A Review of Religion, Politics & Culture

Commonweal

JANUARY 4, 2019

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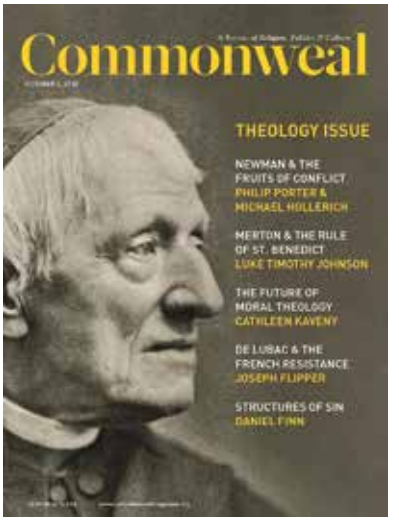
LETTERS

Rethinking the Order of Malta, ratio & intellectus

DRIVE-BY DISMISSAL

In his piece on the current scandal and Archbishop Viganò's letter ("Double Lives," November 9) Kenneth Woodward indulges in a drive-by shooting at the Order of Malta. I, like most Catholics, knew little about this religious order until I first came across them running a leprosarium in Central Africa early in my diplomatic service.



But your readers should perhaps know that this oldest of religious orders (with 13,500 members plus over one hundred thousand professional staff and volunteers) runs hospitals, medical teams, ambulance services, refugee programs, prison ministries, support for the poor and hungry, and efforts to defend the faith in over 120 countries. Mr. Woodward might wish to volunteer to help with the sick we bring on the order's annual pilgrimage to Lourdes.

The witness to the graces poured out, both spiritual and physical (I have seen more than one miracle there), should inspire any who come with us—and perhaps modify the accusation that we are little but politically conservative Catholics favored by an outmoded organization "basically in the business of trading hefty donations for face time with Catholic hierarchs." (The last two candidates I have sponsored were a retired university president and a local fireman—neither, I think, looking forward to trading hefty donations for face time with the hierarchy.)

GERALD SCOTT
Richmond, Va.

GEOMETRISTS ONLY

The more that I read Philip Porter's article ("Newman & Theological Conflict," October 5), the more I became aware of a philosophical error that he consistently makes.

First, great care must be taken with the words "intellect" and "reason" whenever the primary linguistic background is Latin, for in that language and as used by ancient and medieval writers, *intellectus* and *ratio* are not synonyms.

Intellectus is the word used to express what Plato was talking about when the mind is functioning at the highest level of the divided line. It involves insight and comprehension of foundational truth such as Goodness. *Ratio* expresses the deductive workings of the mind as it tries to understand the world in the light of such truth.

That is why the motto over the entrance to the Academy was "Let no one enter without [knowing] geometry." For only those who had had the experience of both comprehending general principles and applying them in an orderly fashion would be able to do philosophy. Anselm's famous remark thus says that the goal of faith is not an articulate theory but comprehension of a truth that might not be able to be put into words.

MICHAEL H. MARCHAL
Cincinnati, Ohio

From the Editors

Lethal Hypocrisy

When the Turkish government provided the United States with an audio recording of the dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi being murdered in Saudi Arabia's Istanbul consulate, President Donald Trump declined to listen to it. There was, he told an interviewer, "no reason" for him to hear the tape; others could do that for him. Later, when a reporter asked Trump's national-security adviser, John Bolton, whether he had heard the tape, he said he hadn't and questioned why anyone would think he should: "Unless you speak Arabic, what are you going to get from it, really?" The reporter mentioned the possibility of listening to it with an interpreter, but Bolton replied that he might as well just read the transcript—though he didn't quite say whether he had done even that much. No one pointed out to Bolton that the sounds of a man being tortured to death and dismembered with a bone saw might be difficult to transcribe. Between Trump's comments and Bolton's, it was hard to avoid the impression that the president and his closest advisers would rather not be confronted with audible evidence of a serious crime they still refuse to take seriously.

CIA Director Gina Haspel also does not speak Arabic, but nevertheless flew all the way to Turkey to hear the tapes. They seem to have made an impression on her. In a closed-door briefing on December 4, she provided U.S. senators with details of the recordings and other classified information that led the intelligence agency to conclude, with "high confidence," that the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammad bin Salman, had ordered Khashoggi's murder. Despite having been assured a week earlier by Defense Secretary James Mattis that there was "no smoking gun that the crown prince was involved," senators of both parties found Haspel's presentation convincing. After the briefing, Republican Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, told reporters that "if the crown prince went in front of a jury, he would be convicted in thirty minutes." Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina said there was "zero chance, zero, that this happened in such an organized fashion without the crown prince." This was a far cry from the president's willful agnosticism about whether a U.S. ally's de facto head of state had orchestrated an assassination: "Maybe he did and maybe he didn't!"

Now senators are looking for ways to punish Riyadh and signal their outrage at Trump's prevarications, though without the cooperation of House Republicans. Graham favors a resolution explicitly condemning the crown prince for Khashoggi's killing, and has cosponsored a bill with Sen. Robert Menendez (D–N.J.) that would suspend the transfer of weapons to Saudi Arabia. Even before Haspel's briefing, fourteen Senate Republicans joined Senate Democrats to advance another resolution—sponsored by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I–Vt.) and Mike Lee (R–Utah)—that would end U.S. support for Saudi Arabia's war against the Houthis in Yemen, a war launched by the crown prince himself.

Such a resolution is long overdue. The war in Yemen could soon result in the worst famine in a century. According to the United Nations, 12 million Yemenis are at risk of starvation. Since the war began in March 2015, Yemen, already the poorest country in the region, has seen its currency lose two-thirds of its value and its GDP fall by half. Almost 80 percent of its population now depends on humanitarian assistance, but a naval blockade has prevented shipments of food and medicine from reaching the country, while making it impossible for Yemenis to fish their own waters. As many as 85,000 children may have already died of hunger or preventable diseases such as cholera and diphtheria. People are also dying of diabetes and kidney disease because insulin and dialysis are unavailable. Half of Yemen's medical facilities have had to close, but the gravely ill cannot be sent abroad for treatment, since the Saudis have also blocked all commercial flights from Sana'a, Yemen's capital.

Initial peace talks are now underway in Sweden, but without pressure from the United States the Saudis are unlikely to make the necessary compromises. In the meantime, Saudi warplanes will continue killing innocent civilians with missiles made in the United States. The official reason we tolerate and enable this kind of state terrorism is that its victims are supported by Iran, which the U.S. government has named the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism. The Khashoggi murder and cover-up have underscored the absurdity of this double standard: the United States can no longer use the threat of Shiite terrorism to justify a Sunni state's crimes against humanity. Our willingness to indulge the Saudi government—to overlook its violent suppression of dissent, as well as its oppression of women, foreign workers, and religious minorities—has made a mockery of U.S. pretensions to promote human rights and democracy in the Middle East. As soon as Democrats assume control of the House of Representatives, they must work quickly with the Senate to put an end to this lethal hypocrisy. ■

December 11, 2018

Joseph Sorrentino

'It's Up to God'

DISPATCH FROM A MIGRANT CARAVAN

Davíd Díaz Hernández fled El Salvador when he could no longer afford to pay the extortion money (called *renta*) demanded by the Mara Salvatrucha, also known as MS-13, one of the most brutal gangs in Latin America. "The amount you pay depends on the type of work you do," he told me. He had a small shoe-repair store and was paying the gang $20 a week, about a quarter of his income. "If you don't pay, they will kill you."

On October 31, Hernández joined one of the caravans that was forming in Guatemala and traveled with it all the way to Casa Peregrino, a shelter in Mexico City. "One day in the caravan, we walked sixteen hours," he said, and pointed to his feet. "Now I have blisters and they are very painful. It is very difficult to walk." Despite the pain and uncertainty of what was ahead, he was determined to continue to Mexico's northern border, along with about five hundred others in the caravan.

The majority of Central Americans traveling through Mexico are fleeing from what are called the Northern Triangle Countries: Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. These are among the most violent countries in the world. Most of that violence is perpetrated by gangs like the Mara Salvatrucha and MS 18. Benjamín, a refugee from El Salvador, told me, "*Everyone* has problems with the *maras*."

Before 2014, most Central Americans headed toward the U.S. border rode through Mexico on the freight trains collectively called *La Bestia*. Hundreds of people could be seen clinging to the tops of train cars or riding in between them. The situation changed dramatically in August of that year when Mexico instituted *Programa Frontera Sur* (PFS, the Southern Border Program). When the program was announced, Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto said it was designed to protect the migrants themselves. Sr. Leticia Gutiérrez of the Scalabrinian Migrant Group disagreed. "The objective was to prevent migrants from climbing on the train...and to detain them," she said, "and in that it has been successful."

Although some Central Americans still ride *La Bestia*, many trains pass by with few or no people on top of them. Police and immigration agents are stationed along the tracks, preventing people from climbing on and sometimes forcibly removing people. Train companies are employing *custodios* (private security) to keep people off trains and have erected cement barriers next to the tracks. Migrants and their advocates report that threats and robberies by police, immigration, and security are routine. "We have known about some cases in 2016 where migrants were executed by [*custodios*]," said Claudia León Ang, the Advocacy Coordinator at the Jesuit Service to Migrants in Mexico. Denied access to trains, more people have been making most of the journey to the United States on foot. Although riding *La Bestia* was dangerous, the presence of hundreds of people afforded some protection. After PFS started, people began traveling alone or in small groups, leaving them more vulnerable to predation. "It was bad before. It is worse now," León Ang told me. It's estimated that 80 percent of the people making the journey through Mexico will be assaulted. According to León Ang, "Seven in ten women will be raped." This explains why people began banding together in what have come to be described as "caravans." "People are aware of the dangers of the journey," said Francesca Fontanini, a spokesperson for the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR). "Traveling alone isn't secure. Members of a caravan...feel more protected; there is a decreased risk."

The first caravan left Guatemala in mid-October and the largest, estimated at about seven thousand people, reached Tijuana in mid-November. Several smaller caravans have been traveling through Mexico since then. The one that arrived at Casa Peregrino left Guatemala on October 31, reaching Mexico City on November 18. "One day walking, one day on a bus," said Fernando, a twenty-five-year-old Honduran who showed me the scars he has on his chest, knife wounds courtesy of Calle 18. The caravan is believed to be the fourth to have reached the city and at its peak included about seven hundred people.

I asked several people traveling with the caravan how it was organized. "It is not organized," said Luís, a Honduran. "People just seem to know when to leave, when to stop walking." Rafaél, a migrant from El Salvador added, "Somebody's in charge but I don't know who." Although the journey through Mexico is still difficult for those traveling in a caravan, it has at least been safer. "Mexican people have treated us well," Luís told me. Fontanini, of the UNHCR, confirmed this. "People in the caravan were very impressed with the help they received from Mexicans," she said. "They were given food, clothing, rides." A large police presence has also ensured people's safety; dozens of officers were posted inside and outside the shelter.

The accommodations at Casa Peregrino are basic. Women wash clothes by hand in concrete sinks and hang them to dry on lines, walls, or banisters. "We sleep on the floor on a thin mattress," said Fernando. "We are migrants, we do not get beds." There isn't much to do except wait, so people sit and chat or play checkers out front. More enterprising people buy packs of cigarettes and sell singles, called *sueltos*, for five pesos, or three cigarettes for ten pesos (about fifty cents).

From left to right: Benjamín, Maurício, and Davíd

JOSEPH SORRENTINO

Many line up at a table where the UNHCR provides information about obtaining asylum in Mexico. Because the probability of getting asylum in the United States has dropped to just above zero, applications for asylum in Mexico have skyrocketed. As recently as 2015, out of the four hundred thousand Central Americans who entered Mexico, only 3,424 applied for asylum there. In 2017, when between 450,000 and 500,000 Central Americans entered the country, there were 14,596 applications, of which 2,825 have so far been approved. (The final number isn't available yet.) "Through June of 2018, there were already fourteen thousand applications," said Fontanini. Most of these were filed in Tapachula, Chiapas, Mexico's southernmost state. Applications are supposed to be reviewed within forty-five working days but the wait is now stretching to six months. According to León Ang, some applicants have to wait as long as a year.

But not everyone thinks Mexico is a good option. For one thing, it can be almost as violent as the places the refugees are fleeing. Homicides are at an all-time high. Nor are there many good work opportunities for the migrants. "You cannot earn much here," said Mauricio, a Salvadoran bus driver. He said he'd return to El Salvador if he can't get asylum in the United States.

Some people have already returned. Audán León, a volunteer with Puente Humanitaria, told me that, just a few days after reaching the shelter, about a hundred people—exhausted from the journey, uncertain about asylum, and tired of waiting—left to go home. Many who remain say they will apply for asylum in Canada, although that may not be a realistic option. Archbishop Leonardo Marin Saavedra, of the Latin American Anglican Church in Canada, visited the shelter one day and announced that, when he returned to Toronto, he would "present a proposal to [Prime Minister] Justin Trudeau" that Canada accept Central American asylum-seekers, saying that Canada has planes and boats it could use to transport people there. He urged Central Americans to "have faith" because the process would take at least three months. When I asked if his church would support migrants remaining in Mexico during that time, he texted, "The Mexican government or the international community must solve the migrants' stay in Mexican territory...we HAVE [emphasis his] no resources." Fontanini said that the UNHCR had no information about the archbishop's

EVENTUAL SURFACE

Down under the tons of the last
millennium, I wonder:

did the denizens of the West,
aware and otherwise, feel

the weight of hundreds, years
—before the evaporation

into three zeros—nil clasped
in eggshell, 999 uncurling,

relaxing like a spent traveler
at the final inn, no tension,

weightless in its end,
those endless circles

swaddling only babes
of the possible

who sleep untroubled
in the fresh linen, smoothed

new at the bud of one thousand
that began rising, flexing at 1,

tightening, furling, screw-boring
until it drop to the ova at the taut

edge of three digits far hence.

