Philo and Gregory of Nyssa) the unique character of the human soul as indeterminate with respect to every final goal. This indeterminacy is still recognizable in feral 'man' precisely in his placelessness, his 'sylvan errancies' and his promiscuity, whereas animals are, by nature, assigned to their proper place" (WMS 8).

> The Adam described the *Oratio* is in no way to itself its own law, it does not suspend on top of everything above his head just as will the Nietzschean Zarathustra, his creative power, he is neither in the abitrary divine fantasy his own judge, nor own avenger. He chooses his destiny, he did not invent. At the end, if he turns out to be true, he followed the instinct of the 'sacra quaedam ambitio' that God inspired him, he will get this unity with God, 'this' supernatural blessing' from which all 'natural blessing' is a 'shadow' (PM 123).[101]

This thinking is paralleled to his description of man as microcosmos. The idea of man as microcosmos has pagan origins. But this idea was accepted and Christianized by the Church Fathers. In this model, man is considered to be a mediator between creature and God. In other words, God's creative activity is mediated through the creative activities of humanity because he is the microcosmos. This traditional idea is appropriated by Pico.[102] Milbank explains well Pico's understanding of human, an understanding which is shared with Cusa. "We are, for Pico, cultural creatures beyond nature because we are also engraced creatures beyond nature… [For Pico and Cusa] something cultural is added to something cosmic, because no longer do humans merely reflect all elements of the cosmos as its microcosmic center; rather they occupy their own little world that stands out from the cosmos, because it conjectures also a relation to the supernatural beyond the cosmos" (SM 53).

In order to show the theological background of Pico's promotion of metamorphosis, de Lubac goes back to patristic and medieval literature. According to de Lubac, the 'metamorphosis' Pico celebrates has a long history in Christian tradition, and Pico's *Oratio* is in the vein of this Christian tradition, and not pagan tradition. We can see that de Lubac links the concept of the metamorphosis in the Church Fathers to *deification*.[103] Thus, de Lubac's conception of *poesis* is not the technical manipulation in Aristotelian sense of the terms, but man's creative activity for his spiritual and cultural growth. It is this understanding of *poesis* that Milbank shares with de Lubac. As we shall see, Milbank's ethical project is poetical in the sense that his ethics does not concern rules or duties, but creative charitable behavior for his sanctification.

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[101][Original text] "L'Adam que décrit l'*Oratio* n'est aucunement à lui-même sa propre loi ; il ne suspend pas au-dessus de tout, au –dessus de sa tête même, comme fera le Zarathoustra nietzschéen, son pouvoir créateur ; il n'est pas, dans l'arbitraire d'une divine fantaisie, son propre juge ni son propre vengeur. Il choisit sa destinée, il ne l'invente pas. Au terme, s'il s'est montré fidèle, s'il a suivi l'instinct de cette 'sacra quaedam ambitio' que Dieu lui inspirait, il obtiendra cette 'unité avec Dieu', cette 'félicité surnaturelle' auprès de laquelle toute 'félicité naturelle' n'est qu'une 'ombre' (PM 123), translation mine.

[102] De Lubac cites Pico: " L'homme a quelque chose de toute créature : il a en effet l'être en commun avec les pierres, la vie en commun avec les arbres, le sentir en commun avec les animaux, l'intelligence en commun avec les anges ; si donc l'homme a quelque chose en commun avec toutes créatures, selon quelque chose l'homme est toute créature" (*In Evangelica* 1. 2, hom. 29,n 2, in PM 166).

[103] For example, de Lubac cites Clement among others: "Je vous le demande, transformez-vous ; décidez-vous à apprendre qu'il est en votre pouvoir de vous transformer, de dépouiller la forme du pourceau, ou la forme du chien, qui est celle de l'homme aboyeur, hurleur et de langue méchante. Il est possible aussi de se transformer pour n'être plus serpent : le pervers, en effet, s'entend appeler 'serpent' et 'engeance de vipères'… Si tu étais aboyeur, et si la Parole t'a façonné et changé, te voilà transformé de chien en homme. Si tu étais impur, et si la Parole a touché ton âme.. te voilà changé de pourceau en homme. Si tu étais une bête sauvage, en écoutant la Parole qui adoucit, qui apprivoise, qui te change en homme, par la volonté de la Parole tu cesseras d'être appelé serpent, engeance de vipères, etc." (*Entretien avec Héraclide* 14 in PM 187).

4.2 *Poesis* as participation (Milbank)

We have seen that de Lubac's understanding of *poesis* is focused on the ethical significance of human making, that is sanctification. Milbank goes further than de Lubac to the extent that he extends the notion of *poesis* to all human cultural activities. In fact, this understanding has a long history in the Christian Platonist tradition. Milbank appropriates this understanding in his own study on Giambattista Vico.

What is of importance for our purposes is that unlike Aristotle, who devalues *poesis* as but a simple technical manipulation, Milbank gives value to this neglected element of Aristotle's philosophy. This understanding is derived from his conviction that human creative activities participate in the divine creative act. This aspect is a neglected and marginalized in the Western Christian theology. But Milbank and RO seek to rehabilitate it. In this sense, we can understand Milbank's own description of his theological work as a "minority report" (FA ix).

Why, then, is Milbank so preoccupied with the creative/poetical aspect of the human being? The reason is that in the first place, "humanity is the animal who quite gratuitously makes meaningful objects" and in the second place "humanity is always trying to catch up with its own proper destiny" (WMS 125). This means that man is a meaning-making animal. Each different person and group can contribute to a different meaning-making, but no man can be exempted from this activity. As Henry Newman put it simply, "Man is emphatically self-made."[104] After all, for Milbank, human creative making constitutes the essence and nature of the human being.

Here, Milbank notes three characteristics of human meaning-making. First, "the fact that our construction of meaning are also manifestations of life, of energy and desire which we never manage to master consciously in the course of our articulations, such that we have always spoken more than we realized" (WMS 125). Second, the emphasis on the meaning-making of the human subject constitutes a radical rupture with the Cartesian *tradition* which seeks transparent and self-evident self-knowledge without consideration of the historical, social and cultural context to which the subject belongs. If we affirm *poesis* as a primary mode of understanding, the subject is not an isolated entity as Descartes supposes. As with the representative narrative theorists such as Ricœur, MacIntyre and Hauerwas, who think that our self-identity is not given *a priori*, but formed by the our narrative experience,[105] Milbank notes that "our own self-awareness arises not in the Cartesian *cogito*, but in our finding ourselves in relation

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[104] J. H. Newman, *A Grammar of Assent*, cd. N. Lash (Notre Dame University Press: Notre Dame, 1979), 274 cited in Milbank, "A Christological Poetics"(WMS 125).

[105] For MacIntyre, "man is in his action and practice, as well as in his fiction, essentially a story-telling animal. He is not essentially, but become through his history, as teller of stories that aspire to truth. But the key question for men is not about their own authorship; I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part'….(Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: a Study in Moral Theory* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981], 121.); For Paul Ricoeur, "Le récit construit l'identité du personnage, qu'on peut appeler son identité narrative, en construisant celle de l'histoire racontée" (Paul Ricoeur, *Soi-même comme un autre*, Paris, Seuile, 175); Stanley Hauerwas, "the self is..more like the unity that is exhibited in a good novel- namely with many subplots and characters that we at times do not closely relate to the primary dramatic action of the novel. But ironically without such subplots we cannot achieve the kind of unity necessary to claim our actions as our own" (Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character-Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethics* [Dame/London: University of Notre Dame Press, Notre, 1981], 144).

to other beings in whom we both actively recognize and do not recognize our own subjectivity" (Ibid). Third, the product of human making is beyond our original intention. For example, when we write a poem, we have an intention to express a certain idea in this literary making at the outset. But when we finish this activity, the product is beyond what we desired at the outset. Surpassing our original anticipation, the meaning of the product is even stranger to the original intended meanings.[106] This is one of the characteristics of *poesis* that Milbank suggests. That is to say, there is a double movement in *poesis,* in which the human being is engaged with the making, but simultaneously "dispossessed" by the product he made. Therefore, Milbank perceptively observes that "meaning only unfolds through the doings of intending subjects, and yet this is never simply 'their meaning'" (Ibid). In other words, "every act of inventive understanding is like the discovery of something new in the future, which 'occurs' to us, because only the process of completion of the product starts to reveal and define the active potency on which it depends" (Ibid).

Seen from this perspective, pure nature, which is considered to be complete in itself, makes no sense for Milbank, as for de Lubac. For him, the idea of nature is culturally constructed.[107] That is, the Greek teleological view of nature, the modern mechanical view of nature, and the neo-scolastic notion of pure nature are historically and culturally made. Nature is envisaged in different manners according to the conception of the world which we hold in a particular age and a particular community. Therefore the neutrality of the natural sphere is fictional and problematic. Milbank's position is also shown in his critique of eco-theology which attempts to divinize nature. In this case, the distinction between nature and grace on which de Lubac lays emphasis is undermined. This is the inverse case of the modern mechanical view on nature. Eco theologians seek to find the spiritual value in nature. Nature itself gives no meaning to man, because it is not for its own sake, but rather for the sake of God. To make nature really natural is to supernaturalize it, because at the outset, it was engraced reality. When we seek something supernatural in nature itself, there remains only Kantian sublimity, which terrorizes us infinitely, but has nothing to say concerning the meaning of our existence. "By turning to nature, we cannot really find the key to 'value.' Its beauties we always 'complete' and so produce in language, symbol and artifact as much as discover. And alongside beauty, we encounter also in nature the ambiguous terror of sublimity: overwhelming, unpredictable power, continuous destruction" (WMS 260-1).

For a better understanding of Milbank's thought, it would be helpful to see the theory of *poesis* of Giambattisa Vico (1668-1744), an Italian Renaissance thinker from whom Milbank appropriates several insights.[108] In his *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the*

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[106] John Bunyan notes this experience in his *Pilgrim's Progress* "When at the first I took my pen in hand/Thus for to write, I did not understand/That I at all should make a little book/ In such a mode; nay, I had undertook/To make another; which, when almost done,/Before I was aware I this begun"(John Bunyan, in *Author's Apology* for his book, *Pigrim's Progess: One Man's Search for Eternal Life- A Christian Allegory*).

[107] See R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of Nature* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1960).

[108] In his study on Giambattista Vico, *The Religious Dimension in the Thought of Giambattista Vico* (two volume), originally written as his doctoral dissertation, he comments Vico's thought with regard to the limitation of human knowledge in omniscient God: "The externality of human knowledge is compared by Vico,…to be a dissection; this image appears in its full significance in conjunction with the imagery of death. Good doctors, he says, distrust dissection because it can only be carried out on a dead body which

Italians (1710), he developed a pragmatic view of knowledge, proposing a thesis that the truth [*verbum*] is identical with the made [*factum*][109]. According to this view, human knowledge cannot grasp the entire reality at the same time. This God's eye view is inherently impossible for the human being. For him, even the scientific knowledge considered generally objective is but an abstraction of reality. Therefore human truth is what he makes, not something intuitively given:

> Divine truth is a solid image like a statue; human truth is a monogram or a surface image like a painting. Just as divine truth is what God sets in order and creates in knowing it, so human truth is what man puts together and makes in the act of knowing it. Thus science is knowledge of the *genus* or mode by which a thing is made, and by this very knowledge in mind makes the thing, because in knowing it puts together the elements of that thing. As we said, God makes a solid thing because He comprehends all the elements, man a plane image because he comprehends the outside elements only.[110]

However, Vico is not simply a nihilist postmodern philosopher, for whom truth is made by human beings and so is relative in character. Against the secular rationalist[111] reading of Vico, Milbank argues that Vico is a Christian theologian who is open to divine revelation. He thinks that the human making of truth itself participates in the divine making (*poesis*). In this sense, Milbank holds that Vico subverts the Platonic understanding of participation by Christianizing it. For Plato, participation is understood as the participation of the sensible in the ideal Forms which precede all sensible images. In contrast, for Vico, it is the human being who constitutes knowledge and this knowledge participates in the divine knowledge. Therefore, "Participation is..not the backwards ascent from image up towards the original, but through the historical path of making towards the *telos* of the infinite *factum*" (RDGV 113).

Seen from his poetical qualification of the human being, we can see that Milbank is situated in a philosophical and theological current associated with narrative philosophers (Ricoeur, MacIntyre) and theologians (Lindbeck, Frei, Hauerwas). According to this current of thought, man's identity is determined not by a predefined essence, but by the narrative framework in which he lives. On the one hand, this

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is no more than a collection of parts (I.ii). Life, the key to their articulation and respective dispositions, is missing. Similarly the universals which are alive in God and in substantial reality are dead in humanity; in *Deo vaunt, in Homine pereunt* (I.ii). However, this death is also a redemption, because the recognition of the 'perishing' character of human concepts awakens us to the living concepts in the mind of God. In these images Vico conveys a new concept of the limitations of the human mind. No abstract concept of finitude, he implies, will ever serve to define it. Rather, our finitude is simultaneously re-established and redefined with every further act of making which constitutes new boundaries for human thought. This finitude is not simply the negation of the infinite, but also the opening to the infinite, as, for example, the geometric point of projects an infinite horizon of geometric possibility for humanity (RDGV 109-10).

[109] See John Milbank, RDGV 77-116; idem. "Pleonasm, Speech and Writing," in WMS 55-83, esp. 72-73; "The Linguistic Turn as a Theological Turn" in WMS 84-120, esp. 107-9.

[110] Giambattista Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians: Unearthed from the Origin of the Latin Language: Including the Disputation with the Giornale De Latterati D'Italia* (Cornelle University Press, New York, 1988, 46-7).

[111] Milbank is against the reading of Benedetto Croce who regards Vico as an idealist and of Arthur Child who reads Vico as a utilitarian like Bacon (RDGV 87). See Benedetto Croce, *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, trans. R.G.Collingwood (London, 1911); Arthur Child, *Making and Knowing in Hobbes, Vico and Dewey* (Los Angeles, 1953), 84-102.

framework is the scheme of past-present-future. This means that the human is an essentially temporal being. So the human being inevitably has to impose a meaning on the past in order to live in the present and anticipate the future. But the past that the human being interprets is not objectively given, but is an interpreted one. The story that he tells is an interpretation of the past. In this way, man acquires his identity. On the other hand, this narrative framework is a community. A story cannot be made by one isolated person. Narrative is formed within a community. Therefore, without a community in which the narrative is told, we cannot know who we are. For the narrative theologian like Stanley Hauerwas, this insight is extended to the Church. This specific community can subsist by its past memory and future anticipation in the vast history of salvation. As a Jewish aphorism says, "memory is the pillar of redemption."[112]

Furthermore, for Milbank, *poesis* is a mode of human understanding. Milbank takes this insight from Aristotle, for whom "poetry has in some sense a referential function—that is mimesis—and that it inaugurates a world—setting up an *ethos* through the employment of a *mythos*" (WMS 127). Milbank, drawing on Paul Ricoeur, "*mythos* and *mimesis* are really two aspects of a single process" (Ibid). That is, there is no detached vantage point where we can makes a distinction between *mythos* and *mimesis*. This means that *mythos* is a mode of our understanding world, and that it is *mythos* which makes the world more real. It follows that there is little disparity between the heroes in the real life and those of *mythos*. Hence narrative representation is our fundamental mode of knowledge. Furthermore, this fact reflects our inherent teleological vision of world which is represented in a narrative form.

According to Milbank, Ricœur notes that our poetic act of understanding can be described as a "metaphoric act" (Ibid.). The human being has the tendency to say something unfamiliar by way of something familiar to us. This metaphorical understanding is, for Ricoeur, deeply seated in human nature. We can draw again on Vico to help our understanding. Vico, in his *New Science* (1744), shows that primordial language is metaphorical language. He observes that all primitive civilizations are founded on fables. By the fable, he does not mean simply an imaginative story, but an interpretation of the world. That is, the story is the container of a worldview [*Weltanschaung*]. Therefore, for him, the poet occupies a much more important place than the philosopher and historian, since he offers more exactly a portrayal of the world. In this respect, the poet is considered by him as a theologian. Vico, closely linked to the Platonic tradition, insists that the metaphoric mind is superior to the philosophic mind. While the philosophers are preoccupied with setting up a universal rule of human conduct, the poet's concern is with finding the meaning of the world in concrete things. Vico states:

> Poetic wisdom, the first wisdom of the gentile world, must have begun with a metaphysics not rational and abstract like that of learned men, but felt and imagined as that of these first men must have been, who; without power of ratiocination, were all robust sense and vigorous imagination. This metaphysics was

[112] D.Stephen Long and Tripp York, "Remembering: Offering our Gifts," in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas, Samuel Wells (Oxford: Willey-Blackwell, 2011), 397.

> their poetry, a faculty born with them (for they were furnished by nature with these senses and imaginations.[113]

Standing in the same tradition as Vico, Milbank maintains that "*poesis* is a logic for the establishment of meanings" (WMS 128). It follows that there is no universally admitted structure of meanings as Enlightenment philosophy seeks to construct. This is, then, to say that Milbank argues for relativism, in denying skeptically the possibility of absolute, unbiased knowledge? Milbank would respond no, because he is never a skeptical thinker. He does not deny the existence of truth, nor the human capacity to arrive at this knowledge of truth. What he questions is the problem of how we arrive at this truth. Like Vico, truth is made by the human poetical representation of the world. For Milbank, "truth, for Christianity is not correspondence, but rather participation of the beautiful in the beauty of God" (TST 427) In this poetical representation, the human being is conditioned by his inner or outer circumstances such as, for example, his community, his inherited tradition, his own language, his personal and his familial history. After all, our poetical construction of the world implicates a kind of faith which makes this understanding possible. It is therefore illusory to think that there are philosophical universals. There is, for Milbank, only "poetic or concrete universals, just as there are reflective or philosophical universals" (WMS 128). In this light, Milbank points out the error of Kant who distinguishes between empirical and pure reason in *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). In this work, Kant abstracts a purely supposed realm which is not contaminated by sensory experience in order to assure the universality of reason. But Milbank, drawing on anti-Enlightenment thinker such as Vico and Hamann, holds that there is no purely rational realm or purely empirical realm. Rather, human reason cannot be detached from his material conditions and these two worlds are interconnected with each other. We are subject to the social, historical and cultural situation. These are not only the conditions limiting access to truth, but also those which offer possibilities to acquire it. Milbank and de Lubac alike think that the Christian tradition is of peculiar importance for access to truth. According to de Lubac, the tradition so unconsciously penetrates our being that we do not feel the need to question the existence of such a tradition. He writes:

> More than one man has noted that the most tradition-minded centuries did the least talking about Tradition. Rather, they lived it. They were soaked through with it. It was through the eyes of Tradition that they read the Scripture themselves. Then, men were not in the habit of questioning themselves about Tradition, for to them it was the present rather than the past and less an object of study than the very form of their thinking (SC 1).[114]

What is crucial, for Milbank and de Lubac, is the fact that the Enlightenment tradition does not have a supreme vantage point. The Enlightenment's truth claim is a

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[113] Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 116.

[114] [Original text] "On a plus d'une fois remarqué que les siècles les plus traditionnels parlaient peu de la Tradition. Ils y baignaient. Ils en vivaient. Ils lisaient les Livres saints par ses yeux. Ils ne se posaient point habituellement de questions à son sujet. Elle n'était pas pour eux le passé, mais le présent. C'était moins un objet d'étude que la forme de leur pensée" (ME 9).

tradition-bounded claim as much as Christianity's truth claims. This does not mean, for both, the mutual recognition of different traditions. Rather, it shows a possibility of relativizing the Enlightenment truth claim. For Milbank, the Christian tradition is never inferior to the Enlightenment tradition in its pretention to truth, since these two traditions are both the products of human communal *poesis*.[115]

Finally, there is an important aspect in the understanding of *poesis* for Milbank. It is the liturgical character of *poesis*. For his participatory model, "all true *poesis* is liturgy" (BR x). Hence, on the one hand, *poesis*, as Milbank understands it, is not inferior human activity as Aristotle thinks of it, but a religious and even doxological act, for it is itself a participation in God. Moreover, this liturgical *poesis* model undermines the traditional dichotomy between *theoria* and *praxis*, since *poesis* itself implicates a moment of *theoria*, which is for Milbank participation in God by the divine illumination: "Metaphysics of the participation of the poetics..must itself be contingent temporal performance as well as an expression of *theoria*"(BR x). In this respect, for Milbank and Pickstock, *poesis* and *theoria* are not distinguishable concepts, but rather complement each other. On the other hand, this assertion shows us that liturgy is not restricted to the Church. It concerns all human activity beyond the boundaries of the Church. Milbank's liturgical characterization of *poesis* manifests his resistance against the modern restriction of *poesis* as a technical manipulation subject to the capitalist market economy. Milbank thinks that the supernaturalizing of *poesis* is an attempt for the liberation from modern and postmodern nihilism. Milbank is convinced that this supernaturalized *poesis* is realized by Eucharistic practice in the Church. We will examine this point in the last chapter.

5. The gift

Recently, the 'Gift' (*Gabe, Don*) has been much discussed in the context of anthropological, sociological and philosophical studies (Mauss, Bourdieu, Derrida).[116] Aristotle defines the 'gift' as a giving without a return.[117] For Milbank and de Lubac, the gift, in the theological sense of the term, is not on the same level as Aristotle's. According to Milbank and de Lubac, the gift does not presuppose a giver-receiver relationship, because both parties are already conceived as gifts. Gifts are not given as a present from the outside because the giver himself is for the receiver already a gift. De Lubac describes this idea as follows: "God's gift to his creature, that gift which is himself, is not really comparable to a present given by one man to another" (MS 76).[118] The

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[115] See Robert C. Miner, *Truth in the Making-Creative Knowledge in Theology and Philosophy*, *Radical Orthodoxy Series*, Routledge (New York/London: 2004).

[116] For the discussions on the subject of 'gift', see Stephen H. Webb, *The Gifting God: A Trinitarian Ethics of Excess* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, ed. John D.Caputo and Michael J. Scalon (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999); Robyn Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology* (New York: Fordhman University Press, 2001); Risto Saarinen, *God and the Gift: An Ecumenical Theology of Giving* (Minnesota : Liturgical Press, 2004), esp.15-35; Boukari Aristide Gnada, *Le Principe Don en Éthique Sociale et Théolgie Morale: Une Implication de la Philosophie du Don chez Derrida, Marion et Bruaire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009).

[117] Aristotle, *Topics,* 125a 18.

[118] [Original text] "Le Don de Dieu à sa créature, ce Don qui est Lui-même, assimilé simplement au cadeau que fait un homme à un autre homme !"(MSu 106).

recipient is also not just an independent subject who passively receives the gift of God from outside, but his existence itself is a gift. De Lubac, drawing on Scotus Eriugena, best expresses Milbank's and de his theology of the gift as follows: "'greatest gift' [*datum optimum*] St. James speaks of is nature; the 'perfect gift'[*donum perfectum*] is grace: the two are different ways of sharing in God's goodness"(MS 89).[119]

In this sense the relationship between creature and creator can be defined in terms of gift-exchange in which God takes the initiative of giving. After all, the relationship between God and man is described as an *asymmetrical gift-exchange*. In this sense, we shall, firstly, examine de Lubac's understanding of the gift. And then we shall consider Milbank's reception of that conception.

5.1 De Lubac's gift theology

> There is nothing in me that preceded all his gifts, nothing able to receive them. The first of his gifts on which all the others rest, is what I call myself; he gave me that self: I owe him not only all that I have, but also all that I am. O incomprehensible gift, which our poor language expresses in a moment, but which the human mind will never arrive at understanding in all its depth! This God who made me has given me myself to myself; the self I love so much is simply a present of his goodness… Without him I would not be myself; without him I should have neither the self to love, nor the love where with I love that self, nor the will that loves it, nor the mind that knows it. All is a gift: he who receives the gift is himself the first gift he receives.[120]

Fénélon's beautiful passage, which de Lubac quotes above, describes his notion of the gift well. De Lubac did not write a specific work on the gift. However, this notion is a recurrent theme which runs through his theological works. Evidently, unlike the anthropologists and sociologists who delve into this concept as a fundamental category for the explanation of anthropological and sociological phenomena, the gift, for de Lubac, is a fundamentally theological concept, which permeates his entire theological reflection like the idea of the supernatural, paradox, the mystery of Christ, etc. For him, the gift means primarily the gratuitous nature of God's action. In this sense, it is unilateral

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[119] [Original text] "Le 'datum optimum' dont parlait saint Jacques, c'est la nature ; le 'donum perfectum', c'est la grâce : deux manières différentes de participer à la Bonté divine" (Msu 122); Scotus Erigena, commenting Pseudo-Deny's *Hierarchia caelestis*, states with regard to the two gifts as follows: "This apostolic declaration distinguishes, in an admirable differentiation, the divine gift [dationem] from the divine endowment [donationem], assigning the best gift [dationem] of every creature to substitution, and on the other hand the perfect endowment [donationem] of divine grace of liberality; for all that exists participates in divine goodness in two ways: the first is in the condition of nature, the second is perceived in the distribution of grace… Certainly there is nothing in every creature that lacks these two; for everything that is exists, and participates in divine grace according to the analogy fitting to it" [PL, 122, 127 BC] (MS 90, MSu 122).

[120] Fénelon, Lettres 1.c 4. n 1, *Œuvres spirituelles*, vol 1, 1810, p. 174… cited by de Lubac MS 78.
[Original text] "Il n'y avait rien en moi qui précédât tous ses dons, et qui fût à portée de les recevoir. Le premier de ses dons qui a fondé tous les autres, est ce que j'appelle moi-même; il m'a donné ce moi; je lui dois non seulement tout ce que j'ai, mais encore tout ce que je suis. O incompréhensible don, qui est bientôt exprimé selon notre faible langage, mais que l'esprit de l'homme ne comprendra jamais dans toute sa profondeur ! Ce Dieu qui m'a fait m'a donné moi-même à moi-même; le moi que j'aime tant n'est qu'un présent de sa bonté… Sans lui je ne serais pas moi-même ; sans lui je n'aurais ni le moi, que je puisse aimer, ni l'amour dont j'aime ce moi, ni la volonté qui l'aime, ni la pensée par laquelle je me connais. Tout est don: celui qui reçoit les dons est lui-même le premier don reçu" (Fénelon, *Lettres*…, 1.c 4. n 1, *Œuvres spirituelles*, vol 1, 1810, 174… cited in de Lubac MSu 108).

because God takes the initiative in giving. But de Lubac's conception of the gift is not unilateral, but rather reciprocal, because the receiver of the gift receives his being as a gift from God, as Fénélon states well. In this sense, there is for de Lubac a fundamental continuation between the gift of creation and redemptive grace. "The first gift God gave us by giving us being. For there...is a genuine parallelism between that first of creation and the second, wholly distinct, wholly super-eminent gift- the ontological call to deification which will make of him, if he responds to it, a 'new creature'" (MS 76).[121]

Nevertheless, this continuity does not eliminate the distinctive character between the gift of creation and the gift of deification. This does not suggest the devaluation of creation. Understanding creation as a gift gives value to the materiality of creation, as contrasted to the gnostic understanding of materiality. For de Lubac creation as such has an integrity and goodness. Yet, this creation is paradoxically created for the purpose of its elevation toward God. After all, it is necessary to distinguish two gifts: "If creation itself can in a real sense be called a 'grace', then the call to see God is another one" (MS 82).[122] This does not mean that the two gifts are different from each other. They are the same gifts from God. However, two gifts are radically distinguished from each other because of the renewal brought by Christ. "Between nature as it exists and the supernatural for which God destines it, the distance is as great, the difference as radical, as that between non-being and being: for to pass from one to the other is not merely to pass into 'more being,' but to pass to a different type of being" (MS 83).[123] De Lubac presents an interesting metaphor drawn from Eckhart's sermon for our understanding: "If the two graces could be compared to rivers, the source 'from which creatures emanates from God is as far from that whence grace comes as heaven from earth.'"[124] Here the same logic of the relation between nature/the supernatural is applied. That is, the two gifts are distinct, but intimately in union at the same time, just as nature and the supernatural are intimately united, but conceptually distinct. De Lubac explains: "The pair "nature-supernatural"…must be thought of at the outset as a relationship of opposition, of spiritual otherness and of infinite distance; but that if man so wills, it resolves itself finally in an association of intimate union" (BCNG 49). He continues to explicate: "Such a relationship expresses at one and the same time both the divine transcendence, the gratuity of the gift God makes of himself, the "grace", and also the deep realism of the quality of "children of God" which is won for men in principle by the Incarnation of the Word" (BCNG 49-50).[125]

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[121] [Original text] " [Le] don premier que Dieu nous a fait en nous donnant l'être. Car il y a un parallélisme réel, ainsi qu'on va s'en rendre compte, entre ce don premier de la création et le don second, tout à fait distinct de lui, tout à fait suréminent, cet appel ontologique à la déification qui fera de l'homme, s'il y répond, 'une nouvelle créature' " (Msu 106).

[122] [Original text] "Si déjà la création peut être dite en un sens réel une 'grâce', l'appel à voir Dieu en est une autre" (Msu 113).

[123] [Original text] "Entre la nature existante et le surnaturel auquel Dieu la destine, la distance est aussi grande, l'hétérogénéité est aussi radicale qu'entre le non-être et l'être: car le passage de l'une à l'autre n'est pas seulement un passage à 'plus d'être', mais c'est le passage à un autre type d'être " (Msu 114).

[124] Meister Eckhart, *Sermon on accomplishment* cited by de Lubac in MS 82): "Si on les compare l'une et l'autre à une source, on pourra dire encore, avec un sermon eckhartien, que la source 'où les créatures émanent de Dieu est aussi éloigné de celle d'où jaillit la grâce, que le ciel l'est de la terre'" (MSu 114).

[125] [Original text] "Le couple nature-surnaturel.. doit être conçu dans un premier temps dans un rapport d'opposition, c'est-à-dire d'altérité spirituelle et d'infinie distance, mais qu'il se résout ensuite, si l'homme s'y prête, en un rapport d'intime union...Un tel rapport exprime donc à la fois, d'une part, la

In the last analysis, de Lubac's understanding of the gift is closely linked to his integrated view on the relation of nature and grace. Nature is an already gifted entity, and grace is a much greater gift than the gifted nature. This understanding is also found in Milbank's overall theology. In Milbank's discussion relative to the gift with other contemporary philosophers and theologians, de Lubac's notion of the gift plays the referential role.

5.2 Milbank and the gift

For Milbank, with *poesis the* 'gift' is an important concept in the redefinition of his key concept, *participation*.[126] In virtue of this concept, his central terms participation becomes a dynamic notion just as did de Lubac's idea of the supernatural. As we have seen above in our examination of de Lubac's notion, the gift is not defined in terms of the giver-receiver relationship, but rather in terms of the communion between giver and receiver, that is, *deification*. That is, the being of the receiver itself is the gift. Milbank added this notion of gift to his key concept, *participation*: "the notion of a participation of the poetic in an infinite *poesis* is to be complemented by the notion of a participation of reciprocal exchanges in an infinite reciprocity which is the divine *donum*" (BR x). Milbank's notion of gift is modeled on the Trinitarian gift-exchange. Drawing on Augustine, he states:

> The *donum* that is the Holy Spirit is not only a free one-way gift (though it is also that), but in addition the realization of a perpetual exchange between the Father and the Son. This exchange results from the production of the Son; but equally, the Son is only brought to birth through the procession of the desire that is the Holy Spirit: a desire for communion, and a desire that even exceeds the closed communion of a dyad, looking for infinite and multiple reciprocities (BR x).

Milbank's notion of the gift is well demonstrated in his article, "Can a Gift be Given?"[127] As the title suggests, this article was written in the context of the debate on the possibility of the gift. In a dialogue with contemporary theorists with regard to the issue, he articulates his position. As with de Lubac, for Milbank the gift is a

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transcendance divine, la liberté du don que Dieu fait de lui-même, la 'grâce' et, d'autre part, le réalisme profond de la qualité d'enfant de Dieu acquise aux hommes en principe par l'incarnation du Verbe" (PCNG 37-8).

[126] For Milbank the gift is "a kind of transcendental category in relation to all the *topoi* de theology, in a similar fashion to 'word' (BR ix). See Oswald Bayer, 'Gabe', *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (RGG 4) Band 3, J.C.B Mohr (Paul Siebeck), Tübingen, 2000, 445). In this article, Bayer, drawing on Rome 6:23 and John 3:16, states that it is the *Urwort* of theology. "Als Urwort der Theol. erschließt sich Gabe konkret im Bezug zur religionswiss. Erkenntnis der kulturanthropologisch fundamentalen Bedeutung de G.(s.o.I). Charakterisiert die mit diesem Wort gemeinte vielgestaltige materielle wie symbolische Reziprozität biz zum Opfer eine allg. Zugängliche une allen einleuchtende menschliche Erfahrung, so steht Gottes Kommen in die Welt und sein Dasein in ihr *gegen* diese Erfahrung und die ihr entsprenchende Erwartung: Es ist im genauen Sinn des Wortes para-dox; es zerbricht jedes berechnende »do, ut des« (Röm 11, 35 mit Hi 41,3). Das Staunen über dieses Paradox ist das Staunen über die unverdiente, »kategorische G.« (Bayer). Sie prägt die Gestalt des Handelns dessen, »der den Gottlosen gerecht macht« (Röm 4,5) und in gleich Weise- sich ganz und gar unverdient, kategorisch gebend- »die Toten lebendig macht und dem, das nicht ist, ruft, daß es sei« (Röm 4,7); »nichts habe ich zu bringen« (EG 407,3). So ist Schöfung wie Neuschöfung G. (vgl. Das Gabewort Gen 2,16 mit dem Gabewort 1 Kor 11, 24).

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fundamentally theological concept as we have seen just above. Therefore, the accusation that Milbank has wrongly appropriated an anthropological or sociological category for theological discourse is not justified.[128] For him the notion, "gift is a kind of transcendental category in relation to all the *topoi* of theology, in a similar fashion to 'word'" (BR ix). Here we shall consider Milbank's notion of the gift in bringing him into dialogue with other theories of the gift.

Milbank criticizes Derrida's notion of the gift. For Derrida, the gift is conceptually self-contradictory because if we understand the gift in the strict sense of the term as the one-sideness of giving, there does not exist a gift without return. According to Derrida, "for there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, countergift, or debt."[129] That is, there is no such thing as a pure gift, a pure donor and a pure receiver, since in giving there is always an expectation of being rewarded. According to Milbank's interpretation, Derrida's assertion of the impossibility of the gift stems from his obsession with a Kantian purity of will. As it were, for Derrida, to give is associated with a pure ethical impetus. The expectation for reward is for Derrida considered to be a contamination of the purity of the gift. Naturally for him the gift is an impossible act for human beings. Milbank states: "As regards the Derridean notion that 'rewards' to self intrinsic to giving cancel the gift, this seems allied to the questionable Kantian understanding of the goodness of the gift as residing in purity of will or motivation."[130]

Milbank's critique of Derrida's argument of the impossibility of the gift is supported by his conception of *agape*. As we have seen in de Lubac's critique of the distinction of *agape* and *eros*, for Milbank, *agape* is not a unilateral sacrifice, but rather "as the consummation of gift-exchange."[131] The problem of the unilateral notion of the gift is that "extreme 'disinterest' in one's activity, though it can only be exercised by a subject, tends also to a suicidally sacrificial will against itself. That is to say, it tends ineradicably to depersonalize or devolve into a will to be a fully usable object."[132]

Milbank's notion of the gift is also made clear in his engagement with Jean-Luc Marion. Marion shares with Derrida the idea of the unilateral character of the gift. For Marion this unilateral character of the gift stems from his infinite distance between God as a giver and man as a receiver. For him the obliteration of this distance risks generating an idolization of the finite. Marion's notion of gift is to be understood from his insistence on the distance between God and creature. This means that the gift is given through God's withdrawal and absence. Hence the distance is the condition *sine qua non* for the union with God through the divine gift.

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[129] Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 12.

[130] John Milbank, "Can a Gift be Given?: Prolegomena to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysics," 132.

[131] Ibid., 144.

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Unlike Milbank, Marion set the 'givenness' above 'Being'. According to him, "no being, even supreme, gives itself to be grasped, since the gift surpasses what any being could..give." [133] Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenology offers to Marion an intellectual framework for his understanding of divine gift. According to phenomenology, it is necessary to 'bracket out' the content of our consciousness in order to filter its essence. There remains only 'givenness', the phenomenological horizon of human being. While Husserl links givenness to theoretical objectivity, and Heidegger to *Ereignis*, Marion goes beyond Husserl and Heidegger in associating 'givenness' with both the gift and revelation which is, for him, identified with charity. For Marion, his phenomenological framework is coupled with the logic of Barth's revelatory theology. That is, for Marion 'givenness' is regarded as God's unilateral revelation. That is, for him, if there is no giver, no receiver and no gift, there remains only givenness identified with revelation. Hence "Marion continues to develop the characteristic twentieth-century theology of divine word as gift and event" (WMS 36). In this respect his theology is very correlationalist insofar as "he usurps and radicalizes philosophy's own categories in favor of theological ones" (Ibid.). As a consequence, Marion is "still within a self-sufficient metaphysics, which is identical with secular modernity" (WMS 47)

In contrast, following de Lubac, Milbank holds that the gift is not given despite the refusal of receivers, but anticipated by them. He takes up Mary's praise in Luke's birth narrative in order to show the reciprocal character of gift. Mary's praise illustrates the human aspiration for the divine gift. After all, Milbank concludes: "Marion's raising of the text 'he came to his own but his own received him not' to a hermeneutically pivotal position which establishes that the divine gift is indifferent to reception, ignores the hermeneutic priority of the necessary reception of Christ by Israel in the person of Mary."[134]

6. Paradox

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[133]Jeans-Luc Marion, *The Idol and Distance: Fives Studies*, trans. Thomas A.Carlson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001),140. For Milbank, "the phenomenological presumption of confinement to the given is that one remains with what appears within the realm of the thinking subject. If what is given within this appearance in fundamentally a gift, then this cannot be guaranteed by the off-limits 'transcendence' of thought-independent being, but only in terms of this subjective space itself, even if this be a space where ther primary subjectivity is that of 'the other' " (FL 354).

[134] Ibid., 136. Tamsin Jones Farmer corrects and reconciles both Milbank's and Marion's understanding of the gift on the basis of Gregory of Nyssa's theology of gift. According to him, Nyssa holds a more balanced view than Milbank and Marion. He thinks that Milbank emphases gift-exchange, while Marion pays attention to the distance between God and creature and unilateral gift. However, these two views are to be corrected by Nyssa's understanding of divine-human relationship. He notes: "while congratualting Milbank, Gregory would also take him in hand and attempt to give him courage, pointing out patiently that a notion of divine excess which eternally resists our comprehension of the divine need not fall off into an abyss of nihilism…Against Marion [Nyssa] would also say that it is precisely [the] maintenance of distance which allows for an ever-increasing participation in the Trinity.. Gregory holds together in creative tension the very aspects which mark the difference between Milbank and Marion: economy and gratuitousness, participation and passive receptivity" (Tamsin Jones Farmer, "Revealing the Invisible: Gregory of Nyssa on the gift of revelation," *Modern Theology* 21:1 (January 2005), 79.

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6.1 The paradox of human nature

6.1.1 The natural desire for God

The paradoxical nature of the human spirit plays a decisive role in overcoming the dualism between nature and grace. In this respect, Milbank holds a dynamic worldview in the sense that the human spirit is not sufficient in itself, but in the movement toward transcendence as we can find typically in Augustine. In Augustine, Milbank sees the human spirit's movement toward the supernatural order.[144] In differing from pagan philosophy in which the body is to be ordered by the soul, Augustine suggested a third dimension of "God/heaven/peace" (TST 410) to which the soul is to be conformed, a dimension which is alien to pagan thought. "In the third dimension the soul realizes its true desire, and enters into reciprocal relationship of affirmation with other souls" (TST 410). As with Augustine, for Milbank, the human soul is situated in the cosmic order, which is characterized by heavenly peace. So seemingly violent, the chaotic earthly order is not supposed to be as it is, but rather participating in the harmonious whole in which the soul itself is its part. As a result, "human nature has a self-transcending character which orientates it towards the supernatural. Hence our reality is not measured by our apparent capacity, but by our aspiration" (BR 27).

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[143] Ibid., 136. Tamsin Jones Farmer corrects and reconciles both Milbank's and Marion's understanding of the gift on the basis of Gregory of Nyssa's theology of gift. According to him, Nyssa holds a more balanced view than Milbank and Marion. He thinks that Milbank emphases gift-exchange, while Marion pays attention to the distance between God and creature and unilateral gift. However, these two views are to be corrected by Nyssa's understanding of divine-human relationship. He notes: "while congratualting Milbank, Gregory would also take him in hand and attempt to give him courage, pointing out patiently that a notion of divine excess which eternally resists our comprehension of the divine need not fall off into an abyss of nihilism…Against Marion [Nyssa] would also say that it is precisely [the] maintenance of distance which allows for an ever-increasing participation in the Trinity.. Gregory holds together in creative tension the very aspects which mark the difference between Milbank and Marion: economy and gratuitousness, participation and passive receptivity" (Tamsin Jones Farmer, "Revealing the Invisible: Gregory of Nyssa on the gift of revelation," *Modern Theology* 21:1 (January 2005), 79.

[144] See Wayne Hankey, "The Postmodern Retrieval of neo-Platonism in Jean-Luc Marion and John Milbank and the Origin of western Subjectivity in Augustine and Eriugena," *Hermathena* 165 (Winter, 1998), 9-70.

An author of the Radical Orthodoxy series, Daniel M. Bell, who delved into the theme of desire in Christianity, devoted a section to Bernard of Clairvaux and the Cistercians who represent the pre-modern Christian positive understanding of desire.[145] According to his study, unlike the modern rationalist tendency of suppressing human desire in favor of human reason, for Bernard, "desire is a basic movement of the human being."[146] However, in contrast to the modern understanding of desire which is considered as linking to a lack, his conception of desire is grounded in his understanding of creation as the fullness of God. For him, "the human being is not constituted by a lack, an absence, a privation but by a fullness, a presence, an excess."[147] Bernard incorporates human desire for God into God's desire for man. In this sense, "human desire is a gift of God".[148]

Thus, for Milbank, both naturalist and spiritualist accounts of man distort the realhuman nature, which is at once nature and spirit. "Our nature as human being is paradoxically by definition t*o exceed* our nature and enjoy further 'accidental' participation in the divine" (TA 16). For Milbank, the modern nihilism which is directly caused by the flattening of the universe originated from the loss of the paradoxical desire of human nature. He states: "The collapse of the paradox of the natural orientation to the supernatural was an aspect of the collapse of this entire cosmology and ontology" (BR 115). That is, desire, not sterile human reason, is the real conductor of the human construction of the world.[149] Naturally without it man's ontological vision of the world is undermined.

According to de Lubac, man as the image of God is created for the supernatural end, that is, beatific vision. He has a natural desire to see God (*desiderium naturale videndi Deum*). "Man is by nature the temple of God, destined to receive his glory" (S, note F.).[150] However, this desire is distinguished from animal desire because, "Spirit, in fact, does not desire God as animal desires his prey. He desires it as a gift." [151] In other words, the desire of the human spirit is not the desire to possess God but to form a union with God. For de Lubac and Milbank, the desire for seeing God is itself the gift of God. The existence of this desire confirms the human supernatural end. But this desire is an asymmetric gift in the sense that God takes the initiative for granting this desire. Furthermore, this desire is reciprocal because it implicates the personal relationship between God and man. C. S. Lewis, who best thematized the subject of the desire for God in man, affirms the beatific vision by the existence of supernatural desire of human being.

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[145] See Daniel M. Bell, *Liberation Theology at the End of History,* 88-96. For an account of the mystical theology of Bernard of Clarvaux, see Étienne Gilson, *La Théologie Mystique de Saint Bernard* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1969).

[146] Ibid*.,* 89.

[147] Ibid., 90

[148] Ibid.

[149] De Lubac states the same things: "La curiosité piquée par les effets de Dieu dans les créatures est une curiosité érotique, tandis qu'inversement le désir "déduit" de connaître Dieu est en soi un désir cognitif"(MSu 58).

[150] [Original text] " L'homme est par nature le temple de Dieu, destiné à recevoir sa gloire" (S 483, emphasis mine).

[151] [Original text] "l'esprit, en effet, ne désire pas Dieu comme l'animal désire sa proie. Il le désire comme un don "(S 483, translation mine).

> Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.[152]

Sharing with Lewis' vision, Milbank remarks: "The natural human destiny that looks towards the supernatural vision of God is only the outworking in a conscious, knowing and willing created nature of the paradox of creation as such: it is of itself nothing and only exists by participation" (BR 114).

De Lubac's understanding of the paradoxical nature of human desire is manifested in his review[153] of Anders Nygren's *Agape and Eros*, a study on the notion of *agape* from the time of the Church Fathers to the Reformation. Nygren's thesis is very simple. According to him, *agape* and *eros* are diametrically opposed theological motifs. *Agape* characterizes the Christian religion, whereas *eros* the Hellenistic religion. These two contrasting motifs have been in conflict in Christian thought. The Christian ideal of *agape* is unilateral and descending love from God. In contrast, *eros* motif is defined by a desire of ascending to God for the salvation of his soul. *Agape* is characterized by self-mortification and self-denial, while *eros* is egocentric in character. De Lubac summarizes the difference between these two loves:

> In both cases, religion is communion with God. By one, human reality is raised up to become divine reality; this is the solution of egocentric religion, the solution of eros. By the other, divine reality reaches down, through piety, to man; this is the solution of thecentric religion, the solution of *agape* (TF 87).[154]

According to Nygren, these two motives are mixed in the history of Christian thought. For example, patristic and medieval thinkers such as Augustine, Aquinas and Pseudo-Deny contaminated the Christian idea of *agape* with the pagan idea of *eros*. Nygren, who himself belongs to the Lutheran tradition, estimates that Luther restored the primitive idea of *apape* to its own place. De Lubac, while admitting Nygren's penetrating analysis of this classic subject, still calls into question the accuracy of his historical inquiry. He believes that Nygren is so preoccupied with defending his thesis and exaggerates the difference between *agape* and *eros* by simplifying it. For example, Nygren does not have a compelling justification of his identifying Paul's *eros* and *gnosis*. And Nygren's argument privileged Pauline texts without considering Johaninne texts. That is, he makes a biased reading of the Scripture. De Lubac holds that the desire for God is confirmed by many biblical texts (TF 87).[155]

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[152] C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 135.

[153] This review is contained in TF 85-9.

[154] [Original text] "De part et d'autre, la religion est communion avec Dieu. Mais 'on peut se représenter celle-ci comme accessible par deux voies. D'un côté, la réalité humaine est élevée jusqu'à devenir réalité divine; telle est la solution de la religion égocentrique, la solution de l'*érôs*. D'autre part, la réalité divine s'abaisse, par pitié, jusqu'à l'homme ; telle est la solution de la religion théocentrique, la solution de l'*agapè*" (TO 93).

[155] De Lubac states that "The Scripture bears witness everywhere to the idea of the supernatural" (BCNG 10).

With regard to Nygren's claim that patristic and medieval thought is contaminated with *eros*, de Lubac criticizes Nygren's symplistic thinking. That is, Nygren, according to de Lubac, "thinks of eros and *agape* as being on the same plane, as though they are inevitably competitive" (TF 88). In other words, Nygren loses sight of the ontological dimension which Christ brought into the world. For de Lubac, "Christian revelation has radically changed the spiritual attitude on which salvation depends, it has not changed human nature and removed it from its ontological laws as they ensue in the creative act" (TF 88). The key error which Nygren commits is his denial of the natural human desire for God which is crucial to de Lubac's thought. Unlike Nygren, de Lubac maintains that the *eros* motif had been Christianized in light of the Christian doctrine of the creation of man in the image of God. Therefore, for de Lubac, *eros* in the Christian sense of the term is not egoistic impulse, but rather a gift from God.

In his turn, for Milbank, the supernatural desire plays a pivotal role of confronting the savage capitalist order. This means that Milbank understands the confrontation between capitalism and Christianity as that of two opposing desires. As Daniel Bell states well,

> The conflict between capitalism and Christianity is nothing less than a clash of opposing technologies of desire. Christianity has traditionally conceived of the human being in terms of desire. Augustine's famous dictum, 'our hearts are restless until they find rest in thee' captures this sentiment well. The human being is constituted by desire, the desire of God. The Christian tradition also claims, however, that desire has been corrupted. Sin has distorted desire. Sin captures and bends desire in unnatural directions. It disciplines and enslaves desire…. Capitalism is one such discipline of desire.[156]

Consumerist capitalism disciplines our desire with a view to its good operation. But this desire, for Milbank and RO, is a perverted egocentric desire that is culturally formed. And this desire is to be healed by another kind of desire. This is what Graham Ward states, that "desire is fundamental to our nature as human beings as God created us, theology will have to show how Christian desire operates in a way that does not accord with the operation of desire in secular culture, the culture of seduction."[157]

How then can Christianity transform perverted human desire and return it to its original place? The answer is, for Milbank and RO, the Church in which human supernatural desire converges. As he states, "Only within the doxological and confessional practices of the historic ecclesia is the alternative desire (to nihilism) possible" (RONT 121). This is because it is only in the Church that a true politics is realized, a politics fundamentally different from the politics which the state leads in capitalistic order. The Church is the locus where the alternative discipline of desire is made against the capitalist discipline of desire. Bell states,

> In opposition to savage capitalism and the governmental logic of its subservient state-form, Christianity is cast as the exemplary form of human community, the true politics. This is to say, Christianity is reclaimed as an ensemble of technologies that

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156 Danel M. Bell, *Liberation Theology after the End of History*, 2.
157 Graham Ward, *Cites of God,* 76.

> reforms or shapes desire in ways that counter the capitalist discipline of desire"[158] … After all," The Christian community, in its sacraments and order its discipleship and prayer, must be retrieved as (no less than capitalism and its state-form) an ensemble of technologie of desire that can properly be characterized as a theraphy of desire.[159]

6.1.2 Anthropological basis

Milbank estimates that De Lubac's "Anthropologie Tripartie" [160] reveals the anthropological implication of de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis, because this work grounds the participatory ontology in theological anthropology (SM 48). In this work, Henri de Lubac tenaciously insists on the triple constitution of body, soul and spirit despite the opposition of many who claim that the triple constitution originated with Greek philosophy, and not from the Scriptures. De Lubac opposes especially Luther's claim to the dual constitution of body and soul in that it is based on his idea of total corruption of man.[161] According to de Lubac, the tripartition of man is recognized by the Christian tradition through and through (TH 115). Yet de Lubac refuses the substantial understanding of this tripartition. Rather, this distinction is to be understood "as a threefold zone of activity, from the periphery to the center, or, to use a traditional and irreplaceable word, to the 'heart' (TF 117).[162]

Furthermore, de Lubac accentuates that this idea of the tripartition of man has a biblical basis, in the Pauline anthropology in particular. He quotes the apostle Paul: "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23, Ibid, 115). For de Lubac, the concept of *pneuma* marks Christian mystical tradition. As Milbank explains, according to de Lubac "already in Paul, whereas the contrast of soul is body, the contrast of *pneuma* is *sarx*, the flesh. This 'flesh' is the false egoism and claim to autonomy of the person; inversely *pneuma* exceeds the psychic, because it is what underlies the entire person as the point of his derivation from God" (SM 49). That is, *pneuma* is the point of contact between nature and the supernatural. De Lubac's anthropology is thus linked inextricably to participatory ontology. In virtue of *pneuma*, man participates in the divine nature. "[The pneuma] in man, is the principle of a higher life, the place of communication with God" (TH 125).[163]

De Lubac's theological anthropology serves as a reference for his critique of modern atomistic anthropology which lost its participatory link to the supernatural. According to Milbank, since Duns Scotus, human individuality began to prevail over the

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[158] Bell, *Liberation Theology after the End of History*, 86.

[159] Ibid.,144. The therapy for the distorted desire that Bell suggests is forgiveness: "It is God's gift of forgiveness in Christ, and not the relentless pursuit of justice understood in the classic sense of rendering 'what is due,' that liberates desire and give birth to communities capable of resisting capitalism. Through the reception and return of God's gift of forgiveness –receiving and giving it- communities are formed where desire is liberated from capitalist discipline" (Ibid.,145).

[160] Henri de Lubac, "Anthropologie Tripartite," (TH I 115-200).

[161] According to Milbank, de Lubac "seeks to demonstrate that Erasmus, who accepted the division, was more authentically Pauline than Luther, who later abandoned it for a doctrine of post-lapsarian total depravity" (SM 49).

[162] [Original text] "comme une triple zone d'activité, de la périphérie au centre, ou, pour reprendre un mot traditionnel et irremplaçable, au 'coeur'" (TH I 115).

[163] [Original text] "[Le] *pneuma*, dans l'homme, est le principe d'une vie supérieure, le lieu de la communication avec Dieu" (TH I 123).

universality of man. According to Scotus' account, what makes Socrates Socrates is his individuality as Socrates, not his universal nature as a human being. Scotus called this distinctive character *haecceity*. This idea is contrasted with the traditional idea of man considered as composed of form and matter. It is universal form, not matter which determines the individual. Scotus inversely gives much weight to matter. Thus Scotus emphasizes the priority of individuality over universality, and concomitantly will over intellect. It is the Scotist individualistic and voluntaristic tendency of the nominalist tradition which Milbank severely criticizes. According to him: "In the thought of the nominalist, following Duns Scotus, the Trinity loses its significance as a prime location for discussing will and understanding in God and the relationship of God to the world" (TST 14).

Milbank illustrates the loss of the participatory link in comparing the usage of *dominium* for Thomas Aquinas with the usage of the nominalist tradition. According to Milbank, Aquinas tries to "tame Roman *dominium* by understanding Adam's *dominium* as *dominium utile*, a property right of free 'procuration and disposal' whose final justification was still *usus* by society in general" (TST 13). Milbank, drawing on Augustine's Christological understanding of *persona*, stresses that the Christian notion of person has little to do with the person which Roman law supposes :

> In Augustine, for example, the background to the anthropological *persona* is Christological and Trinitarian rather than jurisprudential, so that what he stresses is the concrete, specific unit of the person, including both soul and body, a situated unity like the unity of God and man which occurs in the specific divine personhood of Christ- inseparable from its relationship to the Father and the Holy Spirit (TST 96).

However, Gean Gerson interpreted *dominium* as the active right for property. "The self-identity, the *suum,* is no longer essentially related to divine rational illumination, or ethics, but is a sheer 'self-occupation' or 'self-possession'" (TST 13). Milbank cites John Locke who will later state that "Every man has a property in his own person."[164] In the case of the nominalist Hobbes, individualism is radicalized. Human relation is essentially understood in terms of conflict -*Homo hominis lupus est*. Milbank concludes that " 'unrestricted' private property, (absolute sovereignty' and 'active right', which compose the 'pure-power' object of the new politics, are all the emancipation of a new anthropology which begins with human persons as individuals and yet defines their individuality essentialistically, as 'will' or 'capacity' or 'impulse to self-preservation'" (TST 14).

6.2 Creation and incarnation as paradoxes

The doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* constitutes a major axis of Milbank's theology. Everything was created by God without precedent matter, nor existing form on which the world is formed. Naturally, eternal substance or eternal matter is unthinkable in orthodox Christian thought. Even time is the creation of God. In this respect, all creation is entirely dependent on God. According to Milbank, creation is a gift (BR ix). It

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[164] John Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*, Book II, ch.V (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) cited in TST 13.

is as such in an excellent state without any deficiency. In this sense de Lubac calls creation *donum optimum*. However, without God this creation is nothing. Therefore creation is naturally oriented toward the supernatural. In this sense, creation is a paradox because it has integrity and at the same time aspires to its perfection by God (*donum perfectum*). Milbank thinks that human supernatural destiny is rooted in the paradoxical nature of creation. According to him: "The natural human destiny that looks towards the supernatural vision of God is only the outworking in a conscious, knowing and willing created nature of the paradox of creation as such: it is of itself nothing, and only exists by participation" (BR 114).

According to Henri de Lubac, for the Father of the Church "the Incarnation is the supreme Paradox"(PF 8). If creation is *donum optimum*, incarnation is *donum perfectum*. For de Lubac and Milbank, between these two gifts are a continuity and discontinuity because the goal of these gifts is *deification*.[165] Relying on de Lubac, Milbank explains the mediating role of man's desire for God between these two gifts:

> While Creation is the gift of independent existence and grace is the irresistible gift of nonetheless free and deified existence (joining the creature to the Creator as regards intellect, will, and personhood if not essential being), the natural desire of the supernatural is the gift of the bond between the two, negotiated by the spirit's freedom. If Creation implies both autonomous being and entirely heteronomous gift, while grace implies a raising of oneself as oneself to the beyond oneself, then the natural desire of the supernatural implies the dynamic link between the two orders that constitutes spirit, such that this link is at once entirely an aspect of the Creation and entirely also the work, in advance of itself, of grace which unites human creatures to the Creator (SM39).

7. Critical issues

7.1 General critical issues

It is clear that Milbank's theology is refreshing and provocative in its uncompromising challenge to current secularity. His model has many advantages in our attempt to resist the secular . His reenchantment of the world could return the world to its proper state. However, the soundness of a theology does not guarantee its effectiveness. So I want to point out a dangerous idea in Milbank's theology.

First, Milbank's dismantling of the border between nature and grace is not invulnerable to ideological exploitation of a particular human prejudice. We know that neo-Calvinism was used as an ideological justification for apartheid in South Africa. This neo-Calvinism bears deep affinity with Milbank's thought in that it also argues for the breakdown of the separation between nature and grace. From this perspective, Barth's emphasis on God's radical alterity is more efficacious in the face of natural theology. Of course, Milbank does not suggest covert natural theology. But the

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[165] Étienne Guibert well explains this point: "La rencontre de ces deux paradoxes- celui de l'Incarnation et celui de la création- s'était réalisé par le même mouvement d'assimilation réciproque: la création était gracieusement invitée à passer tout entière en Dieu, et à y trouver sa vérité d'étoffe du monde à venir. Le passage de la création en Dieu était rendu possible par l'Incarnation rédemptrice, à la fois 'Don du ciel' et 'fruit de la terre'" (Étienne Guibert, *Le Mystère du Christ d'après Henri de Lubac* [Paris: Cerf, 2006], 295).

integration between nature and grace could give birth to a natural theology in disguise and its abuse in the name of grace.

Second, along with the integration of nature and grace, law and Gospel can be integrated in Milbank's theological model. But because of Milbank's repugnance toward dialectical modes of thinking, Milbank seems not to admit theological uses of the law. For the Protestant mindset, the law is also good, and the gift of God, but in its theological use, it plays the role of disclosing human sin. It seems that Milbank confuses the law as good creation of God and its theological use. Even in its theological use, law does not abolish the natural, but rather it reorients the natural to the supernatural. In Milbank's theological anthropology, it seems to be difficult to embrace this view. But I often have the impression that Milbank confuses the ideal man and the real man. I admit that the human being has a natural desire for seeing God. But we can ask of Milbank if every man in the world has the same desire for the supernatural. I shares Jens Zimmermann's criticism of RO's theurgical neo-Platonic model that Milbank embraces. His primary worry about RO is its lack of the Reformed emphasis on the Word of God: "Radical Orthodoxy's 'theurgic neoplatonism,' is problematic because not only can it slip imperceptibly into a works righteousness mentality; but its emphasis on the Eucharist neglects other manifestations of the divine Word, particularly to the role of scriptural exegesis and preaching remains underdeveloped in RO's writings."[166]

7.2 On Milbank's interpretation of Thomas Aquinas

James K.A.Smith calls into question Milbank's adoption of a platonic paradigm as his theological framework, which Milbank describes as Platonism/Christianity (TST 290) and 'more Platonic' Christianity (RONT 3). For this Reformed philosopher, RO's theological articulation of "more incarnate" and "more Platonic" (RONT 3) sounds strange, because to his Reformed ears, these two phrases are not reconcilable. Smith's reaction is understandable if we take into account the allergy of the Reformed tradition to Platonism which, we believe, distinguishes the sensible and the intelligible. His critique is grounded in this mainline interpretation of Plato. Reminding himself of his Protestant fundamentalism as his early theological background which, like Plato, separates between the sacred and the secular, he identifies Protestant Fundamentalism with Nietzsche's understanding of Christianity : "Both evangelical Christianity and Nietzsche's Platonism cry out, 'And above all, away with the body!'"[167] His discovery of the continental Reformed tradition leads him to realize that it affirms the goodness of the materiality in creation, etc. As Smith admits, this affirmation of materiality is shared by both RO and the Reformed tradition. For him, the problem with RO lies in RO's linkage with Plato, which denigrates materiality in stating that "body is the prison of the soul"[168]. He is made uneasy by RO's fundamental concept of participation (*methexis*) which stems from Plato's dualist philosophy. Here Smith makes clear that RO's Platonism is not the traditional dualist Platonism of Plato and Plotinus, but

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[166] Jens Zimmermann, "Radical Orthodoxy: A Reformed Appraisal," *Canadian Evangelical Review* 26-27 (Spring 2004), 76.

[167] James K.A.Smith, "Will the real Plato please stand up?," *Radical Orthodoxy and Reformed Tradition,* ed. James. K.A. Smith and James Olthuis, 62

[168] Plato, *Phaedo* 81d.

"theurgical Neoplatonism of the Iamblichian tradition,"[169] which robustly gives value to materiality and its sacramental nature. Namely, when RO appeals to Plato, this Plato is reinterpreted by theurgical Neoplatonism. However, Smith is not convinced of RO's reinterpretation because in his view there is insufficient textual warrant for this reading. In conclusion, "Milbank and Pickstock's Plato scholarship has not convinced me that we need Plato for such a project, nor even the Plato offers a properly *incanational* ontology of participation. In this respect, then, I think the Reformed tradition's allergy to Platonism remains warranted."[170]

From this perspective, Smith worries about the blurring of the chasm between the creator and creatures which Milbank's participatory ontology could generate. In other words, Milbank's emphasis on the engraced character of creation could weaken the whole transcendence of God. This typical response is represented by the Reformed theologian, Karl Barth, in its extreme form, which Milbank severely chides. For Barth, God is to remain as the 'Wholly other' (*ganz anders*). As a philosopher in line with Dutch Calvinism, though he, unlike Barth, admits the presence of God's grace in creation, he also, like Barth, cannot help hiding his reservation toward Milbank's excessive universal affirmation of creation without distinction between Christian and non-Christian. He states:

> I have some suspicions that of late, Milbank- under the rubric of universalism- is rehabilitating a quasi-natural theology. This would stem from the fact that, even if he recognizes the noetic effects of sin (it is not clear that he does), for him, grace seems to be universally shed abroad in such a way that these effects are undone for all humanity (BR 106). The result is a renewed confidence in a general illumination or universal reason—assertions that would seem to contradict the critique of the secular that stands at the heart of RO.[171]

7.3 Calvinist critique of Milbank's theology

John Marenbon points to Milbank's misreading of Thomas Aquinas in stating "Truth in Aquinas by John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock offers a blatant misreading of Aquinas that ignores the ordinary canons of scholarly enquiry."[172] In his criticism of Milbank's "Truth and vision" in TA, Marenbon protests against Milbank's idea that for Aquinas, "[even natural power of thought] operate through in the uncreated and intelligible light of the divine intellect" (TA 22). Marenbon asks himself how Milbank's interpretation of Aquinas is supported by his participatory ontology when it cannot explain why Aquinas adopted the Aristotelian notion of human cognition, which is operated by the abstraction of sensible materials. For him, "the Aristotelian account would fit into a broader framework [of Aquinas] in which the 'very remote approximation' (TA 22) to divine intuition enjoyed by the intellect provides the foundation for our knowledge."[173] Namely, Marenbon, unlike Milbank, follows the usual

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[169] Ibid., 65.
[170] Ibid., 72.
[171] James K.A.Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 165.
[172] John Marenbon, "Aqunias, Radical Orthodoxy and the Importance of Truth," in in *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy: Postmodern Theology, Rhetoric and Truth*, eds. Wayne J. Hankey and Douglas Hedley (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 49-63.
[173] Ibid., 53.

interpretation of Aquinas, according to which Aquinas's theology is primarily modeled by Aristotle, so that the idea of participation is but a metaphor. For him, when Aquinas speaks of participation in ST 1.12.2 resp, on which Milbank draws, he regards it as a proof text of the idea of participation in Aquinas. According to him, "What Aquinas says here… is not that our natural powers of thought operates *through* participation in the light of God's intellect, but they are 'derived' from this light. Aquinas is not, then, saying – as Milbank suggests- that some sort of illumination along Augustinian lines is required for individual acts of knowing, but rather that each human's intellect derives from God and bears some resemblance to God's intellect."[174]

Like Marenbon, Nicholas Lash calls into question Milbank's new interpretation of Aquinas. He thinks that Milbank is wrong in his understanding of Aquinas's metaphysics. He qualifies Milbank's position as "the dangerous tendency of Cardinal Milbank."[175] On the basis of the commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Lash explains that Thomas Aquinas utilizes intelligibility on three levels. These three modes of intelligibility correspond to three sciences. If it concerns the causes, one calls it *prima philosophia*. If it concerns reality in general, it is metaphysics. And if it concerns pure spirit, it is *scientia divina sive theologia*. Lash indicates that this text never talks about the revelation of God. Therefore, differing from Milbank, he makes clear that " [he] is genuinely baffled by John Milbank's reference to [Aquinas' text] and that there are plenty of places in his writings in which St. Thomas does contrast the scope and function of theology and philosophy."[176]

One of the contributors to RONT, Laurence Paul Hemming is uneasy with RO's appropriation of Aquinas as their theological model. His thesis is that the restoration of Aquinas is due to the exemplarity of his theology for those who "have shaped a theological understanding of faith through a profound and far-reaching philosophical reflection."[177] He manifests his basic position on Aquinas in stating, "Any restoration of Aquinas is going to have to produce and elaborate a history of philosophy wherein Aquinas, and Aristotle for that matter, can be placed."[178]

In opposition to Milbank and de Lubac, for him, philosophy is an autonomous discipline which can articulate the content of faith in its own terms. It is, for Hemming, in this perspective that Aquinas is to be the model of our theology. In other words, according to him, "in appealing to Aquinas we are called to do what he does: to shape our own understanding of faith through a profound and far-reaching philosophical reflection—that will therefore take into account that the self-reflection of those not yet received in faith."[179]

In this light Hemming opposes RO's interpretation of Aquinas' idea of truth. In his view, Aquinas supports the Aristotelian view of truth as correspondence (*adaequatio*). With regard to Pickstock's interpretation of Aquinas, in which "beyond Aristotle, Aquinas develops an account of how we do in a certain measure participate in

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[174] Ibid.
[175] Nicholas Lash, "Where Does Holy Teaching Leave Philosophy? Questions on Milbank's Aquinas," *Modern Theology* 15:4 (1999), 437.
[176] Ibid., 439.
[177] *Radical Orthodoxy? : A Catholic Enquiry*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming, 86.
[178] Ibid., 93.
[179] Ibid.

the divine knowledge of singulars."[180] he argues inversely, "Aquinas' argument is not moving beyond, but entirely within the province of Aristotle's own understanding of truth."[181] This means that Aquinas did not understand truth in ontological terms as Milbank and Pickstock assert, but in epistemological terms. Unlike Milbank, who upholds the inaccessibility of the essence of things, Aquinas, according to Hemming, thinks that essence (*eidos*) resides in the divine mind. Hemming states, "For Aquinas, the 'correspondence theory of truth' has the happy effect that in my coming across any particular thing, the thing discovered will, through its truth, brings my intellect into conformity with the divine intellect."[182] Milbank would be uneasy with this claim, because for him human reason cannot grasp the divine mind, but can simply participate in it. In this sense, for Milbank, faith is not opposed to reason, but they differ from each other in the degree of participation, whereas Hemming's Aquinas sharply distinguishes the realm of faith and that of reason. In this light, Hemming has difficulty in accepting RO's idea that God is the immediate guarantor of truth.

7.4 Criticism of Milbank's Barth

With regard to the idea of the gift, Milbank's critique of Calvin's theology is summarized as two points: One point is Calvin's unilateral conception of the gift, the other is the metaphysical ambiguity of Calvin's gift theology.

As we have seen, reciprocal understanding of the gift characterizes Milbank's and de Lubac's gift theology. In this light he attacks Derrida's and Marion's gift theology which claims the unilateral concept of the gift. This criticism is directly applied to Calvin's theology, in particular to Calvin's doctrine of 'imputation'. For Milbank, Calvin understands grace as given extrinsically. This forensic account of grace indicates Calvin's endorsement of the nominalist tradition and his rupture with the patristic understanding of grace as participation.

In response to Milbank's charges against Calvin, J. Todd Billings attempts to defend this Reformer and correct Milbank's misunderstanding of him in *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*.[183] Concerning the idea of participation in Calvin, Billings points out that Calvin's idea of participation is complexly related to the theologies before him. According to him, the idea of participation is recontextualized in Calvin's doctrine of *duplex gratia* (justification and sanctification). That is, while Calvin understands the grace of justification as imputation, he understands the grace of sanctification as participation in Christ—or union with Christ.[184] Therefore it is a simplistic idea that Calvin advocates a simply forensic account of grace. For Billings, "Calvin's theology of union with Christ is articulated with reference to participation, adoption, imputation, and the wonderful exchange. It is a multifaceted doctrine, utilizing both legal and transformative images."[185] In fact, the distinction of the two graces is not temporal, but logical. Two

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[180] Pickstock, "Radical Orthodoxy and the Mediation of Time," in *Radical Orthodoxy?: A Catholic Inquiry*, 72.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid.
[183] J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Unions with Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid.

events simultaneously happen in union with Christ and cannot be divided. As regards this issue, Calvin states: "these two which we perceive in him together and conjointly are inseparable-namely, righteousness and sanctification."[186] Briefly, this means that Calvin's *duplex gratia* is two faces of the same coin. In this respect, Calvin's notion of grace/gift cannot be qualified as simply 'unilateral', for Calvin evidently emphasizes the believer's active role by the work of the Holy Spirit.[187] As Billings says, "for Calvin, imputation does not undercut the theological logic of participation, but holds it together: imputation and regeneration are held together by being two aspects of participation in Christ for believers."[188]

7.5 Criticism of Milbank's Barth

In his "Mediating theologies: Karl Barth between radical and neo-orthodoxy,"[189] Joseph L.Mangina defends Barth against Milbank's charge. Above all, he distances Barth from so-called neo-orthodoxy, in which he includes H.Richard Niebuhr, Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich. He draws on James Hanvey's estimation of Milbank that "Milbank's criticism reflects at best a superficial acquaintance with the Barth of the *Church Dogmatics*."[190] According to Mangina, Milbank's understanding of Barth is indebted to Donald Mackinnon. In many ways, Milbank's theological project stands in continuity with Mackinnon's Barthianism[191] in his blurring the boundaries between

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[186] Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.11.6, cited in ibid.

[187] In another article Billings, correcting Milbank's active reception of grace, suggests "activating grace" accordance with his Calvinist conviction of the distinction between justifying grace and sanctifying grace (Billings, "Milbank's theology of 'gift' and Calvin's theology of grace," 91). According to him, "Calvin does have clarity on [this] issues- the first grace is pardon, *extra nos*, while the second grace is a participatory regeneration by the Spirit" (Ibid.). However Billings points that Calvin did not understand God-man relationship as opposing to each other. Here he draws on Philip Butin's argument that "Calvin's Trinitarian account of divine-human relations 'perichoretic'"(Ibid.,92, cf. Philip Butin, *Revelation, and Response: Calvin's Trinitarian Understanding of the Divine-Human Relationship* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, 42,82-83). From this fact, Billings prefers Calvin's model in which soteriology and ethics make an integrated whole to Milbank's gift-exchange model. He states: "Milbank remains vague on these questions: 'active reception' means that the gift of grace coincides with relation, but it does not address the ground of justification and its relation to sanctification. Secondly, I have argued that Milbank's account of grace as a 'unilateral' gift requiring 'passive' reception or relations of mutual logical notions assume an exteriority between agents that is inadequate for describing God's saving relation to humanity" (Ibid.).

[188] Ibid., 191.

[189] Joseph L. Mangina, "Mediating theologies: Karl Barth between radical and neo-orthodoxy," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56:4 (2003), 427-443.

[190] James Hanvey, SJ, "Conclusion", in *Radical Orthodoxy?: A Catholic Enquiry,* Hemming, ed. Laurence Paul, 155, in Mangina, 433.

[191] Milbank makes explicit both his alignment and break with this British theologian: "Most of the British people involve in Radical Orthodoxy are to a degree heirs to the peculiarly British refraction of neo-orthodoxy represented by Donald MacKinnon, who, in effect, sought to develop something like a more philosophically self-conscious Barthianism in which it Kantian presuppositions were much more specifically brought to the fore. There was, indeed, a certain blurring of boundaries involved here, and also a peculiar style of inter-disciplinary collage far removed from any exegetical straightjacket. It seems to me that Radical Orthodoxy has to acknowledge its indebtedness as to idiom to this MacKinnon-derived legacy. But as to content it is equally important to stress a break with MacKinnon and some of his assumption." (Milbank, "The Programme of Radical Orthodoxy," in *Radical Orthodoxy: A Catholic Enquiry*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming, 38). And he states: "MacKinnon seems to endorses a certain positivity of revelation in relation to Christology, at other times he more interestingly associates Christology itself with the possibility of metaphysics" (John Milbank, "Between 'Purgation' and

theology and philosophy, his Christian socialist politics, etc. For Mackinnon, the core of Barth's theology is the suffering Jesus who was crucified. His *theologia crucis* leads him to embrace modern philosophy's account of man's ethical anxiety. And Barth's *Offenbarungspositivismus* is the theological response to legitimated modern philosophy. In the end, "MacKinnon's [metaphysics] might be described as a 'metaphysics of the finite'"[192] For Mangina, Milbank's understanding of Barth is filtered by this British theologian.

For Mangina, however, Barth is more near to Milbank than to neo-orthodoxy insofar as the neo-orthodoxy paradigm supposes the legitimacy of the secular realm as such. For him Barth is not so neo-orthodox as Milbank thinks. Mangina judges that Milbank's reading of Barth is reflective of widespread misreading in the English-speaking world. According to him, unlike Luther, Bultmann, and the Niebuhrs, Barth is never a theologian entrapped within human finitude. "The 'No' of his dialectics is in service to the great 'Yes' of God."[193] And "Barth's point departure in the *Church Dogmatics* is the presence of the resurrected Jesus, the bearer of God's new creation… The characteristic mood of Barth's theology is not that of an abstract *theologia crucis*, a theme in Luther he found highly problematic even as he employed it for specific ends."[194] This means that, for Mangina, Barth sets forth a Christian metaphysics, a metaphysics which is different in character from neo-orthodoxy. Even if Milbank and Barth have the same theological goal of renewing the creation, their approach to this same goal is differently suggested. While Milbank asserts the necessity of theological mediation in all human areas,[195] Barth opposes this kind of mediating theology [*Vermittlungstheologie*] which makes an attempt to reconcile faith and knowledge, an attempt which Barth saw in the 19thcentury's Romantic movement: "From Barth's perspective, [Milbank's mediating theology] represents just another turn of modernity's dialectical machinery."[196] For Mangina, Barth's dismissal of mediation does not mean that his theology constitutes a closed system. Rather, "the more one reads Barth, the more one realizes that this Christological askesis, the technical name for which is *analogia fidei*, not only closes doors (and some doors it definitely does close) but open them."[197] That is, for him, without Milbank's emphasis on mediation, Barth's Christocentrism, grounded in the risen Jesus Christ, makes possible a Christian cultural engagement in the secular world.

8. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined Milbank's reception of Henri de Lubac's idea of the supernatural. As we have seen, the supernatural is a very dynamic notion which can be illuminated from various angles. The supernatural is neither a magical phenomenon

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'Illumination': a Critique of the Theology of Right, in *Christ, Ethics, and Tragedy: Essays in Honor of Donald Davidson*, ed. Kenneth Surin [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008], 175).

192 Mangina, "Mediating theologies: Karl Barth between radical and neo-orthodoxy," 435.

193 Ibid., 436.

194 Ibid.

195 "One can only speak of God indirectly, so theology is always speaking of something else: culture, society, history, language, art, nature. Therefore theology is more mediatory than neo-orthodoxy allowed; it is not just one more positive discourse. To deny mediation is paradoxically too modern, too liberal" (PCA n°4 cited in Mangina, 437).

196 Ibid.,438.

197 Ibid.,439.

which is foreign to the natural human operation of reason, nor a heavenly realm which has nothing to do with our ordinary lives. For de Lubac and Milbank, the supernatural deeply penetrates our concrete ordinary lives. Common to Milbank and de Lubac is their conviction that there is no purely natural realm independent from God's grace. Therefore, there is no such thing as pure natural reason. According to them, everything is granted as a gift. However, this gift is not a unilateral giving on the part of God. This gift is desired by man whose existence is also a gift. So there is a union of man and God. But this union does not mean man's self-deification, because God takes the initiative. Hence asymmetrical gift-exchange characterizes the divine-human relationship. In turn, this gift-exchange also marks the Trinitarian relationship. From this perspective, gift-exchange implicates Miblank's grand theological metaphysics. And this metaphysics backs up the entirety of Milbank's theological reflection.

Moreover, what is characteristic to their understanding of the deification of man is that human-making (*poesis*) is understood as an essential stage in this process. This fact has several implications in their theology. At the cultural level, this shows the importance of the Christian cultural shaping in the secular world. At the ethical level, this shows the importance of the sanctification of the believers through the creative practice of Christian charity. In this way, *poesis* constitutes a major pivot in overcoming postmodern nihilistic culture. This point is Milbank's theological originality with regard to de Lubac's theology, even if he is also basically indebted to this Catholic theologian.

We have also examined de Lubac's paradoxical account of reality and Milbank's appropriation of it. For both theologians the dialectical mode of thought is associated with the spirit of negation, a spirit which is foreign to orthodox Christianity. There is no negation in Christianity. So it is a secular mode of thinking. What worries de Lubac and Milbank is the fact that this dialectical mind is deeply engaged with modern tragic social and political consequences. At the social and political level, the dialectical mind always implicates exclusion, annihiliation, contradiction, etc. In contrast, a paradoxical mindset pursues a synthesis, unification, embrace, etc.

In the course of our study, the major themes which we have examined offer a basis for our better understanding of Milbank's various theological reflections. That is, these themes are Milbank's and de Lubac's theological key words. Many misreadings of Milbank's theology stem from negligence of various dimensions of Milbank's appropriation of de Lubac's idea of the supernatural. In the following chapter, we will see Milbank's critique of modern metaphysics on the basis of his understanding of human language. Here Milbank's understanding of *poesis* occupies an important place.

II. From Metaphysics to Christian Meta-Narrative

God of Abraham, God of Issac, God of Jacob, not of philosophers and scholars.[1]
Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.[2]
Narrative is not secondary for our knowledge of God; there is no 'point' that can be separated from the story.[3]

In the previous chapter, we examined de Lubac's idea of the supernatural in its various aspects in relation to Milbank's appropriation of it. In this chapter we will consider the idea of the supernatural in terms of language. What has the supernatural to do with language? In fact, the idea of the supernatural is deeply interwoven with the linguisticality of the human being. In accordance with de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis, we can hold that human natural-historical language is in union with the supernatural. This means that without the mediation of a sensible image we cannot have the idea of the supernatural. As Gadamer states, "language as they have grown up historically, with their history of meanings, their grammar and their syntax, can be seen as the varied forms of a logic of experience, of natural - i.e., historical-experience (which even includes *supernatural experience*)."[4]

For Milbank and de Lubac, language plays the role of linking the material world to God. Language, metaphorical language in particular, makes our knowledge of God possible. For Milbank and de Lubac, like John Calvin, the world is the theatre of God's glory (*Theatrum Dei Gloria*).[5] This sacramental understanding of the world leads him to emphasize the linguistic mediation of Christian theology. For Milbank this linguistic mediation has been lost sight of by the collapse of participatory ontology. Christian theology became subject to secular immanent reason by losing its distinctive feature of its proper language. Hence the recent renewed awareness of the linguistic mediation of human thinking provides for Christianity an opportunity to reestablish its truth claim grounded in not secular reason, but in Christian faith itself.[6] James K. A. Smith rightly describes Milbank's and de Lubac's position: "A *Christian* theology can only be possible on the basis of a *Christian* philosophy, a radically *incarnational* philosophy. Even more radically.. it is the Christian confession and understanding of the Incarnation which ought to undergird a general philosophy of language."[7] On the basis of Christian

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[1] Blaise Pascal, *Pensée*, trans. A.J.Krailsheimer (Harmondsworth: Penguine,1966), 913.
[2] Percy Bysshe Shelly, "A Defense of Poetry," (1821) in *The Works of P.B.Shelly: With an Introduction and Bibliography* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions 1994), 660.
[3] Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceful Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*, 26.
[4] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G.Marshall (London: Continuum, 2004), 433, emphasis mine.
[5] Cf. Léon Wencelius, *L'Esthétique de Calvin* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1937); Randel Zachman, *Image and Word in the Theology of John Calvin* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2007). Calvin's aesthetic is to a large degree near to de Lubac-Milbank's sacramental model.
[6] Graham Ward confirms Milbank's position in appealing to neo-Platonic notion of creation: "Creation voices. It has never been silent. From the beginning creation announced to God its goodness. Neo-Platonism provides this voicing, this communication through the giving and receiving signs, with a metaphysics. In the contemporary linguistic turn, the attention to signification, Christianity is again given an opportunity for continuing, for mapping out for today, for making intelligible for today, a theology of signification so fundamental to Scripture and in the traditional teaching of the Church. Such a theology makes possible a new analogical worldview" (Graham Ward, *Cities of God*, 9).
[7] James K.A.Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 155.

philosophy grounded in peculiar Christian language, Milbank attempts to reread the traditional themes such as creation, the incarnation, the Trinity, the church, etc. In so doing, Milbank challenges the substantialist understanding of God and reality which does violence to human perception.[8] The substantialist understanding, based on ancient and modern metaphysics, reduces our knowledge of God into human conceptuality. Instead, Milbank suggests that a narrative representation is our basic mode for the knowledge of God. This narrative approch to the knowledge of God is closely linked to Milbank's understanding of the metaphoricity of language. In his study on Vico, he states: "the first metaphors [for Vico] were 'narrative in brief'" (WMS 107). That is, narrative is an extended form of metaphorical language. Milbank's emphasis on narrativity in our knowledge of God is inseparably connected to his understanding of the radical historicity of Christian revelation, an understanding that is shared by de Lubac. The present chapter begins with Milbank's attempt to dismantle the Western metaphysics of *substance*, usually coined *onto-theology* by way of his understanding of the radical linguisticality of the human being. We shall see this linguistic account of the world is directly associated with de Lubac's symbolic theology based on his sacramental ontology. Finally, we shall examine Milbank's engagement with contemporary narrative theorists (Ricœur, MacIntyre, Lindbeck). It will be shown that Milbank's appropriation of Lubac's understanding of biblical narrative is the basis of Milbank's criticism of other narrative theories.

1. Dimantling metaphysics of substance

1.1 Overcoming /Saving metaphysics

In "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics," (WMS 36-52) Milbank criticizes modern autonomous metaphysics in engaging with Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology.[9] Jean

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[8] Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke explain the substantialist understanding of God well: "The substantialist conception carried within itself the distinction between absolute essence and relational attributes. According to this understanding, essence is absolute, and therefore it must remain unchanged in order to preserve its identity. If change occurs in the essence of an entity its identity is lost. Relationality, in turn, was deemed to belong to the dimension of attributes, not substance. Consequently, substantialist theologians suggested that God is absolute and immutable in his essential nature, whereas he maintains relationality to creation through the divine attributes" (Stanley J Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* [Louisville/Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, 2001], 193). For Milbank and de Lubac, the exact interpretation of the world is made possible only by the Christian faith based on the true relation with Christ. The radical orthodox theologian, Philip Blond well describes this incarnational point of view in his contribution to RONT: "Theology redescribes the created world, not as nothing, nor indeed as any self-sufficient something, but as the real testimony and loving expression of God who donates the ideal to the real in order that we might make so. This donation, as most fully expressed by the incarnation of the Most High in the human form and reality of Christ, has forever and for all time fused together ideality and reality and forbidden any faithful perception of the world from ever again dividing them from each other again" (RONT 221-2).

[9] The term metaphysics is used in diverse manner in different philosophical and theological discourses. Stephen's Long's distinction of five kinds of usage of the term metaphysics is helpful for our understanding of Milbank's theological project. Long distinguishes five uses for the terms metaphysics: 1) "metaphysics is a philosophical invective used against an imprecise use of language, which speak of being or beings for which there can be neither verification nor falsification; 2) Metaphysics is a totalizing discourse that presents Being as origin, cause, and goal and thinks everything within its structure; 3) Metaphysics is the inevitable opening of a sign that exceeds its context; 4) Metaphysics is a beyond that interrupts immanence 'in the middle'; 5) Metaphysics is a beyond that secures the presence of any sign such that the sign is unnecessary. It is an objective, universal validation where a sign corresponds to a reality such that the reality could be known without the sign. In fact, the reality secures the sign and not

Luc-Marion is a Catholic philosopher who represents so-called 'theological turn of French phenomenology.'[10] While Milbank welcomes this French philosophical trend, basically he considers that "phenomenology is a child of positivism" (TST[2] xv). Milbank's critique of Marion's attempt to correlate phenomenology with theology can be well understood from his stance toward phenomenology in general.[11] As I have already mentioned in the precedent chapter, Marion positively embraces Heidegger's critique of onto-theological nature of metaphysics.[12] According to Marion, for Heidegger, "metaphysics has a fundamentally *onto-theological* constitution, such that the highest being, or first cause, is identified as a perfect instance of what is fundamentally knowable, namely a 'being', while beings themselves are accounted for through the causal efficiency of the highest being" (WMS 40). The term onto-theology is for the first time found in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason.* Here he uses this term to criticize[13] the ontological proof of the existence of God.[14] Heidegger appropriates Kant's term likewise to criticize the Western metaphysical tradition. For Heidegger, the Western metaphysical tradition is characterized by forgetfulness of Being. According to him, Western philosophy has been preoccupied with *beings,* instead of *Being,* in reducing Being into the concepts such as cause, ground, the highest being, etc.[15] This approach is for Heidegger onto-theological in character.

Onto-theology has a long history, as much as the history of philosophy. According to the story told by Milbank, Duns Scotus committed a fatal error by separating philosophy and theology and by establishing onto-theology as its concomitant consequence.[16] Here

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vice versa" (D. Stephen Long, *Speaking of God*, 9). When Milbank talks of onto-theology, it usually indicates metaphysics 2). Milbank affirms metaphysics 4).

[10] Domnique Janicaud, *Le Tournant Théologique de la Phénoménologie Française* (Paris: Édition de l'Éclat 1991). In this work he treats the philosophers who contribute to the theological turn of phenomenology (Jean-François Courtine, Paul Ricoeur, Jean-Louis Chrétien, Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Henry).

[11] According to Milbank, "An independent phenomenology must given up, along with the claim, which would have seemed so bizarre to the Fathers, to be doing philosophy as well as theology" (WMS 49).

[12] Along with this, Marion embraces Heidegger's phenomenological analysis of the human being. *In Idol and Distance* he states: "the analytic of Dasein precedes and determines the condition of the being that affects the Christian event- 'christianness'" (Jean-Luc Marion [ed.], *Idol and Distance:Five Studies*, trans. Thomas A.Carlson [New York: Fordham University Press, 2001], 209).

[13] For Kant, the term 'onto-theology' is a branch of transcendental theology. According to him, "transcendental theology either thinks that the existence of an original being is to be derived from an experience in general (without more closely determining anything about the world to which this experience belongs), and is called cosmotheology; or it believes that it can cognize that existence through mere concepts, without the aid of even the least experience, and is called ontotheology [A 632/B 660]" (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998], 584).

[14] Ibid.

[15] According to Heidegger, "Metaphysics thinks of beings as such, that is, in general. Metaphysics thinks of the Being of beings both in the ground-giving unity of what is most general, what is indifferently valid everywhere, and also in the unity of the all that accounts for the ground, that is, of the All-Highest. The Being of being is thus thought of an advance as the grounding ground. Therefore all metaphysics is at bottom, and from the ground, and from the ground up, what grounds, what gives account of the ground, what is called to account by the ground, and finally what calls the ground to account" (Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambauch [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969], 58).

[16] In this case, Milbank differs from Heidegger who thinks the entire Western philosophy is onto-theological: "Whereas Heidegger reads the entire philosophical tradition and the Christian appropriation of philosophy as the history of metaphysics or onto-theology (which amounted often to reading it through neo-scholastic spectacles), it now seems at the least unclear as to whether this accurately describes Platonism, neoplatonism and Christian theology before Henry of Ghent and Duns Scotus" (WMS 41).

Milbank has in mind the metaphysics which allows for the autonomous role for philosophy without reference to theology. That is, metaphysics for Milbank is modern, immanent, autonomous philosophy, entirely separated from the transcendent. So Milbank states: "Modernity is metaphysical, for since it cannot refer the flux of time to the ungraspable infinite, it is forced to seek a graspable, immanent security" (WMS 44).

Milbank sees Marion's attempt to criticize onto-theology as praiseworthy, but regards it as a continuation of the modern metaphysical project insofar as it is not totally liberated from the modern Cartesian subject, which remains in phenomenology in general. Even if Marion and Milbank both endorse Heidegger's critique of the onto-theological concept of God, Milbank and Marion take two different directions. For Marion, Heidegger lost sight of the self-givenness [Selbstgegebenheit] of phenomena, in subjecting overwhelming donation to obscure Being. Marion thinks that it is the 'saturated phenomenon' which saves Heidegger's Being from its nothingness. Marion identifies this 'saturated phenomenon' as Christian charity in good Barthian fashion.[17] Marion's project is to replace modern metaphysics with his phenomenology. However, in Milbank's judgment, "Marion 'usurps' phenomenological donation to re-think it as Christian charity" (WMS 49). In this sense, for Milbank, Marion's project is a correlational one in that Marion employs modern phenomenology's category in order to explain Christian revelation. Milbank thus states:

> If…Marion continues to develop the characteristic twentieth-century theology of divine word as gift and event, he also effects the most massive correlation of this theology and philosophy, but in such a fashion that at time it appears that he usurps and radicalizes philosophy's own categories in favour of theological ones: donation intricately slides into charity. Compared with Marion, the ambition of Barth is as nothing, for it is as if, so to speak (albeit in a mode already inscribed by Levinas) Marion seeks to be both Barth and Heidegger at once (WMS 36-7).[18]

Unlike Marion, Milbank wants to save metaphysics in the Christianized sense of the term. In this case he calls this kind of metaphysics as a 'metaphysics of faith' and a 'theological ontology' (WMS 29). That is, Milbank does not reject metaphysics as such, but a particular metaphysics that has been shaped since the Enlightenment. Milbank emphasizes the necessity of a Christian philosophy grounded in the Christian doctrines of creation and incarnation, and not correlated with modern immanent philosophy. He

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[17] In his foreword to the translation of Marion's *Dieu Sans l'Être*, David Tracy confirms the affinity of Marion's phenomenology to Barth: "Like his great predecessor in Catholic theology, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and like his natural allay in Protestant theology, Karl Barth, Marion has developed a rigorous and coherent theological strategy focused on the reality of God's revelation as pure gift, indeed as excess (David Tracy, "Foreword," in Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, trans by Thomas A.Carlson [Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2012], xiv.).

[18] Timothy Stanly criticizes Milbank's misreading of Karl Barth: "Given the affinity often assumed between Barth's critique of conceptual idolatry in the secondary literature, critics of Marion such as John Milbank have in fact depicted his theology as a kind of Heideggerian Barthianism. Milbank's comment is somewhat explained by his sometimes reductive treatment of Barth's theology as anti-philosophical." However, "Barth's theology is far from a strictly post-ontological account. Rather, Barth is developing a notion of ontological difference that is inherently theological and in this sense will reject any radical difference between theology and ontology. Barth's goal is, in the end, to affirm that God is God" (Timothy Stanley, *Protestant Metaphysics After Karl Barth and Martin Heidegger* [London: SCM Press, 2010], 157-8).

states: "if 'only theology saves metaphysics', we are talking about *sacra doctrina* as well as purely philosophical theology."[19] Once again, Milbank describes a Christianized metaphysics not based on autonomous reason, but on revelation as follows: "Talk of 'metaphysics'.. serves to register the idea that the process of 'revelation' is identical with a particular rational and emotional quest for God. Also that through the encounter with Greek culture this tradition has passed definitely into a more reflective mode, although as Hegel realized, there is no limit, to the possibility of the transformation of specifically Greek metaphysics- i.e. 'philosophy' –through its subsumption into Christian tradition: we can say, into theology" (WMS 29).

1.2 Dismantling the notion of substance

For Milbank, as with Marion, substance is a conceptual idolatry because it restricted ineffable God, who is beyond our comprehension, into human conceptuality. 'Substance' is a notion which is variously used by philosophers.[20] However we could roughly define the idea of substance as something that remains self-identical through change. According to Aristotle, "a substance—that which is called a substance most strictly, primarily, and most of all—is that which is neither said of a subject nor in a subject, e.g. the individual man or the individual horse."[21] The notion of substance has persistently been one of the central themes in philosophical and theological thought.

According to Milbank, "patristic and medieval thought was unable to entirely to overcome the ontology of substance" (WMS 85).[22] Despite their opposition to medieval scholastic theology, the Enlightenment thinkers also substantialized human consciousness. Recently classical and modern metaphysics have long been challenged by postmodern thinkers such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, etc. Heidegger, among others, prominently struggled against the metaphysical tradition in the Western philosophy, in qualifying it as onto-theology. However, Milbank, admitting the postmodern critique of metaphysics, disagrees with postmodernists on their nihilist claim that considers *difference* itself as the ultimate reality. Unlike them, Milbank attempts a theological critique of metaphysics on the basis of his relational understanding of the Trinity. In this case, difference is not the origin of violence, but situated within primordial harmony.[23] In fact, this understanding stems from his

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[19] John Milbank, "Only Theology saves Metaphysics: on the Modalities of Terror," in *Belief and Metaphysics, The Veritas Series*, Conor Cunningham and Peter P. Candler Jr. (London: SCM, 2007), 498.

[20] For an account of various usages of the terms substance, see Joshua Hoffman and Gary S. Rosenkranz, *Substance: its Nature and Existence* (London: Routledge, 1999).

[21] Aristotle, *Categories* 2a 13 trans. J L Ackrill in *Aristotle*, *Categories* and *De Interpretatione* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[22] That's why Milbank suggests that the traditional notion of participation is to be reappropriated in a new way in a postmodern context. He calls this approach 'postmodern critical augustinism'. That is, Milbank's theology is not a nostalgic expression of the pre-modern, but a reinterpretation of the premodern from the postmodern context.

[23] See Conor Cunningham, "The difference *of* Theology and some philosophies of nothing" *Modern Theology* 17: 3 (July 2001), 289- 312. According to him, "a Trinitarian ontology.. will allow us to speak of difference. Without the Trinity, difference is impossible and nihilism is somewhat ineluctable" (292). Following Milbank, Cunningham understands the Trinity as a relation of difference: "God as God is difference. The Son is the difference of the Father, the difference which the Father is, whilst the Holy Spirit is the gift of this difference" (297). See John Milbank, "The second difference," in WMS 171-193. Moreover, Cunningham compares the difference which Christian theology affirms and difference which immanent philosophy eliminates because of its violence nature. For Christian theology, difference is constitutive

linguistic understanding of the Trinity. Milbank finds this insight in George Berkeley's empirical idealism. Milbank thinks that Berkley among others understood the radical linguisticality of the human being. In opposition to Descartes's theory of substances dualism,[24] he proposes only one mental substance in denying corporal substance outside the human mind. Usually his thought is summarized as "*esse est percipi aut percipere* [*To be is to be perceived or to perceive*]."[25] This means that all that exists is what appears to our mind. He thinks that the idea of substance derives from general ideas elaborated by the abstraction of the human mind. According to Berkely, the human mind cannot grasp all reality all at once. So a general idea is for him impossible. It follows that what exists is for him what we perceive. After all, Bekeley's world is characterized by "changing networks of relation" (WMS 99), for if there is no such thing as substance, there remains only relations between signs. In the vein of the Augustinian and anti-modern traditions, Berkeley already realized the linguistic mediation of theological discourse. According to Milbank's reading, Berkeley's approach is grounded in Christian theology. Because nature as a divine language is created from nothing, it cannot be reduced into substances, but conceived to be interrelated network: "As 'divine speech' nature is composed of nothing but universals (ideas), but they are only meaningfully articulated 'together' (WMS 99). Again, we can confirm that the 'pure nature' thesis is a fiction, because there cannot be 'pure' nature. All kinds of understanding of nature are based on the human pre-conception of nature. According to Milbank, "for Berkeley, 'things' are not found in any *substantia*, but are composed of unsupported sensory network of signs which encompasses our whole practical inhabitation of the world" (WMS 98). And Milbank is right to say that Berkely replaces

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quality of creation, whereas for philosophers, difference is nothing. Criticizing philosopher's understanding of difference, he says: "The One of Plotinus.. cannot be distinguished from what falls beneath or within it. Indeed, such an understanding of immanence precludes difference. We can argue this because the very reason one comes from one is that the One can think only in ontic terms. Because the One must look to an external register for its understanding of difference, difference is *something*: here the criteria of identity always precede their arrival. This is the sameness of difference –it is always the same difference, the same other, as is the case with Levinasian alterity, Derridian *différence*, or Heideggerian Being. If difference were nothing, it would still remain dialectically linked to the something. Every *meontological* strategy of escape, going beyond being, repeats the identical logic- which is to smuggle the same words into different letters: being/das Nicht; something/nothing (306-7). Cf. By 'me-ontology' Cunningham means an attempt to ground being in non-being (*meon*). He thinks Plotinian Platonism is meontological, for he places the One beyong being (290).

[24] Descartes distinguishes between thinking substance [*res cogitans*] and extended substance [*res extensa*]). Thinking substance means human mind. And extended substance means the material which is mathematically calculable. Descartes thinks that these two substances are clearly and distinctly distinguished.

