

**The Idea of Freedom and the Political Theologies of
Wolfhart Pannenberg and Gustavo Gutiérrez**

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Shorter Abstract

The question guiding the argument of my thesis is whether it is possible to articulate a political theology in terms of the idea of freedom. This possibility is explored through an analysis and evaluation of the political dimension of the theologies of Wolfhart Pannenberg and Gustavo Gutiérrez. For both these theologians, the idea of freedom emerges from reflection on the process of historical experience, which itself delimits the horizon of political activity. The relevance of theology for politics consists in its competence in interpreting the individual desire for liberty within the context of our created finitude, whose deepest meaning is revealed only in God's work of salvation. In discerning the concrete possibilities of freedom, theology has therefore to consider the role of the church as the community for learning freedom, a role already identified as part of its mission in Paul's epistle to the Galatians. In a further step, it has to consider more directly the nature of political authority and its conditioning of the actualization of human freedom through concrete practices in the life of societies and states. In this respect it is the task of theology to establish the creaturely and eschatological contexts of political life in such a way as to ground a morality of political justice. This triple structure, because it finds material justification with both theologians, creates the possibility of a fair and balanced comparison between two visions which share theoretical concerns to a surprising extent, enriching the scope of the dialogue, yet differ radically in practical orientation and commitments. This marked divergence will allow some reflection on the role of intra-theological debate in the self-definition of theological tradition against the political with regard to the competence of interpreting human freedom.

Longer Abstract

This thesis is an analysis and evaluation of the potential of the concept of freedom for a theological account of the political through a comparative study of Wolfhart Pannenberg and Gustavo Gutiérrez.

In the Introduction I suggest that the question of one's own freedom is raised in the context of the experience of change, of the fluctuating boundaries between self and environment; it is inseparable from the desire to control this change, the flow of experience from new to old, by establishing a new temporal flow, from the interior of the organism to its exterior, a forward-moving, productive stream of consciousness and power. To label this desire simply 'self-assertion' would be to downplay its creative ambition. It is not a mere need, satisfied by the acquirement of particular objects, nor is it pure production, immediately enjoying its issue. Language comes into play as a way of organizing this self-generated flux, while at the same time it brings it in contact with strong external currents; the ambiguity of its mediating function may prompt distrust or self-doubt. However, it is only as a consequence of this linguistic mediation that the question of freedom is actually raised. The desire of freedom does not have a life of its own; it does not go on unattended, but depends on one's self-interpretation through various communities. Hence I suggest that the experience of freedom relates to the transformation and return of desire through its interpretation, which ultimately amounts to an experience of self-transformation.

Our intellectual concept of freedom can certainly play a considerable part in this work of interpretation and so bear some responsibility for the self-transformation resulting from it. In recognition of this contribution, we might simply talk from the beginning of a desire for freedom, in the sense that the original desire is continually combined in its transformations with the wish to be right about the notion of freedom through whose lens the interpretation of one's condition takes place. From the multiplicity of concepts of freedom comes the plausibility of its hermeneutical study, of the idea that partial description or even a definition of freedom would also have to follow the movement of its notion: the emergence of the desire, its (partial) satisfactions, communication, reinforcement, and even abatement and stifling. Pannenberg and Gutiérrez are among those who look at freedom from such a hermeneutical perspective, partly no doubt in critical recognition of the Hegelian inheritance of their concepts of history, partly because—as I try to show in the Introduction—the notion of freedom was linked to self-transformation even earlier in the theological tradition; yet they arrive at quite different practical conclusions about the concept of political freedom. Is this an inevitable weakness of theology in the modernistic garb of hermeneutics? Should it not stay within the narratives and ontological categories of its own tradition? The question cannot be decided except by attending to Pannenberg's and Gutiérrez's concrete paths.

The problem of the role of history in the determination of the concept of freedom emerges with the realization that our perceptions about freedom are shaped by contingent circumstances and may therefore make sense only in a limited range of situations. A theological idea of freedom therefore has to enable one to meet the reality of a changing history with critical reflection. Pannenberg's theology of history responds to this challenge by allowing two ways of speaking about freedom, studied in Chapter 1: as a general anthropological concept and as a specific relation to concrete events with their own theological interpretation. The anthropological notion of freedom is at its most exemplary in Jesus' relation to his destiny, which also determines the soteriological transformation of freedom. The primary aspect of Pannenberg's concept of freedom is negative, not quite in the sense of Isaiah Berlin's negative liberty, but in the broader sense of indetermination, that the human vocation goes beyond the demands and constrictions of any given circumstances, that the content of one's participation in the new life in Christ cannot be determined by necessity. The transformation of the human capacity for freedom into freedom in salvation is possible because Jesus Christ, who is the model of the anthropological concept of freedom, is also the Lord of history. Hence the second way of speaking of freedom appears as a necessary supplement, allowing the content of historical freedom to be described from the perspective of divine, Trinitarian activity.

Pannenberg considers the church to be the one community which, according to its historical origin and mission, is able to anticipate explicitly in its structure and activity the eschatological freedom of self-possession in complete devotion. Chapter 2 begins with a brief review of the tendencies which have historically resulted in the definition of ecclesial freedom as a degree of individual latitude in relation to common standards, the definition which provides Pannenberg's negative starting point. He challenges it by deriving a general imperative of toleration from the partial character of the revelation of truth in history—

which means that fixed norms are valid on account of their anticipatory character, and in particular the Law is theologically only of historical interest, having been replaced by the rule of the Spirit in the Gospel. An interesting consequence of his approach is that the historical fruits of the activity of the Spirit in the church need not be approached only through the mediation of the Church as institution, but may legitimately be used as cultural resources in a post-Christian society, at least as expressions of the general human quest for a higher understanding of history. As Pannenberg rejects the apologetic attempt to ground the necessity of religion in the permanence of the ethical question, a connection which would tend to subsume the acts of Christian freedom under a general deontology, he uses his Christocentric reading of history to describe both worship and ethics according to the structure of symbolic action, as action which anticipates through its form and content its fulfilment in meaning by God's eschatological intervention. Although Pannenberg's concerns are not purely meta-ethical, the way in which his account of the meaning and value of ethical behaviour lends itself to generalization leads into the question whether the structure of the church is not in fact the only possible structure of true human community, the principle of free universal union. In order to reject this possibility and affirm in particular the state as a genuine form of community, Pannenberg has to reemphasize that the divine will does not take a single infinite form, but also varied temporal forms, which condition and shape the free human response. In other words, the existence of the church does not mean that the element of desire in freedom is to be superseded by gratuitous symbolization and representation, but that desire is ruled by a principle of communication which allows for the reformation of current practices according to theological considerations.

Chapter 3 looks at the role played by the state, as the sovereign form of political organization, in Pannenberg's theory of freedom. The desire for individual freedom emerges as a practical political problem in terms of the confrontation between individual and state in the Kantian language of means and ends. Pannenberg's critique of the limitations of this language—and of self-founding political philosophy in general—leads into a discussion of the possibility of a religious affirmation of the necessity and goodness of the emergence of political discourse. Because this affirmation is conditioned by the preliminary nature of the state in relation to the perfect society of the eschaton, the state which truly allows freedom to develop its religious dimension is that in which authority is conscious of its temporal nature and adopts correspondent forms of organization. Moreover, the state can only establish itself function as an institution of trust in the context of a converging history of humanity; Pannenberg's conception about the role of religion in the stability of society underlies a vision in which the unity of human destiny has to inform pragmatic political decisions. In this vision, the state can sustain the desire for freedom, without establishing itself as a transcendent source of meaning, by struggling to forge a trustworthy communal story through the practice of justice.

In the second part of the thesis I follow Gutiérrez's route through the same three topoi of individual freedom, churchly freedom, and political freedom. Chapter 4 tracks the liberation argument for the basis of a non-violent reformation of community in the structure of individual freedom. Personal freedom is supremely revealed in the confrontation of the religious impulse with suffering; the adoption of divine desire, of desire as preferential grace over against desire as satisfaction or imitation, demonstrates the possibility of freedom in gratuitous commitment. This form of desire can be learnt only by recognizing the shared nature of suffering. The same recognition is at the heart of the historical revelation and communication of the miracle of divine grace in the process of evangelization. However, liberation theology faces the task of encompassing the tension between the responsibility of conscience and the freedom of social self-organization in the formulation of a response to the Gospel, in other words, of imagining how this form of desire may put its stamp on social reality. Gutiérrez in particular seems to think that both the necessity and shape of economic justice may be derived from the demands of a free conscience. This idea has been explained as a dilution of liberation theology accelerated by the apparent global triumph of capitalism at the beginning of the last decade of the twentieth century. However, an alternative interpretation is that part of liberation theology's initial programme of humanizing social structures must be an analysis of the phenomenon of economic oppression in the language of suffering; part of the attraction of Marx is the analysis of oppression as the enforced individualization of exchangeable time. This fragment of the Marxist critique of capitalist production may be extended to an analysis of the idea of desire underlying economic relations understood in terms of sharing and exchange. The obscuring of this exchange through ideology amounts to idolatry (i.e. fatalism) inasmuch as it attempts to suppress the freedom of response to the gospel by denying the possibility of unity in suffering and desire and thus denying the nature of divine love. Against this ideological illusion, Gutiérrez points to the Christological density of time which mediates the

coincidence of the divine and human wills in the option for the poor. I suggest that Gutiérrez's basing of community in individual freedom may be synthetically represented as a new understanding of the notion of freedom of association.

Chapter 5 analyses the influence of Gustavo Gutiérrez's model of the church on his concept of freedom. Gutiérrez's ecclesiological model is far from the critical stereotype of a revolutionary church of vanguards who dictate the schedule of change to the masses who are supposed to follow it. Rather, the church is the assembly of bodies which have been freed from fleshly necessity and can feel and even act together in a unified strand of time. The feeling which determines action in the church is joy, and the common feeling of the church is determined by the option for the poor. However, this does not mean ecclesial feeling is patterned according to a naturalistic interpretation of the joy of the poor; rather, it is oriented towards the ethical formation of the community in the Christological density of the present. This project of transformation offers an alternative contribution to the models of feeling associated with autonomous accounts of civic and political virtue.

Chapter 6 considers Gutiérrez's vision of the processes through which the desire of freedom can be expressed in political life in such a way as to help the construction of a just and stable society. The overall development may be described as the historical formation of the political subject, 'the people', constituted but in true solidarity with the poor. Of crucial importance in this evolution is the remembrance of the past generations of the marginalized as a way of grounding present action in the 'memory of God' and in the expectation of his absorption and retention of their experience. The action inspired by this memory also has to be guided by a sense of dialogic responsibility, as it aims at the reformation of the whole society; it is at this point that political education plays its part, not in the sense of programmatic indoctrination, but as a transformation of the current generational grammar of political change. In practice, this means that political community will become a free community of the people when the loss of generations of the poor will no longer be accepted as a necessity or a private tragedy, when mourning will find its natural limits through the elimination of unjust death. Just as moderate grief is a Christian affirmation of the goodness of mortal life, so also the right habit of political grief means the recognition of the autonomy and ethical responsibility of public life; revolution would be the cultural change in which disordered grief and its causes disappear.

In the Conclusion, I suggest that while on different theoretical points the perspectives of Pannenberg and Gutiérrez may be synthesized and on others one particular viewpoint is to be preferred, a faithful use of their theologies can only begin by relating them to the current questions of our experience of freedom in the Church. As for their secular political relevance, we can return to them in the work of relating philosophical interpretations of human finitude, our existence in limited time and space, with a theological account of our life in the same world which its Creator come to save.

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List of Abbreviations

Wolfhart Pannenberg

- BQT* 1–2 *Basic Questions in Theology: Collected Essays*, tr. George H. Kehm (London: SCM, 1970–71), vols. 1–2
Grundfragen Systematischer Theologie: Gesammelte Aufsätze (1967; 2nd edn., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), vol. 1
- BQT* 3 *Basic Questions in Theology*, tr. R. A. Wilson (London: SCM, 1973), vol. 3
Gottesgedanke und Menschliche Freiheit (Gütersloh: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972)
- BST* 1–3 *Beiträge zur Systematischen Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999–2000), vols. 1–3
- CSSC* *Christian Spirituality and Sacramental Community* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1983)
- CSW* *Christianity in a Secularized World*, tr. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1988)
Christentum in einer säkularisierten Welt (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1988)
- FR* *Faith and Reality*, tr. John Maxwell (London: Search Press, 1977)
Glaube und Wirklichkeit: Kleine Beiträge zum christlichen Denken (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1975)
- GE* *Grundlagen der Ethik: Philosophisch-theologische Perspektiven* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996)
- GST* 2 *Grundfragen Systematischer Theologie: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), vol. 2
- HNEH* *Human Nature, Election, and History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977)
- JGM* *Jesus—God and Man*, tr. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (London: SCM, 1968)
Grundzüge der Christologie (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1964)
- MIG* *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*, tr. Philip Clayton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990)
Metaphysik und Gottesgedanke (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988)

- ST 1–3 *Systematic Theology*, tr. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991, 1994, 1998), vols. 1–3
Systematische Theologie (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988, 1991, 1993), vols. 1–3
- TKG *Theology and the Kingdom of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969)
- TP *Theologie und Philosophie: Ihr Verhältnis im Lichte ihrer gemeinsamen Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996)
- TPS *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, tr. Francis McDonagh (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1976)
Wissenschaftstheorie und Theologie (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973)
- WIM *What Is Man? Contemporary Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, tr. by Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970)
Was ist der Mensch? Die Anthropologie der Gegenwart im Lichte der Theologie (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962)

Gustavo Gutiérrez

- PPH *The Power of the Poor in History: Selected Writings*, tr. Robert R. Barr (London: SCM, 1983)
La fuerza histórica de los pobres: Selección de trabajos (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1979)
- TL *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, tr. Caridad India and John Eagleson (London: SCM, 1974)
Teología de la liberación: Perspectivas (1971; Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1975)

When a reference gives two page numbers separated by a solidus, the first refers to the translation and the second to the original. When no published translation is indicated in the bibliography, quoted translations are my own; in cases where I have found it necessary to modify a published translation, I have indicated this explicitly.

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SDG

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Introduction

A Case for Freedom as an Essential Concept for Political Theology Today

The timeliness of a return to a hermeneutic approach

The notion of freedom has not been much favoured lately as a starting point for theological reflection on politics; this is understandable since, while it continues to have considerable practical influence on the complicated relation of political and religious discourses, its controversial ambiguity precludes the notion of 'freedom' from serving as a fixed common point of reference. Yet it is usually not controversy which pushes a concept away from the centre of a discussion, but rather a tiresome weight of unhelpful connotations. An easy combination of carefree usage and shrewd salesmanship may have fixed by now the association of 'freedom' with a bountiful choice of merchandise, comfortably reversible commitments, and generally a social surface of relaxed, accommodating flexibility. Perhaps this impression is the root of the contemporary unease in theology over an engagement with any politicized idea of freedom. The development of a thoroughly secular mystique of freedom, whose most common form is a fetishism of choice facilitated by the abundant production of identity-enhancing commodities, seems to have provided not only a bolster and criterion of political legitimacy, but also a range of short-term pacifiers of religious desire.

Of course, theological critiques aimed at this peculiarly modern type of unreflectiveness cannot tell the whole story. For many believers, political freedom, as an ideal essential to the full public expression of their faith, is clearly distinguished from the logic of late capitalism. Nevertheless, in the realm of theology the preoccupation with that particular culturally pervasive way of understanding freedom seems to have considerably shifted attention away from the discourse of freedom emerging in political theory, as if political consciousness is always only an epiphenomenon of general cultural moods, a superstructure that can only be redeemed by starting from the cultural-economic base.¹ In

¹ In fact, it is equally certain that features of the theoretical discourse of political freedom have filtered down to popular consciousness, for instance Isaiah Berlin's famous distinction between negative and positive

fact, the theological and political discourses of freedom face the same challenges from social and technological developments. This is why I would suggest that the investigation of the concept of freedom as a key notion of political theology might allow for certain beneficial exchanges between the two discourses of theology and political philosophy which are hindered when the discussion is framed in terms of a fundamental option between different (orthodox, liberal, and radical) epistemological and ontological assumptions.

One example of the way in which theology is ill served by trying to reduce its own political discourse to cultural analysis is a certain late animosity in certain quarters towards the notion of 'rights', an animosity perhaps inspired by its widespread off-hand usage as a measuring unit for quantifying freedom. Their invocation in cases in which international opinion was considering the pragmatic suspension of a state's national sovereignty has brought vociferous contestation to the idea of human rights as a corpus capable of shaping impartial, judicious decisions. It might seem as if the right moment has arrived to re-establish the theatre of theological concepts within the public square, to present as a public challenge the religious implications of allegiances present in social practices which secularization had uniformly weighed as preferences. Indeed, the opportunity has been solidly grasped with both hands and a good deal of perceptive and original analysis has turned the theoretical apparatus of postmodernity into a weapon of criticism against its social and political realities. Unfortunately, frequent concomitants of such analyses have been syntheses that forsake the question of freedom for a wholesale return to traditional authority, purportedly the only inspiration capable of communicating genuine ontological convictions. Although modernity is supposed to have been left behind, there is still a kernel of existentialism hidden with this critique; true, the space of decision no longer hovers transcendently above the present moment, but is spread in a rhizome of repetitions, rituals, and acts of cooperation. Yet it is still lies there in wait for the inclination of a subjectivity resistant to its own infernal cooptation within decadent social mechanisms. Might it not be that the system of rights is repudiated precisely on account of the subconscious modern obsession with freedom as spontaneity, authenticity, integrity? It

freedom (reinforced and probably muddled by the contrast between classical and modern liberalism and with similar approximation abbreviated to the dichotomy of 'freedom from' and 'freedom for').

is because only a holistic context is supposed to be able to sustain free agency that the faded universe of Christendom has to be revived at least on a limited scale, within the church. Where, on the contrary, the modern idea of free subjectivity is openly on the table for discussion, that is, within the theological process of absorbing and reworking the existentialist and phenomenological traditions, the political implications of this philosophy are still in precipitation, somewhat fuzzily embedded in ethical paraenesis. There are certainly within those traditions plenty of resources for a new ‘mystique’ of politics, but their theological recasting seems still rather too far removed from the theoretical or practical political discourses.

To propose a conversation on freedom as a meeting-ground for theology and political thought may seem a rather naive suggestion, particularly once it has been admitted that there are already some quite sophisticated tools in a theologian’s conceptual apparatus for analysing, measuring, qualifying, or subverting political messages. From the other side, political theorists are well-versed in domestic controversies around several construals of the concept and have largely passed beyond arguing about a single best option in order to deploy them variously in contexts deemed respectively appropriate. However, these developments (especially the benevolent neglect evinced by the theological side) have unfortunately not done much to remove the anxiety and resentment around the use of the concept in arguments of politics and religion. It still appears to be such an ambiguous and pliable notion that anyone who hangs much onto it risks being considered either hypocritical or self-deceiving. The move from the cultural critique of ‘freedom’ to a political theology of freedom should hopefully set in focus enough points of substance to replace such presumptions with a healthier form of controversy.

Surely part of the difficulty of arriving at that stage of the debate is that there is something a bit curious about writing on someone else’s idea of freedom. Is not freedom a concept we can reach through introspection, without having to weigh up various conjectures? How would it deserve its name if we only understood it by relying on someone else’s teaching?²

² In its most thoroughgoing philosophical form, this perception was articulated by Fichte: as ‘we cannot even point to a class of free being’, the affirmation of human freedom is a practical infinite judgement (J.G. Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, ed. and tr. Peter Heath and John Lachs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

It is an objection worth mentioning at the beginning, since this thesis is intended to pursue with real interest and hope two theologians' thoughts about freedom and its meaning in political life. It does not necessarily presume that the theologians to be studied, Wolfhart Pannenberg and Gustavo Gutiérrez, had access to a realm of clarity which the rest of us can only inhabit temporarily, but it does make the assumption there is no simple essence of freedom which we can grasp without being introduced to the spheres of its concrete deliberations—and these we cannot navigate without the aid of others.³ In other words, the premise of this study is that freedom is better understood through an exploration of its languages, which we use in common, rather than by defining it from a picture of the free individual as an interior space communicating with the rest of the world through a single interface of action and passivity.⁴ I will present Pannenberg's and Gutiérrez's arguments on this score in due course and rehearse their essence in conclusion, but for the moment it is worth pointing out that it is the fact that these authors share this premise that allows theology (and this study in particular) an opening to the discourse of political theory. In this respect they are not so dissimilar to contemporary theological critics of the modern idea of subjectivity.

1982), 114). Society may feel it has left Romanticism a long way behind, but popular opinion seems to still share in this attitude. For instance, religious self-definition in so-called post-Christian societies frequently reflects the main argument that Carl Jung made for the necessity to go beyond Christianity. For Jung, freedom meant finding psychic balance and harmony with oneself, and he believed that the resources of achieving it are already within oneself. (C. G. Jung, 'The Spiritual Problem of Modern Man', in *Civilization in Transition*, Collected Works of C. G. Jung, 10 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), 74–94 at 92.) While his specific reasons for this belief are not especially well-known or widely shared, there are many simpler popular alternatives.

³ Rauschenbusch for instance considered the coming into existence of 'protected areas of freedom where the soul could learn the art of being free' to have been dependent on the 'atmosphere of religious freedom within the church' (Walter Rauschenbusch, 'The Baptist Contribution to Religious and Civil Liberty', in Charles W. Wendte (ed.), *Freedom and the Churches: The Contributions of American Churches to Religious and Civil Liberty*, Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1–10 at 4f.).

⁴ Again, perhaps this assumption is uncontroversial for some readers; however, its opposite is by no means without adherents. If one presumes to take the perspective of perennial wisdom, freedom becomes the temporal manifestation of individuality understood as a space of personal truthfulness. In Jung, for example, the metaphor of individuation is the marking out of a specific conscious territory out of the collective unconscious, the carving out a specific region of characteristics uniquely adjacent in a plane of combinations, the variation of a type. This metaphor is favoured by the fact in such a perspective the spiritual world does not puncture the physical at specific points, but appears everywhere present as the depth of its surfaces. ('The Development of Personality', in *The Development of Personality*, Collected Works, 17 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954), 165–186.)

Nevertheless, a return for political insight to these twentieth-century theologians of modernity does not appear at first sign an especially timely way of proceeding. While I admit that the road is not easy or the most efficient, I judge the engagement to be worthwhile. I hope it will not be taken as a sign of capriciousness if I try to support this judgement with a remark which might now appear all too subjective and can only be defended through the following study itself. Both Pannenberg and Gutiérrez avoid the temptation which pursues theologians who engage with politics on the basis of a cultural-philosophical analysis to forsake the need for genuine theological development; moreover, there is no attempt on their part to play off theological conservatism against political radicalism or viceversa. Their guard was that they took freedom for their theme both in their theological inquiry and political self-positioning—and this despite the fact that the connection between the two domains in which the concept is used is in no way straightforward, a fact of which they were certainly aware. It is the purpose of the following study to detail the way in which they discussed, defined, and balanced this connection.

In this effort, my thesis is a plea for a hermeneutical approach to the idea of freedom. This turn to hermeneutics was characteristic of the theological generation to which Pannenberg and Gutiérrez belong, though not always to the same degree or with the same self-awareness. The relation between religious life and politics was no longer mediated by ontological authority claims, but by a historical consideration of the horizons that political and religious communities offered for meaning and action, of which there were many competing descriptions. A positive description of a healthy hermeneutical process is a wager that belongs with the movement of the structure of this thesis. The hermeneutical approach seeks to understand freedom by catching the patterns of its desire, the moments of intensification, of self-denial, of satisfaction, in relation to a supposed origin and point of return and renewal—which theologically can only be explicated as God's enlivening work. Certainly this desire is not merely produced, but also socially communicated, so that the assembly of individual desires does not form a mere plane of interference, but networks, both visible and invisible, of flows and counter-flows and blockages. It is to

describe such temporal patterns of the communication of desire that a theological hermeneutic of freedom would necessarily turn to the well-worn loci of state and church.

Pannenberg and Gutiérrez are, from a practical-political point of view, situated towards opposites of a spectrum that developed in the post-war decades, as the desire for freedom was polarized around the antagonistic horizons of reform and revolution. While this gap may add intrigue to the comparison (how much is left to practical judgement in making a political option? how essential an issue is this for Christian fellowship?), it is not the most interesting aspect of the pairing. It was Pannenberg who gave a vital impetus to German political theology by constructing a theology of history centred on the idea of anticipation. While later versions of this idea and readings of its relation to the reality of history could differ sharply from Pannenberg's concept, it might be helpful, in order to re-evaluate the merit of the hermeneutical approach, to go back to this source. Precisely because Pannenberg's theology is not political first and foremost, it allows a more thorough description of the hermeneutical circumscription of political theology. Pannenberg's conservatism is unusual in the context of German 'political theology'; other theologians of his milieu, such as Metz, Moltmann, Sölle share with Gutiérrez many themes underplayed by Pannenberg: the problem of economic injustice, the mystical resources of the poor, the memory of suffering, a pervading concern with theodicy, and so their selection would have implied a greater degree of overlap and potential repetition. Over the years there has undoubtedly been reciprocal influence between this German mainstream and Latin American theologians, but it was Gutiérrez who most influentially developed the element of liberation theology that threatened to undermine the hermeneutical perspective, understood as an objective undertaking: the option for the poor. It is not surprising that some, including Pannenberg, have misread it as a naive call to partisanship, or more charitably, but—it will be argued—still incorrectly, as part of a series of contextual narrowings of the hermeneutical perspective. Gutiérrez is in fact no prophet of postmodernism, in which he suspects the deadening of the passion for historical being. For the sake of the coherence of the hermeneutical project, one would have to recuperate Gutiérrez's considered one-sidedness for Pannenberg's intuitive cosmopolitanism.

Setting out the parameters of a thesis which puts side by side the views of different authors on such a vast subject is difficult because the balance required is impossible to achieve from the beginning: how can one delimit the subject matter rigorously enough, yet not end up inhospitably and unwisely prescriptive? It is easy to produce assurances that the comparer will set up his own framework as simply and openly as possible and then keep questioning and revising it in light of the material surveyed; but in the case of this particular subject matter, to set out one's own grid of criteria from the beginning would require a crushingly extensive array of past reference points. An easier opening would be simply to show the appeal of a conception that would gather the best of the viewpoints to follow and prove in advance this conception as the synthesis of its partial, idiosyncratic approximations by the studied theologians. However rhetorically effective this approach might be, the readers would probably wonder whether the primary authors themselves are worthy of much attention if their mistakes or flaws are so easy to spot and remedy in the commentator's brisk relation. Crucially, such an abstract treatment cannot show why we care about freedom, and I take it that this is what it would mean to show that freedom should be a central concept of any political theology: that a common concern for freedom is why theologians should care about politics, and political theorists about theology. Therefore, in the following introductory section, I would like to sketch a *prima facie* justification for the shared hermeneutic concerns of theology and political theory, a justification hopefully corroborated by the connections to be made in the following chapters.

Dialogue on the basis of shared categories of finite experience

One of the reasons why a conversation about freedom is bound to be even more difficult than a discussion of authority, power, legitimacy, representation, sovereignty, citizenship, or other primary political concepts is its closeness to a dimension of human nature which goes beyond the plane of the social. Freedom does not follow logically after the endowment with a natural set of desires (as the Marxian language of needs would seem to imply), nor does it mean to grow out of the initial entrapment of desire in rather

predictable networks of natural and social forces (as a positivist understanding of psychoanalysis would have it). Freedom and desire are given in the same promise, that there is a happy human processing of orientation and movement. They go together in the way we try to make the time and space we live in our own. This makes them an immediate object of attention for theology, since our home is God's creation and the promise of happiness, if it is truly a promise and not a necessary illusion, is rather one of blessedness. It is understandable therefore that theology always brings a specific degree of qualification to any discussion of freedom (even political freedom), by affirming that even if the desire of freedom begins as the desire to exercise power over one's surroundings, it comes into its own only as the desire is shaped and modified, in a word confirmed, through self-understanding. There are desires which tie us down into patterns of unhappiness and harm, which may grow into such forces that they become impossible to control; they are clearly damaging to freedom, especially when they accommodate to themselves great means of social influence. One of the greatest affirmations of Christian theology is that it is the love of God that brings freedom and that grace is capable of changing the arrangement of a life to a meaning which cannot be contained in the satisfaction of any sum of worldly desires. If the time and space we live in is framed by external objectified social mechanisms of desire, traversed by the desires of others and pushed against by our own, it cannot ever compass the deepest, ever moving source of freedom.

Nevertheless, it would be rather rash to infer on this account that subjective experience has no place at all in theology. To exclude it would mean to run the risk of making her discourse on freedom unintelligible, hidden behind the authority of a 'positivism of revelation', and certainly unfeeling, as any 'outside' account of agency must be. Both Pannenberg and Gutiérrez attempt to avoid such a result in their respective developments of Christology and pneumatology, which follow in line with their efforts to offer a historical-hermeneutical perspective on the role of experience in theology and attempt thereby to answer some of the questions left in the aftermath of the Barth–Bultmann split and Vatican II, respectively. Part of the difficulty of modern theology in determining the character of religious experience was surely the above-mentioned seductive metaphor of an autonomous interior space, which communicates indeed through the interface of the

senses with the outside world, but regulates its individual geography according to its own principles—and is, moreover, able to perform a somewhat analogous operation by synthesizing the order of the outside world according to the requirements of rationality. The problem of political freedom was thereby unhappily left at a fork between, on the one hand, the method of deduction or analogy from biblical precepts and, on the other hand, the liberal, contract theory of society that goes hand in hand with the modern understanding of experience. I have pointed out that a roughly similar dichotomy can be perceived in contemporary theology. Pannenberg and Gutiérrez form prominent part of a generation of theologians which appropriated the questions of sociology in order to go beyond this account of the relation between rationality and the experience of time and space. For them, therefore, the question of political freedom is not split into a theoretical aspect, as a permanent theme of the relation between man and society, and a practical aspect, as a technical question related to the optimality of various models of social order. We live simultaneously in overlapping fields of time and space, and present experience itself is a network of vectors which at the same time take us out and bring us into ourselves. This simultaneity of experiences means that the question of political freedom is part of the general problem of orientation within these concurrent flows. What sets perhaps Pannenberg and Gutiérrez apart from later generations of theologians is that they see history as a circuit of intrinsically powerful events, rather than as a sequence of ambiguous signifiers. As I hope to show in what follows, this trust may be the singular protection available against the more blatant and more insidious forms of theological voluntarism detectable in contemporary discussions.

If their relation is contextualized according to this understanding of our experience, one of the contributions theology can make to political philosophy is to make it more aware of the spatial and temporal conditions of creaturely existence. One of the special concerns of this study is an exploration of the idea of freedom through a hermeneutical explication of these conditions. The reason this avenue of rapprochement has not been very frequently explored is because, as I have suggested, the political has in modernity generated its own autonomous space and temporality. The territory of the political has found its most

prominent recent articulation in the theory of hegemony,⁵ which draws, via Carl Schmitt, on Hegel's celebrated distinction between civil society and the state. For Hegel, this distinction was still integrated in a theory of history which could be the object of direct theological evaluation. What survives now is a theory of historical transformations in terms of the substitution of social languages.⁶ Certainly, theology can enter this debate on its own terms; but can it be sure that it would not have to rely then on the rhetorical power of its own language, to construct an apology beyond self-criticism? The time of politics has also asserted its autonomy in the form of the rhythm of democratic rational discourse, although in practice it is governed rather by the enveloping tempo of economic optimism or disillusion. This pretence theology has been keen to unmask, but between an ethics of fulfilling the need of the everyday Other and warnings of apocalyptic responsibility, it has not quite captured the interest which has driven the emergence of political time, the mere possibility of an end to history.⁷

This development of a political space and time is not altogether surprising. If the fundamental political relation is defined as one of authority and obedience, a distinct sphere of dominion is inevitably produced.⁸ Church and state will appear as two such different domains, of the spiritual and the temporal. Freedom will be the region of self-rule: Protestantism will have more freedom than Catholicism, liberal societies more than traditional or collectivist societies. Even when freedom is defined as the measure of participation in a communal body, it has to do with one's contribution to the exercise of communal ruling power.⁹ In this scenario, any renegotiation beyond the liberal relation of the spiritual and the secular must appear as regression or interference. In the end, the

⁵ Laclau Mouffe (see also Ch. 6. iii above); but the idea of autonomous political rationality is much more widespread—Henry S. Richardson deduces its practical form by balancing deliberative democracy, liberalism, republicanism, and populism, highlighting a broad range of agreement (*Democratic Autonomy: Public Reasoning about the Ends of Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 23–93).

⁶ Žižek explains that historicity (i.e. real historical change) differs from historicism as 'the change of the very global structuring principle of the Social' (Slavoj Žižek, 'Class Struggle or Postmodernism? Yes, please!', in Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso, 2000), 90–135 at 112).

⁷ Cf. Otto Pöggeler, *Ein Ende der Geschichte? Von Hegel zu Fukuyama* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995), 13, 26.

⁸ Cp. Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, tr. G. L. Ulmen (New York: Telos Press, 2003), 72–79.

⁹ Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 147–50.

freedom of individuals will be defined as the possibility they have to abstract themselves from extraneous spheres of authority, or, in general, to control their own identity, to exercise freedom of choice.

Why should theology be uncomfortable with this? It is not primarily because of the double bind in which it occasionally puts believers. Such an approach might rightly be decried as interventionist: why should the demand of conscience be privileged if it is a matter of choice and might disturb others' choices? It is because it leads to a view of humanity incompatible with their status as creatures, as finite beings inhabiting a space and time which are God's creation. Political theory does not need to accept this claim, although hopefully it may recognize some truth in theological descriptions of human finitude. There is a parallel here to Pannenberg's argument that philosophy must mediate between theology and science,¹⁰ namely that the original common terrain between theology and political philosophy is anthropology.

The structure of the thesis

The structure of this thesis is based around a triptych of themes: history as the horizon of the interpretation of individual freedom, the interpretation of the desire for freedom in the life of the church, and its representation through the processes of political life.

To put at the centre of one's discourse about freedom the individual person¹¹ does not mean that spiritual and political freedom can be derived simply from an analysis of its psychological conditions or the development of its external requirements. Equally, the connection between theology and political thought cannot be discussed in terms of two

¹⁰ 'The Theology of Creation and the Natural Sciences', in id., *The Historicity of Nature: Essays on Theology and Science*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen (West Conshohocken, Penn.: Templeton Foundation Press, 2008), 25–39 at 28

¹¹ Generally speaking, any other choice seems theoretically unworkable, as it would turn hermeneutics over into some kind or other of sociology. An onto-theological kind of sociology seems particularly objectionable, given that theologians have the reverential obligation to consider first the freedom of Christ, and only then reflect on freedom in Christ.

different areas of individual life, the spiritual aspect and its more secular counterpart. In a hermeneutic perspective, their rapport has to be addressed in terms of participation in two different paradigmatic communities, the church and state. The reason behind the structure of my thesis is not simply the familiarity of this dichotomy from the older template of political theology, in which church and state were both represented as institutions providentially designed to influence and regulate the shape of society according to a negotiation between the aspirational demands morality and the cold calculations of necessity and comfort. There seemed then to be a self-understood order to the process of social change, which could not be disrupted without affronting the norms of nature. As a rhetorical template, this model is antiquated in many parts of the Western world, although overall its influence is not so slight as to be completely ignored. The offshoot of its dissolution is the very hardy notion of a split between twin realms of morality and legality, which purports to describe the leeway corresponding to individual freedom and offer a critical space for self-examination. In fact, although I would not like to defend the notion of either church and state as ontological communities, it is rather evident that we participate in a number of communities simply on account of sharing our experience of time and space with others and, consequently, the interrelations of different communities are far too complex to accommodate the notion of discrete regulatory spaces.¹² It is with regard to the feedback of various temporal and spatial forms of community that we navigate our individual trajectories of freedom, while our patterns of action in turn influence the possibility of shared experience. In this perspective, the apparently discrete domains of church and state share analogous media through which they influence and are influenced by individual agency. From the point of view of the latter, they enable different horizons for the perception of the present and the expectation of future change, in other words, for profiling the historical meaning of personal existence.

Chapter 1 begins with the general problem of the relation between individual freedom and the question of the meaning of history. Pannenberg argues that the sense of a life depends

¹² For supporting sociological evidence for this argument, see the different perspectives of David Harvey in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989) and Anthony Giddens in *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge: Polity, 1984). For an accessible review, cf. Barney Warf, *Time-Space Compression: Historical Geographies* (London: Routledge, 2008).

on that of historical totality in the same sense in which the meaning of a part depends on that of the whole. Since the meaning of history is in question until the end, Christian freedom gains an inherent political dimension, as it depends on the anticipation of that finality mediated by the rule of Christ through his Spirit. Pannenberg's attempt to rehabilitate the notion of destiny in Christological perspective is exemplary, but the apologetic account of the experience of freedom as liberation from present constraints appears rather partial and not all the different registers of Pannenberg's theology of freedom harmonize very well.

Chapter 2 is concerned with the interpretation of the concept of freedom in the church. Pannenberg's account of the church centres on the idea of its symbolic role for the unity of humanity; put another way, on its sacramentality in relation to Christ as sacrament. In the context of an ethics founded on the principle of reciprocal community, the additional responsibility of the Church is connected to the notion of symbolic action, indicating humble creaturely self-differentiation from the divine. Because it inwardly makes room for freedom as a concern for truth, the Church can outwardly stand for the kind of action which pursues the good beyond the limitations of interests or necessities.

Chapter 3 discusses Pannenberg's view of the possibilities of freedom within the state. The authority of the state can only be legitimated on a religious basis. Equally, all authority is corrupted by the limitations of human nature and so remains a necessary evil. There is a positive potentiality that the freedom of political authority affords, namely the pious pursuit of a community's divine vocation to justice, a pursuit whose internal drive is a social form of morality (*Sittlichkeit*). The negative uses of political authority, however, are manifold: aggressive self-assertion, internal repression, subjugation of power to private interests. The development of freedom is to be ascertained according to the role the state takes up in relation to the ideal of a world community living in peace.

Chapter 4 will take up again the question at the basis of Chapter 1, this time with regard to Gutiérrez's work. The problem of individual freedom in liberation theology has not been discussed very frequently, as if a direct approach were precluded by methodological

constraints; however, in his book *On Job*, Gutiérrez raises just this problem of the historical horizon of individual freedom into the question of the possibility of talking about God. As a result, the notion of personal freedom is developed in the direction of free association in the midst of deep suffering. Gutiérrez's approach cannot be classified as lying on either side of the Hegel–Marx divide of the determinative relation between consciousness and social reality; what he argues is that theological language is a continued and unavoidable presence in both solitary retreat and coming-together-as-community and can therefore be an instrument to criticize and reform the distributions of social visibility and time which limit or prevent 'free association'.

The form of this language which comes under consideration in Chapter 5 is Gutiérrez's ecclesial spirituality. Gutiérrez does not develop an ecclesiology in the same sense as Pannenberg or other liberation theologians, such as Leonardo Boff; his interest does not lie in the formal hierarchical or ecumenical structure of the church. Rather, he offers a biblically and practically inspired reconsideration of the feeling of freedom, centred in the emotion of joy, without which the church cannot express in anticipation the fulfilment of the human desire for freedom and loses its sense of historical identity. The church's message and practice of joy offer a standpoint from which to evaluate the recourse of political institutions to communal emotions as legitimizing expressions of freedom.

The autonomy and specific rationality of political action will be considered with reference to Gutiérrez in Chapter 6. In his perspective, the crucial question is whether the state functions for the promotion of life or imposes through its political and economic organization the punishment of death. It is no less true for Gutiérrez than it is for Pannenberg that the state should stand for the demand of justice within the limitations of its historical condition; his argument is that only through dedication to the poor can state institutions acquire the capacity to acknowledge the desire for freedom throughout successive generations that is essential to the practice of justice. The political problem of liberation theology is not so much whether there exists or not a sociological method of analysis can offer an autonomous mediation of the values of life, however they may be

formulated, but whether the state has the means to renew itself according to this biological and theological rhythm.

To what extent the elements of this threefold structure coalesce into a hermeneutic ensemble or are left to simply stand side by side depends, of course, on the compatibility of the defences and criticisms to be made of the two main sources. It is, in the beginning, an open question whether the juxtaposition of these two theologians of many opposite views can further an open dialogue with the various standpoints of political theory or just emphasize again the potential ambiguity of the 'Christian point of view'. My purpose is to show the great coincidence of insight in understanding behind the more prominent divergences of judgement. After following different paths of understanding side by side, one may become clearer about the less obvious influences, beliefs, and decisions behind one's own judgement. I will argue that the historical perspective advocated by both Pannenberg and Gutiérrez in understanding freedom through its desire is still necessary in contemporary debate, and that the ways they traced this desire through the church and in politics is still instructive. They both allocate to the church an indispensable role in building a historical consciousness aware of the meaning—the task and promise—of freedom and to the state the equally necessary task of representing in anticipation the social syntax of eschatological freedom. Their divergences about the form of this representation and especially on the input of secular sociology in the notion of political freedom raise the question of the openness of theological discourse to other languages of freedom: their translatability, redundancy or obscurity. However, the point of the hermeneutical approach is not to put an end to interpretive problems, not—in other words—to build a definitive timeline of the desire for freedom, a mechanical dialectic of change and control, even were one obtainable through the synchronization of different authorities; the aim, rather, is to get somewhat closer to finding the language appropriate to each moment, even if one cannot be certain of it. For a theological hermeneutic, this also means at every point relating this language to the sighing and silence which express the eschatological character of the desire for freedom.

This study began with a brief introductory exploration of the emergence of the desire for freedom out of our experience of finite time, out of the desire to establish some order in the flux of change and control the parameters of the integration of one's self in the world. This desire has as its ultimate end a truthful identity and not merely efficiency or the creation of a coherent narrative; they are far too vulnerable to the attacks of external contingency.¹³ Freedom cannot be limited to the construction of a coherent linguistic space, under a single authority—not even a collective political one. I suggested that the condition of freedom merits its name only if it is open to hermeneutical examination, if its self-interpretation is capable of reinforcing the desire for freedom. If this demand is carried to its ultimate conclusion, it means that in relation to the category of freedom both church and state have to be thought of in the terms of their relation in universal history. Perhaps this might seem a revival of Hegel's vision of church and state as companion forms of the self-understanding and self-organization of rational freedom. However, the freedom I begin with is not the philosopher's freedom which loses itself in the objectivity of reason and its historical forms, but the problem of individuals who seek truth in the contingency of their temporal being; I do not think the Christian promise to the individual is that they will find themselves in the (concrete) universal—except if we untwist that to mean union with Christ by God's act of salvation. Hence I have opted in the case of both authors studied for a division of chapters into the themes of individual freedom, freedom in the church, and freedom in the state, since, whatever the degree of their Hegelian inspiration, they both share this theological concern with the individual.

¹³ To be Lacanian for a moment, they come to grief in the confrontation with the Real.

Chapter 1

A Historical Desire: Freedom and Christological Destiny

The problem of the role of history in the determination of the concept of freedom emerges with the realization that our perceptions about freedom are shaped by contingent circumstances and may therefore make sense only in a limited range of situations. A theological idea of freedom therefore has to enable one to meet the reality of a changing history with critical reflection. Wolfhart Pannenberg's theology of history responds to this challenge by allowing two ways of speaking about freedom: as a general anthropological concept and as a specific relation to concrete events with their own theological interpretation (I). The anthropological notion of freedom is at its most exemplary in Jesus' relation to his destiny, which also determines the soteriological transformation of freedom (II). The primary aspect of Pannenberg's concept of freedom is negative, not quite in the sense of Isaiah Berlin's negative liberty, but in the broader sense of indetermination, that the human vocation goes beyond the demands and constrictions of any given circumstances, that the content of one's participation in the new life in Christ cannot be determined by necessity (III). The transformation of the human capacity for freedom into freedom in salvation is possible because Jesus Christ, who is the model of the anthropological concept of freedom, is also the Lord of history (IV). Hence the second way of speaking of freedom appears as a necessary supplement, allowing the content of historical freedom to be described from the perspective of divine, Trinitarian activity (V).

In speaking of human freedom, theology is bound to take a special interest in history because the Christian idea of freedom is closely bound to Christology. Admittedly there is, at least hypothetically, the danger that some species of 'Christomonism' might come to despise human variety and spontaneity, but that is not likely if, as for Wolfhart Pannenberg, Christology and anthropology interact in historical perspective. None of Pannenberg's main works is dedicated exclusively to discussion of politics from a theological point of view; at any rate, such a discussion would have not have placed the

idea of freedom at the centre of political history.¹ This is not an irredeemable disadvantage for an investigation of what it means to think freedom theologically and politically. It rather means Pannenberg prefers to acknowledge several levels of abstraction or concretion in the idea of freedom, all integrated in a dense substantial context, and among them it is not the level corresponding to the development of political institutions which is essential. In other words, the history of the political concept is moved and mediated by concerns better expressed through different forms, both more abstract and more concrete, of the concept.

Pannenberg's starting point for political theology has been accurately identified by Raymond Plant as 'the Christ revelation in terms of its actual connexion with world history'. According to Plant, the advantage of this approach is that if it is consistently developed, 'we do not have to switch to another system when we are concerned with the actual demands of our historical circumstances and the decisions to be made within them.'² This idea, while initially promising, is found by Plant to be unsatisfactory: he criticizes Pannenberg on a number of epistemological grounds, being sceptical in general of the plausibility of a philosophy of history, and also raising the material objection that whereas Hegel's rational view of history found concretization in a fascinatingly rich historical narrative, Pannenberg's references to the testimony of facts are brief.³ Plant's objections are not singular and they probably reflect quite a general mood around the use of history in theological arguments. Nevertheless, I would like to show in the analysis below that Pannenberg's idea of individual freedom, central to his political options, does not play a functional, subordinate role in his philosophy of history. While it is true that Pannenberg appeals to historical hermeneutics to justify the plausibility of an

¹ Pannenberg remarks in connection to Hegel view of history that the central theme of history is not freedom, but the 'true order of society' (*HNEH*, 100).

² 'Divine Revelation and Modern History', in *FR*, 87–104 at 89/115, cited by Raymond Plant in *Politics, Theology, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 46–7.

³ 'Demands [for a theology of history] are highly programmatic and skeletal', Plant, 88. I find this too drastic an evaluation; whether one find them insightful on this score or not, Pannenberg's essays do consider historical events from a theological perspective fairly frequently—a colourful example is the discussion of Charlemagne's coronation to be found, unusually, in a *ST* 3. 512–3. It is true that the scope of such passages is too narrow for them to ever coagulate into a consistent narrative, but that can in part be put down to the difference between a theology of history and a philosophy of history; the latter is intrinsically invested in a broader range of interests.

eschatological horizon, concrete freedom is not mediated by a single universal-theological story, as Plant's diagnosis of Hegelianism implies. It is rather the relation of the individual to God—variously of submission or insubordination—that allows stories to develop in the first place, and out of submission (or 'self-differentiation', as Pannenberg calls it), emerges individual freedom as the experience of the future as the possibility of the new. The centre of Pannenberg's understanding of freedom is not a philosophy of history, but his Christology, which mediates between the theology of history and anthropology.

I. Between anthropology and history

Pannenberg's conception of freedom depends on the idea that the proper knowledge of history is one which dares to affirm the possibility of a theology of history. We should expect the strength of such a conception to lie in the ability to explain the coherence of the whole, the integration of the meaning of history and the practice of freedom, at least once the theological premises are granted. The problem of such theological schemes is how to preserve any space for the contingency granted and assumed in political freedom, in effect whether the political dimension of freedom is freedom in a meaningful sense or just a confusingly labelled foreign concept, although perhaps practically beneficial.⁴ Does political freedom merely offer protection to those who cannot believe in the tradition of truth? Is the desire for political freedom simply a desire for the relative improvement of social relations, or is it significant for the individual as a person?

According to Pannenberg, historical research leads at least to the question of the negative or positive total meaning of history. He adopts the position that 'all historical study remains oriented to the problem of universal history',⁵ and it is in relation to the meaning

⁴ The case of Lamennais dramatically exemplified this dilemma. See John J. Oldfield, *The Problem of Tolerance and Social Existence in the Writings of Félicité Lamennais, 1809–1831* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), (103–)107; Gutiérrez reviews his contribution to Catholic acceptance of the right to religious freedom in 'Freedom and Salvation: A Political Problem', tr. Alvin Gutterriez, in Gustavo Gutiérrez and Richard Shaull, *Liberation and Change*, ed. Ronald H. Stone (Atlanta: John Knox, 1977), 1–94 at 38–42.

⁵ 'On Historical and Theological Hermeneutic', *BQT* 1. 137–182 at 159/140.

of the whole of reality that the question of the existence of God is decided.⁶ Once the question is answered positively, ‘the open future of man and the world ... appear as an expression of the freedom of God.’ Therefore, in a thoroughly considered perspective, human freedom is inseparable from the idea of divine freedom.⁷ An adequate conception of human freedom has to be developed in connection with Christology, because ‘the history of Jesus was marked by the nearness of the ultimate future of this God and thus is the unsurpassable anticipation of the ultimate revelation of God.’⁸

One premise on which a positive answer to the question of the theology of history depends is the absolute contingency of the future: otherwise it cannot be acknowledged as a gift, as the sphere of divine power.⁹ The main problem today in defending divine providence is not the failure of all theodicy, but ‘the replacement of a divine conservation of the world by the self-conservation of material structures and of human beings’.¹⁰ This idea of ‘self-conservation’ is not determined purely by scientific theory; behind it lies one interpretation of ‘the motif of human freedom’, namely independent self-determination. Pannenberg concedes that the traditional idea of temporally prior divine foreknowledge is indeed incompatible with the freedom, but contends that a different conception of divine

⁶ Ibid. 156/137.

⁷ Thomas Freyer objects that ‘such an understanding of time dependent on the metaphysical absoluteness of God is rather a modification and transposition [in the sense that divine subjectivity is constituted by modern freedom of self-determination, 284] of the modern problem of the constitution of human subjectivity, than a satisfying explanation.’ (*Zeit—Kontinuität und Unterbrechung. Studien zu Karl Barth, Wolfhart Pannenberg und Karl Rahner* (Würzburg: Echter, 1993), 297.)

⁸ BQT 1. 157/138.

⁹ Christoph Glimpel argues that the fact that ‘Pannenberg thinks of God as finite ground (as ground only of what exists (*der Seienden*), but not of what does not exist, i.e. of the difference between the two) is the systematic background for the fact that he talks about God predominantly in categories such as lordship and power.’ (*Gottesgedanke und autonome Vernunft: Eine kritisch-konstruktive Auseinandersetzung mit den philosophischen Grundlagen der Theologie Wolfhart Pannenburgs* (Göttingen: V & R unipress, 2007), 91.) He is right in his observation that in the eschaton ‘the proof of the lordship of God over the world coincides with the demonstration of his contingency.’ (Glimpel, 88. Cp. Maurizio Pagano’s questioning whether the idea of totality may in fact be separated from that of necessity (*Storia ed escatologia nel pensiero di W. Pannenberg* (Milano: Ugo Mursia, 1973), 101).) However, it seems to me that the theological doctrine of the freedom of God to decide for creation or not does not exclude Pannenberg’s notion that God can submit to contingency in the sense of being the God of a contingent world, in other words, that God’s initial decision for creation is no longer simply contingent. (See Pannenberg’s letter attached at the end of Timothy Bradshaw’s *Trinity and Ontology: A Comparative Study of the Theologies of Karl Barth and Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1988).) Perhaps this notion cannot be easily rendered in the philosophical language of being and non-being. At any rate, God’s power is manifest not only in the temporal contingency of events, but also in their participation in eternity.

¹⁰ ATP, 505/492.

freedom—eventually articulated in his notion of God as Spirit¹¹—is more appropriate to the reality of history.

Pannenberg's apologetic strategy can be interpreted as an attempt to develop a coherent account of freedom, within which political freedom would also find its place, by starting from two different perspectives. On the one side, he develops a Christological-anthropological conception of freedom as an alternative to the secular, 'protest' idea of self-determination.¹² The first direction of this development has already been indicated, namely from the problem of universal history to the normative role of a Christological account of freedom. The second, complementary procedure is the anthropological (or rather soteriological) generalization of this Christological account.

On the other side, Pannenberg intends to reinstate a vocabulary that would allow theological descriptions of current political institutions and events: election, covenant, mission, retribution.¹³ These are the categories which give context to a contemporary political usage of the theological concept of freedom. Because these categories refer to communities and societies collectively, the idea of freedom has to absorb the variation in the relation of the individual to the whole which occurs across cultures. The relatively smaller importance of the idea in many societies is explicable by their capacity to generate and maintain a compelling ideology in which the problem of individual autonomy remains marginal. The emergence of the secular idea of freedom is itself socially determined, namely by the phenomenon of secularization, which Pannenberg sees as a specifically modern Western anomaly; this underlying phenomenon can be overturned by the infusion of society with communal religious practice, and the popular conception of

¹¹ 'A Dialogue: God as Spirit and Natural Science', in *The Historicity of Nature: Essays on Science and Theology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregerson (West Conshohocken, Penn.: Templeton Foundation Press, 2008), 61–72 at 64–67.

¹² For Pannenberg, the major reference points of this secular tradition, especially in *BQT* 3, are Nietzsche and Sartre; Hans Blumenberg figures prominently among contemporary polemicists.

¹³ 'The venerable categories of God's grace, patience or judgment are only valid or intelligible as interpretations of human situations. They do not refer directly to a special state of affairs which can only be interpreted by a special theological technique but can be used as premises in an empirical argument.' ('Christian Morality and Political Issues', in *FR*, 123–138 at 134–5/170.) Pannenberg acknowledges the gradual development of this intention: 'Only after the Christology was published was I able to clarify certain aspects in the doctrine of God to my own satisfaction so that I could dare now to speak of a divine intention in historical events.' (E. Frank Tupper, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (London: SCM, 1974), 305.)

freedom re-connected with a theological reading of history.¹⁴ After all, the modern concept of freedom has historically evolved, although not without external transformative influences, from theological conceptions: the dignity of the individual created in the image of God, the priesthood of all believers, the ultimate responsibility one bears towards one's conscience. The practical side of Pannenberg's strategy is thus distinctly un-Hegelian: progress in the idea of freedom is not the product of cultural evolution; rather, this particular concept is a secondary feature in the matrix of different religious outlooks, in which there is no strict teleological order.¹⁵ In short, the universal Christological-anthropological account of freedom has to be communicated through particular social and historical practices.

This is because the first side of Pannenberg's strategy is not theologically satisfactory on its own. Pannenberg's Christological answer to the question of freedom overflows the limits of a historical-hermeneutical or anthropological context when it is contextualized in his Trinitarian grammar of revelation. If he had offered a classical liberal account of Jesus' life, in which Jesus' confrontation with the legalistic foundation of Jewish society results in the inauguration of a new cultural pattern of individual agency, the significance of the Christ-event would indeed be exhausted in a historical-anthropological analysis. But just as Jesus' work is not done alone, without the Father and the Spirit,¹⁶ the knowledge of freedom is inseparable from the continued activity of the Trinity, embracing the whole life of the individual. It is the Trinitarian analysis of the Christological idea of freedom which guides the involvement of the church in the question of political practice, because the church has

¹⁴ Through the spread of Christianity, 'the nations of the West were drawn into Israel's history of God, received from it their world-historical mission, and are still part of a history with the God of the Bible. ... The unity of history is founded in the unity of the God who became the God of Israel and by whom the whole history of the West is determined—whether in faith or in unbelief.' ('Jesus' History and Ours', *FR*, 68–77 at 73–4.)

¹⁵ Even Hegel's order was somewhat flexible, and he found integrating Islam in it awkward. (Peter Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 206–219.) Nevertheless his account succeeds in presenting every individual religion in relation to the same spirit, so there is a specifically religious problematic. In Pannenberg's general description of religion the emancipation of religion from social embeddedness only happens with the emergence of world religions. (*ATP*, 474–79/462–66; Schleiermacher made a similar dialectical observation in his *Lectures on Philosophical Ethics*, ed. Robert B. Loudon, tr. Louise Adey Huish (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 91–2.)

¹⁶ See esp. *ST* 1. 272–3/296–7.

no criteria against which to measure cultural views of freedom outside its proclamation of Christ.

The coherence of the two perspectives depends in the first place on the coherence of the anthropological-Christological account of freedom which is common to both. This is in Pannenberg's case more 'negative' than 'positive', to use more broadly Isaiah Berlin's categories,¹⁷ emphasizing not rational self-determination but the uncovering of personality in the temporal formation of identity. The individual has to maintain his or her freedom against supra-individual structures and one can only succeed in that by opening up, in the depth of one's relation to God, to the possibility of resurrection. Can this negative account be sufficient to support the positive concrete practices involved in the second perspective? This latter question will be addressed below, in Chapter 2; before addressing the former, a more detailed account of Pannenberg's two-sided approach is needed.

II. The freedom of Christ as anthropological and soteriological paradigm

Pannenberg's theoretical pathway from the theology of history to Christology is perhaps most concisely described in the essay 'The Revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth'.¹⁸ Starting from a general inquiry into the history of religions,¹⁹ one may come to appreciate the validity of the idea of revelation and of the set of questions which motivated Jewish apocalyptic literature. On establishing the historicity of the resurrection, it is possible to have a fixed point for historical hermeneutics,²⁰ an understanding of history from the standpoint of its totality, since 'by the resurrection of Jesus, God himself and his salvation

¹⁷ Isaiah Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty' (1958), in id., *Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 166–217.

¹⁸ *Theology as History*, 101–133.

¹⁹ Pannenberg's argument that religiosity is a universal anthropological feature is focused on historical evidence. See 'Macht der Mensch die Religion, oder macht die Religion den Menschen?', in *BST* 2, 254–59.

²⁰ Cf. Merold Westphal, 'Hegel, Pannenberg, and Hermeneutics', *Man and World* 4 (1971), 276–293, esp. 285–88.

are near to the world for all time to come—no matter how long the world endures.²¹

Christ's free action and suffering in history receive universal significance. The relationship between Christology and anthropology is a matter of history, established through the definition of the *imago Dei* by the transformative significance of the life of Jesus Christ for the idea of human destiny.²²

Anthropological categories are not properly speaking derived from Christology, but removed from the person of Christ their full meaning is not apparent.²³ 'Openness to the world' is at the most basic level a philosophical reading of biological fact—the flexibility of the human response, only loosely ruled by instincts, to external circumstances, giving rise to the possibility of disinterested knowledge.²⁴ However, in its complete sense, the 'unique freedom of man to inquire and to move beyond every given regulation of his existence',²⁵ including the terror of mortality, it is justified historically only by the resurrection of Christ. Although the relation between anthropology and Christology is established through a concrete historical mediation, through the development of the concepts of religious revelation and apocalyptic thought, anthropological categories receive their Christological refinement through only an abstract historical reference:²⁶ 'openness to the world' is elevated to the ultimate question of the individual's self-understanding in relation to the *totality* of historical reality.²⁷

²¹ 'The Revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth', in James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, *Theology as History* (London: Harper & Row, 1967), 101–33 at 117.

²² Cf. Kim Ming Wong, *Wolfhart Pannenberg on Human Destiny*, 39ff.

²³ Vasile Cristescu, *Die Anthropologie und ihre christologische Begründung bei Wolfhart Pannenberg und Dumitru Stăniloae* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003), 79–80.

²⁴ For a critique of Pannenberg's concept of openness to the world, see Jacqui Stewart, *Reconstructing Science and Theology in Postmodernity: Pannenberg, Ethics and the Human Sciences* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000). I do not think however that Pannenberg's argument that openness to the world is a presupposition of Christian freedom depends on whether culture is an evolutionary necessity or advantage (Stewart, 66); it does not have so much to do with the special status of the human species, as with the possibility of experiencing the universe as a world.

²⁵ *WIM*, 3/6.

²⁶ While the idea of divine revelation acquires a similar panhistorical meaning, apocalyptic thought is only a historical stage, a removable ladder on the way to resurrection Christology. See Christiaan Mostert, *God and the Future: Wolfhart Pannenberg's Eschatological Doctrine of God* (London: T & T Clark, 2002), 44–5.

²⁷ *ATP*, 516/502.

In the case of Christ, this openness is condensed to Jesus' self-relation to his fate,²⁸ which is shaped by his relationship with the Father. The anthropological generalization takes place by showing the indispensability of the God-relationship for the realization of freedom in the constraints of a historical existence. Jesus' religious consciousness, inasmuch as it is accessible to us through his 'Abba' address to God, is based on his anticipation of the end of history, the kingdom of God. Anthropological abstraction can only bring us to the question of our own God-relationship, in which the significance of the individual for universal history is determined concretely. For us, the assumption of the proximity of the eschaton is not in any case a temporal question, but is equivalent to the trust in divine omnipotence which motivated Jesus' proclamation of the coming transformation of the world, a trust which was confirmed in the resurrection. The meaning of our existence for the history of the world does not lie merely in the history of its consequences, but is mediated by the individual orientation of the divine promise of resurrection. It is this personal proximity which confirms our sense of individual dignity, our intuition of self-worth.²⁹ Therefore, despite the so-called delay of the eschaton, Pannenberg affirms that the categories in which we think the freedom of Jesus are definitive for our understanding of human freedom in general because they are tested against contemporary experience: 'To the present day this is the only criterion of the truth of God's revelation in Jesus of Nazareth: that again and again it subsequently proves itself true as we experience the reality in which we live.'³⁰

The second argument for Pannenberg's claim that human freedom is to be thought after the model of Christ, after the one from religious history, is therefore that Jesus' relationship with God becomes the content of our own in faith. As Svein Rise has argued, Pannenberg's Christology is better understood in the light of the Greek Patristic motif of the mediation of incorruptible life than in the Western framework of salvific expiation.³¹

²⁸ A purely philosophical discussion of the question of freedom is attempted by Pannenberg only in a few pages on freedom of the will in 'Christlicher Glaube und menschliche Freiheit'.

²⁹ 'Auf der Suche nach dem wahren Selbst', *BST* 2. 175–190 at 188.

³⁰ In James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr., *Theology as History* (London: Harper & Row, 1967), 101–133.

³¹ Svein Rise, *The Christology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Identity and Relevance* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen University Press, 1997), 258. Krzysztof Gózdź similarly connects the notion that Christ is the sense of history with the

The Resurrection does not function just as proof of Jesus' divinity, but is in fact the material principle of Pannenberg's Christology. The correspondence sought after in this argument is not between Christological and general anthropological categories, but rather between the Christological and the soteriological, in the substance of the new reality that God has introduced in history through Christ. Outside Jesus' model of freedom we cannot understand God's spiritual work of salvation in the present. For Pannenberg, Christology is inseparable from an account of the Trinitarian life; but that means that human history as well is to be understood in the same Trinitarian language.

Pannenberg was following on the complementarity of anthropology and soteriology when he sought in his *Systematic Theology* to overcome the divide between Christologies 'from above' and Christologies from below.³² This integrated perspective can only be granted if history as a whole is thought of as God's work and the history of religions as 'God's way to his revelation'.³³ The result is a transformation of Pannenberg's political language, allowing him the use of theological concepts to describe social reality:

‘The future glory of God determines the present world when people hunger and thirst after justice, when non-violence, peaceableness, and compassion reign, when those in need, in mourning, suffering, being persecuted find their comfort in God's future. Precisely this is revealed in Jesus' death. God is in alliance (*im Bunde*) with those who— against the current of their time and so in suffering, weakness, and persecutions— seek justice, peace, and compassionate love with a pure heart.’ ‘God associates himself (*Sichverbinden*) with what in this world is weak and

idea of recapitulation (*Jesus Christus als Sinn der Geschichte bei Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1988), 74).

³² Cf. ‘Christologie und Theologie’, *GST* 2. 129–145 at 131.

³³ ‘Christologie und Theologie’, 137, 135. Cf. Klaus Vechtel, *Trinität und Zukunft. Zum Verhältnis von Philosophie und Trinitätstheologie im Denken Wolfhart Pannenegs* (Frankfurt am Main: J. Knecht, 2001), 111: ‘The circle, in which the understanding of Jesus and the understanding of God condition each other reciprocally, is widened by Pannenberg to a hermeneutical circle of theology and anthropology generally: every man moves already in the world, which is the creation of the biblical God.’

fails—not, however, with any weaknesses whatever, but with the powerlessness of the pure heart, of the striving for peace and justice ...’³⁴

Here Pannenberg is describing the ethical content of the new life in Christ. The language may seem idealistic, but that is because it is closer than usual to the biblical idiom; the situations referred to are those of people acting out their religion, conscious of their aspirations and their consoling hope. Jesus’ message about the kingdom of God plays the crucial part in the religious history of humankind, but not in the story of social and political ideas. So even in a Trinitarian, theological perspective on history, in what I have called the second side of Pannenberg’s strategy for understanding the concept of freedom, there is no ‘objective’ theological-political vision. Pannenberg is concerned with the religious conditions of the forms of historical subjectivity. Theological language can be admitted in describing social reality to the extent that the self-understanding of those involved allows it. This condition means that a theological historical account of how people understand freedom has to start by asking about the correspondence between different ways of political self-understanding and different forms of the religious consciousness, as opposed to beginning from a de-ideologizing critique (e.g., attempting to reveal the connections between monotheism and paternalism, absolutism, authoritarianism).³⁵ Inasmuch as the political situation of the person comes into contact with, determines or is influenced by this religious dimension, the theologian is competent to comment on it. This is rather different from those pragmatic interventions in which theologians themselves may offer their personal reading of present circumstances, controversial as they may be.³⁶

³⁴ ‘Christologie und Theologie’, 140–1. This substantial description goes some way towards answering Sobrino’s objections that Pannenberg did not specify the hope which at the level of praxis is the ‘contemporaneous horizon for understanding Jesus’ resurrection’ and that ‘Jesus’ death is no longer a reality that uncovers the true nature of sin’. (*Christ the Liberator: A View from the Victims*, tr. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001), 28–9.) Note however that this concrete language is subordinated to the more abstract concepts of self-differentiation and submission.

³⁵ Cf. below, Ch. 3. iii.

³⁶ Cf. below, Ch. 3. iv. Some of Pannenberg’s more direct political remarks in theological articles are: ‘The Nation and the Human Race’ (*FR*, 105–22/135–55, in which he predicates the right of self-determined German reunification on the idea of human dignity); ‘The Peace of God and World Peace’ (*Ethics*, 151–74/146–65, in which he calls for democratic international institutions for peace and falls just short of deeming pacifists moral freeloaders); ‘Die Kirchen und die entstehende Einheit Europas’ (*BE*, 223–35, in

Pannenberg's theological reason for this indirect way of proceeding is that he has warrant to characterize the divine Spirit as the active inspirer of religious devotion, but finds less justification to attribute to the same spiritual influence the historical course of societies. Pannenberg's account of the work of the Spirit in the knowledge of salvific events was from the start anti-fideistic: the Holy Spirit is not an additional authority alongside that of history or the source of a special certitude; instead, he called for 'a whole "theology of reason"'.³⁷ Rather than leading to a Hegelian account of the role of the Spirit in the building up of community,³⁸ Pannenberg's theology of reason is grounded in the individual quest for meaning. In his model of doctrine of the Trinity, perhaps precisely in order to avoid the idea of Spirit as merely inherent in reason (rather than vice versa), he advocates a broader understanding of the concept of 'person', a turn from Spirit as consciousness to Spirit as field of force.³⁹ In relation to the world, Pannenberg's emphasis is on the activity of the Spirit as provident, sustaining energy and inspiration of innovating creativity. This does not mean that the Spirit is equally present in all spheres of human endeavour, and part of the Spirit's work in individuals is to guide them towards a structure of activity that is genuinely 'open to the future', genuinely free. Given our innate limitations, the subjective demands of religion and those of social and political success can compete for one's personal resources. The resolution of their tension takes place through the mediation of the individual's integration in the church;⁴⁰ it is through this primordial participation that one learns a reference point for theologically interpreting social and political events, but also a perspective from which to judge their eternal moral significance. This does not mean that one's political commitments are to be guided by official ecclesial instructions; rather, participation in the life of the church allows one to prioritize social

which he argues that a unifying Europe should incorporate 'the nations of the Christian East'). He has also written in periodicals for an American audience on current German affairs.

³⁷ *RH*, 196–7/144: 'The word itself brings the Spirit with it, since it is the word of the eschatological reality of the Christ-event. ... [the Spirit] is not a special condition for knowledge required more or less as an addition to the Gospel.' Cf. Frank Hasel, *Scripture in the Theologies of W. Pannenberg and D.G. Bloesch: An Investigation and Assessment of Its Origin, Nature, and Use* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996), 155–6.

³⁸ Cf. *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, tr. R.F. Brown, Peter C. Hodgson, and J.M. Stewart (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984–87), 3. 372–3.

³⁹ Pannenberg does not use this conceptuality in relation to social or political themes, because even in a general account of creation it needs to be supplemented by Logos theology: 'Whereas the creative dynamic in the events of creation relates to the Spirit, the Logos is the origin of the distinguishing form of the creature' (*ST* 2. 110/133.)

⁴⁰ 'Society and the Christian Faith', *Ethics*, 7–22/115–28 at 20–22.

responsibilities and commitments in the light of the eschatological future. In short, it is the Spirit's work which allows individual creativity to attain its greatest possible significance by directing it towards its truest allegiances.

All in all, there appear to be two ways in which Christology determines the relation of political liberty to history. The first is on the plane of general anthropology: the question of God is relevant to the state in the sense that it must recognize and allow a free development of the individual search for religious meaning. The question of political freedom itself is not otherwise determined, but it is subordinated—as it will be seen in Chapter 3—to the problem of the justice of the social order. The second is on the level of a Trinitarian theology of history, in which the problem of conceptualizing freedom requires an ecclesiologically (hence also Christologically) formed consciousness.

Pannenberg is very wary of analogical transfers from theology to political argument, from the idea of Church to that of State, as is clear from his criticism of Barth, Moltmann, and liberation theology;⁴¹ instead, he relies on the potential impact of Church life on cultural conceptions of freedom, on the gradual influence of its ideas and practices.

III. The experience of salvation as independence from the world

What then is the negative anthropological-Christological model of freedom, and how is such a synthesis possible? The dynamic Christological principle of this model is not yet present in his first article on freedom, 'The Christian Faith and Human Freedom', which discusses anthropology and soteriology for the most part in rather ahistorical terms.

Nevertheless, for that very reason the article provides useful background for understanding the contribution of Pannenberg's later distinctive Christology.

⁴¹ CSSC, 51–54.

Pannenberg starts out by asserting that there is ‘one, indivisible’ human freedom, the freedom attained by faith in Jesus Christ.⁴² Only in such faith is human nature actualized.⁴³ With this rejection of a two-tier approach to anthropology and soteriology, the article takes a polemical turn, reversing in its structure the usual apologetic sequence: the first part is a positive exposition of ‘the freedom of a Christian’, the second a refutation of common ‘illusions of freedom’.⁴⁴ The second part contains a discussion of the problem of the freedom of choice, analysing it according to the ‘positive ideal of freedom’ expressed in it,⁴⁵ since all particular claims to freedom rely on the idea of ‘the freedom of the human being as a person’.⁴⁶ Although popularly personal freedom is understood as independence, it should rather be thought of as integral obligation towards a determinate content, whose authority does not in turn depend on one’s freedom of choice.⁴⁷ So the category to which Christian freedom belongs is that of ‘freedom with a definite content’. This also contains some other conceptions (e.g., the Kantian and the Marxist) with which it is incompatible on account of their diverging visions of human nature. Since, then, Christian freedom is incompatible with the opposite category of ‘formal freedom’, it should not be identified with a restored Adamic capacity to choose between good and evil. We only experience choice as *liberum arbitrium* if we assume that in the end individual choice can independently determine its content.⁴⁸ While many theologians have used the notion of *liberum arbitrium* to demonstrate human responsibility for sin, responsibility is rather grounded ‘not in a merely ontic authorship but in a recognized ethical obligation.’⁴⁹ It has also been used to explain the origin of evil in a world created good; the problem, set in these terms, is

⁴² ‘Christlicher Glaube und menschliche Freiheit’, *Kerygma und Dogma* 4 (1958), 251–80 at 251.

⁴³ ‘There is freedom when the essence [of a being] is actualized. (*Denn Freiheit ist da, wo das Wesen verwirklicht ist.*) But you truly find yourself only by faith in Jesus Christ. Man is what he is destined to be from the beginning (*von seinem Ursprung*) only by faith in Jesus Christ.’ (Ibid.)

⁴⁴ The article incorporates the substance of two lectures. (‘Christlicher Glaube und menschliche Freiheit’, 251 n. 1.)

⁴⁵ ‘Christlicher Glaube und menschliche Freiheit’, 260 n. 6.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 260.

⁴⁷ It is revealing that Pannenberg’s analysis seems here to overlook the scenario of objective pluralism, where any of the choices is justified in itself, and therefore the act of choice is also justified in itself, as long as it is restricted to that broad spectrum. Cf. Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 321–68.

⁴⁸ Pannenberg’s argument is that the *liberum arbitrium* is incompatible with our experience of choice; the dispute about determinism centres around supposed objective causes of choice, not its phenomenon.

⁴⁹ Cp. Rahner, ‘Schicksal und Freiheit’, in *Gnade als Freiheit*, 88–89.

intractable—it is arrogant and irresponsible to attempt to adopt an eternal viewpoint instead of starting from ‘the historical situation in which man is met by God’s revelation’.⁵⁰

Criticism of the eternal viewpoint was already central in Pannenberg’s doctoral dissertation on Duns Scotus’s doctrine of predestination. The subtle doctor’s various formulations of this doctrine were all attempts to bring it in line with two guiding principles: first, that the origin of all good is to be ultimately attributed to God and of all evil (apart from the wickedness of fallen angels) to humanity; second, that God’s freedom to elect does not come to an end at any given point of a human life.⁵¹ Pannenberg, finding himself in agreement with these principles,⁵² discovers that the reason why Scotus’s efforts to establish their harmony (by postulating distinct layers of divine power and a complex interpretation of the inter-conditioning of divine and human wills) were not successful was the fact that he did not keep to the historical character of the human encounter with God as the only possible context for his question.⁵³ Otherwise, the divine-human encounter can only be conceived, in however great a complexity, as the confrontation of two opposing principles.

The fundamental theological fact transgressed by this way of theologizing is the total dependence of humanity on God. We are to reject the notion of formal freedom for the sake of ‘the essential bond (*wesensmäßige Gebundenheit*) of humanity to God’; that bond means at the same time an ‘ultimate independence from the world’, hence the rejection of theoretical determinism and ‘ethical totalitarianism’, in which persons are used as mere means for a this-worldly future.⁵⁴ That bond results in freedom through the reception of the continuing creative activity of God in the world, which negates sinful self-relatedness. The unfreedom of the latter is provable: ‘the more someone is ruled in his own sphere by self-relatedness, the more similar is his conduct to that of a machine, albeit perhaps a very

⁵⁰ ‘Christlicher Glaube und menschliche Freiheit’, 275; the question itself does not arise from the situation of the worshipping Church, it is an ‘impertinent (*vorwitzige*) question’ (ibid., 276).

⁵¹ *Die Prädestinationslehre des Duns Skotus im Zusammenhang der scholastischen Lehrentwicklung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954), 14–5.

⁵² As he will continue to be throughout his later works, esp. *HNEH*.

⁵³ *Prädestinationslehre*, 138–9.

⁵⁴ Cf. Christine Axt-Piscalar, ‘Die Eschatologie in ihrer Bedeutung und Funktion für das Ganze der Systematischen Theologie W. Pannenberg’, *Kerygma und Dogma* 45 (1999), 130–142, esp. 136.

complicated one', 'easily comprehensible and predictable'.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, there is no compulsive determination in God's creative influence, because it is not to be described in causal terms.

On the political plane, the rejection of 'ethical totalitarianism' results in support for democratic political freedom; not for its own sake, as it has been promoted historically, namely as the expression of the ideal of 'radical autarky' (*Selbstmächtigkeit*), but rather because it correlates to a self-limiting form of government and hence as a preventive measure against attempts to arrive at the fulfilment of human nature by political means. Political freedom is an incomplete expression of a person's potential for transcending their world and thus a negative sign of their capacity for divine encounter. It 'is not a form of the realization of the freedom grounded in Christ', not its reflection (*Abschattung*), as for Barth. Freedom as transcendence of the present means that we are 'freed to use the world in its secularity', by virtue of 'the dominion entrusted in the image of God'.⁵⁶ There is a historical connection between the Reformation proclamation of Christian freedom and the development of modern technology. By the same logic of administrative accountability, political freedom includes responsibility towards the neighbour, a 'responsibility for the shape of the social order'.⁵⁷

There are different threads of intellectual tradition in this early account, some of which will be broken off in Pannenberg's later development, but they have been united in a central thrust towards freedom as eschatological encounter. The placement of the problem of the political order in the sphere of the ethical, of service to one's neighbour, puts it in direct relation with individual conscience as opposed to the order or development of human nature—which would make political participation part of the objective content

⁵⁵ Cp. Schleiermacher's view, expressed in the context of the question of the compatibility of divine foreknowledge with human freedom, that 'we deem those people least free who cannot *in general* [my emphasis] know their actions beforehand, i.e. those who are not conscious of any definite course of action.' (*Christian Faith*, 228.) It is hard to see why one should say that either unpredictability or predictability is closer to freedom than the other, except for the two very different accounts these theologians give of God's work in history and its relation to natural causes: the 'freer' human mode of action is the one more in analogy with God's relation to nature, of which Schleiermacher and Pannenberg have diverging accounts.

⁵⁶ 'Christlicher Glaube und menschliche Freiheit', 254.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 256.

demanded by freedom. Why can political freedom have only an indirect relation to eschatological freedom? Pannenberg's reticence is based here not so much on the objective structure of political life, as it will be later,⁵⁸ but on the subjective disturbance this idea might introduce in the Lutheran relation of gratuity between works and faith.⁵⁹

The division of the different concepts of freedom into formal and substantial seems to rule out a self-critical concept of freedom, giving the picture of a synchronic array of competing views of human nature that completely determine the content of the idea of freedom. The argument that freedom needs content is not drawn from the historicity of human existence, but from an analysis of the will as perfected by (objectively communicable) reasons. Ironically, this abstract way of argument leaves in the air the question of the mode of determination of the content of eschatological freedom—apart from attributing it to a historical encounter with God. It is in his Christology that Pannenberg follows up this question, not so much by specifying a perennial concrete content, but through an analysis of the relation between this freedom for the future and historical meaning.

IV. The historical authority of the freedom of Christ

In the New Testament, freedom is correlated to the entire experience of salvation and so liberation is the result of Christ's work of atonement—one of Christ's benefits, in Melancthonian language—which might make it difficult to derive the idea of Christian freedom from a model of Jesus' human freedom, inasmuch as his atoning work is effective on the basis of his difference from us. We find the reason why it can only be the Son who sets people free⁶⁰ in the wider context of the Gospel of John, as the Son's true freedom is

⁵⁸ *ATP*, 472/459, n. 218. See below, Ch. 3. ii. The statement that Christians may scrutinize 'political affairs for provisional signs of that hope [for the kingdom of God]' and work 'for provisional realizations of it' ('The Nation and the Human Race', in *FR*, 107–8/138–9) is to be taken in these contexts.

⁵⁹ Cf. 'Theology and the Crisis in Ethics', in *Ethics*, 57–70/41–54 at 66/50; 'Christian Morality and Political Issues', 127/161.

⁶⁰ John 8.36.

contrasted to that claimed by ‘the Jews’ and revealed precisely at the point at which the rebellion of the latter against the Father reaches its utmost vehemence. Throughout the history of God’s dealings with his people, his liberating interventions are followed by their disobedience and punishment, a new lapse into the slavery of sin and death.⁶¹ Christ breaks this cycle for God’s people because his own history attests his overcoming of the power of death through obedience.⁶² Thus the freedom of the Son receives its measure at the point where he seems to have fallen in the grip of his enemies.⁶³ Romans 6 refers more narrowly to Jesus’ resurrection as the point from which death no longer holds sway or rules over him, emphasizing not ‘the fact of Christ’s resurrection as such but the life of the Ruler who is no longer threatened by death.’⁶⁴ The singularity of Jesus’ resurrection introduces between Christ’s freedom and Christian freedom a relation not of analogy, but material difference and subordination. As Käsemann puts it, Christ ‘is the free one who became obedient, whereas we receive our freedom in allegiance to him and as a result of the right of lordship which God has graciously established over us.’⁶⁵ This distinction gives political substance to the idea of freedom in the New Testament.

So firstly, it is the historical identity of Christ, his death and resurrection, that determines the understanding of salvation and so structures the Christian experience of freedom. In Romans 6, death with Christ is presented as the basis of freedom from the slavery of sin, the basis for the confident hope of freedom from death and for life eternal, just as Christ lives eternally to God (Rom 6.7–10, 23). Secondly, liberating power belongs to the history of Christ inasmuch as he was and is himself free first. In other words, freedom must be an attribute of his person, as a condition of his communicating it to others. In the Gospel of John, for example, we find the privilege of freedom claimed exclusively for that existence related with God through the Son: ‘The slave does not have a permanent place in the

⁶¹ A point made indirectly yet acutely in John 6.49, 58.

⁶² As Rise puts it, liberation involves a change in human nature: fulfilling one’s human vocation ‘is possible only if God himself intervenes in the human person’s life and changes those conditions (the natural conditions) which the human person himself cannot change.’ (Rise, 246.)

⁶³ John 10.17–8.

⁶⁴ Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, tr. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (London: SCM, 1980), 170.

⁶⁵ Käsemann, *Romans*, 179.

household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.’ (John 8.35–36)

Pannenberg, distancing himself from Bultmann, makes it a matter of principle to subordinate soteriology to the historical content of Christology: ‘Christology, the question about Jesus himself, about his person, as he lived on earth in the time of Emperor Tiberius, must remain prior to all questions about his significance, to all soteriology. ... Otherwise, faith in salvation itself loses any real foundation.’⁶⁶ To speak of a model of freedom is to speak of an authority. However, Christ’s freedom is not merely a hermeneutical model, but also a political authority; or rather, his authority is the exercise of his eschatological freedom.

The political future of the eschaton is effective in the present through the Lordship of Christ. The manner of this Lordship, constituted in the unique anticipation of the eschaton by his resurrection, is in its two essential aspects a reversal of the usual notions of political authority. While political authority implies the privilege of discretionary binding decisions in an uncertain present, Christ’s Lordship continues to be hidden from the world even while it constantly renews the time of human decision.⁶⁷ Moreover, the fulfilment of this Lordship lies not in its own preservation over time, by which the success of political rule is usually measured, but in deferring to the Lordship of the Father: ‘God’s future is present in Jesus’ activity only in that he lets it be wholly and completely future, and certainly God’s future, beside which all else pales.’⁶⁸ Jesus’ Lordship is representative of the future fulfilment of the human destiny of dominion and lordship and introduces this eschatological reality in present relations: ‘The rule of Jesus Christ in his church consists in the elimination of the distinction between ruler and ruled.’⁶⁹ This is Pannenberg’s

⁶⁶ *JGM*, 48/42. Cf. Pierre Warin, *Le Chemin de la théologie chez Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Rome: Università Gregoriana Editrice, 1981), 110.

⁶⁷ Pannenberg does not go so far as to affirm on this account the reality of the atheist experience of the hiddenness of God; cf. Warin, 165.

⁶⁸ *ST* 1. 326–7/354f; *JGM*, 370/385. Vechtel (199–200) objects to this, arguing that since God’s revelation is concretized in the person of Christ, one can no longer speak of his activity as provisional. But precisely as Logos (in Pannenberg’s sense), the Lordship of Christ is connected with the historical self-differentiation of human beings and therefore to be fulfilled in the revelation of reality in the eschaton.

⁶⁹ *JGM*, 372/386.

condensed formulation of the Christian hope for freedom in eternity. Every one of the redeemed will defer to each other, and all will defer to God as Christ defers to the Father, experiencing freedom in absolute devotion. At the same time, this is a description of the dynamic of eternity as living duration: eternity is to be conceived neither as temporal extension nor contraction, but theo-politically, as the coincidence of total submission and total gift.

Pannenberg's concept of lordship is closely derived from the idea of the uniqueness of revelation; it is as the unique revelation of the Father that Christ asserts his Lordship over time. Equally, the political character of his Lordship is utterly defined by its reference to the future fulfilment of the kingdom of God which Christ has brought near. While political, this dominion does not conceal any coercive surplus. Consequently, the church acts as Christ's representative not by claiming a jurisdictional, quasi-political prerogative in interpreting the significance of the Christ event; its interpretation is authoritative when it recognizes its subjection to Christ in the hermeneutical task of relating its own situation to the infinite meaning of revelation and in this way brings into exercise its gifted freedom.⁷⁰ In the absence of a determinate yet universal authoritative model of freedom, which is capable of representation precisely through interpretation, authority would be bound to assert itself in the control or refusal of contingency. In other words, non-coercive authority is impossible outside the sphere of a unique revelation.

The Church recognizes the lordship of Christ in the present and also that the enjoyment of the freedom of God's kingdom lies in the future. The obedience demanded by this acknowledgment takes the forms of discipleship,⁷¹ imitation, representation, by the following of the Word. The freedom of the church is not primarily an external social qualification, but a theological attribute, that of representing Christ's Lordship through the privilege and responsibility of proclaiming the gospel. Whereas a positivistic affirmation of the authority of the Word would require an internalization of the model of secular authority for the sake of its enforcement, realizing that the present power of the promise is

⁷⁰ Cf. Ch. 2. ii, below.

⁷¹ *JGM*, 375/389–90.

inextricable from its reference to the future enables the church to exercise an authority corresponding to the model of Christ.⁷² The church ‘ruled by its exalted Lord through his Spirit’ is then truly a ‘precursory form of the Kingdom of Christ’. The church has the possibility of not getting caught in a struggle with the passing of time, either by vainly seeking relevance or by resisting change, inasmuch as its very commission is concerned with preparation for the final future.

This demand is obscured when the way of being of the church is objectified and set against individual freedom in the form of law. While Jesus did not set himself against the Law, he saw its authority as relativized by the nearness of the kingdom of salvation. The ambiguity surrounding the justification of Jesus’ behaviour persists to the Cross and is resolved only by his resurrection. It is in the resurrection that the claim of the Law, previously regarded as universal, becomes historical and limited.⁷³ The Law does not apply to Christians not simply because they belong to a different historical epoch, but because they submit to the lordship of the living Christ.

The state, on the other hand, necessarily stands in a deficient symbolic relationship with the kingdom of God: ‘to the extent that the order of states still requires force because of the wilfulness of its members, it cannot become a pure representation of free obedience to God’s Lordship.’⁷⁴ For Hegel, submission to the exercise of force is the objective sign of the individual’s rational internalization of the right embodied in the state.⁷⁵ Pannenberg does indeed similarly look to the state as a historical agent, but for him its path is a contingent one, to which its citizens are not bound for the sake of the rationality of their freedom. The cause of the imperfect symbolization of the kingdom of God in the political lies in the latter’s intrinsic connection with the fleeting present: because ‘political activity is concerned with the appropriate mastery of the given social situation’, it demands ‘the

⁷² Church offices confer the role of expressing personally the unity of the community (‘The Reformation and the Unity of the Church’, in *The Church*, tr. Keith Crim (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 84–98 at 97/265) and involve a responsibility for the unity of the church universal (‘Das kirchliche Amt und die Einheit der Kirche’, *BST* 3. 138–149 at 144).

⁷³ See below, Ch. 2. iii.

⁷⁴ *JGM*, 376/391.

⁷⁵ Cf. Alan Patten, *Hegel’s Idea of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 179–81, 184–88.

creatively anticipatory view for what is really necessary and possible'.⁷⁶ The difference lies then in the account of temporal consciousness that is incarnated in the state. For Hegel, 'practical activity in the world represents the effort to give reality or actual existence to the determinations of theoretical spirit, to demonstrate its freedom.'⁷⁷ Conversely, for Pannenberg the present's call to action arises as a problem which can only elicit partial and mutable decisions. It is not the strength of historical consciousness, but the power of predictive calculation which is politically decisive, so the relevance of Christological memory is curtailed by the limited forward-looking horizon of political life. This temporal difference underlies Pannenberg's objections against the Barthian arguments from analogy,⁷⁸ and also against alternative approaches, looking not from the future but from the past.⁷⁹ Any superior political judgement that Christians may be capable of is due to the fact that they know not only the final destiny of humanity, but also that we cannot reach it by our own resourcefulness. In the meantime, the church itself is summoned to attest to what possibilities there really are and awaken, but not inflame, the political imagination.⁸⁰

V. From Trinitarian Christology to a Trinitarian history of freedom

So far we have seen that freedom for the future is conditioned by the Lordship of Christ. However, Christ can communicate his freedom because he was actually free: in the history of Christ we contemplate the living actuality of the concord of divine and human freedom in the unity of Jesus' will and the Father's.⁸¹ Consistent with his earlier position,

⁷⁶ JGM, 376/391.

⁷⁷ Thomas A. Lewis, *Freedom and Tradition in Hegel, Freedom and Tradition in Hegel: Reconsidering Anthropology, Ethics, and Religion* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 127.

⁷⁸ Pannenberg recounts that when he went to Basel to study with Barth, one of their significant divergences was over the justifiability of state espionage in the context of the light of Christ's presence in the world ('An Intellectual Pilgrimage', *Dialogue: A Journal of Theology*, 45 (2006), 184–91 at 186–7).

⁷⁹ Johann Baptist Metz's concept of *memoria passionis* generates a very different picture of the temporal reference of political action, conceived as part of a new form of political culture (*Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*, tr. David Smith (London: Burns & Oates, 1980), 102ff.). Cf. Joseph A. Colombo, *An Essay on Theology and History: Studies in Pannenberg, Metz, and the Frankfurt School* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990).

⁸⁰ JGM, 377/391–2.

⁸¹ Ibid. 349–354/362–68.

Pannenberg strongly rejects any notion of Jesus' freedom as the capacity to be for or against God; in fact, it is on the ground that it would imply such a conception that he rejects the Roman Catholic doctrine of the atonement as meritorious sacrifice. If both good and evil were genuinely equal possibilities of human freedom, Jesus' unity with God would have to be seen as 'a work of his human will' rather than properly acknowledged as God's act and, accordingly, as received rather than performed by Jesus.⁸² But if the content of Jesus' freedom, his unity with God, is given by grace, are we not in danger of seeing Christ in his humanity as a passive instrument?

The question is pre-empted if we abandon the picture of a mysterious reserve of identity which stamps action as personally authentic. 'When a mission has seized a man so unconditionally, he no longer has any choice with respect to that mission. *He reserves no inner independence for himself over against his mission.* Precisely this constitutes his freedom.'⁸³ If a subject identifies completely with a project, there is no barrier between inner freedom and external necessity: all possible contradictions are externalized. But would it not then be said that the subject's degree of freedom corresponds to the degree to which their project is realized, and the idea of freedom reduced to historical impact, voided of its moral authority? How are we to distinguish a mission, a destiny, from a series of coherent but superficial choices? Furthermore, is the free self exhausted without remainder at the moment of death, whenever it may come?

To this last question Pannenberg's reply is that a destiny is unthinkable without its broader historical impact as well. It is a condition of its meaningfulness, as the fragmentary always receives its significance as a part of the whole. Everything in a life is connected to its totality: the freedom given by a mission is that it partially reveals an even wider meaning.

To understand Pannenberg's answer to the first question, we have to consider his new argument against neutral freedom of choice, namely that when someone is opting between various courses of action, the free decision is that which will contribute meaning to that

⁸² Ibid. 351/364.

⁸³ Ibid. 350/363 (my emphasis).

person's history, when 'it is established which of the available possibilities is most appropriate to the destiny of the one who wills.'⁸⁴ This is not a self-aware process, as concern for one's destiny is visible in the pattern of decision itself: stepping back from immediate impressions, putting aside one's instinctive reactions and ingrained habits, questioning the meaning of the situation and its possibilities.⁸⁵ The ability Pannenberg refers to in these terms is not simply the capacity to have second-order volitions, although such an ordering of desires seems a necessary part of self-transcendence; the main possible contradiction is not that between the self and the manifoldness of desires, but that between personal integrity and the sheer givenness of the situation in which the self is placed.⁸⁶ This ability depends on trust—one must have hope that it will be possible to maintain one's integrity in whatever kind of place the world will turn out to be; it is part of what Pannenberg calls 'openness to the world'.⁸⁷ Pannenberg is not advocating reconciliation with fate, especially not the self-deceit by which one 'chooses' to be in a situation in which one has become comfortable or resigned; on the contrary, the meaning of 'openness to the world' is that the search for a meaningful frame of reference cannot be satisfied with any finite environment.⁸⁸

While the same kind of openness is necessary in the overcoming of idolatrous, functionalized conceptions of the divine, the authentic God-relationship allows the revelation 'from God's always still uncomprehended reality' of 'the reply ... to that open questioning of human freedom about its destiny'.⁸⁹ Any present reserve towards the finite

⁸⁴ Ibid. 352/365. Alfred Gläßer rightly objects that this formulation is too narrow, inasmuch as there could be several equally appropriate and good options (*Verweigte Partnerschaft? Anthropologische, konfessionale und ökumenische Aspekte der Theologie Wolfhart Pannenburgs* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1991), 53–4).

⁸⁵ JGM, 352/365–6.

⁸⁶ For second-order volitions, cf. Harry G. Frankfurt, 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person', in *The Importance of What We Care About: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 11–26. As Frankfurt insists, simply having them does not increase freedom, there has to be the capacity to control them as well.

⁸⁷ Following the line of Max Scheler, who coined the phrase (*The Human Place in the Cosmos*, tr. Manfred S. Frings (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2009)), Adolf Portmann (*A Zoologist Looks at Humankind*, tr. Judith Schaefer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990)), and Arnold Gehlen (*Man*). 'In anthropology the newly discovered, unique freedom of man to inquire and to move beyond every given regulation of his existence is called his "openness to the world".' (WIM 3/6) See Stewart, *Reconstructing Science and Theology*, for a critique of Pannenberg's 'monolithic view of culture' (Stewart, 157).

⁸⁸ WIM, 10/11. Rahner similarly relates freedom with the experience of God ('Ursprünge der Freiheit', 58).

⁸⁹ JGM, 352–3/366.

is valid insofar as it participates in the future of God's yet partially hidden decision, insofar as it anticipates the destiny to be revealed by God himself in the eschaton. These two answers introduce the idea of a destiny that cannot be fulfilled in the space of a human life, because it is infinitely open for the God-relationship; one's mission is the truthful and abiding sense of one's destiny 'in unity with ... reality as a whole'.⁹⁰

So far Pannenberg's description of Christ's freedom is open to anthropological generalization. This may be demonstrated through a brief detour through his formulation of the notion of destiny in strictly anthropological terms. To summarize, one could say that the desire for freedom begins with the necessity and impossibility of a description, a linguistic grasp of our experience of time and space.⁹¹ Through the weakness of their instincts, human beings are characterized, in comparison with other animal species, by a relative independence from specific environments, what Pannenberg calls 'openness to the world'.⁹² This is the human mode of presence in the world, 'presence to the other as other'—since there is no instinctive response to the other—, which engenders the promise of objective perception.⁹³ That would be a perspective which grasps the object of perception in its singularity and therefore in its relations to all other objects and oneself⁹⁴—in other words, the perspective of a complete linguistic description of the world. However, this step is 'unaccompanied by a distinct consciousness of genera and species' and therefore, 'the exocentric structure of human living has ... an openness that is not

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Cp. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, A.i–ii, tr. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 59–79. 'The effect of beginning the *Phenomenology* with three sections on "Consciousness" and with problems involved in a post-empiricist understanding of knowledge is that it motivates our discarding the representationalist picture of our relation to the world and replacing it with a reflection on the kinds of social creatures we are.' (Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 44.) Pannenberg's interpretation of the aspiration to objectivity tackles directly the question of freedom, bracketing for the moment the intermediary of sociality.

⁹² *ATP*, 33–4/32. The latter expression is borrowed from Max Scheler.

⁹³ *ATP*, 66/63. The formula is not ambiguous in the original: 'in seinem Sein beim andern als einem andern'.

⁹⁴ 'If I am able to grasp the individual object as this individual object and thus as other in relation both to other objects and to myself, I must have reached beyond the individual object and acquired' a general perspective, made a 'step into the universal.' (*ATP*, 67–8/65.)

restricted to the things of the world.’ The question of God, as it emerges out of the scope of this openness, refers then not to a subjective, but an exocentric relation.⁹⁵

All this is not to deny the primary fact of egocentricity, because ‘each person experiences time and space only in reference to himself.’⁹⁶ Now the human task—or ‘man’s destiny’, as Pannenberg calls it—appears to be to carry this egocentricity within one’s openness to the world.⁹⁷ Our original sin is to refuse this demand by grounding the unity of the world in ourselves, either through knowledge or power; the failure of this attempt is immediately observed in our finite experience of time, as events slip back from us or loom threateningly on the horizon. ‘Harmony between the ego and reality’ cannot be brought about by our own efforts.⁹⁸ Pannenberg even appeals to the theory of relativity as the culmination of the scientific insight that our own experience of time does not in fact correspond to its reality. The ‘spatial rendering of time [time being the fourth dimension of the reality of three-dimensional space] belongs to the objectivity of the human experience of reality, to our concern to perceive reality just as it is in itself, independently of ourselves.’⁹⁹

In other words, there is an intrinsic human desire to know reality as it is, not as it would be perceived through an innate or subconscious schema of affinities and pursuits. It is also a desire to want to know oneself objectively, as part of the whole series of connections which form the history of the world. Since such total knowledge cannot become accessible until the end of the world, any self-knowledge has the character of anticipation, of faith.¹⁰⁰ Therefore meaningful self-knowledge depends not just on the relations which integrate the self in the world, but also on the context of meaning of the whole. (It is notable that

⁹⁵ *ATP*, 69/66: ‘Even when they move beyond all experience or idea of perceptible objects, they continue to be exocentric, related to something other than themselves, but now to an Other beyond all the objects of their world, an Other that at the same time embraces this entire world and thus ensures the possible unification of the life of human beings in the world.’

⁹⁶ *WIM*, 55/41. Cf. Elisabeth Dieckmann, *Personalität Gottes, Personalität des Menschen: Ihre Deutung im theologischen Denken Wolfhart Pannenburgs* (Altenberge: Oros, 1995), 57ff.

⁹⁷ i.e. participation from within time in eternity (*MIG*, 68/63).

⁹⁸ *WIM*, 62/45.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 73/52.

¹⁰⁰ *MIG*, 166. Pagano objects that Pannenberg in fact assumes the possibility of an eschatological completion of meaning, which in turn would depend on the existence of God (Pagano, 91, 227; 204; cf. Gläßer, 54); however, Pannenberg does not assert that the redeemed meaning of all events will be revealed in the eschaton, only that a fulfilment of personality is thinkable.

meaning is a characteristic of sentences, of language as action—action being a particular ordering of different states of affairs towards a certain goal—,¹⁰¹ not merely of language as a set of signs or interrelated symbols. Hence why to speak of the meaning of world history is to speak of world history as God’s action—yet without anthropomorphizing God, who is Spirit, not a Mind in the idealist sense.¹⁰² He brings the present out of his own future, rather than construct a future on the basis of the present, which is all we could attempt to do on the basis of our own fugitive experience of time;¹⁰³ so God’s action has a different temporal structure to human action.)

The desire for order which in the Introduction was identified as tied up in the question of freedom falls under what Pannenberg recognizes as the problem of egocentricity, i.e. subjectivity. Pannenberg’s explanation of the baneful development of egocentricity into original sin unfortunately does not examine desire under the aspect of creativity, but only from the angle of a relation to external objects, be it knowledge or power, determined by an anxiety of identity which finds its desperate expression in self-assertive, purely negative freedom.¹⁰⁴ Consequently, his positive definition of freedom almost erases desire, replacing its variability with adaptation to the conditions of temporal finitude.¹⁰⁵ To be free is to understand one’s present situation and to make the decisions consequent on a consideration of the whole of one’s existence; and since this is not possible now except through faith, it means to have a correct faith about the ultimate context of one’s life, a faith which would allow one to see beyond present circumstances and comprehend the possibilities that are discovered in the present only when understood in its widest context of meaning.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ *MIG*, 158.

¹⁰² *IST*, 34–38.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* 48.

¹⁰⁴ *ST* 3. 249–51/286–88.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, §4.1, pp. 12–3 on the generation of variability through the activity and receptivity of the subject. (Cp. *ATP*, 253/246.) This is a distinction facilitated by Schleiermacher’s starting point in self-consciousness and more problematic from Pannenberg’s anthropological starting-point in organic existence: Pannenberg himself considers the problem of subjectivity as constituted in the question of the possibility of freedom (*BQT* 3. 92/22).

¹⁰⁶ *BQT* 3. 209–10. Cf. Gózdź, 70: events have a significance (*Bedeutung*) in themselves which is accessible only through interpretation (*Deutung*).

In the sense outlined in the excursus above, Christ's freedom is exemplary of anthropological freedom. However, Pannenberg makes the stronger claim that our true freedom derives from his. He applies the concept of destiny to humanity not just distributively, but as a whole. A historical-hermeneutical perspective on humanity would not necessarily lead to such a claim, but a Christological one will. Certainly the question of the relation of individual to the possibility of general destiny is raised here in its most acute form, since Jesus is proclaimed in the New Testament to be the first to have attained the goal for which we were created.¹⁰⁷ If there is substantial correspondence between the shape of human destiny resulting from Christological investigation and some suggestions of philosophical anthropology, that would be due in no small part to the fact that 'the correspondence of anthropology and Christology has been operative in the whole history of idea in Europe since the rise of Christendom' as 'elements of Jesus' own particular individuality ... have been recognized in the universal significance'.¹⁰⁸ But one cannot arrive at a cogent notion of human destiny simply by generalizing certain features of Jesus' character or message; theologically one can only proceed from the fact of God's self-revelation. Christ's activity may have resulted in one of the most astonishing effective histories of the world, but only in a way quantitatively different from other great personalities; it was in his passivity that he determined the lives of all.¹⁰⁹ Jesus's self-understanding in his proclamation of the Kingdom, that he 'personally was the one in whom salvation or judgement are ultimately decided',¹¹⁰ has been turned by his resurrection into the objective confirmation that he is, in his person, the revelation of God. In what sense then does our freedom derive from his?

One possible way to proceed from a Christology rooted in the concept of revelation to the question of the destiny of the individual is to describe the correspondence in terms of form and content, a procedure that corresponds to the widespread distinction between exclusive and inclusive Christologies. The formal element (sometimes rashly identified with Christ's divine nature) vouchsafes unicity, the preliminary negative difference from any other

¹⁰⁷ *JGM*, 49/43.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 203–4/208–9.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 210/216.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* 64/59.

destiny; the content contributes the similarity and adds observable differences. The intrinsic dangers of this schema are noticeable in its resemblance to a general theory of identity as the addition of historical to biological peculiarity—neither part can make much sense of the other if it is not integrated with it from the beginning.¹¹¹ Pannenberg takes a different approach, holding that the connection between Jesus' own and our universal destiny is not determined formally and then materially, but by 'the content of his freedom', 'the choice of his mission of proclaiming the eschatological imminence of God as the beginning of salvation'.¹¹² This connection is encapsulated at a dogmatic level by the concept of *enhypostasis*,¹¹³ but the dogmatic statement derives from the event of the resurrection of Christ. The idea of *enhypostasis* does not add anything to that of incarnation—it is a name for, not the explanation of Jesus' unity with God; in other words, 'Jesus is no synthesis of human and divine of which we can only see the human side in the historical Jesus. Rather, as this man, Jesus is God.'¹¹⁴ Pannenberg relies here both on the Barthian principle that we cannot grasp the incarnation starting from an anti-incarnational idea of God and to Schleiermacher's rejection of the univocal application of the concept of nature to both humanity and divinity.¹¹⁵ To avoid the introduction of any pre-Christological analogical relation between divinity and humanity, Pannenberg sets up the following relation between *ratio essendi* and *ratio cognoscendi*: 'the perception of Jesus' eternal Sonship as dialectically identical with his humanity is based noetically upon the particularity of just this human being in his relation to the divine Father; ontologically, the relation is inverted, for the divine Sonship designates the ontological root in which Jesus' human existence, connected with the Father and nevertheless distinguished from him, has the ground of its unity and of its meaning.'¹¹⁶ This kind of affirmation has been criticized

¹¹¹ Cf. Cornelius A. Buller, *The Unity of History and Nature in Pannenberg's Theology* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1916), 56–7.

¹¹² *JGM*, 353/367.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* 349/362: 'Jesus' *enhypostasis* in the Son of God means precisely that Jesus claimed for himself no independence of any kind from God because his freedom consisted not in independence from God but in unity with him.' On the theoretical separation between *enhypostasia* and *anhypostasia* (one does not have to accept the latter for the sake of the former), see Oliver D. Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 74–5.

¹¹⁴ *JGM*, 322–3/334.

¹¹⁵ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/1, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance, tr. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956), §58, 134–5; Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, §96.1, pp. 391–93.

¹¹⁶ *JGM*, 337/349.

as an attempt to deduce the thought of divinity from the peculiarities of Jesus' life.¹¹⁷ That path is, in fact, excluded by the nature of Pannenberg's appeal to Jesus' resurrection as not only the vindication, but also the revelation of his life.¹¹⁸ What we are invited to contemplate here is the life of Christ in its eschatological meaning. In the absence of belief in the resurrection, Pannenberg would still be advocating a *salto mortale*. In short, the particular truthfulness of Jesus' life coincides with the truth of his divinity. Applied to our current discussion of freedom, this means that what we learn about the freedom of the second person of the Trinity we learn through the human action and fate of Jesus. Conversely, the fullness of freedom achieved by Christ has, ontologically speaking, its basis in his divinity. This ontological basis is clearly not to be taken as an enhanced potential for further individualization of Christ's humanity, which would amount to the reintroduction of a dichotomy form–content. In what sense is then Jesus' freedom divine in its origin?

The main dogmatic proposal of *Jesus—God and Man* is to understand Jesus' divinity on the basis of his relationship to the Father, bypassing the problematic option of a traditional Logos Christology.¹¹⁹ This means not just relinquishing the idea of unity with God as a psychological datum, because 'knowledge of one's own ignorance is a condition of human openness and freedom',¹²⁰ but also the more sophisticated postulate of a gradually realized union with God, manifested in a corresponding progression in his inner life. The chief objection to the latter idea, as Pannenberg perceptively notices, is that it understands unity as consequent upon 'the disappearance of that which established his distinctness from God at the beginning of his life.'¹²¹ The upshot is that Jesus' freedom is not to be understood as his complete, purposeful control over the meaning of his actions, mediated either in advance by the possession of an absolute knowledge or feeling, or step by step through the

¹¹⁷ Iain Taylor, 'How to Be a Trinitarian Theologian: A Critique of Wolfhart Pannenberg's Systematic Theology', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 60 (2007), 180–195 at 192.

¹¹⁸ Cp. Hans W. Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 135–37, 142–3.

¹¹⁹ Starting with the postscript to the fifth German edition of the book (1976), Pannenberg qualifies this rejection, but more in the sense of a redefinition of 'Logos christology'—no longer a 'timeless universal structure' but the 'principle of the concrete, historically unfolded order of the world', of the self-differentiation of the creatures in their history (*ST* 2. 63/81)—than in that of a modification of his earlier Christological statements. (*JGM*, 408–9.)

¹²⁰ *JGM*, 333/343–4.

¹²¹ *Ibid.* 306/316.

reception of new information. Instead, an illustration of Jesus' freedom is his decision to make the last journey to Jerusalem: he was 'determined to bring about a decision' and 'expected that God would, in one way or another, acknowledge him, even in the case of his own failure'; his claim to authority had an authentically 'proleptic structure'.¹²²

Nevertheless, since self-consciousness is essential to personhood, it cannot be said that Jesus' self-consciousness does not matter for his unity with God.¹²³ The latter is expressed in the former by the 'attitude that characterized him and qualified him as "the Son"', 'unquestioning subordination, a spontaneous and unbiased subordination that voluntarily arises from intimate acquaintance'.¹²⁴ The intuitive appeal of this characterization is so strong for Pannenberg that he speculates that 'it is probably correct to suppose an original affinity between Sonship and the motif of obedience that goes beyond the paucity of explicit New Testament references.'¹²⁵ Obedience is fulfilled in representation, i.e. the identification with God in his own activity, as the outward extension of Jesus' personal address to God as 'Abba'.¹²⁶ What sustains this address is his powerful consciousness of the nearness of God's kingdom, in the extension of his forgiveness and communication of his love.¹²⁷

If Jesus' unity with God stopped at the functional level, it would not be possible to see him as God's revelation, and we would wonder whether the freedom expressed in obedience is not really slavery to necessity, the imposition of divine command. Revelation implies unity of essence.¹²⁸ The idea of essence is in justified in general by 'the ontological priority (*Auszeichnung*) of unity over (*vor*) differentiation', reflected also in the unity of truth.¹²⁹ Essence is not to be thought of in the sense of a separately instantiated set of definite

¹²² Ibid. 66/61.

¹²³ Ibid. 326/337.

¹²⁴ *IST*, 59–60; cf. *JGM*, 159/159.

¹²⁵ *JGM*, 159/159 n. 99.

¹²⁶ Ibid. 229–30/235f.

¹²⁷ Ibid. 232–3/239.

¹²⁸ For revelation as self-revelation, Pannenberg's early statement in *RH*, esp. 1–8/7–11, is still indispensable; there, the idea of self-revelation is developed in close connection with the thought of the fullness and uniqueness of revelation. A functional unity would stop short of revelation because 'no single act of God can cause its originator to be known completely, precisely because it is only one act among many.' (*RH*, 7/10.)

¹²⁹ *JGM*, 343/355–6 n. 41.

attributes or a common substratum on which individualizing attributes are imprinted. It does not persist in spite of personal distinctiveness, but exists through the communion the latter enables. In Jesus' relationship with God, 'an "essence" common to both emerges in the course of their interaction.'¹³⁰ Essence and will are interrelated once the idea of God as absolute subjective consciousness is abandoned.¹³¹

How does this understanding of essence make sense in the context of the Chalcedonian doctrine of two natures? We have seen how the divine essence unites the Son and the Father in Jesus' history, but how is his essential humanity shared with us? What does it mean that human essence is integrated through the person of Christ?¹³² In other words, how is our promised eternal personhood, in which communion with God is an unchangeable gift, related to the temporal fluctuations in which character and identity come to be? All these questions find a Trinitarian resolution. Just like the divinity of Christ, the divinity of the Holy Spirit is established historically by an understanding of revelation as God's self-unveiling. Revelation cannot be confined within the subject-object dichotomy;¹³³ as object of knowledge, God's revelation shapes the transformation of those it addresses in their personal response. The consciousness of the presence of the Spirit 'only expresses a reflection upon that which already happens in the knowledge of Jesus' divinity insofar as it is my perception. No knowledge, not even the knowledge of God's revelation in Jesus is imparted to me in any other way than that *I* have the knowledge.'¹³⁴ It is the Spirit who brings self-differentiation, obedience, through self-consciousness.¹³⁵

The process of the self-differentiation of believers is integrated in Pannenberg's general eschatological anthropology, which reflects the Christological structure of anticipation and confirmation outlined above. Instead of the identification of the person with the subject of

¹³⁰ Ibid. 344/356.

¹³¹ *IST*, 33–35, ST 1. 388–9/420–1.

¹³² *JGM*, 344/356–7; cp. 160–63/160–63.

¹³³ This stage beyond the 'objective'—which is not in any way left behind—is necessary because of the 'particular content' of the knowledge of God.

¹³⁴ *JGM*, 175/175.

¹³⁵ Ibid. 176/177.

self-consciousness, he uses a contrast between ego (the 'I' of linguistic self-reference) and self. The difference between ego and self grows out of the temporal nature of our existence. To put it crudely, the ego is 'each of us ... at every moment of our existence'; the self is the totality unveiled in the presence to itself of the ego as past and future: 'the whole is already present in the fragment'.¹³⁶ The theological and ethical significance of the promise of this totality is contained in the idea of personhood. "Person" signifies the human being in its wholeness, which transcends the fragmentary nature of its reality at hand.¹³⁷ The shape in which totality is present is one's personality.¹³⁸ Christian self-distinction refers to the change of personality that takes place through one's self-relation to Christ and the Spirit.

Not only does this self-differentiation take place after the pattern of Jesus' sonship, it encompasses the real grace of sonship through Christ. The consummation of the certainty of revelation is living by faith, exocentrically: 'The Spirit shows himself to be a personal reality by not extinguishing the personal character of human action through his activity but by letting personal life come to consummation through willing dedication.'¹³⁹ At the same time, the Spirit becomes 'the personal centre of Christian action': it 'is the real subject of Christian action, insofar as such action happens out of trust in Jesus and the Father.' As Spirit-led life, Christian existence is characterized by freedom in analogy with the life of the Trinity in its relations.¹⁴⁰ Pannenberg praises Hegel for the insight that 'the essence of the person is to exist in self-dedication to another person', an insight which enabled him to see 'the unity in the Trinity as the unity of reciprocal self-dedication, thus,

¹³⁶ ATP, 240/233, 235/228.

¹³⁷ Ibid. 235/228. Timothy Bradshaw has argued that Pannenberg's insistence on the eschatological completion of personality has left 'individual man too much as a mere function of the whole' (*Trinity and Ontology*, 395, cf. 271). (Cf. Franz-Josef Overbeck, *Der gottbezogene Mensch: Eine systematische Untersuchung zur Bestimmung des Menschen und zur 'Selbstverwirklichung' Gottes in der Anthropologie und Trinitätstheologie Wolfhart Pannenberg's* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2000), 367, 386.) Conversely, one could argue that if the whole is the totality of history, it is functionalized as the process towards the eschatological community.

¹³⁸ ATP, 240/233.

¹³⁹ JGM, 176/178.

¹⁴⁰ Although there is a shift of focus in Pannenberg's work from Christology to Trinitarian theology, I feel that Bradshaw overstates this when he suggests that perhaps 'doctrinally the incarnation of the Logos has been superseded by the Life of the Trinity being enacted and revealed in finite space and time.' (*Pannenberg: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 117–8.) It is still Christology, however much revised and expanded, which mediates between anthropology and theological language. (Cf. Gózdź, 106: 'the vocation of man is community with God in Jesus Christ ... Jesus Christ himself is the vocation of man.')

as a unity that only comes into existence through the process of reciprocal dedication.’ Admittedly the acuity of this insight was spoiled for Hegel by his own attempt to determine a Trinitarian structure in the concept of Spirit as mind.¹⁴¹ Pannenberg’s concept of the Trinitarian unity of reciprocal self-dedication is inspired by the Patristic doctrine of perichoresis, yet whereas the latter is a doxological statement about God’s eternal existence, for Pannenberg the dedication of the divine persons to each other includes their historical relations in the process of revelation.¹⁴² The sense of a growing perfection of divine devotion from time to eternity points to the mystery of God’s infinity, experienced in the thought of revelation and yet uncomprehended.¹⁴³

Granted that the eschaton will reveal the human essence in complete communion, what is the eschatological extension of Pannenberg’s notion of human freedom? God steps freely out of his eternity, but does not our freedom come to an end when we are called into his eternity? These questions are warranted by Pannenberg’s exposition of final redemption: “‘Salvation is the wholeness of his life for which he longs but never finally achieves in the course of his earthly existence’, ‘obtained when the destiny of man becomes identical with this present existence, when man is united in his present with his past and his future. It is surely clear that such unity with oneself is not possible without concurrence with the world and without community with other men.’¹⁴⁴ But the human experience of freedom involves incompleteness and anticipation, risk and sacrifice. Salvation seems to suspend not only human freedom, but also divine: has God put a stop to his free activity towards his people who then experience their destiny in an absolute present? It is here that the political language of freedom is indispensable, since it allows the concept of freedom to be extracted from our current experience of time, from the movement from constraint to anticipation. Inasmuch as that movement was enabled by obedience and dedication to God, its dynamic is eternally established. The eschaton is eternity experienced as the last

¹⁴¹ *JGM*, 182/183–4.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* 183/183.

¹⁴³ *JGM*, 183–4/185. Cf. Juan A. Martínez-Camino, ‘Aufhebung: Zur Architektur des ersten Bandes der Systematischen Theologie Wolfhart Pannenberg’, *Kerygma und Dogma* 45 (1999), 91–101 at 99: ‘God is not accessible to thought (*denkzugänglich*), although he is necessary to thought (*denknotwendig*).’ His further suggestion that this necessity implies reality overlooks the place of the experience of time in Pannenberg’s account of thinking itself.

¹⁴⁴ *JGM*, 192/196.

time, the time of decision, reinterpreting what had come before it in the language of justice and politics, righteousness and rule. Jesus ‘expected the decision about his mission to come from God, not from any human tribunal’; the end of time will mean such a forceful reversal of hermeneutical perspective, from human to divine judgment.¹⁴⁵ The eschaton is divine revolution; for the saved, freedom will persist in the aspect of devotion, although only God will be active under the aspect of historical freedom, through his work of judgment.¹⁴⁶ Desire understood as the gravitational pull of relations is to be eschatologically sublimated into personal devotion. The promise of the eschaton cannot be simply the revelation of a hidden meaning of lived experience, but the actual fulfilment of an eternal complete identity, the coincidence of ego and self.¹⁴⁷ In short, the key to freedom is the Trinitarian pattern in which through the ecstatic dynamism of the Spirit creatures attain their Logos-given essential self.¹⁴⁸ The eschaton transforms the desire for essential being into free communion.

Pannenberg takes the history of the emergence of the concept of afterlife in Israelite religion to be evidence for the strong connection between the concept of resurrection and the independence of individual destiny.¹⁴⁹ Resurrection correlates with the relative independence of the person from a natural hermeneutical community; it is the same logic that grounds the possibility in eternity of a community of indirect relations, mediated in Christ.¹⁵⁰ So even if not all are saved, if the desire for freedom is occasionally stunted and

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 354/368.

¹⁴⁶ Although predictability is not thoroughly denied; see Charles E. Gutenson, *Reconsidering the Doctrine of God* (New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 123 n. 261.

¹⁴⁷ ‘Person und Subjekt’, in *GST* 2. 80–95 at 93–94.

¹⁴⁸ *IST*, 45. However, Gianluigi Pasquale’s suggestion (*La ragione della storia: Per una filosofia della storia come scienza* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2011), 182–3; cf. 35) that this Trinitarian logic may be extended to a general logic of being seems to me to go against Pannenberg’s emphasis on the concrete and personal nature of the work of the Spirit.

¹⁴⁹ *JGM*, 83/80. Elisabeth Dieckmann points out that this is for Pannenberg the crucial difference between Trinitarian and human persons: ‘a human being is not constituted as a person through their relationships with other human persons’, whereas in the Trinity ‘their personality is pure relationality.’ (Dieckmann, 341–2.)

¹⁵⁰ *JGM*, 88/84. Cristescu objects to this line of argument, in the sense that ‘the universality of Jesus’ resurrection has already been fulfilled in his person’ (Cristescu, 301), which makes the life of the resurrection accessible in the present (ibid. 294–5). Pasquale offers a more faithful interpretation when he argues that the resurrection of Jesus, as the actualization of the future of God, is the condition of the retroactive power of the eschaton (Pasquale, 126–7).

does not come to fulfilment for every individual, its partial fulfilment occurs in the inherent connection of the events of one's life to the universal communal vocation of humanity. Even then there is no remainder of time that is not taken up into eternity, even though the desire in its actual, self-related historical form is negated by God's judgment.

In summary, the desire for freedom may be interpreted directly in a negative way, denying its limitation in origin and scope to a particular set of temporal circumstances; this negative interpretation is already confirmed in the life and resurrection of Christ. It may be interpreted positively only indirectly, by allowing the contribution of the individual to become part of the theological story of humanity, absorbed in the movements of religious and political history.¹⁵¹ Already then it seems to have lost the temporal character of desire, and one may talk more appropriately of fractured or partially realized meaning—or, theologically, of a disrupted 'participation in eternity'.¹⁵² To speak more concretely of desire one must do so in the context of its social language; the definition of freedom from a purely individual viewpoint would be fatally incomplete, because 'common humanity, language and society are conditions of personal life, and form the atmosphere in which alone freedom can breathe.'¹⁵³ Pannenberg's ecclesiology and concept of the state, the focus of the following two chapters, are an integral part of his idea of freedom.

¹⁵¹ Mauro Pedrazzoli correctly notes that the 'surplus value' of faith lies not in added information, but in 'the intuition of synthesis: when it is said that faith embraces the whole ... what is meant is precisely a work of synthesis, the perception of connections, of links and crossings, a grasping of the sense of the whole in a unifying harmony.' (*Intellectus quaerens fidem: Fede—ragione in W. Pannenberg. Il problema della credibilità, con riferimento ai contributi di Rahner, Blondel e Pascal* (Rome: Studia Anselmiana, 1981), 132–3.)

¹⁵² MIG, 68/51.

¹⁵³ BQT 3. 113/45.

Chapter 2

Community as Eschatological Sign: The Church and the Call to Freedom

Pannenberg considers the church to be the one community which, according to its historical origin and mission, is able to anticipate explicitly in its structure and activity the eschatological freedom of self-possession in complete devotion. This chapter begins with a brief review of the tendencies which have historically resulted in the definition of ecclesial freedom as a degree of individual latitude in relation to common standards (I), the definition which provides Pannenberg's negative starting point. He challenges it by deriving a general imperative of toleration from the partial character of the revelation of truth in history (II)—which means that fixed norms are valid on account of their anticipatory character, and in particular the Law is theologically only of historical interest, having been replaced by the rule of the Spirit in the Gospel (III). An interesting consequence of his approach is that the historical fruits of the activity of the Spirit in the church need not be approached only through the mediation of the Church as institution, but may legitimately be used as cultural resources in a post-Christian society, at least as expressions of the general human quest for a higher understanding of history (IV). As Pannenberg rejects the apologetic attempt to ground the necessity of religion in the permanence of the ethical question, a connection which would tend to subsume the acts of Christian freedom under a general deontology, he uses his Christocentric reading of history to describe both worship and ethics according to the structure of symbolic action, as action which anticipates through its form and content its fulfilment in meaning by God's eschatological intervention (V). Although Pannenberg's concerns are not purely meta-ethical, the way in which his account of the meaning and value of ethical behaviour lends itself to generalization leads into the question whether the structure of the church is not in fact the only possible structure of true human community, the principle of free universal union (VI). In order to reject this possibility and affirm in particular the state as a genuine form of community, Pannenberg has to reemphasize that the divine will does not take a single infinite form (an eschatological example of Hegel's bad infinity), but also varied temporal forms, which condition and shape the free human response. In other words, the existence of the church does not mean that the element of desire in freedom is to be superseded by gratuitous symbolization and representation, but that desire is ruled by a principle of communication which allows for the reformation of current social-moral practices according to theological considerations (VII).

I. Freedom in the church: a constitutional question?

Of the classical sketches of the theological idea of freedom, Bultmann's triptych surely counts among the most memorable: freedom from the law, freedom from sin, freedom from death.¹ The three moments seem to capture the rhythm of the Pauline kerygmatic hope, a progressive liberation from the obstacles that mean to keep us separate from the love of God. What it leaves out, however, is the deep connection between freedom and the life of the church community expressed by Paul in a forceful juxtaposition: 'For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another.' (Gal. 6.13) The same thought governs Paul's discussion in 1 Cor. 8, 10 of the practical question of the rights of conscience with regard to eating meat sacrificed to idols.² It stands behind his defence of his evangelizing practice: 'For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them.' (1 Cor. 9.19)³ There are two inseparable directions of exhortation in these passages: towards activity, in becoming like a slave to other Christians, and towards toleration or acceptance. If we try to collapse the latter exhortation into the first, it loses the sense of 'suffering with', 'bearing with'; acceptance is not, like active love, pre-emptive, but the sublimation through benevolence of the inevitable limits of earthly agreement. The combination of these two enjoinders

¹ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, tr. Kendrick Grobel (London: SCM, 1952–55), §§38–40, pp. 326–348. The extent to which it has dominated New Testament interpretation can be seen in its reiteration by F. Stanley Jones in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2. 885–89, s.v. 'Freedom'.

² These are the rights of a conscience bound to evangelization and the communication of freedom: see Richard Liong-Seng Phua, *Idolatry and Authority: A Study of 1 Corinthians 8.1–11.1 in the Light of the Jewish Diaspora*, Library of New Testament Studies, 299 (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 192–95. Arguably the same thought lies behind the discussion of the relations between the weak and the strong in Rom. 14–15; for a comparison between the two passages and the connection between internal agreement and external mission, see Carl N. Toney, *Paul's Inclusive Ethic: Resolving Community Conflicts and Promoting Mission in Romans 14–15*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2. 252 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 179–82, 189–90.

³ Is correspondingly what he means by the law of Christ the requirements of the service of Christ in communicating the gospel?—1 Cor. 9.21. Cf. Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, Interpretation (Louisville, Ky.: John Knox Press, 1997), 157; Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), 705.

makes our modern conceptual analysis somewhat awkward: is freedom limited for the sake of the other? or should loving self-limitation be counted as of the essence of freedom?⁴

The separation of these two aspects might go back to the Reformation. Luther made the paradox of the active aspect (the expression of freedom as service), the essential message of his tract *On the Freedom of a Christian*, a foundational text for Protestant ethics.⁵ On the other hand, in the wake of an already long history of the Church defining its dogma through confrontation with heresy, the question of toleration was shaped almost exclusively by the problem of doctrinal disagreements. The sense that Paul transmits, of freedom finding room to adapt and accommodate others, was still in some measure present, but the challenge for reformation-minded Christians was to define ‘tolerable freedom’, to set up criteria for what is respectively non-negotiable, negotiable, and not worth arguing about. Such a discussion, governed by the requirements of certainty and justifiability (i.e. establishing what is warranted by Scripture, what principles can be directly derived from it, what practical corollaries are probable), was weighted with political consequences, as the emerging confessions were encouraged towards an enforceable self-definition through credal and liturgical uniformity.⁶ So one might say that in practice the nature of freedom in the Church came to be thought of, analogously to Constant’s political ‘modern freedom’, as the sphere of private judgement, as encompassing the elements of religious practice not so unassailably demonstrated that they could not be left to the individual conscience.⁷ It is in terms of this development that the Catholic Church came to be criticized from the Protestant side as a political institution with an authoritarian governance, reinforcing association of the motif of freedom with

⁴ Cf. Coppins, 173. Coppins’s attention to detail and equanimity of judgement are admirable, but he seems to imply that systematic theology ought to produce a normative-legal (not descriptive) concept of freedom even if it cannot be fully supported by the more nuanced results of biblical research.

⁵ Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, ed. Harold J. Grimm, tr. W. A. Lambert, in *Luther’s Works* 31 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1957), 327–77.

⁶ See e.g. Thomas Max Safley (ed.), *A Companion to Multiconfessionalism in the Early Modern World* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 25–43. These developments certainly had a positive side as well: besides encouraging a form of theological clarity, they also contributed to a strong visible identity allowing churches to stand up to state interference more easily.

⁷ Cf. Philippe Büttgen, “‘Doctrin et méthode’: Le sujet pastoral de l’herméneutique luthérienne (vers 1570–vers 1630)”, *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, 62 (2009), 187–204 at 204: ‘The history of the arts of interpretation could be described as that of a progressive depastoralization of the method.’

division.⁸ The emergence of this freedom did not necessarily mean that the individual could be given absolute latitude within its limits, since that could encourage heresy, superstition, or idolatry. It was initially a legal phenomenon, rather than pastoral or theological.

Two notions in particular, both central for the definition of the church, furnished the criteria for reflection on freedom: salvation and worship.⁹ By definition, the church is the community of salvation, even as a *corpus permixtum*, and the necessity of identifying the marks of the true church was born from the question whether an individual could be saved as part of this or that community. Luther provided a model of lasting appeal in addressing this concern, as his notion of conscience balances theological nuance with the practical requirement of clear allegiance: conscience is always bound by faith in all encounters and able to recognize the same bond in others, so that sometimes apparently minor differences are sharpened into total opposition, while at other times essential unity prevails in the face of obvious discrepancies.¹⁰ In this model there is little place for the judgement of the church as community; in the crisis of conciliarist politics, the individual conscience had to give the last counsel.

The manner of worship, it was generally agreed, was not simply for congregations to decide, as ultimately right worship is what God demands and institutes. Variation was traditional and inevitable; the Old Testament testifies to the progressive revelation of the kind of worship that God desires and the New Testament mentions different local practices. The recognition of its existence does not necessarily lead to a celebration of diversity, and while Paul speaks of a plurality of gifts in the church,¹¹ the appropriation of

⁸ For John Locke, Catholics place themselves outside the fold of toleration as ‘subjects of a foreign enemy prince’ (*An Essay on Toleration*, in *Political Essays*, ed. Mark Goldie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 134–159 at 146, 152–3). For the Catholic perspective on the inherent contradictions of the principle of reformation, see Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, *The History of the Variations of the Protestant Churches*, n.tr. (Dublin: Richard Coyne, 1839).

⁹ Cf. Pannenberg, ‘Bleiben in der Wahrheit als Thema reformatorischer Theologie’ in Wolfhart Pannenberg and Theodor Schneider (eds.), *Verbindliches Zeugnis*, ii: *Schriftauslegung—Lehramt—Rezeption* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herger; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 122–34 at 124–5.

¹⁰ So Luther’s position towards Zwingli was much more hostile than his attitude towards Hus or some Church Fathers, however much more he might have had in common with the former ‘objectively’.

¹¹ e.g. Rom. 12:4–8, 1 Cor. 12:8–11, Eph. 4:7–16.

this concept was constrained by the pressure of confessional identity. Mathias Flacius Illyricus was certainly right to assert that true adiaphora are those that can be used for the glory of God, but that insight was distorted by his claim it is the prerogative of the (true) Church to stipulate them.¹² The Formula of Concord itself had recourse to a theological definition of the adiaphora as that which ‘is neither commanded nor forbidden in the Word of God’, a formulation which evokes the thought of the church as a legal-political institution recognizing the private rights of its branches or members.¹³

The problem of a predominantly legalistic understanding of freedom in the church seems, if anything, to have become even more critical in the intervening centuries.¹⁴ At the same time, there has been a drive to allow freedom to unfold its own theological language in practical conversation, to bring back together the active and passive aspects of Pauline exhortation. In the wake of the twentieth-century Luther renaissance, an influential way of thinking about freedom in the church has been to put at the heart of the concept of church the liberating experience of justification by faith given in the response to the preaching of the Word, the Word-event. Among the notable and worthy examples of this tendency one must number Ernst Käsemann, who drew from Christian freedom implications for the structure of the church (being open the work of the Spirit)¹⁵ and for its political attitude (fighting subjugation under state authority).¹⁶ Käsemann’s weakness—rather characteristic of this general tendency—was his failure to integrate in his idea of freedom the necessary stability¹⁷ without which, as he noted himself, through an opposite

¹² Bernard J. Verkamp, ‘The Limits upon Adiaphoristic Freedom: Luther and Melancthon’, *Theological Studies* 36 (1975), 52–76 at 68. This point against Flacius is made somewhat moot by the necessity of resistance to state imposition; see Oliver K. Olson, *Matthias Flacius and the Survival of Luther’s Reform* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), 156–60. For Flacius’s defence of communal responsibility and rejection of the special authoritative expertise of theologians, see Andreas Waschbüsch, *Alter Melancthon: Muster theologischer Autoritätsstiftung bei Matthias Flacius Illyricus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), esp. 148–50.

¹³ *Formula of Concord*, x, in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. and tr. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 492–94.

¹⁴ In contemporary theology it has found a new language in the Trinitarian-philosophical problem of persons in community; see Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998) for an exposition of how denominational differences in apprising the role of personal freedom in the church can be reflected in Trinitarian doctrine.

¹⁵ Ernst Käsemann, *Jesus Means Freedom*, tr. Frank Clarke (London: SCM, 1969), 196.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, esp. 72ff.

¹⁷ Cp. Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1969), 58: ‘Paul develops the idea of the Spirit as the

reaction the life of the Church reverts from being genuinely open to the influence of the Spirit and being shaped by a transcendent reality to practising some form of realized eschatology.¹⁸

In his early article on freedom, ‘Christlicher Glaube und menschliche Freiheit’, Pannenberg echoed a common theme of Protestant ecclesiology by describing the freedom of the church as freedom for the Word of God.¹⁹ This description proceeds from the viewpoint of the church as a whole, whose freedom is of a different kind than that of the individual Christian. The definition does have potential political implications: in the context of a regime hostile to Christianity, to accept compromise on certain points of the gospel or to cease to witness to it would be a formal renunciation of this freedom, while in the case of a secularized society, the danger lies with reductive translations of the message of the church and the introduction of foreign criteria of relevance. What is at stake in both scenarios is the self-determination of the church by the Word of its proclamation.

This conviction that the freedom of the Church is freedom for God’s Word continues to be strong in Pannenberg’s later thought,²⁰ but it becomes apparent that a perspective in which the church is viewed from the start as a unity cannot yield the whole truth about its freedom. From a practical point of view, it does not face the obvious problem that there are many Protestant churches that base their separate identity on precisely this understanding of the freedom of the church; in other words, this formulation looks at first

organizing principle of the Christian congregation. There is no need for any fixed system with its rules and regulations and prohibitions.’ Cf. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2. 97–8.

¹⁸ Daniel J. Harrington, ‘Ernst Käsemann on the Church in the New Testament’, *The Heythrop Journal* 12 (1971), 246–57 at 254. Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings*, ed. and tr. Schubert M. Ogden (London: SCM, 1985), 163; Gerhard Ebeling, *The Nature of Faith*, tr. Ronald Gregor Smith (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961), 187.

¹⁹ ‘Christlicher Glaube und menschliche Freiheit’, 259.

²⁰ Most flagrantly in the direct ethical inference from its obligation to Scripture to the (im)permissibility of certain ordinations. See ‘Maßstäbe zur kirchlichen Urteilsbildung über Homosexualität’, *BE*, 99–102. In what regards the ordination of women, there is scriptural warrant for ‘setting aside distinctions that otherwise divide people’ so that ‘our eschatological determination for fellowship in the kingdom of God declares itself in the church’s life.’ (*ST* 3. 390–1/426) In its visible representative structures, the church has to reflect the Scriptures according to the picture of human nature in eschatological community. This limited idealism invites the objection of a Trinitarian restatement of a supposed natural hierarchy—see Linn Tonstad, ‘“The Ultimate Consequence of His Self-Distinction from the Father ...”: Difference and Hierarchy in Pannenberg’s Trinity’, *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 51 (2009), 383–399 at 391, 396.

sight as the very principle of separation, even as Pannenberg's theology of history demands an ecumenical ecclesiology.²¹ Moreover, in light of Pannenberg's eucharistic spirituality, sacramental life would also need to be integrated in an account of Christian freedom.²² Ecumenicity and Eucharist are two sides of the same reality of the church as symbol of the eschatological unity of mankind. In relation to the earlier formulation, these new directions might be described as the interpretation of the eschatological character of the Word that gives the church its mission. In the context of the previously sketched historical range of problems, what seems most promising about Pannenberg's evolution is that through this definition of the church in relation to humanity as a whole, the method in understanding freedom is reversed from easily politicized efforts of objective self-interpretation to self-conscious participation in a dialogue which looks to anticipate the promised end. To what extent the promise is fulfilled depends on the practical transformative potential of Pannenberg's description of that dialogue. Could the church as the visible sign of eschatological unity carry the promise of peace in a landscape of nation states? The reception of this programme no longer depends purely on the church's right self-understanding, but also on the current secular vision of the unity of mankind.

II. Truth and the imperative of toleration

Historically, toleration is the product of confessional conflict, the distillation of continental Europe's fatigue at the end of the Thirty Years' War, rather than the triumph of a generous idea. But that it should be a mere necessity of history makes it vulnerable to revisionist agendas; how does one become tolerant in spirit? The Enlightenment advocates of toleration stand now accused from certain quarters of having undermined the human need for real community.²³ Especially in the Church, the general practice of tolerance, which is

²¹ 'What Significance Does Their Common Past Have for Today's Separated Churches?', in *Church*, 36–43/211–18. On eschatological unity, cf. Ernst Käsemann, 'Unity and Multiplicity in the New Testament Doctrine of the Church', tr. W. J. Montague, in *New Testament Questions of Today* (London: SCM, 1969), 252–259.

²² CSSC, Chs. 2 and 3.

²³ Cf. Michael J. Sandel (ed.), *Liberalism and Its Critics* (New York: New York University Press, 1984). For a previous incarnation of the resistance against the ideology of Enlightenment liberalism, see Isaiah Berlin,

the presupposition of any ecumenism, should not have to contradict the search for closer community. Pannenberg's solution to this tension is to advocate toleration as a necessary aspect of the human search for truth. This form of toleration is incompatible with indifference; the basis of the tolerant community is a shared concern for truth, and even the hope of an eventual agreement. What is the nature of truth if such toleration-in-community is a moral necessity?

According to Pannenberg, Western ideas of truth draw from two contrasting sources: Israelite *'emeth*, steadfast faithfulness,²⁴ and Greek *alêtheia*, unconcealedness of essence; their common aspect is the unity of all truth. The Greek concept has gone through significant philosophical transformations: the historical character (*Geschichtlichkeit*) of truth has come to be recognized, thanks especially to Hegel, and so 'the experience of truth' has become 'a creative act of man'.²⁵ These modern changes owe not a little to the impact of Christianity, through the doctrine of historical revelation and the identification of creativity as part of the image of God in humanity.²⁶ Severed from their theological inspiration, these innovations lead to one-sidedness. On the side of the historical dimension of the experience of truth, the desire to contemplate the unity of truth in history might close us off from the newness of the future (Hegel's distinguished mistake), especially if we fail to recognize the anticipatory character of all human experience as most saliently exemplified in the story of Jesus. On the side of the contribution of creativity to experiencing truth, 'without the presupposition of God' (at least as 'an open question, not an actual knowledge of God') 'truth is no longer conceivable in terms of agreement', and emptied of requirement of harmony with a higher reality the truth of self-expression becomes mere vociferous self-assertion.²⁷

'The Counter-Enlightenment', in *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*, ed. Henry Hardy (London: Hogarth, 1979), 1–24.

²⁴ Mostert cannily observes that as faithfulness can only be expressed over time, it is the rationale for the duration of the world (*God and the Future*, 99). Could this be the basis of a less actualistic notion of time than the one in which anticipation follows anticipation? (Cf. Cristescu, 104; Pagano, 90.)

²⁵ 'What Is Truth?' in *BQT* 2. 1–27 at 12/211.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 15/213, 20/217.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 18/215, 26/222.

The church needs to exercise toleration precisely because it exists for the sake of truth, and not only because of the ethical exigency of non-violence. To begin with, the church lives from a truth, ‘the proleptic revelation of God in Jesus Christ’, which must always form the object of renewed attention on account of its historicity and its depth; the present is always only a relative position in a long chain of doctrinal development and debate. Therefore, ‘a teaching is heretical only when it ends in a partial truth, and there is unwillingness to include in it the fullness of the Christian heritage and the eschatological fullness of catholic truth.’²⁸ One might say that for Pannenberg the difference between inter-denominational and inter-religious rapports is that the dialogue between Christian denominations takes place in consciousness of a definite common future, the full revelation of the eschaton, whereas external dialogue (with the exception of Judaism) would usually have to base itself on a philosophically-defined concept of the unity of humanity.²⁹ The story of Christian doctrine is part of the larger unifying history of truth. This is also the reason for the church to tolerate various non-Christian ethical norms in society. Their corresponding practices can still participate in posing and acting out the question of truth, inasmuch as ‘the conduct of man is true only if it occurs with a view to the unity of the world’.³⁰

Pannenberg’s notion of truth, although it has been the focus of accusations of foundationalism,³¹ issues in a broad-minded but uncompromising account of freedom as toleration, unfavourable to prejudices but not favouring diversity for its own sake.³² The involvement of the church in inter-religious dialogue is only part of the role of the church in the history of freedom, its ‘contingent’ side, concerned to recuperate for the Church through patient learning the potential of our fragile and fallible freedom manifested outside it. Just as important for the church’s self-understanding is the positive side of her role, which essentially lies in the eschatological orientation of individual ethical life

²⁸ Ibid. 27/222; *Church*, 67/240.

²⁹ George Augustin, *Gott eint—trennt Christus? Die Einmaligkeit und Universalität Jesu Christi als Grundlage einer christlichen Theologie der Religionen, ausgehend vom Ansatz Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Paderborn: Bonifatius, 1993), 344.

³⁰ ‘What Is Truth?’, 18/215.

³¹ For a summary and rebuttal, see F. LeRon Shults, *The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology: Wolfhart Pannenberg and the New Theological Rationality* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999), 1–18.

³² Pannenberg thus follows one of the main Millian arguments for freedom (John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty; with The subjection of Women; and Chapters on Socialism*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), esp. Ch. 2.

through sacramental spirituality. It should be noted that the ‘contingent’ aspect also needs to be practised between the churches, while the positive aspect also marks the significance of the church for the world as a whole; the two aspects are interdependent. To be able to use this duality as a key for the church as a community of freedom, Pannenberg first makes a revisionary detour for the theological notion which allowed the politicization of the concern for truth and worship.

III. Community after the Law

In his book on *Christian Spirituality and Sacramental Community*, Pannenberg’s main target is pietistic religiosity, characterized by the belief that the experience of salvation can only supervene on a heightened sense of sinfulness and guilt. This internalized form of the traditional Lutheran dialectic of Law and Gospel³³ promotes a simulacrum of freedom: the subject has first to put on shackles and then passively suffer their removal, a drama especially curious where the optimistic mindset of the Enlightenment has penetrated to the core of one’s moral evaluations and expectations: ‘the modern Protestant succeeds in restricting guilt consciousness to Sundays for the sake of strengthened self-assurance of being like the repentant tax collector’.³⁴ But is our problem in making sense of freedom not perhaps just the fault of modernity sapping our internal piety? Why is it related to Pietism, especially since Pannenberg praises it for bringing to full expression the idea of the spontaneity of the Christian’s obedience to God, as opposed to the reactive and incentivized obedience to the demand of the Law?³⁵

³³ Not developed in Luther himself, who reckoned with a ‘real—and in some sense “mystical”— participation of the believer in Christ *extra nos*’ (CSSC, 20); the seeds of the future emphasis on experience are present in Luther, but there is no indication of the meaning of the experience being exhausted in moral language. This point has been brought out both by Pannenberg and by the Finnish school (see Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (eds.), *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), although in seemingly opposite ways: the former takes up the notion of being outside oneself in Christ, while the latter emphasize the real presence of Christ in the believer. These different approaches reflect perhaps different ecclesiological interests, since Pannenberg’s eschatological orientation contextualizes his approach to tradition and Eucharistic presence.

³⁴ CSSC, 25.

³⁵ ST 3. 91–2/108.

Pannenberg's answer is that in the wake of the collapse of bourgeois morality, the twentieth century has seen the Kantian illusion shattered that the question of God emerges out of puzzle of individual morality (how will my moral effort become part of the highest good?³⁶). It became clear, according to Pannenberg, that 'the return of God in our age is not in the first place a matter of individual morality. Before it is that, it is a matter of caring for God, a matter of concern for the transcendent in the understanding of the realities of life, not only for oneself as an individual but also in society.'³⁷ Pietism holds congregations prisoners to an earlier form of modernity: as long as it does not operate without the Law but still has it as its content, free obedience can easily be understood as the Kantian miracle that is the power of the moral law to move the conscience, to act itself as the incentive. The peril lies in a reading of the commandment of love merely as law, without its ontological and ecclesiological complement.³⁸ As long as the Gospel is only proclaimed in juxtaposition with the Law, it inevitably borrows from the latter the status of an atemporal ethical mediation of the God-relationship. For Luther himself, the Gospel was in the first place the news of forgiveness, yet he viewed forgiveness too much through the lens of the medieval penitential theology for him to recover the New Testament sense of its grounding in the nearness of the kingdom and the corresponding dynamic connection between forgiveness and obedience.³⁹

³⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, in *Practical Philosophy*, tr. and ed. Mary J. Gregory, Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 133–272 at 241, Ak. 5. 126.

³⁷ CSSC, 25.

³⁸ John 15:5: 'I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.'

³⁹ ST 3. 82–3/98–9. The result of this shortcoming is the perceived need for a causal supplement: what makes one accept revelation, what effects its translation into the individual conscience? A common solution is to posit that conviction arises when the work of the Spirit is added to that of the Word. Lindhardt rightly contests this apparent solution (Jan Lindhardt, *Martin Luther: Knowledge and Mediation in the Renaissance* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 207ff.) and shows it does not belong to Luther; but it is not easy to approve of its substitution by the persuasiveness of a rhetorical Word, as this seems to insinuate the denial of free will in general through the efficiency of a linguistic sign by itself. Pannenberg's concept of revelation was from the start meant to disarm the question of a subjective disposition (whether implanted by the Spirit or not), beginning instead from the 'action of God in encountering humanity' (*Begegnungscharakter des göttlichen Handelns*) (*Prädestinationslehre*, 139). This can be affirmed perhaps as a meeting even before and beyond language, as Pannenberg agrees with Schleiermacher that the 'totality of human life' (*Ganzheit des menschlichen Lebensvollzuges*) may be embraced in religious feeling (*ATP*, 251/244).

Instead of being presented simply in contrast to the Law, Christian freedom has to be reconceived as the necessary form of a genuine response to the freedom of God's will. The Law is a localized formulation of the practical requirements of the imitation of God, tailored to Israel's religious development; the Gospel is the message that God's character has been fully revealed in Jesus Christ.⁴⁰ It is in the context of this historical fulfilment that the *imago Dei* can begin to be seen as the true foundation and sense of freedom. True likeness to God means likeness to his eternal being, his wisdom, and righteousness, so the New Testament attributes the complete likeness of God only to Christ;⁴¹ any likeness in us is a derivation of this prototype. The *imago Dei* as our human destiny is a historical process anticipating and fulfilled in eternal fellowship. Now, the condition of fellowship is self-distinction, and the most indissoluble fellowship, that of the Son with the Father, has gone through the utmost self-differentiation in the historical mission of the Son revealing the Father as God.⁴² Our own measure of participation in the eternal fellowship is based on 'distinguishing God from everything finite' and 'accepting our finitude as God-given'.

Pannenberg raises very lucidly the problem that arises out of his exposition of the *imago Dei*: granted that believers are given through the Spirit a share in the image of God in Christ,⁴³ how is the concept to preserve its general anthropological significance? If it means acknowledging God as God, 'we may assume that there is a disposition to do so in every human life.'⁴⁴ Yet this disposition is not itself presence: an inclination may come into its own or it may be stifled or perverted. How do we maintain then the universality of the *imago Dei*?

A first step is to acknowledge that faith is not of our own doing. 'A warning that theology must take to heart is Herder's observation that we cannot on our own hew out or fashion

⁴⁰ Certainly the law should continue as political reality (ST 3. 94–5/111–2).

⁴¹ ST 2. 219–20/252–3, Col 1:15–6. Gläßer objects rather curiously that there is a danger of gnosis in rooting the image of God in the resurrection of Christ (Gläßer, 142). I do not think that the distinction between Pannenberg's idea of vocation—part of which is a natural disposition, as Herder made clear ('Gottebenbildlichkeit und Bildung des Menschen', GST 2. 207–225 at 214)—and the Catholic doctrine of the *imago Dei* is so stark, especially if one admits Pannenberg's point that the eschatological future is already active in history.

⁴² ST 2. 230/266.

⁴³ Ibid. 2. 208/238–9.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 2. 227/261.

the image of God that has been set in us ... but are referred to the working of divine providence through tradition and teaching, reason and experience.⁴⁵ Secondly, there are no structures of existence preliminary to faith that point to or constitute the image. For instance, the *imago Dei* is not already manifest in human being-in-relation, since then it would be postulated as the formal basis of the Christ-relatedness, rather than its outcome.⁴⁶ Equally, it cannot be made evident by a Christological description of human nature, which, however correct materially, falls prey to the tendency to synthesize what can only be narrated.⁴⁷ Moreover, any analogical version of the doctrine of the image of God would have to specify not just the two terms of the analogy, but also the proportion—which it cannot justify.⁴⁸ Pannenberg wants to keep making use of the traditional category of attributes of nature—metaphysical and moral—,⁴⁹ necessary in the irreplaceable language of gift and communication, but to eliminate the necessity of quantification. This is accomplished through the fact that the test of truth is not a measuring-up-to, but submission-to; this is the revealed logic of atonement through obedience.⁵⁰ Without it the eschaton loses its dynamic political logic ('every knee shall bow') and becomes a cosmic drawing up of accounts. The only eschatological quantity will be God's all-pervading

⁴⁵ Ibid. 2. 228/262.

⁴⁶ Cp. Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*, tr. by Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1985), 241. The problem is obscured in Barth because of the central treatment of Christology separately from history in *Church Dogmatics*, §§ 44, 45, and further complicated by his account of man–woman relations; for a comparative defence, see Joan E. O'Donovan, 'Man in the Image of God: The Disagreement between Barth and Brunner Reconsidered', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 39 (1986), 433–59, esp. 456–59.

⁴⁷ Although he concedes the universal relevance of Christology proclaimed by Barth, Pannenberg objects that 'what convincingness Barth's anthropological and ethical statements have, they possess not on account of their Christological derivation, but on other grounds, often ones he does not discuss.' (GE 98.)

⁴⁸ *Analogie und Offenbarung. Eine kritische Untersuchung der Geschichte des Analogiebegriffs in der Gotteserkenntnis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 12; on Aquinas's not wholly convincing strategy for dealing with this problem, see *ibid.*, 119ff.

⁴⁹ Cf. his reconstruction of the doctrine of divine attributes: there are 'two types of attributes, those that are ascribed to God on the basis of his action, and those that define the subject of the statements' (ST 1. 392/425). As for human self-knowledge, it is mediated by the knowledge and appropriation of the world, so it aims at an objective language of description ('Gottebenbildlichkeit', 220). The subject is defined by the self, with which the ego will ultimately coincide.

⁵⁰ Heb. 2:9. On the difficulties (perhaps even self-contradiction) of Pannenberg's defence of substitutionary atonement, see Herbert Nieie, *The Doctrine of Atonement in the Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1970), 176–79, who claims quite plausibly that Pannenberg's notion of shared guilt does not sit well with his reinterpretation of the role of the Law. (Cf. Gläßer, 156.) Cp. Timothy Bradshaw, *Pannenberg: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 94, for a more positive appreciation of Pannenberg's notion of atonement as self-offering.

glory, which again can only be explained politically and relationally, as a sign of majesty.⁵¹ In short, the analogical gradation of the image of God is replaced by different historical-eschatological relations of anticipation, mediated by different relations to Christ.

In history, the shades of the image, all integrally linked to the person of Christ, range from the practice of discipleship to more diluted anthropological (yet still Christologically grounded) structure of personhood.⁵² Even this does not escape the political logic of the eschaton, since the relation of the 'I' to the 'self' is the relation of the I to oneself as part of the perfect eschatological society. Therefore, the image cannot be separated from the social dimension of ego- and self-formation.⁵³ It is the I-self relation which recuperates for the doctrine of the *imago* the language of attributes. It disrupts the traditional analogical schemes through a stark economic metaphor: 'The Bible uses the concept of image of God to describe this human destiny; in the belongingness to God, which sets human beings apart, it sees that special dignity which makes human beings inviolable and grounds the prohibition against taking their lives.'⁵⁴ Freedom is the individual enjoyment of one's person, yet as God's property: 'the element of for-itselfness that belongs to personality finds its fulfilment [in the present] in the idea of freedom.'⁵⁵

Pannenberg insists so strongly on the *imago* as a composition of attributes that he almost makes freedom sound compatible with human passivity: 'On the way to our destiny and in relation to it, we are not just subjects. We are the theme of a history in which we become what we already are.'⁵⁶ It might be objected that this is so because his perspective is so abstractly personal that it threatens to render the interpersonal contribution to this history immaterial.⁵⁷ Whatever secondary causes are involved in shaping the human heart according to its Creator may leave their watermarks on it, but their bond is susceptible to

⁵¹ ST 3. 632/678–9.

⁵² Cf. Stanley Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 280–82.

⁵³ ATP, 233/225; BQT 3. 113/45.

⁵⁴ ATP, 242/235.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 240/233.

⁵⁶ ST 2. 228/262–3. 'This becoming of our own identity is not a producing of the self but a history of its formation.' (ST 2. 228/263, n. 183.) Cf. ATP, 502ff./488ff.

⁵⁷ Cf. Gläßer, 143ff.

reappropriation in the framework of one's personal God-relationship.⁵⁸ In the best cases these bonds themselves correspond to this intention and are therefore self-effacing, e.g. devout parents who raise their children to love God above all things and submit even filial affection to the test of that love. If not, they can still be redeemed from their own evil purpose, just like the sadistic torture of a martyr brings forth the most clashing purity in endurance. Freedom hardly appears as a task to which both the ego and others have to contribute, much rather as something that happens when interpersonal influence is refracted by the divine 'field of force' around the individual. What counts as freedom, what counts towards the *imago Dei* is the way in which the God-relationship allows the force of circumstances to be internalized into the substance of good character. If character is the fundamental eschatological category of morality, then freedom means that the care and desire inherent in a first-person point of view can be represented and preserved in the form of destiny.⁵⁹ It is also this self-differentiation from the world in faith which helps Pannenberg deal with the problem of the delay of the parousia. It is possible to dispense with imminent expectation, to separate the substance of hope from the time of its fulfilment, by humble self-differentiation from eschatological ideals in one's moral effort.⁶⁰ What we have in hope—ourselves—is a gift, which will be received in its glory in the end.

In brief, we should not look for a direct communication of the desire for freedom in interpersonal relations.⁶¹ (This is unsurprising since submission to God is also the grounding mediation of the eschatological peace of human society.) The emergence of this desire only takes place once education, feelings of community, allegiances and

⁵⁸ 'God is not seen as acting in competition with man in history, but through human action, both in its success and in its failure.' ('Christian Morality and Political Issues', 132/170.) Cf. Pannenberg's distinction between *Bildung* and *Erziehung* in 'Gottebenbildlichkeit', *GST* 2. 219–20. In the former, which refers to education aimed at the formation of personality, 'every person is considered in immediate relation to God' (*ist jeder Mensch unmittelbar zu Gott*), while the second concerns the reproduction of the capacities which allow human dominion over the (natural and social) world.

⁵⁹ Hence Gregersen's proposal that the human experience of time should be taken up in that of eternity appears foreign to Pannenberg's intention (Niels Henrik Gregersen 'Einheit und Vielfalt der schöpferischen Werke Gottes: Wolfhart Pannenberg's Beitrag zu einer trinitarischen Schöpfungslehre', *Kerygma und Dogma* 45 (1999), 102–29 at 109 n. 15, 126).

⁶⁰ 'Zeit und Ewigkeit in Israel und Christentum', *GST* 2. 188–206 at 202–6.

⁶¹ Pannenberg thus de-emphasizes the moral category of witness, as well as the theological. (Klaus Kienzler, *Logik der Auferstehung: eine Untersuchung zu Rudolf Bultmann, Gerhard Ebeling und Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Freiburg: Herder, 1976), 165, 198.)

programmes of change have been filtered through the individual eschatological notion of character, which is indispensable for the dialectic of self-differentiation and devotion contained in the idea of an image of God. Because God can be spoken of in terms of attributes, human identity can also be reflected in an eschatological personality, which does not amount to a reduction of subject to substance. In other words, the ground of freedom in desire is preserved even in an eternal personality.

IV. Meaning without destiny: church tradition as secular resource

It is of course not possible to prescribe this eschatological destiny of freedom to others. But is there something like letting another be free, as opposed to simply letting them be?

Individual destiny as the fulfilment of the concern for meaning does not have an analogue on a universal plane; however, the individual level of meaning is in fact only the intuition or anticipation by faith of the whole of meaning. Pannenberg makes this point central against the assumption that we have the capacity to produce meaning out of events which have no meaning in themselves.⁶² The experience of the absence of meaning is impossible without the meaning-structured phenomenon of language, but 'it is part of the nature of language itself to represent a reality that is already given'; language is already integrated into that reality inasmuch as speech is always a moment of an action, not in itself an action.⁶³ So the assumption and expectation of meaning is for us pre-linguistic, although only revealed in language.⁶⁴ Action itself begins with meaning, since 'there is no action without goal-settings'.⁶⁵ The meaning of an action lies in that 'the ego achieves identification with itself through the performance of actions', holds fast to the initial intention and 'dominates' the means necessary to achieving the desired goal. Freedom of action is merely negative, the capacity to screen out dead ends and resist interference, and

⁶² *MIG*, 153–170.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 157–8; *ATP* 364/353.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 160.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 158.

not materially determined by the individual's identity. In fact, 'action is the only area of life in which the concept of subject ['the unity of the ego as subject', in total control of one's freedom] is both appropriate and indispensable.'⁶⁶ That is because with regards to action the subjection is an assumption and not already put in question.⁶⁷ This does not imply that the category of meaning itself is only relevant to the sphere of action, but that only in this sphere its presence is established from the beginning.

The wider range of the concept of meaning is apparent in the way that language is put to use and changes in social contexts; speech brings pattern and colour to social situations and organizations. An opposite form of freedom to that presupposed by action is found in conversation. A conversation is not inter-action in the above sense; a good conversation is characterized not by the effective planning, but by 'shared spontaneous involvement'. What Pannenberg calls the 'spirit' of the conversation makes one present to oneself anew, as moved by the flow of connections and interests made possible by 'the combination of determinacy and indeterminacy in the use of words'.⁶⁸ Here it is not the individuals who are subjects, the only obvious 'subjects' are those mentioned, alluded to, or repressed in the conversation. 'The generosity (*Liberalität*) that characterizes it [the conversation] leaves room for ever new, surprising turns, and thereby also for the individual contribution of each new speaker.'⁶⁹ A conversation has its own time which escapes being enclosed in the temporal framework of any particular interlocutor. The spirit of the conversation changes according to the truthfulness or deceitfulness of the speakers—a matter of their earnestness with regard to the wider (widest) context—, but may in turn move them to change.

The conversational model cannot, unfortunately, be adapted into a general theory of moral interaction or into a picture of the evolution of morality through the proximate revelation of goods.⁷⁰ As a model of moral education it is deficient because the independent intuition

⁶⁶ ATP, 367/356.

⁶⁷ It is clear that for Pannenberg 'action' designates a restricted aspect under which a series of events can be described.

⁶⁸ ATP, 374/362–3.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 371/360; 373–4/362 (my tr.).

⁷⁰ Otherwise, we would have to say that Pannenberg does indeed allow for the communication of the desire of freedom.

and rational analysis required in evaluating moral models does not figure as a feature of the ‘spirit’ of a conversation. It does not make allowance for the inequality characteristic of the initiatory stages of everyone’s social interaction, in which the first requirement for the gradual distinction of the self from the environment is an emerging ‘basic trust’⁷¹ and a continued dependence of self-identity on a stable environment. The shifting character of a dialogue agrees with the fact that we can form no picture-like idea of the highest good;⁷² yet for the same reason, its gradual discrimination cannot be left in the hands of this model, as the goal makes itself present not just in the ‘indefinite trust that opens up the horizon of world experience and intersubjectivity’, but also in ‘a restless thrust toward overcoming the finite’.⁷³ The good of conversation lies for Pannenberg ultimately not in its dialogical structure, but in its spirit; its spirit is what may be good in any conversation, as it constitutes its connection, positive or negative, with the supreme good. In fact, the structure of meaning of conversation itself expresses the problem of truth by reference to an outer object.⁷⁴ The questions of goodness and truth arise in distinct but interrelated ways both in conversation and in general moral interaction.

A condition of freedom is the possibility of a hermeneutical anticipation of the whole of one’s experience, inasmuch as freedom in the image of God means not just that the image forms the content of ethical life, but that it can be veritably signified in action. Of course, given Pannenberg’s account of moral responsibility,⁷⁵ this does not happen purely by virtue of an agent’s intention, by restricting in one’s mind the associations of an intended

⁷¹ ATP, 227/220.

⁷² ‘At present our goal is indistinct.’ (ST 2. 228/263.)

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ TPS, 205/205 n. 402: ‘In contrast to the theory of knowledge-constitutive interests [as that developed by Habermas], which tends to exclude a relation to an object from the concept of truth, the perception of meaning (*Sinnerfahrung*) has no difficulty in finding room for both aspects of the concept of truth, factual correspondence and the consensus of subjects.’ In the end, conversation is to Pannenberg’s hermeneutics what *freie Geselligkeit* was to Schleiermacher’s ethics (‘Free sociability ... dies away as soon as it attempts to organize itself according to external characteristics.’ *Lectures on Philosophical Ethics*, 3.9 §238, p. 96): its contribution consists in the fact that the model cannot be generalized. (The capacity of holding a good conversation is indifferent to Lawrence Kohlberg’s stages of internalized moral reasoning. See Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, tr. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), 116.)

⁷⁵ See above, Ch. 1. iii.

action to the purity of one's picture of the kingdom of God. How then can the image of God be inscribed in one's agency, how can action be made to reference the highest good?

This question makes the object of practical theology, as the study of the historical praxis of the Church. 'All these themes [of practical theology] converge in the question of the concept (*Begriff*) and possibility of freedom, whose nature is ... religious as well as political.'⁷⁶ It is not its object in the sense that it removes it from the purview of dogmatics, since 'a theory of concrete freedom and its historical mediation through the Christian religious consciousness, as was embarked on by Hegel, would dissipate the illusion of an abstract opposition between dogmatics and ethics.'⁷⁷ What makes practical theology, as opposed to theological ethics, the appropriate terrain for discussing the relation between freedom and signifying action is precisely this historical mediation of the concept of freedom. 'The only practical theology which corresponds to this definition of the relationship of theory and practice [that the end is already effective through the work of Jesus Christ], one which is present in outline in the Christian faith itself, is one which expresses the practical bias which the Christian faith derives from the history of Jesus Christ and which continues to operate in the history of Christianity, though at times impeded ... The practice of the church will have to remain the specific field of practical theology unless it attempts to widen into a general Christian ethic, in which case the social form of Christian action, as church-building and ecclesial action, will be a particular sub-division.'⁷⁸

The acknowledgment of the valid wider domain of theological ethics is based on the fact that, for the sake of freedom, the church is not supposed to operate as a force integrating all social practices and gathering all individual narratives into a total sum of meaning, but as a concrete sign, with a distinguishing history and well-defined practices, and an effective sign, as Jesus Christ works through it, through the sacraments and through the Word. The church is not an immersive medium capable of providing a dense frame of social meaning; it can become one, but then it is likely that its true role would fall out of sight and it would

⁷⁶ *TPS*, 440/442, my tr.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 432/434.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 437–8/439, modified tr.

become an environment of heteronomy. ‘The ecclesial community can exercise a liberating function in the formation of conscience only by way of its specific relevance to the social world to which individuals belong.’⁷⁹ Criticizing Paul Lehmann’s *Ethics*,⁸⁰ Pannenberg comments that Lehmann ‘has not avoided the danger of introducing the theonomous *koinônia* of the church as a new “environment of decision”, as though this could without further ado replace the existing social life-world’.⁸¹ Although Pannenberg has not written a Christian ethic,⁸² particular moral questions are addressed in many of his essays,⁸³ and they reveal that in practice the relation between church life as social environment and church life as ethical grammar of action is in fact quite nuanced. The latter model depends on the possibility of a theonomous society; the church does not need such a society in order to proclaim the eschatological destiny of human freedom, but in its absence it will inevitably have to compensate to some extent for the lack of eschatological consciousness in the wider society precisely by becoming something of a heteronomous ‘environment of decision’ and promoting an ethos of difference.

The idea of a theonomous society is understood by Pannenberg to mean that the framework of secular institutions may contribute to the meaning of ethical action; the rationality of these institutions is determined by their suitability to frame the personal confrontation with the meaning of reality as a whole. If the contribution of institutions to morality is to enable the individual search of meaning, their historical self-consciousness becomes paramount—hence, in his particular context, Pannenberg advocates the improvement of general public awareness of the cultural heritage of Christianity. This

⁷⁹ ATP, 306/297–8.

⁸⁰ Paul L. Lehmann, *Ethics in a Christian Context* (London: SCM, 1963).

⁸¹ ATP, 306/298 n. 185. The Barthian inspiration of Lehmann’s ethics undoubtedly contributed to this judgement, which seems unduly harsh in light of the fact that he puts at the centre of his ethics conscience as formed by the Christian community, but only in order to enable an ethics of humanity (Lehmann, 347–351). Perhaps Pannenberg would want more consideration to be paid to the conscience informed by historical Christian values, but not necessarily by communal interaction: ‘the Christian outside the church, in his familiarity with the contemporary world, can in his individual case be closer to the universality of Christianity, which unites in itself all the truth of reality—that is, to true catholicity—than are church members, especially those who confuse a narrow denominational outlook with the total truth of Christianity.’ (‘Churchless Christians’, in *Church*, 9–22 at 14/191.)

⁸² His GE do provide a very brief sketch in the final chapter. The book itself was written as a friendly meta-ethical companion to Trutz Rendtorff’s *Ethics*, tr. Keith Crim (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986–89).

⁸³ Collected chiefly in *Ethics*, *Church* and *BE*.

programme of conservation is not, however, a political coordination of the church's mission; it is simply a laying open for the good of the secular of the resources of the past Christian culture.

His suggestion is made without any attempt to continue the late-nineteenth century trend of a cultural form of Christianity (*Kulturprotestantismus*): 'a Christian culture is not a plausible alternative to the ecclesial form of Christianity. If it ever was, it is no longer. There is no alternative to the church.'⁸⁴ One of the problems of *Kulturprotestantismus* was precisely its self-declared confessional allegiance, which masked a progressive excessive adaptation of its contents to surrounding secular developments under the aspiration of national-confessional unity. Pannenberg instead proposes the ecumenical form of Christianity as a potential model for pluralistic society. To be sure, complete ethical pluralism is nonsensical in practice, as Pannenberg points out with the rather hyperbolic example of a relativist murderer.⁸⁵ Yet it is towards an uncurbed form of pluralism that current social trends tend, especially encouraged by an understanding of freedom which subordinates communal resources to the perceived requirements of personal self-development. By abrogating the 'forum of reason and truth', society inevitable encourages a polarization between relativism and fundamentalism.⁸⁶ Pannenberg is thoroughly sceptical about the possibility of a genuinely multicultural society, in which divergent and even contradictory cultures are equally privileged (*gleichberechtigt*), arguing that 'the unity of the social system rests throughout history on the common cultural self-understanding of the people.'⁸⁷ Some degree of cultural variety is possible, to the extent that the host culture recognizes an accommodating affinity to the guest culture and the latter can adjust and transplant itself onto the former's territory.⁸⁸ Pannenberg claims that the affinity of Christianity to a pragmatic form of pluralism is demonstrated by the easier integration in

⁸⁴ 'Christianity and the West: Ambiguous Past, Uncertain Future', in *BST* 3. 54–64 at 64.

⁸⁵ 'Pluralismus als Herausforderung und Chance der Kirche', in *BST* 3. 23–34 at 24.

⁸⁶ 'Angst um die Kirche: Zwischen Wahrheit und Pluralismus', in *BST* 3. 34–42 at 38.

⁸⁷ 'Pluralismus als Herausforderung', 24. Cp. Charles Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition', in Amy Gutmann (ed.), *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25–74 at 42f, 66–72, for the kind of distinction which Pannenberg seems to assume between the legitimate demand of recognition (which Pannenberg accepts) and multiculturalism.

⁸⁸ Pannenberg usually has in mind Germany as a country of immigration and it is doubtful if the same suggestions would be helpful in a country where significant minorities already have a distinctive history.

German society of Christian immigrants, even those of different confessional allegiance.⁸⁹ The ecumenical cooperation and rapprochement of the Christian Churches could become a model for the coexistence of different cultures and ethnicities.⁹⁰ Moreover, the remembrance of the plural historical forms of Christianity can provide a sense of shared history; unfortunately, it also has to mean coming to terms with the past errors and violence. The common heritage of Christianity can also provide material support to a limited version of the project of the political unity of humanity, namely a united Europe, as ‘one of the few factors which could, at least potentially, ground the consciousness of the unity of European culture’.⁹¹ (Admittedly, Pannenberg awards classical culture a comparable role as one of the pinnacles of human achievement by which later cultural history may be measured.⁹²)

It is not vital to comment here on Pannenberg’s estimates of multiculturalism or classical education, since they are presented for readers to consider on the basis of their own assessment of the current situation—without reference to specific sociological or historical studies. The more pressing question is to what extent a refreshment of the cultural resources of Christianity would enhance the meaning of individual agency. The answer is that it would allow the individual to plan and justify actions with greater optimism and consistency in terms of a common social ethos, informed by historical solidarity and the Christian social values of justice, equality, recognition, and compassion. Nevertheless, it is clear that this potential for greater social meaning of virtuous action does not involve a direct eschatological reference. Accordingly, Pannenberg is consistent that no social concordance or cultural harmony can take the place of the church. His political arguments are framed strictly in terms of the benefits a Christian culture can confer upon a still secular sphere. The conservative bias of these ameliorations is founded in the sense that at some point in the self-justification of Western social and political institutions the idea of freedom has become subordinated to that of progress. Hegel attempted to unite the two in

⁸⁹ ‘Auf dem Weg in eine multikulturelle Gesellschaft?’, in *BE*, 69–79 at 77–8.

⁹⁰ ‘If Christians succeed in solving the problems of their own pluralism, they may be able to produce a model combining pluralism and the widest moral unity which will also be valid for political life.’ (‘Christian Morality and Political Issues’, 138/175.)

⁹¹ *BE*, 224.

⁹² ‘Das Nahen des Lichts und die Finsternis der Welt’, in *BST* 2. 283–294 at 292.

his explication of history as progress in the consciousness of freedom; yet although his idea of freedom was Christian, the notion of progress in civilization is not. The simpler Lockean notion of freedom as natural right was more adaptable and has won out in the end.⁹³ The rehabilitation through cultural consensus of the Christian idea would then inevitably have to demystify the promise of progress, an arduous task in the face of technological advancement and consumer affluence.

V. Expression beyond law: church ethics and worship

The claim that theological dogmatics is not a totalizing discourse meant to absorb ethics into itself needs some clarification,⁹⁴ in light of Pannenberg's previous affirmations that 'instead of an ethical justification for the truth of religion, a religious justification of ethics comes again into question', namely 'a religious justification whose own foundations can claim general validity'.⁹⁵ Validity for Pannenberg implies eschatological verification; that only religion may promise validity does not mean that there does not exist a natural morality which Christian ethics is professed to perfect. While the church is an eschatological community, theological ethics moves between creation and eschatology; it is guarded from the charge of heteronormativity by its embrace of dispositions gifted in creation. In particular, goodwill or benevolence (*Wohllwollen*) is the fundamental natural tendency essential for the development of Christian ethics of love, as it refers to the objective good of the other—not just the good that fulfils my wish for the other, or that the other desires, but what is genuinely good.⁹⁶

Reprising New Testament epistolary exhortations, Pannenberg considers that Christians should show special goodwill to other Christians; to replace this practice of the church with a universal goodwill seems to him a concession to the secularist thesis of the

⁹³ 'Christliche Wurzeln des Gedankens der Menschenwürde', in *BST* 2. 191–201.

⁹⁴ *GE*, 103; cf. *GE*, 20–1.

⁹⁵ 'Civil religion? Religionsfreiheit und pluralistischer Staat: Das theologische Fundament der Gesellschaft', in *BE*, 108–120 at 114–5 (my tr.).

⁹⁶ *GE*, 77.

indifference of religion.⁹⁷ (This interpretation is rather tenuous, inasmuch as the modern concept of religion could not have come into the Christian exhortation to special solidarity.) It is possible to practise a truer form of goodwill in the church because goodwill is open in this context to correction and even contestation, as there are common principles to which all can refer to in order to understand and correct the immaturity, i.e. lack of objectivity, of a particular expression of goodwill.⁹⁸ (Such a conclusion could also be reached through Hegel's theory of the role of Spirit in the church as the common ground of faith⁹⁹—and then extended perhaps even through the state. However, Pannenberg refrains from appealing to the perspective of a renewing work of the Spirit in his reviews of the history of the church.¹⁰⁰)

There is a connection between the foundation of ethics in the tension between creation and eschatology and the primacy of the individual in Pannenberg's ethical theory. Obviously, for Pannenberg (unlike for Luther) the church does not belong to the created order. The institutions in which ethical activity finds a natural matrix are those designated through creation but stamped with the possibility of referring forwards into the eschaton: the family and the state. The family, or rather marriage, on which the family depends, has its eschatological meaning in the enduring dimension of human personality that finds expression in an exclusive male-female relationship.¹⁰¹ The state also, having as its purpose

⁹⁷ Ibid. 118.

⁹⁸ Gal. 4.13–20.

⁹⁹ The superiority of the ethical practice of the Christian community—and then its Lutheran form—is shown in its greater correspondence to the concept of religion, allowing the objective correction of imperfections: 'religion as cult and community is a practical *Vorstellung* developed in strict correlation with the theoretical *Vorstellung* of God developed in reflective consciousness.' (James Yerkes, *The Christology of Hegel* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1983), 100.)

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Graham Watts, *Revelation and the Spirit: A Comparative Study of the Relationship between the Doctrine of Revelation and Pneumatology in the Theology of Eberhard Jüngel and Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2005), 192, 214; Freyer, 315. Cp. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, tr. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1977). Perhaps Pannenberg's distaste for Pietism has obscured to him the potential of the tradition of revival, as this perspective is not incompatible with task of symbolization.

¹⁰¹ GE, 128. What it is exactly is difficult to say; but Pannenberg moves from the idea of biological division that is not erased even eschatologically (at least since Jerome—see Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, Columbia University Press), 482–3) to the thought that some basic human moral potential comes exemplarily to light in lifelong committed love within this division. But would Pannenberg be right to insist that the institution (in this form) has to be universally normative to be eschatologically-symbolic? Otherwise the argument might come to be strangely reminiscent

the regulation of reciprocal relations, will have its eschatological fulfilment when the human dominion necessary to enforce that mandate, always corrupted through selfish interests or imperfect organization, will be replaced by divine Lordship: the kingdom of God.¹⁰²

Why does Pannenberg insist that the church is not an ethical subject? Could either the family or the state be described as such in the form in which they have been presented? Only in an indirect and mainly negative way; if they fail to perform their duty properly, they incur guilt. When they perform well, they allow and enable (the latter especially in the case of family, where the educational role is paramount) individual subjects to behave morally, without accruing merit in any meaningful sense. What Pannenberg wants to make clear is that there is no absolute ethical task associated with the mission of the church. As long as the sacraments are properly administered and the Word of God preached without addition, subtraction, or other perversion, the church is fulfilling its ethical task of signification.¹⁰³ The stipulations are more formal than for a family or state. Of course the miscarriage of this task may be the outcome of an accumulation of moral failures, and in turn underlie others. But the church as a whole is not involved in relations of reciprocal obligation, not even to the extent that states or families are. It is however involved at a deeper level at which ‘the public responsibility of a Christian as a member of that community, his global responsibility for mankind, is represented by the church.’¹⁰⁴

The central question in the Reformation concern for pure worship was the initial act and authority by which a particular form of worship had been promulgated. According to the Protestant rule, a true sacrament must have its origin in the commandment of Christ preserved in Scripture. (This harmonizes with the emphasis that Christ must be believed in as Saviour, rather than revered and imitated as an example. Correspondingly, for instance, John 13.14 was not perceived as a command, but became instead a regular

of Fichte’s or Hegel’s analyses of marriage, made in abstract metaphysical terms yet curiously reflective of contemporary mores.

¹⁰² ‘Society and the Christian Faith’, 11/118.

¹⁰³ Such a solution appeared after the Reformation confronted itself with the permanence of the *corpus permixtum*. (‘Bleiben in der Wahrheit’, 125.)

¹⁰⁴ HNEH, 34.

practice among more radical Protestant groups, who did not share this Christological approach.¹⁰⁵) Catholics were no less keen to insist on the authority of the church in the definition of the sacraments. According to Pannenberg, this deductive procedure should be replaced by a theological-historical question.¹⁰⁶ A merely theological-eschatological criterion would cast the net too wide and blur the line between the ethical, ‘hidden’ life of the church and its ‘open’, kerygmatic life of worship, because all forms of Christian ethical life should refer implicitly to their eschatological fulfilment. The criterion is decided by the fact that Jesus Christ himself is the one sacrament in the primordial sense, and all others have their substance in relation to him; they are also mediated, as acts of the church, by the church’s self-consciousness that its sacramental character is based in its relation to Jesus Christ. Theological conditions thus receive a historical concretion: ‘the criterion for calling a church action sacramental is whether the content of the action, if not necessarily the action itself, has its origin in Jesus Christ’ and whether for its ‘function as representation of the mystery of Christ there is at least a starting point already (as in the case of penance and confirmation) in the church’s apostolic beginnings’.¹⁰⁷ Pannenberg’s proposal is implicitly opposed to the mediation of the validity of the sacraments through the legitimacy of ecclesiastical authority.¹⁰⁸

Is the language of sacraments sufficient to bind all ethical action in the church to its eschatological fulfilment of meaning? Is not perhaps action more binding than language, at least psychologically? Were Church authorities not rightly worried that Christian revolutionaries might feel closer to their comrades, with whom they share a praxis, although they do not agree fully in their motivations, than to conservative practising Catholics? Moreover, can the church undertake to defend freedom symbolically? If there are the occasions when it must use its authority in society to defend it against the state, will its sacramental language be understood? The answer is that Pannenberg is constrained by the historical continuity of the church—from its foundation to its glorification—to delimit

¹⁰⁵ Cf. William Roscoe Estep, *The Anabaptist Story: An Introduction to sixteenth-century Anabaptism* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 88.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Hasel, 127–37.

¹⁰⁷ *ST* 3. 367–8/402.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 368/402.

the role of the church to that of a hermeneutical guide in freedom.¹⁰⁹ Other forms of the exercise of freedom in the church have to receive their interpretation in light of the permanent standard of the sacraments. As for the church's use of its social influence, there does not seem to be any hard and fast rule. It is the state which uses force to provide a normative legal basis to social morality. The eschaton might be imagined as the coincidence of dominion and interpretation, of state and church, in that the human subjects are re-interpreted in their history through their final enjoyment of the immediate rule of God. Pannenberg tends to emphasize more its political dimension because the developmental-hermeneutical process will have been brought to a halt. The role of the church role is therefore not primarily that of transforming the normative basis of society, but rather to interpret the historical relativity of the latter in relation to the eschaton.

VI. The church and the nature of community

The difference between state and church is not so easily exhausted. If the church is symbolic of the eschatological community, the sign of the unity of humanity, in how far is the church the paradigm of community?¹¹⁰ Certainly the church is constituted on the basis of a particular historical event, and that is what gives it its freedom; without its foundation in the prolepsis of the eschaton in Jesus Christ, we would be confronted with the spectre of a 'church in general', struggling between the particularity of its invented symbolism and its purported universal significance.¹¹¹ Moreover, the church affirms that the possibility of the unity of humankind depends materially on its founding event, not that it is merely be

¹⁰⁹ Colombo adds that preaching and ethical action are already directly concerned with the truth of tradition, not only indirectly through the historical-theological framework of the Church. (Colombo, 49–51.)

¹¹⁰ 'Paradigm' here is meant in the sense explicated by Agamben, as involving 'a movement that goes from singularity to singularity and, without ever leaving singularity, transforms every singular case into an *exemplar* of a general rule that can never be stated a priori.' (Giorgio Agamben, 'What Is a Paradigm?' in *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, tr. Luca D'Isanto with Kevin Attell (New York: Zone Books), 2009, 9–32 at 22.) Certainly the church cannot provide a sociological structure that can be assimilated by other forms of community, but does it exemplify for the process by which community is generated? For the question whether community is not an 'intrinsically religious, mythical matter', cp. John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon* (London: Routledge, 2003), 163.

¹¹¹ A tension that was visible around the French revolutionary cult of Reason and then of the Supreme Being. Cp. Georges Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, tr. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1989), 55–57.

symbolized by it. At least this much that is said of the church applies all communities, that they cannot be right in setting themselves against the unity of humankind. Ecumenism is not merely a religious aspiration but also a moral requirement, because the existence of the Church signals the foundation of the human reciprocity and sociality in the God-relationship. It is in this sense that one must take Pannenberg's claim that 'the righteous will of God orients itself to making mutual fellowship possible on the basis of the relation to God.'¹¹² All ethics is grounded in and aimed at reciprocity.

The idea of 'work' as guaranteeing community through external mechanisms of authority and submission, through the effort of accruing ethical merit, or through the sharing of material arrangements is excluded from the constitution of the church precisely by the experience of ethical reciprocity as gift. To what extent does *this* characterize the nature of community as such? And what does that say about the nature of political community? If this experience of gratuity is characteristic of the nature of community, then for Pannenberg political community could not exist in the strict sense now. Would then still be meaningful to speak of political freedom?

The ideal of a free community has found perhaps its strongest expression in Maurice Blanchot's *The Unavowable Community* and Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Inoperative Community*, writings suffused with de-eschatologized messianism, 'a kind of messianism announcing nothing but its autonomy and its *unworking*'.¹¹³ Part of its background is a philosophical dissatisfaction with the famous contradiction of Marxism, which anticipated the absolute flourishing of human social nature at the end of a deterministic conflict.¹¹⁴ The problem is the idea of 'determined' community, a community coming to be for certain reasons, intentions, 'work', in short a community that is made to 'exist by default',¹¹⁵ even when that is the only vaguely definable work of fully socialized humanity. Such an idea of

¹¹² ST 3, 93/109.

¹¹³ Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, tr. Pierre Joris (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, 1988), 33; Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, ed. Peter Connor, tr. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Sawhney (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

¹¹⁴ David Ingram, 'The Retreat of the Political in the Modern Age: Jean-Luc Nancy on Totalitarianism and Community', *Research in Phenomenology* 20 (1988), 93–124 at 96–7.

¹¹⁵ Blanchot, 56.

community is the expression of the mindset in which humanity is immanent in work;¹¹⁶ the miracle of community is, on the contrary, transcendence in the midst of finitude, a transcendence that emerges out of the impossibility of total immanence. It cannot be explained, only alluded to in a set of discrete images. Many of these have a theological resonance,¹¹⁷ and one seems to aim even higher than many versions of Christianity: ‘to take upon myself another’s death as the only death that concerns me, this is what puts me beside myself, this is the only separation that can open me, in its very impossibility, to the Openness of a community.’¹¹⁸ Community is the confirmation of the possibility of complete communication, but never its fulfilment.¹¹⁹ An actual transference would not only be always partial, it would also degenerate into ‘work’, translating the gesture into the language of the real and thus putting it to use of it for a further purpose.

This affirmation of community against total immanence may be co-opted to the Schmittian and Arendtian thesis of the gradual neutralization of the political by the social in modernity.¹²⁰ Nancy in particular offers his account of community as an ontological defence of the autonomy of the political: ‘communism is an ontological proposition, not a political option ... being insofar as it is a matter of that which is [i.e. being-in-common].’¹²¹ Freedom relates to the com-pearance, the appearance of the in-between of finite singularities ‘in the face of the withdrawal of their common being’, of the ontic basis of political organization, of a communication of necessities.¹²² If ‘freedom has to be considered yet another name for the groundless nature of community, a name for the

¹¹⁶ Nancy, *Inoperative Community*, 72–5.

¹¹⁷ Kevin Hart, *The Dark Gaze: Maurice Blanchot and the Sacred* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 194, 235.

¹¹⁸ Blanchot, 9.

¹¹⁹ e.g. the community that results in the proximity of a book (Blanchot, 24). ‘Dialogue and narration provide the opportunity for the murmur to be heard, if one is sufficiently attuned to it and attentive to its call. ... there is an affiliation that allows us to slip from “communication” to community.’ (Hart, 193) Interestingly, this is not a model Pannenberg considers even in the case of ‘churchless Christians’; whatever form of community they may be said to be part of is not the result of the Scriptures’ lone influence.

¹²⁰ Oliver Marchart, *Post-foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 44.

¹²¹ Jean-Luc Nancy, ‘La Comparution/The Compearance: From the Existence of “Communism” to the “Community” of Existence’, tr. Tracy B. Strong, *Political Theory* 20 (1992), 371–398 at 379.

¹²² Nancy, *The Experience of Freedom*, tr. Bridget McDonald (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 68–9.

ground as absent, then the groundless ground of the social is opened up by/as freedom in the form of political space.¹²³ In short, the emergence of a free community has to do with the opening up of a space for political communication in the neutral, ineffable space of the withdrawal of being.

Nancy's concept of the political does not come very well to grips with the idea of political struggle as a distribution of power.¹²⁴ One may also note that his view of freedom excludes the historical emergence of its desire; the renunciation of desire may indeed appear as a necessary moment before the transcendent appearance of community.¹²⁵ The relevance of Blanchot's and Nancy's descriptions of community vis-à-vis Pannenberg's lies in their questioning of the idea of ever greater communion, and especially of the promise that an eschatological revelation of the real could bring about an absolute community. The first matter discloses, as has been indicated before, a good measure of agreement: the church is not founded on any kind of 'work'. In Pannenberg's case, deepening communion does not mean a more perfect actuality, but the purification in the Church of the desire for participation in the eschatological city. It is not at all clear that the community of the Church has been progressing through history towards its ideal form. The ethical aspect of the Church's unity is surely the task of each generation; and even in matters of faith, the New Testament offers a fairly ambivalent prospect.¹²⁶ The representative function of the community does not consist primarily in its good works, even though it is impossible to separate the two. There is surely for Blanchot a polemical background reference point in the Catholic sacrifice of the mass as a paradigm of 'work'. Arguably Pannenberg avoids entering Blanchot's polemical target range in this respect. For him, even ecumenism should not be understood first as an increase in the efficiency of proclamation, but as a restoration of the fullness of signification that was there in the apostolical proclamation of Jesus Christ.¹²⁷ It aims not at the aggregation or harmonization of diversity into the experience of the church, but at a clearer memorial of its total significance, integrating

¹²³ Marchart, 76.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 78–82.

¹²⁵ Nancy, *Freedom*, 91–2, 116.

¹²⁶ Luke 18.8.

¹²⁷ 'The Significance of Eschatology for an Understanding of the Apostolicity and Catholicity of the Church', in *Church*, 44–68 at 66/239.

Christian ethics, eucharistic participation, and social intersubjectivity. Blanchot's and Nancy's visions cannot be readily accepted for the purposes of Christian self-critique, because for the church its foundation in an absolute historical reference point is vital. The model of a religious community emerging from their writings is a sharing constituted by a founding event which is then reabsorbed into a self-contained logic of propagation, which threatens to erase the gratuitous and spontaneous communication of finitude; this model clashes with Pannenberg's ecclesiology, in which the experience of community is neither momentary nor permanent, but combines the forms of historical memory and eschatological hope.

The second question is more serious because it seems to me that Nancy offers in fact a de-politicized¹²⁸ picture of an eschatological community, one in which freedom is not the product of any relations of authority and submission. Obviously a very basic question to be put to Pannenberg's ecclesiology is what sort of community he means when he refers to 'the unity of humanity'. The great theological precedent is here Schleiermacher's notion of *Menschengattung*; for Schleiermacher, the reality of the species-community is a principle of religious, ethical, scientific and artistic life.¹²⁹ Pannenberg's notion of universal historical hermeneutics is meant precisely as a replacement for Schleiermacher's appeal to *Gattung* in this function.¹³⁰ Pannenberg's positive use of the notion of *Menschengattung* does not advance much beyond the traditional picture of the glorified city of God: an actual eschatological community as the key to ecclesiology and social ethics. Significantly, Pannenberg's argument for the bodily resurrection does not proceed from the inadequacy of a theoretical (as opposed to actual) concept of universal humanity, but theologically

¹²⁸ The paradox of a de-politicized account of the political is observed by Marchart, 81.

¹²⁹ One might be forgiven for imagining that another part of the background, giving Pannenberg's use of the concept a polemical political edge, is the refrain of the original French Internationale ('L'Internationale sera le genre humain')

¹³⁰ 'Hermeneutics and Universal History', tr. Paul J. Achtemeier, in Robert Funk (ed.), *History and Hermeneutic* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 122–152 at 127/96, 151/117. Cf. Vechtel, 82–3: 'Human beings are always themselves the theme of their own history, insofar as their acting and being acted are theirs as human. In this relation to themselves as human the relation to humanity as a whole is involved.'

from the resurrection of Christ and apologetically from the *individual* constitution towards meaning.¹³¹

His notion of the experience of species-community might be clarified negatively from his description of the process of historical hermeneutics, which governs the reappropriation of the tradition essential to a community's self-identification. He sees it not as a personal questioning of the interpreter by the tradition, but 'a matter of creative formation of language': 'Precisely by means of interpretation, to the extent that interpretation really wants to understand the author, everything must be turned into statement, must be made explicit, that was involved, by way of nuances and frames of reference, in part even unknown to the author, in the formulation of the text. The interpreted text is precisely the text which has been objectified with respect to the unanticipated range of its horizon of meaning.'¹³² The contrast with Pannenberg's faith in the ecstatic pull of conversation is evident. Hermeneutical effort as explication cannot restore the text as address or meet the freedom of expression that produced it, so interpretation does not create or sustain community. For those purposes real presence is needed. Hence there is no history or development of the universal community, it exists only in anticipation. At the same time, communities are themselves not exempted from history; their meaning therefore would have to lie in a relation to the universal community, rather than in a hermeneutical recuperation of singular events.¹³³ Briefly, Pannenberg believes that social and technological organization does not encroach on the freedom of a community as long as they can be hermeneutically contained; the reason they disappear in the eschaton is because the hermeneutical process has been brought to an end by God's power. As in Nancy's post-foundationalist philosophy, the space of freedom is opened by a political gesture. But the church is not yet there, and the political gesture is deemed to coincide with the eschatological hermeneutical revelation.

¹³¹ 'Eschatologie und Sinnerfahrung', *GST* 2. 66–79 at 72–74.

¹³² 'Hermeneutics and Universal History', 142/111; 144/114. Pannenberg traces this back to openness to the world (*ibid.* n. 34).

¹³³ So Pannenberg agrees with Blanchot that a community cannot live merely on a past event, but he does believe that it can exist out of the future and hence out of a past event whose reality anticipates that future.

VII. Symbolic action in church and state

In the meantime, for Pannenberg ecclesial freedom and political freedom are complementary.¹³⁴ The fact that salvation is really present in the church, in objective symbols of the eschaton which become efficient in faith, means that the communicative action model that can be applied to the life of the church must differ in some important respects from a model which functions as a template for understanding the development of society and a resource for criticizing its current state. The universality of the message of Christianity is unfolded by Pannenberg in a concept of the church as symbol of the eschatological unity of humanity, with the corollary that the specific function of the clergy is to be responsible for and representative of the unity of the church; on the other hand, as I will discuss in the next chapter, he is not convinced by the political idea of popular representation as the basis of authority. The legitimacy of the state lies in its justice, on its capacity to regulate and optimize the interaction of different social systems in accordance with societal norms of morality. The essential difference is between symbolic and functional, effective action. Church authority does not involve compulsion; ethical action which is oriented towards the edification of the church, being guided in its freedom by the model of the apostolic paracletic, already exhibits the eschatological anticipation of authority-by-devotion. But the model of the church cannot be generalized to society; there must be an authority with force at its disposal in order to prevent action which refuses the status of anticipation and instead justifies itself as the conclusive expression of an individual or common will from trespassing on the freedom of others. Both aspects of the eschaton, gratuity and harmony, cannot be now fully represented at once.¹³⁵ The difference in the relations of the Church and the state to the eschaton means that they only enter into competition with one another if either one or the other oversteps its capacity and legitimacy.

Pannenberg's account of the relation of church and state is developed in self-conscious distinction from the various German Idealist accounts of the communal forms of rational

¹³⁴ 'The perfection of society as the precondition of the individual's salvation is what the Christian hope for the kingdom of God means.' (*TPS*, 424/426.)

¹³⁵ 'Reich Gottes, Kirche und Gesellschaft in der Sicht systematischer Theologie', *BE*, 23–37 at 27.

action. Kant ascribed to the Church a potential pedagogic role, as it is in its ability to express and reinforce socially the rational-moral character of the individual, while state authority is limited in its educational possibilities by only being capable to enforce external prohibitions. However, the Church, in contrast with the territorial claim of the state to sovereignty and self-determination, can have no programmatic agenda, indeed the demand of professing faith in revelation and the continuation and spread of an auxiliary tradition interfere with its primary ethical mission.¹³⁶ The eschatological element of Pannenberg's understanding of their relation is certainly missing, as might be expected from Kant's deontological ethics. One might also say that the potential for conflict between state and church, as a legislative rational community, is starker in Kant's account;¹³⁷ it would be a struggle between two legislative authorities, not just a tension between eschatological symbolization and present power.

Schleiermacher, an even more direct point of reference for Pannenberg, claimed that moral action as determined by participation in the church, although differently arrived at—an action is pious according to whether the feeling which has become a motive impulse is pious—,¹³⁸ would be in the end materially coincident with the action that would be arrived at philosophical ethics. Any material distinction has rather to do with a division between different 'spheres', different realms of reciprocal self-expression (the sphere of free sociability, the public or political sphere, etc.). The symbolic aspect of moral activity is self-communication: what is inward receives an outward sign which may be emulated, rejected, rivalled, praised or scorned. The different social spaces have different

¹³⁶ *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, tr. George di Giovanni, in *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni, Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 39–1216 esp. 197–8, Ak. 6. 178–9. Pannenberg recognizes the influence of this Kantian thought in much later German theology (TP, 198–200).

¹³⁷ *The Conflict of the Faculties*, tr. Mary J. Gregor and Robert Anchor, in *Religion and Rational Theology*, 233–328 at 259–61, Ak. 7. 32–36.

¹³⁸ Schleiermacher, *Die christliche Sitte*, ed. L. Jonas (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1843), 22. Schleiermacher started out from the scenario of individuals coming together as a community under the unifying power of feeling, an 'organic unification of a mass of people of the same type for the purposes of subjective activity of the cognitive function under the opposition of clergy and laity' (*Lectures on Philosophical Ethics*, ed. Robert B. Loudon, tr. Louise Adey Huish (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 91). This allowed him to assign a unique role to the church in the moral history of humanity, in dialectical coordination with the state and free sociability. Cf. Trutz Rendtorff, *Church and Theology: The Systematic Function of the Church Concept in Modern Theology*, tr. Reginald H. Fuller (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 142: 'Schleiermacher's philosophical theory of the church springs from his doctrine of the *summum bonum*.'

aims in the sense of different ways of combining human activity: the aim of the state is the cultivation of nature, while that of the church is the fellowship demanded by the consciousness of kind (*Gattung*).¹³⁹ In comparison with Schleiermacher, Pannenberg downplays the aspect of ethical action as self-communication and indeed as the communication of a feeling;¹⁴⁰ the former because it might challenge the idea of an eschatological completion of identity, the latter presumably because of his association of language with action. Seeing as he recognizes that Schleiermacher did not reduce the kingdom of God to the concept of an ethical goal,¹⁴¹ it seems to me that Pannenberg's departures from Schleiermacher are insufficiently warranted. At this point the weakness of the individual focus of Pannenberg's idea of freedom as the transcendence of the necessity perceived in any given situation is at its clearest. This transcendence, while it depends on the character of our eschatological identity as gift, does not exclude the communication of moral care through a worshipping community which is founded on the gratuity of the possibility of ethical living. In other words, as the church is based on belief in justification by faith and the forgiveness of sins, the idea of freedom does not exclude that concern for the character of our action in the eschatologically revealed context of history should coincide with the desire to express our identity as part of such a community.

Pannenberg's cautiousness towards the categories of desire and expression might have something to do with his appreciation of Hegel's notion of objective freedom.¹⁴² Hegel does indeed mediate the two structures of church and state through the concept of cultus or devotion (*Andacht*).¹⁴³ But since broadly speaking religion is thought of as the knowledge and the state as the actual realization of reconciliation,¹⁴⁴ there is a danger that

¹³⁹ *Philosophical Ethics*, 27. Cf. Michael Moxter, *Güterbegriff und Handlungstheorie: Eine Studie zur Ethik F. Schleiermachers* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1992), 81–83: part of the connection is that ethical laws, which develop in the state, relate to natural law as expressions (*Erscheinungen*) to the inner power of the species.

¹⁴⁰ Schleiermacher, *Christliche Sitte*, 509–11.

¹⁴¹ *Ethics*, 211–2/81–2 n. 38. Cf. Pannenberg, *Problemgeschichte der neueren evangelischen Theologie in Deutschland: Von Schleiermacher bis zu Barth und Tillich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 72–74.

¹⁴² While the kingship of Christ is now only visible in the church, 'Lordship (*Herrschaft*) over the world was given to the Christ raised to the right hand of God, even if its exercise is there still hidden.' ('Reich Gottes, Kirche und Gesellschaft in der Sicht systematischer Theologie', BE 23–37 at 31.)

¹⁴³ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, tr. R.F. Brown, Peter C. Hodgson, and J.M. Stewart (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984–87), 3. 341–2.

¹⁴⁴ Hegel, *Philosophy of Religion*, 1. 451–60; cf. Graham Ward, *Cities of God* (London: Routledge, 2000), 140–46.

the church might become simply an externalized performance, not adding to the syntax of ethic (*Sittlichkeit*) through its own social organization, especially if community is defined as the presupposition of faith.¹⁴⁵ It is the absence of this social mediation which renders Hegel's *Andacht* inherently Protestant, even more than his objections to the external treatment of the subject in Catholicism.¹⁴⁶

However, action is rarely purely symbolic or purely functional, which is the direction in which Pannenberg's distinction between religious worship and political submission tends. This is especially to be considered as Pannenberg claims both the political and the religious as inherent aspects of moral action, but with the religious or symbolic matrix as fundamental, being its ultimate test and origin.

Let me put forward a trivial example: a man has promised to attend the wedding of a friend and can only reach it by train, but has no money for the fare. He is certain that once arrived in the town in which the wedding is taking place he would manage to put together enough money for the combined fare. Assuming the chances of being caught and punished are negligible, it seems that the judgement that has to be made is about the symbolic meaning of his options. He could get on the train, attend his friend's wedding, and then buy a full return ticket for the journey home (and thus reimburse the railway company fully). His relation to the train company holds no great meaning for him and the future compensation would set it right again; his friendship could, on the other hand, suffer simply on account of his failure to attend. (Of course this course of action would not be appropriate if his friend, a Kantian, would come to know of his actions and be outraged. In that case our invited guest would be wiser to send a token of regret, hoping that the friend's appreciation of the situation would make up for his incapacity to show his friendship in person.) Should he opt for the more 'meaningful' course of action? Or would taking the risk of being caught express an abhorrent disrespect for himself and social order? It might be objected that this exemplification only sheds light on a small number of situations, in which the symbolic meaning of the action emerges within a well-defined

¹⁴⁵ Hegel, *Philosophy of Religion*, 3. 373.

¹⁴⁶ That obviously can at most refer only to the authoritarian hierarchy, not to the whole cultus of the Catholic Church, which must already be 'inward', if it has the ethical significance he assigns to it.

hierarchy of relations. An even more serious objection is that symbolization is not part of the structure of moral activity for the self, that a concern to be moral cannot consistently take the form of representing all approvable actions as mere symbols. There is the problem of internal motivation: you do something *out of* respect for the moral law, a desire for improvement, etc., not merely to *show* respect or a desire.¹⁴⁷

The tension between symbolization and motivation is already resolved by the commandment of love, which accounts also for the communication of desire. The symbolic character of action necessarily figures quite prominently in religious accounts of morality, inasmuch as right living is the everyday mode of worshipping God.¹⁴⁸ In accord with the aforementioned concern for motivation this came to be understood as inner worship, on which the action follows gratuitously. However, in his willingness to condense Christian ethics to a Christian ethos unconnected from the structure of the church, whose principles may underlie the way of life of a whole society—although in contemporary Western societies they do not—,¹⁴⁹ Pannenberg seems to believe that action does not lose its moral character if its principles are not subjectively ultimately well-grounded. He seems open to decoupling a theory of Christian virtues from the ethos of Christian worship. I agree that action is moral not only when one may provide an ultimate, eschatological justification for it; that is not, however, because moral principles may enjoy an autonomous subsistence, but because moral action may still be inspired by the communication of divine love, whose vessel the worshipping church is meant to be.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (1985; London: Routledge, 2006), 142. Vechtel makes a stronger objection aimed against the provisionality of revelation, arguing that man experiences an ‘unconditional call to love of truth and man’ (252; cf. Overbeck, 374; Freyer, 476). But as Pannenberg would argue, and Vechtel himself acknowledges (261), such an absolute demand emerges only out of the relation of the finite to the infinite. Cf. Pagano, 93–4.

¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, it is not a primary, but a derived mode of worship. Christiaan Mostert is following Panneberg when he asserts that ‘in the liturgy of word and sacrament the church is most clearly instantiated as an eschatological community.’ (‘The Kingdom Anticipated: The Church and Eschatology’, *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 13 (2011), 25–37 at 33.)

¹⁴⁹ GE, 109.

¹⁵⁰ An interesting avenue to pursue might be Peter Lombard’s account of the presence of the Holy Spirit as love. See Peter Lombard, *The Sentences*, tr. Giulio Silano (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2007–10), i. xvii, 88–97; Philipp W. Rosemann, ‘Fraterna dilectio est Deus: Peter Lombard’s thesis on charity as the Holy Spirit’, in Thomas A. F. Kelly and Philipp W. Rosemann, *Amor Amicitiae = On the Love that Is Friendship: Essays in Medieval Thought and beyond in Honor of the Rev. Professor James McEvoy* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 409–36.

Besides, the idea of a secular quasi-Christian lifestyle does not agree very well with Pannenberg's emphasis on the actualism of God's freedom.¹⁵¹ Worship in the moral sense means conformity with the actual, present will of God, whose content is not fixated upon one state of affairs as its object, but includes the dynamic aspect of greater communion with God and among his people on earth. This is the structure in which morality as symbolization is embedded. In its psychological aspect it receives sundry denominations: devotion, service, compassion, generosity, love. Objectively, moral action symbolizes the possibility of continued sharing in the goodness of creation and the hope of being able to respond to new divine gifts. Hence it has to undergo historical mediation, and creativity in worship is not demanded in contrast to tradition, but in its continuation or correction.¹⁵² The entire ethical tradition of the church is an exploration of the domain of freedom. The meaning of action is temporally embedded, and therefore also that of moral action divinely ordained; Pannenberg would have been justified to rehabilitate the language of divine action and will not only in relation to historical events, but also in relation to the pattern of Christian moral action.

Conclusion

Pannenberg rightly emphasizes that the church is 'the creation of both the Spirit and the Son'; however, without wishing to detract from his statement that in binding the community together 'the work of the Spirit is simply to glorify the Son by teaching us to know the Father in the Son through whom we have access to him',¹⁵³ I would suggest that his affirmation of the pedagogic and anamnestic role of the Spirit's work¹⁵⁴ does not quite amount to a Trinitarian integration of the freedom of the believer in the freedom of the church. There is not so much progress as refinement in the latter concept from the early affirmation that it is specifically the freedom to proclaim the gospel. The two concepts of

¹⁵¹ e.g. *TKG*, 70–1.

¹⁵² Here Pannenberg follows, as one would expect, a Lutheran rather than a Calvinist model.

¹⁵³ *ST* 3. 18, 16.

¹⁵⁴ Although very skilfully used in his explanation of epiclesis (*ST* 3. 320–24).

individual and ecclesial freedom are kept apart, it seems, by the fact that the present of the church is perceived only in the tension between its past foundation and future gathering. One obvious avenue for exploring their relation would be the work of the Spirit through the community in elevating and guiding the individual's desire for freedom. Perhaps one should also consider the role of the Spirit in the concrete history of Church. While Pannenberg argues convincingly that in the new covenant Spirit's guidance in freedom thoroughly replaces the statutes of the Law, he does not present this as a movement in which each believer interprets and receives their desire as part of the whole action of community, but only as a continuation of the spontaneous self-understanding of apostolic exhortation.

In fact, because Pannenberg's concept of the Spirit is not limited to the idea of an eschatological reunification and integration, it may be used to recast his ecclesiology in a slightly different mould; however difficult it may be to accept, the notion of proleptic power is necessary in order to ensure the coherence of the various forms of anticipation.¹⁵⁵ This power is already present at work in the different forms of ethical action, guiding and governing their temporal horizons; the coincidence of these divergent horizons in the present means that the self receives its proper vocation as a measure of participation in eternity and not merely as the sum of different desires, even if this vocation—the desire for freedom—may be present in calls of different languages and different durations.¹⁵⁶ In short, the proper lesson of Pannenberg's ecclesiology may rather turn out to be that human freedom depends on the providential divine coordination of the different demands of the times, which shape our being into what it is meant to be. Even the power of the state may come under (or refuse) the purview of this divine providential power.¹⁵⁷ The higher freedom of the church lies simply in its continued belief in this providence as it moves from the Resurrection to Christ's return. It is difficult to shake the impression that perhaps for Pannenberg the strength of ecclesial freedom lies in a certain degree of abstraction in the treatment of the church's temporal existence between Christ's resurrection and the

¹⁵⁵ Philosophically Pannenberg defends this idea through the ontological dependence of the present and the past on the future. (*MIG*, 87–8/63)

¹⁵⁶ *MIG*, 68/51.

¹⁵⁷ This justifies Pannenberg's reading of history in concretely theological language which has been remarked on in Ch. 1. i, v.

eschaton and that is why the aspect of freedom as desire is muted in his picture of church life.

Chapter 3

Desire between Need and Meaning: State Authority as a Question of Trust

This chapter looks at the role played by the state, as the sovereign form of political organization, in Pannenberg's theory of freedom as courageous confrontation of the newness of the future in anticipation of God's final redemption. The desire for individual freedom emerges as a practical political problem in terms of the confrontation between individual and state in the Kantian language of means and ends (I). Pannenberg's critique of the limitations of this language—and of self-founding political philosophy in general—leads into a discussion of the possibility of a religious affirmation of the necessity and goodness of the emergence of political discourse. Because this affirmation is conditioned by the preliminary nature of the state in relation to the perfect society of the eschaton, the state which allows freedom to develop its religious dimension is that in which authority is conscious of its temporal nature and adopts correspondent forms of organization (II). Moreover, the state's function as an institution of trust can only establish itself in the context of a converging history of humanity; Pannenberg's conception about the role of religion in the stability of society underlies a vision in which the unity of human destiny has to inform pragmatic political decisions (III). In this vision, the state can sustain the desire for freedom, without establishing itself as a transcendent source of meaning, by struggling to forge a trustworthy communal story through the practice of justice.

Christian theology has always had to confront the problem of the basis and limits of state authority. While Pannenberg does not feel the need to confront anarchist arguments, he does polemicize with the Marxian historical dialectic which postulates the full achievement of freedom beyond the terminus of statehood. His argument could be described as a defence of the necessity of the state as a form of organization necessary for the temporal practice and interpretation of freedom; the limits of its legitimacy are set by the historical credibility of its discourse in relation to the theme of freedom¹—not so

¹ 'What sort of social order is fit to secure a maximum chance of individual immediacy to God, of individual freedom?' (HNEH, 101.)

much the credibility of official ideology, but of the logic embedded in its institutions and practices.²

I. The state and the service of the individual

However difficult in a Cold War context might have been the task of removing the veils of professed noble intentions and reading the face of power, Pannenberg's sympathies ultimately hung on a single point of principle: 'the measure by which the forms of life in society are judged must continue to be ... the free person.'³ In the West, this was the declared principle of democratic change; in the East, the anticipated result of society in transformation. Aside from the dislike for communist authoritarianism induced by his personal experience with it as a young man and his disagreement with Marxist economic theory,⁴ it is this fundamental option in judging politics in the present⁵ that founded Pannenberg's allegiance to what was then described as the First World, more precisely to a West-German substantial alignment with the United States. At the same time, his

² For instance, Pannenberg's position towards communism agrees with Reinhold Niebuhr's assessment that 'Marxism is realistic about the human nature and behaviour of the "sinners", the competitors, the bourgeoisie, but is idealistic about the "redeemed" group, in this case not the church or the chosen nation, but the Messianic class.' (*Man's Nature and His Communities: Essays on the Dynamics and Enigmas of Man's Personal and Social Existence* (New York: Scribner, 1965), 38. Cp. CSSC, 66.) This is not necessarily a right-wing opinion; Marcuse similarly contrasted the irrationality of fascism with the rational but unrealistic programme of communism (*Soviet Marxism: A Critical Analysis* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), 264–5).

³ 'The Future and the Unity of Mankind', *Ethics*, 175–97 at 186/177. 'The principle of religious and political liberty, the basic principle of modern culture, could be understood—and has been understood—as representing the most universal and concrete realization so far of the Christian faith in human life.' (*HNEH*, 103)

⁴ 'An Intellectual Pilgrimage', 185, 188; CSSC, 68. Pannenberg's sociological and theological arguments against Marx focus on the problem of alienation ('Fluch und Segen der Arbeit', *BST* 2. 213; *ATP*, 272–3/265–6) and he seems to understand Marx's concept of alienation as simply the workers' dispossession of their products.

⁵ It is curious to juxtapose this with the theological accusation (expressed in different ways by, among others, Freyer, Gläßer, and Vechtel) that Pannenberg depreciates the present for the sake of a future overcoming of finitude. (For an example, see Brian Walsh, 'Pannenberg's Eschatological Ontology', *Christian Scholar's Review* 11 (1982), 229–49, esp. 243. for a rebuttal, see Benjamin Myers, 'The Difference Totality Makes: Reconsidering Pannenberg's Eschatological Ontology', *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 49 (2007), 141–155, esp. 145; cf. Pasquale, 257.) I hope to have shown in Chapter 1 that this is not the case; but it would make Pannenberg's political interests inexplicable from the perspective of his theology.

association with Christian Democracy was partially motivated by the worry that Western freedom has the tendency to degenerate into individual caprice.⁶ Yet Pannenberg does not wish to be either conservative or Hegelian. He also concurs in the Marxist denunciation of purely titular ‘political freedom’ and its role in obscuring other forms of domination.⁷ How then would he envision a state fashioned to the measure of a ‘free person’?

The Cold War setting of Pannenberg’s political formation is of more than biographical interest. In the circumstances of the Cold War, as states assumed decisive historical orientations, it was revealed to many of their citizens that an experience of social freedom is denied where one is unable to trust the truthfulness of this direction. That a destination of freedom was mendaciously promised them was probably one of the few common experiences of dissidents beyond the Iron Curtain and anti-capitalist activists of the sixties and seventies. The metaphor of historical progress is less popular now; the absence of a mediating historical-political myth only makes the question of the basis of trust in fundamental political projects all the more acute.

There are two ways in which the state could be conceived of as serving the freedom of the person. In the first, its powers are used to provide a raw quantity, a ‘resource’ at the disposal of the individual who can indifferently use it to freely fashion a personal way of life. In the second, the state provides the ultimate frame of meaning for the personal stories which it situates historically. The first scenario is arguably never realized in its pure form in practice, since it presupposes a perfectly accommodating and charitable state, whereas an individual might always still perceive its presence as an uncomfortable question; completely disinterested (and uninterested, in this extreme scenario) benevolence is likely to stir suspicion and sometimes envy.⁸ Only if the state’s assistance is minimal—in the form of a guarantee of security—are these consequences minimized.⁹ There are

⁶ Kantianism seems one of the main philosophical culprits for having unintentionally endorsed the egocentric assumptions of this social attitude, by severing the normativity of moral laws from religious consciousness. (*CSW*, 34–36/49–51; *TP*, 201; cf. ‘Verbindliche Normen ohne Gott?’, *BE*, 147–57.)

⁷ ‘The Future and the Unity of Mankind’, in *Ethics*, 175–97 at 194/183.

⁸ Such benevolence depends, moreover, on the support of tax-payers, whose willingness to contribute requires a certain level of cohesion and trust within society.

⁹ Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974), 272–74.

undeniably some desirable qualities in a state conforming to this form of service: reliability, organization, coherence—and trust is impossible without them. The second scenario is also unrealistic; as Hegel's (perhaps opportunistic) discrepancies over the role of the monarch in his account of the state show, at no level of the state can meaning arise without the threat of violent disregard for it.¹⁰ Is a purely solemnizing authority meaningful? Can the will of a person embody the expression of an organic totality? Since it cannot create trust by fiat, even the highest authority in a state must be open in its intentions, open to discussion and review of its decisions.

Both options are theologically problematic in their pure form. With the first scenario is connected the traditional liberal claim that the state is founded on a restriction of individual freedom. The individual cannot retain personal freedom in the absence of the state, which is why it is indispensable.¹¹ How far does this initial justification take us? For instance, if the indispensability of the state lies in its guarantee of life and property, can that perhaps also make the state a regulator in matters of religion? It depends on whether that is necessary for the enterprise of offering this guarantee; or perhaps there is a limit even to this guarantee, and the state should rather forsake its functions than overstep the boundaries of freedom. Supposing, per absurdum, that all the citizens of a country at war convert to a pacifist religion, would a liberal state have to dissolve? Or is there no greater social evil than the absence of the state? If religion is concerned with meaning and political authority is not, there is no mediating language between them. What may be, and frequently is, sought are boundaries that can sustain harmony. As for the second scenario, the view that the state is a necessary context of meaning for personal freedom must at least be tempered from a Christian theological perspective by the proviso that it is not the culmination or the last term in the series of contexts in which the individual is inscribed.

¹⁰ I am referring to the revision towards ambiguity of Hegel's account of monarchical power, from a clearly purely formal role, in which the will of the monarch is natural and bounded (*Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science: The First Philosophy of Right, Heidelberg, 1817–1818, with additions from the lectures of 1818–1819*, tr. J. Michael Stewart and Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), §§138–40, pp. 250–60, esp. p. 244), to a 'last word' which represents modern self-conscious freedom in his *Berlin Outlines of the Philosophy of Right* (§§279–86, pp. 267–77, esp. p. 271).

¹¹ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 2.7.87–89, pp. 323–25.

The contrast just presented for the sake of exposition is excessively crude; no social resource or energy is operative in the absence of signification. Arguably the mere recognition of state legitimacy constitutes an ascription of significance. However, in the liberal model, the regularity of this significance is meant to correspond to the standards of legal language;¹² the concept of ‘state’ is employed with a uniformity that aims to eliminate ambiguity. When the term is reinserted in a personal context, it does not lend itself easily to a variety of combinations. If imagination is required for its understanding, it is the abstracting imagination of academic hypotheses.¹³ In other words, there is a definite set of contexts in which the concept is employed validly; but, in fact, because these contexts are connected to the everyday and the personal by a series of media of influence, its relevance is perceived as a vector towards a particular weighing of possibilities and prohibitions.¹⁴ For instance, if the state’s main mission is understood to be that of defending the property of its citizens and it is willing and effective in this regard, then the more daring and acquisitive of its citizenry may be indirectly encouraged in their endeavours to extend their property by pushing its borders.¹⁵

An organic model like Hegel’s recognizes that the sign of the state acquires a different meaning in relation to different forms of concrete freedom, according to the rule of the possibility of representation. As part of a system of right, as opposed to mere law, the state

¹² As it arises from consent, it must have a univocal meaning—see Rawls’s introduction to Locke in his *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Samuel Freeman (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 122–25; see also below on Habermas, Ch. 3. iv.

¹³ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971; rev. edn. 1999), 15–19.

¹⁴ Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, *On Justification: Economies of Worth*, tr. Catherine Porter (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 77–79; Paul Ricœur, *The Just*, tr. David Pellauer (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), 42: ‘there is a problem of justice as soon as an appropriate division of social advantages is at issue. Hence those involved [those under Rawls’s veil of ignorance] must be not just free and rational persons, but persons concerned to advance their own interests.’

¹⁵ I am alluding to the ideology of Manifest Destiny, which could only have arisen on the basis of a particular institutional self-understanding of the young United States. Cf. Richard Boyd and Ewa Atanassow (eds.), *Tocqueville and the Frontiers of Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), esp. 157ff., and Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). However, the connection between economic opportunity and the legitimacy of the state is a wider enduring issue: ‘Missing legitimation must be offset by rewards for conforming to the system. A legitimation crisis arrives as soon as the demands for such rewards rise faster than the available quantity of value, or when expectations arise that cannot be satisfied with such rewards.’ (Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, tr. Thomas McCarthy (London: Heinemann, 1976), 72.)

emerges through a series of recognitions.¹⁶ The representative puts an objective aspect of the life of the represented in relation with a different sphere of individual wills which recognize each other according to a common principle. What sets Hegel apart from more democratic models of this kind is his belief that responsibility also means an orientation, taken on behalf of the represented, towards history—in the form of the state as the conscious realization of freedom.¹⁷ In other words, representation means that through the rational argument of objective interests the state's universal interest is recognized.¹⁸ This is so that an individual whose participation in history is rational can participate freely in the life of the state.

The difficulty of the Hegelian model is that it has to specify those objective qualities that allow the recognition of a form of freedom in a wider sphere in order to eliminate the involvement of subjective trust in representation—and this task has to be undertaken in the light of changing social relations of production.¹⁹ To that extent it invites supersession by an empirically-oriented analytical sociology.²⁰ Perhaps more importantly, it presumes that the moment of recognition which is made possible by representation will issue in reconciliation, and not conflict; the state 'is not subject to partition because it rests on law.'²¹ Hegel's view of the modern state discounts the spectre of revolution. It is difficult to make this assumption without the advantage of Hegel's conception of the Spirit's unfolding in history.²² A theory of representation has to acknowledge the possibility of

¹⁶ Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, tr. Joel Anderson (Cambridge: Polity, 1995), 15ff.

¹⁷ 'The important thing, then, is that a member of the Estates shall have a character, insight, and will adequate to his task of concentrating on universal affairs.' (*Philosophy of Right*, §309, p. 295.)

¹⁸ Cf. Nathan Ross, *On Mechanism in Hegel's Social and Political Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2008), Ch. 5.

¹⁹ Cf. Kenneth R. Westphal, 'Hegel on Political Representation: Laborers, Corporations, and the Monarch', *The Owl of Minerva*, 25 (1993), 111–16.

²⁰ Such as that of Marx, who observed that—quite in accord with Hegel's demand that representatives have a capacity for universal interest—in the modern state 'public affairs and their pursuit is a monopoly while monopolies are the actual public affairs.' (*Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'*, tr. Annette Jolin and Joseph O'Malley, ed. Joseph O'Malley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 65).

²¹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 3.1.176, p. 175.

²² Since some social conflicts are based on utilitarian interest, rather than the struggle for recognition, they may not be appeased by the political mechanisms which integrate the universal desire of recognition; see Honneth, *Struggle for Recognition*, 146–151, 165.

long-standing dissension and perhaps even allow secession as an outcome of its legitimate performance.

Conversely, the shortcomings of the ‘mechanical’ liberal model of representation are obvious in its potential for corruption, when the validity of representation is measured in the success of economic patronage. The model of pragmatic negotiation which it endorses can degenerate into the tendency to partition the commonweal into the satisfaction of special interests—as Pannenberg calls it bluntly, ‘buying off’ ‘pressure groups’.²³ Concurrently, the individual’s relation to the state can become reduced to economic interest, preventing the democratization of the sphere of public debate.²⁴

Although the dichotomy just presented between freedom as guaranteed by the state’s service and freedom in service of the state’s historical role is necessarily reductive of the arguments of the philosophers referenced, it still signals some of the problems that arise in conceptualizing political freedom if individual freedom is understood as either present possession or historical self-understanding. Pannenberg’s concept of freedom as confrontation with a new future in light of eschatological destiny promises to offer a positive account of state authority which avoids their pitfalls. It is an account of the state as a social mechanism which serves the historical mediation of eschatological freedom in terms of the social resources available in the present, or, if I may extend Pannenberg’s own jargon, the self-differentiation of political freedom from eschatological freedom.

II. Temporal authority

For Pannenberg, if the state is counted a good in itself rather than a necessary evil, it is because it furnishes a temporal scheme for the unfolding of the value of human freedom.

²³ TKG, 122–3.

²⁴ Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (London: Allen Lane, 1972), 4–5.; on the inherent limitations of this phenomenon, see Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, 71ff.

In eternity, in the home of freedom, where the finite shall be taken up in the infinite,²⁵ there shall be no more human domination and submission. In this world the authority of the eschatological supreme good in and over all has to be acknowledged by and through a temporal structure of bringing together different trajectories of freedom—a structure not claiming to be recognized the same obedience as the Good, nor attempting to bring even present time under its complete control, but anticipating in a motion of waiting together the possibilities of the Highest Good. The state has ‘temporal authority’ in the sense that its authority is as a temporal rhythm of convergence, forged with the dual arms of persuasiveness and compulsion, which demonstrates indirectly the infinitely higher authority of eternity. The state’s syncopating form of unity is nevertheless a good because it anticipates to some degree the actuality of the supreme good, which is reciprocal enjoyment and participation in the kingdom of God.²⁶

Two quite different streams appear to have merged imperceptibly in Pannenberg’s account of state authority: one is the conservative emphasis on the necessary role of the State in limiting social evil, the other is the idea of the ‘radical impurity’ (to use a Kantian turn of phrase) of state authority, the residue of unjustifiability in a relation in which certain persons get to decide for others. These lines of thought are quite distinct, although they might appear at first sight to coincide: while the Lutheran notion that the primary mission of a state is the negative one of protection may be sometimes associated with the conception of the state as a postlapsarian institution, established on account of sin, it need not render compulsion at all problematic; Pannenberg’s aversion to compulsion would seem instead to echo the ideal of the person as infinite subjectivity, whose dignity is transgressed by external coercion. According to the first tradition, the state can be the servant of God by participating in its limited way in the fight against wickedness, damming its external manifestation. But this notion of participation is somewhat muted in Pannenberg’s account, owing to the lowered profile of the notion of punishment in his eschatology: he prefers instead the Pauline image of perishable waste and enduring grace,²⁷

²⁵ *ST* 3. 635–6/682–3.

²⁶ ‘The Nation and the Human Race’, esp. 118/151: ‘The union of all men in a kingdom of peace and justice ... will only come about as an association of a number of large groups which in turn consist of unions of smaller groups.’

²⁷ 1 Cor. 3.10–15.

just as his interpretation of atonement emphasizes divine solidarity in suffering, rather than the removal of condemnation.²⁸

How then do these two ‘negative’ traditions combine to produce quite a positive notion of the state? Perhaps the most effective argument against the theologically positive valuing of the state’s punitive function is that sin is essentially theological and relational: it is defined in relation to God, in a language inaccessible to the state, who judges by more visible signs. Sin is not a necessary part of the vocabulary even of natural law. But Pannenberg does not agree with this objection which would remove the connection between anthropological observation and theological evaluation: there is contiguity between the impulse to aggression, violence, and sin.²⁹ In them all there is evident a fundamental irrationality redoubling the desire for self-assertion, an inexplicable raising of the psychological phenomenon of ‘centrality’³⁰ to a principle of interaction. The evil that the state combats is not at its root the adoption of a different code of conduct than that approved for a particular society,³¹ but the manifestation of the asocial streak of human nature. Hence the positive worth of the state lies in cancelling the menacing proliferation of this disregard for others, which is related to sin inasmuch as the latter is also a rejection of community. This is not to say that Pannenberg’s state is Hobbesian in nature: the state is not a contractual agreement saving the population from mutual destruction, but develops when the ties of kinship, of natural community, become insufficient for social cohesion; it introduces a new principle, that of justice, in the distribution of social roles.³² The alternative to the state is not physical extermination, but the abandonment of the idea of justice, the principle of community. In short, ‘political power (*Herrschaft*) can be a manifestation

²⁸ This is the case even though, as Bradshaw notes, Pannenberg does not object to the notion of penal substitution. (*Guide to the Perplexed*, 94.)

²⁹ ‘Aggression und die theologische Lehre von der Sünde’, BST 2. 220–234 at 231–2. As a manifestation of sin, aggression can only be healed by religiously inspired positive self-estimation; cf. Reinhold Niebuhr’s argument that ‘religion is at one and the same time, humility before the absolute and self-assertion in terms of the absolute.’ (*Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1932), 64, cf. 261–2.)

³⁰ Dieckmann, 57ff.

³¹ Pannenberg endorses H. Heller’s view that ‘a state must be understood not as a function of a system of laws but primarily as an association under rule.’ (*ATP*, 462–3/450.)

³² In order for there to be subjects of rights we must ‘take society as a vast system of distribution, that is, of the sharing of roles, burdens, tasks, well beyond the distribution that takes place on the economic plane of market values.’ (Paul Ricoeur, ‘Who Is the Subject of Rights?’, in *The Just*, tr. David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1–10 at 8–9.)

(*Erscheinungsform*) of that rule of the Most High God over the world that gives the world order its unity.³³ In fact, because religion is uniquely effective in checking the psychological root of anti-sociality—the tendency to remove oneself from the moral judgement one applies to others—the state will also have to rely in practice on religious sentiment.³⁴

The proof of the negative kernel of state authority comes to the surface, paradoxically, precisely in the fulfilment of its positive mission. In the eschaton, state authority disappears before divine Lordship. It is important to note that this implies the possibility of a state overstepping its limits in idolatrous fashion, claiming for itself authority that belongs only to God. This was a common experience for Christians of the first centuries required to worship the Roman gods; but how is such a situation discernible in less blatant circumstances? Is it a question of different ‘levels’ of authority, to which different sets of possible commands correspond? For Pannenberg the matter is much more subtle. Rejecting the idea that power consists in the ability to satisfy needs, he sees it also in the ability to harm and the corresponding dread; on the other hand, ‘authority is acquired only when power is used for the good of a community and its members.’³⁵ State power can be perverted either by being used diabolically for the purpose of destroying or obstructing the flourishing communities or individuals³⁶ or by being idolatrously aggrandized as the ultimate preceptor and guide in life, promising fulfilment or meaning that only God can award.

Such egregious sorts of sin in the exercise of power are, to be sure, not unique to the state; what is characteristically the shortcoming of the state is the fact that the absolute authority of justice is wielded by mere men and women.³⁷ Convinced by the foundation of the state

³³ ATP, 475/462.

³⁴ ‘Verbindliche Normen ohne Gott?’, 153–4. Cp. R. Niebuhr (*Moral Man and Immoral Society*, 83–168; *Justice and Mercy*, 110), who includes the idolatry of communities within the negative forms of sociality. Pannenberg seems to downplay this aspect.

³⁵ ATP, 456/443.

³⁶ ‘Purpose’ is an important, if ambiguous, word here, because Pannenberg is not a pacifist, although he allows Christian pacifists a ‘symbolic meaning for all Christendom’. (‘The Peace of God and World Peace’, in *Ethics*, 151–174/146–165 at 156/150.)

³⁷ Pannenberg follows the Christian realist tradition of Reinhold Niebuhr, according to which in the life of the state the order of action and the order of morality are reversed, in the sense that justice is promoted

in the ideal of justice, Pannenberg is not persuaded by popular sovereignty and representation as alternative bases of legitimacy which would excuse the limitations of practical justice. Pannenberg's demurral does not contradict his acknowledgement of the value of the state in the formation of the human community,³⁸ because the problem with the notion of popular sovereignty is merely that the community has been stripped of its religious dimension; popular sovereignty is 'the replacement of God by the people and its infallibility'.³⁹ Not that the theory of authority by divine right, in which the political order was supposedly delegated from God as the fountain of justice, was correct; the representative function was then compromised by the inevitable political interest of the survival of the state and by the limited, fallible judgement of those in charge. What redeems the imperfections of a state's realization of justice is its own recognition of them in its difference from the eschatological ideal. In short, the defining commitment of the state to justice and its inherently faulty performance is what makes compulsion objectionable in principle, but necessary and justified in practice.

For Pannenberg, justice cannot be a meta-political or non-political ethical norm: justice is about devotion—loving, respectful submission—to an objectively good order, and as such the full measure of justice in freedom belongs to the eschaton. One would have to say that Christian freedom is unconnected to social or political freedom only if earthly justice had an independent source and ideal from that of the eschatological promise.⁴⁰ By way of this derivation, Pannenberg's political theology oversteps the limits of its Lutheran background, because temporal justice acquires an indirect positive eschatological significance. From a stricter Lutheran standpoint—which places the state in the sphere of justice, as opposed to that of faith—the critical question might be asked whether Pannenberg, by encumbering politics with eschatological meaning, is not leaving the door

according to national interest and can only be attained through a balance of power between communities of divergent interests. (R. Niebuhr, *Man's Nature and His Communities*, 105; *Justice and Mercy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 91.)

³⁸ The rule of law allows the full development of the principle of reciprocity. ('Christliche Rechtsbegründung', in *BE*, 38–54 at 53.)

³⁹ *ATP*, 468/455.

⁴⁰ Pannenberg shows some sympathy towards the political project of the implementation of Christian freedom, Milton's political project for the English Commonwealth, also adopted by certain American colonists such as Roger Williams; the aspiration has not yet been fulfilled (*HNEH*, 78–80).

half-open for some sort of justification by works. To accept Pannenberg's reasoning one must think of the state as designed to fulfil, albeit inadequately, the transcendent human need for justice, rather than accept the identification of justice with law. The latter perception is at work not only in the sphere of Luther's theology, but also where the measure of justice in society is assessed according to some standard applicable to society as an abstract unity; that would indeed allow an attribution of merit that may be theologically assimilated to justification by works. Instead, according to Pannenberg, societies can only be indirectly measured, by the way they contribute to the creation of the unique identities which will be affirmed in the eschaton.⁴¹ Social equality is then not an absolute timeless norm, but a dynamic allocation inspired by eschatological equality; the application of an abstract norm of fairness would not be justified in our present situation, in which inequality has to be seen as the inevitable result of the historical process.⁴² Yet is there not a danger that, once we have renounced the Hegelian scientific method of following the movement of Spirit, a historically informed notion of justice will take refuge in reluctant reformism? Pannenberg assures us that it will not, if it is informed by a religious sense of fraternity.⁴³

This construal of political authority has extensive consequences for the idea of freedom. Freedom is synthesized legally under the form of rights in relation to the state; but the question of the relation between the energy allocated to state resources and the remainder of energy that is assigned over to individual or other initiatives to fostering stable, non-state-reliant identities can only be settled through a communal narrative. It cannot be determined by a constricting argument from a fated historical role of the state, as in 'real socialism'. At the same time, the decision over this narrative cannot be a mere competition of values, with Christianity being able to claim superiority through its broader narrative. Faith may or may not influence this narrative in practice; if it does not, it is not because of

⁴¹ Timothy Bradshaw objected that in Pannenberg's system 'man individually is denied a *standpoint*, be it rational, ethical or experiential, outside the continuum of revelation as the totality of history' (*Trinity and Ontology*, 271); he finds a resolution only in Pannenberg's later development of the doctrine of the Trinity (*Guide for the Perplexed*, 164). He is certainly right that in eschatological identity the Trinitarian God-relation comes first and social relations only second.

⁴² 'The Nation and the Human Race', 111–13/143–45.

⁴³ 'Christian Morality and Political Issues', 132/168–9.

a flawless ideology has been badly implemented and the people have lost faith in it, but because the church has been failing in its symbolic task, in showing the power of the future to shape strong moral and social identities. (Hence there is no contradiction between Pannenberg's assertion that the Christian's responsibility towards humanity as a whole is represented primarily by belonging to the Church⁴⁴ and the idea that the current moral impact of the churches is realized not through public declarations on controversial topics—which may reveal internal dissensions—, but rather through the lifestyle adopted by individuals.⁴⁵) All competing ideologies contain an analogous element of symbolization and anticipation of identity; at a minimum, they have to develop a strategy anticipating the encounter with their negative, with the rival other, and eventually assess the other's objective signification. In Christianity, the tension between encounter and symbolization is resolved by apocalyptic expectation; waiting for God's truthful rule grounds the possibility of tolerance, of loving the other, precisely because what is desired out of this waiting is to learn patience and submission to God. Thus, for Pannenberg, the political narrative does not derive directly from the narrative of the religious tradition; it arises from the tension between anticipated stable identities and their current fluid confrontation. A nation's communal narrative is not selected by competition, but through the intersection of different forms and degrees of faith, which all have to keep faith with the other while expecting the final judgment of their truth.⁴⁶ Temporal peace is conditioned by the interrelation of different self-relations to an eschatological peace.⁴⁷

From this he derives a number of policy implications. With regard to international relations, during the Cold War he believed in a guarded opening of the West to the East, given that the East's ideological self-relation to peace could not be trusted.⁴⁸ As he repeatedly makes clear, the political consequence of the eschatological unity of humankind is not a unique world state; rather, it is responsibility for a common narrative, born out of

⁴⁴ *HNEH* 34.

⁴⁵ 'Moral und Religion', in *BE*, 80–89 at 87; 'The Future and the Unity of Mankind', 196/186.

⁴⁶ Cf. Mary Doak, *Reclaiming Narrative for Public Theology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004), 165–71, on the productive aspect of the 'discordant concordance' of national narratives.

⁴⁷ Fundamentalism and secularist intransigence, narrow conservatism and revolutionary force all refuse or immanentize this eschatological judgement.

⁴⁸ 'Schwerter zu Pflugscharen: Der evangelische Christ vor der Friedensfrage', in *BE*, 213–222 at 220.

the principle of mutuality—and in murkier circumstances in which this common narrative is not recognized and mutual trust is lacking, it is necessary to prevent, insofar as it is possible, its violent disruption.⁴⁹ The necessity of pragmatism is not to be viewed in theology as a compromise, a truncation of a higher wisdom; it is not the business of the state to deal in eschatological wisdom, because the political communal narrative has a distinct eschatological function from that of the church: not to symbolize, but to compose confidence. Radicals and conservatives with no patience would impose their own partial utopias, they demand trust but do not give it. What the state has to cultivate is the grace of living in history in a community;⁵⁰ its strength is the establishment of trust, without which it can only turn into an authoritarian nightmare. From an ecclesiological perspective, the state has the grace to be the medium of the historical relation of that which is a self-conscious eschatological symbol (the church) to those to whom it must become this symbol, the medium of the trust by which symbolization of eschatological truth is made possible through giving and receiving.⁵¹

The idea of legitimating authority through its traditional existence is thereby excluded;⁵² the legal foundation of political authority is a constitution, in the modern sense in which it is recognized as the expression of a common will. Pannenberg's demand that the state acknowledge a higher source of meaning implies that the constitution should be understood historically as the premise and exigency of a narrative. Certainly the trust of the state's citizens is a necessary condition of the perpetuation of the narrative and its truthfulness is subject to further verifications, as its adaptability and coherence are constantly tested by changing social forces. But it makes all the difference that the constitution of the state has reached a self-conscious, written form, because authority then

⁴⁹ 'It is precisely this unassuming peace of compromise through which the eschatological peace of God works in this world of sin and death and for which the true peacemakers, to whom Jesus' blessing applies, strive.' ('Schwerter zu Pflugscharen', 222.)

⁵⁰ Cf. R. Niebuhr, *Man's Nature and His Communities*, 61: 'there is power in all communities, and there are endless variations of interest in preserving order while attaining justice in free communities.'

⁵¹ This does not mean that Pannenberg understands civil society in Hegel's (and Marx's) sense as based on relations of property, but neither is it an open forum; it is related to the state as a space for debate on the 'political narrative'. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, tr. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity, 1989).

⁵² 'Instead of being an ethic of orders (*Ordnungen*), Christian ethics should be an ethic of transformations (*Wandlungen*).' ('Christian Morality and Political Issues', 132/168, my tr.)

acquires independent significance as the meaning of the risk of following the constitution. If the constitution were simply a set of traditional customs and usages, it would still be embodied in living authorities; the law would rest in its teachers, only accessible to those without authority by their mediation—mimicking the theological logic in which God’s revelation through Scriptures is only accessible by his Spirit.⁵³ There can be no political narrative without the element of risk, without the assumption of the constitution as exigency. Without a modern constitution there could still be, of course, a conflict of interest in which the party with less power could claim to be right in terms of the tradition, even to have greater competence in it, but it would have to be resolved in terms of the respective roles of the litigants, rather than by recourse to an independent arbiter.

What is lost if the element of exigency is eliminated can be seen in the excessively positive approach of Schleiermacher. If the state’s constitution is that of an organism, its external shape is that of an enterprise, or, in Schleiermacher’s terms, its purpose is ‘cultivation’ of an objective entity (nature);⁵⁴ this scenario can well account for the diversity of state organizations and integrate cultural tradition and economic history. However, what has been put outside its scope is the negative aspect of a state’s historical determination, the work of remembrance, conciliation, and forgiveness. Pace Schleiermacher, the state cannot simply integrate the various demands of individual freedom, but must allow and make provision for the historical mediation of their conflict.

The advantage of democratic narratives is that they promote a regular rhythm more likely to be accepted and create unity.⁵⁵ In a democratic-liberal constitution, the provisions for superimposed temporal cycles, which allow variation in the interests and personalities in charge of the various powers of the state, are meant to allow not just the correction of unpopular proposals, but also the representation of various narratives which become attuned, although not harmonized, to each other through the challenges of common

⁵³ J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 26ff.

⁵⁴ Schleiermacher, *Vorlesungen über die Lehre vom Staat*, ed. Walter Jaeschke (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 213ff.; it does this by integrating organically the other goods (Moxter, 186–88).

⁵⁵ *GE*, 139.

tasks.⁵⁶ (This form of interaction with society, described as a feature of American pluralism, has been criticized for promoting communitarian—at the expense of individual—freedom.⁵⁷ This might be the case; on the other hand, it is usually only economic independence that can determine whether resistance to social pressures is feasible anyway, not political guarantees. Pannenberg is not averse to this critique of ‘communitarianism’,⁵⁸ but at the same time he feels that it is right to demand that freedom should conform to *Sittlichkeit*, even appealing to the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany for support.⁵⁹) Admittedly this form of temporality is subject to a variety of sources of contamination, most notably external obtrusion or economic disturbances, but as long as these challenges can be managed with the consent of electors, they may contribute to the convergent effect. Nevertheless, even interferences of moderate intensity usually present a direct challenge to individuals and communities, which may cause a centrifugal effect; it is essential therefore that unity itself be accepted as a task, and one for the present, not simply the outcome of a process such as class struggle, cultural assimilation, or religious conversion. This task can only be achieved with the help of interpretative re-narrations, adjusting roles and correcting false expectations. The constitution provides a stable framework for this task, although it may often not be the immediate context of re-narration—what decides the context of consensus is not simply a common thread of experience, but the rallying potential of a shared expectation.⁶⁰

What allows the state to limit its authority appropriately is the recognition of the limits of its understanding. The modern state’s self-understanding is not involved in the same quest as the person searching for a meaningful life, or even as the philosopher who ponders what

⁵⁶ Cp. R. Niebuhr, *The Structure of Nations and Empires: A Study of the Recurring Patterns and Problems of the Political Order in Relation to the Unique Problems of the Nuclear Age* (New York: Scribner, 1959), 234, 288.

⁵⁷ Cf. Robert Paul Wolff, ‘Beyond Tolerance’ in Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr., and Herbert Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), 3–52 at 38.

⁵⁸ In the sense just mentioned, not in that sometimes applied to the political philosophies of Alasdair MacIntyre or Charles Taylor. See above, Ch. 1. v, on the historical emergence of the notion of individual destiny in distinction from community.

⁵⁹ ‘Christliche Rechtsüberzeugungen im Kontext einer pluralistischen Gesellschaft’, in *BE*, 55–68 at 67; ‘Die moralischen Grundlagen der modernen Gesellschaft und die Kirche’, in *BE*, 173–184 at 176.

⁶⁰ It is notable that American civil religion, as it is understood by Pannenberg, is not particularly able to generate such expectations of change. See ‘Civil Religion? Religionsfreiheit und pluralistischer Staat’, in *BE*, 108–120 at 112–114.

makes a meaningful life possible. The state's self-understanding is confined to its own survival, the reproduction of its institutions.⁶¹ The modern state is the state that has incorporated within its being the consciousness that it does not exist by necessity and has reasonably provided in law for the possibility of its self-transformation.⁶² While justice is a permanent imperative, the possibility of its realization, for which the state has to provide, is conditioned by the presence of trust and even love in society. That is because what keeps people together even after the dialogue of mutual understanding has been for a moment extinguished is love; but can justice achieve the same? Love might be inspired or directed by the object of common identification, a shared history, the same inspirational figures, participation in the same culture. Pride in a record of fairness might uplift civic sentiment, but not necessarily inspire the desire of a shared future. It is good that it should be so, since the demand for justice cannot be satisfied by the mere perpetuation of institutions and statutes. Natural good will, and especially eschatological Christian love, ground the durability of right by allowing for the possibility of the reformation of external norms according not only to the demands of just distribution, but also those of cooperation. Socially, the authority of justice is conditioned by the energy of love.⁶³

III. History and the unity of society

There is a mediating language between those of politics and human destiny, namely religion, and more specifically a religious interpretation of history.⁶⁴ This does not mean that Pannenberg calls for a religious self-understanding of the nation. According to Pannenberg's analysis, the phenomenon of civil religion as analysed by Robert Bellah is

⁶¹ Its limitations are delineated precisely by its self-interest: 'The great advance of the state in modern times is that it remains an end in and for itself.' (Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 86.)

⁶² The modern state can incorporate the possibility of its own self-transformation, through change of the form of government, transfer of powers, division, etc., although it may still want to reject in principle some of these possibilities (e.g. secession).

⁶³ GE, 91. Cp. Paul Ricoeur, *Amour et Justice* (Paris: Éditions Points, 2008), 38–9, and Duncan B. Forrester, *Beliefs, Values and Policies: Conviction Politics in a Secular Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 101ff., on the role of religion in sustaining political vision.

⁶⁴ The most concise expression of this claim is in 'Society and the Christian Faith', esp. 16/123.

closely tied to the historical development of national identity in the United States of America and not transferable to German or European reality as a model for national loyalty or social cohesion.⁶⁵ He rejects the idea proposed by Niklas Luhmann that a set of basic common values could serve as an alternative form of civil religion;⁶⁶ instead, in the European context the renewal of the cultural tradition developed under the shadow of Christianity would be a more effective catalyst for a common political narrative, providing the historical moorings for the basic agreement necessary for the permanence of society while avoiding the dangerous route of a secularized sense of mission. But there is no great consecrating project that would legitimately engage political identities, except to some extent the idea of European unity. The latter, however, is viewed by Pannenberg less from the point of view of a future political reformation of Europe and more as a means of bridging the rifts of a violent history by means of a shared cultural legacy and hopefully an ecumenical sense of Christian belonging; there is no moral imperative of ever greater political unity.⁶⁷ That is because while there will always be some degree of cultural unity to the people of God, owing to the transformative effect Christianity has had on local cultures, political unity can only be pursued within the limits of (historical) justice. While various peoples have assigned themselves the privilege of having replaced Israel as the chosen nation of God's plans, sometimes not without some positive consequences, the church should 'acknowledge the continuing claim of the Jewish people to be the people of God' and 'the history of Christianity as an extension of the election and history of Israel'.⁶⁸ The national appropriations of the idea of election in the last few centuries were all in the strict sense illegitimate.

Pannenberg is sanguine in recognizing the merit of the categories of covenant, promise and judgement in the historical formation of identities, and cautious, but not timid, in

⁶⁵ Current civil religion in the United States might be more impressive to an external observer than its reality warrants (*HNEH*, 80).

⁶⁶ Niklas Luhmann, 'Grundwerte als Zivilreligion: Zur wissenschaftlichen Karriere eines Themas', in Heinz Klegler and Alois Müller (eds.), *Religion des Bürgers: Zivilreligion in Amerika und Europa* (2nd edn., Berlin: Lit, 2011), 175–194.

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⁶⁸ 'The Nation and the Human Race', 116/149.

applying them to the present.⁶⁹ Pannenberg considers for instance that the loss of territory, division and displacements that affected Germany in the aftermath of World War II as God's judgement for the 'persecution and attempted annihilation of the Jewish people'.⁷⁰ Although Pannenberg cannot offer guidelines for the application of this language, as its use is a measure of spiritual discernment, it is considered necessary for a Christian's and the Church's self-understanding; it is their own historical language which regulates the exchange of trust with society as a whole, the investment of trust in the state's political narrative, in negotiating the social openness or distinctiveness of the Church.

Since the contribution of the Church to social reciprocity and the life of the state comes in the form of loving benevolence, one may question what part the rather old-fashioned notion of love for one's country (not necessarily one's nation) may play in this negotiation of trust. Its invocation in matters of immediate policy is to be viewed with suspicion, as Pannenberg's attitude in practical debates shows.⁷¹ Its potential utility is in clarifying the sort of attachment Christians should seek to develop. Certainly the emergence of a common *Sittlichkeit*, which Pannenberg identifies as a necessary feature of a successful polity, is impossible without the investment and cultivation of love.⁷² Although he speaks of a reserve that Christians should demonstrate in their attachment towards the states they belong to, it is not objectivity that Pannenberg demands, at least not a purely abstract objectivity that would imply an equal interest or disinterest in all national projects. Rather, because Christianity has an objective character and 'like any religion that takes itself seriously, has to claim recognition and influence as a normative basis on which to shape every sphere of human life ... including matters of law and politics',⁷³ when it is awarded such a normative role it is also inevitably circumscribed within the limits of a particular local negotiation. At best this would be one in which the motives of those who share the

⁶⁹ 'In the Biblical writings, especially in their reports of ancient Israelite history, the notions of God and of his actions in history functioned primarily in a descriptive way by providing a meaningful unity to historical experience.' (*HNEH*, 88.)

⁷⁰ *HNEH*, 104.

⁷¹ See Pannenberg's remarks on German reunification in 'The Nation and the Human Race', 120–22/153–55.

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⁷³ *ST* 3. 482/521.

Christian vision are love and patience for those who fail to agree or conform.⁷⁴ In fact, Pannenberg, despite his reservations towards a European transplantation, is fairly sympathetic towards the model of ‘civil religion’ which he observed on the American scene: objectively, this is not more than the ghost of a religion, a series of affirmations drawn together not by theoretical or practical coherence, but through the force of general acclamation.⁷⁵ Subjectively, for the Christians who mostly exercise it, it is a disguise or kenosis of their Christianity. This is a self-conscious ‘system’ of love⁷⁶ in which particular political attachments wax and wane according to recognizable and even predictable trajectories, in order to sustain the security of one’s allegiance for the idea of the nation. The power of this civil religion lies in the enchantment of a unified narrative, the familiarity of the characters it brings forward and of the setting it provides to new figures. It might be the breeding ground of national mythology, except if Pannenberg’s proviso is respected, by which its harmony should be permanently questioned by the explicit Christian discourse of the church. In the presence of this double, the love of country is an unhappy, perhaps even melancholic love, not just because it seeks to transform its object but because it cannot declare itself absolutely. The language of civil religion may validly be adopted, but not ‘in earnest’, as it clothes the reserve that Pannenberg is anxious that Christians should retain. It is here that the relation between love and justice finds an analogue; just as love out of love submits to the rule of justice, so also Christian freedom preserves itself by speaking two languages at once, the higher language of Christian love and the language of Christian justice.

What this redoubling entails may be outlined in contrast to the self-limitation which Habermas imposes on religious discourse in the public realm. As Pannenberg does not develop quite so explicitly his theory of what I have called ‘political narrative’, his eschatological counterpoint to Hegel’s theory of the state may stand out most clearly through a contrast with Habermas’s reworking of Kantian morality into an ethics of

⁷⁴ ‘Christian Morality and Political Issues’, 138/175.

⁷⁵ Robert N. Bellah, ‘Civil Religion in America’, *Daedalus* 96 (1967), 1–21.

⁷⁶ Extending the formulation applied by Niklas Luhmann to romantic love in *Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy*, tr. Jeremy Gaines and Doris L. Jones (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), 172ff. The reason for this extension is that this love selects the elements that ensure its continuation and propagation.

discourse. Its political extension, democratic procedural agreement, differs from what Habermas calls substantial reason inasmuch as it integrates intersubjectivity directly, without the mediation of partial and partisan narratives.⁷⁷ What Habermas objects to most strongly is grounding morality in a theory of consciousness, and he sees substantial reason as working with the model of an oversized and objectified consciousness. The distorted representation of consciousness comes from the disconnection of substantial reason from interests and self-reflection.⁷⁸ The early Habermas based this critique on an ego-psychological reading of Freud, in which the ego forms an identity in the interaction between instinct and constraints;⁷⁹ this scenario of self-formation applies to almost any important social context to which there must be an accumulation of adaptations. The various adaptations are evaluated as beneficial or detrimental in terms of the ego's reflective capacity to become reconciled with language.⁸⁰ When the ego attempts to maintain control through displacement and sublimation, actions are supposed to be explained in terms of 'motivations', regardless of the underlying psychological mechanism—neurosis (religion) or sublimation (art, science)—whereas truthful interpretations relate them to needs.⁸¹ The legitimation of the political sphere is then that it is able to access a more basic level of reality than religious narratives, as it relies on the essential dynamic of human interaction. It is a small victory for religion if it is able to claim exclusive access to some additional semantic content, if that happens only through a distortion of the paradigm of communication.⁸² Pannenberg's model of narrative unity would only add a dubious layer

⁷⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, 93.

⁷⁸ Both the common ground and the crucial differences between Habermas and Pannenberg emerge quite clearly in their respective critiques of Gadamer's concept of tradition. Habermas also insists on the openness of history and the revelation of the significance of events in what succeeds them, but for him this openness depends on the perspective of the historical agent. (Habermas, 'A Review of Gadamer's *Truth and Method*', tr. Fred R. Dallmayr and Thomas McCarthy, in Fred R. Dallmayr and Thomas McCarthy (eds.), *Understanding and Social Inquiry* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 335–63 at 346, 350.)

⁷⁹ Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, tr. Jeremy J. Shapiro (London: Heinemann, 1972), 313.

⁸⁰ *Moral Consciousness*, 245.

⁸¹ *Moral Consciousness*, 241. J.M. Bernstein has remarked that Habermas's is a Hegelian reading of Freud, in which the subject becomes substance in order to become subject again. ('Self-knowledge as Praxis: Narrative and Narration in Psychoanalysis', in Christopher Nash (ed.), *Narrative in Culture: The Uses of Storytelling in the Sciences, Philosophy, and Literature* (London: Routledge, 1994), 53–82 at 72.)

⁸² A good example is Habermas's appreciation for the religious idea of covenant, which he seems to think has only attained its truth once it has been secularized. See *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, tr. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), 325, and 'Israel or Athens: Where does Anamnestic Reason Belong? Johann Baptist Metz on Unity amidst Multicultural Plurality', in *The Liberating Power of Symbols: Philosophical Symbols*, tr. Peter Dews (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), 78–89 at 85. In general,

of mystification over the reality of political life, as it so clearly refers subjects to the language of ‘motivation’ rather than that of needs.⁸³

Habermas’s challenge touches the essence of Pannenberg’s justification of state authority, which is that while no human state can aspire to embody the ideal of freedom, their imperfect constitutions may be conduits of the most basic trust without which freedom is impossible, trust in a united human destiny. In Habermasian terms, the idea of unified human destiny is a prime example of ‘substantial reason’ as a theory developed out of what are taken to be the intrinsic exigencies of reason (in this case, the reason of historical hermeneutics). The rebuttal of this challenge, with its attendant consequences for the relation between politics and religious reason, must therefore focus on the adequacy of its understanding of freedom. For Habermas, freedom is the developed capacity of the ego to see the other as other and represent itself as another according to the rules of the linguistic game(s), it is ‘being-with-oneself-in-the-other’ or ‘communicative freedom’.⁸⁴

In the context of modern highly complex societies, with their clear distinction between lifeworld and social systems, political freedom is fully exhaustible in the category of law;⁸⁵ there is no need for its affirmation to conceive of the state under the aspect of a communal historical venture. Modern law relies for its subjective normative status on the notions of human rights and popular sovereignty ‘once the normative substance of an ethos embedded in religious and metaphysical traditions has been forced through the filter of posttraditional justification.’⁸⁶ The state itself justifies its existence as the upholder of the

even the later Habermas takes the social contribution of religious traditions to be subjective, one might say semantic as opposed to pragmatic. (Cf. *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays*, tr. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 142.)

⁸³ As Nicholas Adams notes, ‘for Habermas a concern with narrative is, quite properly, a matter for members within a tradition. ... Narrative is not an agreement-type category.’ (*Habermas and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 213.) The same criticism has also been made from a more radical position: ‘just as Habermas’s theory of language overlooked the work of interpretation, so his treatment of narrative divorces narration from reflection, as if readers and writers were unable to reflect as they read, as if the structures of narrative were spontaneously generated in a natural outpouring of language.’ (Susan Wells, *Sweet Reason: Rhetoric and the Discourses of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 34.)

⁸⁴ ‘Communicative Freedom and Negative Theology: Questions for Michael Theunissen’, in *Liberating Power of Symbols*, 90—111 at 102. Cp. *ATP*, 66/63, quoted in Ch. 1. v, above.

⁸⁵ *The Theory of Communicative Action*, tr. Thomas McCarthy (Cambridge: Polity, 1984–87), 2. 194–5.

⁸⁶ *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, tr. William Rehg (Cambridge: Polity, 1996), 99.

law, i.e. of rights,⁸⁷ and the language of its self-understanding is determined by this definition, inasmuch as ‘political will-formation terminates in resolutions about policies and legal programs that must be formulated in the language of law.’⁸⁸ Habermas would object to Pannenberg’s notion of a necessary underlying ethical consensus and to all ‘equating of political deliberation with processes of collective self-understanding.’⁸⁹ While Pannenberg approves of rooting a constitutional order in a *Sittlichkeit*, Habermas objects that ‘insofar as a constitutional court adopts the doctrine of an objective order of values and bases its decision making on a kind of moral realism or moral conventionalism, the danger of irrational rulings increases, because functionalist arguments then gain the upper hand over normative ones.’⁹⁰ The perspective through which Habermas views the role of the constitution seems somewhat restricted, since a constitution is certainly also responsible for setting up some of the parameters of functionalist argument (such as when a nation goes to war or becomes bankrupt). In other words, the constitution is always to some extent determinative of the measure in which the destiny of citizens is affected by that of the nation and in what distribution; this determination does not happen simply on account of some pre-existing solidarity fostered by some tradition of substantial reason, nor simply according to the current practical situation—it is a question of specifically political reason. Habermas narrows the future-orientation of a constitution to the improvement of the processes of political discourse; however, this prescriptive approach seems to depend on the formation of a civic patriotism which can hardly be arrived at by a normative route.⁹¹

Habermas admits as much when he writes that ‘the modern territorial state ... depends on the development of a national consciousness to provide it with the cultural substrate for a civil solidarity.’⁹² However, the idea of national self-determination depends on a ‘majority

⁸⁷ Ibid. 134.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 167.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 280. Hence political deliberation may not be assimilated to the form of narrative self-understanding, as the life-form of a collectivity may. (*Theory of Communicative Action*, 2. 136; *Discourse of Modernity*, 299.) The entire point of a theory of society is to empirically interrelate, without confusion, the evolving forms of the lifeworld and of social systems. (*Theory of Communicative Action*, 2. 118)

⁹⁰ *Between Facts and Norms*, 259.

⁹¹ See Matthew Specter, *Habermas: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 83–89, for an overview of Habermas’s response to the constitutional problem of German reunification.

⁹² ‘The Postnational Constellation and the Future of Democracy’, in *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*, tr. Max Pensky (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), 58–112 at 64.

culture' which interferes with democracy and its normative foundations.⁹³ Globalization has also undermined the basis of the nation state in territorial sovereignty, inasmuch as 'the locus of control has shifted from space to time as "masters of speed" come to replace "rulers of territory"', and made it harder to exclude from our sympathy those to whom the 'costs and risks' of our self-interest are transferred.⁹⁴ In this context it would be desirable to integrate nation-state into ever closer international unions and organizations on the basis of civic solidarity. Yet even so the idea of a common national or transnational destiny is not necessary for the full development of public freedom; political legitimation is based on co-original 'liberty rights' of individual private freedom and 'citizen rights' of public participation,⁹⁵ and so its conditions may equally be satisfied by a supra-national state resulting from the union of territories of diverse cultures and histories as by a monocultural state of longstanding tradition. The distinction between lifeworld and societal systems is here reflected in Habermas's understanding of freedom. Whereas the free formation of personal identity, which would come under the above heading of 'liberty rights', can be understood as a limited concrete choice made in a particular narrative context and governed by a contingent imagination of happiness,⁹⁶ and therefore requires for its understanding the application of the hermeneutical principle of historical reconstruction from the perspective of the agent,⁹⁷ public freedom is a notion whose democratic boundaries are drawn in the name of a normative concept of the 'public use of reason', by whose standards one is expected to be capable of self-justification and self-criticism from the perspective of the other.⁹⁸

One of the resources which the state has to manage in order to maintain practical legitimacy is its citizens' expectations. As 'the state cannot simply take over the cultural system' and cannot produce the resource of 'meaning' which is being depleted in the

⁹³ Ibid. 72, 74.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 67; 'Learning from Catastrophe? A Look Back at the Short Twentieth Century', in *Postnational Constellation*, 38–57 at 55.

⁹⁵ 'Remarks on Legitimation through Human Rights', in *Postnational Constellation*, 113–129 at 118.

⁹⁶ *Theory of Communicative Action*, 2. 110.

⁹⁷ *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 299.

⁹⁸ The requirement extends to religion as a public force, although not as a private resource of 'semantic potentials'. ('Religion in the Public Sphere: Cognitive Presuppositions for the Public Use of Reason by Religious and Secular Citizens', in *Between Naturalism and Religion*, 114–147 at 137, 139.)

latter, it has to make do with ‘the fiscally siphoned-off resource “value”’, a replacement which underwrites the requirement for governments to show economic growth.⁹⁹ The state’s (legislative) decisions are therefore the result of two different processes: reaching understanding through consensus and reaching goals through bargaining.¹⁰⁰ Whereas consensus possesses a motivating force of its own,¹⁰¹ the enforcement of the results of the arbitration of interest depends on political power—which varies in proportion with concrete legitimacy. While the former may be guaranteed through due process to uphold rather than restrict individual freedom, the relation of the latter to freedom seems therefore to depend on the concrete equation of the state’s overall legitimacy: in short, it is a question of present agreement, rather than—as for Pannenberg—of historical responsibility.¹⁰² As the relative success of the state in managing its citizens’ goal-expectations is to a certain extent empirically determinable, the role of trust in this relation is thereby diminished.

However, if trust is eliminated, so is also the role of political life in fostering and developing the desire for freedom. The latter has to be recognized as legitimate for the other, as part of the process of democratic consensus, but there is no guarantee that progress in the rationalization of the lifeworld will not allow the majority to trade it for a resource of more help in meeting their image of happiness. This seems to be a permanent point of possible tension between the two perspectives which Habermas seeks to reconcile in his theory of society: perhaps it is not quite so easy to distinguish, even in theory, between the two ways of losing freedom, between the martyr who has been excluded from the process of democracy and the loser in the process of bargaining?

The desire for freedom cannot be reduced to a linguistic principle. It is also a quantity, a variable social quantity, neither the constant production of a self-assertive individual nor a predictable infusion of civic consciousness. That it cannot be reduced to the result of the operation of cultural forces is shown in the fact that it does not show a constant value or

⁹⁹ *Legitimation Crisis*, 71.

¹⁰⁰ *Theory of Communicative Action*, 2.140.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 2. 147.

¹⁰² That is, in Habermas’s view, a question for cultural, not political, groups. (*Ibid.* 2. 160–65.)

tendency, but its periodic waxing and waning resemble the way in which a story may take its hearers captive, loosen their interest and divert them for a while with various occurrences and then either lose them to boredom or confusion, or tighten again its grip on them by hastening the plot to a decision—it resembles the temporal quantity of attention. For Pannenberg the primary story with which the desire for freedom is connected is that of one's own life; however, its connection with the story of one's political community is not simply the result of the complex interconnectedness of various stories, but rather one of the primary forms of reinforcement of this desire through the medium of trust. In relation to a story, trust, unlike attention, is concerned with the anticipated whole and all its attendant stories; perhaps it is even possible to lose trust with stories altogether. The basic goodness of the state lies in its ability to operate a limited circulation of this trust: for Pannenberg, this function is exercised in the form of recognizing personal freedom and acknowledging the wider stories to which personal freedom makes reference; just as importantly, it is exercised by integrating the demands of justice—the only possible legitimation of authority—into a convincing communal narrative. Such a narrative has to take in the results of progress and failure in the practice of doing justice and set realistic parameters of expectation.¹⁰³ It is in relation to this demand of persuasion that he believes the state cannot do well in the long term without religion, as its own narrative will be reduced to the necessities of political propaganda; without truthful persuasion the claim to authority quickly degenerates into abuse of trust. The desire for freedom will, in the absence of trust, lose sight of the temporal horizons within which it may expect to unfold, a scale which it receives partially through the mediation of a people's common story. It is likely to fall into the patterns provided by an economy assimilating the temporality of desire to the rhythms of production, to the ultimate erasure of conscience.¹⁰⁴ Therefore religion also has something to lose by political corruption, as people turn away from the extended context of their desire.

¹⁰³ Cf. Wells, *Sweet Reason*, 39: 'Narrative may be a relatively easy target for the operations of system, an absorbent discursive practice, permeable to the structural violence of colonization. But that same heterogeneity permits narrative to sustain multiple voices and locations, ironic inflections, and formalized representations of absence.'

¹⁰⁴ Cp. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, tr. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (London: Athlone Press, 1984), esp. 257–63.

Conclusion

It is interesting to notice that in his remarks on politics Pannenberg sees precisely the emergence of ethos of the national community as the highest possible form of unity, occurring through the gradual influence of a system of laws and a cultural milieu. This spirit beyond artificial manufacture amounts to the discovery of an identifying timbre within the combined resonance of the international community, a coherent narrative theme which serves the expected eschatological unity of the nations. State authorities merit their trust to the extent that they are capable of acting in accordance with the disclosure and development of this spirit, of maintaining the conditions of its creativity. As an institution to be abolished in the eschaton through the open establishment of God's rule, the state, unlike the church, has to recognize the freedom of the individual in the first place as negative freedom, of an eschatological scope beyond national institutions. While in the church we may recognize permanent resources for renewing individual freedom (the sacraments and apostolic teaching), in the political sphere we negotiate interpretations of our freedom through the variable movements of extending and withdrawing trust, of investing in or disabusing ourselves of collective projects.¹⁰⁵ There is no common desire incarnated in the state except in pathological cases of totalitarian pretension; this is because a state's identity can only be a partial narrative in the contingent, divinely moved story of the eventual coming together of humanity. It is within these confines that the state may and should actively preserve itself: it does not contribute directly to the semantics of individual freedom, although it participates in the social mechanisms underlying its extension and clarification.

The exocentric existence which is the essence of freedom is defined in individual existence; the church nourishes this freedom by contextualizing it in a revealed

¹⁰⁵ On the question whether the state has any need for the church, it could be said that it does so only to the extent that the church has a cultural impact and influences the national spirit; without its influence, the notion that freedom means doing what you wish without harming others, whatever is legally permissible, permeates culture to the detriment of solidarity. Hence whilst Pannenberg is not against the separation of Church and State, he believes there is an objective argument against secularism.

eschatological framework; the history of states registers its expression as trust and work for the project of the community of humanity. Yet precisely because of the relational paradigm which allows him to integrate his political theology within a Trinitarian hope, Pannenberg seems to lose sight of the expression of the desire for freedom as work. To that extent he is constrained to accept economic and technological histories as developments of an autonomous rationality which finds little place in what is therefore a rather idealist picture of the history of humanity. Not only the Marxist story of liberation through rational production and distribution, but the whole problem of the relation between freedom and work, and then also between freedom and the social relations of production, is sidelined. Another problematic aspect of Pannenberg's vision is excessive reliance on the notion of anticipation; although it offers a valuable way of conceptualizing individual freedom, it is not as successful in interpreting the realities of ecclesial and political communities. The symbolic role of the church as such, as opposed to that of the ethical agency of members of the church, is performed by a relatively stable tradition of sacramental spirituality and apostolic paraclesis. Comparably, the work of the state is accounted for not in the present of political decision, but in the perspective of a long-term narrative of transformations. What is missing is an interpretation of the experiences of a shared present in which communal self-understanding is possible. With these interests in mind it seems opportune to consider the hermeneutics of freedom in their construction by Gustavo Gutiérrez.

Chapter 4

True Religion: Sharing in Freedom

This chapter tracks the liberation argument for the basis of a non-violent reformation of community in the structure of individual freedom. Personal freedom is supremely revealed in the confrontation of the religious impulse with suffering; the adoption of divine desire, of desire as preferential grace over against desire as satisfaction or imitation, demonstrates the possibility of freedom in gratuitous commitment. This form of desire can be learnt only by recognizing the shared nature of suffering (I). The same recognition is at the heart of the historical revelation and communication of the miracle of divine grace in the process of evangelization (II). However, liberation theology faces the task of encompassing the tension between the responsibility of conscience and the freedom of social self-organization in the formulation of a response to the Gospel, in other words, of imagining how this form of desire may put its stamp on social reality (III). Gutiérrez in particular seems to think that both the necessity and shape of economic justice may be derived from the demands of a free conscience. This idea has been explained as a dilution of liberation theology accelerated by the apparent global triumph of capitalism at the beginning of the last decade of the twentieth century. However, an alternative interpretation is that part of liberation theology's initial programme of humanizing social structures must be an analysis of the phenomenon of economic oppression in the language of suffering; part of the attraction of Marx is the analysis of oppression as the enforced individualization of exchangeable time. This fragment of the Marxist critique of capitalist production may be extended to an analysis of the idea of desire underlying economic relations understood in terms of sharing and exchange (IV). The obscuring of this exchange through ideology amounts to idolatry (i.e. fatalism) inasmuch as it attempts to suppress the freedom of response to the gospel—by denying the possibility of unity in suffering and desire, thus denying the nature of divine love. Against this ideological illusion, Gutiérrez points to the Christological density of time which mediates the coincidence of the divine and human wills in the option for the poor (V). Finally, I suggest that Gutiérrez's basing of community in individual freedom may be synthetically represented as a new understanding of the notion of freedom of association (VI).

The contextual interest of liberation theology has increased its sensitivity to the biographical contours of theological writing.¹ It is therefore notable that Gustavo Gutiérrez has described himself as a priest first, and a theologian only second.² This self-description is not to be taken merely as an assessment of how he has divided his energies: the liberation appeal to conversion demands that all one's commitments should be gathered in an individual path of aspiration to freedom. Liberation theology questions the integration of the individual within existing communities in order to see whether they offer the means for coherent self-expression, among which is the potential towards wider community. This strategy is not exclusive to theology, as Pannenberg's recourse to the eschatological community is; it has strong affinities with strands of mid-twentieth century Marxist thought—it is the same strategy that lies at the heart of Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* and, in a more sophisticated, loosely narrative form, Sartre's analysis of the contradictions of the (anti-)bourgeois artist Flaubert.³ Why then is it important for Gutiérrez to put first the more conservatively-defined role of priest? He seems to imply that it would amount to a diminution of his freedom if this vocation were overshadowed by his theological endeavours; not only does this order emphasize the fact that his theology draws on faith and practice, on a commitment to the church community previous to and more enduring than academic visibility, it proclaims the freedom of theology to draw on its existential roots again and again. At the same time, it might seem to make it vulnerable to the possibility of being subordinated to the need for individual narrative freedom, of being reduced to a part of one's story. But this is a perspective to which theology allows itself to be submitted; it affirms its own possibility within the theologian's life of thought, denying

¹ Laurenti Magesa, 'A Theological Journey', *Exchange* 32 (2003), 43–53 at 44; Olle Kristenson, *Pastor in the Shadow of Violence: Gustavo Gutiérrez as a Public Pastoral Theologian in Peru in the 1980s and 1990s*, Diss. (Uppsala, 2009), 6, 111–113.

² Kristenson, *Pastor*, 11.

³ Sartre makes explicit the point that makes the adoption of Pannenberg's eschatological-hermeneutical solution impossible from a liberation perspective, namely that not only is the totality of an era built out of the contradictions between individual life-stories, but those lives themselves integrate the rhythm of their era (*The Family Idiot: Gustave Flaubert 1821–1857*, tr. Carol Cosman (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981–1991), 5, 407–10). (One may also note in passing that, curiously, Sartre was far more interested than liberation theologians in the role of the family in mediating social consciousness.) Though less ambitious or sophisticated, Marcuse's broad-brush portrait of society is more aware of the power of publicity to drown out analytical depth: 'contradiction now appears as a principle of the logic of manipulation—realistic caricature of dialectics. It is the logic of a society which can afford to dispense with logic ...' (*One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), 92.)

that its own freedom is an intrusion. Since for Gutiérrez theology is above all prayer and worship, the principle of the coincidence of theological and individual freedom applies not just to theologians: individual freedom means practice that allows worship to arise and pervade it. The social contradictions one is always inevitably involved in cannot be put aside at the time of worship or left outside its spaces. Yet it is in the individual that this impulse of worship first strives against them.⁴ The freedom of theology does not exhaust itself in the purity of the theologian's habit; it first breaks the entanglement of social contradictions by creating the disposition for a new freedom of association.

I. The gratuity of desire: liberation and the problem of suffering

For Gutiérrez, human freedom reflects divine freedom, and God's freedom is expressed in his love for the undeserving and revelation towards the ignorant. Paradoxically, then, human freedom is ideally exemplified by Job, who in the midst of his trials, though a 'rebel', demonstrates that his religion is 'disinterested, gratuitous'.⁵ This means that religion promoted as a tool of social cohesion, for the prosperity of the commonwealth, can only be a corruption of Christianity. A violent accusation against liberation theology is that its development of the social dimension of liberation implies that it loosens the link between individual salvation and freedom, and instead reifies the benefits of salvation into social conditions which accrue to all regardless of conscience.⁶ Job's experience, however, can hardly be integrated into the method of the Grand Inquisitor;⁷ Gutiérrez's exegesis of

⁴ Thus there is no self-contradiction in Gutiérrez's more recent statements, made with reference to Pope Benedict XVI, emphasizing the origin of social transformation in the joy of faith. ('Benedicto XVI y la opción por el pobre', *Páginas 205* (2007), 6–13 at 8–9.) See also Ch. 5 below.

⁵ *On Job: God-talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*, tr. Matthew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987), 1/30.

⁶ Carl F. Henry, 'Liberation Theology and the Scriptures', in Ronald Nash (ed.), *Liberation Theology* (Milford, Mich.: Mott Media, 1984), 187–202 at 198–9.

⁷ Jung Mo Sung uses Dostoevsky's parable for a metaphysical defence of human freedom, which in turn would explain the fallibility of salvific social transformation ('The Human Being as Subject: Defending the Victims', tr. Jovelino Ramos, in Ivan Petrella (ed.), *Liberation Theology: The Next Generation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005), 1–19 at 11). Gutiérrez's interest lies primarily not in the negative, but in the positive interweaving of human and divine freedom.

it is deeply concerned to show that freedom can only surge as God's work of individual conviction.

The unfree man is the bad theologian. This is the negative upshot of the argument of the book of Job. Since the book allows Job's friends so much space to display their wisdom, it is certain that this unfreedom deserves to be known in its omnipresent details. It does not, of course, recognize itself; instead, in its own terms it claims to be the very system and apology of freedom: you are free to choose and then to bear the consequences. Notably, their argument is not that without material implications, moral choice would be devalued and the mere expression of a preference instead of serving to consolidate the order of the world—rather, the argument is that God is so lofty that human goodness or wickedness only rebound on themselves. Eliphaz makes the point most strongly: 'Can a mortal be of use to God? Can even the wisest be of service to him? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty if you are righteous, or is it gain to him if you make your ways blameless?'⁸ This is not to say that God is indifferent, but that he is impartial: he judges without being affected. In this theology of 'temporal retribution', as Gutiérrez calls it,⁹ the problem of suffering is posed exclusively at the level of individual cases and solved through the postulate of a hidden judgment. There is undoubtedly a powerful commonplace at work here, according to which everyone is alone in suffering;¹⁰ this is why, for instance, the disruptive effect that temporal retribution for a guilty man might have over the innocent who love him is not considered. This is all the more troubling in light of the fact that the exponents of this theology appear in the drama of the book as Job's friends. They presume that the innocent must assume God's point of view—in fact, that it is the only way they can accept his justice. This is indeed what Job's friends are attempting to do: theologize from God's perspective, while proclaiming his overwhelming transcendence. Ironically the recommendation is therefore, in contrast to their universalistic theory, practical self-concern; since no one can be just before God, the best policy is appeasement, doing one's

⁸ Job 22.2–3; cp. 7.20–1 for Job's use of the same idea in his defence.

⁹ *On Job*, 19/61. The name may be misleading, since it suggests a contrast with a theology of eternal retribution; in fact it is in contrast with a theology of everlasting love.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 13/50: 'Our misfortunes tempt us into withdrawal into ourselves.' (my tr.) Since all suffer (in different measures), all are tempted.

best and apologizing just in case.¹¹ The positive sense of freedom in this theology is the freedom of an existence protected from being dismantled from outside.

Job arrives at the opposite conclusion from his friends, namely that human suffering is always to be shared, and becomes inhuman if sharing is impossible. He is put precisely in the latter situation, since everyone has abandoned him and he cannot share it with God who is above suffering and has in fact, he feels, instigated his trouble.¹² Here one must distinguish between the editor's and Job's points of view: according to Gutiérrez, the point of the book is, according to the wager made between the adversary and God, that disinterested worship is possible; this is what Job's life proves, but not what his discourse is aimed at to begin with. Initially, Job seeks to proclaim his innocence, but also claim his freedom to be left alone in his insignificance. Gradually he arrives at a different understanding of what shared suffering means. He demands testimony confirming his innocence first from his friends, then from God; he trusts that God is both judge and advocate.¹³ It is this 'splitting' (*desdoblamiento*) of the image of God, apparent enemy but hidden friend, that is temporally rearranged in the response God makes to Job's pleas. God's freedom is not a struggle between two contradictory roles; he reveals his design, that his acts of justice are always bordered by his love.¹⁴ His creation, the first act of salvation, is aimed not at timeless order, but 'moved by beauty and pleasure (*gozo*)'.¹⁵ These are not altogether spoiled by the spread of wickedness; God still takes pleasure in the good of the earth, as was established in fact in the prologue. So divine power limits itself, postpones judgement to allow human freedom; the powerful God reveals himself in weakness.¹⁶ What happens in Job's dialogue with God is that he is made capable of a similar enjoyment of creation, despite its partial perversion—he comes to esteem God beyond his regulating influence in human affairs and sees that sharing in suffering does not inherently mean a limitation of freedom; that for us such enjoyment can only take place in God, since we

¹¹ Job 22.21–30; here it is also clear that the purpose is not to gain material advantage but God's favour. Perhaps it is significant that Job's atoning sacrifices (1.5) were for his sons and not for himself.

¹² Job 1.21, 10.8–9.

¹³ *On Job*, 62/120, 65/124; Job 19.25–27.

¹⁴ *On Job*, 70/133, 66/125.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 75/140, my tr.; cf. *TL*, 154/201.

¹⁶ *On Job*, 78/144–5.

cannot know in advance the freedom in which he administers justice, but have to participate in it as a concrete gift.¹⁷

Job is liberated from attending to the needs of others out of the perceived need to protect one's freedom against the threat of punishment. The love and pleasure of the good come before and ground the desire for justice. The prophetic language looking for the establishment of authentic peace is grounded in God's covenant, which reveals his loving preference for the poor;¹⁸ the revelation of this covenant removes the speculation that following this preference hides jealousy or resentment towards the possessors of greater material freedom, the wealthy and the powerful. Instead, Job's hope is widened so that his predilection comes to coincide with that of God in freedom. 'The reason to believe gratuitously (*por nada*)—the wager posed at the beginning of the book—is the free and gratuitous (*gratuita*) initiative of God's love.' Generalizing the experience of Job's transformed faith, the two languages of contemplation and prophecy are always therefore to be kept together, as they nourish and correct each other.¹⁹

Gutiérrez's characterization of Job's liberation discloses its specific meaning more clearly in comparison with René Girard's, who also takes the unusual step of a social interpretation of the character's iconic significance. According to Girard, Job is to be taken as a prefiguration of Christ, because he has insight into the mechanism of the scapegoat and refuses it. On one point there is clear agreement with Gutiérrez, in that Job's 'passionate identification with the victim is the authentic source of knowledge as well as everything else. The true science of man is not indifferent.'²⁰ Job is the former leader of the community, whose excellence over his peers instigated their jealousy; once this *ressentiment* has spread throughout the people, he is ready to be made into the next sacrificial victim according to the cycle of desire that vivifies the coherence of the community. Politically, he is slandered as a tyrant who deserves to be thrown off.²¹ His friends do not approach

¹⁷ Ibid. 89/163.

¹⁸ Ibid. 48/103.

¹⁹ Ibid. 94–5/172.

²⁰ René Girard, *Job: The Victim of His People*, tr. Yvonne Freccero (London: Athlone Press, 1987), 107.

²¹ Ibid. 16–7.

him in order to help him come to terms with the catastrophe, in fact Job's adversity is only now about to reach the final crisis; invoking the myth of divine vengeance, they are in the process of ritual preparation, helping the victim consent to his guilt. And Job does occasionally fall into the trap of arguing after their manner; he also believes himself to be persecuted by God, but only so long as he still holds his supposed friends to be loyal. He breaks free from this illusion thanks to his stubborn protestation of innocence²²—the acute polemical force of Job's discourses is the manifestation of this freedom; but for Girard the book as a whole does not move to its practical realization, which would involve a different configuration of society. Instead, God's reply to Job is seen as 'neutralizing the subversive force of Job's speech' for ignoring his concern with social relations and the epilogue is deemed to resemble the 'puerile acts of revenge of a Hollywood success story'.²³ As the final part of the book stalls the progress of revelation, 'the Book of Job forces us to choose between the moral and metaphysical analysis of the problem of evil.'²⁴

There are several points of exegesis in Girard's account that invite scepticism; but in comparison with Gutiérrez's exegesis, the fundamental question raised by his line of interpretation is whether Gutiérrez is in reality half-hearted about the epistemological status of the victim. Are perhaps the poor among those in fact still under the spell of the scapegoat mechanism, the faithful of a religion of violent revenge? The answer depends on what one takes for the measure of freedom. Although the point is not emphasized by Girard in his interpretation of Job, in which it is abbreviated to the idea that unconditional truth first makes itself visible to the lucid victim, to be able to see through the religious veil of the scapegoat mechanism one has to have already left behind mimetic desire. Someone still under its reign would be unable to believe in one's own innocence or maintain it. There is only one way to be rid of the triangulation of desire: not by affirming the illusory independence of the desire born of a strong personality, nor to celebrate the abolition of desire,²⁵ but to undergo the descent to humility:²⁶ the demystification of the pride (*orgueil*)

²² Ibid. 107.

²³ Ibid. 141, 144.

²⁴ Ibid. 30.

²⁵ Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, tr. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); tr. of *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque* (Paris: Éditions Grasset & Fasquelle, 1961), 269/303.

of choice allows the space for recognizing the reality of transcendence. Perhaps this is best expressed in Dostoevsky's Christian terms: 'choosing always means choosing a model, and true freedom rests in the fundamental alternative between a human model and the divine.'²⁷ Once cured, one ceases to possess suffering as an individuating experience.²⁸ On the other hand, there is no imaginable communal exit from the 'romantic lie'—it is always an individual liberation, touching on the hidden story of the will. What Girard sees as the privilege of the victim is insight into the common temptations of universal psychology and the objective schemes of social consolidation which serve to mask them. No one has an inherent proficiency in sizing up or solving the concrete situation of the group; in fact, it would seem that a better society is one in which the demand for charismatic leadership is stilled by the rule of transcendent law.²⁹ It is essential to be able to 'objectify' oneself in the face of such instances of transcendence, but at the same time not to submit to the processes of society as to a necessity of history. In this perspective, true solidarity, true 'care for the victim', is mediated by a particular concrete relation and aware of its limited span.³⁰ Desire is the drive towards a general synthesis, it 'imagines the world in terms of this absurd division between desirable and non-desirable.'³¹ Triangular desire seizes upon its mediator in the illusion of having found the key of universal order and is trapped instead in defining itself by relation to its mediator. In light of this theory, what is politically desirable is the rehabilitation of personal preference within democratic non-violence and universal compassion.³² The upheaval of society through revolution is unlikely to further these aims.

Gutiérrez also holds that freedom means enjoyment without a divided conscience, be it either hypocritically guilty or delusionally alienated. The positive appropriation of the epilogue to the Book of Job is his crucial exegetical difference from Girard: Job's final good fortune does not have to mean the obliteration of the memory of suffering.

²⁶ Ibid. 38–39/53, 308/344: 'The novelistic (*romanesque*) dénouement is a reconciliation between the individual and the world, between man and the sacred. The multiple universe of passions decomposes and returns to simplicity.' (my tr.)

²⁷ Ibid. 58/75.

²⁸ Ibid. 57/74: 'everyone believes himself alone through hell, and that is hell.' (my tr.)

²⁹ Girard, *Job*, 117.

³⁰ Girard, *I See Satan Fall like Lightning*, tr. James G. Williams (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001), 165.

³¹ Girard, *Job*, 63.

³² *I See Satan Fall like Lightning*, 219–20/168–9.

Retribution has to be maintained as the norm without turning it into a theodicy of merit. It is not empathetic modesty that protects freedom from turning into rapacious disconsideration of the misery of others. Only this paradox of limited retribution, and not the project of universal legal transcendence, allows that there still should be the contrast of day and night between justice and injustice, even though daylight may last only for a little.³³ If we ask whether mimetic desire is not just wrong but illegitimate, the answer is not straightforward outside the romantic ethics of authenticity that Girard also denies. Its dangers can be avoided only if joy is possible not only as union with the merited object of desire, but even while judgment is being delayed and lives only in the memory of God's just acts. Job's hyperbolic rehabilitation is not a simple happy ending, but the payment of a wager he has gradually assumed. Hence it is too simple to place the mediation of desire at the stark crossroads between a divine and a human model, because divine desire lives also in and with the hopeful, albeit the paths through which they come closer can prove rather frightening. The meaning of desire cannot become disjointed from the repetition of imitative failures except through this entanglement with a transcendent history.

II. Grace demonstrated: freedom in evangelization

The problem of whether there are objective social and political conditions of evangelization that we must strive to bring about can be reduced, according to Gutiérrez, to the question whether truth is to be sought in freedom. In his brief review of the history of the theological idea of religious freedom, Gutiérrez distinguishes between a theory of the freedom of the act of faith and a concept of the freedom of the human person including the right to religion. In the former, the truth has a right to be recognized, it 'imposes itself on conscience';³⁴ the freedom to reject it is in fact a political (self-)limitation of truth in accordance on the one hand with the value of patience (which unperishable truth affords to be) and on the other with that of social peace. The latter offers a political

³³ *On Job*, 74/144–5.

³⁴ 'Freedom and Salvation', in Gustavo Gutiérrez and Richard Shaull, *Liberation and Change* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1977), 1–94 at 22.

principle which seems to have led to the modern phenomenon of private religion, attacked by Metz for excluding Christian critical reason from the public realm. Gutiérrez believes the situation faced by liberation theology offers perhaps a ‘contradiction of the elements of this process’ of privatization,³⁵ because in Latin America the problem for theology is not the non-believer, but the non-person.³⁶ The problem of peace is not that of delimiting the private and the public, but of opening the present to the future.

It may seem that putting the affirmation of humanity prior to evangelization is reversing the order in which the shape of culture comes into being, that historically the transcendent valuation of human life has been influenced by religion.³⁷ There is a sense however in which this sequence recovers the biblical succession of the miraculous and the doctrinal; Gutiérrez takes exception to the idea that a primordial stock of charismatic demonstration was consolidated into political authority, which afterwards took on the task of promulgating abroad the good news—the notion effective in the Spanish and Portuguese vision of the mission to the New World and later attacked by Enlightenment proponents of secular religious freedom.³⁸ Certainly in the Bible the relation is problematical: miracles are not a guarantee of sound teaching, while a fixation on spectacle and immediate satisfaction is a stubborn enemy of obedience.³⁹ Nevertheless the conviction that miracles are to accompany the proclamation of the gospel is not abandoned; this is because miracles are not symbols of doctrine, but the awakening of overwhelmed humanity to a recollected gaze in awareness of its own dignity. It is when the subjects of miracles do not recognize that they have been honoured by divine visitation that the miracle does not ‘work’ and

³⁵ Ibid. 59.

³⁶ Ibid. 79.

³⁷ Cf. *I See Satan Fall like Lightning*, 172, 177–79; Pannenberg makes the same point—see above, Ch. 2. iv.

³⁸ Spinoza’s animus is stirred by the reference to miracles as a special sign of divine favour. He cleverly uses Deut. 18.15–22 both to deny the theological relevance of the miraculous (*Theological-Political Treatise*, ed. Jonathan Israel, tr. Michael Silverthorne and Jonathan Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 82, 87–8) and their necessity for the acceptance of revealed divine law (ibid. 205, 244), so that in the absence of miracles secular authority has precedence over religious: ‘all men are obliged to keep faith even with a tyrant, unless God has promised a person special help against a tyrant by a separate revelation. Consequently, nobody may use [the example of the disciples] as a precedent, unless he too possesses the power to work miracles.’ (Ibid. 244.)

³⁹ This is a theme present in all the different strands of the Jesus tradition (Mark 6.1–6, 8.11–13, Matt. 16.1–4, John 6.25–59).

they take it for a wonderful magic trick.⁴⁰ But is it possible to discern the same immediate presence of the sacred in every age? There is perhaps something miraculous in the concept of an exchange, an alien completion of suffering, which Paul undergoes for the church in his imprisonment, struggling for those from which he is absent in body but present in spirit.⁴¹ Such a miracle does not offer any demonstrations, unless it is an emotional revelation; least of all is it a demonstration for those not suffering. Yet it is such miracles that Gutiérrez takes as examples of evangelization in Latin America.⁴² The missionary is not self-sacrificing in exchange for the evangelized, but suffering with those already oppressed.

How is this notion of evangelization to be squared with the idea of liberation as change from non-person to self-possession, as the coming to awareness of one's own historical-social position and its transformation? Is there not a contradiction if in fact it is the latter transformation which represents the full affirmation of human dignity? It cannot then be a precursor to the gospel, but threatens to become its substitute. Surely the problem is that dignity cannot be affirmed merely symbolically; it would be hypocritical to thwart its practical assertion. This is an old topos of the critique of liberal democracy: dignity is not a container to be filled with entitlements; it means rather the composure of being open to freedom.⁴³ Such composure exists even in poverty, and it can be built further through outside testimony. It is in fact one's own representative character, not an unspoiled unicity, which demands to be recognized; this is why testimony can take the form of sharing. The miracle introducing the gospel is not the dramatic change of circumstances, from privation to prosperity or from oblivion to power. Poverty itself even can be transformed into a sign of victory, adopted by proclaimers of the gospel as a form of protest against its forceful imposition on others and as a demonstration of respect for their

⁴⁰ This contrast is at its clearest in Luke–Acts, between Simon Peter (Luke 5.1–11) and Simon Magus (Acts 8.18–24).

⁴¹ Col. 1.24, 2.5.

⁴² *Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ*, tr. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 190. Las Casas makes the point that belief in spite of the Christian conquerors' behaviour is a true miracle, even in the absence of external miracles: there is something in the message itself which resonates with the experience of the oppressed.

⁴³ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 74–76.

interlocutors.⁴⁴ This is not a mere strategy geared to induce natural sympathy, because ‘in the question of method, what is at stake is the very meaning and content of faith.’⁴⁵ While it may be effective in championing an alternative culture of the poor, which rejects their oppressive integration in the hegemonic system, can this strategy also encourage an appreciation of the dignity of the individual?

The problem becomes visible when, as in Latin America, the advent of Christianity has not inspired great commitment to individual liberty. Gutiérrez does not allow that this could have been, at least in theory, an opportunity for the emancipation of the individual from the force of traditional society. Rather, he maintains the right of nations ‘to their own way of life and religion’⁴⁶ and that the defence of individual life cannot be successful without the defence of the ‘context’ which gives it its meaning.⁴⁷ Bartolomé de las Casas took this very seriously in stating that the Indians had an obligation to defend their culture.⁴⁸

One explanation for this strong statement is Las Casas’s and Gutiérrez’s emphasis on the incommensurate worth of life. In the perspective of Las Casas’s critics, eternal life offered to the individual compared favourably with the price to be paid in the undoing of the customary social ties. Only in death would the person receive the unassailable guarantee of the esteem proffered in evangelizing. This is unacceptable because it only managed to perform a theoretical separation of community and individual, while denying freedom to both. There is another fault with militant authoritarian evangelizing: the permanence of idolatry. The traditional idols could not be expunged and, worse still, the people had

⁴⁴ There is a hidden syllogism in Gutiérrez’s spiritual outlook which uses spiritual childlikeness to mediate between voluntary poverty and friendship as a social value: ‘Assuming material poverty is an essential manifestation of being spiritually childlike ...’; ‘Receiving the grace of being children of God (1 Jn 3.1) involves creating authentic friendship and justice in our society.’ ‘There will be no commitment to the poor and the oppressed if there is no friendship with them. It is only in friendship that we will abide in love.’ (*Spiritual Writings*, ed. Daniel G. Groody (New York: Orbis, 2001), 134, 279, 105.)

⁴⁵ *Las Casas*, 104.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 184.

⁴⁷ Las Casas thus stands as an alternative traditional champion of the local embeddedness of values to Isaiah Berlin’s Herder—cp. ‘Herder and the Enlightenment’, 143–216 at 156–65, in *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas* (London: Hogarth, 1976).

⁴⁸ *Las Casas*, 204.

adopted the objects of Christian cultus as new idols.⁴⁹ Las Casas went further and sought to show the rationality of indigenous customs. This bold step was necessary in order to show that the Indians were already in the habit of considering and accepting beliefs freely. How then did they arrive at idolatry? Is that not an indictment of their society?

Enrique Dussel has formulated in different terms the foreign imposition of Christianity: as the invention of the Americas through the erasure of the Other and its replacement by a subsidiary version of the Same.⁵⁰ Although reason and idolatry can hardly be said to be in a stable relation, Dussel attempts to show the rationality of Moctezuma's interaction with Cortés; in the process, he creates the impression that any mythology is just another form of rationality. (Admittedly, Las Casas himself took the risky step of putting human sacrifice outside the prohibitions of natural law and into those of positive legislation.) The one aspect of autochthonous mythology Dussel is critical of is its fatalism, which prevented Moctezuma from reacting more effectively to his enemies. One could say that all beliefs which condemn such radical encounters to catastrophe are to be suspected as idolatrous. Free faith allows the approach of the other without the struggle of establishing who is master and who is slave. Of course, this means that the Spanish conquerors themselves were also in the grip of idolatry—in their case, the blind belief in the inherent superiority of their culture, which undeniably did exalt the individual, namely in the shape of the valiant warrior looking for fame armed with indomitable initiative. This is certainly an instance of an idolatrous conception of individual freedom. Moreover, the critique of freedom as honour leads into the critique of freedom as property. While the good standing of a bold man allowed action to be spontaneous in the knowledge of its conformity to the code accepted among peers, property deepened the rule of this spontaneity in one's lordly domain by relaxing within it any peremptory standards; these apparently heterogenous codes are not incompatible because the notion of honour itself can be described in economic terms, a currency subjected to circulation and accumulation according to well

⁴⁹ Ibid. 164. Cf. Enrique D. Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricœur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, ed. and tr. Eduardo Mendieta (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), 70.

⁵⁰ Dussel, *A History of the Church in Latin America: Colonialism to Liberation (1492–1979)*, tr. and rev. Alan Neely (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1981), 41–46, and *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of 'the Other' and the Myth of Modernity*, tr. Michael D. Barber (New York: Continuum, 1995), 49–57.

specified laws.⁵¹ The apparent freedom of courageous spontaneity was only an opportunistic insertion into this commerce of honour, a shrewd intuitive calculation, while the deregulated disposal of property gave the satisfaction of enjoyment without risk, a release of energies too dangerous to be let to interfere in the system of visible exchange. It is the very nature of the idol that it demands endlessly without being able to give back anything but the recurring satisfaction of exclusion, the certainty of sacrifice—and that is precisely what the systems of honour and shame, property and propertylessness do.⁵² The courage of the conquerors had no better issue than that of the capitalist, the assurance of private possessions. Even initiative is fatalistic if it cannot find enjoyment except in seclusion from community.

III. Conscience and self-organization in response to the gospel

If individual liberty is grounded in disenchantment with fatalistic idolatry, its definition must be sought in relation to the definition of evangelization. ‘To evangelize is to announce with works and words the salvation [offered] in Christ.’⁵³ The preeminence given to works is constant in Gutiérrez, but it should not be interpreted as a contra-Lutheran affirmation of salvation by good works. When he states that the ‘route of salvation is the route of works’,⁵⁴ the context indicates that the alternative view is one in which saving truth has been mediated to all cultures through a common stock of experience or tradition, an opinion proffered for instance by Lamennais.⁵⁵ Gutiérrez wants to make the same point, that eschatological salvation may be extended to those who have fallen outside the bounds of the missionary activity of the church. However, his strategy is not to remove the stumbling block of cultural difference. While Dussel wants to address

⁵¹ Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (3rd edn., Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 89–90.

⁵² *The God of Life*, tr. Matthew J. O Connell (London: SCM, 1991), 51–6.

⁵³ ‘Liberation Theology and the Future of the Poor’ in Joerg Rieger (ed.), *Liberating the Future: God, Mammon, and Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 96–122 at 99.

⁵⁴ *Las Casas*, 259.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 267.

this problem by contextualizing historical consciousness within a narrative, preferably global, account of origins,⁵⁶ Gutiérrez does not take this road; the reason is that there is no unified language of proclamation, and works themselves carry their meaning within local languages which have become autonomous to the extent that demonstrating their common origin will not solve the ambiguity of embedded action. A parable of the problem of the language of proclamation is the Spanish landowners' complaint that the priests have been learning the native languages and therefore the Indians are slack in taking up the language of their masters. Natural languages themselves are driven into a regime of servitude once they are deemed suitable only for trivial communication and not the preaching of the gospel. But the work of translation is insufficient to redeem its prestige; it must rather be made to adhere to the works of evangelization, to clothe the novelty of acts anticipating the kingdom. No language can fail to be revitalized by them.⁵⁷

One might ask why religiously-inspired actions themselves do not also come under the shadow of ambivalence and incomprehension, since they are not born of the vernacular tradition. The solution envisaged by figures like Las Casas may be said to belong in some respects to the bygone era of Christendom: it is the fact of appropriation by Christ in baptism into the jurisdiction of the church which proclaims the validity of local languages. Las Casas's radical solution to the injustices perpetrated in America was to demand that the king of Spain reinstate the rightful incumbent of native rule, leaving up to him to accept or not papal authority and with it the legitimacy of European expansion;⁵⁸ once the legal situation has been tilted back to a level plane, the gospel will shine in its natural clarity, because baptism, as an individual process, was understood to depend on a juridical form of consent. As it stands at the end of the process of conversion and does not have to carry a self-contained juridical (as opposed to theological and psychological) meaning, Las Casas has to presume an ideal scenario which posits the possibility of comprehension and acceptance. Were his distrusting adversaries not right to object that aggressive natives

⁵⁶ Dussel, *History and Theology of Liberation: A Latin American Perspective*, tr. John Drury (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1976), 37ff.

⁵⁷ *Essential Writings*, ed. James B. Nickoloff (London: SCM, 1996), 275, 68–9; *The Density of the Present: Selected Writings* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), 159–62. Cp. Peter Ives, *Gramsci and the Politics of Language* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 106–113, on the project of 'translating Marx'.

⁵⁸ *Las Casas*, 394.

would persecute and kill missionaries if they were not made to listen by the royal sword? Did not Las Casas himself claim that Indians had an a priori reason to defend their customs?

Even in practice the theological idea of belonging must come before the juridical. This is the presupposition of evangelization, which means to be ‘searching for the poor of Jesus Christ’. It strikes at the root of the otherwise impressive distinction made by one of the opponents of Las Casas between the right to property and to political self-determination, of which only the former is natural, while the latter is granted by divine prerogative. This distinction drew in paternalism under the cloak of religious pedagogy.⁵⁹ The theological understanding of belonging leads to a distinct form of mutual recognition of the ruler and the ruled, as it offers a universal symbol—the poor—to justify self-organization. The poor are not a remainder or defined in a relative negation; first and foremost they are defined by their address by the gospel and their self-interpretation in its light. Of course, this does not endorse all forms of self-organization of the poor; it may be that a nation, or a town, or a family rallies in response, or just one person answers. The social shape of the answer is not given in advance; hence the political question: to what community do the poor belong?

If there is then no preestablished form of response, it is still the task for the person to stand on their own. It may take the form of individual effort or resistance; where there is hearing, there is also a reflection in saying. The individual will not be judged according to the collective response, but by conscience.⁶⁰ Gutiérrez’s reference to works is part of a theory of total response based on Rahner’s conception of transcendental consciousness, further developed so as to clarify its emergence within the community.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Ibid. 112.

⁶⁰ Cf. Juan Luis Segundo, *Signs of the Times: Theological Reflections*, ed. Alfred T. Hennelly, tr. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 62.

⁶¹ Karl Rahner, ‘Experience of the Spirit and Existential Commitment’, in *Experience of the Spirit: Source of Theology*, tr. David Morland, Theological Investigations, 16 (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1979), 24–34; Rom. 2.15.

IV. An economic conscience: sharing and exchange

Whereas Pannenberg's concept of destiny focuses on the all-gathering and surpassing eschatological future, for Gutiérrez destiny is found in the midst of present contradictions. One of the central phenomena being analysed in *A Theology of Liberation* is 'becoming aware' (*tomar conciencia*); it relates both to objective facts ('the differences between countries'⁶²) and social analysis ('new and subtle forms of oppression'⁶³). When it comes to a definition, Gutiérrez envisages a liberation 'from everything which limits or impedes self-realization.'⁶⁴ Despite this similarity, there is a glaring contrast between Gutiérrez's and Marcuse's programmes of liberation, inasmuch as the two motor concepts of the latter, reason and instinct, are much less foregrounded by the former. Marcuse's preoccupation to give an outline of liberation in scientific terms, using Marxist economics and psychoanalysis, and especially his concern to correctly identify the potential revolutionary class according to objective criteria is hardly matched in Gutiérrez's account of the transformation—change of expectations—in the Latin American theological conscience.⁶⁵ We should not understand his notion of liberation according to a preconceived idea of late sixties radicalism.

Starting the analysis of liberation from a change of conscience is not without its dangers. A stock criticism of liberation theologians is that their values are removed from the experience of the poor;⁶⁶ the rebuttal usually makes reference to the Gramscian notion of the organic intellectual.⁶⁷ A more fundamental criticism, also made by Pannenberg,⁶⁸ is

⁶² *TL*, 21/44, my tr.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 27/53.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 27/52, my tr.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 32/61.

⁶⁶ Edward Norman, 'The Imperialism of Political Religion', in Nash (ed.), *Liberation Theology*, 121–138 at 135.

⁶⁷ *TL*, 13/37–8. See John R. Pottenger, *The Political Theory of Liberation Theology: Toward a Reconvergence of Social Values and Social Science* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 173–4. I will return to this problem in section vi below.

⁶⁸ Pannenberg, *CSSC*, 66; cp. John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (2nd edn., Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 239–40, 247, who exposes liberation theology's call to conversion as a subjective categorical imperative. This criticism must be distinguished from the further libertarian objection that liberation theology sacrifices individuality to collectivity (Ronald Nash, *Social Justice and the Christian Church* (Milford, Mich.: Mott Media, 1983))—an objection that simplistically assumes that the endpoint of liberation is communism.

that justice must have a basis beyond subjective experience. In particular, an experience couched in the language of social antagonism cannot offer a solid roadmap to liberation through justice, only the counsel of a ‘permanent cultural revolution’,⁶⁹ with regular substitutions in the roles of the antagonists. Growing ‘self-awareness’ (*autoconciencia*) would only consolidate an identity planted in the primordial experience of exclusion. Would critics share Gutiérrez’s enthusiastic tone when writing of Guamán Poma: ‘an Indian racially, he makes himself one reflexively’?⁷⁰ On the contrary, they object that objective economic analyses should offer the common rationality able to advance us beyond such conflicts of commitment. This question has divided liberation theology itself.⁷¹

The justification for giving priority to first-hand experience is entirely theological. This creates unease; because while individual testimony is an inevitable mediation of religious experience,⁷² it has (even) less of a peremptory character as a guide in social problems.⁷³ Today even the notion of ‘a social conscience’ refers more commonly to a special sensitivity to objectively formulated problems, rather than a subjective charitable inclination—the latter appears tainted by the heterogeneity of religious motivation. In secular perspective, what is to be sought in the problem of suffering is to eliminate its excess, its unnecessary profusion, according to commonly agreed, hopefully scientific, criteria. The Freudian promise was to carry this programme onto the core structure of the self: an adult’s troubles may stem from phases entirely normal in the course of the child’s development, now needlessly borne forward, or from an overactive superego that does not allow desires to surface which would incur no social damage; crucially, reported suffering

⁶⁹ *TL*, 32/62.

⁷⁰ *Las Casas*, 445.

⁷¹ I am referring to the welcomed/maligned change from economic-social analysis to the cultural-social analysis. Ivan Petrella upholds a chronological division in Gutiérrez’s work, with a shift from sociological analysis to ecclesiastical discourse (*The Future of Liberation Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 81); cp. Ch. 6 below. Scannone offers a generalized related scheme of an ‘axial shift’ from social to cultural analysis (Juan Carlos Scannone, “‘Axial Shift’ instead of ‘Paradigm Shift’”, in G. De Schriver (ed.), *Liberation Theology on Shifting Grounds: A Clash of Socio-Economic and Cultural Paradigms* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1998), 85–103). In this perspective, the specific site of liberation theology, by identifying a particularized concern, sets its contextual range. But if all political theology is contextual, why should liberation theology define itself by this?

⁷² Cf. Paul Ricœur, ‘L’herméneutique du témoignage’, in *Lectures* 3, 105–137, esp. 133–37.

⁷³ Among the best-known liberation theologians, Segundo is especially sceptical about the role of subjective testimony in social intervention (*Signs of the Times*, 79).

has to be analysed, not simply trusted and consoled. The latter point is to some extent comparable to the perspective of liberation theology, in that the experience of suffering is not epistemically pure; however, in this case its purification takes place through a theological perspective, the perspective of communion.

To put it in its theological context, this process is the reverse of the traditional strategy according to which one should always assume the tribulation coming one's way to be retribution for sin and therefore occasion of repentance⁷⁴—the sole exception being Christ, who took over our debts without having any himself.⁷⁵ The strategy was deemed to have a therapeutic aim: even if you cannot know for certain the precise moral cause of your suffering, you still have to determine yourself to reckon with it a certain way. In repentance, it becomes personally and theologically meaningful: hence the irreplaceability of personal testimony, both in suffering and in solidarity. Liberation theology contests this 'assumption' theory, on account of the fact that suffering is rarely first our own; it contests as individualistic the assumption that you can, even in repentance, choose to make suffering completely your own. Pain does not individualize. It arises in its own context, and its continuation always provides a new one. Yet while liberation theology refuses an objective individualistic strategy against suffering, it does demand commitment. This possibility is warranted Christologically: it is a simplification to speak of Jesus' 'attitude towards his suffering', although this is correct inasmuch as he also approached it as a task; it was essentially an attitude towards those inflicting this suffering on him, all and everyone.⁷⁶ Suffering is not an object approached in relation to oneself, but an event in one's relationship with others: insofar the 'dramatic', liberation theory of the communication of suffering holds true.

⁷⁴ See e.g. Marcus Monachus, *Traité*s, ed. and tr. Georges-Matthieu de Durand (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1999–2000), 2. 68–9.

⁷⁵ Marcus Monachus refers to Christ's acceptance of suffering as communication according to love; the communication according to wickedness refers to the attraction or retribution of temptation and evil to wicked deeds (*Traité*s, 2. 82–3).

⁷⁶ Marcelo Horacio Labèque, *Liberación y modernidad: Una relectura de Gustavo Gutiérrez* (Freiburg, Switzerland: Universitätsverlag Freiburg, 1997), 174, 241. Cf. Heb. 5.7–10.

To what extent can this revision of the theological language of suffering have any impact on the interpretation of economic relations? Certain liberation theologians conceive of economy as a common democratic task, so that any unequal distributions may potentially infringe upon justice.⁷⁷ However, this radical utopian demand moves far too quickly from economic need to the assumption of the utility of its implementation. The proper ground of liberation theological economic criticism may be the experience of economic time, of subjugation under it and exclusion from it. Such a critique is quite difficult to formulate because there is no ideal of this experience. Even if Marx's illustration of a day in the communist future (hunting, fishing, critiquing)⁷⁸ is not to be taken completely seriously, what is transparent in it is the idea that one can safeguard the vibrancy of individual creativity by hedging one's bets. Marx's critique of specialization is not that far removed from the historical starting point of marginalist economics in Hermann Gossen's analysis of value. In contrast to Marx's focus on needs, Gossen sought to guard the subjective constitution of value by associating it with the intensity of enjoyment, which decreases over time until the finite amount of pleasure afforded by one particular good is exhausted.⁷⁹ Rationally, one would use the greatest available number of sources until the pleasure provided by all of them is equal;⁸⁰ so far Marx's illustration would fit. However, when it comes to labour relations, the discrepancy is great. For Gossen, labour is used to increase the total amount of life pleasure, so one would work as long as the increase in pleasure through wages is greater than the average previously afforded over the time period (including labour time, excluding pure leisure time in which no values are consumed), in other words, until marginal pain equals marginal utility. Marx analyses the situation from the perspective of needs, separating surplus labour from the time required for the

⁷⁷ Ismael García, *Justice in Latin American Theology of Liberation* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1987), 26, 81, 86. Cf. Joerg Rieger, *No Rising Tide: Theology, Economics, and the Future* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 146; for Rieger, economic justice would mean the equal valuation of equal productivity (ibid. 136–7), although this seems impractical in light of the longstanding demand for economic growth.

⁷⁸ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, in *Collected Works*, 5 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1965), 53.

⁷⁹ One should not make the jump that 'capitalist desire' is moved by scarcity (Néstor Oscar Míguez, Joerg Rieger, and Jung Mo Sung, *Beyond the Spirit of Empire: Theology and Politics in a New Key* (London: SCM Press, 2009), 90); on the contrary, on this theory the pleasure a good affords a single individual may exhaust itself much earlier than it becomes scarce.

⁸⁰ Hermann Gossen, *The Laws of Human Relations and the Rules of Human Action Derived Therefrom*, tr. Rudolph C. Blitz, with an introduction by Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983), 5, 14.

reproduction of capital. Although surplus labour time may well pass Gossen's criterion, for Marx it is an imposition which does not contribute to the workers' wages.⁸¹ Besides, according to Marx there is a point after which enjoyment is not connected with any particular good.⁸² For Gossen, equality would mean an equal distribution of pleasure from each good, thus allowing for the inequality of subjective experience; but his argument for equality is marred by the confusion of the maximum total of pleasures and the total of maximum pleasures.⁸³ It is perfectly reasonable that some be excluded from economic time, insofar as employing their time would not increase the total pleasure of employers, whereas Gossen assumes that it will always be reasonable to use extra work until the fullest available quantity of goods is exploited.⁸⁴ From this contrast, it appears impossible to combine the objective and subjective analyses—unless one can justify thinking of all economic activity as shared time.⁸⁵

Liberation theology starts from the extreme case in which economic time and its zone of exclusion are displacing and perverting all other mechanisms for the construction of a social sphere for the meaningful exchange of time; hence Gutiérrez's polarization of life and death.⁸⁶ The root of this bipolarity is theological, the conviction that 'every human life is ultimately a yes or no to God.'⁸⁷ Unlike Marx, Gutiérrez does not identify the poor purely as those who have had their labour time robbed or labour power ruined. That is because the ideal time allocation is not conceived in terms of the maximum fructification

⁸¹ Marx, *Capital*, 1. 299–300. See Andrew Kliman, *Reclaiming Marx's 'Capital': A Refutation of the Myth of Inconsistency* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2006), 23–4, 141–2.

⁸² The point is the change in economic behaviour from the 'simple circulation of commodities' or 'selling in order to buy', which is driven by the satisfaction of needs, to the accumulation of capital or 'selling in order to sell' (Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1, tr. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1976), 253). Cf. Marx, *Grundrisse*, tr. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1973), 514–5.

⁸³ Jan van Daal, 'The Entwicklung according to Gossen', in Jürgen Georg Backhaus, *Handbook of the History of Economic Thought Insights on the Founders of Modern Economics* (New York: Springer, 2012), 369–388 at 379–81.

⁸⁴ Gossen, 173–4.

⁸⁵ Cp. Ian Steedman, *Consumption Takes Time: Implications for Economic Theory* (London: Routledge, 2001), 100–104. Perhaps this idea is more obvious from an ecological point of view.

⁸⁶ Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations*, tr. by Matthew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), 12/26: 'In this context, "life" includes all dimensions of the human, in keeping with the all-embracing will of God.'

⁸⁷ Gutiérrez, *Truth*, 22/37. This dichotomy seems to be one of Gutiérrez's original contributions to liberation theology; see João Batista Libânio and Alberto Antoniazzi, *Vinte anos de teologia na América Latina e no Brasil* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1994), 49.

of potential or enjoyment of goods; rather, the ideal is a life of commitment to the poor, inasmuch as needs should not be met merely by an investment of time, but also integrated in the structure of the story of a human life open to meaning. It is in the light of the preceding consideration of economic exchange and suffering that we should interpret the requirement that solidarity should be ‘an act of efficacious charity’,⁸⁸ not as a blanket assertion of the primacy of economics. Charity is not ‘efficacious’ if it is hidden under the form of transaction of the present system; it must mean the revelation of yet unthought economic relations, a stripping of the ‘mysteriousness’ of the workings of the market. In order to be offered as a token of equality, economic amelioration must be transformed by thinking through the conditions which tie together suffering and freedom. Gutiérrez’s book on Job does not signal the severing of liberation theology from concrete social-historical projects, as Segundo, Petrella, and others suspect, but a new step in uncovering the unreflected theological community relations which underlie and mediate economic relations. Still, an objective analysis of economic suffering (and not just of its causes) would be of much needed help to liberation theology.⁸⁹

V. The Christological density of time

The starting point of liberation theology is the unity of God’s action in history, reflected in the union of the different planes of Christian existence. Gutiérrez’s metaphor of the ‘density’ of time refers the hidden reality of this connectedness. Instead of a canvas open to the reinscription of abstract projects, ‘time converts itself into a place of encounter with the face of Jesus, God’s Incarnate Son. In this time two liberties meet: the liberty of God

⁸⁸ *We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People*, tr. Matthew J. O’Connell (London: SCM, 1984), 21/32.

⁸⁹ It is regrettable that Gutiérrez’s preoccupation with the ‘non-person’ has not allowed him to pursue as well a theology of work. The above suggestions on the exchange of time do not indicate a realistic practical solution beyond the range of small cooperatives. The appeal to ‘an ethic of life’ does not move us much beyond the hope of ‘flexible relations between subjects and institutions’ (German Gutiérrez, ‘Ethic of Life and Option for the Poor’, in Ivan Petrella (ed.), *Liberation Theology: The Next Generation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005), 75–94 at 88); cf. Gustavo Gutiérrez’s allusion to ‘dead labour’ (*Dios o el oro en las Indias: Siglo XVI* (Lima: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1989), 167). See also *The Density of the Present*, 33–36, for a brief consideration of John Paul II’s ‘spirituality of work’.

reveals itself in gratuitous love, and the liberty of humanity which receives the gift; the first calls forth and establishes the second.⁹⁰ The language of encounter obscures however the inherent problem of liberation theology in doing justice both to this Christological understanding of time and the primacy of praxis.⁹¹ To insist on the Christological focus of Christian praxis is certainly part of the solution; nevertheless, praxis produces a reality deeper than any anticipated outcome, carrying the challenge of a yet unacknowledged rest of meaning. How do we meet the relevance of the doctrine of the incarnate Word in this ever renewed excess?

Traditionally, orthodox theologians have been quite reticent in expounding on the problem of freedom in relation to the humanity of Christ. Firstly, since the human will of Christ is always under the rule of the divine, it seems to be placed in a role more receptive than creative. Although, for instance, Thomas Aquinas recognized the legitimate presence of the sensual appetite in Christ's soul, he integrated it into his distinction between will as nature (oriented towards an object) and will as reason (the determination of means); since freedom of the will means not being determined towards a particular good,⁹² it follows that the freedom of Christ's human will can be materially contained in the counsel of the divine. It cannot be a case of a decision being reached through the choice between opposing impulses: 'The agony did not involve the rational part of Christ's soul, as though there were a conflict of voluntary acts arising from diversity of judgments. ... Such a situation is due to the weakness of an intellect unable to decide which of the two, all things being considered, is the better.'⁹³ Rather, the simple will of nature, sensual and rational, which shrank from the suffering lying before him, was in principle dependent on the divine will and the will of reasoned counsel: 'For it pleased the divine will and the deliberative will of Christ that his instinctive will and his sensuous impulses should act in conformity with their own natures.'⁹⁴ It is not on account of it being necessary for free will

⁹⁰ 'Liberation Theology and the Future of the Poor', 96.

⁹¹ Miguel Manzanera, *Teología, salvación y liberación en la obra de Gustavo Gutiérrez: Exposición analítica, situación teórico-práctica y valoración crítica* (Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto/Mensajero, 1978), 395–98.

⁹² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ed. Thomas Gilby, OP (London: Blackfriars with Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964–1981), 3a 18.4, vol. 31, p. 74–77.

⁹³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 3a 18.6 r. 3, p. 85.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

that Aquinas admits the manifestation of the simple will, but because it is required by biblical testimony and consonant with the full humanity of Christ. Secondly, the doctrine of the omniscience of Christ in his humanity determined the way one could envisage Christ's self-projection into the future, eliminating the mystery of development even when, as in Aquinas, a progress of knowledge was admitted in the order of the human power of abstraction. This should not be seen merely as a duplication of information in a different form, since it also entails a different way of interacting with the world⁹⁵—including ways of being in community; after all, God 'moves the will according to its condition, as indeterminately disposed to many things, not in a necessary way.'⁹⁶

Restoring, as most of modern theology seeks to do, the biblical notion of the spontaneity of Christ's human will does not in itself explain the union of divine and human freedom. The contribution of Gutiérrez's outlook is that the freedom of the Christ is to be sketched against the background of bondage to idolatry. In this context, the paradigm is to be found in the narratives of Christ's temptation. It is noteworthy that a reference to Christ's agony, the main reference of Aquinas' discussion, seems to be included in the coda to Luke's account of the temptations.⁹⁷ Despite the isolation in which it was undertaken, Christ's fast was in solidarity; solitude being, according to Gutiérrez, the indispensable counterpoint of community. All of Jesus' retreats, including this time of personal preparation after his baptism, are time spent in prayer and thus overflow to the greater good of the community. If the zealots saw their mission clearly laid out for them in the midst of God's people, ready to be accomplished, Jesus' voyage into the wilderness is symbolic of his insistence on personal conversion.⁹⁸ Freedom for the kingdom of God means an identity received in analogy with the exodus granted to the Israelites, the sign and trial of a personal bond. While in the case of Jesus' being driven in the desert there is direct analogy with the Exodus, as it signals the beginning of the reformation of the people

⁹⁵ 'We don't just know that the future is open and undetermined—it is our knowledge which makes the future undetermined.' (Stephen Wang, 'The Indetermination of Reason and the Role of the Will in Aquinas's Account of Human Freedom', *New Blackfriars*, 90 (2009), 108–129 at 120.)

⁹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *On Evil*, tr. Richard Regan, ed. Brian Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), a. 6, p. 259.

⁹⁷ Luke 4:13.

⁹⁸ *TL*, 227–8/301.

of God, for Christians the movement of individuation takes place in response to Jesus' example. What the narrative of the temptations represents is the negative proof of the relation proclaimed at his baptism;⁹⁹ in the face of temptations which evoke perversely the notions of self-demonstration and kingship, Jesus affirms his personal allegiance to the God of Israel, his submission to his self-demonstration and kingship. It is not necessary to single out Christ's agony as an expression of the 'will of nature', of humanity, since its true theological significance is that the overcoming of temptation is accessible only by participating in God's no to evil and creaturely self-seeking, and it is in this sense that it can be traced back to God's eternal decree. Gutiérrez's liberation theology is marked perhaps by just as strong an emphasis on divine election as Barth's; although the notion of Christ as the agent of election is absent, there is instead the dynamic notion of the choice of the poor in the principle of Christ's divine-human reality, which is more similar to Barth's view of the Incarnation than to a theory of kenosis as the renunciation of attributes.¹⁰⁰ In short, Gutiérrez's first qualification of Aquinas's perspective is that it is the Spirit-given mission to establish God's community which informs the human will of Christ against all temptations, allowing divine freedom to guide it.

'The following of Jesus is the solid ground on which can be built a reflection on Jesus as the Christ, a Christology.'¹⁰¹ How does the distinction between Christ's divine and human wills take place according to this a principle? Christ's demands can appeal to reciprocity or obedience; when he addresses his disciples as friends, we might be inclined to see the call of the human will, and when he commands their following, the expression of the divine. Or is it just the modulated expression of a single exigency? In traditional exegesis pedagogic intent is frequently associated with demonstrations of humanity, of co-equality (e.g. in asking for information). But in fact he demands that others be treated like him on

⁹⁹ Matt. 3.17, Luke 3.22.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Jon Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator: A View from the Victims*, tr. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001), 270–74. Critics have alluded in fact to such a comparison by referring to poverty as a sign of grace in Moltmann's Reformed theology. (Robert C. Walton, 'Jürgen Moltmann's Theology of Hope', in Ronald Nash (ed.), *Liberation Theology* (Milford, Mich.: Mott Media, 1984), 139–186 at 172.) However, a sign of grace has a positive relation to the purpose of election—e.g. good works to the perfection bestowed eschatologically in Christ—, so this observation sits uncomfortably with the further accusation that the poor are being summoned to affluence; besides, marks of grace are cumulative in their effect of confirmation, but deeper poverty is not a greater sign of election.

¹⁰¹ Wells, 50/71.

account of his divinity.¹⁰² This is not least a warning against idolatry, connected to Jesus' warnings against acknowledging the pretensions of the false Messiahs of the end times,¹⁰³ which would be the acknowledgment of a different imagined divinity, not that of Christ. As to the protest that Gutiérrez reduces the deity of Christ to the validity of his ideological standpoint,¹⁰⁴ a fairer interpretation would be that his divinity is epistemologically inseparable from the united expression of his two wills. It is impossible to ignore Christ's human will without sin,¹⁰⁵ because the divine will is only known in its relation to the human. In the various needs of the poor listed in the Parable of the sheep and the goats,¹⁰⁶ we see a reflection of Aquinas' 'simple will' which it pleased the Son to be moved in him according to its nature. The right response to this need of the other is to acknowledge its human legitimacy; only in this way will one keep from forsaking it for a supposedly superior, divinely-minded intention, like the miracle workers and prophets of this parable or the Levite and priest hurriedly passing by the Samaritan to fulfil higher duties.¹⁰⁷ Thus Aquinas's 'simple will' is reappropriated in a liberation perspective.

Finally, Gutiérrez's motif of the density of the present can also be considered in relation to the idea of the omniscience of Christ in his humanity. Aquinas indicated the problem of its temporal development while keeping it apart from the unfolding of his mission. A perceptive recent critique of liberation theology has identified the main cause of its decline as the absence of a concrete historical project, particularly after the loud collapse of real socialism in the Eastern Block.¹⁰⁸ While Petrella concentrates on the economic dimension of this project, its theological status remains less clear. Does it even need theological concepts or only the support of a general hermeneutical method?¹⁰⁹ Petrella's negation of

¹⁰² Matt. 25.31–46. This is a Chalcedonian, not necessarily a historical exegesis. Cf. Raymond Canning, *The Unity of Love for God and Neighbour in St. Augustine* (Heverlee-Leuven: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1993), 346–51.

¹⁰³ Matt. 24.11, 23–4.

¹⁰⁴ Carlos R. Piar, *Jesus and Liberation: A Critical Analysis of the Christology of Latin American Liberation Theology* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 48, 58.

¹⁰⁵ As is suggested in the old objection that Judas was innocent because he was fulfilling God's plan.

¹⁰⁶ Matt. 25.31–46.

¹⁰⁷ Luke 10.30–36; cf. *Spiritual Writings*, 76–7.

¹⁰⁸ Petrella, *Future of Liberation Theology*, 11–2.

¹⁰⁹ '... liberation theologians are wrong when they suggest that scripture itself provides a warrant for siding with the oppressed and from that scriptural warrant comes the need for historical projects. Instead, the construction of historical projects always already takes place within the context of reconstructive

some liberation theologians' and some of their critics'¹¹⁰ ontological reading of capitalism perhaps suggests the latter. Maybe theological significance accrues precisely to the plurality of concrete economic reorganizations, because it seems wise to refrain from placing the theological stamp of approval on a unified economic programme. A prudent imagination is, in fact, precisely what Gutiérrez's method of penetrating the density of the present calls for. If the omniscience of Christ's humanity includes a process of abstraction and deduction, a human rhythm of interaction may obediently imitate its pattern. The process of discernment between economic alternatives becomes part of the command to follow the example of Christ's humanity. The doctrine of Christ's omniscience excluded however the coordination of Christ's knowledge with his human will, a coordination of knowledge and will which the very idea of 'project' implies. At any rate, it is clear that for the followers of Jesus, a store of abstract knowledge is no more than a tempting chimera, inasmuch as it divorces theological judgment from the practical recognition of Christ. Theological competence cannot be separated from the education of the will. Petrella's proposal is in this respect ambiguous: to the extent that it promotes the unity of practical knowledge and will, it is a useful development of Gutiérrez's model of the density of the present; however, it seems to reduce the legitimacy of an economic mode of organization to its capacity to establish a consensus of participation within a certain degree of equality. To replace the abstract omniscience of ontologically-inspired economics with a range of heuristic alternatives is only progress if theological evaluation is not subsumed in the contingency of their feasibility—because what Petrella seems to overlook is that economic success does not depend so much on the rationality of local solutions, but on the efficiency of their integration into the 'world system'.¹¹¹ Perhaps what can be taken away from his approach is that liberation theology does not need to develop a global alternative to capitalism, even though this ambition may be of great theoretical interest; but it still needs

interpretations of a religious tradition, background theories, retroductive warrants and communities of discourse.' (Petrella, *Future*, 117 n. 64.)

¹¹⁰ In particular Daniel M. Bell, *Liberation Theology after the End of History: The Refusal to Cease Suffering* (London: Routledge, 2001), esp. 15–19.

¹¹¹ Pace Robert V. Andelson and James M. Dawsey, who propose a Georgist solution as an alternative to dependency theory (*From Wasteland to Promised Land: Liberation Theology for a Post-Marxist World* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992), 93–4.). Cp. García, *Justice*, 77: 'Only economic independence from the metropolitan centre—which is not the same as economic isolation—will create conditions for the complete exercise of political sovereignty.'

to show in its concrete analyses how economic self-organization can be part of the free response to the gospel.¹¹² Liberation theology cannot be considered a failure even if it does not find successful economic projects to attach its name to; what it must be judged on is its demonstration of the claim that nonviolent, reflective economic participation is possible. It has to follow in the economic realm Christ's initiative of community-minded freedom by establishing an alternative to the capitalist pattern of time-exchange.¹¹³

VI. Freedom in association

According to Gutiérrez, the aim of liberation is 'communion with God and with people'.¹¹⁴ I do not think it is ill-suited to appropriate the concept of 'freedom of association' to designate this flow of freedom into community. 'Freedom of association' cannot mean simply freedom to associate with whomever one likes, although the reciprocal exercise of choice is certainly part of the concept; nor can it refer merely to the capacity to decide on the terms of this association through self-organization. The notion of purpose does not enter in the idea of free association, inasmuch as it is the expression of a gratuitous social instinct of humanity.¹¹⁵

For Schleiermacher 'free sociability' (*freie Geselligkeit*) arises out of curiosity for the unknown, satisfied by a communication not according to external means¹¹⁶ but by the expression of personality within custom and its recognition 'by feeling'.¹¹⁷ The central model is that of hospitality: 'the host is predominantly the one who gives'¹¹⁸— because the

¹¹² Cf. *Spirit of Empire*, 124, 129.

¹¹³ Such an alternative cannot be simply a different pattern of time-allocation, it has to involve a disruption of the work-leisure divide, an alternative to Weber's 'Calvinist ethic' of demonstration. The following chapter considers one of the foundational concepts of this new ethos, joy.

¹¹⁴ *TL*, 36/67, my tr.

¹¹⁵ García, *Justice*, 190: 'society is a good beyond and prior to considerations of the goods and services we can derive from it.'

¹¹⁶ Schleiermacher, *Lectures on Philosophical Ethics*, ed. Robert B. Loudon, tr. Louise Adey Huish (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 96, §238.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 98, §252.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 96–7, §245.

host brings the different guests together in unity and hopefully even harmony, not the harmony of unison but that of balanced exchange.¹¹⁹ The host plays a unifying role analogous to that of the church or the state,¹²⁰ but in the manner uniquely accessible to an individual gifted with the discernment of feeling obtained through an educated sensibility. Schleiermacher, unlike Kant, does not expound the concrete art of being a host;¹²¹ probably owing to the idea that neighbouring levels of ‘formation’ (*Bildung*) make communication easier, he does not build a model of an ideal host, one capable of adapting to any sort of guest—perhaps also for fear of thus being led into judging the host’s performance, like Kant, according to conventional norms rather than the spiritual outcome of the gathering. Nevertheless, despite the collective nature of the notion of ‘free sociability’ one cannot help feeling that freedom belongs here principally to the host; which is why he distinguishes it from friendship, a stable connection arising out of free sociability¹²² and more symmetrical than the latter due to the shifts of responsibility in a friendship’s passage through time.¹²³ The notion of gratuity is quite lacking in Schleiermacher’s account of association.¹²⁴

The peculiarities of Schleiermacher’s Romantic account of sociability bring out very well the central question: what makes association an expression of freedom? Schleiermacher’s glaring assumption is that the spontaneous resonance of personalities offers a natural form of selection which can only be further refined. There can be no special religious criterion at work; on the contrary, even in the religious realm, while the description of social groups coming together exemplifies another form of freedom, distinguished by the admixture of objective forms, it reflects in essence the same principle: harmonious interaction growing gradually into integration.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. p. 97, §247.

¹²⁰ Ibid. p. 98, §256–7.

¹²¹ Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, tr. Robert B. Louden, in *Anthropology, History, and Education*, ed. Günter Zöllner and Robert B. Louden, Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 227–429 at 377–82.

¹²² Schleiermacher, *Philosophical Ethics*, p. 98, §252–3.

¹²³ Similarly, religious association can be seen as a special case of free association, despite Schleiermacher’s fourfold classification of fundamental ethical forms; see Andrew C. Dole, *Schleiermacher on Religion and the Natural Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 108, 117.

¹²⁴ Still a step up from Fichte? Jacqueline Mariña, *Transformation of the Self in the Thought of Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 178–9.

Schleiermacher's view is developed in opposition to the idea that freedom in association arises from the possibility of operating a selection according to a rigid grid of criteria and that greater freedom corresponds to more mature, more rational criteria.¹²⁵ This latter view takes a territorial approach, in which the social map is constructed according to relative associations; Schleiermacher starts from the affinity felt for and by others. It might be said then that they mirror each other in their avoidance of Ricœur's later distinction between socius ('the person I attain through his social function') and neighbour (encountered 'independently of any social mediation').¹²⁶ If Ricœur's distinction is made, it falls to the individual to draw it in particular situations, that is, to make an exception from the perspective reflected in social organization—neither construct it, nor internalize it; Ricœur urges the individual to intervene where there is a failure of integration in the socius relations. Nevertheless, it would be a misinterpretation to see freedom of association in the capacity to make exceptions; although it recognizes that ethical responsibility accrues as much to the socius-relation as to the neighbour-relation, and even if distributive justice is seen as a form of love,¹²⁷ Ricœur's scheme still reduces freedom of association to a group of natural ties, whose relations are not subject to laws of universalization.

The reverse situation seems to obtain in the Marxist analysis of the social determination of deepest personal relationships. The litmus test of the interrelation is the case of the intellectual who attaches himself to the proletarian revolutionary movement; the credibility of this miracle can be afterwards disputed according to its practical and theoretical results.¹²⁸ Clearly mere assent from afar to Marxist theory is self-confounding and rebirth impossible; rapprochement is possible only from understanding one's historical role in relation to that of the working class, an objectively mediated kinship and for that all the more fragile. Gramsci's idea of the organic intellectual provides a solution to this

¹²⁵ Cp. Adam Smith's harmonization of nature and reason in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. by Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 264.

¹²⁶ Ricœur, 'The Socius and the Neighbor', in *History and Truth*, tr. Charles A. Kelbley (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 98–109.

¹²⁷ 'The Socius and the Neighbor', 105.

¹²⁸ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, tr. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), 13–4.

impasse: between the spontaneous desires of the working class and the programme of its intellectuals there is only a difference in the development of counter-hegemonic consciousness, so freedom is the intrinsic justification of critical discourse arising from a specific situation.¹²⁹ Evaluating the miracle is possible because genuine and pseudo-Marxist positions can be recognized as such through the competing discourses in which the very identities of their representatives arise.¹³⁰ The corollary is that there can be no theoretical description of the freedom of association, since the critical task of guarding against alienating social discourse is ongoing; the verification of one's commitment to the proletariat is inherent in this process. Indeed, it would be misleading to imply that even for Gramsci freedom of association represents a major concern, for the two factors which make of it a principle, the discovery of gratuity and the project of unity, have been sundered. At the root of this marginalization might be the early Marx's conception of the social nature of humanity, which makes association appear one-sidedly under the aspect of need: the unity of society is a given in the process of the reproduction of society, what is problematic is only the economic division of labour. In Marx's projected communist future, unity is already presupposed and gratuity surfaces only in the sense of the release of the individual from servitude. However, if unity is not a task, reciprocity cannot be thematized either, and without the recognition of gratuity unity can only be—as Girard pointed out—temporary.

Gutiérrez's idea of free association is commitment to a community-creating practice. After Sartre,¹³¹ how is commitment free if it is not simply commitment of the subject as self-definition, the moment of transcendence? The term 'practice' in Gutiérrez's formula of 'critical reflection on praxis'¹³² is so pliable as to embrace the general practice of charity,

¹²⁹ The freedom of collective self-organization is restored through the mythical device of the 'modern Prince': 'the modern Prince should focus entirely on these two basic points: the formation of a national popular collective will ... and intellectual and moral reform. The concrete points of programmatic action ... should arise "dramatically" from the discourse and not be an exposition of cold ratiocination. ... its development means precisely that every act is deemed useful or harmful, virtuous or wicked, depending on whether its point of reference is the modern Prince and whether it increases the Prince's power or opposes it.' (Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, vol. 3, ed. and tr. Joseph A. Buttigieg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 249.)

¹³⁰ Cf. Jacques Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor*, ed. Andrew Parker, tr. John Drury, Corinne Oster, and Andrew Parker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 63–69.

¹³¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Problem of Method*, tr. Hazel E. Barnes (London: Methuen, 1963), 151–2.

¹³² *TL*, 6/26.

evangelical humanism à la Barth, the church's service to humanity, and the development of technology. More precisely, it refers to 'the theory of a particular practice' (*práctica determinada*). Practice is an integral part of free commitment, because it is a process of growing freedom; not because it would somehow cling to oneself as a second personality, but because it allows the development of a common narrative, which does not 'flow' from the initial act of commitment but to which one's adherence is both free and gratuitous. The Christological density of time is the historical-theological demonstration of the possibility of free association; the restricted horizon of a 'particular practice' allow the experience of one's finite commitment as gratuitous inclusion in this divine movement. The reflexive form of the verb ('to associate oneself with') is an indication that subject must become object, part of the other's story. To this extent the necessity of economic exchange may be perceived as a challenge to the gratuity of inclusion, but not its refutation, not insofar as commitment can still govern the exchange of economic time.¹³³

It need hardly be said that the liberation concept of friendship is quite removed from that of an ethics of virtue.¹³⁴ It is not Aristotelian moderation that provides the guidelines; the drive towards universal companionship has to be tempered by a history of selection, rather than vice versa. Restriction of affinity is not a natural phenomenon, not even to the extent that Schleiermacher envisioned it, as a range of resonance of personalities—principally, of the personality of the 'host'—, but rather the result of an acceptance of the limitations of one's self-knowledge, in the light of one's limited experience of the possibilities of sharing desires and suffering.¹³⁵ Time seems to impose on sharing the form of trade; it is an appearance which can be overcome through convergent and complementing patterns of availability and commitment. We can only become associated in the common destiny of the gift: you associate yourself with others through the gifts they graciously associate with you.

¹³³ Commitment requires at least the analysis and subordination of the production and transmission of desire involved in economic production to the desire for freedom.

¹³⁴ Cf. Janet Martin Soskice, *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 165, 176–7.

¹³⁵ Matt. 25.12–22.

Chapter 5

Communicating Desire: Joy and the Transformation of the Church

This chapter analyses the influence of Gustavo Gutiérrez's model of the church on his concept of freedom. Gutiérrez's ecclesiological model is far from the critical stereotype of a revolutionary church of vanguards who dictate the schedule of change to the masses who are supposed follow it; the church is the assembly of bodies which have been freed from fleshly necessity and can feel and even act together in unified strand of time (I). The feeling which determines action in the church is joy, and the common feeling of the church is determined by the option for the poor (II). However, this does not mean that the church's feeling is patterned according to a naturalistic interpretation of the joy of the poor; rather, it is connected with the ethical formation of community in the Christological density of the present (III). This project of transformation offers an alternative to the models of feeling associated with autonomous accounts of civic and political virtue (IV).

What motivates Gustavo Gutiérrez's faith in the eventual triumph of the poor? It is not the belief to have obtained an advance draft of fate, but an understanding of the sources of the feeling that allows meaning to the existence of the poor as poor. If poverty means deprivation, being excluded from the fullness of life, denied access to option and diversity, how is the affirmation of life made possible in these circumstances? It must be a miracle; but a miracle adapted to the scarcity of its surroundings. Feeling is freedom reduced to its barebones, an anticipation of actuality, and yet this shadow life has its own fulfilment, brimming up to joy.

I. Borders of a militant church

When approaching liberation ecclesiology from the angle of its implications for a theological theory of emotions, one has to forestall the accusation of drawing attention

away from more substantive concerns. Is it not more important to raise the problem of the supposedly inadequate thematization of the relation between the church and the world?¹ Would it not be more fruitful to outline the objective sociological reorganization of the structure of the church that is required by a re-thought sense of mission? Or to review the prospects of such change, the optimism afforded by waves of self-conscious, self-organizing change from below and the pessimism imposed by an indomitable hierarchy reinforced from the top? Is not precisely the emphasis on joy as a novel aspect of ecclesiology to be viewed in strict conjunction with these emerging organic groupings, rather than approached theoretically?² Perhaps; the danger in these alternative, more pragmatic perspectives is, however, that the implications of Gutiérrez's position might be evaluated in a rather foreshortened perspective and considered merely as a practical outworking of a more basic theological programme, to present his ecclesiology as entirely comprehensible by deduction from a broader historical project. Not far along this path, the church must appear as an avant-garde movement of the sort familiar to many twentieth-century revolutionary theories. The analogy arises because such movements are the most prominent examples of self-organization determined by a specific reading of historical trajectory. The purpose of their core group is not to provide a blueprint for the wholesale transformation of society, as was the case in nineteenth-century utopian experiments, but to mobilize the legitimate agents of the overturn, the workers themselves; the practices of this group might be rightly seen as indicative of what is to come in their future political observances, whether towards democracy or authoritarianism—but even then they could invoke the excuse of inevitable temporary strictures, and, more significantly, the artificiality of temporary political organization, which hides the organic connection of the party to the situation of those it is acting for. Irrespective of the political objections to be raised against this model, the differences between it and Gutiérrez's ecclesiological proposals could hardly be greater.

¹ Stanley Hauerwas, 'Some Theological Reflections on Gutiérrez's Use of "Liberation" as a Theological Concept', *Modern Theology* 3 (1986), 67–76 at 75–6.

² For the classic expression of this approach, cf. Leonardo Boff, *Church: Charism and Power. Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*, tr. John W. Diercksmeier (London: SCM, 1985), and *Ecclesio-genesis: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church*, tr. Robert R. Barr (London: Collins, 1986).

When, for example, Gutiérrez insists that love must be efficient,³ this should not be immediately taken for the efficiency of pre-revolutionary preparations; the crux of the matter is that there should be a real exchange between those acting for and those being acted for, not a merely symbolic act which keeps their relation of integration in the social system stable, or an activity which interprets and fulfils the other's passive need, but an activity in which the passivity of the other is both anticipated and sublated, denied. Jesus' typical words 'Go; your faith has made you well'⁴ illuminate the logic of the miraculous which makes place for the action of the other precisely at their point of utter passivity. The work of the church is not of the same kind; indeed, it can only recognize itself in its work as church as the recipient of that grace. At the same time, the place of its own action it holds in exchange; in Pauline terms, the church inherits the lessons of Israel's past, which happened for its own sake,⁵ but its own existence is a circuitous route to the redemption of the chosen nation.⁶ The apostle inscribes himself in a similar circle, his redemption to be sought in and even (at least rhetorically) put at risk for the salvation of others.⁷ The demand for 'efficiency' is a confession that the church is placed outside the primary logic of miraculous transformation and lives in its rippling secondary circles; it evokes the declarations of the apostles that their acts of healing took place not of their own power, but 'in the name of Jesus', who alone was able to co-opt the passive healed person into the action of grace. The church cannot bestow freedom, nor merely allow or make space for it; it has its own way of asking for and inviting it, through prayer and joy. Perhaps this reading of 'efficiency' will still appear to portray an interventionist, activist church, somewhat remote from the ideal of an organic embodied communion—but for Gutiérrez, the embodiment of the church and its evangelism are coincident. Certainly a different kind of spiral used to be preached sometime, namely that the rich ought to make use of their station by disbursing surplus wealth to the poor; such a lack of transformative

³ *Wells*, 108/144.

⁴ Mark 10:52.

⁵ 1 Cor. 10:6.

⁶ Rom. 11:30–32.

⁷ Rom. 9:3; 1 Cor. 9:16–23.

concern is, from a liberation perspective, not in likeness with the apostolic way of preaching of the gospel.⁸

The relation between an already mobilized political elite and the masses it seeks to represent need not be especially strong emotionally. Some kind of fellow feeling might be allowed to play a role in the conversion stories of bourgeois intellectuals to the mission of the party, of which the most famous is probably that of Che Guevara's travels through the Americas; but surer roots lie in a lucid grasp of the historical transformations of society and its predictable future.⁹ That emotional connections should be consequent upon doctrinal certainty is visible in Marx's aversion to the lumpenproletariat, justified by the estimate that they had no revolutionary potential. A different path of emotional self-relation to the church is inevitably followed in societies in which the individual forms almost from the very beginning a connection of one sort or another to it, even if it would not be unusual to separate the story of one's incurred affects from the attitude one take towards its institutional facade. If the former are positive and a strong link is made between the two aspects of the relation, what may result is a nostalgic attachment in which its inner workings appear enveloped to the awed observer in a mist steadily discharging an afterglow of reminiscence; but the force of this impression is always ineffable—even as it helps one glance over the present imperfections of the moment, its underlying melancholy prevents this personal resource from being shared. Strong emotional connections to the church are not a sufficient condition for the emergence of a transformative community; the church is not the obverse of the avant-garde movement. And this is as it should be, because the liberation strategy is not the marshalling of personal emotions or the conjuring of communal affect for the sustenance of shared religious striving.

What Gutiérrez proposes is a re-reading of one's emotional history, not as the journey of discovering personal certainties through hope, enjoyment, and disappointment, but as a

⁸ Stephen J. Pope, 'Christian Love for the Poor: Almsgiving and the "Preferential Option"', *Horizons* 21 (1994), 288–312, offers a qualified defence of the Thomistic 'order of charity', questioning whether Gutiérrez's historicism sidelines the demand for trust in divine providence.

⁹ I will try to show that the exact correspondence does not take place in which 'the Christian advances centripetally from an awareness of social oppression, through an understanding of one's place in history, to an inner spiritual liberation.' (Guillermo Cook, 'Christian Conversion: A Perspective from Latin America', *Missions Studies* 10 (1993), 91–108 at 95.)

story of resistance, of claiming a horizon that cannot be yet anchored.¹⁰ This is the sense in which it might become a memory of liberation. It is not true that under the light of memory all past experience has to be accepted equally, maybe even with equanimity, so that enjoyment of the self might be expected at the apex of a self-divesting ascent.¹¹ Instead, what joy can be felt in the remembrance of fortunes and misfortunes past must be the same unstable, flickering joy that occasionally illuminates the scandalous bleakness of poverty. Just as meditation on the passion of the Christ was recommended as a means of penitence, so that the hope of resurrection might unexpectedly filter through—which it does only by the revealed remembrance that it was the Christ of God—, in the same way joy is not simply the expression of a trusting basic attitude towards life, but its unexpected return after being driven out by trauma or ground down by stifling circumstances. It has long been noted that one of the characteristic of the laments in the Book of Psalms is that in prayer the petitioner receives reassurance in the midst of still ongoing distress; similarly, the joy of the poor eulogized by Gutiérrez is the confidence that ‘God is the God of salvation’, which is a mark of the returning presence of Christ in changing circumstances.¹²

This meeting is the church’s reason for being and its expectation; but Gutiérrez maintains that the church cannot be the only place in which it happens.¹³ The immediate identification of the poor with the experience of the crucified Christ derives not from a formal analogy in external conditions, but because they form a unique bond with him as present in symbol. Such a bond might seem a non-specific feature of popular Catholicism; what is unique is the fragility of the symbol, not just in the sense of an objectified materiality which invites care, but as something threatened by anonymity, in danger of losing its anchor in the universe of religious symbols on account of its proximity to the strains of daily life. The significance of the symbol is not preserved by an elevation of status, but by recognizing the revelatory meaning of this slide: to embody the symbol one must cloak the details that mark its difference of status. It is possible therefore to point out why methodologically the sequential identification of Christ with disenfranchised

¹⁰ Cf. Jon Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator*, 77–8.

¹¹ Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 233.

¹² Ps. 68:20.

¹³ *TL*, 256/326.

categories is not the surest path; the problem is not necessarily any one of these identifications, but the implicit suggestion that their accumulation could in some way amount to a whole figure of Christ the downtrodden, that triumphant solidarity is only a step away. On the contrary, the reunion only takes place under the aspect of a venture towards anonymity: 'when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?'¹⁴ Just as it is argued that the real reason for exclusion is not the concrete feature that is singled out as exceptionable, but the projection of an Other, it may be said that a movement towards solidarity would require a certain disregard of the particularities of one's own misfortune. In fact, one of the essential tasks of any liberation ecclesiology is to describe this unity which cannot reside merely in a set of properties: it must retrace the conditions of its actual emergence. Gutiérrez opts for a strategy slightly different from Dussel's demand for recognition, namely a general call to conversion: 'To be converted is to know and experience the fact that, contrary to the laws of physics, we can stand straight, according to the gospel, only when our centre of gravity is outside ourselves.'¹⁵

One way to justify concern for the poor is to show it—as Geoffrey Wainwright attempts—as a duty of 'ecumenical solidarity', taking the *oikumenê* in the broad sense of the community of living humanity.¹⁶ But does not such an approach simply avoid the debate about the validity of liberation ecclesiologies? Is it not open to the stock retort that 'charity begins at home', or the suspicion that globalized compassion is somewhat contrived and self-righteous? Wainwright openly lays out his sympathies by judging that 'within our present world community, revolutionary action on the part of the oppressed classes and people should be understood as divine judgment upon the oppressing classes and peoples', a judgment that should conduce the better off to repentance and '*ascesis*, which expresses and promotes my own release from the grip of materialistic values.'¹⁷ This transposition of the Old Testament prophetic theme of the judgment about to be executed upon the

¹⁴ Matt. 25:37–39.

¹⁵ *TL*, 204–5/268.

¹⁶ Geoffrey Wainwright, 'Revolution and Quietism: Two Political Attitudes in Theological Perspective', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 29 (1976), 535–556 at 554.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 551–2.

complacently affluent reveals an embarrassing distance: it was not the poor who were the rod of God's anger, but nations subsequently impeached; in fact, endowed with this *carte blanche*, the oppressed appear as ultimate avengers rather than scrupulous agents of justice. Perhaps the intention is to stir in the hearts of first-world readers the fear of excess, drawing an inference between their indulgences and the chastisement looming in an unstable integrated world society. Undoubtedly some habituation to asceticism would diminish the pain of parting with redistributed wealth, but the main benefit of its practice would be the achievement of justice through moderation. It is recommended to Christians as demonstrating freedom from the world, and in fact this might also be an indication of limits; while it can be community-building to the extent that the community in question seeks to define itself over against the world, in political terms asceticism (or austerity) is problematic, because through it the power of the state over its citizens is not similarly moderated, but appears to increase. In a world of free trade, ascetic regulation appears as an interference which figures only in the relation of the individual (person or company) with the state—it cannot create the wished-for zone of cultural influence of the church.

An opposite concern has been expressed from a more conservative angle, that the liberation approach of interpreting the mission of the church as its historical function risks neglecting the deeper question of identity: 'is there something which would constitute the people of God as such? Or is it only its praxis which constitutes it as such?'¹⁸ The fault of liberation ecclesiologies would be that they understand the church as sacrament only under the aspect of the manifesting function of the sign, neglecting its efficacious power and therefore failing to account for the need (*necesidad*) for the church.¹⁹ They err in the way they seek to 'extract the consequences for the exercise of authority of an ecclesiology in the communitarian-participative mould' (that of Vatican II),²⁰ removing the real distinction between ordained ministry and the various charismatic callings which may indeed have a similar power of signification, but not the same effectiveness in the service of salvation. In the perspective of the traditional distinction between being and act

¹⁸ Rodrigo Polanco, 'Eclesiología en Latinoamérica. Exposición y balance crítico', *Teología y vida* 50 (2009), 131–152 at 151.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 149

²⁰ *Ibid.* 145.

liberation ecclesiologies cannot but appear confused; but if the question of salvific efficacy is connected with the integration of the community ('in the communitarian-participative mould'), rather than the institutional reproduction of its identity, one must expect a host of 'relative', unprescribable factors (including the communication of feeling) to become involved.

Ultimately, the question of the bounds of the church is decided by the fact that 'God's option [for the poor] precedes the Church's and is binding upon believers'.²¹ It must be the coincidence of evangelization and social transformation in the agency of the poor that shows their place at the heart of the church: 'the response of the poor to a "conscientizing evangelization" demonstrates that evangelization and conscientization reinforce each other, and both take place in the poor themselves.'²² But has not this assurance in the popular support for liberation theology been eroded by now? Can we depend on this happy union with certainty? When the unity of the church in action stalls, does it survive at least in unity of feeling, the lesser form of freedom?

II. Transforming joy

There have been great changes in the previous century in thinking about emotions. Where the influence of Scottish realism previously held sway over Anglo-American common sense, distinguishing clearly between intellect and affections, it is more usual now to see them together as part of a united process of judgement, twists by which the cord of reasoning extends.²³ Such proposals are not altogether novel; Richard Sorabji has drawn attention to the ancient Stoics' conception, in which inescapable natural reactions come

²¹ James B. Nickoloff, 'Church of the Poor: The Ecclesiology of Gustavo Gutiérrez', *Theological Studies* 54 (1993), 512–535 at 527.

²² *Ibid.* 523–4.

²³ Cf. e.g. Robert C. Solomon, 'The Rationality of the Emotions', in *Not Passion's Slave: Emotions and Choice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 33–38. For a brief historical review, see Robert C. Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions: A Psychology of Christian Virtues* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007), 6–8: Anscombe, MacIntyre plausible.

under the review and management of reason to train a contained and contented self.²⁴ One may recognize the definite contemporary popularity of more generous versions of this scheme in various methods of self-help. Indeed, if there is something novel about our perception of emotion, it comes rather from the circumstance that the separation between private and public has been contested at the same time. Perhaps the most exemplary articulator of this convergence continues to be the now rather unfashionable Herbert Marcuse, who, rejecting the idea of death wish, identified the aim of socialist revolution as the free expression of peaceful libido. His optimistic take on relation between Logos and Eros has not since been widely seen as a realistic representation of the possibilities of political change. One may refer to Damián J. Fernández's study of the emotional world of the Cuban revolution and its aftermath,²⁵ which paints the picture of a fracture between a programme of the highest moral ideals and *lo informal*, the insuppressible life of ambitious self-interest and minor alleviations of distress; the repeated failures of the former have moved the emotional balance mostly to the latter. It is a familiar scenario, to some degree maybe universal. At any rate, affection is still reputed to be an unreliable political tutor; it remains an irrefutable accusation against religious enthusiasts and political revolutionaries that they are impelled by inflamed spirits rather than cold common reason. When these two dangers arrive together, as in the case of liberation theology, the suspicion is almost self-confirmed that 'the zeal and the compassion which should dwell in the hearts of all pastors nevertheless run the risk of being led astray and diverted to works which are just as damaging to man and his dignity as is the poverty which is being fought.'²⁶

It is perhaps for this reason that liberation theologians have not written at length on the subject of emotions, although a deeper reason might be that they have yet to be taken very seriously as a theological topic. For Gutiérrez, when affections come into discussion it is usually under the heading of 'spirituality'. Contrary to appearances, this does not indicate a marginalization of their importance, but, once analysed through the filter of Gutiérrez's ecclesiology, offers a cue to a new approach to the problem of their place in communal

²⁴ Sorabji, 45–47.

²⁵ Damián J. Fernández, *Cuba and the Politics of Passion* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000).

²⁶ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 'Instruction on Certain Aspects of "Liberation Theology"' (Rome, 1984), 6.2; I say 'almost self-confirmed' because the Instruction does not go on to convict certain cases, but rather ambiguously lists a number of 'temptations' which the reader could exemplify at will.

wisdom, and an alternative to their psychological-philosophical reappropriation as quanta of discrete definitions.

For Aquinas, joy presented a problem inasmuch as it seemed not to conform to the definition of passion as motion, but, on the contrary, describe rest in the delight of its object. His solution is that delight is still a kind of movement because the impression made by the object on the appetite remains.²⁷ Perhaps it is even possible to give a measuring scale for joy in terms of this trace, to the extent that one is reminded of the early Hegel's portrait of love in search of a higher union and lasting production.²⁸ Moreover, for Aquinas joy is distinguished from delight inasmuch as its object is selected not naturally but rationally, in a distinction that propagated itself from the Stoics to Adam Ferguson. But may one really speak of joy only according to the ancient maxim that the passions are never without an object? A modern principle states that sensations bear no intrinsic semblance to the object that instigated them, but are rather signs in an internal code.²⁹ As long as one defines joy as 'a supposed good attained' or 'a supposed evil avoided',³⁰ one stays within the ancient maxim, but only because this definition makes joy an amalgamating genus of different sentiments, in no need of a more precise definition because supposedly more concrete. Only an account which considers the way in which feeling itself is involved in the determination of its object and therefore comes to traverse subjects can hope to be satisfactory. The phenomenon of contagion was indeed acknowledged by the Scottish realists, but ascribed to an imitative instinct. Yet the intellectual frame and construal of enjoyment can also influence its experience. While this may be seen, as by the same realists, as a corruption of natural behaviour, this tension between intellect and unconscious propensity raises further questions about the involvement of power and authority in their abstractly simple subject-object relation.

²⁷ *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae 31.1 r. 2, vol. 20, pp. 6–7.

²⁸ G. W. F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, ed. Richard Kroner, tr. T. M. Knox (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 304ff.

²⁹ Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Active Powers of Man*, ed. Knud Haakonssen and James A. Harris (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 107.

³⁰ Adam Ferguson, *Institutes of Moral Philosophy. For the Use of Students in the College of Edinburgh*, (2nd edn., Edinburgh: A. Kincaid & W. Creech, and J. Bell, 1773), 68.

Significantly, perhaps the central scriptural text about joy is an authoritative statement. Jesus' proclamation of the present activity of the kingdom of God is presented by Luke as having at its centre the pronouncement of the blessedness of the poor.³¹ In relation to the present topic, the paramount question is how to understand this macarism in the era of the church.³² Paul in his epistle to the Philippians speaks of the completion of joy in the unity of the church through the gospel, namely through sharing 'the mind ... that was in Christ Jesus', who 'taking the form of a slave' 'humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death'.³³ He also refers to the communication of joy in the sharing of suffering among the apostle and the church community. The possibility of this communication is given by their being together in Christ, in the same hope: 'Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say rejoice.'³⁴ Of course there is also a more personal dimension, in which the Philippians themselves are Paul's 'joy and crown', but every concrete strengthening of this bond is a cause for rejoicing 'in the Lord'.³⁵ The contrast with the idea that 'the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us'³⁶ is very much a matter of perspective: there the plight of the elect is set in the context of cosmic renewal from a pain that remains largely unspeakable; here joy is an inherent accompaniment of the creation of a new cordiality, a disclosure that establishes its certainty in the midst of sundry admonitions and reminders. Gutiérrez takes up this theme when he speaks of the communion of the church as real fraternity.³⁷ The certitude of this kinship becomes available to Paul only on account of Christ's gospel and its work, rather than a shared experience or an autonomous structure of sympathetic relations. It is this Christological core that sets Paul's letter apart from otherwise similar letters of consolation of Late Antiquity,³⁸ in which writers attempted to turn their correspondents away from grief, an unproductive passion and undignified for someone who has come to appreciate philosophically the things of real worth; it is true that the same strategy seems to be applied

³¹ Luke 6:20; *TL*, 297–99/378–81.

³² Cf. *God of Life*, 112–3.

³³ Phil. 2:7–8.

³⁴ Phil. 4:4.

³⁵ Phil. 4:1; 10.

³⁶ Rom. 8:18.

³⁷ *TL*, 263/338.

³⁸ Paul Holloway, *Consolation in Philippians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

by Paul, except that his solution is not to appeal to mere intellectual wisdom, but looks forward to a bodily transformation of the Christian polity. Echoing the kenotic hymn of Phil. 2, he reminds the community that ‘our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation so that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.’³⁹ In the context of this new sort of civic pride, the thesis that Paul was trying to encourage mutual help among the Philippians, who were faced with economic distress on account of their new faith,⁴⁰ gains a further theological dimension: the bodies of humiliation are uplifted into the economy of God’s ‘riches in glory in Christ Jesus’.⁴¹ There are, of course, no sociological guidelines in the epistle; instead, there is a constant exposition of the apostolic model, yet in such a manner as to ensure that the Philippians are able to proceed even without and after Paul, by confirming them in the task of proclamation.

It is to Paul that Gutiérrez turns in *We Drink from Our Own Wells* as the one who gave the fullest account of life according to the Spirit.⁴² He explicates the Pauline concept of ‘flesh’ as devoid of any moral dualism between body and spirit: just as the flesh is a concept applied to the whole person, so also is spirit. A ‘spiritual body’ is one belonging to a person who ‘walks according to the Spirit’; for that, it has to be liberated from death, and from that liberation comes joy.⁴³ On an individual level then, joy arrives in this new possibility of ‘embracing (*asumir*) the liberated body.’⁴⁴ It must be noted however that the surest sign of this transformed self-relation comes in the readiness of martyrs to live to the end the hope of resurrection.⁴⁵ The liberated body may even need to be affirmed by separation from its contextual system of needs, and Gutiérrez accepts the vocation of voluntary poverty: ‘those who renounce their possessions gain a new realization of the Lord’s

³⁹ Phil. 3:20–1.

⁴⁰ Peter Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). The evidence is not primarily exegetical, but based on a reconstructed social model of local church membership.

⁴¹ Phil. 4:19.

⁴² *Wells*, 55/76.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 67–8/93–4, 121/162.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 70/98.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 121/162–3.

fidelity.⁴⁶ In other words, this liberated body is not an independent legitimizing source of knowledge or feeling. In fact the only two normative models remain the holistic concepts of flesh and spirit. To that extent Gutiérrez's affirmation of the body cannot be seen in analogy with neuropsychological accounts which see emotion as consciousness of a specific state of the body.⁴⁷ Rather, the spiritual body is a source of joy inasmuch as it gains a new autonomy; in its individual moment, it is a negative freedom: 'to be a Christian is to be free of all external coercion.'⁴⁸

It might seem at first that this does little to resolve the problem of the traditional ambivalence to a body that needs to be disciplined and punished. But Gutiérrez needs to be cautious because any direct attribution of authority to the body in the interpretation of experience risks collapsing it under the rule of the flesh, which is in fact also 'a bond of human solidarity at the physical level'.⁴⁹ Without a further prism of interpretation and disposition body and spirit cannot be held together; they converse in worlds that are still at an angle. To draw such boundaries to the self as to force them to coincide in a single sphere of mineness is precisely the work of the flesh. This is a difference between Gutiérrez and later strands of liberation theology,⁵⁰ which strive to rehabilitate individual bodily identity in the face of exclusion. Hence 'it is not "my body" but the "body of the poor person"—the weak and languishing body of the poor—that has made the material a part of a spiritual outlook.'⁵¹

One may wonder then whether it is the experience of the poor that authorizes this intermediate step of the self-interpretation of spirit through body—then the argument would be circular—, or, if not, they are transformed into a mere cipher of the spirit's of

⁴⁶ Ibid. 123/165.

⁴⁷ Cf. Antonio Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain* (London: William Heinemann, 2003).

⁴⁸ Wells, 70/98.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 57/79.

⁵⁰ e.g. Wanda Deifelt, 'Social Context, Language and Images of God', in Marcella Maria Althaus-Reid, Ivan Petrella, Luiz Carlos Susin (eds.), *Another Possible World* (London: SCM, 2007), 118–30, who speaks of 'the body as a parable of language about God ... limited by the perception of the particular context' (125). For a variety of views vindicating the body as theological site, cf. Marcella Maria Althaus-Reid and Lisa Isherwood, *Controversies in Body Theology* (London: SCM, 2008).

⁵¹ Wells, 102–3/137.

redemption—then the body becomes only significant metonymically. In fact, the experience of the poor becomes relevant when it is seen as the key for an objective analysis of the system which creates them—a secular symptomatology of the flesh.⁵² Not because the poor are saints and can therefore make available a unique spiritual experience; ‘the poor are a by-product of the system in which we live and for which we are responsible.’⁵³ God’s choice is made in relation to this system: ‘God’s love for the poor’ is ‘first and foremost simply because they are poor.’⁵⁴ Poverty must be rejected as ‘a slap in the face of God’s sovereignty, God being the Go’el (“Saviour”, “Redeemer”), the Defender of the poor, the “Avenger of the lowly”’;⁵⁵ its elimination is a necessity following from this divine imperative of election which fights against the flesh, not from the necessities of the body itself.

The flesh, in its current symptomatology, has a tendency to tear bodies asunder, as can be seen in the modern drive towards the privatization of feeling.⁵⁶ To the extent that joy is produced in the current system, it works not to unite but to reinforce separation. The experience of the poor is that of a resistance to this sickness, a resistance from which one may eventually hope for even for a divinely worked healing and reconfiguration of bodies. On one level of the experience of the poor, joy falls under the category of motivation and support. Faith cannot be born of fear, but only of ‘life and joy’.⁵⁷ In turn, ‘the poor know that history is theirs. They know that if they must cry today, tomorrow they shall laugh.’⁵⁸ This is a joy that flows from theological certainty, inspired by the Magnificat. On a further level, joy is the accompaniment of a process of real creativity—the formation of a people. The proof of liberation theology is taken to be the test of spontaneity. There will be no ‘authentic theology of liberation until the oppressed themselves are able freely and

⁵² Perhaps then it is unsurprising that Gutiérrez appears to oppose one of the foundational tenets of orthodox Marxism, the temporary necessity of capitalist development on the way to eventual socialism, when he claims that ‘the theological undertaking centred on the liberation process comes ... from an essential opposition (and not a lack of attention) to the principal elements of the historical process’ of liberal modernity. (*PPH*, 185/336)

⁵³ *PPH*, 44/79.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 95/163.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 140/266.

⁵⁶ ‘Liberation Theology and the Future of the Poor’, 114.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 128.

⁵⁸ *PPH*, 107/181.

creatively to express themselves in society and among the people of God.⁵⁹ The development of ways of sharing feeling is an inseparable part of the process of ‘becoming aware’ (*tomar conciencia*). It is indispensable inasmuch as the church is ‘the real body of Christ’ and ‘an extension of the Incarnation’.⁶⁰ ‘The subject of the experience that is giving rise to a spirituality is an entire people, and not an individual who stands apart.’⁶¹

III. Times of joy

Returning carnivals and revolutionary breakthrough

A self-critical retrospective narrative tells us that initially the focus of liberation theology on the socio-political dimension of liberation amounted to an anthropological reduction which ignored ‘other dimensions of praxis, and of the human in general, such as the festive, the imaginative-utopian, the corporeal and the symbolic [elements].’⁶² This imbalance has since been gradually corrected through the effort to understand the poor evangelically, according to the dignity of their calling and not simply as a social force in mobilization, a perspective which would have exposed them to objectification in a way analogous to their quantitative significance in capitalism. Even though it is over-simplified chronologically, this narrative tells a plausible story of progression; the progress has come, unfortunately, with its own ambiguities and puzzles.

A curious motif present at times in the writings of liberation theologians is an attempt to retrieve the innocent conviviality of the simple, combined with a reticence about its effect on the central purpose of consciousness-raising. Pedro Casaldáliga and José María Vigil offer an ambivalent portrait of the traditional Latin American expressions of joy: they point

⁵⁹ Ibid. 65/116.

⁶⁰ Wells, 69/95–6.

⁶¹ Ibid. 29/43.

⁶² Alberto Toutin, ‘La realidad crucial de los pobres da que pensar a la teología latinoamericana: Teología y literatura desde esta ladera del mundo’, *Teología y vida* 50 (2009), 117–129 at 122, 118.

out the astonishment of foreigners at people ‘dancing, singing, laughing, in times of repression and war, while being wounded and dying’ and comment that the poor ‘often make joy a barricade against misfortune or humiliation, even against death.’⁶³ This could well be interpreted as a typical instance of displacement, a ritual sublimation of aggression; but such an analysis is forgone, allowing the observation to stand as a puzzle of human nature. Other features are taken as more certain marks of instinctive resistance to capitalistic objectification: for instance, joy is not integrated within the post-industrial organization of time—‘festivals have no set hours.’⁶⁴ Perhaps it is this more than anything else that prevents them from being incorporated as a paradoxical reinforcement of everyday conformity. But otherwise it seems they are sceptical as to how much the poor’s joy can be understood at all, describing it in terms of a Dionysian chaos, an ‘amalgam of mourning and laughing, drinking and believing, death and vitality’.⁶⁵ Jorge Pixley and Clodovis Boff make similar, if more populist remarks: ‘humour is a recourse to which the poor turn their hand to put distance between themselves and the harshness of life, to “get a jump ahead”.’ ‘Simple people enjoy being in crowds’ and when they come together to celebrate ‘time is not really money.’⁶⁶ The reason they are so positive about the festivities of the poor is that they keep away those who hate the common people.⁶⁷

The problem of ambiguity seems wider than this local context. In moral terms, Gutiérrez identifies it in the fact that ‘laughing can be a legitimate expression of joy (Luke 6.21), but it can also be the manifestation of a merriment that is oblivious of the sufferings of others, one based on privileges.’⁶⁸ As feeling is individualizing (even for a community), it is impossible that it should not exclude someone from it. Perhaps the Bakhtinian parodic

⁶³ Pedro Casaldáliga and José María Vigil, *The Spirituality of Liberation*, tr. Paul Burns and Francis McDonagh (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1994), 27–8.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 28.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Jorge Pixley and Clodovis Boff, *The Bible, the Church and the Poor: Biblical, Theological and Pastoral Aspects of the Option for the Poor* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1989), 216–7.

⁶⁷ Cp. on the opposite side Sung, ‘The Human Being as Subject’, 14: ‘The subject being does not unveil himself or herself in our everyday life’ but ‘by resisting being reduced to a mere social role or to a set of roles.’

⁶⁸ Gustavo Gutiérrez, ‘Option for the poor’, in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. by Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993), 235–50 at 242.

festival could be seen to offer an indirect path to reconciliation.⁶⁹ Bakhtin recognized carnival as the culturally established period of time for symbolic destabilization and moral refreshment—although not in the sense attacked by Kierkegaard, not a mindless trip to Deer Park,⁷⁰ but an outward re-narration of inner conflict in the key of comedy, by which one becomes reconciled with an always present level of dependence on matter, its praise of life culminating in the Rabelaisian images of cheerful death.⁷¹ Then one would have to face the task of identifying the narrative sustaining the celebration.⁷² In the above phenomenological descriptions of practices of the poor, this step is not taken: feasts are concentration of unregulated creativity that gathers all objects in a joy reconciling of distinctions, even life and death (an allusion to *el día de los muertos*?). This may be a warranted general impression, but is rather implausible as a description of the participating individual stories. This foreshortened analysis may be due in part to liberation theology's investment in providing alternative, biblical narratives, and especially in reappropriating that fundamental narrative of people-formation, the Exodus. It is a wise counsel to accept that there are levels of mediation available which may remove the temptation to accept all facets of the life of the poor as equally revelatory by introducing an intermediary layer of critical (self-)reflection.⁷³

Nevertheless, it is also possible that the difficulty comes from the absence of a well-developed context of references in the events themselves, in their reduction to ritual repetition. In a European context the rise of subjectivity is inseparable from developments in literary (self-)interpretation. 'Feeling itself is ... that which constructs and mediates

⁶⁹ Cf. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, tr. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1981), 70–74, 197–99, and *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and tr. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), esp. 252–56, 265–6. See also Ken Hirschkop, *Mikhail Bakhtin: An Aesthetics for Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 254ff.

⁷⁰ Perhaps not mindless, but half-minded, in the sense of a visible separation between sacred and profane; see Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Crumbs*, ed. and tr. Alastair Hannay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 296–7.

⁷¹ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 122–27.

⁷² Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 26.

⁷³ e.g. 'The recourse to literature and its corresponding rationality is not an alienation from the urgency of the reality of the poor, but offers an epistemological mediation which allows one to comprehend them through their lived experienced, represented qualitatively as literature.' (Toutin, 123.)

between the categories of literary “convention” and personal “experience”.⁷⁴ In forgoing these customary instruments, it is understandable that one may resort to rather blunt moral contrasts. One result is Enrique Dussel’s use of the concept of expression: “To express (“press out,” as when an orange is squeezed) is to impel toward the exterior something that is in the interior.”⁷⁵ Protosemiotic proximity—i.e. communication without signs, through nearness—‘will reactualize, on the ... political, or pedagogical level, in ... joy, and enthusiasm, the first (and last) relationship that animates all human life and its semiotic process. What is semiotic poiesis if not the reestablishment of proximity in some manner?’⁷⁶ His verdict on ordinary, un-revolutionary carnival is strict, pointedly dualistic: ‘The game of placing between parentheses (*Einklammerung*) is phenomenological; it is the entertainment of the circus, of the clowns who make others happy while they themselves weep under the mask of solitude and anguish. That is the feast of dominators; they want to forget daily life because, although they pretend to have triumphed, they know that what they have achieved is fictitious, a fetish.’⁷⁷ Perhaps, nevertheless, the sharpness of this condemnation is meant to disguise the bad conscience of not being able to integrate positively the joy of tradition, because Dussel describes joy as flowing from an initial communal event: ‘The worship of the Infinite is liberation itself. The celebration (*fiesta*) of the Infinite is the joy of that liberation. That is why, Rosenzweig tells us, nations only celebrate and commemorate the times of their liberation; they never celebrate their conquests of other nations.’⁷⁸ ‘The festival of liberation ... is the celebration of release from the prison of oppression’, comprising several dimensions, among which ‘the political celebration of the brothers who create the new homeland’.⁷⁹ He goes on to give the example of the Sandinista liberation of Nicaragua. It is understandable that such a composition of the conditions of joy has been seen to conflict with the idea that ‘the life lived steadfastly in worship *is itself* the reconciliation of the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*, private and public life, freedom and necessity’ and, in consequence,

⁷⁴ Adela Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996), 8.

⁷⁵ Enrique Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, tr. Aquilina Martinez and Christine Morkovsky (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985), 4.2.3.1, p. 118.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.2.2.3, p. 118.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.4.9.4, pp. 104–5.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.4.9.2, p. 104.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.4.9.3, p. 104.

Gutiérrez—by virtue of being a liberation theologian—is held to have started ‘from ... a comprehensive politicization of society ... which theology would also have to make the starting-point and the goal of its enterprise, in the sense of reflection on the (political) experience of liberation.’⁸⁰

The covenantal time of ethical self-formation

But Gutiérrez himself does not in fact look for an original ‘real’ event as the legitimization of the feeling of joy; in his view, its legitimization would be a process by which people become conscious subjects of their own history. He would indeed object that the course of worship cannot be separated from the other threads of this history, its role being precisely to offer their highest integration. Some may see in this the peril of a return of Schleiermacher’s construal of worship as the expression of a community’s feeling (in Schleiermacher’s language, a ‘presenting’ action through art in the widest sense);⁸¹ but that is to overlook the fact that the tradition of worship itself offers an essential means of checking and transforming the supposed ‘original’ feeling, that associated with external events of liberation, while at the same time it is through such ‘origins’ that the tradition of worship has to travel in order to retain its critical capacity.

From the other side, a symmetrical attack has been made on the concept of a founding event of liberation. One strand of Marxist criticism of the Exodus paradigm looks at the figure of Moses as an example of a Machiavellian prince, the creator of a co-dependent, ideologically-crazed state.⁸² This suspicion might refer itself to the song of Moses, the expression of victorious joy that exalts the omnipotent majesty of God. However, this criticism, focusing exclusively on the myth of establishment, overlooks the continuing pattern of delight in God’s governance of Israel through the law. It is question-begging to set up an antithesis between a hegemonic discourse of stability (interpreted as repression)

⁸⁰ Bernd Wannenwetsch, *Political Worship*, tr. Margaret Kohl (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 126.

⁸¹ Schleiermacher, *Philosophical Ethics*, p. 92, §§212–15; *Christliche Sitte*, 537.

⁸² Roland Boer, *Marxist Criticism of the Bible* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 64.

and a rival discourse of utopian rebellion; it does not seem that at any point those rebellions are free of manipulative alternative myths,⁸³ but, more significantly, this division involves a self-replicating progression in which no present authority can be a source of peaceful enjoyment. The real target of the attack is the deuteronomistic conditionality of the covenant; but insofar as this creates a problem, due to the disobedience of the people, it also provides the solution in the form of a new covenant in which the law is inscribed in the hearts of the people.⁸⁴ Outside this promise all joy would indeed be tinged with the violence of heteronomy, but it is a fundamental deuteronomistic thesis that joy in the law is the discovery and experience of its promises. The radical promise of a new covenant does not disown this principle, but removes the intermediary of the inheritance of previous generations: ‘no longer shall they teach one another ... for they shall all know me.’

What, apart from the certainty of the poor that they will enjoy the land, remains of this promise of joy in Gutiérrez’s threefold model of liberation, if ‘building the temporal city is not merely the stage of “humanization”, of “pre-evangelization”’ but ‘is to place [oneself] in the full swing of a salvific process which comprises the entire person and the whole of human history’? A burden is placed on the church’s capacity of discernment. On the one hand, we should not forget that we are living in *una historia cristofinalizada*,⁸⁵ which has been fulfilled in Christ. On the other hand, we have to learn to recognize the potentialities which this fulfilment has made available. For Gutiérrez, this means reading the signs of the presence of God which has become ‘more universal and more complete’ beginning with the Incarnation.⁸⁶ How does this prophetic office of the church relate to its work of establishing the new people of God in a unity of feeling?

A traditional method of discerning ‘religious affections’ related them to the question of individual election and conversion.⁸⁷ This method steered away from the more popular,

⁸³ Ezek. 20.

⁸⁴ Jer. 31.

⁸⁵ *TL*, 153/200.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 190/245.

⁸⁷ The classical expositor of such a method is Jonathan Edwards; cf. *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, ed. John E. Smith (Yale: Yale University Press, 1959), esp. vol. 2.

‘economic’ aim of managing emotions, a manipulation that would interfere with the revelatory potential of authentic introspection, guided by the work of the Holy Spirit. Should we now understand Gutiérrez to be replacing this individualistic path with evaluations of the social mood and atmosphere? There is a hint of this when he qualifies his appreciation of Marcuse’s programme by saying that although it is not unproblematic, it does reflect the development of people’s expectations.⁸⁸ But the fact that he invokes what now seem such gauche terms like ‘arrival of the new man’ in the wake of a cultural revolution⁸⁹ could be instead interpreted to indicate that liberation theology has always sought, not always successfully, to connect with a political ethics which would correspond to its insights into the nature of feeling. The quotation of Che Guevara’s words, written ‘at the risk of seeming ridiculous’ that ‘the true revolutionary is guided by feelings of love’,⁹⁰ elicit a rueful smile now that the project to which he attached himself has so consistently debased that ideal. But the propagation of an alternative political ethic seems to me at least as urgent a need of liberation theology as finding, as Ivan Petrella has proposed, a concrete historical project;⁹¹ the two tasks are in practice joined.⁹²

Perhaps one of the avenues by which this ethos could be delineated is in dialogue and distinction from the renewed project of virtue ethics. The role of civic virtue in the welfare of the modern state has been under debate since the beginning of the Enlightenment, but not always with due attention to the changes that have come about in the understanding of feeling. If feeling is to complement virtue, it must be linked to the communal memory of the ‘underside of history’. In particular, joy cannot be reduced to the repetition of a moment of initiatory purification; it is not the record of an original perfection of virtue. Neither is it an abstraction derived from the pleasures of everyday sociability. It is rather the disposition of bodies sustained in a fellowship of abiding sight

⁸⁸ Ibid. 32/61.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 111/156. James B. Nickoloff affirms that the social change which Gutiérrez advocates is ‘at once radical and not without precedent’, being comparable to the Reformation, the Enlightenment and the French Revolution—such an array of transformations indicates the merely scale of the transformation, rather than its nature (Nickoloff, 520).

⁹⁰ *Venceremos! The Speeches and Writings of Che Guevara*, ed. John Gerassi (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969), 398.

⁹¹ Petrella, *Future of Liberation Theology*, 11–2.

⁹² As I tried to show above, Ch. 4. iv.

and hearing,⁹³ in a life for the sake of mutual need,⁹⁴ ‘forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead’.⁹⁵ It is the life of bodies that do not grasp onto their bodily nature and the system it is integrated in, but are aware of their fragility and invisible identity, and their call to be formed to virtue.⁹⁶ ‘Our distresses provoke a withdrawal into ourselves (*un repliegue sobre nosotros mismos*)’,⁹⁷ but joy means opening up to the possibility of a time of common freedom.

IV. Feeling and political virtue

By invoking emotion as a political factor at all, liberation theology has made itself vulnerable to accusations of superficiality; fortunately, it has also struck a hidden stream uniting the life of the church to the world of secular government. But there are problems in trying to connect virtue to communal emotion. There is, to begin with, the distinction made clear by Montesquieu between moral and civic virtue. Is it not likely that ways of experiencing emotions that might favour the one might inhibit the other?

Martha Nussbaum has argued that certain emotions are more reliable guides in the pursuit of justice than others because of the genealogy of the beliefs underlying them. Disgust, for instance, ‘is typically unreasonable, embodying magical ideas of contamination, and impossible aspirations to purity, immortality, and nonanimality, that are just not in line with human life as we know it.’⁹⁸ On the other hand, anger or outrage need not breed a blind desire for revenge, but can be shaped in their expectations by an objective system of

⁹³ 1 John 1.4.

⁹⁴ Phil. 1.25.

⁹⁵ Phil. 3.13. Cp. Philip Berryman’s account of the role of joy and sense of personal providence in the growth of Latin American Pentecostalism (*Stubborn Hope: Religion, Politics, and Revolution in Central America* (New York: New Press; Orbis: Maryknoll, 1994), 151, 156).

⁹⁶ Cf. Robert C. Roberts definition that ‘joy is a construal of something in terms that satisfy one or more of one’s concerns’ (*Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 279).

⁹⁷ *On Job*, 13/50, my tr.

⁹⁸ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 14.

justice.⁹⁹ The problem with disgust and shame arises because they abstract from the limitations of our humanity; by contrast, anger, although it can spring from the frustration of a dream of an untrammelled ego, is also a natural reaction to the infringement of one's fundamental rights. Although the emotions that may be woven into a due legal process do not exhaust the range present in a healthy political environment, they should be more fundamental to it in a liberal society than others which belong to the epiphenomenal enthusiasms and clashes of party adventures. Without adequate demarcation between these two levels, it is not the absence of detachment that may prove dangerous, but the idealization of one's sect, the amplification of emotion through the composition of an exalted narrative.¹⁰⁰ Emotion is thereby made to mediate a transcendence which connects us with a historic destiny. In other words, it becomes another denial of mortality and obstructs the real possibilities of life in political society. Is it possible to give within liberalism any greater political scope to emotion than to guarantee the capability for full emotional development of one's personality? Only in a subordinate capacity: 'emotions are only as reliable as the evaluations they contain, and because such evaluations of objects are frequently absorbed from society, they will be only as reliable as those social norms', which are to be criticized and reformed, if necessary, by reasoned public discourse.¹⁰¹ It would especially seem to be so in the case of joy, which, as all other feelings according to the emotional theory subscribed to by Nussbaum, is local, particularized by certain beliefs and, moreover, has its object fixed in a limited present; it is not a temporal portion of a lifelong sum of happiness, but the maximum of positivity afforded by a restricted time.¹⁰²

A critique of emotionally evacuated liberal political life has been proffered by Harvey Mansfield, who contends that a failure of the modern account of rationality has been its inability to provide an adequate motivation for self-assertion. The diagnostic reaches far back in time: 'Plato gives us a choice between animal courage that is too low, unable to

⁹⁹ Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 405.

¹⁰⁰ As exemplified by Nussbaum in her description of the tendentiousness of the Hindu right's version of history in *The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence, and India's Future* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2007).

¹⁰¹ Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 74–5; cf. *ibid.* 28 on 'the development and expression of personhood'.

¹⁰² *Upheavals of Thought*, 48, 133–35.

state what is human in courage, and scientific courage that is too high, in effect destroying courage by eliminating risk.’¹⁰³ Closely allied to the latter is ‘the modern idea of “security” or self-preservation, whose origins he sees in Machiavellian *animo*, later coming to shape the characters of the bourgeois and the professional. His proposed resurrection of ‘manliness’ is a return to the concern ‘with honour and shame rather than money and calculation, to which rational control makes its appeal’, the taking of risk ‘which must prove itself and do so before an audience’. He adds that ‘manliness is responsible for our individuality’ and therefore ‘is essentially a political act. To make an identity takes effort to impress those who may contest it, sometimes in battle, sometimes through persuasion.’¹⁰⁴ That desire for display is an integral part of manliness is an uncertain assertion, warranted chiefly by Mansfield’s naturalistic method of observing human nature as it resists being conformed to its reformation by modernity and especially feminism. He does not connect the survival of manliness with the search for happiness so much as with its continued social necessity and appreciation, which reinforces an inborn inclination. In fact, the paradigmatic positive example of manliness is that of the person who has the courage to perform a uniformly endorsed but perilous social role, the fireman’s or soldier’s self-sacrifice. Such a role appears self-effacing rather than identity-asserting. So on the one hand there is an individual predilection (purportedly more frequent in men) to assert oneself and one’s identity; on the other hand, this has been socially encouraged independently of its identity-forming power, and so its promotion has ceased to be a general concern. The latter state of affairs is problematic because it constitutes a denial of the contingency of happiness; Mansfield’s protest is that one’s happiness may depend on the manliness of others, that society itself does not rest only in justice, but depends for its welfare on the manly comportment of certain members of it in situations in which there is no prescribed rational course of action. Perhaps Mansfield’s observation might benefit from a better distinction between happiness and joy: joy is not a *telos*, but a result of the interaction and mutual recognition of the elements that might contingently concur for public happiness, even though occurrence of the latter as a result is obstructed by misalignments of circumstances. Both manliness and joy need the mediation of common

¹⁰³ Harvey Mansfield, *Manliness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 228.

¹⁰⁴ Mansfield, 233, 234–5.

myths or ideals: even though an instance of manliness might be misplaced, it can still resonate with the others involved if it approaches a shared positive archetype; similarly, joy in defeat is unlikely, but commendable if the loss is deemed dignified—necessary, in fact, to temperate resentment. Yet in both circumstances common happiness, which depends on the preservation of society, is none the better for it. Both self-assertion and joy need to stand above happiness if they are to serve it.

The typical case of the modern suppression of manliness incriminated by Mansfield is given by the argument commonly deployed before the time of Adam Smith that capitalism should be esteemed as a useful aid against tyranny, pitting the civically innocuous desire for material accumulation against the more dangerous passion for honour, liable to degenerate into authoritarianism.¹⁰⁵ This suggestion can appear historically compromised by the political trespasses of capital. Nevertheless, it is more modest than the positive argument which would derive communal happiness from general prosperity and general prosperity from the industry of the capitalist few. In fact, it would seem to exclude the latter from communal affect as a class interested only in personal enjoyment. The fading of this idea might be due to the fact that the existence of such a naturally secluded contingent is psychologically improbable; Adam Smith's ideas of sympathy and self-interest do not postulate this pathology, neither, of course, does Marx's conflictual description of economic relations. Its obsolescence could indicate that, contrary to Mansfield's position, honour and shame need not necessarily be the main categories in the organization of social affect in order to recover public virtue. Their attractiveness, in fact, seems to lie in the fact that they are to some extent analogous to pecuniary assets, inasmuch as they are cumulative, and it might be for that reason that they were seen as competing alternatives.

If we do away with reliance on the specific contingency of manliness as a type of individual response to an ethos of honour and shame, it might be tempting to argue straightaway that religious communities of feeling are socially beneficial precisely because they can remove some of the contingency that belongs to the way in which the individualization of

¹⁰⁵ Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 31ff.

emotion affects the performance of citizens' roles in a liberal democracy. But is this not another example of reductionism, limiting feeling down to an instrument of social control or transformation? The accusation comes perhaps in continuation of the traditional anti-clerical attack, exemplified by Diderot and Rousseau, on the religious straitjacketing of natural sentiment. The accusation was that religious institutions do not correspond to the inclinations of natural sentiment, whereas alternative social arrangements do; but feeling does not exist for its own sake, even if it may provide an unending domain of expression within the inner workings of the human soul may be explored. Feeling on its own may evoke a sense of freedom, for instance in the presence of a sublime work of art; but the return to everyday experience awakens a painful sense of contradiction and there is no ready provision for that inner treasure to be creatively expressed in society. Did Enlightenment sentimentalism not lead in fact to another instrumentalization of feeling? The old anti-ecclesiastical culture of feeling focused on its recurring regularities, aiming to display, in the age which hailed the replacement of war by trade, the socially stabilizing function of transactions of feeling, and saw it as a dangerous ingredient in social conflict, a possible catalyst for turning freedom into the tyranny of the moment. Yet joy, inasmuch as it bears within it the question of authenticity and hence of historical inscription, is always susceptible of turning into a religious emotion—precisely because it does not see its end in itself, it cannot be instrumentalized.

Why should joy be singled out as carrying the promise of social transformation? Why not its opposite, melancholia? For 'some melancholias are the opposite of depressing, functioning as the very mechanism through which one may be interested in the world.'¹⁰⁶ Does not the experience of modernity, an age disconnected from its past, resonate with the interior world of melancholia, in which one is so 'self-consciously alienated from one's emotional life' that it becomes a 'historical datum'?¹⁰⁷ Does it not better correspond to the experience of oppression in which 'one is forever judging oneself from the point of view of someone who "looks on in amused contempt and pity"'?¹⁰⁸ The merit of this suggestion is

¹⁰⁶ Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 1.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 6.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 124.

that it can pre-empt the objection raised against communal expressions of joy that are perhaps mere compensatory practices; (non-depressive) melancholy seems to involve necessarily a degree of self-conscious historical reflection and still express self-worth. Maybe the exuberance liberation theologians refer to is as yet not tinged by melancholy only because modernity has not yet reached their home? On the other hand, perhaps it is joy which holds the last kernel of resistance, seeing as melancholy can very well flourish in an ambiguous relation of compromise with an externally enforced system: ‘when ethnic groups enter capitalist processes of modernization and are under the threat that their specific legacy will be swallowed up by the new global culture, they should not renounce their tradition through mourning, but retain the melancholic attachment to their lost roots.’¹⁰⁹ Unlike melancholy, joy does not seek to subsume its opposite under itself, it cannot analyse it under the lens of subsequent detachment; its discovery is that the whole self, though diachronically unrolled, can participate in the surprise of the new.

The opposite of joy is not only the melancholy ruled by a roaming imagination, the stranded freedom recognizing no pressing duties. A more vicious opposite is self-abasement, the humiliation of the self faced with present obligations. Julius H. Rubin has drawn attention from a sociological perspective to the nefarious phenomena associated with a historical type of Puritan and Revivalist spirituality which encouraged a cyclical return to the moment of joyous assurance through the potentially wrecking detours of constant self-examination and mortification.¹¹⁰ The source of this polarity seems to be the symmetrical opposition between undeserving human efforts and unmerited divine grace, a transcendent experience that cannot be guaranteed or laboriously recaptured; it stands out from the usual emotional catenation in that it cannot be tempered, corrected or even impelled, as other emotions should, by the guidance of reason, but is the mark of personal authenticity. This individual spiral was not assured of any regularity in its returns; the margin between cyclical equilibrium and permanent devastation turns out to be purely a heuristic question—although the joy of assurance, if granted, was held to be more than

¹⁰⁹ A scenario wryly summarized by Slavoj Žižek, ‘Melancholy and the Act’, *Critical Inquiry* 26 (2000), 657–681 at 658.

¹¹⁰ Julius H. Rubin, *Religious Melancholy and the Protestant Experience in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 30, 44, 58.

capable of overwhelming the memory of the foregoing wilderness, however long in crossing. For the sociologist's eye, judging by averages and remarking tragic exacerbations, this elusive periodicity imposed on the life of feeling is the mark of an inability to reflect on and respond to the demands of various transitions; one comes to prefer the permanence of a familiar internal instability to the menace of new circumstances, especially the impositions of adulthood.

The locus of that melancholic passivity was the individual, while the church as institution belonged rather to the pattern of striving action—even in what regards its evangelizing mission. One solution to the vicious circle seems, in Lutheran perspective, to lie not in negating the passivity of the individual, but in extending it also to the church, because “‘pathos’ is on the human side the only possible mode of redemption’, but a pathos in which one is ‘being present fully as an agent.’ ‘The salvific-economic mission of the Holy Spirit is ... realized not “spiritualistically” in the immediacy of the in-spiration of Spirit into individual religious consciousnesses, but in the form of concrete church practices ... whose point is precisely their *passivum*.’¹¹¹ Reinhard Hütter’s proposal is concerned chiefly with the practice of theology, in which the *passivum* lies in the fact that the *doctrina evangelii*, or God’s history of salvation, always precedes the argumentative-discursive practice, which is the aspect of theological perception and judgement with regard to the needs of the times, and the presentative-communicative aspect;¹¹² the result is that the history of the practices of theology assumes a character of general continuity moving forward by punctual differences. However, given that the proper function of theology is delineated as the service of the church public, this temporal shape and hierarchy must be analogously discerned in all church practices, including those pertaining to the political orientation of its members. ‘The core notion of political theology, namely, that theology is disclosed as critical reflection from the perspective of “praxis”, can ... be accommodated after a fashion, albeit not within its own overall politically determined horizon of perception, but within

¹¹¹ Reinhard Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, tr. Doug Stott (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 125; 127, 132.

¹¹² Ibid. 186.

the horizon of God's economy of salvation, the latter of which can certainly also critically address political contexts and horizons.'¹¹³

In this way the temporal map of transformation is completely changed for the individual, now considered as a member of the church public: from the revivalist expectation of a passive turning-point at the end of a self-denying routine to an agent's participation in the eschatological narrative traced by the practices of God's polis and oikos.¹¹⁴ Certainly, as the extent of this participation cannot be ascertained *a priori*, the tension between already and not yet '*cannot yet* be overcome conceptually ... nonetheless is *already now* being overcome epictetically in the doxology of the church.'¹¹⁵ As the internal history of the church public belongs to the domain of theology, so also an individual's own self-interpretation is recognized as an eminently theological task in such a way as to efface the mediation of an emotional narrative. However, this might not be in reality much of an advance: the way in which the emotions functioned in Rubin's type of Protestant experience was precisely to allow a accidental degree of individuation, attributing the excess of melancholy to the particularities of an individual's nature; an individual's proper theological task was the discernment of an accurate translation of these potentially treacherous signs into the language of public doctrinal certainty. With Hütter, we are faced with the same task of a direct theological translation of the emotions, although in a more sophisticated form.

If theology is only receptive to stories of emotion as already filtered through its own categories, it cannot expect its own values to be reflected in the results of sociological analysis; it can expect to confront, when it comes to social ethics, a classification of emotions based on presumed social and political utility. What is needed then, and what liberation theology can offer, is a theological meditation on the relation between emotion and political life. The simple view of liberation theology is to see it as a movement which

¹¹³ Ibid. 173.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 163–4. In Hütter's reading (122–24), Pannenberg also moved towards a passive understanding of anticipation: 'rather than being an act of the human subject within the horizon of universal history commensurate with the anthropological structure of the prolepsis', in *ST* 3 anticipation becomes 'the salvific-economic act of God's self-antecedence'. Although I would not estimate Pannenberg's position quite so one-sidedly, I have tried above, in Ch. 2. v, to show that in fact from quite early on Pannenberg's emphasis on the eschatological personality implies a focus on moral character, rather than act.

¹¹⁵ Hütter, 124.

encourages a social transformation which will open the possibility of fulfilment and joy to hitherto oppressed masses; a transformation in which the removal of mechanisms of exclusion, of 'social sin', finally permits all branches of the human spirit, until now made subject to bodily injustice, to bloom—including sensibility. In this perspective emotion plays only a secondary role: joy means coming into (self-)possession. This is too simple a view. What distinguishes liberation theology is that it justifies itself not merely by a vision of the future, but by the logic of the only possible present response, whose substance is the discovery of God's preferential option for the poor. It has been able to import into political discourse the urgency of personalism and existentialist decision without sacrificing itself to the vagueness of pious designs, and to advocate passionate concrete involvement without annihilating the liberal pleasure of varied individuality. The extent to which it has accomplished this balancing feat appears in the fact that it has recognized that the logic of social transformation incorporates a change of social emotional structures. But does this theoretical success convince?

Andrew B. Irvine has suggested that inasmuch as liberation theology takes for granted the notion of a personal God intervening in history on behalf of the indigent, it lacks plausibility to those attuned to the 'cultural physics' of late modernity because it evades the questions of relativity, evolutionary thought, and global pluralism; and he invites liberation theologians to greater self-awareness about the hermeneutical process involved in the practice of the option for the poor: 'to opt for the poor is an essentially endless task of ritual reorientation of one's life around a way of accompaniment somehow energized by the divine life.'¹¹⁶ The sweeping nature of this complaint draws attention to a principle it treats rather high-handedly, that the option for the poor must be understood Christologically; its main hermeneutical question is not the relevance of ecclesial action to late modernity, but the relation between the church and Christ. The pattern and persuasion of the argument for a joyful church lie in the imitation and extension of Christ's work.¹¹⁷ The point is not to make the poor plausible as symbols of Christ or even as a moral cause; it is rather to describe the constitution of a plural ethical subject (the

¹¹⁶ Andrew B. Irvine, 'Liberation Theology in Late Modernity: An Argument for a Symbolic Approach', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78 (2010), 921–960 at 249.

¹¹⁷ Wells, 117ff./158ff.

church) starting from the anonymity of Christ's presence in the world. The poor are not the inspiration of the ethical life of the church in either their bodily constitution, in which they exist as oppressed, or in their sociological habits; rather, they are the core of the people of God because by their election, God has given them the source of authentic moral action, the gratuity of the feeling of joy. The extension of this ethical principle into a source of political solidarity may not be realized except concomitantly with an acceptance of the contingency and yet transcendent source of happiness, which mainstream accounts of liberal autonomy seem to avoid.¹¹⁸ To that end, the church also has to realize that its emotional life is not a task given to it in conjunction with a theological tradition, but a process which lives from the actual presence of Christ with it in the poor.

Conclusion

Wolfhart Pannenberg and Gustavo Gutiérrez share the premise that the hope of the kingdom of God means that absolute individual fulfilment can only be hoped for in a society perfected through attunement to God's will, because social ties, dependencies, and devotions are essential to the completeness of a person. For Pannenberg, the church is the anticipatory gathering symbolizing the final unity of humanity; it performs this role by pointing to Christ, the efficient and formal cause of the coming union, through its worship and through its works. Yet the church as such is not an ethical person or instrument; it does not have the task of directing or systematizing its members' ethical purposes. Ethics cannot avoid considering the final destiny of humankind, but the church cannot guarantee that it can prove how this orientation should be expressed in the immediate future of decision. It can certainly offer guidance and exhortation, sharing the wisdom of its tradition, but as we are no longer under the Law, it must allow the special guidance of the Spirit to shape each Christian's spontaneous will for good. Its offices,

¹¹⁸ 'Justice can become an idol if it is not placed in the context of gratuity, if there is no real friendship with the poor person nor daily commitment with him or her.' (*Density of the Present*, 141.)

therefore, are primarily not repositories of executive authority, but representations of the community in unity.

The symbolic role of the church as community engages the freedom of its members by holding before them their solidary calling which transcends any norms externally established, contradicting within its sphere of action any unjust and oppressive impositions. The history of the church and its present situation in the world is not an acceptable immediate starting point for its moral paraenesis, because its transcendent reference, its sacramental nature is received only by participation in the true sacrament, Christ, according to apostolic ties (Word and sacraments). Rather, it is its final station which provides a proper starting point for ecumenical discussions regarding doctrinal adequacy and internal structure. Pannenberg's concern is to pre-empt the instrumentalization of the church and the debasement of the moral ideal, the communion of united humanity with God, into a goal achievable by rational calculation. But that final goal still figures more prominently as a social coda to individual existence than as the intensification of process which is already stirring the church.

For Gutiérrez, what the existence of the church reveals about freedom is not so much that eschatological reality is already effective through a symbolic reconstitution of the social bond of humanity, although he would doubtless agree with Pannenberg that the Eucharist 'confirms the social destiny of humankind, ... encourages and inspires political commitment for the sake of peace and justice' and yet remains greater than 'whatever social activities it may inspire';¹¹⁹ what it reveals is that the Spirit's work of moral regeneration instilling an unlaboured inclination towards the good is not merely, not even primarily an individual transformation, but the first emergence of a social spontaneity, of a communal orientation towards the future, which takes place as a result of the work of Jesus Christ. Christ did not spiritualize God's promises, but opened the present to the future, 'catapulting history forwards, towards the total reconciliation' and the history which 'has been fulfilled in Christ' is the 'gradual, risky and surprising fulfilment of the

¹¹⁹ Pannenberg, *CSSC*, 43.

promise'.¹²⁰ The communal reality on which the moral freedom of the Christian depends is not only the permanent sacramental work of the church, but also the contingent labour of common feeling. Joy is the carrying forth of the church's life of prayer, in which is experienced the gratuitousness of the historical echoes of the great cycle of promise and fulfilment which was brought together in the person of Christ. Joy must then be permanent and yet also bound to the relation of the present moment to the ultimate future. It is in this sense that definitions of joy as the consummation of a relation to a particular object and the distinction between use and enjoyment must be revised. There are aspects of Pannenberg's argument about the experience of community which hint that such a perspective would not be completely foreign to it,¹²¹ but he does not develop the idea of the incompleteness of the ego in the direction of the dependence of the self on a communal ground of feeling.

Augustine's partial objection to 'enjoying' others was their distance, as creatures, from God. What the perspective of liberation theology reveals is that the 'enjoyment' relation between self and other does not have to be an ungrounded, direct short-circuit, a possession which grasps at a present state of the other and seeks to constrict a yet-to-be-revealed person. This does not necessarily mean its re-constitution in the pattern of I-Thou authenticity, but the search for a common present which has not yet been reached. Joy as a distinct event is then an anticipation of that present; and joy as a hidden shared life, a relation which is not exhausted by the psychological events of sentiment, is the unfolding of the significance of the intertwined meaning of separate existences, the diachronic confirmation of the truth—which both Pannenberg and Gutiérrez proclaim—that one's salvation is participation in a blessed community. In the second sense, joy might be thought of as a mode of ordinary psychological experience, or perhaps, without seeking to stretch the metaphor too much, as a modal operator, inasmuch as it is tied in with the truth of its theological implications and may finally show itself as, in the Barthian sense, either a possibility or an impossibility. For the church, it is the historical experience of the poor which mediates between these two senses, an experience in which joy can figure as

¹²⁰ *TL*, 160/212.

¹²¹ Pannenberg, *ATP*, 367/356.

resistance, respite, or jubilation. It is a mediation with a traceable history itself, inasmuch as the church progressively becomes, in execution of its mission, the church of the poor, and is permeated in solidarity by the same feeling through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, despite the worry that liberation theology seeks to harness the church to an ever-changing short-term revolutionary agenda, the church will always be out of step with contemporary political developments, though not in the usual sense that it lives within its own religious timeframe. Neither is it its special task to bring together from time to time compartmentalized networks of shared sentiment, as most social and political organisms do. The church is to bring together the traces and traditions of feeling so that memory of the defeated becomes a ‘source of energy and historical will’.¹²² It cannot enlist its members into an ongoing theologico-political drama, only position them on the uneasy margin of historical (in)significance; it cannot create common feeling, only find it in prayer; it is in fact in that narrow interstice between history and action that Gutiérrez allows for the intervention of feeling.

The differences between Pannenberg’s and Gutiérrez’s are not, for the most part, traceable to the Catholic–Lutheran separation. To the extent that they are, it is because of Gutiérrez’s occasional emphases on the salvific import of human action, which sometimes seem to obviate the role of the church as much as possible—as, for instance, when analysing the plausibility of universalist hope.¹²³ These instances are in all probability connected with his worries about a subconscious or even official partial return to the Roman reaction to classical liberalism, which affirmed that there is no salvation outside the church in a manner which sought to define all political achievements in relation to the eventual triumph of religious truth and to confirm an ecclesial mediation between truth and action.¹²⁴ But his emphasis on action is meant to underline the necessity of faith, not call for a return to *facere quod in se est*: ‘In the act of doing, our faith is made truth, not only for others, but for ourselves as well.’¹²⁵ The proclamation of bare action as soteriologically

¹²² Gutiérrez, ‘Freedom and Salvation’, 92.

¹²³ *TL*, 152/198.

¹²⁴ ‘Freedom and Salvation’, 44.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* 84.

significant would contradict his idea of freedom, which assumes a conception of the self as created for the kind of sharing of meaning manifested in the church's life of feeling.

These liberationist considerations on feeling might in fact support Pannenberg's connection of the desire for freedom with individual destiny. Individual experiences are not the origin of feeling, but always its return; this is easy to observe when, for example, a sudden great sadness seems to bring with it the force of numberless smaller occasions, perhaps belittling their distinction, yet integrating their sharpness. Feeling explains why life has to mean accumulation in a sense beyond that indicated by the multiplication of memories. That is why freedom cannot amount at any given point to simply steering a new course in life, because the feeling for freedom does not remain the same primal passion but changes according to what it appears that the whole of one's existence might come to mean. 'Feeling' does not mean then the expression of an inner true self, but the mode of relating the present to a scattered history of previous attempts at synthesis.¹²⁶ 'Feeling for freedom' means the sense that freedom will return, that the present decision is not the final one, that I will not become captive to myself or to others. In this sense, of course, an absolute feeling for freedom would mean utter irresponsibility, an infinite postponement and dilution of decision; because freedom does not return instantly, but always at an interval, an interval which has by then been consigned to necessity of the past self. Hence freedom is not affected by all emotion, but by those which specially transform our sense of time. Of these, joy may not be as obviously one as its counterpart, melancholy, because the latter seems closer to our inner selves and not to be in need of an object. Nevertheless, joy is the one closest related to the possibility of ethical action, as the unique form of temperance available to the desire for freedom—only joy mediates its own return. Joy occurs precisely in the exchange between subject and object in which the object reveals itself as the full and yet finite time of the subject. If the object is a gift, the consummation of it coincides with the return of the giver, who has become a greater joy to the recipient through the gift. Indeed, one of the ways in which the church becomes a medium for the development and communication of feeling is through its organization of

¹²⁶ Rei Terada, *Feeling in Theory: Emotion after the 'Death of the Subject'* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 44–5.

time, not just through the cyclical progress of liturgical time, but also by attending to the apostolic demand of unity in reciprocal exchange.

Chapter 6

Remembering Those Condemned to Death: Political Education

This chapter considers Gutiérrez's vision of the processes through which the desire of freedom can be expressed in political life in such a way as to help the construction of a just and stable society. The overall development may be described as the historical formation of the political subject, 'the people', constituted not in the sense of populist or nationalist legitimacy, but in true solidarity with the poor (I). Of crucial importance in this evolution is the remembrance of the past generations of the marginalized as a way of grounding present action in the 'memory of God' and in the expectation of his absorption and retention of their experience (II). The action inspired by this memory also has to be guided by a sense of dialogic responsibility, as it aims at the reformation of the whole society; it is at this point that political education plays its part, not in the sense of programmatic indoctrination, but as a transformation of the current generational grammar of political change (III). In practice, this means that political community will become a free community of 'the people' when the loss of generations of the poor will no longer be accepted as a necessity or a private tragedy, when mourning will find its natural limits through the elimination of unjust death (IV). Just as moderate grief is a Christian affirmation of the goodness of mortal life, so also the right habit of political grief means the recognition of the autonomy and ethical responsibility of public life; revolution would be the cultural change in which disordered grief and its causes disappear.

Gutiérrez's political philosophy seems to have a number of naive Romantic-revolutionary features. By his critique of reification, he appears to suggest that politics can become a natural expression of life.¹ He promotes at the centre of political activity the figure of 'the people', a category certainly distinct from that of 'nation' but carrying over some of its rhetorical functions. He bases political revolution on education, as idealists are wont to do. It is therefore all the more helpful to delineate clearly Gutiérrez's innovative use of these concepts (life, people, education) with respect to the traditions it has inherited through his

¹ Poverty implies the stifling of political capacities because it 'ultimately means death' ('Liberation Theology and the Future of the Poor', 121).

revolutionary orientation. The general question under which this attempt at interpretation takes place is the relevance of political life to the freedom which God bestows on humanity in Jesus Christ. Gutiérrez's answer, to formulate it in preliminary form, is that this dimension of common life is the place of learning solidarity by recognizing and preparing for the unequal distribution of death. The foundation of politics in finite human temporality has been recognized before, most notably by Hannah Arendt. But the concern for immortality emphasized by Arendt may be said to be only one aspect of this connection, especially recognizable in the heroic ideal of statesmanship which squares so well with her connection of politics with the instinct for action. A further illustration of this connection is the potential of inspiration and emulation which bereavement rouses when it is placed in the context of political solidarity, as evidenced by the secular appropriation of the metaphor of sacrifice, even though bereavement is ordinarily associated with the terrifying threat of psychological debilitation—what could have been the greatest trap of unfreedom becomes a springboard for reflection and replication. Yet another, less prominent, appropriation of bereavement is the mournful exercise of politics itself, its pragmatic melancholy about the perfect distribution of justice.² That this melancholy may be perverted is perhaps most visible now in the subdued self-relation of political regulation to economic matters.

Liberation theology should be in a particularly favourable position to reveal the possible significance of death for political theology. Certainly there is a starting point for all Christian political theology to consider: Christ subjected himself to a political death. In Pannenberg's interpretation, this free submission inspired the development of personal freedom as a political value, for the individual who risks being a martyr prizes his conscience above the power of the state—although, conversely, the desire for personal immortality was perceived as a possible threat to civic cohesion. But to insist, as Rousseau did,³ only on the aspect of the dual allegiance owed to the earthly state and the

² Cf. Žižek, 'Melancholy and the Act', 663–66.

³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'The Social Contract', in *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, ed. and tr. by Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), IV.8, esp. IV.8.15–20, pp. 146–7. For the inconsistency even of Rousseau's deistic Christianity and his religion civile, see Jason Neidلمان, "'Par le bon usage de ma liberté": Freedom and Rousseau's Reconstituted Christianity', in Christie McDonald and Stanley Hoffmann (eds.), *Rousseau and Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 142–158 at 151–53.

otherworldly kingdom is too one-sided. There is a more concrete aspect of the problem, the question of uniformity and differentiation in death, which has its origin in the utter distinction with which the death of Jesus is perceived in Christianity. A state cannot enact the equalization of all its citizens in death; nevertheless, it is not surprising that totalitarian states of the twentieth century have tended to develop a fascination with the procedural production of death, the output of the self-purifying state machine. The liberation theologies of Latin America have had to confront this phenomenon in the proliferation in the 1970s and 80s of regimes justifying their seizure of power with reasons of ‘national security’ and enthusiastically using their prerogatives to apply the infamous friend/enemy distinction. As this was typically a reaction to movements already somewhat influenced by liberation theology, liberation theologians tended to resist by keeping their previous focus on the economic mediation used by the state to distance itself from the fate of its lesser citizens, its ‘people’, those who matter politically only by the criterion of quantification, without addressing directly the place of death in political culture.

I. The union of solidarity: the people

The concept of ‘people’, which is at the heart of Gutiérrez’s political thinking, already presented a number of related meanings at the time of the introduction of Christianity to the Americas. In the first place, there is the sense of a society able to manage itself according to the rules of civilization; it is this sense whose application was refused to the Indians by certain scholastics who saw them as barbarians, Aristotle’s ‘natural slaves’,⁴ although an objective eye could not have denied the specific achievements of indigenous civilizations. Closely aligned, but necessarily more controversial, is the sense of a society which has the right to produce its own response to the gospel. To a certain degree the question is that of a political response and thus overlaps with the first meaning, i.e. whether there is a legitimate authority whose right to take an official stance towards a religion may be recognized—in the same way in which the Roman Emperors were

⁴ *Las Casas*, 296.

recognized by persecuted early Christians, who accepted their unjust punishments as coming from legitimate civil authorities, and later on were acknowledged to have the right to promote the true religion; more basically, the question does not involve necessarily the state, but is whether a society's specific spontaneous mechanisms of internal interaction can be relied upon to ensure the propagation and 'testing' of religion, to reflect publicly on it.⁵ This also was denied of the Indians through the establishment of the system of *encomiendas*, in which communities of Indians were entrusted to individual Spaniards to be trained in Christianity in return for their labour; by this forced reorganization it was implicitly denied that Christianity could have permeated the existing social ties. Las Casas was keen to affirm that it could have, to Gutiérrez's admiration.⁶ While they accused the Indians of being barbarians, a people with no share in history, it was the colonizers who excluded themselves from the practice of remembrance; the ability to recognize the independence of what is alien depends on the acceptance of their common sharing in God's gift of adoption, on which recognition depends, paradoxically, the reception of the same gift.⁷ In Gutiérrez's reading, Las Casas's effort was to instil in the conquerors a memory that they should have had, 'to recall to the minds of his contemporaries the recollection that God has of all persons, especially of those persons who constitute the refuse of history. To neglect to love a person in need is to forget that one is a Christian' because 'God's memory is founded in the gratuity of divine love.'⁸

These historical nuances may seem rather dry and theoretical; how does Gutiérrez apply the notion in contemporary terms? He has in fact established a remarkable continuity: the

⁵ Cf. *Dios o el oro*, 93–97. In its first aspect, it appears as if the legitimacy of the question should be contested if any establishment of religion is wrong; however, although the point of disestablishment may now be made theoretically and generally, one should not overlook the historical development of this problem—Pannenberg would suggest, for instance, that without Jesus' message of freedom the idea of disestablishment might perhaps not have developed at all. In other words, states that have gone through this process of disestablishment and guarantee religious freedom are not faced with this question at all. With regard to the second aspect, the question might appear far-fetched because almost any existing society would pass the test; it is in fact a reasonable empirical question—if we take, for instance, a society which is strongly under the everyday influence of a special religious class (shamans, magicians, etc.), to the suppression of any free public forum, the introduction or even consideration of a new religion would not occur without considerable disruption of social habits. Cf. Georges Balandier, *Political Anthropology*, tr. A.M. Sheridan Smith, London: Penguin, 1970), 117–22.

⁶ To do so, he had to change the terms of the question and reject the direct responsibility of political authority for the spiritual well-being of its subjects. (*Las Casas*, 221.)

⁷ *PPH*, 63/112, 72/127.

⁸ *Las Casas*, 297.

idea of the ‘people’ is still about the collective rights of Indian nations, who must be ‘agents of their own liberation’.⁹ But they are not organized as a political society, and there is no suggestion that they should now form states independent of any European adstratum. This is because the same notion of ‘people’ is applied without any hesitation, but nevertheless in a derived sense, to modern Latin American nations. The derivation is possible, by analogy and unfortunately also by historical continuity, because the representative of a nation’s destiny is precisely the section left out by political decision processes and left behind by economic progress. But what is the role of Christianity itself in this self-emancipation? Does its involvement change it from what it would be as a mere political programme?¹⁰

To answer this question one has to consider the development of liberation theology in relation to contemporary changes in political programmes. Gutiérrez’s judgement in the mid-nineties (after the collapse of the Soviet bloc which ‘systematically violated the right of freedom’¹¹) was that the autonomy of the economic system is to be respected—with the corresponding limitation in the scope of political reformation—, with the proviso that in practice it is liable to affect the other levels of society, especially inasmuch as capitalism constitutes a challenge to traditional communities. One might link this position with the rise to political prominence in Peru of an opposition to economic neo-liberalism which places its hope not in the universal representative character of the proletariat, but in an ‘Andean-Amazonian socialism’,¹² appealing to the traditional communitarian way of life of the indigenous communities as a partner in a dialogue which would somehow renew the already modernized urban segments of society and forge out of both poles an integrated whole. The affinity is prefigured by Gutiérrez’s early sentiment that ‘Latin American path

⁹ Ibid. 363.

¹⁰ On the danger of reifying ‘the people’ for political purposes, see Philip Berryman’s assessment of the end of the Sandinista regime (*Stubborn Hope*, 59).

¹¹ ‘Liberation Theology and the Future of the Poor’, 106.

¹² See Todd A. Eisenstadt et al. (eds.), *Latin America’s Multicultural Movements: The Struggle between Communitarianism, Autonomy, and Human Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Forrest Hylton and Sinclair Thomson, *Revolutionary Horizons: Past and Present in Bolivian Politics* (London: Verso, 2007), 130–32, 140–43; George Philip and Francisco Panizza, *The Triumph of Politics: The Return of the Left in Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011). The emergence of the new South American left is characterized by a stronger role of civil society and the participation (where they exist) of autonomous indigenous movements.

to socialism' could take Mariátegui as a point of departure.¹³ Therefore the observation that there has been 'a movement away from Marxist reductionism to communitarian participatory radicalism in the development of liberation theology over the last twenty years',¹⁴ although certainly overstated in its antithesis, is substantially defensible. This radical-communitarian perspective denounces the way in which the economic necessity of modernization has been used to enforce a phasing out of indigenous cultural forms, just as previously the necessity of integrating local societies in a European legal-economic framework; this time there is also the promise of a death profitable and without regrets.¹⁵

Does this political development provide an avenue for the continued political relevance of liberation theology? There are many who see the decline of liberation theology as linked with an inability to put forward a viable socio-economic project: the case has been most thoroughly made by Ivan Petrella.¹⁶ More critical analysts have suggested that such a renewal is obstructed precisely by the starting-point of liberation theology in relation to economics, the adoption of dependency theory.¹⁷ According to Michael Dodson, 'dependency is not an empirical theory with explanatory (in the sense of predictive) power at all', not that there is a 'single theory of dependency anyway'.¹⁸ A worrying practical consequence is that 'adherents of liberation theology will be in a poor position to engage critically with political movements they identify in practice as worthy of support';¹⁹

¹³ TL, 90/130.

¹⁴ Paul E. Sigmund, *Liberation Theology at the Crossroads* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 194.

¹⁵ *God of Life*, 56–62.

¹⁶ Petrella, *The Future of Liberation Theology*. The failure to lay out a concrete plan of economic reform might be due to the fact that it would have been subjected to the imperative of 'greater rationality in economic activity' (PPH, 50/89)—which suggests planning and centralization, although it need not, in fact, mean it. Moreover, Gutiérrez agrees with Marcuse that the capitalist instruments of manipulation have become more efficient in line with the rise in technological productivity (Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (100th anniversary edn., New York: Humanities Press, 1999), 435–38); as such, the task of conscientization would appear more accessible than that of competing economically with capitalism.

¹⁷ It seems that the consequences of this question have been exacerbated by the prominence of the direction taken by Clodovis Boff in *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations*, tr. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987) in elaborating the view of theology as science. Despite the influence of the Althusserian model of theoretical intervention, a theology of the political is supposed not to intervene directly, but on the basis of autonomous political rationality (C. Boff, 82–3). Without its own concepts to understand political temporality, liberation theology may well end up as the jilted passive partner of sociology. Cf. Christian Smith, 'Las Casas as Theological Counter-Offensive: An Interpretation of Gustavo Gutiérrez's *Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ*', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 41 (2002), 69–73 at 72.

¹⁸ Michael Dodson, 'Liberation Theology and Christian Radicalism in Contemporary Latin America', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 11 (1979), 203–22 at 211.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 217ff.

without its support, even ‘the appropriate relationship between theology and social science’ is in question.²⁰ Should they even start with that theoretical question, rather than with the reality of power?²¹

Whatever explanatory power dependency theory still has,²² the eclipse of the early nineties is significant insofar as it has occasioned a precipitation of political theory from a previously amalgamated language of social transformation. One way to ask the question about the meaning of this transition is to investigate to what extent liberation theology has come to distinguish and establish a relation between political and economic rights.

In *The Power of the Poor in History*, Gutiérrez had drawn a forceful difference between the modernist concept of human rights and the idea of the rights of the poor. The distinction has sometimes been misunderstood as a restriction.²³ Yet in his study of Las Casas, Gutiérrez attempts to link it with a broader Catholic tradition of rights and in particular the issue of religious freedom; this has prompted the observation that Gutiérrez shrewdly ‘embraces and assimilates that [official] agenda as one element of the liberationist project’ in order to ‘preempt marginalization by an emerging alternative agenda’.²⁴ In truth, the prioritization of the right to worship could hardly be characterized as ‘emerging’ or ‘alternative’, but rather as a mainstay of Catholic policy since the erosion of papal secular authority.²⁵ Nevertheless, the irony is well observed because Gutiérrez, following his Dominican hero, extends this freedom in the first place to the unchurched native inhabitants of the Americas, proclaiming the right of Indian nations ‘to their own way of life and their religion’, indeed, their obligation to defend them.²⁶ Moreover, against

²⁰ Duncan B. Forrester, ‘Can Liberation Theology Survive 1989?’, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 47 (1994), 245–54 at 252.

²¹ Michael F. Jiménez, “‘Citizens of the Kingdom’: Toward a Social History of Radical Christianity in Latin America”, *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 34 (1988), 3–21 at 17–8.

²² Victor Bulmer-Thomas, *The Economic History of Latin America since Independence* (2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 13–18.

²³ Heather Thompson, ‘Stars and Compasses: Hermeneutical Guides for Public Theology’, *International Journal of Public Theology*, 2 (2008), 258–76 at 274.

²⁴ Smith, ‘Theological Counter-Offensive’, 72. One may note that one consequence of this rapprochement is Gutiérrez’s clear divergence from populist forms of liberation theology (for the most sophisticated, see *Spirit of Empire*, 181–83); this should be borne in mind in interpreting his notion of ‘the people’.

²⁵ Cf. Owen Chadwick, *A History of the Popes, 1830–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

²⁶ *Las Casas*, 184, 201.

Francisco de Vitoria, in this regard the theologian of emerging modernity, Las Casas protested that there is no obligation for nations to accept commerce with outside powers, in other words, that free trade does not represent a return to an unfettered natural condition.²⁷ Perhaps it is this rejection of the future axiom of proponents of capitalism that casts Las Casas into an advocate of the collective rights of Indian nations who must be agents of their own liberation.²⁸ There is not much evidence that he developed a conceptuality of liberation as such, although he maintained that regal authority is based on the people's voluntary consent and even upheld to some extent the right to rebellion.²⁹ Nevertheless, he remains a testament to the subversive power of the idea of religious freedom and stands at the beginning of the Catholic Latin American tradition of human rights,³⁰ which affirms 'the conviction that the human being, as a human person, has rights prior to the state' while avoiding a contrast between the isolated individual and state authority by acknowledging that 'freedom is rooted in and expressed through the beliefs, practices, and authority of the community.'³¹

Gutiérrez would also seem to have fallen in line with the papal view of the role the social teaching office of the Church as the practical, case-by-case application of general principles.³² He admits that the church has no 'political programmes or technical proposals' to present. He is keen, however, to emphasize that its task is not merely to work out particular consequences of general principles, but 'to "form consciences"'; but even this is 'a classical position which all theology concerned with these matters must keep in mind.'³³

²⁷ Ibid. 351, 353. J. G. A. Pocock has noted that in the early modern age, commerce could be seen as 'an aggressive action, an acquisition to the trading society's self of something which might have been acquired by another, an end to which war might or might not be an appropriate mean' (*The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 424–5).

²⁸ *Las Casas*, 363.

²⁹ 'Never is tyranny purged by the quiet of the oppressed.' (Ibid. 368.)

³⁰ Paolo G. Carozza, "'They are our brothers, and Christ gave His life for them': The Catholic Tradition and the Idea of Human Rights in Latin America', *Logos*, 6 (2003), 81–103 at 88.

³¹ Ibid. 88, 90.

³² John Paul II, 'Centesimus annus' (Rome, 1991), 1.5: 'The Church ... formulates a genuine doctrine for these [i.e. social] situations, a corpus which enables her to analyze social realities, to make judgments about them and to indicate directions to be taken for the just resolution of the problems involved.'

³³ 'Benedicto XVI y la opción por el pobre', 12.

Nevertheless, there is more to Gutiérrez's return to Las Casas than the discovery of an avenue to bring to liberation theology the mainstream vocabulary of Catholic political theology. It is also a way of reintroducing the concept of the 'memory of God', which 'is an expression of the divine fidelity and accordingly places a demand on every Christian as well.'³⁴ Remembrance through this memory makes it possible to seek 'forgiveness from God and the victims of history'.³⁵ Of course, the need for self-understanding through history is universal, as 'the present acquires density and substance when it is nourished by the memory of a journey'; it is intrinsically important to look at the origin of present identities, and 'Latin America was born dependent.'³⁶ What is more, 'one of the major challenges of Latin America and Peru is our cultural plurality. ... Many different racial, cultural, and spiritual families live in these lands, but they have not yet learned to live together.'³⁷ In other words, a historical self-understanding is essential even for a secular programme of emancipation. But the knowledge that the poor have 'that history is theirs' is theological knowledge and makes revisiting history a spiritual task: the memory of the defeated is a 'source of energy and historical will; to reread is to remake history.'³⁸

One may question how far a liberation theology which develops its political engagement from a doctrine of rights in historical continuation to Las Casas³⁹ has actually progressed from the natural rights tradition which is the background of Las Casas's breakthrough. In Thomas Schubeck's analysis, liberation theology (Gutiérrez in particular) has always been in agreement with the basis of natural law, the idea that 'the nature of the human person grounds moral obligation' and that the individual 'undergoes a self-actualization precisely by exercising freedom through moral decisions.'⁴⁰ Accordingly, the manifest divergences between liberation ethics and traditional natural law theory would not extend to

³⁴ *Las Casas*, 221.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 457.

³⁶ 'Freedom and Salvation', 70.

³⁷ *Las Casas*, 458. Cf. V Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano y del Caribe, 'Documento conclusivo', §527, p. 263, <http://www.celam.org/conferencias/Documento_Conclusivo_Aparecida.pdf>, accessed 1 Sep. 2013, and Gutiérrez, 'La opción preferencial por el pobre en Aparecida', *Páginas 206* (2007), 6–25 at 24.

³⁸ 'Freedom and Salvation', 107, 92.

³⁹ *Dios o el oro*, 43.

⁴⁰ Thomas L. Schubeck, 'The Reconstruction of Natural Law Reasoning: Liberation Theology as a Case Study', *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, 20 (1992), 149–178 at 151.

revisionist adherents of the latter,⁴¹ who also reject ‘the radical distinction between the natural and the supernatural’ and the notion of ‘a fixed moral content derived from natural inclinations’.⁴² This is a pertinent but partial observation; the two programmes could appear analogous only if they had recourse to the same historical hermeneutics. Schubeck acknowledges that ‘whereas Maritain places primary emphasis on knowing God’s will by means of a process of historically understanding essential human inclinations, Gutiérrez searches for the new human being in a people’s praxis that is interpreted in light of the gospel.’⁴³ I would suggest however that this recognition overlooks the innovation within liberation theology, as it moved from a historicist economic-political perspective to a more direct engagement with political theory and recalled that the theme of the latter is life and death.⁴⁴ Without this remembrance, a theology of future political progress does suggest, as Schubeck critically observed, ‘elements of a natural law wherein grace becomes a superstructure built into nature.’⁴⁵

But when this remembrance is performed, what remains of the category of revelation? Is the process of concretely imagining the utopia still a conduit for understanding the divine will? One could reply ‘yes’ simply by appealing to the Rahnerian conviction that ‘no sector of human existence escapes the offering of God’s grace’;⁴⁶ but that would endorse almost every kind of progressive thinking, inspired by either natural law or liberation.⁴⁷ Liberation theology’s rediscovery of the rhythm of politics has to prove its theological potential by going beyond natural law in its understanding and promise for utopian practice.

⁴¹ viz. Karl Rahner and Josef Fuchs.

⁴² Schubeck, ‘Reconstruction of Natural Law’, 152.

⁴³ Ibid. 157.

⁴⁴ In itself this is no new discovery, inasmuch as life and death could be said to have been the theme of modern political theory from the very beginning, only abstracted under the aspect of fortune, and so not in a cyclical or generational but primarily ‘aleatory’ disposition (Louis Althusser, *Machiavelli and Us*, ed. François Matheron, tr. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 1999), 35–6) — or more precisely, as the outcome of the (non-)encounter between fortuna and virtù (*Machiavelli and Us*, 74–5). The claim to originality emerges from a specifically theological interpretation.

⁴⁵ Schubeck, ‘Reconstruction of Natural Law’, 159.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 158.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 162, 164.

II. A history of life and death

For the political order of the generations, the history of life and death, to become a conduit for revelation and so a source of freedom, it must come to be perceived as something else than a never-ending cycle, a changing combination of tradition, chance, and power. Liberation theology has indeed been shaped by alternative, biblically-inspired models; it looks forward to an ideal of peace as ‘the kingdom of life’—and “‘life” includes all dimensions of the human, in keeping with the all-embracing will of God.’⁴⁸ In the Deuteronomistic tradition life is the reward of obedience, of a first choice to ‘walk in the way of the Lord’.⁴⁹ From this primordial act all other decisions can be seen to derive, to the extent that the biographies of Israel’s and Judah’s political leaders can be synthesized in the briefest of reports, in which the length of their reigns is juxtaposed to their commitment to or abandonment of God’s law. (In an implicit assent to the Deuteronomistic perspective, Gutiérrez joins Las Casas in the observation that in the exodus the liberation of the Israelites preceded their formation by God into a nation by means of a covenant and endowment with the Law,⁵⁰ that ‘priority belongs to the religious element, to the covenant with Yahweh’.⁵¹) Moreover, life itself as a concept unites physical, social, and even political well-being, health, honour, and protection from violence; in short, freedom, ‘a broad place where there was no constraint’.⁵² God is called on as the saviour of life, both on account of his justice and of his love for the life of his creatures;⁵³ the life promised to his servants is the demonstration of his own life.⁵⁴

It would be a simplification to imagine the Deuteronomic picture of the free life simply as the thesis of the individual responsibility of each generation, condensed in the decision of its political leader. Such decisions are examples of freedom only as belonging to the distinguishable flows of political and religious time, which are brought into correlation by God’s prophetic word. The time of freedom through complete religious obedience, as

⁴⁸ *Truth*, 12/26.

⁴⁹ Deut. 30.15, Judg. 2.22.

⁵⁰ *PPH*, 6/15; *Las Casas*, 316.

⁵¹ *Truth*, 118/151.

⁵² Job 36.16—only in Elihu’s (not Deuteronomistic) theology, this is a temptation; cf. 1 Sam. 22.20.

⁵³ 1 Sam. 22.21, 22.20; cp. Ps. 88.10.

⁵⁴ 2 Sam. 22.47.

depicted in Deuteronomy, remains a utopia. The nascence of a distinction of times lies in the political reterritorialization of the land through religiously-mandated centralization: ‘the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name’, established to gather and release the whole of the nation in festival and instruction, becomes the capital of a fluctuating kingdom, the focus of expanding and contracting borders. This duality is certainly not altogether negative, in fact it was purposed as remedial; yet it is resolved only by an exile hyperbolically portrayed as the evacuation of the land, emptied (in the Priestly tradition) so as to make up for its Sabbaths.⁵⁵ To the ethos of Deuteronomic life belongs a subordination of the continuous time of politics to the rhythm of religion; nonetheless, they are clearly not divided according to a straightforward separation between *chronos* and *kairos*, but their intersection evolves through each generation living in the land, as the possession of the latter expands through conquest or is lost to infidelity.

What use can liberation theology make of the Old Testament concept which it seeks to reclaim, of life as peace and freedom? On a basic level, there is the observation that those who are put to death through economic and political oppression belong to a generation which can never rise again, as they die a ‘death too soon (*mueren “antes de tiempo”*)’, ‘from hunger or the bullet’.⁵⁶ This indignation coheres with the widespread understanding of political rights as an entitlement to share, positively or in contestation, in the fortune of a generation. But this understanding has no inherent need for the utopian imagination and is rendered problematic by historical determinism. A more adequate connection between the Deuteronomistic notion of life and the idea of political rights is to envisage rights as the testament of previous generations, of the debt incurred through the injustice of its political relations. This debt accrues in the context of a broader covenant, otherwise it takes the form of individual or formal reparations which are ineffective on the level of utopia.⁵⁷ It could be said that the appeal to rights, in the form Gutiérrez makes it, is really an appeal to memory, to an inheritance from the powerless and disenfranchised, ‘history’s

⁵⁵ Lev. 26.33–35. Cf. Jill Middlemas, *The Troubles of Templeless Judah* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 26–32.

⁵⁶ *PPH*, 77/134–5, 89/155.

⁵⁷ One may refer to the contemporary ambiguous effectiveness of expressions of historical remorse or of affirmative action; their methodical and singular application seems to produce some resentment without decisive advancement in a common project.

anonymous witnesses'.⁵⁸ In terms of classical political theory, this interpretative extension of the notion of testament might be seen as a metaphor confusing the public and the private. Admittedly, Gutiérrez does not use the term 'testament', but he does refer to the use of history as to that of a possession and resource.⁵⁹ The right of ownership is transferred from witnesses⁶⁰ to current revolutionaries; the deaths of the martyrs of liberation, whose 'very corpses are subversive',⁶¹ are such political testaments. Hence Gutiérrez refuses an interpretation of political rights as access to the Machiavellian *fortuna*; rather, they are either rights to continue a history of oppression or rights to reclaim a history of liberation.

Is the dissociation of a utopian history of the poor from the political history of a nation permanent? One factor in the turn towards the language of rights might have been the opportunity of involvement in democratic politics, including the opportunity to exhort the electorate in the recurring moments of collective decision. This is one aspect of the formation of consciences which recent circumstances have allowed Gutiérrez to take up directly, and he uses the opportunity to focus on the temptation of polarization which the nation will inevitably fall into if everyone expresses themselves according to their interests. Accordingly, he outlines the role of conscience in a democracy as enabling the citizen to go 'beyond one's own interests, especially where the rights of others are affected'—including the 'right to a life of dignity' which is compromised by clientelism. A political conscience is one which tunes self-expression into the project of a nation united both politically and economically.⁶² The threat of globalization is that of a new phase in the relation of dependency, one in which the discrepancies between the sectors of society which have successfully identified themselves with interests represented on the global market and the marginalized rest are augmented, so that the possibility of a united self-

⁵⁸ *PPH*, 89/155. Nevertheless, this need not be taken as a substitution for traditional Christian eschatology, whose advantage over Marxist eschatology was described by Pannenberg as lying especially in the reparation afforded for the injustices of the whole of history (*ST* 3. 549/592, 586/631).

⁵⁹ *PPH*, 201/370.

⁶⁰ 'The true pulse of history can be taken only by listening to the heart of the lowly, so often anonymous, Latin Americans (*el pueblo profundo y muchas veces anónimo de América Latina*).'
(*PPH*, 76/132.)

⁶¹ *PPH*, 89/155.

⁶² 'Un voto de conciencia', *La República*, 2 June 2011. In light of Gutiérrez's usage elsewhere, 'people' should not be understood here in what Pocock characterizes as the American meaning of the term, 'an undifferentiated mass, possessed of infinitely diverse qualities' (Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 517).

repositioning in relation to the outside world becomes even more problematic.⁶³ Against this development Gutiérrez opposes the project of a national solidarity based in what unfortunately has through globalization become the distinguishing mark of entire societies, the marginalized underclass.⁶⁴ The weakness of such occasional interventions is that they are restricted to the eloquence of pastoral messages and tend to use language appealing to the broadest audience possible, hence rather ambiguous in its implications; nevertheless, they afford a small glimpse into the substance of the liberation theology project of political education by speaking from the life of those constricted to death.⁶⁵

Gutiérrez conceived his political theology in contrast with Maritain's earlier project, in which 'individual lay Christians undertake actions that are directly ordered to a natural end and indirectly ordered to a supernatural end'.⁶⁶ The locus of the mystery is not merely the final spiritual denouement to which voluntary intervention tries to attach itself; one's own historical and social positioning is the object of a providential disposition which has to be inquired about—that is, if 'building the temporal city is not merely the stage of "humanization", of "pre-evangelization"', but 'to place oneself in the full swing of a salvific process which comprises the entire person and the entire human history.'⁶⁷ How is the kind of education to be imagined that would prepare one to deal with such a confounding task as placing 'oneself in the full swing of a process'?

⁶³ *PPH*, 192/351: 'the theory of dependence is not predicated primarily of relations between states, but between social classes'; perhaps a change of emphasis from 'Freedom and Salvation', 58: 'freedom for the West meant oppression for others' (cp. *TL*, 21/44ff.). It should be noted that in Gutiérrez's analysis, the primary cause for the fact that in Latin America there was little respect for life or the 'right to be free and autonomous' was dependence (*PPH*, 37/65–6).

⁶⁴ Cp. *God of Life*, 22–3: 'The identity of Israel is rooted in the relation between the poor and the nation.'

⁶⁵ 'Un voto de conciencia'.

⁶⁶ Schubeck, 'Reconstruction of Natural Law', 155.

⁶⁷ *TL*, 159–60/211.

III. Education and Politics

Against 'political education': adult autonomy

One has to agree with Hannah Arendt that inasmuch as it represents either the accumulation of information or the cultivation of personality, education cannot make up for deficiencies in the 'specifically political forms of being together with others, acting in concert and speaking with each other'.⁶⁸ This observation refers also to the training and experience of leaders.⁶⁹ In a language resounding with Kantian echoes, Arendt insists that 'in the political realm we deal always with adults who are past the age of education, properly speaking, and politics or the right to participate in the management of public affairs begins precisely where education has come to an end.'⁷⁰ The validity of this argument is connected with the assumption that adult education does not differ in kind from that of youth and so 'is politically irrelevant unless its purpose is to supply technical requirements ... needed for participation in public affairs.'⁷¹ There is something to commend in this assumption of irrelevance, as it allows the general extension of education without suspecting in it a potential debasement of political participation via mass movements.⁷² But what would the deplorable application of the metaphor of education in politics mean? It would be the abuse of a self-proclaimed gnostic authority, 'dictatorial intervention, based upon the absolute superiority of the adult', 'the attempt to produce the new as a *fait accompli*'.⁷³ Clearly this is the transfer to politics of a rather limited perspective on education, seen as the handing over of information and training into technical proficiency; only in these terms is the superiority of the teacher unassailable and the production of novelty its demonstration to students. In fact, Arendt does have

⁶⁸ Hannah Arendt, *Human Condition*, 162.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 49.

⁷⁰ 'What Is Authority?' in *Between Past and Future: Six Essays in Political Thought* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961), 91–142 at 119.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (3rd edn., London: Allen & Unwin, 1967), 316. Cp. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (New York: The Free Press, 1952).

⁷³ 'The Crisis in Education', in *Between Past and Future*, 173–196 at 176. Cp. Isaiah Berlin's reservations about positive freedom in superior knowledge ('From Hope and Fear Set Free', in *Liberty*, 252–79 at 271–78).

something to say in favour of another type of the educational paradigm in politics, once we look to the time long before the eighteenth century, which is when the ‘pathos of the new ... developed conceptually and politically’. The acceptable political form of the learning relationship is the process of continuing a unique tradition: ‘politically, authority can acquire an educational character only if we presume with the Romans that under all circumstances ancestors represent the example of greatness for each successive generation, that they are the *maiores*, the greater ones, by definition.’⁷⁴ However, the relevance for today of that Roman origin of authority is problematic, since in the only political society which has managed to place itself under its shadow, the American republic, whose revolution founded ‘a completely new body politic without violence [!] and with the help of a constitution’,⁷⁵ the meaning of the educational paradigm is disputed in the hermeneutic legal controversy whether the constitution represents the codification of a communal event or a transcription of the founding fathers’ permanent intentions.⁷⁶ Why Arendt overlooked this problem is perhaps explained by her dismissal of the problem of Protestant hermeneutics,⁷⁷ since the American legal progressive/originalist dichotomy displays a certain resemblance to the nineteenth-century debate on the character of the Scriptures. A more redeeming cause of this oversight must be Arendt’s intuition that the framework of political tradition is broader than that of legal hermeneutics. Education is a necessary supplement to law in the formation of judgement.

Can this conception be adapted to the liberation idea of political education? Of course, in the matter of mourning there is no definitive and reliable authority; the only guide is friendship. One of the demands of a leader’s position as a representative of a modern nation seems to be to perform publicly a friend’s mourning over figures of public service, even personal rivals.⁷⁸ Meanwhile, when the death of one of its principal political figures becomes an occasion for official public rejoicing, one must recognize an important turning

⁷⁴ ‘What Is Authority?’, 119.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 140.

⁷⁶ See Johnathan O’Neill, *Originalism in American Law and Politics: A Constitutional History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 22, 136–7.

⁷⁷ ‘It was Luther’s error to think that his challenge of the temporal authority of the Church and his appeal to unguided individual judgment would leave tradition and religion intact.’ (‘What Is Authority?’, 128.)

⁷⁸ On this abstract patriotic form of mourning, cf. Nicole Loraux, *The Invention of Athens: The Funeral Oration in the Classical City*, tr. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), 270–8.

point in the fate of that state. One of the reasons for the demise, registered by Arendt,⁷⁹ of the political doctrine of hell must surely be the overwhelming burden it places on the shoulders of survivors; the painful memory of a leader who betrayed the trust of the people and corrupted the institutions of the state is in itself not easy to bear.⁸⁰ Its remembrance becomes the locus from which the relative responsibility of the individual and of the institutions is judged; and since their interplay makes the running of the state, it is also the occasion for reflecting on and reforming their combination. This calculation can take place not only in relation to the actual deaths of political agents, but also in anticipation; however, it is usually obstructed by their identification with a certain programme of temporal change, be it conservative, liberal, or revolutionary. Although inevitably it is this programme which will assume centre-stage in the consciousness of its bearers' historical self-understanding, it would be rather pernicious to short-circuit the logic of responsibility by directly tying the progress of state institutions to its fate. State institutions cannot assume the rhythm inherent to any such programme, but must be reviewed and recalibrated in the course of generations. There is also a personal reason for this caution, in the danger that through personal identification with the movement the suggestion develops that the achievement of its goals somehow removes one's responsibility towards one's own death. A conscience formed exclusively by a political ideal tends to reward itself with the eschatology of a saving secular afterlife, whereas Christian theology is interested in keeping the last things in their proper order, which for all begins with death. Put another way, the problem is that if the anticipation of one's death is removed from the self-mediation of political responsibility, it creates a (utopian or conservative) linear time, in which the calculations of one's ideology are applied with no undue remorse and mourning is excluded because death has been put out of sight. The imposition of a programmatic time inevitably means the dissolution of community. Thus, the spectre of death seems essential to the mediation of political sympathy.

⁷⁹ 'Religion and Politics', in *Essays in Understanding: 1930–1954*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1994), 368–390 at 382–3. Pace Arendt, the doctrine extends to leaders, as well as the masses.

⁸⁰ Cf. Nicole Loraux, *The Divided City: On Memory and Forgetting in Ancient Athens*, tr. Corinne Pache with Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2002), 161–69.

While self-relation to death is closely associated with what H. Mark Roelofs called ‘the confessional life’, the latter concept is ambiguous inasmuch as it is not other-directing, as the practice of mourning is. According to Roelofs, ‘the “confessional life”, or the ‘grounding and sanctification of the private citizen in the particularity of his individual situation and history’⁸¹ through the practice (religious or secular) of self-confession, is perhaps the single most important inheritance that participatory democracy receives from the liberal democratic tradition. The liberal democratic tradition interpreted this idealism as a call to a life of personal self-improvement, whether material or spiritual, or both; the participatory democratic tradition, on the other hand, sees it as a call to the individual to enter and maintain a life of subjectively self-conscious membership in and with community.’⁸²

In programmatic time, personal judgement is overworked, as the schedule of ordinary, other-involving political change has been suspended; in practice, this suspension can take place in what from an outsider’s perspective may seem like the full flight of action. It is in this blindingly empty space that the systematic deployment of terror can most comfortably take place; the state of exception is decreed not in the middle of things, but once the clock has been rushed to the end and the agents of history imagine themselves supra-historical actors.⁸³ Perhaps it is the refusal of this absolute standpoint that explains why unfortunately we may never confronted with Goldingay’s whimsical question as to what theology will have to say ‘when there are no people to liberate’.⁸⁴ Tellingly, however, he puts this question to a theology which he believes has sprouted directly out of a specific social and political context without allowing itself to be first questioned by Scripture, in other words, because he assumes a contrast between a programme running to the time of politics and a more permanent set of questions. I am suggesting that the processes of mourning and the anticipation of death are central in bringing these parallel times in a free relation.

⁸¹ H. Mark Roelofs, ‘Democratic Dialectics’, *The Review of Politics* 60 (1998), 5–29 at 16.

⁸² Roelofs, ‘Democratic Dialectics’, 22–3. Whether his observation that ‘in Latin America, thousands of so-called Liberation theology “base communities” live participatory democracy to almost textbook perfection’ (ibid. 27) raises not just an empirical query, but also provides a theoretical angle on the relation of education and politics will be explored later.

⁸³ Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 463–4.

⁸⁴ John Goldingay, ‘The Hermeneutics of Liberation Theology’, *Horizons in Biblical Theology*, 4 (1982), 133–61 at 141.

Against 'political education': modern self-assertion

The idea of political education might depend on the dialectic of mourning and anticipation, but is it in fact at all legitimate to introduce the notion of 'life' in politics? Can one integrate the meanings of biological life, cultural life, economic life into political life, or should it be restricted to its specifically political sense, i.e. contingency and pluralism? A non-totalitarian way of excluding grief from political life is to accept, even enjoy, the contingency and variety of the conflict for hegemony. Arguably the greatest threat now to liberation theology is not its defeat in national or ecclesiastical politics, but its slide into theoretical irrelevance; in this respect one of its major weak points is precisely the option for the poor, which could be seen from the perspective of a theory of hegemony such as that developed by Laclau and Mouffe as excessively isomorphous with the traditional Marxist theory of the historical subject.⁸⁵ Leninism is the most striking form of this errant tradition, precisely because the unity of the subject is achieved through education, i.e. propaganda.⁸⁶ Even for Gramsci, who seems to offer a better approximation for the relation between the theoreticians of liberation theology and the poor, 'though the diverse social elements have a merely relational identity—achieved through articulatory practices—there must always be a single unifying principle in every hegemonic formation, and this can only be a fundamental class'; this is 'the inner essentialist core which continues to be present in Gramsci's thought'.⁸⁷

For Laclau and Mouffe, following Derrida, hegemony is 'a theory of the decision taken in an undecidable terrain'. This requires a defence, akin in purpose to that made by Arendt, of the autonomy of the political, of political decisions as 'articulations ... retrieving an act of political institution that finds its source and motivation nowhere but in itself'. To 'defend liberalism whilst at the same time accepting the criticisms Schmitt makes of

⁸⁵ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985), 118.

⁸⁶ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 59.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 69

individualism and rationalism' means to restore the true pluralism of the political sphere.⁸⁸ The political is undervalued not just in its classical Marxist subordination to the economic base, but also by the confident proclaimers of the supersession of Marxism, according to whom 'we are now living under conditions of "reflexive modernization" where the adversarial model of politics, of us versus them, does not apply anymore.' For these post-Marxists radical politics 'should concern "life" issues and be "generative", allowing people and groups to make things happen; and democracy should be envisaged in the form of a "dialogue", controversial issues being resolved through listening to each other.'⁸⁹ Is perhaps the rhetoric of liberation theology not guilty of a similar suppression of pluralism in resorting to the notion of life as a universal rallying cry?⁹⁰ Against any premature consensus, Laclau and Mouffe argue for the possibility of transformation driven by the solidarity of political identities.⁹¹ However, since social transformation is impossible in the absence of economic changes, they acknowledge that 'neither the political identity nor the economic identity of the agents crystallizes as differential moment of a unified discourse', and that 'the relation between them is the precarious unity of a tension.'⁹²

Although scarcely put in these terms, it is clear that the argument for 'the return of the political' is made in the name of freedom. In the first place, the specific character of political action means that it creates its own language, with its own pleasures and its own history, with no cipher to translate it into a more basic reality.⁹³ The conflicts which make up its history are antagonisms 'at the same level of discourse'; it is, indeed, 'certain discourses' themselves which 'tendentially construct the division of a single political space in two opposed fields.'⁹⁴ But, just as importantly, the development of this language cannot be codified into a 'stagist' algorithm of transformations. Instead, the telos is characterized as the eruption of a new identity: 'there are no privileged points for the unleashing of a socialist political practice; this hinges upon a "collective will" that is laboriously

⁸⁸ Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London: Verso, 1993), 123.

⁸⁹ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony*, p. xv. For a comparable crisis in liberation theology, see the suggestion that Marxism should be revised and supplemented in pastoral dialogue with the middle classes (Libânio and Antoniazzi, 22–3).

⁹⁰ Cf. German Gutiérrez, 'Ethic of Life and Option for the Poor'.

⁹¹ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony*, p. xii.

⁹² *Ibid.* 121.

⁹³ *Ibid.* 58.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 132, 137.

constructed from a number of dissimilar points', a labour which evidently does not exclude a definite element of historical contingency, since 'popular struggles are merely specific conjunctures resulting from the multiplication of equivalence effects among the democratic struggles'—in other words, 'the meaning of each struggle is not given from the start.'⁹⁵ It may not find a meaning at all, other than its own pleasure, and Laclau and Mouffe have to admit that expressions of the modern demand for autonomy may not result in a collective will at all, but only in a 'proliferation of particularisms'.⁹⁶ This is not that much of an embarrassment if one holds that 'what is truly modern' is the very 'idea of self-assertion',⁹⁷ but it is nevertheless a disappointment that they do not always grant access to that higher form of collective freedom.⁹⁸

The multiplication of particularisms has been connected by Laclau and Mouffe with 'the search for a new privileged revolutionary subject'; however, a whole range of local and contextual struggles ('the ecological movements, the student movements, feminism') have failed to resolve this quest, since there can be no such subject. A comparable tendency may be observed in various more recent strands of liberation theology,⁹⁹ but also in the work of veterans, for instance in Leonardo Boff's effort to 'make possible dialogue and convergence in diversity between the geographical and ideological poles of the world.'¹⁰⁰ It seems as if Boff's motive was not just disappointment in the revolutionary potential of the poor, the initial subject of liberation theology, but rather a theoretical impulse towards exhaustiveness: 'the starting point must also be redefined, namely, the option for the poor, including the most threatened beings in creation. The first of these is planet Earth as a whole.'¹⁰¹ Unfortunately, an all-embracing standpoint easily leaves the question of agency behind: are the poor those called to save the Earth? Or rather are those who should have opted for the poor but have not, who should have cared for the Earth but have not, still

⁹⁵ Ibid. 87, 137.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 165.

⁹⁷ Cf. Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, tr. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983), esp. 138. This is precisely the idea of modern freedom which Pannenberg attacks as illegitimate.

⁹⁸ Mouffe, *Return of the Political*, 124.

⁹⁹ For a critique, see Ivan Petrella, *Beyond Liberation Theology: A Polemic* (London: SCM, 2008), 93ff.

¹⁰⁰ Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, tr. Philip Berryman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997), 114.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 113.

the ones able to avert ecological disaster?¹⁰² Laclau and Mouffe's retrospective should at least warn us that an all-inclusive paradigm, even one based on the concept of life, is not the most promising way forward for liberation theology.

One might in fact see Laclau and Mouffe's defence of the autonomy of the political precisely as the vindication of a revised conception of vitality: not as a flux which promotes change through all the sectors it penetrates, but as the recalcitrance of self-organization in the face of imposed order. The autonomy of the political is warranted by its spontaneous and simultaneous generation from the various points in which the field of hegemonic discourse is pierced by the impulse of self-assertion. From this point of view there is even a resemblance to Arendt's praise for the virtue of courage 'as one of the most elemental political attitudes'.¹⁰³

Gutiérrez's response to Laclau and Mouffe's version of vitality as the self-assertion of the particular would probably be in line with his response to Richard Shaull's essay on 'The Death and Resurrection of the American Dream', a response in which he suggested that too broad a conception of revolutionary transformation would inevitably diminish the contribution that can be made by theology, which cannot abandon either its symbolic language or the requirements of its rationality.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, Gutiérrez's statement that 'human reason has become political reason'¹⁰⁵ has to be interpreted in the context of his criticism of the development in modernity of an autonomous rationality of the state.¹⁰⁶ Is not the purpose of a theory of education precisely to derail this course, to reintegrate into a rational movement the reflexes and instincts of political combat, to perform the necessary mediation between the impulse of self-assertion and the prospect of a progressive history?

¹⁰² It should perhaps be mentioned that in Gutiérrez's own view, even the poor have to opt for the poor (*Essential Writings*, 146; *Spiritual Writings*, 255); cf. above, Ch. 4. vi.

¹⁰³ *Human Condition*, 35; cf. Mansfield, *Manliness*.

¹⁰⁴ 'Response', in *Liberation and Change*, 181–84 at 182. *PPH*, 194/354–5: theology should not be practised in continuation of the rationalist tradition but it must take account 'of the symbolic language in which the people expressed their resistance, their combats, and their religious experience'.

¹⁰⁵ *TL*, 47/76.

¹⁰⁶ 'Freedom and Salvation', 29.

Political Education as Praxis

The essential question is: Is political education as an autonomous praxis capable of mediating a consciousness of political responsibility which makes available to it the experiences of mourning and the anticipation of death? One path to explore this question is through the theory of the most influential educator associated with liberation theology, Paulo Freire. He set out by criticizing the traditional learning process,¹⁰⁷ which relies on memory rather than experience and in which ‘the contents, whether values [including identity] or empirical dimensions of reality, tend ... to become lifeless and petrified’. The traditional teaching relationship, in contradiction to the Sartrean ethos of the subject, ‘involves a narrating Subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students).’¹⁰⁸ By contrast, liberating education ‘is a learning situation in which the cognizable object (far from being the end of the cognitive act) intermediates the cognitive actors’, the teacher as well as the students;¹⁰⁹ they are transformed as subjects through critical engagement with the object of knowledge. Without the help of an educational theory of transformation, left and right become enmeshed in symmetrical errors: ‘the rightist sectarian differs from his or her leftist counterpart in that the former attempts to domesticate the present so that (he or she hopes) the future will reproduce this domesticated present, while the latter considers the future pre-established—a kind of inevitable fate, fortune or destiny.’¹¹⁰ To put it another way, the same fossilizing tendency involved in handing down educational material is in evidence in the reactionary management of social institutions.¹¹¹ This conclusion seems based on a Sartrean characterization of unfreedom as the removal of the future from the subject’s sphere of creativity, rather than on Marxist orthodoxy. Through education

¹⁰⁷ This is a suitable starting-point because the presence of the teacher is inherently political. (Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage*, tr. Patrick Clarke (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), 90.)

¹⁰⁸ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, tr. Myra Bergman, (30th anniversary edn., New York: Continuum, 2003), 71, 77. On the connection of this mode of teaching with narrative reason, see Moacir Gadotti, *Reading Paulo Freire: His Life and Work*, tr. John Milton (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 52.

¹⁰⁹ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 79, 80.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. 38. Such an attitude is contrary even to the principle of animal life—the body resists fatalism. (Freire, *Letters to Cristina: Reflections on My Life and Work*, tr. Donaldo Macedo with Quilda Macedo and Alexandre Oliveira (London: Routledge, 1996), 123–4).

¹¹¹ Gutiérrez similarly contrasts a liberative orientation to the future and the conservation of wealth (*TL*, 214/277).

this attitude is instilled even in the oppressed, who are made 'fearful of freedom'.¹¹² All in all, this amounts to a dehumanization of both politics and education, because 'action is human only ... when it is not dichotomized from reflection.'¹¹³

As the object of political education is the concrete situation in which political subjects find themselves, the process of humanization involves several stages towards creating the appropriate language for its transformation. The first stage investigates 'the thought-language with which men and women refer to reality'.¹¹⁴ The second stage of 'decoding' is also that of consciousness-raising, introducing a general awareness of the shape of society; it means 'moving from the part to the whole and then returning to the parts' so that 'the Subject [may] recognize himself in the object (the coded existential situation) and recognize the object as a situation in which he finds himself, together with other Subjects.'¹¹⁵ Finally, there is the stage of dialogue ('the essence of revolutionary action'¹¹⁶) between the community and its political and educational leaders; while it is not possible to short-circuit the preceding sequence, 'the earlier dialogue begins, the more truly revolutionary will the movement be.' Freire admits however that dialogue does not guarantee representation, and hence it may degenerate into confrontation.¹¹⁷ It is therefore all the more important that leaders should be guided by the rhythm of the educational process, rather than that of political opportunity.¹¹⁸ The necessity of combining witness and analysis is demonstrated in this dialogue,¹¹⁹ not because each partner is assigned a different task but because unequal proportions of the two tasks can be corrected.

The purpose of the educational process is not the success of a political movement, but the development of society as a whole. Although in the wake of their first setbacks the

¹¹² Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 47; and individualistic, Gutiérrez would add (*PPH*, 97/166). Cf. *Pedagogy of Freedom*, 69–72; for Freire's evolution towards a pedagogy of hope, see Daniel Schugurensky, *Paulo Freire*, Continuum Library of Educational Thought, 16 (London: Continuum, 2011), 92.

¹¹³ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 53.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* 97.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* 105.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* 135, n. 10.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* 128, 165.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* 149. Cp. Freire, *Pedagogía de la autonomía: Saberes necesarios para la práctica educativa*, tr. Guillermo Palacios (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1997), 117–20.

¹¹⁹ *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 176.

oppressors ‘genuinely consider themselves to be oppressed’, once ‘the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation.’¹²⁰ However, since privileged adherents of an oppressive ideology obviously cannot undergo the same educational stages as the poor, their conversion is the task of what Freire calls ‘cultural synthesis’, which is ‘a mode of action for confronting culture itself, as the preserver of the very structures by which it was formed’.¹²¹ The test of development is set out in Sartrean terminology as ‘whether or not society is a “being for itself”. If it is not, any other achievements indicate modernization rather than development.’¹²² The status of a mature society is fundamentally an existential-political condition rather than an objective economic distribution: ‘movement [towards development] occurs not only in space, but in the existential time of the conscious searcher.’¹²³

The chief weakness of Freire’s programme of education seems to be its inherent reliance on the traditional Marxist distinction between base and superstructure; in fact, its focus falls on the superstructure as the plane which allows the reproduction of the relations of the economic base.¹²⁴ Interestingly, Freire does not show much interest in the transformations which the ideology of oppression itself performs and estimates that in both education and society it is the same inertia of going along with things ‘in themselves’, of a lack of reflection which preserves an inadequate situation.¹²⁵ This adaptation of Sartrean language raises the question: how is such mechanical reproduction possible? Not simply through a perverse attachment to oppressive ideology, but through deferral to the operation of external organisms and forces, by submitting to the flow of the surfaces of life. Life in itself, without consciousness, is closed to freedom; by contrast, the spectre of death whose threat creates threshold-situations provides an opportunity for meaningful change. Freire adopts a positive interpretation of Jaspers’ idea of ‘limit-situation’ as separating ‘not

¹²⁰ Ibid. 57, 54.

¹²¹ Ibid. 180.

¹²² Ibid. 162. Cp. *Letters to Cristina*, 153–57.

¹²³ *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 160–1.

¹²⁴ Education is initiated separately from economic change.

¹²⁵ On Freire’s failure to engage sufficiently with the adversarial nature of relations of power, see Schugurensky, 141.

being from nothingness, but ... being from being more'¹²⁶ and derives people's ability to deal with limit-situations from their capacity to overcome their immediate circumstances.¹²⁷ His project is that of politics reformed according to an ideal model of education, rather than politics in its contingency serving as an education in the possibilities of mortal freedom; indeed, it is only because he believes that politics can be raised to this higher form that he also believes politics can ultimately reform economic reality. Gutiérrez makes the opposite statement, that 'it is within the context of the political (*lo político*) that the human being rises up as a free and responsible being.'¹²⁸

IV. Political community

The shortcomings of Freire's theory alert its reader to the inevitable limitations of extending to the political sphere a subject/object distinction developed according to external definitions: Freire is able to explain very well how individuals or small groups can become self-conscious free subjects, less so how society as a whole, whose reintegration in some way depends on a 'cultural synthesis', could ever exist for-itself in an analogous way, especially since its constituting temporalities are so different.¹²⁹ This is not only Freire's problem: Gutiérrez as well insists that the poor should become agents of their own liberation, but does not describe in very much detail what sort of political community could allow all its members this possibility. Just as class struggle is a fact, but not 'the motive power of history' or 'law of history',¹³⁰ and so can be abolished, so also the forms of liberation struggle in evidence in capitalism should eventually become sublated into a political organization which allows peaceful reform: 'Christians may not give up on the

¹²⁶ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 99 n. 15.

¹²⁷ Cp. Pannenberg's anthropological idea of freedom, Ch. 1. iii.

¹²⁸ *PPH*, 47/83. Adapting Metz's definition, he gives the broader meaning of the political as 'the sphere for the exercise of a critical freedom won through history' (*TL*, 47/76), and the narrower meaning as an 'orientation to power'.

¹²⁹ And, as Gillian Rose points out, a resolution of the problem of reification through change in consciousness can only be contemplated in a paradigm of Fichtean inspiration in which the reproduction of social relations takes place through the 'acts of a total social subject' (*Hegel contra Sociology* (London: Athlone Press, 1981), n. 156).

¹³⁰ *Truth*, 38/53.

promotion of peace, but the peace they are promoting must be built on authentic, permanent, and just foundations.¹³¹ One notion of peace which Gutiérrez vehemently rejects is that of the reconciliation of conflicting interests through bargaining, the appeasement of the desires of different freedoms through the law of the market—that would be a peace based on the enforcement of a framework which does not disclose its own interest.¹³² But assessing the justice of forms of property is a heuristic exercise¹³³—so whose task is the construction of the just political framework to conduct this exercise? Where will the pre-economic political community be found? After all, there is no ‘untainted and authentic core of popular culture that provides the basis for an identity that is meaningful and organization that is possible’.¹³⁴ Is ‘the community which seeks to do the good’, as Robert Araujo envisages it, ‘a community of sympathy’, meaning “‘the political equivalent of love” in which each views the other as complementary rather than as an antagonistic will, and treats the other as a concrete individual rather than as a role occupant’?¹³⁵ Perhaps such a description would better describe the church, because it seems impossible to so abstractly subtract the relations of economic production from a description of political society.

Gutiérrez frequently invokes as the ideal of political community the traditional socialist image of a community that fosters the development of all human capacities, an image which could be read as reviving the Romantic notion of self-expression.¹³⁶ According to Thomas A. Lewis, who uses Charles Taylor’s category of ‘expressivism’,¹³⁷ what is ‘central to Gutiérrez’s expressivism is the claim that human action must be understood as expressing an underlying potential or impulse and that this potential only becomes real,

¹³¹ Ibid. 67/87.

¹³² ‘Freedom and Salvation’, 31.

¹³³ *Truth*, 155/196.

¹³⁴ Daniel H. Levine, ‘On Premature Reports of the Death of Liberation Theology’, *The Review of Politics*, 57 (1995), 105–31 at 107. Not that Gutiérrez would claim this: ‘the poor are a by-product of the system in which we live and for which we are responsible’ (*PPH*, 44/79), not a positive first reality.

¹³⁵ Robert J. Araujo, ‘Political Theory and Liberation Theology: The Intersection of Unger and Gutiérrez’, *Journal of Law and Religion*, 11 (1994–5), 63–81 at 76.

¹³⁶ Perhaps even in the more Marxist sense of using the various capacities of production? The meaning can certainly not be Aristotelian in the context of Gutiérrez’s theology.

¹³⁷ Cf. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 368–90.

only becomes what it is, through expression in action.’¹³⁸ Our understanding of an impulse grows once it finds an outlet in actuality.¹³⁹ Hence a community of self-expression might possibly emerge organically from the unity of a common praxis, as praxis and self-understanding influence each other in turn. Lewis draws attention to the implications of Gutiérrez’s willingness to brook extensive partnership between religious and secular promoters of popular aspirations: ‘sharing an interpretation of this praxis is not essential to belonging together or to being able to engage in meaningful dialogue. Nor does shared action presuppose, as Hauerwas claims, a common tradition.’¹⁴⁰ However, even granting Gutiérrez’s proviso that ‘the deeper unity of a community that is on pilgrimage in history is a unity that is never fully achieved’,¹⁴¹ Lewis is sceptical that a common programme of reform ‘constitutes a foundation for a community’.¹⁴² Especially considering the propensity of radical political projects towards fragmentation, ‘orthopraxis can be just as repressive and divisive as orthodoxy.’ Lewis therefore believes that in judging the origin of community Gutiérrez has tilted the balance too much in favour of action at the expense of consciousness.¹⁴³ This objection seems partially motivated by the divisions which the emergence of liberation theology exposed within the Latin American church. The fact that Lewis employs an ambiguous unitary denomination of ‘community’, rather than employ the distinction one might be readily inclined to make between a political and religious community, puts one in mind of the old crude criticism that liberation theologians themselves have blurred this line and replaced traditional sacramental ecclesiology with factional boundary definitions. However, it is not, in fact, the right combination between self-definition through tradition and through action that is the key to the emergence of a uniting self-expressive community, since these two media of self-definition are inherently porous;¹⁴⁴ it is rather, as perhaps less sophisticated commentators

¹³⁸ Thomas A. Lewis, ‘Actions as the Ties that Bind: Love, Praxis and Community in the Thought of Gustavo Gutiérrez’, *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 33 (2005), 539–67 at 540.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 544.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 558; cp. John Milbank’s exhortation that Christians opposing to globalization the alternative vision of the City of God ‘may do this alongside many secular co-workers: socialists, communists and anarchists’, who are however perilously mistaken in their drive towards ‘pure flux and unmediated difference’ (*Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon* (London: Routledge, 2003), 210).

¹⁴¹ *TL* (rev. edn., London: SCM, 1988), 161, quoted in Lewis, ‘Actions’, 560.

¹⁴² Lewis, ‘Actions’, 559.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 562.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Stanley Hauerwas, ‘Character, Narrative, and Growth in the Christian Life’, in *The Hauerwas Reader*, ed. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 221–254.

immediately sense, a question of the space within which defining action takes place. What the unsophisticated older critics of liberation theology felt was that the itinerary of the church community was being dragged into a terrain which is not its own, in a sphere where it does not properly belong: the arena of politics.¹⁴⁵

Significantly, the most conventional expression of this criticism is to draw attention to the collapse of the distance between the temporal and the eternal. Perhaps the germ of this attitude is to be found in an unconscious development of the Pauline injunction that we may not mourn like those who have no hope.¹⁴⁶ Or perhaps the originating phenomenon was the distinctive Christian reaction, prescribed in the gospels, to the Jewish experience of the loss of the land.¹⁴⁷ The separation between the church of the eternal and the temporal state is born in such cases from a reluctance to mourn for the secular spectacle. This observation does not, of course, refer to a literal rule; but, generally speaking, when grief was admitted, even to some degree prescribed, it was related to a mourned special destiny, rhetorically or ritually exorcized, and then finalized by a retreat to the status quo.¹⁴⁸ It did not, in short, tie itself with the secular fortunes of policies or parties. This is not to say that, instead, Christian and secular grief should or can take identical forms. While secular political grief cannot leave the public sphere in which the actions of the mourned took place, in the perspective of Christianity (which takes over this feature from Judaism) the absence of the departed is not merely temporal, but also spatial: grief is the experience of departure as exile and implies the recognition of an emerging forcible distance within the community—the public square is no longer the natural home of the departed;. This territorial separation happens not necessarily on account of the distinction between *ecclesia militans* and *ecclesia triumphans*, but rather on account of a previously developed division between private and public at the line of death.¹⁴⁹ So the Christian

¹⁴⁵ Edward Norman, 'The Imperialism of Political Religion', in Nash (ed.), *Liberation Theology*, 121–138 at 134–5.

¹⁴⁶ 1 Thess. 4.13–4.

¹⁴⁷ Mk 13.14ff.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. *Luther's Works* 51. 231–255 on 'Christian and moderate (*guter massen*)' mourning, and for later evolutions O. C. Edwards, Jr., 'Varieties of Sermon: A Survey of Preaching in the Long Eighteenth Century', in Joris van Eijnatten (ed.), *Preaching, Sermon and Cultural Change in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2009) 3–56 at 27–34.

¹⁴⁹ See even the formula 'slept with his ancestors and was buried with his ancestors' repeated in the Book of Kings when death removes a king of Israel or Judah from his anointed role. Cp. 1 Kgs 14.13.

process of healing the fear of death is to be received individually; nevertheless, its objective powers are coded in signs that make a public witness. A prefiguration of this paradigm, even before the development of belief in personal immortality, is King David's mourning of Jonathan through the privileges extended to his helpless son Mephibosheth.¹⁵⁰ Here one can notice that the public performance of mourning is inseparable from the notions of gratitude and compensation. A complementary example is the reformation of Israel as a state based on unity in purifying suffering.¹⁵¹ The period of exile is itself one of mourning, which a new liberation after the manner of the exodus brings to an end. The lesson of the first example is that the exercise of power does not preclude the working out of grief in positive public forms, while the second shows the potential of mourning in solidarity to reform relations of power.

However, where political vitality is appreciated only as the contingency of an autonomous sphere, mourning is not associated with the death of a hero or a generation, but originates impersonally in the retraction through time, a fall into the past, of an event—realized through however many individual moments—of common public action; relative attachments to the event echo deeply and can make this grief personally alienating while diffusing a certain nostalgia throughout public consciousness.¹⁵² It may be noticed that this mechanism would contradict the optimistic scenario in which, once stripped of their unfair privileges, the oppressors come to enjoy their status better, without any melancholy or regret. To be sure, this optimism still countenances the pangs of repentance, but not the more basic melancholy appreciation for the energy, enthusiasm and titanic objectivity of abolished capitalist work. In effect, were it to adopt the idea of political autonomy after the manner proposed by Laclau and Mouffe, liberation theology would have to expect that in a 'post-revolutionary' society the distribution of mourning and *ressentiment* would redraw the map of antagonistic social relations seemingly erased by economic redistribution.

More properly considered, however, the idea of the autonomy of the political does not seem to allow any place for mourning at all. The idea that 'as the wise man has sovereign

¹⁵⁰ 2 Sam. 9.

¹⁵¹ Isa. 40ff.

¹⁵² Cf. Peter Marris, *Loss and Change* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974).

right to do all that reason dictates, or to live according to the laws of reason, so also the ignorant and foolish man has sovereign right to do all that desire dictates, or to live according to the laws of desire', which must be one of the axioms of its pluralism, is in fact a consequence of the thought that 'a *free man* thinks of death least of all things' in order to be ruled solely by reason.¹⁵³ For contemporary political Spinozists, freedom is the intersection of various patterns of life in all their marvellous contingencies and death is still an outside limit.¹⁵⁴ Against an autonomous politics of deathless freedom, Gillian Rose observes that personal grief is inherently neither opposed, nor heterogenous to public life.¹⁵⁵ Consequently, the existence of an alternative to pathological mourning depends on whether it is possible to speak of justice in relation to grief or whether the latter is indeed a state beyond moderation. One such alternative would be to uphold mourning as an expression of finite freedom, as a necessary event in the life of a community of justice; to see it as a form of liberation means to recognize that in order to achieve a capacity for just action a community has to go through the process of coming to terms with the public suffering it has harboured. However, this is not to erase its negative character. While Hegel does allow, under the sign of tragedy, a place for mourning as a definite (gendered) form of personal freedom,¹⁵⁶ insofar as common suffering is concerned—as Rose points out—the Hegelian form of political transcendence emphasizes reconciliation to the marginalization of mourning. The subsumption of the historical Good Friday into the speculative Good Friday means that religion is capable of dealing with grief only in the sense of making a representation on behalf of the community: 'the thesis of the end of religion implies "end" in the sense of *telos*, in the sense of religion as ethical life, and in the sense of *finis*, the cessation of religion as formative experience, but it does not imply the

¹⁵³ Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 16.2, p. 196; *Ethics*, 4.67, in *Complete Works*, ed. Michael L. Morgan, tr. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002), 213–382 at 355.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Gilles Deleuze, 'Immanence: A Life', in *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life*, tr. John Rajchman (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 25–34 at 27–29; with Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, tr. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 96–100, 110–1.

¹⁵⁵ Gillian Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law: Philosophy and Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 26.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. the analysis of Hegel's treatment of Sophocles' Antigone in Allen Speight, *Hegel, Literature and the Problem of Agency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 66ff.

end of representation.’¹⁵⁷ On the contrary, it has to be acknowledged that the pain of a community mourning in the search for justice has something religious in nature.

Gutiérrez has reversed the relation between mourning and politics; for him, mourning is not necessarily contained within the boundaries of a private network (the family, the church, one’s friends), but rather the relative expansion or contraction of the experience of grief is constitutive of the relation between public and private life. The poor are those whose plight under the sign of death does not result in public grief, whose mourning could not possibly be contained within the usual narrow public channels because it testifies to the injustice of the organization of society. Even so, this grief infects through what theologically would be designated as conversion. The church is a witness to the power of the crucified Christ and his Spirit in these conversions, and in this power it has the capacity to give mourning a language of symbols and rational questions. Tied in the beginning to the caprice of fortune and even more to economic interests, politics does not acquire a properly autonomous rationality except by accepting its territory to be colonized by the symbols of grief provoked to excess (to borrow Thomas Müntzer’s phrase), by accepting its distribution of power to be changed and attuned to the anticipation of death as a natural and not a violent end. The opposite of this is a path of violent exclusion of mourning, of fetishizing the life of the state in an ideology of national security. The utopian, unrealizable character of the political project of liberation theology lies therefore in the absence of natural balance in the dialectic of life and death; not all will ever be patriarchs who die ‘full of days’. Even so, political responsibility is achieved by learning to develop a practice of mourning in accordance with justice, and ‘natural death’ is the indispensable limiting case of acceptable death. The ideal of an emancipated society which allows full self-expression thus refers not to the institution of unimpeachable libertarianism, but to a society which has learnt to do justice fully to every one of its generations.

¹⁵⁷ Rose, *Hegel contra Sociology*, 120.

Conclusion

Gutiérrez blurs somewhat the distinction between reform and revolution, focusing not on the discrepancy in method which guides common usage, but on the substantial leap—revolutionary is the appearance of something ‘different in quality’.¹⁵⁸ The objective requirements of a more just society are indicated broadly and idealistically: the abolition of the class system, the extension of political power to greater majorities of the population, and eliminating the private appropriation of wealth.¹⁵⁹ This is because they are not guarantees of freedom; rather, ‘men and women will have to be faithful to a quest for freedom that no political system guarantees’¹⁶⁰—not simply in the sense that the political realm cannot satisfy deeper spiritual desires, but that the political situation itself must be constantly renewed by expressions of those desires. Personal freedom is not only upheld by political liberation, but also a necessary condition for it;¹⁶¹ liberation must first take spiritual roots, especially as a freedom of association and conversion. The difference between an unjust and a just governance is that the desire for permanence expressed in a formal guarantee of peace is impure, inherently unfaithful to the aspirations of personal freedom, whereas a peace which accepts the fact of mortality can guide competing aspirations to an equilibrium. In short, the difference is made by whether murder, in however secretive or disguised a form, is considered a political necessity.

Education is viewed not only as a way of overcoming social burden imposed on the oppressed, but also as a mode of resolving a perennial problem of political philosophy: correlating the divergent speeds of generations. For public life, the processes of mourning and anticipation provide an education for varying the pattern of release and gathering so as to allow personal initiative and public virtue to reinforce each other. If the political space were constituted by irruptions of self-assertion, it would have to be assumed that the desire for freedom is a permanent production of natural bodies and freedom of association would be replaced by the cohesive power of myth. Gutiérrez, on the other hand, argues that it is

¹⁵⁸ *Theology of Liberation*, 48/78.

¹⁵⁹ ‘Freedom and Salvation’, 77.

¹⁶⁰ *Truth*, 59/78.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* 135/172.

the poor who must be taken as the model and subject of an educational process, as according to a Christian viewpoint they are the repository of a lively historical memory, even though the economic and political system destines them towards death.

Unlike in Pannenberg, the chief object of Gutiérrez's political thought is not the state, but the political life as such. However important it is to recognize, as Pannenberg does, that one of the roles of the state is to build a coherent narrative of justice, such a narrative will never become believable to successive generations unless it is interrupted, questioned, and inspired by a remembrance from 'the underside of history'. In its relation to the eschaton, its finitude would remain an abstract certainty, unless stamped by the events of a concrete struggle for justice. The political desire for freedom is at its most vibrant in the awareness of the limits, possibilities, and duties of mortality.

Conclusion

It seems suitable at the end of this study to review some of the divergences which have become apparent between the ways in which Pannenberg and Gutiérrez carry out their conceptualization of freedom. If, in introducing the topic of freedom and my choice of authors, I submitted that a hermeneutic approach from theology to politics would offer better hopes for a dialogue with political theory, it is only reasonable to expect some accounting for the practical contradictions between the two authors whose study appeared equally suitable to that aim. I hope to point out once again that their differences are not the result of a straightforward choice between right and left, but of sometimes subtle variations of theological perception and reflection in matters in which theology should rightly continue to inquire as its own heritage; in other words, I will delineate at first those questions areas in which ecumenical theological argument may be expected to make a judgement and thereby open up a greater margin for common political reasoning within the Christian community. In particular, I would like to highlight the topics of Christ's present active Lordship and of the presence of the Spirit in the moral and emotional bonds of the church as critical areas in formulating a theology of freedom.

Following this review, I would like to suggest some of the emerging criteria which outline the possibilities for continuing the path of making a theological-hermeneutical account of creaturely agency into a relevant instrument of engagement with politics. As I have shown, for both Pannenberg and Gutiérrez the foundation of their reflection on freedom is a rich and perceptive description of its subjective experience, of our condition as creatures endowed with the desire for freedom. My remarks will have the purpose of abstracting some of the features of these representations which should be part of further efforts towards a theological hermeneutic of politics.

Politics in ecumenical reflection

Pannenberg's account of individual freedom starts from the presupposition that the future is not merely the continuation of the present, but the arrival of a new reality. The continuity of the person is not demonstrated in the possibility of self-reference,¹ but in the material coherence of the evolution of our identity. The contingency of the future may therefore be perceived as a threat to our free identity in the form in which we have a psychological and intellectual grasp of it now; it is possible to accept the future as genuinely new and act freely only by trust in God's destiny. Individuals are no longer constrained by past and present necessity if they are ruled by the sense of destiny which follows from the acknowledgement of divine revelation in Christ. Pannenberg offers a salient argument for the necessity of a hermeneutical evaluation of one's condition of freedom within the widest possible context—an argument which develops much more fully the suggestions about the concept of freedom arrived at by a negative path in the introduction; however, by focusing on the singular demands of individual experience, he overlooks the problem of contemporaneity. The problem of mortality is not so much that it does not allow the construction of a unifying narrative, but that it allows the fabrication of a host of narratives² whose significance to their possessor can be changed ad hoc, according to their plausible utility. In order to prove the exigency of a universal framework of freedom, one cannot rely simply on the common beginning and end of all things, but also on their common present. Gutiérrez has understood this very well in his development of the concept of the density of the present. The difference is Christological: Pannenberg thinks of the will of Christ in strict conjunction with his identity, whereas Gutiérrez is inspired by the traditional dyotheletic concept of the will of Christ's humanity running in coincidence with the choice of the divine will. In the latter perspective, we can say that the human will of Christ, the co-experience of finitude and weakness, is still a persistent reality in the light of which we need to understand his divine will, the election of the poor. We may understand the unity of our finite identities not

¹ Cp. Paul Ricœur's starting point in *Oneself as Another*, tr. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 27–30

² Léon Turner, *Theology, Psychology and the Plural Self* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), 161, 183–4.

only from the perspective of the convergence of time in eternity, but from the real possibility of free association and exchange. However, it also can be admitted that from an apologetic perspective, in which theology wants to be understood by secular thinking as well, Pannenberg's approach would need to come in first. This is not to say that only Christians experience real solidarity, but rather that its normative aspect cannot be proclaimed with the same universality as the judgment of the totality of history.³

Nevertheless, Pannenberg acknowledges the communal expression of freedom and that its first home is the church. As was already clear in the first chapter, for Pannenberg worship has an indelible political character, and the definition of true worship coincides with that of freedom as self-differentiation in submission to the Lordship of God exercised in the Lordship of Christ. The church is meant to be a present symbol of the perfect freedom and unity of eschatological society; its primary means for that are, in the continuation of the revelation of Christ, the sacraments and apostolic preaching. Moral action also has a symbolic character, but deliberation is governed rather by the structure of individual freedom than that of community. This rather dilutes the power of the language of 'the body of Christ'; but if one does not want to revert to a legal-politic account of the moral solidarity of the church, it might be necessary to appeal, as Gutiérrez does, to feeling as a mode of configuring the free bodily assembly of the church. Among emotions, joy is the one which comes closest to the feeling of freedom in its temporal arrangement, in the sense that it is not confined to the moment of possession or union but anticipates and builds toward its greater return. Gutiérrez's account of churchly spirituality may be seen as a complement to Pannenberg's notion of the symbolic nature of the church, explicating the forward- and outward-looking structure of symbolizing practice. The church communicates the desire for freedom not only through its essential identity, but also through its bodily distribution and orientation in public space. Part of this task of communication is to challenge the traditions of Stoic self-management and Machiavellian self-assertion which dominate in current visions of democratic public life.

³ This might explain also why Gutiérrez shies away from the idea of communism as an ontological demand, in the vein of Jean-Luc Nancy.

Like the church, the state for Pannenberg is a hermeneutic instance of freedom (albeit a secondary one) on account of its temporal orientation, as its imperfect claim to authority stands in provisionally for the socially unifying role of the eschatological claim and power of God. Precisely on this account, state authority is always in danger of idolatrously overstepping its limits and has to be conceptualized in terms of its function in relation to individual freedom. The advantage of modern states (which have been influenced via liberalism by the tradition of Christian freedom of the radical Protestants) is that they are aware of the nature of their constitutions as historical projects of a just community. Individuals are free to extend or retract their trust in the various alternative paths of developing this project and to thereby regulate it, contributing to the goal of a coherent narrative of reform. On the other hand, for Gutiérrez, the goal of political life is the formation of the political subject of the people; this does not have to be understood as an endorsement of populism, because in the political sphere there is no primordial common experience of temporality. Counterpoints and divergences in individual times are what shape his notion of political freedom as the possibility of sharing a project of generational and historical responsibility that begins with recognizing the freedom to live of those unjustly consigned to death. The recognition of their rights allows us to read the rhythm of political struggle as the returning challenge to allow life to develop without being sacrificed to the accelerated pace of the desire of power. Political education, in other words the specifically political way of interpreting the desire for freedom, amounts to relearning to frame political decisions within the natural practices of mourning and anticipating mortality, to understand justice through the lens of the aspirations of those whose participation in public society has been precluded or foreshortened.

Again, the theoretical distance is not unbridgeable; but the practical remoteness between German Christian democracy and Peruvian democratic socialism allows no synthesis. I believe Pannenberg is more realistic when he puts trust at the centre of the political development of freedom, since this implicitly recognizes that fear is a persistent factor in our common relation to the future. The church is commanded not to be afraid;⁴ any state

⁴ John 14.27, 16.33.

or party has reasonably to reckon with the spectre of failure. Theology can at best hope to combat those public fears which amount to a blatant denial of grace, a refusal to do the good that is clearly possible. Gutiérrez's political vision is not in itself unreasonable, but any step towards it will have to contend with some rational⁵ and some irrational fears. There is no theological method to distinguish between them, if theology follows love; but that also means that it is the example of the action of the church which can remove some of the fears standing in the way of freedom.

Such limitations do not contradict the basic principle, shared by Pannenberg and Gutiérrez, that church and state are two unequal, but equally necessary hermeneutic institutions of freedom. They are this as structures by which the individual's desire for freedom returns through interpretation, allowing the experience of new time as one's own, beyond necessity or contingency. The support of this principle has been the object of this thesis. It seems an important principle to affirm in light of the numerous practical and theoretical assertions of the autonomy of the political and its immunity to theological analysis or argument. However, it has been beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse in detail the various philosophical arguments which would have to support this affirmation in an apologetic context;⁶ I hope nevertheless that its theological interest has been made somewhat clearer.

Another limitation of my thesis has been the rather modest amount of attention expended on the interrelation of politics and economics. Unfortunately, it would be naive to invoke as an excuse for this the pressing limitations of space. There is no easy corollary of a political theology of freedom that would provide a rational solution to the instabilities of capital. However important and urgent a task that may be, it will not appear as a task, nor will any significant proposals towards its accomplishment achieve democratic effectiveness, as long as the vision of the social landscape we inhabit is obscured by the

⁵ e.g. the reaction of the great economic interests and the consequences of radical reform for the integration of a nation in the world economy.

⁶ In Pannenberg, they are mostly already plainly stated; in Gutiérrez's theology, many lie hidden behind concrete intuitions, and part of my purpose was to bring them closer to the surface.

language of discrete rationalities, of a sundered space of politics and a suspended eschatology. It is with the double jeopardy of a unified, yet objectifying, conceptuality and of the sturdy remnant of voluntarism in mind that I propose to sketch in brief an open-ended midway stage for a theological account of personal agency, summarizing some of the arguments produced indirectly in the course of this thesis through the study of Pannenberg and Gutiérrez.

Towards a theological perspective on agency and its linguistic frameworks

The arguments presented in this thesis have established a several lines of orientation within the confusing multiplicity of uses and abuses of the concept of freedom. On their basis, it is possible to outline a model of free agency which, starting from our simultaneous investment in change and order, recognizes freedom as the ability to understand and change the world through the communal medium of language. Such a model is a representation of the belief, echoed throughout this study, that freedom is indeed an art which can be improved by reasoning about its practice. It is time now to look at some of the essential points of this model and flesh out some of the intuitions about the nature of human freedom which have supported so far the dialogue between theological and political perspectives.

In the first place, a constant theme throughout the thesis has been the importance of the choice of language used to describe problematic situations of change. The possibility of dialogue between theology and political theory is usually severely limited at this juncture by the disparity of their respective discourses. Therefore, I have tried to trace in the case of Pannenberg the influence of his notion of individual mission and universal destiny on his view of the historical role of state institutions, and in the case of Gutiérrez the importance of free association with and among the poor for the consolidation of the people as political subject. I have attempted to bring out the links between theological accounts of personal

freedom and the descriptive setting in which questions of political change are raised. At this point I would like to reflect on the relevance of this lexical problem for the subjective experience of freedom, seeing as a hermeneutic perspective on political freedom can only draw its justification from its correspondence with this experience.

In a second step, I would like to develop one upshot of the previous argument, namely that political freedom cannot be completely stabilized into a fixed amount of power available by right to the individual. Because of the constant social negotiation involved in the description of choices, the question of the authenticity or truth of freedom cannot be avoided by relating the desire for freedom solely to its apparent satisfaction. This caveat requires us to mitigate the typically modern conviction that freedom means the ability to control future contingencies. Not only does this Hobbesian interpretation of the desire for freedom stand in tension with the Christian emphasis on the necessity of trust for our future in divine grace, but from a political point of view, it severely misjudges the motivation of political agency, which is surely not confined—except in cases of perversion and failure—to a concern for security. It is for this reason that Gutiérrez judges regimes of ‘national security’ not only as a theological, but also a political disaster. While Pannenberg is more cautious (perhaps at times too cautious) about potential situations of instability, he is clearly not of the opinion that the state should exercise such a purely conservative role.

In practice, it is precisely those governments which legitimize themselves as purveyors of stability that are also the keenest to have in place a close-ended national narrative and therefore to dominate or limit the discussion of the context and meaning of its actions. This should make us wary at a different level of the alluring idea that freedom consists in the idiosyncratic development of a personal narrative. I would like therefore to raise a few objections against the notion that narrative capability and practice are exclusive means of developing a personal identity. It seems to me that far from being the culmination of a hermeneutic approach to the question of freedom, this view rather indicates its premature closure—to ensure its continued sensitivity of to political questions, it is necessary to

avoid reducing the common question of truth to the more congenial riddle of individual identity.

The third and last section addresses the issue of the theological limits of the hermeneutic approach. Surely any method which focuses on the linguistic embeddedness of agency is bound to come short of the full meaning of freedom, given that Christian theology looks forward to the future of a vision beyond language? This question would certainly have been in the mind of readers familiar with the accusations of positivism against Pannenberg and political reductionism against Gutiérrez. At this final point it seems suitable to remind ourselves that the only power truly beyond language is grace, a reality directed not at limiting our powers of language, but at renewing and enriching them—not at confining our reflection, but directing it towards God.

The power of choice and the authority of names

A common pattern of invoking ‘freedom’ in political argument would require setting aside as irrelevant everything else apart from the object it is qualified by: ‘freedom of speech’ may be advocated as if the right to speech is customarily exercised without regard for any of its possible implications, perhaps with the corollary that it must be so exercised; one may similarly advocate free trade, freedom of movement, etc. This pattern of argument has to face at least two problems arising from the wider political use of the idea of freedom. Firstly, if we accept that our recourse to the language of freedom is likely to be extended to a variety of objects standing in a complex, perhaps chaotic, web of relations, there are inevitably certain objects that are privileged over others; the important question is not how strict we are about dividing and keeping separate the regions of the language, in order to arrive at a specific categorization of any specific situation, but rather how far the different usages sustain or cast doubt on each other.⁷ Secondly, because there

⁷ In some cases another word might be more appropriate: instead of ‘free trade’, its opponents may prefer ‘unregulated trade’; surely how compelling the adjectival use of ‘free’ is in one instance depends on what

is no self-evident natural organization of the regions of this language—no indisputable hierarchy of rights—,⁸ one could hope that their mutual relations could become clearer if we could say why we care so much about freedom, so that it is also abhorrent not to care about it; what are the features of our experience in the world that have gradually made it into such an important concept in most cultures of the world?⁹

On the side of theology, the discourse of freedom begins with the postulation of the freedom of God as a characteristic of God's self-relation and descends to God's freedom in relation to the world and especially in the creation of space and time as the parameters through which God acts freely in the world, by allowing and expanding its diversity, providentially coordinating it and bringing the whole to its common fulfilment.¹⁰ The specifically theological problem of the language of freedom is the necessity of describing human action within the context of divine action. The temptation is to describe human freedom as a neutral capacity to decide for or against the divine will. One way to understand this capacity for divergence is in terms of autonomous causal power; this postpones the problem of divine responsibility in the origin of disobedience, which then reappears as the problem of justifying the divine allowance of evil, as the idea of creation *ex nihilo* irrevocably expresses the thought that the temporal creation is all caused in some sense by the eternal creator.¹¹ It is on this account that Schleiermacher rejected the idea of a feeling of absolute freedom, whereas he famously found in the feeling of absolute dependence the key to the experience of faith.¹² In the sense of activity or causative

reasonable connection there is between this instance and others. One measure of this connection is how convincing one finds slippery-slope arguments.

⁸ To use the example of a contemporary controversy, see the problematic relation of the desire for relief and for dignity, right to life and autonomy in John Keown (ed.), *Euthanasia Examined: Ethical, Clinical and Legal Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁹ Friedrich Schleiermacher maintained that to take the sense of freedom as one motivation among others is a perverted course of moral reasoning (*On Freedom*, tr. Albert L. Blackwell (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 77/292).

¹⁰ Cf. Anselm of Canterbury, *Monologion*, esp. 22, 34, in *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and Gillian Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 38, 50–1.

¹¹ For an account of Augustine's solution in terms of the *felix culpa*, see John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 278–80. Pannenberg speaks of this as an eschatological bearing out of God's responsibility (ST 2. 173/200–1).

¹² Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1928), §4.3, p. 15f.

capacity, absolute freedom belongs to God and everything else finds itself in a context in which it is part of a larger whole, possessed with a relative degree of freedom according to the order of the single divine will for the world.¹³ Schleiermacher's concentration on the problem of causality explains why one of fathers of hermeneutics did not develop a hermeneutic understanding of freedom.¹⁴

One way to avoid the problem of a self-causing rebellious will is to shift the focus on the deceptive potential inherent in language, the natural inclination for linguistic inventiveness and the unsteady association of language with reality—after all, in the story of the Fall, Eve does not simply pick up the fruit of the forbidden tree, but is persuaded by the serpent's attractive description. However, how then are we to understand salvation? Is it our restoration to a single language in which God speaks his revelation?¹⁵ Is freedom equivalent to linguistic precision and constancy?

In short, the language of freedom seems then to be prone to excessive fluidity in the political realm and to a certain rigidity in a theological context. How could these two very different patterns of usage be better understood together? A starting point may be provided by the observation that there is one phenomenon attached to the thought of human freedom in all the numerous directions it has extended, a phenomenon itself universal and hence obscurely vague: change.¹⁶ Change in itself has never been confused with freedom: even when the sphere attributed to 'life' has been extended to refer to all facets of reality, this has meant taking up the category of non-free necessity within that of life. Instead, the usual basic idea of freedom is that of a consciousness preliminary to

¹³ Ibid., §54.4, pp. 216–18; §80, pp. 326–30.

¹⁴ The difference between this approach and Pannenberg's is made clear in the latter's remark that 'Schleiermacher all too quickly interpreted the element of receptivity and stateness (*Zuständlichkeit*) as dependence in contrast to freedom.' (*ATP*, 253/246.)

¹⁵ Cf. Rist, *Augustine*, 36–38; language is eventually to be replaced by sight. For the secular aftermath of this idea (including the notion of a language of images), see Umberto Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language*, tr. James Fentress (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

¹⁶ Cf. Karl Rahner, 'Ursprünge der Freiheit', in *Gnade als Freiheit: Kleine theologische Beiträge* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1968), 54–74 at 60: 'There is no fulfilment for corporeal man which does not have some materiality. Time-space (*die Raum-Zeitlichkeit*) is the external atmosphere in which man's act of freedom completes itself.'

change, its unseen beginning. Our inquiring tendency makes us move ever backwards, so that the same question asked of the apparent change is posed to the hidden precursor: what is hidden behind consciousness itself? The problem of determinism centres on whether the consciousness of the agent is truly a new switch,¹⁷ a reality that can alter the way in which causes and conditions combine for production of the new.

Settling sequences: contingency and narrative

Can one speak of freedom by attributing to thought the power, in analogy with physical force, to determine future change?¹⁸ Why should the question of freedom be any more complicated than the question whether anything new has been produced, brought into the world? With the consideration of consciousness, the linear sequence of external agency receives another dimension which makes it more understandable and shows it as a single line through a two-dimensional space of alternatives. The figure of the agent itself becomes multi-dimensional, as complex as a labyrinthine structure turned inside out. It is owing to this increasing figurative complexity that the questions of determinism arise: whether the agent can arbitrarily choose between alternatives or is determined by an internal chemistry, whether the imagination is capable of genuine breakthrough or rather any choice takes place between predictable options, whether perhaps the experience of the newness of an instant is to guarantee the authenticity (read: freedom) of the agent acting

¹⁷ Deleuze and Guattari's immanent definition provides a thoroughly apposite parody: 'a machine may be defined as a system of interruptions or breaks (*coupures*).' (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, tr. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 38.) (Their immanentism comes out in the further clarification that 'the break or interruption ... presupposes or defines what it cuts into as an ideal continuity ... because ... every machine is a machine of a machine'.)

¹⁸ The validity and limitation of this perspective was discussed by Paul Tillich under the heading of the connection between freedom and fate: 'Every finite thing possesses a certain power of being of its own and thus possesses a capacity for fate. The greater a finite thing's autonomous power of being is, the higher its capacity for fate and the more deeply is the knowledge of it involved in fate.' (*The Protestant Era*, tr. James Luther Adams (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), 15.)

in consciousness of it.¹⁹ That these psychological questions are inescapable indicates, to be sure, something of the essence of freedom as supremely human, something about the intrinsic aims of our discourse about it; but confining the question of freedom to the problem of reading psychological causality involves the paradox of forcing an objectifying viewpoint that intrinsically negates that which it looks for: it cannot show why it is good or why we desire it, if it is simply a different, specifically human form of causality. Thus, the problem of freedom is always also the problem of the knowledge of freedom, because the language we use to describe it also somehow belongs to it.²⁰

Perhaps the solution is to refuse to reduce the subject-object duality to a causal analysis, to situate this irreducible question within the context of a hermeneutic of history. In the duality of the causal relation, freedom as belonging to the internal principle of external change would need to have the character of anticipation, in a series of concordances between internal image-objects of the will and the final picture of reality.²¹ It would be contained in a series of abilities, such as the ability to respond to change in one's environment, the ability to reflect on the effect of change in oneself, the ability to desire different forms of attachments to surrounding objects, and in general to control the boundaries between self and environment.²² For a totally active subject, the succession of

¹⁹ The latter point emerges, with a theological slant, through Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel: 'if God did not have the freedom to intervene at any time and in any way in the course of the world, then man, as taken up concretely in his existence, cannot be concretely free either. ... If history had a necessary course, if God existed only "in a phantastic sense, the soul of a process", no experience of concrete freedom would be possible.' (Jörg Disse, *Kierkegaards Phänomenologie der Freiheitserfahrung* (München: Alber, 1991), 158.)

²⁰ Another lesson of existentialism: 'one cannot address oneself to freedom as such by means of constraint, fascination, or entreaties' (Jean-Paul Sartre, 'What is Literature?', in *What Is Literature? and Other Essays*, tr. Bernard Frechtman (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 21–246 at 55) — not to another's because it is always, as one's own, situated.

²¹ Cp. Pippin's explanation that apperceptive self-awareness may be described as taking a position and 'is something like the avowing of a practical commitment of a sort, something like a projecting (if we stay with the project language) of oneself outward into the world and the future.' (Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel on Self-Consciousness: Desire and Death in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 65.)

²² Pannenberg approves Gehlen's interpretation of culture as an artifice compensating for a lack in human nature (*Mängelwesen*); see Arnold Gehlen, *Man: His Nature and Place in the World*, tr. Clare McMillan and Karl Pillemer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988). But is it possible to describe desire in the terms of such a clear distinction between self and environment? In the old definition of love as desire for union with its object, the object of such a desire is the result of imaginative activity which leaps over causes and conditions and requires the coming into being of a state of affairs with no regard for its temporal precedents. The desire is not, to begin with, the desire for a history; although one may end up 'loving' the

intermediary segments that make up one's will would stand in purely logical interrelations;²³ this form of anticipation as the exercise of an ability is therefore unrealistic to the extent that it ignores the involuntary lag between thought and action and the changes that occur while future action is being thought through. The opposite form of anticipation, waiting, involves a degree of oblivion as to the events of passing time, since time itself becomes the object of concern, the time of the expected occurrence.²⁴ Are we to say then that waiting is the opposite of freedom? What is the relation of freedom to time? It cannot necessary for a subject to have perfect abilities of anticipation in order to be free, as the very question of finite freedom starts with the temporal nature of existence, and to posit such abilities seems designed to counter the effects of time. We may need to leave behind then this action model of historical freedom and define the experience of freedom more generally as the fulfilment of the concern to have a grasp on the relation between change and order, although such 'fulfilment' is certainly not an empirically measurable quantity.²⁵ The concern itself is the intellectual task of freedom, its demand on an effort of hermeneutic self-understanding. And in accordance with what has been said before about the relation between freedom and the language of its concept, we might expect the concept of freedom to be open to hermeneutical clarification and expansion.

history either for itself or on account of the object. So, on the one hand, desire aspires to what we might call a totality or more simply a concrete unity; but it is an unreal unity insofar as it has no history. This same thought seems to me to be present in the distinction formulated by Schleiermacher between instinct and will as aspects of the faculty of desire (*Begehrungsvermögen*), the former involving the push towards a task by a determining object, while the latter is determined through choice (*On Freedom*, 9–11/224–8). Since it is the will that integrates the self into the current of interrelated forces out of which future events emerge, it cannot naturally be said to have as an object a state of events at an unspecified time in the future—although this is perhaps too positive a view of the interplay between will and the current state of affairs; the process of willing is probably more a fumbling about for connections rather than fully set from the start.

²³ This is something Fichte had a very keen sense of (*Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy* (Wissenschaftslehre) nova methodo (1796/99), ed. and tr. Daniel Breazale (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 280), although he believed also that external limitations as real coincide with these segments (ibid. 312). See Günter Zöller, *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy: The Original Duplicity of Intelligence and Will* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 77.

²⁴ Cf. Heidegger's distinction between waiting and awaiting (*Erwarten*) which 'already links itself with representing and what is re-presented.' (Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, tr. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper, 1966), 68.)

²⁵ Certainly the project of freedom cannot be exhausted by sequencing a projected order, in the sense of 'spatialized time'—because transformation cannot be timed like a scientific experiment. (Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, tr. Arthur Mitchell (London: Macmillan, 1911), 342.)

In view of the temporal disturbances that affect the abilities to deal with and in change, the experience of freedom is conditioned by the capacity to relate a meaningful narrative of one's transformation over time. The flexibility of the relation between concern and fulfilment is reflected in their variation of significance awarded to different moments, the different functions they perform in the narrative. Attributions of significance cannot take the form of order merely through casual remembrance, but through an externalized memory aid, the deliberate creation of signs and symbols. Although the narrative form of self-accounting is essential to the experience of freedom, the variety of symbolic combinations means that it is not the only form in which one can describe freedom: rather, there are many other genres which bring out different features of the experience. This variety is also present in the Bible, making the question of the primacy of narrative one of special theological interest: there are biblical narratives of freedom (stories of conversion, of national liberation, of divine guidance through impossible circumstance), there are hymns and psalms of praise for personal or communal liberation, there are laments of one's deprivation of freedom and longing for salvation; in the New Testament there are also proclamations of freedom, testimonies of liberation and arguments defending the true idea of freedom from misconceptions, supplemented by moral exhortations. This variety is rooted in the surplus of meaning created by the arrival of a new reality which overcomes the problem of time, inasmuch as the experience of salvation gives rise to a hope that goes beyond setting aright historical wrongs. There are, to be sure, secular analogies to this variety: but they face the question whether in their production the problem of time was not ignored or set aside rather than overcome.²⁶ Such an evasion is made easier by the inherent durability of certain possible symbols of freedom.²⁷

Another way to give up the requirement of perfect abilities of anticipation and yet evade the problem of time is to turn to good use one dimension of our finitude, our limited

²⁶ Cf. Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*, tr. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984–88), 3. 203–206.

²⁷ Cp. Hannah Arendt on the desire for immortality as impulse to political activity (*The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 19).

store of energy and attention. This limitation can inspire a ‘realistic’ way of conceiving of freedom: when a future aspiration is fixed, the temporal reference point is no longer a mere dot in the flux—this very isolation can be taken as the very essence of freedom, because the self is consummated through dedication and seems to elude the temporal fluctuation of its meaning.²⁸ A sense of destiny may be evoked if this singular point appears as natural in some sense. However, just as attention can be captivated or distracted, it can also be retrained; consequently, the bar for ‘the production of meaning’ may be (re)set rather low.²⁹ If long-term projects are seen as outside one’s control or as inflicting a burden of despair, the most reasonable path towards satisfaction is to set one’s aims on a limited amount of happiness or achievement. Freedom then stands to lose all connection with the construction of meaning; order is understood as efficacy, fulfilment as quantifiable satisfaction. The self is objectified, as if there can be no true change in it. There is a loss of our ironic position as beings pressed both to take care of daily chores and understand our existence as a whole.³⁰

This foreshortening of the temporal perspective may have political consequences; to put it in the terms of a Meadian perspective, in which freedom refers to a mutually strengthening relation of the ‘I’ to the ‘me’,³¹ the loss of spontaneity in the production of a socially significant response would be a significant curtailment of freedom in its political aspect, perhaps eventually leading into the friend–enemy binary distinction, the ultimate political–social efficiency saving device.³² Political power involves the exercise of a social

²⁸ Cf. Simone Weil’s subversion of the concept of ‘attention’ from concentration on an object to ascetic training in ‘Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God’, in *Waiting for God*, tr. Emma Craufurd (New York: Putnam, 1951), 105–116, and ‘Attention and Will’, in *Gravity and Grace*, tr. Emma Crawford and Mario von der Ruhr (London: Routledge, 2002), 116–122. Cp. Sartre’s very different notion that ‘consciousness is a nihilation’ (*Being and Nothingness*, tr. Hazel E. Barnes (London: Methuen, 1957), 462).

²⁹ On attention as the ‘desire for the completion of a train of representation’ and its corresponding variation, see Schleiermacher, *On Freedom*, 27/241.

³⁰ To which one may add the suspicion of self-delusion: the deeper, suppressed wish may have been for something else. Perhaps one may even suspect that where there is apparent full satisfaction there has already been resignation.

³¹ Cf. G. H. Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, ed. Charles W. Morris (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1934), 173–178.

³² Although, to be sure, the distinction was at first supposedly strictly political, not social (Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, tr. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 27).

role which allows for introducing a difference in the possible social reactions of others; as such it may be understood to some extent as reinforcing the ‘achievement’ model of freedom, since it is in the business of establishing effective prohibitions and opportunities in relation to certain objects. But it does this by first introducing normative interpretations of certain actions, providing its own practical definitions of them, and then taking further interpretative decisions within those norms; perhaps even before the establishment of law, politics depends on a common understanding of who is allowed to speak on behalf of whom, in front of whom. In other words, the state is an interpretative authority, in charge of its own legal realm, and it must respect the freedom of the individual and communities not only as a pursuit of happiness, but as hermeneutic autonomy. (In turn, its own authority may be limited, just like its subjects’, by natural constraints; for instance, the idea of the social contract works on the presupposition of natural mutual self-understanding, at least to the limited degree of being capable to refer to death as evil and life as good.) The state is concerned not only with setting up a legal framework within which speech and actions may be procedurally interpreted, but also with the process of transmitting and transforming this language over time, as it influences and absorbs the influence of other social registers. In short, if the idea of freedom as performance, as the achievement of a singular limited objective—whether it be a specialization or an average—, takes over political understanding, it can only lead to severe distortions of the state’s own complex hermeneutical role.

This observation in turn brings to light the limitations of the idea of personal freedom as a microcosm of political sovereignty, as self-legislation. Even though not many would profess this notion in the exalted form of a self-positing self, a popular variation is that of a self arrived in charge of the language of their own freedom, of telling their own narrative. Ironically, it seems to me, to understand freedom as the achievement of narrative meaning can be to deny our experience of time. A speaker or a writer choosing reflectively and deliberately which words to fit together into the story they want to tell is a scenario that, conceived abstractly enough, seems to condense the dynamic of freedom and limitation in its primordial purity. