

## Did You See to Think to Speak?

### Table of Contents

[Brill's Companion to German Platonism edited by Alan Kim \[Brill's Companions to Philosophy: Ancient Philosophy, Brill, 9789004250673\]](#)

[A History of Language by Steven Roger Fischer \[Reaktion Books, 9781861890801\]](#)

[A History of Writing by Steven Roger Fischer \[Reaktion Books, 9781861891679\]](#)

[A History of Reading by Steven Roger Fischer \[Reaktion Books, 9781781940681\] reissued](#)

[Aesthetics, Volume I by Dietrich von Hildebrand, translated by Fr. Brian McNeil, edited by John E Crosby \[Hildebrand Project, 9781939773043\]](#)

[Aesthetics, Volume II by Dietrich von Hildebrand, translated by John E Crosby, John Henry Crosby, and Fr. Brian McNeil, edited by John E Crosby and John Henry Crosby \[Hildebrand Project, 9781939773104\]](#)

[The Urban Myths of Popular Modern Atheism \(How Christian Faith Can Be Intelligent\) by Dr. Paul E. Hill \[Christian Alternative, 9781789040326\]](#)

[The Problem of Evil: Eight Views in Dialogue edited by N. N. Trakakis \[Oxford University Press, 9780198821625\]](#)

[As It Was: Frank Habicht's Sixties edited by Florian Habicht, texts by Heather Cremonesi, Frank Habicht, Shelley Jahnke, Valerie Mendes \[Hatje Cantz Verlag GmbH, ISBN 9783775744904\]](#)

[Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time: Art Culture, and Exchange across Medieval Saharian Africa edited by Kathleen Bickford Berzock \[Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University in association with Princeton University Press, 9780691182681\]](#)

[One Rock Upon Another: Marcel Duchamp, Jules Verne, Max Bill, Joseph Beuys, Fischli/Weiss, Al Weiwei: Essays: Deutsch | English | Français By](#)

[Stefan Banz \[Verlag Für Moderne Kunst, Les Presses Du Réel: 9783903228627\]](#)

[Dom Sylvester Houédard edited by Andrew Hunt and Nicola Simpson \[Ridinghouse 9781909932364\]](#)

[Jim Dine: Tools by Jim Dine \[Steidl, 9783869306476\]](#)

[Against Creativity by Oli Mould \[Verso, 9781786636492\]](#)

[Pacific Legacy: Image and Memory from World War II in the Pacific by Rex Alan Smith & Gerald A. Meehl \[Abbeville Press, 9780789213334\]](#)

[Patriotism Black and White: The Color of American Exceptionalism by Nichole R. Phillips \[Baylor University Press, 9781481309578\]](#)

[Public Art and The Fragility of Democracy: An Essay in Political Aesthetics by Fred Evans \[Columbia Themes in Philosophy, Social Criticism, and the Arts, Columbia University Press, 9780231187589\]](#)

### [Bibliography](#)

### Editorial Appraisals:

Some qualified reviewers offer their own brief evaluation of the book. Otherwise most of our content represents the authors'-editors' own words as a preview to their approach to the subject, their style and point-of-view. <>

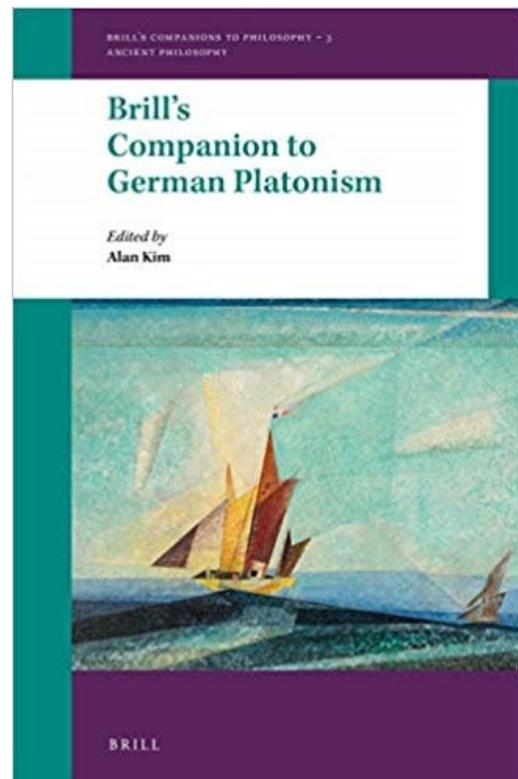
[Brill's Companion to German Platonism](#) edited by Alan Kim [Brill's Companions to Philosophy: Ancient Philosophy, Brill, 9789004250673]

For six centuries, Plato has held German philosophy in his grip. [Brill's Companion to German Platonism](#) examines how German thinkers have interpreted Plato and how in turn he has decisively influenced their thought. Under the editorship of Alan Kim, this companion gathers the work of scholars from four continents, writing on figures from Cusanus and Leibniz to Husserl and Heidegger. Taken together, their contributions reveal a characteristic pattern of

“transcendental” interpretations of the mind’s relation to the Platonic Forms. In addition, the volume examines the importance that the dialogue form itself has assumed since the nineteenth century, with essays on Schleiermacher, the Tübingen School, and Gadamer. [Brill’s Companion to German Platonism](#) presents both Plato and his German interpreters in a fascinating new light.

Contents	
Acknowledgements	
Notes on Contributors	
1	Introduction by Alan Kim
2	Plato and the Platonic Tradition in the Philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa by Claudia D’Amico
3	Leibniz: The Last Great Christian Platonist by Jack Davidson
4	The Infinitesimal Calculus of the Soul: Moses Mendelssohn’s Phädon by Bruce Rosenstock
5	Kant and Plato: An Introduction by Manfred Baum
6	Hegel’s Plato: A New Departure by Jere O’Neill Surber
7	Schleiermacher on Plato: From Form (Introduction to Plato’s Works) to Content (Outlines of a Critique of Previous Ethical Theory) by André Laks
8	Friedrich Schleiermacher’s Theory of the Platonic Dialogue and Its Legacy by Thomas Alexander Szlezák
9	Plato’s Conception of Time at the Foundation of Schopenhauer’s Philosophy by Robert Wicks
10	Plato-Reception in the Marburg School by Karl-Heinz Lembeck
11	Nietzsche and Plato by Richard Bett
12	Phenomenological Platonism: Husserl and Plato by Ian Kim
13	Heidegger’s Ambiguous and Unfinished Confrontation with Plato by Francisco J. Gonzalez
14	The Tübingen School by Vittorio Hösle
15	Form and Language: Gadamer’s Platonism by François Renaud
Index of Pre-Modern Authors and Notables (born before 1500)	
Index of Modern Authors and Notables	
Index of Subjects	

Our title, German Platonism, does not name a tradition so much as a syndrome. I mean the peculiar preoccupation with Plato running through German thought from the late Middle Ages up through our own era: German philosophers develop their philosophies by arguing over and with Plato. Thus, what we think of as the German philosophical tradition is not merely rooted in Plato’s philosophy; in many cases it is an elaboration of it, and, in a few exceptions, a radical reaction against it. One aim of this book, then, is to describe these roots, ramifications, and reactions, chiefly in the chapters on Cusanus, Leibniz, Mendelssohn, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Cohen, Natorp, Husserl, and Heidegger.



If the philosophical interpretation of Plato is a central theme of both the German tradition and our volume, its pursuit nonetheless gives rise to involutions and “spandrels” corresponding to turning points within that tradition itself. That is, as philosophy becomes more self-conscious and reflects upon the conditions of possibility of knowledge, there arise parallel reflections on those

cognitive modes called interpretation and understanding. And just as the former epistemological inquiry uses Platonic dialectic and the Forms as inspiration or foil, so too do the latter hermeneutic reflections chiefly concern the correct interpretation and understanding of Plato's dialogues. This hermeneutic turn corresponds to the awakening of historical consciousness in the early nineteenth century, in which the influence exerted by Plato on modern (German) thought becomes a topic of philosophical reflection in its own right. Earlier assumptions regarding Plato's psychological, ethical, and metaphysical doctrines are subjected to historical and textual critique, revealing the dialogues as deep riddles that call the reader forth to reconstitute them ever anew. A second aim of this book, then, is to exhibit ways in which reflection on the activity of interpretation, on the one hand, and the substantive interpretations of Plato's dialogues, on the other hand, mutually determine each other; this is mainly pursued in the chapters on Schleiermacher, the Tübingen School, and Gadamer.

Whereas each chapter illustrates these points regarding a particular philosopher or school, I want in this Introduction to trace the overarching themes binding them into a distinctly German tradition. In doing so, I suspend judgment as to the rightness of a given reading as an interpretation of Plato; the purpose of a Companion is not to judge, but to show things in a new light.

...

Any interpretation of Plato's philosophy must inevitably unravel a tissue of interwoven ontological, epistemological, and psychological questions. Given that the Forms are "most real", how is their reality to be interpreted? What does it mean to know them, and how is such knowledge achieved? Indeed, is the human mind or soul so constituted as to know them adequately? This volume presents an overview<sup>3</sup> of how the German tradition varies the basic theme of soul knowing Forms, with the ontology of the Forms in constant tension with concomitant psychological and epistemological commitments. When we look past the rich detail our contributors provide, their essays, viewed synoptically, reveal a relationship between

two opposing schemes, which we may call "transcendental" and "transcendent", or (to borrow a distinction from Cassirer) "functional" and "substantial", respectively. Each scheme implies a variety of conceptions of logic, science, and dialectic, of soul, God, and world. Broadly speaking, the thinkers in our volume who understand Plato along transcendent-substantial lines include Kant, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Heidegger; by contrast, Leibniz, Mendelssohn, Hegel, Cohen, Natorp, and Husserl fall into the transcendental-functionalist camp.

The transcendent-substantial view is the more traditional and familiar, on which Plato's Forms are substances that really exist in a separate, higher, transcendent "realm". This realist, dualist metaphysics entails the coordinate epistemological-psychological view that for Plato, these transcendent Forms are the objects of true knowledge, which the soul achieves by some kind of (passive) intellectual intuition. Now, the passages that support this transcendent reading—like the Sun Analogy, Divided Line, and Cave in the Republic, or the myth of the soul's chariot in the Phaedrus—appear to others as the metaphoric effervescence of Plato's poetic élan. These critics argue that what he more soberly means, either explicitly or unconsciously, is that the Forms are a priori concepts akin to categorial functions, the transcendental conditions of possible experience. Contrary to the transcendent view, the transcendental approach rejects the former's two-world metaphysics. The Forms are brought down from their hyperouranian realm somehow to serve as the constitutive infrastructure of this world construed objectively. Instead of passively adoring a divine spectacle, the soul on the transcendental-functional view is the active architect of its earthly domain. Thus, where the traditional substantial interpretation sees the Forms as themselves the objects of a divine science, the functional interpretation grasps them as the theoretical framework within which the mundane may be scientifically captured. Since this framework is not handed down from on high, but laid down and raised up by our own efforts, "knowing the Forms" is ultimately human self-knowledge.

This latter view is of course most famously advanced by the Marburg Neo-Kantians, who, for their part, look back to Nicholas of Cusa, Leibniz, and Kant for their ancestry—a lineage confirmed in this volume. Nicholas of Cusa (“Cusanus”) (1401–1464) stands at the threshold of the Middle Ages and the German Renaissance, and at the nexus of the cosmopolitan universalism of the Holy Roman Empire and the incipient self-consciousness of a specifically German religious and philosophical orientation. Although Cusanus is the *fons et origo* of the German transcendental reading, yet this spring, too, is nourished by more obscure streams reaching back through Albert the Great (c. 1200–1280), via the Christian Neo-Platonist (Pseudo-) Dionysius the Areopagite (late fifth to early sixth century), to the latter’s likely teacher, Proclus (412–485). As Claudia d’Amico explains in the opening chapter of this volume, Cusanus’ reading of Plato centers on the ontological priority of the One—the divine origin that as such lies essentially beyond human comprehension and enfolds within itself all plurality and opposition. Instead, what we face is the sensible multiplicity unfolding out of God. It is in the face of this manifold that human reason undertakes its task: synthesizing intelligible unities, i.e., beings. Because the divinity is inaccessible to us, reason must pursue its task through what Nicholas calls “conjecture”, a procedure by which we gradually collate a symbolic map of the universe. The symbols we conjecture are the Forms.

These are therefore neither separate, divine objects, nor “things in themselves”, but rather *entia rationis*. They are neither in the world nor beyond it but are the means by which the sensible is rendered intelligible. In Nicholas’s conjecturalism we may detect an echo of Socrates’ method of hypothesis in the *Phaedo*—a way of acting within the limits of human reason while expanding them, just as, conversely, Socrates’ method anticipates Nicholas’s paradoxical notion of “learned ignorance”. In Nicholas, then, our main themes are sounded: reason is an activity of synthesizing unities; being is a function of thinking. Thinking is a temporal process, which nevertheless is guided by ideal, atemporal standards of perfection.

In the next two chapters, on Leibniz and Mendelssohn, Jack Davidson and Bruce Rosenstock

provide insight into the early roots of the transcendental-functional view of the active soul. Davidson shows how Leibniz is less concerned with understanding Plato’s philosophy as such, and more with adopting and adapting Platonic elements into his system. In particular, Leibniz thinks Plato was right in holding that “intelligible things” are more certainly than their sensible “appearances”. But as example of such Platonic intelligibilia, Leibniz names mind and soul rather than, as we might expect, the Forms. He is thus naturally drawn to the *Phaedo* and *Timaeus* as confirmations of his own view that this is the best of all possible worlds, caused by a perfect intellect, and that hence the ground of explanation should be sought in purposive ends, not in matter. Leibniz touches on the Platonic Forms obliquely, namely in the guise of innate ideas, which he finds imperfectly anticipated in the *Meno*.

In the next chapter on Moses Mendelssohn, we find an elaboration of the Leibnizian Plato by someone steeped in the philosophy of Wolff. Rosenstock’s detailed analysis of Mendelssohn’s famous *Phädon* illuminates the transcendental view of the active soul adumbrated in d’Amico and Davidson’s chapters, namely as the spontaneous power of unification, or, in Rosenstock’s words, the power to synthesize a manifold. More precisely, Mendelssohn attempts to modernize the arguments of the *Phaedo* by deploying Leibniz’s infinitesimal calculus. On Mendelssohn’s view, the calculus allows us not only to explain the soul’s essential power of representing manifolds as unities, but also thereby to gain insight into the soul’s nature itself, viz., its “will to perfect itself within the moral order of the universe”. In Leibniz’s tenor, Mendelssohn argues for a this-worldly interpretation of the Forms as active in, or indeed as rational souls.

In his chapter on Kant and Plato, Manfred Baum explores both the evolution and the continuity of Kant’s understanding of Plato, from his pre-Critical *Inaugural Dissertation* to the *Critiques*. On the one hand, according to Baum, the pre-Critical Kant interprets the Platonic idea in light of Leibniz and Wolff’s notion of an *ens perfectissimum*; that is, by his “idea”, Plato meant a *noumenon perfectio* or rational standard of perfection against which sensible phenomena are to be judged. Here again,

Kant does not attribute a two-world metaphysics to Plato, but distinguishes rather between God's productive intuition and human discursive thought. In this, he echoes Cusanus's opposition of a divine truth unknowable in itself, but which can be symbolically reconstructed through conjecture. In the *Critical* period, Kant moves beyond the *Dissertation's* simple opposition of sensibility and intellect, parsing the latter into the *Understanding* and *Reason*. He accordingly interprets the *ideai* as the antecedents of what Kant calls "*Ideen*", i.e., concepts of *Reason*, in contrast to "*Kategorien*", i.e., concepts of the *Understanding*. The characteristic role of the *ideai* is providing a standard of perfection, especially for moral and political praxis. Although in this way Kant grants the Platonic Forms an indispensable regulative role, he takes himself to be stating clearly what Plato at best intimated and obscurely expressed in ecstatic metaphor. In other words, although Kant interprets the Forms transcendently, he attributes to Plato a transcendent intent.

Jere Surber lets us see how Kant's distinction between what Plato actually said, on the one hand, and what he was trying to say or should have said, on the other hand, comes to be worked out in much greater detail by Hegel. For, according to Surber, Hegel is the first German thinker to subject the Platonic texts themselves to detailed study, out of a conviction that Plato not only articulated the constitutive problems of Western philosophy, but also germinally anticipated their solutions. The Platonic Form now takes on a much more important role than before, as Hegel sees in Plato's *eidōs* the nascent state of his own worked-out "*Begriff*", which he characterizes as "*identity-in-difference*". Since the *Begriff* unfolds and articulates itself in and as history, Hegel rejects, like his predecessors, the transcendent interpretation of the "*eternal Forms*"; but he also rejects a species of transcendentalism that regards the Forms as merely psychological constructs. Surber shows how Hegel's *geschichtsphilosophisch* preoccupation with Plato compels more clear-cut interpretive commitments than his predecessors saw fit to make. Although he rejects the very idea of an esoteric, unwritten doctrine not found in the dialogues, Hegel does not consider the dialogues the ideal vehicle for

presenting the written doctrine they contain. Thus, his interpretations of the *Parmenides*, *Theaetetus*, and *Republic* aim to recollect and organize systematically Plato's theory of the *Begriff* as we find it diffracted through the dazzling prisms of his dialogues.

For Schopenhauer, Plato inspires what Robert Wicks calls the "*philosophical ascension to a ... better consciousness through art, morality, and asceticism*". To the complaint that the sensible world is a prison, Schopenhauer discerns a Platonic solution, namely in the description of time as "*the moving image of eternity*" (*Timaeus*); hence Wicks concentrates on Schopenhauer's interpretation of time in Plato. Initially, Schopenhauer understands the Forms much like Leibniz or the early Kant, as "*realities existing in God[,] [t]he corporeal world [being] a concave lens that diffuses the rays emanating from the [Forms]*". Human reason, by contrast, is like a convex lens that recollects and reconfigures the original non-sensible Forms, if less perspicuously than before. In other words, since it is space and time that distort the intelligible truth, neutralizing their function will let the intelligible noumenon once more present itself. Is such a thing possible? In *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer identifies in the aesthetic experience of beauty an instantaneous, time-less intuition of the ideal order beyond appearance. And it is in Plato's conception of the *εἰσῆλη* that Schopenhauer discerns just such a "*moment*" which lacks all duration and is therefore timeless. Thus, if we can utterly focus the mind on what is present to it, then what we so perceive must be the "*eternal Form*" or "*pure Idea*" itself. This transcendent state is Schopenhauer's "*better consciousness*", dwelling beyond turmoil and suffering, an ascetic ideal he also associates with Plato. Through his radical recombination of Kant and Plato, Schopenhauer lays down a new interpretive line focusing on Platonic genius: his "*philosopher and prophet*" circumvents Nietzsche and reaches a dubious apotheosis in the poet, Stefan George, and the intuitionistic interpreters of Plato, the visionary.

Nietzsche's antipathy to Plato is well known: "*It is all Plato's fault! He is still Europe's greatest misfortune!*" By contrast, Nietzsche calls his own

philosophy an “inverted Platonism”. Richard Bett does not attempt to overturn this standard picture, but rather to complicate it. In his ascription to Plato of a two-world metaphysics and body-hating morality, Nietzsche holds him responsible for originating the decadent, cowardly, life-sapping nihilism that conquered the West in the form of Christianity. Bett suggests that the substance of this view is taken over from Schopenhauer’s Plato, and indeed, as we know from Wicks’s chapter, Schopenhauer did think of Platonic dialectic as a way of “attaining the divine being and getting behind the veil of appearance”. Of course, Schopenhauer endorses this Platonic insight, whereas Nietzsche condemns it. The Schopenhauerian legacy aside, however, Nietzsche’s direct estimation of Plato (as opposed, perhaps, to Platonism) is quite positive. Plato exhibits a noble strength of mind in his challenges to conventional wisdom, provoking a salutary “tension of spirit”. Thus, Plato’s innovative theory of the tripartite soul not only reflects but also explains psychological complexity. In this way, Plato represents for Nietzsche a necessary, productive stage in the evolution of higher forms of life. Finally, although it is not meant in a mundane political sense, according to Bett, Nietzsche’s approving comparison of the Republic’s caste system and the Laws of Manu unhappily anticipate the “political Plato” of the 1930s.

In his chapter on the Marburg School’s Plato, Karl-Heinz Lembeck expounds the work of two fin-de-siècle neo-Kantians, as significant as they are neglected: Hermann Cohen and Paul Natorp. Pressing beyond purely intellectual-historical considerations, the Marburgers strove, like Schleiermacher, towards a systematic interpretation of Plato’s philosophy. Lembeck traces Cohen’s development from his psychologistic interpretation of the Forms in the 1860s to the transcendental perspective dominant from the 1870s onwards. Guided by the third Critique’s notion of purposiveness, Cohen interprets the Forms as regulative functions. Unlike empirical “things [Dinge]”, functions do not “exist”; rather, they “have validity [gelten]”, like laws. Thus, Cohen comes to liken the Forms to Kantian Categories, that is, synthetic functions laid down, like Platonic

ὑποθέσεις (hypotheses), as the generative infrastructure of experience. For Cohen’s student, Natorp, Plato represents the “autochthonous” origin of (critical) Idealism. Natorp tried to buttress this view through concrete philological analyses, which, however, were vitiated in the eyes of his contemporaries by his unabashed “systematic” purpose. This system becomes clearer to the unfamiliar reader through Lembeck’s presentation of Natorp’s “logical-epistemological interpretation” of the Forms: their ontological significance is entirely elided as Natorp reduces them to the laws legislated by mind for the purpose of constituting particular ontic unities. Lembeck finally turns to Natorp’s obscure late period, in which he seemingly retreats to a Neo-Platonic position reminiscent of Cusanus.

As I argue in my own contribution to this volume, Edmund Husserl vividly illustrates the essential tension in German Platonism between the transcendent and transcendental. For while he explicitly rejects the “static Platonism” of the transcendent vision of the Forms, Husserl nonetheless insists that he himself is a Platoniker—and this, as I show, in the transcendental sense. I lay out the Platonic provenance of certain key Husserlian themes: the scientificity of philosophy; the starting-point of philosophical reflection in sensibility; the “reductions” as paths from the sensible world to that of pure essences or eidē. Finally, I discuss Husserl’s construal of the eidē as genetic conditions of experience, in accordance with which particulars are constituted in consciousness. In particular, I argue that Husserl’s method of eidetic reduction corresponds to Plato’s recollective ascent from conflicting particulars to harmonious Forms, which Husserl interprets as the laws of which the particulars are participating cases. But I go beyond merely pointing out parallels, and show that Husserl read Plato in just this way: that the Forms, in fact, are what Husserl says his eidē are, viz., real in the Lotzean sense of “valid” (geltend). In this way, a deep kinship between Husserl and Natorp’s Plato-readings comes to light.

The last of our purely philosophical interpreters of Plato is Heidegger. As Francisco Gonzalez shows,

Heidegger's public anti-Platonism is strangely matched by a subterranean—indeed, esoteric—appropriation of key Platonic ideas. Gonzalez argues that Heidegger does not regard Plato as the wellspring of the history of Western metaphysics as “nihilism”, but rather treats him as an “exception to this history”. To understand this point, we must keep in mind that for Heidegger both the transcendent and transcendental interpretations of the Forms remain hostage to the traditional theme of subject-knowingobject. Heidegger considers the preoccupation with the nature of mind, on the one hand, and with the Forms as the proper objects of that mind, on the other hand, to be noxious symptoms of Western metaphysics. He instead reads Plato's dialogues through the lens of his so-called fundamental ontology, i.e., the analysis of everyday human existence. Viewed from this perspective, Plato's main concerns appear to be logos and its varieties, both authentic and inauthentic, as Heidegger explores in his 1924 lecture-course on Plato's Sophist. Authentic logos is what Plato calls “dialectic”, which lets us truly see beings as they are. Yet this favorable interpretation leads Heidegger to criticize Plato's (alleged) presupposition that “being” means “presence”. Thus, the Sophistlecture is the first sign of the tension in Heidegger's Plato: on the one hand, an affinity in thinking “being in relation to our own being, and thus dynamically”; on the other hand, confining Plato's conception of being to “presence”. Taking Heidegger to task for the tendentiousness of his “official” critique, Gonzalez points to Heidegger's more nuanced Plato-lectures of the 1930s. Gonzalez's analysis of Heidegger's seminar on Plato's Parmenides is especially interesting, not least because it is here that Heidegger discerns a new conception of time as the *exaiphnēs* (the instantaneous). Gonzalez supplements Heidegger's sketchy notes with class transcripts by Herbert Marcuse, first made available in 2012. On this evidence, it is even more impossible, Gonzalez argues, to overlook Plato's centrality as the only other philosopher before Heidegger to have thought “being and time together”.

So far, I have described a German “Platonism” stretching from Cusanus through Husserl. At bottom,

it contrasts the sensible world of experience with the intelligible transfiguration of that same world. The fluctuating manifold given by sensibility summons the mind to seek its intelligible unity—both by resolving individual unities within the manifold (i.e., “entities”), and by connecting them into a systematic whole (“nature”, “universe”). Whether such ultimate unities are conceived as ectypes of divine archetypes, or more soberly as mere noumena, the common thread is always this: they are not given to humans; we must work for them. This work, be it Cusan *coniectūra*, Kantian “grounding”, or Husserlian “reduction”, at best yields a reconstruction of the postulated inner systematicity of the world. Such conjectural models are the products of the active mind, and what it knows just is its intelligible model, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the phenomenal world as interpreted, as rendered intelligible through that model. But the world and its ontic contents *an sich* lie forever beyond mind's grasp. On this world-view, then, the Platonic Forms are not, and cannot be, the ultimate ideas of God, since then they would not be knowable by us.<sup>18</sup> Instead, as Natorp argues, they are the *logoi* that the mind itself lays down as unifying concepts by which the phenomenal manifold may be resolved and understood. As *conceptūs* or *Be-griffe*, the *eidē* collect, divide, determine, and thus *concipere*, *be-greifen*, grasp what would otherwise forever elude us. We “know” these hypotheses because we laid them down, and are therefore able to justify them (*logon didonai*). For it is only insofar as we can anchor our view in a logos that we are justified in a claim to knowledge. Thus the Forms, as our minds' hypothesizings, are the ultimate a priori conditions of possibility of knowing. The “realm of Forms” simply names the logical medium of coherent experience.

This general picture holds firm for the thinkers I have identified as taking a transcendental view of the Forms: Cusanus, Leibniz, Mendelssohn, Cohen, Natorp, and Husserl, and, with some qualifications, Hegel and Schopenhauer. Importantly, Kant, while clearly a transcendental philosopher, does not give the Forms a transcendental interpretation: he thinks that Plato himself intended the Forms as transcendent substances, rather than the ideal

rational standards of perfection towards which he was groping (i.e., Kant's Ideen). Nietzsche and Heidegger follow Kant in this transcendent-substantial interpretation of Plato's Forms, if in little else. Nietzsche imputes a crude, almost Scholastic realism not only to Plato, but to the entire tradition of Western Platonism—to which this volume's account of German Platonism should decisively give the lie. Heidegger's official position echoes Nietzsche's critique, but his more subtle "esoteric" approach does not again approximate the transcendental reading. Rather, Heidegger attempts to fold Plato into a larger critique of the critical philosophy that classes both the Neo-Kantians and Plato as examples of a forgetfulness of Being, the eliding of ontological difference. I have argued in separate places that each of these criticisms fails on its own terms, but this is not the point here. Rather, as Gonzalez argues, it is especially in the close analysis of the dialogues that we find in Heidegger's lectures the positive appropriation, even reenactment of Platonic philosophizing. This is no longer a matter of substantive doctrine, but rather of the philosophical spirit of dialectic. And this brings us to the second, smaller group of figures examined in this volume, namely those for whom the question of interpretation joins the doctrinal issues at the heart of Platonic studies.

The central figure is Schleiermacher who, as Thomas Szlezák says, "sparked the most far-reaching revolution in Plato-interpretation since Marsilio Ficino". In the first of two chapters on Schleiermacher, André Laks treats the relation between philological form and philosophical content in Schleiermacher's analysis of the dialogues. Laks focuses on Schleiermacher's *Grundlinien* (1803) and the general Introduction to his translation of the dialogues (1804), showing both affinities and differences between the two thinkers. If, as Surber says, Hegel is the first to give Plato his due as a philosopher, Schleiermacher (Hegel's exact contemporary) goes much further, translating most of the dialogues into German. Schleiermacher interprets the Forms as active, though not as transcendental functions. Rather he treats them as transcendent causes, the "Ideas of God" by which He "poetically composes" the world

as a work of art. For Schleiermacher, it follows from this physical postulate that ethics for Plato is one of *Bildung*, the "formation" of the good soul: by "approximat[ing] the Ideal" we should "becom[e] similar to God". Thus, we can see that Schleiermacher attributes to Plato's thought a systematic unity, viz., between physics and ethics. Yet unlike Hegel, who considers dialogue form an inappropriate medium for systematic thinking, Schleiermacher sees it as ideal for allowing the reader to participate in thought's dialectical unfolding and to retrace Plato's progress from a first "seminal intuition of the systematic unity of the sciences". It is this goal, then, that governs Schleiermacher's interpretation of the individual dialogues as well as their correct sequence.

Thomas A. Szlezák's chapter criticizes Schleiermacher's "blunders" in interpreting the critique of writing in the *Phaedrus*, which led him mistakenly to dismiss the esoteric dimension of Plato's thought. In order first to display Schleiermacher's radical originality, Szlezák renders the historical context of German Plato-reception prior to 1804. He then gives a detailed analysis of the *Phaedrus*-critique in order to counter what he sees as the lingering, deleterious effects of Schleiermacher's interpretation of the relation between writing and "orality". In essence, Szlezák tries to show that Plato in the *Phaedrus* argues that the philosopher must not put all of his thinking into written form; indeed, he must take care to reserve its deepest treasures for oral transmission alone. Since Schleiermacher, for his part, holds that the dialogue form serves the pedagogic function of "setting the reader's own thought into motion", he rejects the very notion of Platonic esotericism: what Plato may leave unsaid in a given dialogue simply reflects a pedagogic tactic of not prematurely revealing a truth for which the reader is unprepared, but to which he will be and indeed eventually is led in later dialogues. Against this, Szlezák shows the dialectician doing in other dialogues just what the *Phaedrus* seems to recommend, namely, keeping silent about and withholding his higher knowledge, and coming in person to the aid of his arguments. Thus, it follows for Szlezák that Schleiermacher was also wrong about the purpose of the dialogue: it is precisely

not “to bring the not-yet-knowing reader into knowledge”, knowledge which may ignite only in the living friction of argument.

