EDUCATION, STUDY, AND THE PERSON

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of the Ohio State University

By

Samuel D. Rocha, B.A., M.A., M.A.

Graduate Program in Education

The Ohio State University

2010

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Philip Smith, Chair

Dr. Bryan Warnick

Dr. Patti Lather

Dr. William Taylor

Dr. Timothy Leonard

Abstract

In the strictest sense, this dissertation is not theoretical. It is methodological and descriptive. Methodologically, I am concerned with how to seek, sense, and see—to know as opposed to merely knowing-about. Attempting to know in this ontological way, my analysis begins (in Chapter One) with some categories and metaphysical discussions that offer a "trinitarian lens" from which we might begin to seek, sense, and see things. This lens serves as the reference point for the descriptive project: to describe education (in Chapter Two), study (in Chapter Three), and the person (in Chapter Four) in ways that are potent enough to endure and accompany us. Finally (in Chapter Five) I offer some reflections on the merit of these descriptions and their overall purpose and motivation.

In the end, my purpose is to describe things in a way that is faithful to the reality present through the trinitarian lens and provide room for the reader to exercise in practices of seeking, sensing, and seeing.

There are also practical suggestions for curriculum and teacher education. Namely, that phenomenological method—understood as way of imagining the real—and ontological descriptions should be a part of teacher preparation, curriculum development, and the practice of teaching in and out of schools. These suggestions might offer resources to teachers that could withstand the loss of the school itself.

To my greatest teachers: Tomas and Gabriel.

Acknowledgements

I have so many people to thank. This dissertation is like I am: a thing that only is in relations, in community.

The first community that I would like to thank is my committee: Phil Smith, my advisor, believed in me before I did. He introduced and welcomed me to the field of philosophy of education and to Ohio State University. During my time here, he gave me the freedom and latitude to do my work undistracted by tediousness. His initial sponsorship, and continued mentorship, creates an immeasurable debt that words could never repay. Bryan Warnick has been a consistently attentive, Socratic companion to me. I often think of him as my gadfly because he has never insulted me with empty flattery. Instead, he has shown me true affection through his many, many philosophical provocations that have inspired and clarified many, many of these pages. Bill Taylor has shown me the art of living and the balance that it requires. He has taken much time to be with me, to challenge the existential merits of my work, and to tirelessly listen to me and read and re-read my writings. Patti Lather has not only introduced me to entirely new fields and literatures, she has also supported my work *outside* of those fields of study. She has generously given me her time, attention, and encouragement. Tim Leonard has selflessly poured himself into my work and my life. I cannot properly begin to describe or measure his contribution to this dissertation—it is excessive. What I can say is that his contribution to my life has given me a hope for beauty I have not known before.

I would also like to thank the community of dear friends and esteemed colleagues who have helped shape these pages: Fr. Joseph Goetz, Douglas Macbeth, Ruth Holt, De Leon Gray, josh kurz, Brad Rowe, Tom Falk, Mike Yough, Heather Dawson, Josh Shepperd, Victor Johansson, Larry Green, and Karen Sihra. I owe special thanks to Ben Johnson who helped with the citations and bibliography.

Finally, I thank my most intimate community—my family: Anne, Tomas, and Gabriel have sacrificed much to enable the completion of my dissertation. They have also given me the means and ends from which to write it. My parents and siblings are the foundation of it all. My extended family—especially my Aunt Peggy, whose questions and insight added directly to these pages—and friends add to and strengthen this firm foundation.

While want to extend my gratitude across these communities of love and friendship for their direct and indirect contributions to this dissertation, the usual disclaimer still applies: all of its shortcomings are mine alone.

Vita

October 21, 1982……Born—Brownsville, Texas.

2005……B.A. Philosophy and Spanish, Franciscan University of Steubenville

2005-2006……..……..Instructor, Transfiguration Catholic School

2007……M.A. Educational Leadership, University of Saint Thomas

2009……M.A. Philosophy of Education, The Ohio State University

2007-2010……..…….Graduate Teaching Associate, The Ohio State University

Publications

- Bryan R. Warnick, Benjamin A. Johnson, Samuel D. Rocha, "The Meaning of School Violence: Ten Years After Columbine," *Educational Theory* 60, no. 3 (2010): 371-390.

- Samuel D. Rocha, "A Return to Love in William James and Jean-Luc Marion," *Educational Theory* 59, no. 5 (2009): 579-588.

- Samuel D. Rocha, review essay of *Remarks on Marx* and *Power*, by Michel Foucault, *Foucault Studies*, no. 7 (2009): 99-109.

- Tom Faulk, Samuel D. Rocha, and Bryan Warnick, "Social Science and its Discontents" review essay of *Making Social Science Matter*, by Bent Flyvbjerg, *Educational Review* 12, no. 4 (2009): 1-15.

- Samuel D. Rocha, review of *Why Foucault: New Directions in Educational Research*, by Michael Peters and Tina Besely, *Foucault Studies*, no. 7 (2009): 144-147.

- Timothy Leonard and Samuel D. Rocha, "A Dialogue on Love, Compassion, and Curriculum Studies," in *Spirituality*, *Mythopoesis and Learning*, ed. Peter Willis and Timothy Leonard, (Brisbane, AU: Post Pressed, 2009), 42-50.

- Samuel D. Rocha, review of *Schooling Under the Security State*, edited by David Gabbard and E. Wayne Ross, *Education Review*, July 29th, 2009.

- Samuel D. Rocha, review of *Foucault 2.0: Beyond Power and Knowledge*, by Eric Paras, *Parrhesia: A Journal of Critical Philosophy*, no. 5 (2008): 84-85.

Fields of Study

Major Field: Philosophy of Education

Table of Contents

Chapter 5: Education After the Death of School

"Y bien, se me dirá, '¿Cuál es tu religión?' Y yo responderé: mi religión es buscar la verdad en la vida y la vida en la verdad, aun a sabiendas de que no he de encontrarlas mientras viva; mi religión es luchar incesante e incansablemente con el misterio; mi religión es luchar con Dios desde el romper del alba hasta el caer de la noche, como dicen que con Él luchó Jacob."

Miguel de Unamuno, *Mi Religión*

Chapter One:

"I am not a goose!"

> "Probably a crab would be filled with a sense of personal outrage if it could hear us class it without ado as a crustacean, and thus dispose of it. 'I am no such thing,' it would say…"
>
> William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*

1.1 Introduction

My eldest son insists that he is not a goose. When I use paternalistic expressions like "you goose," "silly goose," or "you silly goose," he becomes indignant and scolds me exclaiming, "I am not a goose!" Even at the tender age of three, he is concerned with what he is. Especially when he is declared to exist as something that he is convinced that he is not. Along with geese, my son has made it clear to me that he is not a variety of other things too: a baby; a "little-boy" and other titles reserved for his younger brother; and any pet terms that describe him as something less than a "big-boy" or his name, *Tomas*—not Tom or Tommy.

If I wanted to be cruel to him, I could relentlessly call him a goose[1] against his wishes. I could verbally torture him by simply repeating the expression "goose" over and over again. This would surely be a form of child abuse. It would bring my son to tears and tantrums and a cause great deal of pain and suffering. It could even lead to the

[1] In case calling someone "a goose" seems utterly trivial and non-threatening, simply substitute this term for more overtly aggressive ones like, "you worthless piece of garbage" or "you total waste of space." Or, to be even more despicable, think of the most heinous, repugnant names one can think of. (Names like "Jew-dog," "savage," or "nigger.") It becomes clear that such names function in the exact same way as "goose" would in this violent context, and if we used these names to name people we would likely get assaulted for doing so—and understandably so.

development of pathologies and, ultimately, transform him into a different kind of person. This is because not being a goose is no small matter for Tomas. Asserting that he is not a goose is serious. He is prepared to yell, scream, and even become violent, in order to resist the very notion of being such a thing. My son will fight to not be what he is sure that he is not. At three years old, he has a passion to be, to live, and to exist in a particular kind of way: not a goose. The particular desires to be or not be will change thought his life, yet the condition it describes will not.

In this first chapter, I will continue using this example, and many others, to introduce some of the key elements of this work. First, I will argue that ontological questions—questions of being, subsistence, and existence—are important and inescapable. In order to do so, I will introduce the three ontological categories (being, subsistence, and existence) that form the trinitarian lens that is the key to my phenomenological method. Second, I will elaborate how ontological questions require phenomenological methods of inquiry and note the convergences and differences between scientific and phenomenological forms of knowledge. Thirdly, I will address some of the postmodern critiques of phenomenology and distinguish between the purposes of philosophy and phenomenology. Finally, I will set the terrain for the chapters to come by discussing the subject of imitation.

The main concern and purpose in this chapter is to provide the orientation necessary to embark on three meditations (on education, study, and the person) that will hopefully provide some sight into the task of being, living, and existing by seeking, sensing, and seeing with fidelity to the reality of our most profound desire: the desire for love and *theosis*.

1.2 Ontological passions: Less than words, behind hermeneutics

The ontological passions to exist, live, and be are not rare. They seem at the root of everything: the biological survival of species and ecosystems; the emotional whimsy of lovers; the mysterious balance of the cosmos; the human obsession with gods and immortality, and more. At the very least, they are less than language. They are simpler than verbal or symbolic identity and hermeneutic politics. They are more basic then words and their meanings.

Ontological passions are less than a matter of what nomenclature seems to fit them best, without too much controversy. The *eros* that drives the project of becoming, living, and existing works like chef hidden away from sight of the food critic: behind the scope of hermeneutics. In other words, being is not the same thing as meaning. Ontology is not the same thing as epistemology. (As we will see later on in this chapter, *knowing* is not the same as *knowing-about*.) The latter can only become the case if the former preempts it. Hermeneutics may be the task before us now as I write and you read, but hovering over, around, and inside us, unmoved by these word-markings and their grammatical order, are the ontological passions and the realities that they are faithful to. Ontology is the lesser, simpler, and therefore more fundamental, dimension evident in the yearning to love and be loved, the desire to desire, the madness of *eros* for itself.

In my own life experience there is an ongoing sense that I do not resist being called this or that word or name because I dislike the account, the call itself, or the symbolic grammar of the calling. Instead, I resist because I intuit that I am at stake with and within the call. I sense that somehow I am the thing in question. I desire first, before the name

and before the call. I *am* (*sum*) a less-than-linguistic thing because I am an erotic person and *eros* seems more potent and fecund than symbols, words, and grammar and the accounts they prescribe—even if they melt away, *eros* will remain and call them back. I am this erotic person because of my ontological passions that, in turn, are not merely strong-willed: they are potent and pregnant with fruit. Like a virus that is too simple to be an organism, ontology is a lesser thing than epistemology. Ontology is a simple non-organism that, in its viral simplicity, is potent enough to take over and reconstitute the more complex organisms of the body. Like a virus, ontology is not marked by its complexity. The simplicity of ontology yields a powerful potency. And, again like a virus, it cannot be cured.

Before the bacteria of language, that complex grammatical organism, we find *eros*: the virus of fecund desire. We are infected with it and this infection gives birth to potentiality. We desire to be within the context of Being, to live with the forces and the invisible, and to exist in this particular way—or, at least, not *that* way. When an account of our self is at stake in the recognition of a name by naming, misnaming, or leaving nameless, we agree or resist to such a thing out of this erotic and potent desire to be. This desire I will refer to as "*eros*" begins with the simple fact that we desire to be something: *some-thing instead of no-thing*. Being always seems to win our favor over non-being. Everything that subsists and exists presupposes that something *is*. *Eros*, then, cannot be sterilized; our desires cannot be superficial and disposable. Even the most banal and mundane desires hide a deeper and more potent reality that gives way to the dark, pregnant womb of *eros*.

This is misleading and too simple if left alone. Ontological passions also include other more developed ontological desires to survive and exist: *to be in particularly alive and existent sorts of ways*. These are the desires that bring out such an indignant reply from my son when he is called a goose, or from any person who is insulted by a kind of existence that she feels degraded by. Facing the threat of defacement, I will protest. Confronted by the threat of only subsisting—being alive without existing, like Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*[2] —I may lose my desire to live at all. Like Job or Juliet, I may even acquire the desire to cease to subsist—to die, in other words—which is a very peculiar ontological passion, but an ontological passion nonetheless.

1.3 The categories: Being, subsistence, and existence

This begins to introduce the ontological categories: being, subsistence, and existence. Explaining the categories of being, subsistence, and existence in fuller detail is one of the main goals of this project. In the meantime, here are some preliminary, basic senses of what each category describes:

1. *Being* is the widest category of things. In order to be some-thing instead of no-thing, a thing must be. Every-thing we assume to be "thingly" must be. This category is the context in which things live and exist.
2. *Subsistence*[3] is the vital and conceptual—as opposed to perceptual—category of things that are there within Being but do not necessarily exist, like the force of

[2] Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Random House, 1952).

[3] Since this term is uncommon, I would like to say a bit more about where it comes from and also note the inspiration for these categories. In Alexius Meinong's "Theory of Objects" he, too, proposes an ontological model: existence, subsistence, non-existence, and non-subsistence. In the end, however, he determines that all the objects in these categories at least have "quasi-

gravity that subsists but does not exist. (Force is not the same thing as matter.) In this category we find concepts, forces, and energies.

3. *Existence* is the category of things within Being that subsist and possess these two qualities (being and subsistence) with the added feature of perceptual existence. In this category we find matter and material things.

Allow me to restate the categories in a slightly different way: Being is the genesis and context for every-thing that is; subsistence are the forces and energies that are there on and in that context; existence is the embodied and perceptual matter we find there too.[4] Unlike Platonic forms, these categories do not originate from an abstract other world. We can find them in many concrete places such the ever-present structure of desire: the desire to be and seek Being, the desire to survive among the forces of subsistence and sense them more deeply, and the desire to exist and see the matter that exists. If we see anything perceptual and material that exists we sense that it has subsistent forces and energies that keep it there and we seek to know what larger, all-encompassing Thing these things are within.

Imagine this image: an apple falling on Isaac Newton's head as he rests under an apple tree. There are three basic things in this image. The first is the canvas that the whole event takes place on. This would be Being. The second is the ghost-like force that is behind the falling apple, gravity. This would be subsistence. The third is the material

---

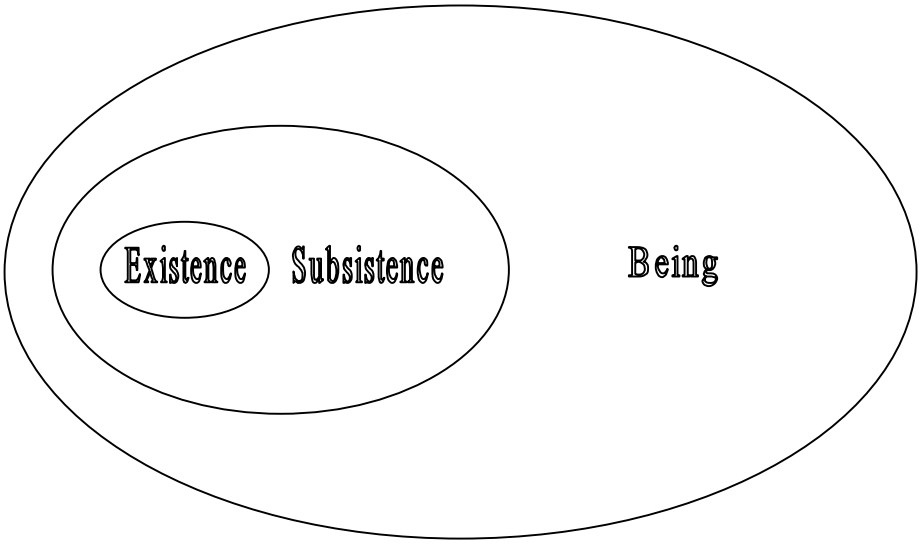
being." This began a long and interesting dispute between Meinong and Betrand Russell. I have proposed my own categories not as a way to mediate in their dispute, but as a way to expand what I see as some of the analytic limits to Meinong's original metaphysical model.

[4] For more on the distinction between concept and percept, see chapters IV, V, and VI of William James' *Some Problems of Philosophy: A Beginning of an Introduction to Philosophy* (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1940).

apple that collides with Newton's material body, his head. This would be existence. As you can see, this example is not a fantasy. It can readily be extended to any site of reality.

The relationship between the ontological categories can be described using this image of what I will go on to call a "trinitarian lens":

Being, Subsistence, and Existence



Together, they locate an ontological dimension that is pre- and proto- linguistic. They are what James called the "*Vorgefundenes* (the-thing-that-has-been-there-before), which we cannot burrow under, explain or get behind."[5] The categories also yield a trinitarian lens, and eye of sorts, through which we can begin to seek Being, sense subsistence, and see existence in a way that is faithful to the minimal reality of things. Seeking, sensing, and seeing in this way, through this lens, is the simplest way to understand the thinking that precedes any methodology—including my own here.

[5] If this strikingly ontological passage from the chapter entitled "The Problem of Being" seems like a surprising thing for James to write, then reading his entire final (posthumous) publication, *Some Problems of Philosophy,* would be a good thing to do. It puts to rest the idea that James was somehow completely opposed to ontology and metaphysics (quote taken from page 46, enclosure mine).

1.4 Method: The need to seek, sense, and see

Because of this tripartite structure of things, we often behave like my three-year-old son. He has almost no positive ideas of what/who he is. For instance, he has little understanding of the meaning of gender and often pretends to be a snow-shoed hare or a manatee. Nonetheless, he has strong negative feelings about how it is that he exists. He has yet to consider the forces that act on his life or the Being it happen within, yet he seems to want more than to merely survive, more than to merely be generically *there*, orphaned by indifference. Tomas has all these desires even as he lacks the insight to say what he exist as in any positive fashion. So too it seems with us: Even when we cannot express or know the terms of our existence in positive ontological descriptions, we are still willing to defend ourselves against that which we are feel that we are not. We resist whatever seems to trivialize our existence into the realm of generic subsistence, simple being (any-thing), or nihilistic non-being.

I am not a goose! I am not a spick! I am not a racist! I am not a resource! I am not an object! I am not your possession! In all these cases, and more, when we are threatened by the real possibility of existing as something we think that we are not, we find ourselves in proximity to the most violent kind of abuse and oppression: ontological disfiguration. For human persons, existence has a particularly high importance since within it we can locate all our ontological features from the starting point of our bodies.

This negativity is not the most common response in the realm of existential desires. We can find parallels to medicine. Consider the example of cancer. Cancer is neither a bacterium nor a virus proper (although it is sometimes referred to as ‘viral’) and is treated very much like ontological desires: we have nothing positive to say about it. By

definition, we can offer no cure for an incurable disease like cancer. But we do seem to have strong negative advice available, tips on what *not* to do. The only counsel we might have to offer to someone diagnosed with cancer can only be negative since it would be unrelated to cancer proper. These negative suggestions are usually preventive and not meant to address the existing cancerous cell. For instance, they may be palliative treatments that have no-thing to with curing the disease. (Or there may be no suggestions at all that have more to do with suffering it, such as not treating it at all, but doing so with a friend.) There are aggressive palliative treatments like chemotherapy. In these cases it is well-known that we cannot treat the existing cancerous cell as a particular existing thing in this way, we can only locate the general location and use radiation that generically kills just about any-thing. The most aggressive form of this negative "treatment," of course, is amputation.

Because of the elusive—perhaps 'impossible' is a better word—nature of certainty, we can be quite wrong about our existence. We are often tricked into thinking we are something we are not. We can be misdiagnosed or subsist in a state of vegetative consciousness where our senses are unreliable, or even unavailable, to us. But the point here is not to verify or falsify a positively true or untrue self, or a singularly universal identity. Finding "a cure" is beyond the realm of this study. As I said before, this is *less* than the extravagant politics of identity and recognition and their palliative, and sometimes aggressive, hermeneutic treatments. To find this lesser phenomenon, we must excavate behind those politics and that language. We must even be willing to excavate behind meaning and locate the meaninglessness origin of Being. We must try to find the virus, even as uncertainty is our only certainty.

In order to do this, we will be required to begin with the earlier, more elementary phenomenon of *eros.* With time and rigor, this might bring us to the later mysteries of comprehensive selfhood, identity, and their politics of recognition. Or, it might not. Regardless, if we focus on this earlier, lesser phenomenon we see that it is quintessentially and unavoidably ontological as opposed to hermeneutic. It does not submit itself to interpretation. It is a question of Being as opposed to meaning; even as meaning reveals Being to our senses through the disclosure of interpretive exercises such as reading and deciphering this sentence. What is this phenomenon? It is the desire to be, to subsist, and to exist. This desire can be described in many ways (biological, physiological, psychological, psychoanalytic, ethical, religious, political, aesthetic and more), but it is first and foremost ontological. It is a question of Being; being alive (subsisting); and existing. For human persons, it raises the Heideggarian question of *Dasein*, which for Martin Heidegger meant the particularly human way of existence. *Dasein*, as I understand it, attempts to capture all three senses of desire—being (*Sein*), subsistence (*Bestand*), and existence (*Existenz*)—all-at-once for the person.

The negative objections we make point to a lack of sight. Any method that seeks to recover a sense of the undisclosed positive thing that we cannot imagine or name must do more than offer categories. It must begin to arrange those categories in a way that the can be put to use in the pursuit of sensation and vision of things. All method begins with the need to seek, sense, and see something as it is—or, at least, not as it is not.

1.5 A vague objection and a bad joke

Imagine the most straightforward objection to the claims I have just made. Someone might simply tell me "Sam, you're wrong."[6] This objection may seem weak, unsupported, and extremely vague (Wrong about *what*?) but it carries a ready-made proof that is potentially devastating to what I have asserted thus far. The proof is this: Since a person who argues that something is simple and elementary is usually also implying, as I happen to be doing, that the thing in question is obvious, like the warmth of the sun on a crisp autumn morning or the cool of shade and a soft breeze on a hot summer afternoon, then, to sincerely deny the obviousness of what is said to be obvious poses a formidable refutation all on its own.

But the rebuttal itself is a blessing. The performance belies the content. It carries the very thing it is attempting to dismiss. That is to say this: Even when we deny ontology as trivial nonsense we raise important ontological questions and issues.[7] We cannot pretend to "opt out" of Being and the rest, even if we went to the existential extreme of committing suicide. Much like the irony that is hatred, where even as we hate most passionately we find ourselves in love with it—or, to put it another way, where I can only hate properly if I love to hate the thing I hate—, in this same ironic way, I could admit to the fact that I most certainly *am wrong* and still feel, all the same, that I *am* much less, and therefore more, than that. After admitting to possible error, I might ask the following question to my interlocutor: "But who am I, or who do you think I am, really?" Which is to say, "Stop talking *about* me, or at me, in some heady abstract. Speak *to* me! Tell me

[6] They could also say, "You're mistaken," which would have the very same implication.

[7] The ontological import of these questions might be said to true yet boring nonetheless. What is hard about this state of mind—boredom—is that it seems to think that it can go about without taking the ontological import of things into consideration, but the very act of existing proves the exact reverse. In other words, there are no exceptions to ontology. It is fundamental and universal.

who I am, at least roughly speaking. Talk to *me*!" To elaborate this point a bit, a schoolyard joke comes to mind.

As a school child, when someone would say something like, "I'm hungry." I would often reply with something like this: "Hi Hungry, I'm Sam. Very nice to meet you." Depending on the mood of this person I had suddenly renamed, my classmate might act confused, clarify what they meant, laugh at my joke, or get annoyed at my antics. Regardless of their response, the point is rather obvious: When people say that they *are* this or that subsistential symptom of existence—like being tired, cold, angry, or hungry—they are not being serious about who it is that they are, and to act otherwise could only be a joke.

When I say things like "I'm thirsty." I am not making ontological claims.[8] Instead, I am giving abstract, symptomatic descriptions about how it is that *other* things are going for me. I am speaking *about* me. On its own, there is very little of me in the details about me: being tired or awake, cold or hot, angry or happy, hungry or full, pure and simple. As we will see in chapter four, the self of a person (*prospon*) is never reducible even to itself and much less to a few subsistent properties of its temporal existence. These symptoms are like Platonic geometry: they are things at a distance from the thing that is and exists here and now. The experiential claim "I am thirsty." may be empirically true regarding

[8] This remark may appear to rashly overlook the raw experience of thirst, hunger, or cold. However, there is nothing at odds between the two of them. The ugliness that it is to die of thirst, starvation, or cold is a phenomenon where we find the person disfigured to a mere body, to flesh and bone, without the ability to desire more than that. Or, in the related occasions of acetic practices such as fasting or physical feats of endurance, we find exactly the reverse: the vitality of the whole being of a person sought through deprecating acts that push the body beyond its limit. In both of these cases the fact remains that the symptoms of our experience are not existential and when we find ourselves stripped down to them alone—when we are thirsty, starving, or cold—we are literally dying, which is hardly an existential model of being alive.

my symptom of thirst and my subsistent need to survive. I may indeed experience real thirst. But this experience I am having lacks the existential power to speak to me as I am and desire to be, not to merely speak about me.

