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Author(s): Alan J Richard

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 Alan J. Richard

Theology has ended,¹ and religious life proliferates.² No longer presuming to discern a divine intention written in the plethora of signs that once marked religious space and time as a space and time of divine visitation, we are left with the signs themselves 'an elevated scroll or cup, bodies leaping and jerking, a circle of standing stones' and the bare fact that, for 'us' at least, they advance a common claim to the name of religion.³ Of course, this bare fact is historically and geographically located. The end of theology means that we cannot start from an assumed *a priori* category of 'religious experience,' and straightaway begin to elucidate its endless varieties. In fact, any attempt to understand the common claim to religion would have to begin with a critique of the implicit rules that 'we' students of religion, relying on the assumed *a priori* perception of missionaries and ethnographers, have used to collect the specific array of signs that we call 'religious.' Thus, it would locate the process within what Carl A. Raschke has called 'the Roman epoch'⁴ and what Jacques Derrida has called 'Latinity.'⁵ It would also note peculiar modifications of the Latin notion of *religio* arising out of contact between various non-European peoples and the European colonialists who believed they had identified, isolated, and understood the word. These peoples they often imagined to be the antitype of their own religious purity, the embodiment of their own disavowed sin. In the end, however, our own attempt to understand "religion," like that of the Romans and the European colonialists, will have recourse to an explicit or implicit *theory*.

3. Theory is indispensable to the distinction, often made in the name of the academic institutionalization of the secular study of religion, between teaching religion and teaching *about* religion, inasmuch as the distinction is intended to shield the latter against the charge of theological indoctrination.⁶ The force of this distinction rests on the implicit claim that, whatever teaching 'about' religion may be, it is emphatically *not* about those sources of religious

¹"Theology has ended" here primarily refers to Carl A. Raschke's usage of the phrase "end of theology," the most extended discussion of which occurs in Raschke, C., *The Alchemy of the Word: Language and the End of Theology*. (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979). Since the publication of this work, Raschke ("Theology, Hermeneutics, and the Shattering of Foundations," *Encounter* [Autumn, 1982], 401-407) has summarized his use of the phrase as designating "not the cessation of what might be loosely imagined as 'theological' conversation, but abstention from any 'theologizing' that recurs to privileged representations such as kerygma, doctrine, or even 'God' in the doctrinaire meaning of the word." On the other hand, the word "end" in *Alchemy of the Word* implies the notion of fulfillment as well as the notion of termination, just it reminds us that "destruction" or "deconstruction" is not so much about sheer iconoclasm as it is about a dismantling that frees what has hitherto remained unthought within the ontotheological tradition.

²This seeming paradox - the proliferation of religious life and academic chatter about it, along with the philosophical disenfranchisement of theological discourse - is the starting point for Charles E. Winquist's reflection on the critical vocation of the theologian after the end of theology in *Epiphanies of Darkness: Deconstruction in Theology*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986). Winquist insists that a "surplus of unsaid meaning calling from the darkness of primary religious experience" (p. 19) pressures thinking toward a transgression of the delimitations that "semantic anxiety" has imposed on theology and its successor, the academic study of religion."

³Raschke, C., "Meaning and Saying In Religion: Beyond Language Games," *Harvard Theological Review*, 67 (2): 79-116; 1974.

⁴Raschke, C., "The Image of the Beast, or Theology and the Thought of Difference," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion, Thematic Studies*, XLIX (1): 109-126.

⁵Derrida, J., "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone," In J. Derrida and G. Vattimo (eds.) *Religion*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 29.

⁶This supposedly straightforward distinction has been advanced by first-amendment groups who see it as a serviceable compromise between organized religious expression in public schools and the conspicuous absence of any and all reference to religion in the primary school curriculum (c.f., Haynes, C., "Teaching Religion's Role is not Teaching Religion," *The Tennessean*, March 9, 1997, p. 4B).

expression invoked and assumed in much religious practice: namely, the divine and/or the demonic. Teaching *about* religion would be an effort to increase the student's understanding of religion without subjecting religion to critical appraisal, since the latter would inevitably raise the question of divine/demonic sources. Theology, as an explicitly religious practice of explanation, linked the signs of religion explicitly to the divine, in an effort to show how the divine operates in the world through religious phenomena. In separating the study of religion from theology, scholars of religion announced that any causal role assigned to a divine being or beings, religious phenomena to the divine, and that our explanations will no longer privilege the theological 'formal residue'⁷ of religious life as if a canon of sacred and quasi-sacred texts or a compendium of myths were a pair of magic glasses that would permit us to read the meaning of religious phenomena.⁸ Neither the texts of a 'tradition' associated with a specific religious phenomenon, nor the texts of a different tradition, will be allowed to dominate the explanation of that phenomenon. Religious studies not only resists becoming a spiritual discipline or a program of religious indoctrination; it also resists using explicitly 'religious' explanations. Religious studies would require theory in order to explain the phenomena of religion in a way that is not religious, that is not an expression of religion itself. Theology never needed to do this, since theology's academic cachet was also a divine vocation. Theology sought to explain religious practice, but its explanatory effort was also an act of devotion. Theology examined religious ideas, but theological examination also produced them.

4. At the same time, however, the notion of religious theory challenges the continued viability of the distinction between a secular study of religion and a theological practice of it. For decades, the formidable Chicago School of religious phenomenology has dominated the former entity.⁹ As Merold Westphal has noted, religious phenomenology seeks to describe and *not* to explain.¹⁰ The phenomenological *epoché*, which requires us to suspend the question of the ontological status of the religious datum, in tandem with an empathetic imperative that shields that datum from the hermeneutics of suspicion, neatly sidesteps the problem of explaining religious phenomena, or even the problem of explaining why some phenomena appear to us as religious while some do not.¹¹ We can doubt whether the leading Chicago School scholars themselves ever endorsed this bizarre shuffle.¹² It is more likely that the long favor enjoyed by religious phenomenology is a product of 'an era of ethno-idealism and self-confident positivism' that favored 'the notion that an effective field of inquiry could be organized around a body of data - - without an underlying conceptual architecture.'¹³

⁷Raschke, "Meaning and Saying," p. 88.

⁸Raschke, *Alchemy of the Word*, p. 66.

⁹The phenomenological method, as represented by the Chicago School, can be read in an almost unbroken series of works starting in the late 1950s and continuing into the late 1980s. Milestones include Eliade, M. and Kitagawa, J. (eds.), *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959); Kitagawa, J. (ed.), *The History of Religions: Essays on the Problem of Understanding*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); Kitagawa, J. and Alles, G. (eds.), *Essays in the History of Religions*. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1988).

¹⁰Westphal, M. *God, Guilt, and Death: An Existential Phenomenology of Religion*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press), 1990.

¹¹Smart, N. *Dimensions of the Sacred. An Anatomy of the World's Beliefs*. (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), pp. 1-2.

¹²Charles H. Long's reading of Mircea Eliade's *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (Long, C.H., "Mircea Eliade and the Imagination of Matter," *Journal of Cultural and Religious Theory*, 1 (2): jcr.org/archives/01.2/long) strongly suggests that Eliade at least, far from employing phenomenology as an evasion of theory, explicitly offers a theory of religion whose force comes from an engagement with materialism and the philosophical problematic of "matter."

¹³Raschke, C. "Religious Studies and the Default of Critical Intelligence," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, LIV (1): 131-138.