—John Zedolik

John Zedolik has had poems published in the Alembic, Ascent Aspirations, *the* Bangalore Review, Common Ground Review, *the* Journal, Pulsar Poetry Webzine, Third Wednesday, Transom, *and the* Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. *His full-length collection will be published in July 2019.*

proposal, and neither did the Canadian embassy. When I asked if he already had a meeting scheduled with Trudeau, Marin Saavedra texted back, "No."

The violence in their home countries and the dangers they face in Mexico have not shaken the migrants' faith. The shelter is across the street from the Villa Guadalupe, the most revered religious site in all of Mexico. The serape with the painting of the Virgin Mary hangs inside the basilica there. Many, probably most, of the Central Americans in the caravan visited the basilica to plead for Mary's help. Alejandra Dominguez was one of them. When I asked if she thought she would be able to cross into the United States, she replied without hesitation: "It is up to God."

People in the caravan know what lies ahead and they know Mexicans may not always be as welcoming as they were a month ago. The caravan in Tijuana, the largest one to date, is straining that city's resources and has faced backlash from residents. The U.S. Border Patrol used tear gas to repel a group from that caravan as it attempted to force its way into the United States. Around five thousand U.S. soldiers line the U.S.-Mexico border waiting to block what President Donald Trump calls an "invasion." When informed that heavily armed soldiers awaited him at the border, Fernando angrily replied, "What do we have?" He lifted up his shirt showing his bare chest. "Nothing." Whenever Trump's name was mentioned, it elicited a string of unprintable invectives. The nicest thing I heard said about him was that he is "one [expletive] angry person."

It's very unlikely that Mexico and the United States have seen the last of the caravans. "I think that this will be a way for people to migrate that will continue," said Gabriela Hernandez, the director of the Tochan, a shelter in Mexico City. "It benefits people; it's better for them." She said that, in addition to making the journey safer, caravans have "made visible migration that had been invisible." Initially, that was a plus. But the caravans are now attracting negative attention. Mexican police and immigration agents are now stopping at least some of them. One with about two hundred people was stopped in Metapa, Chiapas. Almost everyone in it will likely be deported. Some fear that if it becomes apparent that traveling in a caravan attracts police and immigration agents, people will go back to traveling alone. And that will only increase the many risks migrants already face.

Despite the dangers, despite knowing that getting into the United States is extremely difficult, the Central Americans I met at Casa Peregrino are still able to maintain hope, trusting that God or luck will favor them. As I parted from Mauricio and his two friends, he called out to me, "See you in the United States." ■

Joseph Sorrentino *is a freelance journalist and photographer currently based in Mexico City.* *Funding for this article was made possible by the Puffin Foundation.*

John Gehring

Baltimore Flop

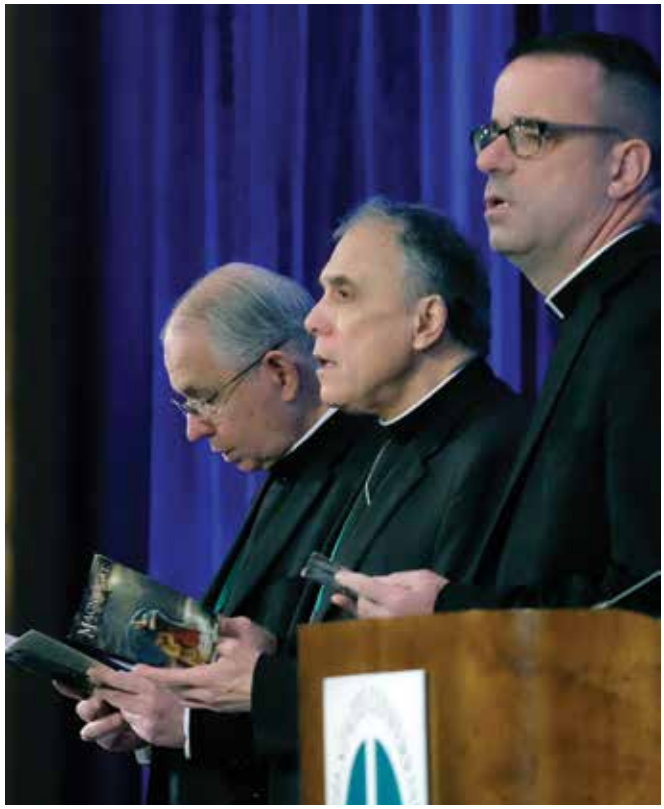
ANOTHER DISAPPOINTING BISHOPS' MEETING

The highly anticipated national meeting of Catholic bishops in early November opened with high drama, closed with a whimper, and in the end raised only more questions about the American hierarchy's capacity to tackle the most profound threat to its moral credibility in the modern era.

Bishops gathered in Baltimore expecting to vote on proposals addressing the lack of accountability measures for themselves, a telling reminder of clericalism's stubborn durability sixteen years after Boston and the consequent approval of the Dallas Charter, which applied to priests but did not cover the actions of bishops. The urgency of implementing mechanisms that would cover abusive hierarchs, as well as those who send credibly accused priests back into parishes, was underscored by a *Boston Globe* and *Philadelphia Inquirer* joint investigation released a few days before the meeting on November 3. More than 130 bishops, the investigation found—nearly one-third of those still living—have been accused of failing to adequately respond to sexual abuse in their dioceses. Among them is Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, who presided over the meeting as president of the bishops' conference and who has been cited by abuse survivors for mishandling cases in Iowa, when he was a bishop in Sioux City, and more recently in Texas.

After a "summer of shame," which included a Pennsylvania grand-jury report detailing six decades of systemic abuse and the fall of former cardinal Theodore McCarrick, expectations for this meeting ran high. National media turned out. Protestors rallied outside the downtown hotel where the bishops met. To leave Baltimore without taking at least *some* tangible action, it seemed, would be episcopal negligence, another insult to abuse survivors, a sign of stunning tone deafness as Catholic anger mounts. But almost before the bishops could settle into their seats came the stunning announcement from Cardinal DiNardo: a last-minute communiqué from the Vatican (specifically, the Congregation for Bishops) directed the bishops not to hold a planned vote on proposed protocols until the February meeting in Rome that will include presidents of bishops' conferences from around the world.

"We are not ourselves happy about this," Cardinal DiNardo acknowledged later in a press conference. Other bishops openly grumbled. Media reports fueled the narrative that church leaders still don't get it. I've attended at least a dozen bishops' gatherings over the years; never before have I seen the air go out of a meeting so quickly. Some bishops may have been quietly relieved given the concern that the proposals—including a new standard of conduct for bishops and a lay-led commission to investigate claims against bishops—were put together too quickly and likely did not have enough backing to win the two-thirds vote they needed in order to to pass.



Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, vice president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, left; Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops; and Msgr. J. Brian Bransfield, general secretary, at the fall meeting of the U.S. bishops in Baltimore

CNS PHOTO / RICK MUSACCHIO, TENNESSEE REGISTER

Questioned by reporters, Cardinal DiNardo offered only a brief explanation of the Vatican's decision. Text of the proposals, he said, had been flagged by the Vatican for having some canonical problems, and Rome is clearly worried that piecemeal solutions can be problematic in a global church. Veteran journalist Andrea Tornielli, citing an anonymous Vatican source, reported that the proposal for a bishops' code of conduct was "too generic," while the proposal for a third-party reporting mechanism lacked canonical authority.

After the meeting, Bishop John Stowe of Lexington, Kentucky, told me he was disappointed at how the announcement of the Vatican's directive was delivered at the beginning of the meeting. "The expression of surprise or disappointment could have been lessened and the whole matter framed as

an opportunity for the U.S. church to make a contribution to the summit in February," he said. "My concern all along was that there was too much expectation placed on this one plenary meeting. I think the proposals that were sent to us were good matters for discussion and indicated both a strong desire to include bishops in the provisions of the charter and to provide lay involvement in the accountability of bishops. The ongoing discussion made it clear that the proposals were far from ready for finalization."

While the bishops did not vote on the proposals, they did debate them extensively on the floor. The exchanges revealed a conference that wants to act but still remains divided over root causes of the abuse crisis and the role the laity should play in policing bishops. Some bishops, while recognizing a general need for lay involvement, warned that a bishop is ultimately responsible for his diocese and that contracting matters to outside parties would be pastorally negligent. But Bishop Shawn McKnight of Jefferson City, Missouri, emerged as a resolute voice for independent lay oversight with real decision-making responsibility. "The laity are the only ones who can keep the hierarchy accountable and get us out of the mess we bishops got ourselves into," he wrote in a letter to his diocese after the meeting, underscoring that his "singular focus" is more public involvement of lay people "at all levels of the church." McKnight also expressed frustration with the Vatican's directive to delay the vote, especially in light of the McCarrick scandals. "We have known about the scandal since the end of June, and our church must take immediate, decisive, and substantive action in light of the deep wound the scandal has caused."

McCarrick's name came up repeatedly in public sessions. Bishops reported that during listening tours and other forums in their dioceses, the former archbishop's rise and fall has been a constant topic. Yet even while there was agreement in Baltimore over the damage done by the McCarrick scandal, the only vote related to the abuse crisis—on a proposal from Lansing, Michigan's Bishop Earl Boyea, encouraging the Holy See to release all documentation related to an ongoing investigation of McCarrick—failed overwhelmingly. Several bishops, including Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago and Cardinal Joseph Tobin of Newark, noted that the Vatican has already pledged transparent reporting in the McCarrick case.

I found most puzzling those bishops who spoke as if the calendar read 1968. Bishop Barry Knestout of Richmond, Virginia, took to the microphone for at least ten minutes to bemoan the fallout after Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae vitae* affirmed the church's teaching prohibiting birth control. Approvingly referencing the sanctions against priests in Washington, D.C. (where he served under three archbishops) who objected to the encyclical, Knestout saw a lesson for improving church unity today: "We need to reaffirm the dignity of human life," he said. Phoenix Bishop Thomas Olmstead also referenced the "great dissent by so many theologians" regarding the encyclical as a contributing factor in diminishing some clergy's faithfulness to the church's sexual teachings. This disillusionment, the bishop suggested, may have "some roots in where we are today."

The idea that widespread rejection of the church's teaching on birth control might explain an abuse crisis rooted in a culture of clericalism boggles the mind. "I was very saddened to hear so much focus on issues of sexuality when the abuse of minors, and the response to that abuse, is more an issue of abuse of power," Bishop Stowe told me after the conference. "A focus on healthy psychosexual development in candidates for the priesthood would be a healthy step forward, along with looking at how authority is exercised in the church. I don't think the bishops overall understand that we have very little credibility in matters of sexuality, even within the church, and appeals to *Humanae vitae* or the condemnation of homosexual activity are not going to address that, especially when abusive acts have occurred within the ranks."

Scapegoating gay priests and pining for a world in which most Catholics agree with church teaching on birth control is no way to confront the abuse crisis. Bishops would be far better served by clear-eyed discernment. Pope Francis, who has shown his own blind spots when it comes to responding effectively to the abuse crisis, is right to stay the course, seeking to dismantle a clerical culture he describes as arising from "an elitist and exclusivist vision of vocation."

After Baltimore, the stakes are now even higher for the February meeting in Rome. Cardinal DiNardo will now synthesize discussions from the November meeting to develop what he called "specific action steps." Among other things, this includes a process for investigating complaints against bishops reported through a third-party compliance hotline; the completion of a proposal for a single, national lay commission; a proposal for a national network using established diocesan review boards with lay expertise, to be overseen by the metropolitan bishop; and studying national guidelines for publishing the names of clerics facing substantiated claims of abuse.

Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe, New Mexico, told me that despite "the divisions and difficulties," he remains hopeful. "I expect that the February meeting will be significant," he said. "Pope Francis is very serious about tackling this thorny issue." Cardinal DiNardo, who opened the meeting expressing disappointment with the Vatican, struck a forward-looking note in his closing statement. "We leave this place committed to taking the strongest possible actions at the earliest possible moment," he said.

But for a growing number of Catholics, might that already be too late? ■

John Gehring *is Catholic program director at Faith in Public Life, an advocacy group in Washington, and a former associate director for media relations at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. He is author of* The Francis Effect: A Radical Pope's Challenge to the American Catholic Church *(Rowman & Littlefield, 2015) and a contributing editor to* Commonweal.

Gary Gutting

Friends Without Brains

CAN A ROBOT HAVE FEELINGS?

Do you say "thank you" to Siri or Alexa? I have friends who do. They're a bit sheepish about it, since they know the voices are just electronic systems set up to simulate human interactions. But if you watch the movie *Her* you may start to wonder whether a much more sophisticated operating system just might be a person: even a person you could love. A recent Ian McEwan short story ("Düssel..." in the July 18 issue of the *New York Review of Books*) makes plausible fiction of a human-robot love affair. And, of course, a bevy of films, from *Star Wars* to *Ex Machina,* and TV shows like *Westworld*, imagine worlds in which it's at least tempting to think of robots as people.