In Spanish, it is the difference between the two expressions for "I am": *Soy* ("I am") and *estoy* ("I am." meaning that "I have.").[9] *Soy* always speaks in an existential voice while *estoy* can only speak from experience and often speaks in term of "I have." "*Tengo hambre*" ("I have hunger.") is a common way to say "*Estoy hambriento*" ("I am hungry"). For this reason, such a joke would be impossible in Spanish ("*Soy hambriento"* is a ridiculous expression). I was never able to jest with my classmates in Mexico in this way because the language offers no opportunity for confusing the difference between what I am ("I am hungry") and who I am ("I am not a goose!"). In Spanish, things are not so easily allowed to go out of focus. But speaking Spanish is not enough to seek, sense, and see things faithfully.

1.6 A trinitarian lens

Ontologically speaking, while positive assertions seems impossible, I can make negative claims like this one: Tomas is not a goose anymore than my phantom critic could say that "I *am* a philosophical error," or than my classmates *were* the abstract, symptomatic experience of hunger. To say otherwise, one would have to be joking and, like my son Tomas, we might still object to the joke as not being funny at all or, perhaps, being quite offensive—or even dangerous. The greatest danger would be the loss of thing

[9] I am thankful to Bryan Warnick who reminded me of this clear connection to the Spanish language. The same grammatical relationship exists in the conjugated interrogative terms *¿estas?* and *¿eres?*

itself in our lack of desire for it, our inability to sense it, and the blurred visions that are substituted for reality or deny the real altogether.

My son's indignation over being called a goose is precisely because it is this kind of bad joke that distorts the fundamental ontology we find in the passions and categories I have outlined here. It takes him as he is in the present moment and declares *that* thing, Tomas the person, to be something else, something altogether different, something abstract and therefore ridiculous like a distant, irrelevant goose. Tomas demands that I return to *him* in the ontological presence that we share together and leave behind that unrelated stupid goose. He is asking for me to treat *him*, not his symptoms. His existence, not his experience. Lacking a cure and facing positive uncertainty, he is asking me to do more than settle for palliative or reactionary treatments. He is asking me to do the impossible: to love him totally, as he is, subsists, and exists all-at-once. To do this, I cannot simply change my speech. I cannot learn a new language with better words. I must acquire new desires, new sensations, and new eyes. I must have longing and perception for Tomas and for him alone, without losing the world in my attempt to focus on him. I must focus by expansion while looking closely. Only when I can begin to seek, sense, and see him in this way will I be able to love him.

When Tomas exclaims, "I am not a goose!" he is not merely telling me what he is not. He has more to teach me than a purely negative lesson. He is also instructing me on how to arrive at who it is that he is, even as he has yet to arrive there himself. He is teaching me that in order to seek, sense, and see as he is, to know him as an ontological trinity complete within the context (being), among life forces (subsistence) and material existence I cannot simply stop saying the wrong words or avoid looking at the wrong

images. I must attempt to return to him. This is no small task and I must admit, even as I type these words, that I doubt what, if anything, I have accomplished in this regard, but there is no question that the challenge presented to me by my son is of the utmost importance. And this importance is not merely personal, experiential or contextual. It is not important simply because he is my son and I am his father. It is not a mere symptom of our genealogy. More than that, it underscores the fundamental importance of ontology in general and the trinitarian lens offered here as a way of seeking, sensing, and seeing things ontologically.

This, then, is the methodological purpose of the ontological passions and categories I have presented: *to use them together as a single, trinitarian lens through which we can seek Being, sense subsistence, and see existence*. This trinitarian lens, then, is a way of seeking what is, sensing what forces are there and seeing the flesh of the matter and then living with fidelity to that reality.

We find the importance of the trinitarian lens of Being, subsistence, and existence in these ways:

1. Being is important in the first place because I desire to be and, insofar as I am, I desire. This first importance requires us to not only begin to take being seriously in the front-end of our consciousness, but also to consider its sufficiency. Even beyond the reach of the intentional aspects of volition, Being is sufficient. As I will explore in more detail in chapter four, Augustine is very to the point: *nemo est qui non amet* (She who would not love [or desire] is no-thing.)
2. At the second level of import, subsistence is important because, since I desire to be to begin with, then, I also desire to survive Being, to be alive. This brings us to

see the worldliness of Being in the subsistent forces that sustain our vitality but remain faceless and ghostly.

3. The second leads us to the third desire: the desire for a face and a body, the desire to exist in a particularly concrete, embodied, perceptual, and existential kind of way—in the flesh, incarnate. As a person I cannot merely subsist without a body. I must exist. This third-level of importance requires us to consider the sufficiency of existence: Insofar as I am, it is enough to exist, so long as that existence is and is so among the invisible forces of subsistence.

Each importance of being, subsisting, and existing provide us with a single, trinitarian lens as our method, a way towards seeking, sensing, and seeing things as beautiful and, based on that beauty, real. This lens' method can be further understood in its relationship to, and identity as, phenomenology.[10]

1.7 Phenomenology: Excess, knowing, and reduction

One of the richest articulations of what "phenomenology" is, can be found in this passage from Heidegger:

> Thus the term 'phenomenology' expresses a maxim which can be formulated as 'To the things themselves!' It is opposed to all free-floating constructions and accidental findings; it is opposed to taking over any conceptions which only seem to have been demonstrated; it is opposed to those pseudo-questions which parade themselves as 'problems,' often for generations at a time.[11]

[10] Two texts that treat phenomenology in the ways that I am sympathetic to are both dedicated to its relevance to psychology. One is somewhat dated and the other is very recent: T.W.Wann, ed., Behaviorism *and Phenomenology: Contrasting Bases for Modern Psychology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964) and Amedeo Giorgi, *The Descriptive Phenomenological Method in Psychology: A Modified Husserlian Approach* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2009). The second, newer one is especially good, I think.

[11] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 50.

Thus we find the particular affinity between phenomenology and ontology. This relationship exists in stark contrast to other methods that respond to "problems." Again, Heidegger is very illuminating on this point when he highlights the "existential analytic" as it confines itself to the "ontological question." He writes:

> We must show that those investigations and formulations of the question which have been aimed at Dasein heretofore, have missed the real *philosophical* problem (not withstanding their objective fertility), and that as long as they persist in missing it, they have no right to claim that they can accomplish that for which they are basically striving for. In distinguishing the existential analytic from anthropology, psychology, and biology, we shall confine ourselves to what is in principle the ontological question.

He goes on to say—regarding science:

> Our distinctions will necessarily be inadequate from the standpoint of 'scientific theory' simply because the scientific structure of the above-mentioned disciplines (not yet, indeed, the 'scientific attitude' of those who work to advance them) is not today thoroughly questionable and needs to be attacked in new ways which must have their source in ontological problematics.[12]

As with scientific methods,[13] phenomenological method is rooted in a certain empiricism. It does not, indeed cannot, say what is beyond the horizon of the embodied world. Unlike scientific methods, however, phenomenological method does not take the *immediate* world (i.e. the world of immediate sensation) as the sum total of what can be

[12] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 71.

[13] The methods of modern-day science vary a great deal across disciplines and orientations. To further complicate the matter, the meanings of scientific methods across history are inclusive to almost every form of inquiry. (In the Middle Ages, *theology* was considered to be the "Queen of Sciences.") So, what I mean by the term has more to do with the impact of these so-called "methods" that is much more obvious than the methods themselves. For example, while a statistician will almost never claim "causality" from her methods of quantitative investigation, the resulting impact of these studies frequently suggests an authority that is "research-based" or "scientific," revealing the methodological narrowness of science and the monopoly it claims in education and modern society at large.

analyzed empirically[14] nor does it find its finality in mathematics.[15] Phenomenology can also attempt to analyze subsistent things like love and even the phenomenon of Being itself.

Furthermore, phenomenological method does not take the horizon of immediate experience—or of the "scientific"—as the limit of ontological possibility. There is always more. There is always an excess of being. This "excess" is different from scientific "unknowns" because excess is ontological and sufficient while the scientifically "unknown" is epistemologically insufficient and something to be known. What "excess" is can be easily understood through any simple experiment of saturation. Consider this example that illustrates what "excess" is.

Imagine doing this: Take a large sponge (about twice the size of an adult hand) and dip it completely into the sea. Once it has absorbed its limit and has been utterly saturated, remove it. When the sponge is removed, take careful notice about how this completely-saturated sponge behaves: when it is lifted from the sea, loaded with water, it does not merely "drip" with extra droplets of water; it gushes with the excess of the sea.[16]

---

[14] This is why William James' "radical empiricism" is very different from the empiricism of science, or what he calls "medical materialism" in his *Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Modern Library, 1936): it addresses experience in its widest sense.

[15] In the preface to his seminal text, *Ressentiment*, Max Scheler makes this same distinction between scientific and phenomenological method very clearly. He writes: "It is one thing to sift the data of inner observation and to set them up as compounds, then to decompose these into ultimate 'simple' observation and experiment, the conditions and results of such combinations. It is quite another to describe and understand the units of experience and meaning which are contained in the totality of man's life itself and have not merely been created by an artificial process of 'division' and 'synthesis.' The first method, influenced by the natural sciences, is that of a synthetic-constructive psychology which wants to *explain*. The second method characterizes an analytic and descriptive psychology which wants to *understand*." (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2003), 19.

[16] I am grateful to joshua j kurz who brought the compelling point of this sentence that had previously escaped my attention. Another way to think of saturation would be by considering the reverse: the droplet of water that can be absorbed fully by a sponge. This is the reverse of

What takes place in this example is the meaning of excess: Being is the sea, and so are we, included within the form of the temporal, existing sponge, gushing with excess—saturated with Being. To paraphrase the Psalmist: *Our existential cup overfloweth with Being.* Therefore, unlike the methods of science, phenomenological method is not intended to simply address the cup of existence as fully as possible. The phenomenologist tries—and always must fail—to explode the very horizon of saturation and gain insight into the ontological excess that eludes our particular ways of being, subsisting, and existing, thereby extending potentiality, the saturation-point of the imaginable, the possible, and the real.[17]

Also unlike scientific methods, phenomenological method does not purely seek out the epistemic knowledge that we find in Aristotelian categories.[18] Most importantly, phenomenological method does not "know" in the way that are accustomed to "knowing-about" in the modern age of the dominance and autarky of scientific rationality. As we have seen (in my earlier point concerning language) the kind of knowledge given through phenomenological method is *less* extravagant, and therefore more potent and infectious, than epistemological knowledge. Phenomenological knowledge is itself ontological: it is

---

excess. It also brings to mind the impossibility for an existential sponge to dip into the sea and literally take it all into itself, leaving nothing behind.

[17] There is no good reason that I can think of that explains why a scientist cannot observe the excessive. But this would not be a product of the scientific method; it would be from an intuition or a daydream. Whenever science explodes the limits of the empirical—like Newton and Einstein—the credit cannot properly be given to "science" per se, but instead, to imagination. In this way, science is most impressive when the scientist becomes a phenomenologist—especially in physics and psychology. This phenomenological nature of movements or shifts in science is verified in the view held by Thomas Kuhn in his authoritative *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962) that amounts to something like this: science is itself immune to science.

[18] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin, (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1984), 424.

a way of knowing Being, subsistence, and existence that, in turn, is a way of being, subsisting, and existing.

After all, the desire to know is never properly epistemological, pure and simple. To desire the fulfillment of the Socratic dictum is not to be interested in knowing *about* one's self. Less than that, it is quite simply to "Know thyself." In this way, epistemology is always too advanced, and therefore less fundamental, for ontology. It only appears later as a complex organism—like symbols and languages and their meanings—infected with desire, but ignoring or forgetful of the fecundity of that desire. (As I will continue to point out: this fecundity is the hallmark of my sense of *eros*.) Epistemology too often loses eyes for itself and become sterile. For this reason, one might even go as far as to suggest that epistemology is not epistemological. It can only be knowledge-about some-thing after there has been some-thing and it has become some-thing that tells us things about it. It can only be born from the vast womb of *eros*. Even after this *is-ing*, there are still further distinctions between types of knowledge. Unfortunately, again the English language is ill suited to explain this point. In order to do so, please consider the difference between the two words for "knowing" in Spanish: *saber* and *conocer*.[19]

[19] I first came to ponder this distinction from my Father's work as an evangelist. In homiletic rhetoric, following Aristotelian *pathos*, this is the effort to make the journey "from head to heart." I began using it as a teacher in my history class, to explain Gerda Lerner's notion of "History as Memory" in her book *Why History Matters: Life and Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). The final paper I typically assign to my classes makes use of it in the following prompt: "What do you know (*conocer*) that you didn't know (*conocer*) before this class, or only knew (*saber*); and why does it matter to education, schooling and your life—or not?" This exercise attempts to push them from answering, "What did you learn?" to "What do you (think that you) know?" and, ultimately, "Who are you?" In analytic philosophy, one can find similar veins of inquiry in Gilbert Ryle's distinction between "knowing how" and "knowing that" in *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949).

If someone were to ask me "*¿Oye Samuel, sabes donde esta la farmacia?*" (Hey Sam, do you know (*saber*) where the pharmacy is?), my reply might reveal that I do know-about (*saber*) where it is (*Si, yo se donde esta la farmacia.*), but my *saber* knowing is only *about* the pharmacy. On the other hand, if someone were to ask me "*¿Dime Samuel, conoces este niño?*" (Tell me Sam, do you know (*conocer*) this child?), my reply might reveal that while I might know-about (*saber*) the child (what she looks like, what color her hair is), I do not know (*conocer*) her. Or, on the other hand, if the child is my youngest son, Gabriel, then, I would exclaim that I do know (*conocer*) him: "*Si, claro que lo conozco. ¡Es mi hijo—Gabriel!*" (Yes, of course I know (*conocer*) him. He is my son—Gabriel!).

Here is a simpler linguistic example of the difference between these two ways of knowing. Take a standard salutation in Spanish like, "*Mucho gusto conocerte*." This literally means "Much pleasure to know (*conocer*) you." The less-literal translation implies something more like the English formality, "It's a pleasure." This, of course, implies that it is a pleasure to know someone by meeting her now, in-the-flesh, not to merely hear or read about her or know-about (*saber*) her otherwise. Now, imagine the rudeness and absurdity in the substitution, "*Mucho gusto saberte*." It is already poorly conjugated, but it also expresses a very different meaning: "Much pleasure to know-about (*saber*) you." This is clearly not what we mean by the English expression, "It's a pleasure." And for good reason! After all, the pleasure we get is presumably not from knowing-about (*saber*) people, but from meeting them and knowing (*conocer*) them concretely—in the flesh. That is why, if I met someone famous, someone who I knew-

about (*saber*) beforehand, I would still say that is a pleasure to know (*conocer*) them now, as opposed to merely having known-about (*saber*) them before.

Therefore, *saber* is a form of the verb "to know" that can only be used to speak of information or data—knowing *about* things. *Saber* never presents the chance, in any conjugated form, for substitution with its unrelated cousin, *conocer*: the knowledge of things themselves.[20] S*aber* is to know-about. *Conocer* is to know. *Knowing-about* is epistemological knowledge. *Knowing* is ontological knowledge. (From this point forward I will use these terms—knowing-about and knowing—to distinguish between the two types of knowledge.) Sometimes, knowing-about is an opening move to diving into the depths of knowledge and knowing to the point of complete saturation. Other times, knowing-about is confused with knowing and we forget what knowing is, we lose our senses for ontological knowledge, things go out of focus, and our vision is monopolized by knowing-about. The trinitarian lens shares the phenomenological spirit in trying to seek after knowing without substituting it with knowing-about.

The distinction between epistemological and scientific knowing-about thing and ontological and phenomenological knowing things themselves is not mutually exclusive but there is an aesthetic dimension present in ontology and phenomenology that is often absent to epistemology and science, and absent by methodological necessity. Take archery, for example; the sport and skill of shooting an arrow from a bow at a target: While the act may seem generic, there are two very different ways to shoot an arrow from a bow at a target. Using the modern compound bow, the archer is a scientist who makes

[20] There is also a colloquial usage of *conocer* that uses it as a pseudo-form of *saber* (e.g. *¿Conoces Argentina?* which is a way of asking "Have you ever been to Argentina?"), but with the slightest clarification and attention to the direct object it becomes clear that this usage blends the two senses and treats the direct object like a subject predicated on knowing it in a way that goes beyond knowing about it.

calculations and sets her sight on the target while squinting down the shaft of the arrow in relation to the target and the aiming mechanisms on the modern bow. Using a longbow, however, the archer simply has to acquire the intuitive ability, through practice and repetition, to *feel* where the arrow is going in relation to the full context of the shooting. This difference is for a variety of reasons, beginning with the fact that modern bows hold the recoil at the back of the draw and longbows do not, but the greatest difference is that the method of aiming and shooting is fundamentally different. One is science and the other is art. One involves epistemic knowing-about and the other requires ontological knowing.

A more common example is throwing a football or shooting a basketball. While there is a scientific knowing-about the physics of each set of motions and mechanics, there is another knowing that is the hallmark of the art of the sport, the one that is at use in the pressure of the game and is the most difficult to master. This is what is meant when a linebacker is said to "have a nose for the football" or a tennis player is said to "have a great feel for the game." The art of sporting, in effect, show us that to know-about doing something is insufficient; we must know the thing in an intuitive way that transforms the act from science to art. And art always begets science; truth is born from beauty. This is because every form of art is a kind of constitution that is ontological through and through. We would rather have artists on our team than scientists—even in the sports played at an operating table or in a laboratory.

Return now to my son's objection. The positive challenge presented by my son to seek, sense, and see him, is to know him in exactly this artistic kind of way: To know him as a saturated ontological subject, not as a dry empirical object. Tomas challenges me to

know him as he is, in the particular manner he subsists and exists, not to merely know-about him. In order to know him in this way, by this method, I, like the scientist, might begin with knowing-about. But I cannot end with it. I must move from knowing-about the child (what he looks like, what he prefers to eat, whether he is potty-trained or not, whether he is allergic to peanuts or not) and begin the impossible task of knowing him as he is, in excess. To *conocerlo*: literally, to know-him. As we will see later, to know-him I must be-with-him.

So too with phenomenological method: Phenomenological method seeks, again and again, to know things themselves[21] from their being to their subsistence and/or existence. In this way we see that the trinitarian lens is a phenomenological instrument for knowing things ontologically that by its very definition critiques the alienation of simply knowing-about. Even if we begin and end by knowing-about things, as I always seem to, phenomenology remains restless for knowing and peers again and again into the lens to find the impossible things we desire to sense and see.

The ontological knowledge that might come from a prolonged and fruitful look into the trinitarian lens should leads us to something different than purely "phenomenological" accounts of phenomena like those articulated by Edmund Husserl's "objects,"[22] Heidegger's "Being,"[23] or Jean-Luc Marion's "giveness."[24] Heidegger himself says as much in his essay, "My Way to Phenomenology."

---

[21] Take careful notice that a "thing itself" is not the same thing as the Kantian "thing in itself."

[22] Edmund Husserl, *The Essential Husserl*, ed. Donn Welton (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

[23] Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

He writes:

> But in what is most its own phenomenology is not a school. It is the possibility of thinking, at times changing and only thus persisting, of corresponding to the claim of what is though. If phenomenology is thus experienced and retained, it can disappear as a designation in favor of the matter of thinking whose manifestness remains a mystery.[25]

In other words, the names and the tradition in general are just too abstract to merit any serious consideration as things for reduction (a term I will describe in the following paragraph). This is why I have focused on describing phenomenology itself as a thing, as best I know it, instead of reporting back to you what I know-about it. In fact, when I look at phenomenology itself through the trinitarian lens, I suspect that there is no-thing properly or necessarily "phenomenological" about phenomena. Phenomena are just things within Being that may or may not subsist or exist. We might even just call them *stuff*. What is properly "phenomenological," then, is the method, how phenomena are known through reduction. This is the positive imperative in my son's objection. He wishes for me to know him in a particular kind of way. And while he cannot tell me who that person he is *is*, what forces and energies drive his life, or in what particular way he exists exactly, he can guide me by teaching me how to look behind the symptoms and seek the impossible cure by paying close and careful attention with proper eyes for-him, not merely about-him. In this way, phenomenology simply is a way of knowing through a phenomenological reduction of seeking, sensing, and seeing that we can perform using the trinitarian lens I have sketched-out here.

---

[24] Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Towards a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press).

[25] Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 82.

We can understand the meaning of phenomenological "reduction" very easily by considering a culinary reduction and taking its literal method as a way to seek, sense, and see things. A culinary reduction is the process where a liquid of some sort (usually a stock, sauce, or gravy) is simmered. This simmering allows certain parts of the liquid to evaporate which has the effect of rendering a more intensely flavorful and rich substance, like a fig reduction. There is no doubt to the palate of anyone eating a fig that the reduction tastes "figly," although the flavor always exceeds our capacity to experience it completely, it saturates our sense of taste. In the very same way, phenomenological reduction is how we go about knowing phenomena as best we can by taking them as they are and moving inward through a gentle caress (like evaporation) of the imagination to intensify them and render them as they are and exist or subsist.

Phenomenological reduction, then, can be defined in this way: it is the method by which we apply the heat (alluding to the stove in the kitchen) or bow (alluding to the violin in the concert hall) of our imagination's eye to a thing that, with time, rigor, and gentle balance—so as to try to avoid disfiguring it by burning it or going out of tune—renders it into a more robust expression of itself. And there is nothing certain or pure about this reduction. Imaginative sight and sensation sought through reduction is not meant to purify the thing itself, but simply to render it a way that is more present and possible. Concerning persons, this more robust expression creates the distinct awareness of, and attention to, the total saturation of our embodied existence by subsistent forces and the context of Being. It gives us a trinitarian scent of an essence of the world around us, ghostly life forces, and our flesh.

The essence of a reduction may not be its taste or sound at all, it may simply be the thing fully evaporated that leaves behind an unquestionable aroma of itself, like that sacred moment of silence at the end of a moving performance, just before the applause begins.[26] We know immediately what it is, even though we may not know-about it. A beautiful smell is just that: some-thing we know even though we may not know-about it at all. Silence that is utterly saturated with beauty is the same sort of thing. It simply *is* beautiful. Such is the existential power of beauty.[27] And without this ontological scent or silence we cannot taste or hear properly, although we can still divide and consume calorie-units into our stomach or sound waves into our ears. This essential scent and silence of ontology, brings us to the question of metaphysics. And looming in this phenomenological thing-to-be-known lays a reasonable apprehension concerning that ancient and dangerous fruit: Platonic metaphysics and its toxically pure essentialism.

1.8 Platonism[28] and postmodernism

[26] Anyone who has heard a moving piece of music knows (*conocer*) that this silence is not a hypothesis. I will never forget the time I saw the solo bassist, Michael Manring, perform a double-bill at the Cedar Hall in Minneapolis with the Canadian fingerstyle guitarist, Don Ross. After performing one of his compositions, inspired by a Muslim call to prayer, the entire room did not applaud for at least twenty seconds. It was as if we were all in mourning for the beauty that just ended. That tragic silence was the essence that the song left behind, like a scent of home that is strongest when away or in the first moments of the return.

[27] For a theological treatment of the matter, see Thomas Dubay, *The Evidential Power of Beauty* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999).

[28] It is important not to confuse "Platonism" with Plato. In my view, Plato is innocent of the sins of Platonism and his dialogues are deeply phenomenological and philosophically meaningful. I would regret using Plato as a foil for my argument here. I only want to bring up the well-known distinction between Platonic metaphysics and their fidelity to a correspondence theory of reality and the post-Platonic metaphysical views of modern philosophy that reject correspondence. The strongest argument against correspondence I can think of in philosophy is Richard Rorty's groundbreaking book *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

I will not torture this point, because it ought to be fairly clear by now from my description of ontology and phenomenological method that the metaphysics of phenomenology are of *this* world—the only world of time and space and the imagination—not a separate world of forms like the dwelling-place of the Platonic Demiurge. In this respect, scientific and phenomenological methods are cut from the same cloth: they both reject the correspondence theory of Platonic recollection and its other-wordly forms that are caged by temporality. Examining the self, for example, the phenomenologist cannot ignore the body as a measly cage of the soul anymore than the biologist could do the same sort of thing. With this new, post-Platonic metaphysics come a new ontological essence. Unlike the "pure essence" of Platonism, or even the Kantian "thing-in-itself," the essence of phenomenology is neither pure nor impure, but, instead, just the thing itself: a thing within Being that may or may not exist or subsist. This minimal "thing itself" is the only possible purity to be found, and because of the excess of being it possesses, there is never the possibility of knowing with the metaphysical purity of Platonic—or scientific—certainty.

Let us return to the fig reduction. It may seem that its essence is singular and purely described by the object we associate with the noun. But, upon closer inspection and wider imagination, we find that even a fig reduction eludes a singular, purified articulation. What is a fig but a collection of flesh wrapped in skin, with seeds that lead to its stem that is a kind of branch that is a kind of trunk that is a kind of root that subsists on the nourishment of the fortunes of the earth, rain, and sun within the world of Being? And yet a fig reduction remains remarkably figly. This is the paradox of phenomenological essentialism that is absent to Platonic essentialism.

