The Church, while recognizing the tragic necessity of 'alien', external punishment, should also seek to be an *asylum*, a house of refuge from its operations, a social space where a different, forgiving and restitutionary practice is pursued. This practice should also be 'atoning', in that we acknowledge that an individual's sin is never his alone, that its endurance harms us all, and therefore its cancellation is also the responsibility of all. Here we *do* echo God, not in punishing, but in suffering, for the duration of the *saeculum*, the consequences of sin, beyond considerations of desert and non-desert.

Likewise, the Church should be a space (a space whose boundaries are properly ill-defined) where truly just economic exchanges occur, in the sense that the equivalents of value are established between product and product, service and service, just as a sense emerges of 'equivalent' restitution for moral fault. Both equivalences can only arise within a *sittlich* society of friends, sharing common goals, where each new product and social role as it emerges is nonetheless given its 'position' and relative weight in the community. By extending the space of just exchange, it can be hoped that the space of arbitrary exchange, motivated by the search for maximum profit, and dominated by manipulation, pretence and absence of any standards of quality, can be made to recede. Although such an attempt must continue to involve certain elements of central organization of the distribution of basic necessities and the supply of finance, the idea of a totally 'planned economy' is actually inimical to it, because this imposes an external central authority and inhibits the free development of personal creativity and developing community preference.

The Church, to be the Church, must seek to extend the sphere of socially aesthetic harmony—'within' the state where this is possible; but of a state committed by its very nature only to the formal goals of *dominium*, little is to be hoped. A measure of resignation to the necessity of this *dominium* can also not be avoided. But with, and beyond Augustine, we should recognize the tragic character of this resignation: violence delivers no dialectical benefits, of itself it encourages only further violence, and it can only be 'beneficial' when the good motives of those resorting to it are recognized and recuperated by a defaulter coming to his senses. The positive content of benefit flows only in the quite different series of purely positive acts, a series that knows only conviviality, and seeks to escape, forever, all tragic profundity.

COUNTER-ONTOLOGY

Christian belief belongs to Christian practice, and it sustains its affirmations about God and creation only by repeating and enacting a metanarrative about how God speaks in the world in order to redeem it. In elaborating the metanarrative of a counter-historical interruption of history, one elaborates also a distinctive practice, a counter-ethics, embodying a social ontology, an account of duty and virtue, and an ineffable element of aesthetic 'idiom', which cannot be fully dealt with in the style of theoretical theology. However, the developing idiom is also an allegorical representation of an idea, a speculation, which practice itself both promotes and presupposes as 'setting'. In the speculation, social ontology (which is really a description of, and prescription for, the Church) is grounded in a general ontology (concerning the ratio of finite and infinite) and a 'counter-ontology' is articulated.

This counter-ontology speculatively confirms three major components of the counter-ethics: first, the practice of charity and forgiveness as involving the priority of a gratuitous creative giving of existence, and so of difference. Secondly, the reconciliation of difference with virtue, fulfilling true virtue only through this reconciliation. Thirdly, the treatment of peace as a primary reality and the denial of an always preceding violence. Let us take each in turn.

1 Difference and Creation

According to the Christian speculation, the absolute is no longer just 'limit', no longer finite, as it was for antique philosophy. What was chaos, *apeiron*, the unlimited and infinite, is now God himself.[116] God is the infinite series of differences, and what he knows is the infinity of differences; as Maximus the Confessor said, God is 'the distinction of the different'. And as the reality which includes and encompasses in his *comprehensio* every difference, God is also the God who differentiates. This means that while, as Dionysius the Areopagite realized, God is superabundant Being, and not a Plotinian unity beyond Being and difference, he is also nevertheless, as Dionysius also saw, a power within Being which is more than Being, an internally creative power.[117] As infinite power which is unimpeded, nothing in God can be unrealized, so that it would appear that God is *actus purus*, yet it must be equally the case that no actualization, even an infinite one, exhausts God's power, for this would render it finite after all. The pre-Thomist intimation in Dionysius of a kind of surplus to actuality in God is therefore correct, but one needs to state clearly that no priority can be given to either pure *actus* or pure *virtus*. Infinite realized act and infinite unrealized power mysteriously coincide in God, and it must be this that supports the circular 'life', that is more than *stasis*, of the Trinity.[118] Yet 'power-act' plays out through, and is constituted by, the trinitarian relations: it is not that the Father is power and the Son act, for this would depersonalize their relation and make it *not* a real surface relation at all (this is why the Father-Son relation is not *just* a signified-signifier one, implying an 'absence' of the Father, but also an 'adjacent', figurative relation). A relation, even a relation constituting its own poles, can only be a relation between act and act, although it is the play of potential which introduces relation as a moving and dynamic element.