Let's think about a case less dramatic than movie scenarios but much closer to what might actually happen fairly soon. I bring home my new Apple iPal (as the ads said, "Everybody needs a pal!"): a humanoid robot designed to provide companionship to lonely people. The robot has a pleasant and responsive face, moves easily without mechanical jerks, converses fluently about standard topics, has a surprising sense of humor, and offers informed and sympathetic advice about my job and personal life. For a while, I may think of it as just an enhanced Siri, but after prolonged contact—and maybe a few upgrades in the self-learning software—my iPal relates memories of our time together, expresses joy or sorrow about things that happen to us, and sometimes talks sincerely about how much our relationship means. I don't forget that I'm interacting with a robot—a machine, not a human being—but I find myself thinking that this is someone who does care about me, and about whom I have come to care—not just a pal, but a friend. If we really are friends, how could my friend, even though a machine, not be a person?

But here we need to be careful. An iPal is a computer. Can computers actually think? Well, they are designed to perform functions that humans perform through thinking. They expertly process information, present it at appropriate points in a conversation, and use it to draw reasonable conclusions. But thinking in this sense can just be a kind of high-level *functioning*. It's another question whether iPals' calculations are accompanied by a subjective *awareness* of what they're doing. Maybe, like math calculators, they generate output without being literally aware of doing the calculations or of what the calculations mean.

But even if we allow that my iPal is somehow aware of the intellectual functions it performs, there's the much more important question of whether it has the sensory and emotional experiences human beings have. Here once again we need to distinguish between functioning and awareness.

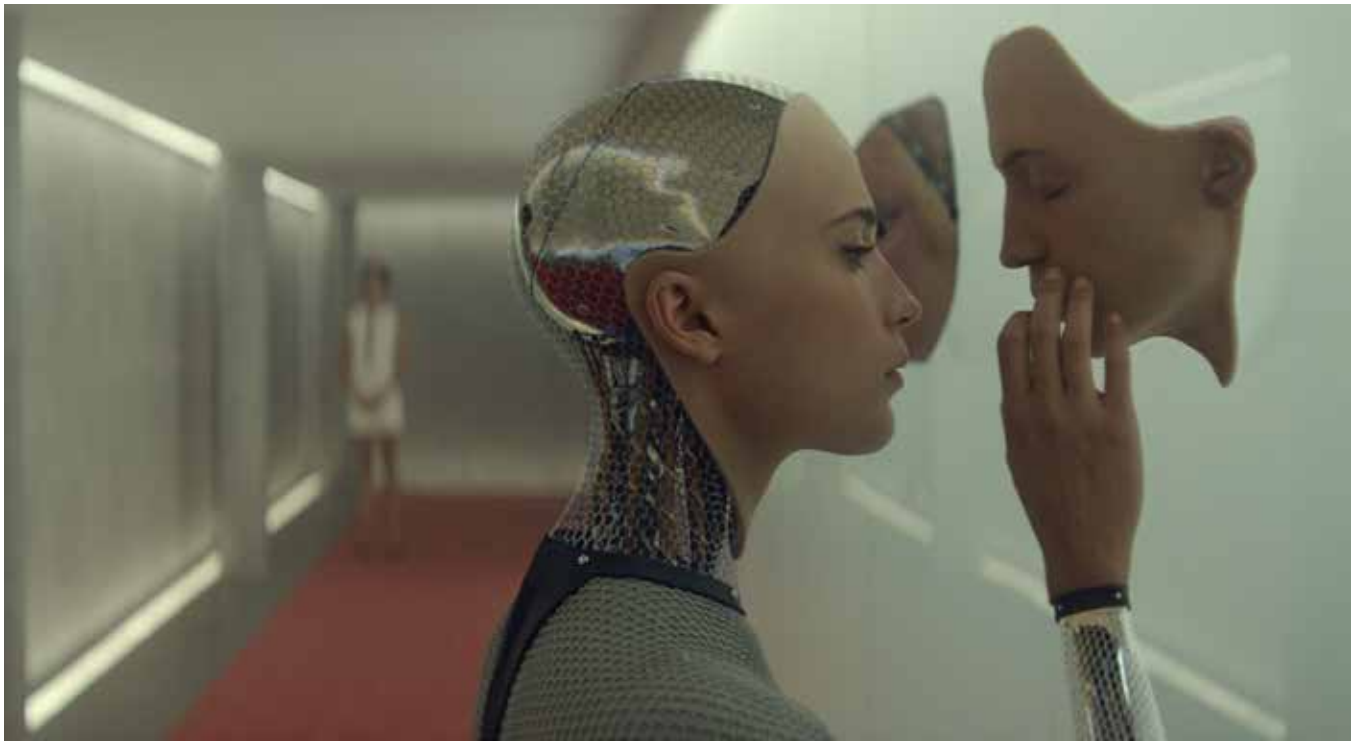


PHOTO 12 / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Alicia Vikander in Ex Machina *(2014)*

We may say that an electric "eye" that opens a door when someone approaches "sees" that person. But we don't think there's any seeing going on in the literal sense of an internal, subjective awareness. The "eye" just performs the reactive function that we could, in a quite different way, perform with our capacity for visual awareness.

What I need, then, is to find out if my iPal is actually aware: whether it has the internal, subjective experiences that go on when we are thinking, perceiving with our five senses, or feeling emotions or pain. Here my question converges with a famous philosophical conundrum, the problem of other minds.

This is the problem of how we can know whether other people do in fact have minds—or, to put it another way, whether other people have the internal subjective experiences we do. I'm saying experiences that *we* have, but the question is really how *I* know that anyone besides me has inner experiences. Once the question is raised, it suggests the dizzying prospect of solipsism: the philosophical view—or pathological delusion—that I alone exist as a conscious being. Note also that the question is not whether others might have experiences different from mine (say, seeing as green what I see as red) but whether others might have *no subjective experiences at all*—whether the mental lights might be entirely out.

Why would such a bizarre problem occur to me? Because I have direct introspective access to my own inner experiences, but not to those of anyone else. I can just "see" (though not with my eyes) that I am thinking it's going to rain, looking at an interesting face, or feeling a pain in my knee. Introspection can, of course, be unreliable: I may be feeling envy when I think of my friend's new Rolex, but believe that I'm just puzzled at his consumerist values. Yet even if I'm sometimes wrong about the nature of my inner experiences, I can at least be sure that I'm having them. I have no such direct knowledge that other people have an inner life.

Raising doubts about whether other people have an inner mental life is a prime example of the skeptical philosophical arguments that David Hume (who himself devised some of the best) ironically defined as arguments that are unanswerable but also utterly ineffective. We see their logical force but continue to believe what they say we should doubt. Doubting that other people have experiences is something we just can't live with.

But as I get to know my iPal, the problem of other minds becomes highly relevant. Here is a case in which I might well decide there is just no mind there. But how to make the decision?

We might think that a decision isn't needed. Why should it matter whether my iPal has subjective experience? But it matters enormously—first because causing others unnecessary pain is a major way (if not the only way) of acting immorally. If iPals can suffer, then we have a whole set of moral obligations that we don't have if they can't suffer.

But it also—and especially—matters for the question of whether a robot could really be my friend. Friendship has various aspects, some of which might apply to my relation to a robot. The robot might, for example, be pleasant to be with or help me carry out projects. But one essential aspect of friendship is emotional. Friends feel with and for one another; they share one another's joys and sufferings. In this key respect, a robot without subjectively experienced feeling could not be my friend. How could I know that my iPal actually has subjective experiences?

In the case of other humans, the classic "argument for other minds," as J. S. Mill formulated it, is based on an analogy. I know that my inner subjective states are often expressed by my body's observable behavior. Sadness leads to crying, pain to grimacing; speech expresses thoughts. Since I observe others crying, grimacing, and speaking, it's at least probable that their bodily behaviors likewise express subjective states. An apparently decisive objection to this reasoning is that the analogy is based on only one instance. What reason do I have to think that I'm a typical example of a human being? For all I know, I'm the rare exception in which subjective states cause bodily behavior, while in everyone else brain states alone cause bodily behavior.

But there may be a way to retool this argument from analogy. Besides knowing that my mental states can cause my behavior, I also know that my brain states cause my mental states. Too much wine and I feel woozy, too much caffeine and I feel hyperalert. I know quite a lot about these connections from my own experience, and there's every reason to think that exhaustive neuroscientific study of my brain would reveal that virtually all my mental life is produced by neural processes. But if it's a scientific fact that my neural processes produce subjective experiences, why think that these neural processes don't work the same way in other people's brains? There's no evidence that there's a special set of neurological laws for my brain.

But even if this argument makes a good case for other humans having subjective experiences, it doesn't help with my iPal, whose observable behavior is produced by a very different physical structure than the human brain. We don't have evidence that this other physical structure causes subjective experiences, so there's no reason to think that my iPal has such experiences. But without subjective experiences my iPal cannot be a person and so cannot be my friend.

We're left, then, with a new version of the problem of other minds. Is there any way to tell whether a robot (something not governed by the laws of human neuroscience) has inner subjective experiences? Unlike the traditional problem, this may soon be a matter of pressing practical importance. ■

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Reign of Love

The Fiction of Wendell Berry

Eric Miller

In the last song of his luminous performance at last year's Pittsburgh Jazz Festival, the Grammy-winning Gregory Porter left his listeners with a haunting, thrilling question. *Do you remember?* he sang. *Do you remember when love was king?* In his song Porter swept a crowd filling a couple of city blocks into the story of another realm, one "far, far away / where love was the rule of the day," a land where justice, compassion, equality, and generosity made for a splendor we've yet to see in our rulers and their reigns. That splendor resounded in Porter's emphatic baritone, worthy of many more awards. He turned those of us listening toward a deeper hope and a better way—even to a coming time, when daylight will dispel this all-too-present darkness.

Porter's "When Love Was King" plays on the archetypal. It draws us into a frank encounter, too often denied, with our longings: for public virtue, civic beauty, richer life. It's the place where the personal meets the political and it is, we know, a kind of dreamscape. The history of modern political ideologies teaches us that such dreamscapes can have a perilous relationship to the waking world of actual politics. But what are we when such dreams vanish altogether?

Wendell Berry has spent his life preoccupied with this very question. Like Porter, he knows that any fruitful response to our dream-defying times must come in many registers and keys. To our enormous gain, Berry, with his prodigious voice, has offered just such a multiform response.

After more than sixty years of writing, Berry is best known for his polemics: his prolific work as an essayist and speaker addressing vital questions at the intersection of ecology, morality, and politics. In this vein, Berry's writings tend toward the contentious and hit like a minority report—and sometimes they report not on his dreams so much as his nightmares. "If we continue to be economically dependent on destroying parts of the Earth," he succinctly warned in 2004, "then eventually we will destroy it all." The title of that essay itself sums up his instinctive political response to the times: "Compromise, Hell!"

Berry's dreams do emerge in his essays, and of course they inform them. His poems, appearing in dozens of publications across these decades, make his hope more vivid, more musical. But to see Berry's dreaming vision of our world fully laid out, one must go to his fiction. In the early 1960s he began to publish an entwined series of stories centered on the fictional town of Port William in northern Kentucky, a town "without pretense or ambition," as one of his narrators recalls, "for it was the sort of place that pretentious or ambitious people were inclined to leave." To date Berry has produced eight novels and more than fifty short stories (along with some poems and at least one play) about this place, magical in its lowliness and mythical in its ordinariness—a fantasia of democratic, republican proportions. If it's a profoundly flawed world, it is yet, in Berry's telling, a good one. And therein lies his hope.

In one of these tales, the narrator tells us that "Uncle Peach," buoyantly recounting a nonexistent episode in his past, "was just storying." The pleasure Berry himself takes in "just storying" couldn't be more evident; his narratives pulse with a range of voices, affinities, and ideals that he weaves together with palpable joy—a surprise, perhaps, to those who know Berry only from his essays.

But Berry's joy in storytelling is rooted in more than love of his craft—it's also an expression of his cosmology. He anchors his stories in a universe in which love indeed rules, and his purpose and challenge as a storyteller is to do justice to this reigning love. "Just storying" indeed.

This notion of reigning love is an old, old story—but that does not make it any less difficult to believe in, however thrilling the thought of it may be. In a central passage in *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, Étienne Gilson contends that for Christians, the universe is most simply "a sum total of creatures owing their existence to an act of love"—the act of a creator

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Wendell Berry in the 1970s

who, "being charity...lives by charity." Gilson imagines love flowing through the universe "like the life-giving blood through the body."

Who can believe such things? Not us. Gilson's truly grand narrative is a long way from our usual stories. We people our tales with solitary souls (or "selves") struggling in a world of mechanistic order (or mayhem), searching for something that feels like peace and bears the touch of love. But on our telling, to fulfill such everyday hopes, we're on our own—you, me, and whoever else happens along. For us such stories are a species of "realism," true to what we moderns know of our interior lives and the supposedly empty universe in which we dwell.

But Berry takes up Christian cosmology as a kind of dare, a dare that's theological and aesthetic at once. In an essay that began as a speech at a 1994 conference on "Spirituality and Healing," he made clear the confession from which his work springs: "I take literally the statement in the Gospel of John that God loves the world. I believe that the world was created and approved by love, that it subsists, coheres, and endures by love, and that, insofar as it is redeemable, it can be redeemed only by love." But he wasn't finished. "I believe that divine love, incarnate and indwelling the world, summons the world always toward wholeness, which ultimately is reconciliation and atonement with God."