This is not only a reply to the Platonist. It is also a reply to certain postmodern[29] antipathies for phenomenology that condemn it as fatally essentialistic—not unlike, if not the same thing as, the essentialism of Platonism. Most notable, of course, would be Michel Foucault *contra* Jean-Paul Sartre during the late sixties; the time when Foucault published what many consider to be his most abrasive dismissals of phenomenology: *The Order of Things* and *Archeology of Knowledge*.[30] When attending to these so-called dismissals it is important to note[31] that in-between the publication of those books he acknowledged the now famous problematic of the subject in *What is an Author?*[32] and, four years later, he continued to raises similar preoccupations in his preface to the English publication of *The Order of Things*. This phenomenological theme of the subject in Foucault is a well-known theme that he continued to articulate until his untimely death in 1984 and is among the most prescient, and controversial, questions of Foucault scholars today.

There are others who are frequently called "postmodern" who have even more direct ties to phenomenology. Consider the powerful work of Jacques Derrida. We cannot

---

[29] It is well-known that here is no single thing called "postmodernism" and more complex and complicated articulations such as structuralism, post-structuralism, post-foundationalism and more have now surpassed it. I only use the term as a placeholder for all these names and traditions.

[30] English translations include Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Random House, 1970) and Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1972).

[31] As I have in an essay review for *Foucault Studies*; see Samuel Rocha, review essay of *Remarks on Marx: Conversations with Duccio Trombadori* by Michel Foucault and translated by R. James Goldstein and James Cascaito and *Power: Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984* by Michel Foucault and translated by Robert Hurley, *Foucault Studies*, Number 7 (7 September 2009): 131-141.

[32] Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory*, *Practice* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 113.

ignore his seminal contributions to the Age of the Post that grow directly out of his engagement with, and critique of, Husserlian phenomenology[33] which led to his masterful work on language and the articulation of *differance* and *deconstruction*: those things of which anything said is surely incomplete. And while this work of his has garnered widespread attention, his lesser-known phenomenology of *le donne* (the gift) produced a rich disagreement with his former student, Jean-Luc Marion, on the phenomenology of donation and its ties, or lack thereof, to theology.[34] And, of course, there is the tremendous influence of Friedrich Nietzsche on both of these thinkers and others; an influence that may not be properly phenomenological but is at the very least proto-existential. Alongside Kierkegaard's theistic existentialism, we find Nietzsche's atheistic version of what it means to *be* under the ontology we find within his famous "will to power."

For bibliographic thoroughness, we should also not forget the Heideggarian behemoth that is acknowledged by Foucault, Derrida and so many others who are considered to be "postmodern"—including the self-described phenomenologist Marion whose phenomenological study of theology has given his work the title of "postmodern theology." In Heidegger's case, of course, the question is not whether he was a phenomenologist. That case is settled. It is more whether his Nazism discredits his

[33] See Leonard Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002).

[34] See Robyn Horner's *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), which largely grew out of the famous debate between Derrida and Marion at Villanova in 1997 on the question of gift.

phenomenology or not.[35] Furthermore, given the proliferation of ontological studies that have come out of—and have also, to a certain extent, abandoned—postmodernism, as with the "political ontology" we find in the popular works of Pierre Bordieu, Georgio Agamben, Alain Badiou, and Slavoj Zizek, it seems that this much must be admitted: What many call "postmodernism" is littered with phenomenology.

For this reason, it seems that postmodern critics who would try to sever the tie between phenomenology and postmodernism do so rather carelessly, for these traditions are not two different things completely. They share a mixed—and, in many cases, exactly the same—genealogy. According to that genealogy, we find this much to be historically probable in the present: To do away with the former would make the latter impossible. To be clear, let me repeat myself: By rejecting the essentialism of Platonism, phenomenology also rejects the rather caricatured critique posed by certain interpretations of postmodern thought, along with similarly skeptical views of ontology by positivism and vulgar articulations of pragmatism.

This not to say that phenomenology is without fault or not in need of constant revision. It is neither to deny the disturbing essentialism of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology nor to look past the uses of Nietzsche and Heidegger by the Third Reich. After all, phenomenology hardly proclaims a single gospel and its controversies often frame the field more than its convergences.[36] It does seem meritorious to say that while

---

[35] For a brief and moving analysis of this question, read Richard Rorty's straightforwardly titled chapter, "On Heidegger's Nazism" from his book, *Philosophy and Social Hope* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 190-197.

[36] See for example the controversies of French phenomenology after Emmanuel Levinas in application to theology in Dominique Janicaud et al., *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate* (New York: Fordham University, 2000).

the product of phenomenological reduction—essence—may be difficult to navigate and may even appear at times to be nothing more than a Platonic essence—after all, this is the critique of Husserl by Heidegger (and Derrida) and of Heidegger by Marion—the requisites of phenomenological method are such that anything dualistic or other-worldly is nothing more than a fantasy or a mistake. Not unlike the goose that my son so abhors.

1.9 Philosophy and Phenomenology[37]

Having discussed the converging genealogies of phenomenology and postmodernism, I should also briefly mention the genealogical relationship between philosophy in general and the philosophical moment of phenomenology. Since philosophy and phenomenology can be very opaque things, I will illustrate my point by referring to a peculiar culinary trend that I recently became aware of.

"Real food" has become trendy. There are popular books on the subject;[38] growing attendance at farmers markets; and restaurants that boast that they serve such food to their patrons. I recently ate at one of these restaurants. It is a popular hamburger and fries eatery named, "Five Guys Burgers and Fries." It came highly recommended to me, and for good reason. It makes very good tasting burgers and fries. What is the secret? It's simple. They use real food for the featured ingredients. Fresh, never frozen, ground beef that is formed into hamburger patties by real hands; real potatoes that are cut into spears

[37] I thank Ruth Holt for questioning me on this distinction and encouraging me to include my response here, which served as the genesis for this section.

[38] And the ones written by Michael Pollan are worthwhile and highly accessible things to read. *The Omnivores Dilemma*, *The Botany of Desire*, and his most recent *In Defense of Food* are all worthwhile books to read, in my estimation. See *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006); *The Botany of Desire: a Plant's Eye View of the World* (New York: Random House, 2001); *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008).

and fried in real oil; real peanuts that one can shell and eat while waiting for the food to be cooked-to-order; and so on. They even boast the name and geographic place of the farm that their potatoes and peanuts are shipped from on a chalkboard display. People seem to be very impressed by the novel idea of eating potatoes and peanuts that come from such a wordly origin, a real farm. Imagine that, using real meat and real potatoes to make hamburgers and french-fries. "Real food," what a revolutionary concept! What's next, being in-the-world?

Satire aside, this is the world we live in: a world where worldliness has itself become a spectacle. We are amazed by the truly ordinary because we have mostly forgotten that it was there or never knew of it to begin with. In one sense, this is what some might call the "human condition." It is the lesson of Plato's cave that has been repeated across time in almost every philosophical movement. Philosophy has always been speaking to this perennial quest for deep recovery. The Socratic practice of *philo-sophia*, love of wisdom, is tailored to address the human struggle to fulfill the deepest desires to be a person: to be, to live, and to exist. As Foucault put it, philosophy has always been invested in the "care of the self."

Foucault's Nietzschian genealogies also remind us that things have changed. In recent historical times there has been a heightened sense that this philosophical quest for selfhood has come under uniquely modern threats. As early as Rousseau, and most famously in Marx, we find the notion of "alienation" that speaks not only to the human condition in general, but, most presciently, to the present, to the time in which we live. Therefore, philosophy and phenomenology are not entirely different from each other, although they do serve distinct purposes. Philosophy is powerful, but, like the wind, it

seems to have a mind of its own. Philosophy goes on undisturbed by the tides of time. Unlike this perennialism of philosophy, phenomenology is not a timeless method. Phenomenology is not immune from history or politics. Phenomenology, in its existential and phenomenological articulations, is impossible without the unique challenges of our time—especially in the globalizing West during the previous century. Phenomenology is impossible without a genealogy that makes it necessary and prescient for the times we live in.

Similar to the basic difference between economics and socialism, where the exchange of capital is general and reactions against modern capitalism are specific, so too with philosophy and phenomenology: We cannot imagine ourselves without philosophical concerns and questions that are fundamentally existential. We also cannot imagine phenomenology without the historical changes of the recent past and the predicaments of modernity. In response to the popularity of "real food," phenomenology comments on this contemporary historical obsession while philosophy speaks to the basic fact that we grow hungry. In my view, we need them both.

1.10 Imitations

Now I would like turn my attention to a recent book in the philosophy of education that is not explicitly phenomenological, but does articulate an important question in a way that leads me to believe that the subject matter is deeply infused with ontological preoccupations that might serve to make my own more clear. My hope is that, with a revision following the phenomenological method outlined in this chapter, it will serve as a way to articulate the curiosities I have invested in for this project. In his book, *Imitation*

and Education: A Philosophical Inquiry into Learning by Example, Bryan Warnick asks this question: "How do we learn from the lives of others?"

While I find his reply interesting, I am most impressed with the phenomenological profundity and insight with which he poses the question. This is very well put in his opening paragraph that I find to be deeply existential, perhaps psychoanalytic, and without a doubt psychological. He writes:

> My life has been a mirror of the lives around me. I find myself becoming like the people I am exposed to; I reproduce their actions and attitudes. Only rarely, however, can I recall making a conscious decision to imitate. One of my teachers was such a towering personality that he radically changed the direction of my life, though I was scarcely aware of his influence at the time. Only long after did I recognize his imprimatur emerging on everything from my occupational decisions, to my views about religion and politics, and even to my preferences about where to go to lunch. I seem to have been passive fuel awaiting his incendiary presence. When I think about his influence, I wonder how it occurred and whether it has, on the whole, been a good thing for me to have learned in this imitative way. *This book is, among other things, a personal attempt to answer questions about how I became who I am. It is an attempt to understand how one human life can sway another* and to better comprehend the meaning and value of this influence.[39]

Here, Warnick declares his book as *being* two things: (1) "a personal attempt to answer questions about how I became who I am…" and (2) "an attempt to understand how one human life can sway another…" Under this dual purpose, the titular question, "How do we learn from the lives of others?" seems to verge on impropriety depending on what that question means. What does this book have to do with "learning"? What does learning have to do with becoming who one is and swaying another life? What does he mean by "learning"?

The answer seems to vary according to the *saber*/*conocer* or knowing-about/knowing distinction. If by "learning," Warnick means learning *about* things, then, it seems to be altogether unrelated to what he states that this book *is*. However, if by "learning"

[39] Bryan R. Warnick, *Imitation and Education: A Philosophical Inquiry into Learning by Example* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008), 1-2. (emphasis mine)

Warnick means learning about things *and* learning things themselves, or simply learning things themselves, then, he meets the self-imposed, ontological prerequisites of his text. In other words, in order to be faithful to what he declares his book to be, Warnick seems to suggest that what is at stake in learning is not the epistemic knowledge—knowing-about or *saber*—so often attributed to it, but, at least in addition to that, ontological knowledge—knowing or *conocer*. A mere case of epistemology like *saber*-learning cannot sustain the desires of the author that constitute his book. Without ontological knowing Warnick cannot accomplish what he is striving for. None of us can. On its own, epistemological knowing-about denies the fact that first it must be within Being.

As Heidegger put it in *Being and Time*:

> We must show that those investigations and formulations of the question which have been aimed at Dasein heretofore, have missed the real *philosophical* problem (not withstanding their objective fertility), and that as long as they persist in missing it, they have no right to claim that they can accomplish that for which they are basically striving for. In distinguishing the existential analytic from anthropology, psychology, and biology, we shall confine ourselves to what is in principle the ontological question.[40]

We could imagine this Heideggarian objection being raised against Warnick's book or, more generously, we could at least see this objection as a way to rearticulate the book. Both readings argue that the sentiment of the question that we find in Warnick's confessional introduction cannot be separated from the question itself. Learning cannot be a matter of epistemology, pure and simple. More than that, learning does not originate from epistemic knowledge, but, instead, from our desires and questions of Being, subsistence, and existence. So, noting Warnick's phenomenological description of the ontology of his own study, I would like to pursue much of the same content—with many

[40] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 71 (italics in original).

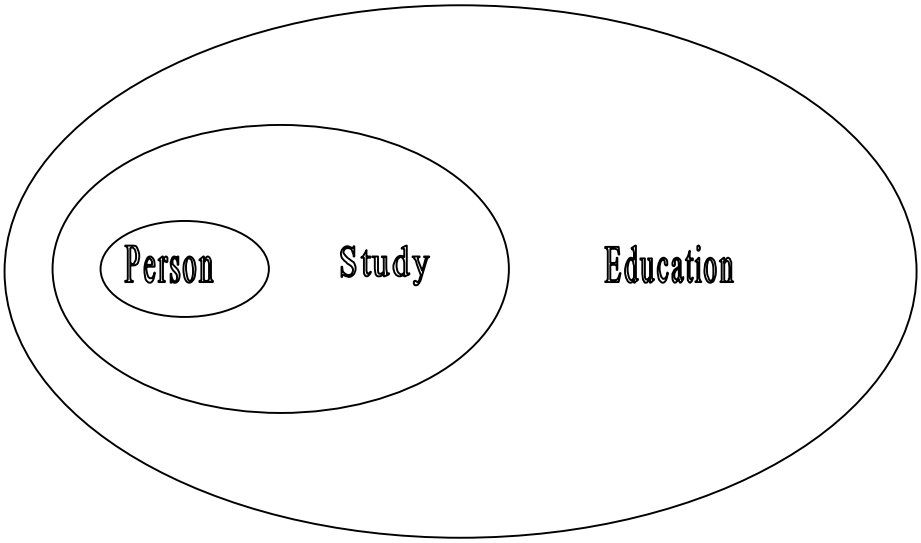
of the same haunting curiosities—with this phenomenological look at education, study, and the person through the trinitarian lens I have described here.

I will organize my thoughts by following using the categories that the lens contains: Being, subsistence, and existence. In the chapter to follow I will consider the question of education: the very *factness* of education. My reply will be minimal, as it should be. I will propose that education is a mystery in the positive sense: a real thing, not the mere negative absence or pure nothingness. In my third chapter, I will move from Being to subsistence in order to look at the art of study as an erotic force as opposed to purely intentional practice. In my fourth chapter, I will make some suggestions about the existence of the person facing the unique challenges that threaten the ability to exist at all. In my fifth and final chapter, I will comments on the implications on using the whole lens and its potent vision that might withstand the death of school.

For the sake of clarity allow me to restate how the chapters interact with the ontological sketch I have provided. In chapter two, education is a way of being within Being. In chapter three, study is a way of subsisting. And in chapter four, the person is a way of existing. (In chapter five, we look at them all together and consider their importance.)

To understand the organization of the content of these chapters in relation and proportion to each of their organizing categories, consider the trinitarian lens with each chapter's theme taking the place of the ontological category (being, subsistence, and existence) that it corresponds to:

Education, Study, and the Person



While the content of these chapters does not orbit a bibliographic concern, I cannot overstate the great impact that William James will have in the entire work. Most significant for this study is James' pluralistic method. This is a hallmark of James' style: balance. His ideas ebb and flow as he adjusts his mind to the thing at hand and he has very little problem reversing order and taking up the thing he seemed to have jettisoned earlier. He expresses this well in his *Varieties* where he writes, "To understand a thing rightly we need to see it both out of its environment and in it, and to have acquaintance with the whole range of its variations."[41] This is consistent with his earlier psychological investigations that range from physiological descriptions to metaphysical speculation. James' methodological sensibility also bespeaks a deep understanding of human belief. The ultimate jury for his arguments is the stark reality of human experience. Rather than force himself into one's mind using the brute force of logical argumentation, James

[41] James, *Varieties*, 23.

simply says: "If you protest, my friend, wait until you arrive there yourself!"[42] This pluralistic, yet realistic, approach to philosophical method combined with the gentle force of his religious sentiment has given me a new vision of phenomenology.

I understand that, to some, it is odd to think of William James as being concerned with ontology or phenomenology. Many think of James in shared company with someone like A. J. Ayer in his distain for metaphysics.[43] Make no mistake: this popular caricature is an outrightly mistaken reading of James' philosophical system.[44] Or, perhaps, it is a failure to read him at all. This is easily proven by an afternoon of close reading. One could choose James' *Pragmatism* that opens by affirming G. K. Chesterton's claim that "…the most important and practical thing about a man is his view of the universe;"[45] selections of his *Principles of Psychology*; portions of *Varieties of Religious Experience*; all of that brief gem that is *Human Immortality*; his unfinished textbook for teaching metaphysics, *Some Problems of Philosophy*; or any significant portions of his extensive letters and correspondence.

Interpretive controversy aside, there is more than exegetic fidelity or sentimental value to my relationship with William James in this study. He, along with the steadfast

---

[42] James, *Varieties*, 160.

[43] This was the impression I had before seeing James in primary text and reading the account given by Fredrick Copleston, S.J. in his *History of Philosophy* (Volume 8, part II) instead. Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 8 (London: Burns & Oates, 1966) part 2.

[44] The two foremost authorities on James of the previous century, his esteemed student Ralph Barton Perry and the contemporary John D. McDermott, both support this point in their life-long work on James. More recently, Robert Richardson's erudite biography is also faithful to these readings of James.

[45] William James, *Pragmatism: A new name for some old ways of thinking* (Boston: Henry Holt and Co., 1907), 1.

help of many dear friends and mentors, has challenged me in many of his texts—most recently in his letters and correspondence—to allow myself to imagine the world with or without a book in hand, using the resources I have in front, around, and inside of me, without too much concern for a "system." It is his unique, yet never singular, companionship that gives me any reply whatsoever to the questions hidden in the lessons of my son Tomas, Heidegger, Warnick, and many others I am remiss to leave unmentioned.

Now, it seems appropriate to begin the work at hand with this exhortation from William James: "There must in short be metaphysicians. Let us for a while become metaphysicians ourselves."[46]

[46] James, *Problems of Philosophy*, 34.

Chapter Two:

Education as Mystery

"Not only that *anything* should be, but that this very thing should be is mysterious!"

"It is not probable that the reader will be satisfied with any of these solutions, and contemporary philosophers, even rationalistic ones, have on the whole agreed that no one has intelligibly banished the mystery of *fact*."

William James, *Some Problems of Philosophy*

2.1 Introduction

What is education? That is the question. This question takes the very fact of education as the thing for investigation. In this chapter, I will discuss the complexities and distinctions embedded in this question. Some will be particular issues within the philosophy of education and others will be more general philosophical issues, yet neither should be excluded from the other.

A query like this, an analysis of being within Being, is very easily taken for granted. It is no surprise, then, that it is scarce within the field of education. This is most understandable. The questions of Being are the most difficult questions that I can possibly imagine. To ask such questions with regard to education, then, will also prove to be difficult. The difficulty often lies in the fundamentality of Being. It is so fundamental that is it easily forgotten or ignored. Imagine trying to spend a week fully aware of every breath taken. It would be impossible. Breathing is so fundamental that it is easily forgotten. The same is true for this analysis—and any ontological analysis, for that matter.

Heidegger was keenly aware that ontological research can lose sight of Being. He writes, "Basically, all ontology, no matter how rich and firmly compacted a series of categories it has at its disposal, remains blind and perverted from its ownmost aim, if it has not first adequately clarified the meaning of Being, and conceived this clarification as its fundamental task."[47] If this is true, then Heidegger's now famous claim that the question of Being had been forgotten when he drafted *Being and Time* in the 1920's continues to be true today.

Heidegger is not alone in this attitude about the fundamentality of Being. James makes a similar claim in *Some Problems of Philosophy*. There he writes, "The question of being is the darkest in all philosophy."[48] Despite this darkness, James maintains that, "Philosophy, in order not to lose human respect, must take some notice of the actual constitutions of reality."[49] Therefore, we find the philosophy of education in need of ontological analysis that addresses the fundamentality of Being and the "actual constitutions of reality." The ontological question that has not been sustained fully is this: The question of fact, the thing itself, and not mere things about the thing in question.

While there is much knowledge *about* education, we know very little of it—too much knowing-about, too little knowing. For instance, educational theories usually take education to be the case in-advance. Education is usually assumed to be factual in the first place. Where are the theories that bring the *factness* of education into question and provide some descriptive relief to precede their theoretical and epistemological

[47] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 31.

[48] James, *Problems of Philosophy*, 46.

[49] James, *Problems of Philosophy*, 15.

knowledge-about? On the frequent occasions when this happens, education remains a presupposed fact onto itself, an inbred *primum mobile*, a credulous *causa sui*. The questions that follow this presumption can only be pseudo-questions.

It is commonplace within academic literature of the field of education to find these pseudo-questions. James once wrote these candid words on his distaste for "pedagogic literature" in a letter to G. Stanley Hall: "Pedagogic literature seems to contain such vast quantities of chaff that one hardly knows where to seek for the grain."[50] This "grain," as I interpret it, would be the pregnant seed of Being. Regardless of possible interpretative differences we might think of, James did not live to read much of the pedagogic literature written by the man he often referred to as "Professor Dewey."

John Dewey shows a great deal of sensitivity to the fundamental question of fact, especially in the opening chapters of *Democracy and Education*. Years later, in *Experience and Education*, he makes this even more clear in his recommendation for thinking about "educational problems."[51] He writes, "It is often well in considering educational problems to get a start by temporarily ignoring the school and thinking of other human situations." For Dewey, as for James, "education" is not something fixed to some institutional subject matter. For Dewey, "education" takes us out into the deep waters of social life. For James "education" leads us into the flux of consciousness and the world. For both of them, "education" is a contextual thing. In a similar spirit, I hope to describe education as a context in the widest and most literal sense, using the phenomenological method outlining in the previous chapter.

---

[50] William James, *William James: Selected Unpublished Correspondence, 1885 – 1910*, ed. Frederick J. Down Scott (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1986), 34.

[51] As we have seen, following Heidegger, I find the treatment of education as a "problem" to be (ironically) problematic.

However, as Heidegger noted previously, phenomenologists are not immune to missing the ontological question. For instance, the Husserlian phenomenologist J. Gordon Chamberlin only grazes—and ultimately misses—the point in, "Phenomenological Methodology and Understanding Education," a chapter in the collection of essays published in 1974 as *Existentialism and Phenomenology in Education*. There, he writes:

> Traditionally educators have assumed that one first works out or adopts a philosophical position and then proceeds to discern its implications for education. A phenomenological approach challenges that deductive procedure. Its method draws educators to look first at the thing itself in careful reflection on the meaning of education, for until it is clear what education is it will be unclear how philosophy and education are, or may be, related.[52]

In this passage, Chamberlin rightly makes the methodological imperative of phenomenology—"To the thing themselves!"—clear. He seems to be concerned with what education is, with its *factness*. Nonetheless, his approach is hermeneutic, not ontological, interpretive not descriptive. He is concerned with "careful reflection on the meaning of education." This concern is not the same thing as a careful reflection on the *being* of education. Because of this, Chamberlin is ultimately unfaithful to the call of phenomenological method. [53] Even Heidegger concerns himself primarily with the *meaning* of Being in relation to time, not with the *being* of Being with relation to itself—even as he clarifies the project of fundamental ontology.

This radical forgetting of Being in philosophy and education cannot be because any intellectual deficiencies. Despite varying amount of genius—very little in my case—we

---

[52] J. Gordon Chamberlin, "Phenomenological Methodology and Understanding Education," in *Existentialism and Phenomenology in Education*, ed. David E. Denton (New York: Teachers College Press, 1974), 119.

[53] For Heidegger, the philosophical task takes up the "meaning of Being" through fundamental ontology, whereas—as Jean-Luc Marion has pointed out in *God Without Being*[53]—theology moves past Being as a thing for interpretation and begin to reduction of giveness through the disclosure of revelation.

all seem to inevitably run the marathon starting at different points in the race with little to no regard for its starting line. If we deny this, then, we are indicted by our own denial. The point here, then, is not to accomplish the analysis of the being of Being, the fact of fact, or the being of education. Instead, it is to begin and end with the first question and, from that point, order all other questions accordingly. Otherwise, our visions of reality are at risk of ontological disorder and subsequent infidelity.

Whatever education might be is most certainly out of order in its everyday usage. It is alarming that it has become conventional in contemporary society—and even within the academic field called "Education"—to think of education as completely indistinguishable from, and in some cases synonymous with, the compulsory schooling system recently instituted under the authority of the similarly recent political apparatus of the day, the nation-state. Many student-teachers I have taught think of education in this exclusive way. These students often ask about the "educational" merits of things that seem to be unrelated to the literal time-space of a modern school classroom. And I suspect that many others share this view. While the earlier theories I mentioned have seminal contributions to make, this narrow view is utterly ahistorical and absurd. It errs in thinking of education as the exclusive subject matter of the schools—and states—of the recent past. A similar view of politics, for example, would be dismissed outright as a sophomoric genealogy, and for good reason.[54]

[54] As an example, imagine the sheer ignorance of a political theory that took politics to be the exclusive product of modern politics, the progeny of the upheavals of Tudor England in the 16th century or, to be more generous, the unification of Spain a century earlier. How, then, could such an impoverished genealogy hold any mettle for education?