[25] See George Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge and Three Dialogues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). He states: "(n°3) It seems no less evident that the various sensations or ideas imprinted on the sense, however blended or combined together (that is, whatever objects they compose), cannot exist otherwise than *in* a mind perceiving them. I think an intuitive knowledge may be obtained of this by any one that shall attend to *what is meant by the term exist*, when applied to sensible things. The table I write on I say exists, that is, I see and feel it; and if I were out of my study I should say it existed-meaning thereby that if I was in my study I might perceive it, or that some other spirit actually does perceive it. There was an odour, that is, it was smelt; there was a sound, that is, it was heard; a colour or figure, and it was perceived by sight or touch. This is all that I can understand by these and the like expressions. For as to what is said of the absolute existence of unthinking things without any relation to their being perceived, that seems perfectly unintelligible. Their *esse* is *percipi*, nor is it possible they should have any existence, out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them"(25).

epistemology with a "hermeneutics of nature" (Ibid.) in the sense that human knowledges are interpreted and mediated by signs (WMS 100).

According to Milbank, Berkeley departed from a substantial understanding of the Trinity by way of his linguistic philosophy. Berkeley called into question the *res/signum* distinction. Instead, he sets forth a "realism construing knowledge as relational event, rather than mirroring representation" (WMS 101). In this sense, Berkeley is a postmodern philosopher in that meaning happens by way of relations. However, Berkeley remains a Christian theologian who makes God as the guarantor of harmony between the signs. Berkeley uses the metaphor of 'light' in order to show that God harmonizes differences in creation. In this way, differences constitute the whole in a harmonious way by divine light. And his linguistic understanding of the Trinity warrants this explanation. In opposition to the substantial account of the Trinity, he suggests a relational account of the Trinity. According to Milbank, Berkely understands God the Father not as a substance, but as light which brings the other persons into relation:

> God the Father is never without God this son; the divine unity and origin is not 'substantial' but 'notional', because it only arises in the articulate 'generation' of truth. The Father, for Berkely, is the Platonic sun, ultimate goodness, 'the source of light', rather than light or truth itself, but a sun never without its rays which 'effects truth' (*vere efficit*) in an eternal illocutionary act. Likewise God the Son is never without God the Spirit; the rays of light, the *pyr technikon* or *logos spermatikos* never actually exist without the various life which they engender (WMS 104).[26]

Milbank appropriates this linguistic account of the Trinity, which offers to him a key to overcoming modern metaphysics. Modern metaphysics has a totalizing tendency of excluding all differences. In contrast, Milbank conceives Being in itself as difference, as we have seen in the neo-Platonic model of creation: "God who is, who includes difference, and yet is unified, is not a God sifted out as 'truth', but a God who speaks in the harmonious happening of Being" (TST 430). Milbank's linguistic understanding of Trinity—that is, relational understanding of the Trinity—makes possible this understanding. While he basically agrees with secular philosophers that meaning happens by the difference between signs (Saussure), he understands, unlike them, the difference between the persons in the Trinity as serving its unity. According to Milbank, the Son is the 'first difference' and the Holy Spirit is the 'second difference' (TST 424). On the one hand, our knowledge of God is available by the Son in God's illocutionary act. The meaning of God is possible from paternal-filial unity to difference. On the other hand, Milbank thinks that it is through the Holy Spirit that the paternal-finial difference is finally established. This is to say that the Holy Spirit has a hermeneutical function for the personal appropriation of God's salvific event and the subsequent

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[26] Pickstock confirms Milbank's position: "In this vision, God is by essence a relational being; God could not exist without His own Image and the desire for this image. God is the mystery of signs; God is the mystery of exchanged gifts in non-identical repetition" (Catherine Pickstock, "L'orthodoxie est-elle radicale ?" in *Pour une Nouvelle Théologie*, ed. Adrian Pabst, Olivier-Thomas, 29); [original text] "Dans cette vision, Dieu est par essence un être relationnel ; Dieu ne saurait exister sans Sa propre Image et sans le désir de cette image. Dieu est le mystère des signes ; Dieu est le mystère des dons échangés dans une répétition qui n'est jamais identique à elle-même." Translation mine.

divinization of man: "The Spirit is connected with our divinization, but this is presented as the appropriation of a divine –human transaction already accomplished" (WMS 174). Here the Holy Spirit is essentially the Spirit of Christ. Hence, while both the Son and the Holy Spirit stem from the Father, the relation of the Holy Spirit to the Father is possible only through the Son. In this way, the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ brings difference between the Father and the Son into harmony. So the Holy Spirit as the *second difference* paradoxically brings about unity in the life of the Trinity. Milbank explicates:

> The Spirit *is* this relation of the one and the many, this *ratio* of charity, but the relational character of this *ratio* is now truly affirmed, because the Son, and the difference contained within the Son, has now become a moment of mediation between Father and Spirit. The differences can be 'received' or 'interpreted' in a moment of reception which is not the Father, and which is beyond the perfect relation of Father and Son (though purely constituted as the 'gift' of this relation). Therefore difference, after first constituting unity (the Son causing 'backward' the Father) becomes a response to unity that is more than unity, which unity itself cannot predict (TST 424).

What is more important for Milbank is that this model of Trinity gives birth to the Church, which is a musically harmonious community: "Just as an infinite God must be power-act, so the doctrine of the Trinity discovers the infinite God to include a radically 'external' relationality. Thus God can only speak to us simultaneously as the Word incarnate, and as the indefinite spiritual response, in time, which is the Church" (TST 424). Milbank maintains that this approach to the Holy Spirit constitutes the distinctive feature of Christianity (WMS 171).[27]

Likewise Milbank discovers an anti-substantialist thinking in anti-modern thinkers (Vico, Hamann, Herder, Jacobi). Common to these thinkers is their rejection of the Cartesian vision of the world that supposes that the world is made up of two substances (*res extensa, res cogitans*). Against Enlightenment thinkers, they claim that reality is ungraspable by scientific, instrumental rationality. For them, the grave error committed by Enlightenment philosophy is its negligence toward the important role of language in our grasping of reality. One of the basic claims of Enlightenment philosophy is the one-to-one, that is, unmediated relationship between the human mind and reality.

However, for these anti-moderns: "everything is interconnected, everything is composed of the relation. So everything reflects the nature of God and can participate in God" (TST 424-5). These thinkers, in different manners, sought to retrieve the centrality

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[27] Although Milbank utilizes a postmodern idiom, difference, his understanding of the Trinity is consonant with de Lubac's understanding of the Holy Spirit. De Lubac also understands that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. The role of the Holy Spirit is to make possible the personal appropriation of the Christ-event and the universalization of this event through the Church. De Lubac states: "There is no other Spirit than this Spirit of Jesus, and the Spirit of Jesus is the Soul which animates His body. Just as the letter of the Law drew together the first People of God, so the Spirit forms the new People of God. Today we are 'in the Spirit' as we are 'in Christ', and we may say, with St. Paul, that we have been baptized in one single Spirit to form one single body, or, as St. Basil comments, in one single body to form one single spirit. The Church is 'the society of the Spirit'. And it is in the Church that the Spirit glorifies Jesus, just as it is in her, the 'House of Christ', that He is given to us in a 'final and eternal alliance'" (SC 152). For a study of de Lubac's pneumatology, see Félicien Boduka N'glandey, *Le Mystère de l'Esprit Saint dans l'Œuvre du Père du Henri de Lubac : Élément de pneumatologie* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2011).

of language in the human perception of the world. Milbank situates these thinkers within an Augustinian tradition which considers man's linguistic capacity as a trace of trinity (*vestigium trinitas*). He estimates that it was these thinkers who first introduced a 'modern' linguistic turn into Western thought (WMS 85).

2. Henri de Lubac's sacramental ontology

2.1 De Lubac's symbolic theology

De Lubac is one of the proponents of symbolic theology.[28] For him there is an analogical relation between God and creature, and between creatures. By virtue of Augustine's illumination theory, our sensory experience is conceived to be closely linked to God. According to him, for the Church Fathers "everything sensible was a sacrament, not so much requiring organization or justification, as open to being transcended" (CM 235).[29] What counts, for de Lubac, is that it is not man, but God who makes a sign, just as Christ as the Word was incarnated by God's initiative. Without God's initiative, we cannot see a sign in a proper way: "In all truth, God makes me a sign. The first language he uses to communicate with me is his creation. Being created by the Word, everything comes from him is a word and speaks of him. It is for me to attend and to answer –but the initiative is not mind" (DG 90).[30] From this fact, de Lubac identifies objective, natural revelation and subjective revelation, because it is God who illuminates the human mind. Hermeneutically, without revelation, we do not have the capacity of interpreting a sign. The capacity to interpret a sign, as well as the sign itself, is granted as a gift (Ibid.).

De Lubac's symbolic theology is nurtured by patristic sources, especially by Augustine's thought.[31] According to him, by virtue of the intelligence of faith, we can discern the spiritual meaning of reality. "Beneath the letter, we can discern the spirit. Beyond the sign, we have to reach out to the thing itself, to the life-giving reality" (CM 231).[32] For de Lubac, this does not mean a leap of faith. Rather faith is grounded in a firm intellectual foundation. This is, as we have seen, because human reason is considered to mystically participate in the mystery of God. In discussing Augustine's sacramental theology, he explains that for Augustine all revealed truth as mystery is manifested to us as a sacrament, that is, as a sign. This is an important point for understanding the

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[28] For an account of symbolic theology in special relation to the sacraments, see Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Les Sacrements: Parole de Dieu au Risque du Corps* (Paris: Edition de l'Atelier, 1997); [English trans.] Louis-Maire Chauvet, *The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville. MN: Liturgical Press, 2001). For the symbolist mentality in medieval theology, see Marie Donmique Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century: Essays on New Theological Perspective in the Latin West* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), esp. 99-145.

[29] [Original text] " Tout le sensible était pour elle un sacrement, il demandait moins à être organisé ou fondé qu'il ne s'offrait à être traversé" (CM 264).

[30] [Original text] " En toute vérité, *Dieu me fait signe*. Les créatures lui servent, pour communiquer avec moi, de premier langage. Créée par le Verbe, chaque chose est un verbe qui me vient de Lui, qui me parle de Lui. J'y dois être attentif, j'y dois répondre,- mais l'initiative ne vient pas de moi" (SCD 109-10).

[31] For Augustine's understanding of language see Andrew Louth, "Augustine on Language," *Literature & Theology* 3:2 (July 1989), 151-158; Rowan Williams, "Language, Reality and Desire in Augustine's de doctrina," *Literature & Theology* 3:2 (July 1989), 138-50.

[32] [Original text] "Par-dessous la lettre, l'esprit se fait pressentir. À travers le signe, il nous faut passer jusqu'à la chose, jusqu'à la réalité nourrissante" (CM 259).

entire theology of de Lubac and Milbank. For de Lubac, the Eucharist and the Scripture are two principal Christian sacraments. By celebrating the Eucharist and reading the Scripture, the believers participate in the Christian mystery in illuminating their intelligence by their faith. According to Hans Boersma, "De Lubac..brought to the fore the sacramental dimension of interpretation by insisting that the spiritual meaning constituted a deeper dimension of reality, one that was contained within the historical event conveyed by Scripture."[33] This sacramental understanding of reality is gradually eroded by the introduction of rationalistic thinking in orthodox Christian theology. De Lubac holds that Berengar played an important role.

2.2 The Berengarian crisis

In his monumental book *Corpus Mysticum* (1944), de Lubac reiterates the historical process that led to the travesty of the meaning of the mystical body of Christ in Christian theology. De Lubac describes the historical, Eucharistic and ecclesial body of the Christ as the sacramentally identical body of Christ. Nonetheless, the introduction of rationalistic theology gave rise to the loss of the sacramental understanding of the body of Christ. According to de Lubac's study, Berengar marked a crisis of symbolic theology. The core problem is manifested in Berengar's declaration that "*the bread and wine after the consecration are not only the sacrament but also true body and blood*" (CM 222).[34] De Lubac points out that the problem with this idea lies in the risk of losing sight of the 'true body' as a 'sacrament' (Ibid). This loss of a symbolic understanding of reality constitutes the departure of subsequent theological development. After Berengar there emerged two groups which opposed each other: one holds to symbolism, the other to the truth: "Against *mystically, not truly*, was set, in no less exclusive a sense, *truly, not mystically*" (Ibid).[35]

This division is the sign of the loss of the sense of participation, to use Milbank's word. The truth came to be understood in a rationalistic way as in modern philosophy. That is, truth is understood as a correspondence between our thinking and reality. Notwithstanding, for de Lubac and Milbank, truth is not something which we know, but rather in which we participate. De Lubac continues to explore the process of rationalizing theology. Gradually theologians leave aside the mystery in order to privilege the truth. De Lubac takes Baldwin of Canterbury as a good example. He argues that "what Christ said, 'This is my body', is expressed truth, not a figure."[36] After him, this division is accepted by theologians. This means that symbolic theology was increasingly deteriorated. St. Peter Celestine's statement illustrates this tendency: "The body of Christ is truth and figure: truth, because it is in reality flesh and blood; and figure, because in appearance and taste we see bread."[37]

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[33] Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie & Sacramental Ontology*, 151.

[34] [Original text] "Panem et vinum post consecrationem non solum sacramentum, sed etiam verum corpus et sanguinem " (CM 250).

[35] [Original text] " Au *mystice, non vere* répond, non moins exclusif, *un vere, non mystice* " (CM 251).

[36] *PL*, 204. 66 I cited by de Lubac in CM 224.

[37] St. Peter Celestine, *Opusculum*, I,C. 49, BMP, vol 25, 784 F cited by de Lubac in CM 225; "Corpus Christi veritas et figura: veritas, quia in re vera caro et sanguis est; figura vero, quia panis videntur specie et sapore "(CM252); [French translation] "Le corps du Christ est vérité et figure : vérité, puisqu'il y a en réalité vraie chair et vrai sang ; et figure, puisqu'il a l'air de pain à la vue et au goût" (CM 521).

At this juncture, de Lubac makes explicit his definition of symbolism in traditional Christian thought. De Lubac holds that the symbolic theology often attributed to Berengar and his adherents is a false one. For him this symbolic theology is, far from being a traditional symbolism, simply a kind of rationalism and dialectic, since for them the Eucharistic body is merely a symbol of Christ (CM 225). De Lubac contrasts their symbolism with the ontological symbolism (or sacramental realism) of the Fathers of the Church. These rationalistic theologians reduced the universal sacramental value of Christ into the Eucharistic symbol. The sacramental synthesis of Christ affirmed by the Father was undermined. They distinguished a historical body of Christ which can be objectified and the spiritual body of Christ in heaven which we cannot identify objectively. In this case, the Eucharistic body is dissociated from the Church which is the body of Christ. After all, unlike the Church Fathers, Berengar's theology loses sight of the comic significance of Christ, in focalizing on the rational and individualistic understanding of the Eucharistic body of Christ. Drawing on Augustine, de Lubac estimates that "his dialectic prevent him from understanding Augustine's 'one Christ, full Christ, total Christ, whole Christ' … All the symbolic inclusions were transformed, in his understanding, into dialectical antitheses" (CM 226).[38]

2.3 Anselm's Christian rationalism and its effects

De Lubac also considers Anselm's case to be an important phase. He is well known for his formulation, *Faith seeking understanding*. As with Augustine, for him faith is the inner basis of human intellectual operation. In this respect, de Lubac admits that Anselm is an ambiguous figure who is interpreted as both a rationalist and a mystical thinker. Yet, de Lubac regards his theology to be opposed to Augustine's thought : "[Anselm's theology] is still Augustinian in its most fundamental intentions, as it is in its principal formulation, but it turns its back on Augustine in the new emphasis that it presses into service and in the ideal of understanding that seduces it" (CM 237).[39] In support of his argument, he examines Anselm's notion of knowledge. According to de Lubac, Anselm's understanding of the nature of knowledge differs from Augustine's, even if they are in agreement that faith is the fundamental basis of human knowledge (Ibid.). In this sense, Anselm does not resort to modern secular reason since reason for him is not opposed to faith. However, his search for rationalistic proof was a compromise with dialectical, rationalist philosophy. So de Lubac describes him as "the founder of 'Christian rationalism'" with Abelard (CM 238), and he considers this Christian rationalism as a major turning point in Christian thought (Ibid.).

Because of the rationalist evasion of sacramental ontology, there emerged a fideistic tendency against this rationalism in Eucharistic theology. For example, de Lubac quotes a formulation which had long been used in liturgy: "The divine sacraments are not so

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[38] [Original text] "Sa dialectique lui interdit de comprendre le 'Christus unus, Christus plenus, Christus totus, Christus integer' d'Augustin….Toutes les inclusions symboliques se muent, dans son intelligence, en antithèses dialectiques" (CM 254). De Lubac's citation is in Augustine, *De peccatorum meritis*, I, c.3I, n. 60.

[39] [Original text] " [La théologie d'Anselme] est augustinienne encore en son intention profonde comme en ses principales formules, tournant le dos à Augustin par les nouvelles forces qu'elle prend à son service et par l'idéal d'intelligence qui la séduit" (CM 266).

much to be discussed as believed in."[40] Put simply, Christian mystery is not associated with understanding, but with faith alone. The separation of faith with reason thus happened. This changed the nature of human understanding itself. That is, understanding began to be used for purely apologetic purposes. This also changed the nature and task of theology itself. That is, theology came to accommodate itself to the human condition because of the loss of the sacramental link between creation and God. Mystery became merely a miracle. The Eucharistic body of Christ was considered to be a miracle inaccessible to our understanding.

In this process, Augustinian symbolic theology disappeared gradually : "The ultimate reality of the sacrament, what was once upon a time its reality and truth *par excellence*, was thus expelled from the sacrament itself. The symbolism became extrinsic: from now on it could be ignored without damaging the integrity of the sacrament" (CM 246).[41] For de Lubac, the fatal consequence of this is that "the essential link that bounded the Eucharistic rite to the unity of the Church has disappeared" (CM 245). This dissociation of the Eucharistic symbol with the symbol of the Church paved the way for the modern individualistic account of Christianity against which de Lubac struggled throughout his life. And Milbank and RO continue de Lubac's task.

3. Linguistic turn as a theological turn

3.1 The incarnational account of language

Language is often considered to be a conveyer of our inner ideas. Aristotle supports this instrumentalist view on language on the ground that the same state of affairs could be described with diverse language.[42] With the rise of hermeneutics and linguistic philosophy, this instrumentalist account of language was called into question. In this case, language is regarded as constituting and creating the world. This implies that human language has a hermeneutical character. Namely, it is impossible for us to grasp an objective reality because of human situatedness in time and space. In Heidegger's terms, man exists as a 'being-in-the world'. We can understand this claim when we learn a foreign language. To acquire a foreign language does not mean that we simply learn to translate correspondingly a foreign language into mother tongue. When we learn a language, we learn a vision of the world contained in that language (*pace* Aristotle). Gadamer is one of the proponents of this view on language. According to him, a translation from one language to another is an interpretive act and not one-to-one change of one sign to another. He calls this difficulty the 'agony of translation':

> When a person lives in a language, he is filled with the sense of the unsurpassable appropriation of the words he uses for the subject matter he is talking about. It seems impossible that other words in other languages could name the things equally

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[40] [Original text] "Galican Sacramentary, Missa in symboli tradione" (*PL*, 72, 488 C) cited in CM 239.

[41] [Original text] "La réalité ultime du sacrement, celle qui en était autrefois la chose et la vérité par excellence, est ainsi expulsée hors du sacrement lui-même. Le symbolisme devient extrinsèque: on pourra désormais le passer sous silence sans nuire à l'intégrité du sacrement" (CM 276).

[42] "Words spoken are symbols or signs of affections or impressions of the soul; written words are the signs of words spoken. As writing, so also is speech not the same for all races of men. But the mental affections themselves, of which these words are primarily signs, are the same for the whole of mankinds, as are also the objects of which those affections are representations or likeness, images, copies" (Aristotle, *On Intrepretation*, trans. Harold P. Cooke (Cambridge, Mass.: Loeb Classical Library, 1983), 115.

> well. The suitable word always seems to be one's own and unique, just as the thing referred to is always unique. The agony of translation consists ultimately in the fact that the original words seem to be inseparable from the things they refer to, so that to make a text intelligible one often has to give an interpretive paraphrase of it rather than translate it.[43]

This way of thinking leads postmodern thinkers to conclude that language is the frontier of human knowledge. Therefore language is both the condition and the limits of our knowledge. At this juncture, we can ask if there is nothing outside language, does language not become a dead sign that never achieves transcendental significance? Far from it. While accepting the linguistic turn of modern philosophy, Milbank refuses their immanentist account of language. Instead of the postmodern view of langauge, he embraces de Lubac's symbolic theology, according to which every sign is not enclosed in itself, but transcends itself in opening multiple levels of meaning. That is, every sign participates in the transcendent. Sharing de Lubac's sacramental worldview, Milbank holds that human linguistic expression participates in divine utterance, that is the incarnated *logos* himself. "The analogizing capacity itself is like God" (TST 305). James K.A. Smith explains Milbank's point of view on language well:

> It is the Incarnation which is both the paradigm and condition of possibility for the proper understanding of language in general and theological language in particular. Not only is the Incarnation the condition of possibility for speech *about God* (*pace* Barth) ; it is the condition of possibility for speaking- or at least the condition of possibility for a proper understanding of language.[44]

That is, for Smith, "the Incarnation is a heuristic for understanding the function of language."[45] According to Milbank, this incarnational account of language is endorsed by the Church Fathers (Nyssa, Augustine) and counter-Enlightenment thinkers (Vico, Herder, Hamann). Following Augustine, this approach understands human thinking as an inner word (*verbum mentis*), just as the *Logos* (the Son) is the inner word of the Father in the Trinity.[46]

Moreover, just as the incarnation happens in a space and time, human speech is situated in a particular time and space. Milbank echoes this thought in remarking, "Language.. is always particular and traditioned" (WMS 29). Without the incarnation, we cannot know God. Jesus is the sacrament of God (as Henri de Lubac says). Likewise,

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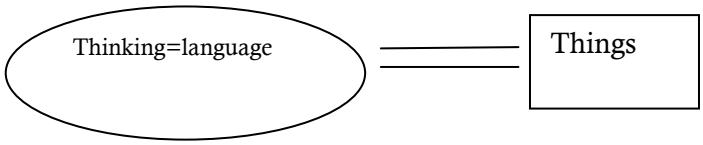
[43] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 403.

[44] James K.A.Smith, *Speech and Theology*, 154-5.

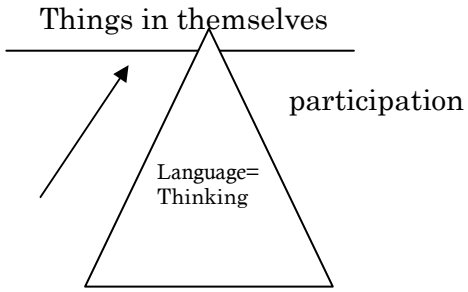
[45] Ibid.,123.

[46] In his *De Trinitate* XV, Augustine explains human speech in terms of the relationship of the Father to the incarnated Word (*Logos)*. For him, the incarnation serves as a model for the explanation of human speech. Just as the Son proceeds from the Father, human thought gives birth to speech: "In the likeness of our word [of God], there is also this likeness of the Word of God, that our word can exist and yet no work may follow it; but there can be no work unless the word precedes, just as the Word of God could be, even though no creature existed, but no creature could be, except through that Word through whom all things were made. Therefore, not God the Father, not the Holy Spirit, not the Trinity itself, but the Son alone, who is the Word of God, was made flesh, although the Trinity brought this about, in order that by our word following and imitating His example, we might live rightly, that is, that we might have no lie either in the contemplation or in the work of our word" (Augustine, *On the Trinity* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002], 189).

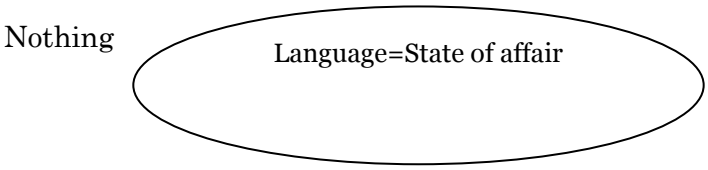
just as the incarnated Word, language in general has an iconic value, because it reflects God's likeness. In this sense, for Milbank, "language is..like God, and our linguistic expression mirrors the divine creative act which is immanently contained in the *Ars Patris* that is the *Logos*" (WMS 29). We can express three different kinds of articulation of the relation between language and things as follows:



[Diagram VII] Instrumentalist view of language



[Diagram VIII] Milbank's account of language



[Diagram IX] Postmodern view of language

The linguistic mediation of philosophy and theology was largely eliminated by modern Enlightenment philosophy. Modern rationalism supposes that language is a transparent medium which makes it possible to grip reality. For Descartes, our knowledge of the world is transparently given to our consciousness without linguistic mediation. Descartes' world came to be qualitatively uniform. Like him, for Kant there is little room for linguistic consideration. He thinks that space and time are the universal form of experience (knowledge) for all human being. Yet, Milbank observes that there is a current of thought which resists the Enlightenment perspective. According to him, great Christian critics of the Enlightenment (Christopher Smart, Hamann, Jacobi,

Kierkegaard, Péguy, Chesterton, etc.), refuse "the secular, but at the same time 're-envision' a Christianity which never sufficiently valued the mediating participatory sphere which alone can lead us to God" (RONT 3). So Milbank holds that they are really the sources of RO, instead of neo-orthodoxy (RONT 23). For example, Hamann protests against Kant's transcendental philosophy and its claims to universality. For him the universalism of the Enlightenment neglects the historical and material character of human reason. Kant did violence to reality with his universal epistemological framework:

> Metaphysics misuses all word-signs and figures of speech drawn from our empirical knowledge, and turns them into sheer hieroglyphs and types of ideal relations; by this learned mischief it works up straightforward language into such a senseless… nothing is left but a rushing wind.[47]

As for Vico, for him, instead of Enlightenment reason, metaphorical language is the primordial means of communication. According to Hamann, "Poetry is the mother tongue of the human race, as the garden is older than the ploughed field; painting, than writing; song, than declamation; parables, than logical deduction; barter, than commerce." [48] Identifying human thinking with language[*Vernunf ist Sprache*], Hamann denies the instrumentalist account of language. Language itself is an interpretation of reality. For him, "to think is to translate… that is, translate thoughts into words-things into names-image into signs."[49] So creation appears to him as a divine language with which God speaks to humanity. Seen from this angle, he supports the incarnational account of reason as we have seen. Having in mind Hamann, Milbank notes his participatory ontology in grounding it in incarnation: "If the truth of nature lies in its supernatural ordination, then reason is true only to the degree that it seeks or prophesies the theoretical and practical acknowledgement of this ordination which, thanks to the fall, is made possible again only through divine incarnation" (RONT 24).

Milbank's emphasis on the linguistic mediation of theological discourse is extended to the importance of the narrative character of Christian revelation. Christian revelation is not systematically articulated in the form of abstract propositional truths, but concretely happens in the historical event as narrated in the biblical story, since, as Steven Shakespeare notes well, "reality is only available to us as interpreted reality – as it comes structured and narrated by our fundamental stories."[50]

3.2 The natural origin of human language

The incarnational account of language is closely linked to the problem with the origin of language. If pure nature is a fiction independent of the supernatural, purely human language independent of divine language is likewise a fiction. This is a key to understanding Milbank's idea that "Christian orthodoxy always encouraged the view

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[47] "Metacritique," 219, in R.G.Smith, *J. G. Hamman* (London: Collins, 1960), in WMS 78.

[48] "Aesthetica in nuce," in *Hamann: Writings on Philosophy and Language*, ed. Johann Georg Hamann, Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 63.

[49] Ibid, 66.

[50] Steven Shakespeare, "The New Romantics: A Critique of Radical Orthodoxy," *Theology* 103:813 (2000), 164.

that language was of human, rather than divine origin" (WMS 84). For example, William Warburton denies that Adam's language is divinely originated in order to mystically communicate with hidden reality.[51] In his polemic against William Law, who maintains the divine origin of Adam's language, he holds that every language (biblical language included) has a natural origin. For him "the *Imago* was a fixed rational-linguistic capacity" (WMS 59). There is no divine language which is added to human natural language. Hence human natural language itself is supernatural in character. This means that Christianity dismisses all forms of mystification of culture prevalent in ancient world.[52] The importance of this understanding for Milbank lies in the necessity of "a Christian ontology which does justice to culture and history as an integral element of Christian being alongside contemplation and ethical behavior, rather than as a 'problem', external to faith" (WMS 79). That is, Christian culture is not a something added to a neutral nature, but nature itself is culturally engraced space. This understanding is closely linked with de Lubac's notion of revelation which Milbank follows. For him revelation is not an irrational event outside the ordinary natural process, but is manifested in the natural. And this naturalness of revelation reaches its apex in the Incarnation. According to de Lubac,

> For Israel, the inconceivable marvel did not consist in having special knowledge of some hidden character of the Godhead: it consisted in the fact that the absolutely free and sovereign being had decided to communicate himself to this people, to give them access to the realm of his sanctity, a grace which was at the same time an unprecedented demand, 'taking the creature from its own installation in the land of servitude and transferring it to a "country" which is God's.' Such is the revelation which finds its accomplishment and climax in Christ...If every revealing act is in the last analysis a revelation of the Trinity, every revelation of the Trinity is a revelation in act, and every such act has a direct relation to man (CF 40).[53]

According to Milbank, the thinkers such as Cusanus, Hamann, Vico, etc., who preoccupied themselves with language, were aware of the fact that "man as an original creator participates in some measure in creation *ex nihilo*" (WMS 79). As we have already seen, human-making (*poesis*) participates in God's making. This means that this making is not a value-neutral affair, but rather has a teleological orientation. As a consequence, there is no such natural origin of language or culture, but paradoxically only a 'cultural origin of culture' (WMS 61). That's why Milbank prefers the French

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[51] See John Milbank, "William Warburton: an Eighteen Century Bishop Fallen among the Post-Structuralist," *New Blackfriars*, 64:757 (July/August 1983), 315-324 and *New Blackfriars*, 64:759 (September 1983), 374-83.

[52] Cf. William Warburton, *The Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated on the Principles of a Religious Deist*, volume 2 [1737] (Kessinger Publishing, 2010).

[53] [Original text] "Pour Israël, la merveille inconcevable ne consistait pas dans quelque caractère interne de la divinité, dont il aurait seul reçu la connaissance: elle consistait en ce que l'Être absolument libre et souverain avait décidé de se communiqué à lui, de lui accorder accès au domaine de sa sainteté: grace qui était en même temps exigence inouïe, 'enlevant la créature à sa propre installation dans le pays de la servitude et la faisant passer dans un 'pays' qui est celui de Dieu.' Telle est la révélation qui trouve son accomplissement et son apogée dans le Christ: 'Dieu, dit Pierre dans la maison du centurion Corneille, a envoyé sa Parole aux enfants d'Israël.. Si tout l'acte révélateur est en fin de compte une revelation de la Trinité, toute la révélation de la Trinité est une révélation en acte, et tout cet acte a un rapport direct à l'homme" (FC 102).

version of integralism to the German verion, for "the version of integralism which 'supernaturalizes the natural' is... the more historist [than the German version], because it does not identify the supernatural as any permanent 'area' of human life" (TST 209).

This point of view is also found in Hamann's notion of revelation. For him, "the 'naturalness' of the origin of language in fact implies that it is simultaneously humanly produced and divinely revealed" (WMS 74). In this sense, Milbank even argues that the postmodern linguistic turn in philosophy is not a modern phenomenon, but was prepared by orthodox Christianity. According to him, "the post-modern embracing of a radical linguisticality, far from a 'problem' for traditional Christianity, has been promoted by it" (WMS 85).

3.3 The doxological character of language

As we have considered, human language is of sacramental value, because it is reflective of God's nature. Therefore the supreme form of language is liturgical language. The doxological character of language safeguards the absolute transcendence of God and at the same time God's sacramental presence in the world. For de Lubac and Milbank, the Eucharist is the culmination of sacramental ontology. According to de Lubac, for Augustine, "any mystery, that is to say any revealed truth, is a sacrament, that is to say an sacred rite, is itself a mystery, that is to say broadly a truth to be understood. The unity of the mystery and the sacrament thus defined is realized to its fullest extent in the case of the Eucharist, the central point of Christian faith and worship" (CM 232-3).[54] In this sense, the Eucharistic language is the best sign which could position all other signs. We come to understand Pickstock's following words: "liturgical language is the only language that really makes sense… the event of transubstantiation in the Eucharist is the condition of possibility for all human meaning."[55] In the postmodern context, language is understood as an instrument of the strategies of power. In this case, language is conceived as dead. Overcoming this nihilistic understanding of language, Milbank and RO promote the retrieval of sacramental understanding of language.

[Excursus 1: Graham Ward's criticism of Barth's model of language]

Milbank's and de Lubac's sacramental understanding stands diametrically opposed to Barth's view on human language. As we have seen in the precedent chapter, for Barth there is no point of contact between creation-including human language- and revelation. Therefore, for Barth, human language remains confined within its fallen state from which only unilateral grace of God can save it. Barth would point out the risk of idolization of human conceptuality in Milbank's theology.[56]

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[54] [Original text] "Toute vérité révélée, est sacrement, c'est-à-dire signe, et qu'en revanche tout sacrement, c'est-à-dire tout rite sacré, est lui-même mystère, c'est-à-dire gros de vérité à comprendre. L'unité du mystère et du sacrement .. se réalise au maximum dans le cas de l'Eucharistie, centre du culte et de la foi chrétienne" (CM 260).

[55] Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing*, xv.

[56] Barth describes his position vis-à-vis human language in the following passage in his *Church Dogmatics* 1-1 which treats the subject of the Word of God: "Theology and the Church, and even the Bible itself, speak no other language than that of this world which is shaped in form and content by the creaturely nature of the world and also conditioned by the limitations of humanity: the language in which man as he is, as sinful and corrupt man, wrestles with the worlds as it encounters with the worlds as it encounters

Graham Ward, a radical orthodox theologian grapples with the problem of language in the theology of Karl Barth in his *Barth, Derrida and Language of Theology* (1995).[57] In this refreshing Barth study, Ward reads Barth's theology of the Word of God in terms of philosophy of language. In this reading, Ward interprets this Reformed theologian in line with Milbank's understanding of Barth. Like Milbank, Ward places Barth within post-Kantian philosophical current in stating that "Barth's natürlich Mensch is founded upon Kantian anthropology."[58] Ward's point of departure is to recontextualize Barth's theology within the so-called 'crisis of representation' in Western thought. For Ward, this crisis of representation goes hand in hand with the crisis of Christology. This means that the significance of cosmic *Logos* is reduced to simple morality. Ward understands that it is in this context that Barth's theology emerged in rehabilitating the divine *Logos*. So he describes Barth's works as an "expression of the modernist dilemma"[59] which was generated by the crisis of representation. Faced with this crisis, Barth developed two irreconciliable linguistic models on the basis of Kantian distinction between phenomenal and noumenal world: one is theological, the other philosophical. In the theological model he calls 'communication model', there is a perfect correspondence between word and reality in virtue of revelation. Lutheran principle of *sola fides* supports this model because only a man of faith can grasps the reality adequately. In the philosophical model he calls 'semiotic model', there is an arbitrary relation between word and reality. That is, natural language is not linked to the transcendent. This distinction of two models stems from Barth's formulation, 'infinite difference between time and eternity'. After all, *analogia entis* is possible only in the framework of *analogia fides* because human language in itself cannot be reflective of God's nature.

Here Ward points out the inner incoherence of Barthian theology which is built on the dichotomy between natural and supernatural world. He holds that Barth sought to solve this dilemma by his Christology. According to him, "the incarnation is the meaning of and the hermeneutic for understanding all language."[60] However, with regard to this, Ward thinks that Barth's theology of the Word is not coherent, because he mistrusts natural language as a conveyor of divine revelation. This position stands in opposition to de Lubac-Miblank's sacramental view of language. From this perspective, Barth's Christological solution is not satisfactory, for this approach divides the Christ as the Word into two diametrically different linguistic being. He notes:

> In the communicational model, Christ would be the full immediate revelation of God as words unambiguously disclose their objects. But the greater the clarity of the disclosure the less emphasis there is upon the means whereby that disclosure has taken place. The signifier dissolves into its direct relation to the signified. By analogy, the human and

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him and as he sees and tries to understand it. The Bible, the Church and theology undoubtedly speak this language on the presupposition that there might be something in it, namely, that in this language God's revelation might be referred to, witness might be given, God's Word might be proclaimed, dogma might be formulated and declared. The only question is whether this possibility is to be understood as that of the language and consequently of the world or man, or whether it is to be regarded as a venture which is, as it were, ascribed to the language, and consequently to the world or man, from without, so that it is not really the possibility of the language, the world, or man, but the possibility of revelation, if in the form of concepts and ideas that exist elsewhere and independently, in correspondence with the created world and the capacity of man as he attempts an understanding of this world, we really come to speak of revelation and therefore of the Trinity, of the remission of sins and eternal life, i.e., of things for which *man's speech as such has no aptitude whatever*"(Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God*, vol 1, part 1, [Contiuum, 2004], 339, emphasis mine)

[57] Graham Ward, *Barth, Derrida and Language of Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[58] Ibid., 16.

[59] Ibid., 8.

[60] Ibid., 31.

> historical contingency of Jesus is only then significant in so far as it effaces itself. The Christology analogous to this would be docetic one in which incarnation is not taken seriously at all. The creaturely in both side of the analogy, Christ's and language's, is dissolved into the revelation of the divine. Where the human and semiotic body is taken seriously, as in the second model of language, then exactly the opposite occurs and the divine and transcendent is dissolved into the creaturely and immanent. To hold both models in paradoxical tension- language and the nature of Christ, the nature of Christ as analogous to the nature of language – is a linguistic form of Nestorianism.[61]

Ward's reading echoes Milbank's emphasis on the linguistic mediation of theological discourse. Both Milbank and Ward think that theology is not something outside language, language itself constitutes theological discourse. In this perspective, for them, Barth's rejection of the validity of human natural language as a conveyer of theological discourse is not acceptable. In conclusion, for Ward, Barth's project of the theology of the Word of God is a failure because Barth at the same time sets forth two opposed linguistic models which are irreconcilable.

4. Milbank's Christian meta-narrative

Since the 1980s, narrative approaches to theology arose as an alternative theological method to the liberal approach to theology whose validity was increasingly called into question. This approach was not simply a trend within Christian theology, but a wide current of science in general in the twentieth century.[62] Narrative thinkers such as Paul Ricœur and Alasdair MacIntyre sought to retrieve the importance of narrative in the understanding of the self and the world, and to a large extent the promotion of this approach serves in its intimate relation to Christian theology.[63] The crucial feature of this so-called post-liberalism,[64]characteristically articulated in the so-called Yale School (Hans Frei, George Lindbeck), is that knowledge is historically and socially conditioned. This theological current challenges the Enlightenment's ideal of universal human rationality apart from the community and its tradition, an ideal which offered the foundation for theological liberalism. Naturally this approach gives value to the historicity of Christian revelation, community and its tradition. And this approach has gained many adherents in various theological domains such as biblical theology (Hans

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[61] Ibid. On this point, Ward draws on a nouvelle theologian, Henri Bouillard in his Catholic Barth study, *Karl Barth: Parole de Dieu et Existence Humaine*, *vol I* (Aubier: Editions Montaigne, 1957).

[62] See *Narratology in the Age of Cross-Disciplinary Narrative Research*, ed. Sandra Heinen and Roy Sommer (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), esp. Andrea Mauz, "Theology and Narration: Reflection on the the 'Narrative Theology': Debate and Beyond," 261-85.

[63] For the influence of Ricœur's and MacIntyre's narrative philosophy on contemporary theology, see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: A Study in Hermeneutics and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Dan R.Stiver, *Theology after Ricoeur: New Directions in Hermeneutical Theology* (Louisville,KY:Westminster/John Knox, 2001); François-Xavier Amherdt, *L'Herméneutique philosophique de Paul Ricoeur et son Importance pour l'Exégèse biblique: En Débat avec la New Yale Theology School* (Paris: Cerf, 2004/Saint Maurice: SaintAugustin, 2004); Boyd Bludell, *Paul Ricoeur between Theology and Philosophy: Detour and Return* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010). In the view of Stanley Hauerwas, "*Theology and Social Theory* could not have been written if MacIntyre did not exist" ("A Milbankian Reflection," in *Wilderness Wanderings: Probing Twentieth-Century Theology and Philosophy* (Boulder.CO: Westview Press, 1997), 197.

[64] For an introduction to 'postliberal theology', see James Fodor, "Postliberal Theology," in *The Modern Theologies: An Introduction to Christian Theology since 1918*, ed. David F.Ford, Rachel Muers (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 229-48.

Frei), Christian ethics (Stanley Hauerwas) and systematic theology (James. W. McClendon).[65] Stanley Grenz /Roger Olson describe the advantage of this approach well:

> The genius of narrative theology lies in its assertion that faith entails the joining of our personal story with the transcendent/immanent story of a religious community and ultimately with the grand narrative of the divine action in the world. The divine story mediated by the community of faith transcends our individual, finite narratives; yet it is immanent both in the history of the world and by faith in the ongoing story of the life of the believer.[66]

Apart from the philosophical revival of narrative theory, narrative theology has its own sources within twentieth century theology itself: Karl Barth and H. Richard Niebuhr. Hans Frei acknowledged his indebtedness to Barth, in particular to his doctrine of divine election.[67] Stanley Hauerwas, on the other hand, appreciates Niebuhr's *The Meaning of Revelation*. In a chapter entitled "The Story of Life," Niebuhr emphasizes the importance of history and community in Christian self-understanding:

> The preaching of the early Christian church was not an argument for the existence of God nor an admonition to follow the dictates of some common human conscience, unhistorical and super-social in character. It was primarily a simple recital of the greatest events connected with the historical appearance of Jesus Christ and a confession of what had happened to the community of disciples. Whatever it was that the church meant to say, whatever was revealed or manifested to it, could be indicated only in connection with an historical person and events in the life of his community. The confession referred to history and was consciously made in history.[68]

Hauerwas, like Niebuhr, is one of the contemporary theologians who recognize the importance of narrativity in ethical and theological reflection. His numerous books mirror this recognition. According to him, our ethical identity is not based on rules, duty, and commandment, but rather shaped by the narrative with which we are engaged through the Christian community. Therefore apart from the Christian narrative and community, Christian ethical and theological reflection becomes impossible. According to him,

> Without denying the place of abstract and general images and concepts in scripture and theology, it is nonetheless true that the most significant claim about God and

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[65] For example, James W. McClendon, *Ethics: Systematic Theology vol 1* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986); *Doctrine: Systematic Theology vol 2* (Nashville Abingdon Press, 1994); *Witness: Sytematic Theology vol 3* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000).

[66] Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *20th-Century Theology God & the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove, Ill: Interversity, 1992), 271.

[67] In the preface of his *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, he notes: "My debts in the present work are innumerable. Among authors who have been particularly influential on my thought. I want to mention Erich Auerbach, Karl Barth, and Gilbert Ryle…. In the case of Karl Barth, I am most deeply indebted not to the famous commentary on Romans, nor to The Doctrine of the Word of God, the methodological introduction to his *Church Dogmatics*, but to the latter volumes of that monumental enterprise, beginning approximately with vol.II,2, on the doctrine of divine election..It seems to me that Barth's biblical exegesis is a model of the kind of narrative reading that can be done in the wake of the changes I describes in this book" (Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Bibilical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New-Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), vii -viii).

[68] H. Richard.Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 23.

> the moral life takes the form of or presupposes a narrative context. Any theological account of narrative, therefore, must involve an attempt to show that this is not just an accidental category but a necessary one for any true knowledge of God and the self.[69]

As we shall see, Milbank, while acclaiming this narrative trend in current theology, criticizes 'narratological foundationalism' within this trend. In the vein of Henri de Lubac, his understanding of narrativity is deeply anchored in history as the stage of God's salvific action.

4.1 Narrative as participation

In chapter 2, it has been shown that participatory ontology is Milbank's fundamental theological framework. We have also seen that this ontology is intimately linked to man's disposition of the poetical representation of the world. In this section, we will consider the relation between participatory ontology and narrative. What relation is there between the two? Usually we enjoy the story and understand the world through stories. Yet, for Milbank, we inhabit the story and it is inevitable to live outside a certain story. According to him, "narrative is our primary mode of inhabiting the world, and it characterizes the way the world happens to us, not, primarily, the cultural world which humans make" (TST 359). We read not only the story, but also are read by the story. And the story cannot be told by an isolated individual, but presupposes a community. Conversely, without the story a community cannot be shaped. That is, the hermeneutical understanding of the human being is, for Milbank, directly interwoven by the narrative understanding of the human self. Therefore the question of narrative is, for Milbank, not epistemological, but ontological. More precisely, our story participates in the grand story of God. This idea is closely related to RO's view on time.[70] According to Milbank, Ward, and Pickstock, as with Plato, time participates in the infinite interpersonal harmonious order (RONT 2). We could say that this story is the salvation history that began with the creation of the world, culminated in the incarnation, and ends with the achievement of the world. This ontological character of story constitutes a specificity of Milbank's conception of narrativity differentiated from other narrative theories.

Evidently Milbank's ontological understanding of narrative echoes de Lubac's theological hermeneutics which supposes multiple level of meanings (historical, allegorical, tropological, and eschatological meanings). For de Lubac and Milbank, the biblical story does not have a historical dimension, but is in tension with the higher level of meaning undergirded by the Christological and eschatological orientation of Christian theology itself.[71] However, de Lubac did not use the word narrative as a technical term.

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[69] Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 95.

[70] See Catherine Pickstock, "Radical Orthodoxy and the Mediation of Time," in *Radical Orthodoxy: A Catholic Enquiry*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming, 63-75.

[71] In this respect, it is not negligible fact that post-liberal theology is influenced by the French nouvelle théologie. According to Picknold, "postliberalism may.. be understood through its constructive dimensions as a 'return to scripture' that seeks to describes 'best practices' for the enduring church in a complex and pluralistic world. The return to the scriptural narrative has been profoundly important. Karl Barth supplied much of the impetus for this return, and his influence is evident in postliberals of the 'Yale

He also did not present himself as a narrative theologian. However, de Lubac's understanding of the biblical story influenced Milbank's concept of narrative.[72] As we have seen, in his work, *Surnaturel*, de Lubac advanced a thesis according to which nature is organically linked to the supernatural. Naturally, his conception of biblical narrative is derived from this thesis. In his remarkable study on medieval biblical interpretation, *Exégèse Médiévale: Les quatre Sens de l'Écriture* (1959), he presented his conception of allegory. In following the logic of the supernatural, the literal sense is not dissociated with the spiritual sense, for the literal sense is fulfilled in its spiritual sense in accordance with de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis. This biblical hermeneutics is differentiated from the Jewish and Hellenistic interpretation. What is important for our purposes is the fact that de Lubac identifies *littera* with *historia*. "The two words are practically interchangeable" (EM² 41).[73] Based on his reading of the patristic literatures, de Lubac reminds us that the biblical passage designates the *littera* as *historia* and in certain cases, as *storia* (Ibid. 426). Here we rediscover de Lubac as a narrative theologian. As far as de Lubac attaches importance to the *littera*, the biblical story is valued as such. On this basis of *littera*, the spiritual/mystical sense, that is, the allegorical sense is derived. He distinguishes the Christian allegory that is firmly rooted in real history from the Hellenistic allegory based on human imagination.[74] Different from Gnostic interpretation and non-Christian allegory, de Lubac argues that history is the foundation of the allegorical sense. This affirmation is equally crucial for Milbank in his understanding of narrative. As Henri de Lubac notes, "biblical allegory is .. essentially *allegoria facti*. More precisely, it is *allegoria facti et dicti*. It is, in the

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school' period, especially in the work of Frei and David Kelsey, and before both of them in the work of H. Richard Niebuhr. But it is also a 'return to the tradition', allied in various way with nouvelle théologie, and the concern in twentieth-century French Catholic thought that ressourcement could help conservative theologians in their task of creative faithfulness to the tradition in the face of contemporary challenges" (C.C.Picknold, *Transforming Postliberal Theology: George Lindbeck, Pragmatism and Scripture* [London: T&T Clark International, 2005], 2).

[72] In *La Révléation Divine*, de Lubac welcomes Oscar Cullmann's concept of 'salvation history' (histoire du salut, Heilsgeschichte) developped in Culmann's *Christ and Time* and *Salvation in History* in that Cullmann attaches importance to history as a place of divine revelation. However, de Lubac notes that the salvation history associated with Cullmann is criticized by Bultmann and his school. According to de Lubac, Bultmann understands 'historicity' in a different sense from Cullmann's. He states: "Pour Bultmann, il y a une 'historicité' réelle de l'action salvifique; la Parole de Dieu 'est d'abord événement temporel, non vérité éternelle'; la révélation n'est pas 'communication de vérités intellectuelles, mais événement salutaire', et ces oppositions sont même poussées à l'extrême, ainsi qu'on va le voir ; mais aussi selon lui quel qu'ait été le fait empirique de Jésus de Nazareth, ni la révélation, en tant qu'elle s'adresse à moi et sollicite ma foi ni le Christ, en tant qu'il suscite mon engagement existentiel, ne sont proprement quelque chose d'historique." Against this idea de Lubac makes a charge against Bultmann in saying : "Pas plus que la temporalité ne se réduit pas au pur instant de la décision, l'Événement salutaire ne se réduit, pour la foi catholique, au pur instant de la Parole. La Parole prophétique est Parole incarnée, tandis que les dichotomies bultmanniennes dissolvent le mystère de l'Incarnation. L'Événement salutaire fait corps avec Jésus-Christ, Existant réel, Verbe fait chair, entré véritablement dans notre histoire" (Henri de Lubac, *La Révélation Divine* [Paris: Cerf, 1983], 51-3).

[73] [Original text] "Les deux mots sont pratiquement interchangeables" (EM I-II 425).

[74] On the difference between Christian allegory and Hellenistic allegory, see Henri de Lubac, "Allégory hellénistique et allégorie chrétienne" in *Théologie d'Occasion* (Desclée de Brouwer: Paris, 1984), 177-211; Equally, Erich Auerbach, German literary critic and philologist observed a remarkable difference between Hellenistic literature and biblical story. See Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

Christian sense of the word, *mysterium*" (ME² 88-89).[75] However, de Lubac does not stop there in limiting the sense of the Scripture in historical fact. For him, "absolutized History"(ME² 71)[76] is a prejudice that is foreign to medieval exegesis:

> All sense of history supposes precisely that one does not stay at the level of its mere *historia*, i.e., the facts pure and simple, or the pure and simple reports of the facts. It supposes that one places oneself, at least at a second time, in another point of view than that of the simple narrator. To explicate the facts- and already somewhat to choose them and to expound them- one thus applies a principle of discernment which can itself be inserted within the facts, but which, as such, pertains to a different sphere and overflows into the observation of the facts. One has recourse to the final causes that the facts would be unable to furnish and which give a retrospective clarification to the whole unfolding of these facts (ME² 71).[77]

De Lubac argues that history and spirit are not two realities belonging to two worlds, but two gazes of the believers. In other words, the Christian can discern the spiritual sense from the historical sense in virtue of his eye of faith. For de Lubac, historical event thus constitutes the Christian allegory. Allegory is not in the text, but in the event which culminates in the incarnation. This argument is linked to de Lubac's conception of revelation. For him, history is not the context in which revelation is added outside it. History itself is the form of divine revelation: "Divine revelation has not only taken place in time, in the course of history: it has also a historic form in its own right" (EM² 44).[78] Milbank, in turn, following de Lubac's conception of allegory, thinks that allegory in the sense of meta-narrative can overcome the historical causality of modern historical science: "Only the meta-narrative level of allegory, which links event beyond causal connection, sustains the narrative coherence relevant to and constitutive of Christianity

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[75] [Original text] "l'allégorie biblique est donc essentiellement *allegoria facti*. Plus précisément elle est *allegoria facti et dicti*. Elle est, au sens chrétien du mot, *mysterium* " (EM I-II 497).

[76] [Original text]" Histoire absolutisée " (EM I-II 470). Like de Lubac, John Milbank sees historical science as "finite idol" (TST 1). However, de Lubac does not relinquish modern biblical schalorship as such. Rather he encourges it to the extent that it provides a firm basis for his spiritual interpretation. In his introductio to his *History and Spirit* he notes this attitude toward science: "My endeavour would be misconstrued if ascribed to even a limited or amended 'anti scientific reaction', which I am told 'is prevalent currently in spiritualist circles'. I know of course, that there is blind criticism and false science. Authentic science itself is not everything, especially when its object is books containing *the Word of God*. It is nevertheless invaluable, and I would consider harmful to the highest degree anyone in the least inclined to contest its domain or scorn its results" (HS 14); [Original text] "Ce serait prendre notre effort à contresens que de l'inscrire au compte de 'la réaction antiscientifique', même atténuée, même amendée, qui, nous dit-on, 'domaine actuellement dans les milieux spiritualistes'. Nous savons, certes, qu'il y a une critique aveugle et une fausse science. La science authentique elle-même n'est pas tout, surtout quand elle a pour objet des livres qui contiennent *la Parole de Dieu*. Elle n'en est pas moins précieuse, et nous considérerions comme néfaste au plus haut point tout ce qui tendrait le moins du monde à lui disputer son domaine ou à faire fi de ses résultats"(HE 12).

[77] [Original text] "Tout sens de l'histoire suppose qu'on ne s'en tient pas à l'historia, c'est-à-dire aux faits purs et simples, ou au pur et simple récit des faits. Il suppose qu'on se place, au moins en un second temps, à un autre point de vue que celui du simple narrateur. On use alors, pour expliquer les faits- et déjà quelque peu pour les choisir et pour les exposer- d'un principe de discernement qui peut bien avoir lui-même son insertion dans les faits, mais qui , comme tel, appartient à une autre sphère et déborde leur observation. On recourt aux causes finales, que les faits ne sauraient fournir, et qui donnent un éclairage rétrospectif à tout le déroulement de ces faits " (EM I-II 460).

[78] [Original text] "Révélation divine n'a pas seulement eu lieu dans le temps, au cours de l'histoire: elle a elle-même forme historique" (EM II-I 429).

as such. This is one reason why de Lubac exalts the allegorizing Erasmus above Luther and Calvin" (SM 57).

The typology which seeks to find the correspondence between the figures of the Old Testament and the reality of the New Testament has a tendency to diminish the ontological sense of the allegory, that is the idea of participation. However, according to de Lubac, typology and allegory are practically identical (EM II-I, 552).[79] In other words, allegory, in the vein of the apostle Paul, has the priority in the medieval exegesis and the specialization of fourfold sense is simply the problem of technical level in the exegesis. "Since there had been no habitual opposition between the two vocabularies, on ought to say that allegorical interpretation, in the traditional sense, consists of discerning the types and figures that, in Israel, announced Christ-in all of Israel, all of Christ" (TF 132).[80] Milbank, following de Lubac says : " (Hans) Frei talks of 'typology' where I talk of 'allegory', because, following de Lubac, I see no essential distinction between the two " (WMS 118).

4.2 Milbank and narrative

4.2.1 Milbank's understanding of narrative

Milbank's pragmatic understanding of language allows him to deconstruct the notion of substance which has been merely a conceptual idol in Christian theology. For him, it is impossible to talk about God through the propositions that imprison God within human concept. If Milbank renounces admitting the pertinence of propositional revelation, how can we talk about God? According to him, as for Henri de Lubac, it is through the narrative of God that He is manifested. Narrative is one of the key concepts for understanding Milbank's overall theology. However, it is necessary to see how Milbank positions himself with regard to the conception of the narrative which postmodern narrative theorists envision. For Milbank these narrative theorists are not completely immune from secular reason. Even though Milbank situates himself within the postmodern philosophical current which places narrative at the heart of thought, he understands narrativity as a theologian and in terms of Christian theology. Here we can spell out several characteristics of Milbank's understanding of narrativity.

First, like lubacian allegory, the narrative, for Milbank, is of ontological significance. According to him, narrative is not a philosophical category to explain and comprehend the social, historical, and scientific phenomena. Rather, we make a narrative and simultaneously inhabit narrative. Hence the dichotomy between subject and object is a modern prejudice since Enlightenment philosophy, especially Kantian philosophy, which insists the active role of the subject in the construction of knowledge. Milbank refuses both Cartesian foundationalism which conceives the *cogito* as the absolute foundation for the construction of human knowledge, and the postmodern nihilism which regards

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[79] [Original text] "dans le vocabulaire naissant de l'exégèse 'tropologie' ait été d'abord pratiquement synonyme d'allégorie" (EM II, I, 552).

[80] [Original text] "Loin qu'il y eût habituellement opposition entre les deux vocables, on devra donc dire que l'interprétation allégorique, en son idée traditionnelle, consiste à discerner les types ou les figures qui, en Israël, annonçaient le Christ - dans tout Israël, tout le Christ " (TO 141), See Henri de Lubac, " Typologie et allégorisme," in TO 137- 75.

the subject as just an element in a complex power strategy. For Milbank narrative is the most fundamental category which embraces subject and object alike:

> In postmodernity there are infinitely many possible versions of truth, inseparable from particular narratives. Objects and subjects are, as they are narrated in a story. Outside a plot, which has its own unique, unfounded reasons, one cannot conceive how objects and subjects would be, nor even that they would be at all. If subjects and objects only are, through the complex relations of a narrative, then neither objects are privileged, as in pre-modernity, nor subjects, as in modernity. Instead, what matters are structural relations, which constantly shift; the word "subject" now indicates a point of potent "intensity" which can re-arrange given structural patterns (PCA n°3).

Second, narrative, for Milbank, is historically contingent and subject to a particular community. Enlightenment reason sacrificed and expelled narrative in order to warrant the universality of human reason. As MacIntyre shows well in his work entitled *Whose Justice, Which Rationality?* (1988), rationality is not separable from the tradition in which rationality is forged, because the formation of rationality in the specific community is rooted in his own belief which is not to be universalisable. In this perspective, MacIntyre's conception of rationality is anti-Cartesian in character in that it is not based on universal reason independent of tradition and community. MacIntyre argues that rationality is the product of a historically contingent tradition, and therefore that all discussions revolving around the problem concerning rationality and justice are possible only within a single tradition. He state:

> Not only … it is out of the debates, conflicts, and enquiry of socially embodied, historically contingent traditions that contentions regarding practical rationality and justice are advanced, modified, abandoned, or replaced, but that there is no other way to engage in the formulation, elaboration, rational justification, and criticism of accounts of practical rationality and justice except from within some one particular tradition in conversation, cooperation, and conflict with those who inhabit the same tradition. There is no standing ground, no place for enquiry, no way to engage in the practices of advancing, evaluating, accepting, and rejecting reasoned argument apart from that which is provided by some particular tradition or other.[81]

Like MacIntyre, Milbank thinks that reason without narrative is unimaginable. He even identifies reason with narrativity itself: "In Greece, *mythos* and *logos*, narrative and reason, were synonymous- they began to be distinguished when history separated itself from false tale or rumor, ethical religion from scandalous tales about the gods, and philosophical abstraction from mythological personification."[82] But unlike MacIntyre who favors *tradition in general* with regard to particular narrative, narrative for Milbank is anchored on the particular history like de Lubac's allegory. "[I do not find] it possible to defend the notion of 'traditioned reason' in general, outside my attachment to a tradition which grounds this idea in the belief in the historical guidance of the Holy Spirit" (TST 328). In other words, Milbank holds that there is an incommensurability

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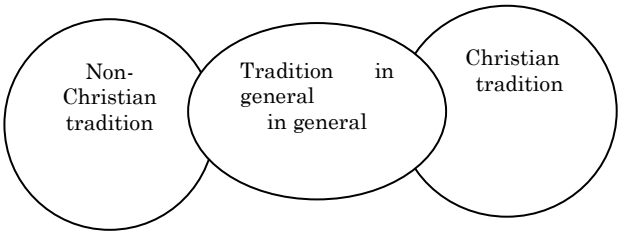
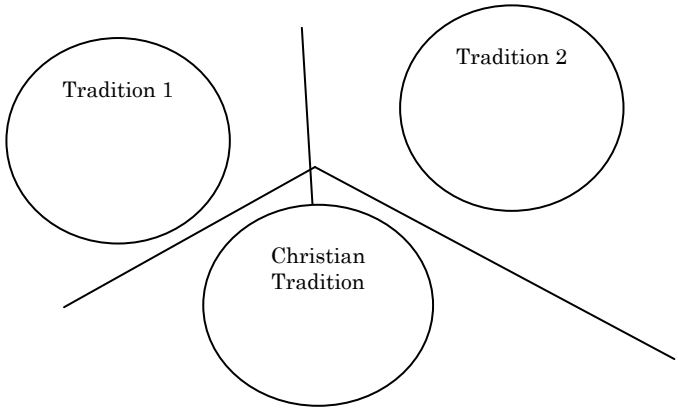
[81] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 350.

[82] Milbank, "Fictioning Things: Gift and Narrative," *Religion and Literature* 37:3 (Autumn 2005), 10.

between the Christian tradition and other traditions because the Christian tradition is the locus of the revelation operated by the Holy Spirit. Even though MacIntyre and Milbank alike place an emphasis on the specificity of rationality in a certain tradition, Christian rationality is totally different from other traditions. The Christian *logos* is differentiated from the philosophical *logos*. This claim flows from de Lubac's idea of the supernatural itself, to which Milbank submits himself. We might present Milbank's view on tradition as a diagram as follows.



[Diagram X] MacIntyre's model of tradition



[Diagram XI] Milbank's model of tradition

In comparison to Milbank, MacIntyre thinks that there is commensurability among traditions. The translatability between two different languages offers a corroboration of this fact. The fact that we can translate one language to another is the proof of the existence of common elements throughout traditions. According to MacIntyre, the translatability warrants the commensurability between traditions. [83] Therefore traditions are in the inter-complementary relation : "Instead of interpreting rival traditions as mutually exclusive and incompatible way of understanding one and the same world, one and the same subject matter, let us understand them instead as

[83] See Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice, Which Rationality*?, 370- 88.

providing very different, complementary perspectives for envisaging the realities about which they speaks to us."[84]

Third, Milbank's idea of narrative is deeply anchored in the ontology of peace. He counteracts the narrative of secular reason with the Christian narrative. These two narratives are undergirded by two diametrically opposed ontologies: ontology of violence, ontology of peace. In the face of the ontology of violence, which envisions the world as infinitely conflictual, Milbank proposes the ontology of peace grounded in the harmony in difference. According to Milbank, the ontology of violence characterizes the ancient world view. The universe is conceived as being in a permanent state of conflict among gods. Virtue is understood in this context of violence. For example, the virtue of courage is praised because it is directly linked to the war which marks ancient society. Milbank notes the limits of ancient thought which cannot envision peace as the constitutive foundation of the world: "Even Plato and Aristotle were inhibited by such a mythical inheritance: in the end they could only think of goodness and happiness as occupying certain privileged sites of self-presence over against an irredeemably chaotic and conflictual cosmos. They isolated islands of peace, but peace was not seen as coterminous with Being" (TST 262).

In this world, where violence is prevalent, emerges Christianity which brings a diametrically opposed ontology. The confrontation between two ontologies is well illustrated by the Augustinian opposition between the *Civitas Dei* and the *Civitas terrena*. While the earthly city is marked by violence and self-love, the city of God is marked by peace and the love of God. We can cite Augustine for explaining the origin of these two ontologies: "Two loves have made two cities. Love of self, even to the point of contempt for God, made the earthly city, and love of God, even to the point of contempt for self, made the heavenly city."[85] These two ontologies propose two different interpretations on *difference*. For the ontology of violence, *difference* constitutes the cause of violence, while for the ontology of peace, difference enriches the world in harmony. Milbank states:

> Christianity...recognizes no original violence. It construes the infinite not as chaos, but as a harmonic peace which is yet beyond the circumscribing power of any totalizing reason. Peace no longer depends upon the reduction to the self-identical, but the *sociality* of harmonious difference. Violence, by contrast, is always a secondary willed intrusion upon this possible infinite order (which is actual for God). Such a Christian logic is not deconstructible by modern secular reason; rather, it is Christianity which exposes the non-necessity of supposing, like Nietzscheans, that difference, non-totalizing and indeterminacy of meaning necessarily imply arbitrariness and violence. To suppose that they do is merely to subscribe to a particular encoding or reality. Christianity, by contrast, is the coding of transcendental difference as peace (TST 5-6).

Milbank considers that the Christian vision of the world [Weltanschaung] gives a priority to the ontology of peace over the ontology of violence. For him this ontology of peace can be expressed only in narrative fashion, and the narrativity itself has the force

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[84] Ibid., 352.

[85] Augustine, *City of God, Book XIV, 28* (New York: New City Press, 2012).

which can bypass the ontology of violence: "Only Christianity (and perhaps Judaism) affirms [the ontology of peace], and so fully evades an incipient nihilism. Yet this ontology is not dialectically established, but is rather implied in narrative about divine creation and revelation. By the same token, Christianity is quite unable to refute rationally the ontology of difference, or the thought of mastery" (TST 262). As we have seen, Milbank does not agree on the apologetic strategy in theology which seeks to refute or conform to other visions of the world in a rationalist manner. Instead, he argues that one can at least recognize other perspectives only as one or another perspective as from our own. In other words, in order to overcome the ontology of violence, it is not efficacious, or even dangerous that one seeks to refute it in appealing to a universal criterion. This endeavor will fail as we had seen in liberal theology. Christianity has to propose a narrative which is qualitatively different from the narrative of violence. "To counter [ontology of difference], one cannot resuscitate liberal humanism, but one can try to put forward an alternative *mythos*, equally unfounded, but nonetheless embodying an 'ontology of peace', which conceives differences as analogically related, rather than equivocally at variance" (TST 279).

Now we can understand the importance of narrative in Milbank's ecclesial project, which we shall see in Part II. The narrative of Jesus is not an example for Christians, but the Christian community itself is the continuation of that narrative. Hence, the goal of the Christian community consists in becoming an exemplary community of peace which is marked by the forgiveness between believers in opposing the violence of the world. Milbank maintains that only the Christian narrative can overcome the narrative of liberalism, not based on secular reason, but on the aesthetic attraction of Christian narrative itself as embodied through the Church: "My case is rather that it[secular reason] is only a *mythos*, and therefore cannot be refuted, but only out-narrated, if we can persuade people-for reasons of 'literary taste'- that Christianity offers a much better story " (TST 330).

4.2.2 Milbank's engagement with secular narrative models

4.2.2.1 From the dialectics of explication and understanding to the narrative

Paul Ricœur, the champion of French narrative theory, is one of Milbank's interlocutors with regard to the nature of narrative. Even if Milbank acknowledges that his own meta-critique of social theory is in the same direction as that of Ricoeur (TTS 439), he reproaches the tradition of *verstehen* in general (Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Weber, Ricoeur, etc), in claiming that "understanding as well as explanation, humanism as well as science, is an aspect of modernist secular reason" (TST 263). Milbank acknowledges its contribution insofar as it discerned the particularity of human and historical phenomenon distinct from natural phenomenon. However, he denounces that this tradition admitted the universality of the explication of natural science which claims universal truth. As with Ricœur, Milbank finds that the distinction between explanation and understanding is questionable because it is a heritage of the Enlightenment tradition founded on the Cartesian *Cogito*. This idea has been called into question by hermeneutical philosophy. Before Dilthey, Schleiermacher sought to interpret the text in presupposing the identity between author and interpreter. That is, for Schleiermacher there are objective elements such as the formal grammatical

structure in the interpretation of text. Naively, Schleiermacher thought that one can enter into the psychology of an author based on these supposed objective elements of the text. Milbank demands whether "there is anything in interpretation 'surplus to' the formal analysis of structure, any level of 'meaning' over and above syntactic entanglements" (TST 264). Under the influence of Kantian philosophy, which distinguishes the realm of fact and the realm of the value, this tradition of *verstehen* is taken up by German and French sociologists (Weber, Simmel, Trœltsch, Durkheim and recently Raymond Aron).[86] Their sociological *démarche* presupposes that the social sphere is value-neutral and objective. They identify the social fact (*le fait social*) supposed to be neutral (Durkheim) in order to explain social phenomena in a positive manner. At the same time they seek to understand the intentions of social agents. Consequently, this sociological current does not call into question the established economic and political structure, because this actual system is a *fait social* which is established without contestation. Milbank protests against this sociological current which is attached to liberal ideology as follows:

> The German thinkers employ neo-Kantian conceptions to describe supposed *a priori* possibilities of relationship between the individual social actor and other individuals. In an apparently contradictory reversal, specifically sociological explanation is conceived of as an appeal to the motives and intentions of individual actors, to the degree that these can be comprehended under the *a priori* forms of social relationship. This 'interpretative sociology', by according primacy to the acting subject, is supposed to allow room for the influence of values and meaning in history, alongside the congealed intransigence of economic and political structures which remain a fatally inescapable phenomenon (TST 75-6).

Furthermore, Milbank applies his critique of the tradition of *verstehen* to the knowledge of natural science on which the tradition of *verstehen* is founded. For Milbank, even natural science based on causal explanation cannot make a claim to universal validity, because this knowledge is the result of arbitrary experimentation. More precisely, the result of putatively objective scientific research is produced by an application of the interpretive framework repetitively, which in the end is but a belief. Therefore, the knowledge of natural science has its own history (narrative). Consequently, it turns out that objective explication is a fiction. Natural science cannot warrant objectivity in the face of social science:

> The 'certainty' of both natural science and of a valid social science does not reside in their representation of reality, but in their homology with a power of repetition and ordered change that is nonetheless able to embrace and welcome a moment of 'unpredictability.' Moreover, the implicit ontology of modern science suggests not uniformity at the level of 'ultimate reality' but rather randomness and difference. The question about the possibility of the extra-scientific then becomes, not a question about the reality of human freedom, but of whether there can be a narrative that is not 'about' power, implying an ontology that does not legitimate the arbitrary (TST 263).

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[86] See chapter 4, "Sociology II: From Kant to Weber," in TST 75-100.

Milbank regards Ricoeur as belonging to the tradition of *verstehen* because Ricoeur admits the validity of explanation in his hermeneutics. In this sense, he is also submitted to the hermeneutical tradition which arose since Schleiermacher.[87] Like Schleiermacher and Dilthey, the task of hermeneutics, for Ricœur, consists in the revivification of the dead text in a present context. For them, first of all, there is an objective inanimate text that possesses a 'meaning [Sinn]', and not 'signification [Bedeutung]'. For example, "Ceasar crossed the River Rubicon" has an objective, historical sense. Namely, this sentence says what happened in objective history. However this phrase signifies an event which represents a new era. In virtue of signification, a phrase is reanimated by the new semantic dimension. In the same way, Ricœur recognizes the internal sense of the text, while signification depends on the readers who are situated within another context. This attitude is clearly revealed in his recognition of the validity of structural explanation. This is to say that Ricœur recognizes the autonomy of the text itself. Even though structural linguistics (Lévi-Strausse) cannot detach signification at the level of meaning, it has an explicative power:

> Linguistics considers only systems of units devoid of proper meaning, each of which is defined only in terms of its difference from all the others. These units, whether they be purely distinctive like those of phonological articulation or significant like those of lexical articulation, are oppositive units. The interplay of oppositions and their combinations within an inventory of discrete units is what defines the notion of structure in linguistics. This structural model furnishes the type of explanatory attitude.[88]

The criticism addressed by Milbank with regard to Ricœur is focused on his articulation of explanation and understanding. The reason why Ricœur revisits this old problem is to surpass the dichotomy between explanation and understanding. In the face of the monopolization of the method of natural science, Dilthey sought to rescue the specificity of human science with regard to natural science. In distinguishing purely natural science and human science at the methodological level, Dilthey qualifies the

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[87] Kevin J. Vanhoozer confirms Milbank's argument. According to him: Ricœur brings an essentially romanticist response to these pressing questions concerning the nature and value of human being. We belong to a Creation that is larger than ourselves. Though it often appears that we do not fit in the world or the nature is against us, romantic poetry evokes visions of a reconciliation between humanity and nature, thereby revealing the basis of their profound unity. Since Kant, of course, knowledge of Creator and Creation is not open to us. But thanks to poetic language we may continue to think beyond the limits of reason alone. Ricœur stand in the long line of those who seek to articulate the 'Transcendence' or 'Sacred' that eludes our concepts as well as our everyday experience Ricœur's agenda is a variation of Kant's: 'I have taken way knowledge in order to make room for hope.' Like another post-Kantian, Schleiermacher, Ricœur believes that certain human feelings, such as the feeling of absolute dependence on a power that is not myself, are actually ontological clues to the meaning of human being" (Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: A Study in Hermeneutics and Theology* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990], 280).

[88] Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics* II, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thomson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 113-4; [original text] "La linguistique ne connaît que des systèmes d'unités dénuées de significations propres et dont chacune ne se définit que par sa différence à l'égard de toutes les autres. Ces unités soient purement distinctives, comme celles de l'articulation phonologique, ou significative, comme celles de l'articulation lexicale, sont des unités oppositives. C'est le jeu des oppositions et de leurs combinaisons, à l'intérieur d'un inventaire d'unités discrètes, qui définit la notion de structure en linguistique. C'est ce modèle structurel qui fournit le type du comportement explicatif " (Paul Ricœur*, Du Text à l'Action* [Paris: Seuil, 1986], 146-7).

method of natural science as *explanation* and that of human science as *understanding*. In fact, this distinction is rooted in the Cartesian dichotomy between matter and spirit. Natural science, which concerns the material, has a task of explaining the causal relation, while human science which preoccupies with the sprit has a task of unveiling the intention and sense of spiritual phenomena.

Like Dilthey, Ricœur criticizes this radical dichotomy because of its Cartesian heritage. Having recourse to Martin Heidegger, he holds that man as being-in-the-world [In-der-Welt-Sein] cannot overcome his Sitz im Leben. Therefore, it is absurd to think that one can explain social, historical and natural phenomena from a universal and objective vantage point. Heidegger and Ricœur conceive of human understanding as an ontological event. Put another way, understanding is a mode of being. Although he is indebted to him, Ricœur differs from Heidegger and his belief that the human being is characterized by his mortality [Sein-Zum-Tode], in thinking there is a possibility of hope. That is the function of narrative which is neglected by Heidegger.[89] For Ricœur narrative gives a meaning to our life protecting us from lapsing into nihilism, since narrative offers individual and collective purpose. In this perspective, in the face of the positivist school, Dilthey is right when he argues that "man is not radically alien to man, because he offers signs of his own existence."[90] However, Ricœur criticizes Dilthey in saying that "Dilthey still belongs to the generation of neo-Kantians for whom the pivot of all human science is the individual, considered…in his social relations, but fundamentally singular."[91] This is to say that Dilthey did not abandon the objective and self-transparent subject. In consequence, it turns out that his model of explanation and understanding belongs to the secular reason of the Enlightenment.

Based on his understanding of narrative, Ricœur, instead of the dichotomy of explanation and understanding, proposes a dialectical model of explanation and understanding. One can simply comprehend this dialectic with the concept of the hermeneutic circle. First of all, when one reads a text, one has a global vision on this text, that is a precomprehension [*Voraussetzung*]. Yet in reading a text, one encounters contradiction with our precomprehension. Then we correct our precomprehension. In other words, for Ricoeur, explanation and understanding is complemented. He explains this argument as follows: "To explain more is to understand better."[92]

In this fashion, despite his critique of the Enlightenment tradition, Ricoeur recognizes the validity of autonomous reason. The text is to explain itself by it. For Ricœur, to explain, it is to reveal the internal structure of the text. But this is not all for Ricœur. On this basis, it is necessary to arrive at a comprehension of ourselves: "To explain is to bring out the structure, that is, the internal relations of dependence that

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[89] See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, 30. According to Vanhoozer, Ricoeur provides a narrative correction to Heidegger's analysis of human temporality: "1) a literary application and analytic precision"; 2) a social dimension; 3) a hopeful orientation" (30).

[90] Ibid., 59; [original text] " homme n'est pas radicalement un étranger pour l'homme, parce qu'il donne des signes de sa proper existence" (Ricoeur, *De Text à L'Action* 83).

[91] Ibid., 60; [original text] "Dilthey.. reste encore posée dans les termes de l'épistémologie caractéristique de toute l'époque néo-kantien " (Ricoeur, *De Text à L'Action,* 81).

[92] Ibid., 20; [original text] "Expliquer plus, c'est comprendre mieux" (Ricoeur, *De Text à L'Action,* 22).

constitute the statics of the text; to interpret is to follow the path of thought opened up by the text, to place oneself en route toward the *orient* of the text."[93].

For Milbank, despite his critique of the dichotomy between explanation and understanding, he is, like Dilthey, subject to the presupposition of the Enlightenment because he holds the distinction between explanation and understanding:

> It is clear that Ricœur only continues to distinguish understanding from explanation, because he persists in a certain belief is a spirit outside matter. Self-reflection, 'presence' to things and to other subjects, are thought of by him as 'external' to the inscriptions that one tries to decipher, whereas, in actuality, speech and self-reflection continue to inscribe in some medium, and they remain as bound codes of signification as any book or portrait (TST 265).

Hence, he criticizes secular reason more radically than Ricœur in emphasizing the radically narrative character of knowledge. "In place of understanding/explanation, I shall put the single mode of narrative knowledge" (TST 263). Milbank's complaint addressed to Ricœur is that he thinks that "the written text, for Ricoeur, possesses in itself only 'sense' and not 'reference'" (TST 265). We can understand this critique of Milbank with regard to Ricœur in light of his conception of language as *sacramentum*, which is undergirded by the idea of the supernatural of Henri de Lubac. For him, text is not an autonomous realm without reference to the supernatural. "Ricœur accepts far too readily a structuralist account of formal mechanisms, so that he can represent the more uncertain interpretative element as beginning to escape from the text, from language, toward the *telos* of pure self-reference" (TST 266). In consequence, Milbank goes farther than Ricœur in radicalizing the narrative theology of Ricœur in order to detach himself from secular reason, which is not reconcilable with Christian *logos*. "'Narrating'...turns out to be a more basic category than either explanation or understanding: unlike either of these it does not assume punctiliar facts or discrete meanings. Neither is it concerned with universal laws, nor universal truths of the spirit" (TST 267).

4.2.2.2 Critique of George Lindbeck's narratological foundationalism

With his colleague at Yale University, Hans Frei, George Lindbeck represents a theological current, so-called postliberal theology. This theological current counteracted the liberal theological current which dominated the theological terrain for more than a century. This current resists the philosophical foundationalism which supposes the universality of knowledge based on the autonomous subject. In the face of this philosophical tendency prevalent in modern philosophy, postliberal theology sought to overcome the philosophical foundationalism on the one hand, and the liberal theological current on the other hand. In his *The Nature of Doctrine* (1984), George Lindbeck proposes a new model of comprehension of Christian doctrine. Lindbeck recognizes his

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[93] Ibid., 121-2; [original text] "Expliquer, c'est dégager la structure, c'est-à-dire les relations internes de dépendance qui constituent la statique du texte; interpréter, c'est prendre le chemin de pensée ouvert par le texte, se mettre en route vers l'orient du texte " (Ricoeur, *Du texte à l'Action*, 156.).

indebtedness toward Barth and Wittgenstein in the elaboration of his theological thought.[94]

We can establish several parallels between Lindbeck and these thinkers. Like Barth, he is against the *Experiential-expressive model* (Schleiermacher, Tillich) which situates Christian experience within religious expression in general. Like Barth, revelation is an event whose essence we cannot express in a propositional manner. Therefore, we cannot help but show the identity of God by means of narrative. But like Barth this narrative does not have any contact with the historical horizon, which can risk the idolization and absolutization of the historical aspect. Hence one could qualify this narrative as "narrative from above," which lays emphasis on the ontological dimension of narrative. This narrative is distinguished from the "narrative from below" of liberal theology which insists the historical and empirical aspect of the history of Jesus.[95] Lindbeck shares his understanding of the nature of the Christian narrative with Barth.

Moreover, Wittgenstein's understanding of language equally stimulated his theological reflection. For Wittgenstein, linguistic performances are anchored in the particular communities. For example, when we play chess, there are particular rules. But outside this game, these rules make no sense because this rule is valid uniquely for the members of this community. Furthermore, language turns out to be true only in its usage. If one does not play, rules do not exist. This means that community is unthinkable outside of linguistic performance. Lindbeck seems to appropriate this linguistic philosophy as a Barthian theologian.

Against this background, we can arrive at a comprehension of the linguistic-cultural model of religion which Lindbeck proposes as a pertinent model in postmodernity. First and foremost, Lindbeck refuses the *experiential-expressive model* which is largely spread in modern theology (Schleiermacher, Rudolf Otto, Rahner, Tillich). According to this model, religious experience is a common experience of humanity and different religions are the expressions of this common experience.[96] Lindbeck calls this model into question because "this core experience is said to be common to a wide diversity of religions, it is difficult or impossible to specify its distinctive features, and yet unless this is done, the

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[94] "One strand in the so-called neo-orthodox movement, that of Barth (unlike Tillich's or Bultmann's), avoid the experiential-expressive turn to the subject. (There may also be other parallels between Barth's method and a cultural-linguistic approach) (*The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* [Louisville: Westminster/John Know Press, 1984], 24); "Karl Barth's exegetical emphasis on narrative has been at second a chief source of my notion of intratextuality as an appropriate way of doing theology in a fashion consistent with a cultural-linguistic understanding of religion and a regulative view of doctrine" (*The Nature of Doctrine*, 135); "Wittgenstein's influence has been strong in some theological circles. While this does not appear to have yet inspired consideration of the problems of doctrinal constancy and change and of agreement and disagreement with which this book is concerned, it has served as a major stimulus to my thinking (even if in ways that those more knowledgeable in Wittgenstein might not approve)" (*The Nature of Doctrine*, 24).

[95] I am indebted this distinction to Samuel Martin Bailey in his *How the Church Performs Jesus' Story: Improving on the Theological Ethics of Stanley* Hauerwas (Doc. Diss, Durham University, 1995), available at Durham E-Theses Online:http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/1462/ (Accessed, 25 May 2013). See 71-5.

[96] Lindbeck summarizes the thesis of Bernard Lonergan regarding the theory of religion. (1) Different religions are diverse expression or objectifications of a common core experience. It is this experience which identifies them as religious. (2) The experience, while conscious, may be unknown on the level of self-conscious reflection. (3) It is present in all human beings. (4) In most religions, the experience is the source and norm of objectifications: it is by reference to the experience that their adequacy or lack of adequacy is to be judged (*The Nature of Doctrine,* 31. See Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), 101-24.

assertion of commonality becomes logically and empirically vacuous."[97] He challenges this model in claiming that prelinguistic and cultural experience is impossible. For him, religious experience is not neutral and universalisable because this experience itself is to be understood only in the linguistic and cultural community. According to the account of Lindbeck "religions are seen as comprehensive interpretive schemes, usually embodied in myths or narratives and heavily ritualized, which structure human experience and understanding of self and world."[98] This is the cultural-linguistic model that Lindbeck proposes. He explains:

> [Religion] is not primarily an array of beliefs about the true and the good (though it may involve these), or a symbolism expressive of basic attitudes, feelings, or sentiments (though these will be generated). Rather, it is similar to an idiom that makes possible the description of realities, the formulation of beliefs, and the experiencing of inner attitudes, feelings, and sentiments. Like a culture or language, it is a communal phenomenon that shapes the subjectivities of individuals rather than being primarily a manifestation of those subjectivities.…just as a language (or 'language game,' to use Wittgenstein's phrase) is correlated with a form of life, and just as a culture has both cognitive and behavioral dimensions, so it is also in the case of a religious tradition.[99]

In consequence, religious language is not universalisable because each religious community has its own religious language despite the same use of a word (for example, love). The language of each community constitutes a particularity of this religious tradition. We can take an example. The word 'love' which is general in all religions, does not have the same connotation. The love of God in the Bible is completely different from the Confucian notion of love (愛). In the Confucian philosophical system, love cannot be the Christian love because this love is possible only in familial and social hierarchy. In the Confucian community, the King loves his people, but it is not imaginable that this king becomes like his people as does the Christian God.[100] In his study on Buddhism Henri de Lubac is against the identification of Buddhist charity with Christian love. He points out that Buddhist love is not an end in itself, but a provisional virtue.[101] That is, "this charity is still part of what Buddhists call 'the mundane order.'"[102] Therefore, "not in terms of this virtue can the Supreme Being-or non-Being- be defined, nor can such a virtue enter into any account of man's last end."[103] So there is no place of Christian God

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[97] George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 32.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid., 33.
[100] According to Fuiping Fan, in Confucianism, "The father's love of the son or the son's love of the father of the father does have a reason: 'he is my son' or 'he is my father.' Thus it differs from God's love of humans or Christian neighbor-love. God's love of humans goes beyond any human reason. God loves human not because humans are the creatures of God. Rather, God loves humans because He is God-His nature is love" (Ruiping Fan, *Reconstructionist Confucianism: Rethinking Morality after the West* [New York: Springer, 2010], 294).
[101] Henri de Lubac, *Aspect of Buddhism*, trans. George Lamb (London/New York: Sheed and Ward, 1953), 41.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.

of love, because in Buddhist love there is not any ontological link to absolute God who is the ultimate source of love. In Buddhism love is simply a technique of self-purgation.[104]

Therefore, there is a radical incommensurability between different religious communities. A religious concept is not to be understood only in the narrative framework of each community. "A religion can be viewed as a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought."[105] Stanley Hauerwas endorses this position:

> The notion that Christian speech can or must be translated if it is to be acceptable to modern people too often embodies simplistic view regarding the nature of language. For instance, such view of the linguistic character of the theological task fails to understand that the theologian should be trained as an adequate skillful speaker of a language. From my perspective, if Christian theological claims are no longer doing any work they are best given up, for it is far better to abandon such futile endeavor than subject them to a resurfacing operation (a 'face life') that tires to show that they really mean something else. The theological task is to articulate why and in what way certain practices are intrinsic to Christian discourse.[106]

Milbank welcomes the rehabilitation of the narrative of postliberal theology: "George Lindbeck and Hans Frei have been quite right to call us back to narrative as being that alone which can 'identify' God for us" (TST 385). But Milbank complains of an error in Lindbeck's understanding of the nature of narrativity. This error is revealed in his comprehension of the nature of doctrine. In the presentation of his theory of Christian doctrine, Lindbeck remarks: "The only theories of doctrine that need to be taken seriously for our purposes are regulative and modified propositional ones."[107] In order to understand this remark, it is necessary to consider his theory of truth. He distinguishes three forms of truths: *categorical, intra-systematic and ontological truth*. The categorical truth is the truth which has a claim to the absolute and definitive truth. This truth is expressed in cognitive –propositional manner. For example, the proposition "Jesus-Christ is the Lord" corresponds really to the lordship of the Christ. The task of *cultural-linguistic model* consists in showing that this model can affirm the propositional truth. For this, Lindbeck distinguished the intrasystematic truth and ontological truth. Intrasystematic truth is assured by its coherence, while the ontological truth by its correspondence to reality. If doctrine is the product of a particular community, how can we claim the propositional truth of doctrines?

Lindbeck takes as an example "*Christus est Dominus*" being ontologically true for the Christians. But it is a false proposition when is used "to authorize cleaving the skull of the infidel (even though the same words in other contexts may be a true utterance)"[108] Why is the same doctrine false in another context? This is because of the contradiction with the specifically Christian form of life [Lebensform]. In this way, Lindbeck is freed

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[104] Ibid., 42.
[105] George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 33.
[106] Stanley Hauerwas, *Wilderness Wanderings: Probing Twentieth-Century Theology and Philosophy* (Boulder/Oxford: WestviewPress, 1997), 3.
[107] George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 79.
[108] Ibid., 64.

from the *aporia* of propositional truth. In short, intrasystematic truth is a condition *sine qua non* of ontological truth.

Therefore, for him, doctrine is of secondary importance with regard to narrative. Doctrine plays a regulatory role in the narrative community. In other words, doctrine functions as *regula fidei* in the Christian community. It is in this perspective that Lindbeck understands the emergence of the doctrines of Christology, Mariology, and infallibility in the history of the Church.

Milbank does not agree with Lindbeck on the theory of the genesis of doctrine. For Milbank, Lindbeck's attempts to abstract the rules which interpret narrative are not easy (for example, 'Christocentricity'). Milbank calls the necessity for these rules into question. "The very necessity for 'rules' marks the highly problematic character of the attachment of the 'identification' of God to 'the idea of God'" (TST 385). According to Milbank, "Doctrines, although they are 'second order' reflections on narrative and practice, and do not 'refer' on their own, but only in conjunction with their 'regulation' of first order discourse, nonetheless do contain an inescapable 'surplus,' propositional element which contributes, in a distinct moment, to the overall 'imagination of reference' "(Ibid.). Milbank thinks that the distinction between narrative and the doctrine which regulates the narrative is not just, because the latter is the integral part of the former. On this point, Stanley Hauerwas says the same thing:

> Some may think that emphasis on narrative as the primary grammar of Christian belief is a theological mistake. Surely we can talk about God in a more fundamental manner than through stories-e.g., through doctrine. Doctrinally we affirm that God is our creator and/or redeemer, or that God's essential nature is that of a Trinitarian relationship. But such emphasis ignores the fact that such "doctrines' are themselves a story, or perhaps better, the outline of the story. Claims such as "God is creator" are simply shorthand way of reminding us that we believe we are participants in a much more elaborate story, of which God is the author. Doctrines, therefore, are not the upshot of the stories; they are not the meaning or heart of the stories. Rather they are tools (sometimes even misleading tools), meant to help us tell the story better. Because the Christian story is an enacted story, liturgy is probably a much more important resource than are doctrines or creeds for helping us to hear, tell, and live the story of God.[109]

Consequently, for Milbank, this approach is not sufficiently postmodern because it is subject to the Kantian paradigm which is equally maintained in the neo-orthodox theological current (Barth). In other words, despite his attempt to overcome the theological liberalism, Lindbeck's concept of narrative does not bypass the limits of Kantian epistemology. Biblical narrative serves as a paradigm for the Christian experience. "A scriptural world is thus able to absorb the universe. It supplies the interpretative framework within which believers seek to live their lives and understand reality. This happens quite apart from formal theories."[110] According to Lindbeck, "traditional exegetical procedures .. assume that Scripture creates its own domain of meaning and that the task of interpretation is to extend this over the whole of

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[109] Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceful Kingdom*, 25-6.
[110] George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 117.

reality."[111] Moreover, like Hans Frei, and unlike de Lubac and Milbank, for Lindbeck it is the typological interpretation which reanimates the persons and the event of the Old Testament. [112] "Unlike allegorizing, typological interpretation did not empty Old Testament or postliberal personages and events of their reality, and therefore they constituted a powerful means for imaginatively incorporating all being into a Christ-centered world." [113] For Milbank, Lindbeck's Christian meta-narrative cuts its ontological link from the supernatural. Conor Cunningham, a radical orthodox theologian, criticizes the Kantian tendency of Wittgenstein's linguistic philosophy. Because Wittgenstein's linguistic philosophy strongly influenced Lindbeck's postliberal theology, we can equally apply this critique to the latter. Cunningham notes that Wittgenstein appropriates Kant's use of the categories of the transcendental analytic (RONT 75). His citation of Kerr is worth being recited: "Wittgenstein's 'critique of language'… is a radicalization of Kant's critique of reason."[114]

There is no continuity between the textual world and the extratextual world. It is biblical text which conquers the world, and not the other way around, even though Milbank and Lindbeck agree that the Christian meta-narrative rooted in Christian practice. Concrete Christian performance is, for Lindbeck, determined by the exemplary story of Jesus, while the Christian performance is, for Milbank, continued by the Church as the continuation of the story:

> [Biblical stories] are not situated within the world: instead, for the Christian, the world is situated within these stories. They define for us what reality is, and they function as a 'meta-narrative', not in the sense of a story based on, or unfolding foundational reason (Lyotard's sense) but in the sense of a story privileged by faith, and seen as the key to the interpretation and regulation of all other stories (TST 385-6).

It is for this reason that his conception of meta-narrative realism is "dangerously ahistorical" (TST 386). What is deficient for Lindbeck is the historical horizon of narrative. It means that Lindbeck imposes his conception of the ahistorical narrative, which is a schema in Kantian sense of the term, to history conceived as neutral. In consequence, "[Lindbeck] .. converts meta-narrative realism into a new narratological foundationalism and fails to arrive at a postmodern theology" (TST 386).

In order to understand Milbank's critique of postliberal theology well, de Lubac's notion of 'the supernatural' is crucial. Milbank says, in alluding to the idea of the supernatural of de Lubac: " In the case of the Biblical narrative, where the projected frame of reference is the relation of the supernatural to the natural, the paradigmatic is sketched in vaguely, and gets constantly revised in response to syntagmatic unfolding" (Ibid.). For Milbank, unlike Lindbeck, the biblical story has a temporal and historical character. Instead of framing our empirical lives by narrative schema, Milbank inserts us within the story of Christ. The historical story of Jesus is not yet finished, but

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[111] Ibid.

[112] Lindbeck gives us a reference concerning his comprehension of typological interpretation, see Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), esp. 1-39.

[113] Ibid., 117-8.

[114] Kerr, *Theology After Wittgenstein*, 37, in RONT 75.

continued by the Church in the narrative manifestation of God: "The meta-narrative is not just the story of Jesus, it is the continuing story of the Church, already realized in a finally exemplary way by Christ, yet still to be realized universally, in harmony with Christ, and yet differently, by all generation of Christians" (TST 387).

5. Critical issues

Milbank's theological understanding of human language might redefine Christian identity itself in that he argues that Christian being-in-the-world means Christian participation in all the realms of social, political, and cultural life. In this sense, this refreshing understanding of language is laudable. However, we can also see dangers in his approche to language.

My first reaction to Milbank's narrative-based theological project is the following question: "Does Christian revelation really exclude all kind of propositional truth?" Milbank would respond that propositional truth is not possible at all, because all human knowledge is narrative-dependent. But as he acknowledges, Christian mathematics sound silly, because we cannot do mathematics in a peculiarly Christian manner. While admitting the originality of Christian narrative, are there not really common points between Christian revelation and non-Christian secular reasoning at all? We have to distinguish between the Enlightenment's universalism and the universal elements that exist between rationalities. We admit that Christianity is a novelty to ordinary human reason, but human reason is a good creation of God—even Luther acknowledges this. If Milbank wants to shows the peculiarity of Christianity, it is not better that he appeals to the seed of religion (Calvin) shared with all man. This could make Christianity be seen as a less aggressive religion. As Oliver Davies states: "by reading Christianity through the lens of 'radical incommensurability' and 'writing', Milbank has closed out the speech agent, and therefore the sociality of language, which is predicated upon the innate dialogical character of utterance. His philosophical obligations serve therefore to construct essential monological and heroic view of culture."[115]

Second, we see also a danger in Milbank's assertion of the revival of Christian meta-narrative and its concomitant, that of Christian philosophy. His effort is praiseworthy as such. However, as Barth has recognized, human sinfulness leads man to misuse the Christian *logos* for the sake of his glorification. Barth echoes Luther's worry from five hundred years prior. Both Barth and Luther are not so foolish that they do not know the radical newness and the force of Christian revelation. But for them human sinfulness has the tendency of using it for other purposes. That is to say, Christian meta-narrative could be perverted into a totalizing discourse as we can often see in the history of the Church. Clayton Crockett criticizes this point well: "Milbank works against a certain totalizing viewpoint, that of autonomous modern reason, and yet his opposition forces him to articulate a totalizing view of his own, that of a Radical Orthodoxy which ends up looking much more orthodox than radical."[116]

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[115] Oliver Davies, "Revelation and the Politics of Culture, " in *Radical Orthodoxy?: A Catholic Enquiry*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming, 123

[116] Clayton Crockett, *A Theology of the Sublime* (London: Routledge, 2001), 33.

Mark C.Mattes criticizes Milbank's understanding of human language. As with Milbank, he admits that human language is poetical in character. However, he chides Milbank for his negligence of another aspect of language, which is the proclaiming character of language. For Mattes, in the theological perspective, this aspect is more crucial than Milbank's poetical understanding of language. That's because by the proclamation of the Word of God, sinful man become revealed as a sinner, and then experiences being justified. So, "Milbank's theology of language fails to acknowledge that activity is, paradoxically, grounded in passivity- in which our external behaviors can grow out of our proper narrative identity of children of God. With Milbank, we would never experience the gracious 'preached God,' only the hidden, unpreached God."[117]

While sharing Milbank's emphasis on the interpretive nature of human knowledge and the embodied nature of Christian truth, which is supremely manifested in the incarnation, Jens Zimmermann points out problems in Milbank's hermeneutically oriented participatory ontology: First, "because RO's *poesis* remains a speculative metaphysics constructed outside an active ecclesial context."; second, "in this speculative metaphysics, Radical Orthodoxy has substituted the 'beatific vision' for revelation."[118] In his reading, RO's speculative metaphysics, understood in terms of participation, stands in contrast to Reformation theology, which put an emphasis on the incarnation as a central point of God's self-revelation: "Radical Orthodoxy is a metaphyscis that justifies itself theologically while Reformation theology, without neglecting the historical nature of such an effort, constructs its metaphysics in light of the Incarnation and the scriptures." [119] However, Zimmermann admits that Reformation theology shares affinities with RO. He holds that the problem lies in hermeneutical difference: "While Reformation theology shares with RO an incarnational, Trinitarian starting point, it differs from RO in its greater emphasis on the limitation of human knowing and greater reverence for divine transcendence and revelation." [120] In other words, RO and Reformation theology have different views on the cognitive influence of human sin. Reformation theology's allergy to *analogia entis* stems from its recognition of the fact that onto-theological categories can easily lapse into onto-theology. Zimmermann maintains that the Reformed emphasis on the interruptive revelation by the incarnation saves theology from this danger. Reformed theology also values linguistic and historical mediation of theology in terms of participation. But Zimmermann asks: "*what kind of* participatory ontology is the best way to articulate the world-God relation?"[121]

Stephen Shakespeare views RO's relation to postmodernism as parasitic, just as fundamentalism is the bastard child of secular modernism. While fundamentalism embraces the assumptions of modern philosophy, RO merges traditional Christian

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[117] Mark C. Mattes, "A Lutheran Assessment of 'Radical Orthodoxy'," *Lutheran Quarterly Volume XV* (2001), 365.

[118] Jens Zimmermann, "Radical Orthodoxy: A Reformed Appraisal," *Canadian Evangelical Review* 26-27 (Spring 2004), 79. For the second criticism, Zimmerman draws on Hanvey's criticism in James Hanvey, SJ, "Conclusion," in *Radical Orthodoxy?: A Catholic Enquiry*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming, 157.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Ibid., 80.