Thus, as Russell McCutcheon has noted, scholars of religion have tended to act ‘as if we all know precisely, and possibly intuitively, what religion is or does and now only need to engage in describing and understanding its distinct and identifiable parts.’¹⁴ Unlike religious phenomenology, religious theory does seek to explain; or more correctly, it *risks* explanation and, in doing so, commits and submits itself to critique, with all its Enlightenment implications. The claim to evade theory is only as credible as its theoretical foundation in the distinction between natural attitude and phenomenological *epoché*, a foundation that has been badly shaken.¹⁵

5. On the other hand, the preference among scholars of religion for a simplified religious phenomenology is understandable in light of the reductive theories too often put forth in the sociology and psychology of religion. Like the phenomenology of religion, these theories tend to fall back on assumptions and commonsense notions that too quickly disavow their own investment in onto-theology. Consider the Rodney Stark/William Bainbridge sociological theory of religion, perhaps the most influential Anglo-American theory of religion to arise in the last 20 years,¹⁶ which has been hailed as a ‘new paradigm’ in the study of American religion.¹⁷ One of the values of the Stark/Bainbridge theory is its rigorous logical construction. In *A Theory of Religion*, the entire system, including a number of testable hypotheses (some of which are tested in work published in a number sociological journals), is generated in the fashion of Spinoza’s *Ethics*, starting with a minimal set of basic axiomata. On the other hand, Stark and Bainbridge define religion as the set of ‘systems of general compensators based on supernatural assumptions,’ and its corollary, the claim that (religious) compensators are ‘postulations of reward according to explanations that are not readily susceptible to unambiguous evaluation.’¹⁸ These complementary definitions set up a contrast between ‘unambiguous evaluation’ and those ‘postulations of reward’ that draw on ‘supernatural assumptions.’ Since the Stark/Bainbridge theory identifies religious participants as rational utility maximizers, it postulates that actors will select rewards that can be unambiguously evaluated over those religious compensators that require supernatural assumption when the former are available to them. Actors are motivated to seek religious compensators for the same reasons they are motivated to seek other commodities: to maximize their own utility function. The only difference between religious compensators and other commodities is the fact that religious compensators cannot be ‘unambiguously evaluated.’
6. Of course, the Stark/Bainbridge theory would have little theoretical value if it didn’t identify which phenomena in the world *can* be ‘unambiguously evaluated.’ It does not hesitate to do

¹⁴McCutcheon, R. T. “The Common Ground on Which Students of Religion Meet”: Methodology and Theory Within the IAHR, *Marburg Journal of Religion*, 1 (2). <http://www.uni-marburg.de/fb03/religionswissenschaft/journal/mjr/lukensbull.html>

¹⁵Derrida, J. *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl’s Theory of Signs*. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), esp. p. 51.

¹⁶The foundational works in this developing theoretical system are R. Stark and W. Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, revival and cult formation*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); R. Stark and W. Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion*. (Toronto: Peter Lang, 1987); and R. Finke and R. Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in our religious economy*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992). The following are examples of reviews that have praised their theory: R. Collins, Review of *A Theory of Religion* by R. Stark and W. S. Bainbridge. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 1993, 32:402-406; E. M. Hamberg, Review of *The Churching of America* by R. Finke and R. Stark. *Review of Religious Research*, 1995, 36: 313-315; T. Jelen, Review of *The Churching of America* by R. Finke and R. Stark. *Review of Religious Research*, 1995, 36: 315-317.

¹⁷Warner, R. Stephen. 1993. “Work in Progress toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States,” *American Journal of Sociology*, 1993, 98: 1044-93.

¹⁸*A Theory of Religion*, p. 39.

so. Ordinary market commodities and objects of science are identified as unambiguously evaluated. To the degree that the needs and wants of actors can be fulfilled through ordinary market commodities and/or objects of science, they will not seek supernatural compensators. The Stark/Bainbridge theory points out, however, that some uncertainties are inevitable. For instance, neither ordinary market commodities nor objects of science can offer solutions to death that can be 'unambiguously evaluated.' Hence, religious compensators will always find a market in any society.

7. One of the most obvious problems in the Stark/Bainbridge theory is that its definition of religion exempts its own activity, its own theoretical text production, from any contamination by the object of inquiry. Of course, it exempts a number of other things as well; namely, those that can be conceptualized in terms of commodities. But is the line between unambiguously evaluated rewards and uncertain rewards really so obvious as Stark/Bainbridge assert? For instance, is investment in the stock market so different from investment in 'heaven?' Given that the uncertainty of death involves its timing as well as whatever may or may not lie beyond it, couldn't future rewards in general, based as they are on an excess of reliance in the predictability of history, be regarded as religious 'compensators'? What about the promise made, say, in a book purporting to report results of statistical analyses in support of a theory of religion, that the authors mean what they say and are not simply playing with words? Can the promise of satisfaction proffered in such a book - or indeed in any book, any text, any claim, any meaningful utterance whatsoever - be unambiguously evaluated, once and for all? The Stark/Bainbridge theory's self-exemption from religion becomes highly questionable once we begin to ask what an 'unambiguous evaluation' might look like. But without that self-exemption, the theory can no longer identify religion at all.
8. It would be too facile, particularly for an Anglo-American readership bent on exempting itself from the propensity for reduction, to scoff at the 'unambiguous evaluation' proffered by sociologism and psychologism, and to dismiss their self-exemptions as so many examples of the distinctively Anglo-American evasion of reflexivity. But as Jacques Derrida points out in the essay 'Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of Religion at the Limits of Reason Alone,' both self-exemption (the unscathed, the immune, the sacred) and the risk of faith in uncertainty ('the promise, the act of faith or appeal to faith that inhabits every act of language and every address to the other') are related sources of religion from which there can be no simple self-exemption.¹⁹ Derrida suggests that 'what is at issue' in religion 'is - a persistent bond that bonds itself first and foremost to itself,'²⁰ a sacred bond that promises simply to be what it is. This bond is not the social bond of Durkheim and functionalism, but a condition of any social bond that is also 'a certain interruptive unraveling.'²¹ Derrida explicitly denies that the Enlightenment or contemporary techno-scientific cyber-culture are exempt from this bond:²²

One can *not* deny it, which means that the most one can do is to deny it. Any discourse that would be opposed to it would, in effect, always succumb to the figure

¹⁹Derrida, J., "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone," p. 18.

²⁰Ibid., p. 37. Derrida cautions against assuming that etymological analysis can clarify what concerns us about religion today, which for Derrida appears in the form of a violence that both enlists and resists globalization in the name of living communities (pp. 52-53). Despite this caution, however, the reflexivity implied by the etymology is vindicated later in the essay when Derrida associates it, the "promise of truth" contained in the address, to the other (p. 63). '

²¹Ibid., p. 64.

²²Ibid., pp. 58-59.

or the logic of denial (denegation). Such would be the place where, before and after all the Enlightenments in the world, reason, critique, science, tele-technoscience, philosophy, thought in general, retain the *same* source as religion in general.²³

9. The bond to which Derrida refers us here, the indubitable bond that is nevertheless indemonstrable, the act of 'saying,' recalls the classical 'source' of the theology whose end has arguably precipitated the current interest in religious theory: the theology of Aristotle.