Scanning the spectrum of educational thought, this much seems clear: *Educational theories have never accounted for the being or factness of education.*[55] This is not to say that the question has not been asked at all, but instead to suggest that it has not been asked in a way that believed itself and took action accordingly. At best, we have epistemological theories *about* education, symptomatic meanderings that cannot fundamentally address its ontological is-ness, its being and factness. These are theories in which education is presumed to be a fact in-advance and only related to this or that other thing *afterwards*, in an order that proceeds from Being but pays it no—or only very little—attention. How can we know education if we have never tried, failed, and tried again to know it?

I suspect that during this study I will find myself in the same position attempting to imagine what education *is*, as I do when I face that haunting question "Who am I?" with any ontological seriousness or insight. And, perhaps, I may come to realize that these two questions, "What is education?" and "Who am I?," are not entirely different from each other and require a reply that says the least amount possible, since the subject matter verges on ineffability.

2.2 Fearful objections

Along with the well-known critics of ontological research in the academic discipline of philosophy,[56] I have also been told that these kinds of questions are pointless or

[55] One can test this claim very easily by asking people—from whom one cares to hear an opinion—what they think education is. The results will surely fail to disprove my thesis. And do not intend to extend it any further in this study.

[56] A recent example of this in the discipline of academic philosophy is to be found in the Presidential Address delivered before the One Hundred Sixth Annual Central Division meeting of

dangerous to ask in the disciplinary field called "Education." (I agree with the latter claim but reject the former.) I have been asked and told things like the following: "Who cares about Being in education? That's not what its about. How will you raise graduation rates and test scores by asking these kinds of questions? What difference will it make in the 'real world'?"[57] Beyond the initial exception and delight—to hear such ontological reactions (e.g. 'real world')—I take to these objections, I wonder about the ontological content of the questions themselves. It is almost as though there is a traumatic risk lying in the recognition of ontological analysis as a valid, and therefore dangerous, form of inquiry. Given the lack of answers I have offered thus far, it does seem a bit premature. But it is not entirely unwarranted.

I know (*conocer*) that my own aversion to asking myself the same sorts of questions—curiosities about my own *factness*—is because I am afraid. I fear the answers, or even worse, the lack thereof. I fear the unknown, the unconscious, and the possibility of an empty abyss in the place where I desire to be some-thing. I fear not being, or being left alone to suffer it. More often than not, I do not wish to have the *factness* of my self rendered suspect and brought into question.

Perhaps it is the same way for the study of education. Could it be this very thing—fear—that motivates educational aversions to ontological investigation? It doesn't seem to be out of the question. After all, these examinations could lead us to believe that

---

The American Philosophical Association by Peter van Inwagen (University of Notre Dame) entitled, "The New Anti-Metaphysicians." Especially relevant is his treatment of Hilary Putnam's critiques of ontology. *Proceedings and Addresses of The American Philosophical Association* 83 no. 2 (November 2009): 46 – 61.

[57] I welcome these sorts of questions. They are powerful examples of just how pervasive ontology is. After all, this critic is not dismissing ontology outright, she is simply arguing for a different brand.

education is very different than we once thought it was, or even more radically, that it is nothing at all. So why gamble with the potential of losing that pleasant fantasy of education-as-we-knew-it? Especially when, to many of us in the field, "Education" has become something like an appendage of who we think ourselves to be personally. Furthermore, facts demand action. What if education reveals itself as something that makes demands on our ways of living that we would rather not meet? What if we are forced to change?

And then there is the integrity of our ego: What if these ontological questions hurt our feelings? According to the contemporary psychoanalyst, Deborah Britzman, questions like these *will* hurt our feelings. On a panel entitled "Convergences and Trajectories in Curriculum Theory" at the 2009 Bergamo Conference for Curriculum Theorizing, she began her commentary by making this simple, yet profound, point regarding psychoanalysis: "The reason so many people oppose psychoanalysis in education is because it hurts their feelings." Knowing very little about psychoanalysis myself, I am not sure if this is true, although I intuitively suspect that it is. True or not, it does seem like it could be the case in much of the educational opposition to ontology and phenomenology.

I imagine that questions of ontology are met with suspicion because of the same desire that makes them the case in the first place. After all, what is held suspect could not possibly be ontology outright. What is considered suspicious could only be the fact that ontological research threatens the current ontological structures, the facts of the day. Those sacred facts may or may not be explicitly acknowledged, but they certainly are the case by their sheer presumed *facticity* (a pejorative word for Heidegger). Otherwise,

where else could these objections come from? It is my view that most of us do not want to discover that the facts that our lives are built upon might not be what we once thought—and perhaps even believed!—that they were. Even if the discovery is mysterious, uncertain, excessive, and incomplete. Or precisely *because* the discovery might be mysterious! In spite of these understandably fearful objections, reality compels us to account for it.

Before I begin, keep in mind the previous chapter and where this ontological curiosity began: in the existential objections of a three-year-old. Because of this ordinary and worldly origin, I hope that you will see that the simplicity of the question "What is education?" does not merely feign at being simple and should also reveal itself to be extremely practical. As I said earlier: Facts demand action. How else, then, can we act by doing things we assume to be factual unless we have some clue as to what the fact *is* that we are doing? We cannot superstitiously presume facts to be facts and then believe that taking these fantasies hook-line-and-sinker through unquestioned "action" is a way of acting in the world. At least not before we give the facts of the day some critical contemplation, again and again. This is the skeptical core of what we might call, following Foucault and Nietzsche, critical ontology: the continuous study of things in the world we presume to be facts to see if they *are* what we take them to *be*. The phenomenological method of reduction tests whether the thing is what we were told it was or if it is some-thing else—or even nothing at all. Even if the meaning of the thing escapes in the end. Even if all we are left with is a meaningless some-thing that itches our deepest curiosities.

My purpose in this study is not to unveil that mysterious fog from the fact of what education might be. It is actually the reverse. The purpose of this study is to advocate for re-enchantment: *to re-enchant education with mystery*. By simply raising the question of fact we begin to see that things are all mysterious to the core. All I can possibly hope for is that education emerges as a thing in the world. That it can be admitted to being truly mysterious and that we will be moved to face that mysterious reality: the mystery of fact. To remove our sandals, tremble, and wonder as we stare into its curiously burning flames, unable to forget it when we go to sleep, walk along the sidewalk, or step into a classroom. This would begin to propose a strong alternative to the deeply disenchanted notions of "Education" that take no interest whatsoever in education as a thing and desperately invent preposterous epistemological certainties for accountable learning and responsible jobs. This would begin to recover a sense of what is at stake in the school that we hope to be the progeny of this education-fact: The becoming of persons, those endangered subjects of modern school and society.

2.3 Hope and novelty[58]

Hope, as I imagine her to be—indeed, as I *hope* her to be—, is neither an optimist nor a pessimist. Her proverbial cup is only what is. She is an ongoing, insatiable desire for something real and true. At the very least, she is the desire for something that matters to my widest self and the world we inhabit. She is a desire for something that is at once old and new, like real pleasure or true love. Hope appears as desire and the intuition that this longing might actualize in beauty; that there is some-thing beautiful in the world—that

[58] For more on the issue of novelty read the final five chapters of James' *Some Problems of Philosophy* with special attention to chapters nine and ten, "The Problem of Novelty" and "Novelty and the Infinite," respectively.

the world itself might be beautiful. Growing tired or bored seems to describe the very times when I lose hope and begin to feel presumptuous and arrogant or despondent and despairing; when I begin to think of the world as disproportionate to itself. I suspect that this is more than a private eccentricity. I am even led to believe that this may even be true for many other people.

I bring up this subject because the objections to ontology mentioned in the previous section are also well-known objections to philosophy in general. They often appear in two forms. In the first, they say something like this: *Philosophy is perennially hopeless*. It duplicates itself over and over like a senile, skipping record that repeats the childish question "Why?" without any regard for who is listening. There is no hope that it will end or comfort us with anything but more nagging questions. Questions that fester like a shallow splinter in the tender flesh of the palm. Questions of life and death and (im)mortality. Facing this perennial hopelessness, philosophy appears to be irrelevant, other-worldly, self-absorbed, and senselessly painful.

And then, there is the second accusation: *Philosophy is hopelessly perennial*. Everything there is to think has been thought. Everything there is to write has been written. Facing this hopeless perennialism the very thought of self-expression seems to be a futile thing to attempt since there is nothing new to say and, perhaps, to be. At best, there is study. But, as we will see in the next chapter, study can often seem barren for the exact same reasons. (Maybe this is why so many students hate school and so many people claim to hate education and life in general?)

But all is not lost. In spite of these charges against philosophy, things catch our attention and *philo-sophia* (love of wisdom) emerges. Wonder embeds itself in the

wonderful; curiosity is infectious once we find some-thing to arouse our curiosity; and awe is hidden within the beautiful—even the beautifully ugly. We desire. The trick seems to be in finding some-thing *desirable*, some-thing attention-worthy and worthwhile. This is what philosophy, ontology, and phenomenological methods are to, and for, me: They are an offering of some-thing desirable, attention-worthy, and worthwhile to do and be. They offer the art of study as an inescapable way of subsistence. In and through these studies I am led to believe that that there is reason to be hopeful for something new out there, that there is ancient and ever-new beauty to find and become. For me, this hope was rekindled in a special way during my study of work of Jean-Luc Marion who literally sent me[59] to re-read Heidegger and Nietzsche. There I found similarities that paralleled my ongoing study of the works of William James—all of them surrounding the question of Being. What is this hope I found in these bookish studies? The hope that philosophy is not over and has only just begun.

In the philosophical quandary of being we find at the turn of the 20th century—the predicament that replaced the medieval study of God's existence—we find an entirely new and excessive world to be discovered and awed by, not unlike Albert Einstein's magnificent correction and expansion of Isaac Newton's universe. Contemporary to Einstein's revolution in physics, we find a rigorous philosophical examination of the *factness* of being as a thing for investigation in way that neither abandoned the *philosophia perennis* nor remained completely faithful to it. It continued the work of the Enlightenment and rejected it all at once.

[59] This is not a metaphor, I spoke with Marion at a conference dedicated to his work in the spring of 2008 at Franciscan University of Steubenville where he advised me to pass through Nietzsche and Heidegger if I wanted to embark on an ontological quest. So I did.

This was not only a secluded affair of academics and scholars. It literally created and shaped, and has been constituted and formed in turn, by the times (*Geist*). Who can imagine Red October without the beforehand *Capital* and *The Communist Manifesto*; *Being and Nothingness* and *Nausea* without the beforehand World War II; or May '68 without all of the above? This is exciting! It is also tragic. Besides the euphoria and sobriety that it brings, it is also a reason—perhaps *the* reason—to speak of ontological research, phenomenology, and philosophy with any glimmer of hope that it can, and perhaps will, yield anything desirable, attention-worthy, and worthwhile to the thing we call "education."

Here we find a preliminary scent of education. Education seems to be the very hope I have described. We hope for education to be the case not because we know its factness, but because we desire for whatever that fact might be to be some-thing that has the potency and capacity for beauty, excitement, novelty, and tragedy. Education as hope is the preparation for the mysterious fact of education to come.

2.4 Real, true mystery

One of the perplexing curiosities of Being is that it often resembles a never-ending Russian doll or an eternal onion. It is layered. Layered like numbers (mathematics), matter (physics), and the cosmos (astronomy). As a whole, it is bigger than our ability to imagine it. And its parts are equally as small. Being's only invitation seems to be into

infinity. It comes in no other size but excess and demands nothing less than humility and restlessness. [60]

How, then, does one attempt to examine such a thing? An inquiry into Being is not unlike the work of a detective. In a mystery novel, detective work surprises our intuitions and disturbs our beliefs and investments in the story. We often find that the most likable and least objectionable character turns out to be the villain. The work of the detective is embedded in her namesake: to *detect* what is the case in a situation that appears to be mysterious. And often our image of a quintessential detective is carrying a lens to see things through! Let us think of ourselves the same way: detectives holding a trinitarian lens in our hand to seek, sense, and see things with.

This is what names the genre of literature we find detectives in: mystery novels. From Sherlock Holmes to Scooby-Doo, detective work is especially good at taking "supernatural" magic tricks and revealing them as "natural" operations or coincidences. A detective always works with the conviction that there is some-thing going on. A detective never works in the midst of no-thing. In other words, what is of the utmost importance in this genre of literature and research is that there must be a world to begin with. A mystery cannot exist in the midst of no-thing. Mystery cannot be no-thing. It cannot be a void that is not present. It may lack meaning, but it cannot lack Being.

Even though being is such a profound mystery that escapes the grasp of every attempt to capture it, it is not supernatural. It is not of another world. That is the point of Heidegger's notion of Being-in-the-world. Being is never ahistorical. This worldly notion of Being does not make it any less mysterious. It does insist that the mystery of Being,

[60] Sigmund Freud describes this disturbing experience as the religiously relevant, "oceanic feeling" in the opening to *Civilization and Its Discontents* (London: Hogarth Press, 1930). To be fair, he also claims that he has never experienced it himself.

the mystery of *factness*, cannot be an absence that is ontologically negative. It must be. And to be, it must be in-the-world. Mystery is not like "evil" we find in privation theory where "evil" has no being of its own, without acting as a parasite on some-thing that is. Unlike this view of evil, mystery is not a parasitic reality or truth. It is not the negation of the real, or the negative side of the truth. Mystery is a positive absence. Absence *within* Being: an absence of disclosure, knowledge, or meaning, not the absence of Being itself. Mystery is very dark to our sight, to be sure, but it is neither the unknown that is nothing at all nor the impossible that is never actually possible or possibly actual. Quite the reverse, mystery, like every-thing else, is some-thing.

For this reason, mystery is a profound truth and an imposing reality. This truth and reality is unknown because of its excess *not* because of its lack. It is too much, not too little. The excess of mystery saturates our ability to see it and make meaning of it. It does not destroy itself somehow because it cannot be seen or grasped and made into meaning. Because we can never see a mystery in proportion to its wholeness, it is also impossible. It saturates the possible. Mystery could even be said to be hyper-potent, not the other way around.

That the world is mysterious is itself a truth and a reality. It may tell us nothing, but that is not to be confused with being no-thing. Its meaninglessness does not annihilate Being. Mystery is the least and the most we can say, all at once, with any amount of positive certainty. We can be certain that there has been, is, and will be mystery.

Even to deny this fact—the fact of the mystery of fact—would itself be very mysterious and demand an explanation that is unknowable to the believer and impossible to speak or symbolize. It would be like someone declaring a riveting mystery novel to not

be mysterious at all. Or, if the novel had its final three chapters missing—like Dickens' *Mystery of Edwin Drood*, which was never finished[61]—it would be like someone who had read it with great interest declaring to have no desire whatsoever to know what the ending might have been. It would be like an orphan who never wondered about her biological and genealogical origins; or a person who has never felt something strange and wondered about it. Given the mystery that we find education to be, it would be like an educator who never wondered what education really and truly is—or who forgot about the ontological wonder within this question altogether.

To a skeptic, so many declarations and assertions about the reality and truth of mystery might verge on paradoxical. This would not be unjustified. Skeptical or not, you too might wonder: "If the impossible is truly impossible, how do we truthfully come to such a truth?" Or, "If the unknown is real, then, how do we really know this reality?" These are surely word games that might be instructive to us, but they are not intended to prove or disprove the stated thesis of the positive ontology—and negative epistemology—of mystery anymore than the thesis itself.

To someone predisposed to desire to believe such a thing beforehand, my claims will probably seem indisputable. To the other who is equally predisposed to not believe these things, my claims will seem circular, tautological, and, perhaps, stupid. As James put it, "If you have a God already whom you believe in, these arguments confirm you. If you are an atheist, they fail to set you right."[62] And to someone whose feelings have not yet made up her mind in advance, one feeling will likely prevail; demand that she look

[61] I am grateful to Timothy Leonard who alerted me to this unique piece of literature.

[62] James, *Varieties*, 428.

elsewhere for further confirmation; or disinterest might take the day and she might forget the whole thing entirely.

2.5 Religion vs. ideology

This probable set of predictions is why everyone is unavoidably religious: we all hold fast to any number of beliefs (*credos)*. This religiosity begins to point us in the right direction. Anyone who thoroughly hates religion does so religiously. And yet, no one goes through life without creeds of some kind. No religious belief is without its uncertainties. All religious convictions are steeped in uncertainty that give way to mystery, to the unknown.

Consider behaviorism,[63] atheism, and theism: What these creeds cannot deny is that there are things that give them fits. For behaviorists, the life of the mind and the experience of love and loving (among other things) elude their grasp. For the atheist, the theistic possibility that there is a God is impossible to dispel with absolute certainty. For the theist, the atheistic possibility that there is no God—or that, if there is one, it is only myself—is a possibility that all-too-often seems to be true. Even in other things—hobbies, sports, politics, and other nostalgic affiliations—we find that everyone carries some form of devotion to any number of articles of faith that constitute their belief, their creed.

If religious creed is taken to be this inescapable condition of belief, then, its generic psychological dimension does not merit serious controversy. What is susceptible to the dangers of fundamentalism and superstition would not be religion or belief outright. Only

[63] See Charles Taylor's devastating critique of behaviorism in *The Explanation of Behavior* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul,1964).

when our beliefs become ideological would religion then become disturbing. This disturbance would not be for moral or ethical reasons. It would be for ontological reasons. Like a detective novel where the problem is not the criminal or immoral nature of the "crime" but the facts of the case, so too with ideology: Basic psychological belief is a religious expression that simply is the case. Ideology, however, distorts reality into something that is not the case at all. This distortion is deceptive and its dishonesty is not "immoral," it is simply ontologically false and untrue.

What is striking about the difference between generic religious belief and fundamentalist ideology is the striking absence of a critical ontology and, consequently, the disenchanting castration of mystery from the life of the ideologue. Puritanical ecclesiologies, positivist science, and behaviorist psychology all share this aspect of being thoroughly ideological. They all display more than the simple psychological religiosity of human belief. They all claim to have a rather comprehensive account of revelation. They may admit to having a certain number of mysteries that remain, but they will all maintain that what has been revealed is more valuable than what is still concealed; what has been disclosed is sufficient to merit membership into their creed. They often bolster these accounts with terrifying—and terribly effective—eschatologies and soteriologies. Among them, we find an ideological account of "Education."

Under ideological influence, "Education" can appear to be frightening and apocalyptic. Anyone slightly familiar with the controversy over of what is called "educational policy" in state schooling agendas knows that many people are very worried about things going badly for them if they neglect this magical thing called "Education." As early as the Common School Movement of the 1830's we find statesmen promoting

compulsory schooling as a way to expand "educational opportunity" thereby preventing moral corruption and social degradation. Take these words from Horace Mann as an example:

> Let the common school be expanded to its capabilities, let it be worked to the efficiency of which it is susceptible, and nine-tenths of the crimes in the penal code would become obsolete; the long catalogue of human ills would be abridged; men would walk more safely by day; every pillow would be more inviolable by night; property, life, and character held by a stronger tenure; all rational hopes respecting the future brightened.[64]

The educational rhetoric of more recent times has not become any less alarmist. The 1983 *Nation at Risk Report* uses bellicose rhetoric that compares the neglect of education as an equivalent to committing a form of "disarmament." It even goes as far to suggest that such a disarming force from another nation-state would be considered an "act of war." Current educational policy in *No Child Left Behind* refers to the neglect of "Education" as the abandonment of children. This act's title brings to mind to mind a popular Evangelical book series entitled, *Left Behind*.[65] There is an unmistakably apocalyptic tone to these warnings sold as reform, and for good reason. "Education" has become messianic. Under these accounts, "Education" has moved from generic religious belief to a fundamentalist ideology. Lacking ontological critique and investigation it exists supernaturally as a form of magic or superstition. It fetishes over the power of "science-based research" and peddles these certainties with a powerful message of salvation. "Education," under these terms, is the redeemer who saves children and the nation-state from neglect and damnation, from being left behind.

---

[64] Mary Mann, *Life of Horace Mann*, vol. 1 (Boston: 1865) 142.

[65] See *National Defense Education Act of 1958,* 85th Cong., P.L. 85-864 (September 2, 1958); National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), http://www.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/index.html; and *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*.

The salvation narrative—we might call it "schoolvation"—goes something like this: If you go to school and act rightly, according to the selected teachings handed down by the Church and entrusted to the priests and priestesses, you will become one of the elect. The Educated. But not all at once. Your name will gradually be written on scrolls called "diplomas," signed by the high priests called "principals," "superintendents," "deans," and "presidents." With enough degrees of piety, you will eventually be saved from the damnation that is a life uneducated, unsaved by the school, unwritten in the transcripts of the Book of Life. "Stay in school" and you will not suffer the torment that comes with not getting this magical thing called an "Education." Stay in school long enough and you will be entrusted with a respectable social status and responsible work. Then, you will be saved.

Those who have grown-up in material poverty—as I did—have likely heard this Gospel of School preached to them by many righteous men and women. And believed it. After all, who really wants to go to hell or, even worse, be poor? So, in fear of damnation, you begin to see "Education" as the one thing that can get you that full-ride scholarship, for some, or college admission, for others, that will lead you into the promised land of milk and honey that lacks the embarrassing car, shoes, and house of being seen as poor and therefore less-than-human. If you are poor, then, people tell you that "Education" is the way, the truth, and the light. But, to you, it is a way out of the shame and fear of being looked down upon and treated poorly. Education becomes something altogether unrelated to its noble titles: it becomes a way to survive the apocalypse of the present, the eschaton you live amidst. And in your deepest and most

truthful intuitions, you know that "Education" is purely instrumental and not to be believed in. It is an idol not an icon.

This messianic narrative and its articles of faith are not learned overnight. They require a great deal of catechesis in order to formalize the doctrines of the school as an "educational" site of exception and redemption. They require obedience. Obedience is best achieved by removing the mysterious and disenchanting the thing in question—or denying its very being, its thingness—so that it can be controlled and regulated by the superstitions of ideological certainty. Rejecting mystery and keeping detectives at bay secures a hegemonic monopoly over the *factness* of education and the school. With that monopoly comes a straightjacket of the imagination and reliance on a creed that is not religious. It is ideological.

The ecclesiology of "Education," like all other churches, requires a superstitious sense of divinity to be taken seriously by a large number of people. Therefore, since "Education" seems to have already acquired the status of a god, then, asking questions about its being could help to find out whether this creed is truly under divine right or if it is simply a magic trick. Does this god exist? What is its being? Furthermore, it could illuminate whether the moralistic, bellicose, and morbid threats made by Whigs of the past and present are generic religious beliefs or dangerous ideologies.

It is my suspicion that superstitious and fundamentalist accounts of "Education" are a major reason why educational research seems guarded from ontological investigation: It has established an unquestioned monopoly over the imaginary of its being. "Education" has no need to take an inward turn, we are told by its guardians. In response to these repressive conceptions of "Education," a purely reactionary move would be misguided.

This is not a reason to abandon or dismiss the school. The power that "Education" and the school yield is not only indicative of the power of negative superstition; it is also an example of religious experience in general—even in the realm of the secular. For this very reason, we need something like another re*form*ation; something like what Bernard Lonergan called a "Second Enlightenment;" something that can only begin by bringing the most sacred thing, "Education," into question through the rigor of reduction and analysis. This is the first reason why education is a mysterious: everything begins in the very same way and remains so until it is fully revealed and disclosed.

In the section to follow, let us begin to look further at the constitution of education and schooling. Then, we can consider some other aspects of the mystery of education.

2.6 Politics and psychology

The politics of schooling are very easily confused with the psychology of education. This is not to belittle one or the other, nor to try and say that they are mutually exclusive. It is to suggest that there are differences between the two that are more than trivial. Here are two reasons: First, within the realms of schooling and education we can find different things going on. In schooling, we find political things happening: a polis (a state or a community); rhetoric (teaching and instruction); and constitution (policies and curricula aimed at the formation and preservation of the polis). In education, we find psychological things happening: thought and thinking; consciousness; and the life of the mind and the person. Secondly, there is also a spatial component that distinguishes them. Schooling directly refers to the school. Schools are perceptual. Education refers to a conceptual place within mind, consciousness, and the world at large that are not so easily perceived.

This is why, in many cases, we tend to favor the more general term ‘education’ over the situated particularity of the school. Of the two, education is more mysterious to us and therefore more fecund and potent for the imagination.

At the same time, it would be premature to undervalue the school. There is much that we can learn from the research done with regard to schooling. Despite the richness of education’s elusive being, schooling has received closer and better attention. While the *factness* of education has gone untouched, the school has by comparison been thoroughly put to the test, again and again; especially during the previous two centuries during the advent of compulsory schooling. I think that if the same attention were devoted to what is presumed to be the school’s genetic educational source we might begin to imagine what ontological research in and of education would look like. It would ask many of the same questions that have already been asked of the school by others like Ivan Illich, John Holt, Paul Goodman, and John Taylor Gatto. Questions like: What is it exactly? Where did it come from? Why should it be taken seriously? Should it be abolished or not? Is it dead or alive?

