

Image by artists Rui Pimenta and Markus Heckmann.

Varieties of

June 14 – 17, 2012, Ryerson University

Continental Thought and Religion

ABSTRACTS

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Bechtol, Harris. Texas A&M.

“Otherwise Than Discursive Knowledge: Faith and Reason in Kant and Kierkegaard”

This paper traces the result of Kant’s phenomena-noumena distinction to an understanding of the relationship between faith and reason from a Kantian and Kierkegaardian perspective. I show that amidst Kant’s transcendental philosophy that lays out the conditions for the possibility of cognition, his account is open to a different kind of non-cognitive knowledge. This second kind of knowledge appears in Kierkegaard’s writings, and it can be illuminated with the help of the sixteenth century Reformers’ understanding of faith as involving *notia*, *assensus*, and *fiducia*. The relation between Kant and Kierkegaard via these Reformers provides us with a unique understanding of the relation between faith and reason.

Bergo, Bettina. Department of Philosophy, l’Université de Montréal.

“Deformalizations, Faith, and Messianism: Phenomenological Reflections”

Movements of deformatization (in post-Kantian thought, as in phenomenology today) mean different things because their objects and times are so clearly different. For there to be a philosophical “deformatization,” however, there must be something like a conceptual sedimentation or loss of meaning, whose abstraction motivates calls for a return to what made them possible—often denoted “life.” The common impulse behind deformatizations is the return to the pre-philosophical, to the practical, or to lived experience, putatively outside of philosophy. That has made possible an enriched approach to temporality, to affects, to subjectivity, or indeed to faith and messianism today. It is a curious thing today to see calls for deformatization in pheno-menology (Renaud Barbaras), the thinking that championed a “return to the things themselves.” I discuss this “call” in light of two recent deformatizations, that of Jean-Luc Nancy, re-defining “faith,” and that of the later Levinas, concerning messianic “consciousness” (*Otherwise than Being*, 1974). I argue that phenomenological deformatizations, clearly hermeneutic projects, give us perspectives on the pre-philosophical dimensions of religious life and on messianic hope. Nevertheless, in their multiplicity, deformatizations pose a more intractable question: Can we, should we, try to establish priorities in the lived experiences thus “unearthed” (priority of world, priority of the other, priority of the Other)—and if so, how to venture such thinking?

Bird, Greg, PhD. Department of Social Sciences, York University.

“Heidegger, Hypostasis, and the Event of Existence”

This presentation is part of a larger project I am working on called “Containing Community”. I use Martin Heidegger’s writings on the event, the proper, and identity, to examine how contemporary continental philosophers, like Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito, and Jean-Luc Nancy, attempt to re-think community. Each draws from Heidegger’s *Ereignis-Denken* to reconceptualize community beyond what I call the “political and theological economy of the proper”. For the purposes of this presentation, I focus on two important strains in Heidegger’s lecture “The Principle/Leap of Identity” (2002) that are paramount to

understanding how the above thinkers attempt to deconstruct the political and theological economy of the proper. First, I draw from Karl Barth's distinction between "en-hypostasis" and "an-hypostasis" to provide an alternative account of Heidegger's eventual opening unto Being. Second, I focus on Heidegger's efforts to think about the eventual opening as a disruption of the metaphysical dialectic of alienation and appropriation.

Bowen, Deborah C. Redeemer University College

"Mimesis and the Ethics of Utopianism: Ricoeur and Kearney on Stories"

Paul Ricoeur spoke in a late interview with Richard Kearney of his desire to explore a "metaphysics of potency and act," and of conceiving of being itself as possibility and actuality rather than substance; for Ricoeur such a turn is intimately connected to the wider return to religious thinking. Looking at the Hebraic tradition, he saw narrative rather than abstract theological interpretation as foundational to the biblical experience of faith. Narrative as a world-making and a world-disclosing activity both presupposes and discloses a model of narrative selfhood which is capable of ethically responsible action, and which can bind people together into communities of vision. This kind of insight guides us to articulate afresh the dynamic and world-changing power of representation, but it also implies a relation to the "beyond" of narrative that is well-nigh unspeakable outside of this layered description of a rediscovered mimesis of past events and future possibilities.

Bradatan, Costica. Texas tech University/Notre Dame University.