[121] Ibid., 81.

theology into postmodern linguistic philosophy.[122] Of course, Shakespeare positively responds to Milbank's emphasis on the centrality of narrative representation of God and the world because his compelling approach can correct both false materialism and spiritualism in modern thought. However, he sees another metaphysical tendency in Milbank's narrative approach. First, despite Milbank's and RO's assertion of the inevitability of the linguistic mediation of human thinking in denigrating all metaphysical claims, "radical orthodoxy maintains the exclusive ability of one narrative- the Christian one- to master reality."[123] For Shakespeare, Milbank's Christian narrative approach is self-contradictory in the sense that the postmodern affirmation of narrative rose against the totalizing tendency of the Enlightenment's totalizing master narrative. Hence Milbank's assertion of the uniqueness of Christian narrative is as totalizing as the Enlightenment master narrative. As a result, Milbank is dominated by the metaphysical symptom that he wants to obliterate. Second, Shakespeare also notes that Milbank's metaphysical symptom derives from the dualism running through his works. Even if Milbank seeks to overcome the modern duality (subject-object, the finite-the infinite, etc) by his hermeneutic participatory ontology, Milbank is still confined within a dualistic framework between Christianity and the non-Christian secular realm, a realm which he regards as inherently nihilistic and pagan. As a consequence, "[Milbank's] Christianity is a self-contained tradition which is defined as the exclusion and suppression of all other discourses."[124]

6. Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen the importance of language in Milbank's theological project. Usually, the postmodern linguistic turn in philosophy is regarded to be a secular move because language is, in this case, understood in purely immanent terms, without reference to the transcendent. That is, this means that behind language lies the strategy of power. In contrast, Milbank, accepting the postmodern linguistic turn, does not endorse its immanent philosophy. With de Lubac, Milbank espouses the sacramental world view in which metaphorical language plays an important role. For them, language is not dead sign, but itself has a doxological character. According to them, this position has a long history since the patristic era. In this sense, Milbank provocatively asserts that the postmodern linguistic turn has a Christian root. His task is the retrieval of this forgotten tradition in a postmodern context. From his insight concerning the nature of language derives the importance of narrative in Christian discourse. The modern metaphysics of substance gave birth to onto-theology which is but a conceptual idolatry. Against this, Milbank holds that the best form of representing God is narrative. His argument is deeply related to de Lubac's theological hermeneutics. In fact, de Lubac's understanding of Christian narrative saves Milbank from a postmodern nihilistic understanding of narrative. For de Lubac, narrative is not autonomous, but participates in the grand narrative of God. While he thinks that historical biblical narratives have their own values, de Lubac supposes another allegorica level of meaning to which

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[122] Stephen Shakespeare, "The New Romantics: A Critique of Radical Orthodoxy," 165.
[123] Ibid., 166.
[124] Ibid., 167.

historical narratives submit. In other words, the ultimate meaning of historical narrative is revealed in the event of Christ. Furthermore, the event of Christ continues with the advent of the Christian Church, which is the Body of Christ. Therefore, the ecclesial time also participates in the divine drama of salvation.

This theological understanding of narrative allows Milbank to criticize all forms of secular understanding of narrative as we have examined above. He seeks to eliminate all the residues autonomous reason for the sake of theological account of the reality, which is for him the most pertinent description of the world.

From this perspective, for Milbank, postmodern critique of meta-narrative is an opportunity for Christian theology, because this means that modernity's meta-narrative is relativized. In this situation, Christianity can arise newly as a meta-narrative, a meta-narrative which is not totalizing, but embracing all differences. That's why he seeks to retrieve lost Christian meta-narrative based on Christian ontological peace in front of the violent world.

In the following chapter, we will follow the story of the secular which Milbank and de Lubac tell us. For them, the secular is made not by a neutral account of reality, but by an artificially made story, behind which human will-to-power lurks. In part II, we will confront the secular story to Christian story beginging from creation to the establishment of the Church. And we will see that only this story can overcome secular stories.

IV. Telling the Story of the Secular

The contemporary vision of the world.. is predominantly, although not perhaps always in detail, Weberian.[1]

In the preceding chapter, we have seen that human ideas cannot make a claim to objectivity, because they are always situated within particular local and historical contexts. This situationality and historicity of human knowledge make it impossible that the human being has ideas which correspond to reality in itself. Accordingly, human ideas are the product of human making (*poesis*). According to Milbank, the best way to take a grip of reality is to narrate it, as many postmodern thinkers affirm. On the basis of this fundamental understanding of the narrative character of all human knowledge, in this chapter, I will show that the idea of the secular is simply a story told by secular thinkers, not a neutral account of the world. This will be made plain when we follow the stories that Milbank and de Lubac tell us. But since there is no perfect genealogy of idea, we shall examine the critical issues concerning the genealogy of the secular that Milbank and de Lubac suggest at the end of this chapter.

Milbank is right to say that "once, there was no 'secular'" (TST 9). The story of the secular is another story which emerged when the Christian story lost its aesthetic attractiveness. The thrust of Milbank's and de Lubac's argument is that the secular realm is not a purely natural sphere, but rather an anti-Christian sphere, and that it emerged through a particular theological choice. As Milbank states, "the secular *epistème* is a post-Christian paganism, something in the last analysis only defined, negatively, as a refusal of Christianity and the invention of an 'Anti-Christianity' "(TST 280). Hence we can see that Milbank with de Lubac tells a different story in taking a different point of view from other postmodern philosophers. Jens Zimmermann clearly articulates Milbank's position in comparing other philosophers' stories: "Where Nietzsche tells the story of Western culture as the decline of life-appreciation, where Heidegger construes this narrative as the overcoming of metaphysics and the advent of Being, where Levinas accuses Western intellectual development of succumbing to the logic of totalities, a story Derrida then retells as the imperialism of presence, Radical Orthodoxy re-reads Western intellectual history and its major passages from premodern to modern and postmodern culture as the rise and decline of participation."[2]

However, Milbank and de Lubac diverge on the origin of the secular. Whereas for Milbank, Duns Scotus's nominalist redirection of Western thought constitutes the key moment in the formation of the secular, for de Lubac, Cajetan's distorted interpretation of Thomas Aquinas is decisive.[3] Despite this difference, they are in agreement that the

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[1] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*: *a Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 103.

[2] Jens Zimmermann, "Radical Orthodoxy: A Reformed Appraisal," *Canadian Evangelical Review* 26-27 (Spring 2004), 66.

[3] Here de Lubac's argument is not plain, because, as we have seen in chapter 3, de Lubac sees also a turning point in Anselm's theology. But in my view, in comparision to Milbank who systematically elaborates the geneaology of the secular, de Lubac's primary concern to reveal the autonomous tendency of

secular was shaped by the recognition of the autonomy of philosophical thinking. For them the autonomy of philosophy without reference to the supernatural is granted by theology itself. In the words of Milbank, "the institution of the secular is paradoxically related to a shift within theology and not an emancipation from theology" (TST 28). The task of this chapter is not to compare Milbank's genealogy of the secular to de Lubac's, but rather to follow the story of the secular that they tell us with critical eyes.

1. The naturalization of the supernatural

In this section we will examine four decisive theologians to which de Lubac attaches importance in the shaping of autonomous areas in modern theological and philosophical thought: Cajetan, Suarez, Baius, Jansenius. On the one hand, two scholastic theologians, Cajetan and Suarez play a central role in the establishment of the twofold structure of nature and grace in Catholic thinking. On the other hand, 16th - 17th century neo-Augustinians, Baius and Jansenius constitute a crisis of the traditional idea of the supernatural. These Augustinians committed a fatal error in their interpretation of Augustine. According to de Lubac, their flawed reading of Augustine had a negative influence on Catholic and Protestant theology alike. He estimates that "both wanted to be faithful to their master, but they see opposition and struggle, where Augustine saw union and inclusion between nature and grace" (S 69).[4] Common to these four theologians is their extrinsic account of the relationship between nature and grace, an account which is foreign to the true Augustine. In this sense, they all admit the autonomy of philosophical thought.

1.1 Thomas Cajetan (1468-1534)

According to de Lubac, it is the Dominican theologian, Cajetan who gives a coherent account of the idea of *natura pura*.[5] The establishment of the idea of pure nature is achieved by his commentary on Thomas Aquinas, which had a lasting influence on the understanding of Aquinas.[6] He denied man's supernatural desire for God and naturalized it. For him, man's natural desire for the supernatural is understood sheerly in natural terms. Cajetan maintains that man is considered as having a twofold finality: one is natural, the other supernatural. He states: "The ultimate end of the rational creature as it is, is God, in two ways: first, as the object of naturally possible beatitude, second, as the object of revealed beatitude."[7]

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human thinking. As many researchers of de Lubac's theology, his theology does not have a systematic, but an occasional character.

[4] [Original text] " Les deux veulent être fidèle au maître, mais là où Augustin voyait union et inclusion entre nature and grâce, ils verront opposition et lutte" (S 69), translation mine.

[5] [Original text] "Cajetan donnera consistance à l'idée de nature pure "en prétendant que le désir naturel de voir Dieu n'existait, selon saint Thomas, que dans l'homme tel que le considère le théologien, c'est-à-dire élevé à une fin surnaturelle et éclairée par la Révélation " (S 105).

[6] [Original text] " Le tournant dans l'histoire de la pensée thomiste est marqué principalement par l'exégèse de Cajetan (1468-1534)-elle-même-, bien entendu, préparée, accompagnée, puis continuée et plus ou moins transformée par nombre d'autres. Les théologiens du XVIe siècle n'avaient pas manqué de l'observer. Tel Suarez, qui, suivant Cajetan pour l'essentiel, n'en aperçoit pas moins la nouveauté de sa position- encore qu'il lui cherche, dans son éclectisme, quelque appui plus ancien" (MSu 26).

[7] [Original text] *In Primam Secundae*, qu.71, art.6, n 9 cited in AMT 191.

According to de Lubac, Cajetan's distortion of the true Aquinas is made by his uncritical reception of Aristotle's philosophy which imposes on nature an immanent *telos*. Aristotle believes that no being desires what its nature has no means to attain.[8] By his endorsement of Aristotle, Cajetan supposes that nature is self-sufficient and complete in itself.[9] De Lubac states: "According to Cajetan, man can have a really natural desire only for an end which is connatural to him; in speaking of a desire to see God face to face St. Thomas could only speak of the desire awakened in man as he is considered by the theologian, that is, he states clearly, in man actually raised up by God to a supernatural end and enlightened by a revelation" (ATM 114).[10] In other words, according to Cajetan two viewpoints coexist in Aquinas. As a theologian, Aquinas supports the desire for the supernatural which is added to the natural, while as a philosopher he denies this desire. This is a typically dualist view of nature and grace against which de Lubac consistently resists. De Lubac criticizes this dualist interpretation of Aquinas which distinguishes philosophy and theology, and natural and supernatural ends:

> In Cajetan's view that [this distinction] does not mean merely that St. Thomas considered the last end with which the Philosophers were not concerned. It meant also that this last end which engaged St. Thomas's attention was no longer the 'natural end' with which he had been concerned as a philosopher. The man whose beatitude was defined by St.Thomas was therefore merely the man who by a kind of miracle had actually received a supernatural finality and who had complied with certain supernatural conditions. Studying this man, later to be 'historical,' St. Thomas, still according to Cajetan, reasoned only in accordance with revealed principles and always for the benefit of theologians who, like him, held these principles (AMT 191-2).[11]

As we have briefly seen in chapter 2, de Lubac's Aquinas is not Aristotelian, but neo-Platonized Augustinian. This means that he sees no distinction between Aquinas as a philosopher and Aquinas as a theologian. Unlike Cajetan, de Lubac finds that even typically Aristotelian elements in Aquinas serve his neo-Platonic framework. In this respect, Cajetan does violence to Aquinas' works.

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[8] Aristotle, *De coelo* II, cited in ATM introduction by Louis Dupré, xiv.

[9] See Étienne Gilson "Cajetan et l'humanisme théologique," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et philosophique du Moyen Age* 22, 1955-6. On Cajetan and the Paduans generally, see Cesare Vasoli, " The Crisis of Later Humanism and Expectations of Reform in Italy at the End of the Fifteenth and Begining of the Sixteenth Century," in *History of Theology*, *vol 3, The Renaissance*, ed. Giulio D'Onofrio, trans. Matthew J. O'Connel (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1998), 387-93.

[10] [Original text] "Selon Cajetan, l'homme ne peut avoir de désir vraiment naturel que d'une fin qui lui soit connaturelle ; en parlant d'un désir de voir Dieu face à face, saint Thomas ne pouvait donc parler que du désir qui s'éveille dans l'homme tel que le considère le théologien, c'est-à-dire, précise-t-il, dans l'homme élevé par Dieu, en fait, à une fin surnaturelle et éclairée par une révélation " (ATM 144-5).

[11] [Original text] "Dans la pensée du commentateur, cela ne signifie pas seulement que saint Thomas considérait la fin dernière, dont les Philosophes ne se seraient pas occupés. Cela signifie en outre que cette fin dernière qui retenait l'attention de saint Thomas n'était plus cette 'fin naturelle' dont il se serait lui-même occupé comme philosophe. L'homme dont saint Thomas définissait la béatitude était donc seulement l'homme qui avait reçu, en fait, par une sorte de miracle, une finalité surnaturelle et qui avait observé certains effets surnaturels. Raisonnant sur cet homme que plus tard on appellera 'historique', saint Thomas, toujours d'après Cajetan, raisonnait uniquement d'après des principes révélés et à l'adresse des théologiens qui admettaient comme lui ces principes" (ATM 233-4).

1.2 Suarez (1548-1617)

According to de Lubac, Suarez faithfully succeeded Cajetan's dualism of nature and grace in sophisticating it.[12] As with Cajetan, Suarez holds that the end of man is within nature itself and the realization of this end could be made possible by his natural capacity. The starting point of Suarez's anthropology is his idea of the creation of man "in pure nature" (AMT 226-7). In this sense, he also follows Aristotelian philosophical anthropology. He states that "the natural appetite follows from natural power."[13] He supposes that Adam's sin brings the elimination of the supernatural gift that God bestowed on him in his creation (MS 69). Therefore man's natural finality is valid even after the Fall. This idea is undergirded by his conviction of the dualist structure of nature and grace and that of nature and the supernatural. According to de Lubac, for Suarez "in the complete system, the two-series- pure nature and supernaturalized nature, or nature called to the supernatural- flowed along parallel channels in complete harmony. But the only intelligible difference, if difference it be, between the two consists in the epithet applied to each respectively. Without anything apparently to distinguish them, one is called "natural", the other "supernatural" (MS 41). Milbank sees a result of Suarez's categorical distinction between nature and the supernatural in his legal theory.[14] Milbank observes that in Suarez's thought, there was a positivist tendency in the understanding of natural law. For Suarez law can be deduced by human rationality apart from the supernatural intervention. As a consequence, law is considered as a rationalist and even utilitarist manner expressed for example as a right of self-defense. That is, in Suarez natural law became understood in terms of active rights (RDGV, II 132). Already we can see Milbank's criticism of modern human rights rhetoric in de Lubac's and his own criticism of Suarez.

One of the contributors to RONT, John Montag SJ, criticizes the false legacy which Suarez left to modern theology. By his acknowledgement of a neutral pure nature, he distorted the relationship between philosophy and theology: "Suárez sees theology itself as standing on the structure provided by philosophy, specifically an ontologically univocal metaphysics" (RONT 54).[15] Montag thinks that this categorical distinction stems from Suarez's embracing Duns Scotus' nominalist philosophy. This false distinction is revealed in his characterization of faith which is different from that of

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[12] According to de Lubac, "Suarez.. while following Cajetan on essentials, recognizes the innovations in the latter's position, though he looked for some solid traditional support for Cajetan's electricism" (MS 7).

[13] Suarez, *De gratia*, prolegom.IV, c.20, cited in AMT 159, n°27.

[14] "With Grotius, Selden, Hobbes, Pufendort, Suarez is the initator of the natural rights theorists constitutes a 'natural rights' tradition, a tradition which offers a basis for 'liberal traditio' in the sense that this tradition legitimates the absolute 'paternal power' of the monarch, and that it guarantees every individual has his 'sovereign territory'" (RDGV 132).

[15] See "Revelation: The false legacy of Suárez," in RONT 38-63. Suarez states: "As it is impossible for one to become a good theologian without having first been established on the solid foundation of metaphysics, thus I always believed it important, Christian reader, to offer you previously this work [the *Metaphysical Disputation*] which –diligently expounded- I place now in you hand…Each day… I saw with more clarity how divine and supernatural Theology require and demand what is human and natural, to the point that I did not hesitate to interrupt for a time the work began [i.e., his commentaries on Thomas] in order to grant- or better, to restore- to metaphysical doctrine the place that belongs to it." (Fancisco Suárez SJ, *Disputationes Metafisicas*, trans. Sergio Rábade Romeo, Salvador Caballero Sánchez, and Antonio Puigcerver Zanón, vol 1 (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1960), 'Ratio et discursus totius operis: ad lectorem,' 17 cited in RONT 53.

Thomas Aquinas. He expounds: "Suárez ...begins his discussion of the formal object of faith by arguing against the position that one must believe or assent to only what has persuaded, and been understood by, human reason. [In contrast, for Thomas] our assent in faith (the 'middle between knowledge and opinion') is… 'mediated' through the middle term of revelation, just as knowledge of geometric truth is mediated through the middle term of demonstration (RONT 56). While de Lubac associates Suarez with Cajetan's theology, RO tends to put more emphasis on Scotus's nominalistic influence in accordance with their genealogy of the secular.

1.3 Michael Baius (1513-1589)

Baius' theology arose in reaction against the notion of *natura pura* which was elaborated for safeguarding the gratuitous nature of God's grace.[16] His theology is grounded in his interpretation of Augustine. Unlike Aristotle, Baius shared Augustine's idea that man's nature and destiny are not in proportion to their own natures, but rather entirely dependent on God. In this sense, for both, the idea of pure nature is not theologically valid. However, according to de Lubac's study, we can see the fundamental difference between Augustine and this interpreter who claims that he saves Augustine from neo-scholastic contamination. This difference gives birth to radically dissimilar theological results.

The fundamental difference between them is shown in their divergent understanding of grace. This is directly linked to the problem of the original state of man. For Augustine, man was not created in a neutral state, but always under the action of grace. On the contrary, for Baius, Adam was created in a natural state without inherent grace. Grace is, according to him, understood as extrinsically granted to the natural state. What counts for him is how grace is granted to man. Because his justice is understood in purely natural terms, and not in supernatural terms, natural human merit is regarded as a right for demanding grace from God. According to de Lubac, "Baius asserts that grace, save in a completely wrong sense, has nothing to do with man in the state of innocence; that by the law of nature itself man has strict rights over God, and thus indispensible divine assistance is no longer an action dictated by an overflowing of entirely gratuitous goodness, but the payment of a debt of justice" (AMT 2).[17]

For de Lubac, "in Baius' view grace itself does not deserve its name, because it serves nature" (AMT 2).[18] In this case, the relation between God and man is defined in purely contractual terms in that man has the right for the grace of God in virtue of his natural

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[16] See Marcel Gielis, "From Driedo to Bellarmine: The Genesis of the Concept of Natura Pura in the sixteenth century." *Augustiana* 57 (2007): 185-209; see also Henri Rondet, "Le Problème de la Nature Pure et la Théologie du XVIe siècle," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 35 (1948), 481-521.

[17] [Original text] "Baius [conclut] que la grâce n'a rien à voir..en un sens tout à fait impropre avec l'homme innocent : de par la loi même de la nature, l'homme a sur Dieu des droits stricts, si bien que l'indispensable secours divin n'est plus l'initiative dictée par un débordement de bonté tout gratuit, mais le payement d'une dette de justice" (ATM16).

[18] [Original text]"Aux yeux de Baius.. la grâce elle-même ne mérite pas son nom, parce qu'elle est au service de la nature " (ATM 16); According to de Lubac, "Saint Augustin montrait l'achèvement de la nature dans sa surnaturalisation. Baius, lui, naturalise le surnaturel. Il transforme une doctrine spirituelle en thèse d'ontologie. Et sans doute il est bien vrai que la doctrine d'Augustin a une portée ontologique; mais l'ontologie de Baius, toute physique, n'a pas également une portée spirituelle. Le fond de la pensée d'Augustin est mystique, le fond de la pensée de Baius est naturaliste" (S 32).

justice, whereas God has the obligation of recompensing human obedience. Therefore, Baius' conception of grace lost sight of the mysterious character of the love of God. Only utilitarian calculation remains. If for Augustine, love is the fulfillment of the law, for Baius, it is the observance, in itself, of the law that is its fulfillment (Ibid. 2). De Lubac describes this God-human relationship as follows: "We can thus no longer talk of the relationship between God and man as a mystery of love; the whole thing has become a commercial transaction. Eternal life is offered to man on a basis of strict reward. Man demands, merits and claims; God provides the tool and pays the account, to the last penny" (AMS 2)[19] Against Baius, de Lubac argues that "the supernatural is not owed to nature; it is nature which, if it is to obey God's plan, owes itself to the supernatural if that supernatural is offered to it" (MS 94).[20]

Henri de Lubac interestingly compares Baius's model to Pelagius. According to him, "Baianist doctrine concerning the primitive state of man might well be defined by terming it impotent Pelagianism" (AMT3). While for Pelagius, man's claim to autonomy is based on his proud self-righteousness before God, for Baius, it is understood in legal terms, that is, as a right before God. Hence Pelagius and Baius are formally converged on the point that both give an autonomy to nature. And they both lost sight of the idea of the supernatural:

> The perfect Pelagian would be the proud man who wishes never to owe anything to anyone. The perfect Baianist, on the other hand, would be the haggling litigant, always pleading poverty and claiming this due. Baius is a Pelagius turned beggar. Pelagianism means pure asceticsm, Baianism pure juridicism. Both, each in his own order and his own way, hold a pure naturalism (AMT 5)[21].

De Lubac points out that Baius overlooked the gifted character of creation which he calls the 'perfect gift' and that the purpose of creation lies in its deification: "Baius failed to recognize that (this) 'perfect gift' of the supernatural, which is completed in the vision of God, constitutes for created nature, however high we rate that nature, a real sublimation, a real exaltation above itself, in short a real deification" (MS 93).[22]

De Lubac's critique of Baius's naturalism and juridism can be coupled with Milbank's critique of modern liberal rights rhetoric. In his article "A Critique of the Theology

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[19] [Original text] "Entre l'homme et Dieu, qu'on ne parle donc plus d'un mystère d'amour : ce sont des relations de comptoir. La vie éternelle est proposée à l'homme à titre de stricte rétribution. L'homme exige, mérite, réclame. Dieu fournit l'instrument de travail, puis il paye la note, exactement" (S 16= ATM 16). De Lubac states: "There can be no question (here) of any kind of debitum naturae, anything owed to nature, no suggestion of anything resembling a demand. Man's longing for God is in a category of its own; we cannot apply univocally to it any of the patterns of thought which we generally use to try to define relationship between beings in this world" (MS 88).

[20] [Original text] "Le surnaturel ne lui est pas dû: c'est elle qui, pour obéir au plan divin, se devra au surnaturel, si ce surnaturel lui est offert " (MSu 127).

[21] [Original text] "Le pélagien parfait, ce serait l'orgueilleux qui ne veut rien devoir à personne. Le baianiste parfait serait plutôt le plaideur chicanier qui crie toujours misère en réclamant son dû. Baius, c'est un Pélage qui se fait quémandeur. Pélage, ou l'ascèse pure. Baius, ou le juridisme pur. L'un et l'autre, chacun dans son ordre et à sa manière : un naturalisme pur " (ATM 20).

[22] [Original text] "[Michel Baius] commencerait par s'aveugler sur le caractère intrinsèque du 'don parfait. Baius méconnaissait que ce 'don parfait' du surnaturel, qui s'achève dans la vision de Dieu, constitue pour la nature créée, si haute qu'on la suppose, une réelle *sublimation*, une réelle *exaltation* au-dessus d'elle-même, bref, une réelle *déification*" (MSu 125).

Right," Milbank holds that rights rhetoric in modern liberal discourse is generated by the loss of a participatory vision, as is prominently manifested in Kant's metaphysics. Unlike Aquinas's participatory theology, the human subject is confined within finitude without any connection to the infinite. Only by practical reason has man conceived himself as moral subject. In this case, man comes to be considered as a subject of right confronted by the unknown infinite. This way of thinking is very similar to Baius's theology of right which naturalized God's supernatural grace into a human right for God. For Milbank, pure nature, pure reason, natural law, and natural right are the concepts which are incorporated into modern immanent ontology. Concerning Kant's metaphysics directly linked to rights rhetoric, Milbank states: "This metaphysics, including especially its agnosticism, is reducible to the ultimately political promotion of abstract, negative right as the foundation of human society, as opposed to any positive conception of a common 'good' as a collective goal" (WMS 12).[23]

1.4 Cornelius Jansenius (1585-1638)

Janenius was the pioneer of a movement of so-called Jansenism, which sought the revival of Augustinisme in the 17th-18th century. His assiduous study of Augustine came to fruition in his book *Augustinus* (1640). In his own study on Jansenius, de Lubac points out the widespread misconception which identifies Augustine and the Augustinism of Jansenius. According to de Lubac, although he delved deeply into Augustine,[24] Jansenius did profound violence to the thought of his master.

Despite the different understandings of the nature of grace between Baius and Jansenius, de Lubac thinks that Jansenius is in the same vein as Baius to the extent that grace is defined extrinsically. In other words, man has no intrinsic relationship with God. The target of Jansenius's theology is the scholastic notion of grace which supposes the reconciliable relationship of nature and grace which is best expressed in Thomistic theology.[25] For him, there is a radical opposition between nature and grace; as with Baius, nature is irremediably contaminated by human sin. However, unlike Baius, for whom grace is understood as the human exigence on God in exchange for obedience, Jansenius maintains that grace is the divine rescue from the sinfulness of humanity. In this sense, there is not any room for the natural desire to see God in Jansenius' theology. De Lubac's comparison of Baius and Jansenius helps us to understand the difference between the two interpreters of Augustine:

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[23] Similarly, Milbank criticizes the modern state for its right rhetoric: "The liberal notion of natural rights guaranteed by a sovereign state itself plays directly into a first constitive aporia of sovereignty. If these rights are 'natural'…as if they belong to an animal, yet are only operative and recognized- and therefore existent -within State, the the State assumes to itself a power over nature, a right even to define nature, and indeed defines itself by this power, and therefore secretly reserves to itself alone a supreme *de facto* right of pure nature prior to contract, by which in exceptional circumstances it may withdraw any right whatsoever" (BR 97).

[24] According to Lancelot, Jansenius "had read St. Augustine more than ten times, and the works on grace against the Pelagians more than thirty times, and this at a time hardly anyone had read or understood them" (*Mémoire touchant la vie de Monsieur de Saint-Cyran*, vol 1, 1978, 104 citied by de Lubac in ATM 31-2).

[25] Cf. John G. Healey, *Jansenius' Critique of Pure Nature* (Ph.D, Diss. University of Gregoriana, 1964).

> At the basis of Jansenius' teaching there is an error opposite to that to be found in Baius. While the latter understood the relationship between God and the creature- even, on a final analysis, in our present world- on the pattern of a balance sheet or a labor contract, Jansenius seems hypnotized by the biblical image of clay in the hand of the potter (AMT 32).[26]

Jansenius' position is best shown in his distinction between the grace of Adam and that of fallen humanity. Adam was created in a neutral natural state and did not therefore need supernatural grace. In this natural state, "grace is not necessary to ensure the efficacious co-operation of human freedom in a more than human work, since free will is already present, fully constituted in its proximate power of acting, before its intervention" (AMT 38).[27] Understandingly, for Jansenius, prayer is a post-lapsarian phenomenon because it is sin which necessitated prayer. "Adam did not have to prayer. It is only the miserable state where sin reduced us that necessitated prayer" (S 88).[28]

His assertion is focused on his interpretation of Augustine's *De corruption et grata*. In this work Augustine distinguishes the *adjutorium sine quo non* and the *adjustorium quo*. Jansenius thinks that this distinction corresponds to that between *sufficient grace* and *efficacious grace*. According to his interpretation, Adam was in a state of sufficient grace in which he enjoyed the free will to choose good and evil without supernatural grace. After the fall, his free will was annihilated so that, in consequence, only God's efficacious grace can make him righteous. Against Jansenius' construal of Augustine, de Lubac states:

> Everything in Augustine's religious thought is against such an inversion of roles, just as everything in his metaphysical ideas rejects the opposition between grace and free will, or to use terms less likely to be misunderstood, between the activity of the creature and the efficacious influence of the Creator. Indeed in dealing with the hypothesis of Adam's perseverance, it is very noticeable what emphasis St. Augustine lays on the idea that Adam did not win it or obtain it himself but would have received it as a gift (AMS 44).[29]

In consequence, "jansenism is the exact continuation of Baianism" (AMT 36)[30] in that both allow for the primitive natural state of man in which grace is required to be added. "Baius..in speaking of grace, admitted that it was in a wrong sense, but

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[26] [Original text] "Au principe de la doctrine jansénienne se trouve une erreur inverse de celle que nous avons rencontrée chez Baius. Tandis que celui-ci concevait les rapports entre Dieu et la créature-même au bout du compte, en notre monde présent- sur le modèle d'un bilan de banque ou d'un contrat de travail, Jansénius n'apparaît-il pas hypnotisé, tout au contraire, par l'image biblique de l'argile dans la main du potier ? " (ATM 50).

[27] [Original text] "La grâce n'y est pas nécessaire pour assurer le concours efficace de la liberté humaine dans une oeuvre plus qu'humaine, puisque le libre arbitre y apparaît déjà pleinement constitué, en sa proche puissance d'agir, avant son intervention" (S 44= ATM 57).

[28] [Original text]"Adam n'avait pas besoin de prier. C'est l'état misérable où le péché nous a réduits qui seul engendre la nécessité de la prière" (S 88).

[29] [Original text]" Tout, dans la conscience religieuse d'Augustin, proteste contre une telle inversion des rôles, comme tout, dans sa pensée métaphysique, s'insurge contre une telle opposition entre la grâce et le libre arbitre, ou, pour employer des termes qui prêtent moins à l'équivoque, entre l'activité de la créature et l'influence efficace du Créateur. On remarquera d'ailleurs l'insistance avec laquelle ici même, envisageant l'hypothèse de la persévérance d'Adam, saint Augustin dit, non pas qu'il l'aurait conquise ou se la serait donnée, mais qu'il l'aurait reçue, comme un don" (ATM 64).

[30] [Original text] "Le jansénisme prolonge exactement le baïanisme" (ATM 55).

Jansenius states that it was to be understood as "a real grace," a "supernatural grace" (AMT 37).[31] According to Milbank, in them (Baius, Jansenius), " grace in the West ceases in any sense to be deification, because it no longer has to do fundamentally with a gratuitous raising of humanity above itself to God but is now merely a judicial corrective for sin" (SM 34).

De Lubac's critique of Jansenius is parallel to Milbank's criticism of the Protestant doctrine of atonement. As we shall see in Chapter 5, Milbank strongly opposed the Protestant substitutionary understanding of Christ's sacrifice. In this case, the grace of Christ is understood as a salvific response to human sin, that is, in extrinsic terms. So, de Lubac considers Reformation theology as a backdrop of Jansenius' theology.

2. The liberal Protestant meta-narrative

2.1 The nominalistic tradition

2.1.1 Duns Scotus as a pioneer of modernity

Duns Scotus occupies a decisive place in Milbank's story of the secular. For him, Duns Scotus constitutes "the turning point in the destiny of the West" (WMS 44).[32] The thought of Duns Scotus might be best elucidated by comparing it with that of Thomas Aquinas. As we have seen, Milbank's Aquinas is, in the vein of nouvelle théologie's interpretation of Augustine, an Augustinized or neo-Platonized Aquinas who holds an integrated view of the relation between nature and grace. Usually, in Milbank's works Duns Scotus' univocal understanding of reality is contrasted to Thomas Aquinas's analogical vision of the world.[33] According to Scotus, both God and creation can be predicated in a univocal manner. This means that the concept used to describe creation is to be applied to God, because the way God exists is the same as the way creatures exist. When we say that God is omnipotent, this does not mean that He can do anything. Yet Duns Scotus thinks that the word 'omnipotent' has the same meaning both for God and for creatures. In this case, God is envisaged as a supremely powerful being. In this way Scotus committed conceptual idolatry toward God. In contrast, Aquinas thinks that the same word has a different meaning for God and creature. For example, God is like a father. This does not mean that God is really a father. Here the word, father, is used

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[31] [Original text] "Alors que Baius, tout en parlant de grâce, avouait que c'était en un sens impropre, Jansénius précise qu'on doit l'entendre d'une 'véritable grâce ', d'une 'grâce' surnaturelle'" (ATM 55-6).

[32] Milbank's understanding of Duns Scotus is primarily to French scholarship on this medieval theologian. See Olivier Boulois's following works and articles: *Sur la connaissance de Dieu et l'Univocité de l'Étant* (Paris: PUF, 1988); *Duns Scot: la Rigueur de la Charité* (Paris: Cerf, 1998); *Être et Représentation: Une Généaologie de la Métaphysique Moderne à l'Époque de Duns Scot* (Paris: PUF, 1999); *Être, Luire et Concevoir. Notes sur la Genèse et la Structure de la Conception Scotiste de l'Esse Objective*, *Collectanea Franciscana*, 60/1-2 (1990); *Duns Scot et la métaphysique*, *Revue de l'Institut catholique de Paris*, *Jean Duns Scot* (1265-1308) 49 (janvier-mars 1994); *Quand commence l'ontothéologie ? Aristote, Thomas d'Aquin et Duns Scot*, *Revue Thomiste* 95 (1995). "Reading Duns Scotus: From History to Philosophy." *Modern Theology* 21:4 (October 2005). For the different interpretations of Scotus, see Richard Cross, "Duns Scotus and Suárez at the Origin of Modernity," in *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy*, ed. Wayne J. Hankey and Douglas Hedley, 65-80; B. Carlos Bazán, "Conceptions on the Agent Intellect and the Limits of Metaphysics," in *Nacht der Verurteilung von 1277: Philosophie und Theologie an der Universität von Paris im letzten Viertel des 13. Jahrhunderts. Studien und Texte*, ed. Jan A. Aersten, Kent Emery, Jr.,and Andreas Speer (New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), 178-210; Mary Beth Ingham, "Re-Situating Scotist Thought," *Modern Theology* 21:4 (October, 2005), 609-18.

[33] For a useful comparison between Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, see Étienne Gilson, *Jean Duns Scot: Introduction à ses Positions Fondamentales* (Paris: Vrin, 1952).

analogically in order to represent God's character. Aquinas's analogical worldview accentuates both God's transcendence and the possibility of the knowledge of God by human reason. That is, God is ineffable, but accessible to human reason by analogy. Usually analogy is understood as a middle way between the univocity of being and the equivocity of being. If being is univocal, God is reduced to the human level, while if being is equivocal there is not any possibility for the knowledge of God.

In opposition to Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus paved a new way for understanding the nature of the world. As with Aquinas, for him there is an infinite distance between God and the human being. However, unlike Aquinas, he denies the possibility of cognitive knowledge of God.[34] So the human being cannot help but deduce the knowledge of God from his sensory experience. That is, our sense, not divine illumination, is the source of our knowledge of God.[35] This idea plays a crucial role in the formation of modernity in two ways: First, this idea gives birth to modern autonomous individualism; second, it is not God's intellect, but His will that determines human moral, cognitive activity.[36] Scotus' univocal understanding of being paves the way for onto-theology which regards God as ground, cause of creation. According to Milbank, it is since Duns Scotus that immanentist modern philosophy emerged in distancing itself from Thomist participatory ontology:

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[34] Soctus's sheer distinction between philosopher and theologian illustrates this point: "In ista quaestione videtur controversia inter philosophos et theologos. Et tenent philosophi perfectionem naturae et negant perfectionem supernaturalem; theologi vero cognoscunt defectum naturae et necessitatem gratiae et perfectionem supernaturalem" (*Opus Oxoniense*, Prolog., qu. I, art. 1.3.)[Les philosophes soutiennent la perfection de la nature et nient la perfection surnaturelle ; les théologiens, au contraire, connaissent la déficience de la nature, la nécessité de la grâce et la perfection surnaturelle] (Gilson, *Jean Duns Scot*, 14).

[35] According to Étienne Gilson, " l'intellect humain ne connaît donc vraiment de l'être que ce qu'il peut en abstraire des données des sens. Nous n'avons aucun concept direct de ce que peuvent être des substances purement immatérielles et intelligibles les anges et Dieu par exemple"(Etienne Gilson, *Esprit de la philosohie Médiévale* (Paris: Vrin 1998), 592-3; MacIntyre articulates the difference between Aquinas and Scotus with regard to the *telos* of human beings. Faced with the possibility of happiness in this life by philosophy apart from theology which some of the Averroists argue. Two theologians assume the opposed positions. According to MacIntyre, "Aquinas… [contends] that all rational being seek perfect happiness and that it can be shown rationally that perfect happiness is not to be had in this life but only in some other. Scotus, by contrast, argues that so far as natural reason is concerned nothing can be known of any life but this, and that the imperfection in any human happiness to which Aquinas had pointed may be imperfections from the standpoint of an intelligence that is pure and disembodied but rationally convinced, as anyone should be without faith in a revelation, of his or her mortality" (Alasdair MacIntyre*, Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990], 152). He states Scotus's position can be understood in the context of his discussion of whether "it can be known by natural reason that there will be a general resurrection of humankind [Opus Oxoniens IV, 43, ii](ibid.). In espousing the Averroist's interpretation of Aristotle according to which embodied mind cannot grasp the immortality of the soul. After all, "on Scotus's view only theology, drawing upon the resources of revelation, can speak competently about these topics, and Scotus's conventionally Augustinian theology envisaged the soul as only incidently related to the body (Ibid., 152-3).

[36] See Étienne Gilson, *Jean Duns Scotus*, 574-624 (Ch IX La Volonté). According to Gilson, for Scotus, the will is not balanced by the intellect. That is, the will can, unlike for Aquinas, operate without intellect. After all, the will itself is the agent of its will. He notes: " Duns Scot réserve de causalité propre à la volonté...c'est précisément la liberté qui fait d'elle la cause totale de sa propre volition. Si l'on veut analyser toutes les causes partielles de l'effet, elles seront nombreuses : l'objet connu, présent en soi ou par son espèce ; l'intellection par laquelle l'intellect la connaît ; l'intellect lui-même qui exerce cette intellection ; la volonté enfin, capable de vouloir et d'exercer aussi son acte...Duns Scot ne concède donc et ne rétracte rien sur le seul point qui lui tienne à coeur. Libre dans sa racine même, l'action tout entière est libre : tota actio est libera. C'est exactement là ce qu'il voulait démontrer" (Étienne Gilson, *Jeans Duns Scot*, 592).

> An ontology entirely prior to theology and unaffected by an orientation to revelation, which emerged in early modernity, depended upon the post-Scotist notion that one can univocally grasp Being as indifferent to infinite and finite. This allowed one to think of infinite Being as simply a being, which either exists or does not exist, in the same fashion as any finite creature.[37]

Furthermore, Scotus's claim to the univocity of being touches on his Christology. In his article "Incarnation: the sovereign victim" (BR 61-78). Milbank compares the Christologies of Aquinas and Scotus. According to him, the key to understanding the difference in their Christologies lies in their different ontologies. While Aquinas maintains participatory ontology which supposes man's final end as *deification*, Duns Scotus' univocal ontology supposes that the final human end is supplementally willed by sovereign God. This contrast corresponds to their different Christologies. While for Aquinas, *deification* is the ground of the incarnation, in Scotus's univocal ontology, the Incarnation is not directly linked to deification. For Aquinas, God can forgive man without the Incarnation. So the Incarnation plays a mediating role in the cosmic reconciliation between God and man. In contrast, for Scotus, the Incarnation has nothing to do with cosmic reconciliation because Christ's finite humanity has no link to the infinite in accordance with the logic of his onto-theology: "Whereas Aquinas's subordination of ontology to theology permits him to ground forgiveness in ultimate reality, Scotus's first beginning of onto-theology involves also an onto-Christology which renders forgiveness a secondary, restricted and arbitrary instance within the divine goodness" (BR 64).

Milbank criticizes Scotus' Christology. First of all, Scotus commits an error of distinguishing between divine justice and divine mercy. According to his logic of univocity of being, God is envisaged as infinite degrees of perfection. This means that Scotus projects human attributes upon the infinite. In this way, "he already thinks of mercy in 'secular' terms, and so outside of justice. As such it becomes a matter of mere negative degree or withholding- this notion of mercy he then projects upon God" (BR 77). In contrast, for Aquinas, as well as for Milbank, these two attributes are not distinguishable because they participate in divine nature. For Aquinas, divine mercy is not bestowed externally upon human justice. Divine forgiveness is defined as a positive term which overwhelms human justice. "Scotus loses Aquinas' sense of forgiveness as positive and inherently divine" (Ibid.). Second, according to Milbank, Scotus thinks that the Incarnation has nothing to do with forgiveness, contrary to Aquinas. For Aquinas, the Incarnation renders forgiveness possible. It depends on divine decrees (Ibid.). That is, "The scotist God has become more like a bestowing tyrant" (BR 78). After all, Scotus's *onto-theology* gives birth to an *onto-Christology*, because "it disallows deification and requires something else to provide the divine requirement of glory from the creation" (Ibid.).

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[37] Milbank, "The Programme of Radical Orthodoxy," *Radical Orthodoxy?: A Catholic Enquiry,* ed. Laurence Paul Hemming, 38.

2.1.2 Reformation (Luther, Calvin)

For de Lubac, the Reformation marks a moment of transformation in the idea of the supernatural.[38] De Lubac criticizes Luther more severely than Calvin. According to him, "neither Luther nor Melanchton- nor Calvin.. 'pause to analyse the being of the eternal God made man, that is, to describe the hypostatic union, but go straight to the exposition of his redemptive work'; their whole perspective remains soteriological" (CF 46).[39] This is similar to Milbank's estimation of Luther and Calvin. With regard to the former he is always more critical,[40] than the latter, probably because Calvin is more influenced by the Christian humanism of Erasmus, which retains participatory ontology.[41]

Milbank understands Reformation theology in general as a continuation of the late medieval nominalist tradition (Scotus, Occkam) which privileges divine will more than divine intellect: "He (Luther) broadly accepted the framework of late medieval nominalist philosophy" (RONT 23).[42]

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[38] De Lubac state : "Il est… certain qu'après les abus dialectiques, après Luther et Calvin, après Baius, une refonte de la théologie du surnaturel s'imposait. Les esprits avaient évolué, les concepts et les problèmes s'étaient modifiés, les mots eux-mêmes avaient plus ou moins changé de sens " (S 151).

[39] [Original text] "Ni Luther ni Mélanchthon – et Calvin d'ailleurs pas avantage- 'ne s'arrêtent à l'analyse de l'*être* du Fils éternel de Dieu fait homme, c'est-à-dire à la description de l'union hypostatique, mais ils vont tout droit à l'exposition de son oeuvre rédemptrice'; toute leur perspective demeure sotériologique" (FC 115). De Lubac's citation is in Alexandre Ganoczy, *Le Jeune Calvin, Genèse et Evolution de sa Vocation Réformatrice*, Wiesbaden, 1968, 141-2.

[40] De Lubac criticizes Luther because of his external account of grace: "Throughout the interminable Jansenist controversy the contrasting of 'medicinal grace' and 'healing grace' or 'versatile grace' and 'determining grace' was to play a part similar to that played by the distinction between the two meanings of scripture in the Lutheran controversy. Like Luther with the *De spiritu et littera*, the defenders of the Augustinus clung to the *De correptione et gratia*" (AMT 41); [Original text] "L'opposition de la 'grâce médicinale' et de la 'grâce de santé' ou de la 'grâce versatile' et de la 'grâce déterminante' va jouer, tout au long de l'interminable controverse jansénienne, un rôle analogue à celui qu'avait joué, dans la controverse luthérienne, la distinction des deux sens scripturaires. Comme Luther au *De spiritu et littera*, les défenseurs de l'Augustinus s'accrocheront au *De correptione et gratia* (ATM 60).

[41] De Lubac cites with approval Calvin's anthropology which regards man as microcosmos: "Le cardinal Journet a même reconnu au centre de la doctrine thomiste l'idée archétypale, profonde et féconde, de l'homme microcosme, de l'homme assembleur et charnière de l'univers, à laquelle Thomas d'Aquin donne toute son ampleur.' L'époque de la Renaissance, à commencer par Nicolas de Cuse, hérite et du thème et du mot. On les retrouvera souvent plus tard encore, ainsi dans les *Nom du Christ* de Luis de Leon et chez Jean Calvin. Celui-ci, dans l'*Institution chrétienne*, estime qu'"aucuns des Philosophes anciens ont à bon droit nommé l'homme un petit monde, pource que c'est un chef-d'œuvre auquel on contemple quelle est la puissance, bonté et sagesse de Dieu, et lequel contient en soy assez de miracles pour arrester nos esprits, moyennant que nous ne dédaignons pas d'y estre attentifs' (L. I, ch 5.3 *Opera, Corpus Reformatorum*, 31, Brunsviae, 1865, col 62 (PM 161-2) However, de Lubac criticizes Luther's anthropology manifested in his *De Servo Arbitrio*: "Certes, on ne saurait imaginer contraste plus violent qu'entre les positions fondamentales de Pic et Luther : l'un défenseur et admirateur du libre arbitre, l'autre négateur passionné. Pic avait mis en un nouveau relief la vielle doctrine de l'homme, dont le privilège essentiel est d'être libre à l'image de Dieu qui est toute liberté. Luther croit que tout ce qui est accordé à l'homme est enlevé à Dieu, et s'acharne en conséquence à refuser à l'homme cet attribut 'plane divinum' : 'Le libre arbitre est un don de divin et ne peut convenir qu'à la majesté divine…. L'attribuer aux hommes, ce serait attributer la divinité, c'est-à-dire proférer le plus grand blasphème que l'on puisse concevoir' [*De servo arbitrio*, W 18.636, *Œuvre t 5*, 1958, 54] " (Ibid, 398).

[42] Milbank's more precise geneaology is understood in terms of de Lubac's understanding of the development of pure nature as a secular force. De Lubac understand nominalist tradition as associated with the idea of pure nature : "Les gauchissements auxquels nous venons d'assister étaient d'autant plus inévitables, que le système qu'ils préparaient se trouvait déjà virtuellement préformé dans les tendances philosophiques de l'époque. La distinction entre thomistes, scotistes et nominalistes ne joue plus ici. Le temps est passé où elle commandait la vie intellectuelle. Un autre âge est en train de naître, où les esprits se partageront suivant de tout autres lignes de force. La 'nature pure' n'est donc pas l'invention ni le bien

In comparing Luther and Augustine, Milbank criticizes the former's nominalist understanding of human will: "For Luther, in a Scotist lineage, the will only 'inclines' to God under grace; the natural will has no natural orientation to God. But for Augustine, without the latter (always through grace) there is no will at all" (BR 214). From this view, Milbank dissents from a recent Finnish study on Luther because of its argument that "imputationism is read back from the Kantian rupture between knowledge and 'things in themselves' (BR 223).[43]

Milbank compares Luther's nominalist model with Aquinas' participatory model. Milbank is very skeptical with regard to the attempt to reconcile Aquinas and Luther in which they are considered as having the same doctrine of justification. According to him "recent attempts theologically to assimilate the two thinkers ignore this metaphysical divide" (BR 214).[44] For Milbank, the difference between Luther and Aquinas is clear. While Luther is nominalist and univocalist, Aquinas is realist and analogical (BR 110). For example, for Luther the incarnation is the precondition of *theosis*, whereas for Aquinas, it is the other way around (BR 223). Moreover, Milbank finds fault with the absence of a paradoxical account of reality in Luther's theology, which is held in his early theology:

> Luther's nominalism will not really admit the Thomist paradox of righteousness that is entirely supernatural, yet also entirely ours since it is our deification. Instead, the younger more 'participatory' Luther is in fact developing the consequences of an almost monphsite Ockhamist and nominalist Christology which cannot really think two universal 'natures' in a single personal reality, nor think this reality other than on the model of a single finite thing 'within which' God has somehow entered [Actually Luther was more monophysite than the formal monomysitism of the 'monophysites'- although John Philoponus, at least, seems a already to have espoused a form of nominalism] (BR 111).

Milbank's assessment of this Protestant reformer echoes de Lubac's. In the context of his discussion of the economy of the Trinity, he opposes the reduction of the economic trinity into a functional understanding of God to which Luther adheres.[45] De Lubac

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particulier d'aucune de ces anciennes écoles. Elle n'était inscrite dans les principes d'aucune d'entre elles, mais elle va devenir le lot commun de ce qui désormais composera 'l'Ecole' "(S 150). Milbank's understanding of Luther relies on Graham White's study on Luther. See his *Luther as Nominalist* (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, 1994). For Luther's view on language see Graham White, "Luther's View on Language," *Literature & Theology* 3:2 (July 1989), 188-218.

[43] The Reformed theologian, Michael Scott Horton criticizes both Milbank and Finnish study on Luther. He admits that the Reformer retains a trace of medieval ontological framework. In presenting many reactions to this interpretation, he maintains: "while RO (especially Milbank) sees Luther's 'forensicism' as a product of an allegedly nominalist commitment, the Finnish school insists that Luther was anything but a nominalist" (176). In opposition to both positions, Horton articulates his Reformed position: "Against both Milbank's and Mannermaa's Neoplatonic concept of participation, the Reformers and especially their successors understood such ens per participatum to be mediated by God's word and Spirit" (180) (Michael Scott Horton, *Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ* [Louisville: John Knox, 2007], for a discussion on the Finnish study on Luther, see 174-80).

[44] See *Union with Christ*, eds. C.E. Praaten and R.W. Jensen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Otto Hermann Pesch, *Theologie der Rechtfertigung bei Martin Luther und Thomas von Aquin. Versuch eines systematisch-theologischen Dialogs* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1967).

[45] Here de Lubac quotes Luther to which the proponents of this view appeal: "Christ has two natures: how does that affect me? If he bears the splendid and consoling name of Christ, it is because of the ministry and the task which has taken upon him. That he is by nature man and God, that is his affair. But he has

holds that his accent on the office of Christ led him to the subjectivization of Christian faith and that this tendency generated the anthropologization of theology. This idea is manifested in Feuerbach in a radicalized form. Moreover, this anthropologization resulted in Christianity without dogma (Ritschl and Harnack), even if Luther himself did not abandon traditional Christian dogma.[46]

De Lubac thinks convincingly that Luther was imbued with traditional Catholic doctrine in which God's objective action of salvation and personal appropriation of it is in equilibrium. Nevertheless, Luther left a dangerous idea with his heirs because of his obsession with a personal anxiety of salvation. By this subjectivization of faith the historical aspect of salvation came to be lost sight of. As a result, according to de Lubac, "the Incarnation is viewed as a mere prelude to the Redemption, leads naturally to a theology which becomes more and more subjective" (CF 47).

In comparison to Luther, Milbank is less severe toward another influential Protestant theologian, John Calvin, whose theology retains, in part, the idea of participation in its Christological context. In his contribution to *Radical Orthodoxy and Reformed Tradition: Creation, Covenant, and Participation* (2005), Milbank criticizes Calvin's theology. In the first place, on the soteriological level, his extremely exclusive view of salvation directly associated with his idea of justice as imputation generates bad social and political consequences. Milbank points out the case of South Africa. In the case of South Africa, racism is legitimated by Calvinist theology. On the Christological level, Milbank situates Calvin's Christology within the nominalist tradition in that he denies the necessity of the deification of Christ's humanity. "Calvin, like Scotus, refuses a necessary deification of Christ's humanity as a result of the incarnation".[47] Likewise, Milbank blames Calvin for the incoherence of his sacramental theology. For Calvin, the presence of Christ is sacramentally manifest in the receiver by the power of the Spirit.[48] However, his idea of spiritual participation enhypostasizes Christ's body. This means that Christ is present not locally, but substantially. [49] Milbank holds that

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devoted his ministry and poured out his love to be my savoir and my redeemer, that is my consolation and my good... Believing in Christ does not mean that he is a person who is man and God, which does no good to anyone; it means that this person is Christ, that is, that he has come forth from God and come into the world... It is from this office that he takes his name" (Luther *Erlanger Ausg*. 35, 207-8) (CF 44)

[46] Here, however, de Lubac admits that Luther holds an opposite view in quoting him: "We must learn to understand Christ and the relation between his two natures, the divine and the human, for here many go astray… In regard to Christ's words, the all-important thing is to see which of them are to be attributed to the divine nature and which to the human one'(Chrismas Sermon of 1521); "I believe that Jesus Christ, the true Son of God, has become my Lord"(Great Catechism), second part 2.27 (cited in CF 45). Again, de Lubac partially acknowledges Dietrich Bonhœffer's defense of Luther. According to Bonhoeffer, it was Melanchton who "reduced the person of Christ to his work, that is, dogmatic Christology to soteriology, with his famous formula: 'To know Christ is to know his benefits, not to consider his natures and the modes of his incarnation'" (CF 46). Nontheless, de Lubac see a continuity between Luther and Melanchton in that "Melanchton, like his master, related the whole creed to trust in the forgiveness of sins, which sum up all the benefits of Christ and which alone directly concerns 'me', but he also professed no less than Luther each of the other traditional dogmatic articles. Both were given to expressing themselves in an antithetical, paradoxical form which should not always be taken quite literally" (ibid., 46).

[47] John Milbank, "Alternative Protestantism," in *Radical Orthodoxy and Reformed Tradition: Creation, Covenant, and Participation* (Grand Rapid, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005), 33. Cf. John Calvin, *Institutes* 2.14.3.

[48] See Calvin, *Institutes* 4.17.8-10.

[49] Ibid.35. See also other radical orthodox theologian's criticism: Graham Ward, *Cities of God*, 161-7; Simon Oliver, 'The Eucharist before Nature and Culture,' *Modern Theology* 15 (1999), 331-53.

"transubstantiation more consistently suggests that participation in a physical- albeit mysteriously physical-reality is itself mysteriously physical. In this way it also stresses the divine kenotic descent by grace to us, right down to our most basic sensible and animal existence."[50] Based on this criticism of Refomation theology, Milbank proposes an alternative Christianity. "Today we need a Christianity that is truly Catholic and truly Reformed, as reformed Catholicism and an alternative Protestantism."[51]

2.1.3 Secular scientific politics

In order to understand Milbank's position vis-à-vis secular scientific politics, it is necessary to know Milbank's attitude toward secularization. In *Meaning in History* (1949),[52] Karl Löwith maintains that modernity's claim to novelty is questionable, for modern thinkers did not invent their philosophy, but rather they secularized Christian theological terms. That is, modernity is nothing other than a secularized version of Christian millenarianism. This 'secularization thesis' is challenged by Hans Blumenberg in his *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (1966).[53] According to him, modernity marks a radical break from the medieval worldview. For Blumenberg, the central characteristic of modernity is not reason, but self-assertion. So, he attacks the optimistic faith in progress of the secularization thesis. Modernity has its own legitimacy distinct from its precedent epoch, because each epoch has its own criteria of truth so that it justifies itself. Milbank recognizes Blumenberg's Nietzchean interpretation of modernity, but holds that his thesis is not radical. Against Hans Blumenberg's thesis, Milbank contends that secularization is itself a Christian heresy and paganism. He states:

> Secular discourse does not just 'borrow' inherently inappropriate modes of expression from religion as the only discourse to hand (this is Hans Blumenberg's interpretation) but is actually constituted in its secularity by 'heresy' in relation to orthodox Christianity, or else a rejection of Christianity that is more 'neo-pagan' than simply 'anti-religious' (TST 3). [54]

What is of paramount importance for Milbank is the fact that this secularization was, as we have seen, promoted by Christian theology itself. For him, the late-medieval nominalist tradition (especially Duns Scotus) is at the center of this development. He believes that the Reformation embraces nominalism. The neo-Augustinism which was developed by the nominalists, Baius and Jansenius in the 16th-17th century contributed to the formation of the secular domain by their distorted interpretations of St. Augustine. Secular scientific politics are anticipated by this nominalist tradition that supposes an autonomous realm in separation from God. This tendency was radicalized by secular political theorists. For them, the secular realm is not only an autonomous

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[50] Ibid. 35.
[51] Ibid. 37.
[52] Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1957).
[53] Cf. Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 1983).
[54] Cavanaugh notes the same idea: "It is not enough to see what is called 'secularization' as the progressive stripping away of the sacred from some profane remainder. What we have instead is the substitution of one *mythos* of salvation for another; what is more, the successor *mythos* has triumphed to a great extent because it mimics its predecessor" (William T. Cavanaugh, "The City: Beyond Secular Parodies," in RONT 190).

domain but also a domain in which violence is rampant. "Secular 'scientific' understanding of society was, from the outset, only the self-knowledge of the self-construction of the secular as power" (TST 10).

Milbank believes that the natural realm proposed by natural law theorist Grotius is autonomous and without reference to the transcendental. Unlike Aquinas, for whom natural law is connected to divine and eternal law, for Grotius, natural law becomes confined within nature, which is complete in itself without reference to the transcendent (Ibid.). Without participation in the divine, natural law is understood in terms of a legal contract, which accentuates individual rights as we have seen in Baius's case. Naturally, modern natural law is concerned primarily with the protection of the individual's life and property. Furthermore, according to Milbank, modern natural law tradition is not grounded in Aristotelian practical reason which aims at the common good, but rather a theologically justified self-preservation principle (Hobbes, Spinoza) (Ibid.). Hence the secular autonomous realm was to be an artificially constructed sphere for the preservation of individuals. After all, "the space of the secular had to be invented as the space of 'pure power'" (TST 12). According to Milbank, the emergence of secular social science is explained against this background: "The conception of society as a human product and therefore 'historical' remains one of the basic assumption of secular social science" (TST 11).

Milbank proves the theological origin of secular politics in terms of the analysis of the concept of *dominium*, anthropology and biblical hermeneutics. In the first place, he considers the concept of *Dominium*. Just as the secular is an artificial human construct (*factum*), this concept is artificially interpreted by modern secular political theorists in terms of sheer rights and power. In the traditional sense of the term, *dominum* means the legitimate control and possession of an external object on the basis of rational self-control of the passions (TST 12). But Milbank contends that the introduction of Roman private law, which understands *dominium* as lordship over one's belongings, did violence to the Christian sense of the term. Although Aquinas attempts to tame Roman *dominium* in holding that "Adam's *dominium* as *dominium utile*, a property right of free 'procuration and disposal' whose final justification was still *usus* by society in general" (TST 13). Gean Gerson, who laid the foundation for natural law theory, traced the origin of *dominium* to the *facultas,* which "possesses the power to do as it likes with its own" (Ibid.). It follows that that "self-identity, the *suum*, is no longer essentially related to divine rational illumination, or ethics, but is a sheer 'self-occupation' or 'self-possession' (Ibid.). And this anticipates Lock's idea that "every man has a property in his own person" (Ibid.).

What counts in this development, for Milbank, is that the establishment of property rights is parallel to that of the modern sovereign state. For Hobbes, state sovereignty is conceived in terms of the individual's unrestricted will. That is, state sovereignty is a collective form of human will. In this regard, Milbank rightly associates this modern tendency with nominalism and voluntarism that privilege human will over intellect. According to him, this is caused by the loss of a participatory framework, which began with Duns Scotus:

> In the thought of the nominalists, following Duns Scotus, the Trinity loses its significance as a prime location for discussing will and understanding in God and the relationship of God to the world. No longer is the world participatorily enfolded within the divine expressive logos, but instead a bare divine unity starkly confronts the other distinct unities which he has ordained (TST 14).

Milbank associates the formation of modern secular space with the breakdown of traditional biblical hermeneutics, which the 'fourfold sense of Scripture' represents. Milbank notes that modern biblical hermeneutics developed in symphonic relationship with modern secular politics and was used for its religious justification. This is illustrated by the fact that Hobbes's *Leviathan* and Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* both devote a section to a biblical hermeneutic (TST 17).

Milbank takes up Spinoza's biblical hermeneutics as an example. He identifies the autonomy of modern politics with Protestant biblicism in that secular politics and protestant biblical hermeneutics alike claim independence from ecclesial mediation. Modern secular politics's absolutism is concurrent with Protestant Biblicism: "'Absolutist' aspect of Hobbes' and Spinoza's hermeneutics is really rooted in the Lutheran *sola scriptura* which lies behind Spinoza's rule of interpreting Scripture 'only through Scripture' (TST 19). For Spinoza, "the Bible, like nature, is a self-interpreting totality, a world articulated by its own widest and most unambiguous meaning, as is nature by the most general motions" (TST 18). And for him (as well as Hobbes), "the Bible provides a kind of rational foundation which 'mirrors' the self-percipience of subjective reason" (TST 19). The Bible is rationalized and naturalized while losing sight of the supernatural mediation of meaning. Nevertheless, a more serious problem of modern biblical hermeneutics, which germinated already during the Reformation, is that the authority of interpretation of the Scripture was transferred from the Church to the modern state in order to warrant the neutrality of biblical interpretation. For this, a positivistic conception of revelation is introduced in accordance with the autonomy of human reason. In consequence, "it is the destiny of the *sola scriptura* to be so deconstructed as to come to mean that we must believe the Scripture because they are politically authorized" (TST 19).

Milbank notes that modern secular politics and its concomitant modern biblical hermeneutics are caused by the loss of the mediation of Christ-*ecclesia.* In the traditional hermeneutics, "the literal, historical 'violence' of the *res* in the old covenant effaced itself, not just vertically towards 'eternal' meanings, but horizontally in the direction of the new reality of Christ-*ecclesia* with its charity, mercy and peace" (TST 20). Milbank complains that "the problem..about the loss of allegory in Protestantism, was that typological fulfillment by Christ was thinned and narrowed down in a way that threatened Christocentricity itself" (WMS 95). Milbank points out that this theological planification is caused by the shift from "the centrality of participation in Christ to that of the abstract offer of a hypostasized grace" (Ibid.). Here, drawing on Henri de Lubac, he notes the close link between biblical hermeneutics and its political consequence in relating the growth of temporal power to the Antiochean line of biblical hermeneutics, which priviledges the literal sense of the Bible: "there is a link from the Antiochenes onwards between those who will admit allegory only as very precise, 'litteral' fulfillment

of prophecy and those who see the more 'political'- sounding promises of the Old Testament as devolving squarely upon temporal power" (TST 20).[55]

2.1.4 Political economy

Political economy, whose origin is moral philosophy, emerged in order to investigate the principle of economy in the framework of the modern nation state in the 18th century. In this sense, it is both economical and political in character. The reason why Milbank is concerned with this discipline that seemingly has little to do with theological reflection is that this discipline is one of the impetuses of the formation of modern secular space. Furthermore, behind the formation of this discipline are hidden theological motives which are in reality pagan. More precisely, modern political economy is associated with Machiavellian *virtù*, which is nothing other than the will to power, unlike antique political virtue which was promoted for the civic excellence, that is, for the benefit of the entire political community. Political economy perverted ancient civil virtues for the glory and reputation of the individual: "Along the line of Machiavellian logic, it was possible to conceive of an individual pursuit of civic virtue transformed into 'passion for glory' which is no longer even an aspiration to the heroic substance of nobility, but merely the quest for a public repute" (TST 33). In consequence, political economy promoted the *libido dominandi* which Christianity rejected (TST 37).

According to Milbank, the relation of political economy to theology is found in the introduction of the concept of 'providence' in its discourse. Milbank describes political economy as pagan. However, it can be also described a "heretical 'theodicy' (Ibid.). This means that a theological justification underlies this discipline. For example, Adam Smith's 'invisible hand' is a case in point. The individual's economic pursuit, out of his egoism, produces benefits for the entire society. That is, the individual's unintended motive contributes to the interest of the whole by the hidden hand of God. This liberation of secular desire is warranted by secular theology, which is for Milbank, a heretical version of Christian theology: "The 'hidden hand' of the marketplace is somewhat more than a metaphor, because God-Nature has placed self-interest and the 'trucking dispensation' in individuals in such a way that their operation will result in an overall harmony" (TST 40). After all, the modern reduction of man into an economic being, far from being a result of secularization, has its theological origin. Milbank states: "The de-ethicization of the economic domain does not, as one might suppose, coincide in any straightforward way with 'secularization'. Here again, the institution of the 'secular' is paradoxically related to a shift within theology and not an emancipation from theology" (TST 29).

In this respect, the division of labor is considered as a natural and providential process which assures social cohesion (TST 38). This is a radical departure of the social ontology that the participatory theological tradition proposes in the sense that self-preservation (*conatus*) is the defining character of the human being, who was in fact created for communion. According to Milbank, the danger of this theological justification

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[55] Cf. Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale: Les quatre Sens de l'Ecriture, 4 vols., II - II*, 198-207, 317-28, 249-352. These references are Milbank's.

of capitalism lies in the fact that "the 'theological' (though 'herectical') version of political economy tends to mystify the description of capitalism" (TST 40). According to Milbank,

> Political economy was not … an emancipated secular science which explored the formal aspects of economic relations in abstraction from moral considerations. Rather, it imagined and helped to construct an amoral formal mechanism which allows not merely the institution but also the preservation and the regulation of the secular. This new science' can be unmasked as agonistics, as theodicy and as a redefinition of Christian virtue" (TST 45).

2.2 Descartes, Kant, and modern sociological narrative

Descartes is regarded as the founder of the modern liberal subject who is conceived as autonomous. Descartes's philosophical project was inherited by Immanuel Kant in a much more sophisticated form. His distinction between a legitimate factual realm and an illegitimate irrational realm had an enormous impact on modern social theory. Common to these philosophers is that there is a universal framework in human reason. Milbank thinks that Descartes and Kant stand in the nominalist tradition. Unlike Descartes and Kant, Milbank and de Lubac hold that there is no objective vantage point anywhere. This means that the universalist claim of Enlightenment philosophy based on reason alone is a kind of disguised faith. There is no such thing as pure reason, pure objectivity. De Lubac rightly points out that there is no knowledge without an Archimedean point and that modern sociology is founded on religious commitment to this *a priori* knowledge. He states:

> [Man] cannot give meaning to something without choosing his perspective. His choice has to be justified, but he cannot avoid making it. The sociologist who, even if only inadvertently, reduces the spiritual to the social, has resolved in advance- negatively- what he wants to explain (TF 39).[56]

Sharing de Lubac's position on human knowledge, Milbank reiterates the history of modern sociology. The goal of this section is to disclose the hidden assumption of modern sociology undergirded by the Cartesian-Kantian philosophical model and to reveal that this assumption is but a religious faith.

2.2.1 René Descartes (1569-1650)

Modern philosophy did not emerge in a vacuum. Today we come to know that without consideration of medieval philosophy we cannot understand modern philosophy at all.[57] For our purposes, it is important to have in mind that modern philosophy was not developed as a competing discipline with theology, but rather within Christian theology.

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[56] [Original text] "[L'homme] ne peut donner un sens aux choses qu'en choisissant sa perspective. Celle-ci devra être justifiée, -mais nul ne peut s'en passer. L'absolu de l'athée est en cela identique à l'absolu du chrétien. Le sociologue qui, ne fût-ce que par prétérition, réduit le spirituel au social, a résolu d'avance par la négative ce qu'il voulait expliquer " (TO 41).

[57] See René Descartes, *Discours de la Méthode, Texte et Commentaire* par Étienne Gilson (Paris: Vrin, 1976); Étienne Gilson, *La Liberté chez Descartes et la Théologie* (Paris: Alcan, 1913). In this work Gilson shows the affinity between the notion of liberty in Descartes and in st. Bernard; Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origin of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Graham Ward, "Introducing Jean-Luc Marion," *New Blackfriars* 76:895 (1995), 317-24.

Drawing on Lacoste and Boulois, Milbank argues that "modern 'philosophy' does not simply emancipate itself from theology; rather it arises in a space that theology itself has carved out for it: the space of pure nature" (BR 114).[58] De Lubac in his turn notes that Baius' distorted Augustinian theology anticipates Cartesian *Cogito*.: " Baius' doctrinal simplicity could produce on them the effect of a real liberation, not unlike (if due allowance is made) the celebrated Cartesian *cogito* of the following century" (AMT 8).[59]

For Milbank and RO, Descartes, usually regarded to be the founder of modern philosophy, is also a decisive figure in the story of the making of the secular due to his rejection of participatory ontology. "Descartes has already rejected a picture of reality which regards finitude as a participation in the infinite, a picture which conceives of the finite as a restricted presence of the infinite" (RDGV 51).[60] Scotus's principle of the univocity of being, and its concomitant separation between reason and faith, and philosophy and theology provide a background for the emergence of Descartes' modern philosophy.[61] His famous 'methodic doubt,' which aims to find the absolute foundation of human knowledge, expresses the modern obsession with the subject. After all, the conclusion of Descartes' philosophical meditation is that self-consciousness is the foundation of the certainty of our existence. Moreover, this self-consciousness, for Descartes, is the stable basis of the understanding of the world. This means that Descartes seeks autonomous human reason independent from tradition, authority, and community. For him the human mind is something outside his body. That is, the human mind is a self-evident entity which is not influenced by exterior causes. This idea is highly problematic for Milbank as well as leading hermeneutical thinkers. For Milbank and other hermeneutical thinkers, the human self is mediated by language, culture and tradition. An independent self outside these elements is impossible. That is, for them these elements essentially constitute aspects of the human being. For example, in his article "Epistemological Crises, Narrative, and Philosophy of Science," MacIntyre is highly critical of Descartes's misdescription of his own epistemological crisis. The thrust

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[58] See Jean-Yves Lacoste, "Le Désir et l'Inexigible : préambules à une lecture in *Les Études Philosophiques*, 2 (1995), 223-46 and Olivier Boulnois, "Les deux fins de l'homme" in *Les Études Philosophiques*, no.2 (1995), 205-22.

[59] This means that the thesis that Augustine's concept of the self is identical with Descartes' turns out to be false. See Stephen Mann, *Descartes and Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). A Radical Orthodox theologian, Michael Hanby contests Stephen Mann's thesis. See his *Augustine and Modernity, Radical Orthodoxy Series* (London: Routledge, 2003); "Augustine and Descartes: An Overlooked Chapter in the Story of Modern Origin," *Modern Theology* 19:4 (2003), 455-82. For a criticism of Hanby's position, see Johannes Brachtendorf, "Orthodoxy Without Augustine: A Response to Michael Hanby's Augustine and Modernity," *Ars Disputandi* (2007). For Hanby's response to this criticism, see "Michael Hanby, "Reconsiderations: The Central Arguments of Augustine and Modernity," and "Response to Brachtendorf and Wisee," *Ars Disputandi* 7 (2007). See also Jean-Luc Marion, *Sur le Prisme Métaphysique de Descartes : Constitution et Limite de l'Onto-théo-logie Cartésienne* (Paris: PUF, 1986); idem, *Sur la Théologie Blanche de Descartes: Analogie, Création des Vérités Éternelles, et Fondement* (Paris: PUF, 1981).

[60] According to Milbank's account, "Descartes's lack of a notion of participation causes him to think finitude and infinitude in Scotist terms as two mutually exclusive things, separately knowable, on the model of two spatially separated and distinct physical objects" (RDGV 51).

[61] According to Pickstock's account, "Descartes follows in the tradition of Duns Scotus, for whom a being is that which is univocal and therefore graspsable.. In thus objectifying being, Descartes transforms the determinations of reality into purely spatial classifications, as the 'given' rather than the gift of a donor through which the transcendent is mediated" (Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing*, 62).

of his criticism is Descartes' idea that his methodic doubt could be free from its context, an idea which is fictive for hermeneutical thinkers like him. In comparison with Hamlet's doubt, which resides in a pre-established world vision, MacIntrye thinks that "Descartes' doubt is intended to lack any such background."[62] In order to rebut Descartes' claim to context-free thinking, he takes an example of the language which Descartes uses. It is impossible to do without the use of language for articulating his thought. Yet Descartes did not recognize that seventeenth-century Latin of scholasticism he used already involves a certain way of seeing the world: "He [Descartes] does not recognize that among the feature of the universe which he not putting in doubt is his own capacity not only to use the French and the Latin language, but even to express the same thought in both languages."[63] In short, it turns out that Descartes' attempt to found human thought without any prejudice is merely a myth.

For Milbank, Descartes's obsession with subjectivity is directly linked to the will to power. He states: "The Cartesian raising of the subjective will 'above' language and the endless flux of human operations upon the world, meant that human creative operations came to be regarded in an arbitrary or instrumentalist light" (TST 150).

According to de Lubac, Descartes' philosophy had been prepared within Catholic theology which itself supposes the fictive notion of pure nature. The acknowledgement of the complete order separated from the supernatural order left an unhappy consequence to following generations. De Lubac points out that the false anthropology stemming from the system of pure nature allows the independence of philosophy with regard to theology and that naturalized anthropology gave birth to the rationalization of theology : "In the field of anthropology as in others, a twofold separation became more pronounced, exaggerating or falsifying entirely legitimate differentiations, and began to bear its fruits- the separation of independent philosophy and traditional theology, and within the latter, the separation of Scholastics from spirituals. The second was already old; the first had been taking shape for some time; in practice it was realized with Montaigne, until the process was complete doctrinally with Descartes" (AMT 230, ATM 277= S 150-151).[64]

2.2.2 Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

2.2.2.1 Critique of Kant's dogmatic metaphysics

In Milbank's story of the secular, Kant, with Duns Scotus, occupies a significant place in the gradual loss of the idea of participation. He developed Descartes' subjectivism in a more sophisticated form.[65] It is widely admitted that Kant's philosophy marks a

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[62] Alasdair MacIntyre, "Epistemological Crises, Narrative, and Philosophy of Science," in *Why Narrative? Reading in Narrative Theology*, eds. Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones, 143.

[63] Ibid.,144.

[64] [Original text] "Dans le domaine de l'anthropologie comme en d'autres domaines, une double séparation s'accentua et commença de porter ses fruits : séparation de la philosophie indépendante et de la théologie traditionnelle, et, à l'intérieur de celle-ci, séparation des scolastiques et des spirituels. La seconde était ancienne déjà ; la première était depuis longtemps au moins amorcée, elle se réalisait en pratique avec Montaigne, en attendant de se consommer doctrinalement avec Descartes. L'une et l'autre sont pour quelque chose dans la constitution de notre nouveau système" (S 150-1).

[65] See *Descartes en Kant*, ed. Michel Fichant et Jean-Luc Marion (Paris: PUF, 2006). According to the two editors, even if seemingly there is not clearly direct relation between two thinkers, for Kant did not

watershed in modern philosophy in that it privileges the subject over the object for the understanding of the world, in making a Copernican revolution in philosophy. For Milbank, this Kantian turn constitutes a radical rupture with the participatory model that was already begun with Descartes. In the participatory model, the finite is understood in an analogical relationship with the infinite. In contrast, in distinguishing the phenomenal and the noumenal realms, Kant limits the human capacity of knowing to the phenomenal realm. This realm is constructed by man as a transcendental subject in virtue of his faculties. Time and space are not external entities outside the human mind, but the internal and external forms of the intuition of human sensibility. This means that man can only know what is within the limits of human finite experience in space and time. In this way the idea of participation of the human mind in God is broken down. Milbank, relying on Foucault, states: "Before Kant, as Foucault well explains, the classical era still understood finite limitation in terms of its relationship to the infinite. After Kant, the possibility of this metaphysics is denied, supposedly on 'critical' grounds, but in fact on the basis of a new and equally 'metaphysical' dogmatism which redefines finitude in terms of certain positive conditions, such as temporality, closed spatiality and mechanical causality" (TST 280).[66]

As with Milbank, de Lubac finds that Kant's demarcation between the sensible and the suprasensible gravely distorts the world where we live. According to him:

> Kant tried to prove that the "transcendent" use of causality was illegitimate, but the causality he had in mind was a narrow, scientific category, the specialized category of causation which rules the universe of Newton. Shaped for the ordering of phenomena, it exhausts its virtue in doing so. Kant's causality is, of course, only one example among many. In fact, modern Western philosophies "are singular in one respect: the world they start out from is," as a general rule, "the constituted and constantly modified by the science." There is nothing surprising in the fact that this world is impotent, by itself, to provide a foundation for thought and sustain the movement of thought to the end. For that to be achieved, it would be necessary to dig down beneath the artificial, methodological categories of science to the great natural categories of reason (DG 61).[67]

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litterally cite any Descartes' sentence, there is a secret liaison between two thinkers. They admit that it is improbable that Kant read directly Descartes and even indirectly through other authors between two thinkers (for example, Wolff) because in Wolff we there is few trace of this French thinker. As a result, they concludes that "il faut bien admettre que Kant n'a pas connu Descartes et qu'il n'a discuté qu'avec son fantôme doxologique " (*Descartes en Kant*, 11). Nontheless, Kant and Descartes alike were faced with and distanced themselves from speculative metaphysics, which they both criticized. Fichant and Marion recapitulate not a few common points between Descartes and Kant. According to their study, "en fait, Descartes et Kant se situent l'un et l'autre en face et à distance du système de la métaphysique, dont les XVIIe et XVIIIe siècle avaient vu l'institution en Espagne, en Hollande et en Allmagne. Cette distance critique se fait jour aussi bien dans des thèses presque communes, que Descatres et Kant opposent solidairement à l'opinion majoritaire de leurs contemporains: l'antériorité définitive (et non seulement provisoire) du moment critique (doute hyperbolique, récusation du dogmatisme); la limitation de la science humaine relativement au savoir divin, en vetu d'une finitude radicalement pensée; la distinction (qui s'ensuit) entre notre connaissance et l'être (*res in ordine ad cognitionem nostram/prout revera existunt*, phénomènes/choses en soi); la détermination négative et non réelle de l'étantité (l'existence ne sous affecte pas, l'être comme pure position); l'infinité de la volonté malgré (ou à cause de) la finitude des facultés de connaître; la discontinuité entre la science (ce que je peux connaître) et la morale (ce que je dois faire), donc le maintien d'une problématique éthique du souverain Bien, etc." (Ibid., 12).

[66] Milbank's indirect citation is in Michael Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 312-8.

[67] [Original text] "La causalité dont Kant a voulu montrer que l'usage 'transcendant' n'était pas légitime, n'était que la catégorie étroitement scientifique, la catégorie spécialisée régissant l'univers de Newton.

Therefore our natural knowledge of God is called into question. Instead of the Christian God who is intimately related with the human being, Kant imagines an infinite being which provokes a sentiment of the sublime.

At this juncture, Milbank's comparison of Kant to Aquinas would be instructive for our understanding of his stance toward modern Kantian metaphysics. In comparison to Aquinas, Kant is agnostic, for he denies the possibility of a theoretical knowledge of God. This fact is well illustrated by their conception of analogy. "For Kant, any apparent positive content in analogy really concerns necessities of our finitude with respect to the use of language, and analogy can certainly tells us nothing more about God than that all the conditions of the world that we know must be in a relation of total dependence upon him" (WMS 8). In contrast, Aquinas holds an ontological notion of analogy in that finite things participate in God: "For Aquinas, any predication of goodness or Being of finite things already refers to a dynamic ontological tension in which they are constantly drawn forwards toward the divine perfection" (WMS 9). Namely, Kant's world is unhooked from the transcendent, whereas Aquinas's is related ontologically and aesthetically to the transcendent. Milbank concludes his comparison of the two opposed thinkers as follows: "Knowledge of God for Aquinas is change within the circumstances of a certain formal, 'beautiful' constancy of teleological development; knowledge of God for Kant is confirmation of this world as it is, or else a 'sublime' aspiration which is a contentless bad infinitude, unrelated to actual social behavior" (WMS 16). In comparison to Aquinas, Kant's reason is separated from human desire based on human sensory experience. What lacks in Kant for Milbank is the desire which leads to the supernatural. Hence, Kant's autonomous reason without making reference to the supernatural is very individualistic in character. He states:

> The supernatural in us may be intelligible as such, intelligence thinking through us, but it is also always conjoined with sensation, as Aquinas taught. Therefore intelligence begins as a bodily exercise, accompanied by desire that reaches into the unknown. Only by the exercise of an artificial abstraction can we prise reason apart from desire, which reaches beyond our capacity. This prised-apart 'pure reason' is also a totally individualistic reason, whether on the level of the single person or of collective humanity (BR 121).

Crucial to Milbank's critique of Kantian philosophy is Kant's dogmatism. Even if Kant himself elaborates his philosophy in reaction to the dogmatism of rationalist philosophy, he is also for Milbank "metaphysically dogmatic" (WMS 11), in that he also justifies practical reason with recourse to the noumenal world which is not touched by laws of nature. According to him:

Taillée pour ordonner les phénomènes, elle y épuise sa vertu. Cette causalité kantienne, au reste, n'est qu'un exemple. En effet, les philosophies occidentales modernes 'ont ceci de particulier que le monde dont elles partent' n'est le plus souvent que 'celui que constituent et modifient sans cesse les sciences. Comment s'étonner qu'un tel monde soit impuissant à fonder par lui-même et à soutenir jusqu'au bout l'élan de la pensée ? Il faudrait creuser davantage, pour retrouver, sous les catégories artificielles et méthologiques de la science, les grandes catégories naturelles de la raison" (SCD 76-7).

> The Kantian attempt to acknowledge limits self-deconstructs, since limits will only appear if one claims absolutely to surmount them, and thus one gets Kant's dogmatic hierarchy of practically perceived noumena above theoretically perceived phenomena. Yet even a postmodern, deconstructed Kant, wherein the sublime overflows every temporary restraint, still erects a shire to pure nature and the confines of reason: its mark is now the hypostasization of the unknown as only an empty void, and refusal of any possibility of 'beautiful' mediation between the invisible and the visible (BR 120).

2.2.2.2 The rejection of Kantian moral autonomy

Milbank's appropriation of the integrated model of nature and grace leads him to develop his ethical thought. Like de Lubac, Milbank thinks that there is no morally autonomous sphere without reference to the supernatural. It is commonly acknowledged that Kant provided the foundation for the establishment of a morality emancipated from dogmatic truth claims.[68] De Lubac estimates that Kant became enslaved by morality, even if he sought to break a religious cage. He states: "Although his first *Kritik* seemed to have broken 'the bars of the cage' in which faith in God keeps us shut up, Kant of his own accord, through the postulates on which he based his ethics, went into captivity again (DAH 46).[69] In *Proudhon et le Christianisme* (1945), de Lubac blames Proudhon for his rationalistic understanding of the moral. Proudhon's appropriation of Kant's moral philosophy [70]is explicit when he proclaims his view on morality.[71]

> For me, moral exist by itself; it does not belong to any dogma and any theory. Consciousness is in man master faculty, sovereign power to which other faculties serve as instruments and servant… It is neither a point of a metaphysics, nor a poem, nor any theodicy that I deducts the rules of my life and of may sociality; it is, to the contrary, of the dictum of my consciousness which I rather deducts the laws of my understanding.[72]

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[68] In the preface of the first edition of *Religion within the Bounds of Pure Reason[Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft]*, Immanuel Kant proclaims the independence of morality from religion: "Morality, insofar as it is based on the concept of the human being as one who is free, but who precisely therefore also binds himself through his reason to unconditional laws, is in need neither of the idea of another being above him in order for him to cognize his duty, nor, in order for him to observe it, of an incentive other than the law itself. At least it is the human being's own fault if such a need occurs in him; nor, indeed, can that need then he remedied by anything else;for, what does not issue from himself and his own freedom provides no compensation for the deficiency of his morality. –Hence on its own behalf morality in no way needs religion (neither objectively, in regard to volition, nor subjectively, in regard to capability); rather, through the power of pure practical reason it is sufficient to itself" (Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Bounds of Pure Reason*, trad. By Werner. S. Pluhar, Hacket Publishing Company, 2009, 1.

[69] [Original text] "Après avoir paru, par sa première *Critique*, 'briser les barreaux de la cage' où la foi en Dieu nous tenait enfermée, Kant est revenue de lui-même, avec les postulats de sa morale, se constituer de nouveau prisonnier" (DHA 43-4).

[70] According to the study of de Lubac, "Proudhon connut Kant de bonne heure, et plus aisément que Hegel. Il était en correspondance suivie avec Tissot, qui en était alors le spécialiste et le traducteur. Vers 1839 – 1840, s'il faut en croire ses lettres à Bergmann et à Pérennès, il le lit 'tous les jours'. Il parlera avec respect de 'la dialectique fondée par Kant' et jusqu'au bout celui-ci sera pour lui 'le vénérable Kant'" (Henri de Lubac, *Proudhon et le Christianisme* [Paris: Cerf, 2011], 151).

[71] This does not mean that Proudon entirely agrees with Kant. See the chapter entitled "Proudhon et Kant, l'antinomie proudhonienne," in *Proudhon et le Christianisme*, 151-61.

[72] [Original text] "Pour moi, la morale existe par elle-même ; elle ne relève d'aucun dogme, d'aucune théorie. La conscience est chez l'homme la faculté maîtresse, la puissance souveraine, à laquelle les autres servent d'instruments et de servantes... Ce n'est point d'une métaphysique, ni d'une poésie, ni d'aucune théodicée que je déduis les règles de ma vie et de ma sociabilité; c'est au contraire du dictamen de ma conscience

According to de Lubac, Proudon's critique of the idea of God did not lead him to deny the existence of God. He did not supplant God with man. However de Lubac points that he replaced God with the idea of Justice. Therefore, it is, for him, idolatry because he did not serve God, but rather the human idea of Justice. Consequently, Justice, for Proudon, is a religion.[73] Moreover, this replacement of God by the idea of Justice gives rise to the 'theology of right' –in Milbank's terms'[74] which is nothing but a expression of egoism.

Milbank thinks that moral justification should be grounded not in the reason, but in religious commitment. He even identifies Kantian liberal humanist logic with Nazi logic in that both replace God with human freedom by idolizing it. "Kantian liberal humanist logic and Nazi logic are seamlessly linked, and Nazism was nothing but an unhindered attempt to raise man as a God, to unleash and perfect the power of human freedom" (BR 179).[75]. That is, a serious problem with Kant, for Milbank, is that his understanding of human will is rooted in his immannantist philosophical framework. Unlike Augustine, with whom Milbank and de Lubac agree, Kant situates evil within the human will, in calling it 'radical evil'[76]. After all, the problem of morality is dependant only on the human autonomous will. This model is individualistic in character, since it reduced morality into individual will. This approach is contrasted with Augustine's view on evil which is understood as a privation of the good. In this account, the moral problem is situated not in the individual, but in the relation between the finite human will and the infinite good, insofar as Augustine understands human will in terms of "drastic participatory tension between the infinitely general and the

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que je dédurais plutôt les lois de mon entendement." (Proudhon, *Justice*, t. 4, 492 cited by de Lubac, *Proudhon et le Christianisme,* op.cit., 154.).

[73] De Lubac notes: "La Justice, nous dit Proudhon, est, comme religion, 'un sentiment *sui generis*': elle est 'le sentiment de notre dignité en autrui, et réciproquement de la dignité humaine, en quelque personne et dans quelque circonstance qu'elle se trouve compromise, et à quelque risque nous expose sa défense'. Elle est donc en chacun de nous le corrélatif du Droit, dont elle constitue 'l'affirmation spontanée': 'Sentir et affirmer la dignité humaine, d'abord dans tout ce qui nous est propre, puis dans la personne du prochain, et cela sans retour d'égoïsme comme sans considération aucune de divinité ou de communauté, voilà le droit "(*Proudhon et le Christianisme*, 294-5). Henri de Lubac, in criticizing Kantian philosophy, notes the risk of idolization of human ideas, however great they are. "Esprit, raison, liberté, vérité, fraternité, justice : ces grandes choses sans lesquelles il n'est plus d'humanité véritable, que le paganism antique avait entrevues et que le christianisme avait fondées, deviennent vite irréelles, dès qu'elles n'apparaissent plus comme un rayonnement de Dieu, dès que la foi au Dieu vivant ne les nourrit plus de ses sucs. Elles deviennent alors des formes vides. Elles ne sont bientôt plus qu'un idéal sans vie, guetté par le mensonge, auquel le mot terrible de Péguy sur le kantisme s'applique bien mieux encore : 'le kantisme a les mains pures, mais il n'a pas de main'. Sans Dieu, la vérité même est une idole, la justice même est une idole. Idoles trop pures et trop pâles, en face des idoles. Idole de chair et de sang qui se redressent; idéaux trop abstraits, en face des grands mythes collectifs qui réveillent les plus puissants instincts" (DHA 68).

[74] See John Milbank, "A Critique of the Theology of Right," in WMS 7-35.

[75] Milbank state again identifying Nazi's concept of universal power with the Kantian categorical imperative: "Nazi concepts of universal power and legality were much more compatible with, and even derived from, the Kantian categorical imperative, than Arendt allowed. In the second place, one can claim that if the Nazis still affirmed a Kantian free will as their good, then they also inherited the *aporias* of this free will, as half-admitted by Kant in *Religion within the Bounds of Mere Reason*. For these *aporias*, there is no clear way of distinguishing between the will which genuinely wills freedom, and the will which wills against itself, restraining freedom: this self-opposition for Kant characterizes the evil will" (BR 4).

[76] Milbank criticizes Paul Ricoeur and Pierre Watté's interpretation of Kant. According to them, Kant offers "the finest interpretation of a Pauline 'Self-Inhabitation' in a fashion that 'free' the theme of liberty from cosmology and discovers the seed of evil to be purely in the will taken as a positive assertionof self…" (BR 213).

finitely particular" (BR 11). Therefore, in this thinking, evil is not defined as a positive force against which the human will struggles. According to Milbank, this model marks a rupture with Augustine's participatory understanding of human will. Without participation, there remain only conflicts: "Without participatory mediation between a partially good finite, and an absolutely good infinite, the finite will only arises through a concealment of Being with which it is essentially in conflict" (BR 17).

Milbank's critique of Kantian morality can be read as an appeal for the relocation of the place of morality from universal human reason to a specific faith. That is, in order to correct the modern Kantian moral project, it is necessary to retrieve the religious root of the moral. As we have seen earlier, Milbank blurs the distinction between faith and reason. There is no pure faith, nor pure reason. Without faith, reason cannot function. Inversely, without reason, faith would not have the capacity to analyze and discuss. Therefore, the Kantian assertion to the universal reason is a kind of faith which cannot monopolize truth claims. In this way, Kantian reason and its bold attempt to set up universal morality are relativized.

> Kant brings religion within the bounds of reason by reducing it to morality, but we have already seen how practical reason problematically transgresses the bounds established by theoretical reason, since it claims knowledge of noumenal freedom..... Thus practical reason, if it is to be saved, must, on the grounds of its own rational demand, be supplemented by religious faith. *Religion within the Bounds of Mere Reason* should really be entitled 'reason outside its own bounds in the sphere of religion' (BR19)[77]

This approach to morality is consonant with Stanley Hauerwas's understanding of morality. In *The Peaceful Kingdom* (1983), Hauerwas contends that every ethics has to be qualified by an adjective. "Ethics always requires an adjective or qualifier-such as Jewish, Christian, Hindu, existentialist, pragmatic, utilitarian, humanist, medieval, modern – in order to denote the social and historical character of ethics as a discipline." [78] This means that he rejects the universal ethical project of the Enlightenment. He continues: "This is not to suggest that ethics does not address an identifiable set of relatively constant questions- the nature of the good or right, freedom and the nature of human behavior, the place and status of rules and virtues- but any response to these questions necessarily draws on the particular convictions of historic communities to whom such questions may have significantly different meanings."[79]

For him, every ethical thought presupposes a religious commitment and a community which the very religious commitment forms. For him, Christian ethics is rooted in Christian confession and the Church. Against the claim that Christian morality must be subordinate to the secular moral agenda, he maintains that "the church does not let the world set its agenda about what constitutes a 'social ethic,' but a church of peace and justice must set its own agenda."[80] That is to say, the Church needs not have recourse to

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[77] This thought is echoed by Nicholas Wolterstorff, who stands in the Dutch Reformed Tradition. See his *Reason within the Bound of Religion* (Eerdmans Publishing Co.,: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1991).

[78] Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceful Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame/London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 1.

[79] Ibid.,1.

[80] Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceful Kingdom*, 99.

the secular moral concepts such as liberty, or freedom, in order to set up a moral agenda. The reason is, as Milbank says, that "if theology no longer seeks to position, qualify or criticize other discourses, then it is inevitable that these discourses will position theology" (TST 1). After all, the Church is not an association which serves the secular moral vision, but rather is itself the moral vision. As Hauerwas rightly says:

> The first social ethical task of the church is to be the church- the servant community. Such a claim may well sound self-serving until we remember that what makes the church the church is its faithful manifestation of the peaceful kingdom in the world. As such *the church does not have a social ethic; the church is a social ethic* (*emphasis mine*).[81]

Unlike Kant, Stanley Hauerwas thinks that Christian moral rationality is historically formed. The moral agent is not an autonomous being, but a historically conditioned being. Narrative is therefore the best form with which Christian conviction is expressed.[82]

2.2.2.3 Critique of Kantian beauty

In his article "Beauty and the Soul" Milbank criticizes the modern Kantian conception of the beautiful. Unlike Kant, Milbank, in the vein of Platonic tradition, does not distinguish the beautiful and the true. In the Platonic tradition to which Milbank adheres, the beautiful and the true are considered to be different aspects of Being. In this case, a beautiful object incites in us a desire to transcend this object for the satisfaction of this desire. According to Milbank, "to experience the beautiful is not only to be satisfied, but also to be frustrated satisfyingly; a desire to see more of what arrive (nonetheless with the same specificity that renders this 'more' problematical) is always involved" (TPGB 2).

The separation of the two is generated by modern Kantian subjectivism, in which the locus of the beautiful is located in the subject. In Kant's philosophy, the beautiful plays the mediating role between knowledge and morality. As we have seen above, the aim of Kant's philosophy consists in making room for a human moral liberty which is not

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[81] Ibid.

[82] Interestingly, he cites MacIntyre, with approval, who thinks Kant's moral philosophy is read as a narrative metaphor which portrays journey human's pursuit of moral ideal: [Kant's account of morality] is the metaphor of the life of the individual and also of the human race as a journey toward a goal. The journey has two aspects. There is the progress toward creating the external conditions for the achievement of moral perfection by individual: "with advancing civilization reason grows pragmatically in its capacity to realize ideas of law. But at the same time the culpability for the transgression also grows." Within the framework of law and civility the individual progresses toward moral perfection, a progress "directed to a goal infinitely remote." If follows that the significance of a particular moral action does not lie solely in its conformity to the moral law; it marks a stage in that journey the carrying through of which confers significance on the individual's life. Thus a link does exist between the acts of duty and the summum bonum conceived as the goal of the individual's journey (Alasdair MacIntyre, "Can Medicine Dispense with a Theological Perspective on Human Nature," in *Knowledge, Value, and Belief*, *II*, ed. H. Engelhardt and D. Callahan, (Hastings-on-Hudson, N. Y. :Hastings Center Publication, 1977), 33-4, cited by Hauerwas in *Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* [Notre Dame, London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981], 99).

conditioned by a mechanically-determined natural world where the laws of causality rule. Yet Kant's problem was to make a bridge between these worlds. This is the task of his *Critique of the Power of Judgement*. In the end, according to Milbank's reading, "Kant's entire philosophy is in a sense an aesthetic of the sublime in which one is brought up against the margin of organized, formal, 'beautiful' experience, and at this margin becomes overwhelmed by the intimation of the materially formless, and infinitely total" (WMS 10).

According to Milbank, this understanding of the beautiful breaks the link between the visible and the invisible. In the High Middle Ages, the possibility of seeing the invisible in the visible was not called into question. Even the discipline of aesthetics is, according to him, a modern phenomenon (TPGB 2). This means that in the modern conception of the beautiful the participatory mediation between the visible and the invisible is undermined with the breakdown of the analogical worldview which began with Duns Scotus. The most serious consequence of the Kantian subjectivization of the beautiful is the modern cult of the sublime. The sublime means the experience of something quantitatively infinitive or qualitatively powerful, an experience we suffer when we hear thunder or face the vastness of the ocean. According to Milbank, [the sublime constitutes] "a realm of ineffable majesty beyond the bounds of the possibility of theoretical knowledge, a domain which cannot be imaginatively represented, and yet whose overwhelming presence can be acknowledged by our frustrated imaginative powers" (TST 204). According to Kant, this aesthetic experience gives rise to a moral consciousness. In this way, human aesthetic experience mediates human intellect and morality.

As a consequence, Milbank attacks the Kantian reduction of beauty into the "a priori meta-category" (TPGB 4) in saying that "modern beauty after Kant is..a 'raped' beauty" (TPGB 6). According to him, "the beautiful in Kant secretly gives limitation to the object and so to theoretical reason as such, and the beautiful is in turn only limited- that is to say, confined to the finite- because of the division between the beautiful and the sublime " (TPGB 5). In this model, true beauty has nothing to do with the visible world. Therefore, Milbank, following Balthasar, suggests that it is necessary to reinscribe the sense of the beautiful in order to makes theology really theological (TPGB 6).

2.2.3 The emergence of positive sociology

2.2.3.1 The theological background of positivist sociology

The 19th century English novelist Charles Dickens presents his figure, Mr. Gradgrind, as "a man of realities. A man of facts and calculations. A man who proceeds upon the principle that two and two are four, and nothing over, and who is not to be talked into allowing for anything over"[83] Through Mr. Gradgrind's mouth, Dickens satirizes the intellectual climate of this age.

> Now, what I want is Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to

[83] Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, George Ford and Sylvere Monod 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1996), 7.

> them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir! [84]

Milbank retraces this worship of Facts in the French positivist tradition of the 19th century. Unlike liberalism, which explains the social in terms of the economic and the political, this French tradition problematizes the social for its own sake. For this tradition, the social is given as neutral 'datum' for the scientific approach to social realities, from which other social phenomena are explained. Namely, in this tradition society itself becomes an ultimate value. "Society is God" (TST 52). Scientific sociology arose in this positivist climate. Because society is the ultimate reality, positivist sociologists suppose that it is a harmonious whole. "The positive polity is…'haronistic' and the only remaining struggle is the struggle to control nature. It is also a 'social', post-political order, because its organization is simply the 'giveness' of an elaborated organic complexity" (TST 54).

Yet, Milbank observes that this positivist spirit also emerged as a social theology within Catholicism after the French Revolution. Faced with secular politics after the Revolution, Catholic thinkers began to respond to the positivist spirit in theologically legitimating the established social and political order. They hold that the relation of the individual to society is rooted in the order of creation. That is, social reality, according to this social theology, is established by God. This social theology lays the foundation for the sociological thought of Durkheim and Comte in which religion is understood in terms of a category of the social. In this way, paradoxically, sociology, which marginalizes religion for the understanding of the social, turns out to be dependent on a religious outlook, as Milbank states: "Here lies the further paradox; sociology is only able to explain, or even illuminate religion, to the extent that it conceals its own theological borrowings and its own quasi-religious status" (TST 52).

Milbank examines in detail the religious origin of French positivist sociology. He points out the significant affinity between Catholics thinkers like Bonald and Maistre and sociologists, Durkheim and Comte. Milbank maintains that these Catholic thinkers did theology in secular terms. That is, they are secular theologians in the vein of the Enlightenment. According to Milbank, de Bonald and de Maistre's conception of God is similar to that of Hobbes in that their God is the arbitrary itself (TST 55). Milbank sees in this post-Enlightenment thought a resurrection of ancient power politics. "The post-Enlightenment case, in a nutshell, is that while, from a formal point of view, any old *mythos* of power will do, in practice what holds societies together is not a formal ordering of the arbitrary, but rather the *content* of the arbitrary, or devotion to a particular *mythos*" (TST 55).

What matters in their understanding of society is the fact that it is God's created and revealed entity as such. In this case, the social is naturalized and understood simply without reference to the supernatural. In consequence, a post-Enlightenment portrayal of society, in which an arbitrary mythos of power is the major key to understanding the social, is undergirded by theology. Namely, "for de Bonald, de Maistre and their followers, language, writing, the family and political sovereignty are all revealed

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[84] Ibid.

institutions, and every human culture represented a post-Babel fragment of God's original self-presence to humankind" (TST 56). Interestingly de Lubac associates Bonald with Baianism:

> Another doctrine closely related to Baianism is strict traditionalism, with its idea of an external revelation as indispensable to the development of reason. Is not Bonlad's teaching concerning the necessity of a first revelation the exact parallel in the order of knowledge to the teaching of Baius concerning the need of supernatural aid in the order of action? Is it not true in both cases that the supernatural exists for nature, and not for the supernatural? (AMT 6).[85]

In this way, Christian revelation is for them naturalized and rationalized in losing its mystical character. This thought is illustrated by Bonald's understanding of 'vision in God'. For him, vision in God is not understood in light of a supernatural desire to see God, as with de Lubac and Milbank, but rather in purely natural terms. That is, vision in God is for him an intellectual insight for a general law like Newton's gravity: "The idea of the 'vision in God' is retained by de Bonald, but its sight is displaced from the individual to the collective. It is only human beings in relationship who have access to the realm of 'general idea', which like gravity in the Newtonian universe, is to regarded as the direct conserving presence of God- so that, indeed, society is literally a 'part of' God" (TST 57).

2.2.3.2 Durkheim and Comte as secular theologian

Under the influence of Bonald, Auguste Comte goes further in eliminating the religious elements of Bonald's social thought. That is, while Bonald retains a religious account of secular society in maintaining that society is a revealed entity, Comte assimilates the religious into the social. That is, the social, for him, is an autonomous and self-sufficient entity. In his understanding, the essence of religion is social cohesion, as we can see in primitive religion. Therefore the goal of his positive religion is the unity of humankind. "The positive religion is … a kind of demystified fetishism, because it involves the worship of humanity in 'social' reality" (TST 60).

Henri de Lubac criticizes Comte's religion of humanity for its atheistic nature because it can seek to explain humanity without making reference to the supernatural. Comte thinks that the supernatural is only present in prescientific stages of humanity. De Lubac remarks: "many a rationalist or postivist author will express himself in the same general direction, but with diverse nuances. Some will make the faith in the supernatural the result of the pre-scientific conception of the world and will say that once all was explained by 'the supernatural'. Thus, principally, Auguste Compte" (S 414).[86] In opposing Comte's progress of human spirit, de Lubac holds that each stage is not in historical development, but corresponds to human mental states:

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[85] [Original text] "Une autre doctrine est étroitement apparentée au baïanisme : c'est le traditionalisme rigide, avec son idée d'une révélation extérieure indispensable à l'éclosion de l'intelligence. La doctrine de Bonald concernant la nécessité de la révélation primitive n'est-elle pas, dans l'ordre de la connaissance, le parallèle exact de la doctrine de Baius concernant la nécessité du secours surnaturel dans l'ordre de l'agir ? " (ATM 21).

[86] Translation mine; [Original text] "Maint auteur rationaliste ou positiviste s'exprimera dans le même sens général, mais avec diverses nuances. Les uns feront de la croyance au surnaturel le résultat de la

> Where Comte saw three successive states, it is actually a case of "three coexistent modes of thought", corresponding to three different aspects of things; thus progress consists in an increasingly clear distinction between these three aspects, at first perceived in a kind of chaotic unity. If, then, it is true to say that "physics" (in the sense of the whole of science) began by being theological, it would be just as true to say that theology began by being physical, and the law of evolution does not tend to expel theology any more than science, but to "purify" both by differentiating them (DAH 144-5).[87]

As with Comte, for Durkheim, *fait social*, which has a theological origin as we have seen above, plays a new metaphysical role in the account of the social. Moreover, as is well known, Durkheim's social thought is immersed in Kantian philosophy in that he embraces the liberal value of self-determination and the obligation for the nation. That is, his sociological positivism is merged with a Kantian outlook. This means, more precisely, that his worldview retains dualist perspective in which the world of fact and the world of value are distinguished. This outlook is disclosed in his understanding of religion. With regard to this Milbank states: "The essence of religion, according to Durkheim, lies in the distinction between sacred and profane, and he thinks that this divide receives its true decoding in the Kantian separation of categorical universal form from empirical intuition, and of categorical imperative from the empirical subject" (TST 63).

In the end, as Milbank understood well, Durkheim socializes Kant's transcendental philosophy. That is, Kant's autonomous individual is converted into the social whole. In good positivist fashion, Durkheim supposes the neutrality of society, but in good Kantian fashion, law is more fundamental than *fait social*. According to Milbank, the merging of positivism into Kantianism gives rise to the secularization of positivism and makes positivism embrace the liberal ethos that supports the autonomy of the individual:

> The relation society/individual is not that of scheme to content, nor of whole to atomic parts. Thus the antinomy can only be mediated by narration; an adequate 'transcendental' reflection on the condition of possibility for social action discovers the inevitability of historiography, but finds no room whatsoever for 'social science' (TST 71).

2.2.4 Kant and German sociological tradition

Milbank recognizes that German sociology partially overcomes the positivist tendency of French and English social thought (Comte, Mill and Spenser), which seek to

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conception pré-scientifique du monde et diront que jadis tout s'expliquait par le 'surnaturel'. Ainsi principalement, Auguste Comte" (S 414).

[87] [Original text] "On a fait aussi remarquer qu'en réalité ce que Comte a pris pour trois états successifs, ce sont bien plutôt 'trois modes coexistants de la Pensée' correspondant à trois aspects des choses-que le progrès consiste à distinguer de mieux en mieux ces trois aspects, perçus d'abord dans une sorte d'unité chaotique ; si donc il est vrai de dire que la physique entendant par ce mot toute science, a commencé par être théologique, il serait tout aussi vrai de dire que la théologie a commencé par être physique, et la loi de l'évolution ne tend pas plus à évacuer la théologie que la science, mais à les 'purifier' l'une et l'autre en les différenciant" (DHA 147).

understand social phenomenon by universally recognized scientific categories. However, he criticizes that German sociology maintains the positivistic elements such as the neutral understanding of 'the social', the separation between objective nature and the subjective mind, the identification of the religious with the irrational (TST 75). In this sense, German sociology was not liberated from Descartes' dualism. Furthermore, according to Milbank, "like Durkheim, they [German sociologists] modify the sociological tradition with an infusion of Kantian and neo-Kantian philosophy" (Ibid.). This means that for German sociology, there is a room for value and meaning in the formation of history alongside a neutral and savage economic realm. So Milbank argues that "their version [German sociology's version] of sociological explanation perpetuates the Kantian program with regard to theology and metaphysics" (TST 76). Namely, the social had little to do with the ultimate reality, just as the finite is for Kant cut from the infinite. Naturally, Kant's individualist philosophy is transmitted to German sociology which conceives the ultimate agent of society as the individual.

Milbank exposes two representative German sociologists (Simmel, Weber) in order to unveil the neo-Kantian philosophical presupposition in their works. Neo-Kantianism arose in reaction to Hegel's pan-logistic understanding of the world in questioning the possibility of human reason to understand it. This school distinguishes the world of facts and world of value. That is, the world of facts is a value-neutral sphere and the facts are meaningful in terms of value. However, this value is not ontologically real because neo-Kantian epistemology suggests that "the normative specification of this value were, in fact, positivistic" (TST 78).

It is well known that Weber's work is largely influenced by that of neo-Kantian philosopher, Rickert. Here we detail the (neo)-Kantian element for Max Weber. In fact, Weber is mainly concerned with the influence of the irrational on the rational behavior of the human being. For example, In *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) Weber traces the root of modern capitalism. As is well known, his conclusion is that man's irrational concern with his salvation gave rise to a specific type of economic and ethical behavior. This is a typically Kantian way of explanation in that Weber, following Kant, distinguishes the rational secular realm from the irrational religious realm. So Weber considers religion as serving the secular ream on the level of morality. Milbank is right to say that German sociology is the "new version of Kant's identification of true religion with morality" (TST 76). In the end, religion is relegated as a secondary element in sociological explanation. In this way, Weber contributes to the academic contretization of the liberal-protestant meta-narrative.

In the vein of neo-Kantism, he recognizes the force of value in history. He objects to the explanation of history with reference to the universal law of nature as we can see characteristically in Comte and Marx. He observes that human action is motivated not only by the *Zweckrational* goal, but also by *Wertrational* goals. However, Milbank criticizes that we cannot directly know the individual motive for a *Wertrational* act. We can only know the result of this act within the intellectual framework that sociologist applies. Moreover he criticizes Weber's claim to objectivity based on historical causal relation. This is, for Milbank, a Kantian legacy which has faith in the laws of causality. In this regard, "Weber is much close to positivism (and so to sociology) than Rikert,

because he deems processes of formal, means-end rationality to be the only thing that can be directly understood by the scientific historian with full objectivity" (TST 84).

2.3 Political and liberation theology

The point of departure of liberation theology is the modern individual that modern sociology considers as the basic element of their theorizing of the social. Yet, at the heart of the development of liberation theology lies a theological debate between de Lubac and Rahner which we have seen in chapter 2. Common to de Lubac and Rahner is their integrated account of the relationship between nature and grace. However, we have seen above, Milbank distinguishes de Lubac, who "supernaturalizes the nature," from Rahner, who "naturalizes the supernatural" (TST 219). This means that Rahner acknowledges nature as a neutral area independent from the supernatural. This idea is in contrast to de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis that there is no such a thing as pure nature. That is, Rahner's conception of nature is not concrete, while de Lubac's supernaturalized nature is particular because of his emphasis on history. These different understandings of nature give birth to different notions of salvation. For Rahner, salvation is atemporal and individual, whereas de Lubac it is inherently social. In spite of some points in common with de Lubac's theology, with the proponent of 'political theology' in German, 'liberation theology' in Latin America embraced the Rahnerian version of intergralism (TST 207).[88] This theological option makes it possible for liberation theologians to accept sociological accounts of the word, especially a Marxist account of the social as a definitive explanation. Naturally, liberation theology identifies political process with Christian salvation. In the words of Milbank, "their theology of the political realm remains trapped within the terms of 'secular reason' (Ibid.). Milbank remarks:

> The Rahnerian version of integralism can only make the social the real site of salvation by a dialectical baptism of secular society. It has to annex Christian 'orthodoxy' to the practical rejection of Christian truth. And its assumption that there is a universally available social ethic ignores the historical genesis of morality. By contrast, the integralism which 'supernaturalizes the natural' is able to expound the difference of supernatural charity as the historical, though incomplete insertion of a different community, and a different ethical practice (TST 232).

Liberation theologians, embracing the Rahner's conception of salvation, understand salvation in terms of emancipation from social and political injustice. Namely, "Hugo Assmann, Segundo, and Gutierrez all insist that the choice for salvation is *authentically* made in an anonymous fashion as a purely worldly and ethical decision to respect human freedom" (TST 229). Therefore their understanding of salvation is confined with the Enlightenment conception of freedom which Kant sophisticated in the light of an

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[88] However, Gutiérrez did not dismiss de Lubac thoroughly. He agrees with de Lubac's assertion of one supernatural vocation. However, Gutierrez turns more to the Rahner's line. In *Liberation Theology* he notes: "This point of view [the affirmation of one finality of man] was first supported by Yves de Montcheuil and Henri de Lubac. The novelty of this view (although thoroughly 'traditional' and certain ambiguities in language provoked strong reactions. Rahner continued thinking along these lines, and in order to avoid the difficulties encountered by the authors mentioned above proposed the idea of a 'supernatural existential,' that is, the universal salvific will of God creates in the human being a deep affinity which becomes a gratuitious ontological-real determinant of human nature" (Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* [Maryknoll.NY: Orbis Books, 1973], 70).

autonomous moral agent and human right. Therefore the supernatural vision of salvation is reduced to morality. In his *Liberation Theology After the End of History*, a radical orthodox theologian, Daniel M.Bell, Jr. criticizes the theology of right which Latin American liberationists endorse. According to Bell, the problem with liberationists is their transactional understanding of atonement.[89]

> God's act of atonement in Christ is Christ is foremost an act of grace. The offer of redemption that comes to humanity in Christ is an offer that is unmerited, underserved. Humanity has no claim upon such redemption; there is right to which it corresponds. When it arrives it cannot be synchronized with any calculus that attempt to "render what is due." In this sense, when viewed through the lens of a strict calculus of what is due, redemption is an act of injustice. God is patently unjust, refusing to deal with humanity in the manner it deserves. What is due fallen humanity is death, yet God in God's grace gives life. Pressing the point, in the context of the liberationists' account of justice as a rendering what is due in accord with rights, one could argue that God redeems humanity *from* justice. The atonement amounts to the displacement of justice in the classic sense of "rendering what is due" by grace.[90]

With a view to correcting liberationists' error of identifying social and economic justice with divine grace, Bell suggests, instead of terrible human justice, a true economy of God's salvation grounded in divine forgiveness. For him, forgiveness is a more powerful means than the claim of justice, because the latter generates violence, while the former can break the cycle of violence. Human forgiveness is made possible by divine forgiveness, and not by divine justice.

> God in Christ shouldered the cross and refused to cease suffering, defeating sin and injustice by forgiving it, by bearing it in order to bear it away. Accordingly, the atoning grace of God in Christ displaces such justice as the modality of God's overcoming of sin and sets in its place of forgiveness. God confronts sin, injustice, capitalism, not with justice conceived in the liberationists' terms, but with the gift of forgiveness.[91]

Only the gift of forgiveness can overcome savage capitalism, and achieve reconciliation between the haves and the have-nots. Moreover, forgiveness has the effect of healing the distorted desire which is cultivated by a capitalist mode of life. So while justice negatively sustains human relationship by mutual recognition of the rights of one another, forgiveness can make us positively treat others in love and generosity. As Bell states, "The gift of forgiveness leaves behind the agony of rights and opens a peaceful path of reconciliation by restoring desire in its original mode of donation….Healing desire of the wounds inflicted by capitalist discipline, the gift of forgiveness renews the possibility of a true mutuality and reciprocity of desire through non-possessive participation in the other.[92]

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[89] We shall see Milbank's transactional understanding of atonement in relation to his Christology in the following chapter.
[90] Daniel M. Bell, *Liberation Theology after the End of History*, 131.
[91] Ibid.,146.
[92] Ibid. 151.

A more serious problem with this kind of theology lies in the displacement of the locus of the social from the Church to a supposedly neutral secular social realm. The social came to have little to do with the religious. This is because their notion of salvation is individualistic in character, embracing a Kantian framework, in which the individual is regarded to be the ultimate subject of right. In this sense, their notion of salvation bears close affinity with modern sociological thought. "The political and liberation theologians remains just as 'Weberian' as those who uphold a purely individual conception of salvation" (TST 233).

Seen from the perspective above, Milbank incorporates Gutierrez's theology into the narrative of modernity (TST 241), which dissociates the Trinitarian God from their story. There remains a Cartesian subject, a Kantian transcendental subject, the 'hidden hand', class struggle, etc. After all, liberation theology is in 'the liberal-protestant metanarrative', which has its germ in the late medieval period, promoted by the Reformation and culminated in Enlightenment philosophy. Milbank compares this story to Christian meta-narrative. He admits liberation theology's accent on history in God's salvific work as such. But their theology is dependent on a particular interpretation of history, that is, for them, a Marxist understanding of history. For Milbank, liberation theology lost sight of an authentic theological understanding of history that is focused on the Christ-event by which history has ultimate meaning. That is, in the understanding of history for liberation theology, there is no tension between history and the supernatural. The meaning of history is one-dimensional without any connection to a higher level of meaning. In contrast to this, Christian meta-narrative is historically continued in Church practice.

> The Church was only constituted, historically, by a particular theoretical perspective upon history: a certain history, culminating at a certain point, and continued in the practice of the Church, interprets and 'locates' all other history. It 'reads' all other history as most fundamentally anticipation, or sinful refusal of, salvation. If one takes one's salvation from the Church, if one identifies oneself primarily as a member of the body of Christ, then inevitably one offers the most 'ultimate' explanations of social-historical processes in terms of the embracing or refusal of the specifically Christian virtues. Not to embrace such a 'metanarrative', or to ascribe to it a merely partial interpretative power, would undo the logic of incarnation (TST 246).

3. Secular reaction against the secular

The secular, which is grounded in immanentist ontology, is vulnerable to its own dismantling within itself because it is linked to violence originating in difference. The secular, which is associated with totalizing discourse, does not tolerate *difference* because it implicates a totalizing discourse. As we shall see, Christian ontology sees difference within harmonious order. Therefore, difference does not give birth to violence. When modernity came to its climax, there emerged thinkers who called into question Enlightenment philosophy. Yet Milbank, acknowledging their effort to critique the secular, holds that their philosophies were still confined within the Enlightenment project. Here we examine Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche who represent this current according to Milbank and de Lubac.

3.1 Hegel's return to history

Hegel's philosophy bears an affinity to orthodox Christian faith at certain points.[93] In comparison to his critique of Kant, Milbank's treatment of Hegel is less severe. So Milbank is, in a sense, both "for and against" Hegel (TST ch 6). Unlike Kant, Hegel is a philosopher who accentuates the importance of history in the development of a thought. As Milbank notes, therefore, philosophy for Hegel is the history of philosophy. Likewise, in contrast to Kant, who sought to detach morality from its historical and social context, Hegel argues that morality is embedded deeply in history and community. Hegel's ethical thinking is revealed in his distinction between *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit*. Moralität concerns the individual's moral decisions by which the individual is to accomplish his duty. In contrast, Hegel's Sittlichkeit is rooted in the community and its custom and tradition. So Sittlichkeit is not given as a commandment, but rather naturally interiorized as character and habit in accordance with the practice of the community. Naturally Milbank prefers Hegel's *Sittlichkeit* to Kantian *Moralität* along with de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis, which emphasizes the historical and particular aspect of revelation; in this sense, Milbank's ethical reasoning is deeply rooted in history.[94] Similar to Hegel's Sittlichkeit, morality for Milbank is not something imposed as a commandment, but is rather developed through the formation of virtue.

Milbank believes that Hegel's emphasis on the historical character of human thought is a trace of orthodox Christian faith filtered by counter-Enlightenment thinkers such as Hamann and Herder. Unlike Descartes and Kant, who assigned to the thinking subject the leading role of constructing reality, these thinkers give priority to human creative activity (*poesis*) through language. That is, anticipating the twentieth century appearance of hermeneutics, they think that language precedes human thinking. That is, prelinguistic understandings of reality are impossible. Crucial to them is the idea that they interpret revelation as "our participation in the divine creative power of expression" (TST 150). Milbank describes Herder's symbolic theology as bearing a close affinity with that of de Lubac:

> As it is impossible to separate humanity and language, he envisages the human creative process, or history, as simultaneously the divine revelation which is the bringing to completion of the natural order. Since language is revelation, it is natural that the central creative work of language should be the imagination of religion itself- and Herder is able to fit the centrality of the Christian revelation/religion within this sheme (TST 150).

However, even though Hegel recognizes the importance of the linguistic mediation of human thought, his philosophy did not radically overcome Kant's transcendental philosophy. Milbank points out several points of residual secular reason in Hegel's philosophy. Most of all, Hegel is trapped within the Cartesian subject in that he thinks the subject is pure and contentless (TST 154). In other words, Hegel thinks that the thinking subject is to be separated from the content of the thinking. According to Milbank, for Hegel, "self-thinking, the 'moral' thinking of freedom, is the certainty of

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[93] According to Milbank, "Hegel shows himself to be perhaps a still profounder reader of the Pauline epistle than Martin Luther" (WMS 184).

[94] Cf. Gillian Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1981).

being: *cogito ergo sum* (TST 155). Second, Milbank criticizes Hegel for the myth of negation. Hegel's vision of the world is characterized by negation which is for him the nature of the ultimate reality (Ibid). As we have seen, for Milbank and de Lubac, the spirit of Christianity is not negation linked to dialectical thinking, but paradox which is associated with Christian revelation. De Lubac criticises Hegel's dialectical thinking: "When interest is its accomplishement the spirit is never at a loss to make anything tally with anything else. Modern 'dialectics' provides it with a further opportunity in this game by allowing it to occupy the most contradictory positions without constraint – in turn and almost simultaneously. Seeing what his 'dialectics' has become in the twentieth century must be, I imagine, Hegel's Purgatory" (P 102).[95]

Finally, for Milbank, Hegel's conception of *Sittlichkeit* is not completely detached from Kantian morality. Like Kant's morality, Hegel's ethical thinking is focused on the freedom of the subject, and he thinks that this freedom is best assured in the framework of the modern state. Therefore, "there is no true *Sittlichkeit* in Hegel's ethical and political theory" (TST 170). After all, "Hegel remains, like Kant, committed to the modern natural law paradigm, because he believes that all moral norms can be deduced from the logical implications of human nature" (Ibid.). In this sense, Milbank estimates that "Hegel is … still a liberal" (Ibid.).

The significance of Hegel's work is that he sought to overcome universalist Enlightenment thought by his recognition of the importance of history. In this sense, Milbank is for Hegel. However, he is still trapped within the presupposition of Enlightenment thinking. In this sense, Milbank is against Hegel.

3.2 Karl Marx as a deconstructor of the secular

In spite of Marx's atheistic thought, Milbank reads Marx as "a deconstructor of the secular" (TST 177). He finds in Marx a good ally in his struggle against secular liberalism to the extent that Marx, in resistance against Hegel, demystifies the myth of civil society as a permanent natural realm. In criticizing modern political economy and scientific politics, Marx claims that capitalism is a historically contingent social form. In this regard, Milbank is for Marx. He states: "in some degree.. Marxism really does assist a Christian critique of 'secular order'. This is because it shows that the presuppositions of liberal political theory and of political economy are culturally specific" (TST 191).

Nonetheless, Milbank is not in agreement with Marx in several regards. Milbank thinks that Marx's critique of capitalism is not so radical that he is completely saved from liberalism. First, according to Milbank, despite his critique against Hegel, Marx reproduces a 'materialist version' of Hegel's dialectics (TST 177). This means that Marx regards "the capitalist economy as a necessary phase within the process of human becoming" (Ibid). With regard to this immanent character of Marx's philosophy, de Lubac states well: "For Marx, man has an essentially historical character, that is to say, the real man 'is nothing but man given to one moment of history' nothing in him goes beyond or transcends this moment" (DAH 444).

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[95] Cf. Henri de Lubac, *La Postérité Spirituelle de Joachim de Flore* (Paris/Namur: Lethielleux/Culture et Vérité, 1978), 359-77.

Milbank criticizes Marx's view on religion. According to Milbank, Marx's critique of religion relies on three sources: antique materialism, Feuerbach's projectionist account of religion, and Hegel's dialectics. Marx was taught by ancient materialism that religion does not essentially constitute human nature. At the stage of pure natural religion, human beings enjoyed an intimate relationship to other human beings and nature. It was after the first division of labor that religion emerged as a means of ideological justification. In opposition to Marx's account of religion, Milbank points out Marx's error of supposing a purely natural state in which communication between human beings is immediate and clear. And all meaning is culturally constructed. For Milbank, "communication only arises in the course of the mutual elaboration of a 'mythical' expression of human interrelationship" (TST 180). Thus, Milbank, following de Lubac's rejection of pure nature, holds there is no such thing as pure natural religion since the supposed natural social reality is shaped by human cultural making. He states:

> Every culture must 'dispose' nature in a particular way, and in consequence there is no such thing as a purely 'natural' religion; nor will any 'natural' semantics indicate to us whether the forces of life or soul are material or more-than-material, always conjoined with matter as we know it, or sometimes separable from it, whether as 'spirit', or a less finitely-bound sort of body (TST 179).

Feuerbach's projectionist account of religion is also present in Marxist thought in a more radicalized fashion. Feuerbach's theory of religion is not against religion itself, but against supernatural religion. In other words, he transforms supernatural religion into a religion of man. According to Milbank, Marx attempted to "graft Feuerbachian 'warm' materialism onto Anglo-French 'cold' materialism" (TST 181). In assenting to Feuerbach's claim of the necessity of overcoming man's religious alienation in order to restore man's real identity, Marx distances himself from Feuerbach because he lost sight of social power as the root of all religion. Marx was consistent in his thesis that 'criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism' (Ibid.). Marx's critique of religion is made more explicit in his engagement with Hegel. While for Hegel the state embodies a religious outlook, for Marx it serves for capitalism. Therefore, for Marx the economic basis is the real religious force of society. After all, religion is relegated to a supernatural level and backed up by material foundation. Henri de Lubac criticizes Marx's atheistic humanism as follows:

> In preaching practical means of emancipating man, Marx may be said to have shown himself 'more Feuerbachian than Feuerbach himself' In that way he ensured his own success in revolutionary circles and right to the end, he remained faithful to his inspiration, thanks to the addition that he thus made to it in point of method. Marx's doctrine, never plain naturalism, always paid as much attention to man's spiritual life as to his material existence. His communism offered itself as the only concrete realization of humanism; it quite deliberately claimed to be a total solution for the whom human problem; moving to the plane of reality, it did not propose to figure there only as a social phenomenon but as a spiritual phenomenon also. This is what gives it greatness, but this is also the radical flaw in it (DAH 40-1).[96]

[96][Original text] "En prônant les moyens pratiques d'émanciper l'homme, Marx se montrait donc, peut-on dire, 'feuerbachien plus conséquent que Feuerbach'. Il assurait par là son succès dans les milieux

3.3 Nietzsche and nihilism

As we have seen above, Kant occupies a central place in Milbank's critique of modernity because of his claim for the universality of knowledge and morality. Nietzsche undertook to dismantle Kant's modern project in challenging the possibility of universal knowledge and morality. For him everything is a perspective and an interpretation. In this sense, Nietzsche is a good ally for Milbank in that they both deny objective knowledge and morality. Having recourse to genealogical analysis, Nietzsche attempted to unveil the hidden power strategies in knowledge and morality. According to him, all morality is understood in terms of the power relationships in human society. That is, the concept of 'good' and 'bad' is determined by social power structures. So-called 'master morality' is invented by those who have social resources such as power, wealth, and health. Naturally the weak have *ressentiment*. From this sentiment, so-called 'slave-morality' is invented. In inverting master morality, the weak considers as good that which the strong defines as evil. For the weak, humility, meekness, charity are considered to be good. Christianity is for Nietzsche the typical model of this slave morality.

In reaction to Nietzsche's genealogy, Milbank questions the validity of this method in the explanation of social reality. That is, for Milbank, Nietzsche's genealogy is not the definitive interpretation of social reality. Milbank thinks there can be numerous genealogical analyses. After all, for him genealogy itself is a positivist method. "Genealogy is not an interpretation, but a new 'joyfully' nihilistic form of positivism which explains every cultural meaning-complex as a particular strategy or ruse of power" (TST 282). However, despite Milbank's belief in a plurality of interpretations, he finds that the outcomes of Neitzsche's genealogy are not admissible, because they are anti-Christian in character: "Nietzsche's genealogy will appear as itself but another perspective: an account of the rise of Christianity, written from the point of view of the paganism which it displaced" (Ibid.).

Likewise Milbank criticizes Nietzsche in taking up his concept of 'ressentiment' which is considered by the latter as the origin of slave morality. Protesting against Nietzsche who conceives the 'natural' human states as a power pursuit, Milbank points out his error in stating that "Christian self-understanding, the primary receptivity of 'weakness' is not in relation to the strong, but to God, the source of all charity" (TST 288). The significance of Nietzsche's thought for Milbank lies in its radical attack on Enlightenment philosophy. Nietzsche is more realist and historicist than the Enlightenment thinkers. In this sense, his thougth is sympathetic to Mibank's. However, Milbank is opposed to Nietzsche's atheistic nihilism. Henri de Lubac considers Nieztsche as a mystic which affirms the mythological worldview. However, de Lubac's mysticism has nothing to do with a nihilistic worldview. Rather it is rational and collective because

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révolutionnaires et jusqu'au bout il demeurera, moyennant ce complément de méthode, fidèle à son inspiration. La doctrine de Marx, qui ne sera jamais un plat naturalisme, aura toujours souci de l'existence spirituelle de l'homme autant que de sa vie matérielle. Son communisme se présentera comme la seule réalisation concrète de l'humanisme ; il s'affirmera très consciemment comme une solution totale apportée au problème humain total ; passant dans la réalité des choses, il n'y voudra pas seulement faire figure de phénomène social, mais de phénomène spirituel. C'est ce qui en fait la grandeur, mais c'est aussi ce qui en fait le vice radical" (DHA 37-8).

it is grounded in the Trintiy.[97] As a consequence, for Milbank, "Nietzschean suspicion is the final and truly non-metaphysical mode of secular reason, or itself embodies an ontology of power and conflict which is simply another mythos, a kind of re-invented paganism" (TST 2).

4. Critical issues

4.1 General critical issues

We can learn many insights from Milbank with regard to the emergence of the secular space in his description of the post-Kantian history of ideas. And to a large extent, his description is persuasive and justifiable. As Milbank thinks, all history is an interpretation of history. Yet, if a history is an interpretation, the insistence of one interpretation could be a violence against which Milbank seeks to resist. In this respect, Milbank commits a self-contradiction. While arguing for an ontological peace, he describes his history as if the history of ideas that he writes was the best interpretation. As Bowlin states, "Milbank does not do history. Rather, he writes theological propaganda in historical tones. It's not Scotus who does the inventing here, but Milbank! It's not historical scholarship that Milbank pursues as he explicates Scotus's view, but something more akin to melodrama, to the fabrication of a villain in the service of a moral and theological agenda."[98] In my view, Bowlin's estimation is much exaggerated. However, Milbank's history of ideas gives us an impression that history moves in a simplistic manner and according to his theological agenda. Once again, Bowlin state: "In Milbank's case, the story of secular morality is designed, not so much to secure the reality and importance of secularity- this he assumes- rather to justify certain judgments and attitudes.[99] That is, the worry of many critics of Milbank's theological project is the misuse of a Christian interpretation of history. According to Paul D. Janz, Milbank advocates a particular ideological historiography.[100]Likewise, Rowan William worries about Milbank's reductionistic account of history of idea: "The telling of the story as a narrative of learning or discovery and of particular (economic or social or ritual) crises and conflicts would not weaken the 'metanarrative' project: on the contrary, the risk of Milbank's exposition runs is, rather paradoxically, of slipping into a picture of history as the battlefield of ideal types."[101] Kevin L. Hughes calls into question the status of the genealogical method in historical research. He admits the usefulness of this method as a heuristic device that can arrange the complex and plural historical sources in a logical order. However, this method risks simplifying multiple aspects of historical reality in doing violence to it. He states that "genealogy can tell one where things come from, but it cannot quite describe what things are"[102] Furthermore, "genealology tends

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[97] For the notion of de Lubac's mysticism, see "Mysticism and mystery" in TF 35-69.

[98] John Bowlin, "Opposites, Parts, Wholes, and John Milbank as Geisthistoriker," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 32:2 (2004), 260.

[99] Ibid., 265.

[100] Paul D. Janz, "Radical Orthodoxy and the New Culture of Obscurantism," 371.

[101] Rowan Williams, "Saving Time: Thought on Practice, Patience and Vision," *New Blackfriars* 73:861 (June 1992), 321.

[102] Kevin L. Hughes, "The Ratio Dei and the Ambiguities of History," *Modern Theology* 21:4 (October 2005), 657.

to let the sins of the son be visited upon the father."[103] So he suggests that RO needs a wider theoretical lens, such as Clifford Geertz's 'thick description' of culture[104], in their theological project. For this, instead of the simplistic constrast between Aquinas vs. Scotus, Aquinas vs. Augustine, Dominican vs. Franciscan, he suggests that each tradition can contribute to enriching our understanding of the complex historical reality.[105]

4.2 Critique of Milbank's Kant

Paul D. Janz is in disagreement with Milbank on his critique of Kant's metaphysical dogmatism. According to him, it is Kant himself who sought to attack speculative metaphysics, which Kant calls 'dogmatism' by criticizing pure reason. According to him, "the search for the 'perfectly inert, controllable and present object' with which Milbank wants to saddle Kant is precisely at the heart of what Kant himself rejects as the 'despotic' tactics resorted to by 'the old worm-eaten dogmatism'[106] which arrogates to itself 'the proud name of an ontology'[107]"[108] I think Janz's critique is not right because Milbank's direct target is Kant's dogmatic metaphysics, which is hidden in his attack to speculative metaphysics. That is, for Milbank, despite his claim to liberation from dogmatism, Kant'sphilosophy is still trapped within another kind of dogmatism which supposes the universality of human reason.

Philip Rossi calls into question Milbank's understanding of Kant's strictly dualistic philosophy, which separates noumenal and phenomenal realm. According to him, Kant's distinction between the two realms is not coherent in its uses in different contexts. He states, "[Kant] did *not* understand it as fundamentally making a distinction between two 'worlds'."[109] That is, for Kant there is one world in which we live, but two ways of envisioning the world. In this sense, "there is no bridge that we need to build between two 'worlds' because there is a single 'world.' That is, we need to deal with it, however, in different ways-i.e., in Kant's terms, theoretically and practically in the use of our reason-indicates something that bears principally upon our make up as human, rather than upon the world that we human engage. Whatever duality there may be, it is one that we encounter within the unity of our humanness as embodied finite reason."[110]

4.3 Critique of Milbank's understanding of the Reformation theology

For Milbank, protestant theology in general lacks a metaphysical claim. For him this is directly related to its individualist orientation. However, recent scholarship on Reformation theology shows us that this is not the case. The Reformers did not feel the necessity for the Christian ontology that Milbank affirms, but had the tendency of

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[103] Ibid.
[104] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), ch. 1, cited in ibid.
[105] Ibid., 658.
[106] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A ix-x.
[107] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 247.
[108] Paul D. Janz, "Radical Orthodoxy and Obscurantism," *Modern Theology* 20:3 (July 2004), 373.
[109] Philip Rossi, "The Metaphyscis of the Sublime: Old Wine, New Wineskin?," *Philosophy & Theology* 16:1 (2004),5, available at http://epublications.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=theo_fac (accessed 17 Mars 2013).
[110] Ibid.

attaching less importance to it than to their pastoral care. In fact, Luther is not a total opponent of metaphysical thinking. As Alister Mcgrath notes, "Luther's critique of metaphysics is actually directed against those who import preconceived metaphysical notions of God from outside the Christian tradition, and demand that theology adjust its ideas accordingly; it is not strictly a criticism of the development of a metaphysics within Christian theology itself."[111]

With regard to the metaphysical ambiguity for which Milbank blames Calvin, Billings defends Calvin by way of Calvin's sacramental theology. For him, Calvin's metaphysics is not so ambiguous as Milbank considers it. According to him, Calvin's *duplex gratia* is to be understood in the light of his Trinitarian metaphysics. The Trinitarian account of *duplex gratia* is best illustrated by the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, believers come to depend on God's benevolence as manifest in the acceptance of Christ's imputing righteousness. In this process, the Holy Spirit intervenes into their union with Christ in giving the gracious promise of the Father. Furthermore, this understanding of *duplex gratia* in terms of Trinitarian metaphysics is revealed in his understanding of the sacramental sign. While adopting Augustine's *signum/substantia* schema, he distinguishes the sacramental sign from Christ, because Calvin sees the danger of divinization of creation when we put more trust in physical signs than in the Son of God. That is, the sacraments make us restore our knowledge of God lost after the Fall. The physical sign itself is worthless without our recognition of the grace of God. However, Calvin does not deny the idea that the sacrament plays the role of indicating to us the Christ. In sum, for Billings, "Calvin's eucharistic metaphyscis are designed to preserve and highlight [the] Trinitarian account of adoption through participation in Christ, conditioned by the *duplex gratia*."[112]

In addition, Billings points the metaphysical ambiguity in Calvin's theology is derived from his rejection of speculative theology, which was his main target. Rooted in his humanist background, his practical pastoral concern leads him to eschew speculative argument, and to expose biblical texts. This means that there is no concern with metaphysics in Calvin, but that this metaphysical concern is secondary to his pastoral concerns.[113]

As a consequence, Reformation theology in general cannot be simplistically understood as Milbank does. In a sense, Milbank's participatory metaphysics could be corrected by the Reformer's understanding of metaphysics. As I mentioned just above, from their experiences the Reformers know the danger of speculative thought well. Although young Luther—which Milbank prefers—was attracted to pseudo-Dionysius' mystical theology, he increasingly distanced himself from this. Probably Luther recognized the danger of medieval mystical thought. Calvin is of the same opinion with

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111 Alister E. McGrath, *Scientific Theology: Theory* (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 278.

112 Ibid., 129.

113 Ibid.,194-5. In another article Billings warns against Milbank's too metaphysical claim centered on the gift. This means for him that his theology lacks a biblical exegesis which is crucial to Augustine (who he follows) and Calvin. He states: "For Augustine and Calvin, a theology of grace is always developed within a broad context of scriptural exegesis, whereas for Milbank this context is thin. [And] neither Augustine nor Calvin use the notion of 'gift' in a highly schematic manner, while Milbank elevates the language of 'gift' to the level of an overarching metaphyscis to explain the Trinity, grace, ethics, and more" (Billings, "Milbank's theology of 'gift' and Calvin's theology of grace," 98).

regard to this.[114] Of course, recent scholarship shows that we can find the mystical theology in Luther and Calvin. However, their mystical theology is more balanced than Milbank's in that their mystical theology protects man from self-divinization. Probably Milbank's excessive academic orientation leads him to neglect a realist understanding of the world. From this fact, Milbank could also learn not a few insights from the Reformers.

Milbank accuses Protestantism of its individualism and of its effect on modern thinking. It is true that Protestant theology puts an emphasis on the individual appropriation of the Christ event. It is true that the Reformers' emphasis on the proper proclamation of the Word of God reinforces the individualist understanding of Christian faith. However, we must not confuse the individuality of Christian faith and Christian individualism. There is no Protestant thinker who agrees with modern individualism, even if it paves the way for it. In fact, the critique of the individualist tendency of Protestantism was made within Protestant circle by Karl Barth. His theology is not for individual Christians, but for the Church. However, this idea is not simply Barth's but is also in the veins of Reformation theology. Calvin's emphasis on the knowledge of self as related to the knowledge of God has nothing to do with Descartes's *cogito*.

In reading Milbank it is difficult to find his thoughts on the Word of God and the importance of the sermon which was dear to the Church Fathers. For Milbank, the Scripture and the Eucharist are like two pillars which support orthodox Christianity. But it seems to me that Milbank does not retrieve the importance of the Scripture and its proclamation. In this regard, the Protestant accent on the proclamation of the Word of God can complement Milbank's Eucharist-centered theology.

Barry G. Rasmussen calls into question Milbank's understanding of Luther in focusing especially on his comparison of Luther with Hamann and Jacobi. Although Milbank also acknowledges Luther's understanding of the Incarnation as a linguistic event (WMS 193),[115] he understands Luther in a nominalist context. Rasmussen reminds us that Hamann considers himself as a Lutheran theologian.[116] He also points out that it is questionable that Luther remains within the late medieval nominalist

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[114] "No one will deny that Dionysius, whoever he was, subtly and skillfully discussed many matters in his Celestial Hierarchy. But if anyone examines it more closely, he will find it for the most part nothing but talk. The theologian's task is not to divert the ears with chatter, but to strengthen consciences by teachings things true, sure, and profitable. If you read the book, you would think a man fallen from heaven recounted, not what he had learned, but what he had seen with his own eyes. Yet Paul, who had been caught up beyond the third heaven [II Cor, 12: 2], not only said nothing about it, but also testified that it is unlawful for any man to speak of the secret things that he has seen [II Cor 12: 4]. Therefore, bidding farewell to that foolish wisdom, let us examine in the simple teaching of Scriptures what the Lord would have us know of his angel " (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill (Louisville : Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), B 1, Ch XIV., 4 (164). See Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Chrisitian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

[115] Cf. Gerhard Ebeling, *Evangelische Evangelienauslegung: Eine Untersuchung zu Luther's Hermeneutik* (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, 1962); Albrecht Beutel, *In dem Anfang was das Wort: Studien zu Luthers Sprachverständnis* (Tübingen: J.C.B.Mohr [Paul Siebeck],1991); Thomas Wabel, *Sprache als Grenz in Luthers Theologischer Hermeneutik und Wittgensteins Sprachphilosophie* (Walter de Gruyter: Berlin, 1998); Graham White, "Luther's View on Language," *Journal of Literature and Theology* 3 (1989),188-218

[116] Barry G. Rasmussen, "Radical Orthodoxy, Luther, and the Challenge of Western Secularization," *Dialog* 41: 2 (Summer 2002), 144.

framework.[117] According to Rasmussen, Luther also has the linguistic turn, but in a different direction from Milbank. If Luther's linguistic turn is centered on the proclamation of the Word as Law and Gospel, Milbank's linguistic turn is focused on analogy.[118] Here Rasmussen draws on Stephen D. Paulson contrast theology based on *analogia entis* and Luther's theology based on *communicatio idiomatum*. "The difference between the two will be the same as the difference between a proclamation shaped as gospel followed by the law and one that begins with law and continues with the gospel."[119] After all, two different turns to language gives birth to two different understandings of grace. For Luther grace is given by the proclamation of the Word, whereas for Milbank grace is but a correspondence of believers's knowledge of God to God's external activity. So for Milbank, "the gospel becomes information about how things really are and those addressed are given the task of aligning themselves to this knowledge."[120] In my view Rasmussen's typical Lutheran evaluation of Milbank is to be corrected, because Milbank's conception of grace is not simply a correspondence between human knowledge and God's external activity. As with Luther, Milbank, following de Lubac, argues that grace is a gift from God, but this grace is given in a particular historical time and place. Therefore Milbank's affirmation of *analogia entis* does not concern the correspondence theology of truth, but is to be understood as a symbolic value of the particular event of grace. In this perspective, Milbank and Luther's concepts of grace are much nearer than we think.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen the historical process of the development of the secular according to de Lubac and Milbank. In many regards, de Lubac's story bears significant affinity with Milbank's story. What matters is not this affinity, but their shared idea that the secular did not emerge opposing the theological, but was born within Christian theology itself. For them, the idea of pure nature is a crucial notion which made the secular in the sense that this idea supposes the autonomy of human reason. And this autonomy of reason provides a foundation for a modern secular world without God.

Milbank accentuates the importance of the nominalist tradition in the formation of the secular. But de Lubac understands the emergence of the nominalist tradition in terms of the idea of pure nature. In spite of their different genealogy, they agree that there was a turning point in Western thinking, which anticipates the subsequent secularizing tendency, and where human ideas are not simply intellectual play, but the impetus to shape the world. As we have seen, modern Kantian subjectivity provides a basis for the sociological account of the society. The Kantian philosophical basis has done harm to theology embracing the Kantian model as well as philosophy, even though Kant's moral ideal is laudable as such. Kantian philosophy legitimated the world

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[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid., 145. See Stephen D. Paulson, *Analogy and Proclamation: The Struggle over God's Hiddenness in the Theology of Martin Luther and Eberhard Jüngel* (Chicago: Th.D. dissertation for Lutheran School of Theology, 1992).
[120] Ibid.

without God as a purely human space. But as we have experienced last century, this space turned out to be a violent world without issue, a world where 'man is a wolf to his fellow man' (homo homini lupus *est*). This tragedy motivates Milbank to set forth a traditional Christian vision which can overcome modern secularity.

Peculiar to Milbank's story is his critique of 'liberal protestant meta-narrative' which focuses on the modern liberal individual who has the right to life, liberty and property. In tracing the roots of this meta-narrative, he unveils the hidden theological assumption. According to Milbank:

> The 'liberal protestant meta-narrative' is then questionable at all its specific points. It has the merit of recognizing the unmistakable uniqueness of both the Jewish presence in history (as a kind of 'counter-state' and the Christian ecclesial presence as a new sort of universal society quite distinct from tribe, empire or polis. But it tries to read this uniqueness as the always implicit presence in the west of a private real of value, a presence which makes western history, in turn, the key to the history of the whole world (TST 96).

In Part II entitled '*Practicing the Supernatural'*, we shall see the distinctive characteristics of Christian meta-narrative which counteract the liberal protestant meta-narrative. This Christian meta-narrative is rooted in the story of Jesus in the Gospels. Behind this narrative lies the ontology of peace undergirded by the Trinity. So the Trinity is linked to Christian meta-narrative. For Milbank, the ultimate aim of the story of Jesus is to establish the Church which will continue the story of Jesus. Therefore, the Church is not a human institution among others, but a supernatural institution made by the work of the Trinity. Milbank is convinced that only the Church as God's language shaped by story of Jesus can resist against the liberal-secular narrative.

Part II. Practicing the Supernatural

In accentuating the tragic importance of Christian theology today, Milbank notes that this rehabilitation of theology as meta-discourse is directly linked to Christian practice, which is for him the real locus where Christian theology is to be done. He laments the present situation in which Christian theology finds itself in writing that "the truth is that we remain uncertain as to where today to locate true Christian practice" (WMS 1). This is because Christian theology has long been at the service of secular humanist practice since the Enlightenment, which excluded the supernatural from its philosophical discourse in disdaining it as a superstition. For Milbank Christian practice is something strange in the eyes of ordinary man, because it is revealed supernaturally. This practice is anticipated by all men, but comes to us surprisingly. Following de Lubac and theurgical neo-Platonic tradition, Milbank does not establish a distinction between theory and practice, a distinction which is a bastard of modernity. For him, practice is a constitutive element of theorization. At the Christological level, this means that Jesus's practice precedes our dogmatic formulation of Christian revelation. Furthermore, the Church's practice is what makes the Church itself, which is in turn the continuation of the practice of Jesus. In part II, first of all, we shall examine Milbank's Christological poetics which is the heart of Milbank's theology in relation to the Christological significance of Henri de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis. Then, we shall consider the ethical significance of the *surnaturel* thesis in relation to de Lubac's biblical hermeneutics. Finally, we shall see Milbank's vision of the Church in the postmodern secular world based on de Lubac's Eucharist-centered vision of the Church. For Milbank and de Lubac, if their Christology is the core of their theology, their ecclesiology is the climax of their theology.

V. Milbank's Poetical Christology

Connaiître ne dispense pas de faire; faire peut dispenser de connaître.[1]
[Knowing does not dispense with doing; doing can dispense with knowing]
To do Christology is to inscribe Christ into the times and cultures we inhabit.[2]

In part I of this thesis, we have examined the idea of participation, which is the central framework of Milbank's theology, in terms of several subjects such as the nature—grace relationship, *poesis*, the gift, paradox, language, narrative, etc. In this chapter, I will demonstrate that Milbank's Christology is best understood in terms of the idea of participation. Henri de Lubac's idea of the supernatural is nothing other than the gift of God which is embodied through Jesus. As with de Lubac, the idea of the supernatural is, for Milbank, the key to understanding the life, death and resurrection of Christ. Sharing de Lubac's fundamental thesis that Jesus is the *sacrament* of God who represents God's likeness, Milbank opposes modern theology's systematic formulation of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. This is not because he believes that this attempt is of no value, but because it can reduce God's mystery of salvation into a human conceptuality. For him, Jesus is a *sign* that signifies the invisible and incomprehensible God. To put it another way, the incarnated *Logos* is a "supremely poetic figure" (WMS 3). Milbank is convinced that only this understanding of Christ can resolve the impasse between individuality and collectivity, between immanence and transcendence, and between ethical universality and ethical particularity.

In this regard, Milbank refuses the classical liberal and rationalist account of Christ, in which Jesus is conceived as the culmination of human nature, regarding Him as a person who proclaims the universal moral principle for all humanity. Behind this approach lies the rejection of the participatory ontology which Milbank strongly espouses. Equally, Milbank opposes to the fundamentalist's understanding of Christ, an understanding which emerged as a response to the modernist crisis in theology. This account of Jesus suggests that the content of revelation of Christ can be expressed in propositional forms. Against this ahistorical attempt to formulate Jesus' work and death, Milbank, with de Lubac, maintains that Jesus' work and death cannot be understood apart from his historicity.

However, they argue that the historical aspect of Jesus is not to be *absolutely* historicized, because history is but a first step into the spiritual dimension. In fact, for them, the historical and transcendental dimension of Jesus is inseparably intermixed in His earthly work. This understanding of Jesus characterizes de Lubac's Christology.[3]

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[1] Maurice Blondel, *L'Action* in Maurice Blondel, *Œuvres complètes*, tome I, [1893], *Les Deux Thèses* (Paris: PUF,1995), 474.

[2] Graham Ward, *Christ and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 2.

[3] For de Lubac's Christology in general, see Jean -Pierre Wagner, "La Lumière du Christ," in *Théologie Fondamental Selon Henri de Lubac* (Paris: Cerf, 1997), 67-91; Donath Hercsik, *Jesus Christus als Mitte der Theologie von Henri de Lubac* (Frankfurt: Verlag Josef Knecht, 2001); Étienne Guibert, *Le Mystère du Christ d'après Henri de Lubac*, *Étude Lubacienne V* (Paris: Cerf, 2006); Noel O'Sullivan, *Christ and Creation: Christology as the Key to Interpreting the Theology of Creation in the Works of Henri de Lubac* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009).

What is crucial to our endeavor to highlight the influence of the mystical theology of de Lubac on the Christology of Milbank is the former's identification of mystery as *sign* or *sacrament*. This understanding is differentiated from the postmodern immanentist understanding of sign which cuts the supernatural link off from the *sign*. Postmodern philosophy supposes that there is no one-to-one correspondence between *sign* and what it represents (reality). Human knowledge is constructed by the system of signs, but we do not know if these signs represent the true reality or not. In this sense, the sign is considered dead, as Catherine Pickstocks describes.[4] In contrast, Milbank's affirmation of the importance of the sacramental value of Jesus rescues us from postmodern nihilism. In this sense, the sign of Jesus is a life-giving sign. In this chapter, we will briefly investigate, first of all, de Lubac's Christological mysticism. On this basis, we will consider Milbank's poetical Christology.

1. Henri de Lubac's mystical understanding of Christ

1.1 De Lubac's notion of mystery

Mystery is one of the overarching terms which could embrace de Lubac's overall theology. As de Lubac acknowledges it, this term can be interchangeable with the idea of the supernatural on which our investigation is focused.[5] Unlike the ordinary sense of the term, mystery in the Christian sense does not connote the things which bypass human reason. The Christian mystery, in de Lubac's understanding, is far from being irrational or absurd. It surpasses human reason, but is deeply rooted in human reason.[6]

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[4] See Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing,* esp. ch. 3: Signs of Death. She contrasts postmodernism with Radical Orthodoxy with regard to the reality: "Postmodernism appears to have foreclosed the possibility of a benign, universal, rationalist humanism, while, on the other hand, it does not seem able to refute the suggestion that it is itself irredeemably nihilistic. Radical orthodoxy, however, has offered a third alternative: while conceding, with postmodernism, the indeterminacy of all our knowledge and experience of selfhood, it construes this shifting flux as a sign of our dependency on a transcendent source which "gives" all reality as a mystery, rather than as adducing our suspension over the void" (*After Writing*, xii).

[5] De Lubac admits the weakness of his choice of the term supernatural in order to fully express God's self-communication in Jesus Christ. But he also states that he uses this term because he has to emphasize the transcendent character of divine grace: "When philosophers and theologians often experience a similar desire to get down to the concrete right away, one can certainly say that, just as the word nature 'fails to indicate clearly the logic of freedom, so too the word supernatural does not fully express the reality of the communication that God makes of himself in Jesus Christ.' [Nature and the Supernatural], therefore, do not suffice to express the 'personal and historic relationship' in which 'the Christian mystery' consists. However, in our opinion there would be more than one difficulty in trying to eliminate their use completely. They oblige us, in our theological reflections, to proceed step by step. They remain useful because 'they forewarn us against the temptation of naturalizing the mystery', in other word, 'of understanding the divine Love which freely evoked another love.'" (BCNG 40-41); [Original text] "Dans une époque telle que la nôtre, où philosophes et théologiens éprouvent souvent un désir analogue d'en venir tout de suite au concret, on peut dire assurément que, de même que le mot *nature* ' désigne trop peu clairement la logique de la liberté, le mot *surnaturel* ne dit pas jusqu'à quel point il s'agit de la communication que Dieu fait de lui-même en Jésus-Christ'; ces deux mots ne suffisent donc point à exprimer 'la relation personnelle et historique' en quoi consiste 'le mystère chrétien.' Il y aurait toutefois, pensons –nous, plus d'un inconvénient à vouloir s'en passer toujours. Ils nous obligent, dans la réflexion théologique, à ne pas brûler les étapes. Ils resteront propres à nous 'mettre en garde contre la tentation de 'naturaliser' le mystère, c'est-à-dire 'de méconnaître l'Amour divin qui a librement suscité un autre amour'" (PCNG 30-1).

[6] See John Milbank, "From the Mystery of Reason to the Mediation of Habit," in *The Grandeur of Reason*, ed. Conor Cunningham (London: SCM Press, 2010), 68-117.

Without this mystery, human reason becomes the amputated one which does not work rightly.

Enlightenment reason is a case in point, since, according to its claim, it considers itself as self-contained, self-sufficient and autonomous, without reference to the supernatural. This model is the opposite of de Lubac's integrated view of nature and grace, according to which human natural reason is not sufficient initself, but already engraced. In this respect, faith, which is the primary stance in front of reality, is the fundamental mode of understanding the world, not the Enlightenment's supposedly universal, unbiased reason. As C.S.Lewis says well, "What we learn from experience depends on the kind of philosophy we bring to experience. It is therefore useless to appeal to experience before we have settled, as well as we can, the philosophical question."[7] This means that there is no neutral and objective vantage point from which the human being can interpret the world. Without faith, we cannot have access to the world. Hence, there is not universal reason, but rather different rationalities based on different faiths. After all, we can do justice to de Lubac's affirmation of 'the intelligence by the faith'. By faith, Christian mystery penetrates human intelligence and opens a surprisingly new dimension qualitatively different from the Enlightenment faith undergirded by immanent human reason. As de Lubac writes, "Mystery whose light probably projects itself to the real, giving birth to this 'intelligence by faith'...but above all immerses to the interior of human mind in order to illuminate certain unperceived depths."[8] If we cannot understand Christian mystery, it is not because this mystery is absurd, but because this mystery surpasses human reason. In surpassing human reason, it does not suppress it, but rather reinforces it, because human reason is apt to this mystery.

Here we can spell out the particularities of Christian mystery as de Lubac understands it in his distinction between pagan and Christian mysticism. These two kinds of mysticisms have their own characteristics. First and foremost, pagan mysticism is rooted in the irrational Dionysian state which is individualistic in character, while Christian mysticism is associated with a sober state that the Holy Spirit gives and it is collective in character (DAH 91). Moreover, Christian mysticism pursues the union with Christ and the elevation of the human self toward God. Therefore, it is, in de Lubac's terms, a 'mysticism of likeness' (TF 57). In distinguishing the image and the resemblance of God, de Lubac maintains that the image is designed to be elevated toward the resemblance of God. Drawing on Augustine, de Lubac states that "the divine image is inalienable in every human being, but the union with God is a 'union of likeness' (Ibid.).[9] Nevertheless, since it is mediated by the elevated Christ, Christian mysticism does not seek self-divinization as we often see it in pagan mysticism. De Lubac makes explicit his notion of Christian mysticism as follows:

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[7] C.S.Lewis, *Miracle: A Preliminary Study* (New York: HaperCollins, 2001), 2.

[8] [Original text] "Mystère dont la lumière sans doute se projette sur le réel, engendrant cette 'intelligence par la foi' dont il était question tout à l'heure, mais surtout plonge à l'intérieur de l'esprit humain pour en éclairer certaines profondeurs inaperçues "(Henri de Lubac, *Recherches dans la Foi. Trois: Études sur Origène, saint Anselme et la Philosophie Chrétienne*, *Bibliothèque des archives de philosophie*. N. S . 27 [Paris: Beauchesne, 1979], 147).

[9] [Original text] " l'image divine est inaliénable en tout home, mais l'union avec Dieu est 'une union de ressemblance' "(Saint Augustine, Epist. 187, c.5,n. 16, PL,33, 937).

> The mystical experience of the Christian, rather than being a deepening of *self*, is-in its most intimate being-a deepening of *faith*. Christian interiority is never and can never be pure interiority. The deeper it goes, the more it involves the intentional movement that carries the mystic beyond himself in the direction of the Source who is forever filling in the gulf that separates them…The Christian experience is not only a participation in the experience of Christ- albeit superior and unique- it is a paticipation, always deficient and the deeper it goes the more the mystic becomes aware of the deficiency, in the reality of Christ (TF55).[10]

Second, as distinguished from pagan mysticism, Christian mysticism is grounded in history. This fact is foreshadowed in the Old Testament narrative and culminated in the incarnation of Christ. The significance of this emphasis on history lies in the impact of Christian mystery on human concrete lives. The mystery of Christ is not an abstract idea untouchable in heaven, but an embodied reality in real human history. As de Lubac states: "This mystery is entirely concrete. It does not exist in idea. It does not consist in any atemporal truth or object of detached speculation. This mystery is a reality in act, the realization of a Grand Design; it is therefore, in the strongest sense, even something historical, in which personal beings are engaged" (ME 2, 95).[11] What is of paramount importance for de Lubac and Milbank is the fact that Christian mystery cannot be expressed in the propositional form as is done by neo-scholasticism and Protestant fundamentalism, because it is not fallen from heaven, but incarnated in history.

Third, another crucial feature of Christian mysticism, according to de Lubac, lies in its emphasis on the collective dimension of mystery as well as the individual one. This emphasis is well illustrated by de Lubac's mystical interpretation of the Scripture. If we consider the Old and New Testament as a double aspect of the same mystery of Christ, the Old Testament focuses on the collective aspect of Christian mystery, while the New Testament on individual spirit. But de Lubac neglects neither the Old Testament, nor the New Testament.[12] We can now understand that de Lubac's understanding of the human person as a mystery is inextricably linked to the Church as mystery. For him the Church is the center of all mysteries: "The Church is a mystery of faith, and 'surpasses

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[10] [Original text] "L'expérience mystique du chrétien n'est pas un approfondissement de *Soi*: elle est, au plus intime de son être, approfondissement de la *Foi*. L'intériorité chrétienne n'est jamais et ne peut pas être intériorité pure: plus elle se creuse, plus elle comporte le mouvement intentionnel qui porte le mystique au-delà de lui-même, dans la direction de la Source qui ne cesse de combler son abîme. L'expérience chrétienne n'est pas seulement…participation à l'expérience du Christ, même déclarée supérieure, unique; elle est participation -toujours déficiente, et comprenant mieux sa déficience à mesure qu'elle s'approfondit- à la Réalité du Christ" (TO 59).

[11] [Original text] "ce mystère est tout ce qu'il y a de plus concret. Il n'est nullement en idée. Il ne consiste point en quelque vérité intemporelle, objet de spéculation détachée. C'est une réalité en acte, la réalisation d'un Grand Dessein ; c'est donc, au sens le plus fort qui soit, quelque chose d'historique encore, en quoi des êtres personnels sont engagés " (EM I-II 504).

[12] According to de Lubac, "Tradition, whether it deals with the Old Testament or the Gospel, and especially when it deals with the parables, preserves both these aspects of the mystical meaning – one has in view the collective destiny of man, the other the interior life of the soul" (C 207); [Original text]"Qu'il s'agisse.. de l'Ancien Testament, ou de l'Évangile et spécialement des paraboles, la Tradition maintient de pair un double sens mystique, dont l'un vise les destinées collectives du genre humain, et le second, l'histoire intime de l'âme" (C 170).

the capacities and powers of our intellect no less than any other.' More than this, she is, as far as we are concerned, the meeting-place of all mysteries (SC 4).[13]

Finally, for our investigation to Milbank's theology, one feature of Christian mystery is extremely important. That is de Lubac's emphasis on symbolism in Christian mysticism. Symbol is of no value for its own sake, but for the supernatural reality that the symbol indicates. De Lubac takes the example of the symbol of 'spiritual marriage' between the human spirit and God, and between the Church and God. Drawing on the prophet Hosea, Song of Solomon, Meister Eckhart, Tauler, Origen, and St Bernard, he reminds us that the use of symbol is rooted in the Scripture itself and the Christian tradition. For him, the symbol is an indispensable means of revealing the essential character of Christian mystery. Namely, the symbol has a sacramental value for representing the ineffable. The necessity of symbol stems from the fact that there is a union between God and the human spirit, but at the same time an infinite chasm: "Between the human soul and its God, as in the marriage of the Church and the Lamb, there is always a union, not absorption (whether in one sense or the other). It is, if you wish, an unification but not an identification" (TF 60).[14] Biblical symbol plays a mediating role between men and God. After all, de Lubac's Christian mysticism is closely linked to the problem of language. This is an idea shared by de Lubac and Milbank alike. De Lubac cites, with approval, Jean Lacroix, who thinks that the comprehension of the sign is the fundamental basis of mystical theology. According to Lacroix,"the deepest thing in the spiritual history of mankind is the comprehension of the sign, and every great philosophy is a semeiology: the discovery of world's cipher and the consequent ability to reveal its language is the object of man's basic desire. And mysticism is undoubtedly the meaning of signs before anything else."[15] Milbank, in his turn, confirms the importance of the sign in de Lubac's mystical theology. "De Lubac indeed declared that theology should be mysticism and that mysticism was essentially a reading of signs" (SM 12). In the 1960s, de Lubac, against humanism, appealed to the semiotic vogue (Ibid.).

We can see that Milbank's emphasis on the sign is founded on de Lubac's Christian mysticism, where the biblical symbol plays a central role. First of all, the importance of biblical symbol, which represents the unintelligible God, leads him to abandon the substantialist understanding of God and to accept the relational understanding. This means that our idea of God cannot be directly acquired by human reason. Therefore, the human being as a finite creature cannot enter into the essence of God. The only access to the knowledge of God is possible through the mediation of signs which we make. So Milbank parts company with the tradition which distinguishes *res* and *signum* as

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[13] "C'est qu'elle est un mystère de foi. 'Non moins que tout autre, elle dépasse les capacités et les forces de notre intelligence.' Bien plus, elle est pour nous comme le lieu de tous les mystères " (ME 12). Citation is in *Roman Catechism*, ch. x, no. 21.

[14] [Original text] "Entre l'âme humaine et son Dieu, comme dans les noces de l'Eglise et de l'Agneau, il s'agit toujours d'union, non d'absorption (que ce soit dans un sens ou dans l'autre); d'unification si l'on veut, mais non d'identification"(TO 65).

[15] Jean Lacroix, *Marxism, Existentialism, Personalism* (1949), 47, cited by Henri de Lubac, ST, 70-1; [Original text] "Ce qu'il y a de plus profond dans l'histoire spirituelle de l'humanité, c'est la compréhension du signe, et toute grande philosophie est une séméiologie : découvrir le chiffre du monde et pouvoir ainsi en révéler le langage, tel est l'objet du désir fondamental de l'homme" (Jeans Lacroix, *Marxisme, existentialisme, personnalisme* (1949), in Henri de Lubac, ET 96).

grounded in Aristotelian form/matter union. For him, there is no self-sufficient *res*. We cannot know things in themselves. What is available to us is the *signum,* which mediates us to the *res*. This means that what we can know is the *signum*, not *res*. This understanding is well illustrated by Basil whom Milbank cites with approval.

> Do not let us seek for any nature devoid of qualities by the condition of its existence but let us know that all the phenomena with which we see it clothed regard the condition of its existence and complete its essence. Try to take away by reason each of the qualities which it possesses, and you will arrive at nothing. Take away black, white, weight, density, the qualities which concern taste, in one word all that which we see in it, and the substance vanishes.[16]

By this citation of Basil, Milbank means to say that there is no underlying '*substratum*' or 'essence' and that there remains only different qualities.[17] For example, when we perceive a thing, we cannot intuitively grasp the essence of the thing, but first of all, the qualities which characterize this thing. But if one quality is changed or eliminated, the entire image also changes. This means that our knowledge of God is mediated by human language, which is the unique mediator of the human being to God.

1.2 De Lubac's mystical Christology

De Lubac's mystical Christology offers a basis for the understanding of Christian mystery. At the same time, this Christology also shares the common characteristics of Christian mystery in general that we have recapitulated above. In other words, all other Christian mysteries concentrate on this mystery. De Lubac thinks that Jesus-Christ is the perfect and definitive form of the Christian mystery, since it finally reveals God's design of the salvation for humanity. In relation to Milbank's poetical Christology, it is necessary to see several characteristics of de Lubac's mystical Christology.[18]

In the first place, de Lubac's mystical Christology is grounded in the mystery of the Trinity. In distinction to pagan mysteries, the Christian mystery is unveiled in Trinitarian terms through the incarnation of Christ: "Christian mysticism is a Trinitarian mysticism since, in Jesus Christ, all the Trinity reveals and gives itself " (TF

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[16] Basil, 'The Hexaemeron', in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol, VIII (Oxford: Jakes Parker 1895), 8, cited in "The Linguistic Turn as a Theological Turn," in WMS 98.

[17] See John Milbank "Theology without Substance: Christianity, Signs, Origins Part I," *Literature and Theology* 2 (1988), 8-13.

[18] Before entering into an examination of de Lubac's mystical Christology, it is helpful to have in mind Tom Bonache's definition of mystical Christology. He incorporates mystical Christology into the type which he classifies as queer Christology. The principal characteristic of this Christology consists in the fact that it is rooted in history. But a more important fact is that history is to be mythologized in order that it becomes a universal paradigm for the enhancement of humanbeing: "The fourth type of queer Christology that I have discovered is what I will call a 'mystical' Christology. It is mystical because it does not seek to ground itself in the historical Jesus or any literal reading of the Gospels, but rather seeks to take clues for human development from the significant events of Jesus' life. A mystical Christology takes the historical framework and 'mythologizes' it so that it becomes paradigmatic or archetypal for the becoming of human, in this case queer, identity. This type of Christology is quite close to my own, for I believe that the stories of Jesus are there as signposts for us along our journey. If they are literalized, they lose their freshness to speak to every day and age. If they are interpreted only in their historical context, they are unable to motivate us to growth and change, which is what I believe any good theology, including Christology, must do" (Tom Bonache, *Christology from the Margin* [London: SCM Press, 2008], 226).

62).[19] The Trinitarian character of Christian mysticism suggests that the object of our adoration is not the non-personal being such as "All-Possibility" or "the place of indefinite possibilities". Neither is he the *Ungrund*," but a personal being expressed as an "infinitely determined form" (TF 62-3).[20] Instead, it is the manifestation of the Love of the personal and infinite God in order to achieve the union of man and God in Christ. In this sense, "in him all the mystery of the personal Being is condensed" (TF 63).[21] Therefore, the central problem of Christian dogmatics is the incarnated Word which is the manifestation of God: "The intellectural fertility of the gesture of the love stems from the intrinsic links which unites the eternal Love, who is God and his manifestation in Jesus Christ. At the center of Christian dogmatics is the gesture of redemptive gesture of the Incarnation of the Word, the 'All of Dogma': "Man and God embrace each other in the Christ."[22]

In the second place, his Christology can be best understood in terms of his idea of the supernatural. And equally, de Lubac's idea of the supernatural itself is Christological notion.,as Karl Neufeld well noted: "in its Christian reception, the supernatural can be conceived only in dependence on the full and definitive self-communication of God in Jesus Christ"[23] De Lubac's Christological model is consonant with his integrated model of the relationship between nature and grace. That is, the natural and supernatural aspect of Jesus is inseparably united in one person. This view is illustrated by his concept 'intrinsic transcendence'. The transcendence of Christianity is not of this world. It is not simply a human imagination, nor a chimerical phantom. However, it is profoundly rooted in history. This is a uniqueness which distinguishes Christianity from other religions which lack a historical engagement. Christian mystery is the synthesis between nature and the supernatural.[24]

From this fact, we can see the character of Christological dogma which de Lubac suggests. Unlike neo-scholastic theology, revelation cannot be formulated in a propositional form, because it is not an idea, but an event.[25] It is a gesture of God's

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[19] [Original text] " la mystique Chrétienne est une mystique trinitaire, puisque, en Jésus-Christ, toute la Trinité se révèle et se donne " (TO 68).

[20] Ibid., 68.

[21] [Original text] "en lui se condense le mystère de l'Être personnel "(Ibid.).

[22] [Original text] "La fécondité intellectuelle du geste de la charité provient des liens intrinsèques qui unissent l'Amour éternel qu'est Dieu et sa monstration en Jésus-Christ. Au centre de la dogmatique chrétienne, il y a le geste d l'Incarnation rédemptric du Verbe, le 'Tout du Dogme': "L'homme et Dieu s'embrassent dans le Christ" (De Lubac, 'La Lumière du Christ', in *Affrontement Mystique*, *Œuvre Complètes IV* [Paris: Cerf,2006], 401), translation mine.

[23] [Original text] "en son acception chrétienne, le surnaturel ne peut être conçu qu'en dépendance de la pleine et définitive auto-communication de Dieu en Jésus-Christ,"(Karl Neufeld, "Surnaturel," in *Dictionaire de Théologie Fondamentale* [Montréal/Paris :Bellarmin/Éd.du Cerf, 1992, 1278.], cited in Jean-Pierre Wagner, *La Théologie Fondamentale selon Henri de Lubac*, 147.)

[24] De Lubac calls this synthesis as 'intrinsical transcendence' : "Transcendance intrinsèque, en vertu de laquelle une réalité donnée, considérée comme synthèse, dans ce qui fait son être propre, surpasse essentiellement les réalités du même genre qui l'entourent, quelle que puisse être la communauté des éléments qu'elle informe avec les leurs, quels que puissent être aussi les liens d'origine qui rendent ces divers éléments solidaires. Toute synthèse véritable n'est toujours plus que synthèse. Une certaine refonte qui est beaucoup plus qu'une combinaison nouvelle, une certaine 'reprise par le dedans' transforme tout. C'est, dans une continuité phénoménale, le passage à un ordre nouveau, supérieur, incommensurable" ("La Lumière du Christ, " 389).

[25] In his inaugural lecture in fundamental theology at the theological faculty of Lyon (1929), de Lubac laments dogmatism in Catholic theology which was caused by extrinsic understanding of the relationship

abounding love. After all, Christian dogma cannot be divided from this love. De Lubac does not think that Christian dogma is unnecessary. Yet it is not dogma which determines the person of Jesus. Inversely, the person of Jesus determines dogma: "The reality of this Dogma and the truth of Dogma are inseparably united, Charity constituting the reality of this Dogma, as this Domga itself constitutes the truth of this Charity."[26]

From this point of view, de Lubac opposes all attempts to 'naturalize' and 'dehistoricize' Jesus alike. Just as nature and grace are in intimate union in de Lubac's sacramental ontology, the historical and sacramental aspect of Jesus is integrated in Him. In other words, de Lubac rejects the extrinsic accounts of Jesus, such as a purely historical account of Jesus without consideration of the mystical sense of his person and work, or as an ahistorical propositional account of Jesus which has no link to the historical reality. In this sense, de Lubac overcomes the traditional distinction between *Christology 'from above,'* which places an emphasis on the pre-existence of Jesus, and *Christology 'from below,'* which focuses on the earthly work of Christ. Rather, in de Lubac's theology, these two aspects complement each other. According to de Lubac, these Christologies are to be brought together in the mystery of Christ. This fact is shown in the context of his discussion of the allegory which binds together Christ and the Church in his *Exégèse Médiévale*. According to de Lubac,

> The object of allegory is sometimes said to be Christ, and sometimes the Church, and sometimes both the one and the other. Indeed, if one takes one series of texts, one

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between nature and grace. He laments: "What a small-minded theology it is that treats the object of faith as an object of science, that does not know how to discern religion in its intimate and universal reality and, thus, envisages only a system of truths and precepts imposing itself only on the basis of a certain number of facts! It confines dogma to the extremities of knowledge and, hence, isolate it This small minded theology makes dogma into a kind of 'superstructure', believing that, if dogma is to remain 'supernatural', it must be 'superficial' and that, by cutting it off from all human roots, it is making this dogma all the more divine" ("Apologetics and Theology," in TF 94-5); [Original text] "Quelle théologie mesquine, en effet, que celle qui traite l'objet de la foi en objet de science; qui, ne sachant pas discerner la religion dans sa réalité intime et universelle, n'y voit qu'un système de vérités et de préceptes, s'imposant uniquement à partir d'un certain nombre de faits! Elle confine le dogme aux extrémités de la connaissance, dans une province reculée, sans communication avec les autres. Elle en fait une sorte de 'superstructure', croyant que, pour demeurer 'surnaturel', il faut qu'il soit 'superficiel', et le pensant d'autant plus divin qu'elle le coupe davantage de toute racine humaine"(TO 101). Surprisingly, in the Reformed tradition, the same idea is voiced in Dooyweerd, for him "dogmatic theology is a very dangerous science. Its elevation to a necessary mediator between God's Word and the believer amounts to idolatry and testifies to a fundamental misconception concerning its real character and position. If our salvation be dependent on theological dogmatics and exegesis, we are lost…" (Hermann Dooyeweerd, *In the Twilight of Western Thought*, 93).

[26] [Original text] " L'homme et Dieu s'embrassent, s'unissent indissolublement la réalité de la Charité et la vérité du Dogme, la Charité constituant la réalité de ce Dogme, comme ce Dogme lui-même constitue la vérité de cette Charité." De Lubac argues the priority of practice over dogme. That is, dogma is the means to assure the practice. Dogma must not define the practice of the Church. This point is strongly shared with John Milbank. De Lubac states: "Evangelium Christi- Evangelium de Christo: forme moderne, à peine plus subtile, de la vieille antithèse de la pratique et du dogme. Mais en maintenant contre ceux qui les opposent qu'il y a entre l'une et l'autre un rapport essentiel, nous ne voulons pas dire simplement qu'il faut conserver le dogme comme un moyen d'assurer la pratique. Leurs liens sont intrinsèques, et la nécessité de leur accord n'est qu'une conséquence. D'autre part, la 'pratique' ne peut être correctement définie que par le dogme, de lui seul elle reçoit son sens et son esprit ; et d'autre part, en un sens, elle contient déjà tout en elle-même, car elle se résume en la charité, qui est l'être spirituel en acte"("La Lumière du Christ," 401).

> sees that it relates "to the Lord Savoir", "let us call everything back to Christ if we want to keep to the path of right understanding." If one takes another series, it is a question "of our people, which has been allied within the sacraments of Christ," or of the "future sacraments of the Christian people." In the first series, "Christ about to come in the flesh is being foretold," and in the second, "the whole order of his churches." Here, or close to it, is what in Christian exegesis has been called, on the one side "Christology from above," and on the other, "Christology from below." Only these two series are tightly intertwined; for as Saint Paul said, Christ and the Church are just one great mystery: this is the mystery of their union.[27]

In the third place, in this Christology, Jesus is understood as a paradoxical figure. According to de Lubac, Jesus is "trait d'union de la terre au Ciel."[28] In this sense, Jesus is a paradox,[29] since he resolves the tension between the finite and the infinite, between the individual and society, and between the temporal and the eternal. In the Lubacian sense, paradox is not a metaphor, but a defining characteristic of reality. The Incarnated Jesus is the supreme form of paradox: "The Gospel is full of paradoxes, that man is himself a living paradox, and that according to the Father's of the Church, the Incarnation is the supreme Paradox" (P 8).[30]

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[27] [Original text] " L'objet de l'allégorie est dit tantôt le Christ, et tantôt l'Église, et tantôt l'un et l'autre. C'est qu'en effet, si l'on prend une série de textes, on voit qu'elle se rapporte 'ad Salvatorem Dominum'; 'totum ad Christum revocemus, si volumus iter rectae intelligentiae tenere'. Si l'on prend une autre série, il y est question 'de nostro populo, qui in sacramentis Christi confaederatus est', ou des 'ventura christiani populi sacramenta'. Dans la première série, 'praenuntiatur Christus venturus in carne' et dans la seconde, 'omnis ordo ecclesiarum ejus'. C'est là, ou à peu près, ce que l'on a appelé, dans l'exégèse chrétienne, d'une part la 'christologisation par en haut', et d'autre part la 'christologisation par en bas'. Seulement ces deux séries sont dans le plus étroit entrelacement; car ainsi que le disait saint Paul, le Christ et l'Église ne sont qu'un seul grand mystère : c'est le mystère de leur union " (EM I-II 501-2).

[28] Henri de Lubac, "La Lumière du Christ," 397; De Lubac notes that this mystery is observed by John the Baptist: "Christ, in so far as transcendent and existing before all things, is anterior to his figure, yet as a historical being, coming in the flesh, he appears after them. The whole Law spoke the words of John the Baptist: 'He who comes after me was made before me.'" (C 174); [Original text] "En tant que transcendant et préexistant, le Christ est avant ses figures, s'il apparaît après elles en tant qu'être historique, venu en chair' C'est toute la Loi qui dit en Jean Baptiste : ' Celui qui vient après moi fut fait avant moi." Mais, vivante synthèse de l'Éternel et du temporel, dans sa dualité il est un : on ne peut séparer le Christ préextistant du Christ né de la femme, mort et ressuscité' " (C 141).

[29] Milbank's paradoxical account of Christ is well illustrated by his controversy with Slavoj Žižek. His debate with the militant atheistic philosopher, Slavoj Žižek was published as a work entitled *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* As the title suggests, the debate revolves around the nature of the incarnation. While they share the anti-capitalist sentimentality, their vision of the world diverges. Žižek, endorsing the death of God theology, claims that dialectical Hegelian Christianity is an alternative to orthodox Christianity. For him, as for Hegel, the incarnation is the monstrous event inaccessible to human reason. Against Milbank, Žižek even states: "my claim is that it is Milbank who is in effect guilty of heterodoxy, ultimately of a regression to paganism: in my atheism, I am more Christian than Milbank" (MC 248). Milbank in turn opposes Žižek's atheistic Christianity based on dialectical mode of thought in setting forth his paradoxical view of reality. For Milbank, the incarnation represents the paradoxical nature of the world. So he compares Žižek's position with his as follows: "the crucial thing at issue between myself and Žižek is the question of the interpretation of Christianity. I wish to argue that he concludes that atheist Christianity is true Christianity only because he accepts a dialectical (Lutheran, Behmenist, Kantian, Hegelian) version of Christian doctrine as the most coherent. By contrast, I claim that there is a radically Catholic humanist alternative to this, which sustains genuine transcendence only because of its commitment to incarnational paradox. Such a humanism is diversely found in Eckhart, Kierkegaard, Chesterton, and Henri de Lubac" (MC 117).

[30] [Original text] "L'Évangile est plein de paradoxes, que l'homme est, lui-même, un paradoxe vivant, et que, aux dires des Pères de l'Église, l'Incarnation est le Paradoxe suprême : Παραδοξοζ παρδόξων "(P 8).

In the fourth place, for this mystical Christology, Jesus as *mysterium* and Jesus as *sacramentum* are identical.[31] The cross is first and foremost the symbol, which represents the depth of Christian mystery. This mystery is the love of God. This symbol embraces the whole of humanity and signifies the end of all sacrifices.[32] It is the universal symbol by which cosmic reconciliation happens. In the section entitled, '*Mysterium Crucis*' in his monumental book, *Catholicism*, he describes Christ on the Cross:

> Through Christ dying on the Cross, the humanity which he bore whole and entire in his own Person renounces itself and dies. But the mystery is deeper still. He who bore all men in himself was deserted by all. The universal Man died alone. This is the consummation of the *Kenosis* and the perfection of sacrifice. This desertion –even an abandonnment by the Father- was necessary to bring about reunion. The is the mystery of solitude and the mystery of severance, the only efficacious sign of gathering together and of unity: the sacred blade piercing indeed so deep as to separate soul from spirit, but only that universal life might enter (C 368).[33]

Equally, for Milbank, the cross represents the sovereign victim which ends all sacrifices. Milbank appropriates de Lubac's thought in the context of his discussion of the forgiveness of God. Usually, forgiveness is considered as negative. The notion of forgiveness presupposes the relationship between the offender and the victim. But according to Milbank this kind of relationship is not applicable to the God-man relationship, because God is not offended by human sin. This thought stems from his elevation Christology, a Christology which supposes that the incarnation is not the divine reaction to human sin, but for our deification. The notion of negative forgiveness is associated with "a theology focused more upon the divine fiat than upon the

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[31]According to de Lubac, "En latin, *mysterium* se double de *sacramentum*. La Bible est essentiellement, pour saint Augustin, la 'mysteriorum scriptura', et ses livres sont les 'divinorum sacramentorum libri'. Souvent les deux mots sont simplement synonymes" (EM I-II 397). Henri de Lubac compares the relation between sacramentum and mysterium to a alternative movement. This is to say that these are one aspects of the same reality. "Alors *sacramentum* désigne plutôt l'élément extérieur, 'l'enveloppe'… Il [Le mystère] est l'élément intérieur, la réalité cachée sous la lettre et signifiée par le signe, la vérité qu'indique la figure ; autrement dit, l'objet de foi lui-même" (Ibid 399).

[32] According to de Lubac, "if we do not wish to misinterpret ancient Christian tradition, the Eucharist has to be seen as a whole. It has to be seen indivisibly as sacrifice and sacrament, sacramental sacrifice or sacrament of sacrifice: the sacrifice of his body, the sacrament of the faithful" (CM 67); [Original text] "si l'on ne veut pas se méprendre sur l'ancienne tradition chrétienne, il importe de voir l'Eucharistie dans son tout. Il faut la voir indivisiblement sacrifice et sacrement, sacrifice sacramentel ou sacrement de sacrifice : sacrificium corporis sui, fidelium sacramentum" (CM 80).

[33] [Original text] "Par le Christ mourant sur la croix, l'humanité qu'il portait toute en lui se renonce, et meurt. Mais ce mystère est plus profond encore. Celui qui portait en lui tous les hommes était délaissé de tous. L'Homme universel mourut seul. Plénitude de la *kénose* et perfection du sacrifice! Il fallait cet abandon- et jusqu'à ce délaissement du Père - pour opérer la réunion. Mystère de solitude et mystère de déchirement, seul signe efficace du rassemblement et de l'unité. Glaive sacré, allait jusqu'à séparer l'âme de l'esprit, mais pour y faire pénétrer la Vie Universelle " (Henri de Lubac, "Mysterium Crucis," in C 323) ; De Lubac also cites Ireneus : " Par le bois de la croix... l'œuvre du Verbe de Dieu est devenue manifeste à tous : ses mains y sont étendues pour rassembler tous les hommes. Deux mains étendues, car il y a deux peuples dispersés sur toute la terre. Une seule Tête au centre, car il y a un seul Dieu au-dessus de tous, au milieu de tous et en tous"(Iréné, *Adversus Haereses*, 5, 17, 4, P. G, 7, 1171-2 in ibid.,324); [Eng. translation] "By the wood of the Cross …the work of the Word of God was made manifest to all: his hands are stretched out to gather all men together. Two hands outstretched, for there are two peoples scattered over the whole earth. One sole head in the midst, for there is but one God over all, among all and in all" (C 369).

Incarnation" (BR 60). He points out the difference between humans and God concerning the problem of forgiveness. "A human sovereign power in some measure suffers what those it represents suffer, but not so God, who is perfectly in act, beyond all suffering. Thus God is so disconnected from all victimage, so impervious to offence, that it seems that he has nothing to forgive" (Ibid.).

Consequently, the cross is not the symbol of a divine victim, but the symbol of forgiveness. This symbol is a strongly effective one, because it plays the role of sanctifying the believers. Therefore, as we have already seen, "divine redemption is not God's forgiving us, but rather his giving us the gift of the capacity of forgiveness…with Christ's humanity alone there arises a pure forgiveness, since this really surpasses forgiveness, and is rather the unbroken continued giving of the divine gift as also the offering of a suffering actively undergone" (BR 62).[34] De Lubac says the effectiveness of the mystery of Jesus on the cross lies in the Deed of Love, which made the love of God visible to our eyes. In this way, it touches our heart. It is an effective force which can transform man.[35]

Finally, mystical Christology takes a narrative form. If it brings together so-called high and low Christology, the pertinent form of Christian mystery is narrative. Yet this narrative is not one of numerous narratives. It is a unique narrative qualitatively distinguished from all other narratives. In this sense, we could call it 'supernatural narrative', in the sense that it takes the form of natural human history, but cannot be understood in purely natural terms. That is, the tension between the natural and the supernatural is maintained in Biblical narrative. Milbank is right to say that "in the case of the Biblical narratives, where the projected frame of reference is the relation of the supernatural to the natural, the paradigmatic is sketched in vaguely, and gets constantly revised in response to syntagmatic unfolding" (TST 386). The Scripture cannot be read as we read a systematic theology. Narrative is the principal literary form of the Scripture. Most of all, the theological significance of Jesus is not described in a systematic way. The Gospel narrative is the only form of the communication of the mystery of Christ.

The narrative character of Christian mystery is also illustrated by the Eucharist. The Eucharist has a double orientation toward the past and the future. One the one hand, it depends on Christ on the cross. On the other hand, it also depends on the future coming of Jesus-Christ: "The Eucharist is not simply oriented towards the past, dependent on Calvary. It is also oriented toward a future, which in turn depends on it:

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[34] For a recent debate on the question of forgiveness, see *Questioning God*, ed. John D. Caputo, Mark Dooley, and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), Part I : Forgiveness, 21-149. See esp. John Milbank, "Forgiveness and Incarnation," 92-128; Mark Dooley, "The Catastrophe of Memory: Derrida, Milbank and the (Im)possibility of Forgiveness," 129-49.

[35] Henri de Lubac, " La Lumière du Christ," 218. De Lubac states again: " It is the effective sign, most particularly, of the body of Christ which is the Church; it is the effective sign of the fraternal charity which binds its members: 'fraternal charity, which is signified by this sacrament; it is the effective sign of the peace and unity for which Christ died and towards which we are reaching moved by his Spirit: 'the sign of the unity, the sign of concord and of peace '" (CM 66); [Original text] "Signe efficace, tout particulièrement, du *Corpus Christi quod est Ecclesia*; signe efficace de la charité fraternelle qui fait le lien de ses members: 'fraterna caritas, cujus signum hoc sacramentum gestat'; signe efficace de la paix et de l'unité pour laquelle le Christ est mort et vers laquelle, mus par son Esprit, nous tendons: 'signum unitatis, signum concordiae et pacis'" (CM 80).

the building up of the Church and the coming of the 'Truth'. Thus it has a double symbolism. It is a sacrament of memory but also a sacrament of hope" (C 66).[36] From this perspective, de Lubac distinguishes three interrelated aspects in the Eucharistic mystery: "Memorial, anticipation and presence: in each of these three essential aspects, which it possesses from the outset, the Eucharist is indeed a mystery, and although each in turn can be thrown into sharper relief, they remain inseparable" (CM 70).[37] By celebrating the Eucharist, we participate in the mystical Body of Christ in interiorizing the suffering of Jesus-Christ, and anticipating the coming of Jesus. Therefore, three moments of time are simultaneously present in the Eucharistic celebration. But an equally important point is that this it is not the individual but the Church that participates in the narrative structure of Christian mystery.

2. Milbank's Christological poetics

2.1 A poetical understanding of Christ

In Milbank's Christological approach, *poesis* (creative making) constitutes the key to interpreting the theological significance of Jesus Christ. Against the modern rationalist understanding of Christ, Milbank attempts an aesthetic interpretation. But this attempt is undergirded by his participatory ontology, for Christ's beauty is not the aesthetic perception of the human subject, but the manifestation of the transcendental Beautiful.[38] We can read his position in his definition of "poetics". By "poetics" he means that "the realization or manifestation of the Beautiful, in contrast to the being of the beautiful object or the perception of the beauty, which is the subject of aesthetics in the Kantian sense" (WMS 123). Milbank applies his notion of *poesis* to the understanding of Christ (TPGB 34). Most of all, in his important article "A Christological Poetics" (WMS 123-144), Milbank investigates Jesus as an essentially linguistic and poetic reality (WMS 123). We can interpret this remark in two ways. First, this means that Jesus is understood in terms of narrative, not in terms of revealed propositions. This is an element common to both Milbank and the so-called postliberal approach to Jesus (Lindbeck, Frei). We shall examine this point below. According to Milbank, "our 'total hermeneutic situation' with regard to Christ *both* regards him aesthetically as he is given (Balthasar) *and* regard him *poetically* as he is still being given, re-born, through our spirit-inspired constructions (WMS 142).[39] Graham Ward supports Milbank's position as follows:

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[36] [Original text] "L'Eucharistie n'est pas seulement tournée vers le passé, en dépendance du Calvaire. Elle est tournée aussi vers l'avenir, vers un avenir qui est en sa dépendance: l'édification de l'Église et l'avènement de la 'Vérité'. Ainsi son symbolisme est double. Sacrement de mémoire, elle est aussi sacrement d'espérance" (CM 79-80).

[37] [Original text] "Mémorial, anticipation, présence: sous chacun de ces trois aspects essentiels, dont chacun peut être mis tour à tour en un plus grand relief, mais qui demeurent toujours indissociables et qu'elle possède dès l'origine, l'Eucharistie est donc bien un "mystère". Le corps du Christ que l'Eglise y offre- in mysterio panis, in mysterio passionis, in mysterio notro- pouvait donc, à bon droit, être qualifié de mystique"(CM 83-4).

[38] For the theological aesthetics of Milbank, see his article, "Beauty and the Soul," in TPGB, 1-34.

[39] According to Milbank, "this kind of approach to the question of why we identify Jesus as God, which is not content with a 'logically primitive' doctrine of incarnation, is not, of course, a matter of 'Christology from below', nor of supposing that from some empirical features of Jesus's life one could extrapolate to divinity. But it is a matter of commencing primarily with our pre-dogmatic, hermeneutic treatment of the gospel texts as themselves the code and context for all our other interpretative acts (this indeed means, as

> Christological enquiry is a profoundly hermeneutical one- on appeal can be made to immediate knowledge of God. This means, pace Barth, Christ cannot be an 'epistemological principle [*Erkenntnisprinzip*]' for we have no access to how Christ views and knows things. We only have access to interpretations of the way Christ views and knows things; interpretation which may participates in God's grace, but which we cannot claim to be so inspired without scandal.[40]

Here we can simply say that Jesus is first and foremost a metaphorical and narrative figure. This understanding can be expressed in de Lubac's word as "Christ Himself, in His humanity, is for us the sacrament of God" (SC 147)."[41] Milbank in his turn states his understanding of Jesus in discussing the nature of the Church which he initiated:

> [The] new and universal pattern of humanity is… presented to us not only in terms of concepts, but also in terms of (high spare) narrative and (really rather abstract) metaphors. It is, in effect, because the narratives and metaphors are fundamental for defining the new and universal pattern of life that Jesus was regarded by the earthly Church as identical with the divine *Logos*, not because he had become the random object of a cultic attachment (FL 286).

Second, this suggests that the practice of Jesus is the key to understanding his identity. This will be treated in Chapter 7. Milbank writes: "*Poesis* is an integral aspect of Christian practice and redemption. Its work is the ceaseless re-narrating and 'explaining' of human history under the sign of the cross" (WMS 32). We can see the trace of de Lubac's Christological mysticism which puts an emphasis on the sign of the cross, which is the symbol of the mystery of Christ. Milbank thinks that Jesus himself is a God's message to humanity. This approach to Christ excludes all extrinsic interpretations of Jesus. Namely, Jesus is not a figure which could be interpreted by other criteria apart from himself. According to de Lubac, Jesus is not an object of doctrinal formulation, because he is himself the revelation. He states:

> The whole essence of revelation is contained in the precept of love; in this one short word, we have "the whole Law and the Prophet." But if this Gospel announced by Jesus, this word uttered by him, contains all things, the reason is that it is nothing other than Jesus himself. His work, his doctrine, his revelation, his word is he! The perfection which he teaches is the perfection which he brings. *Christus, plenitudo legis*. It is impossible to separate his message from his person, and anyone who tries to make such a separation would soon be led to betray the message itself: in the final analysis, person and message are one (ST 190).

On this basis, we can examine Milbank's Christological poetics. In the first place, Milbank considers Christ as human and divine utterance. Relying on Eberhad Jüngel,

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the Yale School claims, against a 'hermeneutic liberalism', that scriptural hermeneutics cannot be contained within any general hermeneutic method) " (WMS 158).

[40]Graham Ward, *Christ and Culture*, 1, citation is Karl Barth, *Die Kirkliche Dogmatik IV.1* (Zürich/Zollikon: Evangelischer Verlag, 1953), 21.

[41] [Original text] " Jésus-Christ lui-même est pour nous, dans son humanité, le sacrement de Dieu"(ME 175).

for whom the Parables are 'performative utterances'[42], Milbank lays an emphasis on the 'strongly poetic' character of the words of Jesus, not in the sense that he is a simple teller of divine truth, but that he himself is the message of the Parables in fulfilling their significance.

> While Jesus' whole being seems to be directed towards the production of such verbal works as opening up the situation of man in relation to God, it is equally the case that he aims to recover from his more concrete works a plenitude of significance. Here he seems to learn from his own works his own nature, in so far as they are works the Father has given him to do. Yet above and beyond all this, he seems at times to be saying, particularly in St John's Gospel, that he himself is the message (WMS 135).

According to Milbank, in the figure of Jesus we can perceive the union between divine and human utterance. That is, the divinity of Jesus is sacramentally present in his humanity. This means that the meaning of the biblical text cannot be unveiled at the historical, structural and literary level. The deep sense of the Scripture is to be found in the sacramental meaning of the text, which is concentrated on Christ: "As the divine utterance, Jesus is the absolute origination of all meaning, but as human utterance Jesus is the inheritor of all already constituted human meanings. He is a single utterance in his unified fulfillment of these meanings, such that he becomes the adequate metaphoric representation of the total human intent" (WMS 136).

More precisely, we can develop Milbank's poetical understanding of Jesus on the basis of his notion of *poesis*. As we have seen above, we cannot obtain universal objectivity, because by our poetical activity, we can obtain merely the 'concrete universal'. If we apply this principle to Christology, the historical quest for an objective picture of Jesus turns out to be in vain, because what we can obtain with regard to Jesus is the poetical representation of the primitive church. And this approach is the only access to Jesus. Therefore, Milbank can write: "Christ is our proper word for God and for true humanity" (WMS 140). More precisely, "Christ the *logos* is conceived again in us- though this may now be understood in more direct linguistic fashion. It is this sense of continuing to form the image of Christ that we genuinely participate in Christ and not as a kind of sub-personal, quasi-material inclusion" (WMS 141).

2.2 The identity of Christ

Milbank's participatory ontology is the key to understanding the identity of Jesus. All things do not exist in their own right and legitimacy, but subsist in the participatory relation with God. If we apply this understanding to Christology, it follows that the substantialist view of Jesus is rejected, because all things exist in a relational network,

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[42] Eberhard. Jüngel, *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt* 2 Auflage (Tübingen: JCB Mohr,1977), 11 cited by WMS 135: We cite Jüngel: "Im Gedicht... *ereignet* sich möglicherweise das, wovon *die Rede* ist. Die Worte sind hier zwar auch signa. Aber sie signalisieren nicht notwendig etwas gegenüber dem Zeichen Abwesendes. Worte können unter bestimmten Bedingungen auch etwas in den Worten beziehungsweise mit ihnen oder durch sie Anwesendes sich ereignen lassen." For the relation between Milbank and Jüngel, see Roland Spjuth, "Redemption without Actuality: A Critical Interrelation between Eberhard Jüngel's and John Milbank's Ontological Endeavours," *Modern Theology* 14:4 (1998), 505-22.

as Catherine Pickstock says, "being is that which is always already relational."[43] According to Milbank, Jesus exists in the network of relations which cannot be reduced to a specific essence. In a strict sense, the word 'identity' cannot be applicable to Jesus, for 'identity' connotes the essence which is stable and unchangeable regardless of different circumstances. For Milbank, we cannot find a fixed content in Jesus. When we identify Jesus with God, it is based not on common essence with God, but on his particularity: "Jesus is 'identical' with God, not in terms of an underlying 'essence', or his general human 'nature', but rather at the precise point of his irreplaceable specificity, or all that goes to make up his 'personality' (WMS 156).[44]

Then, where do we have to find the identity of Jesus? How can we define Him? Milbank considers Jesus as the "new Moses" (WMS 152). Just as Moses leads the community of Israel by means of the law, Jesus is considered as the figure who leads the Church which is under God's grace. "Jesus … figures in the New Testament primarily as a new Moses, the founder of a new or renewed law and community" (Ibid). We can see that in Milbank's thought, there is an allegorical relationship between Moses and Jesus, a relationship which de Lubac' theological hermeneutics consistently supposes. If Moses represents the letter that kills, Jesus is the life-giving spirit. This new figure is not bounded by the fixed letter. It is in this sense that he says that "he cannot be given any particular content" (Ibid).

Then where is the content of Jesus? Milbank might say that his real content is unveiled in the community he establishes, the community which practices the spiritual sense of Jesus. Milbank goes as far as to say that "Jesus is presented not simply as the source of the Church, but as arriving simultaneously with the Church" (Ibid). That is, without the Church, we have no access to the content of Jesus. Milbank contends that the identity of Jesus has to be found in his narrative practice in the Gospel, and especially its continuation of his practice in the Church. Therefore, "the gospels can be read, not as the story of Jesus, but as the story of the (re)foundation of a new city, a new kind of human -the-Church. Jesus figures in this story simply as the founder, the beginning, the first of many" (WMS 150). D. Stephen Long interprets Milbank well:

> Although he has been influenced by von Balthasar's theological aesthetics, Milbank does appear to eviscerate Jesus of any substantial content. The key to Christology is not the substance of Jesus in his two natures but the practice he initiated, which then becomes repeated as church. This is not to deny that Jesus is true God and true human, but resituates Chalcedonian orthodoxy from a discussion of substantial notions of being to the assumption of historical being into the divine Being.[45]

Milbank's Jesus is deeply seated in history. Apart from the historical aspect of Jesus, we cannot help but reduce Jesus' person and work into an abstract concept in order to find his essence. Yet, Milbank does not mean to suggest that this conceptualization is meaningless. What he wants to say is that it is Jesus' practice which defines his

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[43] Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing*, 248.

[44] Equally, de Lubac observes in Jesus a mystery of a qualitatively different character: "Le mystère est pour toujours hors des prises de l'homme, car il est qualitativement autre tout objet des sciences humaines; mais en même temps il concerne l'homme; il nous atteint, il s'agit en nous, et sa Révélation nous éclaire sur nous-mêmes" (Henri de Lubac, *Paradoxe et Mystère de l'Église* [Paris: Aubier-Montaigne,1967], 32).

[45] D. Stephen Long, *Divine Economy: Theology and the Market* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 251-2.

identity, not his essence. However, since his practice is extended to the Church, it is the Church's practice which defines his identity. In this sense, Jesus' true significance is to be found in the ecclesiological vantage point. According to Milbank, this position is most faithful to the Chalcedonian position:

> This word and this 'person' –meaning the unifying 'shape' of the various stylized and formalized specification of Jesus's identity in narrative and metaphor –was 'with God from the beginning', was 'pre-existent' in an eternal relationship with the Father, because the mode of divine transmission of the new law must be consistent with its content (means and end being for God identical), which is not an instruction, but the event of personal relating. And because God- who is simply all that there eternally 'is'- does not change, and is not capricious, this transmission must be God himself. I am here that an approach to Christology from the context of ecclesiology actually allows a full retrieval of the Chalcedonian position, at which more narrowly Christological approaches are today likely to baulk (WMS 156).

We can imagine that this provocative view of Jesus is derived from his aversion toward the rationalist tradition which seeks to find a universal basis for understanding the world. This antipathy can be understood in light of Lubac's attack on scholastic *pure nature* which seeks to explain the world in more rational and autonomous terms. Milbank seeks to purify Jesus from the contamination of rationalist modern theology.

Moreover Milbank applies de Lubac's paradoxical vision of the world to Jesus. Jesus is neither restricted to purely human being, nor is he purely God. This is the paradox of Jesus. When Milbank says that Jesus does not have his content, he says the human aspect of Jesus. But he proves his divine nature in his death, resurrection and establishment of the Church. In this light, we can understand the real content of Jesus lies in the practice of the Church.

Milbank's poetical understanding of Jesus, in which Jesus is regarded as a 'sign', is parallel to de Lubac's mystical understanding of Christ where Jesus is the sacrament of God. The symbol of the cross represents divine forgiveness. Milbank and de Lubac think that this symbol is efficacious in the moral transformation at the individual and social level alike, because this symbol represents the new practice that Jesus begins. However, this practice is not the imitation of the transcendent idea in the Platonic sense, but the non-identical repetition of Jesus' practice. Here lies the significance of the narrative form of the Gospel. This narrative form does not offer the eternal idea, but the repetitive transformation. "The narrative and meta-narrative forms of gospel are..indispensible, not because they record and point us to a vision which is still available in its eternal 'presence', but rather because they enshrine and constitute the event of a transformation which is to be non-identically repeated, and therefore still made happen" (WMS 153). In consequence, the identity of Jesus is fulfilled in the sacrificial act not on the cross, but in the church in which the forgiveness is practiced.

Milbank shares the rejection of the extrinsic account of the identity of Jesus of Hans Frei and others belonging to 'the Yale school'. However, Milbank criticized Hans Frei. Unlike Frei who thinks that Jesus has a peculiar character and has his intention in his behavior, Milbank maintains that Jesus appears to him as a figure not in a *bildungsroman,* whose character is revealed by psychological development, but a detective story in which the identity of a figure is revealed in the finale. The real

identity lies for Milbank in the universal significance of Jesus, not in the character of Jesus (WMS 149). In the last analysis, "the name 'Jesus' does not indicate an identifiable 'character', but is rather the obscure and mysterious hinge which permits shifts from one kind of discourse to another" (Ibid.). Here, we can notice the mystical understanding of Christ which focuses on Jesus as a universal symbol, shared by Henri de Lubac's mystical Christology.

For the understanding of Jesus' identity Milbank makes a distinction between primary narrative level and meta-narrative level, a distinction reminding us of de Lubac's between historical and mystical sense of the scripture. At the historical level, the focus is brought on the work of Jesus such as miracle making, egalitarian social practice, healing, exorcising, etc. But at the meta-narrative level, his work is understood as a sign. Here again the metaphoric description of Jesus is important (the way, the word, the truth, life...). According to Milbank, these metaphors play the role of enhancing Jesus to the vertical and spatial dimension. In this way, Jesus becomes the cosmic Christ. After all, "Jesus is the most comprehensive possible context: not just the space within which all transactions between time and eternity transpire, but also the beginning of all this space, the culmination of this space, the growth of this space and all the goings in and out within this space" (WMS 150). This idea echoes de Lubac's idea of *totus Christus* which we shall see in the final chapter.

One of the contributors to RONT Graham Ward's article "The displaced body of Jesus Christ" is written in line with Milbank's and de Lubac's understanding of the identity of Jesus. As with Milbank and de Lubac, Ward holds that the distinction between high and low Christology originated from a prejudice of 19th century historical scholarship which separates the subject and the object. For him Jesus is not a Subject which is detached from his context, but a person which is always in relationship with others. Therefore the self-identical nature of Jesus does not exist, his identity changes in different contexts. However, this does not mean that Jesus is a capricious person. What is of paramount importance, in his understanding of Jesus, is that Jesus' various forms of body (corporal, Eucharistic, ecclesial) are analogically related : "The body of Jesus is, once more, stretched temporally, the baby body prefiguring the adult body, the adult body figuring the ecclesial body in a march to its resurrection. The physicality of the body, its significance as a body, and the acts with which it is involved, are figured within an allegorical displacement."[46] Whatever forms of body Jesus takes, he mirrors the nature of God. The broken body of Jesus is the beginning of the union of the believers through the celebration of his Eucharistic body in his ecclesial body. The corporeal body trapped within time and place infinitely extends beyond a given time and space. In this regard, Ward corrects feminist's discontent with Jesus' sex. For him, Jesus is not trapped within human corporal identity, because his resurrected body goes beyond all human boundaries : "The body of Christ can cross boundaries, ethnic boundaries gender boundaries, socio-economic boundaries, for example. Christ body as bread is no longer as simply and biologically male."[47]

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[46] Graham Ward, *Cities of God*, *Radical Orthodoxy Series* (London: Routledge, 2000), 99. This essay is also contained in RONT, 163-81.

[47] Ibid.,103. Milbank echoes Ward's thought: "Christ's blood makes peace, Christ's blood makes possible harmony between people; in Christ, there is no longer the inclusion/exclusion logic of race, nor of

3. Creation and incarnation

3.1 Creation as divine gift

Creation is one of Milbank's principal theological motives which could make clear other theological motives such as incarnation, redemption, ethics, etc. Here we see the distinctive characteristics of Milbank's understanding of creation. For Milbank, creation is not autonomous reality, because it is imbued with God's grace. There is no *pure nature* immune from divine intervention. Aristotle's idea of eternal nature is not compatible with the Christian idea of creation out of nothing (*creation ex nihilo*). Hence, creation, is not a neutrally given data with which scientists utilize for their research, but the gift of God. As Milbank notes, "for theology there are no 'givens' only gifts (BR xi).

This way of understanding creation as a gift is theologically significant in several aspects: First, this is to say that there is a meaningful relationship between Creator and creation. Despite the initiative of God for giving the gift, this meaningful gift relationship makes it not unilateral, but reciprocal. However, this relationship is not symmetrical because there is an ontological chasm between Creator and creature. This relationship can be viewed in terms of participation. "The Creation is sustained not only through participation in, but, - in a mediated sense- through union with, God" (BR 71).

Second, if creation is a gift, there is no underlying substance in creation just as Aristotelian tradition supposes, but a participatory relation between Creator and creature. "The created world of time participates in the God who differentiate" (TST 424). If the creation is understood in terms of participation in God, it follows that there is no such thing as *substance* which is the underlying matter in creation : "Just as God (as Augustine already affirms in *De Trinitate*) is not a 'substance,' because he is nothing fundamental underlying anything else, so also there are no substance in creation, no underlying matter, and no discrete and inviolable 'thing'" (TST Ibid.). The component of creation forms a network in an interrelated way in expanding its relationship. "Creation is therefore not a finished in space, but is continuously generated *ex nihilo* in time" (Ibid). Again, he says:

> Creation is always found as a given, but developing order. As the gift of God, creation also belongs to God, it is within God (together with the infinity of all articulations that there may be) as the *Logos*. But existing harmonies, existing "extensions" of time and space, constantly give rise to new "intentions," to movements of the Spirit to further creative expression, new temporal unraveling of *creation ex nihilo*, in which human beings most consciously participate (PCA n° 42).[48]

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economics, nor of gender. There is in Christ no more black and white, master and slave, male and female. But this inclusion of difference does not mean their exclusion! No, they remain, as pure relations, pure passages of harmonious will" (BR 102-3).

[48] This idea is already founded in his study on Vico, whom he places in the neo-Platonic Christian tradition. In describing the context in which Vico is placed, Milbank notes the pecularity of Christianity in its emphasis on the divine and human creative actionin comparing it with the pagan conception of the world. According to Milbank, in comparison to Plato and Aristotle, "the Bible gives a more central role to the idea of creation. The shaping of reality is ascribed to a supreme personal principle and not to a subordinate demiurge, and there is an evolution in Biblical thought towards Creation *ex nihilo* and away from a dualistic belief in a primordial chaos" (RDGV 12).

Finally, the idea of creation as gift implicates the fullness of creation. There is no deficiency in creation. "In the beginning there was only gift: no demon of chaos to be defeated, but a divine creative act" (WMS 228). As we shall see in Chapter 6, modern moral theory is not based on this fullness of creation, but on the threat of deficiency in creation. Therefore modern morality is reactive in character. This point of view is illustrated by Milbank's critique of radical evil theory in which the evil is understood in terms of human finite will, not in terms of the privation of being. 'Radical evil' is used in Kant's *Religion within the Bounds of Mere Reason* (1793) and it is Kant who plays the central role of breaking the traditional privation theory of evil. According to him, "Kant's account of evil is seen as encouraging a break with the traditional privation view focused upon being in general, in favour of a view focused purely upon the finite human will. This new view comprehends evil as a positively willed denial of the good and so as a pure act of perversity without ground" (BR 1). Milbank considers radical evil as the "enlightenment substitute for original sin" (BR 7). For him, radical evil is the alternative explanation in the fallen world without reference to transcendence. He compares this radical evil model with Augustine's privation model of evil in *De Libero Arbitrio*. If we follow Milbank's exposition, according to Augustine, human beings are created to will their beatitude. That is, their will is inherently oriented to the infinite, even if this will is disturbed by their perverse nature. Therefore there is the "dynamism of the participation of the finite in the infinite" (BR 8). It is the rational vision which leads the will in the Augustine's model. "Will is nothing but the impact of omnipotent infinite reason upon finite rational power" (Ibid.). There is not any pure 'sin of the will' as radical evil thinkers think (BR 8). Therefore, radical evil theory is a modern theoretical invention produced by the breakdown of the participatory framework.

3.2 Creation as divine/human poesis

Creation is not an event which has finished, but God's continuous creative activity since the creation of the world. It is not only a continuous process, but a differentiating process. If there is no underlying substance, no underlying matter in creation, naturally there remains God's activities (divine *poesis*) and accompanying relations. In this way "one can only think of the elements of creation as inherently interconnected 'qualities' which combine and re-combine in all sorts of ways (Basil, Gregory of Nyssa) and as 'seed' or 'monad' (Eriugena) or numerical ratios (Augustine) which participate in the divine creative power/act, and themselves continuously propagate *ex nihilo*" (TST 424).

This understanding of creation is also found in de Lubac's thought. For him, creation is not a fact already accomplished, but a place where God's continuous activity happens. This is a thought foreign to ancient philosophers, because for them a God who is present in the material world is unthinkable.

> Creation is not simply something that happened to every "being in the past, a cause or precondition for existence it is something that affects it totally and at every moment; it confers on things both a contingency and a dignity undreamt of in pagan antiquity. God is never absent from his work: "He did not create and leave." In brief, the ancients' nature has become creation in a Christian context; and no one has shown this better than Augustine. No one has demonstrated its consequences better,

> both in the cosmic and the intellectual spheres. But in order to avoid falling into the trap of an amorphous supernaturalism, one must go on to recognize the other aspect of things (MS 19-20).[49]

What matters most for Milbank is the fact that human *poesis* participates in the divine *poesis*. Human creative activity does not have its own legitimacy apart from God, it makes sense insofar as it participates in God's creative act. Here, we have to recall Milbank's assertion, which we have examined earlier, that man is an inherently linguistic being, which gives meaning to the world by means of linguistic signs. That is, for him man as a poetical being is identical with man as a linguistic being. In this way, human creates his linguistic world. In concluding his article "Pleonasm, Speech and Writing," he writes: "Man as an original creator participates in some measure in creation *ex nihilo*" (WMS 79). Milbank even construes the image of God "as fundamentally poetic being" (WMS 4).

Therefore, for Milbank, to be human is to participate in the creative act. That is, the human creative act is in cooperation with the divine creative act. But this is not to say that in this act the human becomes an autonomous being as Milbank writes: "Yet even this movement, the vehicle of human autonomy, is fully from God, is nothing in addition to the divine act-potential, and not equivocally different in relation to him" (PCA n°42). Milbank even understands the revelation in terms of *poesis*. In line with de Lubac's idea that the revelation is not added to the purely natural sphere, the divine creative act is, for Milbank, not operative outside natural human activities. Rather, it co-operates with human creative activities. Consequently, divine and human *poesis* alike have a revelatory function:

> The transcendental possibility of revelation is the decision of God to create the poetic being, humankind, and with this realization one can, at once, overcome a liberal, merely 'ethical' reading of religion, and also an (equally modern and deviant) positivistic notion of revelation as something in history 'other' to the normal process of historicity. The event of revelation itself may be defined as the intersection of the divine and human creations (WMS 130).

However, in this intersection of the divine and human creation, God's creation abundantly surpasses human creation. This means that the human creative act does not assist God, but participates in Him. In other words, God takes the initiative for the cooperation of divine and human poesis: "At the point where the Divine creation establishes the human creation by overtaking and completing it, thereby exposing a

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[49] [Original text] " La création n'est pas pour chaque être un fait du passé, une cause ou une condition préalable d'existence qui ne l'affecterait pas tout entier et à chaque instant ; elle lui confère à la fois une contingence et une dignité que l'antiquité païenne n'avait point conçues. Dieu n'est point absent de son œuvre : 'Non enim fecit, et abiit.' Pout tout dire d'un mot, l'antique *Nature* est devenue en climat chrétien la *Création*. Or, cela, nul mieux que saint Augustin ne l'a montré. Dans le domaine du cosmos comme dans celui de la pensée, nul n'en a mieux manifesté les conséquences. – Mais l'autre aspect des choses devait ensuite être mis en valeur, afin de parer aux écueils d'un surnaturalisme amorphe" (MSu 41-2). De Lubac draws on Gilson's view on the pecularity of Christian notion of creation: "The profound transformation imposed upon the Greek nature by the doctrine of creation and of providence….." (Étienne Gilson, *L'Esprit de la Philosophie Médiéval*e [Paris: 1944], 345-53 (MS 19).

realized intention more primitive than the human intent and fully its master, there is revelation" (WMS 131).

3.3 Creation and redemption

If creation is the divine gift, why does it need redemption? This means that there is a deficiency in creation? Like de Lubac who thinks that nature is the greatest gift, Milbank affirms the integrity of creation. If we follow de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis, there is no double-staged order in which grace is extrinsically related to nature. Milbank says, in following de Lubac, that "there is no gratuity in addition to the gratuity of creation" (TST 221). How can we explain this logical impasse? Here de Lubac introduces his famous notion of *paradox* as we have seen in detail in chapter 2. For de Lubac, the word paradox is not a rhetorical tool, but the defining characteristic of creation including human beings. In line with de Lubac who thinks that creation itself is a paradox, Milbank writes: "as Henri de Lubac realized, the creation is incomprehensibly paradoxical, since it is constituted by the fact that what need not be constantly outweighs and proves more essential and necessary than what must be more necessary than necessity itself" (MC 214). For Milbank, the order of creation is in continuity with the order of redemption. Creation and Incarnation are the same gift, even though the gift of the incarnation accomplishes the gift of creation : "Creation and grace are gifts: Incarnation is the supreme gift" (BR ix). We can find this thinking in de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis. For him, nature is the greatest gift, which is to be renewed by the perfect gift of the supernatural[50] Here we can read the Christological understanding of creation of these two theologians. Both of these theologians acknowledge the goodness of creation without deficiency, but they think that creation should be elevated to perfection. In this sense, creation is a paradox in the lubacian sense of the term. That is, both acknowledge the integrity of creation. Yet they think that creation anticipates its perfection by the Incarnation.[51]

Interestingly, Milbank understands creation and the Fall in terms of Redemption. He maintains that "up to the High Middle Ages generally maintained that Creation only remained in being after the Fall through the proleptic working of the Incarnation" (BR 63). This means that creation is but a preparation for the incarnation. He expresses his highly Christocentric thought in a complex but significant way, in saying that "we are only glimpse the impossibility of Creation through the impossibility of the Fall, and both

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[50] See Msu especially, ch V, "Le Donum Perfectum." De Lubac state: "le surnaturel constitue une perfection 'quae naturalem superet', ou encore, comme nous le rappelions un peu plus haut, que sa gratuité particulière serait ruinée si l'on prétendait que Dieu ne pourrait créer des êtres doués d'intelligence sans les appeler à Le voir. Deux mots traditionnels, empruntés ceux-là à l'Épître de saint Jacques, expriment la même doctrine. Ces deux mots, cités par le Pseudo-Denys dans la *Hiérarchie céleste*, sont commentés par ses commentateurs occidentaux, à la suite et à la manière de Jean Scot : le 'datum optimum' dont parlait saint Jacques, c'est la nature ; le 'donum perfectum', c'est la grâce : deux manières différentes de participer à la Bonté divine" (MSu 121-2).

[51] Étienne Guibert put it as follows: "La rencontre de ces deux paradoxes- celui de l'Incarnation et celui de la création- s'était réalisée par le même mouvement d'assimilation réciproque: la création était gracieusement invitée à passer tout entier en Dieu, et à y trouver sa vérité d'étoffe du monde à venir. Le passage de la création en Dieu était rendu possible par l'Incarnation rédemptrice, à la fois 'Don du ciel' et 'fruit de la terre'" Étienne Guibert*, Le Mystère du Christ d'après Henri de Lubac*, *Étude lubacienne V* (Paris: Cerf, 2006), 295.

through the impossibility of the Redemption, even though Creation does not entail Fall, nor Fall, Redemption" (Ibid.).

4. Participation in atonement

4.1 De Lubac's understanding of atonement

De Lubac's understanding of atonement has to be understood in terms of his sacramental ontology which pervades his whole theology. Because of the sacramentality of Jesus, we must not approach Jesus in an extrinsic fashion, just as Protestant theology does, for Jesus himself manifests God's likeness. In his study on Jansenius, de Lubac is against Jansenius' construal of Augustine. According to Jansenius, Adam's original state is radically different from our actual state because of the Fall. Adam was in a state of sufficient grace in which he could choose freely between good and evil. Christ's efficacious grace is not necessary for Adam. Yet after the Fall, we need the efficacious grace of Christ, because we lost the sufficient grace which Adam enjoyed. De Lubac protests against Jansenius' understanding of grace, because Jansenius conceives of grace as the divine response to human sin. The redemption is conceived as a remedy for the rehabilitation of the original state. For de Lubac and Milbank, this thought was inherited by the Reformers (especially, Calvin, Luther). Their emphasis on the sacrificial aspect of Jesus' death stems from this line of thought. The reason why de Lubac refuses the reformers' account of grace is that this view regards grace as something extrinsic to nature and that it risks naturalizing grace.

Henri de Lubac conceives of imputational grace as secondary to the deification of man: "Beyond the salvation, properly speaking, understood as the redemption and the liberation from evil, the Word of God taking our humanity unites himself to divinity." [52] De Lubac's soteriology is grounded in his understanding of the relation between creation and redemption. For him, unlike the Protestant understanding of redemption, there is not a radical rupture between creation and redemption provoked by the Fall. This necessitates a human cooperation in salvation just as Jesus as human devotes himself to the salvation of humankind. Therefore the redemptive work of God is a continuation of the creative work of God. "The law of redemption is..:a reproduction of the law of creation: man's cooperation was always necessary if his exalted destiny was to be reached. Christ did not come to take our place- or rather this aspect of substitution refers only to the first stage of his work- but to enable us to raise ourselves through him to God" (C 226).[53] This privileging of the concept of salvation as *deification*, over that of salvation by atonement, is echoed by Milbank. Moreover, for the active human cooperation in salvation, the Church provides a framework for the work of salvation. "Humanity is to cooperate actively in its own salvation, and that is why to the act of his sacrifice Christ joined the objective revelation of his Person and the foundation of his

[52] Henri de Lubac, *Révélation Divine* (Paris: Cerf, 2010), 56; [Original text] "Par-delà la rédemption proprement dite, comprise comme rachat du péché et libération du mal, le Verbe de Dieu vient, en prenant notre humanité, l'unir à la divinité." Translation mine. Cf. Henri de Lubac, *Révélation Divine, Affrontement Mystique, Théisme et Sens de l'Homme* (Paris: Cerf, 2010).

[53] [Original text] "La loi de la Rédemption reproduit la loi de la Création: il fallait que l'homme concourût à sa fin sublime, il faut maintenant qu'il concoure à son rachat. Le Christ n'est donc pas venu se substituer à nous- ou plutôt, cet aspect de substitution n'exprime que le premier temps de son oeuvre- mais nous mettre en mesure de nous hausser, par lui, jusqu'à Dieu" (C 187-8).

Church. To sum up, revelation and redemption are bound up together, and the Church is their only Tabernacle" (Ibid.).[54]

4.2 Milbank's reorientation of doctrine of atonement

Consonant with de Lubac's understanding of grace, Milbank seeks to weaken the protestant doctrine of atonement in reinterpreting it from an ecclesiological vantage point. He thinks that atonement doctrine has to be understood as forgiveness practice within the Church. Milbank strongly repudiates the interpretation of the death of Jesus as a compensation paid by God for what was lost by the Fall. We can understand this antipathy toward the protestant doctrine of atonement in the light of his participatory theological framework, in which there is no remainder to which grace is not granted. According to Milbank, God is not offended by human sin, even though the participatory link between man and God was weakened since the Fall. Therefore it is not necessary to appease God by a sacrifice. "God does not forgive, since he cannot be offended, but only continues to give, despite our rejection of his gift" (BR 60). The negative conception of forgiveness does not conform to Milbank's participatory model. Christ's death is not a response from God for human sin, but rather for the sake of our participation in the Trinitarian fellowship. "Christ's abandonment offers no compensation to God, but when we most abandon the divine donation it surpasses itself, and appears more than ever, raising us up into the eternal gift-exchange of the Trinity" (BR 100).

According to Milbank, the cultic understanding of atonement was invented in the Medieval Ages, especially in the nominalist tradition, which puts an emphasis on the divine will. "The Middle Ages started to think through the possibility of this life, but cut itself short by a dual development which invented a forensic reading of the atonement and a voluntaristic doctrine of sovereignty in a single gesture (this is well attested by the theology of Grotius, but has earlier roots in Ockham and further back still)" (BR103). For Milbank, *Giving* and For-*giving* marks God's character. Consequently, "real, positive Christological forgiveness is ...not reactive, since it is only the sustained giving of the original gift, despite its refusal" (BR 68). Daniel Bell notes Milbank's understanding of atonement as follows: "The work of atonement is God in Christ bearing human rejection and extending the offer of grace again, thereby opening a path for humanity to return to the Father. In this sense, the atonement is identified not with a propitiatory sacrifice in the name of justice, but with the self-giving of the Son to the Father as an act of recapitulation that provides humanity with a positive means of return to its Creator."[55]

Then, why does Milbank have a strong reaction against the cultic and extrinsic understanding of the death of Jesus? There is a practical reason. According to Milbank, this understanding fails to make Jesus' death morally efficacious in the lives of the believers. That is, we cannot explain persuasively the universal significance of the death of Jesus. Milbank asks himself: "First of all, by what process of thought does one arrive at the conclusion that someone is God incarnate, or that a single death is universally

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[54] [Original text] "L'humanité doit...coopérer activement à son salut, et voilà pourquoi, à l'Acte de son Sacrifice, le Christ a joint la révélation objective de sa Personne et la fondation de son Eglise. A prendre les choses d'ensemble, Révélation et Rédemption sont liées, et l'Église est leur unique Tabernacle" (C 188).

[55] Daniel M.Bell, *Liberation Theology after the End of History*, 147.

efficacious? Second, what difference does the mere fact- however astounding- of God's identifying with us through incarnation make to our lives, or even to our pictures of what God is like, what he wants for us?" (WMS 148). In brief, Milbank concludes that "it is pointless to approach incarnation and atonement primarily as revealed propositions" (Ibid.). Furthermore, the serious problem with the cultic reading of atonement lies in the isolation of the death of Jesus from the human practice of forgiveness. In this case, forgiveness is defined in a negative way as human forgiveness. Human forgiveness supposes a relationship between the offender and the victim. If we apply this conception of forgiveness, it is inevitable that God would become the source of violence: "The danger of a 'cultic' reading of this doctrine [atonement] is that it will suggest that Christ's death is something in addition to the human practice of forgiveness, whose repetition makes real for us the divine forgiveness itself. If Christ's death is necessary in addition to the practice of forgiveness, then monstrous consequences ensue" (WMS 159).

In my view, the key to Milbank's reorientation of the doctrine of atonement is closely linked to de Lubac's hermeneutics which focused on the spiritual/mystical sense of the Scriptures. This hermeneutics is undergirded by de Lubac's sacramental ontology. That is to say that the expression and passage which support atonement doctrine is not to be understood literally, but allegorically. Sacrificial language is the metaphor for Milbank. Milbank contends that " 'metaphor of atonement'- 'ransom', 'sacrifice', 'victory'- are not to be taken realistically, as an 'atonement in itself', an invisible eternal transaction between God and humanity" (WMS 161). Milbank interprets, following de Lubac's spiritual interpretation, *Epistle to the Hebrew*'s description of the role of Christ as a priest in an allegorical manner, in opposition to an over-literal and naive interpretation. For him, Christ did not literally make an atonement once and for all, but rather he is manifested as a shadow which discloses the true reality, that is "true eternal peaceful process in the heavenly tabernacle" (BR100). Therefore the death of Jesus is not a real sacrifice for God, but the metaphor of love which signifies forgiveness.

This point of view is illustrated by Milbank's interpretation of Pauline theology. In his interpretation of Paul, he revisions the Protestant, especially Lutheran interpretation of Paul in saying that "if there is a 'centre' to Paul's theology, then it is surely not 'justification by faith', but rather, '*participation in atonement'*, the 'filling up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, the Church (*Col.* 1: 24)" (WMS 184, my emphasis). We can see that Milbank displaces the center of Pauline theology from the passive doctrine of justification by faith to the active atoning practice of forgiveness within the Church, that is the Body of Christ. We can also see in this reinterpretation of Pauline theology Milbank's sustained attack on the Protestant individualistic interpretation of Paul, and his reaffirmation of the theme of 'mystical union' with the Body of Christ in Paul. This point of view is made clear in his commentary on the Pauline passage above. "Not only does this passage make clear that every Christian must personally pass through, and not merely acknowledge, the cross, it also indicates that these sufferings are of 'consolatory' or atoning value to the community" (Ibid). In the last analysis, Milbank subsumes Christology and soteriology under his ecclesiology. This does not mean that Christological and soteriological doctrines do not matter, but that these doctrines have to be reinterpreted from an

ecclesial vantage point in order to reinvigorate the meaning of these doctrines. In consequence, according to Milbank, "Christological and atonement doctrine are... theoretically secondary to definitions of the character of the new universal community of Church" (WMS 148). Here we can see Milbank's Church-centered theological vision, shared by Henri de Lubac. For both, the Church is not a means for salvation, but is itself the ultimate end of salvation. We shall see their vision of the Church in the last chapter.

4.3 Atonement and sanctification

Behind Milbank's rejection of sacrificial atonement is Milbank's key theological theme: *deification* by the union with Christ. He states precisely this idea: "There *is* no spiritual, intelligent being (angelic or human) that is not ordered by grace to the beatific vision: that is, to deification" (SM x). This means that his theology is focused on the doctrine of sanctification. Indeed, Milbank incorporates atonement into sanctification.[56] That is, grace, for Milbank, is not the imputation of sin in a Protestant sense, but the grace of sanctification. Milbank adamantly writes: "I reject all Protestant accounts of grace as mere imputation (although there are many Protestant accounts not of this kind), an account of the arrival of grace must for me also mean an account of sanctification, and of ethics" (BR 138).

This reorientation of atonement doctrine is inextricably linked to his understanding of Jesus as a sign. On the cross, Jesus becomes a metaphorical sign, which bears the death and resurrection in serving as a substitute for all humanity. This metaphorical character of Jesus as a sign is the core of Milbank's understanding of atonement. Jesus assumed the burden of sin unjustly, not for the sake of compensating a debt toward God, but for the sake of becoming a universal metaphor for forgiveness. Therefore, for Milbank "[the] assuming of sin is an atonement, because Jesus' response is a non-violent one: since he refuses the violence which would actively distort his own work, yet allows to be incorporated into his own person ugly constructions which in their new context assume a different appearance"(WMS 139). In other words, the significance of atonement is not a compensation for human sinfulness, but the growth of the believers, which de Lubac describes as the shift from the image of God to the likeness of God. We shall consider this point in following chapter. Consequently, for Milbank Jesus could be regarded as a sacrifice insofar as He puts an end to all human sacrifices. "Only in a comical sense was Christ, strictly speaking, a sacrifice. In a serious sense he was an effective sacrifice because he overcame sacrifice once and for all" (BR 100). In this way, he provides a remedy for the problem caused by the Protestant doctrine of justification which is, in his judgment, not ethically useful. "If atonement, therefore, is nothing more than forgiveness, because forgiveness is itself atonement, it follows that for atonement to be materially efficacious it cannot be 'once and for all', like the sign or metaphor of atonement, but must be continuously renewed" (WMS 161). After all, for Milbank, the purpose of Jesus' death is not the sacrificial ransom. For him, "divine redemption is not God's forgiving us, but rather his giving us the gift of the capacity for forgiveness" (BR

[56] I think that this theological position is similiar to Karl Barth who understands justification and sanctification in terms of the reconciliation event in Jesus-Christ.

62). The ahistorical reading of Jesus is related to sacrificial atonement, whereas Milbank's new definition of atonement as forgiveness is consonant with his emphasis on the social aspect of salvation which also preoccupies de Lubac. For Milbank, this political reading of the Gospel can renew the significance of Jesus' new social practice (WMS 148). Accordingly, "our new political life in Christ is once more a merely natural life in the sense of created life, and of specifically human life which is orientation to supernatural deification" (BR103).

5. Critical issues

5.1 General critical issues

Stephen Shakespeare regards RO as a new romantic theology. In his judgment, like the Romantics Milbank attempts to overcome the dualism of the subject and the object, of the finite and the infinite, and of the sensible and the supra-sensible. Moreover, for romantics, the key to this overcoming lies in the aesthetic configuration of reality. Likewise Milbank's solution to the modern *aporia* mentioned above is the aesthetical reconfiguration of traditional Christology. This romantic approach enables Milbank to reject the quest for the historical Jesus, because there is no such thing as objective history apart from human subjectivity. Jesus whom we know is the Jesus mediated by the Scripture and tradition, which are considered as a sacrament by Milbank and de Lubac. As a result, for Milbank, the value of the real history of Jesus is relativized, because what is of importance for him is the metaphorical value of Jesus. For Shakespeare, this approach which relativized the importance of the historicity of Jesus with regard to his symbolic/asthetic value risks arbitrarily interpreting the Christ's work of salvation according to our pre-conception of Jesus. That is, "Christ is interpreted in the context of human poetic activity- the making of meaningful signs which are overtaken, caught up in a meaning we cannot control or delimit."[57]

According to Shakespeare, this aesthetic approach to Christ leads Milbank to his atonement doctrine. For Milbank, "Jesus is substituted for us, because… he becomes totally a sign, here he is transformed into a perfect metaphor of forgiveness" (BR 160). Shakespeare sees in Milbank's understanding of atonement the remains of "liberal exemplarist view of Christ's work."[58] Shakespeare thinks that Milbank's understanding of Christ stems from his idealization of biblical texts. In Milbank's view, the doctrine of atonement has meaning only within the story of Jesus. So atonement is redefined in terms of the goal of the story which is a metaphor of forgiveness. This elevation of the biblical text to a self-sufficient world makes Milbank's Christology ambiguous, because the text is cut out off from the historicity of the Jesus story.

Frederic Christian Bauerschmidt also criticizes Milbank's poetical understanding of Christ grounded in his firm conviction of the irreducibly linguistic and narrative character of human being. In Bauerschmidt's view, the problem of Milbank's approach stems from his violent mixing of particular Christian language with his theological metaphysics. Milbank's poetical and metaphorical account of Jesus grants a surplus meaning to the historical Jesus and this meaning is realized at a highly ontological level.

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[57] Stephen Shakespeare, "The New Romantics: A Critique of Radical Orthodoxy," 170.
[58] Ibid.

But his emphasis on the allegorical meaning tends to sacrifice the historical reality of Jesus described in the Gospels. So, for Bauerschmidt, Milbank's displacement of the identity of Jesus from the historical figure to the Church risks obliterating the historical practiceof Jesus, the practice which had been imitated by many saints, such as Francis of Assisi and Ignatius of Loyola. Because of Milbank's idea of the assumption of Christ's humanity to the divine person, Bauerschmidt even asks whether "Milbank's Christological position amounts to, if not docetism, at least a 'monophysite' absorption of Christ's humanity into his divinity."[59] Milbank's emphasis on the cosmic meaning of Christ results in the evacuation of the identity of Jesus. Even if Milbank seeks the identity in the Church's practice whose aim is at "sociality and conviviality itself" (WMS 154), Bauerschmidt raises a question: "what does it mean to aim at something as abstract as 'sociality and conviviality itself'?"[60] That is, Milbank's elimination of the identity of Jesus in history rends Christianity's content ambiguous. By this elimination "both Christian institutions and Christian morality suffer the same evacuation of content."[61] That is, Milbank makes the Church's practice confusing because of his making vacant Jesus's content.

In my view, Bauerschmidt's criticism is half right in that he sees the risk of Milbank's high Christology. However, in order to evaluate Milbank's Christological thinking, it is necessary to take Milbank's appropriation of de Lubac's mystical Christology into account. It is true that Milbank gives us the impression that he renders the identity of Christ confusing. Yet Milbank's true intention is not to empty Jesus of content, but rather creatively reconstruct the identity of Jesus by dismantling it. Of course, it is true that we can arbitrarily reconstruct Jesus's identity. But Milbank faithfully follows de Lubac's fundamental thesis according to which Jesus is the sacrament of God. In other words, in Milbank's reconstruction of Jesus's identity is a tension between human *poesis* and divine *poesis*. Divine *poesis* plays the regulative role to human *poesis*. That is, Milbank's creative reconfiguration of Jesus is supernaturally regulated. It is in this light that Milbank's poetical understanding of Jesus is fairly judged.

5.2 Reformed criticism of Milbank's Christology

Reformed criticism of Milbank' Christology is focused on his redefinition of atonement. Hans Boersma argues that Milbank's understanding of atonement doctrine—which he calls 'participatory atonement theology'—is an incompatible point between Reformed theology and Radical Orthodoxy. He qualifies Milbank's conception of atonement as the "ecclesio-Christological practice of forgiveness"[62] In the first place, concerning Milbank's relocation of the atonement within the ecclesiological practice of forgiveness, he criticizes that Milbank merges Christology and Ecclesiology together: "Milbank posits not just a close connection between Christ and the church, but goes as far as to identify

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[59] Frederic Christian Bauerschmidt, "The Word Made Speculative?," 425.
[60] Ibid., 426.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Hans Boersma, 'Being Reconciled-Atonement as the Ecclesio-Christological Practice of Forgiveness in John Milbank" in *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition*, ed. James K.A. Smith, James H. Olthuis, 185.

the two."[63] Furthermore, in citing Milbank's argument that theologically ecclesiology is primary, while Christology and atonement are secondary (WMS 148), he states that "Milbank does not just posit a close link between Christology and ecclesiology, but he identifies the two in such a way as to subsume the former into the latter" [64]

In the second place, Boersma criticizes Milbank's positive conception of forgiveness. According to Milbank "there is a contrast between forgiveness as a "positive mixed constitution" and "the negative and unilateral post-late-mediaeval and Reformation sense of forgiveness which perverts this constitution into a despotism now to be exercised as anarchy" (BR 190). In order to confirm his argument, Milbank draws on Thomas Aquinas. He thinks that Aquinas, like him, maintains the positive notion of forgiveness, which he expresses as "unlimited positive circulation" (BR 48). Concerning this argument of Milbank, Boersma argues that the position of Aquinas is more similar to the Reformed theology than to Milbank. He acknowledges that in Aquinas's theology, there is a God's positive forgiveness. That is to say, there is a significant connection between forgiveness and transformation of the believers. However, according to him, "Aquinas does distinguish between forgiveness and transformation by insisting that it is impossible to have the one without the other."[65] He cites Aquinas: "mortal sin is said to be pardoned from the very fact that, by means of grace, the aversion of the mind from God is taken away together with [*simul cum*] the debt of eternal punishment."[66]

Furthermore, Boersma suggests that we have to distinguish grace-initiated transformation from the interpretation of the notion of forgiveness: "It is certainly certain that the Western tradition since Augustine regarded justification as a grace-initiated transformation rather than a judicial declaration. But this is something quite different from interpreting the notion of forgiveness along similar lines."[67]

Another Reformed theologian, Michael S.Horton offers a similar criticism to Milbank's participatory Christology in paying attention to his understanding of atonement. Horton affirms the affinities between Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed tradition in many ways. Radical Orthodoxy's strong challenge to the autonomy of secular philosophy, its stark critique of modernity and its rehabilitation of Christian tradition are common points shared with the Reformed tradition. However, Horton is opposed to Milbank's understanding of the death of Christ and his subsuming of Christology under ecclesiology.

Horton perceptively recognizes that Milbank' Christology is intimately intertwined with his affirmation of an allegorical method of biblical interpretation decisively supported by Alexandrian Christology. In Horton's view, the allegorical method makes Milbank's understanding of atonement doctrine similar to Hegel's. He says, "As with Hegel, the meaning of the cross as atonement is hermeneutical and poetic rather than soteriological."[68] As we have seen, Milbank reinterprets the doctrine of atonement not in terms of Protestant vicarious substitution, but incorporates it into sanctification. For

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[63] Ibid., 187.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid. 191.
[66] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologia*, 3 Q.86 a. 4, cited in ibid.
[67] Ibid.,190.
[68] Michael S.Horton, "Participation and Covenant," in *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition-* Creation, ed. James K.A. Smith, James H. Olthuis, 128.

Horton, this non-extrinsic approach to Christ risks blurring several distinctions which the Reformed tradition has strongly maintained: "Christ and church, church and cosmos, Christ's atonement and ours, justification and sanctification, individual and community, law and gospel, faith and works."[69] Horton believes that "so suspicious of dualism, Radical Orthodoxy seems overly nervous about distinctions."[70] Milbank's weakening of soteriology leads him to conflate Christ and the Church. And his relocation of Christological doctrine within his ecclesiology resituates the traditional Protestant understanding of Pauline theology from his ecclesiological vantage point. That is, the central Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith, which is individualistic in character, is replaced by 'participation in atonement' which is concretized by suffering for the Church. Horton shortly estimates Milbank's position as "Ecclesiology swallows Christology."[71]

In articulating his position, Horton sums up his critique of Radical Orthodoxy in comparing its theology to the Reformed tradition: "However strenuously Radical Orthodoxy criticizes the univocity of being, its account of participation at many junctures blurs the distinction between Creator and creature, redeemer and redeemed, cult and culture. By contrast, a covenantal paradigm, such as the one adopted historically by the Reformed tradition, affirms a strong view of union with Christ but in representative and organic rather than ontic and metaphysical terms."[72] Again, Horton contrasts Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed tradition in a very schematic manner. "Radical Orthodoxy and Reformed theology think different thought; rather, they operate in different universes of discourse. Despite important agreements, Reformed theology inhabits an ethical-historical-eschatological rather than a metaphysical-ontological-speculative atmosphere."[73] In my judgment, Horton's interpretation is very simplistic because Milbank's theology is as historical, ethical and eschatological as Reformed theology. This misunderstanding, in my view, stems from his ignorance of the influence of de Lubac's theology on Milbank, which I attempt to illuminate in this study. As we have already seen, Milbank's theological ontology is deeply rooted in history due to the incarnation of Christ. So it is a misreading to read Milbank as a metaphysical theologian in ancient and modern sense of the terms. Milbank's metaphysics is inseparably connected to human time, which he considers as participating in divine time. In this sense, Milbank's theology has an eschatological orientation as Reformed theology. Moreover, Milbank's ethical reflection is incorporated into his theologico-ontological reflection. From this fact, Milbank's theology is not opposed to the Reformed tradition, but rather bears affinities to this tradition.

Finally, in my reading, for Milbank, the Protestant doctrine of atonement is used for the justification of the divine and human violence that is increasingly globalized. It seems to me that Milbank confuses man's violence and divine violence out of fatherly love. When the father chides his child, can we say that this is bad violence? So I ask of Milbank if we could find a third alternative Christianity instead of Milbank's

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[69] Ibid., 129.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid., 132.
[73] Ibid.

'alternative Christianity,' a Christianity based on non-violent atonement. In *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, Hans Boersma, in reappropriating the atonement tradition, attempts to show how to reconcile God's hospitality with His violence. Unlike Milbank, for him violence is not incompatible with God's hospitality. He holds that God's hospitality, "while necessarily involving violence, retains its integrity as hospitality."[74] He makes clear that his understanding of violence is different from recent philosophical thinking on this subject (Derrida, Levinas). While for these philosophers, violence has an inherently negative implication, for Boersma God's violence does not eliminate God's hospitality. In the face of Milbank's attack on the violent character of the Protestant God which is directly connected with Calvin's doctrine of predestination, he sets forth the idea of "preferential hospitality."[75] He understands the notion of election from a different point of view than Milbank. Based on a Deuteronomic understanding of election, he holds that election is the expression of God's grace. According to him, "this preferential hospitality is instrumental in character; that is to say, the election of God's people leads to a relationship with them: election is the foundation of the covenant."[76]

Milbank himself did not deny the Protestant doctrine of atonement. It is for him of secondary importance with regard to his ecclesiology. In my view, his dismissal of the Protestant literal interpretation of the Scripture leads him to reject the literal affirmation of this doctrine of the New Testament. For him, this doctrine is to be spiritualized for the higher Christological/allegorical meaning, which is realized in the Church as the Body of Christ. Yet his Church-centered understanding of the death of Christ, as many point out, risks weakening a soteriological significance of Jesus' death. In this respect, it is necessary for Milbank to reconcile the soteriological and ecclesiological aspects of the death of Jesus. If protestant theology has to learn Milbank's emphasis on the centrality of the Church in theological reflection, Milbank could learn from Protestant theology the fact that atonement is not God's violence, but rather the expression of His hospitality.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined John Milbank's Christological poetics. Why is, for Milbank, the category of *poesis* so important, even in his understanding of Jesus Christ? We can read that Milbank's poetical approach to Christ is his postmodern Christian challenge to the modernity. If modernity has a Christian origin, it is only Christianity which cures the ills that modernity produced. For Milbank, autonomous reason is at the heart of modernity and this assertion of the autonomy of reason is the result of the loss of the supernatural link to the transcendent. With de Lubac Milbank thinks that this supernatural link is Christ Himself. That is, incarnated Christ plays the role of integrating nature and the supernatural. Therefore, the antidote to the illness of modernity is the recovery of the idea of the supernatural defined in Christological terms. Milbank's theology is grounded in his conviction of the human hermeneutical situation. There is not any human being that can be immune from situationality and locatedness

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[74] Hans Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004),17.
[75] Ibid., 75-95.
[76] Ibid., 18.

in time and space. This basic insight is applied to his Christology. For Milbank and de Lubac, Christ is neither a purely historical person, nor an untouchable person in heaven. His existence is so rooted in history, that Christ cannot but be understood creatively and poetically. It is the history of Jesus, not a metaphysical preconception that determines Jesus's identity. Milbank is convinced that the recovery of this poetical aspect of Christ can overcome modernity.What is more important is that this approach is not to assimilate postmodern philosophy into Christian theology. For him, this idea is deeply grounded in patristic sources as de Lubac shows us.

Finally, for Milbank and de Lubac, the extrinsic account of Christ is a false, because Jesus himself is a message, that is, God's sign to humanity which shows His likeness. This basic understanding leads Milbank and de Lubac to reject the Protestant sacrificial account of the death of Christ. For them, he is not the sacrifice for human sin, but rather the symbol of God's forgiveness. This understanding of Christ is directly connected to his vision of the Church, which we will examine in the final chapter. Milbank interprets atonement from an ecclesiastical point of view. That is, atonement is not conceived as forensic justification, but a process of sanctification in participating in the Body of the Church. Milbank broadens and reorients the meaning of atonement. It is not simply an individual affair, but concerns communal spiritual growh in union with Christ within the Church. Milbank's ethical thought is in the same direction. His ethics is not based on autonomous reason, but on Christ's poetical act. And his Christian ethics aims at training Christians as a virtuous people through the Christian community

VI. Supernaturalizing Ethics

By recovering the narrative dimension of Christology we will be able to see that Jesus did not have a social ethic, but that his story is a social ethic.[1]

In his essay "Can Morality Be Christian?"(WMS 119-232). Milbank asserts straightaway that "there cannot be a specifically Christian morality … Morality cannot be Christian" (WMS 219). By this provocative answer, what does he mean? Does he mean that Christianity is an amoral religion? Does he mean that the Christian way of life has nothing in common with secular morality? His denial of Christian ethics does not mean that there is not a typical Christian mode of life, but that there is a distinctive ethical behavior in Christianity differentiated from secular ethical practice. If there is a typical Christian morality, it is something qualitatively different from other secular moralities. This is what we will explore in this chapter in relation to Henri de Lubac's theological ethical thought.

It is from the peculiarity of Christian narrative that Milbank's ethical thought is derived. More precisely, he resists against the modern moral project concretely elaborated by Kant who proposes the establishment of universal ethical law grounded in autonomous reason. Instead of having recourse to the universal norms, rule and principles, he accentuates the ethical particularity of each community. If we appeal to the *surnaturel* thesis, at the ethical level, the supernatural is concretized as a communitarian ethics, for the supernatural primarily concerns the Christian community as its social expression.[2] As Stanley Hauerwas notes, "Christian ethics is not an abstract discipline primarily concerned with 'ideas.' Rather it is a form of reflection in service to a community, and it derives its character from the nature of that community's convictions."[3]

Before examining Milbank's engagement with de Lubac on ethical problems, it seems to me that we could understand Milbank's provocative argument more clearly, if we follow Stanley Hauerwas, a famous American Methodist ethicist, and his explanation with regard to the nature of Christian ethics. According to him, Christian ethics as a self-conscious activity was recently developed and preoccupied especially with Protestant liberalism.[4] Faced with rational and historical challenges to the Christian truth, liberal theologians sought to adapt Christian belief to secular rationalist philosophy in order to make Christian belief meaningful in the modern world. This tendency gives rise to the separation between morality and Christian dogmatic assertion. In this way Christian ethics emerged as a positive response to the rise of modern

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1 Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 37.

2 For the rise of communitarian ethics in American context, see Lisa Sowle Chaill, "L'Éthique Communautarienne et le Catholicisme Américain," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 95 (2007-1), 21-40. For the constructive dialogue between communitarian ethics and Kantian ethics, see Gaziaux Éric, "Morale 'autonome' et éthique 'communautarienne': Quels rapports pour quelle éthique chrétienne?" *Revue d'Éthique et de Théologie Morale*, 2008/HS n° 251, 191-215.

3 Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceful Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press,1983), 54.

4 Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 89.

rationalist moral philosophy. As Hauerwas notes, "The 'moral' kernel did not seem to require the 'religious' claims associated with it."[5]

In his article "On keeping Theological Ethics Theological," (1983) he explains the development of Christian ethics as a self-conscious activity in the United States context in the twentieth century. Here, in resistance against a modern view of religion as offering a moral utility, he strongly defends a confessional approach to morality. As we have seen above, modern Christian morality is a product of a compromise between Christian theology and modern secular philosophy:

> Theologians have sought, at least since the Enlightenment, to demonstrate that theological language can be translated into terms that are meaningful and compelling for those who do not share Christianity's more particularistic beliefs about Jesus of Nazareth. In short, theologians have tried to show that we do not need to speak theologically in order to "say something theological," as other forms of speech are really implicitly religious. After all, hasn't talk of God always really been but a way to talk about being human?[6]

According to Hauerwas, this apologetic project is not a modern development, but has a long history. But ancient forms of apologetic like Justin's case are different from modern ones in that ancient Christian apologetics did not compromise Christian dogmatic assertions. The fact that the Church fathers did not write books concerning Christian ethics for its own sake shows that they incorporated Christian ethical reflection into their theology. Ethical principles were considered as proceeding from their theological reflection. However, modern apologetics sought to mould Christian beliefs into modern rationalist philosophical frameworks. Ethical reflection became autonomous, separated from theological reflection. Hauerwas thinks that Immanuel Kant was a great exponent of this model, in which 'the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man' is the essence of the Christian religion.[7]

In addition to the modern tendency of reducing Christianity into a morality in its essence, Hauerwas equally notes that Christian ethics as a distinctive discipline arose out of a pastoral concern. This was sophisticated as the social Gospel movement of which the theological basis is offered by Walter Rauschenbusch. This movement arose in reacting against the prevalent prejudice that poverty was derived from the fault of the poor. The proponents associated with this movement grounded their belief in the Old Testament prophetic tradition. Protesting against the Christian accommodation of the *status quo*, they maintained that there is an organic unity between religion and

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Stanley Hauerwas, "On Keeping Theological Ethics Theological," in *The Hauerwas Reader*, ed. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 52.

[7] Hauerwas cites Kant : "Since the sacred narrative, which is employed solely on behalf of ecclesiastical faith, can have and, taken by itself, ought to have absolutely no influence upon the adoption of moral maxims, and since it is given to ecclesiastical faith only for the vivid presentation of its true object (virtue striving toward holiness), it follows that this narrative must at all times be taught and expounded in the interest of morality; and yet (because the common man especially has an enduring propensity within him to sink into passive belief) it must be inculcated painstakingly and repeatedly that true religion is to consist not in the knowing or considering of what God does or has done for our salvation, but in what we must do to become worthy of it" (Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. with an introduction by Theodore Green and Hoyt Hudson [New York: Harper, 1960], 123 cited in "On Keeping theological Ethics Theological," 55.).

morality[8], and between theology and ethics. Walter Rauschenbush understands Christian salvation as the coordination of our life with the life of our fellow man as a response to God's love. Here "God is the all-embracing source and exponent of the common life and good of mankind. When we submit to God, we submit to the supremacy of the common good. Salvation is the voluntary socializing of the soul."[9]

This identification can be described as "naturalizing the supernatural" (TST 219) in Milbank's words. That is, the integrated model of the social Gospel is rooted not in the religious outlook, but in the common basis with secular reason. In this case, sociology is the primary source for the explanation of society. And theology is to serve the goal which this sociological account of society envisions. In this sense, Hauerwas' critique of the social Gospel finds an echo in Milbank's critique of liberation theology which embraces the sociological explanation of society as a universal law ruling society. According to Milbank, liberation theology, following Karl Rahner's model of the relation between nature and grace, remains essentially individualistic in character (TST 229). In this case,

> The transcendental impulse, which gives the conditions of possibility of a theological critique. Ethics belongs to the world, and the world is a totality, self-sufficiently closed in upon itself. One deduces ethics from the mere formal fact of our freedom, our self-transcending capacity… For political and liberation theology therefore, the ethical belongs to the social, but both remain essentially apart from the 'religious', which is either their anonymous secret, or else a categorically separate dimension of 'experience' (TST 230-231).

Hauerwas is one of the theologians who hope to rehabilitate the Church as the locus of theological reflection. Since the Enlightenment, numerous theologians sought to accommodate theological assertions to a modern philosophical framework. He notes: "For Christian belief about God, Jesus, sin, the nature of human existence, and salvation are intelligible only if they are seen against the background of the church- that is, a body of people who stands apart from the 'world' because of the peculiar task of worshiping a God whom the world knows not."[10] In this respect, he makes a radical rupture with modernist rational ethics. For him, ethics is not understood as an attempt to set up universal rules and principles, but as an attempt to embody Christian virtues within the Church. This ethical enterprise is also found in Henri de Lubac's ethical thought. When he challenged the neo-scholastic two-layer structure of the world, he had in mind the ethical consequence of this double structure. If we distinguish between nature and grace, understandingly, we have to set up purely natural and rationalist ethics which has nothing to do with the supernatural. In consequence, the sphere of ordinary life is separated from the overwhelming grace of God. For de Lubac, this separation had resulted in a modern spiritual, and its concomitant political, and social tragedy, since modern man lost the teleological end which the Christian idea of the supernatural could offer. In a supposedly purely natural sphere, man has to impose his end on himself in the name of autonomy. As we have seen in chapter 4, John Milbank,

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[8] Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1945), 140, cited in "On Keeping Theological Ethics Theological," 56

[9] Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, 98-9, cited in ibid.

[10] Hauerwas, "On Keeping," 72

sharing the problematic concerning modern and postmodern ethical predicament, severely criticizes modern Kantian ethics which is an attempt to establish universal ethical norms without reference to the supernatural. Instead, Milbank, following de Lubac's idea, proposes a robust ethics of gifts or, as he prefer, a charismatic ethics which is backed up by the idea that human behavior is not limited to human practical reason linked to human duty, but is supernaturally mediated.

1. Ethics of the gift

1.1 Secular morality versus Christianity

Milbank adamantly maintains that morality cannot be Christian (WMS 219). This is to say that there exists a fundamental antithesis between Christianity and secular morality. Furthermore, if Christian morality exists, this would surpass the supposedly normal human moral order, because Christian morality is not rooted in universal human reason, but in the Christ-event which brought a radical newness to overall creation.[11] This newness appears to ordinary eyes as so strange that it is judged as immoral or amoral: "Christian morality is a thing so strange, that it must be declared immoral or amoral according to all other human norms and codes of morality" (Ibid.). This vision of Milbank's finds its ally in the communitarian ethics of Stanley Hauerwas. He strongly opposes the identification of Christian value with liberal modern democratic value in the context of North America. In his book on the Ten Commandments, he tells an episode of a judge who displays the Decalogue in his tribunal, hoping that this commandment would ameliorate the moral predicament in American society. He tells this story:

> Judge Roy Moore of Etowah County, Alabama, was sued by the JACLU and the Alabama Free Thought Association in1995 for displaying the Ten Commandment on his courtroom wall. A Montgomery County judge rules that Moore must take the commandments down from his wall. The Alabama Supreme Court issued a stay, but Governor Fob James promised to call out the National Guard to protect Judge Moore and the Ten Commandment from the court
>
> One of our Alabama relative said, "Don't'worry about anybody in the state legislature wanting to hang the Ten Commandment in the legislative chamber. Until they can figure out a way to do something about the thing on adultery, the senators want to keep those commandments in court and as far away from themselves as possible.[12]

What would be the response of Hauerwas in the face of this episode? Contrary to our expectations, Hauerwas does not praise the courageous act of the judge because the Christian commandment is not primarily for a secular society as a universal rule, but rather for the community of believers. The accommodation of Christian commandments to liberal democratic value, which sets human right and freedom above anything else,

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[11] Lubac points the newness of Christianity in invoking Irenaeus who states: "This is an absolute transcendence. *Omnem novitatem attulit* (He has brought the utmost novelty)"; [Original text] "c'est une transcendance absolue. *Omnem novitatem attulit* (Il a apporté toute nouveauté)." Henri de Lubac, "La Lumière du Christ," 196.

[12] Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *The Truth About God: The Ten Commandments in Christian Life* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 95.

gives rise to the loss of the particularity of the divine commandment for God's people. But Hauerwas does not mean that the Ten Commandments are not of universal value. As Milbank and de Lubac think, the universality of the Church has a different sense from that of the Enlightenment. In this sense, the judge's praiseworthy act is courageous, but ineffective in human moral growth. Interestingly, in his article, "On Ethics," C. S. Lewis, like Milbank and Hauerwas, opposes the revival of Christian ethics under the banner of the preservation of civilization:

> It is often asserted in modern England that the world must return to Christian ethics in order to preserve civilization, or even in order to save the human species from destruction. It is sometimes asserted in reply that Christian ethics have been the greatest obstacle to human progress and that we must take care never to return to a bondage from which we have at last so fortunately escaped… Though I am myself a Christian, and even a dogmatic Christian untinged with Modernist reservations and committed to supernaturalism in its full rigour, I find myself quite unable to take my place beside the upholders of the first view. The whole debate between those who demand and those who deprecate a return to Christian ethics, seems to me to involve presuppositions which I cannot allow. The question between the contending parties has been wrongly put.[13]

At this juncture, we have to follow Milbank's contrast of (secular) morality with Christianity. He sums up the characteristics of secular morality as "Reaction, Sacrifice, Complicity with Death, Scarcity and Generality", whereas those of Christianity are "Gift, End of Sacrifice, Resurrection, Plenitude and Confidence" (WMS 219).

In the first place, secular morality is based on lack, and it is therefore *"reactive*". In order to explain the reactive character of morality, Milbank cites William Blake's poem as follows: " I heard a devil curse/ On the heath and the furze/ Mercy could be no more/ If there was nobody poor" According to Milbank's understanding, the key point of this poem is that "*every* act of mercy, in so far as it rejoice in itself, rejoices also in its occasion" (WMS 219). That is to say, by the merciful act, far from meeting the beggars' need, we perpetuate his situation. In this case, the merciful act itself becomes an evil. Furthermore, every good act presupposes "initial evil, some deficiency, some threat, some terror, something to be warded off" (WMS 220). Therefore, Milbank thinks that "virtue is paradigmatically heroism, the essence of manhood in action, *virtu*s, the male force which sustains the bounds of self, or the bounds of the city" (Ibid.). This understanding of morality is diametrically opposed to the Christian vision of an abundantly engraced world, the vision that de Lubac and Milbank espouse. They think that creation has no lack and after the incarnation the fullness of Christ overflows much more than the first creation. In his essay entitled "Evil-Darkness and Silence," (BR1-25) Milbank criticizes the theory of radical evil which situates evil within human will. Against this understanding of evil, Milbank asserts that there is no positive evil in creation, in construing, evil as the privation of being (BR 1) in the vein of Augustine. According to this view, evil is not conceived as a positive force in creation, but an illness accompanying good creation like a person without one hand—this does not harm the integrity of this person. This Augustinian understanding of evil as privation was lost

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[13] C.S.Lewis, "On Ethics," in *Christian Reflections*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1996), 44.

sight of since the Enlightenment in which Kant plays a central role by his radical evil theory. According to Milbank's interpretation, this view constitutes a radical rupture with the participatory paradigm because the link between the finite and the infinite is cut. "In no sense could radical evil for him connote loss of vision of the infinite, since the bounds between the finite and the infinite are permanently fixed and permit of no participatory mediation" (BR 12). Milbank thinks that this view has a moral consequence:

> For Kant, there is no such sphere of participatory mediation between the physical and the psychic. For him it is rather a given that the sensory is neither moral nor immoral, but instead amoral, and so naturally oriented towards self-preservation and self-enjoyment. In consequence morality is not for him primarily a matter of the reorientation of the feeling, or the passions. Rather, a necessary 'moral feeling' is the paradoxical feeling of 'the sublime' which is the feeling of a break with feeling, or the counter-attractive attraction of self-sacrifice (BR 13).

The second characteristic of Christian *ethos*, which is the logical consequence of the first one, is that Christian morality is *non-reactive*. If morality is reactive, it ensues that it necessitates self-sacrifice and that this act is regarded as a most praiseworthy ethical behavior. Milbank resists against this unilateral notion of morality which is theorized by several philosophers such as Jan Patocka, Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion. According to the logic of the ethics of self-sacrifice, there must be a twofold sacrifice: One is the overcoming of the inner self's protective tendency; the other, the overcoming of a part for the sustenance of a threatened whole. Here Milbank raises a question with regard to the logic of self-sacrifice. According to him, behind this logic lie a pagan anthropology and a pagan social ontology. In the first place, he points out an anthropological problem. The ethics of self-sacrifice supposes the duality between the superior part (soul) and the inferior part (body). The higher part must respond reactively to the lower passions of the body. This anthropological conception implicates the hierarchical division of the human being. In contrast, Milbank maintains the integrated understanding of body and soul. In the second place, the dualist anthropology of the ethics of self-sacrifice is extended to its social ontology, in which a part is subordinated to a whole. The part is exposed to vulnerability, for the whole cannot help but react against the external threat by sacrificing the part for the sustenance of the whole. In this way, the part is considered as superficial and redundant. Consequently, this sacrifice is not a sacrifice of one for another in its true sense, because, as Milbank writes, "we can see that sacrifice is never of one for another, but always a matter of self-sacrifice for one's higher self and of part for whole, for even the individual who dies for his friend dies rather for the idea of his being contained within the greater whole which is the circle of friendship" (WMS 223). According to Milbank, the problem with this deontological model is that "every ethical command of duty requires a violent renunciation, a subordination of the part to the whole" (Ibid.).[14] This criticism is coupled with his criticism of the reactive character of secular morality which is derived from the idea of the lack in creation. In Milbank's eyes, modern ethics, which is obsessed with the

[14] For Milbank's historical examination of the issue of sacrifice, see John Milbank, "Stories of Sacrifice: From Wellhausen to Girard," *Theory, Culture & Society* 12:4 (November, 1995), 15-46.

subject cut off from the fullness of creation, lost sight of the doxological character of the human self. As he states, "modern ethics, just because it enthrones altruism, is *pathological* in its degree of obliteration of the possibility of consummation, or of the beginning of beatitude in a time simply to be enjoyed, and a conviviality to be celebrated by the living self "(BR 144, emphasis mine).

Milbank's assertion is very simple: no lack, no sacrifice. In contrast to this false social ontology, Christian social ontology modeled on Trinity supposes a mutual belonging between the part and the whole. The distinction of the part and the whole is a conceptual invention of modern social theory, which Milbank, along with de Lubac, persistently attacks. In this model, the relationship between Creator and creature is considered as reciprocal in the sense that there is not a deficiency in creation which requires a unilateral compensation from God. However, this fact does not, for Milbank, weaken the gratuity of grace, since God takes the initiative in giving. In this sense, we can see Milbank's paradoxical understanding of the relationship between God and creation, an understanding which we see prominently in de Lubac. Milbank states: "If the fullness of being, or of convivial interaction, defines our vision of the perfect good, then giving can be conceived as quintessentially reciprocal; expecting a gift in return need not necessarily diminish the gratuity of a gift."[15]

In the third place, Milbank perceptively recognizes that the reactive character of secular morality and its concomitant demand of sacrifice are intimately connected to its obsession with Death. Namely, secular morality is established on the principle of repelling death with death. In Milbank's words, "death for death to secure life against death: this is 'morality', this is 'ethics'" (WMS 223). In other words, "without death, there would be no need to be good, violence would be but sadomasochistic fun" (Ibid).[16] Here Milbank reminds us that the New Testament binds sin and death together. Death is the fruit of sin. Therefore it is sin that invents morality. Hence secular morality is associated with Death. Yet according to Milbank, "to be ethical … is to believe in the Resurrection, and somehow to participate in it. And outside this belief and participation there is, quite simply, no 'ethical' whatsoever" (BR 148). Milbank draws on Bonheoffer in order to confirm this assertion. According to Bonhoeffer, " 'Christian ethics' opposes the knowledge of good and evil, which all morality seeks, because this is itself the evil that institutes evil along with the good."[17] As a result, "the ethical," for Milbank, "is only imaginable as mutual and unending gift-exchange, construed as an absolute surrender to moral luck or absolute faith in the arrival of the divine gift, which is grace" (BR 154).

1.2 Poetical understanding of ethics

Milbank raises the issue of the relationship between *poesis* and *praxis*. The importance of this issue, for Milbank, lies in his break with the Aristotelian distinction

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[15] John Milbank, "The Ethics of Self-Sacrifice," *First Things* 91 (March 1991), 35.
Milbank says also that "the gift was not a commodity refusing to declare itself, because it returned non-identically, at no absolutely required time, and thereby always preserved a reciprocity that was asymmetrical and in consequence not abstractly equivalent other reciprocities" (BR 46).

[16] Here we can remind ourselves of Hebrew 2:14-5: "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death –that is, the devil- and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."

[17] Dietrich Bonhœffer*, Ethics* (SCM: London, 1963), 3, cited in WMS 225.

between *praxis* whose end lies in the activity itself, and *poesis* whose end is external to the activity. How can we relate human poetical activity with the practical—that is, ethical—activity? This is the problem of how to reconcile two different modes of human activity. Milbank finds an aesthetic solution in his participatory framework. He writes: "*Poesis* .. is concerned with discernment of forms that are suitable and fitting, and so with aesthetics and the beautiful. However, since all our discernment proceeds *via* the means of representation, it is not genuinely possible to separate *praxis* and *poesis* (WMS129).[18] That is, human *poesis* is not simply a meaningless technical manipulation, but is understood as the making of *telos*. In this way Milbank integrates *poesis* and *praxis*. "Poetic representation themselves seek to establish a more adequate human *telos*; therefore they belong to a single practical-poetical movement which opens up deeper possibility of human behavior" (Ibid.).[19] Milbank thinks that the linguisticality of the human being makes possible the merging of *praxis* and *poesis*. Human language has the double aspect of *poesis* and *praxis* at the same time. On the one hand, in our linguistic performance, we always have in mind our *telos* and according to this *telos* we prepare the means for completing it. In this case 'doing' precedes 'making". On the other hand, we also perform a word such as our promise or politician's declaration, and after it we act in order to accomplish the *telos* we establish. Milbank compares this idea to double role of an actor in drama: "In the case of language as *praxis* we are like the actors in the drama; in the case of language as *poesis* we are reminded that there is no dramatist, but we are all, as character, also co-authors of what we take to be a single 'work'" (RDGV 318).

As I said before, we can understand Milbank's position with the help of his participatory framework as understood from an aesthetic perspective. To be more precise, according to him, human ethical behavior participates in the harmonious whole. That is, individual ethical behavior is not reduced to personal virtue, but understood in terms of participation in an aesthetic fashion. But as Milbank notes, this does not mean

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[18] This approach finds an echo in Hauerwas. See his *Vision and Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

[19] For Milbank's understanding of the relation of *praxis* and *poesis*, see RDGV 313-21.
Daniel Franklin Pilario's comparison of a liberation theologian Leonardo Boff and Milbank is instructive for our understanding of Milbank's poetical understanding of Christian ethics. According to his account, "Boff appears to be concerned with the Aristotelian distinction between *praxis* and *theoria*. Despite liberation theology's extolling of *praxis* as the criterion of truth, Boff's Althusserianism seems to point to the opposite direction: that (theological) theory has an autonomous language of its own which in turn can provide the criteria with which to judge any praxis- political, economic, cultural or religious. Be that as it may, Boff's discourse is mainly located within this Aristotelian distinction-on how praxis relates to theory. Milbank's concern with the authenticity and 'purity' of theological discourse can be located with the other Aristotelian contrasting notion of *praxis-poesis*… In Aristotle, this distinction arose in order to protect the ethical sphere (*praxis*) from the incursions of technical rationality (*poesis*)…Milbank's concept of theology as an explication of practice aims at obliterating the classical divide between *theoria* and *praxis*. Here, theological theory gives in to the priority of Christian practice. What is privileged is no longer the theological construct but the constant repetition of the same Christian event, albeit differently performed at every instance.It means that 'practice' can only be authentic when it is 'made strange' in every performance. And if theological theory is to be faithful to its task, it must contribute to making Christian practice establish its difference. The paradigm of arts, music and poetry then comes to be adopted in theological methodology since it is these media which best project the Word-event into the world as defying its instrumental logic, as its counter-story, something unexpected, surprising or novel- one which is 'made strange'" (Daniel Franklin Pilario, *Back to the Rough Grounds of Praxis: Exploring Theological Method with Pierre Bourdieu* [Louvain: Peeters Publishers, 2005], 382-3).

the reduction of the individual into a part of a whole. Rather, according to his participatory model, the individual subject is in analogical relation to the whole. That's why Milbank opposes Hobbes's political science which reduces *poesis* into technical manipulation by which "man can effectively control his social destiny by obedience to an analytical blueprint" (WMS 125).[20]

As with de Lubac, for Milbank, man is considered as a microcosmos. In other words, man has his own integrity and simultaneously exceeds himself infinitely. The individual cannot be used only for the interest of the whole. Conversely, the whole is not to simply serve the interest of the individual. These two realities can be distinguished, but cannot be divided, just as the soul and body can be distinguished, but cannot be divided. He states:

> It might be protested that a notion of the good which tends to regard it as but the imperative to produce the beautiful risks a dangerous 'aestheticization' in which people are merely reduced to parts of a harmonious whole. But to this one should reply that our sense that self-activating, variable 'part' of nature- everything tending, in whatever degree, to 'subjectivity'- should somehow 'exceed' the whole, while still collaborating to produce an overall harmony, is itself not expressible as anything other than a richer more complex vision of what 'the beautiful' might be (WMS 129).

For Milbank, in contrast to secular morality, Christian ethics is not a response to deficient and threatening force, but rather, a "spontaneously creative act" (WMS 4) which presupposes the plenitude of creation. In this sense, Milbank compares the moral actor to an artist: "The moral actor, since he is an artist, is as much at the mercy of 'the muse' (or the Holy Spirit) as the artist (WMS 126).[21] According to him, this creative moral act is conceived of as a participation in the life of the Trinity. So this participation is repeatedly manifested in different ways.[22] In this light, Milbank cites Luther with approval—this is an exceptional approval for Milbank toward this reformer. In citing Luther's *Treatise of Good Works,* Milbank appreciates that he understands God's law not as a compulsory commandment, but as a commandment of faith.

> 'A Man is generous because he trusts God and never doubts but he will always have enough. In contrast a man is covetous and anxious because he does not trust God' 'Do not steal' means, for the gospel, positively 'be generous', and as Luther further says, 'faith is the master workman and the motivating force behind the good work of generosity'. Generosity or true not stealing acts out of the assumption of plenitude, our confidence in God's power (WMS 225).

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[20] See Robert C. Miner, *Truth in the Making*, ch 5, Hobbes, 78-95.

[21] For Milbank, this ethical approch is more Platonic than Aristotelian in the sense that human moral behavior is a participation in the divine beauty like an artist : "Aristotle's very sharp demarcation between two spheres of action, for his concern is to attack the Platonic notion of ethics according to which the good person is like a 'technician' trying to realize some ideal scheme, in accordance with the 'reduced' notion of *poesis*" (RDGV 316).

[22] According to Milbank, "to be Christian is not, as piety supposes, spontaneously and freely to love, of one's own originality and without necessarily seeking and communion. On the contrary, it is to repeat differently, in order to repeat, exactly , the content of Christ's life, and to wait, by a necessary delay, the answering repetition of the other that will fold temporal linearity back into the eternal circle of the triune life" (Milbank, "Can the gift be given?" 150).

Thus, for Milbank, *poesis* is directly linked to the redemption, which is understood not as a change of status in the Protestant sense of the term, but as sanctification.[23] It is the very reason why Milbank's understanding of Christian ethics is inextricably linked to Eucharistic practice, because the liturgy is, for him, the archtypical form of human *poesis*. Moreover, in the Eucharist, the giftedness of others, which is the core of Milbank's ethical thinking, is most manifested. Therefore, "in the Eucharist, we see the only possible paradigm for gift and therefore for ethics, not as one-way sacrifice but as a total surrender for renewed reception" (BR 161). Thus human ethical behavior is not based on his autonomous will, but on divine grace. And this means that we are to renounce the ethical in order to receive this grace that is to satisfy the primordial human desire for God. "We render ourselves entirely prey to the mere good fortune that it might turn out that we have been ethical. But the name of this fortune is secretly grace, the gift or the Good; those names which convey all our Western longing" (Ibid.)

Milbank's poetical understanding of ethics can be best understood in the light of Stanley Hauerwas' narrative approach to ethics. Strongly influenced by MacIntyre, Hauerwas challenges both the utilitarian and deontological approaches to Christian ethics. The former focuses on the consequences of moral behavior, and the latter rule, principle, and obligation. For Hauerwas, his rejection of these approaches does not mean they do not have value as such, but that they lost sight of the context in which a certain moral problem arises.

For Christian ethics, this means that we have to consider the narrative context in which Christian moral behavior is situated. As he states, "Christian ethics does not begin by emphasizing rules or principles, but by calling our attention to a narrative that tells of God's dealing with creation." [24] Hauerwas attaches importance to the place of stories in our childhood experience. A child's world is poetical world full of metaphors, symbol, story, etc., whereas an adult's world is full of rules, principles, abstraction, etc. For Hauerwas, this fictional world is more real than the reality. This is exactly the same argument as Milbank's poetical understanding of the world. Hauerwas states:

> We naturally associate stories and narratives with fiction. Stories create a fantasy world that releases us from the burden of having to deal with the real world. The stories of God in Scripture, it is thought, are but attempts to say 'mythically' or 'symbolically' what might be said directly, but because of the nature of the object being described can only be reached through 'poetic' form. Such stories of God, like most stories, are perhaps important comfort us, but one is mistaken to ask if they are true.[25]

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[23] See Graham Ward, "Kenosis, Poiesis and Genesis: Or the Theological Aesthetics of Suffering," in *Encounter between Eastern Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy: Transfiguring the World Through the Word*, ed. Adrian Pabst and Christopher Schneidr (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 165-75.

[24] Stanly Hauerwas, *The Peaceful Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 24-5. This echoes Yoder's ethical approach. According to Yoder, "the modern ethicistis who have assumed that the only way to get from the gospel story to ethics, from Bethlehem to Rome or Washington to Saigon, was to leave the story behind." (John Howard, Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994], 25). Milbank manifestes the same idea: "ethical activity always occurs within the bounds afforded by our poetic representation" (WMS 129).

[25] Stanly Hauerwas, *The Peaceful Kingdom,* 25.

For Hauerwas, our moral character is largely dependent on the narrative in which we are situated and on the community which was formed by the narrative.[26] Christian moral identity is not formed by abstract rules or obligation, but by participation in God's story as told through the historical Christian community. In this respect, Milbank opposes Christian morality based on 'narrative foundationalism' which is but an obsession with the modern subject. Like Hauerwas Milbank places Christian moral identity in the Church as God's new language.[27]

2. Supernatualizing virtue

2.1 Defining virtue ethics

The recent revival of virtue ethics is encouraging for Milbank's ethical reflection. Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* (1981), in particular, marks a watershed in recent moral discourse. In fact, Milbank's theological ethics owes much to this philosophical achievement, even if he attempts a theological critique of MacIntyre's understanding of virtue. In this groundbreaking book, MacIntyre points out the failure of coherent accounts of human behavior of the Enlightenment's moral project. He maintains that this confusion is generated by Enlightenment philosophy, which tries to set up a universally valid structure of knowledge, and universal morality as its concomitant project. This means that this philosophy marginalizes local and traditional morality as mere superstition. According to him, the legacy of the Enlightenment project is endless disputes of moral discourse such as the dispute between Kantian deontologists and utilitarian consequentialists. As an alternative for the failure of the Enlightenment project, he suggests the revival of Aristotle's teleological account of ethics. He thinks that Aristotle's virtue-centered ethical vision can overcome the modern moral impasse. According to MacIntyre, 'virtue" is the translated word for the Greek 'aretê', which, in Homeric poems, means excellence of any kind. [28] This means the excellence of a function of a thing or a person.[29] After all, virtue is teleological in character. For example, if a computer functions well—which is its virtue—it fulfills its *telos* well.

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[26] MacIntyre points the same thing. "The self has to find its moral identity in and through its membership in communities such as those of the family, the neighborhood, the city, and the tribe does not entail that that the self has to accept the moral limitations of the particularity of those forms of community." (MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 205.)

[27] See "The Church as God's New Language," in *The Hauerwas Reader*, ed. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 142-62. The editor of *The Hauerwas Reader* sees this essay as a significant turning point of Hauerwas' ethical thinking: "Although rarely cited, this essay extremely important for understanding Hauerwas's larger project. It signals a significant shift for Hauerwas in the mid-1980s, distancing him from formal appeals to the notion of narrative (or, for that matter, character) and emphasizing the material specification of the Christian narrative in the lived experience of the church."(142). Milbank, in his turn, states the same thing: "To say that our moral virtues are legitimated within a 'narrative framework' cannot itself be a solution to the post-transcendentalist problem of legitimation, if this be taken to mean that narrative is for us a substitute for a natural human *telos* which is now, after historicism, no longer available…But Stanly Hauerwas progressively moved away from any such suggestion, towards an emphasis that the Christian narrative is, first and foremost, the lived narrative of the Church" (WMS 29).

[28] Ibid.,115.

[29] MacIntyre defines virtue as follows: "*A virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods*" (MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 178).

Furthermore, virtue presupposes a specific community, because nothing can function well for its own sake. Everything has its purpose in the relationship which determines his function. For virtue ethicists, community and its tradition play the role of imposing functions on the members of this community. The virtue of a soldier in polis lies in his courage. He is not courageous for this own sake, but for the sake of the security of the polis. Inversely, it is the polis that assigns this function for the soldier. According to MacIntyre, a tradition sets the stage for the social life of a community. That is, it defines the common good of a community. Without it, a society is fragmented and enters into conflict.

> The concept of 'tradition' has importance as one prerequisite for the kind of social life in which the rational discussion of both ends and means, by its continuing elaboration and reformulation of some conception of a common good, provides an alternative both to the mindless conservatism of hierarchies of established power and to fragmentation through the conflicts of individual preference defined without reference to a common good.[30]

Naturally, virtue ethics focuses on the character of the moral agent more than on the moral act itself. Modern ethical thought has a tendency to neglect this aspect, in privileging the rule and principle in moral choice. What is of importance is not the problem of 'what kind of act do we have to do?', but of 'what kind of person must we become?' In this respect, we can understand that theologians such as Hauerwas and Milbank, who are preoccupied with virtue ethics, place an emphasis on the sanctification of believers.[31] But this emphasis is not a recent phenomenon; it has an old history in Christian thought. Henri de Lubac traces this line of thought in his study on biblical hermeneutics.

2.2 Henri de Lubac's supernatural virtue ethics

If everything is, for de Lubac, given as a gift, it is natural that our relationship with others is to be a gifted one. Concretely, this means that we should not treat others as the subject of rights opposed to my rights as we see it in the modern contractual interpersonal relationship, because others' being also is as much engraced as our own being. To put it simply, social relations are to be characterized by Christian love. It is to be qualified as not passive and reactive, but as active and creative, because all creation is abundant with the love of God. This is the main motive of Christian morality as Milbank and de Lubac understand it. In this understanding, Christian virtue occupies a central place. Unlike philosophical virtue ethics, their theological virtue ethics is guided by the mystery of Christ, that is, by the idea of the supernatural.

De Lubac did not write a systematic treatise concerning Christian ethics, but his ethical thought is incorporated into his theological vision on the mystical union of human beings with God. The ethical significance of this mystery is incorporated into de

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[30] Alasdair McIntyre, *An Interview with Alasdair McIntyre*, *Cogito* 5 (Summer 1991), 63, cited by in Michael Fuller, *Making sense of Macintyre* (Aldershot: Ashgate 1998), 26.

[31] See Stanley Hauerwas, *Character and Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1975), esp. ch V, "Santification and the Ethics of Character."

Lubac's hermeneutics, which we usually call the 'fourfold senses of the Scriptures'.[32] Here it is necessary to see briefly de Lubac's hermeneutics in order to see its relationship with his ethical thought.

De Lubac's spiritual interpretation of the Scripture stands upon the so-called fourfold scheme—literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical senses. De Lubac begins his introduction of the *Exégèse Médiévale* by presenting the distinction, established in the Late Middle Ages, which summarizes medieval hermeneutics.

Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria,
Moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia
(The letter teaches events, allegory what you should be
Morality teaches what you should do, anagogy what mark you should be aimed for)
(EM [1]1).

First, de Lubac comments on *Littera gesta docet*. The literal sense of the Scripture is the first biblical sense. He thinks that the choice of the word *littera* is associated with the biblical pair of letter-spirit. This distinction was formulated by the apostle Paul as "The letter killeth; the spirit giveth life" (2 *Corinthians* 3:6). De Lubac's interpretation of this phrase is essential to the understanding of the relationship of literal sense with other senses of the Scripture. According to his interpretation, the letter in "letter killeth" is not the historical reality. The letter, for the apostle Paul and the Fathers, is the Judaic interpretation of the Scripture (EM I-I, 439). This does not mean that de Lubac disdains the letter in a Manichean manner, but gives value to it, because it is the bearer of the mystical sense of the Scriptures. According to him, "the spirit does not exist without the letter, nor is the letter devoid of the spirit. Each of the two senses is in the other-like the 'wheel within the wheel.'" (EM[2] 26).[33]

Furthermore, he also thinks *littera* is interchangeable with *historia* in a large sense of the term. Furthermore he identifies *historia* with *narratio*, which means the story. He even says that the history—biblical narrative—itself is the specific form of God's revelation.

> Considered both in its totality and in its letter, Scripture first delivers us facts. "The letter is the deed that the sacred history reports." It recounts a series of events which have really transpired and concerning which it is essential that they should really have transpired. It is neither an exposition of an abstract doctrine, nor a collection of myths, nor a manual of the inner life. It has nothing atemporal about it. "For that people really and temporally attained all these things." Divine revelation has not only taken place in time, in the course of history: it has also a historic form

[32] For an account of de Lubac's theological hermeneutics, see Kevin L. Hughes, "The 'fourfold sense': De Lubac, Blondel and contemporary theology." HeyJ XLII (2001), 451-62; Marcellino G. D'Ambrosio, *Henri de Lubac and the Recovery of the Traditional Hermeneutic* (Ph.D. Diss, Catholic University of America, 1991) and his "Henri de Lubac and the Critique of Scientific Exegesis," *Communio* (U.S) 19 (Fall, 1992), 365-88; Susan K.Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church in the Theology of Henri de Lubac* (Grand Rapids. Mich, 1998); Ulrich Kuther, *Kirchlich Tradition als geistliche Schriftauslegung: zum Theologischen Schriftgebrauch in Henri de Lubacs 'Die Kirche. Eine Betrachtung'* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2001).

[33] [Original text] "L'esprit n'est pas sans lettre, pas plus que la lettre n'est vide d'esprit. Chacun des deux sens est dans l'autre-comme la 'roue dans la roue' "(EM I-II 406).

> in its own right. It is contained within a *res gesta: a thing that has been accomplished* (ME 2, 44).[34]

The importance of literal sense lies in the fact that it is the foundation of mystical sense. Without it, mystical sense cannot exist. "In the interpretation of Scripture, history is the universal *foundation*."[35] According to de Lubac, Rupert compares the letter of the five books of Moses to five columns that were set up at the entry of the Tabernacle and these five columns each have spiritual meaning.[36] Consequently, the importance of this sense lies not only in the fact that it provides the foundation for other senses, but also that it is the vehicle by which the mystery of Christ is transmitted.

Second, allegorical sense concerns the mystery of Christ. That is, its aim is the edification of faith and the maturity of believers. "History can satisfy only children- to wit : spiritual children ; it merely excites the appetite of the mature mind, which it must placated by allegory."[37] History itself is ineffective in making us mature. We need an intelligence which can lead us to the new spiritual dimension. "After having read, it is necessary for us to understand. It is necessary for us to enter the path of comprehension. We must enter upon new regions through the 'door of intelligence'" (ME² 85).[38] One important point on which de Lubac puts an emphasis is that the allegorical sense is firmly rooted in the real historical event. This is the point where Christian allegory is distinguished from pagan allegory like that of Homer. "Biblical allegory is… essentially *allegoria facti*. More precisely, it is allegoria facti et dicti. It is, in the Christian sense of the word, mysterium."(ME² 88-9)[39] It is a narrative and, at the same time, a fact.
Finally, in his understanding of allegory, de Lubac places an emphasis on the value of biblical symbol. But the symbol is allegorical insofar as it indicates the mystery of Christ. "There are.. symbols in the Bible, just as in other human books. But only the Bible in truth contains mysteries. It alone is to transmit the memory of allegorical deeds, whose reality is divinely guaranteed" (ME² 89).[40]

Finally, by the examination of the tropological sense of the Scripture, we can discern the ethical significance of his hermeneutic. De Lubac opposes the idea that tropology has to do with natural morality, while allegory has to do with mystery. These two senses are, for de Lubac, situated on the same mystical level of the sense of the Scripture. "It does

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[34] [Original text] "L'Écriture, considérée à la fois dans son ensemble et dans sa lettre, nous livre d'abord des faits. '*Littera est factum, quod sancta narrat historia* '. Elle raconte une série d'événements, qui se sont réellement passés, et dont il est essentiel qu'ils se soient réellement passées. Elle n'est ni un exposé de doctrine abstraite, ni un recueil de mythes, ni un manuel d'intériorité. Elle n'a rien d'intemporel. '*Haec omnia temporaliter atque realiter iste populus adeptus est*'. La révélation divine n'a pas seulement eu lieu dans le temps, au cours de l'histoire : elle a elle-même forme historique. Elle est contenue dans une *res gesta"* (Ibid., 429.)

[35] [Original text] "Dans l'interprétation de l' Écriture, l'histoire est l'universel fondement "(Ibid., 434.)

[36] Ibid.,437.

[37] [Original text] " L'histoire ne peut rassasier que les enfants- entendons: les enfants spirituels ; - elle ne fait qu'exciter l'appétit de l'esprit mûr, qu'il faut apaiser par l'allégorie" (Ibid., 492.)

[38] [Original text] "Après avoir *lu*, il nous faut *comprendre*. Il nous faut entrer dans la *via comprehensionis*. Par la 'porte de l'intelligence' il nous faut déboucher sur de nouveaux espaces " (Ibid., 492-3).

[39] [Original text] "L'allégorie biblique est…essentiellement *allegoria facti*. Plus précisément, elle est *allegoria facti et dicti* " (Ibid.,497).

[40] [Original text] "Il y a .. dans la Bible bien des symboles, tout comme dans les autres lives humains. Mais seule elle contient en vérité des mystères. Elle est seule à transmettre le souvenir de faits allégoriques, dont elle garantit divinement la réalité "(Ibid. 498).

not precede 'the spiritual edifice,' but it 'adds to it,' or rather it exerts itself within it to complete it. It is within allegory. It constitutes an integral part of the mystery" (ME² 132).[41] Here we can note that for de Lubac, there is no natural morality apart from Christian mystery. This is to say that for him autonomous morality without consideration of religious commitment is illusory. We can equally observe this position in Milbank's critique of secular morality.

Hence, we can see that both allegorical sense and tropological sense are subsumed under the mystery of Christ. If the transition from literal sense to allegorical sense happens drastically from the historical level to the mystical one, the transition from allegorical sense to tropological sense arises in the interior of mystical sense. This transition is sophisticated by de Lubac in his distinction between '*cognitio vertatis'* and '*forma virtutis'*. De Lubac explains that the former concerns literal and allegorical sense, and the latter tropological sense. That is, literal and allegorical sense, for de Lubac, are for the 'edification of the faith', while tropological sense is for the 'edification of morals'[42] For de Lubac and Milbank, the formation of Christian virtue has little to do with the notion of ancient virtue which is linked to heroism.

De Lubac thinks that the discernment of mystical sense is not enough. It is necessary to scrutinize the moral sense. Of course, this is not a kind of secular moral principle, because it is linked to the mystery of Christ. Drawing on Origen and saint Gregory, two great masters of tropological sense, de Lubac ordered the different senses of the Scripture. Historical sense is allegorized in order to pass into tropological sense. "Everything in Scripture that is susceptible of being allegorized also can and ought to be moralized. We pass from history to tropology through allegory. The latter consisting entirely in the Mystery of Christ, this mystery finds itself interiorized within tropology" (ME² 134).[43] In consequence, the Christian's charitable act does not stem from self-righteous morality, but from the mystical union with Christ. Put another way, de Lubac supernaturalizes natural human virtue. The following long passage from de Lubac provides a good illustration of Christian supernatural virtue. He transforms ancient heroism based on violence into Christian heroism based on love.

> In the present state of the world, a virile, strong Christianity must become a heroic Christianity. But this adjective is a description, it must not be a definition, in which case it would be a falsification. Above all, this heroism and raving about the virtue of strength- which would perhaps prove that one is under the influence of someone stronger and that one has begun to give up. It will consist, *above all*, in resisting with courage, in face of the world and perhaps against one's own self, the lures and seductions of a false ideal and in proudly maintaining, in their paradoxical intransigence, the Christian values that are threatened and derided. Maintaining them with humble pride. For, if Christianity can and should assume the virtues of ancient paganism, the Christian who would remain faithful is bound to reject with a categorical No a neopaganism that has set itself up against Christ. Gentleness and

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[41] [Original text] "[La tropologie] ne précède pas 'l'édifice spirituel', mais elle 's'y ajoute', ou plutôt elle s'y déploie, pour le compléter. Elle est au-dedans de l'allégorie. Elle fait partie intégrante du mystère" (Ibid.,555).

[42] Ibid.,549.

[43] [Original text] "Tout ce qui , dans l'Écriture, est susceptible d'être allégorisé, peut être et doit être aussi moralisé. On passe de l'histoire à la tropologie par l'allégorie. Celle-ci consistant tout entière dans le Mystère du Christ, c'est ce Mystère qui, dans la tropologie, se trouve intériorisé"(Ibid., 558).

> goodness, considerateness toward the lowly, pity for those who suffer, rejection of perverse methods, protection of the oppressed, unostentatious self-sacrifice, resistance to lies, the courage to call evil it proper name, love of justice, the spirit of peace and concord, open-heartedness, mindfulness of heaven; those are the things that Christian heroism will rescue. All this so-called "slave-morality" will be shown to be a morality of free men and the sole source of man's freedom… But, whatever happens, Christianity will never have any real efficacy, it will never have any real existence or make any real conquests, except by the strength of its own spirit, *by the strenghth of charity* (DAH 129).[44]

Another important point which concerns tropological sense is that de Lubac relates this sense to the Church. "The tropological sense.. does not only presuppose the Mystery of the Christ, but also that of the Church, which is.. inseparable from it" (ME² 135).[45] For de Lubac, since the individual soul participates in the Body of the Christ, individual Christian charitable work cannot be separated from the Body of Christ. In this respect, the distinction between individual and social ethics makes no sense, because ethics already supposes a community. This is an idea which brings de Lubac, Milbank and Hauerwas together, for Christian ethics is unthinkable apart from the Church.

The fourth sense of the Scripture is anagogical sense. It is eschatological sense. This sense is inseparably connected with allegorical and tropological sense, because all three senses are the different aspects of the mystery of Christ. De Lubac writes these three aspects in terms of the three advents of Christ.

> The first advent, 'humble hidden,' on our earth, performs the work of redemption, which is pursued in the Church and in her sacraments: this is the object of allegory in the proper sense of the word. The second advent, entirely interior, takes place within the soul of each of the faithful, and is unfolded by tropology. The third and last advent is saved up for the 'end of the age,' when Christ will appear in his glory and will come back for his own to take them away with him: such is the object of anagogy (EM² 179).[46]

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[44] [Original text] "Dans l'état actuel du monde, un christianisme viril et fort doit aller jusqu'à être un christianisme héroïque. Mais cette épithète est une qualification, elle ne doit pas être une définition, auquel cas elle serait une falsification. Surtout, cet héroïsme ne consistera pas à parler constamment d'héroïsme et à délirer sur la vertu de force - ce qui prouverait peut-être qu'on subit l'ascendant d'un plus fort et qu'on a commencé de démissionner. Il consistera *d'abord* à résister avec courage, en face du monde et peut-être contre soi-même, aux entraînements et aux séductions d'un faux idéal, pour maintenir fièrement, dans leur paradoxale intransigeance, les valeurs chrétiennes menacées et bafouées. Avec une humble fierté. Car si le christianisme peut et doit assumer les vertus du paganisme antique, le chrétien qui veut demeurer fidèle ne peut que repousser d'un *non* catégorique un néo-paganisme qui peut qui s'est constitué contre le Christ. La douceur et la bonté, la délicatesse envers les petits, la pitié- oui, la pitié- envers ceux qui souffrent, le refus des moyens pervers, la défense des opprimés, le dévouement obscur, la résistance au mensonge, le courage d'appeler le mal par son nom, l'amour de la justice, l'esprit de paix et de concorde, l'ouverture du coeur, la pensée du ciel...: voilà ce que l'héroïsme chrétien sauvera. Toute cette "morale d'esclaves", il fera voir qu'elle est une morale d'hommes libres, que seule elle fait l'homme libre...Mais en tout cas, le christianisme n'aura jamais d'efficacité réelle, il n'aura jamais d'existence réelle et ne fera jamais lui-même de conquêtes réelles que par la force de son esprit à lui, *par la force de la charité* "(DHA 133-4).

[45] [Original text] "Le sens tropologique ne suppose .. pas seulement le Mystère du Christ, mais aussi celui de l'Église qui en est inséparable"(EM I-II 559).

[46] [Original text] "Le premier avènement, 'humble et caché', sur notre terre, opéra l'oeuvre rédemptrice, qui se poursuit dans l'Église et dans ses sacrements : c'est l'objet de l'allégorie proprement dite. Le deuxième avènement, tout intérieur, a lieu dans l'âme de chaque fidèle, et c'est la tropologie qui l'expose. Le troisième et dernier avènement est réservé pour la 'consommation du siècle', quand le Christ apparaîtra

De Lubac distinguishes between the objective and the subjective dimension of this anagogy. The one anagogy is concerned with the doctrinal formulation of the fourfold sense, while the other anagogy with the subjective appropriation of the objective (EM[2] 181). That is, the former is the objective eschatological sense, while the latter is subjective mystical sense. However, as de Lubac states, both "constitute part of the Christian mystery" (Ibid. 181). In my view, we can see the ethical significance of this sense. First, at the personal level, Christian morality in union with Christ is to be recontextualized from the eschatological perspective. This means that Christian morality should recognizes itself as an extended story of Jesus reaching the eschaton. At the same time, at the ecclesiastical level, this story is not the story of the individual, but the story of the Church, for there is a "mystical identity of the Church of heaven and that of the earth." (Ibid. 184). This idea finds an exact echo in Milbank's and Hauerwas's ethical vision. For them, the ethical identity of the individual and the community is enframed not by atemporal universal rules, but by personal and communal history. The Christian's ethical identity is incorporated into the Church's ethical identity, rooted in her historical experience. In this light, the Church's ethical identity is not predetermined, but should be creative according to its historical context, for the Church exists in history as well as in eschatological heaven.

2.3 Milbank's understanding of virtue

According to Milbank, Augustine's understanding of virtue is undergirded by his ontology of peace. Even if Augustine acknowledges the ancient wisdom that the soul guide the body, he thinks that this wisdom cannot arrive at true virtue, because it is ignorant of the supernatural dimension which Milbank summarizes as "the dimension of God/heaven/peace" (TST 410). Without consideration of this dimension, the soul unjustly represses the body, which is also a good creation of God. He thinks that human desires should not be suppressed, but rectified. "In the third [supernatural] dimension the soul realizes his true desire, and enters into reciprocal relationships of affirmation with other souls" (Ibid.). This understanding of desire is undergirded by Augustine's ontology, which Milbank calls "musical ontology." In this ontological model, "both soul and body are different intensities of the same 'numerical' stuff, both emerging, not from matter, but from nothing" (Ibid.).

Milbank compares Augustine's understanding of virtue with that of the pagans at the ontological level. In the pagan worldview justice is negatively defined, that is, there is a primordial conflict and justice is therefore to be achieved by an external arrangement, whereas in the Christian worldview that Milbank endorses, justice is a positive concept, since it is in relation with infinite justice. In this concept, then, there is no chaotic remainder as in the pagan worldview. In this respect, the pagan worldview is extremely individualistic, conflictual and dualistic (between matter and spirit). In consequence, "Public virtue [is] ...at base military virtue, the securing of inner dominance of one class over another, and outer security against enemies, both in the interests of the 'whole' over the parts" (Ibid.).

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dans sa gloire et viendra chercher les siens pour les emmener avec lui : tel est l'objet de l'anagogie" (Ibid., 621).

In contrast, as we have noted above, Augustine's Christian social ontology "linked to the idea of an emanative procession of all reality from a single divine source, abolishes the duality which supports the idea of an ineradicable ontological violence" (Ibid.). In the eyes of Augustine, ancient ethics fails to be ethics because it does not provide a proper interpersonal vision, unlike Christian vision, which affirms the unity of humanity in the image and likeness of God. Antique ethics is defined only in terms of power relations, whether it is the control of the *polis* over its member, or of the body over its soul. After all, for Augustine, "all the antique virtues are... ambiguously virtuous, because each is necessitated by an absence of charity and peace" (TST 411).

Then, how can the Christian peaceful vision be realized in this extremely violent world? Milbank's response is by Christian non-violent practice, which is expressed as forgiveness. The Christian way of life assumes "the ontological priority of non-violence, and this way is called 'forgiveness of sins' " (Ibid.). According to Milbank, for Augustine, forgiveness is the necessary condition of divine perfection, not the excellence of virtue, since in the Christian conception, virtue is understood not individually as in pagan ethics, but collectively in their endeavour to imitate the heavenly virtues, which are faith, hope and love: "Virtue cannot properly operate except when collectively possessed, when all are virtuous and all concur in the sequence of their claim to, *least of all* resemble true, heavenly virtues" (Ibid.).

2.4 Critique of MacIntyre's conception of virtue

Milbank qualifies MacIntyre's thought as "benign postmodernism"(TST 328). MacIntyre finds an antidote for postmodern nihilism in the revival of social order grounded on virtue. In his engagement with MacIntyre, Milbank thinks that he treats social theory as a theologian, while McaIntyre treats it as a philosopher (TST 327).[47] Precisely, he qualifies his goal as "detachment of virtue from dialectics" (Ibid). This means that from Milbank's point of view, MacIntyre's approach is not historicist enough so that his approach to virtue is not entirely liberated from Cartesian foundationalism, which means an attempt to ground all human knowledge on an absolutely certain basis such as Cartesian *cogito*. Milbank describes his method as a theologian (ontology of difference), in distinguishing this method from that of MaIntyre (foundationalism): "There is for me no method, no mode of argument that charts us smoothly past the Scylla of foundationalism and the Charybdis of difference. Nor do I find it possible to defend the notion of 'traditioned reason' in general, outside my

[47] Hauerwas gives us an interesting description of Milbank's relation with MacIntyre: "Milbank wrote *Theology and Social Theory* prior to the publication of MacIntyre's *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry*. It is my guess, however, that MacIntyre's 'realism' in that work only reinforces what Milbank takes to be his disagreement with MacIntyre. Milbank senses that his disagreements with MacIntyre finally comes down to this: He approaches social theory as a theologian, whereas MacIntyre approaches it as a philosopher.The key point at issue here is the role that must be accorded to Christianity and to Christian theology. For MacIntyre, it is true, Christianity has come to matter more and more, but Milbank argues that it remains the case that MacIntyre 'opposes to philosophy and practice of difference not, primarily, Christian thought and practice, but the antique understanding of virtue, with the accompaniments of Socratic dialectics, and the general link of reason to tradition. Of course, for MacIntyre, one must subscribe to some particular tradition, some particular code of virtue and here he identifies himself as an Augustinian Christian. But, all the same, the arguments put forward against nihilism and a philosophy of difference are made in the name of virtue, dialectics and the notion of tradition in general" (TST 327) (Hauerwas, "A Milbankian Reflection," 197).

attachment to a tradition which grounds this idea in the belief in the historical guidance of the Holy Spirit" (TST 328).

Namely, Milbank estimates that MacIntyre's attempt to secure virtue is not radical, because he still uses a dialectical method—that is, a rationalist method which seeks to find the universal—in his approach to reality. This approach is contrasted with the rhetorical method of Milbank and de Lubac.[48] This method is based on a paradoxical understanding of reality. Rhetorical method gives weight to opinion (*doxa*), testimony (*marturia*) and persuasion (*pistis*), unlike a dialectical one: "The primacy given to teaching and tradition in the neo-Platonic and then Christian understanding of the *logos*, pushes the practice of virtue much closer to a rhetorical than a dialectical habit of mind" (Ibid.). Graham Ward comments on Milbank's rhetorical approach: "Milbank's hope is for a rhetorical victory over secular reasoning. Its appeal, therefore, is as much to the imagination as to the intellect."[49] Dialectic is defined as "an argumentative exchange involving contradiction or a technique or method connected with such exchange."[50] That is, dialectics is characterized by negation. It is necessary to deny one thing in order to acquire another. No synthesis between two opposed realities is possible. For Milbank, Barthian theology is a case in point. For Barth there is an antithesis between God and man, between nature and the supernatural. There is no possibility of synthesis between them. In *Paradox of Faith*, De Lubac compares his paradoxical approach toward reality with a dialectical one:

> Paradox is the reverse of what, properly perceived, would be synthesis. But the proper view always eludes us. Each of us contributes by his existence to the weaving of a wonderful tapestry but it cannot yet be comprised entirely within our range of vision. In the field of facts as of spirit, synthesis can only be sought. *Quamdiu vivimus, necesse habemus simper quaerere* (As long as we live, we deem it essential ever to seek) Paradox is the search for synthesis. It is the provisional expression of a view which remains incomplete, but whose orientation is ever toward fullness. Paradox has more charm than dialectics, it is also more realist, more modest and less tense and less hurried; its function is to remind the dialectician when each new stage is reached in the argument, that however necessary this forward movement is no real progress has been made (PF 9-10).[51]

Consequently, Milbank argues that MacIntyre's "securing' of virtue is a new mode of foundationalism" (TST 328). And this attempt is *apologetica*l in character, because it seeks to assimilate the Christian *logos* into universal reason. Here we can recall Milbank's assertion that "if my Christian perspective is persuasive, then this should be

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[48] For de Lubac's critique of dialectical tradition in theology, see CM, Ch X, "Du Symbole à la Dialectique."

[49] Graham Ward, "John Milbank's Divina Commedia," 313.

[50] Robin Smith, 'Dialectic', in *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy,* ed.*Rober Audi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 232.

[51] [Original text] "Le paradoxe est l'envers dont la synthèse serait l'endroit. Mais cet endroit nous fuit toujours. La tapisserie merveilleuse que chacun de nous, par son existence, contribue à tisser ne peut être encore embrassée du regard. Dans les faits comme dans l'esprit, la synthèse ne peut être que cherchée. *Quamdiu vivimus, necesse habemus semper quaerere.* Le paradoxe, c'est la recherche, ou c'est l'attente de la synthèse. Expression provisoire d'une vue toujours incomplète, mais qui s'oriente vers la plénitude. Frère souriant de la dialectique, plus réaliste et plus modeste, moins tendu, moins pressé, il rappelle toujours à sa grande soeur, en reparaissant à ses côtés pour chaque étape nouvelle, que, malgré le nécessaire mouvement qu'elle se donne, elle n'a pas réellement avancé " (P 71).

a persuasion intrinsic to the Christian *logos* itself, not the apologetic mediation of a universal human reason" (TST 1). According to Milbank, as we have seen in chapter 3, MacIntyre's conception of tradition is not sufficiently particular. That is, in MacIntyre's philosophy, a universalism still remains. When he says tradition, it is tradition in general, not specific tradition such as Christian tradition. Coupled with his interpretation of MacIntyre's conception of tradition, Milbank maintains that MacIntyre's notion of virtue is still not Christian, but rationalist in the sense that it embraces the ancient rationalist understanding of virtue that is linked to Socractic dialectics (TST 327).

As we have seen above, Christian virtue is rooted in the mystical union with Christ in which faith plays central role. In MacIntyre's philosophical model we cannot resolve the *aporia* between the universal and the particular—such as the individual and the whole, family and the city, etc.—with which ancient philosophers grappled. In thinking that this *aporia* is solved satisfactorily in Christianity, he states: "The 'more satisfactorily' is objective in the sense that I identify a series of antinomies in Plato and Aristotle's account of virtue, the city and the individual soul, which they can never satisfactorily resolve within the terms of their inherited *mythos*, but which are resolved within the terms of the Christian *mythos*" (TST 330). The reason why ancient virtue cannot overcome this *aporia* is that it is subjected to dialectics: "A virtue yoked to dialectics, and even to the Aristotelian account of practical reason, finds it impossible to do this. A solution is only really possible in terms of a tradition like Christianity, which starkly links particular to universal by conceiving its relationship to transcendence in a rhetorical fashion" (TST 329).

2.5 Critique of Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian realism

In his article entitled "The Poverty of Niebuhrism," (WMS 233-254) Milbank attempts to criticize Niebuhr's so-called 'Christian realism'. Milbank begins this article by invoking the connotation of the word 'realism' as Niebuhr understands it. According to him this notion implicates first, non-negotiable 'limits to human ethical possibilities; second, the existence of original sin; and third, the practical character of Christian social and political ethics (WMS 233). Milbank's attack aims at these three aspects of Niebuhr's Christian realism.

In the first place, we can examine Milbank's critique of Niebuhr's imposing limits on human ethical possibilities. In his famous *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932), Niebuhr has in mind a theory which restricts human ethical possibility due to the limits of human intelligence and human imagination and the egoism of groups. This human finitude is for Niebuhr an unbreakable barrier to the actualization of a human moral ideal. However, in Milbank's estimation, this approach is "stoic in character" (Ibid. 235). We can understand Milbank's critique of Niebuhr's stoic anthropology in light of his affirmation of the engraced character of creation which he appropriated from de Lubac. In the stoic outlook, there is an irreconcilable struggle between the human moral ideal—which is called omnipresent *logos* in the world—and the finite chaotic state of affairs. Nature is considered as an inherently fallen state. In this immanent model, there is no room for supernatural intervention. To the contrary, the Christian understanding of nature is based on the idea of the goodness of creation. In this respect,

conflict and violence is not the primordial state of affairs in the original creation. In Milbank's words, there is "ontological priority of peace over violence" (TST 411.). Niebuhr's conception of the world is a stoic one. According to Milbank, Niebuhr, in his *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*, expresses his adherence to the stoic position vis-à-vis the natural law to which humankind has to conform. Luther's 'two-kingdom' political theology is that of Niebuhr. That is, the ideal of love is an individual affair, and not a social affair. He says: "Christianity really had no social ethic until it appropriated the Stoic ethic."[52] Furthermore, Milbank notes that Niebuhr's thought is similar to the Kantian ethical ideal in the sense that individual moral consciousness is the basis of moral progress and politics plays the role of harmonizing moral agents (WMS 236).[53]

For Milbank, this stoic vision of Niebuhr's does violence to the Christian love which is defined as a strong aspiration by Milbank and de Lubac. "Christian love- a vision of ideal aspiration- is..assimilated by Niebuhr to the absolute principles of Stoic natural law" (Ibid.). That is, Niebuhr transformed the Christian ideal of love which is supernatural virtue into an immanent stoic principle. After all, Niebuhr permits a violent Christian intervention in social affairs in the name of *agape,* which is a merely disguised power politics. Consequently, in distinguishing between individual and social morality, Niebuhr maintains that the Christian ideal of *agape* might be realizable only at the individual level, not at the social level, since, as he observes, the egoism of a group is far greater than the egoism of an individual. After all, he thinks that Christian love is expressed as a social equality. That is, social justice is the negative expression of Christian *agape*. This understanding leads him to permit the use of violence in the conflict between social groups, especially between nations. Niebuhr states:

> From the perspective of society the highest moral ideal is justice. From the perspective of the individual the highest ideal is unselfishness. Society must strive for justice even if it is forced to use means, such as self-assertion, resistance, coercion and perhaps resentment, which cannot gain the moral sanction of the most sensitive moral spirit. The individual must strive to realize his life by losing and finding himself in something greater than himself.[54]

However, Milbank asserts that this idea is a compromise of the Christian ideal of love with the rationalism of the Enlightenment and that it can instrumentalize the ideal of

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[52] Reinhold Niebuhr, *Interpretation of Christian Ethics* (London: SCM, 1936), 160 in WMS 237.

[53] Stanley Hauerwas agrees with Milbank on his critique of Niebuhr's realism. He writes: "John Milbank argues that Niebuhr's account of our moral situation bears uncanny resemblance to Stoicism. Carefully exegeting Niebuhr's discussion of the early church's engagement with Stoic ethics, Milbank concludes that Niebuhr found some of its key tenets to be ennential. 'The basic focus of Stoic ethics is on the encounter between an absolute spiritual ideal and a 'chaotic' finite world which it does its best to regulate.' (Milbank, *Nuclear Realism and Christian Reality: The Poverty of Niebuhrianism* [London: Jubliee Group Publications, 1986], 5) Like Niebuhr, the Stoics saw little chance of bringing this ideal into the external world of chaos, which is inevitably conflictual. We are sure that Milbank is right to draw a parallel between Niebuhrian realism and stoicism, but before we explore how that might affect our understanding of Niebuhr's account of Christianity, we need to suggest how completely Niebuhr stands in the American grain." (Stanley M. Hauerwas "The Irony of Reinhold Niebuhr" in *Wilderness Wanderings: Probing Twentieth-Century Theology and Philosophy* (Boulder. CO: Westview Press, 1997), 51). See also, Hauerwas's article, "History as Fate: How Justification by Faith Became Anthropology (and History) in America," in *Wilderness Wanderings*, 32-47.

[54] Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 257.

equality, which is the natural union of humankind, for the regulation of social conflict. The point of departure for liberalist political philosophy is the autonomous individual and the protection of his rights and freedoms. The role of the state is to arbitrate the conflict of individual rights.

> Niebuhr reveals his essential liberalism: in the first place he endorses the rationalism of the Enlightenment as the only thing that can make Christian principles at all politically effective; in the second place equality or equity is not seen as a goal of general human fulfillment, but merely as an intellectual device needed to regulate a sphere of permanent and insoluble conflict (WMS 236).

The key to understanding Milbank's critique of Niebuhr's stoic and Kantian individual ethics can be found in his central theological notion of deification, which is understood in terms of the sanctification of the individual and the world. That is, Niebuhr understands Christian morality in a negative and individual way. This means that in his notion, Christian morality is best expressed in the heroic self-sacrificial act. For Milbank, this is not compatible with authentic Christian ethics, because Christian existence is seen from the vantage point of God's overwhelming gift, not from lack. Unlike the vision of Christian realism which assumes the world as a neutral space, in Christianity, "the world is construed as gift and promise, and we construct the narrative picture of a Creator God" (WMS 244). This gift sanctifies the individual and the community. This gift leads us creatively to the practice of charity. This gift makes us consider others as a gift Milbank states: "Christianity does acknowledge 'a cloistered virtue', because Christian virtue is primarily the spontaneous life of creative charity, not the heroic defense of the city walls" (WMS 239).

On the basis of his understanding of the gifted character of creation, he protests against the vision of the world that Christian realism suggests as we have seen above. Instead, he proposes that true realism is grounded in the idea of the original goodness of creation. First of all, he distinguishes the 'the realities of history' and 'the Christian narrative'. Like de Lubac, Milbank does not neglect real historical happenings. But he denies the existence of the brute historical fact. That is, all historical facts are already interpreted ones. We can understand Milbank's distinction above. What he claims is that we need a Christian eye which reads history. Even if Christians and non-Christians are in the same objective historical process, "Christians see a different historical reality" (WMS 248) Therefore, Milbank maintains that "we must realize this, if we are not to confine Christianity to a realm of 'pure value', or else to cordon off the narratives of the New Testament as a sacred enclave within an otherwise secular process" (Ibid.).

In Milbank's Christian narrative, the resurrection takes a central place. According to him, "only *resurrection* reverses the effects of the fall" (WMS 250). Death as a result of sin impregnates the whole of nature. In the face of death, nature appears to be deficient and fallen, while the resurrection makes nature abundant. In the light of the resurrection, fallen nature and its accompanying fallen culture are restored. This is the outstanding hallmark of the Christian narrative which distinguishes it from other narratives. "In the resurrection, our human historical narratives, and attempts to extend this narration to the ultimate 'way things are' –the closing of the gap between nature and history that we call mythology-come together" Therefore, "there is no

independently available 'real world' against which we must test our Christian convictions, because these convictions are the most final, and at the same time the most basic, seeing of what the world is" (Ibid).

In the light of this uniqueness of Christian narrative, Milbank points out the error of 'Niebuhrian realism'. The error lies in his idea of a neutral public space to which Christians accommodate their vision. As we have seen, this public space is nothing but another narrative. Therefore, Niebuhr's realist reading of history as inherently violent is but a prejudice. To the contrary, truly Christian realism reads history in the light of the Cross, which is the sign of the cosmic reconciliation between God and man, and between men. Therefore, for Milbank peace is the concept which is more realistic than violence. In this sense, "the Cross is a political event and 'apolitical' character of the New Testament signals the ultimate replacement of the coercive *polis* and *imperium*, the structure of ancient society, by the persuasive Church, rather than any withdrawing from a realm of self-sufficient political life. And from the cross we re-shape our metaphysics" (WMS 251).

3. Critical issues

Éric Gaziaux defends moral autonomy in the face of Milbank's trenchant critique of it. Unlike Milbank, for Gaziaux, moral autonomy is not incompatible with Christian faith. Rather Christian faith itself warrants moral autonomy, because Christian faith promotes human liberty faced with all tutelage. For him, RO's emphasis on the human vocation to his sanctification in the story of creation-alliance-redemption makes room for a natural ethics. As Milbank argues, if Christian faith is implicated with God's salvific event in history, it is human morality that makes the human more human.[55] In this sense, autonomous ethics makes the human the responsible being in his collaboration with God. That is, the moral act of the human being is itself a *Gottesdient*.[56] As a consequence, he holds that Christian faith can motivate moral action, but cannot serve as a foundation of it, because Christian faith does not eliminate the categorical moral stucture of the human being, but rather strengthens it.[57] He states : "if it is evident that the moral inspired by Christianity can criticize such and such conception of existence, such and such wisdom of the world, it does not condemn, be that as it may, the moral conscience of man as man."[58] So, in his view, "Radical Orthodoxy seems to reduce Christian ethics to a specific practice."[59] Furthermore, Gaziaux maintains that moral autonomy does not exclude RO's central idea of participation. Drawing on Alfons Auer, he notes that Thomas Aquinas endorses moral autonomy and at the same time the idea of participation. This model suggests that human moral responsibility is connected to God's redemptive act.[60] Consequently, he estimates, "in the name of the defense of the specific Christian practice, Radical Orthodoxy risks eliminating the tensions

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[55] Éric Gaziaux, "Radical Orthodoxy et Moral Autonomy," in *Où est la Vérité?: La Théologie aux défis de la Radical Orthodoxy et de la Déconstruction*, ed. H.-Ch.Askani, C.Mendoza, D. Müller, D. Andronicos, 180.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., 181.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.,179.
[60] Ibid.,182.

constitutive of an ethics under the movement of faith such as the tension between justice and charity, or golden rule and commandment of loving enemies."[61]

Barry G. Rasmussen compares Luther's view of the relation of faith and charity to Milbank's in criticizing the latter. With regard to Milbank's poetical approach, the Lutheran theologian, Rasmussen has a double attitude: on the one hand, he is comforted by Milbank's connection between the Good and Christ; however, on the other hand, Milbank's correlatation of "the human performance of charity with the poetic bounds of that same Good"[62] worries him, in that this understanding of the relation between charity and *poesis* makes the ungodly anxious for his salvation. According to him, the same worry is found in Luther's criticism of Aquinas's formulation *fides charitate formata*. Unlike Aquinas, faith is active in love, not formed by love.[63] According to Rasmussen's account, in the case of Luther, faith cannot be determined by human charitable practice, but comes from outside all human charitable effort, because the faith formed by charity cannot give rest to human consciousness.[64] For Luther, faith formed by love is no other than the righteousness of the law. Luther states: "When it comes to justification, therefore, if you divide Christ's Person from your own, you are in the Law; you remain in it and live in yourself, which means you are dead in the sight of God and damned by the Law. For you have a faith that is, as the sophists imagine, 'formed by love'…But faith must be taught correctly, namely, that by it you are so cemented to Christ that He and you are as one person, which cannot be separated but remains attached to Him forever and declares: 'I am as Christ.'"[65]

Rasmussen acknowledges Luther's Aquinas could be different from Milbank's more Augustinized Aquinas. That is, Luther's understanding of Aquinas is contaminated by the scholastic understanding of this theologian. And again he admits that Luther and Milbank have shared the idea that faith is given as a gift and this gift offers a basis for the union of the believer to Christ.[66] However, "Luther insists on the primacy of faith even over love so that, in the face of the terrors of death, sin, and the devil one will be drawn outside oneself to hope in Christ rather than to trust in the efficacy of one's own charity."[67] He asks to Milbank whether he presents the 'radically orthodox' Gospel.[68]

In "Radical Orthodoxy, Ethics and Ambivalence,"[69] Gavin Hyman calls into question RO's solution to the present ethical predicament. Hyman points out several irrelevancies in Milbank's ethical vision. First, Milbank's ethical vision is totalizing, because of Milbank's insistence on Christian meta-narrative as the only solution to modern liberalism and its violence. For Hyman, the return of the other is made possible by non-totalizing discourse. He even identifies RO with a kind of fascism. We understand Hyman's worry about theology as ideology in historical Christianity. Second,

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[61] Ibid., 183.
[62] Barry G. Rasmussen, "Radical Orthodoxy, Luther, and the Challenge of Western Secularization," *Dialog* 41:2 (Summer 2002), 141.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] WA 40 I, 285, 15-26; LW, 26, 168, cited in ibid., 142.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Available at *http://www.jcrt.org/archives/03.2/hyman.shtml* (accessed 5 June 2013).

Milbank's ethical vision is undergirded by 'unwarranted omniscience'. This means that "Milbank's social and political program may be seen as a premature attempt to usher in the Kingdom of God on earth."[70] That is, Milbank's ethical vision is grounded in his realized eschatology. But for Hyman, Milbank's model is a 'totalitarian model of a just society' (Ibid). Third, Hyman complains of Milbank's dismissal of pragmatic concern in favor of "the higher calling of 'vision and contemplation.'"[71] This prohibits us from local resistance to the Capitalist order. For him, Milbank's ethical strategy aims at the "total transformation of the capitalist republic into a theological kingdom."[72]

In my view Hyman's criticism belongs to the usual criticism of Milbank's theology. That is, Milbank's theology is misread as an appeal for the rehabilitation of Christian totalizing discourse. But as we have seen, Milbank is never for totalizing discourse. Rather he is against it, and knows well the danger of that kind of discourse. One of the aims of Milbank's theology is to dismantle totalizing philosophical and theological discourse. As Milbank makes plain, his retrieval of Christian meta-discourse does not mean the Christian discourse as a suppressive one, but rather shows the attractiveness of Christian discourse itself.

Mark C.Mattes worries about Milbank's semi-Pelagian view of salvation. From a Lutheran view point, he views man as a sheerly passive being before God and thinks that this description best characterizes humanity as such. Hence, Milbank's neo-Platonic Augustine-Aquinas model blurs the "*coram deo*, *coram homibus* distinction."[73] Mattes's charge against Milbank is that the removal of this distinction leads us to look over the pretentious tendency of our good work.[74] So Mattes thinks that Milbank's error stems from his undervaluation of the sinful state of man in the earthly city as Augustine understands it, a state necessitating the justifying of Christ. By the same token, at the ethical level, Milbank fails to distinguish the justified person and the good work derived from this person due to his emphasis on the human action in salvation. He states: "For Milbank, the categories of 'person' and 'work' are identified, while for Luther they are clearly demarcated. For Luther, the person is passively defined by God's word of address that calls the new being into existence and good works are a result of the newness of one's identity in Christ."[75]

4. Conclusion

Milbank's critique of secular ethics is grounded in his firm conviction of the fullness of Christ in creation. As he states, "as the gift of God, creation also belongs to God, it is within God (together with the infinity of all articulations that there may be) as the *Logos*" (PCA n°42). In contrast, modern ethical thought is for him based on lack and chaos which is foreign to orthodox Christian thought. By the false humility of Christian theology, it appropriates the assumptions of modern ethical thought: moral autonomy,

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[70] Ibid., n°18 This is the number marked on the internet page above.
[71] Ibid., n°19.
[72] Ibid.,n° 20.
[73] Mark C. Mattes, "A Lutheran Assessment of 'Radical Orthodoxy' "*Lutheran Quarterly* XV (2001), 361.
[74] Ibid.,361.
[75] Ibid.

universal morality, etc. The accommodation of Christian ethical thinking to the modern secular one makes Christianity lose sight of its uniqueness and novelty. Milbank's ethical reflection is closely related to his poetical Christology. That is, it is in the framework of our poetical representation of Christ that our ethical reflection is made possible. So, for Milbank, Christian ethics is an active concept which poetically realizes Christ's event in our lives.

Milbank's ethical idea is echoed by de Lubac's idea of human ethical growth understood as deification/sanctification through the union with Christ. In this regard, modern autonomous morality marks a radical break from orthodox Christian tradition. That is, for them, the ethical is to be incorporated into the theological in order that it might be really ethical, whereas modern Kantian ethics finds its justification in autonomous reason.

Furthermore we can understand Milbank's and de Lubac's accent on the formation of Christian character based on Christian virtues. That is, to be ethical is not to obey the rules and principles given from outside, but to become virtuous in the Christian sense of the term. For Milbank and de Lubac, there is no distinction between natural virtue and supernatural virtue. There are only natural virtues which are destined for supernatural ends. Moreover, their virtue ethics has its locus in the Church, where supernaturalized virtues are to be realized. In this sense, their ethics is for the Christian community as an alternative community in liberal society. In the following chapter, we shall examine Milbank's Church-centered social vision, a vision which is inseparably linked to his Christological and ethical vision which we have seen. Milbank's vision of the Church is the blossom of his all-theological reflection. This means that the aim of Milbank's theological reflection is not an arm chair theological leisure, but for the purpose of authentic Christian practice in the secular world. As with Marx, what is important is not to interpret the world, but transform it. In the following chapter, we will examine Milbank's grand vision of the Church centered on the Eucharist. In the modern and postmodern world where everything is fragmented and enters into conflict with each other. Milbank sets forth a liturgical vision of society where the Church plays a central role. Most of all, the Church is to be the locus of reconciliation in order to modern and postmodern secularity. This means that the Church is the political community which God really intended, a political community which stands in contrast to the false community based on modern sociological assumptions.

VII. Eucharistic Vision of the Church: Toward a Postmodern Church

There can be no separation of Christology from ecclesiology, that is, Jesus from the church. [1]
Die Gemeinde Gottes hatte und hat zu allen Zeiten ihre eigene Sprache (Karl Barth).[2]

De Lubac's idea of the supernatural is essentially social in character, for it is understood as a participation in the Trinitarian life. Likewise, Milbank's Christian social vision is modeled on the Trinitarian harmony. He understands his fundamental theological conception, *participation*, in social terms. As he argues, "the problem of participation in the idea of God does not….stand alone: it is also the problem of whether there can be moral goodness at all, and this problem is in turn identical with the problem of justice and peace, or of whether there can be a harmonious human order" (TST 334).[3]

For Milbank the idea of participation understood in social terms is closely related to the problem of language. That is, Milbank deals with the problem of the Church as a supernatural community in relation to his understanding of language. Language presupposes a community in which it is practiced. Moreover, it has its proper history in a particular community called tradition. Conversely, we can also say that language is not invented for the sustaining of a community, but rather gives birth to a particular community. Milbank's understanding of theology is derived from his understanding of the pecularity of Christian language and the community where this language is practiced. According to him, "explication of Christian practice, the task of theology, tries to pinpoint the peculiarity, the difference of this practice 'by making it strange', finding a new language for this difference less tainted with the overfamilarity of too many Christian words which tend to obscure Christian singularity" (PCA n°10). This strange language takes the narrative form, which offers a framework in which the identity of self and community is determined.[4] Milbank is convinced that the Church is this

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[1] Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 37.

[2] Karl Barth, *Dogmatik im Grundriß* (Theologischer Verlag : Zürich, 1998), 34.

[3] Catherine Pickstock also interprets the notion of participation as a political term: "Human beings, who created in the image of God, began to conceive themselves as autonomous will, and human society began to resemble a collection of isolated atoms. We therefore see that the forgetting of participation in the ontological sense of the term, naturally lead to the forgetting of the participation in the political sense of the term" (Catherine Pickstock, "L'orthodoxie est-elle radicale?," in *Radical Orthodoxy : Pour une Révolution Théologique*, ed. Adrian Pabst, Olivier-Thomas, 24, translation mine).

[4] In this regard, Milbank's project bears a significant affinity with Stanley Hauerwas's project. Both Milbank and Hauerwas are, in fact, indebted to Alasdaire MacIntyre. According to MacIntyre, "it is because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of the narratives that we live out that the form of narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others. Stories are lived before they are told—except in the case of fiction" (Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: a Study in Moral Theory* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press], 197). Nonetheless, differing from MacIntyre, Milbank and Hauerwas lay an emphasis on the specificity of the Christian story which was revealed in the history of Israel, especially in the story of Jesus. They both share the idea that the Church is the continuation of the Jesus story. On Hauerwas' theological project, see Robert W. Jenson, "Hauerwas Project," in *Modern Theology* (July 1992); Birgit Rommel, *Ekklesiologie und Ethik bei Stanley Hauerwas: von der Bedeutung der Kirche für die Rede von Gott* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2003); John B.Thomson, *The Ecclesiology of Stanley Hauerwas: A Christian Theology of Liberation* (Aldershot:

strange language itself, because the Church is the locus in which the new practice that Jesus initiated is realized.[5] Therefore, the Church incarnates the idea of the social qualitatively different from the conception of society modern sociology supposes.

Despite its encyclopedic exposition and the complexities of its argument, John Milbank's *Theology and Social Theory—Beyond Secular Reason* (1991) can best be understood as an attempt to dismantle the modern notion of the social and to reconstruct it within the Church.[6] The making of the secular space, for Milbank, is coupled with the creation of an atomistic social ontology. Following Henri de Lubac, who asserts that humanity was created for communion, Milbank maintains that the categorical separation between the individual and society, which modern social theory presupposes, is, in Milbank's terms, but a "sociological illusion" (TST 226).[7] This thinking is illustrated by his critique of the modern sociology of religion which supposes that the role of religion is to serve the maintenance of the public space, presupposed to be neutral. In this case, religion plays the functional role of preserving the social by way of morality: "Sociology creates the illusion of a 'social fact', which can be contrasted with religion defined in such a way as to confine it and yet preserve it, in an irreal sublimity. The confinement is achieved in the dimension of space, where religion is subordinated to the social and deemed to be functional in relation to it" (TST 110).

Nevertheless, for Milbank, modern social theory overlooks the core of religion which cannot be explained by purportedly neutral and scientific terms. Religion does not

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Ashgate, 2003); Klaus Klother, *Charakter, Tugent, Gemeinschaft: Grundlegung christlicher Ethik bei Stanley Hauerwas* [Freiburg: Herder, 2010], 197).

[5] See Stanley Hauerwas, "The Church as God's New Language," in *The Hauerwas Reader*,ed. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 142-62. In this article, Hauerwas regards the event of Pentecost as the event of reunification of language which had been confused in Babel. He states: "It is only against the background of Babel..that we can understand the extraordinary event of Pentecost. The sound that was like the rush of a mighty wind signaled a new creation. The fire of the Holy Spirit burned clean, making possible a new understanding. The Jews of diaspora heard these Galilean followers of Jesus telling of the mighty works of God in their own language. The promised people themselves, who had been scattered among the tribes, learning their languages, were now reunited in common understanding. The wound of Babel began to be healed first among the very people God had called into the world as a pledge of God's presence" (146).

[6] Interestingly, Stanley Hauerwas suggests that Milbank's *TST* could be read in pneumatological terms: "one of the most interesting ways to think of *Theology and Social Theory* is to interpret it as an extended reflection on the work of the Holy Spirit. The materiality of the Spirit's work is the reason Milbank can make the astounding claim that theology must be its own social science. It must be so exactly because Christian convictions are necessary for us to locate the final causes shaping our history as God's ongoing work of creation" (Stanley Hauerwas, "A Milbankian reflection," in his *Wilderness Wanderings: Probing Twentieth-Century Theology and Philosophy*, 192.

[7] Milbank suspects that Henri de Lubac is faithful to his idea of the supernatural, because in the final chapter of *Catholicism*, entitled "Transcendence", he writes that "there is in man an eternal element, a 'germ of eternity', which always breathes the upper air, and which always, hic and nunc, evades the temporal society. The truth of his being transcends his being itself." (Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, trans. by Lancelot C. Sheppard [London: Barns and Oates, 1937], 202, cited in TST 226); [Original text] "Il y a en l'homme un Élément éternel, un 'germe d'éternité' qui, dès maintenant, 'respire au-dessus du temps' qui toujours, *hic et nunc*, échappe à la société temporelle. La vérité de son être déborde son être même " (C 314). Milbank thinks that de Lubac lapses into Platonism which is open to the autonomy of the secular society. He states: "When talking about the Church de Lubac is careful to avoid what I define as 'the sociological illusion' of making society and the individual spatially external to each other, and yet this care is forgotten when it comes to distinguishing the Church from secular concerns. Here, de Lubac rediscovers the evasive spark of Platonic life, and makes the contrast of Church/secular society in terms of the contrast individual/social, despite the fact that the preceding chapters had argued that the Church is also a society" (Ibid).

serve the social; rather, it is embedded in the deepest ground of the social. As we have seen earlier, it is impossible to understand the world without a specific religious outlook. Hence, Milbank argues that "'scientific' social theories are themselves theologies" (TST 3). In other words, the point of departure for social theory is some kind of religious motive that makes it possible for social theorists to develop their social theory. Therefore, every social theory is elaborated on the basis of a specific underlying social ontology that's supported by a particular religious commitment.

Furthermore, Milbank's choice of social theory as his interlocutor is not arbitrary but purposive. This choice stems from his conviction that the site of the social is in the Church, as an exemplary place of the social. It is thus not in a supposed neutral area. Milbank makes the bold assertion that the explanation of the social that modern social theory offers is a theology *in disguise* which is incompatible with authentic Christianity. Thus, Milbank says:

> Talk of 'a Christian sociology' or of 'theology as social science' is not … as silly as talk of 'Christian mathematics'…precisely because there can be no sociology in the sense of a universal 'rational' account of the 'social' character of all societies, and Christian sociology is distinctive simply because it explicates, and adopts the vantage point of, a distinctive society, the Church (TST 380-381).

According to Milbank, the modern notion of the social is a conceptual construction developed on the basis of the modern idea of the rational, autonomous subject. In this conceptual framework, the social is claimed to be a neutral space independent of various prejudices, especially religious ones. Moreover, the individual and society are conceptually separated from each other in accordance with the ideas of modern social theorists such as Rousseau, Locke and Hobbes (however much these theorists' explanations of the social differs one from the other). Where these philosophers agree is on the idea that the social is an entity exterior to the individual and that society is, therefore, established by the mutual contract of supposedly rational and autonomous individuals. Against this contractual account of the social, Milbank asserts that the modern creation of a neutral realm without interference from the Church is—despite its claim to neutrality—a Christian heresy. And this heresy, in turn, possesses a religious commitment which puts individual freedom and rights above anything else.[8]

Milbank's view on the social is undergirded by de Lubac's notion of salvation as a social and historical event. Unlike the modern social theorists who affirm a hypothetical state of nature in which rational individuals can make a contract in order to protect their life, freedom, and property, de Lubac robustly advances a thesis according to which

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[8] In "Can a Gift be Wrapped?: John Milbank and Supernatural Sociology," [*HeyJ* XLVII (2006), 387-404], Daniel Izuzquiza critcizes Milbank's exclusive supernatural sociology. While respecting Milbank's attempt to supernaturalize social theory, he disagrees with Milbank on his dismissal of the mediation of social theory in theological reflection. Comparing social theory to wrapping paper, he states that "the gift is always the gift, while the paper is merely secondary" (402) and that "gifts are better when wrapped" (Ibid). For him, "non-theological disciplines may useful.. just as extra-ecclesial criticism may also be a means of purification and route towards internal coherence for Church's practice" (Ibid). In my view, Izuzquiza seriously misconstrues Milbank. Put simply, for Milbank 'wrap' is itself a vehicle of the gift of God. His emphasis on the historicity of Christian revelation manifests this fact. For Milbank, there is right or wrong 'wrap'. Social theory, for him, distorts the content of the gift. That's why Milbank dismisses sociological mediation in the articulation of Christian conviction.

man was created in the image and the likeness of God. This anthropological basis guarantees the natural and supernatural unity of the humankind.[9]

It is against this background of the supernatural vocation of man based on natural unity that Milbank's vision of the Church is best understood. Man is not an isolated island, but a being in communion. This sort of social existence is supremely illustrated in the Church which is the sacrament of Christ, and Christ is in turn the sacrament of God. The task, therefore, of this present chapter consists primarily in demonstrating that Milbank's notion of the Church is largely indebted to de Lubac's communion ecclesiology, and that Milbank situates this notion in a postmodern context.

1. Henri de Lubac's communion ecclesiology

Communion ecclesiology is today a term widely used even beyond the boundaries of various Christian traditions. While rooted in scriptural and patristic tradition, it was primarily developed in reaction against a modern individualist description of man. Despite a varying range in the meaning of this term, the distinguishing feature of communion ecclesiology lies in its accent on the fellowship of the believers and a sacramental understanding of the Church. [10] It is understood that communion ecclesiology staunchly opposes juridical and institutional descriptions of the Church, which Y. Congar calls *hiéarchologie* as well as individualistic-oriented ecclesiologies. For de Lubac, one of the proponents of communion ecclesiology (along with Möhlner,[11] Congar,[12] etc.), the Church is understood as 'the whole Church' (*totus Christus).* That is, the Church is marked by its inclusiveness in the sense that the Church is sacramentally present in all areas of human life. This idea is echoed by Milbank's description of the Church as a community without boundaries.[13] The purpose of this section is not to fully account for de Lubac's communion ecclesiology, but to provide merely a preliminary understanding of some basic elements in it. On the basis of this understanding we could grasp clearly the thrust of Milbank's ecclesiology

1.1 Church as communion

For de Lubac the nature and destiny of man consist in his union with God and his fellow men. In line with his understanding of the relationship of nature and grace, de

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[9] The supernatural dignity of one who has been baptized rests, we know, on the natural dignity of man, though it surpasses it in an infinite manner: *agnosce, christiane, dignitatem tuam- Deus qui humanae substantiae dignitatem mirabiliter condidisti* [Recognize, O Christian, your dignity – God, who in a wonderful manner created and ennobled human nature]. Thus the unity of the Mystical Body, a supernatural unity, supposes a previous natural unity, the unity of the human race (C 25); [Original text] "La dignité surnaturelle du baptisé repose, nous le savons tout en la dépassant infiniment, sur la dignité naturelle de l'homme : agnosce,christiane, dignitatem tuam- Deus qui humanae substantiae dignitatem mirabiliter condidisti... Ainsi l'unité du Corps mystique du Christ, unité surnaturelle, suppose-t-elle une première unité naturelle, l'unité du genre humain " (C 3).

[10] For example, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church* (Augusburg Fortress, 1998); John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (New York: St.Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985). See Dennis M.Doyle, *Communion ecclesiology: Visions and Versions* (London: Orbis Books), 179-80; David L. Schindler, *Heart of the World, Center of the Church: Communio Ecclesiology, Liberalism, and Liberation* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B.Eerdmans, 1996).

[11] For Möhler's ecclesiology, see Peter Riga, "The Ecclesiology of Johann Adam Möhler," *Theological Studies*, 22, 1961, 563-587; M. Doyle, "Möhler, Schleiermacher, and the Roots of Communion Ecclesiology," *Theological Studies* 57, 1996, 467-80.

[12] M. Doyle, "Journet, Congar, and the Roots of Communion Ecclesiology," *Theological Studies* 58 (1997), 461-479.

[13] "Christianity is the religion of the obliteration of boundaries" (BR 196). Milbank continues to writes that " Secular commentators like Deleuze, Hardt and Negri assume, in all too modern and essential fashion, that there is some sort of 'natural' human desire which demands deterritorialization without end" (Ibid.).

Lubac thinks the natural union of humankind is the foundation for his supernatural union. This means that man as the image of God is created primordially as a communal being modeled on the Trinitarian union. Though sin would scatter humanity, the original vocation for the communion of man was not obliterated: "God did not make us to remain within the limits of nature or for the fulfilling of a solitary destiny; on the contrary, He made us to be brought together into the heart of the life of the Trinity" (CC 12).

A crucial aspect to de Lubac's affirmation of the supernatural in humanity is his recovery of an authentic understanding of the Eucharist. In his *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages* (1944), a monumental historical study on the notion of the mystical body, de Lubac seeks to show the shifting process in the meaning of the term *corpus mysticum*[14] by documenting it from patristic and medieval theological literature. According to him, the Church fathers and medieval theologians used the term to designate the Church. For them, the real, Eucharistic and ecclesial body of Christ, they all constitute the mystical body of Christ in their analogical relations. This means that the Eucharist and the Church is intrinsically and reciprocally related to each other. According to de Lubac, "in the thinking of the whole of Christian antiquity, the Eucharist and the Church are linked" (CM 13).[15] Milbank continues to expound that for Augustine, who in the Donatist controversy insisted on a significant connection between the two, "the Eucharist corresponds to the Church as cause to effect, as means to end, as sign and reality" (Ibid.).[16] That is, the Eucharist plays a double role: "The Church produces the Eucharist, but the Eucharist also produces the Church. In the first instance the Church is involved in her active aspect … in the exercise of her sanctifying power; in the second case she is involved in her passive aspect, as the Church of the sanctified" (SC 93).[17] If the ultimate aim of the Eucharist is the communion of saints by a participation in the corporal body of Christ, this communion actualizes the Church. In this sense the Eucharist and the Church share in common the same end: the unity of the saints. For de Lubac, "the Church, like the Eucharist, is a mystery of unity- the same mystery and one with inexhaustible riches. Both are the body of Christ—the same body" (SC 156).[18]

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[14] According to de Lubac this phrase first appeared in an official document (the Bull Unam Sanctam of Boniface VIII [18th November 1302]): "'One holy Church… which represents the one mystical body, of which the head is Christ, just as the head of Christ is God' " (CM 3, author's emphasis). Nevertheless, de Lubac observes that this phrase is used in different ways by the Fathers: 'body of the Church of Christ' (Basil), 'spiritual body' (Tertullian, Clement, Zeno), 'the true and perfect body of Christ' (Origen), 'The common body of Christ' (St. Gregory Nazianzen), 'the common body of the Church' (Theodoret), 'sacrament of the body of Christ' (Hilary, Augustine), 'the grace of the sacred body' (Paulinus of Nola), 'mystical and intelligible body' (Erigena), etc "(CM 4-6).

[15] [Original text] "Dans la pensée de toute l'antiquité chrétienne, Eucharistie et Église sont liées " (CM 23).

[16] [Original text] "l'Eucharistie est rapportée à l'Église comme la cause le signe à la réalité, comme le moyen à la fin, en même temps que comme le signe à la réalité" (CM 23).

[17] [Original text] "C'est l'Église qui fait l'Eucharistie, mais c'est aussi l'Eucharistie qui fait l'Église. Dans le premier cas, il s'agit de l'Église telle que nous l'avons envisagée au sens actif, dans l'exercice de son pouvoir de sanctification ; dans le second cas, il s'agit de l'Église des sanctifiés" (ME 113).

[18] [Original text] "Comme l'Eucharistie, l'Église est un mystère d'unité, (et c'est encore le même mystère, à la richesse inépuisable. L'une et l'autre est le Corps du Christ, – et c'est encore le même Corps" (ME 133). Elsewhere, de Lubac states again: "Eucharistic communion was.. conceived of as a communion with the Church. The very term communion, which we are occasionally reminded, is a translation of the Greek 'synaxis', retained the ecclesial sense which it had in preceding eras. It would retain it for some

This link between the Eucharist and the Church began to be loosened by the rise of rationalistic thinking in theology, as we have already seen in chapter 3. This marks a crucial break with Augustinian sacramental theology in which the sign is intrinsically related to the thing. According to de Lubac, this shift is illustrated by the change of the notion of truth. In sacramental theology, truth is not understood as the correspondence between sign and reality, but rather as the participation of the sign in reality: "Body, spirit, truth:.. there was an intimate connection between these words. What the body was to the shadow, the spirit was to the letter, the truth was to the figure. Bodily, spiritually, truly: there adverbs that a whole series of texts show us belong in the one equation" (CM 188).[19] The body of Christ was understood as participating in the Truth of the *Logos* which. That is, the Eucharistic body gives rise to a spiritual understanding of truth as its effect. And this truth is the plenitude of Christ which is realized in the Church: "The truth was to be found beyond the sacrament. Now the sacrament itself has become the 'thing' and the 'truth' of the ancient rites, which receive within it both their 'spirit' and their 'body', that is to say their understanding and their fulfillment" (CM 204).[20]

In the patristic tradition the true body is identified as the Church, while the mystical body is identified as the Eucharistic body. The Eucharistic body is the true body insofar as it is the figure for the ecclesial body of Christ which is Truth. This sacramental view on the Body of Christ was narrowed down by a rationalistic understanding of truth. In the end there arose a distinction between the Eucharist as the true body of Christ and the Church as the mystical body of Christ. This means there was a breakdown in the link between the Eucharist and the Church. De Lubac laments this change as follows: "the two words truth and body, originally used in parallel fashion would be fatally brought together…to form no longer just the *body of the truth* but also the *true body*" (CM 208).

1.2 Church as mystery

For de Lubac, the Church is an indefinable entity which bypasses human reason. All other Christian mysteries are oriented toward this mystery. Because of this ineffable character of the Church, de Lubac prefers to use metaphors for the Church rather than to precisely define it. De Lubac declares: "[The church] is my mother because she brought me forth to a new life. She is my mother because her concern for me never slackens, any more than do her efforts to deepen that life in me, however unenthusiastic

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considerable time to come. The sacramental act would continue to be placed in relation to the necessary union with the body of the Church" (CM 95-6); [Original text] "La communion eucharistique est toujours.. conçue comme communion à l'Église. Le terme même de communion, dont on fait quelquefois remarquer qu'il traduit le grec 'synaxis', conserve le sens ecclésial qu'il avait aux âges précédents. Il le conservera longtemps encore. On continuera de mettre en rapport l'acte sacramentel avec l'union nécessaire au corps de l'Église" (CM 111-2).

[19] [Original text] "Corps, esprit, vérité: ..il y avait.. entre ces trois mots une intime correspondance. Ce que le corps était à l'ombre, ce que l'esprit était à la lettre, la vérité l'était à la figure. Corporaliter, spiritualiter, veraciter: trois adverbes que toute une série de textes nous montre mis en équation" (CM 211-2).

[20] [Original text] "La vérité se situait en fin de compte au-delà du sacrement. Maintenant, le sacrement lui-même est devenu la 'chose' et la 'vérité' des anciens rites, qui reçoivent en lui à la fois leur 'esprit' et leur 'corps', c'est-à-dire leur intelligence et leur accomplissement " (CM 229).

my co-operation" (CPM 4).[21] Nevertheless, as we have already noted, for de Lubac, this mystery has its own logic. Mystery has nothing to do with ecstatic experience, but rather it identifies itself with the sacrament itself which is, along with the Scriptures, a source of Christian understanding. So, when we say that the Church is mystically united with Christ as her Bride, this means that the Church is a sacrament. De Lubac emphasizes that in the traditional usage the word "mystical" is always linked to the Eucharist (CM 41). The Church discloses the nature of God toward the world.[22] De Lubac states: "The Church is a mystery; that is to say that she is also a sacrament. She is 'the total locus of the Christian sacrament', and she is herself the great sacrament which contains and vitalizes all the others. In this world she is the sacrament of Christ, as Christ Himself, in His humanity, is for us the sacrament of God" (SC 147).[23]

Even though de Lubac identifies *sacramentum* and *mysterium*, he points out the difference between them by stating that *mysterium* is a more dynamic concept than *sacramentum*. Namely, in the ancient sense of the term, mystery is not a thing but rather an action (CM 49). According to him, "the mystery is essentially an action" (CM 51).[24] Namely, "it conveys dynamism and synthesis. It focuses less on the apparent sign, or rather the hidden reality, than on both at the same time: on their mutual relationship, union and implications, on the way in which one passes into the other, or is penetrated by the other" (Ibid.).[25] In this sense, God's saving action by the incarnation is mystical, because its aim is to bring into union God and man.

From this perspective, divine action is inextricably connected with the temporal horizon of humanity. This horizon is composed of the past, present and future, because God's saving action happens within historical dimensions. So, while celebrating the Eucharist, believers participate in God's salvation history, a saving work spanning from the Old Testament to the New Testament. As noted by de Lubac, in the ancient tradition the two Testaments were considered as two sacramental institutions in the same framework of God's salvific design : "For just as the reflection of the Fathers on the Eucharistic mystery cannot be separated from their reflection on the entire Christian economy [of salvation], which they find revealed in Scripture, so also their reflection on the same Scripture breaks well beyond the limits of exegesis: its aim is to include in its grasp the totality of the work of God in the world" (CM 65).[26]

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[21] Cf. Henri de Lubac, *Les Église particulières dans l'Église universelle, suivie de La Maternité de l'église, et d'une interview recueillie par G. Jarczyk, Aubier Montaigne* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne,1971); [English trans] *The Motherhood of the Church: Followed by Particular Churches in the Universal Church and an Interview conducted by Gwendoline Jarczyk* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982).

[22] De Lubac notes: "L'Eglise a pour unique mission de rendre Jésus-Christ présent aux hommes. Elle doit l'annoncer , le montrer, le donner à tous" (ME 175).

[23] [Original text] "L'Église est un mystère, c'est-à-dire, aussi bien, un sacrement. 'Lieu total des sacrements chrétiens,' elle est elle-même le grand sacrement, qui contient et vivifie tous les autres. Elle est ici-bas le sacrement de Jésus-Christ, comme Jésus-Christ lui-même est pour nous, dans son humanité, le sacrement de Dieu" (Ibid.).

[24] [Original text] "Le mystère est essentiellement action " (CM 61).

[25] [Original text] "Il est synthétique et dynamique. Il porte moins sur le signe apparent ou au contraire sur la réalité cachée que sur l'un et l'autre à la fois : sur leur rapport, sur leur union, sur leur implication mutuelle, sur le passage de l'un dans l'autre ou la pénétration de l'un par l'autre" (CM 62-3).

[26] [Original text] "Car de même que la réflexion des Pères sur le mystère eucharistique est inséparable de leur réflexion sur toute l'économie chrétienne dont ils trouvaient la révélation dans l'Écriture, de même leur réflexion sur cette Écriture déborde de beaucoup le cadre d'une exégèse : elle veut saisir en esprit la totalité de l'œuvre de Dieu dans le monde " (CM 78).

1.3 Church as paradox

As we have seen in chapter 2, paradox is the defining characteristic which describes de Lubac's understanding of reality. The Church is not exempt from this category. She is visible in the earth, but is oriented toward the heavenly kingdom of Christ. Because she belongs to this world, she is full of human weakness. "In this world the Church is a mixed community and will stay like that to the end— unthreshed corn, the ark with both clean and unclean animals, a ship full of unruly passengers who always seem to be on the point of wrecking it" (SC 77).[27] However she is holy and clear because she is united with Christ as his mystical body. In this sense, de Lubac describes her as "complexio oppositorium" (CPM 2).

This paradoxical nature of the Church stems from the paradox of the Incarnation. The Church is the continuation of the Incarnation which made possible the adoption of humanity by the Father in his Son. That is, without the mediation of the Church, we cannot enter into communion with God, because God's salvific design was accomplished by the establishment of the Church. It is by the Church that God's salvific design is accomplished. Drawing on Bonhoeffer, de Lubac states:

> The Church is a mysterious extension in time of the Trinity, not only preparing us for the life of unity but bringing about even now our participation in it. She comes from and is full of the Trinity. She is for us—in a favourite phrase of Bossuet—'Jesus Christ diffused and communicated'. She is 'the Incarnation continued'. She is, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer used to say, 'the presence of Christ on earth', the 'Christus praesens', she speaks with 'the authority of Christ living and present in her' (CPM 24).[28]

Faced with the world hostile toward God, she has to show what God is like in continuing the practice of Jesus in the Gospels. In this regard, she is a distinctive community because of her supernatural origin. At the same time, however, she is an open community in the sense that she is the locus of the fulfillment of God's saving design for the entire world. This idea exactly is echoed by Milbank's vision of the Church, in which the Church is potrayed as an alternative community resisting the world built on violence.

2. Christological-ecclesial meta-narrative

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[27] [Original text] "L'Église est ici-bas et demeurera jusqu'à la fin une communauté mêlée : froment pris encore dans la paille, arche contenant des animaux purs et des impurs, vaisseau plein de mauvais passagers, qui semblent toujours sur le point de l'entraîner dans un naufrage " (ME 95-6).

[28] [Original text] "L'Église est une mystérieuse extension de la Trinité dans le temps, qui non seulement nous prépare à la vie unitive, mais nous y fait déjà participer. Elle vient de la Trinité, et elle est pleine de la Trinité. Elle est pour nous- c'est une formule de Boussuet, souvent reprise,- 'Jésus-Christ répandu et communiqué' ; elle est.. 'l'Incarnation continuée'. Elle est, disait Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 'la présence du Christ sur terre, elle est le Christus praesens', aussi parle-t-elle 'avec l'autorité du Christ présent et vivant en elle'. Par un 'glissement de sens' qui s'imposait en quelque sorte en vertu d'une logique interne, saint Paul lui applique ce même mot de 'mystère' qu'il appliquait d'abord au Christ. C'est qu'elle est l'Épouse du Christ et son Corps. Elle lui est si parfaitement unie que pour nous, comme disait Jeanne d'Arc, 'c'est tout un'. Aussi est-elle toute sainte et santifiante. Et comme Dieu est notre Père, elle est notre Mère" (PME 48-9).The citation from Bonhoeffer is in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol I, 144.

2.1 Church as extended story of Jesus's story

We have examined earlier that *narrative* is, for Milbank, a fundamental category with which to understand the world. However, for him, narrative is not just a conceptual apparatus for grasping human, social and historical reality: rather, it constitutes the world. In other words, through narrative we not only grasp the world and ourselves, but also we are engaged with the world. In this sense, Milbank rejects the narrative foundationalism which other narrative theorists like Ricœur, Lindbeck espouse. In these theorists Milbank perceives the traces of a Cartesian-Kantian obsession with the subject (which we've looked at in chapter 3). What distinguishes Milbank from other narrative philosophers or theologians lies in his emphasis on the historicity of the Christian narrative. This emphasis stems from his theological mentor, de Lubac, for whom revelation itself takes a narrative form, since history itself is the place of the revelation of God. This insight is of paramount importance because he thinks that the only foundation is not narrative itself, but the Church. The Church is, for Milbank, shaped by God's story, and in turn tells the story of God by its practice.

Milbank is understandably less inclined to Kantian and modern epistemological understandings of narrative—in which the subject and object are separated—than he is to a Hegelian philosophy of history, in spite of his reservations concerning Hegel's philosophy.[29] For, despite a hyper-rationalist tendency, Hegel at least recognized the importance of history and faith in philosophical thought. Hence, "one has to pass from Lindbeck's 'Kantian' narrative epistemology of scheme and content to a 'Hegelian' meta-narrative which is 'a philosophy of history', though based on faith, not reason" (TST 387). By this Milbank means that man is a historical being which is not reducible to an atemporal category. As for other narrative theorists, including Milbank, the pure Kantian transcendental self which exceeds the limits of space and time is an illusion. Therefore Milbank rejects the epistemological concept of narrative for the sake of ontological one.

For Milbank, objective social reality does not exist in such a way that scientific social theories claim. This is not to say that he denies social reality itself. Rather, he is primarily concerned with how social reality is constituted. He thinks that the social fact which constitutes the social is not a neutral fact. The social fact which they consider as objective is but an already interpreted fact, one interpreted by their sociological presuppositions. These presuppositions are undergirded in turn by their religiously committed social ontology, in which the ultimate social unit is conceived as the atomized individual, and the relationship between the individuals is understood as inherently violent. Alasdair MacIntyre criticizes that social fact, which is for him a modern invention and is utilized as the ultimate criterion of truth:

> Facts, like telescopes and wigs for gentlemen, were a seventeenth-century invention. In the sixteenth century and earlier 'fact' in English was usually a rendering of the Latin 'factum', a deed, an action, and sometimes in Scholastic Latin an event or an occasion. It was only in the seventeenth century that 'fact' was first used in the way in which later philosophers such as Russell, Wittgenstein, and Ramsey were to use it.[30]

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[29] For Milbank's interpretation of Hegel, see Ch 6: "For and Against Hegel," in TST 147-76.

[30] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 357.

The artificial construction of social reality based on the supposed neutral and objective social fact is indeed a distorted version of true social reality. The danger of this model consists in the fact that the social reality that social theory offers is a violent one. To the contrary, Milbank situates social reality in the Church's non-violent practice which is exemplarily illustrated by mutual forgiveness within the church. First and foremost, this practice is rooted in the historical Church. And this practice is supernatural in character insofar as it reflects the peaceful harmony of the Trinity. In Milbank's terms, this is "supernatural pragmatism".[31] It is pragmatic in the sense that truth is proved in practice. And it is supernatural, because this practice is linked to the grace of God. Moreover, Milbank's position is theologically realist in that, for him, a theological and confessional interpretation of the world best corresponds to how the world really is. This is an important challenge to the explanations of the social reality which social theorist offers. In short, his position is historicist, pragmatist and theologically realist (TST 6). Milbank states:

> No claim is made to 'represent' an objective social reality; instead the social knowledge advocated is but the continuation of ecclesial practice, the imagination in action of a peaceful, reconciled social order, beyond even the violence of legality. It is this lived narrative which itself both projects and 'represents' the triune God, who is transcendental peace through differential relation. And the same narrative is also a continuous reading of positioning of other social realities (TST 6).

Furthermore, man is bounded by the community and its tradition to which he belongs. For man is a historical being, tradition and community are inescapable elements in the constitution of human being. This condition is often unconsciously interiorized by the members of a particular community. This insight is theologically important, because as de Lubac claims, Christian revelation takes a historical form. For him, this historical form is the story and tradition of the Church. Milbank agrees with de Lubac on the importance of the role of story in forming Christian community. He thinks that the Church is formed by Christ's narrative; but this narrative is of supernatural origin in the sense that this narrative is configured by the economy of the Trinity. In other words, the Trinitarian God is the origin and end of the Christian meta-narrative: "The association of the Church with the response of the Spirit which arises 'after' the Son, and yet is fully divine, shows that the new community belongs from the beginning within the new narrative manifestation of God" (TST 387).

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[31] Milbank uses this term to designate the philosophy of Maurice Blondel who had much influence on Henri de Lubac's theological thought. Milbank contrasts Blondel's 'supernatural pragmatism' with 'foundational praxis': "His [Blondel's] 'supernatural pragmatism', which makes practice fundamental in the sense that thought and action are inseparably fused in the development of a tradition, is to be contrasted with the 'foundational praxis' of political and liberation theology, which appeals either to an impossible practice 'without theory', or else to a specifically 'political' practice, which is a practice outside Christian tradition" (TST 209). Pragmatism is a philosophy which argues that an idea turns out to be true when it is practiced, like in a promise or a declaration. The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy defines pragmatism as "a philosophy that stresses the relation of theory or praxis and takes the continuity of experience and nature as revealed through the outcome of directed action as the starting point for reflection" (*The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Robert Audu [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999], 730).

Milbank maintains that the mission of Jesus is not to be an atoning sacrifice for human sinfulness, as we have seen above, but to establish a community that practices non-violence in a violent world. In this way, salvation is accomplished by the embodiment of Christ as a reconciled community where forgiveness is practiced: "The Church itself, as the realized heavenly city, is the *telos* of the salvific process" (TST 403). In this sense, salvation is unthinkable apart from the Church. So 'Believing without belonging' makes no sense according to Milbank's theology. The actual practice of Jesus within the Gospel narrative is the origin of the Church. Otherwise, the picture of Jesus is perverted into an ahistorical and gnostic one: "the meta-narrative..is the genesis of the Church, outside which context one could only have an ahistorical, gnostic Christ" (TST 387). That is, the believer's participation in the Body of Christ also means participation in the story of Jesus, a story which has its beginning at creation and is accomplished in the establishment of the universal Church. Michael Hanby even states that "the very form of creation, its means and its end, is Church."[32]

Thus, the Church is called to practice the non-violent mode of life that Jesus practiced, reliving it in a new way. This means that it is by the Church that God makes himself known to the world. And it is not theology which offers the rule of faith to the Church, but rather the Church's practice provides the foundation for her theological reflection. Furthermore, this theological reflection is to be poetical in the sense that theology should always provide a Christian practice in a new way. As Milbank states, "Unless [Christianity] reflects upon the singularity of Christian norms of community, theology has really nothing to think about. For Christian practice, like every practice, is all external, a matter of signs and actions interpellating "persons" ... if Christians ask what is God like, then they can only point to our "response" to God in the formation of community" (PCA n°11). From this perspective, we can understand Milbank's understanding of Christian meta-narrative. As for de Lubac, for Milbank, if Jesus is the *sacramentum* of God, the Church is the *sacramentum* of Jesus. That is to say that between Jesus and the Church, as his mystical Body, is an essential continuity—the story of Jesus is the story of the Church.

2.2 Individual and society within Church narrative

In his early article, "An Essay Against Secular Order," (1987)[33] Milbank raised an old question as to whether salvation is individual or social. In the individualistic view, salvation is understood spiritually and otherworldly without connection to present social reality. To the contrary, the viewpoint that salvation is essentially social, a position represented by liberation theology, understands salvation, first and foremost, as emancipation from present political, social and economic suffering. It aims at the construction of a just society in this world in the name of human emancipation. This theological current makes recourse to social science as the explanatory model of the social. "Within this model [liberation theology or political theology], sociology may become the natural partner of theological and ecclesiological endeavor."[34] Faced with this old soteriological dilemma between the individual and the social, Milbank proposes

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[32] Michael Hanby, "Desire: Augustine and Western Subjectivity," in RONT, 9.
[33] John Milbank, "An Essay Against Secular Order," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 15(1987), 199-224.
[34] Ibid., 200.

the narrative solution of Henri de Lubac, for in de Lubac's thought the individual is incorporated into the story of the Church. De Lubac treats this problem in the context of his discussion of the salvation of the non-believers. He state:

> [The Church] is both at the beginning and at the end, and all that lies between is full of her foreshadowings and her expansion. Seen by the eye of faith the whole religious history of mankind stands out illuminated, its several parts fall naturally into place, and what many were tempted to consider the irremediable conflict between belief in a world-wide call to salvation and belief in the Church as necessary for this same salvation is seen to be resolved (C 217).[35]

According to this 'narrative ecclesiology'[36] of Henri de Lubac, there is no opposition between the individual and society. This opposition finds its origins in Enlightenment philosophy and is foreign to the orthodox Christian tradition. For Milbank, "salvation is neither 'individual' nor 'social' but concerns insertion into ecclesial narrative."[37] Following de Lubac, Milbank argues that salvation is accomplished in the Church, which is the Body of Christ. The common error found in both these approaches to salvation consists in their misunderstanding of the historical and social aspects of Christian salvation. First of all, salvation is not "a mechanism for the recruitment of individuals into heaven or even a state of private temporal well-being."[38]. Salvation happens on the historical horizon and is also simultaneously social in character, for, according to Milbank and de Lubac, the idea of an autonomous individual without a connection to history is an illusion. De Lubac and Milbank hold that the person is a historical being who is rooted in the community and its tradition. However, this does not mean, as liberation theologians suppose, that salvation "concerns the liberation of the human race from the oppressive social structure and the inauguration of the kingdom as a this-worldly utopia."[39] In this liberation model, social science is considered to offer an objective explanation of society. That is, an alliance is established between theology and social science which claims to offer a neutral account of social reality. In the end, an atomist social ontology becomes inevitably infused into Christian theology. That is, the point of departure in Christian theology is not the Christian *logos* itself, but the sociological account of Marxist social theory. Thus, "liberation theology fully reproduces a dualism between 'spiritual' individuals on one hand and 'social structure' on the other hand in a way that encourages the sociological notion (in the tradition of Comte, Durkheim and Weber) that society is an 'external,' empirical reality, whose ahistorical form is governed by eternal laws."[40] Protesting against these two opposing accounts of salvation, Milbank proposes a Church-centered account of salvation. In his programmatic work, *Catholicisme* (1938), de Lubac attacks the individualist notion of

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[35] [Original text] [L'Église] est au début et elle est au terme, et tout l'entre-deux est encore plein d'elle : de ses préparations et de ses développements. À la lumière de cette vue de foi l'histoire religieuse de l'humanité s'éclaire, sa complexité s'organise, et l'on voit se dissiper la contradiction que beaucoup étaient tentés de croire sans remède entre le dogme de l'appel universel au salut et le dogme de la nécessité de l'Église pour ce même salut " (C 179).

[36] This phrase is Milbank's. De Lubac did not use this phrase.

[37] Ibid.,199.

[38] Ibid., 200.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.,201.

salvation because humanity, for him, has a natural unity in sharing the same supernatural end. However, unlike liberation theologians, de Lubac's insistence on the social and historical dimensions of salvation does not lead him to neglect the salvation of the individual. Rather, the individual and society are paradoxically united, without one absorbing the other. This balance between the individual and society in salvation stems from de Lubac's peculiar social ontology, which is also appropriated by Milbank. The individual is regarded as a microcosmos which is in an analogical relationship with the entire universe, the macrocosmos. In this case, salvation is impossible without consideration of the whole, while, inversely, salvation of the whole is equally dependent on the individual. According to de Lubac, "Fundamentally, personality can be imagined as a network of concentric shafts; in full development, if a paradox may be used as an expression of its interior paradox, it can be called a centrifugal center. Thus it can also be said, to exalt its inner richness and to make clear its character as an end, while all others must acknowledge, that 'a person is a whole world,' but it must also be added at once that this "world" presupposes others with which it makes up one world only" (C 333).[41]

For Milbank, de Lubac's particularity lies in his notion of the Church. The Church is not a human assembly which is comprised of the saved, nor a hierarchical structure, nor a vehicle of social justice. Rather, the Church is the ultimate end of salvation. This means that the Church cannot be instrumentalized to other ends, because the Church is itself the ultimate goal of salvation of God.[42]

Moreover, this notion of the Church is closely linked to the narrative approach to salvation, in the sense that the historical Church participates in God's salvation history. If the Church is not the means of salvation, but the goal, it follows that it has her origin and her end in history. Pre-Christian Israel participated in salvation by anticipating the coming of Jesus. And the Church anticipates her eschatological accomplishment. There is, therefore, no room for what Karl Rahner designated, famously, as 'anonymous Christianity.'[43]

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[41] [Original text] " À sa racine, on peut imaginer la personne comme un réseau de flèches concentriques ; en son épanouissement, s'il est permis d'exprimer son paradoxe intime en une formule paradoxale, on dira qu'elle est un centre centrifuge. On pourra bien dire aussi, par conséquent, pour magnifier sa richesse intérieure et pour manifester le caractère de fin que tout autre doit lui reconnaître, qu''une personne, c'est un univers', mais il sera nécessaire d'ajouter aussitôt que cet univers en suppose d'autres, avec lesquels il ne fait qu'un" (C 289-90). Lubac's citation is in J. Maritain, *Humanism integral*, 1935, 17.

[42] Ibid., 204. In commenting on de Lubac's *Catholicism*, Milbank compares de Lubac's view on salvation with the view of salvation in political and liberation theology: "De Lubac here [in *Catholicism*] offers a fine account of how salvation is *inherently* social; it is not, for him, as so often for later political and liberation theology, that there is individual salvation *and also* a salvation of social structures. Rather, salvation means…. reconciliation with one's fellow human beings, and reconciliation with God. Both mediations occur in the Church, so that the Church is not primarily the means of salvation, but rather the goal of salvation, because it is the community of the reconciled. Furthermore, by insisting that salvation is incorporation into *ecclesia*, de Lubac makes salvation not only social, but also historical. The individual is always saved in a particular manner, according to his situation with regard to the Christian past, and in prospect of the Christian future" (TST 226).

[43] De Lubac distinguishes between 'anonymous Christian' and 'anonymous Christianity. ' He admits the existence of anonymous Christians. But anonymous Christianity is invalid because Christianity is, for him, a radical newness in human history: "That 'anonymous Christians' will be found in diverse milieu where, one way or another, the light of the gospel has penetrated, no Christian could possibly still deny. Even that he might find it elsewhere, by virtue of some secret operation of the Spirit of Christ, this also may be admitted… To hold, however.. for an 'anonymous Christianity's spread throughout the world,

Milbank explains the advantage of the narrative account of salvation. In the first place, this view can preserve the particularity of the individual. In this model "all the individual specificity of salvation (how it is offered *to me*, how *I* respond), so far from being in antithesis to a 'social dimension,' precisely belongs with this dimension in so far as this specificity situates me with regard to the Christian past and provides my contribution to the Christian future."[44] Secondly, there exists a tension between history and eschatology. Salvation happens within history but is not fulfilled in history. This tension rescues us from the error of both a materialistic or a spiritualistic account of salvation. "In every Christian re-telling of the past, the very organization of the material into a dramatic narrative of salvation is implicitly a thrust towards not leaving the dead where they are, but rather at retrieving and re-making their actions and destinies." [45]

This Church-centered narrative model of salvation is echoed by Stanley Hauerwas' model proposed in his article "Jesus: The Story of the Kingdom,"[46] even if this article was written in the context of his discussion of Christian ethics. In the beginning of the article, he points out the error in the following question, "What is the relation between Christology and social ethics?" For him, this question itself is absurd because it appears to presuppose that a commitment to Jesus has no social significance. Instead, he offers a more radical argument that "a Christology which is not a social ethic is deficient."[47] He criticizes the reduction of Christian conviction into formulas because it leads us to neglect the social meaning of discipleship. In order to recover this Christological deficiency, he suggests that "recovering the narrative dimension of Christology will be able to see that Jesus did not have a social ethic, but that his story is a social ethic."[48] In the end, for Milbank as for Hauerwas, Christology is inextricably interwoven with ecclesiology.

Though Hauerwas disagrees with liberal theologians in their rejection of the classic Christian dogma associated with Chalcedon (Hauerwas is associated with so-called high Christology), he praises their emphasis on the historical dimensions of God's revelation, dimensions often neglected by classical Christologies. On the one hand, he points out that the search for the historical Jesus is an ahistorical attempt, because the event of the Gospels is not described for the sake of historical accuracy but for the sake of discipleship among those who follow him. On the other hand, he points that the

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would not be logical, though it might sound so. Neither would it be logical to conclude, as is still done, to an 'implicit Christianity' which it would be the sole concern of apostolic preaching to render explicit-still essentially unchanged. All of which would be as much as to say that the revelation we owe to Christ was no more than the surfacing of something that has always existed" (CPM 87-88); [Original text] "Qu'il existe certains 'chrétiens anonymes' dans les divers milieux qui, par une voie ou par une autre, ont reçu les lumières venues de l'Évangile, aucun chrétien ne saurait non plus le nier. Bien plus, qu'il puisse s'en trouver ailleurs, en vertu de quelque action secrète de l'Esprit du Christ, on peut également l'admettre…Mais ce serait paralogisme que d'en conclure à un 'christianisme anonyme' partout répandu dans l'humanité, ou, comme on dit encore, à un 'christianisme implicite' que le seul rôle de la prédication apostolique serait de faire passer, inchangé en lui-même, à l'état explicite,- comme si la révélation due à Jésus-Christ n'était autre chose que la mise au jour de ce qui se trouvait exister déjà depuis toujours" (PME 153).

[44] Ibid., 204.

[45] Ibid., 205.

[46] Stanley Hauerwas, "Jesus: The Story of the Kingdom," in *A Community of Character*, 36-52.

[47] Ibid., 37.

[48] Ibid.

separation of Christology and soteriology is not desirable, because this approach can restrict the significance of Jesus in the Gospel. In this respect, like Milbank and de Lubac, he is not liberal, nor conservative, insofar as he does not absolutely embrace historical revelation, nor abandon it. Therefore, "the claim that the story of Jesus is a social ethic means that there is no moral point or message that is separable from the story of Jesus as we find it in the Gospels."[49] In sum, the identity of Jesus is not exterior to the Gospel story, that is, to be found somewhere in history or in untouchable propositional revelation.

What is important in the understanding of Jesus' identity is that it is linked to the Kingdom of God which means God's lordship over all creation and history. What is the relation between Jesus' story and the Kingdom of God? According to Hauerwas, the Scriptures do not separate the Kingdom from the proclaimer of the Kingdom. He accepts with approval Origen's phrase, "Jesus is the *autobasileia.*"[50] Jesus is the personification of the Kingdom of God in which he exercises the lordship over it. Hauerwas argues that the defining characteristics of this Kingdom are found only in the story of Jesus in the Gospel. That is, the form of Jesus' life in the Gospel is the only source of ethics for those ruled by this Kingdom. In this sense, the significance of Jesus in the Gospel is made clear when he is understood as the initiator of a new kind of polity whose constitutions are the Gospels. Belonging to this new community is the necessary condition of discipleship: "To be a disciple means to share Christ's story, to participate in the reality of God's rule."[51]

In short, the story of Jesus is a story for the formation of the Church. The Church is a special community which has to embody the form of Jesus' life. But as Milbank puts it, this form of life is creative in the sense that it is practiced in particular and concrete circumstances. For Hauerwas, the four Gospels are the manifestation of the multi-forms of Christian life. In concluding this article, Hauerwas states:

> The social ethical task of the church, therefore, is to be the kind of community that tells and tells rightly the story of Jesus. But it can never forget that Jesus' story is a many-sided tale. We do not have just one story of Jesus, but four. To learn to tell and live the story truthfully does not mean that we must be able to reconstruct "what really happened" from the four. Rather it means that we, like the early Christians, must learn that understanding Jesus' life is inseparable from learning how to live our own. And that there are various ways to do this is clear by the diversity of the Gospels .[52]

3. Church and Eucharist

3.1 The Eucharist as cosmic reconciliation

In our previous examination of Milbank's Christology, we have seen that Jesus' death is interpreted by him as a non-violent act of God and that the purpose of this act is the reconciliation between man and God, and between men through the practice of mutual

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[49] Ibid., 42.
[50] Origen, "Commentary on Matthew," in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (New York: Scribner's, 1926), 498, cited by Hauerwas, 45.
[51] Ibid., 49.
[52] Ibid., 52.

forgiveness. In order to realize this cosmic reconciliation, Jesus established the Church as a vehicle for cosmic reconciliation. How might, then, this reconciliation between men and God and between men be possible in the world where violence is rampant everywhere? According to Milbank, this is made possible by following Jesus' act of reconciliation. Here, as we have seen, the Eucharistic body of Jesus has a symbolic power to achieve this reconciliation: "This symbolic power is not, primarily, mediated by a human hierarchy: on the contrary, it is in the first place mediated by the general ingestion of these symbols throughout time" (BR 177). De Lubac manifests the same idea of Milbank's: The Eucharist is the effective sign of the spiritual sacrifice offered to God by the whole Christ (SC 108).[53]

Therefore, this capacity has a supernatural origin, that is, it is made possible by the grace of God. The Church is the locus where reconciliation happens and the celebration of the Eucharist is the means of this reconciliation. For de Lubac, the Eucharist is the sacrament of unity (C 63). The natural union of original humanity is fulfilled, in an exemplary fashion, by the supernatural union of believers by means of participating in the same body of Christ.

Both for de Lubac and for Milbank, the Eucharist is the means by which we can overcome the dichotomy between nature and the supernatural, between the individual and society, and between the material and the spiritual. Communal participation in the Eucharistic body of Christ means for the participants both assimilation into Christ and assimilation into one another.[54] In this way, each member enters into communal union with God by way of supernaturalizing the natural union of humankind. Drawing on Augustine's doctrine of illumination, according to which the true and the good is manifested at the same time to everyone through the divine light, Milbank thinks that the Eucharistic body is like light.[55] Like light, "the Eucharist supremely combines the most common and the most intimate. Therefore, the Eucharist most exemplifies true willing or desiring and restored participation" (BR 215).[56]

Thus the Church is an "erotic community" in the words of Graham Ward, because in the Church the desires of each baptized are converged upon Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. In this sense the Church is the true society insofar as there is one will and one desire. As Milbank states, "true society implies absolute consensus, agreement in desire, and entire harmony amongst its members, and this is exactly (as Augustine reiterates again and again) what the Church provides, and that in which salvation, the

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[53] [Original text] "L'Eucharistie est le signe efficace du sacrifice spirituel offert à Dieu par le Christ total" (ME 130).

[54] Classically, Augustine manifests this idea in his *Confessions* (7, 10, 16, PL 32, 742): 'Nec tu me in te mutabis, sicut cibum carnis tuae, sed tu mutaberis in me' = You will not change me into you, as food for your flesh, but you will be changed into me).

[55] Here Milbank offers a corrective interpretation of Augustine. Unlike Augustine who devalues knowledge through palpable objects, for we can touch these one at a time, Milbank thinks that Augustine himself implicitly recognizes that "in the Eucharist 'sight' and 'touch' are fused since here the most intimate touching that is tasting is a simultaneous and collective eating of a body not 'used up', and not enjoyed exclusively 'one at a time'" (BR 215). In my view, Milbank tries to place Augustine in the line of theurgical neo-platonism which gives values to the material. In other words, for Milbank, Augustine's Platonism is much more imbued with theurgical Platonism, and not with Plotinus's henological Platonism which privileges intellectual intuition in order to acquire the truth without material mediation.

[56] Graham Ward develops this subject in his *Cities of God*, see ch 4, 'Communities of desire' (117-51), and ch 5, "The Church as the erotic community" (152-81).

restoration of being, consists" (TST 402). And so, it is impossible to be united with Christ without participating in the Church by means of the Eucharist.

As for de Lubac, so for Milbank: the Church, made by the Eucharistic celebration, is the most fundamental social event which can position all other social events. This event stands in contrast with the modern liberal individualist conception of society, because it is grounded in the supernatural union of human beings. Hence Milbank states that this event offers a matrix for positioning all others social events:

> The logic of Christianity involves the claim that the 'interruption' of history by Christ and his bride, the Church, is the most fundamental of events, interpreting all other events. And it is most especially a social event, able to interpret other social formations, because it compares them with its own new social practice (TST 388).

Again, Milbank argues the inseparability of the Eucharist and the church. Like with de Lubac, at the heart of the Church is the celebration of the Eucharist. If the Eucharist is the inner core of the Church, the Church's practice is the outward expression of this core. According to Milbank, "the church has both an 'esoteric' and 'exoteric' aspect. The esoteric aspect is mystical theology, which is theology pure and simple; theology as experience and discourse that is possible through reception of the Eucharist. The exoteric aspect is the actual dispersed life of the ecclesial community" (BR 108).

Here, it is important to note that the Eucharistic mystery has a narrative structure.[57] The Eucharistic mystery is composed of three inseparable moments—memory, presence and anticipation. This mystery is not ahistorical, one which is extrinsically given from the outside. The supernatural is intrinsically present in the Eucharistic practice. The narrative structure of the Eucharistic mystery shows the ultimate goal of the Eucharist. Julie Gittoes makes plain this point: "The Church stands within the dynamics of memory and hope, grounded in the past events that shape her life—Christ's life, death and resurrection- and awaiting the fulfillment of God's Kingdom. The anamnesis within the Eucharist weaves these strands together in the particularity of the Church's corporate worshipping life, and is a locus of life."[58] In the words of Milbank, the goal of the Eucharist is to bring believers to participate in advance in the

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[57] Catherine Pickstock criticized the simplification of the Eucharistic rite in the liturgical reform of Vatican II because of its spacialization of liturgy, which she associates with modernity. She takes as her paradigm of genuine liturgy the medieval Roman Rite which retains narrative structure. By the liturgical reform, this narrative structure disappeared. According to her the liturgical reform was not faithful to its theology as proposed by de Lubac, Balthasar, Congar and Gilson. For her, liturgical performance is a gesture against modern secularity. Therefore, abandoning narrativity in liturgy renders the cultural task of liturgy impossible. She states: "[The] narratological dereliction is a symptom of the continued 'impossibility' of the liturgical task, and is manifested in its own vocal stammer. The obscuration of repeated beginnings, shifting personae, oblique calls, cries to be heard, recommenced purifications, and apostrophic petitions for assistance reflect the same 'slow tongue of Moses, the 'unclean lips' of Isaiah, the demur of Jeremiah, and the mutism of Ezekiel. Thus, we can situate the liturgical poetics of satire, verbal "blockage", obscuration, supplementation, and preface, within an overall response to, and expression of the crisis of liturgical expression, the transgression of the mundane order of language, and the magnitude of its task: to mingle its voice with that of the supernumerary seraphim" (Pickstock, *After Writing*, 215).

[58] Julie Gittoes, *Anamnesis and the Eucharist: Contemporary Anglican Approach* (Aldershop: Ashgate, 2008), 78.

eschatological peace and rest: "In the eucharistic liturgy, humanity enters in advance into the divine Sabbath, the eschatological banquet and cosmic nuptial" (BR 161).

Here, Milbank's ecclesial vision is made more explicit. It is the exemplary site of cosmic reconciliation between God and man and between men. But this special community is not of this world, even if it belongs to it visibly, because it is situated between humanity's memory of Christ and the expectation of his coming.[59] Milbank describes his vision of the Church based on the Eucharist as follows:

> The short answer to 'where is the Church?' (or 'where is Milbank's Church') might be, on the site of the Eucharist, which is not a site, since it suspends presence in favor of memory and expectation, "positions" each and every one of us only as fed—gift from God of ourselves and therefore not to ourselves—and bizarrely assimilates us to the food which we eat, so that we, in turn, must exhaust ourselves as nourishment for others (FL 134).

3.2 Eucharist as political act

For de Lubac and Milbank, Christian salvation inherently has a social and historical implication. The social nature of salvation is closely related to their understanding of the Eucharist. The believer enters into union with God and other believers in the celebration of the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, the true body of Christ is sacramentally present so that the true mutual belonging between Christ and believers is accomplished. The major concern of de Lubac and Milbank is that Christianity has lost this social and historical significance with reference to the Eucharist. As de Lubac says, in drawing on Thomas Aquinas: "True Eucharistic piety.. is no devout individualism. It is 'unmindful of nothing that concerns the good of the Church.' With one sweeping, all-embracing gesture, in one fervent intention it gathers together the whole world" (C 109).[60]

As we have seen above, de Lubac retraces the process by which the meaning of *corpus mysticum* was distorted. According to de Lubac, in patristic and high medieval Christian literature, this term denotes the Church as the true Body of Christ. That is, the Church was not conceived as a functional and judicial institution, but as identical with the mystical body of Christ. That is, the Church is the sacramental embodiment of the Christ. According to de Lubac, this understanding began to be weakened by the identification of the *corpus mysticum* with the Church apart from the Eucharistic body. This distortion began roughly around the 12th century. This historical study on the transformation of the meaning of *corpus mysticum* is directly linked to de Lubac's protest against the neo-scholastic dichotomy between nature and the supernatural. This dichotomy articulates the relation between Christ and the Church in terms of one being extrinsic from the other. In turn, this gave rise to an individualistic understanding of salvation and the loss of social and historical dimensions in defining salvation. By

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[59] This understanding of the Church's identity is echoed by the Stanley Hauerwas's qualification of the church as a "resident alien". See his book written with William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens—Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989). In this book, they state: "the Church exists today as resident aliens, an adventurous colony in a society of unbelief. As a society of unbelief, Western culture is devoid of a sense of journey, of adventure, because it lacks belief in much more than the cultivation of an ever-shrinking horizon of self-preservation and self-expression "(49).

[60] [Original text] "La véritable piété eucharistique n'est.. pas un individualisme dévot. Elle 'n'oublie rien de ce qui intéresse le salut de l'Eglise' Comme d'un immense geste enveloppant, elle recueille en son intention profonde l'univers entier" (C 81). De Lubac's citation is in S. Thomas, 3a, q 83, a, 4, ad 3m.

identifying the Eucharistic body with the Church, de Lubac paved the way for Milbank to retrieve the political /social notion of the Church.

Drawing on the Dionysian tradition to which he submits, Milbank rejects a dualistic ecclesiology that separates the mystical and the political. For him, the Church as the mystical body of Christ is the political body, for the Church as a political body seeks the mystical communion of believers: "There are not then two parallel hierarchies, the one internal and mystical, and the other public and political. Instead, for the authentic Dionysian tradition, there is but one hierarchy of the Eucharist and ecclesial *corpus mysticum* which is at once *mystical and political* "(BR 107, emphasis mine).

That is, in the Lubacian sense of the term, *corpus mysticum* is collective in character. That's why Milbank can say that the Church is both mystical and political. Milbank's social/political notion of the Church leads us to understand his radical rejection of explaining the social in terms of secular social theory. Milbank recognizes that social science is based on the myth of autonomous and isolated individuals having no relation to the supernatural. That's why Milbank strongly protests against the liberation theology's model, for it accepts without qualification the presuppositions of the liberal view of man. The conception of the autonomous individual stands in contradiction to de Lubac's anthropology, in which humanity is created for communion. Milbank maintains that this individualist liberal understanding of man is connected with secular power politics rooted in the original violence. In contrast, the Church forms an alternative politics based on an original peace that was disturbed by sin but achieved by communion with Christ. In this sense, the Eucharist becomes a political act in reaction to secular politics. Stephen Long and Tripp York point out well that the Church's inability to overcome the capitalist-consumer culture originates from her forgetting her true identity which lies in the Eucharist:

> The Church itself desperately searches for the right "niche" market to sell its wares, and we are all too willing to forget who we are for the sake of market shares. This is precisely why the repetition of the liturgical performance of the Eucharist and the bringing forth of our own offering can be a radical political act. It causes us to see our everyday lives in terms of the orientation Christ gave and gives us. In an effort to guard against amnesia the Church performs particular liturgical rituals that functions as story-telling devices reminding us as to whom we are and how our lives are to make sense. The Eucharist is the reminder par excellence. This act of remembrance makes possible that form of Christ's body known as the Church.[61]

Through the Eucharist the Church can find its true identity. The politics of the Church, grounded in Eucharistic harmony, bypasses the politics of the state grounded in violence. That is, to be the Church by means of the Eucharist is the most political act against state politics: "The Church, to be the Church, must seek to extend the sphere of socially aesthetic harmony—'within' the state where this is possible; but of a State committed by its very nature only to the formal *dominium*, little is to be hoped" (TST 422).

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[61] Stephen Long and Tripp York, "Remembering: Offering Our Gifts," in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Well (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 398.

For Milbank, the Christian social vision based on Eucharistic union is fundamentally different from the liberal social vision in which freedom is negatively defined. The mutual recognition of the other's liberty and equality cannot guarantee true social union, because in this liberal understanding social relationship is grounded in the liberal ideal of non-interference and toleration. In this sense, the social vision of Milbank and de Lubac is more radical than liberal social vision. There is room for difference and opposition between men, because this vision supposes positive forgiveness toward others. Milbank states: "The Christian social project (as Hegel distortedly saw) envisages not just liberty and equality, but also perfect reconciliation in and through freedom. This means that an agreement beyond mere mutual toleration is aimed at, but an agreement constituted through the blending together of differences, which thereby cease to be oppositional" (FL 296).

[Excursus 2: De Lubac's and Milbank's Eucharistic vision of the Church (Cavanaugh)]

In his *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ,* William Cavanaugh appropriates Milbank's and de Lubac's Eucharistic social project in his analysis and critique of the Church's attitude toward the Chilean dictatorship of Pinochet. In his study he observes that the Church's attitude toward social and political problems is undergirded by her ecclesiology. He maintains that Jacque Maritain's New Christendom ecclesiology, which had a profound influence on Catholic theology under Pinochet's regime, paralyzed the Church's reaction against the dictatorship. For Cavanaugh, the crucial problem with Maritain's ecclesiology is his recognition of the autonomy of the temporal realm. This means that society has its own natural end apart from its supernatural end. Of course, he thinks that the natural realm should be subject to the spiritual. However, he simultaneously affirms that the natural is complete in itself. Cavanaugh estimates that Maritain's dualism is not that of Thomas Aquinas, but that akin to the misreading of Aquinas of Cajetan.[62] This means that Maritain's understanding of the relationship of nature and grace is different from de Lubac's and Milbank's. In other words, he acknowledges a pure nature without recourse to the supernatural.[63] Maritain's position is illustrated by Cavanaugh's quotation: "Although *formally considered as part of the State*, every act of his can be referred to the common good of the State, man, *considered in the absolutely peculiar and incommunicable quality of his liberty and as ordered directly to God as to his eternal end*, himself enjoying therefore the dignity of a whole."[64]

As we can see, unlike de Lubac, Maritain distinguishes two human ends: one is formally considered as part of the State, the other is considered in the absolutely peculiar and incommunicable quality of his liberty and as ordered directly to God as to his eternal end. Namely, for Maritain the State and the common good which the State assures offer a framework for a human natural end. And this natural end could be

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[62] Here Cavanaugh draws on Geral McCool SJ's appraisal: "Maritain can be fairly called the great twentieth-century representative of the Thomism of the classical commentators," that is, "Cajetan and John of St. Thomas." (Gerald McCool, SJ, *From Unity to Pluralism: The Internal Evolution of Thomism* [New York: Forham University Press, 1989], 116, cited in *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 183.

[63] For Maritain's appraisal of de Lubac's surpernatural thesis, see R. Mougel, "La position de Maritain à l'égard de 'Surnaturel' : le péché de l'ange, ou 'esprit et liberté" in *Revue Thomiste*, 101 (2001), 73-98.

[64] Maritain, *The Things That Are Not Caesar's*, trans. J. F. Scanlan [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931], 4, italics in original, cited in *Torture and Eucharist*, 160.

reconcilable with his supernatural end. The Christian belongs to two distinct worlds. One the one hand, he belongs to the natural community, that is the State by way of natural law and its affirmation of human rights. On the other hand, he is of the Church by this supernatural vocation. In this case the State concerns the body of man, whereas the Church, the soul of man. This duality generates the loss of the social significance of the Church. The church is understood as only caring for individual souls. After all, "Christianity will enter the body politics not through a confessional State but through the leadership of virtuous individual Christians."[65] The Church becomes a source of "metapolitical unity"[66] Here Cavanaugh observes that Maritain's theology is much more akin to Kant than Aquinas in the sense that he supposes the human being is determined as phenomenon and free as noumenon.[67] In consequence, Maritain's New Christendom is, in its roots, a secular project. That is, unlike de Lubac and Milbank's project, Maritain's project is a compromise with liberalism.

Against Maritain's false model, Cavanaugh, following de Lubac and Milbank, proposes that the Eucharistic union offers a true Christian politic in the face of secular politics. He takes up the subject of torture which was cruelly practiced by the Pinochet dictatorship. He theologically defines torture as a kind of liturgy. More properly speaking, "torture is a kind of perverted liturgy."[68] That is to say, torture is a liturgical practice for the maintenance of the State religion. Torture has an effect of showing that the body is in the hands of the State. Cavanaugh contrasts this torture with the torture of Jesus. While torture by the State scatters a society into isolated individuals, the torture of Jesus produced a community which is his Church. The Eucharist makes the participant remember the torture of Jesus; and his torture represents a non-violent resistance against the cruel world. Therefore, "the Eucharist is the Church's response to torture, and the hope for Christian resistance to the violent disciplines of the world."[69] What is more important is the fact that torture and Eucharist are diametrically different disciplines. That is, the two different practices produce two different types of the formation of character:

> Torture and Eucharist are opposing *disciplinae arcanorum* using different means and serving different endings. Where torture is an anti-liturgy for the realization of the state's power on the bodies of others, Eucharist is the liturgical realization of Christ's suffering and redemptive body in the bodies of His followers. Torture creates fearful and isolated bodies, bodies docile to the purposes of the regime; the Eucharist effects the body of Christ, a body marked by resistance to worldly power. Torture creates victims; Eucharist creates witnesses, martyrs. Isolation is overcome in the Eucharist by the building of the communal body which resists the state's attempts to disappear it.[70]

In this perspective, the Eucharist, for Cavanaugh, is the means for effacing the demarcation between the temporal and the spiritual which ahistoric New Christendom ecclesiology assumes. This is so because the torture of Jesus happened at a particular time in history. By participating in the Eucharist, Christians participate in the tortured body of Christ. And just as the tortured body was resurrected by God, Christians have the hope of being resurrected in the eschaton by means of the Eucharist. Here Cavanaugh accentuated the importance of Eucharistic imagination. By this he means a way of thinking about the present from an eschatological perspective. He believes this imagination is formed by the Christian story which stands in opposition to the story of the secular, as we have seen in chapter 4:

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[65] Ibid., 168.
[66] Ibid., 162. (The pharase "metapolitical unity' is Maritain's).
[67] Ibid., 172; "Maritain intends to preserve the freedom and transcendence of the human person, but in so doing he seriously qualifies and limits the possibility of the supernatural acting directly in the world" (ibid.).
[68] Ibid., 12.
[69] Ibid., 2.
[70] Ibid., 206.

> In contrast with the secular historical imagination, the Christian story is intrinsically eschatological. Unlike the modern nation-state which, under the influence of Roman law, is predicated on its own perpetuity, Christian history has an end. Even stranger, it has an end which has already come, and yet time continues. The end of history is Jesus Christ, who announced the Kingdom of God as something which awaits final consummation in the future, but is already present in the form of signs. This is the peculiar "already but not yet" character of the Kingdom of God.[71]

In this way for Cavanaugh, as with de Lubac and Milbank, the Eucharist makes the Church and it is the core of the Church's life in the face of the violent world. It is the place of communion between God and man, and between men. Therefore, "the Eucharistic community is already a real foretaste of the fullness of the Kingdom."[72] In conclusion, the Eucharist is inherently a political act because it aims at true communion in the secularized world in which the State imposes a false union by its discipline.

4. The modern state as a parody of the Church

In the history of Christian thought, the relationship between the state and the Church has been articulated in various manners. The Reformers considered the state as belonging to the order of natural law. So they did not question the established political order. However, the Anabaptists considered it as a satanic institution. Milbank's position joins the latter tradition.[73] He strongly repudiates the Constantinian project which seeks to incorporate the Church into the end of the state. In this model, the interest of the state and that of the Church is mediated by natural law. In this respect, it seems that it is not unfair that Milbank could be qualified as "an Anabaptist or Mennonite Barth."[74] In fact, there is a significant affinity between Milbank and John Howard Yoder who represents contemporary Mennonite theology in many respects. However, Milbank's first and foremost intellectual inspiration is from Henri de Lubac's integrated model between the natural and the supernatural and that this reading can lead us to a correct understanding of Milbank's political theology. Unlike Aristotle who thinks that the state is a natural society, Milbank, consonant with de Lubac's thesis, argues that the state is not an autonomous realm which subsists without reference to the transcendent. There is no purely natural sphere into which the state is absorbed.

His position is well illustrated by his interpretation of Augustine's political theology. According to Milbank, the elaboration of a theory on the relation between Church and

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[71] Ibid., 223.

[72] Ibid., 228.

[73] There was a dialogue between radical orthodoxy and radical reformation. See *The Gift of Difference: Radical Orthodoxy, Radical Reformation*, foreword by John Milbank, ed. Chris K. Huebner & Tripp York (Winnipeg, MB: CMU Press, 2010).

[74] Gregory Baum, *Essays in Critical Theology* (Kansas: Rowman & Littlefield) 1994, 52. However, a Mennonite theologian, Tripp York, does not agree with Gregory Baum's description of Barth as an Anabaptist theologian, even if Milbank's thought bears an affinity with the Anabaptist tradition. He states: "Though the ecclesiological hermeneutic Milbank champions may or may not be reminiscent of the ecclesiology of some Anabaptists, I am not entirely convinced that his thought is paradigmatic of Mennonite theology (if there is such a thing)." He continues, "Baum appears to confuse Milbank's project with the more Christologically driven theology of the Anabaptists. He seems to overlook the incompatibility of the apocalyptic Christ—located within much of Mennonite theology—with Milbank's inescapably tragic-ridden ecclesiology" (Tripp York, "The Ballad of John and Anneken," in *The Gift of Difference: Radical Orthodoxy, Radical Reformation*, ed. Chris K. Huebner & Tripp York, 52).

state is not what preoccupied Augustine. That is, Augustine did not in fact elaborate a 'theory of Church and state' (TST 406). *Civitas terrena* is, for Augustine, not identical with the 'state' in the modern sense of the terms. "*Civitas* is the vestigial remains of an entire pagan mode of practice, stretching back to Babylon (Augustine, *Civitas Dei*, XVI, 4)" (Ibid.). Milbank notes that the difference between *civitas Dei* and *civitas terrena* lies in how finite goods are used. While goods are used with reference to the infinite with faith, hope, and love in the *civitas Dei,* these goods are used in the *civitas Terrena* only for the pleasure of flesh. That is, the two cities are grounded in two incompatible desires in human beings: one is the love of God, the other is self-love which is a distorted form of the love of God. Consequently, *civitas Dei* is the rule of God operative particularly in the Church rather than in the temporal and spatial realm.

Milbank chides Augustine for his acknowledgement of a natural political rule that exists in a twofold manner: One aspect of this rule is that those who are intellectually and morally superior are to rule those inferior. The other is that, given the post-lapsarian state of affairs, the exercise of coercive political power is legitimate (Ibid.). The crucial point which Milbank attacks in Augustine's thought is that it posits the state's self-sufficiency in the political sphere. This reminds us of de Lubac's critique of Jansenius' interpretation of Augustine, in which humanity's radical corruption after the Fall causes its radical rupture with God's grace, so that he accords autonomy to the post-lapsarian state by rejecting engraced nature.

However, Milbank interprets Augustine in the line of de Lubac, since, according to Milbank, Augustine thinks that the secular political rule takes the example of ecclesial pastoral care. This is to say that the earthly rule has to serve the heavenly rule of peace. "Insofar as possible the Christian ruler will make a *usus* of the earthly peace, by subordinating it to the ecclesial purpose of charity and of a 'loving discipline'"(TST 407). This understanding of Augustine with regard to the political realm is compatible with Milbank's participatory vision and de Lubac's integrist model. They both leave no realm without the peace of God which is the gift of God. Milbank criticizes an approach to Augustinianism—the so called 'political Augustinianism'—found in liberation theology, an approach which considers Augustine as the defender of the natural right of the state.

Henri de Lubac, in his turn, severely criticizes this distortion of Augustine that presents itself as 'political Augustinianism'. In his essay "L'Augustinisme politique?" de Lubac opposes the thesis proposed by H.-X. Arquillière, especially in his work *L'Augustinisme politique: Essai sur la formation des theories politique du Moyen-Age*.[75] To put it simply, this thesis is an attempt to associate the thought of Augustine with the direct papal power over the temporal realm. The 'political Augustinianism' is defined by M. Mandonnet as a "tendency to absorbe the natural law into supernatural justice and the law of the State into the law of the Church."[76] According to de Lubac, this notion was popularized by the Swiss historian G. Schnürer, among others, who says with regard to Gilles of Rome: "The theocratic doctrine of the omnipotence of the pope- as it was constituted- had been supported by an Augustinian foundation from the time of

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[75] H.-X. Aroquillière, L'Augustinisme *politique: Essai sur la Formation des Théories politique du Moyen-Age* (Paris: Vrin, 1934).

[76] Ibid., 54. [Original text] "tendance à absorber le droit naturel dans la justice surnaturelle, le droit de l'État dans celui de l'Église."

Gregory VII and especially since Innocent III. The author's ideas hardly ever touch those of Aristotle: these go back to St. Augustine for their supreme principles." [77]

Arquillière, distinguishing between Augustine and Augustinianism, maintains that this kind of Augustinianism dominated Christian thought until the 13th century and culminated in the 14th century.[78] According to him, this kind of Augustinianism is a distortion of the true Augustine, and that all theorists who defended the papal right justified it on the basis of Augustine. Objecting to Arquillière's interpretation of Augustine which asserts that Augustine is the first Father of the Church who establishes the doctrine of the state, de Lubac contends that the Augustinian contrast between *Civitas Dei* and *Civitas terrena* is not identical with that between the Church and the state. The city of God is a hidden reality which is mixed with the earthly city even in the visible Church. Therefore *De Civitas Dei* is neither a political treatise nor a philosophy of history. It is a "theology of history" which concerns salvation history as a Christian drama, that is, it concerns individual and collective Christian spirituality.[79] Therefore, the opposition between the two cities is not a political one. De Lubac writes: "St. Augustine's recognition of a 'natural law' and his affirmation of the legitimacy of states, even pagan ones, are not to be interpreted as a more or less fortunate antidote to the 'peremptory, unequivocal separation between the City of God and the city of the devil where one would be able to detect a vestige of Manichaeism."[80]

4.1 Critique of modern nation-state

Milbank is convinced that the modern nation state is but a modern invention. Henri de Lubac also cautions the totalizing tendency of the modern state, which was strikingly expressed by Nazism [81] For them, the modern state is a phenomenon which is characterized by the monopolization of violence (Weber). Benedict Anderson, from an anthropological viewpoint, defines the modern nation state as an "imagined political community". For him, the nation is imagined "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion… In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact [and perhaps even these] are imagined."[82] For Milbank, the Church and the state are the products of two different stores based on the two different ontologies: one is the ontology of peace founded on the Trinity of harmony in difference, the other an ontology of violence which underscores

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[77] G. Schnüner, L'Eglise et la cilivization au Moyen Age t. 3., 16 cited in Henri de Lubac, "Political Augustinism" ?, in TF 236; [Original text] "La doctrine théocratique de l'omnipotence du pape y est soutenue, telle qu'elle s'était constituée, sur une base augustinienne, depuis Grégoire VII et surtout depuis Innocent. Les idées de l'auteur ne se rencontrent presque plus avec celles d'Aristote; en revanche, elles reviennent,pour les principes suprêmes, à saint Augustin." G. Schnüner, L'Eglise et la cilivization au Moyen Age t. 3.,16 cited in de Lubac, TO, 256-7.

[78] "Political Augustinism," 238 ="Augustinisme politique," 1-2, 6, 151, in TO 258.

[79] "Political Augustinism," 250= "Augustinisme politique," 271.

[80] "Political Augustinism," 251; [Original text] "La reconnaissance par saint Augustin d'un 'droit naturel', son affirmation d'une légitimité d'Etats même païens, ne sont pas de sa part un correctif plus ou moins heureusement apporté à 'la séparation tranchante entre la Cité de Dieu et la Cité du diable, où l'on aurait pu voir un reste de manichéisme" ("Augustinisme politique," 273.).

[81] See Henri de Lubac, *Résistance chrétienne à l'antisémitisme*, *Souvenirs 1940-1944* (Paris: Fayard, 1988).

[82] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 6.

modern thought. Christianity considers peace as the ultimate basis of the reality, whereas modern thought supposes that the world is inherently violent.

In consequence, it follows that the state is never a neutral, objective and profane reality. It is the parody of the Church. In the words of Cavanaugh, "the body of the state is a *simulacrum*, a false copy, of the Body of Christ" (RONT 182). That is to say, the modern state, propagating liberal ideology, proposes a pseudo-soteriology. For Milbank, the mission of the Church consists in becoming an alternative community on the basis of the ontology of peace against the modern state grounded in the ontology of violence. Hence, the Church itself is a politics. She has her own social theory that is ecclesiology (TST 380). Moreover, following de Lubac's ecclesiology, Milbank situates the core of his ecclesiology in the liturgy. Daniel M.Bell, Jr. states this idea well: "Christianity is the true politics, the true polity, over against the agony of capitalist discipline, in the Augustinian sense that the Church embodies the true form of human social, political, and economic organization because its order is one of liturgy, of worship of the triune God."[83] That's why the Eucharist is conceived as a political act. The Church is, most of all, the site of the communion between God and man. Faced with the secularized, atomized, individualized world shaped by liberal ideology, the Church is to be the "exemplary form of human community" (TST 388) in which forgiveness is practiced and peace is realized in imitating Christ. In Milbank's and RO's vision, peace within the Church by the Eucharist is to be extended to the whole society. In this sense, as Pickstock states well, "the liturgy is less the beginning than the end, or rather the anticipation of this end. Liturgical cult does not have the purpose of making better the quality of our collective life, but is the crowning of this collective life."[84] Milbank in his turn manifests his strong vision of the Church as follows:

> The universality of the Church transcends the universality of enlightenment in so far as it is not content with mere mutual toleration and non-interference with the liberties of others. It seeks in addition a work of freedom which is none other than perfect social harmony, a perfect consensus in which every natural and cultural difference finds its agreed place within the successions of space and time. In this context it is correct to say that the Church is a 'community of virtue' which desires to train its members towards certain ends, rather than a 'community or rights' founded upon liberal indifference (WMS 154).

With regard to the event of September 11, 2001, Milbank does not interpret it as a gigantic act of terrorism by a few individuals, but as a "threat to sovereign power" (FL 223). His construal of ongoing terrorism is rooted in his conviction that the modern nation-state emerged out of the breakdown of the integrated system between the natural and the supernatural. As we have seen, according to Milbank, Duns Scotus gave a privileged place of the divine will over the divine intellect; this in turn produced a nominalistic-voluntaristic tradition exercising a direct influence on modern political thought.[85] The contract theory for the origin of the modern state is undergirded by a

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[83] Daneil Bell, *Liberation Thelogy after the End of History,* 4.

[84] Catherine Pickstock, "L'Orthodoxie est-elle Radicale?" in Adrian Pabst, Olivier-Thomas Vernard, *Radical Orthodoxy: Pour une révolution théologique*, 32. Translation mine.

[85] See Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing*, 136-7.

social atomism focused on the individual will. Hobbes' *Liviathan* is a symbol of the sovereign power of the modern State which controls conflict between individual wills. In this respect, the modern State, for Milbank, is an autonomous body which is established by the autonomous individual without reference to divine intervention. This artificial construction of community is inherently violent. Terrorism is a violent response to the legitimately monopolized violence of the modern state.

What worries Milbank in the emergence of the modern State is that it displays a totalizing character in the name of sovereignty, ignoring the particular objectives of individuals. This concern is shared by de Lubac in his critique of modern nationalism. De Lubac does not consider blameworthy a natural love for the community to which one belongs; he counts blameworthy the totalizing tendency of modern nationalism, which he himself experienced in war time as he leads a spiritual resistance against this ideology. In his article "Patriotisme et Nationalisme," (1933, RCN11-25), de Lubac distinguishes between patriotism and nationalism. Concerning patriotism, he thinks it is a virtue and an obligation, even to the point of sacrificing oneself for one's country if need be. This is not incompatible with the teaching of the Church. However, nationalism has a different character. It is not simple love of country, but a perverted form of patriotism.[86] De Lubac summarizes two aspects of the character of modern nationalism: one aspect is a horizontal problem, the other is a vertical problem. First, horizontally, nationalism is exclusive in character because it ignores the diversity of other countries. De Lubac holds that plurality is inevitable in humankind because peoples are conditioned by time and space, even if all humans are created in the same image of God. Second, vertically, nationalism puts forward the interest of one nation before the Kingdom of God, since it is ignorant of the providential diversity of the countries.[87]

De Lubac perceptively recognizes that the nation-state is grounded in the power equilibrium which is but a disguised peace, that is, on "the ontology of violence"—to use Milbank's terms. The optimistic vision of the organization of international society is so naive because the State has a tendency to absolutely aggrandize its power, even if there is a relatively stable power equilibrium. The peace assured by the balance of power is, therefore, an illusion. De Lubac thinks that the deepest problem is spiritual. That is, the modern state is founded on a principle of immanency which is indifferent to eternal dimensions. This principle, for de Lubac, tends to a "state individualism" which is the collective expression of personal individualism.

4.2 A Tales of two cities

Milbank thinks that Augustine's theology of history represents the authentic form of Christian meta-narrative. This Augustinian Christian meta-narrative is superior to secular meta-narratives undergirded by Hegel's and Marx's philosophy of history in that Augustine's meta-narrative is more historicist and more realist. Drawing on Nietzshche,

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[86] De Lubac states: "Comme tous les sentiments profonds, l'amour de la patrie semble parfois sommeiller dans les cœurs. Mais aux heures de crise, en face d'un grand malheur ou d'un grave péril, subitement il se réveille avec une intensité prodigieuse une âme à des hommes qui ne se connaissaient point une âme soudaine commune et inspire, comme naturellement, les actes les plus héroïques" (RCN 25).

[87] De Lubac summarizes his view: "le nationalisme est déréglé, parce qu'il considère la patrie comme un absolu, la mettant au-dessus de tout, faisant de son intérêt la norme suprême et universelle" (Ibid., 14).

Milbank states that "both liberalism and socialism are not truly universal rational ethical codes, but rather variants of the Christian *mythos*" (TST 389). So their meta-narratives are a pseudo-Christian meta-narrative. Properly speaking, they are anti-Christian meta-narratives because they are rooted in conflict and violence. For Milbank, the Augustinian contrast between the Christian story and the secular story amounts to two contrasting ontologies: "Augustine's contrast between ontological antagonism and ontological peace is grounded in the contrasting historical narratives of the two cities" (TST 390). As a consequence, Milbank understands Christianity as an inauguration of a radically new kind of community, a community which is not of this violent world, but rooted in this world.

Milbank applies Augustine's theology of history to a modern context. While for Augustine, the earthly city is represented by the Roman Empire, for Milbank, it is represented by the modern nation-state. These two political institutions have in common violence as their underlying basis. What is of great importance in Milbank's understanding of the modern state as a parody of the Church is that the modern nation-state is formed by its own story in a fashion not unlike that of the Church. Milbank discloses that the modern ideal of human rights supported by the modern liberal state is based on religion, not on neutral human reason: "The idea of the subject and of human rights depends wholly on the religious narrative. There is no possible conceptual or intuitive access to a pure subject over and above the domain of power" (TST 319).

William T. Cavanaugh contrasts the story of the Church with the story of the state. As we have seen, the Church is grounded in the Christian meta-narrative whose plot is composed of creation, incarnation and the *eschaton*. He, in line with the creation narrative of Henri de Lubac, begins the Church story by telling of the natural unity of mankind. He cites with approval de Lubac's summary of patristic anthropology as follows: "The same mysterious participation in God which causes the soul to exist effects at one and the same time the unity of spirits among themselves."[88] That is, according to the creation narrative, there exists a natural unity of humankind. Cavanaugh notes that Cain's fratricide, the wickedness of Noah's generation, and the scattering at Babel speaks to us of an anti-participatory tendency after the fall from natural human unity (RONT183). Moreover Cavanaugh emphasizes that the restoration of the unity of the human race, achieved by the Body of Christ, is based on the original natural unity. "The supernatural unity effected in the Body of Christ rests on a prior natural unity of the whole human race founded on the creation of humankind in the image of God (*Genesis* 1:27)"(Ibid.). This supernatural unity of humankind is the basis for understanding human salvation. Like Milbank and de Lubac, Cavanaugh thinks that salvation is essentially social, since God did not created individuals but humanity as a unity. Therefore, the sin of Adam is not the sin of Adam as an individual, but it represents the sin of all humankind. And the effect of sin is not simply found in the relationship between God and man, but also between man and man. This is because "through the *imago Dei* our participation in God is a participation in one another" (RONT184). In this light, the goal of God's redemption is the restoration of the lost unity among humans. God's plan is the establishment of a reconciled community, which

[88] Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, 29, cited in RONT 183.

is the Church. But this community is not a human association among others, it is the supernatural Body of Christ. "The Body of Christ is the locus of mutual participation of God in humanity and humanity in God" (Ibid.). By incorporation into the Body of Christ, we regain the lost image of God by way of union with Christ who is the express image of the invisible God (Col1:15). Because of a common and equal dignity resulting from the restoration of the image of God, among members of the Church there is no discrimination according to the class, race, sex etc. In the last stage of the Church's story, Cavanaugh notes there is an anticipation of the gathering of all nations that is exemplified by the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles in Christ. According to Cavanaugh, this reconciliation is not purely a worldly affair, nor entirely an other-worldly affair. He says rightly that "this eschatological gathering is neither an entirely worldly nor an entirely other-worldly event, but blurs the lines between the temporal and the eternal" (RONT 185).

According to Milbank the modern state is founded on the "liberal protestant meta-narrative", which we have examined in chapter 4. Cavanaugh, sharing this insight with Milbank, continues the state's story. We have seen that the Church's story begins with the unity of humankind by a mysterious participation in God, that is, a supernatural state of mankind at creation. In contrast, the state's story begins with the purely natural state of man. This means that the autonomous individual is the final reference for the construction of society. Thus, with this presupposition the divine-human participatory framework was undermined. Drawing on Milbank, Cavanaugh writes: "modern politics is founded on the voluntarist replacement of a theology of participation with a theology of will, such that the assumption of humanity into the Trinity by the divine *logos* is supplanted by an undifferentiated God who commands the lesser discrete wills of individual humans by sheer power" (RONT 186). For example, Hobbes interprets Adam's sin as punishable because of his disobedience to God's will. For Locke, the individual's will and right characterize the state of nature (Ibid.). In the creation narrative of the state's story, there is no supernatural end; there is only individual free will. There is no unity; there are only isolated individuals. This is the fundamental basis of the *mythos* of the modern state. According to this *mythos*, individuals enter into contract for the protection of life, liberty, rights and property. Modern political theorists secularized the biblical motive of *dominium*. Relying on Milbank again, Cavanaugh states: "*dominium* was traditionally bound up with the ethical management of one's property, and was therefore not a sheer absolute right but was based on ends, namely upon what is right and just" (RONT 187). However, in the early modern era, the connotation of *dominium* was perverted into the absolute right over one's person and property. Cavanaugh notes that "this movement was the anthropological complement of the voluntarist theology: humans best exemplify the image of God precisely when exercising sovereign and unrestricted property right" (Ibid.).

The soteriology of the state is contrasted with that of the Church's story. Instead of the Body of Christ as a locus of reconciliation, Cavanaugh notes that modern political theorists also use the Christian metaphor of 'body' for their soteriology (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau). Hobbes's *Leviathan* is described as an artificial man in which "sovereignty is soul, the magistrates the joints, reward and punishment the nerves, and 'lastly, the pacts and covenants, by which the parts of this body politics were at first made, set

together, and united, resemble that fiat, or the let us make man, pronounced by God in the creation'[89]" (RONT 188). What is crucial for Cavanaugh is the noting that there is a one-to-one correspondence between the Church's story and the state's story. He says that "the soteriology of the modern state is incomprehensible ... apart from the notion that the Church is perhaps the primary thing from which the modern State is meant to save us" (Ibid.). The modern state emerged in the context of the 'War of Religion'. In the eyes of modern political theorists, religious dogma is the origin of social conflict.[90] Therefore it was necessary that religion is to be relegated to a private affair: "The modern secular state and the privatization of religions were necessary, therefore, to keep the peace among warring religious factions" (Ibid.). Thus, the modern secular state arises in order to cure the ills caused by the Body of Christ. For Hobbes, it was necessary that the state absorb the Church. The consequence is that many states became the many pseudo-Churches. This is the very situation that the modern theorists sought to avoid. From these facts, we can understand that the state also, like the Church, has its own dogmatic truth claims which it claimed to avoid.

In the light of our discussion, the Church is a reality which is entirely different from the modern nation-state and its truth claims. For Milbank, the modern nation-state is but a form of state religion which aims at realizing its salvation primarily in earthly terms. In contrast, as with de Lubac, the true identity of the Church is not on the earth where it is inevitably rooted. Therefore, the Church on earth exists as a paradox, since it is both rooted on the earth but finds its ultimate end in the *eschaton*. Milbank writes: "The city of God is in fact a paradox, 'a nomad city' (one might say) for it does not have a site, or walls or gates. It is not, like Rome, an asylum constituted by the 'protection' offered by a dominating class over a dominated, in the face of an external enemy. This form of refuge is, in fact, but a dim archetype of the real refuge provided by the Church, which is the forgiveness of sins" (TST 392). Again, Milbank contrasts the city of God with the modern secular state which idolizes the conception of liberty:

> The modern secular state rests on no substantive values. It lacks full legitimacy even of the sort that Saint Paul ascribed to the "powers that be," because it exists mainly to uphold the market system, which is an ordering of a substantively anarchic (and therefore not divinely appointed in Saint Paul's sense) competition between wills to power—the idol of "liberty," which we are supposed to worship (FL 224)

As a result, faced with a modern liberal society which promises us a false salvation, Milbank's conviction is that the Church is the ultimate answer which can challenge the secular force which savages modern capitalism promotes. This strongly Church-centered Christian social project finds an ally in Hauerwas's ecclesial project. This project aims at recovering true identity by becoming the Church as envisioned by orthodox Christianity. As Hauerwas states,

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[89] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: Or the Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 19.

[90] See William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Root of Modern Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

> The world cannot be the church, for the world, while still God's good creation, is a realm that knows not God and is thus characterized by the fears that constantly fuel the fires of violence. We live in a mad existence where some people kill other people for abstract and unworthy entities called nations The church's task is not to make the nation-state system work, but rather to remind us that the nation, especially as we know it today, it not an ontological necessity for human living. The church, as an international society, is a sign that God, not nation, rules this world.[91]

4.3 Church's attitude toward the state

As we have seen, Milbank manifests a deep repugnance toward the 'Constantinianism' which identifies the interest of the state with that of the Church on the common basis of universal natural law. This is the logical consequence of his idea that there is no sphere that exists apart from the grace of God. Hence, for Milbank, natural rights granted by natural law, is, as French lay theologian, Jacques Ellul states, a "belle invention",[92] since this conception is founded on the hypothetical notion of a "pure nature". Then what is, for Milbank, the desirable relationship between Church and state? He maintains that the dominance of the Church over the state and the dominance of the state over the Church alike are to be avoided. And he prefers the coexistence of different social associations to the monopolization of all social spheres by the state: "Better then that the bounds between Church and state be extremely hazy, so that a 'social' existence of many complex and interlocking powers may emerge, and forestall either a sovereign state, or a hierarchical Church" (TST 408).

We can see this position again in de Lubac's thought. In his article "L'autorité de l'Eglise en matière temporelle,"[93] de Lubac articulates his position concerning temporal authority. In line with his position on the relation between nature and the supernatural, de Lubac opposes the thought of Bellarmine and his follower, Suarez who asserts the indirect intervention of the Church into the state. According to this thought, it is possible that the Church can intervene in civil affairs by the promulgation of civil law, and can even nominate the chief of state. For de Lubac, this is the logical outcome of the position that grace is extrinsic, a position against which de Lubac protests. Based on historical experience, de Lubac points out the danger of Bellarmine's theory. The indirect influence on the state by the Church was always perverted into direct domination. De Lubac cites with approval Mgr. Martin's critique of Bellarmine: "For Bellarmine, the pope acquires authority over kings only indirectly and specifically when the spiritual good is at stake; but, once authority is acquired, he acts directly on temporal matters. It is he who deposes the king, without any intermediary."[94]

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[91] Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 109-10.

[92] Jacques Ellul states: " l'invention du droit naturel fut une belle invention, qui..confirmait l'appartenance du religieux au monde de la nature, fût-elle transcendée, transformée en surnature." (Jacques Ellul, *La Foi au Prix du Doute* :Encore quarante jours (Paris: La Table Ronde, 2006), 170. See also his *Le Fondement Théologique du Droit* (Paris: Delachaux, 1946).

[93] Henri de Lubac, "The Authority of the Church in Temporal Matter," in TF 199-233.

[94] Msgr. Martin, "Le gallicanisme politique et le clergé de France," (Paris: 1929) in Henri de Lubac, "The authority of the Church in temporal matters," in TF 203; [Original text] "Pour Bellarmin, le Pape n'acquiert sans doute qu'indirectement la compétence sur les rois, à savoir lorsque le bien spirituel est en jeu ; mais, cette compétence une fois acquise, le Pape agit directement sur le temporel ; c'est lui qui dépose le roi, sans aucun intermédiaire." (Msgr. Martin,"Le gallicanisme politique et le clergé de France," Paris, 1929, 31, cited in "L'autorité de l'Eglise en matière temporelle" in TO, 220).

With regard to the argumentation that just as the body is subject to the spirit (*Caro subset, spiritus praeest*), so the temporal power has to be submitted to the spiritual authority, de Lubac recalls the fact that "the soul would find it impossible to use corporal means to subject the body."[95] For de Lubac, the intermingling of the temporal authority with the spiritual authority becomes a cause in the deterioration of the spiritual authority. He says: "Because making civil power a mere instrument of spiritual power demeans the Church as well as humiliates the state. Do not call this liberalism. The scandal provoked by such a doctrine has nothing in common with the one that will always be provoked by the mystery of the Cross."[96]

For de Lubac, the governance of the Church over the state, whether it is direct or indirect, has to be abandoned. He points out the fact that there is a middle area between the temporal authority and spiritual authority: "There is a middle way. There is the commandment, the order, which is no less rigorous because it is addressed only to the consciences of the faithful and, consequently, produces its effect only through the intermediary with the consent of those consciences."[97] That is, for de Lubac, the influence of the Church on society is to be exercised in a spiritual fashion, and not by means of the juridical means: "The Church's authority is entirely spiritual. Her divine authority is limited to the individual conscience."[98] This remark of de Lubac, does it then mean the marginalization of the Church for the protection of its purity? This is not the case. De Lubac asserts that the universality of Christianity relies on universal salvation in Jesus-Christ. The universal catholicity of the Church lies in the fact that no human area is exempt from the salvific influence of Jesus-Christ. How can the universality of the Church be realized? De Lubac's answer is, unlike the direct or indirect theory of intervention of the Church in secular affairs, to establish a Christian philosophy which gives birth to a Christian society:

> Since there is Christian thought, there ought be a Christian civilization. And, since there is Christian philosophy, there ought to be a Christian society. But, when we say this, we are thinking in terms of *directing ideas*, not of their full realization. And, if these ideas were promoted by trying to make secular power the instrument of ecclesiastical power, the effort would be as futile as making philosophy the slave of theology. 'Non ancilla, nisi libera.' The hierarchy to be established in the world by the Church does not consist of subjection…Just as philosophy, on the precise points where it ought to conform to theological teaching, enjoys a necessary autonomy, civil society must have that autonomy in the areas where it should submit to the Church.

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[95] Ibid., 207; [original text] "l'âme ne saurait employer des moyens corporels pour se soumettre le corps." (Ibid., 224).

[96] Ibid., 210-211; [Original text] "Car c'est abaisser l'Église, aussi bien qu'humilier État, que de faire de la puissance civile un pur instrument de la puissance spirituelle. Qu'on ne parle pas donc ici de libéralisme. Le scandale provoqué par une telle doctrine n'a rien de commun avec celui que provoquera toujours en ce monde le mystère de la croix"(Ibid., 228).

[97] Ibid., 205; [Original text] "Il y a un milieu. Il y a le commandement, l'ordre proprement dit, qui, pour ne s'adresser qu'à la conscience du fidèle, et, par conséquent, ne produire son effet que par l'intermédiaire, avec le consentement de cette conscience, n'en est pas moins rigoureux"(Ibid., 222).

[98] Ibid., 211; [Original text] "Autorité de l'Eglise est toute spirituelle. Elle n'a d'autorité divine que sur les consciences" (Ibid., 228).

> In both cases, it is a matter of life and death. Both of them must struggle until the end against a 'bid for power' that threatens their existence.[99]

De Lubac explains this in terms of the relationship between nature and grace. More precisely, he applies his law of the relationship between nature and grace to the relation between state and Church. If the role of grace is to elevate the soul, this grace can be extended to the elevation of the state. The role of the Church is not to cooperate with the state for its agenda, nor is it the direct domination of the state in order to utilize the state as a means for propagating the Christian truth. It should sanctify the state by means other than those used by the state: "The law of the relationship between nature and grace is the same everywhere. Grace seizes nature from the inside and, far from lowering it, lifts it up to have it serve its end. It is from the interior that faith transforms reason, that the Church influences the state. The Church is the messager of Christ, not the guardian of the state. The Church ennobles the state, inspiring it to be a Christian state (one sees in what sense) and, thus, a more human one." [100]

In this light, the indirect supernatural intervention of the Church in society is more radical than direct intervention, because it does not have recourse to human natural reason but to faith. Therefore, this does not mean an indifference to secular affaires, but an intervention from the standpoint of Christian faith. De Lubac takes an example. If the state establishes what is viewed as an impious law to the eyes of Christian faith, the intervention of the Church is justified. But its intervention is not to imitate the secular authority by the promulgation of the law, but to be made in a non-violent manner, which is based on the believer's conscience. However, de Lubac distinguishes the two cases: First, if the state commits a simple unjust act, which is incompatible with the Christian conscience, de Lubac holds that the Christian should obey instead of revolt; Second, if

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[99] [Original text] "Comme in y a une pensée chrétienne, il doit y avoir une civilisation chrétienne et, comme une philosophie chrétienne, une société chrétienne. Mais ce sont là plutôt des idées directrices que des choses dont on puisse jamais dire qu'elles sont réalisées. Et pour les promouvoir, il serait aussi vain de vouloir faire du pouvoir séculier l'instrument du pouvoir ecclésiastique que de la philosophie l'esclave de la théologie. Non ancilla, nisi libera. La hiérarchie à établir ne consist pas dans une sujétion.... Comme la philosophie sur les points même où elle doit se conformer à l'enseignement de la théologie, ainsi la société civile, sur les points même où elle devrait soumission à l'Eglise, jouit d'une nécessaire autonomie. C'est, pour l'une comme pour l'autre, une question de vie ou de mort. Contre ' un coup de force ' qui les menacerait dans leur existence, elles se doivent de lutter jusqu'au bout"(Ibid., 229).

[100] [Original text] "La loi des rapports entre la nature et la grâce est, dans sa généralité, partout la même. C'est par le dedans que la grâce reprend la nature et, loin de l'abaisser, l'élève, pour la faire servir à ses fins. C'est par le dedans que la foi transforme la raison, que l'Église influe sur l'État. Messagère du Christ, l'Église ne vient pas mettre l'État en tutelle; elle l'ennoblit au contraire, lui inspirant d'être un Etat chrétien (on voit en quel sens) et, par là, plus humain" (Ibid., 229-30). He states again: "Since the supernatural is not separated from nature, and the spiritual is always mixed with the temporal, the Church has eminent authority- always in proportion to the spiritual element present- over everything, without having to step out of her role. If this is not true, then we might as well admit that the Church has no authority over anything, that she can speak on in the abstract. She must not limit herself to outlining absolute principles, to proclaiming doctrine and ethics from her 'above the fray'. When circumstances requires it, she must be able to make decisions- that is, either approve or condemn, hic et nunc –about concrete activities where doctrine and morality are involved (Ibid., 214-5); [Original text] "Le surnaturel n'étant pas séparé de la nature, le spirituel étant partout mêlé au temporel, l'Église a, en un sens éminent, – et toujours dans la stricte mesure où le spirituel s'y trouve mêlé, – autorité sur tout, sans avoir à sortir de son rôle. Elle ne peut donc se borner à tracer, dans l'absolu, des principes, à proclamer, 'au-dessus de la mêlée ', la doctrine et le droit; mais elle doit pouvoir, lorsque la situation l'impose, décider, c'est-à-dire approuver ou condamner, *hic et nunc*, les activités concrètes où cette doctrine et ce droit sont engagés" (Ibid., 232).

the State prescribes the unjust act (for example, take an oath contrary to Christian faith), de Lubac holds that the Christian should suffer an injustice. However, de Lubac maintains that in each case "the Church acts on the state only by addressing herself to the consciences of the citizens. Thus her power is never either directly or 'indirectly' a power over the temporal. It is rather a power in temporal matters."[101]

4.4 Socialism by grace / Complex space

In his article entitled "Socialism by Grace," Milbank sets forth his supernatural vision of human society. According to Milbank, the term 'socialism' is originally a Christian concept (BR 162). In the present globalized market liberalism, the ideal of socialism seems to be a spectral reality. Yet, for Milbank, this ideal is not a spectral reality, but an embodied one. Milbank asserts that Christianity possesses such an excellence that no other religion can replace it. Its excellence lies in its supernatural social vision which can overcome the impasse between the individual and society. It does not sacrifice the individual in favor of the society (totalitarianism), nor does it sacrifice the society in favor of the individual (atomistic individualism). In this sense, Christianity is the realization of human anticipation in this kind of social unity. Hence, "the Church, to be the Church, must seek to extend the sphere of socially aesthetic harmony—'within' the state where this is possible; but of a state committed by its very nature only to the formal goals of *dominium*, little is to be hoped" (TST 422). Therefore the demise of Christianity means the loss of an ideal social vision. This leads to cruel utilitarian calculations by individuals.

> As with Christianity in the West, we remain haunted by its ideal excellence, because nothing has emerged to replace it; we sense that just as the story of a compassionate God who became human was the 'final religion', so also the hope and to a degree the practice of a universal fraternity based on sharing was 'the final politics'. With its demise, we are delivered over to something somehow more secular than politics—to a future of infinite utilitarian calculations by individuals, State and trans-national companies of the possible gains and losses, the greater and the less risks (BR 162).

As noted above, Milbank's Christian social vision is modeled on Eucharistic union in which we participate in God and in each other. Socialism by grace is the extension of this Eucharistic practice and it is, therefore, liturgical in character.[102] More precisely, the reconciliation among the believers in the Eucharistic practice is to be the exemplary model for all other social practices in the entire world. In other words, this is the application of the Eucharistic peace to the violent secular world. Milbank begins his

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[101] Ibid.,213; [Original text] "L'Eglise n'agit, peut-on dire, sur la cité qu'en s'adressant à la conscience des citoyens. Son pouvoir n'est jamais, directement ou ' indirectement', un pouvoir *sur le temporel*. Nous dirons plutôt qu'il est un pourvoir en *matière temporelle*" (Ibid., 231).

[102] Milbank states: "Christian socialism makes festivity central. Only a working for celebration, worship and expenditure prevents capitalist accumulation. Only this joyful prayer to God interrupts the dreadful seriousness of technocratic man which betokens that he pursues a black hole, precisely nothing at all…The liturgy and the music and the dancing were essential to Christian Socialism as work amongst the poor, indeed in a certain sense, like the alabaster box of ointment, they alone gave it a pint. For mutual giving is enacted in order to produce a certain *show* of giving, a certain beautiful pattern of giving—to give things away through time, show this passage to God, offer it up to God. In the end, our Eucharist" (John Milbank, "Socialism of the Gift, Socialism by Grace, *New Blackfriars* 77:910 (1996), 544)

article with posing the following significant question: "How is the peace of the Church mediated to and established in the entire human community?" (BR 162). We can put this question another way as "How can the Church be sacramentally present in the society in general?" We could think that this question stems from de Lubac's thesis that the Church is the sacrament of Christ—not the sacrament of the world.[103] De Lubac's thesis leads Milbank to develop the idea that the Church is the Eucharistic community where true politics happens. Only this community has the capacity to resist the politics of a liberal democratic state which is but a disguised power politics with a totalizing tendency. William Cavanaugh states well this point:

> Christ is the centre of the Eucharistic community, but in the economy of the Body of Christ, gift, giver, and recipient are constantly assimilated one to another, such that Christ is what we receive, He who gives it, and 'the least' who receives the gift, and we are assimilated to Christ.… Whereas in the modern state the centre either vindicates the rights of property against the marginalized or takes direct concern for the welfare of the marginalized out of our hands, in Christ the dichotomy of centre and periphery is overcome. The unity of the state body depends… on the subsumption of the local and particular under the universal. This movement is a simulacrum of true catholicity, in which the antithesis of local and universal is effaced. The Eucharist gathers the many into one as an anticipation of the eschatological unity of all in Christ, but the local is not therefore simply subordinated to the universal.[104]

In this sense socialism by grace is in contrast to atheistic socialism. Socialism by grace is rooted in the Christian participatory ontology in which everything is considered as a gift, whereas atheistic socialism is based on the immanent ontology of Enlightenment philosophy that cuts the participatory link between the world and God. Therefore, for Milbank, the failure of socialism and the Enlightenment project, as

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[103] De Lubac criticizes Father Edward Henri Schillebeeckx's idea that the Church is the sacrament of the world (*sacramentum mundi*). De Lubac cites Schillebeeckx: "The Church manifests, as in a sacrament, what grace…is already accomplishing everywhere in human-existence-in-the world. … The Church is the 'sacrament of the world'…. The Church, the form in which the progressive sanctification of the world shows itself explicitly (as a profane reality) by the law of the living God, is at the same time an intrinsic aspect of the history of the world sanctified by God's unconditional 'Yes'… The deepest secret of what grace is accomplishing in the profane world, in virtue of the unknown and hence unexpressed name of God, is named and proclaimed by the 'Church of Christ'…. (*Approches théologiques*, Brussels/Paris, Editions du C.E.P, vol 3, 145-7, cited in BCNG 191-2)." With regard to this assertion, he is not in agreement with this formulation insofar as it means "sacrament which the world is" (Ibid., 213). That is, if the expression, *sacramentum mundi* is used as a symbol by which the invisible is manifested in the visible world, de Lubac does not oppose it. However, this is not the case with Fr. Schillebeeckx. According to de Lubac, "What Fr. Schillebeeckx has in mind when he considers the relationships between the Church and the world; it is a question of something that he calls (in a derogatory sense, which from his point of view may be justified, but which he does not analyze closely enough), the 'theophanic world of former times'. For him,… this is the world that modern science and 'the new experience of existence' have caused to vanish by 'ridding religion and the Church of those elements which sacralizing religion had appropriated, and had, by that fact, withdrawn from their original worldly profane condition" (Ibid., 215). De Lubac also likes Fr. Schllebeeckx's vision of the convergence between ecclesialization in humanity in general and sanctifying secularization in the Church. However, de Lubac places this vision in the eschaton. He states: "This convergence is essential, but perhaps up to now it has been a dream more than an actuality; it is a convergence in which the discussion begun here might eventually be absorbed but within which an alternative still remains, depending on how one understands this 'order' and this final 'peace' which will prevail in the end" (Ibid., 232).

[104] William T. Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination: Christian Practices of Space and Time* (York Road/New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2003), 49.

socialism's larger context, is an opportunity to put back socialism in its original Christian base. According to Graham Ward, "Radical Orthodoxy as offering one means whereby socialism can be returned to its Christian roots."[105]

So then, what in concrete terms is the Milbank social vision that's called socialism by grace?. First and foremost, it holds that no society is self-sufficient and without need of the outsider. For him the coming of Jesus as a stranger is the best example of the outsider. "Every community exchanges outside itself, with the infinite unknown" (BR 165). For Milbank, community cannot be instrumentalized for other goals other than that of the community itself. This is what we see in facism, national socialism, capitalism, etc. Community is a gift, just as our self is a gift from God. And the outsider is a gift to the community, just as the other is a gift to the self.

> Instead of the treating of even neighbours as aliens (through this was transcended even in primitive societies in the case of guest rituals) one would substitute the treating of even aliens—when encountered—as neighbours: a universal practice of offering, a universal offering in the expectation or at least hope of receiving back not a practice due to us, but others themselves in their counter-gifts, because we aim for reciprocity, for community, and not for a barren and sterile self-sacrifice (BR 169).

Therefore, community can be sustained by the gift-exchange between community and outsider. For Milbank, this gift-exchange is the hallmark of Christian participatory ontology. According to him, a traditional participatory framework neglects this aspect of the idea of participation. We can here recall Milbank's statement, "my theological project has been primarily focused upon 'participation', but in a new way" (BR ix). This theological vision stems from his understanding of the Trinity which is understood in terms of reciprocity and gift exchange. Thus *poesis* and *gift exchange* are two principal pillars that describe Milbank's notion of participation. He maintains that "the notion of a participation of the poetic in an infinite *poesis* is to be complemented by the notion of a participation of reciprocal exchanges in an infinite reciprocity which is the divine *donum*" (BR x). If this gift-exchange breaks down, there remains the economic and formally legal exchange as we see it in capitalism. In this case, families, localities and nation become instruments for the capitalist economy.

In the face of this tragedy, communitarians like MacIntyre recommend the 'thick' virtues like justice and truth, instead of the 'thin' virtues like 'respecting liberty' or 'promoting happiness' which is nothing other than self-preservation or the preservation of the whole society (BR 166). However, Milbank thinks that this solution is not enough to overcome modern liberalism, because the true identity of a community cannot be explained by the general notions of justice and truth. Instead, Milbank argues that "a genuinely thick virtue, a genuine model of social bonding valued for its intrinsic quality, would have to be difficult (yet not entirely impossible) to name, and semi-ineffable"(Ibid.). And he, following Augustine, thinks that the general quality of a community is 'peace':

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[105] Graham Ward, "Radical Orthodoxy and/as Cultural Politics," in *Radical Orthodoxy?: A Catholic Enquiry*, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming, 103.

> Augustine gave this intrinsic quality its perhaps only possible general name – which is 'Peace'; but like St. Paul, he did not take this as something one could contrive or formally plan for. Instead it is what arises 'by grace' as a thousand different specific models of social harmony, a thousand different gifts of specific social bonding, a thousand kinds of community (BR 167)

Milbank explores how ecclesial peace is extended to social peace in his vision of complex space. What is complex space? This notion implicates an antipathy toward the totalizing modern state which induces 'simple space'. According to Milbank, "the advocacy of complex space" is the defining hallmark of Christian social teaching in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—whether among Catholic, Calvinist, Anglican and with reserve Lutheran traditions (WMS 271). For him, complex space is not simply the unity of different social associations. It has a unique organizing principle because of its attempts at "combining the principle of association with that of free independence, in terms of the idea of self-realization achieved in collective harmony with others" (WMS 273). In other words, this complex space is undergirded by Milbank's social ontology which we have seen above. In this ontology, there is an analogical relation between the part and the whole. The society is not reduced to the isolated individual, nor is absorbed the individual to the total society. "The whole is mystically elevated as greater than the parts, in such a fashion that the totality is held to transcend the grasp of reason, and must be regarded as the work of an unfathomable nature or providence" (WMS 275). Just as the Trinity is not divisible, the society cannot be divided into the individual unit. Rather, there is a relation of co-penetration between each social group. This means the society is not sustained not by acontractual relation, as we can see in the modern liberal society, but by gift-exchange. Barry G. Rasmussen comments well as to Milbank's social theory: "Milbank proposes a 'complex space' for understanding the world and society that is derived from the loving, creative, expanded liveliness of the Trinity."[106]

In accordance with the medieval social model, Milbank maintains that there is to be intermediate social bodies between the State and the individual such as guilds, religious associations, universities in order to prevent the monopolizing force of the modern state. The breakdown of this model would mean a giving way to absolute sovereign power (WMS 275). This sovereign power sacrifices the individual for the interest of the whole, because the modern nation-state is founded on the Machiavellian will-to-power. It's only *raison d'être* is the aggrandizement of its power. On the contrary, according to Milbank, in complex space, there is an analogical relation between associations. Hence the interest of the whole does not sacrifice the interest of the part. Milbank notes that this conception is rooted in the biblical thought of the body of Christ. In this sense, complex space is modeled after the Church, that is, the body of Christ. He states:

> The interest in 'complex bodies', wherein parts are in turn wholes, and not simply subordinate to the greater whole (the model for this being, according to Gierke, ultimately the Pauline concept of the Church as 'body of Christ') by contrast exhibits a way in which mediaeval exemplars were thought to manifest a crucial aspect of

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[106] Barry G. Rasmussen, "Radical Orthodoxy, Luther, and the Challenge of Western Secularization," *Dialog* 41:2 (Summer 2002), 140.

> freedom—the freedom of groups—that modernity tends to obliterate. In many ways this interest transcended the terms of the usual 'sociological' contrasts of ancient organism and modern contracturalism" (WMS 276).

5. Church and culture

5.1 Henri de Lubac's theology of culture

De Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis provides a foundation for his understanding of culture. Nature, which for de Lubac is already engraced, is not an autonomous and self-sufficient reality: it is made by human *poesis*, which is understood by de Lubac as deification. As we have seen, for de Lubac the essence of the human being, created in the image of God, lies in his liberty. By virtue of human *poesis*, the natural order is linked to the supernatural because human *poesis* is understood as a participation in divine *poesis*. Consequently, there is no antithesis between the human being and nature because man, who is likewise a part of nature, also transcends it and is called to transform it for its supernatural end. De Lubac states:

> Man..cannot be content merely to "follow nature" because it offers him nothing normative—but neither can he simply "struggle against nature", "as though he himself were in no way biological but was entirely a creature of culture." His task is rather to "welcome" it in order to transform it (BCNG 13-15).

Thus de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis is closely linked to the cultural nature of the human being. For there is no such thing as pure faith which is detached from the cultural setting in which it exists. Faith is always interwoven with history and culture. In this sense, for de Lubac, the campaign against Christian culture or Christian humanism makes no sense under the banner of pure faith or secular faith, because the opponents of Christian culture have a specific faith. Therefore, de Lubac holds that "no culture is really neutral" (BCNG192). This means that Christian culture cannot be assimilated into a secular form of culture because the secular is grounded in a secular faith and human reason. Here de Lubac offers a corrective to the idea that Christian culture has to be nourished by only Christian resources. Rather, Christian culture becomes more fruitful by appropriating other various human resources. However, de Lubac imposes a condition: "[these sources] must be enlightened, judged, criticized, transformed and unified by this assimilating principle called faith that is nourished by them" (BCNG193). Therefore de Lubac asserts that the idea of culture is not a problem for Christian faith. In line with his thesis of the *surnaturel*, de Lubac holds that natural human resources have a supernatural vocation and end.[107]

5.2 John Milbank's postmodern Christian vision of culture

In line with de Lubac's theology of culture, Milbank suggests a robust Christian cultural vision. For him, as for de Lubac, culture is not a neutral area, because it is

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[107] He notes: " Elle (l'Église) affirme, ou plutôt elle suppose constamment un certain rapport entre la bonté des choses de l'ordre naturel (et par là nous entendons aussi bien les choses de la culture et de la civilisation), la bonté des réalités humaines et terrestres – et la fin dernière, surnaturelle, à laquelle chaque homme est appelé dans le Mystère du Christ" (Henri de Lubac, *Athéisme et Sens de l'Humanisme* [Paris: Cerf, 1968], 121).

shaped by a specific religious commitment. Christian faith is not something extrinsic to a neutral cultural sphere, but productive of a particular culture. That's why Milbank insists on the necessity of a Christian ontology which supports a Christian culture. He states: "We need a Christian ontology which does justice to culture and history as an integral element of Christian being alongside contemplation and ethical behavior, rather than as a 'problem', external to faith" (WMS 79). As we have seen, the Christian ontology which Milbank suggests seriously takes into account the role of language as a vehicle of culture (WMS 80). Furthermore, this insight, as we have seen, stems from his linguistic understanding of the Trinity. Milbank's cultural vision is inextricably related to his Christian social vision. Namely the problem of culture, for him, is inseparable from the realization of heavenly peace on earth. Culture, in the larger sense of the term, is the means for achieving this goal. And the Church is situated at the center of this Christian mission. In "Culture: The Gospel of affinity" (BR 187-211), Milbank treats the problem of culture in the postmodern context. Above all, Milbank defines the primary feature of postmodernity as follows:

> [Postmodernity] means the obliteration of boundaries, the confusion of categories. In the postmodern times in which we live, there is no longer any easy distinction to be made between nature and culture, private interior and public exterior, hierarchical summit and material depth; nor between idea and thing, message and means, production and exchange, product and delivery, the State and the market, humans and animals, humans and machines, image and reality—nor beginning, middle and end (BR 187).

According to Milbank, these characteristics of postmodernity, far from being harmful, offer a favorable situation in which Christian culture might be recovered. If postmodernity arose as a challenge to modernity, it could be a good ally with Christianity. In this postmodern situation, what kind of a Christian cultural vision does Milbank suggest? For Milbank, postmodernity, despite its affinities with Christianity, is subject to immanent ontology like modernity. So Milbank agrees neither with the conservative refusal of the postmodern, nor with the positive assimilation of the postmodern (David Tracy). Rather he attempts "critical engagements with post-modernity to force us to re-express our faith in a radically strange way, which will carry with it a sense of real new discovery of the gospel and the legacy of Christian orthodoxy" (BR 196). This means that Milbank endeavors to utilize the postmodern in order to stand witness to the uniqueness of the Christian faith.

As we have mentioned above, the postmodern merging of nature and culture offers to Christianity an opportunity to retrieve human creative activity (*poesis*) as a participation in the divine. Unlike the modern notion of nature, which is regarded as an object of domination and a means of human aggrandizement and power, Christianity sees, with postmoderns, nature as a culturally transformable entity. Milbank notes this, drawing on Nicholas of Cusa who is in the vein of the Dionysian tradition:

> Human creative power and natural power is never equal to God, and yet in its very creative exercise participates in the divine Logos or Ars, and registers 'conjectually' a sense of how things should develop towards their proper goals. Even in its originating moment, creativity remains discerning. And such discerning *poesis* is

> essential, because human beings cannot be content with mere nature, and rightly prefer the stars of fable to the mere stars of astronomy—as Tolkien declares in his essay 'On Fairy Stories' … this is the crucial sign of our supernatural destiny (BR 199-200).

Milbank points out that "the obliteration of the boundaries" (BR 196) is a common point between postmodernism and Christianity. So the postmodern undermining of boundaries offers a favorable situation for Christian affirmation of the breakdown of boundaries by the Incarnation which undermined ethnic, economic and sexual boundaries. Milbank holds that the Gospel has to concern the issue of affinity : "The Church should proclaim the 'gospel of affinity' (BR 209), because God himself becomes human in order to break down the boundary between Creator and creation. Jesus established the "community of affinity" because he is himself in affinity with God. Therefore, for Milbank, "affinity is the absolutely non-theorizable, it is the almost ineffable. Affinity is the mysterium" (BR 203). So affinity goes beyond the ethical which imposes boundaries between men. Affinity is active charity which is above human morality and self-mortification. In this way, "the chain of affinity, beyond nature, discovers a higher nature (the supernatural), the gift of grace" (Ibid.). Milbank articulates his notion of affinity:

> Affinity or ontological kinship is a kind of aesthetic of co-belonging of some with some, and so ultimately of all with all, not formally and indifferently (as if every person were equally near every other, as on the internet, which not accidentally is awash with prostitution in multiple guises) but via the mediation of degrees of preference. Without the recovery and restoration of this ontological kinship, there can be no possibility of real peace and reconciliation, only a kind of suspension of hostilities (BR 204).

Thus, Milbank's social, cultural vision is made clear. The ontology of peace which he endorses is realized at the social level by breaking down all human boundaries which are always the origin of human violence. The goal of the Church lies in the heavenly vision of peace in this world as an exemplary community where there are no boundaries. As Milbank remarks, "It is the Church which already foreshadows the Kingdom of realized peace through the infinite web of affinity, and it is within this collective foreshadowing that the local gamble of faith becomes possible" (BR 204-5).

[Excursus 3: Tracy Rowlad's *Culture and Thomist Tradition*]

> Under the influence of de Lubac's theology of culture, Australian theologian Tracy Rowland, in *Culture and the Thomist Tradition: After Vatican II*,[108] published in a series on radical orthodoxy, criticizes the understanding of culture in post-Conciliar magisterial thought. The author points out how the authors of *Gaudium et spes* misunderstood the nature of modernity. This misunderstanding is illustrated by their definition of culture. According to them, the term culture "in the general sense refers to all things which go to the refining and developing of man's diverse mental and physical

[108] Tracy Rowland, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition: After Vatican II, Radical Orthodoxy Series* (London: Routledge, 2003).

endowments" (paragraph 53).[109] Rowland laments that its general definition lacks the consideration of the relation between nature and grace. This means for Rowland, as it does for de Lubac, that there is not such a thing as an autonomous culture. Again the author complains: "the Conciliar fathers generally lacked a notion of modernity as a *specific cultural formation*."[110] That is, modernity is not something neutral which Christian culture is to be accommodated. It is itself a particular culture, like a Christian culture. In harmony with the thought of de Lubac and Milbank, Rowland sees modern culture as even anti-Christian in character. "The culture of modernity has been treated as a new 'universal culture' replacing Greco-Latin culture, and that this culture, far from being a neutral medium for the spread of Classical culture, is actually a hostile medium for the flourishing of Christian practices and belief."[111] In this sense, Rowland appreciates the endeavor of *nouvelle théologie* to recover the space of Christian culture which has succumbed to modernity:

> The logic of the Nouvelle Théologie alternative was to foster the idea that all realms of culture have a theological significance and this significance is related, at least in part, to the Christian virtues (in the context of institutional practice), the norms of the moral law, including their symbiotic relationship with the virtues (in the context of the institutional practices), the norms of the moral law, including their symbiotic relationship with the virtues in the context of formation of the self) and the Trinitarian, rather than mechanical or Cartesian, form (in the context of the *logos* of a civilisation).[112]

From this perspective, Rowland finds fault with the new natural law theory (Germain Grisez, John Finnis and Joseph Boyle) within the Thomist tradition. In harmony with de Lubac, he holds that the concept of nature is culturally constituted. That is, the idea of nature is variously articulated by diverse philosophical and theological traditions.[113] In support of their position, those of the New Natural Law School make recourse to questions 90-97 of the *Prima secundae* of the *Summa Theologiae*. However this source is, for Rowland, problematic. Here the author draws on MacIntyre's criticism of this position. According to MacIntyre, such an approach is not compatible with the interpretation of 'principium' in question 94 ("the first principle [principium] of natural law is that good is to be done and evil avoided"). MacIntyre thinks that "ought" is to be derived from "is", unlike the New Natural Law School which supposes that "ought" cannot be derived from "is". That is, MacIntyre, like de Lubac, interprets Aquinas from an Augustinian angle. Aquinas' statement has an ontological implication. Drawing on MacIntyre, Rowland states, "Since both Kant and Hume were post Aquinas, MacIntyre regards it as anachronistic to read Kantian and Humean construction into Aquinas, and applies instead a Platonic and Aristotelian reading *of principium*."[114] This means that the New Natural Law School, while making recourse to Aquinas, interprets him from a rationalist point of view. Therefore their theory lacks a consideration of the natural-supernatural relation as de Lubac understands it. In the end, this school is indeed aligned with modernity. In Rowland's view it is required for this school to recognize the importance of narrative and tradition for the formation of a rationality. As McIntyre suggested in his *Whose rationality, Which Justice?* every rationality is bounded by a certain tradition and narrative. In fact, natural law and its rhetoric of rights is the fruit of a certain tradition. So she notes:

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[109] Ibid., 20.
[110] Ibid., 21.
[111] Ibid., 159.
[112] Ibid.,29.
[113] "In the Thomist tradition, the concept cannot be understood without reference to the concepts of grace, creation, providence, divine law and human nature; in the Liberal tradition, providence and grace either do not exist or are irrelevant and human nature has no particular telic orientation, whereas in the Nietzschean tradition, nature does determine one's destiny, but there is no universal human nature and providence and grace remain otiose. Each person is a unique bundle of emotional drives and must create him/herself" (Ibid. 86).
[114] Ibid., 137.

> A narrative tradition is a crucial medium in which to participate in the goods of human flourishing and serves an epistemological function in the discernment of the goods. Since the goods of religion, knowledge, play, work and aesthetic experience are largely cultural inheritances, they could be developed along 'narrative lines'. However, this would requires a recognition by the New Natural Law theorists of the epistemological significance of traditions and the 'forms' in which traditions are embodied, and this in turn would introduce a tension into the New Natural Law framework, which remains closer to the Liberal-Kantian idea of 'pure reason' than to the pre-modern and postmodern idea of 'tradition-constituted rationality.'[115]

6. Church and salvation

6.1 De Lubac's view on salvation outside the church

With his appointment as professor of Fundamental Theology in the Catholic Theological Faculty in Lyons in 1929, and the request of the dean of this faculty for de Lubac to open a course on the history of religion, de Lubac found the occasion to be interested in other religions, especially in Buddhism. He published several studies on Buddhism.[116] In order to understand Milbank's position on religious pluralism, it is necessary first of all to examine de Lubac's thought on religion. His view on the religious pluralism is shown in his article "L'origine de la religion."[117]

First and foremost, de Lubac points out that the scientific attempt to discover the origin of religion is in vain, because primitive societies explored by ethnologists and historians are extremely complex. It is thus impossible to trace religion's origin. For de Lubac the word 'primitive' is a relative concept. And he even says that the 'primitive' is a myth that the scientist made artificially. Moreover, de Lubac perceptively notes that behind this scientific research is hidden an ideological basis which modern atheistic thought forges (for example, the myth of the 'law of three stages' of Auguste Comte). This progressive view of history supports the scientific research to find the origin of religion.

Likewise, de Lubac criticizes a rationalist ideology which backs up the science of religions.[118] According to this ideology, primitive religion emerged on the basis of very rudimentary religious representations and developed into monotheism by the mental and social progress of humanity. This primitive was irrational and infantile in character. Therefore, religion, commenced in a primitive mental state, is destined to disappear as human intelligence progresses. With regard to this thought, de Lubac thinks that it is in line of that of Auguste Comte, who had a firm belief in human progress. De Lubac,

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[115] Ibid., 143-4.

[116] Henri de Lubac, *Aspects du bouddhisme* I (Paris: Seuil, 1951);Aspects du bouddhisme, II: Amida (Paris: Seuil, 1955); *La Rencontre du bouddhisme et de l'Occident* (Paris: Cerf, 2000).

[117] Henri de Lubac, TO, 333-59.

[118] This does not mean that de Lubac dismisses the value of the science of religion as such. However, de Lubac limits the validity of its explanation. He states: "The sociology of religion may be profitable when it is put in its proper place, and this on two counts. First, it must keep from laying claim on the whole gamut of religious science and remain at its own level. And second, it must justify the very ground of its existence by truly being religious sociology instead of conceiving of itself as a branch of profane sociology which equally regards both religion and irreligion as deriving from neutral presuppositions" (PF 123); Again he states: "Professors of religion are always liable to transform Christianity into a religion of professors. The Church is not a school. It is not an elementary school" (Ibid., 224).

recognizing the limited legitimacy of the scientific research of religion, criticizes as myth a supposed objectivity in scientific research: "Scientific fact is never raw fact. There is mutual fertilization between the theory and the experience or whatever takes its place" (TF 316).[119] Consequently, he states: "it becomes evident that it is not in the field of ethnology or prehistory and on the scientific question of origins that a decisive debate on the subject of religion can be instituted" (TF 317).[120]

If scientific research cannot reveal the essence of religion, then it is not an objective scientific basis that can determine the right attitude towards other religions. This fact is also important for Milbank's thought on religious pluralism which supposes a common objective basis for dialogue between religions. This means that for de Lubac and Milbank, it is not Enlightenment reason, but faith that is the basis of religion. For de Lubac, the idea of God rises spontaneously in humankind made in the image of God, even if sinful humanity resists this natural idea: "[The idea of God] is appeared in humanity as something spontaneous and specific. All attempts to pinpoints its 'genesis', just as all attempt to 'reduce' it, have erred in some way" (TF 330).[121]

Then, if the idea of God is inherent in humanity, what warrants the affirmation that the Christian idea of God is true? In order to show the specificity of the Christian mystery, de Lubac compares Christianity and Buddhism. According to de Lubac, if we define religion as a relation to a personal God, Buddhism is not a religion, because it does not recognize such a God.[122] De Lubac qualifies Buddhism as a spirituality or mysticism. Like in Christian mysticism, morality is an inferior part of salvation. De Lubac cites a Buddhist canon: "According to the Sutta Nipata (790), the perfect man is one who is not 'contaminated by either virtue or vice." The same is true for the Dhammapada (412): "He who has escaped the attachment either to virtue or to vice, who is without sorrow, to whom no dust adheres, who is pure, it is he whom I call a true Brahmin" (TF 340).[123] That is, morality is, for Buddhism, a contingent thing which belongs to the illusory world from which man has to be rescued. De Lubac interprets this thought in stating that "it is in this sense that 'beyond morality' in Buddhism tends to become a 'beyond good and evil', good and evil being placed on the same level, so to speak, and becoming practically identical" (TF 341).[124] Unlike Christianity which affirms the Creator and the original goodness of creation, Buddhist metaphysics, which

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[119] [Original text] "Le fait scientifique n'est jamais un fait brut, il y a une fécondation mutuelle de la théorie et de l'expérience ou de ce qui en tient lieu, et s'il est vrai qu'aucune méthode ne peut se vanter d'être purement objective "(TO 341).

[120] [Original text] "*ce n'est pas dans le champ de l'ethnologie ou de la préhistoire et sur la question scientifique des origines, que peut s'instituer un débat décisif au sujet de la religion.*" (Ibid., 343.).

[121] [Original text] "L'idée de Dieu apparaît dans l'humanité comme quelque chose de spontané, de spécifique. Tous les essais de 'genèse' comme tous les essaie de 'réduction' tentés à son sujet péchent par quelque endroit. "(Ibid.,357).

[122] [Original text] "La notion du bien et du mal moral dans le Bouddhisme, et spécialement dans l'Amidisme," in TO, 362.

[123] [Original text] "D'après le Sutta Nipata, l'homme parfait est celui qui n'est 'contaminé ni par la vertu ni par le vice'. De même pour le Dhammapada : 'Celui qui s'est évadé de l'attachement soit à la vertu soit au vice, qui est sans chagrin, à qui nulle poussière ne colle, celui qui est pur, c'est lui que l'appelle un vrai brahmane'" (Ibid., 369).

[124] [Original text] "c'est ainsi que l' 'au-delà de la morale' tend dans le bouddhisme à devenir un 'au-delà du bien et du mal', bien et mal étant pour ainsi dire mis sur le même pied, pratiquement identifiés " (Ibid., 369).

is linked to the idea of Nothing, absorbs the distinction between good and evil. The goal of Buddhism is the annihilation of the human self in front of the illusory world. This means that in this religion there is not a personal relationship between men and the Creator. There is no idea of sin, nor any idea of separation from God. To compare the false spirituality of Buddhism, de Lubac cites Jean d'Avila:

> Faith in Christ and in his redeeming death is the place where man truly learns what sin consists of, about its gravity and the depths of its effects on human existence. Here it inescapably appears that sin is not only a relative imperfection but a rupture; not only a fault or an error on the human level but a separation from God, which divides man himself (TF 346).[125]

6.3 Milbank and problem of religious pluralism

Milbank's position *vis-à-vis* religious pluralism stands in the same line of that of Henri de Lubac. Just as de Lubac points out, there is incommensurability between the Christian Mystery and other religious mysticisms. His article entitled "The End of Dialogue," is devoted to the problem of religious pluralism. This article was written as an orthodox Christian response to the book *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness.*[126] In this book Milbank attempts to unveil the "the myth of Western universalism". According to Milbank, one of the contributors in this book "denied that there is any Archimedean point of theoretical reason from which one can objectively survey all religious tradition, or that religions are 'about' an ultimate reality specifiable independently of their traditional modes of discourse" (FL 279). However, paradoxically, despite this acknowledgement of incommensurability among different religions, the real intention of this book is indeed to seek a dialogue among religions in order to find a common ground beyond the truth-claims of each religion. Milbank identifies this attempt with the continuous modernist project since Descartes, which seeks to establish a universal rationality, without prejudices, in order to overcome tradition-bound reasoning. Therefore, the goal of this book is itself questionable in that its ambition is allied with the Enlightenment project, which Milbank regards as a new prejudice. "Any conception of religion as designating a realm within culture, for example, that of spiritual experience, charismatic power, or ideological legitimation, will tend to reflect merely the construction of religion within Western modernity" (FL 283). For Milbank the word 'dialogue' itself is problematic, because it presupposes a common ground shared by the participants in the dialogue between religions. "Dialogue obscures the truth-of-difference" (FL 284). Drawing on Plato, he writes about the character of modern dialogue: "in Plato, the initial common focus is extra-dialectical mythical or cultural. In modern dialogue this is lost and so dialogue is hypostasized; it is dialogue itself which.... enables us to develop the facility to 'enter deeply into two or three' alternative perspective[s]" (FL 283). For Milbank, the truth is not accessed by the dialectical

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[125] [Original text] "La foi au Christ et en sa mort rédemptrice est le lieu où l'homme apprend véritablement en quoi consiste le péché, quelle est sa gravité et à quelle profondeur il affecte l'existence humaine. Là apparaît de façon inéluctable qu'il n'est pas seulement une imperfection relative, mais une brisure ; pas seulement une faute ou une erreur au niveau humain, mais une séparation avec Dieu, qui divise l'homme lui-même. " (B.JEAN D'AVILLA, *Audi, Filia*, trad. Jacques Cherprenet, 1954, 349 in TO 375).

[126] *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions, ed.* John H. Hick, Paul F. Knitter (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2005).

method which is a rationalist one. The truth is given by grace in a paradoxical fashion. This means that the attempt at discovering a common basis by means of human, immanent, rational deliberation is in vain; for each religion is founded on its particular faith which is a pre-philosophical presupposition without which religion cannot arise. Consequently, Milbank considers the discourse of pluralism as a compromise with the Enlightenment project, including this project's concomitant elements of the Western nation-state system and Western capitalism. "The discourse of pluralism exerts a rhetorical drag in a so-called liberal direction, which assumes the propriety of the West-inspired nation-state and the West-inspired capitalist economy" (FL 281).

In this article, Milbank discloses, with several arguments which I will briefly examine, the myth of the possibility of dialogue between religions. In the first place, Milbank objects to the idea that religion is a *genus*. For him, the concept of religion is not to be universalized, because the core of each religion cannot be reconciled. He supports his argument with historical example. In the history of religion, there was a polemical debate between the major religions, but this was occasioned by the exigencies of cohabitation (FL 281), and not by the search for common ground amidstmodern pluralism. Therefore, "no assumption about a religious *genus*, of which the various traditions are species, was necessarily involved here" (Ibid). Milbank points out that it is this assumption that provides the dialogical foundation for the recent encounter of religions. But for Milbank this is a categorical error which seeks to encompass religious phenomenon with a Western liberal prejudice.

> Such an assumption, by contrast, certainly undergirds the more recent mode of encounter as dialogue, but it would be a mistake to imagine that it arose simultaneously among all the participants as the recognition of an evident truth. On the contrary, it is clear that the other religions were taken by Christian thinkers to be species of the *genus* "religion," because these thinkers systematically subsumed alien cultural phenomena under categories that comprise Western notion of what constitutes religious thought and practice. These false categorizations have often been accepted by Western-educated representatives of the other religions themselves, who are unable to resist the politically imbued rhetorical force of Western discourse (FL 282).

In the end, Milbank notes that in the notion of 'dialogue' is hidden the logic of Western imperialism. This dialogue deterritorializes.

> The major religions are notoriously not so susceptible to conversion or accommodation, precisely because they already embody a more abstract, universal, and deterritorialized cultural framework, although they do not usually succumb to the temptation of trying to found this universality in a reason independent of all particularized memory (FL 287).

Secondly, according to Milbank the contributors to *Myth* (Knitter, Gilkey, Ruether, and Suchocki) embrace without qualification the modern notion of justice and liberation, considering them as a common basis of the dialogue. Milbank criticizes this embrace as deriving from the authors' ignorance of the different faith of each religion. "The uncritical embrace of modern norms of politics and

legality led the contributors to gloss over, and even to try to try to deny, the obvious fact that religions have differed over political and social practice quite as much as anything else" (FL 289).

Thirdly, in response to the alternative solution to the theoretical and practical solution proposed by Raimundo Panikkar. Panikkar lays claims to a supra-traditional vantage point that bypasses the theoretical (concept of religion as *genus*) and practical (justice, liberation) vantage point. He suggests an ontological solution in affirming that "reality itself is 'plural'" (FL 297). To be more precise, he identifies the Christian intra-Trinitarian differentiation with a "neo-Vedantic plurality". Against Panikkar, Milbank maintains that Panikkar's proposed union between neo-Hinduism and Christianity is arbitrary. He writes:

> Neo-Vedantic pluralism, insofar as it has not become evidently permeated by Christianity, will propose a 'univocal' or 'indifferent' presence of transcendental power in the many diverse and often competing formations of temporal reality. Trinitarian pluralism, by contrast, remains in the 'ethical' line of the West, and can perhaps be construed (especially in its Augustinian version, bearing in mind here both the theory of 'substantive relation,' and the psychological analogy) as effectively a reworking of the Indo-European triadic structure that de-hierarchizes and temporalizes it (FL 297-8).

In Milbank's understanding, despite the seemingly similar formal structure of thought, the contents of these two viewpoints is substantially incompatible. What is important here is that Milbank thinks that the Trinitarian differentiation of the unity of God implicates a difference-in-harmony, whereas neo-Vedantic thought holds to a difference-in-conflict. In other words, in Christianity, difference serves the harmony, whereas difference in Hinduism is something to be overcome, that is, it is inherently violent in character. Milbank, drawing on Wilhelm Halbfass's view, writes: "Hindu pluralism has little to do with toleration" (FL 299). He even identifies this religious philosophy as ideologically supporting the pluralism of liberal society. "The neo-Vedantic pluralist claim that all local differences represent some aspect of an ultimate plural reality will tend ideologically to reinforce the pluralism of liberal society" (FL 299). In contrast, Milbank contends that only the Christian reading of the world paradoxically corresponds to reality itself and so is non-violent in character. "With an apparently extreme degree of paradox, one must claim that it is only through insisting on the finality of the Christian reading of 'what there is' that one can both fulfill respect for the other and complete and secure this otherness as purely neighborly difference"(FL 299).

After all, Milbank robustly insists on Christian uniqueness. Therefore the Christian encounter with other religions should not be attempted on the idea of a common basis, for the Christian *logos*, for Milbank, is a foreign to other religions. However, this does not mean that Milbank insists on religious exclusivism. Rather, Milbank agrees with de Lubac, that the Christian *logos* is spread over and anticipated in the entire world. Therefore, "Christian theology must continue to subvert other discourses at the very point of their denial of otherness, by searching for internal tension and *lacunae* which permit it to interpellate 'typological' anticipations of the Christian *Logos*, and to set free

a spiritually 'different' response, which yet must be a specifically Christocentric one" (FL 299). In this context, Milbank introduces a new concept—"mutual suspicion"—instead of the problematic notion, 'dialogue'. He concludes his article:

> As regards Christian theology and practice, we should simply pursue further the ecclesial project of securing harmony through difference and a continuous historical conversation not bound by the modern constraints of dialogue around a neutral common topic. *In the course of such a conversation, we should indeed expect to constantly receive Christ again, from the unique spiritual responses of other cultures. But I do not pretend that this proposal means anything other than continuing the work of conversion* (FL 300, emphasis mine).

7. Critical issues

7.1 General critical issues

In his response to TST, [127] Aidan Nichols OP criticizes two points: Milbank's hermeticism and theocracy. First, he defines the hermeticism as he understands as "the enclosure of Christian discourse and practice within a wholly separate universe of thought and action, a universe constituted by the prior 'mythos' of Christianity."[128] He points out that for Milbank there is no common point of contact between Christianity and natural reason. Milbank's appeal to radically rhetorical approach to theology leaves no room for the dialectical reasoning of theology. In short, for Milbank there is no argument, but persuasion through aesthetic pulling. However, in Nichols's view, this approach strands in contradiction with de Lubac and Balathasar's integrated view of nature and the supernatural.[129] We can take as an example Justin Martyr's praising of the similarity between Greek logos and Christian logos. Furthermore, the Hebrew Bible is also allegorically and typologically united with Christianity. So Nicholas states: "it is imperative..to keep open the commerce of the Church's doctrine with more universal structure of reason as with the faith of Israel."[130] Nichols's second criticism can be regarded as a continuation of the first. Milbank's hermeticism is directly linked to his theocratic tendency. According to Nicholas, Milbank really desires the "the restoration of the Tudor polity in England" and of "Richard Hooker's *respublica christiana.*" [131] Nichols's discomfort stems from Milbank's excessive criticism of the state for its essentially violent character. For Milbank, "only the Christian *mythos*, the Christian narrative the Christian (ecclesial) community, can secure the human good- the beautiful pattern of living- which always eludes the secular ruler's grasp."[132] As a result, for Nicholas, "Milbank goes too far: in attempting to persuade to the faith of the Great Church he damages it, and not with some slight but a grave wound."[133]

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[127] Aidan Nichols OP " 'Non tali auxilio': John Milbank's Suasion to Orthodoxy," in *New Blackfriars* 73:861 (June 1992), 326-41.

[128] Ibid., 327.

[129] Ibid., 328. In my view, Nichols misconstrues at least de Lubac, for nature is distinguished from the supernatural despite their union in de Lubac's account.

[130] Ibid.,329.

[131] Ibid., 331. Once again, Nichols misread Milbank, because for Milbank and de Lubac are always wary of Church's theocractic tendency, which is designated as 'Constantinianism'.

[132] Ibid.

[133] Ibid.

In "The Politics of Radical Orthodoxy: A Catholic Critique," [134] Mark Doak criticizes Milbank's political ecclesiology, which she calls "remnant Christendom approach." Doak is uneasy with Milbank's negative attitude to the Second Vatican Council (TST 206-10). For her, Milbank's rejection of the autonomy of the secular realm is linked to his *societas perfecta* ecclesiology, which identifies the Church as the Kingdom of God rooted in history. This model gives us an impression that without the mediation of the Church secular violence will not cease. In Doak's judgement, unlike Vatican II, Milbank is trapped within the dichotomous logic which he seeks to undermine. That is, Milbank's logic is exactly the reversed version of modernity: "In countering modernity's hyperrational rejection of a religious belief or practice not defensible through reason alone, Milbank (at least on key points) merely reverses modernity's approach, as he criticizes any reason that does not proceed from the premises of the revealed Christian meta-narrative."[135] Milbank's monism stems from his merging of reason and revelation. But she corrects Milbank in saying that "[Milbank's] critique of modernity's oppositional relation between reason and revelation ought to elicit more serious consideration of the possibility that some differing forms of reasoning and discourse might exist in a complementary relation."[136] A serious problem of Milbank's political ecclesiology is that it risks socially and politically marginalizing non-Christian citizens in his Church-centered vision of society. Despite his assertion of the necessity of blurring the boundaries between Church and state, his political ecclesiology still has the danger of absorbing society into the Church. Therefore, his model is very close to 'Dominion Theology.' As a consequence, Milbank's robust assertion of ontological peace over violence on the basis of the Church's non-violence practice is inconsistent and instable because of its inner contradictory logic.

In his article "Charitable Interpretation,"[137]a Lutheran theologian, John F. Hoffmeyer is found engaged in a dialogue with Milbank concerning Milbank's discourse on "the hermeneutics of charity". He begins his discussion with *Luther's Small Catechism* even though, as he notes, Luther is not a positive figure in Milbank's theology. He cites Luther's commentary on the eighth commandment ("not to bear false witness against your neighbor") : "We are to fear and love God, so that we do not lie about our neighbors, betray or slander them, or destroy their reputations. Instead we are to come to their defense, speak well of them, and interpret everything they do in the best possible light."[138]Hoffmeyer grounds his understanding of charitable interpretation in Luther's words above, especially the phrase "interpret everything they do in the best possible light." Drawing on the German original ("alles zum Besten kehren" [turning everything to the best]), he understands Luther as follows: "we are to 'turn everything to the best'

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[134] Mary Doak, "The Politics of Radical Orthodoxy: A Catholic Critique," *Theological Studies* 68 (2007), 368-80.

[135] Ibid.,375.

[136] Ibid.

[137] John F. Hoffmeyer, "Charitable Interpretation," in *Interpreting the Postmodern: Responses to "Radical Orthodoxy,"* ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether and Marion Grau (New York: T&T Clark International, 2006), 3-17.

[138] *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, eds. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 353, cited in *Interpreting the Postmodern*, 4.

in the very evaluation of our neighbors words and deeds."[139] For Luther, telling the truth is itself a charitable act in the favor of the neighbor.

Against this background Hoffmeyer discusses Milbank's position *vis-à-vis* religious pluralism. From his understanding of Luther's charitable interpretation, he thinks that what is crucial in interpretation is to call into question the interpreter himself, in order to interpret everything neighbors do in the best possible light. From this perspective, it seems to him that Milbank's proposal of conversation with other faiths is not based on charitable interpretation, because when Milbank speaks of conversion, he "might be reserving 'conversion' to refer to the move from another religious faith to Christianity."[140] Moreover, the goal of conversation is that the Christians "constantly receive Christ again, from the unique spiritual responses of other cultures." For Hoffmeyer, the problem with Milbank's position is that "the conversion street would still be ultimately one way, since its goal would be the cultivation of Christian faith."[141] He asks if Milbank's position is consonant with his words elsewhere where he says: "Christianity should not draw boundaries, and the Church is that paradox: a nomad city" (PSA n° 15). That is to say, why does Milbank assert Christian uniqueness while he argues that the identity of Christianity is indeterminate because it is a nomad city? Hoffmeyer offers a corrective for Milbank's position as follows: "If charitable interpretation is to govern interreligious conversation, then it is essential that Christians be ready to respect the "unique spiritual response" of persons of other faiths. Milbank models charitable interpretation still further by claiming that Christians should enter interreligious conversation expecting to be renewed in their Christian faith precisely through the gift of the unique spiritual responses of persons of other faiths. The humility and respect characteristic of charitable interpretation urge a further step. The unique resources of other faiths are only gifts with the power to renew Christian faith. Respect requires that the Christian interpreter honor the possibility that the resources of another religious faith put its practitioners in a position to be open to the 'unique spiritual responses' of Christians and to be renewed and deepened in their faith by those Christian gifts, without themselves having to 'convert' to Christianity."[142]

Agreeing on Hoffmeyer's urge to charitable interpretation, I do not agree with his understanding of charitable interpretation. As Hoffmeyer admits, for Luther charitable interpretation is possible in truth. When Hoffmyer says 'truth', he does not understand it just as Luther and Milbank use it. For Milbank, the notion of truth is understood in terms of participation, and not in terms of modern epistemology. In my judgment, Hoffmeyer's correction of Milbank's position on religious pluralism stems from a lack of understanding Milbank's theology. For Milbank, truth is not the common points between Christianity and other faiths. It is the Christian *logos* which is qualitatively different from other forms of rationality. And it has an effective power of transforming man. It is from this context that Milbank's assertion of Christian uniqueness arises.

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[139] Ibid., 4.
[140] Ibid., 10.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid.

7.2 Reformed critical responses

Lamber Zuidervaart, who is in the line of reformed theology, attempts to engage a dialogue with John Milbank's ecclesiological project. He begins his article[143] by speaking of the modernity complex with which Christian scholars have been trapped since the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. According to him, Milbank and RO and Reformed theology have an anti-modern sentiment in common, although the two theological currents react against modernity in different ways. For example, the twentieth-century Dutch Christian philosopher Dooyeweerd thinks that the spiritual crisis in modern Europe reflects competing "religious ground motives"—that is, a secular motif versus a Christian motif. But Milbank and RO consider the crisis as stemming from a "growing nihilism that only an analogical worldview can resist".[144] Likewise, Milbank and RO's solution to modernity is different. But for Zuidervaart, the fundamental difficulty with Milbank is his overemphasis on the centrality of the Church in his theological discourse. He questions Mibank's designation of theology as "a social science" and his rebaptism of theology as "the queen of the sciences." This idea risks narrowing the universal Christian vision, for it exclusively locates theology within the Church. Zuidervaart raises the following question: "Is theology to be a social science in a way that is recognizable as social science to contemporary social scientists, who are wary not only of theology but also of philosophy and of any other pretenders to the academic throne?[145] Zuidervaart thinks that the difference between them stems from their respective understandings of revelation. While reformed theology focuses on common grace, Milbank accentuates the particularity of grace. "Radical Orthodoxy makes all grace special, and Reformational thought makes too much of it common".[146] Not surprisingly, for Milbank, theology is primarily an ecclesiology. However, Zuidervaart worries that "theology becomes the only science in which faith-oriented scholarship can take place."[147] Furthermore, he criticizes two points with regard to Milbank's understanding of the Church.[148] First, "he equates certain social institutions (churches) and societal relationships (the worship community) with 'a society'. Second, Milbank "fails to distinguish between the body of Christ (*ecclesia*) and the reign of God (God's Kingdom). That is, for Milbank, the historical and the local Church itself encompasses the whole social body and societal relationship. From what we have seen above, we can understand Milbank's position. Milbank's idea of the Church is grounded in his sacramental worldview where the Church occupies a central place. However, for Zuidervaart, this centrality of the historical Church identified with the city of God has problems. First, "it locates the source of societal goodness in an ideal pattern that lies outside human history." Second, "it restricts the effectiveness of this pattern within human history to certain practices developed within an ecclesial community."[149] I think the difference

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[143] Lambert Zuidervaart, "Good Cities or Cities of the Good?: Radical Augustinians, Societal Structures, and Normative Critique," in *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition*, ed. James K.A. Smith and James Olthuis,135-149.

[144] Ibid., 140.

[145] Ibid., 144.

[146] Ibid., 147.

[147] Ibid.,145.

[148] Ibid.

[149] Ibid., 146.

between the two theologians can be explained by their respective accent on the Word of God and sacrament.

However, Zuidervaart rejoins Milbank with regard to modernity. They both oppose the return to a pre-modern society. This would mean an abandonment of the positive fruits produced by modernity, such as the progress of science, the democratic political system, the rule of law, and human rights. Zuidervaart even adds to this list the positive element of modern philosophical subjectivism, which is harshly attacked by both Reformed theology and RO. "Although modern subjectivism seems to move us away from trust and reverence toward that which sustains and renews all creation, nevertheless it also powerfully awakens us to the creative potential that God has given to even the most ordinary of human beings." [150] Milbank echoes this idea in saying that "Radical Orthodoxy, although it opposes the modern, also seeks to save it. It espouses, not the pre-modern, but an alternative version of modernity."[151]

Jonathan Chaplin describes Milbank's political theology as "postmodern Augustinian (Anglo-) Catholic anarcho-pacifist socialism—an intriguing and combustible theoretical mix" [152] In his article, "Suspended Communities or Covenanted Communities? : Reformed Reflections on the Social Thought of Radical Orthodoxy," Chaplin engages Milbank's political theology from the perspective of the reformed tradition. Above all, Chaplin suggests that RO's ecclesiological centrality and its concomitant political theology are backed up by the metaphysical principle of "the suspension of material"[153] Namely materiality transcends itself by participating in the transcendent. According to Chaplin, this principle is applicable to various human communities—including the Church. In this sense, they are "communities in suspension."[154]

In his engagement with Milbank and RO, Chaplin begins with pointing out some common points between the two traditions. Because these two traditions stand in line with the Augustinian tradition, Milbank's theology bears significant affinity to the reformed tradition in that both object to all forms of accommodation with secular thought. For the reformed tradition, "radical orthodoxy's repudiation of any dichotomous or dualistic framing of the relationship between nature and grace, natural and theological virtues, natural law and gospel law, secular and sacred would be enthusiastically endorsed."[155]

However, Chaplin differs from Milbank in his understanding of the role and nature of theology with regard to other disciplines. While theology, for Milbank, should reclaim its supreme place as the "queen of the sciences" (TST 380), for Chaplin, who draws on

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[150] Ibid., 149.
[151] Milbank, "The Program of Radical Orthodoxy," 45.
[152] Jonathan Chaplin, "Suspended Communities or Covenanted Communities?: Reformed Reflections on the Social Thought of Radical Orthodoxy, " in *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition,* ed. James K.A.Smith and James Olthuis,152).
[153] Ibid., 153.
[154] Ibid. Here Chaplin describes the notion of ' communities in suspension' as "existing meaningfully only as suspended in and so participating analogically in God, a participation made possible by the church's sacramental performance and never confinable in determinate structure forms" (Ibid.).
[155] Ibid., 155.

the thought of Dooyweerd, theology is not queen of science.[156] Chaplin thinks that Milbank's idea of theology as the queen of the sciences could be understood from Milbank's Church-centered thinking. This means that the Church's sacramental practice, which the Eucharist represents, is to be the basis of all sociological thought. Chaplin states:

> Where the Reformation tradition may differ from Radical Orthodoxy is in denying that this subordination is authoritatively mediated to disciplines like social theory by a royal discipline called theology. Christian sociologists will need to draw on the expertise of theologians for their understanding of the Christian narrative in general and specific biblical themes such as creation, anthropology, sin, history, community, eschatology, and so on. But a theologian will also need to draw on the work of Christian sociologists for their Christian understanding of social processes, structures and norms. For the Reformed tradition, the sciences are a republic, not a monarchy, but—If I may risk invoking a Calvinist political notion with a mixed history—a republic under Scripture.[157]

Against this backdrop Chaplin is concretely engaged with Milbank's political theology manifested in the article "Socialism of the Gift, Social by Grace". Having described Milbank's social ontology as concretized 'socialism of the gift/grace', or 'complex space', Chaplin calls Milbank's social vision into question by asking, "how do we know what precise institutional forms will best realize these aspirations?"[158] The reason why Chaplin raises this question is that Milbank really thinks that Christianity offers a particular social structure. He quotes Milbank: "Christianity implies a unique and distinctive structural logic for human society…This is what ecclesiology is really all about" (TST 406). Chaplin admits that the reformed tradition also offers an idea on the shape of society. Yet Milbank ironically suggests that there is no given social structure.

From the perspective of the reformed tradition, Chaplin is skeptical of Milbank's Church-centered social vision. In citing Hans Küng's expression, "the kingdom is creation healed", Chaplin holds that the grace of God inspires us to realize God's intent for creation by way of concrete human institutions and the exercise of peace and justice. Consequently, the Church is not a unique vehicle for the realization of God's salvation for the entire world. Therefore, he states:

> The concrete social institution we call church is therefore completely indispensible to that task, but it is not necessarily the model upon which all other social institutions should be based. Healthy families, trade unions, or indeed political communities, for example, can aspire to enact the will of God and offer up praise to God without being appendages or annexes or outposts or mirror images of the institutional church (i.e., the organized, gathered community of worshiping believers).[159]

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[156] "Dooyeweerd defined theology as but one special theoretical discipline among many. He held that a discipline such as sociopolitical theory may and must, at least for a Christian scholar, be shaped by an intergral, biblically formed Christian philosophy, but protested- perhaps too much- that for a theologian to presume to dictate the terms of another discourse was simply illicit" (Ibid 156).

[157] Ibid., 157.

[158] Ibid.,160.

[159] Ibid.,172.

That is, human institutions have their own integrity and they have their own way of practicing charity without ecclesial mediation. Unlike Milbank, who thinks that all coercion is incompatible with Church practice, which is characterized by non-violence modeled after Jesus' own non-violent sacrificial act, Chaplin thinks that political charity could involve compulsory legal measures in order to arbitrate disputes among various social institutions. He states: "in the Reformed tradition, such institutions are certainly viewed as historical human constructs—they are not seen as descending from the heavens—but, at a deeper level, also as human responses to enduring normative social callings."[160]

7.3 Anabaptist critical response

Tripp York, while acknowledging the common ground between Milbank and Anabaptist thought,[161] remains hesitant to accept Milbank's extreme Church-centered model, because this model risks weakening the significance of the incarnation. For him, contrary to Milbank, Christ and not the Church is the bearer of the ontological peace. He states, "For descendents of the Radical Reformation the nonviolence of an original creation cannot be known except through the revelation of God in Jesus. Therefore, the life of Jesus is *the* convincing argument of the ontological priority of peaceableness".[162] He continues, "If the Church is incapable of producing lives that are inexplicable had Christ not been risen from the dead, then the church will become a 'hellish society'.[163] Here he draws on the representative Mennonite theologian, John Howard Yoder, in order to support his argument. According to him, Yoder claims that his view of Jesus is more radically Nicene and Chalcedonian than the so called classical orthodox view.[164] Yoder states, "the implication of what the church has always said about Jesus as Word of the Father, as true God and true Man, be taken more seriously, as relevant to our social problems, than ever before."[165] Tripp York explains Yoder's argument: "Yoder's argument is that the ontological claims made about the existence of Jesus displayed in the incarnation are true because Jesus' teaching are in conformity with the way the world was created."[166]

Milbank in turn points out the weakness of the Mennonite individualist practice of peace. For him "the practice of peace is not a matter of isolated individual motivation; it is rather a matter of a shared habit and an achieved practice."[167] Milbank thinks that it is inevitable that the Church has to have recourse to physical force because "God created us as hybrid material-spiritual creatures."[168] So "ecclesia includes certain

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[160] Ibid., 172-3.

[161] "In many ways, Milbank has enabled Anabaptists to better narrate liberalism, the pathos of nihilism, the anti-theological politics that led to the creation of the nation-state, and the political theologies that, despite their best efforts, continue to reinforce the legitimacy of the nation-state." (Tripp York, *Gift of Difference*, 51); "The one important commonality between the two revolves around how Christians are to seek to live in the here and the now in light of both our past and our future" (Tripp York, "Introduction," in *The Gift of Difference*, 5).

[162] Ibid., 61.

[163] Ibid.

[164] Ibid.

[165] John H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*: *Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 102.

[166] York, *Gift of Difference*, 62.

[167] Milbank, *Gift of Difference*, xiii.

[168] Ibid., xvi.

physical spaces which it is arguable that, *in extremis*, one may have physically to defend."[169] In this light, Milbank opposes the purism of Yoder's pacifism which resists any kind of coercive physical resistance.[170] In illustrating the case of King Alfred, he holds that King Alfred fights for peace and not for the sake of heroism. "Alfred won his military victory in highly Augustinian terms and that an unqualified coercion grounded in an ontology of violence was defeated by a qualified, teleological use of coercion grounded upon an ontology and eschatology of peace".[171] However, Milbank concludes that the dialogue between RO and the radical Reformation is done by encouraging and respecting each other: "When a Mennonite refusal of all military action and legal force is asserted against me it is done with great nuance and subtlety and often with a certain desire to reach a higher synthesis through an *Aufhebung* of both theological pacifism and the theology of justified coercion."[172]

8.Conclusion

In this final chapter we have made plain Milbank's robust social vision focused on the Church and its Eucharistic practice. As we have seen, Milbank's idea of peace is not an absence of chaos and violence, but has an ontological value that is undergirded by his conviction of Trinitarian harmony. This means that peace is the primordial state of creation, even though disturbed by human sin. Faced with an apparently violent world, Milbank and de Lubac affirm a strong peaceful vision of creation based on their theological conviction. So their affirmation of ontological peace does not simply mean their resistance against war. The heavenly peace which Milbank claims has to be realized at all levels of human relationship ranging from individual life to political life. That's why Milbank does not agree with simple pacifism.[173]As with de Lubac, for him, the problem of ontological peace is directly linked to his affirmation of Christian philosophy. Milbank's and de Lubac's ideal of Christian philosophy lead them to critically engage with the secular thought and culture. This move was already developed by numerous Christian philosophers. However, Milbank's and de Lubac's originality is the fact that the Church has to play the pivotal role in this work. So Milbank's Church-centered Christian vision could provide a correction to Protestant theology, which has neglected this aspect.

Moreover Milbank's accent on the Eucharistic practice as a real locus for the realization of heavenly peace in the society in which the Church plays a central role. This move is a great return of modern Christianity to the patristic tradition to which Milbank submits. This reminds us that Christianity is based not on a system of proposition, but on a practice which Christ brings to this world. The significance of this model in the postmodern context lies in the recovery of the political aspect of the Church, which has been lost sight of by theological modernity. The Church, for Milbank and de Lubac, is not a human institution which conforms to secular agenda such as liberty,

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[169] Ibid.
[170] See John Howard Yoder, *What Would You Do? Expanded edition* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1992).
[171] Ibid. xvi.
[172] Ibid.xvii.
[173] See John Milbank, "Violence: Double Passivity," (BR 26-43).

human rights, etc, but is itself an alternative political entity which sets forth its own agenda as a servant community for the world. This community is naturally based on this world, but oriented toward the eschaton. This paradoxical presence of the Church in the world makes sure its supernatural character.

In finalizing this last chapter, we could state that the final destination of Milbank's theological reflection is the Church. But, here, the Church for Milbank is not an object of speculative thinking, but the living Body of the Christ which practices what Christ had practiced in the violent world, and with move in all directions and to all the areas of human life in order to share the gift of Christ.

VIII. General Conclusion

1. A recapitulation of this study

We began this study with Milbank's self-reflection on the situation in which Christian theology finds itself. Christian theology is a tragic discipline because at the origin of the modern social, historical and cultural tragedy is Christian theology. In fact, according to Milbank, secular modernity was generated by a distortion within Christian theology itself. More precisely, the secular space was shaped by the acknowledgement of a purely natural sphere set apart from divine grace. Even if de Lubac and Milbank differ on the details with regard to the origin of modernity, they agree that the affirmation of the autonomy of human reason is the root of modern secularity. This option opened a supposedly neutral human space. What is important for them is the fact that this autonomy of human reason was justified by Christian theology itself, not by non-theological discourse.

As we have experienced in the last century, this neutral space in reality turned out to be a space of Machiavellian assertion of human will without rein, a space of extreme violence and conflict characterized by 'everyone against everyone.' This situation made Milbank realize that theology is an extremely important discipline. Theology has a strong responsibility for the curing of the illnesses which modernity has caused. As we have seen in this study, Milbank is convinced that only theology undergirded by participatory ontology can save this tragic world from its predicament. We can demand "Can a simple theological idea really save this world ?" Given Milbank's argument that we have examined, it is certain that Milbank is sure that ideas can change history, because the very ideas give birth to our present world. This means Milbank with de Lubac has a firm conviction of the possibility of Christian philosophy not based on neutral human reason, but on Christian *logos* itself and its effectiveness in the public realm. In this sense, we could call him an advocate of Christian public theology.

In his challenge to modernity, he is not a lone combatant. Rather, he, to a large extent, has recourse to the secular thinkers associated with postmodernism. For Milbank postmodernism is a good news for his endeavor to recover the position of Christianity as a meta-narrative. Postmodernism's anti-foundational account of knowledge and its abandonnment of the possibility of universally valid knowledge provide a favorable basis for Christian theology, because the certainty based on human reason turns out to be a fiction. This tendency is more open to the religious in human intellectual activity. The religious has long been excluded in scientific and public discourse, because of its supposed irrationaity. In contrast, postmodernism rediscovered that human reason is incorporated into *myth*, in paving the way for the rehabilitation of Christian *mythos*. Notwithstanding, Milbank's relation to postmodernism is double : On the one hand, postmodernism is a good ally in his contest against modernity; on the other hand, Milbank considers postmodernism as a last gesture of modernity. Milbank utilizes secular postmodern discourses to the extent that they conform to the content of Christian l*ogos*. In this case postmodernism is a good companion to Christian theology. Yet in Milbank's view postmodernism is essentially nihilistic in character, because this thought works within immanent reason without reference to the supernatural. In this

sense, postmodernism is a continuation of modernism in disguise, because it, like modernism, seeks a human emancipation from all exterior authority.

As we have examined in this study, his true fellow militant against modernity is Henri de Lubac. In all his critical engagement with secular thought, de Lubac accompanies Milbank in guiding his theological reflection. Like de Lubac, Milbank dismisses secular thought as such, but exploits it in favor of Christianity. De Lubac does not hesitate to utilize the thought of representative secular thinkers such as Nietzsche in order to promote Christian thought. This theological method is familiar to patristic theology which selectively uses the elements of pagan thought in Christianizing them.

In this study we have seen that Milbank's appropriation of de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis appears at various level of his theological thought. Here we can summarize the various dimensions of Milbank's appropriation of de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis.

1.1 Nature and grace

Milbank's appropriation of the idea of supernatural is first and foremost revealed on the ontological level. For him, nature is not a self-sufficient realm, because, following de Lubac, it is already graced from the beginning of the world. Therefore, against modern secular thought, de Lubac and Milbank assert that there is no such realm or pure nature independent from God. This basic idea is expressed in their integrist model of nature and grace. For them nature is overwhelmingly in the state of grace and at the same time grace is inherently manifested in natural terms. Milbank's appropriation of de Lubac's integrated account of nature and grace leads him to reject both Rahner's transcendental account of grace and Barth's dialectical account of grace. In these two models, he discovers the remnant of pure nature. So their models are not radically post-postmodern, but still trapped within modernity. For Milbank and de Lubac, grace is paradoxically interrelated with nature. This model has an advantage of protecting the transcendent character of grace and simulataneously of assuring the integrity of nature. Milbank sees in this model the possibility of overcoming modernity and of establishing an orthodox Christian postmodern theology. By reconciling reason and faith, this model can overcome both fidestic fundamentalist theology and rationalistic modern liberal theology.

1.2 Sacramental ontology

However, Milbank's theology cannot be understood by his reception of de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis as such. It is necessary to see how Milbank engages modern and postmodern philosophy with the help of de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis. The so-called linguistic turn in philosophy gives to Milbank an opportunity for Christian engagement with the secular. From his study on language, especially on Vico's Christian humanist philosophy, he learns that human knowledge is not based on predetermined essence. Human knowledge is a construction of human-making in a particular time and place. Therefore the neo-scholastic notion of pure nature is but a culturally constructed notion. In this perspective, the modern and postmodern linguistic turn of philosophy is, for Milbank, a welcome phenomenon, because like Christianity this current holds that there is no *a priori* essence due to its doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. However, Milbank is wary of postmodern philosophy, for it continues the modern dismissal of a participatory link

to the supernatural. Milbank sees a nihilism lingering over postmodern linguistic philosophy. Here Milbank appeals to de Lubac's symbolic theology based on his sacramental understanding of creation. While the sign become dead in nihilistic postmodern philosophy, it becomes alive in de Lubac's symbolic theology. In the vein of Augustine, de Lubac's sign is reflective of the transcendental reality, because his theology is supported by participatory ontology. This life-giving sign is the key to overcoming modern and postmodern nihilism.

1.3 Poetical Christology

As de Lubac argues, Christ is the sacrament of God. It is not simply a substitute for God in a human image, but an efficacious sign which can transform the human being. With de Lubac, Milbank understands the whole earthly life of Christ as a message of God to humanity. But this is not the same as the moral understanding of Christ in modern liberal theology. Unlike modern liberal theology, Milbank's and de Lubac's sacramental account of Christ is not based on universal human reason, but on the Church. Milbank and de Lubac oppose the understanding of Christ in an extrinsic manner. This means that the true identity of Jesus cannot be determined by our preconceived intellectual framework. That's why Milbank and de Lubac challenge the Protestant doctrine of atonement. Christ is to be understood in the context of biblical narrative. As a result, the life and death of Christ is oriented toward the establishment of the Church which is the ultimate goal of salvation. For Milbank and de Lubac the practice of Jesus is more fundamental than dogmatic formulations of Him. And Jesus's practice is relayed by the Church's practice. In this sense, they can call the Church the sacrament of Jesus.

1.4 Supernatural ethics

Milbank's postmodern Christian ethics is derived from his linguistic interpretation of Jesus, an interpretation supported by de Lubac's sacramental worldview. For him, Christian ethics is not understood as a system of rules or utility as modern ethics supposes, but a creative following of Jesus' pratice which is metaphorical in character. Therefore we can say that for Milbank there is no Christian ethics in the modern sense of the term, because Christianity does not set forth a series of ethical norms, but repeats Christ's practice always in a new way. In this way, Milbank's ethics is united with Milbank's Christocentric theology. Without the union with Christ through faith, believers cannot do moral behavoir, since a moral act does not have its own value, but is a natural fruit of their union with Christ. Moreover, Christian ethics is based on the gifted character of creation. The feature is contrasted with modern ethics based on lack. Christian ethical behavior is nurtured by the fullness of creation brought by Jesus. In this sense, Christianity opposes sacrificial ethics which does not know God's fullness. This way of thinking echoes de Lubac's ethical thought manifested in his theological hermeneutics, which we usually call the 'four fold sense of the Scripture.' The historical narrative in the Scripture has its authentic meaning in its allegorical, typological, and anagogical senses. The allegorical meaning of the Scripture is grounded in the historical meaning. And in turn the allegorical sense is linked to the typological meaning, which concerns the moral growth of the believer in union with Christ. Again, all these senses

are achieved in the heavenly Church in the eschaton. The movement of Milbank's ethical reflection largely echoes this framework of de Lubac's theological hermeneutics.

1.5 Church and Eucharist

Finally, Milbank's argument of Christ's fullness in creation is revealed in Milbank's understanding of the Church. With de Lubac, Milbank opposes the instrumentalization of the Church, even for human salvation, because the Church is not the means for salvation, but itself the goal of salvation. That is, Jesus came for the purpose of establishing the Church which is His Body. His Body is not to be received as judicial and institutional terms, but as the ultimate sacrament of Jesus. As a sacrament, the boundary of the Church is without limits. This idea of overcoming all human boundaries is different from postmodern philosophers' assertion of the dismantling of the boundaries, even if this tendency is encouraging. Milbank finds his understanding of the mission of the Church in the creation order itself. Christian ontology at the outset affirms the unity in diversity because creation is understood as a differentiation from God. While postmodern philosophers argue for the totalising and violent character of human reason and seek to dismantle it, Christianity maintains the harmonious relationship between the individual and the whole. The Church is, for Milbank, the realization of this ontological ideal. The Church is universal in this very sense. Its universality is not that of modernity, which is violent in character. Christian universality affirms the diversity within a coherent whole.