Nonetheless, the questions would also differ because the politics of schooling presumably sits on the psychological shoulders of education. That is to say this: While schooling provides a way to imagine what ontological research of education might be like, it also lacks the ability to say much more than that since its very status as fact remerges as questionable when we analyze the *factness* of education.

I would also like to suggest that this difference between the politics of the school and the psychology of education points to a profound synergy between them. Rather than posit the sole view that politics and schools are somehow crass and vulgar while

psychology and education are profound and pure (or the converse), we might begin to see that these are not two worlds but one. I am deeply troubled by the totalizing imprimatur contemporary society has given the State apparatus to practice compulsion via modern compulsory schooling and, to a much greater extent, the limits of the educational imagination therein. But this is not the sole nor the best meaning of politics or schooling. Not anymore than the presence of the ugliest pathological behaviors would be the only good way to describe what psychology and education are about. In the dual-happenings of politics and psychology we find a basic fact of life: We cannot separate our communal (*communio*) life from our innermost thoughts, feelings, and desires. To try and pretend to have accomplished such a feat would be utterly nihilistic and undesirable.

This fact is displayed in relation to education and schooling in James' *Talks to Teachers on Psychology*. Despite his tone that sometimes verges on condescension towards the teaching profession, James brings the politics of schooling *and* the psychology of education to bear on the art of teaching. He ends his *Talks to Teachers* with moving words that unify the political and the psychological in the loving practice of teaching.

He writes:

> I have now ended these talks. If to some of you the things I have said seem obvious or trivial, it is possible that they may appear less so when, in the course of a year or two, you find yourselves noticing and apperceiving events in the schoolroom a little differently, in consequence of some of the conceptions I have tried to make more clear. I cannot but think that to apperceive your pupil as a little sensitive, impulsive, and reactive organism, partly fated and partly free, will lead to a better intelligence of all his ways. Understand him, then, as such a subtle little piece of machinery. And if, in addition, you can also see him *sub specie boni*, and love him as well, you will be in the best possible position for becoming perfect teachers.[66]

[66] William James, *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals* (New York: Holt Company, 1910), 196.

This passage is profound and challenging to me for many reasons. One of them is that, unlike the predominant view on schooling today, James' disposition to the school is remarkably optimistic.[67] This optimism is somewhat bizarre for the tormented James who wrote on the absurdity of academic degrees in his witty essay "The Ph.D. Octopus."[68] Throughout his life he remained critical of formal structures that seemed to demand more respect than they were worth. Yet here he speaks of schooling with great warmth and hope. Given his record for skeptical dispositions to institutions, where does James' peculiar optimism for the American school come from? The answer might be this: Throughout his *Talks to Teachers,* James' optimism flowed from his ideal hope for what the school could be if its teachers would take the time and effort to know their students by learning about their psychological make-up in order to love them properly; to know-about them in order to know them.

Hardly one for naive optimism, James' hope was not the product of superstition. He knew first-hand the profound effect that psychological—which for James included and celebrated philosophy and religious experience—insight could have on the capacity for love, for understanding the community at large *and* the inner-workings of those mysteries we call "mind," "consciousness," "self," and "education." James' respect for this continuity between politics and psychology was such that, as with all of us, his own politics were deeply psychological and his psychology was deeply political. He could not

[67] Be reminded that James' enthusiasm for the American school and schooling in general were not meant to include, and should not be confused with, what he called "Pedagogic literature."

[68] Besides critiquing the requisites of the Ph.D.—a degree that he lacked, as his only degree was in medicine—James also did not support the founding of the American Philosophical Association, of which he later became president. William James, *The Letters of William James*, ed. Henry James (Boston: Boston Press, 1920).

separate the life of the mind from the lives and minds of others, and for good reason. In place of dogmatic dualisms he posited "the flux." In phenomenological fashion, James argued that we must turn *towards* this flux of life, not away from it.[69] He writes, "…dive back into the flux (and) turn your face toward sensation, that fleshbound thing which rationalism has always loaded with abuse."

I find this complex, flux-facing view of politics and psychology deeply instructive to the task of phenomenology. It is crucial to how one might continue to think of the looming ontological question, "What is education?" without turning to rash judgment or oversimplification. We can see that education and schooling are not the same and need not be completely different in the flux of the world of life and death. More than that, it reminds us that the world is complicated and mysterious and the contents therein follow suit by ontological necessity.

2.7 The divine is serious

In case this ontic quest is misunderstood, please take note that the question "What is education?" does not imply a hope for a singular thing to be found or a dogmatic principle to be obeyed. It is not my purpose here to stake a claim to the one true "Being" of education and defend it against all comers. The aim is not to "define" education. I take Nietzsche's warning to heart that "only that which is without history can be defined."[70] Lacking a definition does not mean that there is nothing going on here. It simply means

[69] William James, *Writings 1902-1910* (New York: Library of America, 1987), 951.

[70] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*. In Max Scheler's treatment of *Ressentiment* taken from this same text, he presents this alternative to definition: "Instead of defining the word, let us briefly characterize or describe the phenomenon."

that, as James put it, "Philosophy lives in words, but truth and fact well up into our lives in ways that exceed verbal formulation. There is in the living act of perception always something that glimmers and twinkles and will not be caught…"[71] Let us see what we can catch a glimpse of.

Since education is taken to be so many different things to so many different people who assume it to be a fact, a sensible way to begin to look for it would be within a claim like this: *Education is what it is to those who take it to be the case.* The question now becomes whether a cacophony of voices can be reduced into a more articulate expression of itself. This is not to try to take the plural and make it one thing, but, instead, to ask: What, if anything, could we imagine such a plural thing to have as its ontological source? What makes this name *be* in these various ways without *becoming* utterly unspeakable and unknowable to those who speak it? What do those who speak about education as though they know it seem to imply that it is? Or, do they only know-about it? This much is clear: *Education remains a mystery to us*. Knowing-about education is not the same as knowing it.

A preliminary phenomenon we can find among these voices is that this mysterious fact of education is taken to be divine. This does not mean that people are acting ideologically about its divinity. It does mean that people are fundamentally religious. What I mean is this: People who take education to be the case—and, because of this, even those who deny it—seem to take it to be something divine, in the sense of some-thing that is serious. We can look to James' *Varieties* and see that education can be found in the divine phenomenon from which James comes to understand a minimalist "primal reality" of religion during his second lecture. This observation for James, and for myself, is not a

[71] James, *Varieties*, 446-447.

definition of the divine; it is simply a sketch of a glimpse reality. James writes: "The divine shall mean for us only such a primal reality as the individual feels impelled to respond to solemnly and gravely, and neither by curse nor a jest."[72]

Now, isn't this exactly the same way we feel about education? That it is some-thing solemn and of grave importance, some-thing we cannot discard or take lightly? If someone were to talk about education as though it were trivial and unimportant wouldn't we rightfully object? And wouldn't this objectionable person rightly know—and, perhaps, be delighted—that they were committing a sort of blasphemy? We might even declare to this heretic, "That is not education!"[73] and ask them to recant or submit to further catechesis.

It seems safe to assume that we can find a common phenomenology in the discourse on education as something that, at the very least, is mysterious as a matter of practical difficulty to agree upon and, as such, is not a joking matter and should be taken very seriously. This is the first thing we can say about the mystery of education: That it is serious in a way not unlike what anyone takes to be divine in its "primal reality." This divine sensibility is not an exclusive one. We might call it panentheistic. In other words, the divinity of education is not superstitiously reserved away from the world. For this reason, the seriousness we find in attitudes about divinity and education is a sober mark of tragedy. This divine mark is especially visible when we face the invisibility of Being.

---

[72] A page earlier (on page 38), James makes this similar remark concerning religion that embellishes the words in the one quoted here. He writes: "There must be something solemn, serious, and tender about any attitude which we denominate religious. If glad, it must not grin or snicker; if sad, it must not scream or curse. It is precisely as being *solemn* experiences that I wish to interest you in religious experiences." James, *Varieties*, 39.

[73] This sentiment might explain why the use of state compulsion to enforce compulsory schooling laws is met with so little resistance over time: People seem to recognize the divinity of education, its solemnity and its gravity.

To develop sight for this, we must acquire tragic eyes. The trinitarian lens is a dark lens. These eyes are the mark of true philosophical wonder. As James put it, "The philosophic wonder thus becomes a sad astonishment, and like the overture to Don Giovanni, philosophy begins with a minor chord."[74] The cosmos sings the blues. This song tells us that it knows what love is, even if it has little know-about it.[75]

2.8 Tragedy

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle declares tragedy to an imitation of an action that is three things: serious, complete, and possessing magnitude.[76] If education is indeed serious like the divine, then, Aristotelian tragedy may serve to give a sense of the *factness* of education if the other two categories are equally as descriptive as the first one. In case this moves along uncritically, let us first consider one objection to the idea that education is serious.

I could imagine a critique that might claim that seriousness can go too far and distort what education is. This objector might say, "Count me out! I do not find education to be serious as you say it is." This critic might object that the *factness* of education is not put at risk because it is taken too lightly. From her view it could also be taken *too* seriously as well. This critic might come from many points of view, let's pretend that she is a romantic, a follower of Rousseau. She may even be a teacher who brilliantly advocates

[74] James, *Some Problems*, 39.

[75] This refers to the jazz standard "You Don't Know What Love Is," that teaches that until we know the Blues, we cannot know love. Suffering begets love.

[76] Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. James Hutton (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1982), 50.

for play and free time as ways to remove the "seriousness" of an overly restricting classroom and curricula. I do not disagree with her intent or her teaching methods, but I do think that this construal of what is meant by "serious" is a misunderstanding of what I am asserting here.

To explain what I mean, imagine this scenario: While my sons and I are out for a walk, the younger of them, Gabriel, decides to spontaneously lay in the well-kept lawn of one of the houses we are passing by. As he lays there delighted to feel the soft grass bristle into his back, and as my older son joins him, the owner of the house come out yelling profanities and holding a shotgun, threatening to shoot my young boys as trespassers. What would a reasonable reply on my part be like? I imagine that I would be incredulous, angry, and scared. I might yell "Are you serious?!" as I rush to get my sons away from this lunatic. The implication in my question is the same as the misunderstanding of anyone who objects that education is not serious. If this outrageous, gun-toting person were truly serious, she would never threaten the lives of two harmless children lying on her front lawn. She would recognize what is more important and would act *seriously* about it. When we see the facts as they are, their *factness* is serious by ontological necessity.

In other words, the objections from a teacher who feels that my construal of education as divinely serious might threaten the play and free time of school children is not because she disagrees with me. She merely underestimates what it is to be serious. She rightly understands that play and free-time are very serious things. By doing so, she is asserting the seriousness of education present in the practice of playtime and daydreaming. This is the same variety of seriousness conveyed to a CEO by her doctor who orders her to go on

vacation in order to prevent a heart attack. Leisure is serious. Education, in the very same way, is also serious. And this seriousness always begins and ends with the divine scent of life and death looming somewhere not too far away.

This objection has also created another problem. My reply could be misunderstood as asserting an axiological component to the being of education. Let me be clear: I reject the distinction between "education" and "mis-education" as having to do with the *factness* of education since raw facts are not good or evil. They simply are the case. Education is not the fact of a good-thing or an evil-thing. It is only some-thing instead of no-thing. Expecting an ontological analysis to render a fact factual with the added dimension of being innocent or guilty, permissible or impermissible, is a mistake. For this reason, my use of Aristotle's notion of tragedy is intended to help reduce the *factness* of education away from overly complicated questions of ethics.

Moving from this non-axiological seriousness of education, we should consider its second Aristotelian dimension of tragedy: completeness. Education is complete because of its wholeness. Like the singularly plural universe that James believed in, education also has this complete aspect. To visualize this wholeness think of bed linens. Bed linens are whole because of their thread count. The tragic dimension of this wholeness is that nothing can be isolated and contained. As a whole, the parts become irreducible to each other and cannot be divided. This wholeness adds to the mystery of education, because we cannot separate it into parts without distorting Being. We cannot divide it into sterile subjects or lessons without losing the lifeblood that makes it complete in the first place.

When we look at these two aspects together, seriousness and completeness, we find the third feature—possessing magnitude—that brings us back to the "primal reality" of

the divinity of education. Education is big and magnificent which demands us to be serious about it as a whole. In the eyes of those who claim to see it, education possesses a breadth and depth that is as expansive as the mind, consciousness, and even life itself. Many call education something "lifelong" that verges on the eternal.

There is an aesthetic sense to this Aristotelian trinity. When we think of something beautiful, we find it has all of these features in one way or another. So, perhaps, we might also say that along with being divine, and tragic, education is beautifully mysterious. The dark, overlapping hues of this description begin to outline the mysterious core of education. None of these colors contain moral or axiological statements. They simply are imagined statements of fact. In case this sounds strange or arrogant, here are some possible questions and answers:

> Q: How does this fact that education is mystery, in these varied ways you describe here, come to be the case?
>
> A: Every-thing comes to be the case in the world. There are no alternatives to this.
>
> Q: This may be true, but surely you do not think that *you* know what the world is or that your experience can totalize the world as such?
>
> A: You are right. I do not think that.
>
> Q: Then you must provide a better answer! How do these claims you have made come to be the case in the world *to you*?
>
> A: If you had asked that question, then, I would have answered it. What I describe here concerning the mystery that is education comes to be the case in the world through impressions from my senses, intuitions, and desires that create beliefs in

me about things in the world. At least that is as far back I think I can gather together from my mental life.

Q: Why are those beliefs and desires that constitute your mental life themselves the case universally, or at least generally—in a way that is meaningful for a community of inquiry?

A: Because that is the way they seem to be at the moment to me. I speak of them as true because they are not yet untrue to me. Would you object to that? Would others you know object to this? Is not your objection itself an example of doing the same exact thing?

Q: Is that all you can say?

A: Yes. I think so.

Q: So what was the point of all this?

2.9 Enchanting absence

In the final, unanswered question posed above, we find the pregnant gem of the divine, tragic—and perhaps even beautiful—mystery that is the *factness* education in the phenomenon of desire. In it we see the enchanting effect that mystery can have on action. We may even realize that a mystery lurks beneath everything we take to be an act. What is this effect? Mystery causes us to desire disclosure. Absence is full of erotic enchantment that leads us to act, with or without volition, will, or intention. If we were to admit to the mystery that is education we would find this: Education as mystery reveals education as more, not less, desirable. If education were indeed in a crisis, as the politicians of schooling like to tell us, then the most basic reason for such a crisis would

be because it has lost its appeal and we have lost our appetite for it. Or because we know that what is said to be "Education" is not serious enough to be education. A student who loves to fix cars or weld steel knows that taking practice tests for a standardized test is not education. So, how does something become more than just palatable? How do we make something so disenchanted desirable again?[77]

Let us imagine a more radical crisis of our time: starvation. Daily, thousands of people die of starvation. Unlike an educational crisis where appetite is lost, people who are starving long for food. The problem is simply one of feeding those who need food in the proper proportion. Education is different. An educational crisis reveals itself in the disfiguration of the desire itself and the subsequent loss of the object of desire in exchange for some-thing—or no-thing—else altogether. An educational crisis is more akin to obesity. In this case, we find that our desire for food continues but we desire food in a way that disenchants the very fact of what food is, the very *factness* of food. We even develop the desire to eat things that are not food at all to the most ordinary analysis, like reading the list of ingredients. Or, we celebrate "real food."

Unlike ending starvation, where the desire for nourishment is still intact, educational problems point to an ontological confusion of desire: we no longer know what it is that we want and, consequently, we no longer *want to want* it. Again, this is not a moral or an ethical issue. It is a failure of the ontological foundations of desire and action. The divine and tragic call of the mystery of education is largely seen as non-erotic and even unattractive. In its place we accept the ideology of "Education" and its fundamentalist certainties as a worthy substitute. Reacting against this, others have presented a world of

[77] For the founders of "Five Guys Burgers and Fries" they accomplish this by serving real food. This seems like a good approach to education that will require ontological analysis.

pure fiction, where no-thing is real and every-thing is constructed by no-thing. In both cases, when the thing at stake is obfuscated as perfectly certain or entirely fictional, we find a phenomenological crisis: the loss of the thing itself. The re-enchanting potential of mystery is this in the positive absence that is education we find a way to recover that thing we never had before: the *factness* of education, the mystery of education.

There are many examples and explanations that I might offer, but Disney sums them up in a saying I remember from my childhood in the animated adaptation of Robin Hood. In a scene that I can remember like it was yesterday, Maid Marian (the vixen), longs for Robin Hood (the fox). Her lady-in-waiting (the chicken) consoles her by quoting an English poet who wrote: "Absence makes the heart grow fonder."

I find this chicken to be quite right. The power of a real and true absence is remarkable erotic and tragically powerful. (Think of the death of someone dearly beloved one or the fate of star-crossed lovers.) When we feel the absence of the things we most deeply desire we often experience a primal religious sensation that goes beyond generic belief or shallow intentions and into the realm heartache, melancholia, and nostalgia. What if we were to re-imagine the mysterious *factness* of education as this very absence? What if the point of sustaining a reduction that reveals education as mystery was to re-enchant education as the undisclosed thing that *is*? How would we act about the politics of schooling when we admit that the thing itself is too elusive to measure? What effect would this have on our actions and our lives?

Education as mystery has been described in many, interwoven ways. It begins as a descriptive case: some-thing difficult to figure out, like a puzzle or a detective novel. We also begin to see it as a way to combat the superstitious ideologies of the day. Here,

education as mystery can be filtered through the lens of the school where we find the politics of the day and yesteryear. Then, education as mystery can be understood as the seriousness we find analogous to the primal reality of the divine. This seriousness leads into the other Aristotelian dimensions of tragedy (completeness and wholeness) that also help to describe education as mystery. And yet, it is not until we face the re-enchanting power of positive absence that we begin to see what mystery discloses by remaining undisclosed: the *factness* of education. This fact—the fact of the factness of education—is itself still a mystery, as it should be. As such, we are challenged to face it and leave behind the urge to tame it by removing its ontologically defining, and most enchanting, feature: mystery. We should not want a domesticated, sterilized, disclosed, or fully revealed education for aesthetic, not moral, reasons. We should want one that is from the wild flux of Being that James instructs us to face.

From the most opaque desires of the ontological quest for Being to the most practical needs of everyday action, education as mystery rejects the relativistic neutrality of constructivist and postmodern epistemologies and simultaneously exposes the fundamentalist superstitions of Whiggish Puritanism and positivistic psychology. What is left is a real and true, divine and tragic, absent mystery that tells us what it is we long for when we desire the fact we hope to be education: the hope to become a person. To be in relation; in ontological communion; to be-with. Even in relation to the unknown—the unknown forces and energies that drive us to study in our (un)conscious life.

2.10 First exercise: Seeking Being

Up to this point I have postulated a number of things in various ways. What has been lacking has been a space to see through your own eyes. In each final section of these descriptive chapters, I will ask you to take some time to carefully consider an event of teaching using the part of the lens I have focused on. (In this chapter we have considered Being, the context that all things are within.) This will not produce the full trinitarian effect, but it should begin to exercise your ability to seek, sense, and see.

Imagine an event of teaching that you can think of in very descriptive, real terms and try to respond the following questions: What would seeking Being look like in this event you have imagined, and what vision would it yield in turn?

Chapter Three:

Erotic Study

"My inability to study fills me with despair."

William James, *Selected Unpublished Correspondence 1885 – 1910*

3.1 Introduction

How is it that the ability to study comes and goes even as we long for it? If I desire to study, then, according to conventional wisdom, all that is left is to *do* it. In the schools of our day, "study!" is an often-heard command and "study skills" are techniques to be acquired in remedial classes for the (supposedly) less able. In this chapter, I will investigate the ontology of study with the growing intuition that this conventional understanding of study in schools and elsewhere is misunderstood. Study, it seems to me, cannot be a simple matter of intention,[78] attention, or learning. At least in addition to that, study must have some-thing to do with being within Being, living, and existing. Study, as with most things, cannot not wholly determined by a strong will generated from a singular intending ego. If the reasons and examples provided are illuminating, then, these two points should become apparent: First, volition does not rule the day when it comes to the art of study. Secondly, study subsists as an erotic force that comes and goes, but never leaves us altogether. In other words, despite our inability to execute it as a technique, study remains in our desire for it. This not only contradicts convention, it also asserts the

[78] Unlike analytic accounts of intention (e.g. Michael Bratman), I am using intention in its phenomenological/psychological sense that follows the continental descriptions begun by Brentano and extended by Husserl.

erotic dimension of study. Erotic study, then, is like other forms of *eros*[79]: a wild thing, partly this and partly that, teeming with potentiality.

To re-state what I have said above: The analysis in this chapter should begin to reveal study as less intentional than the common view that takes it to be paying lots of voluntary attention to something for an extended amount of time—with corresponding results lurking right behind, with definite, prescriptive things to say. Emerging from this erotic theory of study, we might also begin to see a corrective suggestion to phenomenological methods that rely on intentionality as the primary or sole force of reduction and replace it (intentionality) with the complexities of consciousness and the world. In place of purely intentional accounts of study, I will describe study that subsists erotically, that lives in and through desire. Unlike the idea that erotic desire is itself willed into being, a closer reduction should discover that eros, like study, simply subsists. It is there, in the world, seeking and to-be-sought like Nietzsche's ghostly "will to power."[80] This location of erotic study in the category of subsistence will shift and clarify the ontological geography of the trinitarian lens from the outer-place of Being, to the middle-place of subsistence.

Because of this shift, things should begin to be more observable. Unlike the dark, positive absence of "education as mystery" described in the previous chapter on Being, erotic study should be more perceptual than the overwhelming vastness of Being that

---

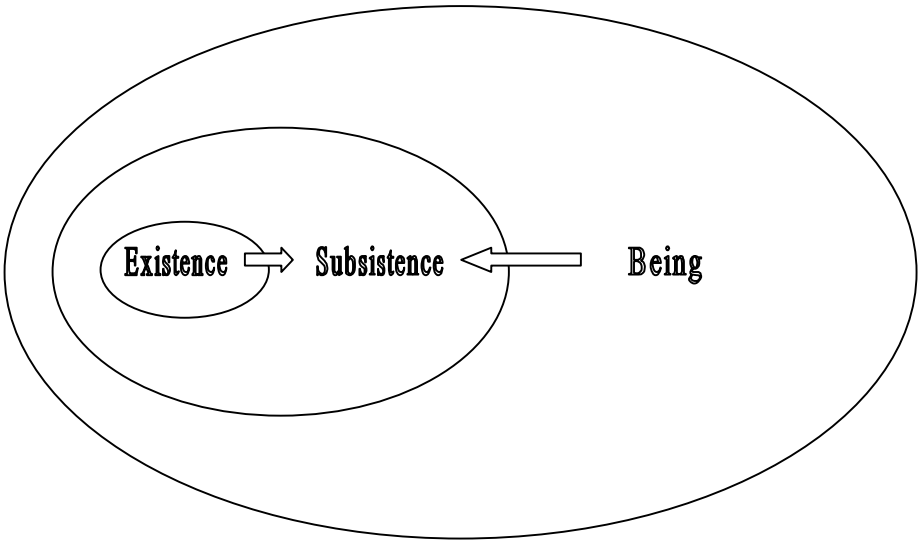
[79] The way I am referring to *eros* is in the classic sense of desire, that "great god" of Plato's *Symposium*. My treatment of desire is laid out more fully in chapter one.

[80] I refer to Nietzsche's subsistent "will to power" as *ghostly* because I sense that it is his affection for it that he refers to in this moving passage from "On Love of the Neighbor" in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: "Do I recommend love of the neighbor to you? Sooner I should even recommend flight from the neighbor and love of the farthest. Higher than love of the neighbor is love of the farthest and the future; higher yet than the love of the human beings I esteem the love of things and ghosts. This ghost that runs after you, my brother, is more beautiful than you; why do you not give him your flesh and your bones? But you are afraid and run to your neighbor," trans. and ed. Walter Kaufman (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 173.

leaves us blind and dumbfounded. Study seems to be more—using "more" as an ontological quantification—than the general sense of the context of Being where we seek, but do not find, education. Thus, the erotic subsistence of study will continue to describe this place within our lens, the ontological category of subsistence: The place where forces and energies of life and death mediate between being and existence, the category of ghostly things that prepare existence for being. This is why we should expect to have more sensory places to look for and discuss study than we had while investigating education.

For this reason, this chapter is not only descriptive. It is also the best space in which to convey the general contours of my methodological instrument, the trinitarian lens. In other words, since subsistence lives between being and existence, we will need to identity it in relation to its outer and inner categories. In sections 3.2 and 3.4 the descriptive terms I will offer will map on to the ontological categories in this way:

Being, Subsistence, and Existence



Once again, the question at hand is the ontological question of fact: What is study? My reply will be that study is and *is not*. It is insofar as it must be some-thing in the world. It *is not* insofar as it subsists uniquely in the region where we find life forces that drive things in the world. In the sections to follow, I will present my reasons for these statements.