This movement, as Dionysius explains, is from unity to difference, constituting a relation in which unity *is* through its power of generating

difference, and difference *is* through its comprehension by unity.[119] But one may legitimately wonder here whether difference that is generated in an emanation which constitutes (as Augustine explains) a 'pure relation', where the two poles only are through their relating, might appear to be locked within this relation, which would then appear just as closed off, and as monistic as an isolated 'substance'. Likewise, the differences which are unified through the paternal origin can appear to be enclosed within a totality, and *denied* as differences, in the sense of an infinite series of 'escaping' differences. This is why, (speculatively speaking) within the Godhead, there is held by Christianity to arise after the 'first difference' which is the Son, also the 'second difference' of the Holy Spirit, constituted as an equally pure relation to the Father, but 'through' the Son.[120] The Spirit *is* this relation of the one and the many, this *ratio* of charity, but the relational character of this ratio is now truly affirmed, because the Son, and the differences contained within the Son, has now become a moment of *mediation* between Father and Spirit. The differences can be 'received' or 'interpreted' in a moment of reception which is *not* the Father, and which is beyond the perfect relation of Father and Son (though purely constituted as the 'gift' of this relation). Therefore difference, after first constituting unity (the Son causing 'backwards' the Father) becomes a *response* to unity that is more than unity, which unity itself cannot predict. The harmony of the Trinity is therefore not the harmony of a finished totality but a 'musical' harmony of infinity. Just as an infinite God must be power-act, so the doctrine of the Trinity discovers the infinite God to include a radically 'external' relationality. Thus God can only speak to us simultaneously as the Word incarnate, and as the indefinite spiritual response, in time, which is the Church.

This God who differentiates is not one who 'causes' anything, nor a God whose knowledge precedes his action. As Eriugena already affirmed, 'making', in the sense of a spontaneous development (unlike causality) is, for Christianity, a transcendental reality located in the infinite, and God acts and knows because he internally 'makes' or 'creates'. Likewise he knows and acts upon things in time insofar as he creates them, and there is no question of 'before' and 'after' here.[121]

The created world of time participates in the God who differentiates; indeed, it *is* this differentiation insofar as it is finitely 'explicated', rather than infinitely 'complicated'. Just as God (as Augustine already affirms in *De Trinitate*) is not a 'substance', because he is nothing fundamental underlying anything else, so also there are no substances in creation, no underlying matter, and no discrete and inviolable 'things'. One can only think of the elements of creation as inherently interconnected 'qualities' which combine and re-combine in all sorts of ways (Basil, Gregory of Nyssa) and as 'seeds' or 'monads' (Eriugena) or numerical ratios (Augustine) which participate in the divine creative power/act, and themselves continuously propagate *ex nihilo*, in the sense of continuously re-providing their own 'matter' (as Eriugena affirms) through time.[122] There are no 'things' (as Augustine sees in *De Musica*) but only tensional *ratios* which in their 'intense' state, do not pre-contain all that they later unfold, but have an 'incorporeal' power for expansion. Creation is therefore not a finished product in space, but is continuously generated *ex nihilo* in time. To sustain this process, the monads, seeds or ratios also self-generate, but in this they do not 'assist' God, who supplies all power and all being, but rather participate in God. For if God is an internally creative power-act, then he can only be participated in by creatures who do not embody an infinite coincidence of act and power, but a finite oscillation between the two, yet are themselves thereby radically creative and differentiating.

As against this ontology (intimated by Eriugena) the great thirteenth-century theologians, Aquinas and Scotus (here following Augustine), denied participation in creation by creatures for two reasons. First, under Aristotelian influence, they thought of making as merely a modification of existing forms, not as the inauguration of radically new 'types' of thing. Secondly, they supposed that co-creation implied an 'assistance' to God in the act of creation, whereas, of course, for Christianity only God is commensurate with the bringing about of Being from nothing, in the absolute sense of a 'first' creation, impossible for creatures.[123] However, they only came to this latter conclusion because they did not conceive God as internally creative, or as power-act, and therefore failed to see that a creature is *not* primarily something which is, but primarily something which is creative. Seeds *do* cause creatures to be, human beings *do* cause houses, bridges, novels to be, for where are these in nature? A novel does not *exist* simply as a particular set of marks on thin pieces of wood. It is only the infinity of Being, and a new being without precursors, that creatures do not make. Yet in creating things, creatures do not assist God, for *all* this power/act of a finite creation is created by God.

