

THE FAILURE OF REPRESENTATION IS THE ONLY AUTHENTIC PRESENTATION: PURSUING THE NEGATION OF NEGATION IN (POST)MODERN THEOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL LINES OF THOUGHT

Colby Dickinson¹

After Auschwitz there is no word tinged from on high, not even a theological one, that has any right unless it underwent a transformation.²

Theologians are often beset by the difficulties encountered in modern forms of critical thought and the postmodern demise of grand narratives, or at least this is how the situation is often perceived.³ The (post)modern shift in theological thought, on the whole made in an effort to cope with such problematics, has at least since Spinoza inclined many to tilt toward an enclosed plane of immanence rather than attempt to reconstruct an ontotheological justification for sovereign forms of transcendence.⁴ Traditionally understood, ontotheology has been in decline ever since, though its alleged death is something that remains to be seen. Constructing a form of transcendence in order to undergird one's theological point of view has been typically little more than a political ploy for power, whether ecclesial or social in nature. In this (post)modern theological displacement and reconfiguration, the critique of the ways in which theology has traditionally perceived its (transcendent) object of study has made things much more restrictive in terms of positive constructs offered, a reality that frequently lessens the political power of religious institutions in the West and consequently pits a defensive and apologetic form of theology against an increasingly secular society (and even the occasional, if seemingly paradoxical, secular or radical theology). If there is to be a hope for theological reflection in the near future, it must take Adorno's suggestion—inasmuch as it also echoes a sentiment found in the late Bonhoeffer's work—quite seriously: theology must be transformed or it will no longer be able to speak to our world in a meaningful way.

¹ Loyola University Chicago. cdickinson1@luc.edu.

² Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (London: Continuum, 1973), p. 367.

³ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

⁴ See Joeri Schrijvers, *Ontotheological Turnings? The Decentering of the Modern Subject in Recent French Phenomenology* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2011).

Within such a context, I believe that Adorno's intuition for developing a theology post-Auschwitz is entirely correct, and I believe as well that we are still trying to work out the implications of what all of this means for theological methods and models. The lines, moreover, between theology and philosophy continue to be blurred in this regard, playing out his suggestion, made in his *Negative Dialectics*, that '[...] transcendence feeds on nothing but the experiences we have in immanence'⁵, though what this entails exactly is still somewhat unclear. I hope in what follows to briefly make an act of clarifying this intuition of his as a focal point of my engagement with this necessary call to transform theological points of view today. I want to do so, moreover, by connecting the French philosopher Maurice Blondel's 'method of immanence' to Adorno's negative dialectical method. Specifically, what I wish to center my comparison of these two rarely juxtaposed thinkers upon is Blondel's critique of demythologization, or the 'myth of no myth'—including his eventual turn to the supernatural—and, from there, to see how such thoughts compare with Adorno's elucidations on the 'Dialectic of Enlightenment' in light of his negative dialectical method and commentary upon metaphysics. As I argue, both authors maintain a solid critique of Kantian transcendentalism and of traditional (Hegelian) dialectical forms while yet creating new forms of non-identitarian dialectics—a proximity between them that calls for closer inspection of their divergence, and what might be gained philosophically from any interplay between them—including complete reformulations of both the 'supernatural' and the 'metaphysical'. My aim in this undertaking is to elaborate upon how their respective views end up in close proximity to one another in philosophical terms, though yet overtly divergent in their theological commitments, as well as to consider how we might benefit in both disciplines from rereading them alongside one another today.

To begin, I would suggest that what we are forced to contemplate in Adorno's reconceptualization of theological thought is a profound rereading of the relationship between the immanent and the transcendent, or, if you will, between the material and the theological. As he claims, 'At its most materialistic, materialism comes to agree with theology. Its great desire would be the resurrection of the flesh, a desire utterly foreign to idealism, the realm of the absolute spirit'.⁶ Contrary to an idealistic abstraction from the material realm, Adorno hits upon that which has been, and will presumably continue to be, very fruitful for the recovery of theological insight, and in contradistinction with those metaphysical, transcendental

⁵ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 398.

⁶ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 207.

subjectivities that have often undergirded theological projects precisely through an abstraction from material reality. As the theologian Jürgen Moltmann would put it in light of Adorno's work, the resurrection of the flesh matters in a way that theology has often neglected to comprehend:

To recognize the event of the resurrection of Christ is therefore to have a hopeful and expectant knowledge of this event. It means recognizing in this event the latency of that eternal life which in the praise of God arises from the negation of the negative, from the raising of one who was crucified and the exaltation of the one who was forsaken.⁷

This is, in short, the negation of the ultimate immanent negation, death itself then, and it is thereby also a stress laid upon the resurrected materiality of the flesh. For Moltmann, in particular, such a suggestion would eventually yield an intensified focus upon the suffering of Christ, or what was, in the end, and following Luther's phrasing, the 'Crucified God'.⁸ As the negation of the negative, this form of negative dialectics would, in his eyes, open theology up to the reality of suffering in a way that theology had not been attentive to prior to the horrors of Auschwitz. Such a movement was not an idealistic dialectics that sought to remove itself from material reality, but a negative dialectics that would return to the material reality beyond whatever label had been inscribed over it.

It was precisely this return to our material realities which had led Adorno to state that 'The smallest trace of senseless suffering in the empirical world belies all the identitarian philosophy that would talk us out of that suffering: "While there is a beggar, there is a myth," as Benjamin put it. This is why the philosophy of identity is the mythological form of thought'.⁹ Suddenly, from this perspective, demythologization becomes a theological task, though one that differs entirely from Rudolf Bultmann's efforts, and which likewise differs from traditional theological projects working in league with a certain history of metaphysics. In a way that would open theology up to its more contextual, emancipatory projects (e.g. liberation, black, feminist, postcolonial, queer theologies, etc.), Adorno's insight offers us a way to see how the theological must be understood in relation to its material realities and traditions. There is a potential 'theological materialism', as Patrice Haynes puts it, latent within Adorno's work, though it is one that also retains its paradoxical nature, and, as such,

⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, trans. James W. Leitch (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1967), p. 211.