3.2 Physiopsychology

The first consideration for this investigation will begin with what we know from existence (matter) and move outwards to subsistence (energy). In other words, we will begin with the body as a point of recognition and move from it to consciousness. This is not an original method. James' psychological descriptions in his *Principles* are largely based on the empirical, material observations of the brain and its nervous tissue.[81] At the same time, this phenomenological methodology for psychology does not require fidelity to a particular author or school of psychology. We do not need to do as James did and delve into anatomical physiology *per se* to see the surface of what I am referring to as "physiopsychology."

Physiopsychology points to this basic expectation: The intact body—the subject of anatomy and physiology, in other words—has *some-thing* to do with psychology.[82]

---

[81] See, for example, this passage where James invites his reader to join him in observing the physical and physiological aspects of the brain: "Nothing is easier then to familiarize oneself with the mammalian brain. Get a sheep's head, a small saw, chisel, scalpel and forceps (all three can best be had from a surgical instrument maker), and unravel its parts either by the aid of a human dissecting book, such as Holden's *Manual of Anatomy*, or by the specific direction *ad hoc* given in such books as Foster and Langley's *Practical Physiology* (Macmillan) or Morrell's *Comparative Anatomy and Dissection of Mammalia* (Longmans)." *Principles*, 7.

[82] If anyone were to dispute this meta-assumption, then, they could easily find it in more detail in the opening chapter of James' *Principles*. There he presents his opening theories of

If this expectation is reasonable to your intuitions, then, consider these two proofs, one in the negative and the other positive:

1. The *negative proof* is that a physical assault on the body, an action that abuses it to the point of murdering it, is not unrelated to being alive or not. Furthermore, this physiological life that is threatened by physical force is not unrelated to the psychological life of consciousness.
2. The *positive proof* is more revealing. In order for our body to survive and stay alive—to subsist, in other words—many different things have to be simultaneously present. This simultaneous presence of things might even begin to describe what life is. At the very least, it gives a minimal description of what the live body is: *a thing alive, a dynamic thing teeming with innumerably different forces and energies simultaneously and actively present.*

This bodily life-presence can be altered in directly intended ways: when we move the body-parts that we think we can control (such as when I move my arms and legs); when we use the body to alter the body (such as when I exercise); or when we allow the body be in a position to be influenced (such as when I stand out in the cold). However much we can direct our bodies with certain amounts of clearly felt intention, the vast proportion of our bodily life-presence is out of our hands. After repeated intentional actions (such as typing on a keyboard) we usually begin to perform the same body-actions without the aspect of strong intention. After a certain amount of time, we might call these things

---

psychology relying on a "cerebralist" approach that is vividly captured in his description of "plasticity" where he writes: "Organic matter, especially nervous tissue, seems endowed with a very extraordinary degree of plasticity of this sort; so that we may without hesitation lay down as our first proposition the following, that the phenomena of habit in living bodies are due to the plasticity of the organic materials of which their bodies are composed," 68.

"habits." The most habitual body-actions, of course, are completely out of our control; even as we tend think ourselves in complete possession of "our" body.

Our bodies often seem to have multiple minds of their own. They even seem to possess competing interests and abilities. We ignore the strong opinions of our bodies (such as extreme pain) at our peril, but the weak opinions (such as minor pleasures and discomforts) go on beyond our ability to weigh-in on, or even realize intentionally. We cannot pay attention to every-thing that happens in and to our bodies. Even when we seem to take deliberate forms of action on behalf of our bodies (such as swallowing medicine), the results are very unpredictable for a variety of known and unknown reasons. It is true that finding harmony with one's own body—the needs, desires, and whims of bodily subsistence and existence—is a life-long project that always ends in failure: Death.

Therefore, because the negative proof reveals that the body is not irrelevant to our overall conscious life and the positive proof shows that much of the life of the human organism is involuntary, physiopsychology teaches us this lesson*: Being alive, or subsisting, is not purely or primarily intentional.* Quite the contrary, intention is a proportionally small, secondary, and unreliable part of our physiopsychic life. I make this claim because the body, which I take as a phenomenological first instance, operates in its own times, spaces, and manners. It even has its own reasons—most absurd to us is its final decision to perish. I assume that this descriptive, existential case offers us a normative, ontological suggestion about subsistence: things cannot be altogether different from our physiopsychological ways of subsisting.

This should not be confused with an attempt to advance a *purely* deterministic theory of life. Even the ever-skeptical James declared that his first act of free will was to believe in free will. Whether we will admit it or not, we must believe (albeit skeptically for some) that we have the capacity to deliberately will *some* things and hope for the best. But even when we are convinced that we have a recipe for success we can—and do—fail for reasons that are all-too-often mysterious to us.

Some would call this an acknowledgment of the unconscious, and that would not be incorrect. However, in order to ask as little as possible from your intuitions, and my own, I am not asking that you submit the entirety of subsistence to an abstract unconscious. After all, whatever could be understood as "unconscious" would be a part of consciousness by the basic assumption described here: even the unconscious is not disembodied. If I am unconscious, then, I am such a thing in *this* body, over here, not that one sitting over there. I subsist as *me* insofar as I subsist in *this* particular space of flesh and bone that I call "my body."

For these reasons, physiopsychology is relevant to our ongoing investigation of the ontology of study.[83]

[83] To remain faithful to the minimalism required by phenomenological reduction (as described in chapter one) this description is made with no "supporting" scholarship. However, two of the already cited authors present more developed studies that support the claims I make in this section. In Warnick's *Education and Imitation* the question of becoming is premised on the fact that imitative processes happen involuntarily. Along with psychological literature, Warnick also delves into cognitive science that verifies the existence of a vast unconscious life in human beings. The most expansive source, of course, is William James. In many places James makes a nuanced case for the primacy of the involuntary attention in the human will. Most direct are his sections on "Attention" and "Will" in his *Principles* and reprinted in *Psychology: A Briefer Course*. The most famous theories of this sort, of course, come out of the vast resources of psychoanalysis—of which I am mostly unfamiliar. However, as this section argues, one need not make an uninformed psychoanalytic leap to see the skeletal aspects of my point here.

3.3 Consciousness and subsistence

Physiopsychology is observed through the body and yet this is not an existential observation in the strictest sense. This is an important methodological point to keep in mind. It should begin to clarify the relationships between the organizing categories (Being, subsistence, and existence) that constitute the methodological key to this project, the trinitarian lens. Since subsistence mediates between Being and existence, it, in turn, can best be seen through the relationship between Being and existence.

Whereas the previous chapter reasoned from the mystery of the world, this chapter begins the move from the world to the person (the subject of the next chapter). Between these two behemoths—Being and existence, the world and the person—we find the intermediary space of subsistence. If we pay attention to its unique location, we might begin to see the ontological geography of consciousness. In other words, there is an intimate, even special, relationship between the subject matter of psychology (what James calls the "science of the minds laws" and I refer to here as the phenomenon of "consciousness") and the ontological category of subsistence.

The relationship between these two things could justifiably raise a great deal of speculation as to the *exact* nature of these relations. Sadly, I cannot remark on that question here. My interest is only directed at the question of what study is. That is to say this: Whereas the vast mystery in the Being or factness of education lent itself to forms of religious speculation, the *eros* in the subsistence-factness of study lends itself to physiopsychological speculation. Unlike psychological theories and methods that take for granted the ontological location of consciousness, whatever psychology this might be must begin by noting the distinct, subsistent space of consciousness. The role that

consciousness (and study) plays, then, is to mediate between what exists and what is; to remind my existence here to recall itself within Being, and realize that they are one thing. In this view I am beginning to acquire, I suspect that my understanding of consciousness might depart company, with my mentor William James. Regardless of that, the reasons for setting off alone—if indeed that is what I am doing here[84]—are embedded in the phenomenological method I have set out for myself.

3.4 The fundamentality of fortune

A second reason for proposing a corrective theory of study can be understood by reversing the methodological direction of 3.2. Instead of moving from existence to subsistence, from the physiological to the psychological, we might see what going from being to subsistence will do. Referring again to the ontological categories, instead of the directionality of *existence » subsistence* in 3.2, this section will reverse the polarity and move in this way: *subsistence « Being*. This reversal reveals dialectic between two radically different ways of considering the world. This takes us past the physiopsychological move into the world at large, with the same methodological and ontological order and rationale.

I begin with this expectation: The excessive world of Being has *some-thing* to do with subsistence. This minimal expectation is clarified, again, in these similar, yet modified, proofs:

[84] The reason I am unsure as to whether my conception of consciousness is a departure point with James' psychology or not is because James himself seems to be of many minds about what he means by consciousness. At times he questions its very existence and at other times he argues for its total integrity.

1. The *negative proof* asserts that just as an assault on an existing body is not irrelevant to subsisting, so too with the world: Nihilism or ontological no-thingness, the complete annihilation of Being, is not irrelevant to subsistence. In other words, the world of Being is not irrelevant to the task of surviving it.
2. The *positive proof* is less demanding. In order to survive in the world, living things—subsisting things, in other words—must *be* in a way that is not unlike the world itself. Life forces cannot escape or divorce themselves from Being nor can they be rightly understood as Being. They must also subsist. When viewed from this perspective, we begin to see something like what has been called the "life-world."

Considering these two proofs in relation to the world will require descriptions not unlike the physiopsychological ones offered in the earlier section. To do so, consider the dialectic present in these contrasting terms used to describe both the world and the life—even psychological life—we find in it: *Fortune* and *nonfortune*.

Fortune is an ontological designation, not an axiomatic or moral one. When I wish someone I love "fortune" I am wishing that person "*good* fortune." This is what I mean when I tell my family, "Wish me luck!" I am asking for *good* luck, not just any kind of luck. On its own, however, fortune (and its synonym, "luck") simply *is*, nothing more, nothing less. Lady Fortuna is not an ethical superstition. She really and truly is unpredictable and unshakable. In *After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre describes her as "that bitch-goddess of unpredictability," and goes on to say, "we cannot dethrone her." [85] A

[85] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1984), 94.

fortunate life, then, is neither good nor bad on its own. It just is. There is no disputing it. Fortune can only be suffered.

For this reason, *nonfortune* is not the same as *mis*fortune. Misfortune is merely *about* fortune. Nonfortune is itself a different thing. Whereas misfortune implies something like a bad influence, nonfortune fundamentally lacks the ontology we find in fortune. Like fortune, nonfortune is not a good or bad, healthy or ill thing on its own. It simply lacks the ontological vulnerability to chance and randomness. Literally, nonfortune is not-fortune. Therefore, a nonfortunate life is the most radical converse of a fortunate one. Nonfortune recasts the world in the image of a strange otherworldliness: predictability, certainty, and the exile of chance.

The effect we might imagine of such a life would be a sense of the world and an approach to it that would be quintessentially superstitious and deterministic. In other words, it would rely on things that are not in the world to determine worldly outcomes. Like a person who sees tarot cards, astrological signs, or test scores as reliable reasons to feel secure about things and predicate wagers on them, so too with nonfortune: It is certain to subvert the ontological uncertainty of fortune with certainty. It is an attempt to sterilize beauty to the very edge of annihilation. Nonfortune is nihilistic.

Anyone who denies fortune and endorses nonfortune outright could only do so for reasons that would be extremely hard to imagine and intuit as beautiful, real, or true. It may be the case that some might seek consolation by pretending to escape reality altogether, but even they must at some point admit to this strategy. While this may only be a failure of my own imagination, I suspect it is more than that. Perhaps it is so difficult to imagine someone rejecting fortune because nonfortune is sterile and lacking worldly

beauty with makes it not real and untrue. As far as I know, there is no place in the world where things are really and truly predictable from the bottom up (or the top down). Every-thing is filled with things that escape and later might surprise, delight, or terrorize us. As pointed out the previous chapter, even if someone holding to a nonfortunate view would admit to a certain amount of chance in things, she would nonetheless argue that the fortunate side of things is proportionally miniscule and unimportant when compared to the nonfortunate one.

This strange ideological superstition is an attempt to guard against the inevitable winds of fortune. Yet, the hubris of nonfortune is not a moral lesson; it is an ontological reminder of the fortune of nonfortune. Even in the face of claims to certainty and demands for accountability there are still ghostly whispers of death and fear of the unknown. In those ghostly voices we begin to realize that nonfortune is only the case because fortune begets it. It is fantasy created by fortune. Without the immovability of fortune in the world there would be no fearful reasons to want to tame or escape it. Nonfortune is a defensive thesis that, to the person who endorses it, may seem to hold on to things that are true and real, but in doing so, nonfortune distorts the vulnerability of the world. It cages the wildness and fertility of things out of fear of the unknown.

Nonfortunate certainty could never be called foundational or universal. After all, if there were anything that we could reliably regard as foundational and universal, it would be the *unreliability* of things.[86] It is fortune, then—not nonfortune—that represents a world that is sufficiently unpredictable to be called foundational and universal. Despite this reliable unreliability of things, nonfortunate theories abound. Theory itself, when

[86] This is, as I see it, the magnificent genius of Darwin's insight into natural selection: there is nothing "natural" about it.

allowed to escape ontological fundamentals, is nonfortunate, no matter what its specific epistemological content might be about.

Even in the face of the grand randomness of science after Darwin, Einstein, Gödel, and Heisenberg, among others, there is a disturbing trend to see a particularly nonfortunate form of scientific rationality as a way to neutralize or eradicate fortune altogether in social institutions. In schools, this is very apparent in the proliferation of standardized testing. Standardized tests are considered to be effective ways to domesticate the wild mystery of education with "science." (And, in many ways, they are!) Supposedly this ontological castration that decouples things from the world, knowing from knowing-about, will produce effects that vindicate the messianic gospel of schooling, and its sponsor, the nation-state. Invariably, it contributes to my description of contemporary schooling in the previous chapter as predominantly, and problematically, superstitious.[87]

It is for this reason that the dialectic between fortune and nonfortune should be revealing to this study of study: While the sometimes-overestimated "testing taboo" is well known these days—but all-too-often ignored by policy makers, to be sure—, it is the *preparation* for these superstitious and nonfortunate tests that should be equally alarming to us for ontological, not moral, reasons.

---

[87] In the preface to his volume, *Theologico-Political Treatise*, Benedict de Spinoza expresses this now-common view of the relationship between superstition and fortune: "Men would never be superstitious, if they could govern all their circumstances by set rules, or if they were always favored by fortune: but being frequently driven into straits where rules are useless, and being often kept fluctuating pitiably between hope and fear by the uncertainty of fortune's greedily coveted favours, they are consequently, for the most part, very prone to credulity." *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza* trans. R.H.M. Elwes (New York: Dover Publications, 1951) 1:3.

Thus, the physiopsychology and the fundamentality of fortune bring us to the ontological question of the factness of study: Taking into account the physiopsychology of person and the fundamentality of Fortune in the world in general, what is study?

3.5 The signs of convention

Before offering concrete examples, a potential misunderstanding should be clarified. However critical I have been to what has been referred to as the "conventional view" of study, this critique should not be taken too far. Especially since my reasoning is largely based upon conventional, intuitive ways of thinking, it would be unwise to think that all convention is useless in this matter. Ontological objections do not so much rail against convention pure and simple. Instead of the facility of decrying convention, a worthwhile ontological critique should also be able to point out that the thing taken to be "conventional" is not sufficiently conventional or *thingly* to be taken at face value. It cannot deface things gratuitously. It can only *demask* to reveal the potentiality of a face.

For this reason, I think that there are many aspects of study within the conventions of schooling that hold rich signs of a deeper study, embedded in the poverty of "practice tests" and "study skills." I have seen, time and time again, a disfigured thing that still holds fundamental signs that remind me that the thing in question is there, at least in potentiality, despite how totally hidden it may seem to me. Take two of the ugliest, most disenchanted things we have witnessed during the past century: Hitler and the Nazi *swastika*. Even amidst their now conventional—and justifiably so!—hideousness, we can find glimmers of truer selves, of potential beauty and enchantment in them.

With Hitler, I can ask simple questions about his life—his family, fears, hopes, and dreams; his self- love and hate—and begin to unearth both the rich alternatives that might have led him to escape that miserable life *and* the dark possibilities of me becoming him if I am not vigilant and attentive to beauty. With the swastika, despite its jarring symbolic imprint left on recent historical memory, it is plainer to see. In its remarkable symmetry and simplicity we see the signs that lead us to its less menacing, and religiously meaningful, expressions in the East, Greek Christianity, and ancient Babylon.

It goes without saying that the subtle signs of these now aesthetically repugnant things do not—and should not!—refute their conventional expressions. We should desire things lacking the repulsive, aesthetic scar of genocide. And yet the very wounds and scars are themselves signs of what might have been in a possible world. They are masks that can easily blind us to what was, is, and might be there. However one might take this, these examples do impress this ontological truth: some-thing cannot be some-thing it is not. A thing can never depart from itself entirely. For this reason, no matter how deformed and disenchanted they may be, the conventions of study are not to be discarded *in toto*. In fact, many of their subtle signs might be in need of radical recovery.

Keeping that view in mind, allow me to present two examples where I think we can see the subsistence of erotic study. As I move along, there will be many parts to these exemplars that mirror the conventions we find in the scientific testing-fetishes of schools. These signs are rich and useful to us, not troublesome or contradictory. Most notably, we will find practices of preparation through memory and repetition that apply to both the ideal and its more common reality. In my view, none of these fairly conventional aspects of study should be abandoned as practices; they need to be seen as more than cheap

masquerades. They need to be re-imagined and re-enchanted through new, trinitarian senses. That is what, in my view, the examples to follow possess that "study skills" classes lack. It is also what we find in James' despair on the occasion when he deceives us into thinking that he cannot study.

3.6 Baby-talk and jazz

Babies and jazz musicians have a lot in common. They are both trying to say something. Their subsistent ways of speaking are simultaneously preparatory and performative. It is this unity of preparation and performance that sets them apart as articulate examples of what I mean here by erotic study. Before illustrating what I mean in the examples themselves, consider this preliminary formulation: *erotic study is a subsistent force that allows no distinction between preparation and performance.*

Baby-talk. Several years before formal instruction, toddlers learn to speak.[88] There are wide variations from child to child, but certain aspects seem to be fairly constant. To begin with, long before formal speaking and imitative word-associations, and even before the earliest mimicry of infantile *echolalia*, there are purely acoustic prerequisites: bare vocal noises and sounds. A sign of life in a hospital delivery room is a good, loud cry. Noise is also a sign that infants have the potential to speak vocally. Without the ability to acoustically make vocal noise, vocal speech is impossible. (Although the possibility for language remains.) Perhaps it is for this reason that it is a common thing for infants to vocalize at random for very unexplainable reasons. It often seems, at least to me, that these noises—low intonations; high intonations; rapid stutterings using the tongue or the

[88] I make all of these observations as one might expect: from personal observation—especially, from the lives of my two sons.

hand; strong yells in echo-prone places; and more—are fascinating and experimental to them. This much seems to be true about baby-talk: it happens between Being and existence. It verifies the earliest, unconscious "am" of a person and mediates between that and the conscious existential "I am."

This acoustic proto-speech is an instance in which we can witness how erotic study subsists. I believe that we can see erotic study in these sacred moments of infantile vocal experimentation. Prior to the event of speech and the ordering of language, there is a strange thing that happens with no direct instruction or technique and very questionable rationality and consciousness. There is nothing other than what seems to be there to begin with. What is this first-thing? The least we can say is *eros*.

Jazz. Consider another, more developed, example: Mastering an instrument. In this case, the guitar.[89] I want to focus on the mastery-end of the spectrum in this example to show that this notion of study is not only to be found in the earliest moments of life. Much like the effortless experimentations of a noise-making infant, a master guitarist plays with an organic wildness that is the hallmark of the craft. Without this wild, effortless character, this so-called master is discovered to be a fraud. And as much as it may seem that this mastery is gained from a self-directed program and routine of practice—which most certainly is a vital *part* of the process—the master will most likely describe the experience in reverse order.

To spend years of repetition, imitation, and experimentation on the physical space of a guitar's neck, body, strings, frets, and so much more—using the finite limits of physical dexterity and technique; all the while remaining constantly in-process, never finished yet

[89] These are not observations in the technical sense; they are lived experience from my own twenty-two years of experience as a guitarist.

extremely proficient and confident—to do this is not to try to *possess* the instrument. A master guitarist is not trying to domesticate her guitar. This is why "mastery" is a misleading term, it is not so much that an expert guitarist has *mastered* the instrument, but that the instrument and the artist have become one. A true master of any instrument would likely describe the process as being possessed by some-thing else, beyond the finitude of the person or the instrument: an intense desire for rich, communal love; a genetic curiosity about melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic colors and shapes; a religious thirst for beauty; and many other things.

To "study" guitar in this way is not to take simply take lessons. Many guitar masters never took such lessons. Wes Montgomery never did. To study is more properly understood as to never stop taking lessons from every-thing, and to simultaneously perform and prepare during these abundant lessons. This may sound opaque, but if you listen to a master musician warm-up, you will hear the simplest warm-up or practice scales performed beautifully. The expectant chaos of a tuning orchestra is not the same thing as the ear-grinding wails of an amateur violinist. While playing the guitar, an instrument that you cradle in your arms, like a child, the master guitarist cannot take that intimate posture for granted. It is said that Segovia once spoke these words: "Lean your body forward slightly to support the guitar against your chest, for the poetry of the music should resound in your heart." The master guitarist never studies in the cold, isolated sense of routine practicing. At the same time, the master guitarist is always at study, a thick, warm, erotic, and endless form of study—even when the instrument is in its case and someone (or something) else's music plays.

To be more concrete and less presumptuous, let us look to the bare fact of what happens. When a song is played, any decent player can attest to this fact: what we call "music" is the product of a relational event where the player, the instrument, and the context itself—the other musicians; others who might be present and/or listening; the acoustics of the room; the muse; the ghosts of memories and nostalgia—become one thing. In a more radical way, whenever the score is not predetermined, such as in jazz improvisation, we find that there is no line dividing the preparation from the performance. In a jazz soloist, we can literally see and hear, as in the infant mentioned before, erotic study. I say this for these reasons:

In order to solo over a set of melodic and rhythmic changes, or even over a single, continuous note and rhythm (a "vamp" is the musical term), a jazz soloist cannot play willfully extracted memories from a previous lesson or isolated repetitions that are somehow disconnected to the past or present. If she did, her performance would be exposed as an amateurish façade. She relies on a thicker memory that is the sum total of things voluntary and involuntary, determined and free, that she has accumulated and somehow remembered—even if for the very first time.

She repeats things that simply are the case to her imagination because she has been immersed in them for so long that they are present to her. Like a chef's seasoning, she does not look at her instrument to measure-out what she is doing. Her eyes are closed. She doesn't deliberate. Often there is no time to do so. She imagines and plays in a stroke. Sometimes, she plays nothing at all. Other times, she plays every note she can find—even ones that have never existed before. If she is right-handed, then, her right hand's fingers strike, pick, or pluck this string and then that one, in this and/or that

certain way, according to this and/or that sense of rhythm; sometimes one at a time, other times in bold strokes or careful bunches, all depending on what she imagines and what the music requires to be itself, to be beautiful. The fingers on her left hand go from this fret to this other one, or rest in clusters together on different strings and frets (or on different strings on the same fret) to form chords, or leave the strings open; all of it in a fit of expression that is as new as it is old, as deliberate as it is random, as preparatory as it is performative. Whether she is willing to believe it or not, the form of life that sustains this rich experience requires the full consideration of the voluntary and the involuntary with the constant variable of fortune always in and around it. By the way: This is not all to be found under dim lights and critical acclaim. Most of it is located in a rehearsal studio, a living room, or even in a daydream.

The artist—a cooing baby; the master guitarist; a curious physicist; the passionate teacher; a confused student; the tragic lover—knows about the subsistence of erotic study because, like Zarathustra, she can understand that "Higher than love of the neighbor is love of the farthest and the future;" and declare with him, "higher yet than the love of the human beings I esteem the love of things and ghosts."[90] Erotic study, then, is to be found in a jazz guitarist's solo because it too, like baby-talk, can only come from those who are willing to love that ghostly thing, *eros*. And the love that this begets reveals the person at study. We know this for reasons unexplainable and mysterious to us, but we can say this much: erotic study cannot be either prepared or performed. It is always a preparation *and* a performance.

3.7 Memory and repetition

[90] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 173.

What these two examples display is not exceptional to the conventions we find in study. They are not beyond the everyday. The acquisition of memory through repetition is an ordinary and common trait of study. And for good reason: it works. That fact alone—the fact that memorization and repetition work—is a cautionary tale to not reinvent the wheel. If we take this warning to heart, then, alluding to the ontological contours of erotic study would be insufficient on its own. I must explain how erotic study functions without throwing away the baby with the bathwater, so to speak.