Eriugena's ontology, based on God as internally 'maker' and then on different degrees of participation in creation, is therefore more profoundly Christian than that of Aquinas.[124] However, he did not fully realize that his 'pragmatist' notion of God's knowledge denied the traditional paradigm of art, whereby art is first causally in the mind of the maker before it is in the work of art, and he did not extend his 'pragmatist' view fully to human knowledge. Here he seems to anticipate a subjective idealist idea of an 'internal' creative operation of mind upon received sensation, but does not arrive at the notion that the mind only *has* ideas in what it makes, and so in the contingent products of culture. As has been mentioned, this notion was first broached by Nicholas of Cusa, and it is vital to realize that contingent 'making' should naturally be conceived by Christianity as the site of our participation in divine understanding – for this is also a making, combined with the 'reception' of what is made by the Holy Spirit. The great failure of modern Christian ontology is not to see that secular reason makes the essentially Platonic assumption that 'the made' lies beneath the portals of the sacred, such that a humanly made world is regarded as arbitrary and as cutting us off from eternity.

The task of human creative differentiation is to be charitable, and to give in 'art' (all human action) endlessly new allegorical depictions of

charity. Through this charity, 'God' is both imaginatively projected by us and known, though with a negative reserve which allows that our initiative, precisely *as* an initiative, is a response, and a radical dependency. Theological realism amounts to this. But it does not seem to me that it at all supports or requires philosophical realism: God is not something in any way seen, that we could 'refer' to. And as for the finite world, creation *ex nihilo* radically *rules out* all realism in its regard. There are no things, no substances, only shifting relations and generations in time. Knowledge itself is not 'something else' in relation to Being, a 'reflection' of Being, but only a particularly complex form of relation, another happening, and a pragmatic intervention amongst finite happenings. One should read again what Augustine says about memory: knowledge, he maintains, is not of space 'seen', but always of time remembered. All that we ever know is a memory, because the present has always already passed by.[125] This is *not* a thesis about the essentially subjective reality of time, but rather a thesis (which seems to show some kinship, perhaps accidental, with stoic ideas) about the event itself. (This can be inferred from the fact that, in *De Musica*, Augustine does not confine the 'intense' phase of the time-span, as exemplified in memory, only to mind, but sees it as the generating power present in everything. Also from the fact that he is interested in the moment of the *passage* of an event from external time into memory.)[126]

If time were only a pure flow, then one would have only a seamless continuum; not only would nothing be known about, nothing would actually *happen*. For an event to 'occur' at all, it must pass into an intentional, or what the stoics called an 'incorporeal' state: a state of affairs, or a connection must *remain* although it has in fact also already passed away. Hence, for example, the window of a house simply does not 'occur' except as an idea, as a particular 'section' out of a really *moving continuum*, which because it is 'frozen', we can then immediately conceive as larger or smaller, or even as not surrounded by bricks, like the grin that remains after the Cheshire cat has vanished in *Alice in Wonderland* (to use Deleuze's example).[127] Events already take an ideal form, already happen as knowledge, and although they seem to float 'above' the continuum, they also reveal to us the 'seed' power of expansion and contraction which moves the *continuum*. Body always is, with and through the incorporeal, as fact always is, with and through value, and the Father with and through the Son; the Spirit being like our mental prolongation of events. This would be a way of reworking Augustine's trinitarian analogy: the finite bodily 'stuff' of memory has always already passed into the 'intense' incorporeal state of something judged, or uttered in the *verbum mentis* (a phrase which implies an idea that 'emanates' from memory, which continues to 'occur' as an idea). This in turn can be judged as comparatively larger or smaller, or as situated in such and such a new juxtaposition according to the 'spiritual' promptings of our will and desire.[128]

If we think seriously about time and creation, and follow in the tradition of Augustine, we shall conclude that knowledge is not a representation of things, but is a relation to events, and an action upon events. Our judgement of the 'truth' of events, according to Augustine in the *Confessions*, is essentially an aesthetic matter.[129] We recognize beauty or not, and the measure of truth is likeness to the form of the divine beauty of which our soul has some recollection. Augustine is basically right: truth, for Christianity, is not correspondence, but rather *participation* of the beautiful in the beauty of God. However, abandoning Platonic recollection, one should re-conceive the mind's kinship to beauty as the capacity of a particularly strong 'intensity' to become the fulcrum for events, and to shape events in an 'honest' and 'decorous' fashion.