⁸ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R.A. Wilson and John Bowden (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993).

⁹ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 203.

might be seen to maintain a certain ‘heretical’ position, not in the least because he also declares that the core of religion, is, and should remain, empty.¹⁰

This call to perceive religious ‘truth’ as a contentless vessel of human experience and understanding is actually a call that has been made repeatedly in certain (post)modern circles of contemporary philosophy of religion. From John Caputo to Giorgio Agamben, theology is said to work less in the interest of preserving its traditions, and more in service to a ‘weak messianic force’ that moves throughout any and every tradition, promising justice and truth to shine forth, though it is also often misperceived as an antinomian or heretical force. The real ‘deposit of faith’, however, is perhaps a gesture toward something we have not yet grasped, and perhaps never will in its entirety.

What is interesting in this particular reading of religion, though, is that, despite religion being declared fundamentally empty content-wise, from this point of view, it yet maintains a ‘more consistent’ form of materiality than those metaphysical positions which were developed in conjunction with theological claims (i.e. the long history of western ontotheology so often decried). Religion maintains, as it were, something intrinsic to its hope that is yet essential to the project of negative dialectics, though this is only, at times, hinted at by Adorno:

Christian dogmatics, in which the souls were conceived as awakening simultaneously with the resurrection of the flesh, was metaphysically more consistent—more enlightened, if you will—than speculative metaphysics, just as hope means a physical resurrection and feels defrauded of the best part by its spiritualization. With that, however, the impositions of metaphysical speculation wax intolerably.¹¹

Seen as such, the belief in a physical resurrection takes the nature of materiality more seriously than subsequent metaphysical speculation and its spiritualization of a theological materialism which should not be discarded in such a manner. The faults of idealism are again on display as Adorno suggestively points toward a material theology that has been long ignored. Here, in particular, we see what distance separates Adorno’s project of demythologization from Bultmann’s, which would jettison the physical resurrection as an inherently ‘mythological’ element of the Gospel accounts, and thereby expose its own existentialist metaphysical supports.

¹⁰ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 399. See also Patrice Haynes, *Immanent Transcendence: Reconfiguring Materialism in Continental Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

¹¹ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 401.

What Adorno is ultimately after is of course no less radical than Bultmann's claims, though on a level altogether different. What Adorno seems to gesture toward is a subversion of those religious-ideological identities that have been politically staked, but which are rarely useful in any genuinely theological sense: 'The idea of truth is supreme among the metaphysical ideas, and this is where it takes us. It is why one who believes in God cannot believe in God, why the possibility represented by the divine name is maintained, rather, by him who does not believe'.¹² What is present in his thought is precisely, and as we see in Slavoj Žižek's contrast of the believer and the atheist, that which appears to be not present—an identity suggested only through one's nonidentity, what Levinas once referred to as the form of a 'relation without relation'.¹³ I would wager that such considerations are not too far removed either from figures such as Derrida and Caputo who seem to revel in such reversals of identity such as these: believers who rightly pass for atheists.¹⁴

The reference to Derrida in this context might also help to make clearer how a great deal of frustration has often been on display in response to those deconstructive (or negative dialectical) projects that refuse to engage in a 'positive' political or identitarian project. Along these lines of inquiry, the very real question many would put to Adorno in this context, as it might and often was to Derrida, is: Should we resist this 'non-identity' as the only solution to the problem of identity, as Patrice Haynes suggests, trying instead to assert a more 'positive ontology' in the face of this loss?¹⁵ And yet as Adorno has perhaps already answered this presupposing question: '[...] the fallacy is the direct elevation of negativity, the critique of what merely is, into positivity as if the insufficiency of what is might guarantee that what is will be rid of that insufficiency. Even *in extremis* a negated negative is not a positive'.¹⁶

In tones that will echo within the deconstructivist project, itself centered on a justice always yet 'to come' but never fully present in the future—in fact dependent upon an eschatological horizon of justice that could never be present in its entirety, for this is the myth of totalitarianism—negative dialectics does not 'rest in itself, as if it were total. This is its form of hope'.¹⁷ In sharp contrast to metaphysical-mythological, 'enlightened' thought, this

¹² Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 401-402.

¹³ Slavoj Žižek and John Milbank, *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?*, ed. Creston Davis (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), p. 298

¹⁴ Jacques Derrida, 'Circumfessions', in *Jacques Derrida*, ed. Geoffrey Bennington, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 155.

¹⁵ Haynes, *Immanent Transcendence*, pp. 149-150.

¹⁶ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 393.

¹⁷ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 406.

messianic focus upon a future horizon always yet to come exhibits an altogether different way to envision the theological element always already *within* our world, the broaching of the mythical immanent sphere with *something like* transcendence, though not a form of transcendence we have ever seen before. It is one that must be embodied; hence Adorno's stress on a 'physical resurrection'. It is a transcendence present only in the *failure* of the immanent; it is that which shines through an (immanent) negation *of* the immanent which exists *as* a negation of anything that might lie beyond it. Only through this understanding can Adorno declare that the only solidarity that exists between thinking and metaphysics exists 'at the time of its fall'.¹⁸ In other words, the only genuine representation is one that is capable of showing us the failure of our representations. This is the only true presentation beyond representation that is possible: the negation of representation, the negation of that which had already negated (or perhaps simply *reduced*) a possible presence in our world. This is the only way by which we might access something like a true hypernomianism that refrains from actually becoming the feared antinomian stance.¹⁹

The entirety of negative dialectics seems to revolve around this central pivot: thought itself is broached by that which negates it, but which, by that very negation, gives renewed life to it. Or, more directly stated, 'Represented in the inmost cell of thought is that which is unlike thought'.²⁰ We are brought back to the foundations of negative dialectics which posits that 'Immanence is the totality of those identitarian positions whose principle falls before immanent critique'.²¹ In other words, 'No immanent critique can serve its purpose wholly without outside knowledge, of course—without a moment of immediacy, if you will, a bonus from the subjective thought that looks beyond the dialectical structure'.²² This is an immediacy, of course, that comes only from the failures of mediation, but it is the very immediacy that also undoes what we had strived so hard to uphold as an identity.

It is from this place that we begin to understand why Adorno could only construct his post-Auschwitz philosophy as a particular 'logic of disintegration' or a philosophy in fragments, notions both akin to Johann Baptist Metz' political-theological suggestion that 'systematic' reflections are no longer possible as certain figures of the Enlightenment would

¹⁸ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 408.

¹⁹ See Elliot R. Wolfson, *Open Secret: Postmessianic Messianism and the Mystical Revision of Menahem Mendel Schneerson* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 182.

²⁰ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 408.

²¹ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 181.

²² Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 182.

have attempted.²³ What is left in their stead is a firm call for a philosophy of self-reflection—a ‘thinking against itself’ with dire implications for those un-self-reflective philosophies that depict grand systems.²⁴ This refusal of systematic identity is ultimately what motivates a negative dialectics, and what perhaps precipitates new thoughts within Blondel’s theological speculations as well: a theology that thinks against itself, and which must therefore begin thinking within immanence in order to think towards, but not necessarily arrive at, an ephemeral moment of transcendence. To see things as such becomes another way to champion a theology that dares *to think the non-theological*, perhaps even the philosophical, just as the philosophical must think the non-philosophical, *perhaps even the theological*. To envision relations between such fields as inherently porous like this is to expose the *myth* of the closed (entirely immanent) systematic reflection; and, of course, this is the real myth that Adorno and Horkheimer had sought to dispel.

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, we hear them suggest, for example, that ‘The principle of immanence, the explanation of every event as repetition, which enlightenment upholds against mythical imagination, is that of myth itself.’²⁵ In this formulation, events are perceived as repetitive, or cyclical, because the wholly immanent system cannot admit anything beyond itself, cannot open itself up to that which is other to it, to that which speaks another language, or is foreign to its particular paradigm. Everything seeks a stasis that cannot be upended by the intrusion of a ‘foreign’ element: ‘Hence, for both mythical and enlightened justice, guilt and atonement, happiness and misfortune, are seen as the two sides of an equation. Justice gives way to law’, and the entire cyclical phenomena is begun again.²⁶ Though this may appear as a ‘modern’ conceptualization through its equating the logic of enlightenment with the oldest of mythological devices, we can observe how the tension between justice and law is continuously maintained in religious circles today at all costs, with the one flowing into the other. Though there is certainly a biblical precedent for this tension, there is also no easy—often wrongly ‘Christianized’—solution to it. The one does not supersede the other, and the two do not always balance one another out—or, at least, balancing them is not the point they are set to make in relation to one another. This truth is no

²³ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 144, 28.

²⁴ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 365.

²⁵ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 8.

²⁶ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp. 11-12.

less present in René Girard's critique of the violence of mythology as it is here in Adorno and Horkheimer.²⁷

For Pauline thought, something that has gained more than a fair share of attention within contemporary philosophical reflection, the tension between the law and grace (or Gospel) is paramount to comprehending the essential core of the Christian proclamation. Just as with the spirit/flesh dichotomy that subdivides the Jewish identity from within, we have in Adorno's estimation a similar dialectic of non-identity as the only justly sought after identity, one that yet does not become a 'positive' identity in its own right. Again, I would point out, this is what Moltmann has described in a theological context as a form of the 'negation of negation'—a consideration he derives, in part, from Adorno's reflections on negative dialectics: 'Out of the night of the "death of God" on the cross, out of the pain of the negation of himself, he is experienced in the resurrection of the crucified one, in the negation of the negation, as the God of promise, as the coming God'.²⁸ This is, for Moltmann, the only form of a positive statement that can be made—a simple pointing toward the negation of negation itself. To seek a positive ontology is to capitulate to identitarian thought, and to posit an ideological identity instead.²⁹

I would only hasten to add to this connection the more contemporary establishment of a Pauline 'division of division itself' in the commentaries of Agamben, who likewise seeks to avoid any positive content being given to identity.³⁰ With a certain equivalence to Adorno's comments on religion, Agamben determines the shape of a potential theology transformed from within by its own radical messianic impulses. For him, there is no positive doctrinal content to point toward, only the 'division of division' that signals a certain non-identity which must yet be respected—in many ways, the singular point of 'whatever being' where ethics truly begins.³¹

To frame this movement within the context of Adorno's critique of mythology, we can see how it is mythology—which historically has often masqueraded as theology—that promotes a facile and ideological form of unity beyond division, a solitary, sovereign sense of an undivided self. As such, the task of rendering the subject divided from within is an ethical

²⁷For more on a Girardian framework, see Scott Cowdell, *René Girard and Secular Modernity: Christ, Culture, and Crisis* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013).

²⁸Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p. 171.

²⁹Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 158, 148.

³⁰Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

³¹ See Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); see also Colby Dickinson, *Agamben and Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2011).

task of the highest order. It must be denounced again and again: ‘Demythologization is division; the myth is the deceptive unity of the undivided’.³² For this reason, the mythology which enlightened thinking promotes—a quest to purify itself of all myth, and to remain forever undivided from within, which is the ultimate myth—is in many ways the greatest and most deceptive myth of all, the one that both philosophy and an able political theology should seek to dismantle in its political, religious and philosophical guises.