It would be a reactionary mistake to think that erotic study absolves the person from the need to do any-thing or that it gives the aesthetic license to do every-thing. At the same time, as I argued earlier, it is also too simplistic to think that study can happen through a naïve gesture of intentionality. So, as with most things, the answer lies somewhere else. Although I would not go as far as to call this alternative a "middle way," it does seem to recover what is true in both directions. Erotic study requires a more rigorous consideration of memory and repetition.

Memory. We find that "remembering" something can be quite different from "memorizing." I can try to remember where I left my keys or I can experience memory by remembering something at random. I can even remember things that I desire to not remember or things I am not sure whether I have remembered or imagined for the very first time. Memorization, on the other hand, is not as multifunctional. And yet, there are times when knowing something by heart requires memorization. When we put aside semantics and move beyond this word or that one, I think we can begin to see that memory, in all its facets, is a thick thing that bears all the complexities of our bodies, consciousness, and the world. For this reason, erotic study would not abandon memory.

Instead, it would thicken it up. We need to remember things through both our exercises of will and from the depths of our repressed and unconscious knowledge that goes as deep as the imagination. As described in the jazz guitarist, we remember with our whole Being: our bodies, our minds, our souls, our desires…

The distinction between short- and long-term memory is basic enough, yet both forms of memory assume that memory is an external act of memorization. Erotic study does not favor short- or long-term memory because they both miss the mark. To remember something richly is fundamentally unquantifiable, and deeply erotic. In fact, the memories that stay with us are usually those that have the unique aspect of awakening our desires. The cultivation of a thick memory, then, is also through the usual process: repetition.

Repetition. The world is on repeat. Repetition is the norm, not the exception. Things repeat, however unrepeatable those repetitions may be. For this reason, to repeat oneself is something we do all the time. We constantly repeat ourselves, which is why from year to year we are mostly recognizable to others. The world is repetitive too. Although each repetition is uniquely situated, there is something repetitious about it nonetheless. Consequently, the grand sum of such repetitions is a large portion of what we remember or recall. Other times, it is the *contrast* to the normative repetition of things that raises something to the surface of our memory. I will never forget when I saw mountains for the first time: they literally went above the surface of what I was used to repeating itself in my topographic vision of things. Despite this ever-presence of repetition, many treat it as exceptional instead of normative. This, as I see it, is an ontological mistake.

It is this link between thick memory and normative repetition that seems to distinguish erotic study from conventional study. While they both carry many of the same signs, erotic study expresses a more accurate ontology—an ontology that recognizes the physiopsychological person and the fortune of the world. When we cultivate a thick memory within the normativity of repetition we realize that, in the end, *study is beyond our control*. For this reason, James' despair is more complex, and instructive to us, than we might think.

Despite his "inability to study," James' despair is potent with study, with desire for it and the ghostly desire of study for him. It is this poignant despair, expressed in the exercise of letter writing, that has guided this chapter's study of study. In short, there is no convention that can escape *eros*. Like the subsistent force of gravity, erotic study subsists and offers us a way to be and exist within Being and among ghostly forces. Erotic study offers us more than the cosmic mystery of education but less than the embodied existence of the person. Erotic study mediates between the person and the world through the ghostly *eros* of desire.

3.8 Second exercise: Sensing subsistence

In this chapter we have considered subsistence, the invisible forces and energies that mediate between Being and existence. Using the same event of teaching you imagined previously, consider similar questions: What would sensing subsistence look like in this event you have imagined, and what vision would it yield in turn?

Chapter Four:

The Person—Tragic Lover, Teacher

"Where would any of *us* be, were there no one willing to know us as we really are or ready to repay us for *our* insight by making recognizant return? We ought, all of us, to realize each other in this intense, pathetic, and important way."

William James, *What Makes a Life Significant*

4.1 Introduction

Whereas in chapters two and three, education and study are as methodologically instrumental as they are ontologically descriptive, this chapter is mostly suggestive: a suggestion of things that will hopefully stimulate the imagination in worthwhile ways. One might even consider this chapter under an alternative subtitle: *Educational suggestions for further being*. To put it another way, at this point in the analysis the ball has already been pushed and should be gaining some momentum. Through the method already employed in previous chapters, the contours of a developing ontological sketch should already give a strong, basic impression. This impression does not suffice as an excuse to abandon the project prematurely. What it does suggest is that ontological investigations are impossible to finish in the deepest sense of completion and finality. It also suggests the limits of phenomenological method, and all methodologies for that matter.

The modest scope of this chapter is also because the enormity of its topic, the person. There is no doubt that the question of the person, and all its other nomenclatures, is among the thorniest of philosophy. No one except a philosopher could deny that philosophy is fundamentally anthropological. (Which is not to say anthropocentric.) And

as difficult as the question of the person might be for philosophy, philosophers are not the only ones positing answers. Nor are they positing the best answers. This much can be said in advance: The mystery of the existence of the person, like the forgotten mystery of the being of education, is interwoven into the tapestry of alienation and disenchantment that has surrounded, and continues to surround us.

This chapter will provide directions for further reading and contemplation—reading and contemplation that, if their content is chewed slowly enough, might begin to help us digest the overall project and its implications for things, especially for the art of teaching. After pointing to these readings, I will make one distinctly educational claim about the person—a personification, we might call it—that should suggest the enormous task left to be done.

4.2 Person-in-existence

At this point, it might be useful to consider what *can* be claimed based on what has been presented thus far. Namely, that the person exists, subsists, and is. In other words, the person is not only in-the-world, as Heidegger rightly teaches us, she subsists *in-existence*. To be in-the-world and to subsist in-existence are not entirely different things. What the latter reveals more than the former is this unique relationship between subsisting and existing: Existence is glued to subsistence in a very particular way. They are close relatives, both born from, and attached to, the same womb of Being.

This ontological sketch of the basic geography of things is all I can offer from the previous investigations of this study. This, in effect, is the only contribution that might be thought of as "original." Originality would be an inexact claim in its purest sense, but

what it is meant to convey is that this is the contribution that phenomenological method has produced here. In a way, it marks the end of the work in the strictest, methodological sense. Rather than rely purely on the trinitarian lens, I will employ a comparison of texts to do the rest in this chapter and stories in the one to follow. Otherwise, I fear that the phenomenon will escape us completely.

4.3 The highly disputed 'person'

"Ask an educated European today what his thoughts are when one uses the term 'human being' [der Mensch], and he will just about always find three irreconcilable ideas about the term, which are in continuous conflict with each other."[91] That is how Max Scheler opens his insightful essay *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, published a year before his death in 1928. Not much has changed. Disputes abound regarding the different terms used to refer to the particular space inhabited by these "human" bodies and their various aspects.[92] Person, Subject, Self, Human, Man, Ego, and even God all locate sites of controversy. This is mostly for good reason, since the disputes are usually in first-person. In other words, the speaker tends to see herself as the ultimate thing at stake. What is not very easily disputed is the *existence* of persons, ontologically speaking.[93]

---

[91] Max Scheler, The *Human Place in the Cosmos* trans. Manfred Frings (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 5.

[92] A good example of this is Abraham Heschel's brief text, *Who is Man?* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1965). There are many other texts, more than I could possibly mention here, and several of them will be treated in some detail as I move along.

[93] Yes, there is the resounding "death of man" that cannot be ignored, but that death is not an ontological death. It is a historical one. For Foucault "the death of man" signifies what one might call, following Kuhn, a paradigm shift in the epistemology of personhood.

We find that amidst the controversy—the many genealogical myths to be found and the hermeneutic twists and turns of language, for instance—existence, like Being, has the qualities of *Vorgefundenes* (the-thing-that-has-been-there-before). It may be the case that since Being appears with or without subsistence and existence inside of it, then, the existing person is an ontological option to Being, not a necessity. But, if we look closer, I would suggest that the aspect of the person both in-the-world and subsisting-in-existence is unique to Being and might not be so easily removed from it. In effect, the person is revealed in the ways that, as James suggests, are "intense, pathetic, and important."

What cannot be ignored is that many take Scheler's basic claim to be an ontological statement, not a semantic one. This would be a mistake. And even though the term 'person' is not the same thing as a person-in-existence, the terminological disputes give us a sense of where we have been. In particular, we find that the term 'person' conveys very different meanings—with serious ontological questions at stake—depending on its etymological and cultural variations, especially between the differing sensibilities of the Latin-Western and the Greek-Eastern traditions of Hellenic thought. These views can be situated within the historical disputes of the Great Schism of 1054 that divided the Roman and Greek Catholic churches. In this overlap of institutional creed, culture, and language we also begin to see that philosophy does not have a monopoly over ontology—even today, in the "secular age" of modernity. With regard to the terminology of 'person,' the disputes are as deeply philosophical and political as they are religious and theological.

This may cause some discomfort to those who would like to sweep religion under the rug of the "private;" those who see it as outdated, irrelevant, and dangerous. As

dangerous as it might be to speak of religion without apologies, there are two stark facts that make such an unapologetic risk reasonable: First, to sterilize an entire realm of experience and belief into an artificial domain is highly unlikely to ever succeed. We might go as far as to call it ontologically impossible. That alone bespeaks a tremendous impracticality. It intuits as plausibly as the idea of censoring love or hate into this place and demanding emotional neutrality in another, wholly separate place. Secondly, there is an aesthetic to such a segregation that seems questionable. The dictum from Tacitus, "*Atque ubi colitudinum faciunt pacem apellat*" seems appropriate: in English, "They create desolation and call it a peace."

To investigate the questions of the person in the estuary of philosophy and theology, this mixed place of fresh and salted water, then, is not only reasonable. The desolate alternative reveals that it is also appropriate. Having made this defense of the integration of faith and reason for this investigation, I should also remark that my interests here are better described as philosophical anthropology or philosophical theology than as theology proper.

4.4 Latin and Greek, 'person' and person

An etymological comparison, pure and simple, fails to convey the aesthetic convergences and differences between the Latin 'person' and the Greek person. Under, over, and alongside the linguistic variations are an array of historical and cultural preferences that offer insight into the disputes of our day. (Especially, those surrounding the questions of political liberalism.) I do not present them here for multicultural observation. They are not equal to each other in my mind. To begin with, one is

terminological and the other is existential. There is also a certain defensiveness about the Latin 'person' of the West that, in my view, makes the Greek sense of person more fertile, tragic, and phenomenologically honest. In many ways, it is this very distinction between 'person' and person that sets the battlefield over it and its synonyms and antonyms. At their root, we find one of the earliest and the most basic divides in the *philosophia perennis*, the classic divide of Hellenic thought: the general—and all too easily oversimplified—difference between Plato and Aristotle.

In the West, ever since the integration of Aristotle into the philosophy and theology of Thomas Aquinas, via the Arabic philosopher Averroes, we find momentum building towards a particularly "western" approach to life. This, of course, culminates in the early-modern rejection of scholasticism and enters into the political philosophies and practices of liberalism. What we find beforehand however, is that the legal system of the Roman Empire and the theology of the Holy Roman Empire, mixed with the philosophy of Aristotle, carry over a sense of 'person' that remains with the West to this day and culminates with the most radical invention of all time: the autonomous individual. This invention inaugurates what Foucault regards to be "the death of man."[94]

The best source that I know of for this purpose is *Person and Being* by the neo-Thomistic Jesuit, W. Norris Clarke.[95] The book itself has Western sensibilities. It is brief, systematic, and practical. However, too much can be made and inferred from these generalities of "the West." To take them too far would be a mistake. The book is also

[94] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Random House, 1970), 342.

[95] W. Norris Clarke, *Person and Being* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1998).

insightful, straightforward, and offers rich passages of the person that, in my view, exceed the terminological 'person.'

Clarke describes the Western 'person' "as a distinct entity beginning as a social and legal term in Roman law, where 'person' meant a human being with full legal rights as a Roman citizen, as distinguished from slaves, who were indeed human beings, but not persons." He moves from Roman legality to the uses of term 'person' in early Christian theology as he continues:

> But the most urgent pressure came from the Christian theologians to explicate more precisely the two central Christian doctrines of God and as Triune (one God, with one divine nature possessed equally by three "owner" or persons) and the Incarnation (God become man in Jesus Christ, so that the human nature of Jesus is not a person on its own but is "owned" by the Second Divine Person, the Son, who now possess two natures, one divine, possessed from all eternity, the other human, taken on in time).[96]

Clarke sees this theological use of the term as taking 'person' from the social or legal realm into the realm of being. Notice, however, that Clarke's Thomistic understanding of 'being' is radically different from what has been presented here thus far. The two should not be confused. This is largely because the Thomist ultimately sees metaphysics as derived from an abstract, transcendent, primordial nature. This view is crucial to understanding Clarke, but should not be attached to the phenomenological view of Being that I have endorsed here.

Nonetheless, it is in this marriage between the 'person' of Rome and the 'person' of Christian theology where the philosophy of Aristotle served Aquinas so very well. The result was a systematic presentation of 'person.' Fusing the legal and the metaphysical demands of the term, Clarke describes Aquinas' sense of person in this way: "In a word, in perhaps the briefest—and still one of the best—descriptions of person ever given, a

[96] Clarke, *Person and Being*, 25.

person is a being that is *dominus sui*, that is, master of itself, or *self-possessing* (in the order of knowledge by self-consciousness, in the order of will and action by self-determination and free will)."[97]

This description of 'person' is striking in many ways. To begin with, it is nearly identical to what would later become the individual of modernity. It bears the mark of autonomy, even before the political system for this autonomous self to live in had been thought of. It would be a mistake to think that Clarke, or Aquinas, had a superficial sense of 'person.' The *dominus sui* is not the exact same thing as the autonomous, modern "individual." For Thomists, unlike phenomenologists, things are not merely given. Things grow according to nature. Faithful to this tradition, Clarke offers this rich insight into what he calls "an actualized person," a person who has been perfected according to nature: "To be an actualized person, then, is to be a lover, to live a life of inter-personal self-giving and receiving. Person is essentially a 'we' term. Person exists in its fullness only in the plural."[98]

The ontological question becomes, why? If the person is in fact a "we" term, then, why does Clarke remain faithful to Aquinas' *dominus sui*? The answer to that question is to be found in the introduction. Here Clarke reveals his own motives and the overall defensive posture of the 'person' of the West:

> There is another more urgent reason for undertaking this "creative completion" today. The second part of our century has seen a rich development of the relational aspects of the person, worked out by existential phenomenologists and personalists of various schools, as well as by schools of psychology and psychotherapy, extending from Heidegger to Sartre, Gabriel Marcel, Emmanuel Mounier and the French personalists, Martin Buber, Levinas, John Macmurray, Viktor Frankl, and many others. St. Thomas

[97] Clarke, *Person and Being*, 25-26.

[98] Clarke, *Person and Being*, 76.

> himself would have been delighted, I think, with these rich phenomenological analyses of our time, since this aspect of his own thought was only very sketchily developed. Yet these valuable analyses have almost without exception been suspicious of, or entirely hostile towards the notion of person as *substance*, which was so heavily stressed in the classical tradition—ancient, medieval, and early modern. As a result, the being of the person has been explained so onesidedly in terms relation and systems of relations that the dimension of the person as abiding self-identity, interiority, and in-itselfness has tended to disappear from sight, or at least lose all metaphysical grounding. Here we are faced, on the one hand, with a rich older metaphysical tradition of the person that has left the relational dimension underdeveloped and, on the other, with a more recent phenomenological tradition that has highly developed the relational aspect but lost its metaphysical grounding.[99]

This is Clarke's descriptive claim. His argument attempts to reconcile these two articulations of 'person,' and defend the view that all of it can be found in the vast resources of philosophical and theological Thomism.[100] He claims that there is a metaphysical grounding to be had on the *inside*, so to speak, of the 'person.' This is where Clarke is quintessentially Latin and Western[101]: in his belief that relationality is a mere *aspect* of the person. His metaphysical approach favors the part from the whole because it is based in a disembodied metaphysics that separates—or needlessly expands—the world into two distinct realities. That is why he seems to find the locality of interiority to be a metaphysical anchor for the term 'person' and its referent, the existing person.

---

[99] Clarke, *Person and Being*, 4-5.

[100] A worthy project indeed—for a Thomist.

[101] "Quintessentially Latin and Western" is not meant to caricature or oversimplify the intellectual traditions of the West, I am only trying to point to a very general distinction that outlines the contours of the basic controversy over the person.

We find a radically different view in Christos Yannaras' magnificent work, *Person and Eros*.[102] In the ways that Clarke's book is Latin, Yannaras' is strikingly Greek. While Clarke's *Person and Being* is just over one-hundred pages, Yannaras' *Person and Eros* is just shy of four-hundred. And while Clarke is clear, systematic, and practical, Yannaras is dense, sporadic, and mystical. At the same time, Yannaras' sense of person begins with an etymology that directs us towards an ontological and existential reality.[103] In other words, for Yannaras, the person is not primarily semantic or terminological and the metaphysics of personhood flow from existence. Here, the precision and nuance of the Greek language serve him well.

Yannaras wastes no time. He begins in this way:

> By the word *prospon* ("person") we define a referential reality. The referential character of the term is revealed fundamentally by its primitive use, that is, by its grammatical construction and etymology. The presupposition *pros* ("towards") together with the noun *ops* (*opos* in the genitive), which means "eye," "face," countenance," form the composite word *pros-opon*: I have my face turned towards someone or something; I am opposite someone or something. The words thus functioned initially as a term indicating an immediate reference, a relationship. *Prospon*, or person, is defined as reference and relation and itself defines a reference and relation. The word's primordial semantic content does not allow us to interpret personhood simply as individuality outside the field of relation.

The clarity of this passage is remarkable! From the genetic "semantic content" of the term we find a path towards a metaphysics that is irreducible. The interiority of the person and the field of relations in which it exists are not points of disputation here, they simply are the case in complete totality. The whole person for Yannaras, then, is *"all*

---

[102] Christos Yannaras, *Person and Eros* (Brookeline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007). I am deeply grateful to Gary Perkerwicz who recommended the book to me in the most generous way possible: by purchasing it for me.

[103] Also noteworthy is that Yannaras bases his methodology on Martin Heidegger, who he calls "the West's last 'essence mystic'" in the introduction to *Person and Eros*.

light, all face, all eye." Yannaras ends by completing his opening move. Here is the complete passage:

> For the person to be restored to his or her integrity and wholeness, for the human being to become 'all *prospon'*—'all person'—defines our existential end. It is the conclusion of our moral journey, the attainment of theosis or deification, the goal towards which our Church strives—as defined by Macarius of Egypt when he wrote: 'For the soul that has been deemed worthy to participate in the spirit of his (God's) light and has been made radiant by the beauty of his ineffable glory, since he has prepared it for himself as a throne and dwelling-place, becomes all light, all face, all eye.'[104]

Because of this we come to this conclusion that escapes the Latin/Western sensibilities of the Clarke: *individuals do not exist*. Any form of 'person' that denies this reality will only serve to alienate the person from herself. As Martin Buber—a Western thinker—put it in *I and Thou*: "In the beginning is the relation."[105]

This insight can also be found beyond the particular polemic we have considered in this comparison. These critiques carry us into modernity.

4.5 Tragic Lover: The person of Jean-Luc Marion and Charles Taylor

In *The Erotic Phenomenon*, Jean-Luc Marion remarks that, in the original Latin of Descartes' *Meditations*, the *ego* is described excluding love.[106] The first translator of Descartes from Latin into French, Duc de Luynes, added, "which loves, which hates" to

---

[104] Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 293.

[105] Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 69. It also worth mentioning Buber's excellent essay on education that relates to many of these reflections in the collection of his essays entitled, *Between Man and Man* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1975).

[106] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 6-8. In Descartes, this description can be found in the first paragraph of Meditation Three, "Concerning God that He Exists." The original, 1641 Latin passage is: "Ego sum res cogitans, id est dubitans, affirmans, negans, pauca intelligens, multa ignorans, volens, nolens, imaginans etiam & sentiens…" All three versions are available for free online at: Descartes, *Descartes' Meditations* ed. David B. Manley and Charles S. Taylor, http://www.wright.edu/cola/descartes/intro.html (accessed May 4, 2010).

the opening of Descartes' Third Meditation.[107] Marion favors this revision—albeit a revision unintended by Descartes—and exhorts us to take up Duc de Luynes' addition to the *ego* and see ourselves "as the *cogitans* that thinks insofar as it first loves, in short as the lover (*ego amans*)… substituting for the *ego cogito*, which does not love."[108]

This challenges the ontological implication of Descartes' *cogito* and affirms Augustine's claim: *Nemo est qui non amet*, There is no one who would not love—*without love, I would be no-thing*. In other words, I do not think and therefore exist, as Descartes would have it—I love and therefore exist and think and love again (and again and again).

Marion's exhortation against modernity ushered in by Descartes' *cogito* also takes the form of a question and answer. He asks, "Why is love thrown to the wind, why is it refused an erotic rationality…" He replies to his own question, saying:

> The answer is not hidden far away: because love is defined as a passion, and therefore as a derivative modality, indeed as an option to the "subject"… And, in fact, we think of ourselves most of the time as just such an ego, a being who cogitates orderable and measurable objects, so that we no longer look upon our erotic events except as incalculable and disordered accidents happily marginalized, indeed optional…[109]

Earlier in the book, Marion makes this striking statement:

> The result of these failed efforts is that ordinary people, or, put another way, all those who love without knowing what love wants to say, or what it wants of them, or above all how to survive it—that is to say, you and I first and foremost—believe themselves condemned to feed on scraps: desperate sentimentalism of popular prose, the frustrated pornography of the idol industry, or the shapeless ideology of that boastful asphyxiation

---

[107] The 1647 French translation is: "Je suis une chose qui pense, c'est-à-dire qui doute, qui affirme, qui nie, qui connaît peu de choses, qui en ignore beaucoup, ***qui aime, qui hait***, qui veut, qui ne veut pas, qui imagine aussi, et qui sent." This translates into the 1901 English translation, by John Veltch, which retains Duc de Luynes' addition parenthetically. It reads as follows: "I am a thinking thing, that is, a being who doubts, affirms, denies, knows a few objects, and is ignorant of many,--[*who loves, hates*], wills, refuses, who imagines likewise, and perceives…" (emphasis mine, enclosure in original). Descartes, *Descartes' Meditations*.)

[108] Marion, *Erotic Phenomenon*, 8.

[109] Marion, *Erotic Phenomenon*, 6.

> known as 'self-actualization.' Thus philosophy keeps quiet, and in this silence love fades away.[110]

For Marion, this silence of philosophy is neither a disciplinary silence in academia nor a problem in the history of philosophy. It is, first and foremost, the silence of *philo-sophia*: love of wisdom. It is the alienated silence of love to itself, the restraining of *eros* from its passionfruit, love. This strange *philo*-sophical forgetting of love is even more prescient and fundamental to Marion than the neglect of Being noted by Heidegger in *Being and Time*. This is because, for Marion, the very terms of our existence are at stake when persons are mistaken as anything but lovers. This insight also reveals the dialectic between the previous two senses of personhood as ultimately self-defeating.

It may also be helpful to cite a similar view from Charles Taylor's book *A Secular Age* (published the same year, 2007, as the English publication of Marion's *Erotic Phenomenon*) via the erudite review written by Peter Gordon.[111] Like with Foucault's genealogies—whose source is not power, pure and simple, but the production of the subject by biopower—so too with Taylor (according to Gordon), in that the Secular Age is described in terms of how its "disciplinary society" built a "new model of the human being."

Gordon writes:

> With the rise of the disciplinary society Taylor also sees a change in the very conception of human being. The older conception of the self as embedded in a holistic but differentiated natural-social-theological order slowly gave way to a "disembedded" selfhood understood to be ontologically prior to and independent of its surroundings. The realist conception of the world as the bearer of intrinsic meanings to which we must conform was supplanted by the notion that the only orders we must acknowledge are those we construct for ourselves. The social imaginary no longer envisioned as an

[110] Marion, *Erotic Phenomenon*, 2.

[111] Peter E. Gordon, "The Place of the Sacred in the Absence of God: Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 69, no. 4 (October 2008): 647-673.

> interdependent system working in concert but a dispersal of atomistic individuals only to themselves and only contingently responsive to those around them.[112]

This new human being that Taylor sees as the hallmark of the disciplinary society built by the Secular Age—modernism, in other words—is strikingly similar to Descartes *ego cogito* critiqued by Marion, and anticipated by Aquinas' *dominus sui*. Taylor calls it "the buffered self." This "buffered self" is the kind of self that, according to Taylor, replaced the "porous self" during the modern, secular Enlightenment ushered in by Descartes, Locke, and Kant. Gordon describes Taylor's "buffered self" as one that is, "assertive, rationalistic and stakes a claim to autarky that shuts down its experience of intimacy even in relation to its own bodily passions."[113]

In striking similarity to the dialectic of Descartes' *ego cogito* vs. Duc de Luynes' *ego amans* we find in Marion, Taylor's description of the buffered and porous self brings out the tragic elements of this Tragic Lover. (Elements that, for Taylor, come cloaked in religious mysticism.)