2 Difference and Harmony

Thinking an infinite differentiation that is also a harmony: this is what grounds the reconciliation of difference with virtue. For antiquity, as was mentioned, that which is without limit, the *apeiron*, was a chaotic element. For Plato, dialectics leads us to the conclusion that reality consists both of what is, self-identical and rational, *and* of that which is not, the non self-identical and therefore irrational. Being, it then appears, is a hopelessly infected area, for the only discourse which can include both the same and the different (the non-self-identical) is itself a discourse of difference, which is not dialectics, not a discourse of reason. In a somewhat similar fashion, Aristotle's epistemic discourse on Being, which identifies a real knowledge of substance with knowledge of the universal, is problematically infected by his placing of the substance primarily in the concrete material particular, which, as particular, is ineffable and unknowable.

To save Greek reason, therefore (which I do not wish to do), one must derive it from a now inconceivable, unknown unity, which lies beyond Being and beyond the infections of difference. This is the move of neo-Platonism. For this philosophy, Being participates in unity and yet participation appears threatened by the absolute gulf fixed between pure unity, and a unity only thinkable in relation to difference.[130] The precarious solution to this problem was to make all reality 'emanate' from unity in a series of degrees of unified purity, and to make even the 'nether limit' of unlikeness something projected by this chain of emanations. However, the reassuring presence of the ladder cannot really disguise the gulf which opens to view at its top, nor the break which now threatens between a mystical discourse on unity, and a dialectical reasoning about being which requires, and yet is subverted by, the emanative becoming-different of the same.

For this reason, as Anton C. Pegis long ago pointed out, there is a hidden continuity between neo-Platonism and the late scholastic voluntarists: the latter, in the light of the doctrine of creation, correctly became suspicious of all doctrines of essences and universals which imply some presence of 'necessity' within the ontological order.[131] Being comes to be seen as an essentially revisable, shifting diversity. But the only way that the voluntarists could characterize God in contrast to this was to emphasize his unity, and absolute simplicity; these become the properties of a

sheerly inscrutable will, of whom no finite qualities can be eminently predicated.

As was seen in chapter 1, voluntarist theology is one of the two important sources of 'secular reason'. The other is a revived 'paganism', deriving mainly from Machiavelli. However, the comparison of neo-Platonism with voluntarism reveals the logic of a fusion between these two different currents, a fusion perfectly realized not in liberalism, but in nihilism: the only transcendental self-identical reality is the recurrence of an empty will, or force, which always returns as the arbitrarily and unpredictably different.

In opposition to this antique-modern 'secular reason' should be set, not a revived Platonism or Aristotelianism, including their Christianized versions (viz. MacIntyre) which secular reason can easily deconstruct, but rather the Christian critique and transformation of neo-Platonism (although a vital Aristotelian influence is necessarily involved here). Building on the neo-Platonic recognition of the One as itself 'without limits', beyond the sphere of division and contrast which involves dialectical negation, both Augustine and Dionysius (in their trinitarian theologies) went further by situating the infinite emanation of difference within the Godhead itself, and in this fashion overcame the 'third antinomy' of antique reason, between the 'gods' of truth and the 'giants' of difference. Unity, in this Christian outlook, ceases to be anything hypostatically real in contrast to difference, and becomes instead only the 'subjective' apprehension of a harmony displayed in the order of the differences, a desire at work in their midst, although 'proceeding' beyond them (as the Holy Spirit). For Dionysius, unity has become both a dynamic happening and a complex relation. It is, in fact, transcendental peace which 'overflows in a surplus of its peaceful fecundity' and 'preserving [all things] in their distinctness yet linking them together'.[132] This entirely reinvents the idea of order. Order is now more purely an aesthetic relation of the different, and no longer primarily self-identity or resemblance. Nor is order something essentially synchronic, within which a serial development must be situated; on the contrary, the infinity of God, his never exhausted 'surplus', means that the context for development is always open to revision by the development. The unity, harmony and beauty of the emanation of difference cannot, in consequence, be anticipated in advance, even for God himself. As Eriugena realized, God's knowledge is not 'before' but *in* the infinity of generation, and this knowledge can only be ordered, only be, in some sense, as Dionysius says, 'limited', if it is the infinite happening of the new in harmony with what 'precedes' it.[133] In this fashion, Dionysius embraces (unlike Aristotle) the transcendental difference of the *Parmenides* and the *Sophist*, yet conjoins it with transcendental peace in a fashion inconceivable for antiquity, which identified peace with finitude and rational 'containment'.