Saying and Being

10. Aristotle argues that 'saying' itself commits an interlocutor, not only to religion, but to theology itself. This 'saying' requires 'not that our opponent will say something either is or is not' but only 'that he shall say something which is significant for *himself and for another*.' It is the act of 'saying' itself, rather than the act of advancing a claim, that establishes the faith with which Aristotle imagines we can transcend the variable axiomata of the several sciences toward a science of being *qua* being, and which Derrida will call 'in essence or calling, religious.'²⁴ The structure of saying compels us, Aristotle argues, to acknowledge the capacity of logos, saying, to assume various forms, to pass from mouth to ear or from hand to page to eye, without losing its essential meaning. And once we have acknowledged this, Aristotle argues, we have acknowledged at least one criterion that cannot be denied without contradiction: that anything with being will be itself and not another. In this way, the passage of logos from one to the other is seen to rest on the literally undeniable epistemological priority of unity over the difference traversed in this passage.²⁵
11. Since saying involves not only speaking but also a hearing, and since both the speaker and the auditor must embrace the faith in saying for a dialogue to occur, it is not even necessary for the individual who denies that faith to say something in order for his or her denial to be refuted, but only that he or she attend to what is said. 'For while disowning reason, he listens to reason.'²⁶ Listening implies an act of interpretation that is predicated on a univocity of meaning parallel to the univocity of meaning assumed by the signifying act, making listening as interpretation of speech into a special kind of signifying act: one that takes place *after* the sounds that make up the material component of significant speech have been uttered. Reason and significant speech are near synonyms: 'if words have no meaning, our reasoning with one another, and indeed with ourselves has been annihilated, for it is impossible to think of anything if we do not think of one thing.'²⁷
12. Aristotle declares that the structure of saying has justified the self-same as the *founding* axiom of the science of being *qua* being, not by demonstrating the truth of the self-same, but by rendering it indubitable. Nevertheless, he admits that educated people may have genuine difficulties with its implications. If the self-same is to be the certain ground for the knowledge of being, then that knowledge must conform to the rules of reference. That being must

²³Ibid., p. 59.

²⁴Derrida, *op. cit.* p. 45.

²⁵Aristotle's argument from saying is quite formidable and complex. It continually subverts critical and so-called "deconstructive" attempts to defuse it, largely because the way occupies an undecidable territory between ethics and ontology. Jacques Derrida ("Faith and Knowledge," p. 44) has correctly emphasized its common tie to both science and religion.

²⁶*Metaphysics* IV.IV, 1006a: 26-27.

²⁷*Metaphysics* IV.IV, 1006b: 11-13.

conform to the requirements of reference means that no being can appear except through the mediation of what Derrida, in his analysis of Aristotle's epistemology, calls the 'allocution.'²⁸ The faith granted to allocution as mediator of being means that the necessary conditions for understanding are epistemologically prior to the necessary conditions of being. Derrida thus asserts that Aristotelian allocution 'opens this space' of ontology rather than being presented within an assumed ontological space.²⁹ The pre-ontological attention given to a speaker (since even thinking is an 'internal dialogue') affirms, not any particular thing, but only a definite 'something.'³⁰ The faith that the 'something' that captures the attention of speaker and listener in saying is a *definite* something 'a 'just this and no other' ' is what captures that attention in the first place.³¹ Consequently, any discussion between interlocutors in a dialogue regarding that 'something' is not a discussion about whether or not the 'something' that brought them together is definite; but only about what definite thing this 'something' is. Dialogue takes place, then, in the space opened between the allocutionary affirmation and the allocutionary aspiration.

The god and another

13. Once an interlocutor acknowledges the incorrigibility of self-sameness in saying, self-sameness becomes the principal criterion for being. Any entity that is not self-same cannot possess substantial being, and must be regarded as secondary in relationship to self-same being. All appearances, experiences, and thoughts are subject to this indubitable faith, a faith that immediately and paradoxically excludes every phenomenon available to experience from being. Properly speaking, phenomena are not. Since nothing in the phenomenal world exhibits the self-sameness required of being, Aristotle allows that empirical beings - beings that are capable of being other than they are - are only beings in a derivative sense, potential as opposed to actual beings. Actual being is logically prior to these potential beings and must be made to account for them; actual being must be the *source* of potential of being. Nevertheless, it must never partake of potential being's potentiality, and it must be internal to the several beings while remaining self-same. As self-same, actual being is unchangeable; while as the source of change in potential being, it is also alive. Since beings that are eternal and alive are called gods, Aristotle concludes that actual being - whatever it is - must be a god. The pure concept of god, once extracted from the exemplary instances crowding traditional understanding, says the same thing as the concept of being.
14. Plato also postulates a god as the self-same cause of change in being, but his god never reaches the necessary degree of purity to offer itself as the same as being. Put another way, Plato's cosmology addresses the matter of religion, but evades the trap of theology. Plato's god is a *dhmiourgoV* (artisan), even if it is also the principle of intelligibility (*nouV*).³² This *nouV*/*dhmiourgoV* fashions phenomena according to *eidh* (forms) and *tecnh* (art or craft). The *nouV*/*dhmiourgoV* and its forms are self-same, and thus answer to Aristotle's criterion that actual being be self-same; the *nouV*/*dhmiourgoV* is alive, answering to Aristotle's other criterion that actual being be a source of movement. On the other hand, the *nouV*/*dhmiourgoV*, while being the cause of changeable finite beings, is not an unmoved mover. From the

²⁸Derrida, 'The Politics of Friendship,' *Journal of Philosophy* 85 (11): 632-644; esp. p. 637.

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰*Metaphysics* VII.I, 1028a: 10-30.

³¹*Metaphysics* IV.IV, 1006b: 12-18.

³²*Timaeus* 47e; see also *Philebus* 26e-30e.

beginning, Plato's nouV/dhmiourgoV confronts an equally primordial unquiet visibility, moving out of formation, out of tune.³³ Although the nouV/dhmiourgoV 'orders' this primordial visible, it does not retain pure activity in so doing. As John Sallis points out, Plato declares that the nouV/dhmiourgoV both *takes up* and *receives* (paralambwn) the unquiet visible field, which is 'there to be taken up.'³⁴ If the god is to be a nouV/dhmiourgoV, something it must be in order to be the active force joining being to becoming, then the nouV/dhmiourgoV requires something more than form. It requires *stuff*, a receptacle, something capable of receiving form. Eventually, after announcing a 'fresh beginning,' Plato supplements the primordial pair of nouV/dhmiourgoV and unquiet visibility with the 'notion' of cwra, 'an invisible eidos, formless, all-receiving, and, in a most perplexing way, partaking of the intelligible.'³⁵ Plato makes no attempt to conceal the contradictions inherent in cwra (a formless eidos!), because these contradictions say what cwra is.