The Tübingen School names the interpretive tradition begun by Hans Joachim Krämer and Konrad Gaiser in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and to which our contributors, Thomas Szlezák and Vittorio Hösle, both belong. This tradition argues, in nuce, that the dialogues do not contain the kernel of Plato’s teaching, the so-called Prinzipienlehre or Doctrine of Principles, i.e., the One and the Indefinite Dyad, which, on the Tübingen view, was systematically transmitted within the Academy through oral instruction. The Tübingen School is therefore “radically anti-Schleiermacherian”, as Laks points out, since Schleiermacher rejected the esotericism of Tiedemann and Tennemann, and believed the dialogues to contain the whole of Plato’s thought. Hösle, in his chapter, lays out the Tübingen approach and its critics. The Tübingen School’s starting point, according to Hösle, is that certain of Plato’s students at the Academy, notably Aristotle, “attribute to [Plato] certain metaphysical doctrines [not found] in the dialogues”. As Schleiermacher’s approach and chronology failed to gain general support, scholars undertook in earnest the reconstruction of the *agrapha dogmata*, beginning in the nineteenth century with Trendelenburg, and continuing into the twentieth with the work of Robin, Stenzel, Wilpert, and Ross. Nevertheless, according to Hösle, the common assumption was that these teachings remained unwritten because they stem from Plato’s late period, when he simply lacked time or energy to commit them to paper. Both Cherniss and the Tübingeners challenge this assumption: Cherniss because he regards Aristotle as an unreliable witness of others’ views; the Tübingen men because they reject the developmentalist assumption. Hösle helpfully discusses Krämer’s first book *Arete bei Platon und Aristoteles* (1959)—which is out of print and remains untranslated—and then surveys the work of Gaiser, Szlezák, Jens Halfwassen, as well as his, Hösle’s own contributions. He concludes with an account of Vlastos and Sayre’s criticisms and sketches a rebuttal.

The other major stream in twentieth-century German Plato interpretation is the hermeneutic

approach of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002), whose long life brought him into contact with many of the figures in this volume. He wrote his doctoral dissertation under the direction of Natorp at Marburg in 1922, studied under Husserl and Heidegger, and was a friend of Wolfgang Schadewaldt, the teacher of both Krämer and Gaiser. In the concluding chapter of our volume, François Renaud discusses Gadamer’s Plato in the light of Heidegger, as well as his treatment of the *Phaedo* and the paradigm of number. Heidegger’s phenomenological analyses of concrete everydayness set Gadamer’s orientation towards the practical, pragmatic aspects of Platonic dialogue. Yet just as Natorp tried to avoid Cohen’s speculative excesses by exquisite attention to the texts, so too Gadamer made his own way into the dialogues through rigorous training in classical philology under Paul Friedländer. Against Heidegger’s official interpretation, Gadamer comes to contend that “Plato is not a Platonist”: that is, the dialogues are not the site of metaphysical dogmatism, but embody a dynamic praxis rooted in everyday concerns. Thus, as with so many of our thinkers, the opposition of Form and particular does not imply a two-world metaphysics, which Gadamer considers contrary to Plato’s intentions. The Forms are, in effect, transcendental conditions of experience, but not, as Natorp holds, *qua* scientific laws; instead, the Forms are the conditions of dialectic, understood as authentic being-in-the-world. Renaud shows how Gadamer’s “Socratic Platonism” guides his interpretation of the Forms in the *Phaedo* as implicit in everyday language and dialogue themselves, *viz.*, as the starting points, not the endpoints of philosophical inquiry; and in the *Parmenides* as embedded in an ideal systematic nexus, like numbers. Renaud distinguishes Gadamer from the Tübingen School: the written dialogue retains primacy, and the very notion of a “doctrine”, written or otherwise, conflicts with the ineluctable openness of dialogue as a way of being.

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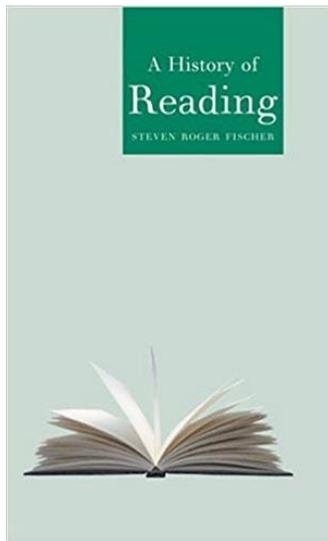
Note on the terms “Idea”, “Idee”, “Form”, and *ἰδέα*: The problem of translating “*ἰδέα*” and “*εἶδος*” into English for the purposes of this volume has vexed

me somewhat. In contemporary anglophone Platoscholarship, the use of the English word, "Idea", has been abandoned in favor of "Form". But virtually all German interpreters of Plato naturally use the German word, "Idee", to translate "ἰδέα"—and it would be absurd to translate "Idee" into English as "Form". So, my general editorial policy in this volume is this: wherever the conceptual content of Plato's so-called Theory of Forms is at issue, the texts use the word, "Form". But in those chapters in which the term "Idee" as a translation of "ἰδέα" is itself at issue, "ἰδέα" shall be translated as "Idea". <>

[A History of Language](#) by Steven Roger Fischer [Reaktion Books, 9781861890801]

It is tempting to take the tremendous rate of contemporary linguistic change for granted. What is required, in fact, is a radical reinterpretation of what language is. Steven Roger Fischer begins his book with an examination of the modes of communication used by dolphins, birds and primates as the first contexts in which the concept of "language" might be applied. As he charts the history of language from the times of Homo erectus, Neanderthal humans and Homo sapiens through to the nineteenth century, when the science of linguistics was developed, Fischer analyses the emergence of language as a science and its development as a written form. He considers the rise of pidgin, creole, jargon and slang, as well as the effects radio and television, propaganda, advertising and the media are having on language today. Looking to the future, he shows how electronic media will continue to reshape and reinvent the ways in which we communicate.

[A History of Writing](#) by Steven Roger Fischer [Reaktion Books, 9781861891679]



From the earliest scratches on stone and bone to the languages of computers and the internet, *A History of Writing* offers a fascinating investigation into the origin and development of writing throughout the world.

Commencing with the first stages of information storage, Fischer focuses on the emergence of complete writing systems in Mesopotamia in the fourth millennium BC. He documents the rise of Phoenician and its effect on the Greek alphabet, generating the many alphabetic scripts of the West. Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean and Japanese writing systems are dealt with in depth, as is writing in pre-Columbian America. Also explored are Western Europe's medieval manuscripts and the history of printing, leading to the innovations in technology and spelling rules of the 19th and 20th centuries.

[A History of Reading](#) by Steven Roger Fischer [Reaktion Books, 9781781940681] reissued

Steven Roger Fischer's fascinating book traces the complete story of reading from the time when symbol first became sign through to the electronic texts of the present day. Describing ancient forms of reading and the various modes that were necessary to read different writing systems and scripts, Fischer turns to Asia and the Americas and discusses the forms and developments of completely divergent dimensions of reading.

With the Middle Ages in Europe and the Middle East, innovative re-inventions of reading emerged – silent and liturgical reading; the custom of lectors; reading's focus in general education – whereupon printing transformed society's entire attitude to reading. Fischer charts the explosion of the book trade in this era, its increased audience and radically changed subject-matter; describes the emergence of broadsheets, newspapers and public readings; and traces the effect of new font designs on general legibility.

Fischer discusses society's dedication to public literacy in the sweeping educational reforms of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and notes the appearance of free libraries, gender differences in reading matter, public advertising and the "forbidden" lists of Church, State and the

unemancipated. Finally, he assesses the future, in which it is likely that read communication will soon exceed oral communication through the use of the personal computer and the internet, and looks at "visual language" and modern theories of how reading is processed in the human brain. Asking how the New Reader can reshape reading's future, he suggests a radical new definition of what reading could be.

Of the three volumes in Steven Roger Fischer's hugely ambitious and sedulously executed trilogy, the first two dealt with language and writing. This one, however, is the most suggestive and open, dedicated not only to the technicalities of his subject but to the everyday experience of communication . . . Fischer lets his historical readers speak for themselves, ceaselessly seduced by textual magic. – The Independent

'Starting from the Bronze Age and ending with modern emails and a possible future of e-books, Steven Fischer's A History of Reading takes in a wonderful diversity of things' – Nature

'It's an exciting story, which the author tells clearly and chronologically' – Daily Telegraph

- Contents
- Preface to the New Edition
- 1 The Immortal Witness
- 2 The Papyrus Tongue
- 3 A World of Reading
- 4 The Parchment Eye
- 5 The Printed Page
- 6 The 'Universal Conscience'
- 7 Reading the Future
- References
- Select Bibliography
- Acknowledgements
- Illustration Acknowledgements
- Index

Excerpt: It is history's latest revolution. A work still in progress, it has already touched every country, city, village, office and home. The cerebral prosthetic's access to news, knowledge and others has suddenly endowed humankind with seeming omnipresence and omniscience. If for centuries black ink on bound paper pages had objectively educated and civilized, this new electronic platform, palm-held or worn, has subjectively connected and yoked, delivering the rush of

belonging. For 'd-reading' – the new digital reading – has enthralled netizens whose powers and actions are currently presenting wondrous and worrying things.

It is a further stage of reading. When nearly six hundred years ago Western Europe first began printing books, a growing body of shared facts fashioned new ways to think and analyse from diverse read sources, at which historic juncture passive compliant reading became active creative reading. Yet in any public space, transport, business or classroom today, one sees heads bent in silent isolation, lost to an electronic screen that has replaced active thought and exchange. Digital addiction is rife. Especially with young people, texting is habitually replacing spoken language. Pre-schoolers and nursery school children try to swipe the pages of their first physical book.

Command of books always meant success. Now digital devices command. There are those who allege that digital literacy will ensure social survivability. But surely more important than what the young are passively accessing is the way we teach them to actively think and learn – acquiring such qualities as creativity, agility, the ability to adapt and change, to recognize opportunity and to understand what one is best suited to do. In this process, constant digital reading, as it is currently constituted, could actually be a personal and social impediment, if not danger.

As papyrus scrolls ceded to parchment codices, and these to printed paper books, now phones, tablets, laptops, desktops, wearables and other electronic conveyances are enticing Homo legens to places unvisited and unimagined.

Reading. Everyone – young and old, past and present – has had to admit its primacy. For an ancient Egyptian official it was a 'boat on water'. For an aspiring Nigerian pupil 4,000 years later it is 'a touch of light in a deep dark well'. For most of us it will forever be the voice of civilization itself.

Today's white-collar worker spends more time reading than eating, drinking, grooming, travelling, socializing or on general entertainment or sport – that is, five to eight hours of each working day. (Only sleep appears to claim as much time.) The

computer and Internet? Texting, Facebook, Twitter and so much more? All belong to the new reading revolution.

Yet reading embraces so much more than work or Web. What music is to the spirit, reading is to the mind. Reading challenges, empowers, bewitches, enriches. We perceive little black marks on white paper or an electronic screen and they move us to tears, open up our lives to new insights and understandings, inspire us, organize our existences and connect us with all creation.

Surely there can be no greater wonder.

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Though reading and writing go hand in hand, reading is actually writing's antithesis – indeed, even activating separate regions of the brain. Writing is a skill, reading a faculty. Writing was originally elaborated and thereafter deliberately adapted; reading has evolved in tandem with humanity's deeper understanding of the written word's latent capabilities. Writing's history has followed series of borrowings and refinements; reading's history has involved successive stages of social maturation. Writing is expression, reading impression. Writing is public, reading personal. Writing is limited, reading open-ended. Writing freezes the moment. Reading is forever. <>

[Aesthetics, Volume I](#) by Dietrich von Hildebrand, translated by Fr. Brian McNeil, edited by John E Crosby [Hildebrand Project, 9781939773043]

Dietrich von Hildebrand understood the centrality of beauty not merely to art but to philosophy, theology, and ethics. In his ambitious and comprehensive *Aesthetics*, now translated into English for the first time, Hildebrand rehabilitates the concept of beauty as an objective rather and purely subjective phenomenon. His systematic account renews the Classical and Christian vision of beauty as a reliable mode of perception that leads humanity toward the true, the good, and ultimately the divine. There is no more important issue in our culture—sacred or secular—than the restoration of beauty. And there is no better place to start this urgent enterprise than Dietrich von Hildebrand's *Aesthetics*.

Dietrich von Hildebrand was born in Florence in 1889, and studied philosophy under Adolf Reinach, Max Scheler, and Edmund Husserl. He was received into the Catholic Church in 1914. He distinguished himself with many publications in moral philosophy, in social philosophy, in the philosophy of the interpersonal, and in aesthetics. He taught in Munich, Vienna, and New York. In the 1930s, he was one of the strongest voices in Europe against Nazism. He died in New Rochelle, New York in 1977.

Hildebrand Project: advances the rich tradition of Christian personalism, especially as developed by Dietrich von Hildebrand and Karol Wojtyła (Pope St. John Paul II), in the service of intellectual and cultural renewal.

Publications, academic programs, and public events introduce the great personalist thinkers and witnesses of the twentieth century. Animated by a heightened sense of the mystery and dignity of the human person, they developed a personalism that sheds new light on freedom and conscience, the religious transcendence of the person, the relationship between individual and community, the love between man and woman, and the life-giving power of beauty. We connect their vision of the human person with the great traditions of Western and Christian thought, and draw from their personalism in addressing the deepest needs and aspirations of our contemporaries. For more information, please visit: [www.hildebrandproject.org](http://www.hildebrandproject.org)

- Contents
- Foreword by Dana Gioia
- Preface by Robert E. Wood
- The Aesthetics of Dietrich von Hildebrand by John F Crosby
- A Note on the Text by Alice von Hildebrand
- Introduction
- CHAPTER ONE: The Objectivity of Beauty
- CHAPTER TWO: The Realm of Aesthetic Values: Metaphysical Beauty and the Beauty of the Visible and the Audible
- CHAPTER THREE: How is Metaphysical Beauty Given in Our Experience?
- CHAPTER FOUR: The Role of the Senses in Apprehending Beauty

CHAPTER FIVE: The Beauty of the Visible and the Audible in Its Relation to Expressed Metaphysical Beauty  
 CHAPTER SIX: The Riddle of Spiritual Beauty in the Realm of the Visible and the Audible  
 CHAPTER SEVEN: The Various Way in Which the Visible and the Audible are Linked to Non-material Contents  
 CHAPTER EIGHT: Levels of Beauty  
 CHAPTER NINE: The Solution to the Riddle: The Mystery of the Immaterial Beauty of Visible and Audible Things  
 CHAPTER TEN: The Spiritual Plentitude of the Beauty of the Second Power  
 CHAPTER ELEVEN: The Poetic  
 CHAPTER TWELVE: The Three Antitheses to Beauty: Ugliness, Triviality, and Boringness  
 CHAPTER THIRTEEN: Thematic and Unthematic Bearers of Beauty  
 CHAPTER FOURTEEN: Beauty in Nature  
 CHAPTER FIFTEEN: Beauty in Human Life  
 CHAPTER SIXTEEN: The Aesthetic Experience  
 CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: The Variety of Aesthetic Values  
 CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: Elegance  
 CHAPTER NINETEEN: The Comical  
 CHAPTER TWENTY: Beauty and Truth  
 CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE: The Bond of Beauty with Morality and with Love  
 Acknowledgements  
 Index

Excerpt: The first thing to be said about Hildebrand's aesthetics is that it is embedded in his value philosophy. The concept of value that he had developed already in his doctoral dissertation and employed throughout his ethics is taken over in the aesthetics. By value Hildebrand means the intrinsic worthiness or excellence or nobility or splendor or dignity of a being. And according to him values are not scattered and random phenomena, but they are gathered into an ordered whole, a cosmos, which he expresses whenever he speaks of "the world of values." Value for him differs from the traditional bonum in that bonum expresses the idea of "perfective of" someone, or "beneficial for" someone, whereas value lacks this relation to a perfected or benefitted person; it expresses a non-relational or absolute worthiness. Whenever Hildebrand discusses value he usually inserts it in the larger whole that he called value-response

(Wertantwort), by which he means a response given to some valuable being in the consciousness that my response is merited by it, or is due to it. Thus when I express a value-responding admiration for someone, I am not primarily trying to benefit or enhance that person but am rather filled with the consciousness that the person is by his or her value worthy of my admiration. Now in the first volume of his aesthetics he speaks of aesthetic values, of their relation to beauty, of their main kinds, of their unity; of their antitheses, of the ways of experiencing them, and of course, of aesthetic value-response.

Hildebrand finds a path from value in general to specifically aesthetic value in the following way. Take moral values, such as generosity, faithfulness, truthfulness; all of these, though not themselves aesthetic values but rather moral values, have a certain radiance or splendor of beauty and thus have aesthetic value. They are not in the first place aesthetic values, but they also have aesthetic value. Hildebrand finds that with all values that are not in the first place aesthetic values there is this radiance of beauty, and thus that all these values also have aesthetic value. For example, we speak of the dignity of human persons; though this is certainly not what is called an aesthetic value, it "gives off" its own beauty and thus also has its own aesthetic value. He gives a name to this aesthetic value that arises everywhere in the world of value, calling it "metaphysical beauty" This metaphysical beauty played a large role in Hildebrand's conversion; what Scheler disclosed to him in the saints was precisely the beauty of their holiness. His conversion was not just based on the "apologetic" arguments on behalf of Christianity, including various historical arguments; it was also, and perhaps above all, based on this sacred beauty. It was the metaphysical beauty of Christian holiness and of the God-man of Christianity that caught and fired Hildebrand's religious imagination.

It is worth noting that metaphysical beauty also plays a role in Hildebrand's magisterial treatise The Nature of Love. He insists at the beginning of that work that love is a value-response, which means that it is awakened by the sight of some personal value in the beloved person. He then develops the idea that this value, though not a

value that is in the first place an aesthetic value, is perceived by the one who loves as being radiant with beauty, and that it is only in this aesthetically potent way that it awakens love. In other words, Hildebrand explores the connection, first studied by Plato, between love and beauty, and the beauty at stake in interpersonal love is what in his aesthetics he calls metaphysical beauty.

Now from metaphysical beauty he distinguishes all those values that are in the first-place aesthetic values; these arise without the mediation of any other kind of value. For example, a well-formed human face may have a loveliness that is not the radiance of; say, the worthy moral character of the person, or of the dignity that the person has as person, but a loveliness that appears immediately in and on the face; here we have what we commonly call an aesthetic value. A lovely melody gives us another example of an aesthetic value that is nothing but an aesthetic value. Hildebrand tries to capture these aesthetic values with the name "the beauty of visible and audible form." Thus he begins his work in aesthetics by dividing the realm of beauty into metaphysical beauty and the beauty of the visible and the audible.

Hildebrand also engages in debate the claims of aesthetic subjectivism, giving particular attention to the subjectivism of Hume, Santayana, and W. D. Ross. Against all these subjectivisms he argues forcefully for the objectivity of aesthetic value. By objectivity he of course means, for a start, that aesthetic value is given to us not in our experiencing (as if it were a part of our conscious experiencing, or *Erleben*) but is given over against us, as an intentional object, in or on some being. But he also means more than this; he also means that beings having aesthetic value really do have it, so that they show themselves for what they really are when we experience them as beautiful, which means that people who fail to experience them as beautiful also fail to experience what is really there. Thus his philosophical realism shows itself in his account of the ontological status of aesthetic values. He shows himself quite mindful of the special difficulties that one encounters in arguing for such objectivity precisely in the case of aesthetic values. For instance, he is fully aware that the visible and audible bearers of many aesthetic

values are things of appearance, existing only in their being seen or being heard by human subjects. He argues that the appearance-character of the bearer does not interfere with the full objectivity of the aesthetic value that is based on the appearances. But Hildebrand does not give attention to the issues of cultural and historical relativity that are often raised by way of challenging the objectivity of all value, including aesthetic value (Scheler was more sensitive to these issues than was Hildebrand).

We now come to what Hildebrand regarded, and rightly regarded, as his greatest single contribution to aesthetics. It is situated within his discussion of the beauty of the visible and audible. Take the beauty of the streaked colors appearing in a clear sky at dawn; Hildebrand is struck by the depth and sublimity that can be found in this beauty and also struck by the fact that the beauty does not seem to be proper to, or proportioned to, the light and colors and spatial expanse from which it arises. He means that this sublime beauty surpasses by far the "aesthetic capacity" of light and color and spatial expanse. He even suggests that this sublime beauty is somehow akin to the aesthetic dimension of the greatest moral value. But in the case of moral value we at least understand where it comes from; we understand the value, and the beauty of the value, of a person exercising his freedom and committing himself to the good. But with the comparably sublime beauty appearing in the sky at dawn we cannot achieve the same kind of understanding, for the visible appearance qualities seem to be ontologically too modest to give rise to such beauty. Hildebrand recognizes that visible and audible appearance qualities have some modest aesthetic value that is proper to them; he speaks here of *Sinnenschönheit*, or sense beauty, examples of which would be the beauty of a circle, or the rich mellow sound of a well-tuned cello. But this is for him a more primitive beauty, or what he calls a "beauty of the first power," which he contrasts with a "beauty raised to the second power," which is the beauty that mysteriously exceeds the aesthetic capacity of the visible and audible elements out of which it arises. The first and more primitive kind of beauty is the natural effluence of these elements, the second rests on them as on a pedestal. It is, of

course, not only in nature but also in art that this mysterious beauty is found. Thus a haunting melody of Schubert, which moves us deeply and makes us shudder within ourselves, seems not to grow out of its musical elements but, as it were, to descend on them from above.

Hildebrand considers and rejects as un-phenomenological two ways of dealing with this phenomenon. There is first of all the view that all beauty of the visible and audible can only be a thing of sense beauty and that the feeling we have in some cases of an "excess" of beauty must be an illusion. He objects that one is simply not letting this excess come to evidence, that one is suppressing it because one feels that it is so inexplicable that it ought not exist. But Hildebrand also rejects the idea that this excess of beauty is to be explained by associating it with some great reality other than the audible and visible bearer of it. For example, some say that the mysterious beauty of a mountain as seen in a certain ..fight arises only for a viewer who is reminded by the mountain of the immensity of God; one thinks that the sublime beauty of the mountain is now intelligible as being grounded not just in a physical reality but also in a divine reality. Hildebrand objects that there is no phenomenological basis for such a supposition; a viewer of the mountain can fully experience its sublime beauty without any such theological thought in the back of his mind. Hildebrand ends by marveling at the "sacramental" relation that exists between certain visible and audible things, on the one hand, and the sublime, unearthly beauty that is attached to them and exceeds them, on the other. The result he achieves displays a kind of paradox: by staying very close to the experience of this beauty, he discerns in it a mysterious "signal of transcendence," which does not, as one might at first think, come from some un-phenomenological construction, but which on the contrary is blocked by un-phenomenological constructions and is brought to evidence by letting the beauty show itself for what it is.

The account so far given of Hildebrand's aesthetics has neglected one remarkable aspect of it: the concreteness of the aesthetic phenomena analyzed by him. I have so far presented some fundamental divisions that he makes within the realm of beauty,

and one particularly significant structure that he tries to understand, but from this presentation of fundamentals the reader would never know that he deals throughout his aesthetics with very concrete aesthetic phenomena such as the poetical, the festive, the elegant, the trivial, the prosaic, the aesthetically boring, and the comical; nor would the reader suspect that he exhibits great phenomenological sensitivity in expressing the aesthetic values that belong to the different times of day, such as morning, evening, and nighttime. Thus Hildebrand's work in aesthetics conveys a much stronger "taste" of the aesthetic world than we find in some of the works in aesthetics by Roman Ingarden, who, in *The Literary Work of-Art*, for example, stays for the most part at the level of rather abstract logical theory. Hildebrand puts into practice the phenomenological principle that philosophical insight is not restricted to the most general first principles but extends even to more particular structures, such as the comical or the festive.

We see more of this concreteness of Hildebrand in the second volume of his aesthetics, in which he discusses five different realms of art: architecture, sculpture, painting, literature, and music. In connection with these he tries to characterize particularly significant individual works of art, such as Beethoven's *Fidelio* or Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, an undertaking that is akin to the project of his earlier work *Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert*, in which he tries to do a phenomenology of the spirit and genius of the music of each of these composers. Of course he knows that he cannot achieve with respect to individual composers the same kind of essential insight which he as phenomenologist tries to achieve throughout the first volume of his aesthetics, but everyone who reads Hildebrand on the composers or on individual. works of art will recognize his studies as eminent phenomenological achievements.

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Give me a lover and he feels what I am saying:  
give me one who yearns, give me one who  
hungers ...give me one like this, and he knows what  
I am saying. But if I speak to one who is cold., he  
does not know what I am saying.

So many things can be approached only with great reverence, for it is only then that they disclose themselves to us as they truly are. One of these is beauty. It is of course true that the philosophical analysis of beauty demands a genuine sobriety and the thirst for truth that is required by philosophical eros; but this analysis also requires us to approach beauty with reverence, indeed with love. Beauty kindles love, and only the one who remains captivated by it, only the one who is intoxicated by it, only the one who remains a lover while he is investigating its essence, can hope to penetrate its essence.

Plato, Saints Augustine, Anselm, and Bonaventure have repeatedly insisted on the importance of our inner disposition with regard to something, if we wish to get to know it truly. In chapter 1 of his *Proslogion* Saint Anselm writes that without prayer there is no access to a philosophical knowledge of God. We need not approach beauty on our knees, but we must be reverent and receptive, listening in all humility.

The subject of this book is purely philosophical. We ask the ancient Platonic question: *ti esti*, "What is it?", with reference to the essence of beauty; to the basic forms of beauty, and to the whole realm of the beautiful.

This book is neither a history of aesthetics nor a debate with everything that others have said in the past about the sphere of the beautiful. My aim is simply to work out the essence of beauty and of aesthetic values, and I shall refer to earlier insights into the aesthetic sphere and to erroneous theses about it only when we are helped, by the critical assessment of them, to work out the truth of the matter.

Some theses, such as any kind of relativism, get the essence of beauty wrong from the beginning, and interpret beauty as a merely subjective feeling. We need not discuss all of these in detail, but we must thoroughly refute what is common to them all, and we must do this with reference to one or the other author. For it is impossible to separate the formulation of truth from the refutation of error.

Our primary aim is to gain knowledge of genuine essential relations. In the realm of the beautiful, in

the aesthetic sphere, there are many matters that are accessible only to philosophical insight and to the philosophical method of investigation, even though they do not possess the character of absolute necessity. This is the necessity found in typical essential laws, such as  $2 + 2 = 4$ ; color presupposes extension; moral values cannot belong to impersonal beings; responsibility presupposes freedom. Josef Seifert has written of this distinction between different kinds of essential laws in the introduction to his book. *Leib und Seele*.

In this introduction I should like to point out the existential urgency and relevance of an investigation of the true essence of beauty. Beauty is of fundamental importance for the human person, but this is not the primary perspective from which we will look at beauty. Above all, beauty is a reflection of God, a reflection of His own infinite beauty, a genuine value, something that is important-in-itself, something that praises God. This means that the question of the contribution that beauty makes to human life is secondary. Nevertheless, this question is highly significant, since it is extremely important to understand the central objective good that the existence of beautiful things is for the human person. And from the perspective of the ecology of the spirit, it is necessary for us to grasp that the elimination of poetry from life, the destruction of the beauty of nature and especially of the beauty of architecture, terribly impoverishes human existence, and indeed damages and undermines it. We proceed now to point to the fundamental significance of beauty for the human person for his happiness, his character, his moral growth, and his spiritual development.

Beauty as a central source of human happiness

The role of beauty for human happiness is not restricted to those moments in which one is consciously looking at beautiful things. Beauty is active even at those times when one's attention is directed to completely different things. The beauty of the environment in which one lives—one's house, even if it is very simple, like the farmhouses in Tuscany; the view from one's house, both near and far; the architectural beauty of the neighboring houses; the beauty of the sun that shines into the house, and of the shadow cast by a tree—all this

nourishes the soul even of the simplest man or woman, entering into their pores even when they are not concentrating on it. And this applies to every situation in life. In the past when a person worked with his hands, bought and sold in the market, and celebrated feasts, he was surrounded by the poetry of these existential situations. This poetry nourished him. He no doubt lacked the understanding of poetry that a poet has when he observes these situations and consciously enjoys them. The simple person did not look at these situations but took them for granted, living in them unselfconsciously. Their poetry nourished his spirit, irrespective of how far he consciously grasped it.

One should not make the mistake of assuming that because many People today apparently lack any sensitivity to beauty, beauty is not a fundamental source of happiness, even for the simplest people. One should not forget the role that beauty plays for the happiness of people — of all people. The atrophy of this sensitivity is a terrible loss, and this ought not to be interpreted as a progress that modern man has made in the industrialized world. We should instead seek to understand the consequences for man of the withdrawal of this spiritual nourishment. The fact that one does not know the causes of a sickness is no proof that one is not sick.

People have grown accustomed to the elimination of the poetry of the world, to the mechanization of life, to the expulsion of beauty; but this does not make any less real the influence on human happiness of this destruction of the charm of an organic, truly human life. People have grown accustomed today to the din to which they are exposed on the street and at home by the many machines that they use; but this does not mean that our nerves escape unscathed from all this cacophony.

It is easy to see the great decrease in human happiness today,, and the great increase in the number of psychopaths, suicides, crimes, disorders, revolutions, protests, etc. Are these not unambiguous symptoms of unhappiness, of an unfulfilled hunger for happiness? Why, for example, are the people in Spain so much happier than the people in the United States, although they are much poorer and

their life is much less comfortable? They sing while they work, they adorn their simple houses with flowers, and their faces have a happy expression, especially in Andalusia. They are joyful as they gather on the street in the evening, and one cannot fail to see their delight in life and their vitality. As yet there has been little industrialization in the country in which they live. The organic rhythm of life and the poetry of life still survive there to some extent, and very little of the beauty has been destroyed.

There can be no doubt that beauty is one of the great sources of joy in human life. Naturally, like all the central sources of joy, it has many gradations, in accordance with the receptivity of the individual.

No one with eyes to see will deny that the love between husband and wife is one of the greatest sources of happiness in human life. There can be no doubt that a great truth finds expression in the words of Schiller in the Ode to Joy ("Whoever calls even only one soul his own, let him join in the exultation! But let anyone who never achieved this, slink away weeping from our brotherhood!") and of Goethe in Egmont ("Only the soul that loves is happy"). Naturally, however, the potential for love varies tremendously from one individual to another. One man can love more deeply, more strongly; and more faithfully than another. He can feel more deeply than another the sweet bliss of a love that is requited, the unheard of gift of gazing into the eyes of a beloved person. But this does not prevent love from being one of the deepest sources of joy for all hunch persons. This is true not only of the love between husband and wife, hut of love as such, be it the love of friends, of parents for their children or of children for their parents, or the other forms of love. And it applies in an incomparably superior manner to the love for God, the love for Christ.

In the same way, the degree and depth of the happiness caused by beauty has many gradations in different persons. But this does riot keep beauty from being a great source of happiness for anyone who is not completely obtuse. Even children are delighted by the beauty of nature, by the poetry

of the various seasons of the year, by sunrise and sunset.