In aesthetic terms, there is something 'Baroque' here, in contradistinction to both the antique-classical and the modern avant-garde. In the perspective of infinitude, ornamentation overtakes what it embellishes; every detail (as Deleuze points out) is a 'fold' within an overall design, but the design

itself is but a continuous unfolding, which reaches out ecstatically beyond its frame towards its supporting structure.[134] Structural supports are consequently overrun by the designs they are supposed to contain, and massive architectural edifices appear merely 'suspended' from above, by aery, celestial scenes. This hierarchy is not an antique, natural order, but nor is it a postmodern 'plateau' where all is 'indifferent'. 'Baroque' hierarchy, as already described by Dionysius, is instead the appearance of the divine self-realization in finitude, and therefore as a vertical sequence up which each individual can contemplatively and actively rise. At its summit lies not a static completion, but a full participation in the suspension downwards of hierarchies (the aiding of others by charity) and a greater participation in the suspension forwards of the thearchy, God's infinite self-realization.[135] Here the analogy switches from architecture to music, which resounds within the earthly building. In Baroque music, the individual lines become increasingly distinct and individually ornamented; there is an increasing 'delay' of resolutions, and an increasing generation of new developments out of temporary resolutions. The possibility of consonance is stretched to its limits, and yet the path of dissonance is not embarked upon. To say (with Deleuze) that dissonance and atonality are here 'held back' or 'not arrived at', would be a mistake of the same order as claiming that nihilism is evidently true in its disclosure of the impossibility of truth.[136] Instead, one should say, it is always possible to place dissonance back in Baroque 'suspense'; at every turn of a phrase, new, unexpected harmony may still arrive. Between the nihilistic promotion of dissonance, of differences that clash or only accord through conflict, and the Baroque risk of a harmony stretched to the limits – the openness to musical grace – there remains an undecidability.

Where, however, Christian theology helps to invent this nihilism, as in the case of a voluntarism blind to the possibility of an aesthetic account of analogy, then it betrays itself. For the trinitarian God does not possess the unity of a bare simplicity, a naked will, nor does he stand in an indifferent relationship to what he creates. God's love for what he creates implies that the creation is generated within a harmonious order intrinsic to God's own being. And only by means of this conception, this admission of some analogous exchange of predicates between God and finitude, can one conceive of an absolute that is *itself* difference, inclusive of all difference, unlike nihilism, which can only posit a transcendental univocity.[137] The way was opened to such an exchange of predicates by both Augustine and Dionysius, who broke with neo-Platonism by ascribing all Being, and in consequence difference, to God himself. And yet they could only do this, because, in effect, they had already made the 'post-philosophical' move of separating difference from dialectics. The Platonic, Aristotelian and neo-Platonic problematics were entirely founded on the idea that difference is distinguished from sameness through the medium of denial and of non-Being. Augustine and Dionysius, by contrast, in effect redefine Being as itself that which is different. But, in consequence, God, or the first principle, can no longer be arrived at by dialectics, by the discipline of 'truth', or by the careful distinguishing of that which

remains self-identical. A knowledge that is rather the infinite maximal tensional harmony of difference has to be something persuasively communicated, something constituting the positive reality of the finite world, and also something continuously *added to* this world, rather than uncovered within it. Hence the relationship of God to the world becomes, after Christianity, a rhetorical one, and *ceases to be anything to do with 'truth'*, or, in other words with the relation of reality to appearance. Creation is not an appearance, a mixture of truth and untruth, related to God by a minus sign, nor yet an Aristotelian hierarchy of identities, but is rather the serial occurrence of differential reality in time, and related to God by a plus sign. Negation, here, as Dominique Dubarle has noted, is reduced to the purely heuristic functioning of a zero sign, in the speculative expression: 'creation out of nothing'.[138]

The God who is, who includes difference, and yet is unified, is not a God sifted out as 'truth', but a God who speaks in the harmonious happening of Being. As Dubarle argues, this is affirmed by Augustine in the *Confessions*, where the God of Moses who defines himself as the God who is (*est*), the 'ontological' God, is also (as the verbal form indicates) the God who announces himself; while, inversely, the historical God who declares 'I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob' is also the ontological God, the God of what positively *occurs*[139] (not a God attained through any final relinquishing or denial). Narrative and ontology reinforce each other in an ontology of difference, because God must be known *both* as the 'speaking' of created difference, *and* as an inexhaustible plenitude of otherness. This ontological background, or 'setting', finally steps into the foreground when the heir of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob himself announces 'I am before the creation of the world'. Then the positive given event becomes itself inexhaustible, itself the setting of past and future lives.