In Maurice Blondel’s language, which I enter into here as a fitting theological compliment to Adorno’s conceptualization of (material) immanence, to think oneself free of all superstitions is the ultimate superstition—it is the myth of having no myths that binds one even more tightly to myth than one thinks imaginable.³³ It is the modern, enlightened quest to purify oneself of all forms of idolatry, or fetishes, that ensures that one is doubly, though unconsciously, ensnared within them—a point that echoes well with Adorno’s treatment of the fetish on several counts.³⁴

Whether we radicalize Blondel’s method of immanence in a theological-phenomenologically way, as both Emmanuel Falque and Jean-Luc Marion have done, in order to focus on the body ‘from below’ and yet so as to make the movement ‘from time to eternity’³⁵, or whether we follow Adorno’s social critique and emphasis upon suffering from a theological point of view, as both Jürgen Moltmann and Johann Baptist Metz have already done³⁶, we are forced by both perspectives to search through the enclosures of immanence for its failings, and only from this point are we able, perhaps, to glimpse something of that which transcends the immanent plane. It is in this way that we confront what Hent de Vries has referred to, in the context of Adorno’s work, as a ‘minimal theology’, a title that plays upon Adorno’s own *Minima Moralia*.³⁷ Such a label certainly gives one the impression that theology has lost something of its strength, that its content has been emptied a bit of its vitality through this encounter with poetry. Though perhaps in such a weakening there is another strength we have yet to ‘identify with’, which we seemingly always have trouble

³² Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 118.

³³ Maurice Blondel, *Action (1893): Essay on a Critique of Life and a Science of Practice*, trans. Oliva Blanchette (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), pp. 285-299.

³⁴ See Bruno Latour, *On the Modern Cult of the Factish Gods* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

³⁵ See, for instance, Emmanuel Falque, *The Metamorphosis of Finitude: An Essay on Birth and Resurrection*, trans. George Hughes (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

³⁶ See, among others, Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*, trans. J. Matthew Ashley (New York: Crossroad, 2007).

³⁷ Hent de Vries, *Minimal Theologies: Critiques of Secular Reason in Adorno and Levinas*, trans. Geoffrey Hale (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005) and Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life* trans. E.F.N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 2006).

‘identifying with’ (and which constitutes the real difficulty of taking religious claims seriously, because of this demand they make upon us to leave our identities behind).

To give but one example of this, we might take up the question often put to those philosophers who dabble in the principle of justice and which is central to any analysis of alleged antinomianism: did this call for justice originate with Judaism first? Or with Christianity? As we must attentively declare, the answer is both, or at least the weak messianic force that permeates them both. As de Vries even considers: ‘[...] what increasingly forces itself on our attention is that Jewish existence, in a certain sense, was paradigmatic of the “enclaves of negation” which might authenticate the integrity of his theory’.³⁸

In many ways, this futile quest for an origin that is really an undergirding force within all structures is similar to Derrida and Caputo’s wrestling with the ‘origins’ of their messianic speculations. Yet, as I would recall to mind, their views are, like Moltmann’s, eschatologically oriented. It matters little what the point of origin actually is: Judaism, Christianity or another religion that breaks into the West from elsewhere. Indeed, to search for the origins as a fixed point of orientation is an ideological task, and not a genuine theological one. A ‘minimal theology’, if I might continue in calling it that, is more concerned about the justice always yet to come than with the source of its foundations. It searches only for the negation of a previously established identity (the first negation of a fuller material, living reality), the division of division of whatever identity is already before us, rather than to establish an originary point of access or foundation, and then claiming such a point as its long sought-after identity.

In these reformulated terms, it is that which is more concerned with moving from the foundations of immanence outward, *toward* the infinite, *toward* the horizon that is always yet to come, and which we might describe as transcendent yet without a foundational metaphysical, ontotheological claim. If theology is to have a future, one that learns from these mindful reflections, perhaps it should be one that tries to locate a theology that moves out beyond theology, toward *that which is other to it*. This, and only this, would be the poverty of theology, and perhaps also the only proper way to do theology in the first place: comparatively, inter-religiously.

³⁸de Vries, *Minimal Theologies*, p. 342.

*

To embrace the radical poverty of theology is moreover, I would note, to recognize that faith itself forever remains in a state of impoverishment. It is not a permanently fixed or unchallengeable entity, or institution, that is built so as to withstand its weakening; it is rather a focused look at precisely how the weakness that constitutes its core is to be understood and engaged. This, in many ways, is how we should reconceive the much maligned split between the sacred and the secular that continues to dominate our western, religious topography. What we fail to note when we read this apparent fracture as a problem waiting to be overcome is how the divide between the sacred and the secular is not removed from the Jewish and Christian traditions, but is rather *inherent to them*.

In particular, there is a certain ‘disjunction’ that Christianity introduces into the experience of God, what comes about through God’s own death, that simultaneously upends our experience of ourselves, provoking a ceaseless probing of ourselves in order to ascertain how we might better betray ourselves, so to speak. This movement is, and here somewhat deepening Adorno’s account above, an ‘immanentism of transcendence’.³⁹ Julia Kristeva, for her part, becomes attuned to such a moment in history, not simply because it defines the inner critical voice of psychoanalysis, which it does as a field that becomes for her a possible historical variant of theology⁴⁰, but because such a disjunction in the history of the human being renders secularization almost ‘negligible’ in the larger scheme of things.⁴¹

It is interesting that her reading of psychoanalysis as a variant of theology runs parallel to her depiction of psychoanalysis as a possible path forward for the establishment of an ‘atheism without nihilism’.⁴² Both religion and atheism, in psychoanalytic form at least, deal with the creation of symbolic, representative meaning—in other words, ‘a concern for coherence and identity’.⁴³ What she touches upon most directly, we should add, is the ‘need to believe’ that is rooted in the experience of language, a ‘happy infantile and amorous trauma’⁴⁴, that stretches toward the ‘bonds of investment’ caught up within all forms of symbolization.⁴⁵

³⁹ Julia Kristeva, *This Incredible Need to Believe*, trans. Beverley Bie Brahic (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. xv.

⁴⁰ Kristeva, *This Incredible Need to Believe*, p. 70.

⁴¹ Kristeva, *This Incredible Need to Believe*, p. ix.

⁴² Julia Kristeva, *Hatred and Forgiveness*, trans. Jeanine Herman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 210.

⁴³ Kristeva, *Hatred and Forgiveness*, p. 210.

⁴⁴ Kristeva, *This Incredible Need to Believe*, p. vii.

⁴⁵ Kristeva, *This Incredible Need to Believe*, p. xv.

Belief, then, for her, is an experience, not solely indebted to concepts, reasoning, historical facts or contexts, but rather an experience of truth that undergirds and sustains the relations around us. ‘It is a matter of a *truth* “we stumble upon,” to which I cannot not adhere, that totally, fatally subjugates me, that I hold for vital, absolute, indisputable: *credo quia absurdum*. A truth that keeps me, makes me exist’.⁴⁶ It is a Joycean ‘coherent absurdity’ that yet also takes us out of ourselves *ek-statically*.⁴⁷ It ‘dispossesses’ a person of themselves, much as God once dispossessed God’s own self of God through the death of Jesus, an act that is also reminiscent of Meister Eckhart’s prayer that God free us of God.⁴⁸

Kristeva’s wager is that in taking a deeper look at such a ‘pre-religious’ longing to believe, we might confront both fundamentalist and secular worldviews at the same time.⁴⁹ That is, it has the possibility to introduce a new way of thinking-politically that is precisely founded upon a western, Christian way of being in the world that is, in today’s context, open to critiquing both religious and secular points of view—as Žižek has already intimated in his work.⁵⁰ For her, Christianity introduces a ‘sharable’ form of suffering that provides access to our vulnerability as humans, the very thing that might bring about a new form of politics that shares with others who suffer and so is uniquely capable of speaking to a world increasingly torn apart by violence.⁵¹ Such a theo-political point of view is only made possible by the ‘negative’ rupture or disjunction at the heart of the Christian, universalized subject, one brought about through a kenotic form of suffering that serves to remove passion from the self, hence a ‘de-eroticized’ suffering.⁵²

I would only add that Kristeva’s analysis shares to a certain degree with Charles Taylor’s study of secularism an understanding that both religious and secular viewpoints are ‘infected’ with each other, inextricably intertwined in such a way that a modern individual cannot sever one from the other without considerable loss to the integrity of the subject. To isolate one at the expense of the other is to reduce the complexity of faith—and of the human being—to a homogenous sense of conformity or unjustifiable authority.⁵³ What Taylor, for his part, points toward is rather a recognition of the ‘ontological indeterminacy of language’, a ‘poetic fragility’ that incorporates and plays upon what comes before a given expression or

⁴⁶Kristeva, *This Incredible Need to Believe*, p. 3.

⁴⁷Kristeva, *This Incredible Need to Believe*, p. 7.

⁴⁸Kristeva, *This Incredible Need to Believe*, pp. 8, 54.

⁴⁹Kristeva, *This Incredible Need to Believe*, p. 12.

⁵⁰Kristeva, *Hatred and Forgiveness*, pp. 211-212.

⁵¹Kristeva, *This Incredible Need to Believe*, p. 92.

⁵²Kristeva, *This Incredible Need to Believe*, p. 95.

⁵³Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2007), p. 772.

identity.⁵⁴ The search is for the ‘pagan’ within the ‘Christian’, which is an undoing of a fixed Christian identity inasmuch as it is also an entering into the complexity or ‘messiness’ of a genuine theological hermeneutics.⁵⁵

The allowance of such complexity within a given identity is what enables Taylor to place emphasis upon the tensions or ‘cross pressures’ that typify late modern life, offering both ‘promise’ and ‘threat’ to a particular way of seeing the world.⁵⁶ Being caught between religious tradition and secularism, as between the objectivity-seeking ‘buffered’ and contextually-mired ‘porous’ selves, is a state we should seek neither to escape nor to foreclose. What becomes clear in the end when we contemplate the relationship of the sacred and the secular is that one side, which introduces the ‘unthought’ to a particular, established way of thinking, ceaselessly ‘fragilizes’ the other side, and such a state of being is not wholly unwelcomed either.⁵⁷ This particular hermeneutic is not the only reading of the situation, as we will see in a moment, though it is one that appears to pull the religious into the secular, and vice versa, so that we might get a better sense of what exactly is at stake in contemporary (post)modern struggles to identify the traditional stakes in the game.

*

The horizon toward which Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age* points, in constructive terms, is the ‘networks of agape’ that move within those forms of life put forth by Christianity as an alternative to the world’s order. Charity, he counsels, must be free to pursue ‘a skein of relations which link particular, unique, enfleshed people to each other, rather than a grouping of people together on the grounds of their sharing some important property [...]’.⁵⁸ Love, once institutionalized, becomes corrupted, and what the institutionalization of Christianity resulted in, over the long course of the last several centuries, was what we have come to know as the modern world in which we live.⁵⁹

Though this is in many ways the central belief that Taylor wants to work toward in his study, it is also the thesis developed by Ivan Illich that Taylor discovered while working on *A Secular Age*.⁶⁰ He adopts Illich’s reading of modernity because it illuminates his own,

⁵⁴ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 757-758.

⁵⁵ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 754.

⁵⁶ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 548.

⁵⁷ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 531, 556.

⁵⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 739.

⁵⁹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 740.

⁶⁰ Charles Taylor, ‘Preface’, in Ivan Illich and David Cayley, *The Rivers North of the Future: The Testament of Ivan Illich as Told to David Cayley* (Toronto: Anansi, 2005).

especially the emphasis he places upon the development of those somewhat ill-conceived moral codes that developed and dominated western life in the 16th and 17th centuries. Illich's willingness to look beyond the 'necessity' of such codes and toward the phenomenon of love as taking precedence over them is what enamors Taylor and points toward something beyond one's adherence to moral systems governing human behavior, though it is clear that Taylor wants to somewhat downplay Illich's radical views in the hopes of retaining the significance of the religious for the age in which we live.

Despite his adopting such a stance, however, Taylor is certainly not ignorant to the radicality of Illich's proposal, as the apparent dismantling of human moral coding in modernity is no simple task. To favor a 'network of agape' over the apparent rigor and consistency of a moral code appears to take apart what is fundamental to all forms of social and political organization—the alleged antinomian furor I have already singled out to observe and potentially reconfigure as a part of the structure itself.

What is Illich telling us? That we should dismantle our code-driven, disciplined, objectified world? Illich was a thoroughgoing radical, and I don't want to blunt his message. I can't claim to speak for him, but this is what I draw from his work. We can't live without codes, legal ones which are essential to the rule of law, moral ones which we have to inculcate in each new generation. But even if we can't fully escape the nomocratic-judicialized-objectified world, it is terribly important to see that that is not all there is, that it is in many ways dehumanizing, alienating; that it often generates dilemmas that it cannot see, and in driving forward, acts with great ruthlessness and cruelty.⁶¹

What Taylor fashions alongside Illich's insights is a hermeneutics that attempts to strike a balance between the necessity of moral coding—the aptly titled 'nomocratic-judicialized-objectified world'—and its undoing at the hands of those 'networks of agape' that appear to operate outside the bounds of any established morality. The possibility to counter legalistic acts of dehumanization or alienation lies within such a dialectical tension. In this sense, Taylor issues a word of caution concerning our propensity to construct moral systems:

Codes, even the best codes, can become idolatrous traps, which tempt us to complicity in violence. Illich can remind us not to become totally invested in the code, even the best code of a peace-loving, egalitarian, liberalism. We should find the centre of our spiritual lives beyond the code, deeper than the code, in networks of living concern, which are not to be sacrificed to the code, which must even from time to time subvert it. This message comes out of a certain theology, but it could be heard with profit by everybody.⁶²

⁶¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 743.

⁶² Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 743.

This is the resolution of the seemingly ever-present tension between structure and anti-structure that creeps up over and over again in Taylor's analysis of modern secularity.⁶³ It is a resolution that is really a non-resolution in that there will never be a code or an anti-code that we might permanently advance, though the temptation to divide the world up into the orthodox and the antinomian will most likely persist. We are always caught in-between the two poles, searching for a form of life beyond the representational tension (the definition of hypernomianism), though just as often failing to achieve anything permanently resembling this state of being.

Illich, for his part, had described such a state of being as one that was fundamentally, in an anti-modern sense, without purpose and therefore capable of accessing something like grace (a highly significant point that I would only underscore). In Illich's estimation, modernity and its technological, instrumental rationality, issued in a replacement of the good with the valuable, a switch that immediately elevated the efficient over the purposeless:

The valuable always implies some relationship to effectiveness, to efficiency, therefore to device, to tool, to purpose. It has become very difficult at the end of the modern time to imagine actions which are good and beautiful without in any way being purposeful. What I meant when I spoke to you about the absence of a sense of grace referred to this absence of a sense of gratuity'.⁶⁴

To critique or reject the modern domination of the efficient and the technological is to attempt to access a state of being outside of the 'system', as Illich would call it, to reside fundamentally in what is good and beautiful 'without in any way being purposeful'. This is precisely, I would argue, the very basis for determining our access to grace, as he suggests, by learning to view the crises at the heart of the 'system' or of reason, not as an obstacle to be overcome or a wound to be sutured, but rather as the means by which we might experience the gratuity and grace of life itself.

This admittance of the desire for something 'deeper than the code' is what makes the work of Agamben so philosophically resonate with the analysis of both Taylor and Illich. Not only does Agamben hold forth on propositions that seem to signal an almost antinomian fervor against the establishment of moral codes in the quest for a form of life lived beyond them, but he also at times seems to point toward a hermeneutical position somewhat similar to

⁶³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 712.

⁶⁴ Ivan Illich and David Cayley, *The Rivers North of the Future*, p. 227.

Taylor's in that he seeks to maintain a productive tension between established structures and their (messianic) undoing. His proximity to Illich's general line of argumentation is what makes Agamben's more recent engagements with Illich himself that much more illuminating.

In his conclusive study to the *Homo Sacer* project, *The Use of Bodies*, Agamben picks up specifically on Illich's critique of the modern reduction of life to a fetishistic 'scientific fact' rather than an actual way of living life, a form of life that Agamben too seeks to develop more fully as an authentic way of living the human life.⁶⁵ His critical eye, in this regard, is trained toward undermining those formulations of life as being inherently sacred, but, in actuality, highly ideological—a conceptualization that has become highly politicized, but also problematic, in religious, doctrinal terms within today's global society. In his words, 'Church and lay institutions are converging today in regarding this spectral notion [of life], which can be applied in the same way to everything and nothing, as the sacred and principal object of their care, as something that can be manipulated and managed and, at the same time, defended and protected'.⁶⁶ What is considered as 'sacred', Agamben cautions us, can easily slip into an ideological defense of whatever position one wishes to safeguard against its 'unholy' attackers.

Agamben's critique here, of course, shares in his refusal of the sacred/secular dichotomy which only perpetuates the problem that we are trying to overcome. In his analysis elsewhere, Agamben states how 'Secularization is a form of repression. It leaves intact the forces it deals with by simply moving them from one place to another. Thus the political secularization of theological concepts (the transcendence of God as a paradigm of sovereign power) does nothing but displace the heavenly monarchy onto an earthly monarchy, leaving its power intact'.⁶⁷ What he is after, instead, is a force of profanation that departs from this dichotomy altogether in order to restore the proper use to a thing that had been wrongly separated from common use. Profanation is therefore a political act, but one that restores a common usage. Agamben's methodological aims are thereby disclosed: 'Just as the *religio* that is played with but no longer observed opens the gate to use, so the powers of economics, law, and politics, deactivated in play, can become the gateways to a new happiness'.⁶⁸

⁶⁵Giorgio Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), pp. xx, 201.

⁶⁶ Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, pp. 201.

⁶⁷Giorgio Agamben, 'In Praise of Profanation', *Profanations*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Zone, 2007), p. 77.

⁶⁸Agamben, 'In Praise of Profanation', p. 76.

It is perhaps no surprise that Illich's demonstration of the rise of an instrumental rationality that sought to explain the unlimited role of technology at the dawn of modernity also becomes a point of interest to Agamben, who sees such a form of rationality deployed by the Church through its development of a 'trinitarian economy and the doctrine of the sacraments'.⁶⁹ Agamben's critique of these theological foundations, one that runs the entire length of his *Homo Sacer* project, is one likewise intended demonstrably to reveal and thereby to undermine the political-theological apparatus that has sustained western subjectivity. In attempting this deconstruction, he again runs close to declaring a form of antinomian thought that, paradoxically, mirrors the critique of a particular strand of Jewish thought offered at one point in history specifically by Pauline Christianity.

This connection linking Illich's project of radical reform to Agamben's 'pure antinomianism' that seeks a 'form of life' beyond the representations that typically establish what human life is to society has already been noted moreover by John Milbank, who takes up both thinkers within his *Beyond Secular Order*, where he isolates Illich's work specifically, while also referring to Agamben's critique of western political order. Milbank's interest in Illich relies upon the latter's claims concerning the corruption of a Christian 'divine government through love', turning charity into something that one can order through a bureaucratic efficiency.⁷⁰ As Milbank will unfold its basic coordinates,

If, indeed, Ivan Illich exaggerated in almost seeing schools, hospitals and mad-houses as bad *per se*, surely he did not exaggerate in seeing the absolutely unprecedented intrusion of the state and the capitalist market into absolutely every aspect of modern human life as a kind of demonic perversion of the "extra" of supernatural charity. According to his thesis, it is not so much that the sense of the supernatural has ever gone away as, rather, that it has been grossly perverted, starting with processes at the heart of Christendom itself, as just detailed. The Christian charitable sense of unlimited inter-involvement and creative capacity to give to the other and so transform it has been mis-deployed as an excuse for the state to pry into and regulate absolutely every aspect of human life – apparently in the interests of our now of course merely animal well-being [...] but really in the concealed interests of the state as an efficiently run machine, and of the extraction from it of the capital of control by those who – for the moment – run it.⁷¹

Citing Agamben, but really following a thread of Foucault's work within Agamben's writing in many ways, Milbank further comments on how this perversion of Christianity has led to a 'disciplinary mode of the pastoral' which then evolved into a 'warped anarchic rule of the

⁶⁹ Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, pp. 72-73.

⁷⁰ John Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order: The Representation of Being and the Representation of the People* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 16, 257.

⁷¹ Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, p. 259.

entirely “flexible market”⁷². I find, in general, that Milbank is right to take up this linkage between Illich and Agamben in order to demonstrate a wholesale critique of the disciplinary society much like Taylor had already done.⁷³ This is, moreover, the site from which we might begin to rethink the role of reform (and hence a sort of ‘pure antinomianism’ or hypernomianism) at the heart of Christian claims, though I am also not convinced that Milbank himself has grasped the full significance of Agamben’s critique as such.⁷⁴

Illich, for his part, cites the influence of Gerhart Ladner’s *The Idea of Reform* upon his own understanding of institutional critique, a strand of thought that it might prove helpful for us to discuss a bit more in-depth in order to illuminate the general dynamics I am seeking to elucidate. For Ladner, there was an irresolvable tension between the subjective impetus for reform (the *idea* of reform, its epistemological or psychological foundation) and the objective, material conditions in which any reform is carried out (its ontological status). It was his opinion, moreover, that only the historian could attempt to suture this fractured state of things (as in Agamben’s work, it is only the philosopher who is capable of such suturing).⁷⁵ Subjectivity, as such, extends itself through every objective condition and illustrates its steady influence upon the material conditions of reality. Only a form of ‘historical complementarity’, as he would put it, can serve as what brings the subjective and the objective together.⁷⁶ What Ladner seems to highlight overall is that which we might see parade under a variety of names and tensions, many of which remain theoretically unresolved—a situation that brings to mind in particular Agamben’s admitted call for a ‘hermeneutical’ tension between law and the Church at the same time as he signals for an end to western apparatuses of subjectivity (and so appears as perhaps advocating antinomianism to many).⁷⁷

We also see this in such formulations as Erich Fromm’s diagnosis of the dialectical tension between disobedience and obedience that characterizes humanity and its history, or

⁷² Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, p. 259. The real influence behind all four thinkers would seem to be Michel Foucault, whose genealogical methods seem to dominate their chosen methodologies. Though Agamben is the only one to openly recognize Foucault’s influence upon his work, the genealogical project lingers through them all.

⁷³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 90-145.

⁷⁴ Though I will perhaps be enlightened by subsequent commentary on Agamben’s work as offered by Milbank, his reading of Agamben’s genealogical projects as concluding in the general direction of his own theological project needs much clarification in light of Agamben’s own development of an ‘ontology of poverty’.

⁷⁵ Gerhart B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. 436, 441.

⁷⁶ Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, p. 437.

⁷⁷ See the conclusions reached in Giorgio Agamben, *The Church and the Kingdom*, trans. Leland de la Durantaye (New York: Seagull, 2012).