15. The implications of cwra for ontology and metaphysics have been fully and painstakingly discussed in recent years.[^36] cwra 'would trouble the very order of polarity, of polarity in general, whether dialectical or not,'³⁶ an unstable necessity that can be spoken of only in a 'bastard reasoning,' not in the rational discourse of a theology. Plato's *Timaeus*, starting with the twin requirements of self-sameness (required to explain intelligibility) and movement (required to explain sensibility), begins with philosophical language, but soon gives way to an unfinished quasi-mythological narrative, before plunging into the 'bastard' language of chorology which, awash with images, nevertheless cannot be mythological because it resists anthropomorphism.
16. As for Aristotle, his understanding that the principle of self-sameness can be found in the indubitable faith in 'saying' prevents him from allowing any of the nuances of experience from casting doubt on that principle. Although science must explain movement and change, under no circumstances can it sacrifice self-sameness in this explanation. If there is to be a god behind beings, that god must truly cause movement, not merely order it; and that god must not itself be moved by anything else. Certainly, an account that respects the principle of self-sameness cannot endorse the thought that an eternally formless receptacle could share the stage with the god, since such an entity could never be self-same. Aristotle agrees with Plato that an explanation of phenomena requires both form and some 'stuff' in which form appears. Substance, according to Aristotle, 'has two senses, (a) the ultimate substratum, which is no longer predicated of anything else, and (b) that which, being a 'this,' is also separable ' and of this nature is the shape or form of each thing.'³⁷ Instead of resurrecting Plato's cwra, however, Aristotle introduces the concept of matter (ulh), and then tells us why matter can never be substance. Like cwra, matter is 'neither a particular thing nor of a particular quantity nor otherwise positively characterized; nor yet is it the negations of these, for negations also will belong to it only by accident.'³⁸ Since 'both separability and 'thisness' are thought to belong chiefly to substance,' and neither belong to matter, matter cannot be substance and must be secondary to something else.³⁹

³³*Timaeus* 30a.

³⁴Sallis, J. *Chorology: On Beginning In Plato's Timaeus*. (Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 57.

³⁵*Timaeus* 51a, b.

³⁶Derrida, 'Khora,' p. 92.

³⁷*Metaphysics* V.VII, 1017b: 24-25.

³⁸*Metaphysics* VII.III, 1029a: 24-25.

³⁹*Metaphysics* VII. III, 1029a: 28-29.

Self-Movement

17. The substitution of *ulh* for *cwra*, and the dismissal of the former on the grounds that it is formless and hence does not conform to principle of self-sameness, still leaves Aristotle with the problem of explaining movement and change without compromising his first principle. Movement and change cannot be referred to a primordial formlessness, since substance 'whatever it is' must account for them solely by itself. Moreover, it must do so without undergoing change. In order to arrive at a solution, Aristotle goes to great pains to distinguish two kinds of movement: *energeia* and *kinhsi*V.⁴⁰ Jonathan Lear translates these terms as 'activity' and 'change,'⁴¹ and Theodore Scaltsas as 'complete activity' and 'motion.'⁴² The distinction between these terms is not absolute. As an example of *energeia as kinhsi*V, Aristotle uses a house, one of his earlier examples of composite (hence potential) being.⁴³ Let stones, bricks, and timbers be regarded as the 'matter' of the house, or the 'potential house.' Let the plan of the house be the universal form, universal because its actualization does not require the use of the bricks, stones, and timbers we have assembled as the matter, but can utilize any bricks, stones, or timbers of the requisite shape, size, and quality. The composite being, resulting from the coupling of matter and form, is the 'actual' house - or would be, were it not for the troubling problem of its composite nature, a necessary consequence of the structure of predication ('this as such') that violates the principle of substantial unity required by saying and so necessarily possessed by actual being. The only other candidate besides composite form, Aristotle opines, is 'something which caused the movement from potency to actuality.'⁴⁴
18. Thus Aristotle finds himself in need of a maker, a *dhmourgoç*. He finds one in *energeia*. In the example of the house, the very act of building becomes the *energeia* necessary for the pile of stones, brick, and timber to be actualized as a house. As Jonathon Lear puts it, 'the activity of the builder building is itself the form of a house at its highest level of actuality.'⁴⁵ This is not the same as saying that the activity of the builder building is the highest level of actuality of the house that is in the process of being built. That house will not be even relatively 'actual' until the material elements have been compounded to form the house, and the *energeia* of building ceases. Rather, the act of building is the actuality of an anticipated motion or change, the actuality of an aspiration. As Theodore Scaltsas observes, 'Aristotle explicitly states that the actuality of a motion is not the actuality of its product, and for the same reasons not the actuality of its end.'⁴⁶ As Scaltsas argues, when Aristotle uses the phrase 'buildable *qua* buildable' to identify the actuality of the act of building, he contrasts the compound substance of the 'built' house with the actuality of another 'buildable' house.⁴⁷
19. Following Michael Wedin's reading of Aristotle's account of cognition in the *Metaphysics* and *De Anima*, we can understand the 'buildable' house as the house anticipated in the imagination of the builder.⁴⁸ This buildable structure is not an abstract form, like the blueprint in the mind of the builder. Rather, it combines the abstract form with the *thought* of the specific

⁴⁰Cf. Ackrill, J. L., 'Aristotle's distinction between *energeia* and *kinesis*,' in Bambrough, R., (ed.) *New Essays on Plato and Aristotle*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), pp. 121-141.

⁴¹Lear, p. 105. [Need full biblio]

⁴²Scaltsas, pp. 177-178.

⁴³*Metaphysics* VIII.II, 1043a: 14-21.

⁴⁴*Metaphysics* VIII.VI, 1045b: 20-25.

⁴⁵Lear, p. 102.

⁴⁶Scaltsas, p. 188.

⁴⁷*Metaphysics* XI.IX, 1066a: 3.

⁴⁸Wedin, M., 'Aristotle on the mechanics of thought,' in Preus & Anton, pp. 245-271.

materials through which that form will be instantiated. This imaginary house is not merely a 'potential' buildable, since it contains no material component, and does not present the specific materials separately from the thought of the abstract form. According to Martha Nussbaum, the Aristotelian imagination (*fantasia*) is just the sort of faculty required to enable the builder to construct a house, given a specific 'heap' of formed matter and a universal form.⁴⁹ As Nussbaum argues, Aristotle's *fantasia* is the capability to focus on a concrete particular *as* something, distinguishing its accidental features from its essential form.⁵⁰ If this is so, then Wedin is correct when he argues that the image of the house in the mind of the builder is an actuality that is also a necessary stage in the actualization of the specific buildable house. As such, it does not stand in relation to that house as potentiality to actuality.⁵¹ Rather, it is a primary actuality, which is the condition for the possibility, both of the act of building and of the secondary compound actuality of the house.

20. Some confusion may arise from the fact that Aristotle calls the act of building, the *energeia*, the one *true* actuality involved in the being of the house.⁵² How can the act of building be the true actuality if the act of building depends on the prior actuality that is the imaginary combination of material elements and universal form in the mind of the builder? Aristotle answers that the act of building can be decomposed into an originative source of movement and the movement that follows from it. A *technē* such as building is a 'potency that depends on a rational formula' that is activated by 'an originative source of movement' in the soul.⁵³ It is the possession of the rational formula that gives the builder the capacity to see bricks, timbers, and stones *as* a house, *or* as a number of other structures. But the possession of the rational formula cannot assure that the builder *will* create imaginary or material structures; the originative source of movement does this.⁵⁴ Aristotle calls this source of movement *oreziV*, which is ordinarily translated as 'desire'.⁵⁵
21. Martha Nussbaum's reading of Aristotle's account of animal motion the first such account to fully appreciate the originality of Aristotle's use of the term '*oreziV*'.⁵⁶ According to Nussbaum,

⁴⁹This is precisely the role Kant assigns to the reproductive imagination in the first *Critique* (p. 183): 'the *image* is a product of the empirical faculty of reproductive imagination; the *schema* of sensible concepts, such as of figures in space, is a product and, as it were, a monogram, of pure *a priori* imagination, through which, and in accordance with which, images themselves first become possible;' see also pp. 218-219. Kant himself notes a fundamental problem with the epistemological reliability of the Kantian imagination when he describes it as a '*blind* but indispensable function of the soul' (*Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 112). On this particular problem as it affects Kant's various restatements of the doctrine of the faculties, see Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, *op. cit.* Stuart Hampshire ('Public and private morality,' in *Morality and Conflict* [Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983], pp. 101-1250) argues that Aristotle's *phantasia* shares this weakness, and so cannot serve as the moral guide Nussbaum seems to want it to be.