It's a confession infinitely easier to make propositionally than to unfold artistically. Yet this is precisely what Berry has attempted. In the Library of America's first of four projected volumes of Berry's writing, ***Wendell Berry: Port William Novels & Stories: The Civil War to World War II*** (Library of America, $32, 1,034 pp.), twenty-three short stories and four novels bear bountiful witness to Berry's creed and hope. The stories flow chronologically through Port William's history—a "hard history of love," as one narrator says—providing an ever deepening intimacy with both the world of Port William and the story of modern America.

But one can also read the volume chronologically in another sense: according to the date of each story's original publication. Read in this fashion, Berry's stories unveil a shifting understanding of the world. A close reading reveals, quite simply, that love grows: grows fuller in its place in his stories and more central as a presence in our lives.

If, as the literary critic Fritz Oehlschlaeger says, "the end" of Berry, across his oeuvre, is "the development of a comprehensive charity," it wasn't obvious at the start. *Nathan Coulter,* Berry's first novel, was published in 1960 and set in the 1930s. Berry was just twenty-five, and the darker passageways of his time, and perhaps his schooling, color the story.

Each of the novel's five chapters concludes with death of some kind—a cat, a mother, fish, ducks, and at its close, the grandfather of Nathan Coulter, the story's narrator. In a familiar fashion, enmity and affection jostle throughout. Nathan's grandfather and uncle "never had been at peace with each other," we're told, "and there never had been any chance that they would be." One "Jig Pendleton" is "crazy for religion," reading and rereading the Bible to "purify himself." But "sooner or later he always gave it up and got on a drunk, and then he'd have to start all over again"—a carefully arranged peek at Protestant America's underside.

If a distinctly Augustinian key sounds, it's not a full chord; no bass notes of redemption ascend from below. "We were the way we were," teenaged Nathan reflects after a bitter conflict abruptly rends his family. "Nothing could make us any different, and we suffered because of it. Things happened to us the way they did because we were ourselves." Nathan comes to see that everyone he knows, in fact, is trapped in this travail of self and soul. "There was nothing anybody could do but let it happen."

This is our first glimpse of Port William. It's grim. But crucially, the longing for communion is ever present, marked especially by an acute awareness of its absence. One senses

PHOTO BY JAMES BAKER HALL, FROM THE COVER OF *WENDELL BERRY: PORT WILLIAM NOVELS & STORIES: THE CIVIL WAR TO WORLD WAR II*

it in the keen, earnest voice of Nathan Coulter, and in the affection and devotion of his Uncle Burley, who, after the death of Nathan's mother, offers years of steady nurture and care. The novel ends with Nathan walking alongside his aged and dying grandfather—a fitting image of a love that will, however troubled and forlorn, yield much good in Nathan's life long after his grandfather's passing.

Burley will go on to become a central figure in what he and his intimates in Port William begin to call, as Berry's fictional world unfolds, "the membership"—and with it comes Berry's own enlarging vision of love. Far from an exclusive circle, membership in Port William comes to mean exactly the opposite: the grateful inclusion of any who live in devotion to the wellbeing of the town and its environs. The membership isn't self-appointed. But it is self-identifying. Those who are devoted to the place recognize one another by their mutual inclinations and sacrificial practices.

In Berry's second novel, *A Place on Earth*, a flood devastates farms close to the river; Burley knocks on his friend Mat Feltner's door in the darkness of morning to tell him of the danger an isolated family is in. The meaning of membership becomes clear in Burley's explanation of his unexpected arrival. "Well, Mat," he begins, "what I've come about really ain't any of my business. I think it probably ain't any of yours either, really. But the reason I come is that if it ain't our business then it probably won't be anybody's." The members know one another; they've made evident their vows, though none are spoken—to speak baldly would diminish them. Being a member is simply what one does. Who one *is*. The only announcement that membership requires sounds from the life that is lived.

Such lives create neighborhoods. And for Berry, any neighborhood includes not only people, but the land and all the creatures therein. More, a neighborhood's care requires an intimacy with its past, since the past is, as Berry sees it, "the interior of the present." Berry's stories thus rove over nearly two centuries of history, layering the imagination with wisdom and vision and warnings that come to the reader through a past that speaks presciently into our time. Young Mat Feltner's turning away from his impulse to avenge his father's murder, in the story "Pray Without Ceasing," leads to a communal richness that would have been impossible had he satisfied his rage. Neighborhoods grow not only through such acts, but through *stories* of such acts, stories of paths taken and shunned.

Since the inspiration for Berry's fiction begins with his own history—Port William is the fictional counterpart to his own Port Royal, where he has lived nearly all of his life, the sixth generation in his family to farm there—a personal urgency pervades his storytelling, the urgency, as one of his characters says, to "tell the stories right." When, in *A World Lost*, Berry's fictional alter-ego, Andy Catlett, sets off down the trail of history to make sense of his uncle's murder, which occurred decades before, we sense that there's more than a story being told: there's something at stake. If the place's history can be recreated, if its members' lives can be understood, then a vision to help guide the community in the present just might emerge.

What, if not something like a membership, can secure a future for those we love? The effect of Berry's fiction is to enliven our sense of just what such sturdy and enduring communion demands—and what it promises.

But what of a cosmology of love? To tell the story of membership is one thing; to knit it into a universe "born of love," as Gilson has it, is another. How has Berry's metaphysic shaped his fiction?

Berry's early writing featured a strict, mysterious organicism. It followed Thoreau in its vision of harmonic, submissive participation in the world itself, human freedom tied to our embrace of a spiritually resplendent material order. A grieving mother in *A Place on Earth*, suffering the loss of her daughter in a flood, finds herself moving toward healing as she awakens one morning to a "brilliant pool of sunshine" in the room. The light, we're told, "changed her." Her psychic restoration comes through a kind of spiritual attunement to this transcending material reality.

Such spiritual organicism doesn't necessarily lead to theistic love. But for Berry it did; by the 1980s he had begun to tack toward it. In an appreciative 1991 letter to Berry published in an edited volume on his work, the literary scholar Judith Weissman told him that his 1987 book of poems, *Sabbaths*, "touches me deeply, but also humbles me—because I know I cannot follow you in all of your Christian faith." She admitted that, due to her formation in "the scientific tradition that you distrust," these poems "are still a far-off light to me. I can see that it is light, but I cannot see it well enough to understand or identify it." She sensed that his work was formed by a vision of what she called "wholeness"—against which "the last fifty years of literary criticism have been an attack." This was a wholeness, she knew, flowing from Christian belief, and it required of Berry a costly vocational sojourn, leading him away from New York City and back to Kentucky. "What you cannot say for yourself or about yourself," Weissman exhorted, "is what I want to say here: that your wholeness matters."

In these years Berry's cosmology of love—the wholeness he assiduously has sought to explore and express across his writing—began to inspire narratives threaded with more illuminating analogical dimensions, glimpses of earthly lives entwined in the eternal. In his 1994 story "Watch with Me," set in 1916, we follow a band of neighbors who, over the course of two days, risk their lives to protect an armed and afflicted friend wandering through the woods; they fear he has become a danger to himself. It's the parable of the lost sheep—we're made to see that, like the afflicted man, all of us are, every day, "walking the rim of the world, a narrow, shadowy steely sloping margin between life and death." The story features a devoted membership, to be sure. But the membership is not alone

in the world; rather, the universe itself summons them together, toward union and care, though discord and the threat of dissolution are always near. It was only due to a "precarious interplay of effort and grace," the narrator recalls, that "the neighborhood had lived"—and that's how any kind of communion has ever lived, be it a marriage, parish, or nation.

Such stories fill this volume, stories with the ancient quality of a parable, with the everlasting shape of life. There's Wheeler, the young nephew who, struggling one evening with the care of his drunken uncle, finally falls asleep beside him, "his hand remaining on Uncle Peach's shoulder where it had come to rest." There's the grandmother who, in her last hours, whispers to her watching granddaughters, "Well, if this is dying, I've seen living that was worse." If these souls find themselves, as one of Berry's narrators puts it, "in a moral landscape exceedingly difficult to get across," the possibility of a way through still opens, however treacherous and costly it may be.

At the close of *A World Lost*, Andy Catlett bears eloquent witness to this gentle mercy, this redeeming grace. Having in the course of the story faced not only the murder but the memory of his dearly loved and deeply flawed uncle, Andy is moved to consider the life beyond this one, the one toward which we all travel, whether in submission or resistance to our end. "I imagine the dead waking," Andy says, "dazed into a shadowless light, in which they know themselves altogether for the first time."

> It is a light that is merciless until they can accept its mercy; by it they are at once condemned and redeemed. It is Hell until it is Heaven. Seeing themselves in that light, if they are willing, they see how far they have failed the only justice of loving one another; it punishes them with their own judgment. And yet, in suffering that light's awful clarity, in seeing themselves within it, they see its forgiveness and its beauty, and are consoled. In it they are loved completely, even as they have been, and so are changed into what they could not have been but what, if they could have imagined it, they would have wished to be.

This is the light that, in our darkness, can heal grieving mothers, and that can move us each toward hope. The singular care with which Berry tells his stories reflects the extent to which he has himself embraced it. Love reigns, we come to see, even in these times. And love shall reign.

This is our story, our song. Berry's achievement is to help us remember it. At a moment when a reckless dismembering afflicts us all, such remembering may be the most necessary act of all. ■

Priesthood & Revolution

Where Christianity & Marxism Part Ways

Herbert McCabe

We find among Catholics two opposing attitudes to the priesthood. There is the conservative view, which sees the Church as a kind of feudal society, in which each man has his proper status with corresponding "duties of his state." On the other hand, there is the progressive view, which models the Church on the democratic society, in which citizens are not differentiated by their status but by their functions. I think that both these views are mistaken, because both place the Christian ministry essentially within the Church; both hark back to the idea that the basic job of the priest is to celebrate Mass and otherwise minister to the faithful. In the decree on the priesthood of Vatican II, however, the position is quite otherwise: "Priests, as co-workers with their bishops, have as their primary duty the proclamation of the gospel of God to all men." It has to be admitted that the same document later on asserts that "Priests fulfill their chief duty in the mystery of the Eucharistic Sacrifice," but that occurs in a section that seems plainly to have been inserted to satisfy those who wanted to safeguard the practice of daily Mass. The emphasis of the Vatican decree on the priesthood, like the one on bishops, is on the proclamation of the gospel to all, whether Christians or not.

As I see it, the basic error is to see the Church primarily as a community. The Church is not first of all a community; it is first of all a movement within the community of mankind. We ought not to have simply a functional view of the clergy within the Church; we ought to press our functionalism much further; we ought to have a functional view of the Church within mankind. It is only within communities that people have functions. You could not have the function of being a teacher or a plumber except within a society which demands and makes sense of teaching or plumbing. The progressive sees the Church as a community and the priests as functional within it. I, on the other hand, want to see the only community as that of mankind, and to see the Church as functional within it.

Rev. Herbert McCabe, OP, *was editor of* New Blackfriars *and the author of several books of theology, including* The People of God *(Sheed & Ward). He died in 2001. This article first appeared in the September 20, 1968, issue of* Commonweal.

Herbert McCabe

It will follow from this that the important distinctions in the Church—those we call sacramental, the distinctions established by baptism/confirmation, ordination/consecration, and marriage—are not functional in relation to a community called the Church. Fundamentally they are functional in relation to the community of man. The bishop or priest is not a man with a special job to do in the Church; he is a man with a special job to do in the world. Any differentiation within the Church is a mere consequence of this.

Being a bishop is a function not in a Church but in society, just as being a plumber is a function not in a Church but in society, with this essential difference: the plumber's job is immanent in the society; it is part of the fabric of the society; whereas the bishop's job is essentially revolutionary or subversive of the society. (I am using the word revolutionary to do the work that in the past was done by the word transcendental, because the latter word has lost its Christian significance; in fact, it has lost both its paradoxical and its historical character.)

If we are to understand the Christian ministry, it is as well to take our start from the New Testament. It seems to me that the most illuminating text is the passage in John 17 when Christ, in the course of his prayer before his arrest, commissions his apostles. Speaking to his Father he says: "I passed your word on to them, and the world hated them because they belong to the world no more than I belong to the world." I think it is extremely significant that the first thing said about them *qua* apostles, as bearers of the word, is the world will hate them.

They are to be set apart from the world, not in the sense of avoiding it or "being removed from it," but in the sense of being sacrificial victims, the consecrated ones of the world. They are to stand askew to the world in some way. And this consecration, Christ explains, is simply their commission to the truth, to the word that he has passed on. Jesus says that their consecration will be like his, hinting that just as the world cannot tolerate his "standing apart," his independence of its structure, and so hates him and finally kills him, so they, too, are ultimately to be consecrated by violent death.

Jesus then speaks of those others "who through their [the apostles'] word will believe in me." He clearly envisages a distinction between his missionaries and those who come to believe through their teaching. The belief in question is the belief that Jesus is "from God," that his opposition to the world, or rather his transcendence of it which provokes the hostility of the world, is divine and not satanic. Jesus is manifestly dangerous to the world; belief in him consists in seeing that his destructive power is not evil but mysteriously good, that if the world will let itself be destroyed, it will find not merely death but a new life. The whole purpose of all this, Jesus goes on to say, is that "they may be one." The believers are themselves to be one in a new way and in this way they are to bring about unity in the world.