### The significance of beauty for the development of personality

Beauty is not only a central source of joy. It also possesses a great significance for the development of personality, especially in a moral sense. Plato writes: "At the sight of beauty the soul grows wings." Genuine beauty liberates us in many ways from the force of gravity, drawing us out of the dull captivity of daily life. At the sight of the truly beautiful we are freed from the tension that urges us on toward some immediate practical goal. We become contemplative, and this is immensely valuable. We expand, and even our soul itself becomes more beautiful when beauty comes to meet us, takes hold of us, and fires us with enthusiasm. It lifts us up above all that is base and common. It opens our eyes to the baseness, impurity, and wickedness of many things. Ernest Hello makes a very profound point when he says: "The mediocre person has only one passion, namely hatred of the beautiful." Beauty is the archenemy of mediocrity:

The appreciation of beauty, the interest in beauty, the longing for beauty, the need of beauty—all this has often been seen as a danger for the full understanding of moral values and their ultimate seriousness, or else as something effeminate, something only for aesthetes.

This is to confuse true sensitivity for beauty, true love for all bearers of genuine beauty, with aestheticism, which is a perversion with dangerous effects on the moral quality of the personality. Aestheticism undermines the personality and robs it of its ultimate seriousness. The aesthete does not in any way do justice to the true mystery of beauty and to the message from God that beauty contains. He does not understand that beauty is a value, and so he treats beautiful things as if they were only subjectively gratifying. Kierkegaard calls the unserious playfulness of the aesthete, his coldness and self-centeredness, the "aesthetic attitude," which he contrasts with the ethical sphere and a fortiori with the religious sphere.<sup>1</sup> This attitude has nothing in common with receptivity to beauty, with being affected by beauty; or with the value-

response to beautiful things. Both Kant and Schopenhauer, each in his own way, saw the nobility that lies in the contemplation of the beautiful and in the love of beautiful things. And Herbart went so far as to regard ethics as a subdivision of aesthetics.

Without discussing this thesis in detail here, let me affirm unambiguously that beauty does in fact have an ennobling effect. Contact with an environment permeated by beauty not only offers real protection against impurity, baseness, every kind of letting oneself go, brutality, and untruthfulness; it has also the positive effect of raising us up in a moral sense. It does not draw us into a self-centered pleasure where our only wish is to indulge ourselves. On the contrary, it opens our hearts, inviting us to transcendence and leading us in *conspetu Dei* ("before the face of God"), before the face of God. Naturally, this last point applies above all to the high, exalted beauty which Kant calls the "sublime" [*das Erhabene*] and which he contrasts with the "beautiful." But even in little things that are charming and graceful, even in the more modest beautiful things, one can find a trace of the pure and the noble. This may perhaps not lead us in *conspetu Dei*, but it does fill us with gratitude to God. It frees us from captivity in our egoistic interests and undoes the fetters of our hearts, releasing us (even if only for a short time) from the wild passions that convulse them.

### The distinction between beauty and luxury

There also exists a pseudo-democratic antipathy against beauty, an attitude full of resentment: beauty is regarded as luxury for the elite in society, as an antisocial indulgence that ignores urgent social problems. Luxury, we are told, is morally negative; we must fight against it and abolish it.

A first point: beauty in general, beauty as such, is confused here with refined culture. Obviously, it is ignorant nonsense to regard the beauty of the blue sky in the sunshine, of the mountains, of the sea, of the springtime, summer, fall, and winter, of morning, noon, and evening, or the beauty of architectonic forms (even when these are very simple) as a luxury for the social elite.

Let us think, by contrast, of a really cultivated atmosphere, of the beauty of a noble house with high-quality furniture curtains, and carpets.

This is not in the least "luxurious." It is instead a kind of beauty that presupposes a certain level of culture, a special artistic gift that enables one to create the beauty, and a refined taste in order to appreciate it and enjoy it to the full. The term "elite" may in some sense be appropriate here, but this kind of beauty is no luxury. It therefore retains both its value and its *raison d'être*.

Above all, however, we must explain the true meaning of "luxury."

This term is used with three distinct meanings, each of which denotes something devoid of value, unnecessary, superfluous.

1) The first meaning of the word derives from an incorrect use of the term. Anything that is not useful (in the narrowest sense of this word) is considered superfluous. This is due to an ambiguity in the word "superfluous." On the one hand, it means that from a practical, utilitarian perspective something is not required. In this case, the word does not imply that something is valueless, unserious, or dilettantish. The opposite is true: culture as a whole (in contrast to civilization) is "superfluous" in this sense, as is beauty. Beauty is a pure gift, a superfluity (literally, an "overflowing") in the highest sense of the word. Beauty may well be called unnecessary, if one equates "necessary," "serious," and "entitled to exist" with "indispensable in order to achieve a practical goal." Something that is "superabundant" in this sense clearly possesses a high value and is not in any sense a luxury. It is not at all acceptable to apply the term "luxury" to everything that is superfluous in the sense of superabundant; it reveals a blindness to values, a purely utilitarian attitude, a radical philistinism. To call such things luxury is, as I said, to extend the concept to embrace the totality of culture, the world of beauty, and even moral values, that is, things that are much more important, more necessary, and more serious than all those things that are merely useful. This is a typical instance of an unjustified term which is essentially flawed, indeed based on a contradiction: it takes something that is profoundly

meaningful and absolutely necessary, and calls it superfluous and unnecessary.

2) Where, however, the term "luxury" is applied to things that serve only an exaggerated comfort,<sup>9</sup> things that are agreeable but have no inherent value whatever and need not be used from the perspective of usefulness, we are justified in calling them superfluous and in speaking of luxury. Many "beauty products," chairs, carpets, etc. are neither beautiful nor necessary for our daily lives. In other words, they have no inherent aesthetic value and they are superfluous from the practical perspective of achieving goals, that is to say, they are a sheer luxury, especially when they are also expensive. (The concept of luxury includes the idea that something is expensive.)

3) The term "luxury" has a third meaning, this one referring to quantity. Like the second meaning, this third one refers to something real. This sense of luxury does not assume that the object is not a bearer of value; superfluity is present not due to worthlessness, but to the fact that something is present in a quantity wholly disproportionate to its actual use. If someone has fifty neckties instead of ten, this is clearly a luxury; the same is true of one who has a hundred pairs of shoes or two hundred different dresses, irrespective of how aesthetically valuable they all may be. This is luxury, firstly, because someone possesses much more of such things than he can use, no matter how elegant he might wish to appear.

A superfluity of this kind is literally meaningless. Secondly, this superfluity is luxury because it is very expensive and entails an irresponsible relationship to money. There is something disgusting about it and extremely antisocial. To squander money in such a meaningless manner is immoral. This type of luxury does, however, presuppose that these things are in fact destined to be used. The situation is completely different where someone owns a hundred valuable paintings; it would be meaningless to speak here of luxury. Only those who are well-off can afford aesthetically noble, cultivated furnishings, since these cost a great deal of money. But this is no luxury, since such furnishings have a high value of their own.

Their legitimacy is therefore unquestionable, even if only a small number of persons can enjoy them.

We are interested primarily' in the difference between such special beauty, which we may say is for the social elite (without thereby disputing its legitimacy or classifying it as luxury), and beauty in general, which .is accessible to all and is a highly significant objective good for tile person.

### Aesthetic experience as "disinterested" and anti-pragmatic

Beauty has a special significance for the spiritual development of the person. In the act of looking at the beautiful—I have in mind here the conscious concentration on something that is beautiful— there lies a special form of the act of self-transcendence, a certain contemplative objectivity. I have frequently pointed to the gesture of transcendence that is contained in every value-response. Here I want to point to one special dimension of this transcendence which belongs specifically to the value-response to the beautiful. Kant aims at this in speaking about the "disinterestedness" [Uninteressiertheit] of aesthetic experience. I want to refer here to the thing that Kant saw and that he probably intended to describe, although he did not in fact give an unambiguous explanation of the term "disinterestedness," and indeed failed to distinguish it from a false interpretation. More on this subject in chapter 16.

The objectivity that I envisage lies in the fact that our own person is not always included in a special way in the experience, as in the case of moral value-response. This inclusion applies especially to all morally obligatory actions, in which we reflect consciously not only on the value of the good that we are dealing with, but also on its moral significance, that is, on the rightness of my moral conduct. This is not true of the response to beauty. Another pointer to the existence of a special dimension of self-transcendence is the fact that all value-responses to the beautiful are of a purely contemplative nature, whereas in moral value-response the decisive role is mostly played by the will (and in many cases, by action).

Every genuine value-response is disinterested in the sense that the person does not seek his own

advantage, but gives himself over to the importance that the good possesses in itself. In one sense this transcendence attains its high point in the value-response to morally relevant goods. I have described in detail the various dimensions of transcendence in my book *The Nature of Love*, especially chapter 4.

The beautiful can attract us and make us happy, but its importance is inherently and specifically anti-pragmatic. It penetrates very little into the realm of our own .interests, whether into the practical conduct of our lives, our relationships and conflicts with other people, or the way we earn our daily bread. In this way beauty is a typical representative of the valuable, that is, of that which all genuine values possess, of that which characterizes them as values.

This, however, shows us the seriousness and importance of beauty, and it is for this reason that aesthetics, the exact philosophical analysis of the realm of beauty, is an important part of philosophy. And as we have seen, it takes on a particular relevance today.

In this book, I shall attempt to present an aesthetics that keeps its distance to all constructions, that does justice to the essence of beauty and of all aesthetic values, and seeks to penetrate their essence, without taking for granted unexamined theories.

As I have already mentioned, this book is not a debate with already existing theories about beauty, but an analysis of the essence of the world of the beautiful. I should like to repeat Aristotle's words in the *De Anima* (412a), which I have quoted in my *Ethics*: "Let us now make a completely new beginning and attempt to give an exact answer to the question: 'What is the soul?'" We propose to apply this to beauty. <>

[Aesthetics, Volume II](#) by Dietrich von Hildebrand, translated by John E Crosby, John Henry Crosby, and Fr. Brian McNeil, edited by John E Crosby and John Henry Crosby [Hildebrand Project, 9781939773104]

"Hildebrand's thinking deserves the greatest attention from philosophers today...his fine observations will surely stimulate a discussion of

which we are all greatly in need." — Sir Roger Scruton

"Dietrich von Hildebrand's engaging studies of different art forms is a marvelous illustration of the way phenomenology is uniquely accessible to a wider readership. Here is philosophy for the sake of the world." — James K. A. Smith

"How does the beautiful evangelize? Following Dietrich von Hildebrand, we should say that the truly beautiful is an objective value, to be distinguished from what is merely subjectively satisfying. This means that the beautiful does not merely entertain; rather, it invades, chooses, and changes the one to whom it deigns to appear. It is not absorbed into subjectivity; it rearranges and redirects subjectivity, sending it on a trajectory toward the open sea of the beautiful itself." — Bishop Robert Barron

"I am convinced that the section on music echoes not just my own experience but that of many performers striving to do justice to the works they bring to life. Whoever is looking for an aesthetic vision of the whole will find *Aesthetics II* deeply insightful, challenging, and encouraging." — Manfred Honeck

Written in the early 1970s during the last years of his life, as if harvesting a lifetime of reflection, Dietrich von Hildebrand's *Aesthetics* is a uniquely encompassing work. The first volume develops an original theory of the beautiful, and the second applies that theory with tremendous breadth and attention to the various types of artwork and to many of the world's most beloved works of art.

It is a testament to the work's broad significance that two of the most respected voices in contemporary aesthetics have joined together to offer forewords to each volume: Dana Gioia to Volume I, and Sir Roger Scruton to Volume II.

Sir Roger Scruton writes on Volume II: "In this second volume of his treatise on the subject Hildebrand assembles the results of a lifetime's thought about the arts, and expresses his devotion to beauty in terms that the reader will find immediately engaging."

He continues: "Most philosophers of aesthetics content themselves with a few examples from the realm of art, and make no attempt to explore the distinct disciplines or to catalogue all the parts that contribute to the overall aesthetic effect. One purpose of this second volume, however, is to show the completeness of the artistic enterprise, and the way in which it penetrates human life in its entirety, so that the idea of beauty enters our practical activity at every point."

Dietrich von Hildebrand's *Aesthetics* occupies a place in the great philosophical aesthetic tradition of Plato, Kant, and Hegel, while incorporating the fresh and fundamental insights of phenomenology. With this publication of the first English translation, Dietrich von Hildebrand becomes a contemporary spokesman and defender of the importance of beauty and aesthetic values at a time when many think that beauty is relative and art unnecessary.

#### Contents

- Foreword by Sir Roger Scruton
- Note on the Text of the Current Edition
- Preliminary Note to the German Edition
- Introduction
- CHARACTERISTICS COMMON TO ALL THE ARTS
- VARIOUS ATTITUDES TOWARD ART
- The Ontological Reality of Works of Art
- The Work of Art Is Not a Projection of the Artist
- Wrong Attitudes to Art
- The Combinations between the Different Arts
- The Claim Made by a Work of Art to Greatness and Depth
- ARCHITECTURE
- Architecture in General
- Architecture as an Expression of History
- Types of Buildings
- How Architecture Combines with Sculpture, Mosaics, and Frescos
- Interior Architecture
- The Beauty of a City as a Whole
- Architecture and Nature
- The Architectural Forming of Nature
- Applied Art [Das Kunstgewerbe]
- Representation in the Imitative Arts
- SCULPTURE
- The Artistic Importance of That Which Is Represented in Sculpture I

The Various Types of Sculpture  
Factors Determining the Artistic Value of a Sculpture

Comedy and Grotesqueness

PAINTING

Representation [Darstellung] in Painting

Subject Matter [Stoff] and Form

The Artistic Means Employed in Painting

Drawing, Fresco, Mosaic, Illustration

LITERATURE

The Form of Existence of the Literary Work of Art

The Medium of Language

The Contact with the Object in Literature

Sound [Laut], Tone [Klang], and Rhythm

The Expressive Qualities of Words and

Figures of Speech

The Theme That Is Proper to Literature

The Compositional Means Used by

Literature

Composition and Storyline

The Artistic Transposition of Evil, Repulsive,

Tragic, and Comic Figures

Excerpt: The first volume of this *Aesthetics* studies the being of beauty, especially in nature and in the life of the human person. The object of this second volume is the essence of the work of art, the character of each of the various genres of art—architecture, sculpture, painting, literature, music—and specifically artistic beauty.

We begin with a number of topics that apply to every artistic genre. First of all, we study the ontological nature of the work of art. Next we refute the theory that the work of art is the objectification of the personality of the artist. We then point out incorrect attitudes to art, and finally proceed to discuss which genres of art collaborate with which other ones—in other words, which genres can unite to form a new artistic whole.

Finally, we will offer a detailed analysis of each individual artistic genre, which will also bring to a conclusion some of our general investigations.

Sir Roger Scruton: *Aesthetics* as a philosophical discipline came into being with the Enlightenment, and acquired its dignity and standing with Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. In Kant's taut and difficult work there is little mention of art, and no attempt to give the broader cultural context within which aesthetic judgment emerges. That context was the

theme of Hegel's posthumous *Lectures on Aesthetics*, and those lectures were perhaps the first attempt by a great philosopher to see the arts as indispensable expressions of the human spirit, providing knowledge and insight that cannot be obtained from scientific experiment or intellectual argument. Dietrich von Hildebrand was far from being a Hegelian. But, like Hegel, he saw aesthetics as incomplete without a full exploration of the arts, and an attempt to say what each of them severally supplies to our understanding of the human condition. In this second volume of his treatise on the subject Hildebrand assembles the results of a lifetime's thought about the arts, and expresses his devotion to beauty in terms that the reader will find immediately engaging.

As the son of a famous sculptor Hildebrand naturally attached great prestige to artistic creativity, and inherited the idea—made central to aesthetics by Kant and Schopenhauer—that a work of art should be the product of 'genius,' the unpredictable outcome of a faculty that has no rules for its employment. But he was not taken in by the fashionable idea that aesthetic value must always be a shock value, and that originality trumps discipline in every contest between them. He was a romantic, but also one with a classical sense of the place of art in the community. His wide taste did not extend to the extremes of expressionism and Dadaism that were fashionable in pre-war Germany. He was a disciple of Goethe and Schiller in literature and his taste in music was for the established classical repertoire. Indeed he was a persuasive representative of the culture of bourgeois Germany, in which the arts in general, and music in particular, formed the central object of leisure and reflection in every household.

In the first volume of his *Aesthetics* Hildebrand argues for the distinct place of beauty in the life of rational beings, and distinguishes two kinds of beauty: beauty of the first power and beauty of the second power. The first power belongs to those objects that, through their intrinsic form and harmony, attract an unreflective sensory delight: flowers, landscapes, the symmetries and harmonies of animals and plants. The second power is exhibited when a spiritual idea is expressed in artistic form. In this case our delight is not merely

sensory, but involves an apprehension of deeper truths, and a sense of the correspondences that unite the parts and moments of our world. Often, when we encounter beauty of the second power, we are struck by the truth of the idea expressed by it, and in such cases beauty and truth seem to blend indistinguishably, as they do in the plays of Shakespeare or the Lieder of Schubert.

In applying those ideas to the study of art Hildebrand pursues a course that is uniquely his. Most philosophers of aesthetics content themselves with a few examples from the realm of art, and make no attempt to explore the distinct disciplines or to catalogue all the parts that contribute to the overall aesthetic effect. One purpose of this second volume, however, is to show the completeness of the artistic enterprise, and the way in which it penetrates human life in its entirety, so that the idea of beauty enters our practical activity at every point. We are seeking harmony and order in everything we do, and even if the sublime effects of the most spiritual works of art are beyond our everyday competence, we will always be motivated in our everyday activities by a fundamental need for harmony and an aversion to ugliness.

This is brought out very clearly by the practice of architecture, and the long section on architecture that opens this second volume contains some of Hildebrand's most important contributions to aesthetics. Few philosophers have written about architecture as a distinct realm of philosophical enquiry, though Hegel devoted a section of his lectures to it, as mankind's first shot at giving 'sensory embodiment to the Idea.' Unlike Hegel, whose description of architecture concerns the monumental idiom of temples, Hildebrand recognizes the inescapable nature of the art of building, which is exhibited in all our attempts to settle. Buildings are our fundamental way of becoming part of the objective world, and they surround us in everything that we do.

Architecture, Hildebrand argues, does not have only one theme. It has the theme of beauty, and the theme of use, and the synthesis of the artistic and the practical dictates the quite special role that architecture plays in the practice of aesthetic

judgment. Although in one sense building is the art of creating and molding space, this space is not the space explored by the natural scientist or the philosopher, but space as we experience it, space that encompasses us and which offers us vistas to every side. Space conceived in that way is both an object of experience and a subject of shaping and molding. We understand architecture not merely as a structure that encloses us, but also as a way of shaping, decorating and opening all the spaces where we conduct our lives. Unusually for a Philosopher, therefore, Hildebrand breaks the art of building down into its many components, devoting separate sections to temples, staircases, towers, fountains and bridges. He writes in a penetrating way of streets and squares, acknowledging that streets have 'a "face" of their own that is distinct from the houses that enclose them.' He makes clear, what so few architectural critics acknowledge, that buildings are indefinitely sensitive to their context, and that even the most beautiful cathedral will not remain undamaged if the streets above which it soars are mutilated or developed at random. He notes that street facades in Tuscany have been controlled by legislation since the Middle Ages, and that the modern habit of inserting new additions to a street without regard for the style or materials that surround them is a violation of the most basic aesthetic norms.

The whole section on architecture proceeds in that way, with common sense observations that are also part of an original and comprehensive view of what architecture means to us, and how its twofold nature provides an opening to spiritual significance of an objective kind. As Hildebrand points out, we need to acknowledge that the ordinary practical reasoning of the builder makes room for the idea of beauty, without requiring that the builder have 'genius' or see himself as engaging in the highest creative act. Getting things right is here far more important than originality, which is often merely getting things wrong. At the same time Hildebrand is hostile to the mere imitation of traditional styles and, like so many of his contemporaries, in revolt against the meaningless encrustations of the late Rococo style.

In writing about painting Hildebrand shows the same familiarity with the topic as when writing of

architecture. In both cases it is Italy that has seized his imagination, and his description of the works of the Italian masters—Titian and Giorgione in particular—shows how deeply he was affected by them. As he recognizes, the heart of painting is representation, and the represented image can be produced in many other ways than with a paintbrush. He anticipates later philosophers in making radical distinctions between the painted image and the photograph, and his description of photography, what it can do and what it cannot do, is a paradigm of philosophical insight. So too is his description of landscape painting and portraiture, in which the beauty of the thing depicted is not carried over automatically into the beauty of the depiction, but transposed into another idiom so as to acquire another meaning. His account of this 'transposition' is fascinating and casts considerable light on the thought once expressed by Wittgenstein, that it is no longer possible, in the age of photography, to obtain a real portrait of your friend. Hildebrand was writing before the emergence of the 'selfie'. But he anticipated everything that one might now want to say about this mass assault on the art of portraiture.

The concept of transposition enables Hildebrand to address one of the most important questions of modern aesthetics, which is the question of evil and its aesthetic representation. Evil abounds in our world, in actions, characters, sentiments and plans. Yet evil, transposed into art, can be an integral part of beauty, as the evil of Mephistopheles is integral to the beauty of Faust Part I, or the degenerate sentiments of the poet are integral to the beauty of Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal*. Do we say that beauty redeems evil, so that it ceases to be evil? Or do we say that it reconciles us to evil, by showing it to be part of a greater good? This question is ever more serious for people today, given the quantity of art that depends for its effect on shock, terror or the fascination with nastiness. It seems that 'transposition,' as Hildebrand understands it, can enable us both to understand evil for what it is—a denial of our humanity—and also to recognize in evil the proof of our freedom and the avenue to a purer way of being. In this the love of beauty prefigures our salvation, and enables us to enter the darkest corners of our world

shielded from their corrupting vapors. All this aspect of Hildebrand's thinking deserves the greatest attention from philosophers today, and even if he has no final answer to the question of evil and its representation in art, his fine observations will surely stimulate a discussion of which we are all greatly in need.

Like architecture, music invites special philosophical treatment and Hildebrand does not disappoint us. He argues that musical notes are not mere sounds, that they have dimensions—such as tone, height, penetration—which no mere sound can exhibit, and are combined in a way that resembles the grammar of a language. From the finite repertoire of 7 (or, with the accidentals, 12) notes composers in our tradition have produced works of surpassing sublimity, and Hildebrand sets out to examine some of their achievements, and the role of harmony, melody and rhythm in organizing the musical surface. In this long and detailed section nothing is more in evidence than the acuteness of Hildebrand's musical perception, and the authority of his aesthetic judgment. Even if he does not always unravel the philosophical difficulties presented by music his descriptions of its effect—notably in the Wagner operas—are wonderfully perceptive and inspiring.

Many philosophers will dislike Hildebrand's easy-going style and relative lack of reference to other philosophers. They will wonder how this intelligent and cultivated survey of the arts can be squeezed into the categories of philosophical or phenomenological analysis that are familiar to them. And as a result they might choose to ignore a work that deserves to be widely known, not only by philosophers, but by the reading public generally. John F. and John Henry Crosby are to be congratulated in making this translation available, and so helping to establish Hildebrand's reputation as one of the last great representatives of the high culture of Germany, and one for whom art was not merely a topic of philosophical enquiry, but also a gift of the Holy Spirit.

**Note on the Text of the Current Edition**  
We want to alert the reader to the fact that Hildebrand's *Aesthetics*, especially volume two, is in an unfinished state. Both volumes were written in a

nine-month period from 1969-1970, when Hildebrand was eighty years old. He did not live long enough to work through and order the text of volume two in the way in which his other philosophical works are fully completed and structured.

But even in this unfinished state the work is full of deep and original insights into art and beauty. And not just scattered insights, but foundational insights. One of the richest ideas in volume two is that of "artistic transposition" (the idea that the full range of values, including moral values and disvalues, can be fully transposed into aesthetic values). We are fortunate that Hildebrand devoted an entire chapter to this theme (chapter 32), though it remains only a partial treatment. Readers will find significant uses of the idea of transposition throughout the work, with many notable instances in the section on music.

Other insights and themes in volume two that rise to the level of original contributions include the entire section on literature, which contains the elements of a philosophy of language, and the discussion of architecture, which explores the "lived space" that we experience when we dwell in houses, palaces, churches, public squares.

The chapters of volume two are full of reflections on great works of art, such as Beethoven's *Fidelio* or Cervantes' *Don Quixote* or the Parthenon in Athens. These reflections may not be philosophical in the strict sense, since they concern in each case some individual work of art, but they are eminently phenomenological reflections which capture the spirit and genius of the individual work.

The treatment of music is philosophically perhaps the richest and most fully developed part of volume two. Hildebrand's phenomenological spirit is fully on display in his exploration of the basic building blocks of music. He is always in search of irreducible structures, whether of the most elemental variety, like the musical note and musical sound, or other irreducible but progressively more complex structures like melody, harmony, and the musical whole (all in chapter 33). His discussion in chapter 34 of pure musical expression (the ability of music without words to express emotions like love and sorrow) is not fully developed but lays the

foundations for an original theory of musical expression. Readers will find him constantly in debate with various reductionistic efforts to explain the higher through the lower, such as explaining expression through association.

These remarks do not purport to represent or evaluate this second volume of *Aesthetics* exhaustively. They are meant only to underscore the fact that *Aesthetics*, and especially volume two, presents original and complete ideas despite remaining an incomplete text.

Volume two was published posthumously in 1981 (Hildebrand died in 1977) thanks to the efforts of Karla Mertens, founder of the Hildebrand Gesellschaft. She is almost certainly a source of the German editions subtitles and the editor's footnotes. In our translation of volume two, we have retained these subtitles and many of the footnotes, and we have added some more for contemporary readers.

Our English edition of Hildebrand's *Aesthetics* is the fruit of the extraordinary generosity and commitment of countless friends and benefactors. We are deeply grateful to Dana Gioia, then-chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, who provided the catalyst with a Chairman's Extraordinary Action Award. And we are forever indebted to Howard and Roberta Ahmanson for their enduring support which allowed us to bring this work to completion. We thank Sir Roger Scruton for contributing a foreword that places Hildebrand's *Aesthetics* within the broad tradition of philosophical aesthetics. We gratefully acknowledge Brian McNeil, whose initial translation provided the point of departure for our final English text. Copyediting was meticulously executed by Elizabeth Shaw, proofreading by Sarah Blanchard, while the entire production of the book, encompassing everything from contents to covers, was masterfully led by the Hildebrand Project's director of publications and marketing, Christopher Haley. Marylouise McGraw has adorned the book with a beautiful and thoughtful cover.

We hope that readers will not only have their aesthetic perspective enlarged by the phenomenological richness of Hildebrand's work,

but will also be challenged by all that is unfinished in it, and will carry it forward and build on it. <>

[The Urban Myths of Popular Modern Atheism \(How Christian Faith Can Be Intelligent\)](#) by Dr. Paul E. Hill [Christian Alternative, 9781789040326]

How Atheists rely on urban myths about religion to buttress their case against God. God, and the whole business of being dependent upon him, is being downgraded, downsized, downplayed, and most of all, just plain dismissed in the modern, cultured, educated parts of Europe and in academia. This process is powered and driven by a whole, growing series of interlocked urban myths about what is supposed to be involved in being a religious (and often specifically Christian) believer. This book examines and critiques those myths, showing how the Christian faith can be intelligent and supported by reason.

Contents

Acknowledgements

About the Author

Introduction: The Problem, the Usual

Suspects and the Urban Myths

Belief & Denial

Urban Myth No 1: Atheism is a mere denial. It's up to believers alone to argue for their view.

Urban Myth No 2: One good reason why religion is to be rejected is that there's no rational way of choosing the right one.

Beyond Design, Purpose and Accident  
Urban Myth No 3: You Christians believe that God designed the universe.

However, this gets us nowhere, especially since we cannot say who designed the designer.

God, Glory and Greatness

Urban Myth No 4: There's little reason for supposing that God is really great, even if he is real.

Utter Dependence

Urban Myth No 5: Science now has a good idea of how something can come from nothing, so we don't need God to explain the creation of the universe.

Explaining, Invoking & Sufficient Reasons

Urban Myth No 6: Unless you can say how God works, saying that 'God did it' is no explanation at all.

Urban Myth No 7: God cannot explain intelligence because God — as an intelligence — would have to be more complex than the intelligence it explained.

Urban Myth No 8: Darwin makes God a redundant hypothesis.

Urban Myth No 9: The First 'Zero Sum Game' Myth

Religion is all (or largely) about explaining things. The trouble for religion is that science comes along, makes real progress, and leaves less room for religious explanations.

What Do We Mean When We Say 'God'?

Urban Myth No 10: Getting rid of the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition would be no more fundamentally different than having ridden ourselves of all the other Gods we no longer believe in: Mars, Thor, Woden, and so on.

Urban Myth No 11: Religious faith is all about getting us to believe in invisible fairy-things in the sky, for which there is no real evidence. God is supposed to be this 'supreme being' but there is no real evidence.

Urban myth No.12: The Second 'Zero-sum game' myth. The more room we give to God in our lives, the less room there is for us just to be reasonable, rational and most ourselves. We become slaves to dogma. Just What Is Meant by 'Creation'?

Urban myth No.13: God hangs around for an eternity, then decides to create the world. Then — well what?

Science and Religion; Doubt and Certainty

Urban Myth No 14: Only science admits of the possibility of doubt and promotes a proper, honest and justified scepticism about beliefs. Only science acknowledges the tentative nature of belief and shows any willingness to adjust its own beliefs in the face of new evidence. You believers would never really accept anything as counting against your religion. You place it conveniently beyond any possible refutation. Your flaw is that you cannot live with uncertainty.

Urban Myth No 15: Scientific opinions converge (at any rate after lots of research at the cutting edge); religions always diverge. Therefore, science must come closer to the truth than religion.

Urban Myth No 16: Only things testable by science should be believed.

On Faith and Reason

Urban Myth No 17: In going beyond reason, faith is just irrational.

Urban Myth No 18: Religion throughout the ages has held up the forward march of rational, evidence-based science.

Evil, Religion & Looking Up to God for Goodness

Urban Myth No 19: Bad things make it hard, even irrational, and even distasteful, to believe in an all good God.

Urban Myth No 20: We don't need God to be good.

Urban Myth No 21: Religions in general and Christianity in particular have been responsible for so much war, evil and general nastiness, that we would clearly be better off without them.

Urban Myth No 22: The irrationalism of religion spoils the world and encourages violence.

On Needs and God

Urban Myth No 23: We just so desperately need to find someone who can tell us what to do, so we invent a father figure called God who can do the job. This, however, just stops us from growing up, thinking for ourselves and taking the necessary risks. Moreover, we pathetic religious folk only need God because we need a crutch to lean on. We just haven't got what it takes to stand on your own two feet and face the world as it is.