⁵⁰Nussbaum, M., 'The discernment of perception: An Aristotelian conception of private and public rationality,' *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, 1 (1985), pp. 151-201; and in *Love's Knowledge*, pp. 54-105.

⁵¹In Kantian terms, this sort of cognition would still be an employment of the transcendental function of the imagination because, for Kant, the very notion that bricks could *become* a house depends on a prior experience of a house. This prior experience 'the 'first' cognition of a house' involves the transcendental imagination, without which there would be no experience at all. Aristotle's *phantasia* fulfills a similar function except that, as indicated in the last chapter, Aristotle does not locate cognition in the subject of cognition, and so there is no *noumenal* limit-concept in his system. On the difference between (A) the perception/cognition of a built house and (B) the anticipatory mental construction, as well as an explanation as to why in (B) *phantasia* is entirely a cognitive process, see Wedin, p. 267.

⁵²*Metaphysics* XI.IX, 1066a: 5-7.

⁵³*Metaphysics* IX.II, 1046b: 16-18.

⁵⁴*Metaphysics* IX.II, 1046b: 23.

⁵⁵*Metaphysics* IX.V, 1048a: 10

⁵⁶Nussbaum, M., 'The 'common' explanation of animal motion,' in P. Moraux & J. Weisner, (eds.), *Zweifelhaftes im Corpus Aristotelicum*. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1983), pp. 116-157.

Aristotle's usage transformed a word that had hitherto functioned to designate 'reaching out' into a technical term in philosophy that designated the originative principle of movement in all living things.⁵⁷ For Aristotle, *orexis* or desire is behind every concrete act performed by a living being, provided that this living being is not fully actual. Thus, 'everything which has a rational potency, when it desires that for which it has a potency and in the circumstances in which it has the potency, must do this.'⁵⁸ When the builder imagines the house, the builder is already acting. This act of imagination is an instance of desire animating the rational principle resident in the mind of the builder.

22. In order to illustrate how the imaginary house can be a full actuality in and of itself, while simultaneously being a condition for the act of building, Wedin cites a passage from Aristotle's *De Memoria*, in which Aristotle compares the imagination to painting.⁵⁹ There, Aristotle claims that a painting, like a mental image, can be viewed as either its own end or as a means to a further end. I quote at length:

Just as when one contemplates the painting in the picture as being a likeness, and without having [at that moment] seen the actual Corsicus, contemplates it as a likeness of Corsicus, and in that case the experience involved in this contemplation of it [as relative] is different from what one has when he contemplates it simply as a painted figure ' [so in the case of memory we have the analogous difference, for], of the objects in the soul, the one [the unrelated object] presents itself simply as a thought, but the other [the related object], just because, as in the painting, it is a likeness, presents itself as a mnemonic token.⁶⁰

23. The image of the house is an activity that is irreducible to its parts, the memory-traces of the building formulae (the stored 'science' of building) and the building materials, so long as the image of the house is not taken as a 'likeness' of these memory traces or as a means for accomplishing the building of a house. When it is not taken as a likeness or a means, it is taken as a thought: the thought of the completed house cognized because such cognition is desirable in itself. It is like the painting of Corsicus, when the painting is enjoyed *as* a painting. When the imaginary house is taken as a means, it is like the picture of Corsicus, when this picture is used as a way of identifying Corsicus when the viewer encounters the 'real' Corsicus.
24. As Scaltsas argues,⁶¹ the primary actuality that is the cognized house has a different ontological status from its components, which is why Aristotle can both argue against the possibility that (abstract) form can be primary substance, and argue that 'the proximate matter and the form are one and the same thing, the one potentially and the other actually.'⁶² Consequently, 'the potential and the actual are somehow one'⁶³ *when*, by virtue of the builder's thinking of the pile of bricks, timbers, and stones *as* a house rather than as, say, a temple, the pile of bricks, timbers, and stones remains the (compound) actuality it already is and becomes in addition a potential (buildable) house. At the same time, the abstract formula for building a house remains what it is (i.e., an immaterial form) but becomes in addition a singular actuality.

⁵⁷*Fragility*, p. 274.

⁵⁸*Metaphysics* IX.V, 1048a: 14-15.

⁵⁹Wedin, pp. 245-271.

⁶⁰*De Memoria* I, 450b 26 - 451a 4.

⁶¹Scaltsas, p. 199.

⁶²*Metaphysics* VIII.VI, 1045b: 17-18.

⁶³*Metaphysics* VIII.VI, 1045b: 20-21.

25. When we view the activity of building the house as the originative cause of the house, we are in a sense correct. We are incorrect, however, if we assert that the actuality of the house is either its realization as building or its realization as built. Inasmuch as the building activity and the built house both involve matter, they are compound entities, while the primary actuality of the house turns out to be the ontologically prior cognitive activity that is the originative source for the activity of building and the substance of the house separated from matter. Similarly, for Aristotle, it is the geometor's thinking, and not the geometor's drawings, that constitutes the actuality of the potential geometrical figures contained in those drawings, so that when the geometrician draws, 'the potency proceeds from an actuality.'⁶⁴
26. Although building is an example of *energeia* that is also a movement, *energeia* need not involve movement. By examining the activity of building, Aristotle has shown that it depends on a prior actuality of thinking which is its originative cause. For Aristotle, this thinking activity is a different species of *energeia* from the building activity. The building activity represents *energeia* in the 'strict sense' of *kinesis*, because that activity aims at an end (the house) that is other than itself.⁶⁵ The thinking activity is *energeia* in a more technical and specific sense, because it is not subject to this limit. Seeing, hearing, walking, and thinking are *energeia* within which the end is already present, and are therefore activities and the goals of these activities at the same time.⁶⁶
27. The distinction between *kinesis* and *energeia* is not the only salient distinction Aristotle makes between activities such as building and activities such as thinking. Alongside the question of whether or not an activity is its own end, Aristotle is concerned with the question of whether or not the activity is its own beginning. For Aristotle, a being is 'living' just to the extent that it possesses an internal, originative source of movement.⁶⁷ Whereas external forces generate movement in nonliving beings, living beings are characterized by such internal, originative sources. These internal sources of movement are themselves arranged hierarchically. Plants are said to have a 'nutritive soul,' because their internally generated activity is limited to growth.⁶⁸ Animals also have a 'nutritive soul,' but in addition possess a 'sensitive soul.'⁶⁹ Their internally generated activity involves growth, but it also involves the processing of sensations. In addition, some animals are distinguished by their possession of an imaginative soul, which relates ends means.⁷⁰ In addition, the soul is said to have an 'appetitive' part, *oreziV*, which is not a true part, but is 'that which originates movement' and appears *as* nutritive, sensitive, or imaginative.⁷¹ Thus, *oreziV* has a different and higher ontological status than any of the soul's parts. The only thing that is 'further back' in terms of the origination of movement is 'the *object* of that faculty; for it is this that itself remaining unmoved originates the movement by being apprehended in thought or imagination.'⁷² Thus, the truly original source of movement in a living entity is the object of that entity's *oreziV*.

⁶⁴*Metaphysics* IX.IX, 1051a: 31.

⁶⁵*Metaphysics* IX.VI, 1048b: 17-22.

⁶⁶*Metaphysics* IX.VI, 1048b: 20-25.

⁶⁷*De Anima* II.I, 412b: 17.

⁶⁸*De Anima* II.II, 413a: 25-31.

⁶⁹*De Anima* II.II, 413b: 1-4.

⁷⁰*De Anima* III.VII, 431a 14 - 431b: 9.

⁷¹*De Anima* III.X, 433b: 10-12.

⁷²*De Anima* III.X, 433b: 13.

The Theology of Theory

28. For Aristotle, fully actual being must be active, must be able to exist separately, must be a simple unity, and must be prior to all potentiality. In contemplating the forms of activity, Aristotle finds that some have their ends elsewhere than in themselves, and others have their ends in themselves. Of those activities that appear to have their ends in themselves, some (e.g., viewing a painting of Corsicus as a painting) are really stimulated by an object outside of themselves, the ultimate source of movement. In order to determine the nature of the unmoved mover, Aristotle must locate an activity that is entirely self-contained, is its own end and object, and toward which the oreziV of all other entities is directed.
29. Aristotle has already indicated that the imagination may provide a clue as to actual being, because the imaginary object can be cognized as an immaterial thing, a thought. When the imaginary object is cognized in this way, it is an activity that joins an abstract formula to a specific set of materials, where both formula and materials are also images. Furthermore, this thinking activity is prompted by the originary source of movement in the organism that thinks it, namely by desire. If that desire, for instance, is the desire to build a house in order to get paid, then the image will be a 'memory-token' that is useful for building the house. If, however, the desiring activity of thinking is not directed toward building a house, but toward the image of the house *qua* thinking activity, it is complete. It is an energeia that fully contains its own end. The oreziV directed toward the cognized imaginary house *qua* cognized imaginary house is not reducible to any utilitarian end the house may serve. Rather, *it is the desire to fully actualize the thinking capacity of the thinking being*, that being's desire that its potential for self-movement reach its most actual state.
30. When such objects of desire cause mortal thinkers to commence thinking about them, Aristotle says, 'they move without being moved.'⁷³ Just as the spectator's enjoyment of the picture of Corsicus, when viewed as a picture rather than as a likeness, has its end in the enjoyment of the spectator rather than in some further end, so the cognized image, when it stimulates contemplation rather than serving as a mental reminder, 'moves' the contemplator for the sake of nothing except the contemplator's being so moved. The difference between this cognized image and the picture of Corsicus is that, while the picture of Corsicus is still a compound material being, the cognized image 'is' nothing other than the thinking activity that cognizes it. As a cognized image, it is an active force in thinking, not simply a passive object of thinking. Thinking does not subordinate this object to itself; rather, *it is this object*.⁷⁴
31. Aristotle maintains that the 'primary' objects of thought and desire are the same, and this sameness is realized to the degree that the object of desire is cognized as the cognitive power that constitutes it.⁷⁵ Because desire fastens on the object that is the apparent good (e.g., whether or not it is the actual good), and thought is capable of distinguishing between apparent and actual goods, it is cognition that makes actual goods appear as good to desire.⁷⁶ Thus, although thinking activity in humans is inseparable from desire, thinking activity *qua* thinking activity is logically so separable when this activity moves desire as its fully active

⁷³ *Metaphysics* XII.VII, 1072a: 26.

⁷⁴ Cf. Lear, pp. 135-141.

⁷⁵ *Metaphysics* XII.VI, 1072a: 27.

⁷⁶ *Metaphysics* XII.VI, 1072a: 28-29.

object. Desire, then, both desires to 'possess' its object, and desires its object inasmuch as that object is already actively self-possessed. Any object that was capable of being possessed by another would not be desirable; but any object that was actively self-possessed could not be grasped by desire's 'reaching out.' Hence, Nussbaum can say that, for Aristotle, desire is a sign that a being's self-sufficiency is incomplete, a sign of being's 'fragility.'⁷⁷ This contradiction at the heart of desire is thus a contradiction between being and having. If desire is thinking reaching out for itself, the potential being by virtue of which beings are multiple is the failure of thinking to finally grasp itself, and this incompleteness in being just *is* desire.

32. Aristotle asserts that reflexive thinking resolves this dilemma between being and having. That thinking is the object of desire is apparent by the fact that we desire the kind of coherence given by saying; that thinking is ontologically prior to desire is known because thinking as the specific activity it is (and not, for instance, sensing or feeding) actually leads desire from apparent to actual goods.⁷⁸ Finally, even desire in thinking seeks 'that which is best in itself,' e.g., the highest form of thinking. Thus, Aristotle argues that 'desire is consequent on opinion' and that 'thinking is the starting-point.'⁷⁹
33. By defining the independent, self-sufficient, immovable originaive cause of movement as the object of thought and desire, Aristotle characterizes it as pure *energeia*, since it is the only moving force that does not produce motion by being moved, but only "by being loved."⁸⁰ This final cause, of which all contingent objects of desire and all contingent objects of thought are signs, is the act of thinking itself, when it fully takes itself as its own object:

Thinking in itself deals with that which is best in itself, and that which is thinking in the fullest sense with that which is best in the fullest sense. An thought thinks on itself because it shares the nature of the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought in coming into contact with and thinking its objects, so that thought and object of thought are the same.⁸¹

34. Active thinking does not move, but it is alive because thinking is an activity. Were the arch' merely a rational principle (as Aristotle claims is the case in Plato's system⁸²), then the arch' would not be divine, because it would not be alive. The argument that active thinking is divine hinges on the fact that both eternality and life belong to active thinking: 'for the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and God's self-dependent actuality is life most good and eternal. We say therefore that God is a living being, eternal, most good, and that life and duration, continuous and eternal, belong to God, for this *is* God.'⁸³ God is the eternal life that moves every desiring being as that toward which desiring being strives, just as the movements of desiring beings are the originaive causes of all other movements. This eternal life is the active thinking that realizes the form of every phenomenon.
35. As the self-affection of thinking, God is not only divine but a divine *arch'*, the causal *and* explanatory starting-point. The actuality of beings is a lure by which desire in rational beings is finally directed toward actual being as God. If all other desiring beings desire Aristotle's

⁷⁷*Fragility*, p. 276.

⁷⁸*Metaphysics* XII.VII, 1072a: 28-35.

⁷⁹*Metaphysics* XII.VI, 1072a: 29-30.

⁸⁰*Metaphysics* XII.VII, 1072b: 3.

⁸¹*Metaphysics* XII.VII, 1072b: 18-23.

⁸²*Metaphysics* XII.VI, 1072a: 1-3.

⁸³*Metaphysics* XII.VII, 1072b: 25-29.