The "world" here in St. John, it seems evident enough, is a political concept. It is a form of relationship among men, a style of society typified for St. John by the Roman colonial empire—a kind of human organization and unity based on the domination of man by man. Jesus sees his task and that of his followers as the subversion of this kind of society so that it may be replaced by a society with a new kind of unity: "Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you." His object is a society sustained as society by love, the presence of the divine Spirit in man.

The attitude of St. John to "the world" is ambivalent. Michael Davitt, the nineteenth-century Irish revolutionary, was of the opinion that Ireland was a horrible country; he was also deeply in love with Ireland. These are not incompatible views. In the first case he meant by Ireland certain structures of political power, in particular the institutions of land ownership; in the second case he meant by Ireland the structures of communication among men which constitute the Irish people as Irish—their traditions, religion, language, environment, and all the rest. He felt that the people constituted by the second structures were victims of the first structures. Out of this dual viewpoint came a revolutionary movement called the Land League. (This movement was denounced by the Irish hierarchy. One Archbishop McCabe, the story is, described the women members as "immodest and wicked" and was promptly made a cardinal.)

The movement known as Christianity arose from a similar ambiguity of attitude toward the world, an attitude attributed to God. It is indeed the attribution of this attitude to God, the acknowledgment that Jesus is "sent from God," that lies at the root of faith for St. John.

Christianity is a movement of change within the world, a movement which seeks to transform the institutional relations between men in order to better express the relationships which constitute them as human; this movement is to be hated by the world, is to come in conflict with the power structure of the world, but is eventually to "overcome the world": "This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith." It therefore seems not unreasonable to describe the Church as a revolutionary movement within the world. The preaching of the gospel is a danger to the values of the world and to the economic and political structures which embody these values.

If I may borrow some words from Cardinal Suhard:

> We have to aim at structural reform. A structure corresponds to an aim. Now we have to change the aim; instead of aiming first at producing, we must aim first at giving all men a truly human life. In place of capitalism, a mere technique of production in which, in the absence of a higher rule, production puts man at its service, we must put an economy which will be at the service of men, and not just of some men but of all men...something is needed quite different from a more or less extensive modification of our institutions. More is needed even than a revolution, for "revolution" means turning round, and a situation which is turned around is not necessarily improved or even changed. There must be a total renewal.

Without quibbling about words like revolution and renewal, that seems a fair account of what Christianity is concerned with.

If then we are to see the Church as essentially a revolutionary movement within the world, how are we to assess its relationship to other, more overtly revolutionary movements? In particular, what are we to make of the consistent opposition that the Church has in fact shown to such movements?

Throughout the prophetic books of the Old Testament, especially in the psalms, runs the theme that the dominative society, which is maintained in stability by domination and fear, is linked to the rejection of Yahweh. It is linked with the worship of idols, of gods, and the inability to believe in Yahweh, the "non-God," the one whose demands are not essentially in terms of this or that religious practice, but of righteousness and justice between men. Together with this goes firstly the idea that this is not due simply to the individual bad choices of men, but that all men are somehow

the victims of this setup, that we are constituted as men in a system of relationships that inevitably compromises us, and secondly the idea that release from this situation is to come somehow through the *anawim*, the dispossessed, the outcasts of society.

In a well-known passage, Karl Marx speaks of

> a class in civil society which is not a class of civil war, a class which is the dissolution of all classes, a sphere of society which has a universal character because its sufferings are universal...which claims no traditional status but only human status...a sphere finally which cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all the other spheres of society, without therefore emancipating all these other spheres.

Marx saw quite clearly that the freedom of the oppressor is as illusory as the freedom of the oppressed. For him there can only be true freedom when the relationship of domination which alienates man is destroyed, and he thought that the one force in society which could do this was that of the poor, the dispossessed.

Jesus, you might say, carries this idea a good deal further. He says it is the poor who will possess the kingdom of heaven; that is to say, it is through the poor, the *anawim*, that the kingship of God is to replace the kingship of man over man. And Jesus' notions of poverty and of alienation also go further. For him, the liberating class consists of those who have sunk below even the poverty of the proletariat, who have gone beyond a poverty inflicted from outside to an even deeper poverty of spirit, those who have reached a total dispossession even of themselves. This is what Jesus means by faith. A willingness to accept destruction, a willingness ultimately to accept death. That is why he links faith with crucifixion. He refers to his crucifixion as his "baptism" and as his "consecration" and he demands the same of his disciples. This acceptance of death is, for Jesus, the beginning of life. It is the emancipation not just of the poor that finally brings about the kingdom (or non-kingdom) but the emancipation of the dead. The final revolution is the resurrection of the body.

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It is characteristic of revolutionary change, as distinct from simple reforms, that its ultimate aim is not describable in the available language. The concepts and descriptive language at our disposal in any age are determined by the whole complex of institutions that make up that age. It follows that a proposal for the complete transformation of the structures of a community cannot be expressed descriptively, except very approximately, in the language of that community. Fortunately, the range of expression of our language goes beyond its descriptive use. We are able through symbolism to point toward what we cannot yet express descriptively. Thus, whereas a revolutionary can state precisely a number of things he wants to get rid of (and he may to this extent be confused with a reformer who wishes to remove abuses while retaining the present basic structure of community), when it comes to trying to say what his new world would be like he has to leave the language of sociological prose and employ imagery. He has to hope that his listener will understand the direction in which he is pointing. An important consequence of this is that it is nearly always possible to betray the revolutionary by taking him literally; to fulfill all that he seems literally to be demanding and yet to move no nearer the revolutionary goal. This indeed is exactly what we see happening in neo-capitalism. It is possible to give away all I have and deliver my body to be burned and yet have not charity.

The sacraments of the Church are precisely the imagery in which she speaks of the world of the future, the coming kingdom of God. What sort of relationship is there to be among men? The kind that is hinted at, symbolized in the Eucharist; it is to be a political reality but not one that can be described in today's political terms. A revolutionary is not merely one who tries to make political changes; he is out to change the meaning of the word politics. When the kingdom can be described in political terms, in its own political terms, the Eucharist will no longer be necessary. But until then we point toward it in symbolic terms. And, of course, there exists an equivalent of neo-capitalism to emasculate the revolutionary character of the Church. This takes the sacraments not as symbols of the future, but as literal realities. We may see the liturgical movement, the whole concentration on the parish community, the people of God gathered around the altar and so on, as in some danger of embodying this "neo-capitalist" mistake. The sacramental life has been valued literally for its own sake—as somebody might value the nationalization of steel for its own sake—instead of seeing it as an image of the world at which we are trying to arrive.

It is in this sense that the revolutionary is concerned with the transcendent, with what cannot be accommodated within the categories of our time, of our world. He points toward an unimaginable future. He is there to tell us that the future is unimaginable. It is in this sense that we speak of God as the absolute future—not as the relative future which will in turn become present and domesticated, but as what eternally summons man to self-transcendence, to living into the future.

If what I have been saying is approximately right, then we may say that Christianity is Marxism carried a great deal further. Christian and Marxist both recognize the need for struggle against specific anti-human forces, and both see human history as the story of this struggle. Both seek to end the dominative society, and both see this coming about through a redemptive movement that has no stake in that society, a redemptive community of the poor. Both, moreover, in their different ways—predestination for one and the materialist theory of history for the other—claim that they are not merely proposing an ideal, a possibility that we may happen to choose, but that they are recounting facts, revealing the plan upon which human history is based, whether we like it or not. Marx, however, only claims to be dealing with the alienation brought about by conditions of life, ultimately by conditions of labor; Jesus claims to deal even with the alienation involved in death.

Corresponding to this is the difference in their notions of the redemptive community. For Marx, it is those dispossessed of themselves through the conditions of their work; for Jesus, it is those who have faith, those who are totally stripped of themselves, those who are crucified. For Marx, the proletariat claims no traditional status, only human status. His redemptive community is left with its human powers, above all its numbers. It is by these human powers—the power to handle a gun—that the armed violence of the bourgeois state is to be overcome. For Jesus, the redemptive community has dispossessed itself even of its human status, and its revolutionary force comes from the depth within man which is beyond man, from the power of grace. Involved in faith is the confidence that by dying to ourselves, by giving up all forms of self-assertion, we will receive again our humanity, we will rise again from the death of faith. We will "come forth from the baptismal font" transformed by the divine life, so that we become an explosive force in the world, a force which will, as St. Paul puts it, "Do away with every sovereignty, authority and power" and finally even with the domination of death itself.

It seems to me that the operation of this restored, divinized humanity does not necessarily preclude the use of guns or any other human power. I think there are times when the constant violence of the class-structured society reaches such an intensity that it can only be contained by revolutionary violence. There is this difference, however: for the revolutionary, precisely because of his vision of the non-dominative community, violence is an exceptional and regrettable measure; for the dominative society, institutionalized violence is the very condition of its existence. As James Connolly, the Irish rebel who was, I believe, the first Roman Catholic Marxist, pointed out: "One great source of the strength of the ruling class has ever been their willingness to kill in defense of their power and privileges...the readiness of the ruling class to order killing, the small value the ruling class has ever set upon human life, is in marked contrast to the reluctance of all revolutionists to shed blood."

The first thing, then, that I want to say about the revolutionary mission of the Church is that it cuts deeper than what would ordinarily be called the political revolution. The Christian is entitled to feel that the political revolution, precisely because it does not reach to the heart of the matter, to the ultimate alienation of sin, is liable to betray the revolution itself. The achievements of the political revolution, insofar as they are thought of as ultimate aims and not as pointers toward an absolute future, may themselves become forms of the dominative society. The mission of the Church is to be—in a slightly different sense from Regis Debray—the revolution in the revolution. To proclaim the gospel is to interpret the revolution in revolutionary terms, not to see it as merely the substitution of one imaginable social order for another.

The honest hostility of the Christian to the Marxist is based on the Marxist's apparent denial of the absolute future, the Marxist's belief that man can ultimately arrive at being man, with no further transcendence beyond him, in other words the Marxists' atheism. The honest hostility of the Marxist to the Christian is based on the belief that concern with an ultimate alienation, with sin and with death, is a technique for avoiding the demands of the historical present. The Marxist-Christian dialogue, it seems to me, starts from these two honest hostilities.

But vastly more important in practice is the dishonest hostility of both sides. The dishonest hostility of Christian for Marxist arises out of the Christian's betrayal of his own revolutionary purpose. It arises when he forgets that he is involved in a revolutionary movement and comes to think of the Church as a community that is part of the established political order. Then what threatens the established order will seem to him a threat to the existence of the Church. This has been the typical attitude of at least the higher clergy for centuries. Similarly, the dishonest hostility of the Marxist for the Christian arises out of the fossilization of Socialist society into an authoritarian form and fear of the Christian Church as a possible form of organized opposition to the government and its domination. The actual world scene is governed far more by the interplay of these two dishonest hostilities and the natural reactions to them than by the conflict of the two honest differences I mentioned above.

To return now to the question of the Christian ministry: as I see it, the Christian priest is not to be understood on the model of the political leader in either a feudal or a democratic society because the Church is not a society. It is a movement of transformation, a revolutionary movement within the society of the world. The likeliest model for the Christian minister, therefore, is the revolutionary leader; indeed, the priest should be a revolutionary leader, but one who goes in and through what in today's terms is called a political revolution to a depth which today we call metaphysical or spiritual. This interpretation of the revolution in its ultimate depths

is the proclamation of the gospel; it is the call to faith as the radical overcoming of the world. Such a mission will inevitably lead to conflict not only with "the world" but also with those whose revolution remains at a more superficial level. There is bound to be conflict as well as cooperation between those whose ultimate aim is the humanizing of man and those who regard this end as illusory except in terms of divinizing man.

But if we say that the task to which the priest is dedicated is the proclamation of the gospel, how can we say that the priesthood of the Christian minister differs from that of any baptized Christian—and differs, according to *Lumen gentium*, not merely in degree but in quality? Is it not every Christian's task to proclaim the gospel? The only answer, it seems to me, is in terms of dedication. A priest is dedicated to this task in both senses of the term—in the personal sense of being a dedicated man and in the institutional sense of having been dedicated to it by the community. You cannot lead a revolutionary movement as either a job or a hobby; you can only lead it if you are recognized as dedicated to and embodying the spirit of the revolution. It seems to me similarly appropriate that people should expect their ministers to embody the spirit of the gospel in their whole lives and not merely in the sacramental job they do. A revolutionary leader, however, is not simply a charismatic figure. He cannot rely simply on the enthusiasm he inspires as an individual. Precisely because he embodies the revolutionary spirit of the people, he speaks for them as a movement and hence exercises direction and authority in the movement. His authority resides in the spirit of the movement itself, but the criterion of his authority is his recognition by the movement as a whole.

It is in this way that we distinguish the central path of the movement from byways which may lead nowhere. As I see it, ordination is the recognition by the whole community of the dedication of an individual. Such recognition is a creative act of realization; that is, it is both a realization in the sense of a discovery and in the sense of an act of making real. Ordination is like baptism, or for that matter any other sacrament, in that it is a creative interpretation of a situation. All Christians are lay people but some are more lay than others, namely the clergy. This, in summary, is what I am saying. The Christian minister is dedicated (set apart) for the task of penetrating the world. The fact that the Church's task is, in a sense, a political task, should not make us see it as essentially a job for the laity, with the clergy acting as backroom boys or as the army supply corps. We should, rather, see it as a task for the Church as such, in its structures. If the bishop is a leader in the Church, it is only because he has been given the task of being a leader in the revolutionary struggle against the values and political forms of the world. Insofar as he neglects this primary task it becomes increasingly difficult to take him seriously as a merely ecclesiastical leader. This is, after all, our experience, is it not?