The reconciliation of virtue with difference implies a harmonic pattern in the happening of difference, a 'tradition' whose norms are only seen in the course of its unfolding. But a tradition (is Christianity the *only* tradition in this sense?) automatically *consists* in the imagination of a reality in which traditioned processes themselves participate. The thought of God as infinite Being, as difference in harmony, is this speculative imagining. And such a speculation ends and subsumes philosophy, just as the Christian counter-ethics ends and subsumes all politics.

3 Peace and Privation

If, for Christianity, 'philosophy' is finished and surpassed, then there can be no more 'truth and falsity'. Because no positive non-being is posited, as by Platonism, and no pure material potency, as in Aristotelianism, nothing that is, can be in any sense wrong. There can be no more illusions, and no unmaskings: instead, there are *deficiencies*. To be 'wrong' is now to do evil, and to do evil is rather not to do the good, for something 'to be lacking'. Neither ignorance nor sin make 'mistakes'; instead, they somehow do not do enough.

What can this mean? Not that all creatures sin because they can never have done enough (though Augustine sometimes lets this neo-Platonic relic intrude, and so opens the way to theodicy).[140] Rather that there is a way of acting which inhibits the flow, which prevents the infinitely more being done in the future. This is the failure to 'refer' our desire to God, to make good *usus* of things. A well-made deed should be like a picture which admits the sublime within the scope of its beauty: the perspective upon a distant landscape, the shaft of light from an upper window. But at the same time, the sublime must not just intrude upon the beautiful, nor hover, emptily (as for Kant, who reduces ethics to the upholding of freedom)[141] upon its margins, but allow its perspective to infuse the entire scene, to decompose the scene, so that we are invited to enter into it as an opening to what lies beyond it. And this opening must entrance us, we must be seduced; hence the beautiful form taken by the opening of the sublime gulf ought to make the gulf appear attractive, must seem to manifest, be suspended by, the gulf itself. It is not just that the infinite calls out to our freedom to affirm its own incomprehensibility, but also that the infinite is opened out along a particular path, and *within* the scene we become a free, but concretely desiring subject. (The aesthetic reconciliation of the sublime with the beautiful is the same task as the ethical reconciliation of difference with virtue.) To 'refer' things to the infinite is to arrange them in their proper place in a sequence, and hence 'privation' implies not just inhibition of the flow, but also a false, ugly, misdirection of the flow. Although evil is negative, it can be 'seen' in an ugly misarrangement. All the same, nothing is positively wrong here, for every scene can be adjusted by rearrangement, omission and re-contextualization. Indeed, finding the right perspective on the infinite is a matter (to adapt Augustine) of being open to the risks of new and unexpected beauty.

Thus Augustine affirms, against antiquity, that for true happiness and virtue one must not only possess the goal (which for antiquity would have been enough) but also envisage the right 'way' to the goal, which remains with the goal in the sense that one must continue to possess it with the right desire. Although goal and way are ultimately identical, such that to love *God*, must be to love him rightly, for us the one does not guarantee the other: they must be grasped in separate moments. To be virtuous one must both 'refer' all to the infinite goal, *and* find the right path, the right perspective and sequence for desire – the path constantly laid out, re-drawn, re-traced, by Jesus and the Church (all genuine Christian community) in history. This double requirement supplements the goal with the way, and reconceives the goal as itself *still* the way, thus collapsing together the 'circle' and the 'arrow', and preserving the moment of the arrow, which antiquity tended to negate and leave behind. It is this supplementation which is summed up in Augustine's Christian re-definition of virtue as 'rightly ordered love'.[142]

In contrast to the true goal, and the true desire, stand the spurious goal and false desire. Both are entirely privative: insofar as they 'are', they are good, and there is no nature or essence of evil. But as both Augustine

and Dionysius emphasize, an evil which is purely privative is also an evil whose *only* essence must be 'violence': the denial of Being both as infinite plenitude and as harmonious ordering of difference, or as peace.[143] Whereas, for both these thinkers, peace is essential for existence (so that peace becomes a transcendental attribute of Being), violence is an unnecessary intrusion. Thus Christianity, uniquely, does not allow violence any real ontological purchase, but relates it instead to a free subject who asserts a will that is truly independent of God and of others, and thereby a will to the inhibition and distortion of reality (so that, in a sense, the Cartesian subject only exists as the sinful subject). I do not think there is any way of *demonstrating* this ontological priority of peace, although one can argue for the *conceivability* of a purely 'positive' Being without the 'non-Being' of violence. But it follows as an explication of the doctrine of creation.

If nothing is evil insofar as it exists, then it is only evil in terms of its failure to be related to God, to infinite peace, and to other finite realities with which it should be connected to form a pattern of true desire. Evil becomes the denial of the hope for, and the present reality of, community. Yet this has implications also for how Augustine begins to think (and we should think further) of the reality of the Good, or the reality of what is. For what makes something to be good, what makes it to be, is not any essence which it possesses (indeed self-possession *is* privation) but its existing (without any reserved 'surplus' of individuality, which is but a false freedom) entirely in particular patterns of desire, which remain open to, and whose beauty constitutes a path to, the unknown infinite. What is 'free' here, what gets adjusted, is not contentless wills, but relationships. When we change we alter others, and the changes of others alter ourselves. Salvation is only in common: it is only the peace of the *altera civitas*.

THE FATE OF THE COUNTER-KINGDOM

However, if this is salvation, then we are forced to admit that it can only have been present intermittently during the Christian centuries. My onslaught, in this book, against secular reason, has not at all been in the name of a past epoch of Christian dominance. On the contrary, while it is possible to recover the narrative and ontological shape of the Christian 'interruption' of history (and to suggest that this has been resumed by Christian socialism), one should also recognize that this interruption appears to have tragically failed, and that it is the course of this failure itself which has generated secular reason. Once there was no secular... but the invention of the secular began at least in the eleventh century.

Two points should be noted here. First of all, Christianity has helped to unleash a more 'naked' violence. During the middle ages, the attempts of people to rule directly over people in small communities, without recourse to an elaborate formal mechanism of law, gradually failed. The Church did not succeed in displacing politics, and as a result, politics returned,

yet in a virulent form unknown to antiquity. For once purely sacramental and charitable bonds alone had failed to uphold community, then the aid of new legal forms had to be sought: forms thoroughly desacralized through the impact of Christianity itself. Hence the later middle ages engendered a newly rationalistic and formalized approach to law, from the twelfth century onwards. Law now dealt in 'pure' possession and control, in the regulation and balancing of power. Hence, too, the theorists of papal absolutism pressed further than antiquity towards a doctrine of unlimited sovereignty, progress was made towards a liberal conception of property rights, and relationships between 'corporate' bodies came to be conceived on a contractualist basis.[144]

Secondly, although politics returned, the state itself assumed the form of a perverted Church, an anti-Church. It is here that theologians can learn much from Michael Foucault in the construction of a 'theology of Church history'. For the Church's non-legal, 'pastoral' rule worked through knowledge, through the exact understanding of communities, and the attempt to regulate time and activity into a pattern that would discipline human desires. Gradually however, *ordo* became almost a goal in itself, and pastoral rule, concentrating on the minute regulation of bodies in time and space, fused with the return of formal legality (this process being much encouraged by the failure to see all punishment as negative and in some sense sinful). 'Mystical bodies', like monastic communities, become more and more subject to fixed, legally enforceable codes of regulation.[145] Concomitantly, a firmer distinction arose in the twelfth century between 'healthy', well-regulated bodies, and those 'outside' these bodies – lepers, primitive villagers, prostitutes, homosexuals, charismatic preachers – who became increasingly liable to persecution.[146] Gradually *ordo* got separated off from both true *usus* and ultimate *frui*, and pastoral rule became, within the secular state, a rule through the classification of populations in terms of medical, psychological, economic and educational canons of 'normality'. Such rule is a kind of mimicry of ecclesial peace, because it can be based upon a consensus, yet the basis of this consensus is not agreement about either 'the goal' or 'the way', but merely a deferral to 'expert' opinion. And expertise is only expertise about power.

In the midst of history, the judgement of God has already happened. And either the Church enacts the vision of paradisal community which this judgement opens out, or else it promotes a hellish society beyond any terrors known to antiquity: *corruptio optimi pessima*. For the Christian interruption of history 'decoded' antique virtue, yet thereby helped to unleash first liberalism and then nihilism. Insofar as the Church has failed, and has even become a hellish anti-Church, it has confined Christianity, like everything else, within the cycle of the ceaseless exhaustion and return of violence.

Yet as we are situated on the far side of the cross – the event of the judgement of God – no return to law, to the antique compromise of inhibition of violence, remains possible. Both nihilism and Christianity

decode the inconsistencies of this position. And the absolute Christian vision of ontological peace now provides the only alternative to a nihilistic outlook. Even today, in the midst of the self-torturing circle of secular reason, there can open to view again a series with which it is in no continuity: the emanation of harmonious difference, the exodus of new generations, the path of peaceful flight...

NOTES

1 George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (London: S.P.C.K., 1984).
2 Ibid., pp 65–8.
3 D. Z. Phillips, 'Lindbeck's audience', in *Modern Theology*, vol. 4, no. 2, January 1988, pp. 133–54.
4 Rowan Williams, *Arius* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1987) pp. 95–117.
5 This phrase was first used by Ken Surin in relation to one of my own articles, but I think it can be usefully applied also to Lindbeck's perspective.
6 Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, pp. 67, 82–4.
7 Ibid., pp. 101–2.
8 Ibid., pp. 81–3, 96.
9 Kenneth Surin, 'The weight of weakness: intratextuality and discipleship', in *The Turnings of Darkness and Light* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1989) pp. 201–21.
10 R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) p. 177ff.
11 Augustine, *Civitas Dei*, XIV, 15, 28. XV, 7.
12 Augustine. *CD* XIV, 1; XV, 4; XIX, 19, 20, 27.
13 Augustine, *CD* II, 18, 20; III, 10, 15; V, 12.
14 Augustine, *CD* XIV, 9; XIX, 4, 10, 27.
15 Augustine, *CD* II, 22; III, 13; V, 12: IX, 6–23.
16 Augustine, *CD* III, 6, 13, 14; XV, 5, 6.
17 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, VIII, 68.
18 Augustine, *CD* IV, 15.
19 Augustine, *CD* XIV, 17; XIX, 10, 13, 27.
20 Augustine, *CD* XV, 2.
21 Augustine, *CD* I, 35; V, 12.
22 Augustine, *CD* I, 7, 35.
23 Augustine, *CD* XIX, 25.
24 Augustine, *CD* III, 14.
25 Augustine, *CD* X, 5, 6.
26 Augustine, *CD* X, 5.
27 René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1978).
28 Ibid. René Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer (London: Athlone, 1987) pp. 3–48, 326–51.
29 Ibid., pp. 3–48, 105–26, 299–305.
30 Ibid., pp. 3–48, 126–38.
31 Ibid., pp. 141–280.
32 Serge Tcherzekoff, *Dual Classification Reconsidered.*
33 Raymond Schwäger. *Der Wunderbare Tausch: Zur Geschichte und Deutung der Erlosungslehre* (Munich: Kosel, 1986) pp. 273–312.
34 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Frazer's Golden bough*, trans. A. C. Miles (Retford: Brynmill, 1979) p. 3.
35 Girard, *Things Hidden*, pp. 224–62.
36 Schwäger, *Der Wunderbare Tausch*, pp. 290–5, 304–12. See also pp. 161–92.
37 Colossians I:24, 2. Corinthians I:3–12. Augustine *CD* X, 6; XIX, 23. Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, pp. 253–8.
38 James L. Kinneavy, *Greek Rhetorical Origins of Greek Faith: An Inquiry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).
39 See chapter 3 above.
40 See chapters 4 and 5 above.
41 Augustine, *CD* XIX, 17. Rowan Williams, 'Politics and the soul: a reading of the City of God', in *Milltown Studies*, no. 19/20, 1987, pp. 55–72, 64.
42 Gerhard B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform* (London: Harper and Row, 1967) p. 113ff.
43 Markus, *Saeculum*, pp. 164–71.
44 Augustine, *CD* II, 21; XIX, 21–4.
45 Augustine, *CD* XIX, 24.
46 Williams, 'Politics and the Soul', pp. 59–60.
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50 Markus, *Saeculum* pp. 170–1. Augustine, *CD* XV, 1.
51 Augustine, *On Baptism: Against the Donatists*, I, 15, 23–16.25, VI, 5.7.
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53 Augustine, *CD* IV, 15.
54 Augustine, *CD* XXII, 29. Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy, 165A–165C. The Divine Names*, 889D–893A.
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58 Augustine, *CD* XIV, I, XV, 1–2.
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60 Williams, 'Politics and the soul', pp. 57–8.
61 Augustine, *CD* XVI, 4.
62 Augustine, *CD* XVIII, 54.
63 Augustine, *CD* XIX, 15.
64 Augustine, *CD* XIX, 14, 15.
65 Seneca, *Epistulae*, XC, 5.
66 Augustine, *CD* XIX, 14, 20.
67 Augustine, *CD* V, 24.
68 Williams, 'Politics and the soul', p. 65.
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70 Aquinas, *ST* II, I, 108 a 2.
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