On Understanding the Bible

Urban Myth No 24: The Bible just encourages and lauds evil and bad behaviour.

Urban Myth No 25: Those who are honest about their Christianity take the Bible literally. Only those theological sophisticates who realise that much of the Bible is inconsistent with the findings of science start to complicate matters by introducing non-literal interpretations of scripture. It's all an intellectually desperate and dishonest process of cherry picking in which we adjust our understanding of scripture to bring it in line with modern science but it is disingenuous because it

involves a denial of what was originally taught about the Bible.

### Excerpt: The Problem, the Usual Suspects and the Urban Myths

God — and the whole business of being dependent upon him — is being downgraded, downsized, downplayed, and most of all, just plain dismissed in the modern, cultured, educated parts of Europe and in academia. This process seems powered by a whole, growing series of interlocked urban myths about what is supposed to be involved in being a religious (and often specifically Christian) believer. These myths seem subscribed to in some form or another, even by many otherwise very sophisticated philosophers. But they seem common to pretty well all the known 'new-atheists' and, alas, by too many Christians (who then, quite unwittingly, give the atheists more of the ammunition they need).

Proper theological understanding is badly needed in order correctly to counteract this tendency. It is only in this way we may become warriors for Christ in the proper sense. The trouble is that much of the relevant material is, frankly, hard to read and academic in the extreme. Little or none of it ever feeds through to the wider intelligence. The so-called 'New Atheists' on the other hand do seem to be getting through, and they are using the urban myths about Christianity to help them do so. Something needs to be done to redress this imbalance. This book is a small attempt to get across to that wider intelligence a sensible, rational and defensible Christian theological story and show it to be a genuine alternative. Put bluntly, it is an attempt to show how faith can be intelligent.

Even to fairly well-educated folk who just haven't thought too deeply about the issue, looking up to God for dependence seems at best, to be just quaint, old-fashioned and out-moded.

It is also commonly seen as having been out-run by science. Besides, we are not much into looking up to anyone any more, except perhaps celebrities. Cap-doffing to authority figures is no longer our thing. In any case, it is simply not a good idea to be told what to do, especially by a god who is thought to resemble nothing much greater than a rather petulant nineteenth-century public school

headmaster with a few added Harry Potterish magical powers thrown in. (How many people, I wonder, think of God as a kind of super-Dumbledore?) Moreover, we should think for ourselves and not be told what to think by an ancient document full of nothing but dust and (sometimes, apparently, terrifyingly vicious) nonsense. Then we would be really freed-up for sensible, civilised conversation. We would also become more 'scientific' (whatever quite that means) and less disposed to believe such weird things as, for example, that touching with faith the clothes of an Iron-Age prophet will cure us of any lingering haemorrhages.

That's at best. At worst, confessing dependency on God is considered downright dangerous and even inhuman. Isn't that just the sort of thing that suicide bombers and other assorted maniacs do? And many of the rest on the list seem only a tad less cool — those who would put down women, kick homosexuals into the gutter, and condemn to eternal hell those who 'err and stray' in each other's bedrooms. Aren't such folk more than mere party-poopers and killjoys? These thoughts are behind the late Christopher Hitchens' remark that Christianity is like 'a celestial dictatorship, a kind of divine North Korea'.

Not that we in the 'good old' Church of England folk are quite counted in this list of dishonour, of course — at least not any more. But that is only because we have long since had our teeth pulled and even stopped behaving any more like emasculated bulldogs. Moreover, Anglican clerical power over people's lives has diminished since the Enlightenment — now almost to zero. (And that takes in most church folk too.) People no longer have to be worried about 'what the vicar might think'. (Quite the reverse is now true.) But, we ask: isn't this to be welcomed? Only a pathetic few are terribly impressed any more by the dark-eyed, black-robed authority of the cleric (or, perhaps, the blue-scarfed Lay Reader). We do, of course, still send bishops to the House of Lords, something often seen as some kind of threat to the soundness of our national policies. However, by and large, we Church of England folk are seen, as often as not, merely as relics of a long distant past. We are simply an increasingly elderly, growingly confused

and, frankly, rather quaint collection of individuals who just fail to 'get' the real picture. (Sometimes I can even manage to look the part, I'm sure.) We are but a pale reflection of our former selves. We are blue-rinsed, stiff-collared wrinklier who get bemused by trendy team vicars called 'Dave' and become nervous and giggly when offered so much as a small sherry wine at a vicarage garden party. We then process into church and bow our heads in solemn silence in the now well and truly antiquated, and hardly believable, Miss Marplelike institution of Choral Evensong. We are merely picturesque and our places of worship good background for wedding photographs. We should be put out to grass if not exactly rendered down for glue. Besides, as any decent atheist will tell you, it's just not nice to kill off granny and granddad. But neither does it much matter, for we'll soon all be dead anyway and the Church of England long gone. Patience in this matter is, after all, no more than mere Anglo-Saxon decency.

In the meantime, though, real people get real. God is not cool. God is not scientific. God is not great. God is not rational. God is a now long redundant hypothesis. God is, frankly, just not needed, never mind someone to be looked up to. God is well and truly 'off-side' when it comes to scoring any real goals. To back up all this comes that huge raft of urban myths concerning what we Christians are supposed to believe. These urban myths of popular atheism are the subject of the present book.

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For the moment, though, I simply point out that looking up to God has nothing to do with this nonsensical, if popular, picture. In this book, I hope to show that looking up to God, far from being dangerous, or just rather silly, is the most rational of acts in which we humans can ever engage. In the process, I hope to debunk the urban myths of today's popular atheism (and even those of some popular Christianity). Urban myths are popular tales — something akin to Dawkins' famous 'memes'. They grow and get transmitted increasingly widely until they become deeply held assumptions despite their lack of any real historical, philosophical, theological or even scientific credentials. They survive because their

presuppositions go almost unchallenged. I feel that even a good many Christian thinkers rather take these presuppositions for granted. This leads them to make the mistake of responding to them at the wrong level. It also leads to our competing on the atheist's own playing field. This is a tragedy, for the myths are hardly obviously true. For example, as Rowan Williams has pointed out, if Richard Dawkins could sit down and chat with St Augustine of Hippo (from the fifth century) Dawkins may well be surprised. He would find Augustine not opposed to the idea of evolution for starters — all I may add without any hint of its causing discomfort to his understanding of Christian doctrine. Altogether, Dawkins would find that his own doctrines would hardly just get the better of those of Christianity.

My wish, then, is to be bold and attack these urban myths where it most hurts — at their very foundations. Ironically, some of them even have their origins in bad theology. My aim is to expose their inadequacies and replace them with that which is far more philosophically and theologically sound. If what follows shocks as many Christians as it does atheists, I do not apologise.

Yet what I put in the place of the dispossessed myths is no vain invention of my own fancy. I am not, frankly, that original.

Those who are familiar with the relevant literature will readily identify that my replacement ideas belong well and truly within the long and, I firmly believe, much sounder tradition of historical teaching in the Christian world. It is not all easy and some of it grates with our modern sensibilities. Hence, the book inevitably contains some rather difficult philosophical and theological thinking here and there. However, it is intended for a wider readership, so it is not laden with all the usual paraphernalia of heavy-duty scholarship. I restrict myself to just a few citations and references. I simply want the text to flow unimpeded. It is more a work of reflection than academy-strength scholarship in any case.

I don't, though, wish you to proceed under false pretences. I in no way want this book to be an exercise in dumbing down. I firmly believe that doing that helps no one. If you take yourself to require 'Theology for Idiots' or ask that the

sometimes brain-hurtingly difficult be 'Made Easy', look elsewhere for I shall not oblige. My hope is that both my philosophical and theological thinking is at least decent and uncompromised. That, I am afraid, simply has implications for universal accessibility. I may add at this point that the reader may sense a measure of anger every now and again in my tone. This is also quite deliberate. I believe that such anger is justified, for I direct myself quite unashamedly to errors that should simply not be countenanced. They stand in almost screaming need of denunciation and correction.

With that off my chest, I must add that I don't believe in 'slagging off' the opposition in point-scoring, mud flinging exhibitionism either. Atheists are, I believe, wrong — flat wrong — but I do not think that you need to be a blind idiot to be one. Both atheism and Christianity arise from the employment of our human intelligence in response to a deeply puzzling world. I intend to seek out and destroy the atheist's urban myths and do so without mercy but I would always welcome their questions and doubts. I would not want any atheist to live on without appreciating why we Christians think they may be in danger. Yet, yet, if there were only one atheist left in the world to convince, something decent in me would not want me to do the job (even if I could do the job in any case). This is because I value challenge and I think that Christianity can thrive on it. I am sure that God would understand. (Christopher Hitchens once said the same with respect to believers in God.)

Rather immodestly also, I want what I write to be a small inspiration to my fellow Christians as much as a thought-revising invitation to the sceptic. A fat inspiration it would be if it made no proper sense. And it cannot make proper sense without some pretty serious theology. All this means that whatever is difficult and mind-bending, remains so. Relatedly, I hope also to show — just a little — that the Christian faith has, throughout its long history, been an intellectually smart tradition. An idiot may indeed make a lovely Christian. Christ does not exclude those without brains, but he does not exclude those with brains either. So, if you can think hard, don't be down-hearted about your faith. Besides, if the church were ever to forget the importance of the intellect, it will commit suicide.

On this matter, I have encountered in my ministry as a Lay Reader a rather unfortunate attitude on the part of some fellow Christians. Many of these folk are themselves suspicious of sophisticated theology. 'Simple faith, Paul, simple faith. That's all one needs'. I've had that, or something similar, said to me a number of times. Sometimes it is accompanied by a vaguely finger-wagging aggravation following a sermon. I can take that.

But more worryingly, it seems often motivated by fear, fear that stirring up the mud below may cause the superstructure of simple faith above to come crashing down. Too many Christian folk become reluctant to explore further their own faith and confront difficult questions because of this fear.

Well! I have no problem with simple faith. Many of the greatest brains in the history of the church have displayed simple faith.

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But simple faith does not stand alone — nor should it be allowed so to do, certainly not if we are to avoid being intellectually devoured by the atheist. But in fact, simple faith historically has always assumed the armour of argument and intellect. In any case, it is from simple faith that the harder questions flow — and they flow from it with all the grace of a gentle breeze that flows in from the evening sea. So I would say to my fellow Christian, 'Fear not. If it fits, don the armour simple faith has been given and engage, for it is in failure to engage that we become our own worst enemy'. This is not, of course, to deny the obvious fact that what this book contains will not be the cup of tea for many decent and faithful members of the church, many of whom will have given a lifetime of devoted service. We all have our different callings and they are all valuable one way or another. I ask only that the calling implicit in the present book be regarded as one of them.

A word now about a subsidiary prey of mine. It is sometimes thought that we Christians have to be against science in order to sustain our position. I hope in some measure to show that this is not the case. What we have to be against is Philosophical Naturalism (PN). This is the purely philosophical

doctrine that all that exists is the natural world construed as a fully autonomous, closed system.

Many, though by no means all, scientists seem to embrace PN, sometimes without much obvious thought going into the matter. Insofar as this happens, they lend authority to it. However, we need always to keep in mind that doing science is one thing and embracing PN quite another. I return to this matter later in the book.

It is, of course, always easy to misrepresent one's opponent's position, to make it seem simpler than it really is. This has two psychological motives. The first is that one just wants to put one's opponent in as bad a light as possible, to present him as the villain of the piece. The second is that it makes the work of criticism considerably easier. I have tried to avoid this sin of misrepresentation, of erecting then tearing down mere 'straw men' - but I am only human.

Another word of caution: I do not always attribute any particular urban myth to any particular 'new atheist'. In truth, the 'new atheists' sometimes speak (and write) more crudely and, sometimes, they reveal more carefully nuanced views. (Though we can all do this, of course.) Often a context demands that we 'keep it short' when, deep down, we recognise the need for ever deeper and ever more subtle qualifications. Thus, I have heard Richard Dawkins say that, though in all practical ways he can be counted as an atheist, he is strictly an agnostic. Why? Because he feels that all he is strictly entitled to do is place the existence of God way, way down on the list of probabilities (given the evidence he thinks we have) but not exclude the possibility altogether. Very well, I am happy to take him as 'strictly' agnostic. The choice of labels makes little difference to the pattern of his arguments and presuppositions in any case.

This, however, doesn't matter very much for my present purposes. This book is not specifically about this or that particular atheist's (or agnostic's) particular arguments, nuanced or otherwise. You will find that task done in many other books. Primarily, this book is about the urban myths themselves, as they seem to me to have percolated down into our popular atheistic secular culture. I do back up many of them with quotes from famous

atheists but it is the urban myths themselves that are important. They represent the sort of thing any thoughtful agnostic or atheist might say in response to Christianity. I have personally encountered each of them in my many discussions on religion. If these myths are the products of a fevered imagination, it is not my own. In other words - and again - I certainly do not think that I am attacking any mere 'straw men'.

What is really needed to fight these crazy myths is a better theological understanding. My real enemy in any case is not the people, not honest enquiry, not honest intellectual struggle, not honest agnosticism or even honest atheism (though I hope that I give some reasons for questioning those last two things) but downright, unacceptable historical, philosophical and theological muddle and myth loudly and proudly parading itself as intellectual clarity and progress. This, frankly, I cannot stand.

I feel therefore that addressing such myths is a hugely important task. For the want of addressing this task, the downgrading, downsizing and downplaying of both a reasonable and saving Christianity could well be hastened. Since I believe that Christianity tells us the truest and greatest story about the world that has ever been told, I quite naturally want to do all I can, however small, to impede the progress of its downfall. <>

[The Problem of Evil: Eight Views in Dialogue](#) edited by N. N. Trakakis [Oxford University Press, 9780198821625]

One of those rare questions in philosophy that is not only technically recalcitrant but also engages the hearts and minds of the broad community is the so-called 'problem of evil': How can the existence of an absolutely perfect God be reconciled with the existence of suffering and evil? This collection of dialogues between eight philosophers of religion explores new ways of thinking about this longstanding problem, in the process reorienting and reinvigorating the philosophical debate around the relationship between God, goodness and evil: How exactly are these three notions connected, if at all? Is God the cause, or author, of evil and suffering? How is the goodness of God to be understood, and how is divine goodness related to human morality? Does God's perfect goodness

entail that God must have reasons for permitting or bringing about suffering, and if so what could his reasons be?

Contents

Acknowledgements

List of Contributors

Introduction

Eleonore Stump, "The Problem of Suffering: A Thomistic Approach"

Responses by Bishop, Oppy, and Trakakis  
Replies by Stump

John Bishop, "On Identifying the Problem of Evil and the Possibility of Its Theist Solution"

Responses by Stump, Oppy, and Trakakis  
Replies by Bishop

Graham Oppy, "Problems of Evil"

Responses by Stump, Bishop, and Trakakis  
Replies by Oppy

N. N. Trakakis, "Anti-Theodicy"

Responses by Stump, Bishop, and Oppy  
Replies by Trakakis

Beverly Clack, "Evil, Feminism, and a Philosophy of Transformation"

Responses by Nagasawa, Tilley, and Gleeson

Replies by Clack

Yujin Nagasawa, "The Problem of Evil for Atheists"

Responses by Clack, Tilley, and Gleeson  
Replies by Nagasawa

Terrence W. Tilley, "A Trajectory of Positions"

Responses by Clack, Nagasawa, and Gleeson

Replies by Tilley

Andrew Gleeson, "God and Evil without Theodicy"

Responses by Clack, Nagasawa, and Tilley  
Replies by Gleeson

Index

### Excerpt: The State of Play: The Problem of Evil Today

The 'problem of evil'—whether conceived broadly as the challenge of reconciling evil and imperfection with a commitment to ultimate justice, goodness, or harmony in the universe, or more narrowly in (say) theistic terms as the problem of reconciling the existence of an absolutely perfect being with the existence of sin and suffering—has a long and venerable history, exercising some of

the finest minds from ancient to modern times. However, as will be discussed below, in recent philosophy of religion the debate seems to have reached a stalemate, where opposing camps rehearse tired and familiar lines of argument that remain singularly unconvincing to one another, giving the entire debate the character of what Imre Lakatos called a 'degenerating research program. In reaction to this, signs have begun to emerge that the problem of evil and the discipline at large are on the cusp of a breakthrough that promises to bring to the forefront a series of imaginative, suggestive, and innovative, though unfortunately neglected, approaches to the nature of divinity and its relationship to evil. The present collection of dialogical essays is put forward as a contribution to this renewal.

Here I will outline two ways in which this nascent movement is manifesting itself in work on the problem of evil: metaphysically, and metaphilosophically. But before I do so, it will help to say something about the status question, specifically about the standard ways in which the problem of evil is understood and answered in contemporary philosophical discussions within analytic (Anglo-American) philosophy of religion.

To begin with, the standard approach conceives of God in a very particular way—call it Standard Theism (ST). ST is taken to accurately, albeit not exhaustively, reflect the variety of monotheism that is widely shared by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Specifically, ST holds that there exists just one God, that this God is a person or person-like, and that whatever else God is like God must be a proper object of worship (or object of 'ultimate concern', in Paul Tillich's phrase). But if God is to be worthy of worship and unconditional commitment, it is arguably the case that God must be perfect, where to be perfect is to be the greatest being possible or, to borrow Anselm's well-known phrase, the being than which none greater can be conceived. This minimal conception of divinity forms only the starting point in what has come to be known as 'perfect being theology' (Morris 1987, 1991; Rogers 2000). On this view, one begins with the idea of God as maximally great or absolutely perfect, and then from this conception of deity one deduces all of God's core or essential attributes—

i.e., those attributes which are constitutive of God's nature, so that he could not at the same time exist and lack any of these attributes. What these 'great-making' attributes are, or how precisely they are to be understood, remains open to debate, but a consensus has developed that God, as an absolutely perfect being, would possess some or all of the following properties as essential or intrinsic to his nature and being: omnipotence (God has the capacity to bring about any state of affairs that is logically possible in itself as well as logically consistent with his other essential attributes), omniscience (God knows all truths or knows all that it is logically possible to know), perfect goodness (God is the source of moral norms, or always acts in complete accordance with moral norms), aseity (God is ontologically independent, for he does not depend either for his existence or for his characteristics on anything outside himself), incorporeality (God has no body, he is a non-physical spirit), eternity (God is timeless, or is everlasting in having infinite temporal duration), omnipresence (God is wholly present in all space and time), and perfectly free (either in the sense that nothing outside God can determine his actions, or in the sense that it is always within his power not to do what he does). ST typically adds that God is the sole creator and sustainer of the world, though this is an attribute God is said to possess only contingently (given that he was free not to create a world).

The next stage in the standard approach to the problem of evil is to define this problem as a certain kind of challenge to ST: evil is conceptualized as a problem insofar as it casts doubt on, or undermines belief in, ST in specific ways. To formulate the problem of evil in this fashion is already to express it as a primarily intellectual and theoretical matter, as distinct from an experiential or existential concern. Accordingly, a distinction is now commonly made between two forms of the problem of evil, only one of which is taken to be the sole or principal concern of the professional philosopher. Firstly, there is the experiential problem of evil. Although variously interpreted, this form of the problem speaks to the practical and personal difficulties that issue from our knowledge and experience of suffering and

evil. Such difficulties may consist in the concrete challenges of working, from within a religious community, to combat and eradicate injustice and inequality in one's society; or they may be conceived more personally as the difficulty of adopting or maintaining an attitude of love and trust towards God when confronted by evil that is deeply perplexing and disturbing. Alvin Plantinga expresses this latter predicament well:

The theist may find a religious problem in evil; in the presence of his own suffering or that of someone near to him he may find it difficult to maintain what he takes to be the proper attitude towards God. Faced with great personal suffering or misfortune, he may be tempted to rebel against God, to shake his fist in God's face, or even to give up belief in God altogether... Such a problem calls, not for philosophical enlightenment, but for pastoral care.

Secondly, and by contrast, there is the theoretical problem of evil, which is the purely intellectual exercise of determining what impact, if any, the existence of evil has on the truth-value or epistemic status of belief in ST. It is this latter version of the problem of evil that philosophers of religion address, to the exclusion of the practical problem, which they regard as the province of priests, social workers, and health professionals.

The theoretical problem is further subdivided into two broad categories: the logical (or deductive, a priori) problem of evil, and the evidential (or inductive, a posteriori) problem of evil. The logical problem consists in removing an alleged logical inconsistency between certain claims made by ST and certain claims made about evil (e.g., that the existence of the God of ST is logically incompatible with the existence of certain kinds of evil). The evidential problem, on the other hand, takes it as given that the question of logical consistency has been or can be settled, and focuses instead on relations of evidential support, probability, and plausibility: the question here is whether the existence of evil, although logically consistent with the existence of God, counts against the truth of ST insofar as evil lowers the probability that ST is true.

Although some, led by the Australian pair J. L. Mackie (1955) and H. J. McCloskey (1960, 1974),

boldly took on the logical problem of evil and sought to demonstrate the comparatively strong thesis that God and evil cannot possibly coexist, it has now been supposed for some time that such attempts are unlikely to succeed, or at least that they fail to get to the heart of the difficulty that constitutes the problem of evil. This is a difficulty that relates to our ability to explain and make sense of our world, as opposed to formal questions of internal or logical consistency. One of the major turning points that led philosophers of religion to make the transition from the logical to the evidential problem was William Rowe's (1979) seminal defence of atheism on the basis of an intuitively appealing argument that was crucially predicated on the inductive step that, given the countless instances of apparently pointless suffering found in the world, it is highly likely that at least some of these are in fact instances of pointless suffering.

As attention shifted to the evidential problem, two theistic responses took up much of the discussion. One response involved the construction of theodicies, this being the project of vindicating the justice or goodness of God by offering plausible explanations as to why God allows evil to abound in his creation. A multitude of theodicies have been developed, from John Hick's (1966) 'soul-making' theory (where suffering and setbacks are viewed as necessary for the development of virtue and character), to theodicies that make appeal to the value of human free will, and theodicies that take at least certain kinds of 'evil' (e.g., natural disasters) that befall humans and animals as the unavoidable by-product of the outworking of the natural laws governing God's creation. Just as theodicies are legion, so too are criticisms of them (paralleling the 'proofs' of God's existence). One could question, for example, whether the value of free will is great enough to offset such terrible evils as war, genocide, and sexual abuse.

In the face of such criticisms, the discussion gradually moved towards a different answer to the problem of evil, one that has come to be known as skeptical theism. This is the view that the limitations of the human mind are such that we are in no position to be able to discern God's reasons for permitting evil—and hence, the fact that we cannot

identify such reasons should not surprise us and should not count against the truth of ST. As one of the original proponents of this position, Alvin Plantinga, has asked, in rhetorical fashion: "Why suppose that if God does have a reason for permitting evil, the theist would be the first to know?" Despite an initial degree of plausibility, the skeptical theist view has often struck critics as a last-ditch attempt to save face. Furthermore, skeptical theism has been criticized as opening the door to more radical and therefore more troublesome forms of skepticism.

In looking back over this debate, it can easily seem that the discussion has not progressed far since Rowe's 1979 paper. Some defenders of ST continue to attempt to cover up lacunae in traditional theodicies, while an increasing number have given up such attempts, preferring instead to simply defer to the inscrutability of God's ways. Opponents of ST, on the other hand, remain unconvinced by such appeals to the providential plans of God, whether these plans are knowable by us or not. Admittedly, deep disagreement of this sort is a common feature of philosophical debate, and it does not necessarily evince a lack of progress or a permanent impasse. Nonetheless, a mounting sense of frustration has become discernible, both within and beyond the philosophy of religion, over the current state of the debate. Michael Levine, for example, has noted that "instead of progress, insight or innovation, there has been backsliding, repetition, and obfuscation:"<sup>1</sup> Levine pessimistically concludes:

Evil remains religiously and existentially problematic. For the religious, it should at times test faith along with an understanding of scripture. As an intellectual problem, however, it has been exhausted and resolved. Reiteration after reiteration; old wine in still old or slightly newer bottles, does not constitute philosophical advance. Become a student of the problem of evil if you must, but all you will find are anachronisms, alongside a new generation of apologists digging in their heels.

But even if, as Levine with some plausibility contends, the discussion has become petrified into a select number of entrenched and defensive

strategies, this need not lead us to conclude that the problem of evil is now 'dead', but might instead compel us to creatively rethink and redirect the discussion. We could, indeed, come to think the time ripe for a wholesale reconsideration of the problem of evil, where this involves reviewing, if not overthrowing, the parameters and presuppositions that often constrain the debates. Two ways in which this might be effected, as suggested also by contributors to this volume, will briefly be outlined.

### Opening I: Reconceptualizing Divinity

The first possibility, or way of 'opening' up the debate around the problem of evil to new or neglected ways of thinking, has been foreshadowed by another recent Oxford University Press volume in philosophy of religion: Andrei Buckareff and Yujin Nagasawa's edited collection, *Alternative Concepts of God* (2016). Buckareff and Nagasawa have commendably assembled a series of fascinating explorations of alternatives to classical theism "in the pursuit," as they put it, "of a more global perspective in the philosophy of religion" They immediately add: "If we go global, we quickly discover that there are conceptions of divine or ultimate reality developed in various cultures that differ in significant ways from the received view we get from orthodox theology in the Abrahamic religions:"<sup>4</sup> Buckareff and Nagasawa therefore invited a diverse range of philosophers of religion to present and defend alternatives to the Abrahamic orthodoxy, most of which turn out to be versions of 'pantheism' (the view, roughly stated, that the universe and God are in some special sense identical rather than distinct) or 'panentheism' (the view, again roughly stated, that God is immanent within all creation while at the same time transcending the physical world). These and other alternatives to standard theism are useful not only in bridging ingrained divides between Western and Eastern religious thought, but also in shedding light on the strengths and weakness of competing conceptions of divinity (or ultimate reality)—particularly with respect to the 'religious adequacy' of these conceptions. However 'religious adequacy' is to be construed, one criterion that is relatively uncontroversial concerns the capacity of a way of

thinking about divinity to 'handle', or even 'resolve', the problem of evil.

It is common enough to find religious studies scholars, theologians, and historians of philosophy taking a keen interest in a variety of conceptions of the divine beyond standard theism, and also examining the consequences these conceptions have for the problem of evil. It has become less common for philosophers of religion to undertake such work, despite the undeniable benefits their distinctive tools and methods (e.g., logical rigour, conceptual and phenomenological analysis) could bring to the discussion. Some contributors to *Alternative Concepts of God* make a start in this direction, recognizing the problem of evil as a significant desideratum for conceptualizing divinity. Nagasawa, for one, considers a version of panentheism (what he dubs 'modal panentheism': God as the totality of all possible worlds, all of which are as real as the actual world) but finds that it succumbs to a version of the problem of evil even more troublesome than that faced by traditional theism. John Bishop and Ken Perszyk, in their essay in the same volume, expand upon this approach to trace the ways in which varying concepts of God generate varying problems of evil.

Bishop has been a longstanding critic of the traditional theistic model of God (or "the omniGod," as he calls it), in large part because of the intractable difficulties, as he sees them, that the problem of evil creates for such a model (see also Bishop and Perszyk 2016). The alternative he has sought falls within a position that is garnering increasing attention—'naturalist theism'. On this view, the natural world is all there is, and religious meaning and value are to be found solely in nature or some aspect of the natural order, thus rendering redundant any supernatural being, power, or principle. A leading advocate of this position in theological circles was the late Gordon Kaufman of Harvard Divinity School, who labelled his outlook "biohistorical naturalism" and who reconceived God as the "serendipitous creativity" of a cosmos that evolves and changes in surprising and unpredictable ways (Kaufman 2004). Similar voices can now be heard in the philosophy of religion. Mark Johnston (2009), for example, has sought to purge theism of the idolatry of supernaturalism,

and replace it with what he calls 'process panentheism; where God as the 'Highest One' (the One most worthy of worship) is defined as the wholly immanent self-disclosing process of the outpouring of Existence Itself in ordinary existents, a process that is manifested in the natural realm alone.'

Bishop, likewise, holds that a naturalist ontology suffices for developing a religiously viable conception of who or what God is, of what (as he likes to say) it is that fills "the God-role"—the role of being worthy of a special kind of practical commitment involving trust, worship, and obedience. To specify what fills the God-role, Bishop (2007) turns, firstly, to the Trinitarian insight that the Divine Being belongs to the category of relation, not that of substance. Bishop thus presses for a shift away from the traditional idea of God as supreme individual agent to the idea of God as supreme community, constituted by persons-in-loving-relationship. This leads to a second, Christological strand in Bishop's model, where he takes (metaphysically) seriously the New Testament claim that God is love (1 John 4:16). This is not construed to mean that God is identical with the universal, Love, but that God's relational being is instantiated, though not exhausted, by genuinely loving interpersonal relations within the world. In recent collaborative work with Ken Perszyk (2016), Bishop has added a 'euteleological' dimension to his account, where the standard view of God as supernatural producer of the world is replaced by the idea that the universe's being God's creation amounts to its being inherently directed upon the supreme good as its telos (goal, purpose), and existing only because that telos is realized within it. The result is a model of God that is thoroughly naturalistic, devoid of any supernatural agency or entity either within or beyond the natural world.

Reconfiguring divinity along these and other lines may not entirely remove the problem of evil, as Bishop acknowledges. Indeed, Bishop and Perszyk (2016: 124) concede that euteleological theism will seem improbable given the nature and extent of evil in the universe, at least if no additional theological resources (such as those provided by Christian revelation) are brought in. For Bishop and Perszyk, however, any conception of the divine

"worth its salt" in dealing with what they call 'the existential problem of evil'—the problem of how to live virtuously and flourish, or find 'salvation, in a world seemingly unfavourable to such ideals—will almost certainly introduce a significant intellectual problem of evil (2016: 115). There may be some doubt about that (given that there may be adequate non-moral conceptions of God that dissolve, rather than needing to resolve, the problem of evil), but what is worth highlighting is the way in which the alternative conceptions of divinity developed by Johnston, Bishop, and other non-standard theists help us to see, if not answer, the problem of evil in innovative and insightful ways.

It is not even mandatory to believe in, let alone display resolute commitment to, these alternative Gods. Rather, they might be postulated in speculative fashion, in the manner of Whitehead's 'adventures of ideas'. It is to this that I now turn?

### Opening II: Renewing the Discipline

A second 'opening' has been suggested by yet another new Oxford University Press anthology, this time edited by Paul Draper and J.L. Schellenberg, entitled *Renewing Philosophy of Religion: Exploratory Essays*. The essays collected by Draper and Schellenberg address the previous concern of seeking to expand the focus of contemporary philosophy of religion beyond the bounds of Western theistic religions, even beyond traditional forms of religion altogether. But there is a second initiative in the Draper/Schellenberg volume that I want to pick up on—what they call, in their introductory essay, questions of 'standpoint': "that is, with how philosophers of religion are placed, in terms of such things as commitments brought to inquiry and assumptions about proper aims and procedures, as they address whatever particular issue becomes their focus"

The question of placement, in terms of religious commitments and methodological presuppositions, has arisen because of a decisive but problematic turn taken recently in philosophy of religion. This is a turn towards relatively traditional or conservative forms of religion and theology, and interestingly it has become evident in both analytic and Continental schools of philosophy of religion.

Amongst Continental philosophers, suspicions were raised early, with Dominique Janicaud in a 1991 report objecting to what he called 'the theological turn in phenomenology' on the grounds that: "The dice are loaded and choices made; faith rises majestically in the background" (2000: 27)<sup>3</sup> Analytic philosophers, by contrast, have only just begun to raise concerns, against the background of the dominance over the last few decades of a new generation of (mainly mainstream) Christian philosophers, led in large part by the trailblazing efforts of (among others) Alvin Plantinga, Richard Swinburne, Peter van Inwagen, Marilyn McCord Adams, and William Lane Craig. Their goal has been to rejuvenate the field after (in their eyes) it lay fallow in the wilderness of twentieth-century positivism, and to do so by developing a distinctly and unashamedly Christian form of philosophy.

There is little doubt that 'analytic theists' have brought a newfound rigour, depth, and indeed sense of excitement to a formerly flailing discipline. At the same time, questions are now being asked about the serious side-effects this religious turn has introduced. Paul Draper has done much to highlight this, not only in the volume he co-edited with Schellenberg, but also in an earlier paper co-authored with Ryan Nichols. Draper and Nichols' 'diagnostic hypothesis, as they put it, is that the discipline's poor health can be attributed to "a variety of cognitive biases operating at the nonconscious level, combined with an unhealthy dose of group influence." These biases, according to Draper and Nichols, manifest themselves in at least four ways: (i) partisanship, or following the 'party' rather than the argument wherever it leads; (ii) polemics, or an adversarial and combative approach to philosophy; (iii) focus narrowly placed on mainstream Abrahamic traditions; and (iv) religious constraints (e.g., the teachings of a sacred text or a church), which limit or predetermine the outcomes of philosophical discussions. These symptoms, unfortunately, are not difficult to detect in recent work on the problem of evil, as Draper and Nichols observe:

A philosopher of religion who is a theist, for example, could consistently admit (and even defend the view) that horrendous evil is strong evidence against theism, so long

as they think, for instance, that this evidence is outweighed by even stronger evidence (whether inferential or noninferential) on the other side. Yet such admissions almost never occur.

To wake philosophy of religion from its dogmatic slumber, what is required is a renewed appreciation of the kind of thinking that has traditionally been regarded as integral to philosophy—a thinking that is sustained and searching, restless, and even endless in its explorations, but without knowing where such wondering and meandering will lead, thus being responsive to the unforeseen and unexpected and so not prejudicing the outcome. Commitment, even religious commitment, is not thereby ruled out, as long as it promotes a questioning frame of mind, and accords value to skepticism and doubt. What the poet John Keats called 'negative capability' has a place in philosophy as much as in literature:

It struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in Literature & which Shakespeare possessed so enormously - I mean Negative Capability, that is when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason...

This capability for lingering in doubt is challenging and confronting to many, especially those with strongly held religious convictions. But philosophy is nothing if not challenging and confronting. Draper and Nichols, towards the end of their paper, make a series of recommendations as to how the discipline could be improved in light of their earlier diagnosis. Their final recommendation, which they say "is the hardest of all to follow," is to

... make a conscious decision to accept genuine risk. True inquiry requires risk. This is why philosophical inquiry is aided by doubt ...Apologetics ... is very safe insofar as pursuing it is very unlikely to result in the apologist rejecting any of the central doctrines of the religious community he or she serves. Philosophy should be riskier—the philosopher of religion must be prepared to abandon cherished beliefs. But with that risk comes [sic] greater opportunities for growth and discovery, and for freeing oneself from service to inflexible orthodoxy.

In retrieving the questing and adventurous nature of philosophical inquiry, philosophers of religion will not only broaden the current debate around the problem of evil with a greater plurality of perspectives, but will also help drive the discussion away from conventional towards more creative paths. Beverley Clack, a contributor to this volume, has in earlier work defended a similar, 'aporetic' methodology:

borrowing from the psychoanalytic model of therapy as a 'pathless path' or *aporia*, Clack envisages an approach to the problem of evil that sees it as a journey with no predetermined goal or end-point, "a journey where the road is strange and unknown." This may involve, as happens in her own philosophical work, drawing upon the literary and creative arts for insights into evil and suffering (something rarely done in contemporary discussions), because "the best art challenges, forcing the viewer/reader to consider again the way in which they habitually see the world." But it may also include creatively constructing speculative theories, experimenting with diverse myths, models, and metaphors of (e.g.) God and world, without necessarily subscribing to everything one puts to paper, but performing a kind of *epoche* or suspension of belief that gives one licence to imagine and explore. And so alongside Draper and Schellenberg's call for wider focus and plural standpoints, also vital is the question of style: ways of writing philosophy that go beyond the standard academic template, and which might for example be slow, meditative, open-ended, and essayistic, dialogical and interactive in form.

### The Dialogues

Despite the current preference in academic philosophy for the journal paper or the book-length treatise, the genre of the dialogue is beginning to make inroads and is proving popular with specialists and non-specialists alike. But in contrast with the philosophical dialogues of old, as represented by the sole-authored works of Plato, Berkeley, and Hume, a spate of more genuinely interactive dialogues has appeared, involving exchanges between various philosophers, each defending a distinct position around a vexing problem in philosophy (e.g., free will: Fischer et al.

2007) or philosophical theology (e.g., divine providence: Helseth et al. 2011). In an attempt to rejuvenate the discussion on the problem of evil, the dialogical form was selected to bring eight philosophers of religion together in critical but also considerate conversation. Each of the eight came to the discussion table with a history of extensive reflection and often influential publications on the problem of evil, and each came equipped with an interestingly different orientation and outlook, thus helping to generate a broad spectrum of views.

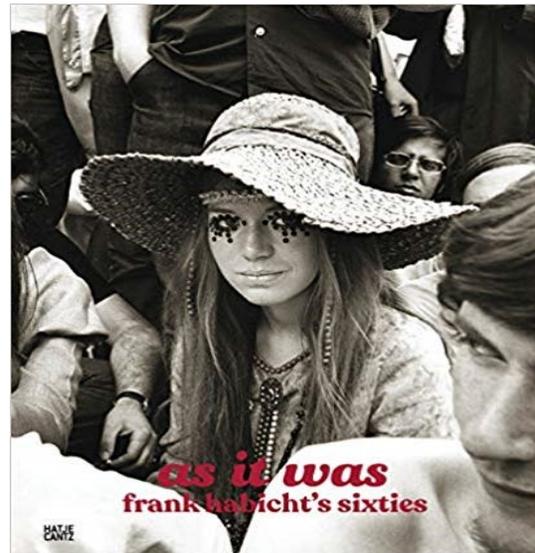
To make the dialogue process manageable, participants were divided into two groups, of four individuals each. The first group consists of John Bishop (naturalistic theism), Graham Oppy (secular naturalism), Eleonore Stump (Thomism), and N. N. Trakakis (anti-theodicy and idealism); the second group is made up of Beverley Clack (feminism), Andrew Gleeson (Wittgensteinianism), Yujin Nagasawa (standard Anselmian theism), and Terrence Tilley (praxis-based Christian theology). The parentheses are merely indicative of the broad frameworks the participants tended to work within, even if the frameworks themselves were not always at the forefront of their discussions or concerns. The basis of the pairings, however, was to enable creative and constructive discussion across these divergent schools of thought, while preserving enough commonality to avoid extreme clashes and misunderstandings. This, to be sure, is a fine balancing act, and it may not be feasible or even desirable to always avoid the kinds of disagreements and conflicts that are typical of philosophical disputes.

The dialogues began with each author preparing a 'Position Statement' providing a detailed overview of the perspective they favour on the problem of evil. These position papers were presented in abbreviated form at a workshop held at the Australian Catholic University, Melbourne campus, on 14-15 July, 2014. During the workshop, participants were also invited to respond to each of the position papers (from their own group) and to field questions from the audience. These initial replies to the Position Statements were subsequently revised and included herein as 'Responses. Finally, the Responses were circulated to the relevant recipients, so that authors could

prepare a second round of replies, commenting upon each of the initial Responses from their group. (Each of these second responses has been collected under the heading of 'Reply to ...')

It is hoped that the essays and exchanges that follow will advance the precedent recently established by other philosophers of religion seeking to push the discipline in new and more promising directions. Such reorientation and renewal is particularly important with the problem of evil, where seemingly fruitless and interminable debates (over theodicy and 'skeptical theism, for example) have raised the need for a consideration of alternative, if not daring and 'riskier, ways of conceiving God's relationship to evil. At a time when God and violence, religion and extremism, are inextricably linked in the minds and politics of many, the need for a rigorous and nuanced understanding of divinity and evil that opens, or re-opens, lines of inquiry that have been unjustly dismissed or neglected is perhaps as great as it has ever been. <>

[As It Was: Frank Habicht's Sixties](#) edited by Florian Habicht, texts by Heather Cremonesi, Frank Habicht, Shelley Jahnke, Valerie Mendes [Hatje Cantz Verlag GmbH, ISBN 9783775744904]



The Sixties are synonymous with dramatic political and social revolution and change. This decade saw the conservatism and restrictions of the preceding postwar nineteen-fifties give way to a more radical

libertine generation committed to fostering the utopian ideals of free love, world peace, and harmony. It was the decade that saw the Beatles and the Rolling Stones invade America, the peak of the civil rights movement, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Malcolm X. Widespread protests against the Vietnam War erupted while the end of the decade gave rise to hope as the world witnessed a man walking on the moon. This fertile environment encompassed Europe in the nineteen-sixties—an era that was captured through the lens of Frank Habicht.

Habicht was born in Hamburg in December 1938. He began his career as a photographer in the early nineteen-sixties attending the Hamburg School of Photography in 1962. He quickly became established as a freelance photographer and writer in Europe, submitting works to be published in magazines that included Camera Magazine, Spiegelreflex Praxis, Twen, Esquire, Die Welt, Sunday Times (UK), and The Guardian. Habicht also gained employment working as a stills photographer for film directors Bryan Forbes, Roman Polanski, and Jules Dassin, as in-house photographer for the Playboy Club in London, and as a freelance photographer for Top of the Pops. These encounters certainly provided Habicht direct access to international pop idols and film stars who became the subjects of his most celebrated photographs, and included Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones, Jane Birkin and Serge Gainsbourg, actors Vanessa Redgrave, Marty Feldman, and Christopher Lee, director Roman Polanski and photographer Lord Lichfield.

Habicht's images capture the uninhibited spirit of the times offering a glimpse into the heady period that still manages to arrest the imagination some fifty years later. His book *Young London: Permissive Paradise* (1969), a social document on London's youth, was published in the late nineteen-sixties and in decades to come gained international recognition. Another photographic book, *In the Sixties* (1997), juxtaposed those who achieved international fame with the unnamed and unrecorded in history books.

In 1981 Habicht left a successful international career to reside in New Zealand's Bay of Islands,

with his wife Christine and sons Sebastian and Florian, drawn to the country for its beauty and tranquility. He now spends much of his time devoted to creating images that celebrate the landscape and community in and around the Bay of Islands where he lives. His two books *Bay of Islands -*

*Where the Sunday Grass is Greener* explores the creation of New Zealand seen through the eyes of a flock of sheep. The acclaimed satirical pictorial is a collaboration with Kiki and Helme Heine. *Bay of Islands - A Paradise Found*, with a text by Bob Molloy, captures the fun and friendship to be found in this stunning part of New Zealand.

In October 2004 Habicht exhibited his *Karma Sixties* collection at Colette in Paris. Frank's fascinating images certainly captivate the wider public, both young and old alike. The images are timeless and contemporary, retaining their relevance either for those generations who experienced the Sixties firsthand or for those who are a product of them.

Habicht's Auckland exhibition, *High Tide and Green Grass*, in June 2007 at Gow Langsford Gallery, attracted nationwide critical acclaim and New Zealand's current affairs TV show *Sunday* paid homage to his work from this immortal decade.

A party in the spirit of his Sixties was held in Moscow on April 18, 2008 at the exclusive Arterium Gallery to celebrate the opening of Frank Habicht's exhibition. Funds were collected by the charitable foundation Peace Planet to aid orphaned children.

In 2011, Frank had a lead role (playing himself) in his son Florian Habicht's feature film, *Love Story*. A hybrid of documentary and fiction set in New York City.

From May to July 2016, Habicht's photographs were featured as part of *Strange and Familiar* at the Barbican Centre, London. Curated by the British photographer Martin Parr, this major exhibition looked at how foreign photographers captured UK identity. It included black-and-white photographs from the thirties to Sixties by iconic photographers such as Henri Cartier-Bresson, Bruce Davidson, and Robert Frank. *Strange and Familiar* was also shown

at the Manchester Art Gallery from November 2016 to May 2017.

In July 2016, Frank's photographs were featured in *An Ideal for Living* at London's foremost commercial photographic gallery Beetles & Huxley (now Huxley-Parlour). The exhibition collated photography from the nineteen-twenties to modern day, looking at Britain's attitudes towards class and race. <>

[Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time: Art Culture, and Exchange across Medieval Saharian Africa](#)

edited by Kathleen Bickford Berzock [Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University in association with Princeton University Press, 9780691182681]

How West African gold and trade across the Sahara were central to the medieval world  
The Sahara Desert was a thriving crossroads of exchange for West Africa, North Africa, the Middle East, and Europe in the medieval period. Fueling this exchange was West African gold, prized for its purity and used for minting currencies and adorning luxury objects such as jewelry, textiles, and religious objects. Caravans made the arduous journey by camel southward across the Sahara carrying goods for trade--glass vessels and beads, glazed ceramics, copper, books, and foodstuffs, including salt, which was obtained in the middle of the desert. Northward, the journey brought not only gold but also ivory, animal hides and leatherwork, spices, and captives from West Africa forced into slavery.

[Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time](#) draws on the latest archaeological discoveries and art historical research to construct a compelling look at medieval trans-Saharan exchange and its legacy.

Contributors from diverse disciplines present case studies that form a rich portrayal of a distant time. Topics include descriptions of key medieval cities around the Sahara; networks of exchange that contributed to the circulation of gold, copper, and ivory and their associated art forms; and medieval glass bead production in West Africa's forest region. The volume also reflects on Morocco's Gnawa material culture, associated with

descendants of West African slaves, and movements of people across the Sahara today.

Featuring a wealth of color images, this fascinating book demonstrates how the rootedness of place, culture, and tradition is closely tied to the circulation of people, objects, and ideas. These "fragments in time" offer irrefutable evidence of the key role that Africa played in medieval history and promote a new understanding of the past and the present.

- Published in association with the Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University
- Exhibition schedule:
  - Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University: January 26-July 21, 2019
  - Aga Khan Museum, Toronto: September 21, 2019-February 23, 2020
  - Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington, DC: April 8-November 29, 2020

#### Contents

Director's Foreword Partners' Forewords  
Acknowledgments Note to the Reader  
SECTION I: Groundwork  
CHAPTER 1 Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time, An Introduction KATHLEEN BICKFORD BERZOCK  
CHAPTER 2 Uncertain Fragments, A Divination CHRIS ABANI  
CHAPTER 3 Views from Afar: Reading Medieval Trans-Saharan Trade through Arabic Accounts ROBERT LAUNAY  
CHAPTER 4 The Sources of Gold Narratives, Technology, and Visual Culture from the Mande and Akan Worlds RALPH A. AUSTEN  
CHAPTER 5 Fragments at Risk: The Protection of Cultural Heritage in Mali, Morocco, and Nigeria MAMADI DEMBÉLÉ, AHMED ETTAHIRI, YOUSSEF KHIARA, AND YOUSUF ABDALLAH USMAN  
SECTION II: Sites  
CHAPTER 6 The Sahara as a Cultural Zone CYNTHIA BECKER

CHAPTER 7 Sijilmasa's Role in the African Gold Trade RONALD A. MESSIER AND ABDALLAH FILI

CHAPTER 8 Essouk-Tadmekka: A Southern Saharan Center of the Early Islamic Camel Caravan Trade SAM NIXON

CHAPTER 9 Gao, a Middle Niger City in Medieval Trade MAMADOU CISSÉ

CHAPTER 10 Urbanization and Trade Networks in the Inland Niger Delta MAMADI DEMBÉLÉ

CHAPTER 11 Politics and Trade in Medieval Northern Nigeria DETLEF GRONENBORN

SECTION III: Matter in Motion

CHAPTER 12 Gold, Ivory, and Copper Materials and Arts of Trans-Saharan Trade SARAH M. GUÉRIN

CHAPTER 13 Dinars as Historical Texts: Documenting the African Gold Trade RONALD A. MESSIER

CHAPTER 14 Gold Processing at the Early Islamic Market Town of Tadmekka, Mali: Preliminary Results from Experimental Replication GIANLUCA PASTORELLI, MARC WALTON, AND SAM NIXON

CHAPTER 15 Medieval Glass Bead Production and Exchange ABIDEMI BABATUNDE BABALOLA

CHAPTER 16 The Written Word: Islamic Literacy and Arabic Manuscripts in West Africa MAURO NOBILI

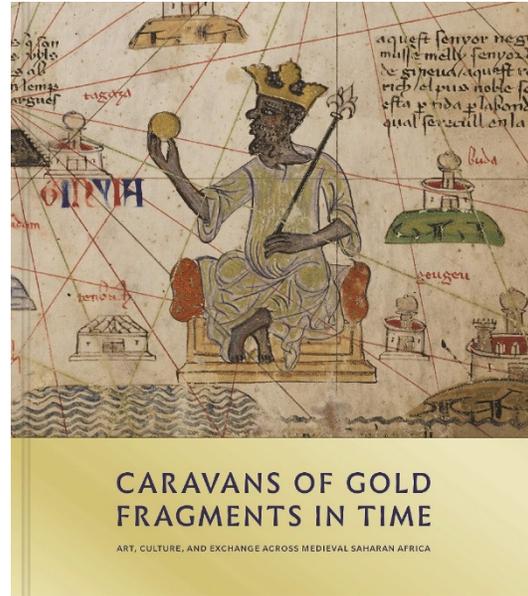
SECTION IV: Reverberations

CHAPTER 17 Red Gold: Things Made of Copper, Bronze, and Brass RAYMOND SILVERMAN

CHAPTER 18 Gnawa Material Culture Innovation across the Sahara CYNTHIA BECKER

CHAPTER 19 Saharan Crossing: The Realities of Migration Today GALYA BEN-ARIEH

Bibliography  
Lenders to the Exhibition  
Contributors



Excerpt: Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time by Kathleen Bickford Berzock

To recreate the world behind the ruin in the land, to reanimate the people behind the sherd of antique pottery, a fragment of the past: this is the work of the archaeological imagination.... The archaeological imagination is rooted in a sensibility, a pervasive set of attitudes towards traces and remains, towards memory, time and temporality, the fabric of history. —Michael Shanks, *The Archaeological Imagination* (2012)

**Seeing Medieval Saharan Africa**  
The Sahara, the world's largest desert, occupies a vast expanse of western Africa. Between the eighth and the sixteenth century, an epoch that corresponds with the medieval period, the Saharan region was the site of world-shaping events, though these have become veiled in popular memory. The book *Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time: Art, Culture, and Exchange across Medieval Saharan Africa* and the exhibition that it accompanies have been organized to reanimate this history, which stretched across boundaries of culture, region, religious practice, and systems of value, and to draw attention to its relevance and importance in the present day. "History is both a discourse of knowledge, and a discourse of power," the philosopher V.Y. Mudimbe incisively declared in his

pivotal book, *The Invention of Africa*.<sup>1</sup> While over time the central role of the African continent in the medieval world has been diminished in historical memory, today's interdisciplinary "global turn" is bringing attention back again to this critical chapter.<sup>2</sup> *Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time* makes a unique contribution to that effort by examining the history and legacy of medieval trans-Saharan exchange through its dispersed and fragmented material remains.

As a close companion to the *Caravans of Gold* exhibition, this volume reflects its content and concerns, which are by necessity circumscribed. As such the volume is not intended to be comprehensive; rather, like the exhibition it consists of fragments, in this case in the form of case studies from diverse disciplinary, geographic, and temporal perspectives with a focus on West Africa and its branching network of connections. Together these provide a fuller but still incomplete view of a provocative past. Because the exhibition relied on partnerships with institutions and individuals working in Mali, Morocco, and Nigeria, examples are drawn from the rich history of these countries. Our focus could equally have been on sites in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, or other countries in and on the fringes of Africa's Western Sudan region, but these were beyond the reach of the project.

Our contemporary moment is defined by a rise of global connectivity, as well as by entrenched ideas about difference. The common representation of the Sahara Desert as a vast emptiness that separates North and sub-Saharan Africa bolsters the perception of a clear difference between the two. Situated at the center of western Africa, the Saharan region also lies between Europe and the Middle East, and it is often described either as a divide or a crossroads. Medieval travel across the Sahara was time-consuming and at times difficult, but it was not an unknown journey nor one void of human contact. As in the past, the contemporary Sahara is a place of movement. People continue to make it their home, while others traverse it for economic gain, education, or to escape conflict. They set off along much the same routes that in the medieval period were traveled by camel caravans engaged in the transportation of goods and

people. *Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time* shifts the popular narrative of Africa's history—seen predominantly through the lens of the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism—by bringing forward an earlier history that reveals thriving, far-reaching systems of circulation and exchange in the Sahara, and the central and foundational role they played in global networks of the era. This history, we argue, must be accounted for in understanding the world today.

The Sahara Desert was initially seen from the north as the route for accessing West African gold, which was highly valued for its purity. A tenth-century description of the Bilad al-Sūdān, the "land of the Blacks," which lay south of the great desert, by the Persian author and traveler al-Istakhrī (d. 957) provides an example: "It is said that no other mine is known to have more abundant or purer gold, but the road there is difficult and the necessary preparations are laborious." Below the Sahara, surplus gold could be acquired by trading high-quality rock salt, sourced in the Sahara, a mineral that was critical to the well-being of humans and animals. Salt is emphasized in the Arabic accounts as highly valued in exchange for gold.<sup>6</sup> Based on this foundation, trans-Saharan routes soon fueled a global economy that stretched well beyond the Sahara and was motivated by desires from all sides for resources and goods from distant lands. Perhaps no single object more clearly illustrates the prominence of West Africa within the medieval world than the elaborate fourteenth-century world map known as the Catalan Atlas. The map was commissioned by Pedro IV of Aragon as a diplomatic gift for his cousin Charles V, the king of France. Fourteenth-century Aragon was a powerful trading empire that encompassed multiple strategically situated islands across the eastern Mediterranean, including Majorca, where the map was drawn by the Jewish cartographer Abraham Cresques (1325-1387). Cresques came from a long line of highly skilled Majorcan cartographers who were renowned for their knowledge of the globe as it was then known, based on accounts gathered from sailors, diplomats, and merchants. The Catalan Atlas presents the world from the perspective of Aragon, emphasizing nautical navigation and

harbors, as well as land routes, key political dynasties, and the location of resources.

### This Book

As a companion volume to the exhibition [Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time](#), this publication takes a wider and a more in-depth view of topics that are introduced by the exhibition. Medieval exchange across the Sahara extended through eight centuries and three continents, and its study today engages multiple disciplines, including archaeology, art history, anthropology, history, literature, religion, and political science. The chapters that follow range across these fields of inquiry, and bring the work of leading scholars into the expansive public sphere. They are unified by a shared focus on western Africa, with the Sahara Desert at its center, and on movement as expressed through concepts such as exchange, circulation, dissemination, and portability. It does not focus on the built environment. Multiple scholars have recognized and analyzed the unique Western Sudanic style of mosque design and construction that developed in the medieval period, and its strong connections to Islam. Such architecture is undoubtedly important to conceptualizing the history of medieval West Africa, and that literature is a natural companion to the work included here.

Section one, *Groundwork*, begins with an introduction sketching the urgent questions of history and the compelling themes that underlie this volume and the exhibition that was its impetus. This is followed by a provocative essay on fragments by the novelist, poet, and essayist Chris Abani. Fragments are the foundation for this project, and Abani moves fluidly from their use in the rituals of Ife divination, to material fragments in the exhibition, to textual fragments, evoking in each case their potential and their mutability. His chapter is an invitation to imagine but also a caution. It reminds us, as we embark on the journey that this book represents, of the open-endedness and affective power of fragments.

Shifting tone, anthropologist Robert Launay provides an overview of the major themes invoked by the medieval Arabic-language accounts of trans-Saharan exchange and considers their inherent shortcomings and impediments. Historian

Ralph A. Austen then examines what is known about the sources and the technologies for obtaining gold in the medieval period and considers changes in the nature of the gold trade as it shifted from the Sahara to the Atlantic coast in the late fifteenth century. This is followed by a joint contribution from Mamadi Dembélé, Ahmed Ettahiri and Youssef Khiara, and Yousuf Abdallah Usman, cultural heritage specialists in Mali, Morocco, and Nigeria respectively, who offer background and perspectives on the pressing matter of protecting Africa's medieval cultural heritage.

Section two, *Sites*, focuses on key sites in Mali, Morocco, and Nigeria that are central to the story of medieval exchange across the Sahara. Art historian Cynthia Becker looks at the Sahara itself, summarizing its environmental characteristics as they have shifted over the medieval period and over subsequent centuries, and considering it as an artistic and cultural zone. This introduction to the Sahara is followed by contributions from archaeologists working on its fringes and hinterlands: Mamadou Cissé introduces the interrelated sites of Gao Ancien and Gao Saney in Mali; Sam Nixon provides an overview of work at Tadmekka, Mali; Ronald A. Messier and Abdallah Fili summarize their decade-long work at Sijilmasa, Morocco; Mamadi Dembélé reviews primary sites across Mali's Inland Niger Delta; and Detlef Gronenborn sets the late medieval site of Durbi Takusheyi, in Nigeria, within the broader context of the Central Sahel region, which lies east of the Niger River and includes the Lake Chad Basin.

Section three, *Matter in Motion*, shifts focus to a series of case studies that highlight the movement of specific materials, objects, and forms of knowledge across the Sahara during the medieval period. Art historian Sarah M. Guérin provides a wide-ranging synthesis of the circulation of gold, copper, and ivory that reveals the interconnectivity of western Africa's Sahara, Savanna, and forest regions with the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and western Europe. Archaeologist Ronald A. Messier outlines how medieval Islamic dinars are an invaluable

source for documenting the transregional demand for West African gold. Archaeologist Sam Nixon

and material scientists Marc Walton and Gianluca Pastorelli present pioneering work to analyze the only known fragments of gold molds and crucibles from West Africa, which were excavated at Tadmekka, Mali, proving that gold was indeed processed below the Sahara. Archaeologist Abidemi Babatunde Babalola summarizes equally important findings for agency south of the Sahara, in this case focusing on glass from the site of Igbo Olokun, Nigeria, which provides new evidence for the local production of a distinctive form of glass beads in Africa's forest region and their circulation northward to urban centers, such as Gao, Mali, involved in trans-Saharan trade. Finally, historian Mauro Nobili considers the dissemination of Arabic literacy across the Western Sudan in the medieval period and the creation of a distinctive literary tradition there. This is documented in numerous medieval stone inscriptions at sites on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert, as well as in the more mobile form of manuscripts, treatises, and amulets on paper. These are the intellectual work of West African Islamic scholars based in cities such as Timbuktu and Jenne, with wider Islamic scholarship, a tradition that has a legacy into the present day.

Section four, Reverberations, presents three final case studies that continue to consider the legacy of medieval trans-Saharan exchange after the late fifteenth century, when the establishment of maritime trade along Africa's west coast effectively undercut the thriving and lucrative trade across the Sahara Desert. The section begins with art historian Raymond Silverman's account of several intriguing copper-alloy vessels, including bowls from Mamluk Egypt and ewers from England, that made their way to West Africa in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. By tracing their histories, Silverman raises important questions about shifts in trade at this critical time, as well as about how the meanings of things change as they shift in place and time. Art historian Cynthia Becker looks at the legacy of trans-Saharan slavery in Morocco through the development of a distinctive identity known as Gnawa, which is associated with the descendants of enslaved West Africans. The book's last chapter, by political scientist Galya Ben-Arieh, considers movement across the Sahara today, focusing on migration and raising important questions about its

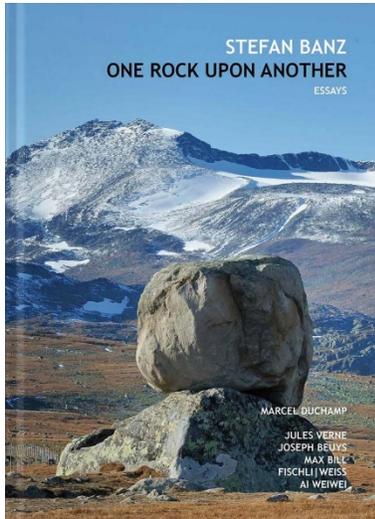
continuity with the past and the disjuncture of present-day geopolitical realities. This chapter, which points to what is to be gained in the present by reflecting on western Africa's medieval past, is a fitting and necessary ending to *Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time*.

### The Archaeological Imagination

[Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time: Art, Culture, and Exchange across Medieval Saharan Africa](#) brings humble yet remarkable remains from sites in Mali, Morocco, and Nigeria into the spotlight along with the histories that they reveal. The challenge of the project and its significance has been in finding ways to reveal the value of these tangible remains of Africa's medieval past as critical points of reference in an effort to comprehend a time that sits enticingly beyond our comprehension. To do this, the project foregrounds the concept of the archaeological imagination, which offers a way of looking at remains of the past that leads us beyond the sticking point created by the absence of a robust archive of firsthand accounts, the favored form of historical evidence. Moving from the excavated fragment to informed supposition about a bigger picture is fundamental to the work of archaeologists. Seeing the validity in this practice, which is the soft center lying at the heart of archaeological science, is critical for seeing history even when the corroborated account or the extant object is absent. Expanding our grasp of the past is important, and revealing West Africa's medieval history holds particular relevance for the present day. Foregrounding the central role of medieval Saharan exchange in connecting West Africa, Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East provides insight into a surprising early globalism across regions that remain deeply intertwined though increasingly conflicted today. <>

[One Rock Upon Another: Marcel Duchamp, Jules Verne, Max Bill, Joseph Beuys, Fischli/Weiss, Ai Weiwei: Essays: Deutsch | English | Français](#) By Stefan Banz [Verlag Für Moderne Kunst, Les Presses Du Réel: 9783903228627]

Verlag für moderne Kunst provides this handsome produced Multilingual edition of insights into Duchamp's reception and appropriations.



In this captivating collection of essays on Marcel Duchamp and his legacy, the renowned Swiss Duchamp expert Stefan Banz (born 1961) explains, among other things, why it was not Walter

Hopps who mounted Duchamp's first solo exhibition in a public institution but Max Bill; what exactly Joseph Beuys had misunderstood about Duchamp when he performed *The Silence of Marcel Duchamp* is Overrated; how Fischli/Weiss appropriated Duchamp's unrealized idea for *Équilibre*; the numerous ways in which Ai Weiwei cites Duchamp in almost all of his major works; and the tremendous influence that novelist Jules Verne had on the artistic approach of this great avant-gardist.

Inhalt | Contents | Sommaire  
 Deutsch  
 Vorbemerkung  
 Joseph Beuys — Das Schweigen Von Marcel Duchamp Wird Überbewertet: Ein Missverständnis  
 Le Rayon Vert  
 Jules Vernes Einfluss Auf Marcel Duchamp Immer Doppelt Und Hauchdünn  
 Max Bill, Fischli 'Weiss Und Marcel Duchamp  
 Fischli/Weiss: Plötzlich Diese Übersicht Hanging Man In Porcelain  
 Ai Weiweis «Hommagen» Auf Marcel Duchamp  
 Abbildungen | Figures | Illustrations

English  
 Preamble

Joseph Beuys—The Silence Of Marcel Duchamp Is Overrated: A Misunderstanding  
 The Green Ray  
 Jules Verne's Influence On Marcel Duchamp  
 Always Double And Infrathin  
 Max Bill, Fischli 'Weiss, And Marcel Duchamp  
 Fischli 'Weiss: Suddenly This Overview  
 Hanging Man In Porcelain  
 Ai Weiwei's "Homages" To Marcel Duchamp

Français  
 Préambule  
 Joseph Beuys — Le Silence De Marcel Duchamp Est Surestimé : Un Malentendu  
 Le Rayon Vert  
 L'influence De Jules Verne Sur Marcel Duchamp  
 Toujours Double Et Inframince  
 Max Bill, Fischli I Weiss Et Marcel Duchamp  
 Fischli Weiss: Soudain Cette Vue D'ensemble  
 Le Pendu De Porcelaine  
 Les «Hommages» D'ai Weiwei À Marcel Duchamp  
 Anhang | Appendix | Appendice

Namensregister | Index of Names | Index des noms  
 Index der meist diskutierten Werke | Index of the Most Discussed Work | Index des oeuvres les plus discutées  
 Textnachweise | Original Sources of Texts | Références bibliographiques  
 Dank | Acknowledgments | Remerciements  
 Autor Author | Auteur

Excerpt: The six essays that have been collected here were written between 2013 and 2017. Half of them deal with important though hitherto ignored or only rudimentarily discussed aspects of the connection between Joseph Beuys, Max Bill, Fischli I Weiss, and Ai Weiwei and the various artistic concepts of Marcel Duchamp. The essay "Joseph Beuys—The Silence Of Marcel Duchamp Is Overrated: A Misunderstanding," written as early as 2013, describes, for example, how Beuys's most famous performance on German television (ZDF) in 1964 came about and goes on to explain why its direct reference to the then suddenly prevailing

myth—namely that Duchamp had long since given up the production of art, adopting silence as his ultimate artistic concept—was based on a calamitous misunderstanding. The text "Max Bill, Fischli / Weiss, and Marcel Duchamp" tells us why it was not Walter Hopps who mounted Duchamp's first solo exhibition in a public institution but Max Bill, and also how familiar Peter Fischli and David Weiss had actually been with this now forgotten exhibition, and that, in 1984, they appropriated Duchamp's unrealized idea for a work that was to be titled *Équilibre* and used it for their own artistic purposes. "Hanging Man In Porcelain: Ai Weiwei's 'Homages' to Marcel Duchamp" examines why this famous Chinese artist and dissident cites Marcel Duchamp in almost all his major works. The fourth essay—"The Green Ray"—is the first to examine the influence of Jules Verne's same-titled novel on Duchamp's major idea of the *Bride and the Bachelors in The Large Glass*. The fifth essay—"Fischli I Weiss: Suddenly This Overview"—analyzes the important substantive components of two clay sculptures from this early major work of the famous Swiss artist duo, while the sixth essay—"Always Double And Infrathin"—deals concisely and pointedly with the theme of duplication and the idea of *inframince* in Duchamp's great legacy, the diorama *Étant donnés*, a work that has for years played an important role in Stefan Banz's theoretical and artistic explorations. Translated from the German by John Brogden <>

[Dom Sylvester Houédard](#) edited by Andrew Hunt and Nicola Simpson [Ridinghouse 9781909932364]

Widely recognised by his contemporaries as one of the leading theorists and outstanding practitioners of concrete poetry, Dom Sylvester Houédard (1924-92) is an *unsung* intellect of the twentieth century.

The aim of this book is to reinstate the Benedictine monk and artist as an important figure in the countercultural and transnational art movements of the 1960s and early 1970s, especially within kinetic and concrete poetry. This publication also presents an extensive series of Houédard's highly personal 'typestracts' - typewriter works - for the first time.

Houédard is deeply relevant to our digital age: we may no longer use an Olivetti Lettera-22 typewriter, as he did, but we all increasingly type rather than handwrite our lives. Houédard would have been delighted by the permutational possibilities offered by the 140 characters in a tweet, or the visual shorthand of emojis and hashtags. For this monk, everything connected and was interconnected. The opportunity for the individual to compose 'machinepoems' or text-works that 'move thru the air' in a 'global kinkon' is now greater than ever.

Contents  
 Foreword  
 Nicola Simpson can yrt/writer wiggle its ?ears  
 dsh bits of autobiography  
 Charles Verey Dom Sylvester Houédard: to widen the context  
 Guy Brett Gloster Ode cosmic poet  
 dsh me as poet rather than critic  
 Guy Brett visual poetries  
 dsh paradada  
 dsh the wider concrete  
 dsh intro to the catalogue of arlington-une 1966  
 dsh apophatic art  
 dsh the aesthetics of the death wish  
 dsh parameters & paramitas  
 Nicola Simpson in conversation with Andrew Hunt  
 Gustavo Grandal Montero kinkon biobib  
 Authors'  
 Biographies

dom  
 sylvester  
 houédard

Excerpt: The aim of this publication is to help reinstate the Benedictine monk and artist Dom Sylvester Houédard (1924-92) as an important figure in the countercultural and transnational art movements of the

1960s and early 1970s. Widely recognised at this time as one of the leading theorists and outstanding practitioners of concrete poetry, he is still remembered by his contemporaries as an *unsung*



Therefore the decision was made to present these works chronologically, with a few exceptions, making visible a trajectory through Houédard's developing experimentation, confidence and skill. For an artist so preoccupied with the moment of creation - an instant, in his words, in which to produce a 'spontaneous get-with-it poem' out of a 'permanent awareness' of 'an unextended present' - the date of composition is not to be overlooked.

Rare and previously unpublished texts by Houédard are also included in date order. Again, these demonstrate his embrace of co-existent art movements and how these correspondences influenced his work. Of particular interest is his role in the Ravensbourne Symposium on Creation Destruction and Chemical Change and the subsequent Destruction in Art Symposium. We are delighted to include the entire facsimile of Houédard's record and comment on the Ravensbourne symposium and the unpublished typescript of the talk he gave at DIAS. These appear alongside texts that elucidate his central role in a matrix of international artists, theologians, philosophers and poets and key historical events in countercultural London. Critical essays by Guy Brett and Charles Verey also provide previously unknown scholarship about Houédard's early life and the events leading to his joining monastic life at Prinknash Abbey in 1949 for his ordination a decade later.



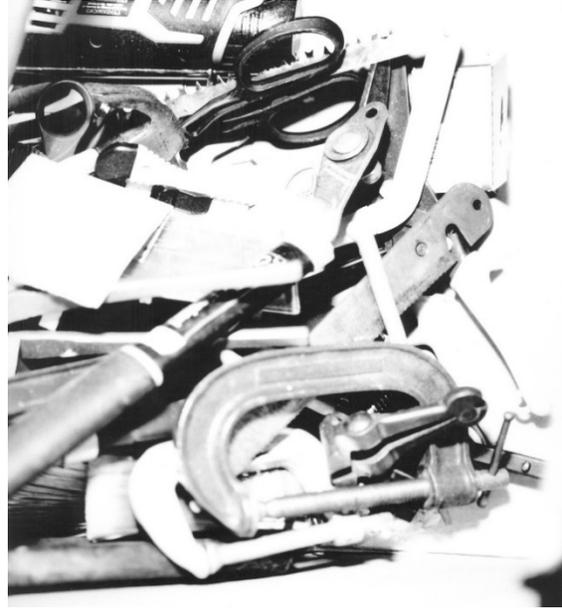
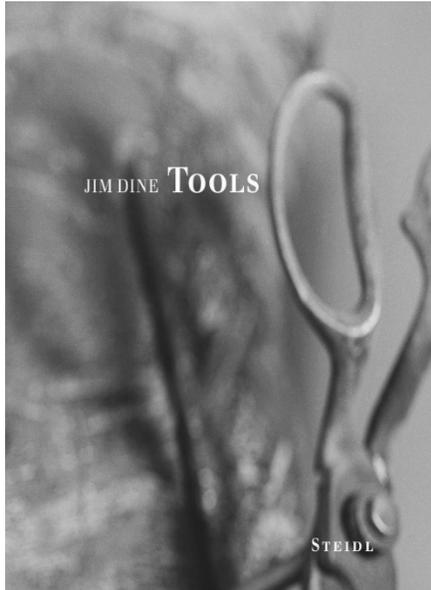
This publication is connected to two exhibitions of concrete poetry at Richard Saltoun Gallery during

early-to-mid 2017, 'Integration Alone is Not Enough' and 'Dom Sylvester Houédard: Typestracts', the latter being the first substantial presentation of Houédard's typestracts in Britain for over four decades. The two previous notable exhibitions were the solo retrospectives at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1971 and the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle in 1972.

Jasia Reichardt, curator of ICA London's seminal exhibitions 'Between Poetry and Painting' (1965) and 'Cybernetic Serendipity' (1968), has stated that concrete poetry and computer art were the first truly international movements, more so than the concurrent related historical genres of Conceptual art and Minimalism. Apart from the fact that Reichardt's ground-breaking exhibitions presented examples of networks in the cross-pollination of painting, literature and computer art, they also stage the potential for further developments in a contemporary digital environment.

We may no longer use an instrument such as Houédard's Olivetti Lettera-22 typewriter, but it is indisputable that we all type rather than handwrite our lives. Houédard's understanding of the creative potential of the signs and media we use to communicate has a potent relevance today. The manifestos of the concrete poets in the 1960s stated how they sought to integrate new technological methods into their work in an attempt to humanise scientific advances. Houédard would have been delighted by the permutational possibilities offered by the 140 characters in a tweet or the shorthand of emojis and hashtags. For this monk, everything connected and was interconnected. The opportunity for the individual to compose 'machine-poems' or text-works that 'move thru the air' in a 'global kinkon' is now greater than ever. <>

[Jim Dine: Tools](#) by Jim Dine [Steidl, 9783869306476]



A portfolio of 50 b&w photos of used hand tools in situ.

"When I was born, I came home to my grandfather's house. His name was Morris Cohen. He was my mother's father. I lived with him for three years until my parents built a small little house and we moved away. But from the time I was born until he died when I was 19, I either spoke to him or saw him every day. He owned a hardware store that catered to plumbers, electricians, woodworkers, contractors. It was an early version of a contractors' supply store. It was called The Save Supply Company. He was a very large man, and he felt he could do anything with his hands. He made tables, he fixed automobiles, he was an electrician, and he was lousy at all of it. But through sheer force of will, he forged ahead." —Jim Dine



[Against Creativity](#) by Oli Mould [Verso, 9781786636492]

Everything you have been told about creativity is wrong.

From line managers, corporate CEOs, urban designers, teachers, politicians, mayors, advertisers and even our friends and family, the message is 'be creative'. Creativity is heralded as the driving force of our contemporary society; celebrated as agile, progressive and liberating. It is the spring of the knowledge economy and shapes the cities we inhabit. It even defines our politics. What could possibly be wrong with this?

In this brilliant, counter intuitive blast Oli Mould demands that we rethink the story we are being sold. Behind the novelty, he shows that creativity is a barely hidden form of neoliberal appropriation. It is a regime that prioritizes individual success over collective flourishing. It refuses to recognise anything - job, place, person - that is not profitable. And it impacts on everything around us: the places where we work, the way we are managed, how we spend our leisure time.

Is there an alternative? Mould offers a radical redefinition of creativity, one embedded in the idea of collective flourishing, outside the tyranny of profit. Bold, passionate and refreshing, *Against Creativity*, is a timely correction to the doctrine of our times.

Contents  
 Introduction: What Is Creativity?  
 Work: Relentless Creativity  
 People: Marginal Creativity  
 Politics: Austere Creativity  
 Technology: Algorithmic Creativity  
 The City: Concrete Creativity  
 Conclusion: Impossible Creativity  
 Acknowledgments  
 Notes  
 Index

Excerpt: What Is Creativity?

On a cold February night in New York City in 2012, I exited a Midtown bar with a friend, having just taken in a typical Broadway mega-musical. Before we had the chance to get our bearings, an unkempt man dressed in an ill-fitting bomber jacket and a New York Yankees beanie confronted us. My

initial reaction was, I'm ashamed to say, one repeated countless times in cities all over the world when tourists encounter the homeless: an attempt to dodge the situation as quickly as possible. However, before I could formulate an excuse, he broke into song. He had the most exquisite voice. It would not have sounded out of place in the show I had watched that night.

Having been perhaps a bit more inebriated than I would like to have been, I can't recall the exact words, but it started with the line 'Don't be bashful, don't be shy, / Don't be afraid of this homeless guy.' The lyrics included a request for money. He was (or so he sang) only a few dollars short of the price of a Broadway musical course in which he was going to be top of the class. I forget the rest of the song, primarily because I was too busy laughing and fumbling in my pockets for change. Could my money help him turn his life around and enter the magical and creative world of Broadway? Would his name soon be inscribed in neon above the bustling Manhattan streets?

I walked away from the encounter elated. Here was a guy down on his luck, sleeping rough in the streets, but possessing a talent for song, comedy and salesmanship. He had taken the situation he found himself in and capitalized on it artistically. He was engaging in music, dance and comedy, aping the stereotypical New York City street performer so ubiquitous in countless rags-to-riches stories. A homeless person becomes a street performer, becomes a Broadway extra, becomes the star, becomes rich and famous — proof that anyone can make it. He was being very creative, wasn't he?

The more I thought about it, though, the answer I hit on was no. Talented? Absolutely. Creative? No. To my eternal regret, I didn't ask about his life, but his story can't have been unique: back in 2012, there were approximately 45,000 homeless people in New York City (a figure still rising today). He was living in a global city that has developed under a regime of capitalism in which severe (and ever-increasing) social injustices are inbuilt; because of these injustices people often have to beg, perform or rob people for money just to survive. This man clearly had a gift, and he was using it in a way

that many others with similar talent use it: he was selling it. This man, who found himself without a home at the hands of a rampant, unjust and gentrifying urban market, was doing what he thought he must do in order to survive. He was using the talents he had just to scrape by, so he could perform the following day, and every other day, over and over again.'

Today, the system that causes homelessness — and the other related injustices: precariousness, racism and the emboldening of fascism, massive inequality, global health epidemics and the rest — is the very same system that tells us we must be 'creative' to progress. This is because capitalism of the twenty-first century, turbocharged by neoliberalism, has redefined creativity to feed its own growth. Being creative in today's society has only one meaning: to carry on producing the status quo. The continual growth of capitalism has become the prevailing order of life.

It has not always been this way. Creativity has been, and still is, a force for change in the world. It is a collective energy that has the potential to tackle capitalism's injustices rather than augment them. Creativity can be used to produce more social justice in the world, but it must be rescued from its current incarceration as purely an engine for economic growth. This book will expose how creativity is wielded for profit. It will outline the ways in which people and institutions are being told to be creative in order to proliferate more of the same. But it will also highlight the people and processes that are against this kind of creativity, in that they forge entirely new ways of societal organisation. They are mobilizing it in a different way. They are enacting a creativity that experiments with new ways of living, ways that conjure entirely new experiences that simply would not exist under capitalism.

### A History of Creativity

Creativity has always been a slippery and nebulous concept. But strip away the millennia of etymological layering, and you are left with a kernel of truth: it is the power to create something from nothing. And it is a 'power' rather than an 'ability'. Being creative is more than the 'ability' to create something from nothing in response to a

particular need or lack. Nor is it simply an ability to produce a new product that the market has deemed necessary. Creativity is a power because it blends knowledge (from the institutional and mechanistic level to the pre-cognitive), agency, and importantly desire to create something that does not yet exist.' Far from being reactive, it is proactive; it drives society into new worlds of living.

So rather than 'What is creativity?' the more pertinent questions become 'Who or what has that power and desire?' and 'What is the something that is being created?' In ancient societies, this power was always a divine power, a God that made the Heavens and the Earth. From traditional Judeo-Christian views of the all-powerful Creator God and the story of Genesis, to Ptah the Egyptian demiurge who brought the world into being by simply thinking it, the act of pure creation has been beyond human agency. Mere mortals were imperfect sinful beings, subservient to an Almighty who had ultimate and unlimited powers to build something out of nothing.

But since the Enlightenment, Western civilization began to dominate, colonize and exploit the resources of our planet. Religions that preached the denial of the self and subservience to an external 'other' creative power were incompatible with a need for a better, richer way of life. So people began to look inward for sources of creativity. According to the doctrine of the dominant faith of the Western world, Christianity, we were made in the image of God, and so we too had the power to create. Hence to separate ourselves from the rest of God's creation, we imbued ourselves with the power to create.

During the Enlightenment, thinkers such as Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau saw that human imagination and creativity was the path to progress, not a blind genuflection to an all-powerful God. Science was the way forward, not faith. As Nietzsche proclaimed, God was dead, and we had killed Him.' As a result, it was craftspeople, philosophers and scientists who were considered 'creative': those who laboured for a lifetime to hone their intellect and their skills (and passed those skills down through the generations) were bringing into being

new ideas and tools that allowed us to progress as a civilization.' Humanity, not God, was creating something from nothing.

What's more, 'artistic' creativity and a broader appreciation of culture were marbled through everyday life; they were part of the commons. Music, poetry and art were not considered to emanate from creative 'genius' or a higher cultural plane, but were simply part of collective social life. Shakespeare, in his day, would not have been thought a genius at all: he would have been seen as a craftsman, a wordsmith whose work was to be appreciated, enjoyed and 'consumed' collectively.

Although creativity was increasingly thought of as an individualistic trait, there were alternative schools of thought. Groups such as the Diggers and the Levellers in England in the mid-seventeenth century vaunted the commons as more important to human progress than self-interest. The intricate co-operation among a group tackling the complexities of sharing and maintaining land was considered very creative. It was a collaborative and collective creativity that encouraged equality between people. Cultural production and artistic endeavour were integral factors in the process of maintaining a just society.

But it was a mode of societal organisation that, even at the time, was under increasing pressure from a dominant mode of thinking that focused on self-interest, the hoarding of private wealth and a reliance on interpersonal competition (rather than mutual aid) to provide equality.

As European powers began to plunder more of the world, they became richer and richer. Fuelled by a growing capitalist way of life that encouraged self-interest over cooperation (catalysed by the Enlightenment doctrines of competition as a key factor in societal progress that spawned such ideologies such as social Darwinism) the wealthy merchants wanted to privatize the enjoyment they got from the 'artistic' culture they had experienced collectively. The greed and selfishness around which Western societies were increasingly being organized bred a new desire to horde land (often from collectives like the Diggers) and, crucially, cultural products.

So the wealthy began to commission great works of art, and the more impressive these were, the more status they granted the commissioner. In combination with a phase of romanticized individualism, we saw the privatization of creativity. The artist producing the work became increasingly important, a development that, over time, wrenched artistic production out of the collective social arena, individualized the creative process and gave birth to the modern conception of the 'creative genius'.

The onset of the Industrial Revolution further entrenched the divide between those who were able to 'consume' art and those who were not. The wealthy (merchants, factory owners, etc.) had more time and resources to consume culture, while the workers spent more time on the factory floors. With the onset of the printing press, and later photographic and cinematic technology, cultural production itself became industrialized. Adorno and Horkheimer, in their now seminal text *The Culture Industry*, argued that capitalism had enabled this mass-production of culture. It had entrenched a divide between a popular culture that numbed the masses into passivity, and a high culture that heightened the senses.' This separation of cultural consumption into popular and high art characterized much of the twentieth century's articulation of creativity: artists produced art worthy of the name, the rest was industrialized forms of mass objects that had far more to do with machine-like production than it did creative genius. Schönberg and Picasso were creative; the Hollywood studios were not.'

So creativity, or more accurately the power to create something from nothing, had gone from being a divine power, to a socialized and collective endeavour, to an individual characteristic that could be traded. Being creative now had value. It was a character trait that was much sought after by employers, businesses and governments; it was an exchange value to be exploited. And this is where the UK government plays an important role in the contemporary etymology of creativity.

In 1997, Tony Blair swept into power. Much of the Labour government's early success lay in embracing the concept of 'Cool Britannia', an exultation of the

UK's pop culture and artists. In a reversal of the divide that Adorno and Horkheimer viewed as indicative of capitalism's culture industry, Blair's 'New' Labour party celebrated popular culture and the creativity at its core. By doing this, New Labour caused two major structural shifts in the socioeconomics of culture and creativity. It related to the 'people' on a national level (with its championing of popular culture), and moved the economy from post-industrial services to the proliferation of knowledge-based work (of all skill sets, ranging from call centres to start-ups). The former of these structural shifts got New Labour the votes, while the latter allowed it to advance a rhetoric of creativity as having an economic value and to forge a brand-new growth agenda based on knowledge, entrepreneurship and innovation.

In 1998, it created the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and set about formulating a remit for the creative industries' from the remnants of an unfavourable and out-of-date cultural industry policy Using templates forged in Silicon Valley and Hollywood, where the profitability of intellectual property had been perfected (not least by an army of legal service professionals and a flexible, autonomous business model), this new UK government set about adopting a cultural production policy that championed its competitiveness, global reach and viability for UK plc.

It was a phenomenal economic success. The creative industries began to be championed as the UK's flagship sector. In 2016, they were estimated to be worth £84.1 bn to the UK economy, and employed around 2 million people." Not even the global financial crisis of 2008 curtailed their growth. As this success became celebrated, countries all over the world began to replicate the rhetoric and use the language of creativity in their economic and political narratives. So much so that today 'creativity' is applied to more and more aspects of our lives.

Now, everyone is encouraged to be creative — at work, in our personal lives, in our political activities, in the neighbourhoods in which we live, in schools, in our leisure time, in the choices we make in what we eat every night, in how we design our CVs. We are

bombarded by messages that by being creative, we will live better, more efficient and more enjoyable lives.

From line managers, corporate CEOs, urban designers, teachers, politicians, mayors, advertisers and even our friends and family, the message is 'be creative' and all will work out for the better. They eulogize that we now live in 'creative times' and we are encouraged by 'thought leaders' to free ourselves from the shackles of bureaucracy, centralized power and social straightjackets, and 'unleash' the inner creative entrepreneur. In doing so, we will create innovative products and services that will empower us in work and social life.

Moreover, we are told that this version of creativity is no longer the privilege of an elite 'genius' few; it is something that everyone has. Creativity can be found in unskilled amateurs, on the street, on the shop floor or in the waiting room. We are all invited to take part in this new democratic and liberating form of creativity and in so doing, we will create new (often digital) products and processes that will transform social and economic life.

Contemporary society is formulated, operated and maintained with creativity as the core source of progress. This is having a huge impact on everything around us, from the places where we work to the ways we are managed. The traditional corporate hierarchy is now a defunct system that negates creative activity. Governments are too bureaucratic and stifle innovative policy thinking. Regulation is the enemy of flexible, agile and creative work. Social services, charities and other third sector institutions are failing not because their funding has been drastically cut, but because they are not creative enough. Hospitals, schools and universities that fail do so because they are insufficiently entrepreneurial and can't adapt to a rapidly changing marketplace and digital technologies. With the onset of this language, institutionalized into terms such as 'the creative industries', the 'creative economy', and the 'creative class', creativity became the critical paradigm of economic growth.

The spread of this economized and capitalism-friendly version of creativity has been

turbocharged by the infusion of neoliberal ideologies. Formulated in the intellectual cauldron of the Chicago School of the 1940s and '50s, neoliberalism has become one of the most prevalent ideological forces of our time. Various readings of neoliberalism have seen it viewed as a mixture of free-market economic thought, the elevation of self-interest as the guiding force of progress, minimal state intervention and, increasingly, invasive forms of biopolitical control."

At its core, though, neoliberalism is about the marketization of everything, the imprinting of economic rationalities into the deepest recesses of everyday life. The political theorist Wendy Brown has argued that neoliberalism 'configures human beings exhaustively as market actors'. Every decision we take then becomes an act of weighing up the costs and benefits of choosing one option over another. If I hug my child now, will it help her become a more confident and employable adult? If I go for a run now, will it mean I'm able to be more productive later? Swipe left or right for love? If I spend more time counselling this student will it increase my student feedback scores?

Seen as a means of societal organisation, neoliberalism was openly adopted by key world leaders in the '70s and '80s, notably Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Reagan in the US. One of their key tropes was the importance of the 'enterprising self'. It wasn't up to the government or society to help you out: if you wanted to succeed in this world, you had to unleash the inner entrepreneur. It is easy to see then how neoliberalism and the creativity rhetoric go hand-in-glove. Being creative today means seeing the world around you as a resource to fuel your inner entrepreneur. Creativity is a distinctly neoliberal trait because it feeds the notion that the world and everything in it can be monetized. The language of creativity has been subsumed by capitalism.

### Capitalism's Creativity

The dominant narrative of creativity is one of creating more of the same. Contemporary capitalism has commandeered creativity to ensure its own growth and maintain the centralisation and monetisation of what it generates. Marx prophetically argued that capitalism does not see

its limits as limits at all, only as barriers to be overcome. Its relentless pursuit of resources to exploit, and wealth to generate for the elite, means that the only creativity capitalism has is in destroying alternatives and turning them into fertile and stable ground for further growth.

The social theorists Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, in their work *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, have argued that in the world after the protests in Paris in 1968 (and the counter-cultural revolution of the '60s more broadly), capitalism's growth has become predatory. It preys on the people, ideas, things and movements that are in direct opposition to it. By mobilizing the creative industries of advertising, branding and public relations, contemporary capitalism actively seeks out those who are opposed to it, and offers fame and fortune. In essence, capitalism stabilizes those movements, people and ideas that are 'outside' it by naming them. It brings them into the 'mainstream' and the broader public consciousness. It does all this to prep them for commercialisation. Many countercultural movements, from hippy culture to punk to skateboarding, have fallen foul of capitalism's lure of monetary reward. In the twenty-first century, this process of co-option has become intensely rapid, and in some cases, extremely crass.

Take for example the furor over an advert for Pepsi that aired briefly in early 2017. The advert is focused on a laughably generic protest march, whose participants carry placards with slogans such as 'join the conversation' and 'love'. A fashion model is taking part in a photo-shoot nearby, and spies an identikit male counterpart (complete with a Pepsi can, of course) in the rally who seductively beckons her to join in. She throws off the shackles of her manicured beauty by discarding a blond wig and smudging her perfectly applied lipstick, and joins the throngs of the protest. She then grabs a Pepsi can of her own from an ice bucket and hands it to a policeman who is standing guard alongside the rally. He sips the refreshing soda, nods approvingly to the fashion model and to his fellow law enforcers. Everyone cheers and hugs each other and the screen fades to black. 'Live Bolder. Live Louder. Live for now'. Drink Pepsi.'

The advert rapidly received opprobrium on social and mainstream media platforms." At a time of intense anger in the US, with marches against Donald Trump's presidency and institutional racism in the police, this advert was a blatant co-option of protest aesthetics to hawk a sugary soda drink. With a less than subtle riff on the famous image of Leshia Evans being handcuffed by police officers in riot gear at Baton Rouge in 2016, Pepsi sanitized protest and redirected the powerful imagery of urban-based activism away from the social injustices they are trying to correct, to selling more drinks. Deaths in police custody, and the oppression of protesters by police who used kettling, pepper spraying and wrongful arrests were (and still are) raw in the public imagination, and when Pepsi aped the protest 'look' for gain, the rebuttal was rightfully swift, and their retraction welcome.

But the very presence of such a branding exercise is symptomatic of how capitalism mobilizes its agitators as vehicles for its proliferation. Drawing on an advertising and technology industry that scours the social world for images, movements and experiences yet to be commercialized, capitalism's 'creative' edge leaches any possibility that these could be utilized to create alternative social worlds. Any movement (be it a countercultural group, protest movement, meme or activist ideology) that is looking to destabilize capitalism is viewed as a potential market to exploit.

Hence, capitalism's 'creative' power does not create, it appropriates. It offers stability to dissenting voices via financial incentives, recognition, or even the promise of a rest from the emotional and physical exhaustion of constant resistive practices. But in so doing, those anti-capitalisms cease their destabilizing practices: they become fertile grounds that can be harvested for more profit. Indeed, this is how capitalism's appropriative mechanisms have been so successful; it is the creativity rhetoric fuelled by the ideology of self-interest, market logics and competition that has been wielded as capitalism's most potent weapon. It has become the very means by which capitalism can boast: 'There is no alternative.'

## Against Creativity

The following chapters highlight the ways capitalism co-opts creativity for its own growth. Through the prisms of work, people, politics, technology and the city we will focus our attention on how everyday life is being saturated by a creativity rhetoric that actively discourages us to work 'creatively'; and move towards a horizon of impossibility beyond the appropriative capitalism of the contemporary world. This book is in opposition to the way in which we are told to be creative; it is against creativity.

But in highlighting the injustices of this articulation of creativity, I wish to show how there can be an alternative, perhaps revolutionary creativity; one that is about creating new phenomena to which capitalism is unaware. It is increasingly difficult to see, but there is a powerful force in the margins of society and in the fissures of the commercialized world that are destabilizing the ground on which capitalism's future is being harvested.

Creativity should be about seeking out those activities, people, things and ephemera that resist co-option, appropriation and stabilization by capitalism. More than that, it should be about amplifying them. It is this version of creativity that this book looks to champion. <>

[Pacific Legacy: Image and Memory from World War II in the Pacific](#) by Rex Alan Smith & Gerald A. Meehl [Abbeville Press, 9780789213334]

The classic photo book about the battlegrounds of the Pacific Theater then and now—updated with new information about the preservation and accessibility of these historic sites

Pacific Legacy offers an unprecedented record of the relics of World War II that have survived on the islands of the Pacific: American landing craft rusting on the reefs where they were stopped by enemy fire; shell-pocked Japanese fortifications; fallen aircraft overgrown by jungle; packed-coral landing strips still as good as new. These evocative color images are paired with archival photographs that show the same tropical battlegrounds as they appeared in wartime.

The text covers the entire war in the Pacific, from the attack on Pearl Harbor to Japan's surrender in Tokyo Bay. The principal battles are recounted hour-by-hour, drawing heavily on firsthand accounts. This vivid narrative helps the reader visualize what it was really like to be at war in the Pacific, doggedly island-hopping to victory.

CONTENTS  
 PACIFIC WAR CHRONOLOGY  
 FOREWORD Joe Foss  
 PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION  
 Gerald A. Medal  
 PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION  
 CHAPTER 1  
 THIS IS NO DRILL!  
 The Attack on Pearl Harbor / Pearl Harbor / Remember Wake Island / The Doolittle Raid on Tokyo  
 CHAPTER 2  
 THE TIME-BUYERS  
 Losing the Philippines  
 THE BATAAN DEATH MARCH  
 Surrendering Corregidor  
 CHAPTER 3  
 THE LONG ROAD BACK  
 Invading Guadalcanal  
 Guadalcanal / SOUVENIR MANIA / Tulagi and the PT Boats / Munda and the Evolution of an Island Base / Bora Bora, the Island Paradise  
 Chapter 4  
 A THOUSAND HONORED DEAD  
 Overcoming Tarawa  
 Tarawa / EVENTS AT SEA / Guam, Saipan, and Tinian: The B-29 Bases / On the Sidelines / Peleliu: The Unnecessary Sacrifice / SUBMARINES / They Also Serve Who Stand and Wait / Returning to the Philippines /  
 CHAPTER 5  
 UNCOMMON VALOR A COMMON VIRTUE  
 Securing Iwojima  
 Iwo Jima / The Interpreters / Pacific Island Natives / THE CARRIERS / Okinawa: The Last Land Battle 252  
 Chapter 6  
 ENDING THE PACIFIC WAR  
 Bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki 263  
 The Atom Bombs and the Japanese Surrender

## EPILOGUE

The Pacific War in Hollywood / Posters for the Home Front /  
 SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY /  
 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS / PICTURE CREDITS / INDEX

Excerpt: With marine fighter squadron VMF, I landed my F4F WILDCAT on the island of Guadalcanal on October 9, 1942. From the air it looked like a tropical paradise, but, for a guy from the plains of South Dakota, terra firma came as something of a rude shock. We landed right after a Japanese bombing raid, and Guadalcanal turned out to be what the Australians had called it: "a bloody, stinking hole." There were leeches, poisonous spiders, scorpions, and malarial mosquitoes, and the island had only two seasons: wet, hot, and steamy, and wetter, hotter, and steamier. It was a climate in which nothing ever dried out, including us, and fungus infections flourished.

We were there because, after conquering everything else in the western Pacific, Japan now wanted Australia. Well aware that Australia, with most of her fighting men in Europe or North Africa with the British, could only survive through steady supplies and support from the United States, the Japanese were building on Guadalcanal a bomber base that if completed would enable them to sever the vital America-to-Australia supply line. The consequences of that happening would be so serious that in August 1942 the U.S. First Marine Division was sent to Guadalcanal to see that it did not come about.

It was a drastic decision, for America was far from ready for such an operation. Because of widespread pacifist sentiment in the 1930s and lack of preparation for war, America's armed forces in 1942 were still seriously under-equipped and under-trained. Moreover, to secure Guadalcanal, the Marines would have to be landed from the sea in small boats, facing a well-entrenched enemy, a hazardous type of operation with a bad history of failure and high casualties.

Still, on August 7, 1942, the Marines arrived at Guadalcanal, began landing, and received more bad news. Having promised the invasion force seventy-two hours of Naval protection, the

commander of the battle fleet, fearing loss of his aircraft carriers from a Japanese counterattack, decided to withdraw his support at the end of the second day. Left unprotected, the transports and supply ships also withdrew, carrying with them some of the invasion force and about half of the operation's supplies.

All of this should have meant certain disaster for the Americans when Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto dispatched an experienced Japanese battle force charged with pushing the invaders into the sea. Most of the Marines meeting this force had never seen combat. Many were in their teens. A year or so earlier, most had not even been Marines. And yet, on the night of August 21, 1942, those untested, under-equipped, and seemingly unqualified young men didn't just beat back the attacking force, they wiped it out, handing the Japanese Army its first defeat in a thousand years.

And that was only the beginning. By the time I got there those young, civilian soldier Marines had withstood every attack the Japanese could throw at them and were still at it enduring the stress of almost nightly bombings and shellings from Japanese ships. On one night that I remember well, the shelling lasted from one to three in the morning, and over that time nine hundred shells exploded on the island in the vicinity of the airfield. For minutes at a time the roar of explosions was so loud and the pain in my ears so intense that I could do nothing but hold my hands over my ears and cringe. Those two hours were indescribable. Unless you've been through it, you just can't imagine what it's like.

But the Marines hung in there and took America's first step on the road to victory, creating a turning point in the war by being first to recapture territory that Japan had seized. Ordinary men, swallowing their fear, rising to the need, and, against heavy odds, got the job done. But it was just a sample of what would take place later on other beaches and other islands in the Pacific.

There was another side to the war. My old friend Jack Conger attempted to rescue a Japanese pilot who had parachuted into the sea. When Jack reached down to grab the enemy airman's life vest to pull him into the boat, the pilot smiled and

extended an arm up to his rescuer. As the two clasped hands, the Japanese pilot whipped his other arm around and rammed the barrel of a cocked 8mm Nambu pistol between Conger's eyes and pulled the trigger. The gun misfired, but Conger threw himself so violently backward against the other side of the boat that back problems plagued him the rest of his life. Oddly enough, in April 1990, Jack met this same Japanese pilot, Shiro Ishikawa, and the two veterans shook hands and talked for the first time since their encounter forty- eight years earlier. And there was Saburo Sakai, Japan's top fighter ace to survive the war. I ended up sharing the platform with him at university symposiums after the war, and one time he told me that I was his best friend in America.

Significant moments like these may be locked in history, but time heals, and God gives us a forgiving heart. The fact that after the bitterness of war such friendships could grow is for me a significant legacy of the Pacific war.

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It has been sixteen years since my coauthor Rex Alan Smith and I put together the first edition of *Pacific Legacy*. Our intention was to tell the story of World War II in the Pacific with then-and-now images of its principal battlegrounds. The challenge, however, was to place these images in a coherent historical narrative without becoming overwhelmed by the many facets and infinite details of the war in the Pacifica monumental action that encompassed forty million square miles, with only scattered bits of islands to focus the battles. And it was not just the battles that made the Pacific war unique. Due to the incredible distances involved, the defense and supply chains stretched thousands of miles through hundreds of islands. Only a very small fraction of those who served in the Pacific ever saw action, with many thousands more stationed on remote, isolated, exotic, and, under other circumstances, romantic island outposts across the watery expanse of the Pacific. We decided that the best way to recount this complicated and compelling story, and to convey the significance of the photographs, was through the voices of the veterans themselves. As we wrote

in our 2002 preface, "The vivid images and memories in the minds of the veterans are the key elements ... to recapture impressions of the war and its times, the sight, sound and feel—thereby enabling readers who lived through those times to remember and relive them, and to allow those many more who were never there to get a sense of how it really was."

To that end, Rex and I interviewed many surviving Pacific war veterans in the late 1990s. At that time, most were in their late seventies and retained memories so vivid that little editing was required. We only had to choose the quotes most appropriate to bring the images and history alive. The oral histories were so evocative that we subsequently compiled and published complete stories from about seventy Pacific war veterans, a group that included Americans, Japanese, and Pacific islanders, in a separate volume entitled *Pacific War Stories* (2004).

Since *Pacific Legacy's* original publication, most of the veterans we interviewed have passed away, along with most others who had any firsthand memories of the war years. Any of that generation who have survived to date, the remaining eyewitnesses to history, are now in their nineties. *Pacific Legacy* has turned into a history rescue project. With the rapid passing of the World War II generation, there are few eyewitnesses left to tell the story. We must now rely on images, recordings, and written accounts of their experiences to bring that history back to life, and these are what *Pacific Legacy* provides.

Some of the eyewitnesses we have lost were directly involved in the preparation of this book. Joe Foss, who wrote the foreword, was a Medal of Honor winner for his heroics as a Marine fighter pilot in the skies above Guadalcanal in the desperate early days of the war. Joe passed away at age eighty-seven in 2003, a year after *Pacific Legacy* was published. My coauthor Rex Alan Smith, himself a Pacific war veteran, followed Joe in 2010. Two of my uncles who were veterans of the Pacific War have subsequently passed away—PT boat motor-mac Al Hahn and army artilleryman Harlan Wall. They both fought the Japanese in the Philippines.

One of the few veterans who remains to tell his story is ninety, five-year-old Everett Hyland. He was seriously injured when a Japanese bomb exploded next to him on the battleship USS *Pennsylvania* during the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. He awoke from a coma on Christmas Day, 1941, with shrapnel wounds and severe burns over much of his body. He recovered, spent the rest of the war on another ship in the Atlantic, and became a schoolteacher in Las Vegas. When he was in Hawaii for the fiftieth-anniversary commemoration of the Pearl Harbor attack in 1991, he met a lovely Japanese travel planner at his hotel in Waikiki. Miyoko and Everett ended up getting married, and they retired to Honolulu. The irony is not lost on Everett that some of the members of the Japanese military machine that almost killed him on December 7 became his in-laws. As of 2018, Everett is the only veteran who was on a ship in Pearl Harbor on December 7 still residing in Honolulu today. Every Sunday he makes his way to what is now the World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument (formerly the USS *Arizona Memorial*), to sign copies of *Pacific War Stories* and *Pacific Legacy* in front of the bookstore at the visitors' center. His very presence enralls long lines of tourists who marvel at seeing an actual surviving eyewitness to the December 7 attack. Visitors crowd around to ask if they can take their photo with him or if they can shake his hand to thank him for his service. Others stand silently by, gawking in wonder at what they rightly view as an historical treasure. Though arthritis now makes it difficult for him to sign his name, Everett patiently affixes his stamped signature to anything people put in front of him.

"Sandy," Alexander Bonnyman won the Medal of Honor in spectacular fashion by leading a group of Marines in a charge to the top of a huge sand-covered concrete bunker in the latter stages of the battle for the tiny island of Betio in Tarawa Atoll in late 1943. The charge was successful, and one of the last points of Japanese resistance was eliminated, but Sandy was killed at the top of the bunker. He was soon buried nearby in an impromptu cemetery with a group of other dead Marines. Such scattered burials needed to happen quickly, as bodies decomposed rapidly in the

oppressive tropical heat. As the Marine survivors left the island after the seventy-six-hour-long battle, Navy Seabee construction crews were already frantically at work to expand the coral runway and taxiways on the tiny island to make a suitable base from which to carry the war farther west to the Japanese. Although all burials were marked and recorded at the time, the location of Sandy's shallow grave was promptly lost to history. Of the thousand or so Marine dead, only about six hundred bodies were recovered after the war. The missing dead of Tarawa remained unaccounted for and missing for the next seventy years.

Enter another volunteer group searching for World War II remains, History Flight, led by Mark Noah. After extensive historical research and high-tech procedures on the ground amidst the many structures on the small but heavily populated island, they thought they had a good lead on where Sandy's remains might be found. Meanwhile, Clay had become interested in finding out more about his grandfather, and he was present when History Flight volunteers unearthed Sandy's remains. The only one of the four Tarawa Medal of Honor winners whose body had never been recovered emerged, ghostlike, from the embrace of the sand that had held him since that day in 1943 when he was buried in a shallow trench with about twenty of his fellow Marines. He was lying facedown in a relaxed position. His boots, including the rubber composition soles, were still on his feet, a reminder that he was buried exactly as he was killed, in combat gear. A cigarette lighter, engraved with a hand-scratched B, was found underneath his remains where his left-front pants pocket would have been. Though it was obvious from his unique gold dental work that the remains were Sandy's, his body had to be officially identified by the DPAA. He then was returned to the Bonnyman family in Knoxville, Tennessee, for a military burial. This was final closure to the legend of Sandy Bonnyman, and Clay described the experience in his 2018 book *Bones of My Grandfather*.

But, in recent years, perhaps nothing has drawn more attention to the legacy of the Pacific war than the high-profile finds of sunken ships by the Paul Allen—funded research and exploration vessel *RV Petrel* Using the latest in scanning equipment and

submersibles, the *Petrel* has mission, initiated a "last man" ceremony. Every year, the remaining Raiders gathered and toasted their comrades who had died in the past year. A set of eighty silver goblets, each inscribed with the name of one of the original Raiders, was used for the toast; the goblets of those who had passed away were inverted. A bottle of cognac, vintage 1896 (the year of Doolittle's birth), was kept with the goblets. Doolittle's instructions stipulated that when there were only two Raiders left alive, they would open the bottle and toast all who had gone before them. In 2013, the four surviving Raiders decided not to wait any longer. In an emotional ceremony at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force in Dayton, Ohio, the three Raiders who could still travel opened the bottle of cognac and made the toast. As of this writing, there is only one goblet not yet turned over. It has Dick Cole's name inscribed on it. He was Doolittle's copilot, and he is now 103.

One would think that with the passage of time, and the passing of the World War II generation, interest in the Pacific war would fade. If anything, it has intensified. The sprawling National World War II Museum in New Orleans, one of the biggest tourist attractions there, opened a new Pacific war pavilion in 2015. The National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas, completed a major expansion of its facility in 2009. Both museums are repositories of the physical artifacts of the war as well as many recorded oral histories that give visitors a chance to hear about the Pacific war from those who experienced it.

Other organizations are returning to the Pacific to find the men and ships that were lost there more than seventy years ago. The government-funded Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), as well as several volunteer groups, scour brilliantly colored tropical lagoons and jungle-enshrouded islands looking for the long-lost remains of the Pacific war's MIAs. One such group, Bent Prop, has focused on plane crash sites in and around the islands of Palau in the western Pacific. Over the course of numerous expeditions, they have been able to locate the wrecks of crashed World War II aircraft as well as the remains of the fliers who died in them. When human remains are located in crumpled aluminum wreckage in the aquamarine

lagoons of the Rock Islands of Palau, or scattered among fragments of crashed aircraft deep in the islands' rain forests or mangrove swamps, the DPAA is called in to make an official identification. Once there is a positive ID, the remains are returned to the family for burial. These ceremonies are powerfully emotional, even though more than seven decades have passed since the young men disappeared "somewhere in the South Pacific." <>

[Public Art and The Fragility of Democracy: An Essay in Political Aesthetics](#) by Fred Evans

[Columbia Themes in Philosophy, Social Criticism, and the Arts, Columbia University Press, 9780231187589]

Public space is political space. When a work of public art is put up or taken down, it is an inherently political statement, and the work's aesthetics are inextricably entwined with its political valences. Democracy's openness allows public art to explore its values critically and to suggest new ones. However, it also facilitates artworks that can surreptitiously or fortuitously undermine democratic values. Today, as bigotry and authoritarianism are on the rise and democratic movements seek to combat them, as Confederate monuments fall and sculptures celebrating diversity rise, the struggle over the values enshrined in the public arena has taken on a new urgency.

In this book, Fred Evans develops philosophical and political criteria for assessing how public art can respond to the fragility of democracy. He calls for considering such artworks as acts of citizenship, pointing to their capacity to resist autocratic tendencies and reveal new dimensions of democratic society. Through close considerations of Chicago's Millennium Park and New York's National September 11 Memorial, Evans shows how a wide range of artworks participate in democratic dialogues. A nuanced consideration of contemporary art, aesthetics, and political theory, this book is a timely and rigorous elucidation of how thoughtful public art can contribute to the flourishing of a democratic way of life.

CONTENTS

Preface and Acknowledgments

1. DEMOCRACY'S FRAGILITY AND THE POLITICAL AESTHETICS OF PUBLIC ART
  2. VOICES AND PLACES: THE SPACE OF PUBLIC ART AND WODICZKO'S THE HOMELESS PROJECTION
  3. DEMOCRACY'S "EMPTY PLACE": RAWLS'S POLITICAL LIBERALISM AND DERRIDA'S DEMOCRACY TO COME
  4. PUBLIC ART'S "PLAIN TABLET": THE POLITICAL AESTHETICS OF CONTEMPORARY ART
  5. DEMOCRACY AND PUBLIC ART: BADIOU AND RANCIÈRE
  6. THE POLITICAL AESTHETICS OF CHICAGO'S MILLENNIUM PARK
  7. THE POLITICAL AESTHETICS OF NEW YORK'S NATIONAL 9/11 MEMORIAL
  8. PUBLIC ART AS AN ACT OF CITIZENSHIP
- Appendix: Badiou on "Being and the Void"  
Notes  
Bibliography  
Index

Excerpt: The issue concerning public art and democracy was broached in the United States long before the Civil War. Its appearance at this earlier time will convey to us further the importance of our criterion lies in the uncertainties that democracy always has about itself—the issue of its fragility. Along with issues of racial justice and diversity, we need a criterion in order to judge if public art is also attentive to how money in politics can blur the line between plutocracy and democracy; to how fear of migrants can undermine our commitment to inclusion and diversity; and to how our conservatism can accept artwork that repeats patriotic bromides in place of critical and imaginative expansions of our ideas of democracy. Thus the prevalence and power of public art to influence our perception of democracy—to enhance or eviscerate this political ideal—are justifications of the need to develop a criterion that helps us determine the status of public artworks as acts of citizenship.

The task of establishing this criterion is made difficult because of another theme that I hinted at in the beginning section of this chapter: the three major terms involved in our criterion—democracy, citizenship, and public art—thrive on evading the final characterizations we might want to impose

upon them. But establishing at least workable meanings for these terms is a necessary part of constructing the criterion we seek. Like the proverbial ship at sea, we will have to continually reconstruct their significations while putting them to use and viewing them in relation to one another. We should not be surprised that the ideas put forward by the end of this book will act more as lures for further thought than serve as completed concepts. This also will be true for our criterion of public art. If democracy, citizenship, and public art intrinsically resist final definitions of themselves, then shouldn't our criterion, our touchstone, be helpful for assessing public art as an act of citizenship but also always remain an invitation for further revisions of itself? Shouldn't that be part of its meaning?

Notions of democracy, citizenship, and public art are linked by the idea of voice and its derivatives. I have comprehensively developed the notion of voice and of society as a dialogic body in an earlier work. A particular advantage of voice is that it helps us understand a key sense in which public art can be an act of citizenship. Specifically, we will call public works of art "quasi-voices" as a mark of their agency in public spaces. Spelling out the meaning of this hyphenated term will be part of the task ahead of us. The notion of voice also applies to the participants and institutions that we will encounter in this book. I will present this term and its nuances more fully in the next chapter with the help of Krzysztof Wodiczko's example of "counter-architecture," The Homeless Projection, and Rosalyn Deutsche's commentary on the socio-political meaning of his work.

The relation of public art to democracy is only one major part of the criterion we are seeking. Savage's elaboration of the debate between the Republicans and the Federalists—a plain tablet versus a stone monument—also makes clear that public art involves an aesthetic dimension as well as a political one. Our essay on political aesthetics will therefore be complicated, and made more interesting, by having to probe how these two dimensions of a public artwork—the aesthetic and the political—can effectively fuse together in it: how the different emphasis of the one can avoid cancelling out that of the other. We must also

reinforce a caveat already entered: the criterion of public art arrived at must be one capable of continually interrupting itself in light of innovative public artworks, art history, philosophy, and other sources. A criterion in stone is no better than our most uninspiring monuments of the same material.

#### Public Art and Acts of Citizenship

These opening remarks have emphasized the importance of our proposed criterion of public art. We can now briefly examine the definitions of "public art" and "acts of citizenship" and then proceed in the next two sections to do the same for the relation of public art to politics and aesthetics. State sponsorship or support is usually a key marker for what might pass as public art. But this is helpful only in a limited manner. Almost all aspects of society, including its art, are intentionally or inadvertently supported to a greater or lesser degree by government organs. Furthermore, contemporary social media provide a public dimension for many artworks that are in private hands. For these reasons, Lambert Zuidervaart prefers the term "art in public" over "public art." He defines the former as "any art whose production or use presupposes government support of some sort and whose meaning is available to a broader public—broader than the original audience for which it was intended or to which it speaks."

We will retain the term "public art," proposing a broader definition than Zuidervaart's but then paring it down to make it more manageable. For us, public art will encompass any artistic creation that has the intent or effect of addressing democratic values and occurs in public spaces. This qualification, like Zuidervaart's definition, also allows that some private spaces can be transformed functionally into public ones when they make a point—here an artistic one—that engages a society's public policies. Most importantly, our characterization of public art explicitly includes Zuidervaart's emphasis on government-sponsored art but also adds art that can dissent from the former under certain conditions.

With respect to the "government sponsored" side of our definition, we can at least initially restrict ourselves to art that is directly state-sponsored. We can assume that the government is obligated to

express or at least not undermine the values that it shares with the people whom it presumably represents. In a polity such as the United States, these values are democratic ones. Governments can also sponsor artworks that qualify as acts of generosity, charity, or entertainment. In that these acts tend to reflect the interests of religious, ethnic, or other specific groups, they are not directly related to and can even conflict with the more inclusive meaning of democracy. For our purpose, they therefore do not formally qualify as acts of citizenship no matter how valuable and socially acceptable they might be otherwise. In short, the relation of public art to democracy is paramount in the formal context of an "act of citizenship."

An act of citizenship is not the same as legal citizenship. We can initially clarify the force of "act" by considering some of the Engin Isin's remarks on the topic. He distinguishes an "act of citizenship" from citizenship taken as "status" and "habitus." Citizenship as status includes the "rights and responsibilities of citizens in a given state"; citizenship as habitus refers to "how citizens and perhaps non-citizens practice the rights that they do have." Isin holds that acts of citizenship transcend these two other forms because they involve creativity, inventiveness, and autonomy. More importantly, they have the capacity to "rupture" established laws and practices. These ruptures make possible acts with the other three qualities—creativity, inventiveness, and autonomy—but also have the ability to traverse established borders and limits. Isin develops these terms with great care and many examples. Our own characterization of acts of citizenship will share his emphasis on rupture, creativity, and kindred terms; but they will also receive the elucidation needed for our aims as we confront the meanings of democracy and public art in the rest of this book.

If we accept direct state sponsorship as one limit on the continuum of examples that make up public art, then dissident public art constitutes the other. Dissident public art counts as an act of citizenship when it reflects a democratic ethos and corrects the government's support of art that implicitly or explicitly promotes autocratic values. In this essay, we will sometimes use examples of dissident art to help us obliquely ascertain the status of officially

government sponsored art as acts of citizenship. We will use Wodiczko's *The Homeless Projection* for that purpose in the next chapter. There is, of course, art that dissents from democracy itself, but it would be an act of citizenship only for the polity that it imagines to replace democracy in the future. The soldier-statues of the Confederacy offer such an example: the constitution of that short-lived government included an explicit provision that today we consider anti-democratic, the affirmation of slavery in perpetuity.

#### Public Art and Politics

We saw earlier that our criterion for assessing public art involves two related parts: a political one and an aesthetic one. This section will introduce the political part by exploring further public art's relation to the fragility of democracy. The next will take up the aesthetic part of the criterion. The most general way of characterizing democracy's fragility is through its relation to what I call the "dilemma of diversity." The dilemma arises historically with the advent of "the age of diversity." In this age, the traditional search for a homogeneous identity or univocal notion of the good is now rivaled by the growing recognition that cultural, ethnic, and other forms of diversity constitute values as well as facts. The tension between these two political virtues, unity and heterogeneity, constitute the dilemma: the desire for solidarity threatens to diminish the importance of differences; but the allegiance to diversity can easily divide us into disparate islands held together by nothing other than the exigencies of mutual fear or commercial trade. The two contrasting terms of this dilemma threaten to cancel out each other. If we are not able to couple the very ideas of unity and plurality (solidarity and heterogeneity, identity and difference) and do so in a way that is just and compelling to most people, it will be even harder in practice to counter ethnic cleansing, draconian antiimmigration policies, and the other agendas of social and political exclusion that have plagued our recent history. Besides exploring the vicissitudes of this dilemma and hence the fragility of democracy, we will want to discover if it is intrinsic to democracy—a sort of autoimmunity, or a product of the foibles of the citizens who otherwise subscribe to it.

To confront this dilemma, to try achieving at least a conceptual affinity between unity and diversity, we will have to envision a unity composed of—rather than imposed on—difference. The notion of "voices" mentioned earlier will help us express this abstract formula in a manner that captures its concrete as well as logical sense. Public artworks will also play a major role in contributing to this goal. Indeed, the dilemma and its solution will be the key aspect of the political part of our criterion for assessing public artworks as acts of citizenship.

Some problems closely related to the dilemma of diversity suggest both advantages and disadvantages of democracy's fragility. To see how fragility can paradoxically be both a promise of and a hindrance to democracy, we can take the difficulty of defining democracy as a chief example. This difficulty is partially due to democracy's status as both a dream and an abstract idea, a way of life as well as a set of constitutional rules. Indeed, scholars often cite approvingly Claude Lefort's comment that democracy gains its legitimacy from "the image of an empty place, impossible to occupy, such that those who exercise public authority can never claim to appropriate it" These scholars echo Lefort by valorizing democracy for being intrinsically protean, continually reinventing itself and requiring art and other media to help it fulfill this tendency. Thus Daniel Bensaid equates democracy with its permanent revision into new and more radical forms: "To survive, [democracy] must keep pushing further, permanently transgress its instituted forms, unsettle the horizon of the universal, test equality against liberty.. .. It must ultimately attempt to extend, permanently and in every domain, access to equality and citizenship. So democracy is not itself unless it is scandalous right to the end."

But the disadvantages associated with the ambiguity of democracy offset its auspicious "scandalousness." One of these is the tendency for acts in the name of democracy to inadvertently or surreptitiously support autocratic interests. We have already noted how the Confederate States thought that democracy was compatible with legalized enslavement and racism. Another disadvantage is the tendency in many democracies to permit the increasing privatization of public space by

capital—its "naturalization"—as well as the domination of government by business interests, as seen particularly in the United States. Thus Kristin Ross argues that "democracy [has become] the right to buy," both in the sense of purchasing a wide variety of consumer goods and in the sense of corrupting government. She contrasts this with the more laudable sense of democracy practiced by the Paris Commune.<sup>29</sup> More generally, the rising inequality in the United States and other capitalist countries undermines the solidarity required for a democracy. In later chapters we will see how this problem of privatization extends to the artistic realm when corporations play a major role in financing public artworks that are officially sponsored by the government.

A further disadvantage of lacking a clear definition for democracy is the tendency to leave its meaning unexamined in popular, political, and artistic discourse. For this reason, John Keane makes the pithy comment that "democracy itself had become democratized [after its proliferation in modern times]—to the point where anthropologists rather than political scientists [are] better equipped to grasp its ways." Similarly, Jean-Luc Nancy proclaims that "democracy has become an exemplary case of the loss of power to signify.... It means everything—politics, ethics, law, civilization—and nothing" These statements by Keane and Nancy reiterate a much earlier one by the eighteenth-century French revolutionary Auguste Blanqui:

You say to me: "I am neither bourgeois, nor proletarian. I am a democrat." Beware of words without definition, they are the preferred instruments of schemers.... It is they who invented the beautiful aphorism: neither proletarian nor bourgeois, but democrat! ... What opinion couldn't manage to find a home under that roof? Everyone claims to be a democrat, even aristocrats.

The problem of the ambiguity of democracy extends to the art world as well as to the political. For example, Rosalyn Deutsche regrets that there has been "little interrogation of the definition" of this political concept in the debates concerning public art. Yet "no topic is more urgent today than democracy.... [Its] emergence ... in the art world .

corresponds to an extensive eruption and diffusion of struggles over the meaning of democracy, in political theories, social movements, and cultural practices." The ambiguity and abstractness of the term therefore call for public artworks and other concrete images to render democracy palpable, to increase its force in society and to explore or extend its meanings. These images can include everything from protestors' urgent artistic interventions in the streets to governments' often staid monuments that attract only birds. Public art, in short, has the potential to help convert the abstract idea of democracy into a "popular ethic," thus motivating citizens to participate in civic activities—or to reduce it to clichés that inspire no one.

Before continuing to the aesthetic part of our criterion of public art, we can use this discussion of democracy as an empty place to illustrate how the concept of an act of citizenship in public art varies from one national ethos to another. Sabine Hake mines Lefort's idea of empty place in her book on democracy and film during and after Germany's Third Reich. She points out that in contrast to Nazism, "the inherent abstractness of democracy, both as a form of government and a way of life, has posed a considerable challenge to filmmakers because of its lack of compelling myths and symbols and the resultant difficulty of forming and sustaining democratic commitments through fictional scenarios and imagined identities." This statement suggests that what counts as an act of citizenship in art is going to differ considerably according to whether the art is sponsored by and reflects a democratic or a fascist government.

The difference in the meaning of an act of citizenship is further brought out by considering what public sculpture signified for German National Socialism. George Mosse highlights "beauty without sensuality"—"worshiped but neither desired nor loved"—as the standard for statues or paintings of nudes during the Third Reich and its rise to power in the 1930s. The "muscular and harmonious bodies" of male and female nudes in German public art promoted national cohesion around the moral standards of that time and emphasized the Nazis' belief in the Aryans as a pure race. This vision of the purity of the German

Volk was intensified by contrasting it with what the Nazis considered to be the genetic and cultural "degeneracy" of Jews and other ethnic groups. Indeed, this self-aggrandizement through such images of the nude included a cult of "active" masculinity to which even the public artistic depiction of women conformed. Only in the context of the private realm were women's bodies encouraged to be portrayed in a more "passive" and sensual manner. Moreover, Hitler and the Nazis considered the masculinist aesthetic of its public art as a remedy to the "chaos" and "degenerate art" (*Entartete Kunst*) of modernism, especially the latter's accent upon the individual and the new. The images and values embodied by Nazi art also supported more general motifs of hierarchical order and militarism in German fascism. Even in light of our preliminary characterization of democracy, these examples help us see, once again, that acts of citizenship in the realm of public art tend to differ markedly in democratic and totalitarian societies. The importance of this difference is further highlighted in contemporary democratic Spain. Many Spanish citizens are outraged about the use of public funds to maintain a monument from the era of Franco's fascist regime, the Valle de los Caídos, as part of the country's "patrimonio nacional." This is clearly similar to the feelings of the citizens of New Orleans who proposed the removal of the Confederate monuments from civic locations in their city.