According to what I have called the "progressive" view, the priest is distinguished from the rest of the laity simply by having a specific sacramental task in the Church. This seems inadequate to me. The ministerial priesthood is not defined by a single set of tasks but by a relationship to the priesthood of all Christians. The business of the priest is to be one jump ahead of the Christian life of his age; it is his job to be constantly representing to the Christian people and to the world, the evangelical, revolutionary significance of their Christian, secular lives. It is every Christian's task to be critical and interpretative of his world; it is the ministerial task to be interpretative of the Christian life, to see through it to the gospel that it more or less adequately embodies. It is to seek out and represent to men the Christianness of their Christianity, the evangelical character of their lives. This is what promulgation of the gospel means.

If this is so, then there is from age to age no constant activity that belongs to the priest as such. We may use some general purpose phrase like "promulgating the gospel," but what this means in terms of revealing the gospel as present, and destructively present, in this or that age, must necessarily change through history. When history seems to be moving exceptionally fast, then what it is like to be a priest will change very rapidly, much more rapidly for example, than what it is like to be a teacher or a father. Hence, the bafflement of young people looking at the priesthood.

I have said relatively little about the way the Church measures up or fails to measure up to its mission. Yet, it seems to me, it is here that the "credibility" of the Church is to be judged, not according to whether it is a community in which we can begin to satisfy our personal need for human warmth and kindness and decent personal relations, but according to whether it is an effective force in the revolutionalizing of the world. Someone might complain, "But this is to set the Church too hard a test. Looking at its history you could hardly claim that it has ever been in the forefront of the revolution. Isn't it enough for it not to impede the revolution too much and meanwhile to carry on its private task of exploring religious questions and propagating kindness?" No, it is not enough. Such a Church would not be worth belonging to. The Church stands or falls by its revolutionary character; and despite all that may be said against it, despite the constant betrayal of its mission by its leaders, despite the competing claims of other movements which may look revolutionary for the moment but which will inevitably become conservative in the next generation, my personal view is that there is nowhere else to go.

The first sign of real recovery of Christianity will be the hostility of the world. "I passed your word on to them and the world hated them." If the world, the powers of the establishment, does not hate the Church, her ministers and her people, it is because we have successfully concealed from the world the character of the word that has been passed on to us. ■

Griffin Oleynick

Sounding the Secret Depths

'HILMA AF KLINT: PAINTINGS FOR THE FUTURE' AT THE GUGGENHEIM

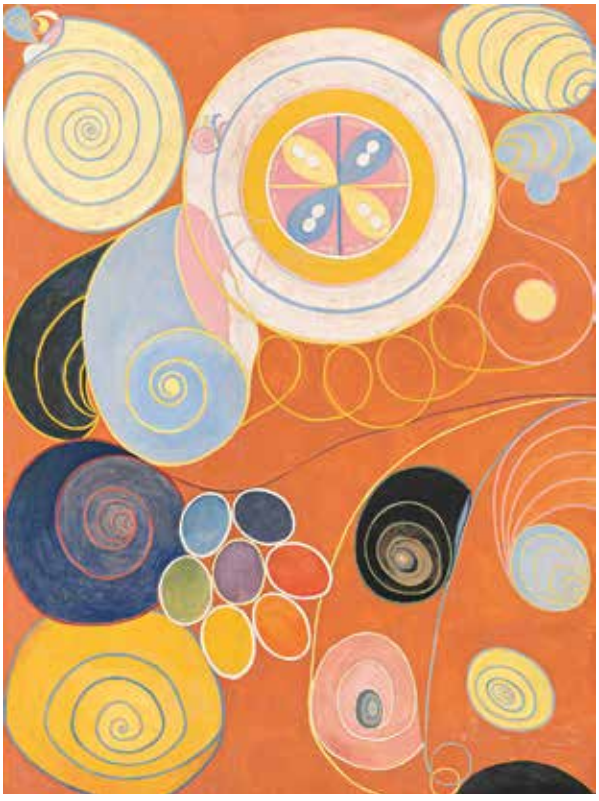
Who was Hilma af Klint, and what led her to pioneer some of the most formally daring, spiritually transformative paintings of the early twentieth century? Though it's technically not part of the new retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum, a photo of the Swedish artist (taken in the early 1900s, when she was about forty years old) captures the creative tension at the heart of her work. Seated in a relaxed, upright posture, af Klint wears a serene gaze, her blond hair gathered behind her head and her thin lips joined in an enigmatic Mona Lisa smile. Her simple dark dress, layered over a starched white blouse with a tall collar, gives her an almost monastic, even priestly aura. But there's a limit to her asceticism: from a cruciform metal broach on her neck hangs a wildly ornate lace cravat, its pulsating pattern evoking the curvy geometric forms that would soon fill her polychromatic paintings. It's a traditional portrait of a lady, but also the portrait of a radically inventive artist, one who transcended her classical academic training to sound the secret depths of the divine.

Hilma af Klint: Paintings for the Future transforms the Guggenheim's Frank Lloyd Wright building into what it was originally designed to be: not just an art museum but a "temple for the spirit." Featuring more than 170 objects (mostly abstract paintings and drawings, but also pages from af Klint's notebooks as well as samples of her early academic oils and late watercolors), the show, curated by Tracey Bashkoff, gracefully spirals up the museum's ramps with the steady rhythm of a prayer. It is af Klint's first solo exhibition in the United States, and it has already struck a chord with critics and museumgoers, earning glowing reviews and an extended run through April 23, 2019.

Audiences weren't always so eager to embrace the mystery of Hilma af Klint's singular art. Not only were her paintings rarely seen and never sold during her lifetime, but af Klint, suspecting that her contemporaries were unprepared to appreciate her *oeuvre*, even left instructions that it not be exhibited until at least twenty years after her death in 1944. Museums began showing a few works in the 1980s, but it's only now that her moment has fully arrived. Rather than presenting her entire career, the Guggenheim retrospective centers on the years 1906 to 1920, when af Klint, inspired by "spiritual guides" (incorporeal authorities accessed through communal seances as well as private prayer and contemplation), completed an ambitious pictorial program entitled *The Paintings for the Temple*. Comprising 193 abstract works grouped into series of varying dimensions, the project was intended to adorn a multi-tiered circular sanctuary that would guide visitors from the fallen, changing world of matter into the eternal realm of pure spirit.

True to af Klint's intentions, the show begins with a spectacular mystical flourish. Along the walls of the museum's High Gallery are ten massive rectangular canvases (more than ten feet tall and eight feet wide, they're simply called *The Ten Largest*), each replete with exploding pastel colors and oscillating geometric forms. As a series, they constitute a meditation on the human life cycle: the first two represent childhood, the next two youth, the following four adulthood, and the last two old age. As one's gaze sweeps across the gallery, light blues and oranges give way to soothing purples and pinks; flower petals and baroque ellipses flow into dotted lines and nautilus spirals; an ornate script even fills a few canvases with invented words and Roman numerals. The paintings are staggering in their novelty—still more so when we consider that af Klint completed them several years before figures like Vasily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian began experimenting with abstraction.

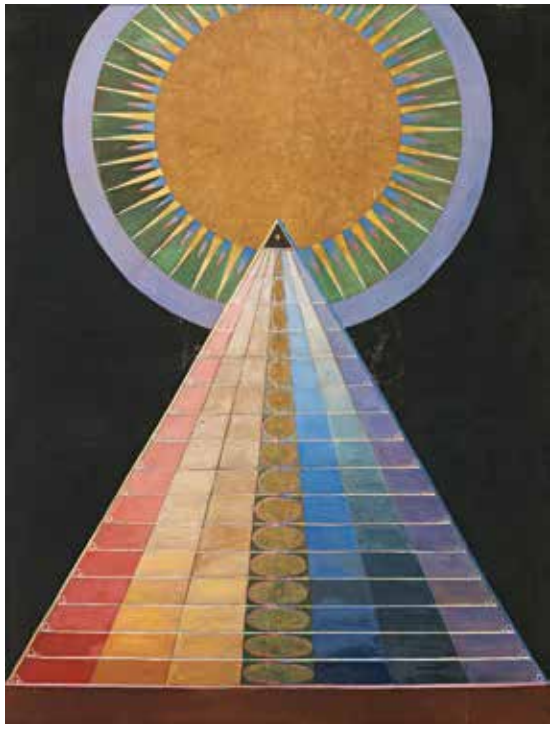
Yet *The Ten Largest* are also deeply traditional. The show's catalogue explains that af Klint had a fondness for religious paintings, especially from the Italian Renaissance and Dutch Golden Age. Just as these works aimed to draw audiences beyond the painted surface and into prayer, so too



Group IV, The Ten Largest, No. 3, Youth, *1907 from* Untitled Series, *tempera on paper*

THE HILMA AF KLINT FOUNDATION, STOCKHOLM PHOTO: ALBIN DAHLSTRÖM, THE MODERNA MUSEET, STOCKHOLM

does af Klint's series point past itself into a fuller, richer whole. Along with purely abstract elements, we find symbols typical of religious art: patterns modeled on Swedish *bonader* (large-scale folk art paintings, often depicting sacred subjects), as well as a spinning mandala filled with the words "*ave maria*" (in the third canvas, "Youth"). The last painting ("Old Age") even features a large white cross at the center, mimicking a gravestone. The more time you spend in front of the paintings, the more the shapes and colors start to mirror the unfolding process of human growth and decline. On the day I visited, I watched new mothers with brightly dressed infants posing cheerfully in front of "Childhood," while elderly couples stood reverently before "Adulthood" and "Old Age."



Group X, No. 1, Altarpiece*, 1915, from* Altarpieces

Much of the rest of the show is dedicated to illustrating the process of af Klint's development as an abstract artist, highlighting her formal achievements as well as her evolving intellectual interests and expanding religious vocabulary. From her early work of the 1890s, we know that af Klint was a skilled painter of nature. Detailed drawings of insects and flowers, as well as striking portraits of two women, precede the "automatic drawings" that she began in the early 1900s, when together with a group known as "The Five" af Klint began tracing the geometric forms that she perceived during spiritual seances. During these practices, af Klint felt herself a conduit, a physical body possessed by spiritual entities (they even had names: Amaliel, Ananda, Clemens, Esther, Georg, and Gregor) that worked through her without any mediation. Fulfilling their "commissions," af Klint completed her earliest abstract works, including the explosive *WU/Rose Series* (which illustrates how spiritual energy congeals into matter), the tender *Eros Series* (whose curves trace the tugs of desire), and the esoteric *Evolution* (which expresses af Klint's growing interests in science, theosophy, and spiritualism).

Soon she began to complement the forms she received from her spiritual guides with symbols taken from different religious traditions (especially medieval Christianity) as well as intuitions born of her own private reflection. Thus the *Tree of Knowledge*, saturated with earthy green and brown watercolors and stamped with gold leaf, provides a moving gloss on the Genesis story of Adam and Eve, while *The Swan* abstracts an alchemical symbol for the union of opposites into a mirrored progression of colors, circles, and triangles. Shifting from automatic drawings to this more personal mode of painting, af Klint makes a bold, if subtle, claim for the role of the artist—no longer a passive servant of the spirit, she is now an active co-creator with the divine.

The endpoint of this trajectory arrives near the top of the Guggenheim's ramps, with a trio of extraordinary *Altarpieces*. Af Klint intended the triptych to occupy the central chamber of the upper floor of her proposed shrine, where visitors would at last experience the resolution of the dualities and tensions that fill the *Paintings for the Temple*. The museum honors her idea by setting the paintings in a relatively quiet, secluded space. In the canvas on the right, a triangular ladder, its steps colored like a rainbow, climbs through a black field to reach a radiant golden orb; in the painting on the left, another gilded sphere spins down a long black chute before disappearing into a small spiral whirlpool; in the central work, a metallic golden globe occupies nearly the entire field, a small six-pointed star resting at its center. Here, in a virtuosic display of abstraction, af Klint conveys her beatific vision, the union of humanity and divinity that even Dante struggled to articulate at the end of the *Paradiso*.

It's become increasingly common to speak of art museums as "sacred spaces" where a disenchanted, secular culture can still experience something akin to religious transcendence. And for good reason. As the Trump era wears on, with its never-ending assault on political norms and social unity, cultural institutions have begun to rethink their public role, some casting themselves as hosts for difficult conversations and dialogue, others organizing exhibits implicitly (or even explicitly) critical of the current administration. But there's a kind of false dichotomy that has crept into the discourse: all art, we're told, is political, and if it doesn't want to abet oppression and stand in the way of progress, it needs to take an unequivocally engaged stance. Such a view, as the Hilma af Klint show makes clear, is reductive: by reasserting the vitality of the spiritual in a divided secular age, the Guggenheim helps us stand, however momentarily, outside the political fray. In the presence of Hilma af Klint's quiet search for ever-deeper unities, we're refreshed and empowered, ready to face the world with a renewed consciousness of our own God-given goodness. ■

Griffin Oleynick *is an assistant editor and the current John Garvey fellow at* Commonweal.

THE HILMA AF KLINT FOUNDATION, STOCKHOLM

John T. McGreevy

A Noble Experiment

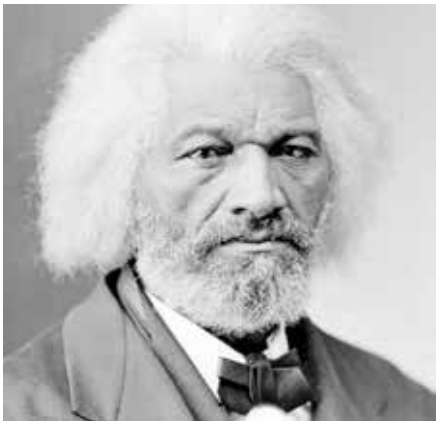
These Truths
A History of the United States
Jill Lepore
W. W. Norton, $39.95, 960 pp.

"This book," explains Jill Lepore in the introduction to her exhilarating one-volume history of the United States, "is meant to double as an old-fashioned civics book." It's not a conventional advertisement, but we could do worse than to press a copy of *These Truths* into the hands of every bored high-school sophomore peeking at Instagram during government class, or every immigrant hoping to obtain citizenship. One of the country's most accomplished historians, Lepore teaches at Harvard and has written books on topics as diverse as Benjamin Franklin's underappreciated sister, Jane; the seventeenth-century King Philip's War in colonial New England; and the origins of Wonder Woman, the comic-book heroine. She has even coauthored a novel—and all this while producing a stream of crisp, witty essays as a staff writer at the *New Yorker*. In a recent interview, Lepore expressed frustration with encomiums to her productivity, likening them to "complimenting a girl on her personality." Well, okay. But her output over two decades does inspire awe.

At the outset of *These Truths*, Lepore warns her readers that the task of fitting the history of the United States into one volume requires hard choices. My own deformation as a professional historian made me flinch when she glided by the Pacific theater in World War II in a paragraph, while spending a couple of pages on the relatively obscure wartime Office of Facts and Figures. Her assessment of the economic boom of the 1950s and '60s—a few disjointed paragraphs—is insufficient. And *Commonweal* readers may find the unreflective treatment of Catholics (constituted by Fr. Coughlin, Phyllis Schlafly, and malevolent opponents of *Roe v. Wade*) discouraging.

But to focus on the inevitable quibbles is to miss Lepore's achievement. *These Truths* is at once a compelling narrative and an argument about American democracy, and in making that argument, it keeps one eye focused on our democracy's unstable present. If the initial two chapters, taking us from Christopher Columbus up to the American Revolution, are the least compelling, that's because for Lepore the real story is yet to begin. Only with the Declaration of Independence and its self-evident truths, followed eleven years later by the Constitution and its effort of "securing the blessings of liberty," does American history succeed in fashioning a template for an ongoing argument about equality, natural rights, and the sovereignty of the people.

The ricochets of these arguments structure Lepore's book. The most consequential is the relationship between slavery and the "unalienable" right to life, liberty, and happiness—a phrase coined by Thomas Jefferson a few years before he fathered the first of six children with his enslaved lover, Sally Hemings. Such paradoxes abound. The first New York newspaper to include a printed copy of Alexander Hamilton's The Federalist No. 1, Lepore tells us, also contained a classified ad offering for sale a "A LIKELY young NEGRO WENCH," touting her as "healthy" and "remarkably handy at housework."


Frederick Douglass

Lepore deftly sketches the protagonists in the enduring debate over slavery, beginning at the constitutional convention in Philadelphia and continuing into the middle of the nineteenth century. The cast includes James Madison; abolitionists David Walker and William Lloyd Garrison; John Brown; John Calhoun; Abraham Lincoln and his political rival, Stephen Douglas; and above all, Frederick Douglass.

The first half of *These Truths* is organized as much around Douglass as any other figure. The world's most famous person of African descent, the most photographed person of the nineteenth century (for Lepore, photography is the "technology of democracy"), and the most celebrated American memoirist since Benjamin Franklin, Douglass did more than anyone to demonstrate the inhumanity of the slave system he himself had escaped. His 1852 denunciation of slavery, conspicuously delivered the day after the Fourth of July, excoriated the "boasted liberty" of the United States as a shameful blend of "bombast, fraud, deception, impiety and hypocrisy."

After the Civil War, Douglass fought for civic equality for freed slaves. He favored the vote for women, too, even if he angered feminist allies by not pressing the issue when Congress approved the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870, granting voting rights to all men—but not women—regardless of "race, color or previous condition of servitude." He

lived to see white southern (and some northern) politicians successfully evade the spirit of the Reconstruction-era amendments. By the early twentieth century, just a decade after Douglass's death, slavery had long been vanquished but it had also become illegal for a black child to play checkers with a white child in a Birmingham public park.

The pace of *These Truths* accelerates once Lepore reaches the 1930s, an era she interprets as the beginning of a slow unraveling of the founders' commitment to discovering truth, yielding devastating effects for democracy. Her view that the advent of polling firms (the most famous led by George Gallup) and political consulting partnerships formed the "single most important force in American democracy" since the creation of political parties might seem implausible. Yet campaigns organized around polling data, and reliant on experts paid to fashion candidates acceptable to the public—and on voters conditioned to mistake polling data for reality—surely *did* weaken the process by which parties choose political candidates. So-called public opinion, Edward R. Murrow warned in 1952, should not become a "petty tyranny" dictating voters' views of the candidates. Radio, too, proved a destabilizing political medium, one beyond the control of political parties. Yes, radio delivered Franklin Roosevelt's heartwarming fireside chats. But Lepore dwells on more ambiguous accomplishments, such as its success in making Christian fundamentalism a national movement, and its appeal to demagogues such as Fr. Coughlin and Huey Long—or, more darkly, to fascist propagandists such as Joseph Goebbels.

Much as he stalked Hillary Clinton onstage during the 2016 presidential debates, Donald Trump looms in the background during Lepore's coverage of the period since the 1950s. The moral urgency of Martin Luther King Jr. occupies its rightful place in this part of the story, as do the charisma of John Kennedy and the crisis in Vietnam. The origins of our current partisanship are evident too. The divide began with the political parties, and Lepore has fun with a report from the American Political Science Association in 1950 bemoaning the absence—yes, the absence—of partisanship in American life. A decade later, Barry Goldwater offered a conservative choice (not an echo), and soon after that, the Democratic Party began its move to the left on social issues. Over time, politicians with the capacity to work across party lines, especially moderate Democrats and Republicans (think Jimmy Carter and Nelson Rockefeller) became endangered species.

Bill Clinton, a centrist Democrat, would seem an exception; but here Lepore is herself immoderate. Clinton in her view is "a rascal," and his effort to reform welfare policy, his support of NAFTA, and his endorsement of the federal crime bill of 1994 cumulatively marked an "abdication of the New Deal." These judgments are severe, especially given that Lepore concedes there were precedents for these actions, and also notes that incomes during and after the Clinton era "rose across the board." Surely Clinton's participation in welfare reform made it better than it otherwise would have been—and it is worth noting that in urging what now seem like horribly misguided sentencing guidelines, he was joined by members of the Congressional Black Caucus. On the other side of the ledger, and in support of Lepore's claim, Clinton and his treasury secretary, Larry Summers, unleashed investment banks from New Deal restrictions, helping enable the financial malfeasance that sparked the 2008 recession and, with it, a search for new political champions by the disaffected rural white working class.

Lepore's appraisal of Clinton's "foolishness, irresponsibility and recklessness" in his affair with Monica Lewinsky—a twenty-one-year-old intern, Lepore reminds us—also hits its mark. The affair has had lasting consequences. Its exploitation by Republicans began a bipartisan pattern of attempting to discredit and even unseat presidents, including George W. Bush and Barack Obama. It also pushed further into the national spotlight a New York real-estate developer and twice-divorced socialite,

Donald Trump, whose loud and gleeful opinions included the assertion that he would have respected Clinton more if he'd had an affair with a supermodel. Trump moved on to jumpstarting the "birther" movement that slandered and denigrated President Obama, contributing to a political polarization so widespread that by 2018, 40 percent of Americans said they would be "upset" with a son or daughter marrying a member of another political party.

Lepore's treatment of the Clinton scandal also lays bare the roots of the media fragmentation that plagues us today. The ratings of an upstart network, Fox, skyrocketed with saturation coverage of the Lewinsky episode. Once broadly nonpartisan, and indeed required by the government to give "equal time" to mainstream candidates and viewpoints, major media outlets lost viewers and listeners to more combative competitors. Conservative talk radio (some nine hundred stations by 1992, led by the influential Rush Limbaugh) and Fox News made no pretense of objectivity, with Limbaugh once going so far as to accuse Hillary Clinton of concealing a murder. Donald Trump's attacks on reporters, *These Truths* reminds us, are the culmination of a decades-long effort to discredit the "mainstream media." The liberal reaction has been more of the same, just less ruthless; MSNBC in Lepore's view is not "less partisan than Fox News...merely differently partisan." The most dramatic assault on objectivity occurred in 2016, when Russian hackers manipulated Facebook to place ads extolling Donald Trump and denigrating Hillary Clinton before 120 million Americans.

Along with political parties and the media, universities have contributed to the polarization problem, and currently find themselves teetering on the edge of what Lepore terms an "epistemological abyss." Here the culprits are mostly on the left, and Lepore is cold-eyed, even courageous, in her assessment of an identity politics, traceable to the 1960s and '70s, that too often seems more concerned with the social location of the speaker than the content of her ideas, and that has effectively dismissed the idea of "truth" as old-fashioned, even malign. Just as liberals followed conservatives in developing their own media outlets, conservatives eventually took to identity politics, too, under the veneer of "fair and balanced" straight talk, with groups such as the National Rifle Association cultivating what Lepore calls a no-compromise "cultural style animated by indictment and indignation." She is especially good on how climate change has gotten dismissed as "fake news," and described as merely one theory among many, by Republicans who know better. *These Truths* makes clear that the new and daunting environmental reality we face today should dampen our willingness to dismiss ideals of objectivity. A "post-truth" view of science seems less appealing in a world where icebergs the size of Delaware are breaking off Antarctica.

A reader might skip the final sentences of *These Truths* and their extended metaphor about a reeling ship of state, with liberals stuck belowdecks and conservatives setting bonfires with the planks. Better to finish with Lepore's sober-minded reporting on a 2016 post-election forum held at Harvard, where representatives from Facebook, major media outlets, and the campaigns all seemed singularly uninterested in how their own mistakes might have brought them (and us) to this point. Better still to remember her eloquent plea to revisit the nation's founding truths, notably a commitment to equality and popular sovereignty informed by debate and inquiry. Displayed to great effect as recently as the civil-rights struggle of the 1960s, this commitment badly needs renewal. So too does the sense that the United States remains a noble experiment in rule of, by, and for the people.

The renewal must take place on both sides of the ideological divide. Liberals, Lepore writes, need to rely less on "judicial remedies, political theater and purity crusades." Conservatives need to avoid overzealous judicial remedies, too, and refrain from wallowing in false nostalgia about lapsed American greatness. Good advice all around, especially at a moment when democracies around the world are experiencing their own varieties of populist nationalism. Let's hope *These Truths* finds the readership it deserves—and pushes us toward the politics we need. ■

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Daniel Finn

Economics as if Theology Mattered

Interrupting Capitalism
Catholic Social Thought and the Economy
Matthew A. Shadle
Oxford University Press, $99, 392 pp.

Matthew A. Shadle begins *Interrupting Capitalism* by identifying two "roadblocks" that prevent the Catholic Church from transforming economic life. The first is that the global economy is immense and immensely difficult to alter. The second is that the church is unable "to capture the imagination of the vast majority of its members with its vision of economic life." Without an adequate pastoral strategy, "the transformative power of Catholics in the pews remains mostly untapped."

Shadle's aim is neither to dismantle the global economy (as Marxists would) nor to establish "small pockets of countercultural practice" (a popular proposal of disciples of Stanley Hauerwas or John Milbank). He intends to provide a vision, and "tools for a pastoral strategy" to energize Catholics.

The bulk of the book provides an insightful account of developments in intellectual, political, and economic history from World War II forward. This begins with social Catholicism (the church's response to the Industrial Revolution) and Christian democracy (the political movement in Western Europe). It recounts the economic visions of Vatican II, liberation theology, progressive and neoconservative Catholicism in the United States, and the contributions of popes from John XXIII to Benedict XVI. (Francis is the focus of the six-page Conclusion.) While Shadle's own position periodically appears in the historical section, his history's real contribution is its fair-minded, intellectually astute assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of each of these sources. Even readers experienced in Catholic social thought can gain significantly from his work.

Shadle's substantive proposals depend heavily on his account of our current situation, characterized by secularization, "pluralization," and individualization. Following Charles Taylor's account, Shadle understands the secular character of contemporary life to entail three shifts away from the premodern world, in which religious life was bolstered by collective ritual actions in the civic community, everyday life was in touch with a spiritually meaningful world, and human flourishing entailed a harmony with the purposes of the cosmos. In our secular age, the world is "disenchanted"; religious faith is no longer the default position in society but simply one of many alternative ways of life that an individual might choose.

Relying on Zygmunt Bauman, Shadle identifies this fact of pluralization (the great variety of lifestyles, perspectives, and worldviews) with individualization. Every person faces the task of constructing an individual identity. The neglect of community generates the illusion of "the self-sufficient individual" as "the public is colonized by the private." All this makes the world a fertile seedbed for global capitalism, which relies on vast international networks of production and distribution but treats persons as isolated individuals and strives to convince them that this is for their own fulfillment.


An interruptor?