"Some Secular Considerations on the Constitution of the Sacred"

The paper discusses the constitution of the sacred in the context of "dying for an idea" (philosophical martyrdom) from two distinct, though complementary angles. First, I show that by overcoming one's natural fear of death – which is accomplished through the commitment to an act of voluntary death – one crosses a threshold and enters a new, radically different space. What we feel toward the person performing it is in fact a complex mix of fear and respect, of fascination and repulsion, attraction and revulsion, all at the same time. In other words, the one who is performing an act of voluntary death is putting herself in a *sacred* mode of being. Second, I propose to read the event of the philosopher's death through René Girard's theory of sacrifice. My thesis is that there is a significant overlap between philosophical martyrdom and the phenomena that Girard describes when he talks of the election of the sacrificial victim, the performance of the founding killing and then the process through which this is rendered "sacred."

Caputo, John D. Department of Religion, Syracuse University.

"The Two Types of Continental Philosophy of Religion"

In this paper I adapt a famous strategy from Paul Tillich, where this time the prototypes will be Kant and Hegel, not Augustine and Aquinas. The first type thinks that postmodernism plays the role of Kant in the philosophy of religion, and the second type thinks it plays the role of Hegel. By "continental philosophy of religion" I mean post-metaphysical approaches

to religion from Kierkegaard to post-structuralism which turn on a critique of metaphysics and take more material, experiential, existential, embodied, gendered, historical, linguistic, cultural and interpretative approaches.

The first type takes its lead from Kant's famous statement that he has found it necessary to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith. In this version, postmodern theory is treated as an epistemological critique which delimits the pretensions of the various forms of reductionism brought forth in modernity. The "modern" tradition under fire in this "postmodernism" culminates in the masters of suspicion, the atheistic reductionisms of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. Postmodern theory discredits such claims by denying that we have access to overarching ahistorical principles. It offers an epistemological delimitation of atheistic metaphysics which leaves the field open for religious belief in the God of classical metaphysical theology. The first postmodernist on this account is Kierkegaard when he has Johannes Climacus say that the world is not a system for us, but that does not mean it is not a system for God. Climacus's distinction between "for us" and "for God" steps up as the successor form of Kant's untenable distinction between appearances and things in themselves and it makes it possible for us to have faith in the way things are for God even though we are deprived of the God's eye view ourselves. Postmodernism is shrunk down to (1) "apologetics," a defense of faith, a "skepticism" that fends off atheistic "dogmatism," that deflects attacks on religious faith by casting doubt on the metaphysical presuppositions of atheism, and (2) an epistemological "humility" that we are not God. Postmodernism does not imply that there is no God but only that we are not God. Postmodernism is content with a draw: if the way to a metaphysical refutation of religion is blocked, it is happy to surrender any claim to a metaphysical defense of religion. The merit of the Kantian version lies in its targets—both the Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett types and religious fundamentalists who think that by believing in God they themselves have become God, or at least have acquired the status and authority of God and are authorized to speak for God. But at bottom it offers a thin postmodernism, an abridged edition, a postmodernism "lite."

In the version that descends from Hegel, postmodern theory is neither an epistemology nor an apologetics but a genuinely radical theology which mounts a heartier critique of religion. Postmodern philosophy is not restricted to building epistemological levees to contain the rising waters of materialist critique but fully embraces the floods that rush across the plane of immanence. Like the Kantian type the Hegelian version of postmodern theory comes after metaphysics. It is not metaphysics, but unlike the Kantian type it is not merely epistemology. In this approach religion is taken to be a *Vorstellung*, but the *Vorstellung* goes all the way down, unlike the Kantian version, where it has a more limited role. The Kantian version is happy to say that religion is a *Vorstellung* so long as that is restricted to mean that religion is a finite, historical and created human institution which should not be confused with God Almighty. Postmodern theory on the Kantian approach then turns out to be no more than a critique of idols, where religion's *Vorstellung* of God is to be sharply distinguished from God Himself, which is pretty much what Karl Barth has to say. But in the Hegelian version, where the *Vorstellung* goes all the way down, it is not merely the case that religion is a *Vorstellung* of God, but that "God" too is a *Vorstellung*, that it is *Vorstellungen* all the way down. Postmodernism takes a distinct turn in the direction of the philosophy of religion when it recognizes that the name of God is, indeed, not just one more

name, but a paradigmatic name, where what is going on in that name, what I am calling the event, takes place in a paradigmatic way. In the Kantian version, to say “God” comes down to saying that perhaps the good old God of the old metaphysics still stands and such faith is still possible. In the Hegelian version, to say “God” is to link God with the event that cuts into the very name of God, the possibility of the impossible.

Corey, Paul, PhD. School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Humber College.