He writes:

> Living in a disenchanted world, the buffered self is no longer open, vulnerable to a world of spirits and forces which cross the boundary of the mind, indeed, negate the very idea of there being a secure boundary. The fears, anxieties, even terrors that belong to the porous self are behind it. This sense of self-possession, of a secure inner mental realm, is all stronger, if in addition to disenchanting the world, we have also taken the anthropocentric turn and no longer even draw upon the power of God.[114]

As I argued earlier, we cannot ignore Taylor's demand for a theological turn—a turn shared by recent French phenomenology (Levinas, Ricœur, Marion, et al)[115] and Slavoj

---

[112] Gordon, "Taylor's *A Secular Age*," 661-662.

[113] Gordon, "Taylor's *A Secular Age*," 662.

[114] Ibid.

Zizek's atheist "materialist theology,"[116] among many others. Yet, even if we pay the theological aspects little attention, the description of the dispossessed and insecure *porous self* as something fearful, anxious, and even terrorized adds a layer of tragic meaning to the *ego amans* of Marion. This marriage of a an amorous *ego* and a porous self is ultimately a matter of knowing in that deep ontological sense of existential intimacy (*conocer* as opposed to *saber*) that to offer true love is to be a Tragic Lover: the lover who rejects the nihilist nonfortune of modern (capitalist) individualism, among other things, and allows herself again to be thrown into the flux of relations in the life-world, come what may.

This is the person who cannot be removed from the world of Being, nor deny the subsistent forces that act in complex ways to reveal the proximity of existence. This is the whole person, the one we hope to become. This is what my son taught me when he became my teacher and ontologically asserted, "I am not a goose!"

4.6 Who shall we teach?—*Teachers*

When we see it in its barest form, the art of teaching is the art of existing, the art of becoming a person. To teach requires a relational ontology that might seem to overlap the already present ontology of the person. But here is the answer to our riddle: *there is no ontological distinction between person and teacher*. Because of this, the task of teaching

---

[115] See the (translated) 1991 report by Dominique Janicaud (with replies from several scholars mentioned in the report, including Marion and Ricœur), *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000).

[116] See Zizek's most recent book *The Monstrosity of Christ*, written along with John Milbank (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009) and Zizek's earlier work: *The Fragile Absolute: Or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (New York: Verso, 2000) and *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).

can be found in the communal demands of existence, in the complete fabric of the world. This suggests the fundamental value of ontology and phenomenological methods for teaching. It also points to the tragic love that teaching requires. Facing these ontological requisites, the question becomes "Who?"—*Who shall we teach?*

Leaving aside the broad cultural and political replies one might present to this question, we can imagine the process of entering the classroom—wherever that may be—to encounter the pupil. Who will it be? A mystery? A ghost? Or perhaps a person: that singular thing that is ontologically plural. The broad and general critique of the times tells us that persons are something of an endangered species, and this is mostly true. But when a teacher encounters her student, we find a moment that is new and pregnant with imagination for the person to re-appear as a Tragic Lover. Thus, these pages are not for the dreamer, they are for the teacher. Education, then, becomes the site of hope for tragic transformation.

To be specific, I am thinking of the actual, physical, mental, and spiritual approach—the phenomenological event. The memory that today is the first to teach; gathering of books, syllabi, class roster, and/or other teaching things into a stack or putting them into a bag or box; walking down the hall while adjusting a waistline, necktie, or collar wondering where the room is; running a hand through the hair or checking the make-up; stopping to use the bathroom or get a drink of water, all the while, wondering: Who will I find inside that room? How many will come to meet me? Who will those names on the roster become in the flesh? How will they appear to me? What will they look like? Do I have eyes for them? What will they disclose and what will remain hidden? Who will I see? Will they like me? Shall I love them? Would they even care?

Those curiosities before one enters a classroom for the first time are not so different from the "first-day-of-school" feelings a student also has on this day too, especially if they do not know the teacher or the class beforehand. This particular event is not limited to the schoolhouse, but that does seem to be a widely available and poignant time and place to begin things anew, to put the person into the ancient relations of tragic love. To face the question, "Who shall we teach?"

The demands of this question are very specific. The first question of education is the question of "who." The other questions we might ask—what, where, or how—are ordered by this question. This order reveals another paradox: the "what" question of Being cannot be answered without the question of "who" that brings it into existence through the life forces of subsistence. When we ask that question again and again we face both the perennial challenge to exist as a person and the current crisis of the disenchanted individual. We must struggle for love against nihilism. We must never answer this question, but dare to face it again and again and in doing so, become tragic lovers.

After the sight of the person to be tragically loved is unsettled, then, the question reappears: Who shall we teach? This time, the answer slowly becomes slightly different: Who is teaching? Who is the teacher? It is fashionable to blur the line between teacher and student. Ontologically speaking, this would be overly complicated. The simple fact is that persons are teachers, moved by erotic study, living amidst the mystery of education that we find ourselves in.

This is our task: to be, live, and exist by seeking Being, sensing subsistence, and seeing existence. In short, to teach.

4.7 Third exercise: Seeing existence

In this chapter we have considered existence, the material that gives us access to the ghosts of subsistence and the mystery of Being. Recalling again the event of teaching, consider the question: What would seeing existence look like in this event you have imagined, and what vision would it yield in turn?

Chapter Five:

Education After the Death of School

> "For my own part, then, so far as logic goes, I am willing that every leaf that ever grew in this world's forests and rustled in the breeze should become immortal. It is purely a question of fact: are the leaves so, or not?"
>
> William James, *Human Immortality*

5.1 Questions

At the end of these chapters, pertinent questions still remain. Here are three that come to mind: Are the visions supplied by this "trinitarian lens" worthwhile? Of what value is this phenomenological approach to seeing things? In what significant ways would this affect the practice of teaching?

There are understandable reasons to be skeptical when asking questions such as these. To begin with, the results of the descriptions offered in the previous chapters have not narrowly focused on education, study, and the person. In not doing so, these things have not been brought into clear view. In fact, these descriptions have tried to focus by expansion—by zooming out, not in. This expanded vision has been chosen over clearer, narrower views in order to remain faithful to the ontological breadth and depth of things. In doing so, our sight is likely to appear darker and less clear.

In other words, the trinitarian lens is a magnifying glass. Not only does it serve to see with ontological—as opposed to purely epistemological—eyes, but, perhaps more importantly, it aids in *not* seeing what is there but cannot be seen, what exceeds the horizon of the lens itself and reminds us of the expansive enormity of things.

Consequently, this trinitarian vision is more likely to perplex than to crystallize. It tends towards the mysterious; the concealed; the undisclosed. It rejects solutions and their artificial, made-up "problems." And while the perplexity of these dark, hidden things can often inspire awe, reverence, and beauty, it can also initially be frustrating.

For this reason, it is understandable for one to be vexed after considering these chapters. Furthermore, there is an irritating contradiction within the epistemological and hermeneutic conditions of this ontological project, the poverty of using language to describe the ineffable. In the end, it might be disheartening—or even maddening—to find that the trinitarian lens is not a prescriptive technology but, instead, a way of imagining things with fidelity to the context of Being, the forces and energies of subsistence, and the matter of existence. As the exercises have shown us: it is a way of seeking, sensing, and seeing.

Beyond these reasonable frustrations, someone might also question the philosophical significance in giving such large, excessive descriptions. For instance, if education is a mystery akin to the vast context of Being, as I have suggested, then, perhaps I have been asking the wrong question from the outset. Why not ask, "What is *not* education?" The description I have provided (education as mystery) implies that everything must be within an ontological context of education. This draws out an objection that is logically unsound, yet intuitively compelling nonetheless: "If every-thing is education, then, at least as a practical matter, you have reduced education to no-thing." Along similar lines, the same objection could be raised against my descriptions of study and the person. There is a common way of thinking that sees little to no value for describing things in their widest sense, as they are.

Make no mistake: This way of thinking is unfaithful to reality. It is narrow-sighted and willfully blind. Admitting to the vastness and complexity of things that appear to be vast and complex does not ontologically annihilate them into nothingness. The scientific claim that describes the universe as constantly expanding is perplexing in many ways, but it does not require us to dismiss the matter completely on the basis of its offensively vast grandeur. It simply makes things difficult—even impossible—to consider as they are. The issue here, then, is not ontological presence or absence. Instead, it is the willingness to be faithful to what is; to see with dark, tragic eyes; to look into the abyss and call it some-thing instead of no-thing; to turn the eye/face towards the hidden face/eye of God and become "all face, all eye."

The purpose of these investigations, then, has not been to make descriptions in order to obtain knowledge-about, but rather, to appeal to our deepest desire for more than superficial epistemic knowledge: the desire to know and be known ontologically. To love and be loved. To not be a goose. To rest in the divine sea of restlessness.

Reawakening our senses to this ontological knowledge also invigorates our sense of the lasting potentiality hidden in these pregnant desires. This "invigoration" is what re-enchantment is: to show that what might have appeared to be sterile is fertile—to vindicate the fruitfulness of some-thing against the barrenness of no-thing. This is what the fundamentality of mystery (in Chapter 2), fortune (in Chapter 3), and *eros* (in Chapter 4) all share: fertility, fecundity, and potentiality—fruit. The pregnant, fruitful aspects of these descriptions are what, in my view, make them worthwhile, valuable, and capable of significantly affecting the practice of teaching—wherever that may be.

5.2 Criteria: Cockroaches and heirloom tomatoes

A sterile species is in constant crisis. It is ontologically unsustainable from beginning to end. A fertile species has it own challenges, to be sure, but, at the very least, it is ontologically sustainable. Following this basic fact, one way to measure the worth, value, and effect of things is to see how sustainable and durable they are; that is to say, how well they can be some-thing fertile, and in doing so, display potentiality that verges on immortality.[117] For instance, think of the relative immortality and durability of the cockroach when compared to the inverse qualities of the panda.

Another example to consider is the distinction between industrial and heirloom tomatoes. One of way I have heard them distinguished (by my Aunt Peggy, who grows them) is this: while the seeds of industrially grown tomatoes cannot be fruitfully re-planted, heirloom seeds can. Industrial tomato seeds are sterile. Heirloom tomato seeds are fertile. What is even more interesting is to speculate on how and why this might have happened. Industrial agriculture grows the same kinds of plants that have been domesticated by science and can easily be mass-produced. Also, since they are neutered, industry has a monopoly on the growing rights. Heirloom tomatoes are different: they are untamed, wild things that can sow their seed if given the chance. Unlike their domesticated cousins, these tomatoes are capable of bearing fruit, for better or for worse.

It is strange, then, that heirlooms have become a recent commodity, a "specialty item" at overpriced grocery stores. As we have seen with "Five Guys Burgers and Fries," worldliness has itself become a spectacle to our aesthetically impoverished and disenchanted modern eyes. Even "organic" and "heirloom" things have now been

[117] I thank Bill Taylor, whose passion for this aspect of human desire (immortality) has impacted me deeply and made me realize it more and more in my own life and thought.

domesticated, commodified, and disenchanted. There is little chance that an "heirloom tomato" bought at a grocery store will actually have fertile seeds—my Aunt buys her heirloom starter plants from a hippie in Colorado.

To judge the merits of this investigation, then, please consider it under the same sort of criteria: ontological sustainability and durability; potentiality verging on immortality; wild worldliness—mystery, fortune, and *eros*.[118] Under these principles we would ask more than general questions about what is worthwhile, valuable, and significant for teaching. We would wonder to what extent this trinitarian vision of things gives us some-thing that is more like a cockroach and less like a panda, more like a fecund heirloom tomato and less like a neutered industrial one. Are these visions wild enough to endure and exceed the domesticated era we live in?

5.3 Death of school

These questions are not new. Hidden within immortality is mortality. This is what is implied by the many "deaths" of the past century: the death of God (via Nietzsche); the death of "Man" (via Foucault); the death of the Author (via Derrida); the death of Being (via Marion); the death of religious belief (via Taylor). When we consider these various "deaths," we begin to seek the potential for some-thing that can replace the dead thing and prove to be more sustainable and durable than its predecessor. For instance,

[118] This is the criteria Socrates speaks of to Phaedrus when he says: "Would a husbandman, who is a man of sense, take the seeds, which he values and which he wishes to bear fruit, and in sober seriousness plant them during the heat of summer, in some garden of Adonis, that he may rejoice when he sees them in eight days appearing in beauty? at least he would do so, if at all, only for the sake of amusement and pastime. Plato, *Dialogues on Love and Friendship: Lysis, The Symposium, Phaedrus*, (NY: Heritage Press, 1968), 204.

mathematics (via Gödel) and science (via Heisenberg) seem to understand that uncertainty is more sustainable after the death of naïve certainty (via Einstein).

Let us now consider another "death": the death of school. This would not be the same as the abolition of school. This would not be "deschooling" or any other historical end of institutional schooling. Just as the deaths of God, "Man," the Author, Being, and religious belief do not imply that such things have been eradicated altogether, so too with the school: The death of school would be a time when the school would continue to exist, but would cease to be believed in as something serious for real life. The death of school would be the time when, like Church attendance or book reading, people continued to attend and purchase but knew better than to believe—as they once might have—in the idol. They would ritually bring it food and drink, knowing all along that the statue cannot ingest anything—it is human, not divine.

The death of school would be like *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, where Tolstoy teaches us that even a most ordinary-looking life is not lived until one has loved—even if that love only comes while one is senselessly dying in agony. In dead schools people would still come more often than not, but once they were there, they would seek relief in anything that feels like an escape from the imposing deadness of the school. Like the office-worker who waits for an end to the torture of another day of sitting at her cubicle, surrounded by absurdity, trying to invent new ways to make time pass as painlessly as possible, so too with the dead school: the death of school would be when, like God and political kings of the past, the school is exposed as a fraud, but the alternatives seem even more terrifying so nothing is done. We would agree to die before death itself for fear of the costs of living. The death of school is when the stupidity of things set in and Sartrean *Nausea*

ensues, but we sit in our pews, cubicles, or desks anyway. When like Kafka, we faithfully go to work for the "hangman."[119]

Perhaps the school is dying or is dead already. And, perhaps, it is not. A telling sign would be when student-teachers hate to be students—and, consequently, hate to be teachers—yet are equally committed to make their own students be and do what they themselves hate. Whether this is true for today or not, the death of school presents a useful litmus test for these chapters. Can the vision acquired through this phenomenological gaze into the trinitarian lens withstand the death of school? If the school were to die, would there be any fruit to be born from these chapters or would they be neutered leftovers from a sterile, domesticated fruit? Furthermore, if the school is dying or is dead already—as I many times suspect it is—would this trinitarian vision offer any relief to this malaise of stupidity and deadness?[120]

I will not attempt to answer these questions myself. Such a response would all too predictable. Instead, I will tell you a true story.

5.4 Driving Tomas

[119] In *Conversations with Kafka*, the author, Gustav Janouch, recounts this exchange: (Kafka) 'The hangman is today a respectable bureaucrat, relatively high up on the civil service payroll. Why shouldn't there be a hangman concealed in every conscientious bureaucrat?' (Janouch) 'But bureaucrats don't hang anybody!' (Kafka) 'Oh don't they!'… 'They transform human beings into dead code numbers, incapable of any change.' (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1971), 19. (enclosures mine)

[120] It is also worth considering the ability of the work produced within the field of philosophy of education and education in general to withstand this death of school. It may reveal a useful distinction between those who are interested in education and those who are not.

I must admit: I have not frequently had the visions I have written about here. In many ways, these words are written for myself in order to remember and be faithful to them. Here is a story of one time that I had a trinitarian vision.

The first time I drove with my newborn son, Tomas, my sight was ontologically changed. (My life was changed too.) As I drove, I felt myself overwhelmed by the context of Being (Tomas being so new in the world, the fortune of this world I was driving in with him, and more); I sensed the forces and energies (especially physics!) of subsistence all around us as I watched my speedometer tell me that we were traveling at over fifty miles per hour and hoped his body was working well, that is wasn't too hot back there for him; I saw him existentially, in the flesh, in my rear-view mirror that reflected the "baby-mirror" that we had installed in order to see him in his back-facing car seat, but I also saw him as my son, *Tomas Mateo Rocha*, someone I loved and would die for.

I saw all of this and more. It made realize the frightening seriousness of this mundane thing I often do called "driving." It also made me well up with joy and love because of the beauty of driving in this particular way: as a lover, not an individual—as a father. I was painfully aware of the potential for tragedy as we used technology to travel at speeds that our bodies were not made to withstand and could end in death. I was also intimately aware of the new life that joined me and made me feel newly alive, re-enchanted, and immortal. All at once, the sight of the existence of my son, made me sense the subsistence I had previously been numb to, and this sensibility drew me to further seek Being and realize that, in fact, it was Being who first sought me. I did not "think" these

things then. I lived them. Recalling them now, I desire to live them again. To be, subsist, and exist. To seek, sense, and see.

This vision I had while driving my newborn son changed me. I have witnessed the same sort of thing various other times when I encountered the fragile and overwhelming reality of the personal existence of him and others. Each time, it shows me a trinitarian vision of things that is mysterious, fortunate, and erotic. What I saw on that day was (and is still) beautiful, which made it real. These trinitarian visions I witnessed are the closest I have come to formulating a positive reply to my son's later objection, "I am not a goose!" A few years later, when he objected on his own behalf, he taught me to remember those transformative, trinitarian visions and summoned me to be faithful to them. I must now attempt, fail, and continue to show this fidelity through restlessness. Through love.

This story explains why I wrote this text and what it is for.

5.5 Fourth Exercise: Seeking, sensing, and seeing

In this chapter we have considered the potentiality of the trinitarian method and descriptions contained in these chapters through seeking Being, sensing subsistence, and seeing existence, all at once. In other words, we have—for the first time—considered looking through the whole lens, not a portion of it. Recalling again the event of teaching you have been pondering, consider the questions: What would seeking Being, sensing subsistence, and seeing existence look like in this event you have imagined, and what vision would it yield in turn?

5.6 Conclusion

I do not intend to provide "solutions" to any "problems." Instead, I hope to have offered an alternative to this problem-solving approach using a phenomenological method that will eventually allow us to simply be, subsist, and exist through seeking, sensing, and seeing. I will conclude with one final story.

I went to the zoo today. In the outdoor space where the gorillas usually play during the warm months, I saw a young woman. There were no gorillas in sight and she was just sitting there in the shade, under the treehouse-looking structure made for the gorillas to climb and sit on. I wondered who this person was and why she was just sitting there. She was dressed like a nurse. Perhaps she was a veterinarian of some kind. Wasn't there work for her to do? Was she on her break and had nowhere else to go? Was she some kind of mystic or a crazy person?

As I looked more closely, I saw that she had a tiny, newborn gorilla in her lap. I came to find out that this baby was an orphan that the zoo had rescued. In order to provide for this orphaned baby, persons have to be with the baby the entire day. Not only do the zookeepers have to feed, bathe, play-with, and protect the baby. *They have to be with it.* (To do that, they have to be aware of it and see it.) They have to "just sit there," "doing nothing"—to *be-with*. The baby doesn't need to be fixed because it has not been made into a problem, even as an orphan. The baby just needs love. This means that it needs to be-with others.

As I know from personal experience, human babies—and other babies too—know how to be-with people. Many times they know this better than adults who have grown accustomed to alienation. They might know very little *about* this, but they know how to be-with someone. They certainly know when they are left alone—they protest loudly.

Perhaps, using this trinitarian lens will show us that we—humans and the world in general—need exactly what this baby gorilla needs: love, ontological—as opposed to purely sociological—community. Could this be education after the death of school? *Seeking* being, *sensing* subsistence, and *seeing* existence? Being, subsisting, and existing? Living in love and ontological communion? I believe that it is one worthwhile place to start and finish, to strip away as much of the chaff as we can, trying to find the pregnant grain, even as it only appears to us through its mysterious absence and renders us awestruck and silent. Otherwise, I fear that without a constant renewal of this search for love and *theosis* we are all already orphaned to the emptiness of planetary nihilism.

What would this look like in practice? I have just told you.

> Llanto de viejas bocas, sangre de viejas súplicas.
> Ámame, compañera. No me abandones. Sígueme.
> Sígueme, compañera, en esta ola de angustia.[121]

THE END

[121] Taken from memory of Pablo Neruda's poem, "Para Que Tu Me Oigas" ("So That You Will Hear Me"), included in his famous collection, *Veinte Poemas de Amor y Una Canción Desesperada* (*Twenty Poems of Love and a Song of Despair*). In English, it reads as follows:

> Lament of old mouths, blood of old supplications.
> Love me, companion. Don't forsake me. Follow me.
> Follow me, companion, on this wave of anguish.

Bibliography

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Terence Irwin. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1984.

————————. *Poetics*. Translated by James Hutton. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1982.

Buber, Martin. *Between Man and Man*. New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1975.

————————. *I and Thou*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970.

Chamberlin, J. Gordon. "Phenomenological Methodology and Understanding Education." In *Existentialism and Phenomenology in Education*, edited by David E. Denton, 199-138. New York: Teachers College Press, 1974.

Clarke, W. Norris. *Person and Being*. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1998.

Copleston, Frederick. *A History of Philosophy*. Vol. 8. London: Burns & Oates, 1966.

Descartes. *Descartes' Meditations*. Edited by David B. Manley and Charles S. Taylor. http://www.wright.edu/cola/descartes/intro.html (accessed May 4, 2010).

Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. New York: Random House, 1952.

Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge, 1972.

————————. *The Order of Things.* New York: Random House, 1970.

Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. London: Hogarth Press, 1930.

Giorgi, Amedeo. *The Descriptive Phenomenological Method in Psychology: A Modified Husserlian Approach*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2009.

Gordon, Peter E. "The Place of the Sacred in the Absence of God: Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 69, no. 4 (October 2008): 647-673.

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson New York: Harper and Row, 1962.

————————. *On Time and Being*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh New York: Harper and Row, 1972.

Heschel, Abraham. *Who is Man?* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1965.

Horner, Robyn. *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2001.

Inwagen, Peter van. "The New Anti-Metaphysicians." Presidential Address delivered before the One Hundred Sixth Annual Central Division meeting of The American Philosophical Association. Vol 83. No. 2. *Proceedings and Addresses of The American Philosophical Association* (November 2009): 46 – 61.

James, William. *Human Immortality: Two Supposed Objections to the Doctrine*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1898.

————————. *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*. Boston: Dover Publishing, 1956.

————————. *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals*. New York: Henry Holt and Company,1910.

————————. *The Principles of Psychology*. Chicago: Henry Holt and Company, 1952.

————————. *The Letters of William James*. Edited by Henry James. Boston: Boston Press, 1920.

————————. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York: Modern Library, 1936.

————————. *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1907.

————————. *Some Problems of Philosophy*. New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1940.

————————. *William James: Selected Unpublished Correspondence, 1885-1910*. Edited by Frederick J. Down Scott Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1986.

————————. *Writings 1902-1910*. New York: Library of America, 1987.

Janicaud, Dominique. *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2000.

Janouch, Gustav. *Conversations With Kafka*. New York: New Directions Books, 1971.

Kuhn, Thomas. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.

Lawlor, Leonard. *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002.

Lerner, Gerda. *Why History Matters: Life and Thought*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue*. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1984.

Mann, Mary. *Life of Horace Mann*. Vol. 1. Boston: 1865.

Marion, Jean-Luc. *The Erotic Phenomenon*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Basic Writings*. Edited by Walter Kaufman. New York: The Modern Library, 1992.

————————. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Translated and edited by Walter Kaufman New York: Penguin Books, 1976.

Plato. *Dialogues on Love and Friendship: Lysis, The Symposium, Phaedrus*. New York: Heritage Press, 1968.

Pollan, Michael. *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*. New York: Penguin Press, 2008.

————————. *The Botany of Desire: a Plant's Eye View of the World*. New York: Random House, 2001.

————————. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin Books, 2006.

Rocha, Samuel. Review essay of *Remarks on Marx: Conversations with Duccio Trombadori* by Michel Foucault and translated by R. James Goldstein and James Cascaito and *Power: Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984* by Michel Foucault and translated by Robert Hurley. *Foucault Studies*, Number 7 (7 September 2009): 131-141.

Rorty, Richard. *Philosophy and Social Hope*. New York: Penguin Books, 1999.

————————. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.

Ryle, Gilbert. *The Concept of Mind*. Chicago:University of Chicago Press, 1949.

Scheler, Max. *Ressentiment*. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2003.

————————. *The Human Place in the Cosmos*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University

Press, 2009.

Spinoza, Benedict de. *Theologico-Political Treatise*, vol. 1 of *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*. Translated by R.H.M. Elwes. New York: Dover Publications, 1951.

Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.

————————. *The Explanation of Behavior*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964.

Wann, T.W., ed. *Behaviorism and Phenomenology: Contrasting Bases for Modern Psychology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964.

Warnick, Bryan R. *Imitation and Education*. Albany, NY: 2008.

Yannaras, Cristos. *Person and Eros*. Brookeline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007.

Zizek, Slavoj and John Milbank. *The Monstrosity of Christ*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009.

Zizek, Slavoj. *The Fragile Absolute: Or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?*, New York: Verso, 2000.

————————. *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003.