In response, Shadle lays out three "theses for a Catholic vision of economic life." The first is that the way forward lies in a theology of interruption, in contrast to the theologies of continuity characteristic of contemporary Catholicism. Here Shadle relies on Belgian theologian Lieven Boeve. Theologies of continuity "affirm a fundamental continuity between the Christian faith and modern social life." While they may be critical of much that happens today, "they [couch] their criticisms in terms of the values of modernity, pointing out ways the modern world has failed to live up to its best ideals." With this definition, Shadle argues that most contemporary Catholic theology—including official Catholic social teaching, both neoconservative and progressive U.S. Catholic theology, and even liberation theology—is fundamentally a theology of continuity. These assume the autonomy of secular society and the separation of the sacred from the secular. Each "appeals to a vision of what it means to be human that transcends the particularities of culture and religion." Shadle acknowledges that the best representatives of each of these options avoid the temptation to subordinate Christian claims to the secular; his primary complaint seems to be that each of them intends to "enter into dialogue with the modern world" in a postmodern context.

Because there is no single modern experience to dialogue with, he argues, such theologies of continuity appear to function only when and where "the residual influence of Christian culture create[s] the perception of a shared vision of humanity in congruity with the Christian vision." With an increasing splintering of perspectives in postmodernity, each of these theologies of continuity becomes "less plausible."

Shadle is similarly critical of theologies of discontinuity. In light of the postmodern abandonment of an integrated Christian vision, these approaches—whether of Milbank, Hauerwas, or

traditionalist Catholic movements—understand themselves as resident aliens in the postmodern world, and some of them yearn nostalgically for a world that can no longer exist.

In place of both theologies of continuity and discontinuity, Shadle endorses Boeve's "theology of interruption." Interruption is understood to be an experience of God (in scripture, sacrament, "the religious other," or the poor and marginalized) that, although interpreted in light of prior faith, challenges believers to "a deepening or development of the tradition." As a systematic theologian, Boeve employs this notion largely as an interpretive principle to deal with contemporary religious pluralism. Shadle takes up the challenge to show "how a theology of interruption can contribute to Catholic social thought."

Shadle's second thesis is that we should recover and renew the traditional Catholic "organicist communitarian vision." This will provide a critique of modernity and a deeper appreciation of the institutions of civil society. While he wants the economy to be organized in such a way as to make space for local intermediate communities, he cautions against too sharp a separation of these communities from the structures of the global economy.

His third thesis is that the "social scientific tools" needed for an adequate Catholic vision of economic life are provided by critical-realist social theory and institutional economics. Critical realism rejects both the methodological individualism of mainstream economics (which assumes that there are no causes in social life other than the decisions of persons and groups) and the methodological holism of many sociological approaches (which assumes a very thin form of freedom in light of powerful social forces). It proposes a more adequate—and more Catholic—understanding of the relation between structure and human agency. Following critical-realist sociologist Margaret Archer, Shadle explains that "social structures constrain and enable agents, but agents in turn reproduce and transform those same social structures." Culture, "the entire stock of ideas and values available to a society," has an analogous relation to human agency and, of course, structure and culture themselves interact. He also recommends relying on institutional economics, perhaps the most robust of the "heterodox" schools of economics. In two pages in the opening chapters, he borrows from Geoffrey Hodgson a set of three characteristics of capitalism (that it is complex, linear, and open) but makes almost no use of institutional economics in the rest of the volume.

Shadle's views become apparent in the historical survey, and especially in the penultimate chapter, where he reviews the work of five contemporary Catholic voices: Meghan Clark, Samuel Gregg, Christine Firer Hinze, Maria Teresa Dávila, and William T. Cavanaugh. In each case, he offers both praise and critique, consistently making clear that the method of a theology of interruption requires two things: making claims from the Christian tradition that critique contemporary culture and structures, and engaging in dialogue with the poor and marginalized.

His own perspective, "organicist communitarianism," is directly articulated in only three pages, just before the concluding chapter on Pope Francis. We need local communities and economic practices "to bend the state away from the interests of concentrated wealth and power." We must re-embed the economy in civil society and ensure that "the values of self-giving, mutuality, and solidarity are embodied in economic life." Although he mentions transforming larger economic structures as part of this vision, his attention focuses on local change.

The brief concluding chapter addresses the teaching of Pope Francis. Shadle sees many hopeful signs there. Although he acknowledges that Francis hasn't endorsed his three theses (theology of interruption, organicist communitarianism, and critical realism/institutional economics), Shade suggests that these three "offer a good prediction of where the Catholic social tradition is headed."

No volume is without its shortcomings. Contrary to Shadle's critique, no Catholic theologian I know of has claimed that any modern perspective is congruous with the Christian vision, and most have acknowledged the difficulties presented by the variety of worldviews today. Magisterial teaching and most theologians "of continuity" have tried to speak not only in specifically religious language but also in categories (justice, human rights, etc.) familiar to contemporary people who are not Christians. Such intellectual "outreach" is missing from Shadle's account of theology, which thereby comes closer to theologies of discontinuity. The interruption he envisions is in economic life. His endorsement of institutional economics implies an interest in the intellectual debates about national economic policy and structures, but he does not develop here this feature of his position.

It's also worth noting that Shadle's position—his three theses, for example—is rooted in the insights of Boeve, Archer, Hodgson, and a number of other scholars who are prosperous white academics from the global North. I say this not to disparage their work or reputation (I fit into the same group!) but to note that Shadle's enthusiasm for injecting into Catholic social thought a novel perspective from "outside" is perhaps more difficult than he indicates.

This is a good book. The fair-minded, insightful accounts of the positions of others are exemplary throughout the text. Shadle's constructive position presents a challenge to most others in the field. It's quite likely that whatever your view of these issues, his work will helpfully call your position into question. ■

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Mary McDonough

Tales of a Deathwife

With the End in Mind

Dying, Death, and Wisdom in an Age of Denial

Kathryn Mannix

Little, Brown and Company, $27, 352 pp.

In the third act of *Richard III*, Sir William Catesby tells Lord Hastings: "'Tis a vile thing to die, my gracious lord, when men are unprepared and look not for it." Although written around 1592, Catesby's words still ring true today. Many of us are not prepared for our own deaths. In fact, death remains a topic that makes most of us so anxious and unsettled that we spend much of our lives avoiding the subject entirely. Complicating matters even further is that we live in a culture that shields us from death with the use of euphemisms, such as he "passed away" or she "lost" her husband, rather than the word *died*.

British palliative-care physician Kathryn Mannix has spent more than thirty years working with the terminally ill. She wants us to regain "the familiarity we once had" with dying because "death itself has become increasingly taboo." Often separated from loved ones and familiar surroundings, we "now die in ambulances and emergency rooms and intensive care units, our loved ones separated from us by the machinery of life preservation." Yet all of us will eventually die. So, Mannix decided: "It's time to talk about dying." She does just that and much more in her powerful testament to dying well, *With the End in Mind: Dying, Death, and Wisdom in an Age of Denial*.

Mannix draws us into the world of the dying through stories of her patients. Heart-wrenching and heartwarming at the same time, these poignant tales carry us directly into the core of that mysterious territory we try so hard to avoid. Her stories are not for the faint. Mannix spares no details of the physical and emotional toll the dying process takes on both patients and their support systems. Yet she does so in such an eloquent and tender manner that we do not object to being transported into the private worlds of the terminally ill. Instead, we are inspired and uplifted by these ordinary people and how they deal with the extraordinary pressure of trying to live while they know they are dying. Questions about suffering, meaning, fear, and transcendence emerge on every page. By the end of the book we have learned that while the dying process itself is generally predictable and comfortable, we can make certain choices to increase the likelihood that our life journeys will finish well.

With few medical details omitted, Mannix does not sugarcoat the dying process. She describes sitting with "people while they wept or stared blankly into a future they could barely contemplate." Her descriptions of deathbed scenarios are quite graphic and at times, even difficult to read. She is so adept, however, at weaving these stories together that I felt as if I were actually in the patients' rooms, sitting beside them, sensing what they were feeling. There are victories here but no survivals. Still, each thread of Mannix's tapestry represents courage, acceptance, resilience, forgiveness, and transformation.

The stories of Mannix's patients are as varied as the illnesses that kill them. We learn about Louisa, who collapses while shopping for a wedding dress for her daughter. Diagnosed with aggressive bone cancer, she is forced to use a wheelchair but is determined to live long enough to attend her daughter's wedding. On that special day, Louisa is able to hoist herself up with a walker so

Edvard Munch, Death Struggle, *1915*

she can walk with her daughter to the limousine and escort her to her wedding. In another story, we meet an elderly man critically ill with advanced intestinal cancer. He has been living in Rotterdam for years but returns to England to die because he feels subtle yet increasing pressure from Dutch doctors to use euthanasia, legal in the Netherlands. But he does not want that option. Instead, he prefers to spend as much time as possible with his wife and daughter. Mannix is able to keep him comfortable as he lives for another two months surrounded by his loved ones.

The story of Sylvie, a nineteen-year-old dying of leukemia, moved me most. Determined to sew a patchwork cushion cover, she carefully chooses fabrics from her own clothes—an old sun dress, a button from a school uniform, part of a favorite t-shirt. The cover is for the seat cushion of her mother's rocking chair so that after her death, Sylvie explains, her mother can sit in the chair and "I can rock her, and she can feel my arms around her."

Even medical professionals can benefit from reading this book. Mannix, who is also trained in cognitive behavioral therapy, has valuable insights into how to interact with terminally ill people and their caregivers. She has learned when to speak, when to listen, when to confront, when to comfort. Her observational skills about her patients' anxieties, fears, and wishes offer effective lessons on how to approach delicate subjects such as treatment plans, treatment withdrawal, and various family issues. Most of all, Mannix has an inspirational passion for this challenging profession. Her work is not merely a job. It is a vocation, akin to being a midwife on the other end of life. "We are the deathwives," she says, "and it's a privilege every time."

After following the journeys of Mannix's patients, I found myself in awe of their courage while at the same time wondering: Can I be that brave at the end of my life? But the author reminds us that "these are just ordinary people, like the rest of us, but they are at an extraordinary place in their life journey." While not perfect "they are examples of what we can all become: beacons of compassion, living in the moment, looking backwards with gratitude and forgiveness, and focused on the simple things that really matter."

In today's world of medical technology, it has become easier to live longer but more difficult to die well. Mannix's book offers us lessons, not just on dying, but also on living. She beautifully illustrates how the awareness of our deaths can bring meaning and purpose to our lives. ■

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‘My Kate!’

Kate Madore

Her hands were small and knobby, with padded tips like a gecko. She was thin, pale, and freely freckled. She had a sheaf of white-blond, frizzy hair and intensely pale-blue eyes.

She’d sit under the table in the stale church basement after Mass, next to my folding chair, lacing the dusty floor with coconut from her donut. At times she’d reach for my large hand with her nimble ones, first spreading my fingers one-by-one, then smashing them back together with feral strength. She talked to herself ferociously.

Six, seven, eight years old when I knew her, she alighted on our parish doorstep from another state one day with her elderly father. Some whispered behind them; others questioned him. A story misted about eventually—mother gone or dead, poverty, father struggling; little girl out of control, no structure, needs help.

Annie (not her real name) was one of a few children I met in my brief spell as a Sunday school teacher. I was fifteen years old, aggressively shy, often sweaty, overweight. I had bad glasses, few friends, a melancholy streak, and a growing dread of the adulthood a few dozen months away. Some kind women of the parish had invited me to help with the younger grades’ class. They were exceptionally patient with my teaching style, which involved blushing my way through the material while losing the focus of every tousled head at the table before me.

In spite of this, Annie lifted her cleft little chin and set her sights on me, and for the remainder of my high-school years was attached to me, physically, during those Sunday mornings, endlessly hanging off my hand or leg. I didn’t always know what to say to her, but I took comfort in her presence and she in mine, and we found a place among the weak coffee, gossip, and church shoes.

In some of her moods she tumbled and giggled with the other kids. One of her top teeth had grown in far ahead of the others and for a few months she flew about chasing her friends with one giant tooth, her blue-jay laugh, and a bushel of unbrushed curls streaking behind her.

In other moods she was surly and unkind. She would bite and scratch. If she was adhered to me and anyone came to take my attention, she would bark and growl, or meow and hiss at them while we spoke. She could keep it up for hours. When my new boyfriend visited from another town and I introduced her to him, she howled “My Kate!” and she would circle like a coyote whenever he was around.

Many, many Sundays saw her father lift her on his knotted shoulders to bring her home while she hit and screamed and gouged him.

I left for college, my boyfriend and I married a few years later, and my parents moved. My sister still lived in the area, and every few years Annie’s name would come up, and I’d marvel that my fierce, lovely girl was now a high school graduate, a farmer, a wife, a mother.

Olga Rozanova, Portrait of a Girl, *1911*

A few weeks ago my sister visited on one of the first warm evenings we’d had in eight months. As the last fingers of orange sunlight slid around the corners of the windows, she spun her cup round in her hands and asked, “Did you hear about Annie Smith?”

Maybe it was how she said it, but I knew that she had died. My lungs refused air as the facts emerged. Drug addiction. Runaway. Overdose. Taking donations.

My firey little friend is dead. She had a life of shadows and dark things and unknowns. I don’t know her husband or child or the grief and anger they are drenched in. In a real way, I didn’t know her at all.

But part of me has this half-born daydream to drive back to my hometown this weekend. To implore an undeserved second of their time. To look them straight on and say, “I loved her.” And when I felt myself most unloveable—she loved me. ■

Kate Madore *is a freelance writer and pianist. She lives and works with her family in coastal Maine.*

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