In a postmodern political context Milbank-de Lubac's Eucharistic vision of the Church has a good opportunity. Postmodern politics is characterized by the weakening of the nation-state system by globalization. Since the two theologians know well the danger of the totalizing character of the nation state, this phenomenon is a welcome move. In this situation, the Eucharistic practice can be a Christian alternative to postmodern global politics which is a continuation of modern Machiavellian politics. With de Lubac, Milbank holds that the recovery of the political significance of the Church is the key to its mission in this secularized world. And the Church as a alternative servant community is the inherent goal of the Church established by Jesus Christ, because the Church is the sacrament of Jesus, and Jesus in turn the sacrament of God.

In summary, Milbank's postmodern engagement with Henri de Lubac is ranged in diverse domains. First of all, de Lubac's integrated account of nature and grace is espoused by Milbank. This so-called *surnaturel* thesis enables Milbank to critically engage with the secular. Especially the Christological significance of the *surnaturel* thesis is of paramount importance for Milbank as well as for de Lubac. All reality is understood in terms of Christology: Not only creation is Christological, but human reasoning, moral acts, and the Church and its practice is Christological. All these ideas are found with Milbank's theological mentor, Henri de Lubac. Therefore, we can safely conclude that John Milbank is a faithful intellectual son and an inheritor of Henri de Lubac, even if Milbank attempts to originally apply de Lubac's idea in a postmodern context.

2. An evaluation of Milbank's postmodern appropriation of Henri de Lubac

As we have seen just above, Henri de Lubac is evidently the fundamental source of Milbank's theological project. His participatory ontology is nurtured by Henri de Lubac's idea of the supernatural. Just as de Lubac's idea of the supernatural has a multi-level implication, Milbank's reception is also manifested in a manifold way. It is made clear that Milbank is really Henri de Lubac's intellectual heir. However, in finishing this section, we can demand if Milbank is really faithful to his theological mentor, and if, as he declared, Milbank and RO accomplished the unfinished project of the nouvelle théologie.

As mentioned in our introduction, Milbank complains that nouvelle théologians (de Lubac, Balthasar) were not thoroughly faithful to the *surnaturel* thesis in that they did not develop a political and cultural theology. So Milbank's principal task was to elaborate a theology more faithful to *surnaturel t*hesis.

In fact, as Milbank himself manifests, his idea of participation is enlarged to the whole human cultural realm. It is true that although de Lubac has his own cultural theology, he did not thoroughly develop this theme. The pecularity of Milbank's thought is its focus on the cultural and political aspect of his participatory ontology. In his main works we can observe the the movement from ontological issues to the cultural and political issues. This means that he always has in mind that he understands his task not only as a continuation of de Lubac's work, but also as a further development in the cultural and political direction. In this sense, to a large extent, Milbank succeeds in his theological project as a creative heir of de Lubac's theology.

Especially, the originality of his theological task lies in his critical engagement with postmodern thought. His postmodern theology is classed as a conservative response of Christian theology to postmodenism. But he is differentiated from the usual evangelical understanding of postmodernism as anti-Christian relativist philosophy. As we have seen, the goal of his engagment with postmodern philosophy is both heuristic and polemical. That is, Milbank conceives postmodernism as ' the spoils of the Egyptians ' in order to 'build the house of God'. But he did not receive postmodern philosophy without the filtering of the Christian *logos*. It is de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis that makes possible Milbank's polemical enagagement with nihilistic postmodern philosophy. Postmodern philosophers suppose that ideas have deep historical roots. De Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis also opposes the view that the idea can be given from heaven without historical mediation. However, de Lubac's *surnaturel* thesis gives also to Milbank a polemical tool against postmodern philosophers. For example, the postmodern emphasis on the radical linguisticality of the human being enables Milbank to polemically take issue with secular thought. Milbank courageously enters into dialogue with this core postmoden issue in order to show the deep involvement with human affairs of the Christian *logos* itself. Milbank goes so far as to say that the postmodern discovery of human linguisticality is actually indebted to patristic theology. In his engagement with this refreshing issue in theology, Milbank has recourse to de Lubac's symbolic theology. For Milbank, the idea of the supernatual is inseparably linked to the linguistic character of reality. That is, all reality appears to us with the mediation with the sign, without

which it is impossible that we would have access to reality. This approach is very postmodern in character in that it is postmodern linguistic philosophy which places an emphasis on the linguistic nature of reality. However, Milbank also appeals to de Lubac's symbolic theology in order to save the postmodern sign from its death. In de Lubac's symbolic theology, all signs have a transcendental link. So they are not dead signs, even if it is also in flux like we find in the postmodern understanding of sign.

In the domain of political theology, we can also see that Milbank takes up the postmodern emphasis on the narrativity of human being in appropriating the narrative character of the surnaturel thesis. If eveything is to be understood in narrative terms, Christian narrative can occupy a favorable place in postmodern discourse. He considers that the Church is not an assembly of believers, but the vehicle of God's story manifested in Jesus. This insight was derived from de Lubac's emphasis on the narrativity of Christian revelation. Here we can see Milbank's refreshing theological endeavor in that he places de Lubac's theology in a postmodern context in order that he bring de Lubac into polemic with postmodern ideas. At this point, Milbank succeeds in his project of postmodern reappropriation of Henri de Lubac's theological paradigm. Nonetheless we can also see that Milbank's engagement with postmoden thought makes him risk losing the identity of Christian faith. That is, in taking up postmodern issues in order to utilize them for Christian theology, we suspect that he unconsciously correlates postmodern issues to orthodox Christian faith, even if he starkly criticizes the correlation strategy of modern theology. As Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt points out, we have even the impression that "Milbank presents us with a postmodern philosophy tricked out in Christian theological language –a kind of postmodern version of Hegel's project." [1] For example, Milbank takes up the postmodern issue of 'difference'. He intends to Christianize this issue in affirming that Christianity embraces 'difference' on the basis of his doctrine of creation as the self-differentiation of God. Of course, we see that Christianity is a religion of dismantling the social, political, cultural boundaries. Yet it is also a religion which establishes the differnce between the true and the false, the right and the wrong, the beauty and the ugly because of its absolute truth claim. We can presume that while Milbank would not object to this distinction, he would argue that these oppositional notions are culturally shaped. We can agree with Milbank's pragmatic account of knowledge. However, in his engagement with the postmodern, we have the impression that he merges the postmodern with orthodox Christian faith. We can admit that postmodern philosophy bears much affinity with Christianism. So we can utilize postmodern sources in order to confirm Christian truth claims, just as the Church Fathers did with pagan sources. But in Milbank we can see that he overappropriates the postmodern idea of the 'obliteration of the boundaries', even if this ideal has strong affinity with the Christian ideal of breaking down the wall. So we can suggest that the Reformed emphasis on the creation order expressed in the form of law as the boundary between God and the creature can correct Milbank's overappropriation of postmodern thought. In the Reformed tradition, the respect of the diversity in

[1] Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, "The Word Made Speculative?," 429. However, in my view, this judgment is unfair. But it is undeniable that Milbank's appropriation of postmodern philosophy seems to be too excessive.

creation does not mean that we can cross the boundary between God and man. We can also presume that Milbank will maintain that this law as the boundary between God and man is the product of human-making and the law should not be understood atemporally and statically. Although we accept Milbank's argument, there remains a problem of how we can warrant that the order we make is conformed to the divine order. So, evidently, Milbank's postmodern pragmatic understanding of all human knowledge has a risk of being abused. We know well that Milbank's allegy to the dialectical spirit which the Protestant distinction between law and spirit illustrates. But without the boundaries that God's law establishes, human life will be undermined. Of course, Milbank would respond that in this way the more violent world emerges. But the postmodern obliteration of the boundariesis not always Christ's obliteration of human boundaries.

3. The promise of Milbank's radical orthodox theology

Milbank's theology is promising in his main target, Protestantism. Indeed, Milbank's theology contains a possibility for correcting many flaws of Protestant theology since the Reformation: First, Milbank's theology awakens Protestant theology from its contamination by secular reason. The failure of cultural Protestantism's correlationist strategy gives rise to fideistic fundamentalist movements. The radical separation between reason and faith became a disease in Protestant Christianity; second, the thin ecclesiology in Protestant theology, especially evangelical theology, has many things to learn from Milbank; third, so literal an interpretation of Protestant theology, which makes the Scripture very plain literature, has to be corrected by de Lubac-Milbank's spiritual interpretation of the Scripture.

Stanley Hauerwas begins his essay, "History as Fate: How Justification by Faith Became Anthropology (and History) in America," by citing Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "God has granted American Christianity no Reformation. He has given it strong revivalist preachers, churchmen, and theologians, but no Reformation of the church of Jesus Christ by the word of God."[2] Bonhoeffer's significant judgment becomes Stanley Hauerwas's core theological motive as well as Milbank.' American evangelism carved out last century with Coca Cola and MacDonald. Thus Bonhœffer's acute words have to be voiced in Azusa street[3] and in Seoul.

In this respect, evangelical reception of Milbank and RO is needed and most promising. Recently, Macia Pally published America's *New Evangelicals: Expanding the Vision of the Common Good*, a study on the new move in evangelical circle in Northern American context. According to her, "New evangelicals" endorses church-state separation and constitutionally based law."[4] This tendency stands in contrast to the support of the evangelicals in Bush administration. This is to say that American evangelism already reconsiders its theological, social, and political self –identity.

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[2] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *No Rusty Swords*, ed. Edwin H. Robertson (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 117, cited in Hauerwas, 32.

[3] Azusa street in Los Angelis is the symbol of the revival of Pentacostalism in 20th century.

[4] Marcia Pally, *New Evangelicals: Expanding the Vision of the Common Good* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 23.

It is surprising that de Lubac-Milbank model is appropriated by the Canadian evangelical theologian Hans Boersma -despite his reserve toward Milbank's understanding of atonement. He is the author of comprehensive study of French nouvelle théologie, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Theology: A Return to Mystery* (2009). His recent work, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (2011) is largely reflective of de Lubac-Milbank's theological paradigm. Hans Boersma states: "One of the reasons why talk of a participatory link between sacrament and reality is difficult for evangelicals is that this language goes back to the eucharistic controversies at the time of the Reformation. I suspect that evangelicals might be open to a sacramental ontology were it not for the fact that there are significant implications for the way one understands the Eucharist and the Church."[5]

James K.A. Smith, one of authors of Routledge radical orthodoxy series, *Speech and Theology*, has a Pentecostal background. His study in Toronto Institue of Christian Science leads him to discover the possibility between radical orthodoxy and Reformed tradition. And his doctoral research under the direction of John Caputo offers a new theological framework for the Reformed theological paradigm. This background enables him to see the broad affinity with Milbank and his radical orthodoxy. His *The Fall of Interpretation* reveals the same perspective as Milbank's on the problem of interpretation in general. His *Speech and Theology*, published as Routledge Radical Orthodoxy Series, [6] also stand in continuity with Milbank's theology in the understanding of human language. His *Who afraid of Postmodernism?* shows the same theological method as Milbank's. He is the author of the best introduction to radical orthodoxy, *Introducting Radical Orthodoxy*.[7] Milbank attests that "Smith's evangelical-Dooyeweerdian reception of RO tends to bear out RO's claim that it is, indeed, an ecumenical theology that can speak to several different Christian communities."[8]

If Milbank's theological goal is heavenly peace, exemplarily realized in the Church, this vision is to provide an ecumenical basis for the contemporary Church. However, as Milbank holds, the basis is not universal human reason, but the Christian *logos* itself. The Christian *logos*, as Milbank understands it, respects difference. This means that numerous Christian traditions—including the tradition to which Milbank belongs—serve the harmonious vision which the Christian *logos* sets forth. Protestant churches can use Catholic tradition in order to cure its illness. Likewise the Catholic Church has many things to learn from Protestant churches. In this way, God's one Church is constituted by the various features of different Christian traditions, just as the apostle Paul says: "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ" (1 Cor 12:12).

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[5] Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 112.

[6] James K. A. Smith, *Speech and Theology: Language and the Logic of Incarnation* (London/New York: Routledge, 2002).

[7] James K.A.Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-Secular Theology*, foreword by John Milbank (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).

[8] John Milbank, "Foreword," in *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy,* 12.

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French Summary

John Milbank et le Mystère du Surnaturel : Son Engagement Postmoderne avec Henri de Lubac

1.Introduction

Il est indéniable que John Milbank (1952 -) est l'un des théologiens anglophones de la théologie contemporaine qui suscite notre plus grand intérêt. La préface à son ouvrage majeur, *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture* (1997) commence de la façon suivante: « Aujourd'hui la théologie est tragiquement importante. »[1] Cette citation de Milbank, le père fondateur du mouvement « Radical Orthodoxy » (RO), révèle la situation dans laquelle la théologie chrétienne se trouve aujourd'hui. La théologie est importante, mais paradoxalement elle occupe peu de place dans le discours public. Elle devient, par là, une discipline tragique. Face à cette situation, Milbank propose un projet théologique très provocateur dans le contexte postmoderne. Son programme théologique consiste, avant tout, à mettre en question la modernité et à affirmer l'autonomie de la raison universelle. Donc, pour lui, la postmodernité constitue une occasion historique par laquelle la théologie peut surmonter son complexe d'infériorité face à la modernité. Pour Milbank, la théologie moderne est en crise parce qu'elle s'est adaptée aux présupposées de la raison séculière à travers la stratégie de corrélation (Tillich, Bultmann, Niebuhr, Gutiérrez). Il affirme avec audace: « Si ma perspective chrétienne est persuasive, cela tiendra à la persuasion intrinsèque qui provient du *logos* chrétien lui-même et non d'une médiation apologétique s'appuyant, d'une manière supposée neutre, sur la raison humaine. »[2] Donc, « la pathos de la théologie moderne est sa fausse humilité » déclare-t-il John Milbank.»[3]

Milbank est fameux pour sa récusation de la neutralité des sciences sociales dans son ouvrage *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (1990). Cet ouvrage vise à dévoiler le mythe de la notion du séculier, qui est, pour Milbank, artificiellement construite sur la base de l'idée de la raison autonome. Donc, pour lui, la modernité n'est pas une nécessité historique, mais un moment contingent dans l'histoire humaine. Par la raison autonome nous voulons dire que l'homme se façonne un monde sans référence à Dieu. Pour lui, l'idée de la raison autonome depuis les Lumières n'est pas une forme sécularisée du christianisme comme la théorie de la sécularisation l'affirme, mais elle est essentiellement anti-chrétienne car il y a une antithèse entre l'idée de la raison autonome et le christianisme.

Dans *Theology and Social Theory,* Milbank tente de retracer la racine théologique de la modernité en employant la méthodologie archéologique de Michel Foucault. D'après sa recherche, il est clair que la raison séculière est un produit historique qui s'est formé à partir du XIIe siècle (plus précisément à partir de Duns Scot) et que la raison séculière se base sur l'illusion de la raison autonome et naturelle depuis les

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[1] John Milbank, *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997),1.
[2] John Milbank, *Théologie et Théorie Sociale: Au-delà de la Raison séculière*, trad. par Pascale Robin, (Paris/Genève: Cerf/ Ad Solem, 2010), 49.
[3] Ibid.

Lumières. Par conséquent, rien n'est, pour Milbank, plus étranger au christianisme que les dualités raison/foi, nature/grâce, privé/public, profane/sacré, parce que ces dualités sont établies par la modernité dont la validité est de plus en plus mise en question. Aux yeux de Milbank, toutes les activités intellectuelles et culturelles de l'homme sont religieuses, confessionnelles, autrement dit théologiques.

Malgré sa nouveauté théologique, Milbank reconnaît sa dette envers la nouvelle théologie en France, surtout envers Henri de Lubac, théologien jésuite. L'appropriation de l'idée lubacienne du *surnaturel* permet à Milbank d'élaborer son programme théologique. La notion du surnaturel pénètre tous les écrits de Milbank, ainsi que les écrits des auteurs de RO.

Dans son ouvrage révolutionnaire, *Surnaturel*[4] (1946) Henri de Lubac tente de montrer que l'homme a une seule fin surnaturelle et que la notion de la nature pure (*natura pura*) est une fiction théologique de la néo-scolastique. Par la thèse du surnaturel, de Lubac signifie qu'il n'y a pas de nature pure (*natura pura*) réservée à une sphère purement naturelle sans la grâce divine. Cette notion sauvegarde la gratuité de la grâce en supposant une sphère indépendante de la grâce, surtout face à la crise de Baius qui renie la gratuité de la grâce divine. De Lubac a, avec audace, riposté contre cette notion problématique, car cette notion de nature pure rend la grâce extrinsèque. Influencé par Maurice Blondel, de façon décisive, qui a accusé l'extrincécisme qui suppose que la nature et la grâce sont conçues comme deux réalités sans lien interne, de Lubac avance une thèse selon laquelle la nature est déjà imprégnée par la grâce. Cette compréhension intégriste du rapport nature/grâce est relayée par Milbank dans un contexte postmoderne.

Avec de Lubac, Milbank partage l'idée qu'il n'y a pas de nature pure. Milbank et Henri de Lubac s'accordent à dire que le monde moderne est formé à partir de l'assertion de la raison autonome, et que le drame tragique au XXème siècle est dérivé de l'immanentisation de l'esprit humain par le rejet de Dieu. Pour de Lubac, la naturalisation du surnaturel est à l'origine de cette tragédie, tandis que pour Milbank c'est l'oubli de l'idée de la participation qui en est la cause. Par ailleurs, la démarche non-apologétique milbankienne converge avec celle du théologien catholique français, Henri de Lubac. De Lubac est une source d'inspiration pour John Milbank dans tous les domaines de sa réflexion théologique. Face à la modernité et au nihilisme causé par sa philosophie immanente, de Lubac et Milbank ont en commun l'idée que seul le christianisme sauve le monde de son nihilisme.

Cette thèse vise à éclairer l'appropriation de la thèse du *surnaturel* d'Henri de Lubac par John Milbank dans ses divers aspects. Dans la pensé de Milbank, l'idée du surnaturel apparaît, tantôt au niveau ontologique, tantôt au niveau linguistique, et tantôt au niveau ecclésial. Si on dit que les œuvres de Lubac sont organiques[5], on peut dire, à juste titre, que les œuvres de Milbank sont également organiques, car la notion du surnaturel, qui domine la pensée lubacienne, aussi pénètre toutes les démarches théologiques de Milbank.

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[4] Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: Étude Historiques* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1946).

[5] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri de Lubac: An Overview* (Sans Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 22-4.

2.Ontologie Participative

2.1 Participation

L'idée de la participation a une longue histoire dans la pensée occidentale depuis l'antiquité. Platon l'utilise comme un terme technique pour son système philosophique. À la différence d'Aristote, Platon pense que le monde ne se suffit pas à lui-même, parce que le monde est conçu comme une copie de la vraie réalité qu'il appelle le monde de l'idée. L'idée de la participation sert à mettre en relation ces deux mondes. Cette idée a été reprise par la théologie patristique et a perduré jusqu'au haut Moyen Âge. Mais d'après Milbank, c'est à partir de Duns Scot qui a catégoriquement distingué la philosophie de la théologie que cette idée de participation a commencé à être oubliée. Duns Scot a introduit la notion de l'univocité de l'être selon laquelle Dieu est compris sur le même plan ontologique que les créatures en prenant ses distances par rapport à la vision analogique de Thomas Aquin. Dieu est, désormais, représenté comme la volonté suprême. Milbank considère que la théologie de la Réforme, surtout la théologie de Luther s'inscrit dans cette tradition nominaliste. Par ailleurs, la Réforme a fourni, en fin de compte, les fondements de la pensée moderne. Par le mot, *participation*, Milbank entend la dépendance de la création au créateur au sens où toutes les choses sont dans un état de la grâce[6]. Donc cette idée est identique à l'idée lubacienne du *surnaturel* dans son contenu. Deux notions expriment deux faces d'une même médaille. Milbank déclare que « le cadre central théologique de Radical Orthodoxy est "participation" développée par Platon et reprise par le christianisme, parce que toute configuration alternative réserve nécessairement un territoire indépendant de Dieu. »[7] Mais Milbank maintient que cette notion doit être utilisée d'une nouvelle manière: « J'ai toujours essayé de suggérer que la participation peut aussi être élargie au langage, à l'histoire et à la culture: toute sphère de *human-making*. Non seulement l'être et la connaissance participent à Dieu qui est et qui comprend; *human-making* participe à Dieu qui est l'énonce poétique infinie: la person seconde de la Trinité. »[8] En d'autres termes, avec de Lubac, Mibank souligne la nécessité de la philosophie chrétienne pour apporter une critique théologique au monde séculier et reconstruire un monde basé sur une vision chrétienne.

2.2 Nature et grâce

Il n'est pas exagéré d'affirmer que le mode de l'articulation de la nature et de la grâce détermine la nature de la théologie. Le couple nature-grâce est mis en parallèle avec celui de raison et foi, celui philosophie et théologie, et même celui d'État et Église. David L. Schindler dit même que la relation entre nature et grâce détermine l'identité

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[6] John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon* (London: Routledge, 2003), 115.

[7] John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward, (eds.*), Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (London: Routledge, 2009), 3.

[8] Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, ix: « I have always tried to suggest that participation can be extended also to language, history and culture: the whole realm of human making. Not only do being and knowledge participate in a God who is and who comprehends; also human making participates in a God who is infinite poetic utterance: the second person of the Trinity ».

chrétienne[9]. De Lubac est en opposition avec le modèle néo-scolastique dans lequel la grâce est comprise comme étant ajoutée à la nature. Dans ce modèle, la grâce et la nature existent comme deux sphères catégoriquement distinctes avec aucune connection intrinsèque entre les deux réalités. Influencé de manière décisive par Maurice Blondel qui a développé la philosophie de l'action, de Lubac a mis en question cette double structure de la nature et de la grâce. À ses yeux, ce modèle entraîne la séparation entre la foi chrétienne et la vie concrète des chrétiens. Contre ce modèle que Blondel appelle « l'extrincécisme »[10] de Lubac propose un modèle d'intégration qui suppose qu'il y a un lien organique entre la nature et la grâce. En d'autres termes, la nature est une réalité déjà graciée. Milbank adopte ce modèle en disant que « la nature est toujours déjà gracié dans le sens où elle participe au Créateur. »[11]

La réception du modèle lubacien permet à Milbank de critiquer les autres modèles de la nature et de la grâce. D'abord, Milbank critique le modèle de Karl Rahner. Karl Rahner partage sa compréhension d'intégration de la nature et grâce en commun avec Henri de Lubac. Mais au fond il prend un autre chemin que de Lubac. Influencé par le thomisme transcendantal *via* Maréchal et par la phénoménologie de Martin Heidegger, il a élaboré une conception, « existentiel surnaturel ». Dans cette conception, Rahner veut dire qu'il y a la grâce immanente dans la vie naturelle humaine. À travers cette notion Rahner veut sauvegarder la gratuité de la grâce, en même temps qu'il veut assurer le caractère surnaturel de la grâce. En d'autres termes, malgré sa compréhension d'intégration de la relation entre la nature et la grâce, il n'a pas rejeté la notion de la pure nature. Dans ce cas, la nature a son intégrité et son autonomie comme la nature pure, mais le surnaturel est présent dans cette nature déjà conçue comme autonome. Par conséquent, pour Rahner cette nature est qualifiée comme *Restbegriff*. À la différence de de Lubac qui a dédaigné le concept de la *puissance obédientielle*, « la nature spirituelle devra être telle qu'elle ait une ouverture pour cet existentiel surnaturel. »[12] En s'opposant à de Lubac selon qui « le dynamisme illimité de l'esprit est même l'existentiel naturel immédiat pour la grâce », Rahner prétend qu' «on devra seulement se garder d'identifier d'une manière simplement apodictique ce dynamisme illimité de la nature de l'esprit avec ce dynamisme que nous expérimentons (ou que nous croyons expérimenter) dans l'aventure de notre existence spirituelle concrète, parce qu'en celui-ci.. l'existentiel surnaturel peut déjà être à l'oeuvre. Et on doit se garder d'affirmer ce dynamisme naturel comme exigence absolue de la grâce. »[13]

À propos de l'article de Rahner sur la relation de nature et grâce, de Lubac écrit: « Nous n'aurions essentiellement qu'une réserve à faire sur ce texte, et c'est une réserve d'ordre purement historique: en réalité, on vient de le voir, ce concept "scolastique" de

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[9] David. L. Schindler, « Introduction: Grace and the Form of Nature and Culture, » in *Catholicism and Secularization in America*, ed. David L. Schindler (Notre Dame: Communio Books, 1990).

[10] D'après la définition de Henri de Lubac, « [la méthode d'immanance] met en question dans la conscience même ce que nous paraissons penser et vouloir et faire, avec ce que nous faisons, nous voulons et nous pensons en réalité ». Maurice Blondel, *Les Premies Ecrits de Maurice Blondel* (Paris: PUF, 1956),39.

[11] Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, 115: « nature is always already graced in the sense that it participates in the Creator ».

[12] Karl Rahner, « De la relation de la nature et de la grâce », dans *Ecrits Théologiques*, tome 3 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1963), 30-31.

[13] Ibid., 31.

nature, trop copié sur le modèle de l'infra-humain, est plutôt le concept d'une scolastique moderne. »[14] Milbank de son côté compare le modèle de de Lubac et celui de Rahner de la façon suivante: « Comme Henri de Lubac, Karl Rahner semble rejeter la néoscolastique et la théorie "des deux tiers" quant à la relation de la grâce à la nature ». Toutefois, « la patristique et la notion médiévale de *desiderium naturale visionis beatificae* avaient perdu de vue. » Du coup, « la surabondance surnatuelle de la grâce comme reliée à une nature humaine autosuffisante, déjà complète en elle-même.»[15]

Une autre critique est adressée à Karl Barth. Barth est bien connu pour la séparation catégorique qu'il opère entre Dieu et la créature. D'après lui, il n'y a pas de point de contact entre Dieu et l'homme. Il dit que « *finitum non capax infini*. »[16] De plus, il dit: « *homo peccator non capax verbi Domini*. »[17] Milbank situe Barth dans l'univers post-Kantien dans lequel on accorde une autonomie au monde naturel sans référence à Dieu. Bien que Barth privilégie la Parole révélée, la critique barthienne de la modernité n'est pas radicale, parce que Barth en fait reconnaît l'autonomie de la nature par son rejet de la nature. C'est pour cela que Barth récuse la possibilité d'une philosophie chrétienne. Au contraire, Milbank, en suivant de Lubac, souligne la nécessité de la philosophie chrétienne parce qu'il n'y a aucune sphère réservée à la raison séculière.

2.3 Raison et foi

Le rapport entre raison et foi va de pair avec celui entre nature et grâce. Tout au long de l'histoire de la théologie chrétienne, on a privilégié la raison ou la foi, si bien qu'on est tombé dans le rationalisme ou dans le fidéisme. Milbank redéfinit la relation entre la raison et la foi dans le cadre de l'ontologie participative. D'après lui, « pour les Pères de l'Église ou les premières scolastiques, la foi et la raison sont incluses dans le cadre plus compréhensif de la participation dans l'Esprit de Dieu .»[18]

Milbank et de Lubac se situent dans la tradition patristique qui exprime que la différence entre raison et foi n'est qu'une différence d'intensité, une tradition notamment augustinienne (reprise également par Thomas d'Aquin selon l'interprétation de la nouvelle théologie et RO). Pour de Lubac, la foi chrétienne est un guide de la raison humaine. Il dit: « Après l'intelligence de la foi vient aussi, comme son complément nécessaire, l'intelligence de la foi qui fait apparaître le dogme comme un

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[14] Henri de Lubac, *Le Mystère du Surnaturel* (Paris: Cerf, 2009).

[15] Milbank, *Theologie et Théorie Sociale*, 379. Milbank compare de Lubac et Rahner en divisant ces deux home en deux versions du modèle intégriste: « la version française "surnaturalise le naturel", la version allemande "naturalise le surnaturel". La poussée de cette dernière version va dans la direction d'une théologie intermédiaire, d'un humanisme universel, d'un rapprochement avec les Lumières et d'un ordre séculier autonome. Bien que ces idées ne soient pas entièrement absentes de la version française, les principales tendances de celle-ci s'orientent vers des directions complètement différentes: pour la nouvelle théologie, ce qui importe, c'est le rétablissement d'un sens prémoderne de la personne christianisé en tant que personne réelle à part entière » (*Théologie et Théorie Sociale*, 357).

[16] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1/1: The Doctrine of the Word of God (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 220.

[17] Ibid.

[18] *Radical Orthodoxy*, 24: « In the Church Fathers or the early scholastics, both faith and reason are included within the more generic framework of participation in the mind of God ».

foyer de lumière universelle. »[19] Par conséquent, comme pour Kant, il n'est pas nécessaire d'« abolir le savoir afin d'obtenir une place pour la croyance. »[20]

Pour eux, la vraie raison anticipe la révélation[21]. Dans cette perspective, Milbank émet quelques réserves à l'égard de la théologie néo-orthodoxie. La théologie néo-orthodoxe privilégie la révélation du Christ pour sauvegarder la pureté de la grâce de Dieu, si bien qu'elle refuse la possibilité de la connaissance de Dieu dans la révélation naturelle. Dans cette perspective, Milbank et RO considèrent Henri de Lubac comme théologien plus révolutionnaire que Karl Barth[22]. À la différence de Barth qui admet les assomptions de la théologie moderne, de Lubac a surmonté la dualité entre la nature et la grâce. Donc, Milbank estime que de Lubac est le vrai précurseur de la théologie postmoderne[23].

2.4 Poesis

Poesis (*human-making*) est l'un des concepts pivots de la théologie milbankienne. Pour bien comprendre cette notion, il faut savoir comment de Lubac utilise ce concept dans sa théologie. Dans la lignée néo-platonicienne, de Lubac valorise l'activité poétique de l'homme. Mais pour de Lubac, ce concept est avant tout un concept éthique qui concerne la sanctification des croyants. Dans son ouvrage *Pic de la Mirandole: Étude et Discussion,*[24] de Lubac traite principalement de ce concept. Dans cette étude, il essaie de corriger le malentendu répandu sur ce philosophe de la Renaissance, Pic de la Mirandole, en le plaçant dans la tradition de l'humanisme chrétienne comme Érasme. D'après de Lubac, l'humanisme chrétien de Pic se manifeste principalement dans son anthropologie. Pour Pic, le caractère distinctif de l'homme réside dans sa liberté et son indétermination qui est orienté vers sa *déification*[25]. Cette position est bien illustrée par cette citation de Clement: « Je vous le demande, transformez-vous; décidez-vous à apprendre qu'il est en votre pouvoir de vous transformer, de dépouiller la forme du

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[19] Henri de Lubac, *Théologie d'Occasion* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1984), 106. Ailleurs de Lubac dit: « La foi chrétienne peut être- et l'histoire nous montre qu'elle fut en effet- génératrice de raison ; mais elle n'est pas elle-même ni une science ni une philosophie révélée: de pareils termes n'ont aucun sens. Elle est (reprenons la formule de Pascal) d'un autre ordre » (Henri de Lubac, *Petit Catéchèse sur Nature et Grâce* [Paris: Fayard, 1980], 49).

[20] Immanuel Kant, *Critique de la Raison Pure*, trad. Jules Barni (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1976), 24.

[21] Milbank, *Radical Orthodoxy*, 24.

[22] John Milbank, « The Programme of Radical Orthodoxy, » in Laurence Hemming (ed.), *Radical Orthodoxy ? – A Catholic Enquiry*, 35.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Henri de Lubac, *Pic de la Mirandole: Étude et Discussion* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1974).

[25] Cette idée est bien révélé dans la description d'Adam: « O Adam, nous ne t'avons donné ni une place déterminé, ni une physionomie, les dons que tu aurais souhaité, tu les acquières toi-même selon tes voeux. Pour les autres, leur nature définie est régie par les lois que nous avons prescrites; toi, tu n'es limité par aucune barrière; c'est de ta propre volonté, au pouvoir de laquelle je t'ai remis, que tu détermineras ta nature. Je t'ai installé au milieu du monde afin que de là tu examines plus commodément autour de toi tout ce qui existe en ce monde. Nous ne t'avons fait ni céleste ni terrestre, ni mortel ni immortel, afin que, maître de toi-même et ayant pour ainsi dire l'honneur et la charge de modeler ton être, tu te composes la forme que tu auras préférée. Tu pourras dégénérer en formes inférieures, animales ; tu pourras, par ta propre décision, être régénéré en formes supérieures, divines » (Pic de la Mirandole, *De la Dignité de l'Homme*, cité dans *Pic de la Mirandole*, 65)

pourceau, ou la forme de chien, qui est celle de l'homme aboyeur, hurleur et de la langue méchante.. »[26].

Le même concept du *poesis* se trouve chez Milbank. Comme de Lubac, Milbank qualifie l'homme comme un être créatif parce que l'humanité doit accomplir sa propre destinée. Pour Milbank, « la *poesis* est une logique pour l'établissement du sens. »[27] Dans cette perspective, la quête de l'universel de l'homme est vaine, parce que c'est l'homme qui fait le sens. D'après John Henry Newmann « l'homme se fait poétiquement. »[28] Milbank prend à son compte la thèse de Giambattista Vico selon laquelle « *Verum* et *factum convertuntur (le vrai et le fait se réciproquent).* » Pour Milbank, le projet universaliste de l'établissement des Lumières est une fiction, parce que tout ce que l'homme peut saisir n'est qu'un « universel concret », car l'esprit humain n'est pas en mesure de saisir la réalité dans sa totalité. Milbank maintient que la réalité est constituée par *human-making*.

Cette vision poétique du monde se retrouve dans sa compréhension de la narration de l'homme. Conformément à cette idée, l'homme n'est pas prédéterminé par une essence, mais encadré par la narration et par la communauté que cette narration construit. Milbank affirme que l'homme participe au surnaturel à travers la narration, parce que le temps est compris comme participant à l'éternité. Par ailleurs, Milbank comprend l'éthique en termes du *poesis*. Cette approche implique qu'il rejette l'approche moderne de l'éthique basée sur la raison autonome. La compréhension poétique de l'éthique place l'agent moral dans le cadre narratif où cet agent moral se situe. Et cette narration est formée par la communauté et *vice versa*. C'est pourquoi Milbank souligne la formation du caractère chrétien à travers la communauté chrétienne. De plus, Milbank comprend la *poesis* comme un acte liturgique. Il dit: « Tous les vrais *poesis* sont liturgies »[29]. Cela veut dire que l'activité poétique est activité doxologique. Pour Milbank, *poesis* n'est pas compris comme une assertion de l'homme, mais comme une coopération créative avec Dieu pour faire le monde[30].

2.5 Don

Aujourd'hui la question du don est un sujet qui retient l'attention de plusieurs disciplines (anthropologie, sociologie, économie, philosophie, théologie). Par exemple,

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[26] Clément, *Entretien avec Héraclide*, cite dans *Pic de la Mirandole*, p. 187.

[27] Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 128: « *pœsis* is a logic for the establishment of meanings ».

[28] J. H. Newman, *A Grammar of Assent*, cd. N. Lash (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1979), 274, in Milbank, « A Christological Poetics, » in *The Word Made Strange*,125.

[29] Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, x: « all true *pœsis* is liturgy.»

[30] D'après Catherine Pickstock, collègue de John Milbank, cette idée existe depuis longtemps comme un courant théologique minoritaire : « la créativité humaine se tailla un domaine autonome pour elle-même clos délimité par des êtres finis pour des êtres finis vivant dans un monde de finitude. Une tradition minoritaire (illustré par le cardinal Nicolas de Cuse et de nombreux humanistes augustiniens) interpréta cette capacité créatrice humaine comme une participation à l'énonciation créatrice du Logos par le Père. Dans cette perspective, l'intelligence créatrice humaine, sans revendiquer d'autonomie propre, s'efforce de réaliser la totalité du telos humain et de rendre plus manifeste la révélation divine. L'orthodoxie radicale s'inscrit dans ce courant minoritaire, qui représente une sorte de contre-modernité. Car toute en proclamant la libération du potentiel créatif de l'homme, elle subordonne son développement aux réalités divines qui orientent nos efforts » (Catherine Pickstock, « L'orthodoxie est-elle radicale ? » in Adrian Pabst, Olivier-Thomas Vernard, *Radical Orthodoxy, Pour une Révolution Théologique* (Genève: Ad Solem, 2004), 26-7.

Marcel Mauss comprend le don comme un échange économique.[31] En contraste, Jacques Derrida est en recherche du don littéralement pur. Donc pour ce philosophe, le don est une chose d'impossible.

Pourtant, pour Milbank et de Lubac, le don est avant tout un concept théologique, parce que la création et recréation manifestées par l'incarnation sont données comme don. Pour Milbank, « le don est une sorte de la catégorie transcendantale en relation avec tous les *topoi* de la théologie de façon similaire à la "parole". »[32] Le point de vue lubacien vis-à-vis du don est parfaitement clair dans la citation qu'il fait de Fénélon : « Il n'y avait rien en moi qui précédât tous ses dons, et qui fût à portée de les recevoir. Le premier de ses dons qui a fondé tous les autres, est ce que j'appelle moi-même; il m'a donné ce moi, je lui dois non seulement tous ce que j'ai; mais encore tout ce que je suis. »[33] L'idée lubacienne du don est reprise également par Milbank. Pourtant, Milbank va plus loin que de Lubac, car cette idée lui sert à redéfinir son concept central de *participation*. D'après lui: « la notion d'une participation du poétique au *poesis* infini doit être complementé par la notion d'une participation des échanges réciproques dans une réciprocité infinie qui est le *donum* divin. »[34]

La notion philosophique du don est caractérisée par son unilatéralité. Pour Aristote, le don est conçu comme un cadeau sans retour[35]. Mais de Lubac et Milbank s'opposent à cette idée, parce qu'ils contestent la séparation du donneur et du receveur. Pour Milbank, la Trinité est le modèle de référence pour notre compréhension de l'échange du don. Entre les personnes de la trinité est une union réciproque. Les personnes peuvent être distinguées, mais ne peuvent pas être séparées. De même, la relation humaine est pour Milbank conçue comme un échange du don. Mais dans notre relation avec Dieu cet échange est compris comme asymétrique. En bref, le rapport de l'homme à Dieu est caractérisé comme un « échange asymétrique du don ». Dans cette perspective, Milbank critique la compréhension du don chez Jean-Luc Marion. Pour Marion, il y a une distance infinie entre Dieu et la création. Cette distance amène Marion à supposer que le don de Dieu est compris comme la révélation unilatérale de façon barthienne. Dans ce cas, il n'y a pas d'échange du don. Pour Milbank, cette approche n'est pas conforme à la tradition patristique. Il pense que Marion a mis en corrélation la théologie et la phénoménologie qui n'est pour Milbank qu'une continuation de la tradition positiviste.[36]

2.6 Paradoxe

Le paradoxe est un mot qui décrit la nature de la réalité d'une meilleure manière chez de Lubac et Milbank. D'après de Lubac, « Paradoxes: le mot désigne.. avant tout les

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[31] Marcel Mauss, *Essai sur le Don. Forme et Raison de l'Échange dans les Sociétés archaïques* [1925] (Paris: Quadrige /PUF, 2002).

[32] Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, ix ; « gift is a kind of transcendental category in relation to all the topoi of theology, in a similar fashion to "word" » (*Being Reconciled*, ix)

[33] Fénelon, *Lettres Oeuvre spirituelles*, vol 1, 1810,174, cité dans Henri de Lubac, *Mystère du Surnaturel* (Paris: Cerf, 2009), 108.

[34] Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, x: « the notion of a participation of the poetic in an infinite *poesis* is to be complemented by the notion of a participation of reciprocal exchanges in an infinite reciprocity which is the divine *donum* ».

[35] Aristote, *Topique,* 125a 18.

[36] Milbank, *Théologie et Théorie Sociale*, 18.

choses elles-mêmes, non la manière de les dire. »[37] Pour les deux théologiens, le paradoxe est conçu comme un concept diamétralement opposé à la dialectique. Milbank affirme que « pour le paradoxal, la logique nondialetique, il n'y a jamais de contradiction, de conflit, ou de tension. »[38]

Pour de Lubac et Milbank, la nature humaine est en elle-même paradoxale. D'après de Lubac, l'homme a le désir naturel de voir Dieu (*desiderium naturale videndi Deum*). Basé sur sa compréhension de la nature paradoxale de l'homme, de Lubac critique l'interprétation de Nygren sur l'*agape* et l'*eros*. Pour Nygren l'*agape* est opposée à l'*eros*. Mais de Lubac argumente que l'*eros* n'est pas un concept négatif qui est lié à l'égoïsme. L'*eros* de l'homme, dans sa compréhension, est un mouvement de l'âme envers Dieu. Donc ce désir est donné par Dieu comme don[39].

De Lubac fonde cette compréhension paradoxale de l'homme sur son anthropologie. Dans son article « Anthropologie Tripartite », de Lubac, malgré de nombreuses oppositions selon lesquelles l'anthropologie tripartite est l'anthropologique hellénistique, affirme que cette anthropologie est confirmée par l'Écriture et la théologie patristique. D'après lui, « le *pneuma*, dans l'homme, est le principe d'une vie supérieure, le lieu de la communication avec Dieu. »[40]

De Lubac dit, en ayant recours aux Père de l'Église, « l'Incarnation est le Paradoxe suprême. »[41] Milbank et de Lubac pensent qu'il y a une continuité entre la création et l'incarnation. Donc la nature paradoxale de la création est reliée à celle de l'incarnation. Si la création est le *donum optimum*, l'incarnation est le *donum perfectum*. Milbank met en relation la création et l'incarnation à travers le désir naturel du suranturel, « tandis que la Création est le don de l'existence indépendante, et la grâce est le don irrésistible de l'existence libre et déifiée.., le désir naturel du surnaturel est le don de la liaison entre les deux. »[42]

3.De la Métaphysique à la Méta-Narration Chrétienne

3.1 Déconstruire la métaphysique de la substance

La pensée postmoderne porte un intérêt tout particulier au langage. La transition de la méta-narration à la narration correspond à celle qui va de la subjectivité cartésienne au langage. La philosophie moderne du langage suppose que le langage représente la réalité en tant que telle, tandis qu'en postmodernité, on ne croit plus que langage soit un instrument qui exprime notre pensée, mais construit activement la réalité. D'après Wittgenstein, « les frontières de mon langage sont les frontières de mon

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[37] Henri de Lubac, *Paradoxes* (Paris: Cerf, 1999), 72.

[38] John Milbank and Slavoj Žižek, *The Monstrosity of Christ: Pardox or Dialectics?* (Cambridge: MIT, 2009), 185: « For the paradoxical, non-dialectical logic, there is never any contradiction, conflict, or tension » (*The Monstrosity of Christ*,185).

[39] Voir « Erôs et Agapè », Henri de LUBAC, *Théologie d'Occasion*, pp. .91-96.

[40] Henri de Lubac, *Théologie dans l'Histoire I* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1990), 123.

[41] De Lubac, *Paradoxes,* 8.

[42] John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate concerning the Supernatural* (Michigan/Cambridge, Grands Rapids/ U.K, W.B. Eerdmans, 2005),39; « While Creation is the gift of independent existence and grace is the irresistible gift of.. free and deified existence..., the natural desire of the supernatural is the gift of the bond between the two. »

monde. »[43] Pour Milbank, *le tournant linguistique de la philosophie* est loin de nuire à la foi chrétienne, il a son origine dans le christianisme lui-même.

D'après Milbank, « l'esprit humain ne correspond pas à la réalité. »[44] Autrement dit, l'esprit ne peut pas se justifier par lui-même, il a un caractère relationnel. Théologiquement parlant, il y a une corrélation entre l'esprit humain et l'esprit divin. « L'esprit n'est illuminé que par le Logos divin, si notre énergie "précédent" et nos désir "émergents" également correspond au Père et l'Esprit respectivement. »[45] Le langage est donc surnaturel en caractère. Le langage est la seule façon avec laquelle nous pouvons accéder à la réalité divine. Il est donc à la fois possibilité et les limites de la connaissance de Dieu.

Cette démarche milbankienne trouve un écho dans la pensée des « contre-Lumières » (Hamann, Vico, Herder, Kierkegaard). Selon Vico, avant le langage, « l'humanité n'a tout simplement pas de contenu. »[46] Pour Hamann, « la création est le langage inventé par Dieu pour transmettre sa volonté aux hommes »[47] Selon Milbank, les penseurs du XVIIIe siècle ont vraiment surmonté l'« ontologie de la substance ». Pour eux, « la réalité est constituée par les signes. »[48] En d'autres termes, ils se sont opposés au fondationalisme cartésien qui serait à l'origine de la théologie moderne. Ils ont mis en lumière la radicale « linguisticalité » de la pensée humaine qui est basée sur la sémiologie chrétienne d'une manière clandestine. »[49]

Milbank, s'inspirant d'Henri de Lubac et d'Hans von Balthasar élargit l'horizon de sa pensée jusqu'à la culture. En s'appuyant sur l'ontologie participative, il affirme que toutes les réalités sont déjà sous la grâce.

Dans cette perspective, les activités créatives/poétiques de l'homme sont comprises comme surnaturelles. C'est à partir de sa compréhension du langage que sa théologie de la culture se forge. Il comprend l'événement de l'incarnation comme événement langagier. Le caractère langagier du Christ justifie la culture humaine dans laquelle l'homme se fait poétiquement. Graham Ward comprend RO comme une *Kulturpolik.*[50] Selon lui, la tâche de RO est non seulement de faire de la théologie, mais de participer à la rédemption du monde d'une manière théologique.

Par ailleurs, on doit tenir compte du rapport de l'eucharistie au langage. Dans son ouvrage *After Writing, On the Liturgical Consumation of Philosophy* (1998),[51] Catherine Pickstock affirme que l'eucharistie est le langage de référence qui peut donner sens à tous les autres langages. Pour comprendre cette affirmation provocatrice, on doit tenir

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[43] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* 5.6, trand. Fr. Gilles Gaston Granger (Paris: Editions Gallimard).

[44] « The human mind does not "correspond" to reality » (« Postmodern Critical Augustianism », n° 36 in John Milbank, *Future of Love: Essay on Political Theology* (Eugene Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009), 337-351, désormais PCA).

[45] PCA n° 37: « The mind is only illuminated by the divine Logos, if also our "preceding" energies, and our "emergent" desire, correspond to the Father and the Spirit, respectively ».

[46] Milbank, *Théologie et Théorie Sociale*, 270.

[47] Claude Piché, *Année 1781-1801, Kant, critique de la raison pure, vingt and de réception* (Paris: 2002), 92.

[48] Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 85.

[49] Ibid., 84-5.

[50] Voir Graham Ward, « Radical Orthodoxy and/as Cultural Politics », in Laurence Paul Hemming (ed.) *Radical Orthodoxy ? – A Catholic Enquiry*, 97-111.

[51] Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

compte du contexte postmoderne. En postmodernité, le langage est conçu comme instable, parce qu'il a perdu sa référence transcendantale. Dans ce cas, le langage devient le signe de mort. Dans cette perspective, l'eucharistie comme le langage peut le rendre mort parce que dans le langage eucharistique le Christ est le signe vivant. Elle aboutit à la conclusion suivante: « l'événement de la transubstantiation dans l'Eucharistie est la condition de la possibilité pour tous les sens humains. »[52]

3.2 La conception de la narration chez Milbank

Le problème du langage occupe une place importante dans le projet théologique de Milbank et de Lubac. Pour eux, le langage humain est inséparablement lié à l'idée du surnaturel. Cela veut dire que le langage n'est pas simplement conçu comme un instrument pour exprimer notre pensée vis-à-vis des choses, mais un sacrement qui a la fonction du miroir qui reflète Dieu. Autrement dit, il y a aucun langage neutre qui décrit objectivement la réalité. Le langage est le véhicule qui retient une conception particulière du monde. Tout langage est donc encadré par une tradition et communauté particulière. Tous les deux pensent que le langage métaphorique joue un rôle central dans notre compréhension du monde. Milbank comprend le récit comme une extension du langage métaphorique. La raison pour laquelle Milbank attache l'importance à la narration est intimement lié à sa compréhension du temps dans laquelle, comme pour Platon, le temps participe à l'éternité. Cette idée valorise l'histoire biblique dans le sens où le récit biblique se déroule dans le cadre de l'histoire du salut (*Heilsgechichte*).

De ce point de vue, la valorisation postmoderne de la narration fournit une opportunité pour réhabiliter l'histoire biblique comme méta-narration, car les penseurs postmodernes s'accordent pour dire que le récit des Lumières n'est qu'un récit de plusieurs narrations. De Lubac maintient que « la révélation divine n'a pas seulement eu lieu dans le temps, au cours de l'histoire: elle a elle-même forme historique. »[53] En d'autres termes, la narration biblique n'est pas la source de laquelle la vérité propositionnelle s'abstrait, mais elle représente Dieu. Du coup, les deux théologiens rejettent la révélation propositionnelle comme la source de la connaissance de Dieu. Milbank pense que « la narration constitue notre principal moyen d'habiter le monde, et elle caractérise la manière dont le monde se manifeste à nous; et pas, principalement, le monde culturel que les humains fabriquent. »[54]

Cependant, de Lubac n'absolutise pas l'histoire comme dans l'exégèse biblique moderne. Pour lui, il faut un regard spécifique pour arriver au sens spirituel à partir du sens historique. Ce regard est focalisé sur l'événement de l'Incarnation. Donc, l'histoire biblique doit être interprétée à la lumière de l'événement du Christ. Ce sens allégorique constitue une base fondamentale de la vision chrétienne du monde. Comme de Lubac, Milbank pense que « seul le niveau méta-narratif de l'allégorie, qui relie les événements

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[52] Ibid.,xv: « the event of transubstantiation in the Eucharist is the condition of possibility for all human meaning. »

[53] Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale: les Quatre Sens de l'Écriture II-I* (Paris: Éditions Montaigne, 1959), 429.

[54] Milbank, *Théologie et Théorie Sociale*, 589.

entre eux bien plus étroitement que tout lien de causalité, soutient la cohérence narrative constitutive du christianisme comme christianisme. »[55]

À partir de notre compréhension de la notion milbankienne de la narration enracinée sur le sens allégorique lubacienne, nous pouvons récapituler les traits caractéristiques de la notion de la théologie narrative chez Milbank.

En premier lieu, comme l'allégorie lubacienne, la narration de Milbank a une signification au sens ontologique. Nous faisons la narration en même temps que nous habitons la narration. Cela veut dire que Milbank refuse la dichotomie moderne entre le sujet et l'objet.

En deuxième lieu, pour Milbank, la narration est historiquement contingente et soumise à la communauté particulière. La Raison des Lumières a sacrifié et chassé la narration pour assurer l'universalité de la raison humaine. Comme MacIntyre, la rationalité n'est pas séparable de la tradition dans laquelle la rationalité spécifique se forge parce que la formation de la rationalité particulière dans une communauté s'enracine dans sa propre croyance qui n'est pas universalisable. Pourtant la compréhension de la narration chez Milbank est plus historiciste que chez MacIntyre dans la mesure où il soutient qu'il y a pas de points communs entre les traditions. Même si tous les deux soulignent la spécificité de la rationalité dans une certaine tradition, la rationalité chrétienne est totalement différente des autres traditions, car le *logos* chrétien se distingue du *logos* philosophique.

En troisième lieu, la narration de Milbank s'ancre sur l'ontologie de la paix. Milbank oppose la narration de la raison séculière fondée sur la violence à la narration chrétienne fondée sur la paix. D'après Milbank, l'ontologie de la violence caractérise la vision du monde du monde antique. Dans ce monde où la violence est dominante émerge le christianisme qui apporte une ontologie diamétralement opposée. Ces deux ontologies proposent différentes interprétations sur la différence. Pour l'ontologie de la violence, la différence est à l'origine de la violence, tandis que pour l'ontologie de la paix, la différence enrichit le monde dans son harmonie.

Pourtant, comment peut-on démontrer la supériorité de l'ontologie de la paix sur l'ontologie de la violence. Comme nous avons vu plus haut, comme de Lubac Milbank rejette l'apologétique qui a recours au critère universel de la raison humaine. Donc, il suggère une solution esthétique. Le christianisme doit proposer une narration qualitativement différente des autres narrations. « Pour contrer cela [ontologie de la différence], il n'est pas question de ressusciter l'humanisme libéral, mais on peut essayer de mettre en avant un *mythos* alternatif, tout aussi infondé, mais incarnant néanmoins une "ontologie de paix", qui conçoive les différences comme liées de manière analogique, et non figées en un désaccord équivoque. »[56]

De sa compréhension de la nature de la narration, Milbank s'engage à se dialoguer avec des interlocuteurs comme Paul Ricœur et George Lindbeck.

D'abord, même si Milbank admet que sa propre métacritique de la science sociale tend vers la même direction que Ricœur[57], il récuse la tradition du *Verstehen* en général

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[55] John Milbank, *Le Milieu Suspendu. Henri de Lubac et le débat sur le surnaturel*, trad. par Olivier-Thomas Vernard (Paris/Ad Solem: Cerf/Genève, 2006), 86.
[56] Milbank, *Théologie et Théorie Sociale*, 463.
[57] Ibid., 439.

(Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Weber, Ricoeur, etc.) Comme pour Ricoeur, pour Milbank, la distinction entre l'explication et la compréhension est problématique parce qu'elle est un héritage de la tradition des Lumières fondée sur le *cogito* prétendu transparent qui est elle-même aujourd'hui considéré comme problématique.

Le grief adressé par Milbank à l'égard de Ricoeur se focalise sur son articulation de la explication et de la compréhension. La raison pour laquelle Ricoeur aborde ce problème ancien est de dépasser la dichotomie ditheyenne entre l'explication et l'a compréhension. Comme Dilthey, Ricoeur critique la dichotomie radicale à cause de son héritage cartésien. En ayant recours à Martin Heidegger, l'homme comme *Dasein* ne peut pas surmonter son milieu de vie (*Sitz im Leben*). Donc, il est absurd de penser qu'on peut expliquer les phénomènes sociaux, historiques et naturels de manière universelle et objective. Comme pour Heidegger, pour Ricoeur, la compréhension est de l'ordre ontologique. Autrement dit, la compréhension est un mode de l'être.

Pourtant, aux yeux de Milbank, malgré sa critique de la dichotomie entre l'explication et la compréhension , Ricoeur est comme Dilthey soumis à la présupposition des Lumières parce qu'il maintient la distinction entre l'explication et la compréhension, en disant que « expliquer plus, c'est comprendre mieux. »[58] Donc, Milbank critique la raison séculière de manière plus radicale que Ricoeur en mettant en avant le caractère narratif de la connaissance. Milbank dit: « Je remplacerai le duo compréhension-explication par le mode simple de la connaissance narrative. »[59]

De même, Milbank critique le fondationalisme narratologique de Geoge Lindbeck qui avec Hans Frei représente l'école de Yale. Décisivement influencé par Karl Barth et Wittgenstein, Lindbeck propose le modèle linguistico-culturel de la religion comme un modèle pertinent en postmodernité. En opposant au modèle expérience-expressive (Schleiermacher, Otto, Rahner, Tillich) qui suppose que l'expérience religieuse est une expérience commune de l'humanité et les différentes religions sont les expressions de cette expérience commune, il propose le *modèle linguistico-culturel* parce que l'expérience religieuse ne peut être comprise que dans une communauté linguistique et culturelle.

Milbank loue cette réhabilitation de la narrativité de la théologie postlibérale. Mais Milbank fait un grief à Lindbeck dans son erreur sur la nature de la narrativité. Cette erreur de Lindbeck se révèle dans sa compréhension de la nature des doctrines. D'après Lindbeck, « les seules théories de la doctrine que nous devons prendre au sérieux pour nos objectifs sont les théories régulatrices et les théories propositionnelles modifiées. »[60]

Par rapport à cette théorie, Milbank critique la théorie de la genèse de la doctrine chez Lindbeck. Milbank met en question de la nécessité de ces règles. « La nécessité même de 'règle' illustre le caractère hautement problématique de l'attachement à l''identification' de Dieu à l'idée de Dieu. »[61] Aux yeux de Milbank, l'approche de Lindbeck n'est pas suffisamment postmoderne parce qu'elle est soumise au paradigme kantien qui est également maintenu dans le courant neo-orthodoxe (Barth). Malgré son

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[58] Paul Ricoeur, *Temps et Récit*, t 1, (Paris: Seuil, 1983), 12.
[59] Milbank, *Théologie et Théorie Sociale*, 440.
[60] George Lindbeck, *La Nature des Doctrines* (Paris: Van Dieren Editeurs, 2002),102.
[61] Milbank, *Théologie et Théorie Sociale*, 463.

essai de surmonter le libéralisme théologique, le concept de la narration chez Lindbeck ne dépasse pas le seuil de l'épistémologie kantienne.

Même si Milbank et Lindbeck s'accordent pour dire que la méta-narration chrétienne s'enracine dans la pratique chrétienne, la pratique correcte chrétienne est, pour Lindbeck, déterminée non pas la narration exemplaire de Jésus, alors que la pratique chrétienne est, pour Milbank prise par l'Église comme la continuation du récit de Jésus. Il dit: « Ces histoires ne se situent pas dans le monde: à l'inverse, pour les chrétiens, c'est le monde qui se situe dans ces histoires. Elles définissent pour nous ce qu'est la réalité et elles fonctionnent comme une 'méta-narration', non dans le sens d'une histoire basée sur une raison fondatrice (selon le sens de Lyotard) mais dans le sens d'une histoire privilégiée par la foi, et envisagé comme la clé de l'interprétation et de la régulation de toutes les autres histoires. »[62]

4.Christologie poétique

La christologie de Milbank peut être bien comprise en termes de compréhension lubacienne qu'il a du surnaturel. En fait, l'idée du surnaturel est une conception essentiellement christologique. En partageant l'idée que Jésus est le *sacrement* de Dieu qui représente la nature de Dieu, Milbank s'oppose à la formulation systématique de la vie, de la mort, et de sa résurrection dans la théologie moderne. Pour lui, cette entreprise est une sorte d'idôlatrie conceptuelle qui réduit Dieu ineffable et incompréhensible en une conceptualité humaine. Milbank pense que Jésus incarné est « une figure suprêmement poétique. »[63] Milbank est convaincu que cette approche peut surmonter l'aprorie entre individualité et collectivité, entre immanence et transcendance, entre particularité éthique et universalité éthique. Dans cette section nous allons voir la christologie de Milbank en relation avec celle de la christologie mystique de Henri de Lubac.

4.1. Christologie mystique de Henri de Lubac

La christologie d'Henri de Lubac est directement liée à sa notion du mystère. Dans son article « Mystère et mystique »[64] de Lubac présente sa conception du mystère. Pour notre propos, il est d'abord nécessaire de récapituler les traits caractéristiques de sa conception du mystère.

Premièrement, le mystère dans le sens lubacien du terme n'a rien à voir avec expérience extraordinaire ou magique. Bien que ce mystère dépasse la raison humaine, il est loin d'être irrationnel, plutôt renforce la raison humaine. Cela constitue une différence majeure avec la conception païenne du mystère qui concerne l'expérience dionysiaque.

Deuxièmement, le mystère chrétien s'enracine dans l'histoire. Une implication de ce caractère est que le mystère chrétien est en intime rapport avec la vie ordinaire.

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[62] Ibid., 628.
[63] Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 3.
[64] De Lubac, *Théologie d'Occasion*, 37-76.

Autrement dit, le mystère chrétien n'est pas une idée abstraite intouchable, mais une réalité incarnée.

Troisièmement, un point crucial chez Milbank est l'importance du symbolisme dans notre compréhension du mystère chrétien. Pour de Lubac le symbole chrétien est indispensable pour révéler la nature du mystère chrétien. Le symbole joue un rôle médiateur entre l'homme fini et Dieu infini. La position lubacienne apparaît clairement dans cette appréciation de Jean Lacroix: « Ce qu'il y a de plus profond dans l'histoire spirituelle de l'humanité, c'est la compréhension du signe, et toute grande philosophie est une séméiologie: découvrir le chiffre du monde et pouvoir ainsi en révéler le langage, tel est l'objet du désir fondamental de l'homme. »[65].

Nous pouvons comprendre la christologie mystique de de Lubac sur la base de sa compréhension du mystère chrétien en général. Pour de Lubac Jésus-Christ est la forme définitive du mystère chrétien. Nous pouvons également exposer les traits de la christologie mystique d'Heri de Lubac.

Premièrement, la christologie mystique est basée sur le mystère de la Trinité. De Lubac dit: « la mystique chrétienne est une mystique trinitaire, puisqu'en Jésus-Christ, toute la Trinité se révèle et se donne. »[66] Cela veut dire que le mystère chrétien s'enracine dans l'amour de Dieu.

Deuxièment, la christologie mystique peut être comprise en termes de la thèse du *surnaturel*. En d'autres termes, les aspects naturel et surnaturel sont unis dans la personne de Jésus. En conséquence, la distinction moderne entre « la christologie d'en haut » et « la christologie d'en bas » n'a aucun sens dans la christologie de de Lubac.

Troisièmement, cette approche considère Jésus comme une figure paradoxale. D'après de Lubac, Jésus est le « trait d'union de la terre au Ciel. »[67] Dans ce sens Jésus est le paradoxe parce qu'il résout la tension entre finité et infinité, entre individualité et collectivité, entre temporel et éternel.

Quatrièmement, dans sa christologie mystique, Jésus comme *mysterium* est identique à Jésus comme *sacramentum*. La croix est après tout le symbole qui représente la profondeur de l'amour de Dieu. D'après de Lubac, la croix est « mystère de solitude et mystère de déchirement, seul signe efficace du rassemblement et de l'unité. Glaive sacré, allait jusqu'à séparer l'âme de l'esprit, mais pour y faire pénétrer la Vie Universelle.»[68]

Cinquièmement, la christologie mystique prend la forme narrative. C'est dire que la narration est la forme la plus pertinente pour la représentation de Dieu. Donc, on pourrait appeler cette narration « narration surnaturelle ». Milbank approuve cette idée: « un "réalisme métanarratif" authentique et sincère rend pleine justice à la tension interne existant au coeur du récit. En particulier, on ne trahit pas la temporalité de la dimension syntagmatique parce que la métanarration cesse de n'être qu'un ensemble

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[65] Jeans Lacroix, *Marxisme, Existentialisme, Personnalisme* (1949), in Henri de Lubac, *L'Écriture dans la Tradition* (Paris, Aubier-Montaigne), 96.

[66] De Lubac, *Théologie d'Occasion*, 68

[67] Henri de Lubac, « La Lumière du Christ », in *Affrontement Mystique* (Paris: Cerf, 2006), 397.

[68] Henri de Lubac, « Mysterium Crucis », in *Catholicisme: Les Aspects Sociaux du Dogme* (Paris: Cerf, 2003), 323.

privilégié d'événements pour devenir plutôt le récit de l'histoire intégrale de l'humanité, encore mise en œuvre et interprétée à la lumière de ces événements. »[69]

La structure narrative du mystère chrétien est inextricablement liée à l'Eucharistie qui est chère à la théologie milbankienne. À travers la célébration de l'Eucharistie on participe à l'histoire salvifique de Dieu. D'après de Lubac, « l'Eucharistie n'est pas seulement tournée vers le passé, en dépendance du Calvaire. Elle est tournée aussi vers l'avenir, vers un avenir qui est en sa dépendance: l'édification de l'Église et l'avènement de la "Vérité". Ainsi son symbolisme est double. Sacrement de mémoire, elle est aussi sacrement d'espérance. »[70]

4.2. Christologie poétique de John Milbank

C'est à partir de cet arrière-plan de la christologie mystique de de Lubac, une christologie « d'en haut », qu'on peut comprendre la christologie poétique de Milbank. Dans son article important « A Christological Poetics »[71], Milbank décrit Jésus essentiellement comme une réalité linguistique et poétique[72]. Nous pouvons interpréter cette description dans deux directions. D'abord, pour Milbank Jésus est compris en termes narratif, et non pas en termes de la proposition. Ensuite, cela dit que la pratique de Jésus est la clé de voûte pour la compréhension de l'identité de Jésus.

D'après Milbank, « le *poesis* est un aspect intégral de la pratique chrétienne et de la rédemption. Son oeuvre est la re-narration sans cesse et « explication » de l'histoire humaine sous le signe de la croix. »[73] Nous pouvons voir la trace de la christologie mystique qui souligne l'importance du symbole dans notre compréhension du Christ. Pour Milbank, Jésus est essentiellement un message de Dieu. Dans ce sens, Milbank refuse toute forme de la compréhension extrinsèque du Christ. C'est pour cela que Milbank critique la doctrine Protestante expiatoire du Chirst.

Cette compréhension est directement liée à la compréhension lubaciene du rapport de la création à l'incarnation. Pour Milbank comme pour de Lubac il y une continuité entre la création et l'incarnation. En d'autres termes, l'incarnation n'a pas pour objet de remédier à la faute causé par le péché humain, mais pour accomplir la création. Il comprend la création comme un processus continu. Ce qui est important, c'est le fait que l'homme participe à la création avec Dieu. La poesis humain et la *poesis* divine se rencontrent dans la création du monde.

C'est dans cette perspective que Milbank entend réinterpréter la doctrine protestante de l'expiation comme participation à l'expiation. Milbank intègre cette doctrine à son ecclésiologie. La mort sacrificielle de Jésus n'est pas un paiement du péché, mais un acte exemplaire pour participer à la souffrance de Jésus. Cela reflète la

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[69] Milbank, *Théologie et Théorie Sociale*, 631. Le texte original exprime l'idée milbankienne plus clairement: « in the case of the Biblical narratives, where the projected frame of reference is the relation of the supernatural to the natural, the paradigmatic is sketched in vaguely, and gets constantly revised in response to syntagmatic unfolding ».

[70] Henri de Lubac, Corpus *Mysticum: L'Eucharistie et l'Église au Moyen Âge, Étude historique* (Paris: Cerf, 2009), 84.

[71] Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 123-144.

[72] Ibid., 123.

[73] Ibid., 32: « *poesis* is an integral aspect of Christian practice and redemption. Its work is the ceaseless re-narrating and "explaining" of human history under the sign of the cross. »

position de Lubac sur cette doctrine protestante. De Lubac dit: « C'est qu'en effet cette Vie éternelle, qui est lumière, est en même temps amour: "L'essence de la Vie, pour saint Jean, est l'amour qui se donne". Dieu, qui "est Amour", dit encore saint Jean dans cette même Epître (4, 8), se donne aux hommes dans le Christ. Par-delà la rédemption proprement dite, comprise comme rachat du péché et libération du mal, le Verbe de Dieu vient, en prenant notre humanité, l'unir à la divinité. »[74].

5.Surnaturaliser Éthique

Dans son article « Can Morality Be Christian ? », Milbank avance une thèse provocatrice selon laquelle la moralité ne peut pas être chrétienne. »[75] D'après Milbank, « la morale chrétienne est une chose si étrangère, qui doit être déclarée immoral ou amoral selon toutes les autres normes de l'homme et les codes moraux. »[76] Par cette assertion, qu'est-ce que Milbank veut dire ? Il entend par là qu'il n'y a pas de mode typique de la vie qui caractérise la vie Chrétienne ? Loin de là. Cela veut dire qu'il y a une nouveauté dans la vie chrétienne différenciée des autres éthiques séculières.

La compréhension de la narrativité permet à Milbank d'articuler son éthique chrétienne. Milbank est contre le projet de la modernité qui propose la loi éthique universelle fondée sur la raison autonome. Sur ce point, Milbank trouve un allié, Stanley Hauerwas. Dans son article « On keeping theological ethics theological », Hauerwas s'oppose à la stratégie apologétique de la théologie moderne. Dans l'éthique théologique moderne, la réflexion éthique n'est plus considérée comme une partie de la théologie. À travers son affirmation de la morale autonome, Immanuel Kant a en grande partie contribué à l'établissement de l'éthique théologique indépendamment de la théologie. Hauerwas veut être en rupture avec cette compréhension moderne de l'éthique. Au lieu de fournir des normes et des principes universaux, Hauerwas souligne la particularité éthique dans chaque communauté. L'éthique ne peut donc s'exprimer que d'une manière qualifiée (comme par exemple l'éthique Bouddhiste, Confucienne, chrétienne...). Cela veut dire que l'éthique chrétienne est une éthique pour la communauté chrétienne. Il dit: « L'éthique chrétienne ne commence pas en mettant accent sur des règles et des principes, mais en attirant notre attention sur un récit qui raconte la relation de Dieu avec la Création ».[77] C'est pourquoi Hauerwas nomme l'Église comme « immigrées résidents vivant dans la colonie chrétienne »[78]

Avec Hauerwas, Milbank déclare sa rupture avec l'éthique séculière. En faisant cela, il compare l'éthique séculière avec l'éthique chrétienne.

Premièrement, la moralité séculière est basée sur le manque, et donc elle est réactive en caractère, car la moralité séculière ne connaît pas la plénitude de Dieu manifestée dans le Christ. À cause de ce caractère, il s'ensuit que la moralité séculière est théorique dans la mesure où elle est une expression de l'obsession du soi. Donc, Milbank s'oppose à l'éthique du sacrifice, typiquement révélé dans l'éthique moderne.

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[74] Henri de Lubac, *Révélation Divine* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1983), 29.
[75] Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 219.
[76] Ibid., 219.
[77] Stanley Hauerwas, *Le Royaume de Paix : Une Initiation à l'Éthique chrétienne* (Paris: Bayard, 2006), 74.
[78] Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: life in the Christian Colony* (Abingdon Press: 1993, 49).

Deuxièmement, la moralité séculière est directement liée à la Mort, alors que la moralité chrétienne concerne la Résurrection. D'après lui, « sans la mort, il n'y aurait pas de besoin d'être bon, la violence aurait simplement un amusement sadomasochiste. »[79]

Au lieu de la moralité séculière basée sur la raison séculière, Milbank suggère que la moralité doit être poétique et créative. Milbank pense que le *telos* éthique doit participer à l'harmonie de la totalité qui n'a pas une déficience. Donc, l'éthique chrétienne est « l'acte créatif spontané »[80]. Comme nous avons vu en haut, pour de Lubac, le *poesis* est conçu comme *déification*. En d'autres termes, l'éthique poétique milbankienne vise à participer à la rédemption divine. Nous pouvons voir une affinité de l'accent de Hauerwas sur la narrativité de l'éthique chrétienne avec l'éthique poétique de Milbank. Hauerwas s'oppose à la fois à l'éthique utilitariste et à l'éthique déontologique. À la différence de ces approches éthiques qui soulignent la conséquence de l'acte moral ou les règles morales, Hauerwas met l'accent sur le contexte dans laquelle la pensée éthique se forme. D'après Hauerwas, « l'éthique chrétienne ne commence pas en mettant l'accent sur des règles et des principes, mais en attirant notre attention sur un récit qui raconte la relation de Dieu avec la création. »[81]. De plus, comme Milbank, Hauerwas souligne l'imagination poétique dans la réflexion éthique.

Nous associons naturellement les histoires et les récits avec la fiction. Les histoires créent un monde imaginaire qui nous délivre de l'obligation pesante de nous occuper du monde réel. En racontant Dieu, pense-t-on, les Écritures tenteraient seulement d'exprimer, par des « mythes » ou des « symboles », ce que l'on pourrait dire directement mais qui, en raison de la nature même de l'objet décrit, ne s'exprime que sous une forme « poétique ». De telles histoires sur Dieu, comme la plupart des histoires, sont sans doute importantes pour nous consoler, mais on aurait tort de demander si elles sont vraies. »[82].

5.1 Surnaturaliser la vertu

La parution de *After Virtue* (1981) d'Alasdair MacIntyre marque un tournant de la réflexion éthique. En fait, la réflexion de Milbank sur l'éthique vient de la pensée de MacIntyre. D'après MacIntyre, la stratégie morale des Lumières a échoué à cause de son incohérence sur la vision morale. Au lieu de stratégie morale, MacIntyre suggère l'éthique de la vertu qui est fondée sur une vision téléologique du monde typiquement développée dans l'éthique aristotélicienne. Par vertu, MacIntyre entend une excellence de la fonction. Comme la fonction n'est pas séparable de la communauté, l'éthique de la vertu caractérise la communauté et sa tradition dans laquelle une pensée éthique se forme. De ce fait, l'éthique de la vertu retient également l'attention de la formation du caractère qui est développé dans une communauté.

Milbank critique la conception de la vertu de MacIntyre. Du point de vue de Milbank, il aborde le problème éthique en tant que théologien, tandis que MacIntyre

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[79] Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 223: « without death, there would be no need to be good, violence would be but sadomasochistic fun. »
[80] Ibid., 4.
[81] Hauerwas, *Le Royaume de Paix*, 74.
[82] Ibid., 75.

l'aborde en tant que philosophe[83]. Pour être précis, en se distinguant de MacIntyre, il qualifie sa démarche éthique de « détachement de la vertu de la dialectique »[84]. Cela montre que Milbank a une approche éthique en rupture avec la modernité, il recherche un fondement de la connaissance humaine. Dans cette perspective, Milbank est plus historiciste que MacIntyre.

Aux yeux de Milbank MacIntyre est aussi un penseur non-fondationaliste, mais il n'abandonne pas totalement une base universelle dans la réflexion éthique. Par exemple, MacIntyre maintient que la traductibilité entre les langues fait preuve d'une commensurabilité entre nombreuses traditions[85]. En contraste, la tradition chrétienne, pour Milbank, est radialement une nouveauté dans l'histoire de l'humanité.

Au niveau méthodologique, Milbank opte pour la méthode rhétorique qui privilégie l'opinion, le témoignage, et la persuasion, tandis que MacIntyre demeure dialecticien en recherchant des éléments universels de notre pensée. Milbank maintient qu'il s'attache à la tradition neo-platonicienne: « La primauté donnée à l'enseignement et à la tradition dans la compréhension néoplatonicienne et chrétienne du Logos rapproche bien davantage la pratique de la vertu d'une tournure d'esprit rhétorique plutôt que dialectique. »[86] Pour Milbank, la vertu chrétienne ne se situe pas dans la raison universelle, mais dans l'union avec le Christ. En cela sa pensée se différencie de la vertu au sens séculier. Cette pensée apparaît dans la théologie de Henri de Lubac.

Même si Henri de Lubac n'a pas écrit de textes spécifiques sur l'éthique, il est l'un des promoteurs de l'éthique de la vertu. Sa pensée éthique se manifeste dans son herméneutique théologique comme en témoigne son ouvrage important sur les quatre sens de l'Ecriture. Ici, il est nécessaire d'exposer brièvement son herméneutique. Il présente ce principe de l'interprétation de l'Écriture par la formule médiévale:

> *Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria,*
> *Moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia*[87]

Le premier sens de l'Écriture est le sens littéral qui concerne le sens historique. Pour de Lubac c'est le fondement du sens spirituel. D'après de Lubac *littera* est interchangeable avec *historia*. De plus il identifie *historia* avec *narratio*. Cela veut dire que de Lubac attache beaucoup d'importance à la narration biblique en tant que telle. Pour lui, l'histoire biblique écrit sous forme de narration est elle-même la forme de la révélation.

Le sens allégorique est le sens concernant le mystère du Christ. Il sert à l'édification de la foi. Si le sens littéral est pour les enfants, le sens allégorique est destiné aux les croyants d'un âge mûr. « L'histoire ne peut rassasier que les enfants, entendons: les enfants spirituels, elle ne fait qu'exciter l'appétit de l'esprit mûr, qu'il faut apaiser par l'allégorie. »[88]

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[83] Milbank, *Théologie et Théorie Sociale*, 537.
[84] Ibid.
[85] cf. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice, Which Rationality*, 370-388.
[86] Milbank, *Théologie et Théorie Sociale*, 537-8.
[87] De Lubac, *Exégèse Médiévale*, I- I, 23.
[88] Ibid., 492.

D'après de Lubac le discernement donné par sens allégorique ne suffit pas. Il est nécessaire d'étudier le sens moral. Mais ce sens moral n'a rien à voir avec la moralité séculière, parce que la formation de la moralité n'est pas séparable du mystère du Christ. La progression morale du croyant dépend de l'union avec le Christ. De Lubac le dit de la façon suivante: « Tout ce qui, dans l'Écriture, est susceptible d'être allégorisé, peut être et doit être aussi moralisé. On passe de l'histoire à la tropologie par l'allégorie. Celle-ci consistant tout entière dans le Mystère du Christ, c'est ce Mystère qui, dans la tropologie, se trouve intériorisé. »[89]

Le dernier sens est le sens analogique. Ce sens est inséparablement lié au sens allégorique et tropologique. De Lubac distingue l'aspect objectif et l'aspect subjectif de ce sens. Nous pouvons voir la signifiance éthique de ce sens. C'est-à-dire, au plan personnel, la moralité chrétienne doit être recontextualisée dans l'eschaton. De plus, la moralité chrétienne n'est pas une affaire personnelle, mais collective à travers l'Église. Cette idée est exactement conforme à la vision éthique de Milbank et Hauerwas pour qui l'Église est au coeur de leur réflexion éthique.

5.2 La critique du réalisme chrétienne de Reinhold Niebuhr

La pensée éthique fondée sur la théologie chrétienne permet à Milbank de critiquer la pensée de Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr est célèbre pour sa distinction entre l'éthique individuelle et l'éthique collective dans son ouvrage *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932). D'après Niebuhr, l'égoïsme de l'homme empêche la réalisation de l'idéal éthique au niveau collectif parce que l'égoïsme a tendance à grandir quand l'égoïsme individuel se développe sous forme collective comme par exemple dans le cas de l'État-nation. Face au mal collectif, la moralité individuelle est incapable. Donc il est nécessaire que l'on ne doit pas avoir recours aux ressources individuelles.

À propos de cette démarche de Niebuhr, Milbank qualifie sa pensée de « stoïque en caractère »[90], parce que la pensée de Niebuhr est limitée dans les limites de la finitude humaine. Aux yeux de Milbank, Niebuhr, négligeant la plénitude de la création apportée par l'incarnation, pense que la création est dans l'état de Chute. La version stoïque du christianisme fait violence à la Charité chrétienne et il néglige la sanctification des croyants et la sanctification du monde par les croyants sanctifiés.

Donc, la doctrine sociale de l'Église au nom de la charité chrétienne n'est pas l'*agape* au sens chrétien du terme. Pour Milbank c'est un compromis avec les Lumières.

6. La Vision Eucharistique de l'Église

L'ontologie sociale de Milbank est profondément basée sur l'idée de l'unité naturelle et surnaturelle de l'humanité réalisée définitivement dans l'Église, une idée éminemment claire chez de Lubac. Il est inimaginable pour Milbank que les sociologues distinguent entre l'individuel et le sociétal, car l'homme est créé pour la communion. Donc Milbank appelle la distinction catégorique des sciences sociales « illusion sociologique »[91]. La conception moderne du social est une construction conceptuelle de la

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[89] Ibid., 558.
[90] Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 235.
[91] Milbank, *Théologie et Théorie Sociale*, 388.

sociologie moderne. Pour Milbank et de Lubac le social, dans un sens authentique du terme, se situe dans l'Église, et non pas dans une sphère neutre que les sociologues imaginent. Dans cette perspective, l'ecclésiologie doit être une sociologie chrétienne. L'Église a sa propre théorie sociale qu'est son ecclésiologie[92].

6.1 L'ecclésiologie de la communion de Henri de Lubac

L'ecclésiologie de communion a émergé contre le courant de l'ecclésiologie individualiste en soulignant communion des croyants et compréhension sacramentelle de l'Église (Bonhœffer, Zizioulas, Möhler, Congar, de Lubac). De Lubac est l'un des principaux artisans de cette ecclésiologie. Au coeur de l'ecclésiologie de de Lubac, il y a l'Eucharistie. Dans son étude historique monumentale, *Corpus Mysticum* (1944), de Lubac avance une thèse selon laquelle « dans la pensée de toute l'antiquité chrétienne, Eucharistie et Église sont liées. »[93] D'après lui, « c'est l'Église qui fait l'Eucharistie, mais c'est aussi l'Eucharistie qui fait l'Eglise »[94] Dit autrement, le but ultime de l'Eucharist est la communion entre les croyants qui se réalise comme l'Église.

Pour de Lubac, l'Église n'est pas un rassemblement des croyants individuel, mais un mystère en tant que telle, car Elle est identifiée avec le vrai Corps du Christ. C'est pourquoi de Lubac, au lieu d'une définition de l'Église, préfère des descriptions métaphoriques des l'Église comme par exemple, l'Église comme mère. De Lubac identifie le mystère avec le sacrement. « L'Eglise est un mystère, c'est-à-dire, aussi bien, un sacrement. »[95] Pourtant il attire l'attention sur la différence entre le mystère et le sacrement. Par rapport au sacrement, le mot mystère dans le sens antique du terme est plus dynamique. « Le mystère est essentiellement action. »[96]. Cette idée implique que l'intervention divine se déroule dans l'histoire humaine. Autrement dit, l'Église comme mystère veut dire qu'elle existe à l'horizon historique comme le véhicule de l'action divine.

L'Église appartient au monde ici-bas en même temps qu'au ciel. Ce caractère manifeste que l'Église est conçue comme une société paradoxale. En ce sens, de Lubac décrit l'Église comme « complexio oppositorium »[97]. La nature paradoxale de l'Église est issue du paradoxe de l'Incarnation. Comme l'Église est la continuation de l'Incarnation, il est impossible que nous entrions en communion avec Dieu sans Église.

6.2 Méta-narration Christo-ecclésiale

Milbank maintient que la mission de Jésus n'est pas de se sacrifier comme l'expiation à cause de la nature pécheresse de l'homme, mais d'établir une communauté où la pratique non-violente est réelle. Donc, pour lui « L'Église elle-même, en tant que cité céleste réalisée, est le telos du processus salvateur. »[98] Milbank pense que l'histoire de Jésus est le fondement de l'établissement de l'Église. « La métanarration représente

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[92] Ibid., 619.
[93] De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 23.
[94] Henri de Lubac, *Méditation sur l'Église* (Paris: Cerf, 2003), 113.
[95] Ibid., 175.
[96] Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 61.
[97] Henri de Lubac, *Paradoxe et Mystère de l'Église suivie de L'Église dans la crise actuelle* (Paris: Cerf, 2010), 11.
[98] Milbank, *Théologie et Théorie Sociale*, 656.

la genèse de l'Église, en dehors de laquelle on ne peut avoir qu'un Christ gnostique et anhistorique. »[99] Les croyants participent au Corps du Christ à travers son engagement à l'histoire de Jésus, une histoire qui commence au commencement du monde, culmine dans l'Incarnation, et sera accomplie dans l'eschaton. Donc l'Église a la vocation de pratiquer l'action non-violente manifestée dans l'Evangile. La mission de l'Église consiste à devenir la communauté alternative appuyée sur l'ontologie de la paix à l'encontre de l'État moderne qui est fondé sur l'ontologie de la violence.

Dans son article « An Essay Against Secular Order », Milbank propose une vision intégrale de l'individu et de la société en ayant recours à l'ecclésiologie narrative de de Lubac. Cette démarche vise à corriger la fausse notion du salut des théologiens de la libération (Gutiérrez, Boff). D'après Milbank, la théologie de libération adopte l'explication sociologique de la science séculière comme une référence pour notre compréhension du social. Pourtant Milbank souligne que cette appropriation des sciences sociales qui admettent la neutralité du social est incompatible avec le *logos* chrétien. Au lieu de cette démarche, l'individu est intégré dans la narration de l'Église en faisant appel à de Lubac. Chez de Lubac, l'individu et la société sont en balance grâce à son ontologie sociale particulière. Il conçoit homme comme microcosme. Cela veut dire que l'individu ne se place pas d'une manière opposée à la société comme la sociologie séculière le suppose. De Lubac décrit son modèle de la personne comme suivante: « À sa racine, on peut imaginer la personne comme un réseau de flèches concentriques ; en son épanouissement, s'il est permis d'exprimer son paradoxe intime en une formule paradoxale, on dira qu'elle est un centre centrifuge. On pourra bien dire aussi, par conséquent, pour magnifier sa richesse intérieure et pour manifester le caractère de fin que tout autre doit lui reconnaître, qu'"une personne, c'est un univers', mais il sera nécessaire d'ajouter aussitôt que cet univers en suppose d'autres, avec lesquels il ne fait qu'un »[100].

6.3 Église et Eucharistie

Fortement inspirée par l'ecclésiologie lubacienne, au coeur de l'ecclésiologie milbankienne se situe la liturgie, surtout l'eucharistie. Pour Milbank, la restauration de la liturgie est celle d'une ontologie participative. Catherine Pickstock interprète la notion de la participation en terme politique: « Les êtres humains, créés à l'image de Dieu, commencèrent à se concevoir comme des volontés autonomes, et la société humaine se mit à ressembler à une collection d'atomes isolés. On voit donc que l'oubli de la notion de participation, au sens métaphysique du terme, conduisit tout naturellement à l'oubli de la participation au sens politique du terme. »[101] L'eucharistie est donc comprise comme un acte politique. L'Église est, avant tout, le site de la communion entre Dieu et l'homme et entre les hommes. Face au monde sécularisé, individualisé sous l'influence du libéralisme, l'Église doit montrer « l'exemple de la communauté humaine »[102] dans laquelle le pardon est pratiqué et la paix se limite à l'imitation de la vie de Jésus dans l'Évangile.

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[99] Ibid., 630.
[100] De Lubac, *Catholicisme*, 289-290.
[101] Pickstock, « L'Orthodoxie est-elle radical? » In *Radical Orthodoxy: Pour une Révolution théologique*, 24.
[102] Milbank, *Théologie et Théorie Sociale*, 631.

6.4 L'État comme parodie moderne de l'Église

Pour Milbank l'État moderne n'est qu'une invention moderne. De Lubac et Milbank sont hostiles à l'État-nation, car il a toujours la tendance totalisante comme on a vu dans l'histoire du XXe siècle. Pour Milbank l'État moderne n'est qu'un un phénomène récent. D'après Benedict Anderson, l'État moderne n'est qu'une « communauté politique imaginé. »[103] D'après William Cavanaugh qui dénonce le mythe de l'État sauveur, « la théorie politique moderne, prétendument "séculière" et neutre, est en réalité une théologie masquée, qui fait de l'État moderne un État sauveur, en lieu et place de l'Église. Prendre conscience du caractère parodique, ou "hérétique", de cette sotériologie, c'est déjà commencer de réimaginer l'espace et le temps dans une perspective authentiquement théologique. »[104] Milbank pense que l'Église et l'État ne sont que les produits de deux narrations, basées sur deux différentes ontologies. L'un est l'ontologie de la paix, qui est fondée sur la trinité harmonieuse dans sa différence. L'autre l'ontologie de la violence qui est inhérente dans la pensée depuis les Lumières.

Par conséquent, l'État n'est jamais la réalité neutre, objective ou profane. Il est une parodie de l'Eglise. « Le corps de l'État est un *simulacrum*, une fausse copie du Corps du Christ. »[105]

C'est-à-dire, l'État moderne propose une peudo-sotériologie en propageant l'idéologie libérale. Dans cette perspective, Milbank critique sévèrement le réalisme politique de Reinhold Niebuhr. Bien que Niebuhr dénonce la naïveté de *the social gospel* qui affirme une évolution sociale harmonieuse, il est aux yeux de Milbank, aussi un esclave de la modernité dans la mesure où il considère le monde comme un domaine neutre. Donc, Niebuhr ne voit pas d'aspect politique de l'Église. Cette idée trouve un écho dans la pensée de Hauerwas. La position vis-à-vis de l'État est manifeste dans son attitude envers la guerre. « L'Église n'est pas quelque chose à dire sur la guerre tant que l'église est ce que Dieu a dit à propos de la guerre. L'Église n'est pas une alternative à la guerre. L'Église est notre alternative à la guerre. C'est pourquoi les questions de l'unité de l'Église doivent être l'enjeu le plus urgent. »[106]

6.5 Église et culture

Pour Milbank et de Lubac il n'y a pas de culture neutre. Toutes les cultures sont fondées sur une foi religieuse particulière. Cette idée est basée sur la thèse du *surnaturel*. Il n'y a pas de nature objective. La nature elle-même est une conception culturellement forgée. Donc, il faut une culture chrétienne basée sur une foi chrétienne qui sera toujours inadaptée à la culture séculière.

En suivant de Lubac, Milbank dit: « Il faut une ontologie chrétienne qui justifie la culture et l'histoire comme l'élément intégral de l'être chrétien le long de la

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[103] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 6.
[104] William Cavanaugh, *Eucharistie et mondialisation. La liturgie comme acte politique* (Ad Solem: 2001),8.
[105] *Radical Orthodoxy*, 182.
[106] Stanley Hauerwas, *Against the Nations* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press),16.

contemplation et comportement éthique, plutôt qu'un "problème" externe à la foi. »[107] Dans son article « Culture: The Gospel of Affinity », Milbank aborde le problème de la culture dans le contexte postmoderne. Milbank caractérise le postmodernisme comme « l'oblitération des frontières. »[108] Aux yeux de Milbank, cette affirmation postmoderne, qui est souvent mise en question comme relativisme éthique, sert à la proclamation de la vérité chrétienne. Pour Milbank, le christianisme est une religion qui élimine les frontières, parce que le christianisme embrace la différence. Cette idée est justifiée par Milbank comme la structure ontologique chrétienne elle-même. L'ontologie trinitaire, qui est marquée par la différence, est la base primordiale du monde.

7. Enjeux critiques

Il est vrai que le projet théologique de John Milbank est très provocateur dans le milieu protestant aussi bien que dans le milieu catholique. Sa nouveauté consiste à dévoiler nos préjugés selon lesquels la modernité a formé en nous et n'a pas été mis en question. Dans ce sens, le christianisme contemporain est dû à ce théologien Anglican.

Pourtant, il est nécessaire que nous ayons une vue critique à l'égard de ce théologien éminent.

D'abord, malgré la pertinence de son modèle participatif, il faut mettre en garde contre le risque de ce modèle. Dans la tradition protestante, on a toujours vu le risque du mysticisme chrétien. Je pense que les réformateurs (Luther, Calvin) ne se sont pas opposé à tous les éléments mystiques, mais il a vu le danger de la divinisation du soi à cause de la tendance égocentrique. Donc, les réformateurs ont préféré le modèle de l'alliance parce qu'il souligne l'initiative divine dans la relation entre Dieu et l'homme. Mais on peut reconnaître l'avantage du modèle participatif. Dans ce modèle, l'univers (y compris l'homme) est conçu comme une totalité harmonieuse, parce que toutes les choses sont analogiquement liées les unes aux autres. Il s'agit là d'un point oublié par le protestantisme à cause de son obsession de vouloir l'interprétation littérale de l'Écriture.

Deuxièmement, Milbank associe la doctrine de l'expiation à la violence. C'est pour cela qu'il montre sa répugnance envers cette doctrine. Pour lui, il est incompréhensible que Dieu puisse commettre une violence sur le Christ. Ce malaise le conduit à rejeter la compréhension sacrificielle de la mort de Jésus. Et il considère que cette doctrine est introduite par l'influence de la loi romaine. Mais elle n'est pas inventée, elle a une histoire longue depuis la théologie patristique. Globalement on a l'impression que Milbank considère que la Réformation a une branche marginale dans l'histoire chrétienne.

Troisièmement, la vision eucharistique de l'Église que Milbank propose est digne d'être louée. Milbank a raison quand il dit que c'est l'Eucharistie est à l'origine de l'Église. Mais on peut demander à Milbank si l'Eucharistie seule peut maintenir l'Église. Nous savons que pour Milbank l'Écriture autant que l'Eucharistie occupe une place centrale, parce que les deux sont le sacrement principal de Dieu. Donc, nous pouvons

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[107] Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, 79: « We need a Christian ontology which does justice to culture and history as an integral element of Christian being alongside contemplation and ethical behavior, rather than as a "problem", external to faith »

[108] Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, 187.

demander à Milbank pourquoi son coeur balance entre l'Eucharistie et la proclamation de la Parole de Dieu. Milbank peut puiser dans la tradition protestante pour répondre sur ce point.

8. Conclusion

Dans cette thèse nous avons montré que John Milbank a approprié la thèse du surnaturel d'Henri de Lubac de manière exhaustive depuis l'enjeu ontologique jusqu'à la théologie culturelle. Par ailleurs, Milbank situe la théologie lubacienne dans le contexte postmoderne. Cela dit que Milbank s'engage avec les philosophes postmodernes avec la thèse du surnaturel afin qu'il montre la supériorité du *logos* chrétien.

Plus précisément, l'idée du surnaturel permet à Milbank de déconstruire la métaphysique occidentale. Pour de Lubac et Milbank, la métaphysique séculière est une science dangereuse, car il réduit Dieu incompréhensible à la conceptualité humaine. D'après de Lubac, le surnaturel est inséparablement lié à l'histoire. Cela veut dire que la révélation chrétienne est intimement liée au langage humain. Donc on ne peut pas avoir la connaissance de Dieu en dehors de la représentation linguistique de Dieu.

C'est dans cette perspective que la compréhension de de Lubac and de Milbank concernant le Christ peut être comprise. Pour eux, le Christ ne peut pas être comprise sous forme propositionnelle. Le Christ est le sacrement de Dieu. Donc le Christ doit être compris de façon métaphorique. Il est la métaphore du pardon. Cela veut dire que nous devons trouver la vraie identité du Christ dans sa pratique et que cette pratique is la vraie source de l'élaboration théologique du Christ.

De cette compréhension du Christ est dérivée la compréhension de l'éthique chrétienne. Pour eux la pratique du Christ et non pas la raison universelle est le fondement de l'éthique chrétienne. Donc le but de l'éthique chrétienne est de faire les croyants surnaturellement vertueux. Pour cela, l'éthique chrétienne doit être créative /poétique, car la sanctification/déification des croyants à travers la formation du caractère est le but ultime de l'éthique chrétienne. L'union des croyants avec le Christ rend cette formation possible.

Si la christologie poétique est le cœur de la théologie milbankienne, l'Église est le point culminant de sa théologie. Comme for de Lubac, l'Eucharistie est le centre de son ecclésiologie. Sans la pratique eucharistique l'Église n'est pas imaginable parce qu'il y a un lien analogique entre le corps du Christ et l'Église. Pour Milbank et de Lubac, l'Eucharistie est le fondement non seulement de l'Église, mais la société en général. En d'autres termes, la paix eucharistique doit être élargie jusqu'au tous les domaines de l'activité humaine.

Ainsi l'engagement de Milbank avec Henri de Lubac est très exhaustif. De plus, son engagement est très créatif dans le sens où il resitue la pensée lubacienne dans le contexte postmodern. En postmodernité, toute idée est considérée comme instable à cause de la mise en question de la vision cartésienne du monde. Dans cette situation, Milbank réussit à utiliser la pensée postmoderne en faveur de la théologie orthodoxe, de même que les Pères de l'Église ont utilisé la pensée païenne pour la foi chrétienne.

Hyeongkwon LIM

John Milbank and the Mystery of the Supernatural :His Postmodern Engagement with Henri de Lubac

Résumé en français

Mots clés: *surnaturel, nature et grâce, paradoxe, don, nature pure, désir, participation, meta-récit, etc.*

Cette étude a pour objet de lire thélogien anglicain, John Milbank à travers la thèse de *surnaturel* du théologien catholique français, Henri de Lubac. Dans sa thèse du surnaturel, de Lubac entend montrer qu'il n'y a aucune sphère purement naturelle indépendemment de la grâce de Dieu. Autrement dit, d'après cette thèse, la nature et le surnaturel constitutent une unité organique. En fait, cette idée d'Henri de Lubac s'oppose à la notion néo-scolastique de *natura pura*, qui a été développée en vue de sauvegarder la gratuité de la grâce face à la crise Baianiste. La thèse du surnaturel a été appropriée par John Milbank et sa théologie peut être comprise comme une continuation de la thèse d'Henri de Lubac. Milbank s'approprie la thèse du surnatuel dans divers aspects de cette thèse. Cette thèse apparaît chez Milbank tantôt au niveau ontologique, tantôt au niveau éthique, tantôt au niveau ecclésial. Si l'idée du surnaturel de de Lubac est organique (Balthasar), cette même thèse donne une cohérence au projet théologique de Milbank. Une originalité de l'appropriation milbankienne de la thèse du surnaturel consiste à la mise en rapport de l'idée du surnaturel avec le langage. Pour être plus précis, pour lui, le langage joue un rôle médiateur entre le materiel et le surnaturel. Bien que cette idée soit présente dans la théologie sacramentelle de de Lubac, Milbank développe cette théologie en élargissant cette idée à tous les domaines de la culture humaine. Autrement dit, la thèse du surnaturel rend possible la théologie de la culture chez Milbank. Mais ce qui est crucial, pour Milbank et de Lubac, c'est que l'Église elle-même doit être le véhicule de la création de la culture chrétienne.

Résumé en anglais

Key words: *supernatural, nature and grace, paradox, gift, pure nature, desire, participation, meta-narrative, etc.*

This study aims at reading Anglican theologian John Milbank through the lens of French Catholic theologian, Henri de Lubac's central concept of the idea of the supernatural. Henri de Lubac's so-called, *surnaturel* thesis means that there is no reserved realm, which neo-scholastic theologians call pure nature (*natura pura*), independent of God's grace. This means that nature and the supernatural constitute an organic unity. Milbank appropriates de Lubac's thesis through and through. De Lubac's idea of the supernatural penetrates Milbank's all theological reflection ranging from ontological issues to political ones. One important point in Milbank's appropriation of de Lubac's surnaturel thesis is that he emphasizes the relationship of the supernatural to human language. For him, human language itself is supernatural in character. This means that human culture, which is constituted by human language, is itself theologically constituted. In other words, there is no neutral culture, but cultures based on particular theological convictions. From this insight, Milbank emphasizes, with de Lubac, the necessity of Christian philosophy which will be the true basis of human culture. Crucial to Milbank's theological project is the centrality of the Church in the establishment of Christian culture. For both Milbank and de Lubac, the Church is not a means for atemporal salvation, but itself the goal of salvation. The Church is to be the place of heavenly peace which the Eucharist represents. Milbank is convinced that only the Church has the power to counter the neo-liberal capitalist order that is based on the ontology of violence.