Michel de Certeau's contrast between the elite and the masses, which essentially recalls a Marxist reading of that class struggle which underlies all of history itself.⁷⁸ What Fromm, for his part, highlights is essentially a prophetic, messianic propensity toward disobedience that frees humanity of an idealized state of nature, thereby creating its history, but also paradoxically points toward the 'end of history' wherein such a harmony will be restored.⁷⁹ What Fromm grasped in this too was that disobedience, or any deviation from moral norms really, is constituted by our freedom. Or, to put it in Ladner's phrasing, '[...] the idea of reform may now be defined as the idea of free, intentional and ever perfectible, multiple, prolonged and ever repeated efforts by man to reassert and augment values pre-existent in the spiritual-material compound of the world'.⁸⁰ Reform is, however, as Ladner goes on to caution, 'a provisional conceptual tool only', one that 'may not always fit the historical material exactly'.⁸¹

If, as for Fromm, our desires for disobedience, but also reform, stem from an idea alone, and not necessarily or solely from our historical conditions, Ladner would agree, though he would also isolate such a dynamic as arising from within the Christian tradition and its ability to abstract itself into philosophical conceptual form apart from the historical and material conditions of 'being Jewish'. This was to be the Pauline reading of the Christ event—to put things in Alain Badiou's register for a moment—that would undo Jewish identity without changing the historical person who either was or was not born Jewish. In fact, such a materialistic identity no longer mattered so long as the 'idea' of reform dominated. In Ladner's summation,

[...] granted the possibility of defining the idea of reform and of studying and describing it as a historical fact, as a phenomenon essentially Christian in origin and early development, it does not follow implicitly that the idea corresponds to a reality. That it often does not is no serious problem, but whether it ever does is a question whereby the terms contained in the definition are transposed from the history of ideology to that of preideological existence. Is there possibility at least of spirit besides matter, of value besides indifference, of liberty besides determination, of final besides efficient causality, of relative perfectibility besides the absolute, of multiplicity besides unity; in short, is there possibility of reform besides changelessness and besides other types of renewal and change? No cogent answer can be expected from the historical sources alone.⁸²

⁷⁸ Michel de Certeau, *Culture in the Plural*, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 85-87.

⁷⁹ Erich Fromm, 'Disobedience as a Psychological and Moral Problem', *Disobedience and Other Essays* (New York: Seabury, 1981), p. 17.

⁸⁰ Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, p. 35.

⁸¹ Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, p. 35.

⁸² Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, p. 35.

If Ladner is correct in positing historical analysis as the suture, or what provides the complementarity, between the psychological and the material, then we are able to see how the eschatological, viewed as the end of history itself, might actually point us back toward the existence of that which history wrestles with, rather than merely as that which goes *beyond* history. That is, perhaps the end of history is really the domain of the abstract idea *or* the pure material conditions of existence, both of which exist ‘beyond’ history and yet *rely upon* history to make them intelligible in any sense. Again, following Adorno, we might suggest that any going beyond history (its transcendence) is possible only through the fractured immanence before us, a point that Agamben has echoed on numerous occasions as well. If Judaism could be said to give birth to this relationship between the idea of reform and our lived material conditions (portrayed as the call for justice in terms of one’s living material conditions) as what lay at the root of a salvation history, it was Christianity’s genius—if I might attempt to put things this way—to simply *repeat* this dynamic relationship itself, devoid of specific material conditions. In the Christian conceptualization of this impetus for reform, even Judaism’s particularity is shed so that the idea itself might be further isolated and enacted within history, *as* history, embodied anywhere and potentially by anyone.

Seen from this point of view, we might then be better able to contemplate the ‘weak theology’ of someone like John Caputo and his unending attempts to reform the Catholic faith by seeming to want to do away with the Church’s institutional structure while simultaneously repeating something like the Protestant Reformation. In his estimation, attuning one’s ear to the ‘poetry of Scripture’ means to listen to the event happening in the biblical narrative, under it, moving through it and, in a certain sense too, *beyond* it.⁸³ In the context of discussing the creation narratives as a ‘poetic turn’ which brings life to a barrenness and not a *creatio ex nihilo*, Caputo begins to define just such a religious poetics as ‘works of religious imagination that give expression to a faith and a hope, a love and a desire, to a religious hermeneutic that the name of God inscribed in things from the start, that the world is marked by the hand of God, that the world bears the stamp of a great and sweeping Yes’.⁸⁴ Creation thus comes to express what he terms a ‘sacred anarchy’, or a force which could be called a ‘poetics of the impossible’ that undoes whatever religious representations we have worked into shared forms, just as time itself can now be perceived as an endless cycle of creation, destruction and re-

⁸³John Caputo, *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 74.

⁸⁴Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, p. 93.

creation.⁸⁵ The ‘Kingdom of God’, for Caputo, and here following Derrida rather closely, is the always coming horizon of justice that is never actually historically present to us, that which is regularly interrupted or suspended precisely in order that it might never cease to be caught up in those perpetual asymptotic processes of justice.⁸⁶

Caputo’s hope, of course, is that a particular experience of grace might become possible beyond the strict confines of any perceptible sense of normativity, that grace indeed, to paraphrase Saint Paul, might that much more abound. Whether or not such an experience must come about through this dissolution of traditional forms of identity or law is another question, one that is not removed in the least from the center of (post)modern thought. Rather, I would argue, that this question lingers in a variety of forms in contemporary thought, none perhaps more emphatically than in the unending tension between grace and law.

Whether we call any such attempt to resolve the tension between law and grace the end of the sacred, the genuinely sacred, the force of secularization itself or a profanation beyond any such dichotomous logics, we are faced with the same problematic configuration again and again: how does structure (or law) relate to its reform (or moment of intrusive grace)? What I have been gesturing to throughout this brief study is in fact an ingenious solution that has been bandied about since Saint Paul wrote his letters to the churches, or even earlier as it was made manifest within Judaism itself. The only solution worth considering, hence the variety of philosophers and theologians intent on isolating its capacity to dismantle any system without fully doing away with it, is one involving the negation of negation, or the failure of representation, as the only possibility of transcendence, that which theologically we consider to be a moment of grace through the transcending of law, but an action that does not eliminate law altogether—hence its hypernomian rather than antinomian tone.

⁸⁵ Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, pp. 102, 149.

⁸⁶ Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, p. 151.