The problems just introduced suggest that government public art in democracies should support the values that are or could be associated with its polity. It should, that is, help characterize and support the idea of democracy as a unity composed of difference; resist the colonization of democratic values by autocratic interests; concretize the abstractness of this political idea as well as motivate civic practices expressive of it; and, perhaps most important, stay true to its transformative capacity, revealing new possibilities for democracy and acts of citizenship.

#### Public Art and Aesthetics

In this section, we can examine more closely—though still preliminarily—the aesthetic part of the

criterion we are seeking for evaluating public art works. There are two problems with respect to this part of the criterion. We can expose each by appeal to Congressman Nicholas's idea of a plain tablet as public art. The plainness of the tablet is close to the emptiness of Lefort's empty place of democracy. The first of these problems reflects a claim by the many contemporary theorists and practitioners of art who uphold the notions of contemporaneity, heterochronicity, and anachronicity. This claim and the three notions related to it assert that contemporary art eschews the idea that artistic work has an essence or universal telos. This presents the problem then of being able to state the nature of what can count as a public artwork. How can we evaluate an artwork if we have no basis for distinguishing art from non-art? We will address this claim and the meaning of contemporaneity, heterochronicity, and anachronicity in chapter 4. For now, and from our contemporary standpoint, we can take Nicholas's plain tablet to represent a radical pluralism and the relativism that term implies: a tablet that is open to any and every opinion being inscribed on its surface, and so plain that it might be mistaken for a registry rather than recognized as an art object.

We can generalize from this affinity between Nicholas's plain tablet and Lefort's empty place to say that both are forms of the dilemma of diversity and its possible solution via the idea of a unity composed of difference. Indeed, the words "plain" and "empty" convey the image of an intrinsic incompleteness or, better, the paradox of two vacancies that must be filled while leaving them open: say what they are and we annihilate them; don't, and they remain an empty and troublesome mystery. Resolving this paradox is therefore another way of articulating the dilemma of diversity as the central meaning of democracy's fragility; of elucidating the ideal of a unity composed of difference; and of constructing a criterion for acts of citizenship in the domain of public art.

We have already encountered the second problem of the aesthetic part of the criterion of public art. We could say that it, like the first problem, revolves around a dilemma. It is directly related to

the aesthetic status of public artworks: it concerns the relation between the aesthetic and political dimensions of public artworks. (It should not be confused with the relation between the political and aesthetic parts of the criterion of public art.) The dilemma is that of either of these contrary dimensions cancelling out the other: too political, and the artwork is non-art; too much of an aesthetic aura, too arty, and it is not political. To present this aesthetic dilemma more fully and to reiterate some of the political complications we have discussed, I will briefly introduce the two public art projects that will be the respective focuses of chapters 6 and 7: Chicago's Millennium Park and New York's National September 11 Memorial.

Some of the critics of Millennium Park contend that the park both "naturalizes" the interests of capital and reduces art either to the status of "spectacle"—"wow aesthetics"—or, alternatively, to amusement, instruction, or some other strictly instrumental value. The first problem—naturalizing capital—is part of the larger issue of privatizing public space. The second problem—reducing art to either a mesmerizing spectacle or a mere tool—consists in distracting the viewer from recognizing whatever critical significance or catalytic force an artwork might have. Taken to its extreme, the mesmerizing character of spectacle is close to the "aestheticization of politics" that Walter Benjamin attributed to Nazi and other totalitarian regimes. In contrast, art as a mere instrument is more like an exaggeration of the "politicization of aesthetics" that Benjamin favored and felt characterized communism. We have already encountered the abhorrence of mesmerization or "detached opticality" in Congressman Nicholas's rejection of the Federalists' penchant for stone monuments. On the other hand, Nicholas's plain tablet suggests the opposite problem: if the tablet is only the receptacle of stated opinions, it risks forfeiting the affective power of art and amounts to no more than a didactic, merely pedagogical enterprise.

In his discussion of the Federalist-Republican debate over the monument for George Washington, Savage does not address explicitly this possible problem with Nicholas's tablet, but he indirectly suggests it when he states why Nicholas's

opponents might have valued a monument for other than purely political reasons:

The public monument speaks to a deep need for attachment that can be met only in a real place, where the imagined community actually materializes and the existence of the nation is confirmed in a simple but powerful way. The experience is not exactly in the realm of imagination or reason, but grounded in the felt connection of individual to collective body.

In other words, art does more than merely provide a lesson or entertainment. It often sends a condensed shock of recognition through us that provokes us to repeat in thought, language, or action what its more immediate presence is suggesting. Art can also affect us in more subtle ways, as when it establishes a mood that permeates its audience after a period of time. These sorts of political and aesthetic issues also surround New York's National September 11 Memorial. Construction of the memorial and the related museum finished in 2011 and 2014 respectively at the site of the destroyed World Trade Center in Lower Manhattan. The catastrophe motivating the project is considered by many to be the key event in the first part of the new millennium. Thus the memorial has received both considerable critical as well as favorable comment.

Although our later discussion of these two projects will reveal autocratic tendencies plaguing both of them, I will show how Millennium Park suggests a notion of democracy that is more radical or profound than those often touted in relation to the park and other public art. We will see then if what the park introduces can address successfully the dilemmas of democracy and aesthetics. If it can, it ironically will provide us with a flexible and effective criterion that we can then turn back upon the source of its origin, Millennium Park itself. That is, we can use it to evaluate Millennium Park as an act of citizenship. The same criterion can then be applied to the National September 11 Memorial and other public art so as to judge whether or not they qualify as acts of citizenship and indicate whatever other values they might also embody. Indeed, New York's 9/11 memorial will serve as a test case for helping us to determine how discerning

our criterion can be in this sort of assessment. We will be aided in this effort by also considering an alternative 9/11 memorial proposed by another of the artworks of Wodiczko—albeit one never actually constructed. This will further clarify and render concrete the idea of a unity composed of difference, its application to democracy, and the tension between the aesthetic and political dimensions of an artwork.

In addition to establishing a criterion for judging public art as an act of citizenship, I will also maintain that a positive evaluation on the basis of this criterion can hold even if the artwork continues to serve the autocratic forces it simultaneously resists: the artwork can be at war with itself and still favor an alternative to the nondemocratic forces afflicting it and society. The question is the degree to which it can still successfully counter those forces. Because purity is an illusion and perhaps even detrimental to society, or so I have argued, the ongoing conflict among disparate forces is always the setting in which art must be evaluated—especially when it is under the auspices of the government or other powerful institutions.

Besides the more substantial notion of democracy that Millennium Park suggests, I will argue that the park also combines spectacle with a form of relational aesthetics or aesthetic agency that allows it to escape the Scylla of wow aesthetics and the Charybdis of mere instrumentality. This combination is paradoxical because relational aesthetics is the opposite of spectacle: it prioritizes the effects of the art object on the relations among its viewers and of the viewers on the art object. Once again, the National September 11 Memorial and Wodiczko's dissenting artistic response to it will help us determine the discriminating power of this standard for aesthetic effectiveness. An interrogation of Millennium Park and the New York 9/11 memorial will therefore culminate in innovative ideas concerning the aesthetic as well as the political dimension of public art. In other words, this endeavor will be an exercise in political aesthetics: we will try to determine if and under what conditions the aesthetics of a public artwork can impress upon us an innovative sense of democracy and aid it in resisting the autocratic

tendencies that are often embodied in public art and its social setting.

Besides the public importance and the critical comment Millennium Park and the 9/11 memorial have stimulated, I chose these two public artworks for a number of other reasons as well. One is simply that the two works brought forth these issues of democracy and aesthetics for me more forcibly, yet also more subtly, than most of the other projects I had encountered. Part of their power in this regard is that Millennium Park functions ostensibly as a site of celebration and entertainment—that is, life—and the New York memorial presents itself as a setting for mourning and death as well as for reflections on peace and war. The two projects therefore span some of the most significant aspects of human existence—life and death, peace and war. For this reason, they should allow us to consider democracy, citizenship, and public art in some of the most revealing and challenging contexts possible. Indeed, the commemoration of the dead, the finality that it suggests, would seem at least superficially to mark the limit of what is relevant for the political concept of democracy. The New York memorial will therefore serve as a challenging test case for the criterion of citizenship at which we arrive initially through the aegis of Millennium Park and the other sources we will critically explore.

Three other reasons for selecting these two public art works are more minor than the others but worth mentioning at this point. First, both of them are government sponsored and have been undertaken in the same time period—the beginning of the new millennium—and in the same country. These similarities help diminish the differences in social-political and aesthetic sensibilities that often confound attempts to evaluate public artworks comparatively across time, space, and type. Moreover, their status as government projects in the United States means that they are committed, if only officially or traditionally, to express democratic values or at least not to undermine them. I must caution, however, that the tradition of joint private and governmental funding for these and other artworks in the United States will lead us later to examine more closely the sense in which we can still consider them as public art. The third

reason for choosing the two projects concerns their aesthetic dimension: they have benefited from the work of Michael Arad, Frank Gehry, Kathryn Gustafson, Anish Kapoor, Daniel Libeskind, Maya Lin, Jaume Plensa, and other internationally acclaimed artists. If aesthetics makes a difference, and assuming for now that artistic excellence is the reason for the prominence of these artists, then their work should readily demonstrate the importance of aesthetics in the political aesthetics of Millennium Park and the 9/11 memorial.

### The Path Ahead

All these factors, then, are the reasons for why Millennium Park and the National September 11 Memorial constitute a central focus of this book. But to approach these two public art projects adequately and construct our criterion from them, we will have to follow a preparatory path. Making our way along it will involve clarifying the major issues and ideas concerning democracy, citizenship, and public art. I have already introduced this task historically in the present chapter by illustrating how the political and aesthetic issues concerning public art were considered calamitous by politicians and the populace alike at the very beginning of the United States—and then thereafter.

In chapter 2, I will introduce the salient aspects of the "public sphere" and the space in which public art is located. I will use that topic also to present some concepts that will shape this and our other inquiries in this book. As I indicated earlier, I will argue that we should think of public art and its space—indeed, of society itself—in terms of the notion of voice and also as a dialogic or multivoiced body that is constituted by the interplay among the government officials, entrepreneurs, donors, artists, audiences, and the other participants belonging to this body, including the "quasi-voices" of the art objects themselves. This chapter will show us the advantages of using these terms when we examine New York's Union Square. Its exploration will include how the city's real estate industry transformed the square to fulfill their pecuniary predilection, as well as how Krzysztof Wodiczko transforms it again with "counter-architecture" in the name of the homeless who were

displaced by the previous, traumatic metamorphosis. This and commentary by Deutsche, Nancy Fraser, Jürgen Habermas, and others will give us a preliminary idea of the contours for a criterion of public art as an act of citizenship.

In chapters 3 and 4 we move from the microcosm of Union Square and Wodiczko to the broader context that includes and informs it: the theory and practice of democracy and its public art. To provide the proper background for these two themes, we will treat democracy and art separately in a pair of chapters and then thereafter treat them together. More specifically, in chapter 3 we will see to what degree John Rawls's "political liberalism" and Jacques Derrida's radically different "democracy to come" escape the horns of the dilemma of diversity and fill without eliding Lefort's empty place of democracy. Their attempts at approximating our touchstone of a unity composed of difference and an agonistic polity will help us clarify how our public art criterion must treat diversity, solidarity, and a third political virtue, fecundity, that is, the creation of new ideas of democratic values. The efforts of these two thinkers will also help us address the nature of democracy's fragility, especially whether it is a contingent or, instead, an intrinsic or "autoimmune" aspect of the people's sovereignty. In other words, it will allow us to define and evaluate the idea of democracy's fragility in terms of the dilemma of diversity and Lefort's idea of democracy as the image of an empty place.

Chapter 4 will complement this endeavor by discussing the aesthetic dimension of Congressman Nicholas's plain tablet and kindred public art projects. More exactly, we will move from Wodiczko's earlier example, *The Homeless Projection*, to the characterization of public and other art as a contemporary genre (or anti-genre), that is, as contemporaneity, heterochronicity, anachronicity, and participatory art. Chapter 3 will tell us more about how our criterion of public art must reflect democratic values, and chapter 4 will explore how it should do so without sacrificing its important aesthetic dimension—how it can avoid reducing itself to a meaningless spectacle, on the one hand, or to a pure political statement, to non-art, on the other; how it can fill the plain tablet of

Nicholas's monument without marring its aesthetic surface.

Chapter 5 will continue the efforts of the previous two chapters by considering the views of two other leading contemporary thinkers on both democracy and art: Alain Badiou and Jacques Rancière. Examination of their conflicting thoughts adds new dimensions to the visions of democracy and art that we will have already reviewed. This will help provide the breadth necessary to ensure that our criterion of public art as an act of citizenship will reflect the most important characteristics of democracy and art. Because of the open meanings of democracy, citizenship, and public art, we will profit from understanding them through a judicious use of examples and figures rather than abstract definitions alone.

Chapters 6 and 7 will deal respectively with the two examples of public art I just introduced: Millennium Park and the National 9/11 Memorial and Museum. These two spaces will allow us to present a comprehensive statement of our criterion of public art as an act of citizenship and to test how compelling it is at the same time. Chapter 6 will also critically address some of the work of the important Italian thinker Giorgio Agamben that is related to democracy, art, and, by extrapolation, to the 9/11 memorial and museum. These achievements will still leave us with the task of the last chapter: to provide a succinct statement of our criterion of public art, assign important qualifications to it, and clarify its status as an "event." Its status as an event will show that the criterion, we are constructing is different than the traditional sort of standard and its partiality for absolute finality. Most importantly, this chapter will express once more the hope that our efforts concerning public art in this book will contribute to safeguarding and creatively exploring democracy. This hope is especially appropriate when that political form of "we the people" is called into question during times of crisis such as the one we are undergoing today with the emergence of proto-fascist movements and governments. <>

[Patriotism Black and White: The Color of American Exceptionalism](#) by Nichole R. Phillips [Baylor University Press, 9781481309578]

American civil religion unifies the nation's culture, regulates national emotions, and fosters a storied national identity. American civil religion celebrates the nation's founding documents, holidays, presidents, martyrs and, above all, those who died in its wars.

[Patriotism Black and White](#) investigates the relationship between patriotism and civil religion in a politically populist community comprised of black and white evangelicals in rural Tennessee. By measuring the effort to remember national sacrifice, [Patriotism Black and White](#) probes deeply into how patriotism funds civil religion in light of two changes to America—the election of its first Black president and the initiation of a modern, religiously inspired war.

Based on her four years of ethnographic research, Nichole Phillips discovers that both black and white evangelicals feel marginalized and isolated from the rest of the country. Bound by regional identity, both groups respond similarly to these drastic changes. Black and white constituents continue to express patriotism and embrace a robust national identity. Despite the commonality of being rural and southern, Phillips' study reveals that racial experiences are markers for distinguishable responses to radical social change. As Phillips shows, racial identity led to differing responses to the War on Terror and the Obama administration, and thus to a crisis in American national identity, opening the door to new nativistic and triumphalist interpretations of American exceptionalism. It is through this door that Phillips takes readers in [Patriotism Black and White](#).

Contents
Preface
Acknowledgments
Introduction
1 Honoring the Dead A Community Procession for a Fallen Soldier
2 Religion, Race, Region, and American Exceptionalism "Making America Great Again"

3	Fighting the Good Fight of Faith Bald Eagles First United Methodist Church
4	Conjuring Black Evangelical Spirituality and Culture Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
5	Made in the U.S.A. American Evangelicals and Identity Politics
6	For God and Country Bald Eagles First United Methodist Church
7	Black Patriotism and Bloodstained Loyalty Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
8	"We the People" ... White and Black Dying to Defend Our Nation A "New" American Exceptionalism
9	American National Identity in a Global Civil Society
	Appendix 1: Methodology and Research Process
	Appendix 2: Theological Orientations and Social Perspectives against Age Groups
	Appendix 3: Interviews
	Bibliography
	Notes
	Index

Excerpt: [Patriotism Black and White](#) is an interdisciplinary empirical study that attempts to answer questions about regional and American national identities from the perspective of patriotism, social conflict, and a politics of death. In so doing, it reveals a rural, Southern community's interpretations of their multidimensional identities under religiously inspired war conditions and under the presidency of Barack H. Obama. Both demonstrate how structural and global innovations and massive social transformations contributed to changing understandings of American national identity, signaling what was the onset of a crisis in American national identity. For that reason, new interpretations of American exceptionalism presently include the more triumphalistic and nativistic brand that makes America great again.

The research and findings support the implication that a politics of death underlies civil religion. To achieve this result, the study explored the connection between religion and the sacrificial service and deaths of military personnel, fallen

leaders, and common citizens who have given their lives to uphold the freedoms granted and preserved by the sacred founding documents of this country. The study also shows how whites and blacks in the rural Tennessee community of Bald Eagles produced assorted and differing public theologies of war. This is particularly important because America, like many other countries, is now continually at war due to religiously inspired terrorist activity. Such distinct public theologies of war ultimately demand new interpretations of American national identity, interpretations capable of honoring nationalistic enterprises in a global market and of creating a "new" form of American exceptionalism anchored by a civil religion that can supply the moral and religious resources required for membership in a global civil society.

Following are the questions that become the basis for comprehending how these rural dwellers construe and reconstruct American national identity and interpret American exceptionalism with respect to military service and in the midst of America's involvement with the War on Terror leading up to the start of Barack Obama's presidential tenure. How does soldiering in service to the country and sacrificing one's life in defense of the country reflect racial and American civil religious values? What hermeneutic drives the placement of secular symbols (e.g., the American flag and Tennessee state flag) and sacred symbols (e.g., the cross) in public and private "worship" spaces where community and congregational ritual life mirror and support each other and solidify regional identity? How should we interpret contemporary religious warfare theologically? Is war (even on terror) the best mechanism for preserving American civil liberties and constitutional freedoms? How does American exceptionalism connect with American national identity especially when an "exceptional" nation fights never-ending war against an "elusive enemy"?

These fundamental inquiries are at the heart of understanding the racial distinctiveness of whites and blacks in rural Bald Eagles and their Southern civil religious practices, political tradition of American exceptionalism, evangelical faith, patriotism, and public theologies of war. Answers to these questions are the basis for comprehending

how these rural dwellers find themselves at the periphery of American society at the start of the twenty-first century. To interpret the community's civil religious practices under constant, albeit forgotten, war is to realize there are implications for what it means to be American in the present day and under the Trump administration.

The introduction is an overview that captures the meaning and import of evangelical faith and civil religious practices to Bald Eagles residents during wartime. Both subjects tie together the chapters in this volume. Both must be read in the shadow of definitive historical moments that continually prompt new conceptualizations of national identity and exceptionalist ideals embraced by Americans. A detailed account of military personnel, Corporal Keith Essary's funeral, is such an example launching chapter 1. Residents, visitors, and friends honor this soldier's ultimate human sacrifice for the protection of the nation by equating it to Jesus' sacrificial death. Death creates a moral community simultaneously solidifying national and regional identities of Bald Eagles' rural and Southern residents. However, wide-ranging interpretations of white and black patriotism in turn complexify evangelical faith and practice as well as American national identity. Patriotic "speech acts" turn consensus building into contestation and contradiction between the various segments of this rural American community. Such patriotic utterances signal the reality that Americans are living through "times of trial" as discussed throughout chapter 2. Showcasing how the people of Bald Eagles integrate American exceptionalism and American national identity, chapter 2 additionally illustrates the particular ways in which reformulations of American exceptionalism begin to divulge rifts in American national identity.

Chapter 3 displays the regional and national identities of white townfolk as observed through rites of faith that promote a theology and ethics of "good" and "evil." I argue that for these self-identified white evangelical Christians (who might also belong to historically liberal Protestant congregations), "good" and "evil" are oppositional constructs. The "devil" is a source of particular "evils" that require a "good" fight, meaning spiritual and temporal wrestling and struggles that

will not allow the devil to overcome the "good" that resides inside of people. This ethic of "good" and "evil" attributes evil conduct to lax morals, secularization, and anything that disrupts a so-called orderly and balanced way of life.

In chapter 4, I argue for a theology and ethics of "good" and "evil" made evident through rites of faith that underline the regional identity of black townfolk and the ways in which their regional identity grounds their national identity. Their theology and ethics of "good" and "evil" expresses itself through dialectical and conjunctive (i.e., syncretistic) thinking and practice. Self-identifying as evangelical Christians, their worldview accommodates and acknowledges the presence of the "devil" as the source of particular "evils" they suffer as a social group.

A social and demographic profile of the eighty-three research participants in this study is the focus of chapter 5. That includes members of both churches as well as white and black residents of the city and of the greater county of Bald Eagles. My descriptions of these self-identified evangelical Christians along with qualitative and quantitative data show how whites and blacks in this civil religious community are similar and how they are different. My goal, however, is to demonstrate that evangelicals of all stripes—white, black, male, female, single, married—are "made in the U.S.A." They contribute to and reinforce American national identity because of their investment in a republican and liberal democracy, market economy, and American civil liberties safeguarded by constitutional freedoms.

Chapter 6 highlights members of the First United Methodist Church to discuss the politics of dying on the battlefield and rites of war, based on their interpretations of patriotic service to the country. Such service is symbolized by the ultimate patriot, one who gives his or her life as a human "blood" sacrifice in defense of the American nation, freedom, and values.

God and country for this group go hand in hand, for soldiers sacrifice their lives to preserve constitutional rights, including the guarantees of religious freedom, freedom of speech, freedom from want, and freedom from fear that this social

group holds at a premium. The unabashed display of ancient landmark insignia—the American flag, the Bible, and the cross—in public and private ritual spaces symbolically reaffirms the civil religious roots of the community, church members' commitment to their faith and nation and specifically to preserving our country. "In God we trust" holds dual meaning for these congregants. With respect to exceptionalist ideology, it indicates the country's special mission and destiny, when American interests are being served both domestically and abroad.

Chapter 7 captures the politics of dying on the battlefield and rites of war at home and abroad among members of the historic black Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church. It relies on their interpretations of patriotic service to a country that often requires a "blood" sacrifice as an indication of one's loyalty. However, for these black members, their "blood"(-stained) loyalty is given and their fight for freedom is waged—to the point of death—in spite of America's broken covenant. While agreeing to enter America's battlefield(s), they do so with hesitation because of a less than perfect Union often defaulting on its promises to this segment of the American population, which identifies them as not belonging. Despite struggling to earn their "bars and stripes," the members of this social group remain true to their God and their native land and committed to realizing a more perfect Union. Consideration of what it means for black lives to matter to these black and rural Southerners who are still committed to a less than exceptional America closes this chapter.

Chapter 8 illustrates the civil religious loyalties of blacks and whites in Bald Eagles County who question and debate the meaning of a republican and liberal democracy in a post-racial, post-9/11, militarized America, and who are feeling the effects of economic insecurity because of the housing crisis, market crash, and global impact of war. In chapter 8, both social groups display interactive, contradictory, and at times conflicting viewpoints, placing their public theologies at variance with their civil religious loyalties yet underscoring what it means to be American in a representative democracy and in a period of perpetual war. Moreover, each case study argues

for group rights and responsibilities as freedoms that Americans exercise and must protect and uphold in "dying to defend the nation," thereby stressing what it means to be American. Interpreted from the standpoint of these rural Southerners on American national identity, "We the People," however, fails to function as a transcendent and enduring ideal for what makes America "great."

I conclude this volume in chapter 9 with a proposal for a more inclusive understanding of American national identity and a reformulated political tradition of American exceptionalism, rooted in the American dream, produced from diverse interpretations of rites of faith and rites of war, and with the capacity to honor the inclusive premise and constitutional principle of "We the People." Human "sacrificial" death features prominently in the narratives of these rural dwellers, for it exemplifies how they really do belong to a nation that however frequently disregards family histories of career military service.

A "new" American exceptionalism recognizes this rural and evangelical community's service and sacrifice to and for the nation, regardless of racial group. "Remember the faithful and the dead"—never forget—is an enduring message about the values of this and other small-town moral communities. Feelings of isolation and alienation compounded by worldwide structural revolutions are hallmarks of twenty-first-century postmodernity. For these rural dwellers, especially many of those who are white, the election of Barack H. Obama embodied such tumultuous changes.

Mr. Obama was an unsettling figure for many whites—and even some blacks. While his election to executive office stood for human and racial progress, his "hybridity" was perplexing for many and nevertheless represented the discomfiting nature of twenty-first-century postmodernity manifested: as threats against national security because of religiously motivated terrorist activities. That, in part, precipitated fluctuating interpretations of American regional and national identities. Nevertheless, "fear" of the "other," uber-nationalistic avowals, and other strong patriotic sentiments corresponding to upticks in American

triumphalism and nativism are not the only acceptable reactions or reasonable responses to extremely disruptive structural transformations.

Mindful of church members' and residents' struggles with the communal effects of our nation's endless war against terrorism, a reformulation of American exceptionalism and a novel and engaging approach to American national identity is in order. Such an approach would call for greater democracy at present and in our more global civil society and historical age. A new American exceptionalism would celebrate the ongoing moral discourse around divergent constituencies, civic debate, and social and religious diversity. In our growing and ever-changing democracy, it would tie together the dialectical interplay between civil religion and public theology. Such interplay would facilitate and enable cultural conflict in successive times of trial.

Dying for country shapes social belonging. From this rural and Southern community's perspective, the fallen sacralize the land, preserve America from "enemies," and assist residents in their attempts to distinguish between who belongs and who does not belong in America. Yet that distinction also defies what it means to live in community and in America—a land welcoming of the dispossessed, immigrants, and any who yearn to experience "true" liberty. This new American exceptionalism requires democratic and (civil) religious work. As such, it holds the potential to create a more inclusive and just society where multiple global constituencies meet' and where the connection between race, ethnicity, and civil religion come to represent both reformulations of national identity and the more nativistic expressions of American exceptionalism.

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The United States faces an upsurge in nativism because of a return to certain forms of American nostalgia in the wake of the election of Donald Trump. A triumphalist variant of American exceptionalism has emerged because of this present national mode, engendering a crisis of American national identity. Citizens are at odds over how to understand the nature of the United States and its values. Traditionally, America has

embraced a civil religion, frequently identified as a form of patriotism, which has been understood as unifying the citizenry, regulating its emotions, and sacralizing its communities and the nation. This civil religion has served as a means of national religious self-understanding' and has come to be associated with American national identity as illustrated in the motto "In God We Trust" as well as in the inclusion of the phrase "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Recent anti-immigration policies and travel bans, reneging on free-trade and climate-control agreements, the end to the DACA program, moratoriums on transgendered military personnel, massive budget cuts to social and disability programs, anti-Muslim sentiments, restrictions on refugee admissions and withdrawal from the U.N. Global Compact on Migration, white nationalist rallies, and an NFL-centered patriotism and race schism challenge American civil religion and a shared ethos. How various constituents of the nation conceptualize American national identity and belonging has become a pressing matter because of these far-reaching policy changes. In order to make sense of the social, cultural, and global changes that led to these developments, this book argues that we can trace the roots back to 2001 and the beginnings of the War on Terror.

Four years of research in the rural Southern community of Bald Eagles explores the ways in which both black and white rural dwellers found themselves feeling marginalized and isolated from the rest of the country at the outset of the new century. Understanding their reactions to the War on Terror and the election of a black president helps us to comprehend how these groups, bound by regionalism, responded both similarly and differently to these drastic changes. Both communities within Bald Eagles acted in response to these macrostructural changes by practicing a derivation of American civil religion called Southern civil religion.

Southern civil religion acts like a social glue and spiritual anchor that pulls people together under common and abiding American principles and Southern regional experiences, regardless of race, ethnicity, and nationality. Other versions of this

form of civil religion exist. Racialized forms are ones that tie racial and ethnic groups to the land of America, but they do so in different and compelling ways, ways that reflect the particular values and commitments important to each respective social and cultural group. Southern civil religion is further distinctive in that features of evangelical faith support regional and national commitments to America but disclose differences between white and black racial values. This book is therefore also a study of white and black evangelicals in this self-identified civil religious and politically populist community.

Both communities additionally acted in response to the social turbulence by performing rites of faith that contribute to community contestation and consensus and rites of war that produce racially diverse and divergent public theologies of war. These rites are called rites of intensification, and they reinforce the authority, identity, moral commitments, ideologies, values, and structures of social groups and institutions.

Religion, politics, history, and memorializing the dead together are forces that unify communities and inform Robert Bellah's investigations into the ways in which political and sacrificial death—martyrdom—plays into the rebirth of a nation and shapes American civil religion. Concerning a politics of death implied as the content of civil religion, the association between race, religion, and American national identity is made evident by examining the connection between religion and sacrificial service—and centralizing the deaths of military men, fallen leaders, and common citizens who have given their lives to uphold the freedoms granted and preserved by the sacred founding documents of this country. Polyvalent funerary rites of a civil religious nature, case studies on leadership and patriotism, and church sermons work in tandem to unpack racialized understandings of "blood-land-religion." Studying the symbolism of these blood sacrifices and their ties to religion and to land shows this trifecta as reinforcing American nationality and regional communities, while also raising questions about the present resurgence and form of American exceptionalism.

Post-9/11 religiously inspired war conditions and the election of President Barack Obama produced a crisis in American national identity, for which reason the blood-land-religion trifecta remains central because the United States is in a perpetual and permanent state of war due to religiously inspired violent extremism. In responding to this civil religious politics of death, some Americans have embraced the nativistic and triumphalistic tradition of American exceptionalism, reintroduced by President Donald Trump. Distinct public theologies and civil religious interpretations of warfare related to Americans dying to defend the nation have become the substance of moral conversations and debate in American public life. These moral conflicts now demand new framings of American national identity.

The War on Terror and the election of Barack Obama have also contributed to restructuring America. *We, the People*, will consider those large-scale social factors that brought about these enormous shifts by providing a thick description that anticipated the incredible divide in the public's response to Trump's campaign (and why, though Trump's values were at variance to people who champion values, they still backed him); show how American's founding myths both do and do not explain religious and political behaviors; reveal the incredible complexity of being both white and black in America today (neither are stereotypical); and consider the politics of sacrificial death and how the blood-land-religion triumvirate (i.e., connection) has relevance to American national identity and American exceptionalism, particularly around questions of who does and who does not count as American.

*We, the People*, will uncover the microstructural and cultural realities that showcase the communal effects of America's War on Terror on rural and Southern dwellers; offer a richer picture of race and civil religion in the United States and a subtle understanding of the identity of American Evangelicals as a religious and political group; and determine the role of the public church (i.e., religious communities) in raising American consciousness and shaping American conscience—because the end result is to learn how to live in a more global civil society.

*We, the People*, must envision a "new" American exceptionalism for a global civil society that is in pursuit of the common good. For that reason, American national identity must offer greater democracy, not less. It needs to be diverse and inclusive enough to honor nationalistic loyalties even in a world market and typified by the democratic and (civil) religious service of rural subpopulations like those in Bald Eagles whose "boys come home in body bags." It requires creating a path to peoplehood where a new American exceptionalism supplies the moral and religious resources required for common membership in (our) global and civil society and that makes America better again. <>

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