“The Gods and the Other: A Consideration of Dreyfus and Kelly’s All Things Shining”

In *All Things Shining* (2011), Hubert Dreyfus and Sean Dorrance Kelly argue that we are now released from the attractions of monotheism and should instead embrace contemporary forms of polytheism. Polytheism, they argue, reveals manifold ways of being-in-the-world, and is better suited to respond to the polyphonic nature of contemporary life. Dreyfus and Kelly’s phenomenology of polytheism is often compelling, particularly their efforts to make us more attuned to the transcendent “moods” of our experience. Their readings of Homer and Melville are intended to reawaken our sense of awe and gratitude toward the world, and to help overcome contemporary nihilism. However, any effort to combat nihilism must also contain a clear account of ethics. In this regard, their argument falls short. Dreyfus and Kelly’s account would be enhanced by considering the phenomenology of Levinas, who, strangely, they do not discuss.

DeRoo, Neal. Department of Philosophy, Dordt College.

“Beyond Obedience? Kenosis, Weakness and the Law”

The notion of obedience to a divine Law does not cohere well with the move beyond theism. However, abandoning obedience may disconnect Continental philosophy of religion from the contemporary practice of religion. This impasse can be overcome by re-interpreting the understanding of the law at work in traditional theistic accounts of God by reading the notion of law that operates in the Reformational tradition in the light of Caputo, Kearney and Vattimo. Doing so suggests an account of the law of God rooted in love rather than power, as well as a new reason to follow the law, rooted in “attunement” rather than in obedience and punishment. Both love and attunement emphasize the role of the Spirit in human agency, helping us re-imagine the human-divine relationship in ways consistent with the work of Caputo, Kearney and Vattimo without collapsing the divine and the human.

Dudiak, Jeffrey. Associate Professor of Philosophy, The King’s University College.

“A Phenomenology of Religious Truth: The case of Quakerism”

“Truth,” in traditional Quaker discourse, is anything but a philosophically qualified term. Indeed, a doctrine of direct revelation, the Quaker resonance with the Johannine ‘true Light, which lighteth everyone that cometh into the world’ (Jn 1:9), the Light of the Christ within apprehended immediately in the heart, the fulcrum of truth in traditional Quaker teaching, would seem to bypass entirely the natural light of reason that is central to modern/Enlightenment versions of truth, if not philosophy per se. How then do we

undertake a philosophical thinking of these other than philosophical phenomena? In this essay I attempt a phenomenology of religious truth across a reading of two important figures in Quaker history, the 16th Century founder George Fox, and the controversial 19th Century figure Elias Hicks, a reading inspired and methodologically informed by Martin Heidegger's early "phenomenology of religious life."

Dunn, Rose Ellen. Drew University.

"Toward a Phenomenology of Religion: Jean-Louis Chrétien and Michel Henry »

Jean-Louis Chrétien's phenomenology of call and response and Michel Henry's phenomenology of affectivity and life describe the experience of an immanent transcendence—a transcendence that is experienced prior to intentionality. While the phenomenologies of Chrétien and Henry are decidedly permeated by language evoking a theological interpretation of appearance and transcendence through Christianity, their work allows for a general phenomenology of religion, one that is based on the prior phenomenological description of call and response and of affectivity and life. For Chrétien and Henry, it is through the call and the auto-affectivity of life that the human person is continually beckoned into subjectivity—a subjectivity that is intertwined with the immanence of transcendence—a transcendence that is experienced through the appearance of the visible world and that can be affirmed and described in multiple ways.

Eisenstadt, Oona. Professor of Philosophy, Pomona College.

"Religion and/or Zionism: Derrida's Rehabilitation of Levinas's Religion"

This paper begins by raising the question of whether recent criticisms of Levinas's eurocentrism are driven by uneasiness about his position on Israel, and the connected question of whether his Zionism will taint his philosophical legacy. It moves into deeper consideration of his stance through a reading of Derrida's essay, "A Word of Welcome," which I argue both provides an address of certain of the strongest recent criticisms of Levinas, as well as a rethinking, on Derrida's part, of some of the criticisms he himself brought against Levinas in "Violence and Metaphysics." "A Word of Welcome," I argue constitutes Derrida's most mature thought on Levinas and provides a way to rehabilitate the Levinasian diasporic, polyphonous 'holy' of the everyday, despite and via the Zionist essays.

Enns, Kent. Professor of Political Theory, Humber College.

"René Girard's Apocalypse: Evolution, Politics and the Escalation to Extremes"

René Girard's thinking displays a striking tension between the apocalyptic and the evolutionary. Similar to Carl Schmitt, Girard maintains that an increasingly cosmopolitan political culture as well as our historically increased sensitivity to cultural and political scapegoating renders the sacrificial order of politics progressively unworkable. Further, ever-spreading globalization and "equality of conditions" inadvertently foment extreme religious, ethnic and international rivalries, while modern technology has produced a situation where enmity can mean utter annihilation. Thus Girard holds that we must now behave in the

radically “impolitic” manner of Christianity’s renunciation of violence and of the various forms of mimetic rivalry that generate it, or we risk our own destruction. However, Girard’s grounding of the mimetic hypothesis in evolutionary theory allows for a more resolutely political interpretation of his anthropology. Those evolutionarily-conferred mimetic binding forces between individuals, communities and regimes have always rendered political things as much a matter of non-rational enculturation as principled iterations of what shall be most highly valued and esteemed. In this light, and in the context of globalization with its market-channeled mimeticism, the apocalypse will more likely be one of last men, not last days.

Feuer, Menachem. Jewish Studies, University of Waterloo.

“The Arch of the Bow: Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt’s Readings and Misreadings of the Schlemiel in terms of Politics, Aesthetics, and Mysticism”

Walter Benjamin’s letters to Gershom Scholem clearly demonstrate that he was at his wits end about the relationship of theology, aesthetics, and politics in Kafka’s novels, short stories, and diaries. Although Benjamin published the first part of his essay on Kafka two years after beginning his project, the other parts of the essay troubled him for over five years. Benjamin’s goal was stated in a letter to Scholem dated October 17, 1934. There, Benjamin uses the metaphor of the bow to describe why he had such difficulty “The image of the bow suggests why: I am confronted with two ends at once, the political and the mystical.” In my talk I would like to suggest two things which can help us to understand Walter Benjamin’s plight over aesthetics, theology, and politics in Kafka. First of all, I would like to add one more individual to this discussion: Hannah Arendt. There is no doubt that she and Benjamin, who were both in Paris in the 1930s and spent time sharing their work, discussed Kafka. Second, I would like to suggest that their differences were over the Jewish folk-comic character otherwise known as the schlemiel, and that these differences demonstrate the tension that exists between a political and theological reading of the schlemiel. I will also discuss the tension between Benjamin and Arendt in terms of differing mystical and political readings of the schlemiel. I will argue that both of them missed the most important theological aspect of this comic character; namely, the meaning of the schlemiel in relationship to chosenness, suffering, and transcendence. The political and aesthetic meanings of this missing link are best understood in light of what Adorno means by art and philosophy “After Auschwitz,” on the one hand, and by the meaning of the Jewish joke, as understood by Ruth Wisse, on the other. Benjamin was right about the emphasis on failure, exile, and redemption in Kafka’s work (which puzzled Scholem to no end), but he was not clear as to what it means in terms of chosenness and redemption. Arendt, on the other hand, misread the schlemiel by putting the accent on humanism and immanence rather than transcendence. The arch of the bow, to use Benjamin’s metaphor, discloses the schlemiel as a character and a problem which is at once aesthetic, political, and theological.

Gall, Robert S. Professor of Philosophy. West Liberty University.

“Twenty-Five Years After Beyond Theism and Atheism: Faith or Faith in Doubt?”

Following Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Schleiermacher, contemporary Continental philosophy of religion has gone “beyond theism and atheism” by turning to faith of some sort as a way of characterizing religion and as the ultimate appeal in any sort of religious thinking. *Beyond Theism and Atheism: Heidegger’s Significance for Religious Thinking* twenty-five years ago signaled another path. There the obliteration of all guarantees of meaning announced by the death of God was taken as a call for faith in doubt, i.e., as a call to question any faith and guarantee we are given and to become who we are—those beings that ask the question of being. This results in a theology not unlike that found in tragic literature, in which naming something divine is a response to the way things are that does not give us final answers but directs us to the “discordant concord” of ourselves and the world.

Houtt, Jason. PhD candidate in Social and Political Thought, York University.

“Truth Will Out: Kant and the—Religious or Secular?—Role of the Scholar”

What is our role as scholars (or thinkers) in light of the infinite varieties of both religious and secular thought? Is our role religious or secular, varied (plural) or singular, public or personal? Is the truth that we will religious or secular, varied or singular, universal or individual? In his essay “An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?” Kant argues – conventionally – that the true measure of enlightenment is the separation of (biblical) religion and (secular) politics. Yet, what is so unconventional about Kant’s argument is that in separating “Church” and “state” he demonstrates not the opposition of but the relationship between religious and secular thought. I shall argue, in and through an investigation of the role that Kant ascribes to all scholars (including himself), that the truth that we will publicly – that our public will to truth – is as religious as it is secular and as secular as it is religious.

Irwin, Chris. Professor of Political Theory, Humber College.

“A Reading of Take Shelter: Prophecy and the Absence of the Political”

Take Shelter is one of a growing number of films that deal with anxieties about economic instability, environmental degradation, and the general insecurities of the middle-class by projecting them into apocalyptic settings. While the film masterfully interweaves biblical themes into the world of post-2008 financial crisis America, it is also marked by two significant absences: one religious, the other political. Drawing on the work of Spinoza, Žižek, Arendt, and Sebald, I will argue that this film actually distorts the crisis it presents. It does this by neglecting the moral content of biblical prophecy to focus entirely on the portents of a catastrophe to come, and then also by portraying a social, cultural, and economic environment near collapse in which the political has no discernible place or role. By absencing the political and narrowing the prophetic, the film arguably misrepresents the structure and foundations of the crisis it purports to critique.

**Jager, Colin. Assoc Professor and Assoc Chair, Dept of English, Rutgers University.
“Benjamin, the Unburied Dead, and Secular Reading”**

In "Critique of Violence," Walter Benjamin distinguishes between mythic and divine violence. His example of the latter is Korah, whose entire family is simply swallowed up by the earth; as an example of the former, he cites Niobe, whose children lie "in their blood" for nine days after they have been killed by Apollo and Artemis. My paper reads Benjamin's account against two Romantic literary texts from William Wordsworth and James Hogg. In these texts, bodies are neither left unburied nor simply disappeared, but rather buried, uncovered, and buried again. Hogg and Wordsworth, I propose, carve out a secular space between the mythic and the divine--though they come to rather different conclusions about the benevolence of that space.

Joy, Morny. Professor of Religious Studies, University of Calgary.

“Paul Ricoeur and Hannah Arendt on Natality, Evil and Regeneration”

Paul Ricoeur and Hannah Arendt first met at the University of Chicago in the late sixties. In an interview with Charles Reagan, Paul Ricoeur observes: “My choice of the University of Chicago was motivated by the fact that I could teach simultaneously in the Department of Philosophy, the Divinity School and the Committee on Social Thought. It was there that I met Hannah Arendt at the home of Paul Tillich. My friendship in those days with Paul Tillich and Hannah Arendt played a major role in the decision of the University of Chicago to invite me to regularly give courses there [1970]” (Reagan 1996: 132) In 1983 Ricoeur wrote a Preface to the French translation of *The Human Condition* (*La Condition de l'homme moderne*). (This was published in English as: “Action, Story and History” in *Salmagundi* (1983).

Both Arendt and Ricoeur were victims of World War II – Ricoeur was a German prisoner of war (he was a captured French officer) and Arendt barely escaped from Nazi Germany, first to Paris and later to the USA. Both strove to counter the horrors of violence which they both viewed as evil. They each used their prodigious intellectual strengths and physical energies to investigate and provide profound insights into its occurrences. They did not necessarily agree on anything and there is no published work on which they collaborated.

Both based their lives on a strong affirmation of hope in the human capacity for renewal and regeneration. Such affirmation did have religious inspiration – albeit qualified from Arendt's perspective – though both thinkers were also given to elaborate speculations on both the provenance and the persistence of evil. Both were also strongly influenced by aspects of Kant's thought. One could not say that they were overly optimistic, as they comment often on the fragility of all personal and collective human efforts. This fragility was not simply the result of human finitude per se, but because they knew only too well that evil, though not regarded by either of them as innate or original, could never be discounted from intruding. Their work provides insights that bypass traditional theodicies to address new ways of understanding the question of evil in the contemporary world.

Kompridis, Nikolas. Professorial Fellow at Centre for Citizenship and Public Policy, University of Western Sydney.

“The Heterogeneous Languages of Public Reason and the Limits of Translation”

The demand that religious reasons must be translated into secular reasons if they are to play a justificatory role in the political public sphere is a demand that presupposes an under-complex view of translation and metaphysical view of the unity of reason. Eschewing Habermasian assumptions about the "unity of reason" I present an alternative that makes room for multiple and heterogeneous languages of public reason, which places the stress on language learning rather than on language translation.

Kuipers, Ronald. Institute for Christian Studies.

“Cross-Pressured Authenticity: Charles Taylor on Religious Identity in a Secular Age”

Charles Taylor’s landmark work, *A Secular Age*, tells a complex story about the fate of religion over the past 500 years. Taking issue with an overly-simplistic ‘secularization theory’, Taylor portrays a Western cultural landscape that, instead of witnessing the demise of religion, has become home to a dizzying plethora of spiritual ‘options’. But there’s the rub; today the most ardent religious adherent, or even the most strident fundamentalist, cannot help but be aware of the “cross-pressure” this situation of increased cultural plurality induces, as well as the “fragilization” of one’s religious orientation that ensues. To complicate matters even further, the modern emphasis on the value of authenticity compounds the fragilizing effects of these cultural cross-pressures. Today, a growing number of adherents of traditional world-historical religions insist on the importance of carving out their own unique spiritual paths, and are no longer ready to passively accept traditional, authoritarian, or ‘spoon-fed’ answers to life’s deep existential questions. Yet what remains throughout these modern challenges to religious faith, says Taylor, is the quintessentially human quest for meaning, and the struggle against a modern nihilism that increasingly threatens to rob life of any such meaning. Is it still possible to occupy a religious position that positively engages these modern challenges, yet can still speak with ancient wisdom to the peculiarly modern challenge of meaninglessness?

Lalonde, Dr. Marc P. Department of Religion, Concordia University.

“To Think Otherwise: Michel Foucault and the Post-Religious Situation”

According to Michel Foucault, critical thought involves a multifarious effort to disengage ourselves from approved frameworks of thought in order to search out “other rules”; to transform “received values”; and “to think otherwise.” The question to be explored in this paper is: To what degree does religion, within a post-religious situation, assist the critical endeavour “to think otherwise”? How might religious themes, terms, or practices contribute to that indispensable displacement that Foucault identifies as critical thought? The argument

for this presentation will proceed as follows: first, it will sketch out the nature and character of the post-religious situation; second, it will explore and explain Foucault's version of critical thought; and third, it will intimate how religion within a post-religious situation can contribute to the development of critical thought as envisioned by Foucault.

Niemoczynski, Leon. Immaculata University.

“Meillassoux’s God and Process Theism”

Meillassoux's divine inexistence recently has been compared to “the God-who-is-yet-to-come,” posed by Continental philosophers of religion such as John Caputo. Additionally, the divine inexistence, in all of its radical non-existence has, to a lesser extent, been compared to the God who neither is nor is not, but “maybe” – as posed by the Continental philosopher of religion, Richard Kearney (Meillassoux's God does not exist strictly speaking, however if God does not exist now but someday may, we require explanation for the Meillassouxian belief in that non-existence – the “virtual God” and the “immanent form of hope” related to it). In all of these accounts, however, one finds metaphysics to be a hard pressed issue. If we are to turn toward a deity other than the old God of onto-theology and dusty scholasticism, then, is it fair to ask whether the “post-metaphysical God” has proven useful, especially considering the recent critiques of correlationism and anthropocentrism? In this we may possibly condemn the likes of Caputo and Kearney, for they have dodged speculative query in favor of the ethical, the human-situated and human-centered. However, here I disagree. Concepts such as virtuality, power, contingency, weakness, and justice require adumbration indeed – but these notions are picked up by Caputo and Kearney in both their ethical and metaphysical dimensions. Still, one requires a key to unlock the bridge between discussions about virtuality and possibility in Caputo and Kearney and in Meillassoux. From what philosophical resources, then, might we draw in order to deal with this non-existent or virtual coming-to-be God? On my view (and to the ire of more than a few), Meillassoux's God may be said to have process-relational features that seem to crop up in both Caputo and Kearney: Caputo's “weak theology” and Kearney's atheism most explicitly. How is this so? Could it be that specific strain of Euro-American process-relational thought (i.e. Whitehead/Hartshorne) is a key to comprehending the Meillassouxian God, especially when read vis-à-vis Caputo and Kearney? My paper attempts to answer that question.

Norton, Michael Barnes. Department of Philosophy, University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

“Divine Inexistence, or Divine Instauration? A Latourian Answer to Meillassoux’s Spectral Dilemma”

Quentin Meillassoux, in his essay “Spectral Dilemma,” puts forward an update to the Problem of Evil, his answer to which is the concept of “divine inexistence.” Meillassoux argues that God does not exist now but may come into existence in the future to grant new life to those who have suffered unjustly. The coming to be of this “virtual god” entails a radical break with the world as we know it; yet if this is the case, then this god remains something radically other than the present world. By contrast, the concept of the divine

found in the recent work of Bruno Latour provides an alternative to traditional theism and cynical atheism (both of which Meillassoux finds unacceptable), while still allowing for the existence of what I will call an “actual god” that is radically connected to this world – thus answering Meillassoux’s spectral dilemma more satisfactorily than Meillassoux’s own virtual god.

Proulx, Jeremy. Department of Philosophy, Eastern Michigan University.

“Religion as a Creative Endeavour: Schelling’s Philosophical Letters”

It is easy to forget that the German Enlightenment was very much a religious movement. The German *Aufklärer* did not see themselves as engaged in a battle against religious dogma but rather as reforming traditional religious concepts from within. This is especially true for Friedrich Schelling, whose 1795 *Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kritizismus* took its point of departure from the questionable interpretation of Kant’s moral religion that was in vogue while Schelling was a student. I argue that in the *Briefe* Schelling employs an aesthetic model of religion as an alternative to the dogmatic approach that merely attempted to support pre-existing religious beliefs and moral convictions with clever philosophical arguments. The force of Schelling’s polemic in the *Letters* consists in the idea that genuine religion is about becoming an agent involved in the creation of a moral world.

Roy, Christian. Independent Scholar.

“Reconciling Nietzsche and Jesus: Pleasure as Sacred Action in Religion and Beyond in the Thought of Arnaud Dandieu (1897-1933)”

With his phenomenological rather than theological sense of incarnation, Arnaud Dandieu (1897-1933), chief theorist of the Ordre Nouveau Personalist group, allowed its unlikely meeting of minds between committed converts of different creeds and free-thinkers from a Surrealist milieu like himself, around an anti-utilitarian vision that eschewed the atheistic religiosity and transgressive jouissance of his friend Bataille’s wasteful expenditure. For Dandieu, “taking the act as standard of value” is to answer to “the thought of Nietzsche and of Jesus” by uniting the “Christian notion of charity” with the “Nietzschean pleasure of giving”. This leaves room for the self, no longer as stable essence, but as “created by action insofar as it is sacred, that is a-pragmatic (including invention for pragmatic social ends).” Disinterested compassion can therefore survive religious imperatives and moral duty in the link made by Dandieu between sacrifice and hedonism in his search for a post-Christian “Moral of Becoming”.

Sands, Justin. PhD candidate at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven.

“Tilling Soil, Planting Mustard Seeds: Merold Westphal’s Phenomenology of Faith in Dialogue with John Caputo”

This conference paper will explore the role of religious faith in overcoming onto-theology through the work of Merold Westphal and his phenomenology of faith. It will begin with a brief summary of Westphal’s phenomenology and will then explore how faith, as its own

method of thought and ethical discourse, opens the self to an understanding of God that transcends the self, and thus revealing a process of overcoming onto-theology. After this summary, it will then engage in dialogue with a primary critique of Westphal's phenomenology made by John D. Caputo, which questions whether or not Westphal is actually overcoming onto-theology within his understanding of transcendence and self-transcendence. Through this dialogue, this paper hopes to raise questions on the importance of faith as an alternative form of thinking and discourse to scientific-calculative thinking and to emphasize that overcoming onto-theology is an ethical process that cannot be contained or explained within a philosophical system.

Schaefer, Donovan O. Le Moyne College.

“Embodied Disbelief: Poststructural Feminist Atheism”

“I quite rightly pass for an atheist,” Jacques Derrida announces in *Circumfession*. Gavin Hyman's suggestion that the poststructuralist critique of modernity can also be trained on atheism helps us make sense of this playfully cryptic statement: although Derrida sympathizes with the “idea” of atheism, he is wary of the modern brand of atheism, with its insistence on rationally arranging—straightening out—religion. In this paper, I will argue that poststructural feminism, with its focus on embodied epistemology, offers a way to re-explain Derrida's “I rightly pass,” and also to carry it forward. Poststructural feminist atheism leads us through Derrida to an embodied atheism. What I call the sense of embodied disbelief looks at three dimensions of a poststructural feminist atheism: the deployment of feminist epistemology, of the feminist relational ethics tradition, and the new field of affect theory, each of which enables a new approach to atheism.

Sims, Jesse. University of Toronto.

“Revaluation Inside and Outside Antithesis: A Reading of Nietzsche's The Anti-Christ”

In this paper I develop a reading of Nietzsche's *The Anti-Christ* which looks beyond its apparently unilateral hostility toward Christianity and instead takes seriously the author's identification of the work with his central project, the revaluation of all values—considered as a task of affirmation unmitigated by its modes of negation. The paradox of the revaluation is that it at once seeks to transcend antithetical thinking and to engage in it; the polemics of *The Anti-Christ* represent an ironic deployment of antithetical thought against itself and thereby seek to overcome it. I explore the strategies and themes Nietzsche employs to accomplish this inversion, including the autobiographical nature of the book's oppositional scheme, the passage from proximity to Jesus to self-declared “enemy of God,” and the crucial role that the notion of the “holy lie” plays in the text.

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“Songs of Innocence and Experience: Cinema and Belief in Terrence Malick's *The Tree of Life*”

In their philosophical engagement with cinema, Stanley Cavell and Gilles Deleuze raise a fundamental question: can cinema restore the broken link between us and the world? Can cinema, as Deleuze puts it, give us 'reasons to believe in this world': to evoke a cinematic thinking in response to our cultural-historical nihilism. My case study for exploring the relationship between cinema and belief will be Terrence Malick's visionary film *The Tree of Life* (2011), a film that poses the question of belief in cinema on a number of levels. Is belief in cinema still possible? Can film depict belief, spiritual experience, and love in a manner that transcends our cultural scepticism? I will argue that with its fusion of moral, historical, metaphysical, and spiritual visions, it challenges the viewer's own scepticism, whether towards religion, morality, or the aesthetic possibilities of cinema. Malick's wager in *The Tree of Life* is that cinema retains the power of creating an aesthetic mythology; that it is a medium of aesthetic revelation capable of evoking personal, historical, even cosmic memory.

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“Silence and Hospitality in Irigaray: Towards a Culture of NonViolence”

According to Irigaray, the task of today must be what she designates as a double gesture of regrounding singular identity and regrounding community constitution. This task is both empirical (naturalness of sexual difference and our natural dwelling) and transcendental (the Being, language and culture). In this process, the relation is grounded in two autonomous persons and opposed to the Western dialectic, which is predicated on the logic of competition, strength, force, war and violence. For a reciprocal and ethical exchange to arise (and, by implication, our hospitality towards the other), we must stay within ourselves, with our habitual belonging, being fully aware and respectful of cultural differences. Finally, this perspective seems to hold new possibilities for the future ethics of hospitality as an ethics of non-violence we are looking for. This is not silence as renunciation of speaking but a shift from nihilism to the not yet revealed (yet silent) shared world of intersubjectivities and interculturalities.

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“Veiling, Embodiment and Space: Confrontations with the Religious in the Public Sphere”

Charles Maier argues that our underlying sense of territory has itself become plural and fugitive. To understand deterritorialization, we do not need to become migrants since the ground itself is shifting under our feet. The new reality is that diasporas no longer seek to recreate a community of their original compatriots but instead experience a sense of multiple identity as individuals. The diasporic man or woman exists in two civilizations at once; they are liminal and must comport themselves to live and act in both symbolic orders.

I would like to look at Euro-Islamic veiled women through three different concepts: i) comportment, ii) translation and iii) transmutation. These three concepts bring with them clarifying and guiding questions: i) Comportment: As a deterritorialized, dehierarchalized community, the question is not only how have they generated social solidarity but also how have they adjusted to state pressure. These two questions can basically be expressed as, how does a modern, veiled Muslim woman live in the Western context? ii) Translation: As a liminal figure, how are their practices intelligible to both the general ummah as well as the nation she lives? iii) Transmutation: how do these new practices change the concept of citizenship and belonging?

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“Feminism and the Islamic Revival: Freedom as a Practice of Belonging”

In her book, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and The Feminist Subject*, Saba Mahmood analyzes the practices of the women in the mosque movement in Cairo, Egypt. Mahmood argues that in order to recognize the participants as agents, we need to question the assumption that agency entails resistance to norms; moreover, we need to question the feminist allegiance to an unquestioned ideal of freedom. In this paper, I argue that rather than giving up the ideal of freedom, we can explore the possibility that there are different conceptions of freedom, and that the agency of the women in the mosque movement can be understood through a conception of freedom as a practice of connection, or belonging. I develop this alternative paradigm through discussions of four conceptions of freedom that are thematized by Mahmood: Foucault’s theory of agency as self-creation, positive freedom, communitarian freedom, and freedom as resistance.