God, Aristotle's God does not desire. To say that God is active thinking is to do more than to make a simple identification between God and thinking. As Lear argues, active thinking can be actual being because only this activity is also a simple unity. 'What it is for something to be *actively indivisible* is for mind to think it as a whole.'⁸⁴ This kind of thinking does not occur when, for instance, a particular imaginary house is cognized. When that happens, active cognition is accompanied by a receptive cognition that receives the image that active cognition 'is' at that moment. Only when the object is cognized *as* the thinking activity that thinks it, when thinking and its object are genuinely the same, is actual being achieved. This activity is not the activity of a 'thinking thing,' since that would subordinate the thinking activity to a subject that thinks. It is a thinking activity that thinks itself. Therefore, since desire presupposes a gulf separating the desiring being from the object of desire, God does not desire. He derives eternal enjoyment - pleasure - from the self-sufficient activity that He is.⁸⁵ He enjoys, and pleasures, Himself eternally. Aristotle's God eternally completes the circuit that all other beings aspire to complete.

36. Aristotle's God has the distinction of being an activity in which humans can participate 'in theory. Aristotle calls the kind of thinking God does and is 'theory' (qewria),⁸⁶ and notes that qewria is available to us inasmuch as we are able to engage in active thinking.⁸⁷ qewria is the most fully realized form of thinking, the form of thinking to which all thinking aspires. It is a self-contained thinking that can be 'agent' and 'patient' simultaneously. qewria is distinguished both from productive thought (which aims at ends such as building or carving) and from deliberative thought (which aims at what is to be done) because it aims purely at its own activity, is performed for its own sake rather than for the sake of building or doing.⁸⁸
37. According to Aristotle, qewria is the greatest human activity because thinking is the best thing we do, and the objects of thinking are the best knowable objects.⁸⁹ qewria is the noblest activity because it is the most continuous 'since we can contemplate truth more continuously than we can *do* anything.'⁹⁰ qewria is the most pleasant of activities, being not equivalent to inquiry but to the purity of self-sufficient knowledge.⁹¹ qewria is self-sufficient because those who contemplate can do so without needing anything other than 'the necessities of life.'⁹² Other noble activities are noble because they make room for leisure, while qewria seems both to be superior in serious worth and to aim at no end beyond itself, and to have its pleasure proper to itself (and this augments the activity), and the self-sufficiency, leisureliness, unweariedness (so far as this is possible for man), and all the other attributes ascribed to the supremely happy man are evidently those connected with this activity.⁹³
38. Humans are capable of qewria 'in so far as something divine is present' in them. Without the divine first principle, qewria would be unthinkable. Aristotle declares that this sort of

⁸⁴Lear, p. 304.

⁸⁵*Metaphysics* XII.VII, 1072b: 16.

⁸⁶*Nichomachean Ethics* X.VIII, 1178b: 21-22.

⁸⁷*Nichomachean Ethics* X.VIII, 1178b: 24-26.

⁸⁸*Nichomachean Ethics* VI.I, 1139a; 6-8.

⁸⁹*Nichomachean Ethics* X.VII, 1177b: 20-22.

⁹⁰*Nichomachean Ethics* X.VII, 1177a: 22-23.

⁹¹*Nichomachean Ethics* X.VII, 1177a: 24-25.

⁹²*Nichomachean Ethics* X.VII, 1177a: 30-35; this self-sufficiency is particularly troubling for Nussbaum and Cooper, because they believe it implies isolation. Cf. 'Transcending Humanity,' and Cooper, J., 'Aristotle on Friendship,' *The Philosophical Review*, 86 (1977), pp. 290-315.

⁹³*Nichomachean Ethics* X.VII, 1177b: 18-24.

contemplation is not 'our' activity, but is the activity that is God. Glimpses of this activity are 'the best we can enjoy,' though unlike God, who enjoys it eternally, we can 'enjoy (it) for but a short time.'⁹⁴

39. Although Aristotle develops the philosophical notion of qewria much further than previous thinkers, he was not the first to deploy it. Before Aristotle, Plato already links qewria to reflexive thinking. In Plato's work, however, qewria suggestively retains its traditional *religious* usage to designate a troop of pilgrims. A qewria travels from the enclosed space (tops) of the city in order to attend a shrine or festival in honor of a divine being, generally located outside the city in the open space (cwra) *between* cities, and then returns to its city of origin with the blessings of the divine for the citizens of the city.⁹⁵ This traditional usage of the term emerges at key points in Plato's account of the trial and death of Socrates. Socrates' accusers mark his content with Athens by his refusal to leave the city except in time of war, even in order to take part in a qewria.⁹⁶ Moreover, the time of Socrates' imprisonment, the time between his sentencing and his execution, is defined by the interval between the departure and return of a traditional qewria to Delos.⁹⁷ qewria does not wander, but completes a circuit, starting from and returning to the city. But between its departure and return, the crucial final dialogues of Socrates, whose love of the enclosed city has prevented his own participation in such a circle of departure and return, are said to occur.
40. A second 'traditional' usage of qewria that Plato retains is that of 'seeing.' Indeed, Plato's philosophical appropriation of qewria retains the reference to 'seeing,' but Plato distinguishes qewria from various other kinds of seeing. As opposed to the kind of seeing that sees things with the eye (orav), qewria sees past visible things by means other than the body.⁹⁸ Thus, in the myth of the cave, the prisoner can see theoretically (yeasaito) only after a process of habituation (sunhyeia), which by stages passes from the sublunary visible through the visible things in the heavens to the invisible intelligible.⁹⁹ After being properly habituated, the prisoner is able to look and to see (yeasasyai) the sun as it is in itself. Plato also distinguishes qewria from skopev, the kind of seeing that 'looks after', since skopev is a matter of mastering its object with some other end in view. Thus, medicine can 'look after' the body,¹⁰⁰ and the dialectician can look after (skopvmen) our attempts to speak correctly of non-being,¹⁰¹ but we cannot 'look after' the divine.¹⁰² In contrast to the mastered object of skopev, the object of qewria attracts the seeing that sees it, so that the seer's attentiveness to the object seems like a necessity (*anankasth'i*), rather than like a free act. This necessary attentiveness moves the seer beyond the object's appearances until the object has revealed the true source of its

⁹⁴Metaphysics X.VII, 1177b: 14-16.

⁹⁵Phaedo 58b. "Now the Athenians made a vow to Apollo, as the story goes, that if they were saved they would send a mission every year to Delos (e(ka/stou e)/touj qewri/an a)pa/cein ei)j Dh=lon).

⁹⁶Apology 'Socrates, we have strong evidence that we and the city pleased you; for you would never have stayed in it more than all other Athenians if you had not been better pleased with it than they; you never went out from the city to a festival (ou)/t' epi qewrian pw/pot' ek th=j po/lewj e)ch=lqej), or anywhere else, except on military service, and you never made any other journey, as other people do, and you had no wish to know any other city or other laws, but you were contented with us and our city."

⁹⁷Ibid. "The beginning of the mission (arch d' esti th=j qewri/aj) is when the priest of Apollo crowns the stern of the ship; and this took place, as I say, on the day before the trial. For that reason Socrates passed a long time in prison between his trial and his death."

⁹⁸Phaedo 65e

⁹⁹Republic 516a-c

¹⁰⁰Republic 342c

¹⁰¹Sophist 239b

¹⁰²Cratylus 401a

attraction, its power to elicit concern.¹⁰³ For Plato, this power lies in those properties granted to the object by its participation in the eidh.

41. Plato's qewria remains uncertain because the ontological status of the thinking process that 'theorizes' the object is uncertain. Insofar as the movement of qewria starts from phenomena and tends toward eidh, it must be able to 'see' that truth somehow in the phenomena.¹⁰⁴ The arguments of the *Parmenides*, however, make it quite clear that the eidh are in no position to use phenomena as instruments to compel qewria, since eidh are unified and changeless, whereas phenomena are multiple and constantly changing.¹⁰⁵ If eidh are immanent in phenomena, then they cannot be unified and changeless, since, if they are *entirely* in phenomena, they will be entirely changeable and if they are only *partly* in phenomena, then they will not be unified. On the one hand, eidh must be visible in phenomena; otherwise, we would have no knowledge of them. On the other hand, eidh must be unchangeable and authoritative, or beings will have no unity, no distinctness, no form. Since eidh must be both unchangeable and somehow manifest within becoming, there must be some 'third' that links the being of eidh to the becoming of phenomena. The series of false starts in the *Timaeus*, starting with the nouV/dhmiourgoV and culminating in the thought of the cwra, represent Plato's most serious attempt to characterize this 'third.' If this series of narratives fails to establish a self-identical qewria, it is because Plato treats movement, affection, and receptivity with the same level of seriousness that he treats the problem of unity. Aristotle, on the other hand, is committed to the indubitable truth he perceives in 'saying' *before* he is committed to the reality of change and becoming, so he cannot leave his reader with a receptive formless eidh or, as he would put it, an 'indeterminate dyad,' alongside the One.
42. Aristotle's inoculation of thinking against receptivity, and his disposal of matter as secondary (though uncreated and co-eternal with thinking), enables his qewria to escape the apparent limits of finitude without losing itself in the unlimited or compromising its purely active nature. Although Aristotle grants that thinking is receptive inasmuch as it 'is capable of receiving the object of thought,' he does not develop this thought, but immediately asserts that 'it is active when it possesses this object,' and that 'the possession rather than the receptivity is the divine element which thought seems to contain.'¹⁰⁶ If the receptivity of thinking in relation to its object is eliminated when thinking actively possesses that object, then we can understand how, as Wedin has written, 'all the equipment required to produce the object of thought is contained within the system.'¹⁰⁷ However, it is quite another thing to assert, as does Aristotle, that active thinking can 'possess' the object of thought, when that object is the active thinking that is doing the possessing, and then to assert that this involves no disruption of the *unity* 'the self-sameness to which Aristotle is committed above all other criteria - of thinking activity.
43. Aristotle is not unaware of this problem. Elsewhere in the *Metaphysics* itself, Aristotle insists 'a living unity cannot be acted upon by itself,'¹⁰⁸ and that a being that is said to act on itself must act on itself *qua* other.¹⁰⁹ Thus, in animals that have a soul, it is the soul that acts on the body of the animal, and in the soul itself, the rational part of the soul acts on the sensitive

¹⁰³ *Symposium* 210c

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *Parmenides*' observation that without the eidh the observer will have nowhere to direct his mind, and dialectic will perish. *Parmenides* 135b-c.

¹⁰⁵ Especially *Parmenides* 134d-e

¹⁰⁶ *Metaphysics* XII.VII, 1072b: 22-24.

¹⁰⁷ Wedin, p. 268.

¹⁰⁸ *Metaphysics* IX.I, 1046a: 27.

¹⁰⁹ *Metaphysics* IX.I, 1046a: 13.

and nutritive parts.¹¹⁰ These originative sources always imply a 'passive object' that is acted upon.¹¹¹ For God, however, there can be no passive object, since God has no other to act upon. Since genuine action cannot occur without a receptive 'partner' to be acted upon, the double activity of ontological thinking would seem to be an illusion. Either the thinking that is 'grasped' as an object loses its status as agent, or the thinking that is elicited by the active object (the thinking that 'loves' that object) loses its status as an agent.

44. Jonathan Lear attempts to help Aristotle get around this problem by arguing that Active Mind is the object that is received by phenomenal thinkers.¹¹² For instance, the house that is cognized is Active Mind as Active Mind is received by a receptive mind that is only phenomenal. If this is the case, then only phenomenal receptive minds, inasmuch as they are the potential for thought rather than the actuality of thought, can 'have' objects. This explanation is consistent with Aristotle's distinction between active and receptive mind, where God is identified with active mind only. But if the 'object' of phenomenal, receptive mind (e.g., the cognized house) is a specific reception of active mind, then how was it ever able to become a specific object (such as a house) at all?
45. The escape from finitude without loss is what qualifies Aristotle's qewria as theological. Conversely, the end of theology undoes this escape, and to some extent, exposes theory to an indistinct differentiation between the nouV/dhmiourgoV and cwra that emerges in Raschke's reference to the 'fury of the formless' hidden behind the name of God,¹¹³ and in Derrida's distinction 'between the theological movement that speaks and is inspired by the Good beyond Being or by light and the apophatic path that exceeds the Good.'¹¹⁴ Theoretically, the crux of religious theory, its critical edge, lies in this indistinct differentiation. Aristotle's theological foundation for theory—a foundation that continues to hold sway over the sciences and has in fact resulted in their appropriation of theology's traditional status,¹¹⁵ cannot make qewria see determinate objects or phenomena as anything other than its own potentiality. It cannot make the world more distinct than Plato's indistinct differentiation, since the 'One' that God is in the self-affection of thought both grounds and precludes the 'one' that makes each being distinct from every other.
46. But this cannot be the whole story, for Aristotle's path to God is a progressive elaboration of the analysis of 'saying,' his epistemological starting point. God is nothing other than Aristotle's most sophisticated way of stating the pre-ontological affirmation and anticipation in 'saying,' the being-present that appears on beings as their ground and destiny, but is immediately withdrawn by the capacity of beings to be other than they are. When Aristotle selects the sign as the starting point for his inquiry into being *qua* being, he is not simply stating a presupposition. Rather, in naming actual being as the being that appears in 'saying,' he is invoking an anteriority that is at the same time an always-distant aspiration. But this fragmentary trembling between affirmation and aspiration that is the sign is precisely what makes it the starting point it is. The sign would not be a sign if it were fully actual being, because then it would no longer point away from itself, no longer bid us to look elsewhere for the fulfillment of the desire it elicits. Moreover, 'saying' is also a prayer that addresses the

¹¹⁰ *Metaphysics* IX.II, 1046a 37 - 1046b: 2.

¹¹¹ *Metaphysics* IX.V, 1048a: 10-20.

¹¹² Lear, pp. 138-141.

¹¹³ Raschke, "The Image of the Beast," p. 123.

¹¹⁴ Derrida, "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," p. 41.

¹¹⁵ Raschke, C.

Other *qua* Other, and in doing so asks the Other what I think I am doing when I address the Other. Insecure theory, but still theory: not theology or theory of religion, least of all theory above religion, but religious theory.

Notes

Alan Jay Richard, Ph.D., an independent researcher, is principal investigator for 'Formative Research on Cocaine Use among Hispanics in the Southwestern United States,' a three-year, multimillion dollar research effort funded by the National Institutes on Drug Abuse. He has served as co-investigator on a number of other federal research grants in the areas of HIV risk, social networks, and addiction. He has published over 70 articles in peer-reviewed journals in the fields of religion, ethics, sociology, and psychology. Besides religious theory, his scholarly and research interests include emotional attachment, affective neuroscience, addiction, sociology of religion, American religion, and the erotic imagination.

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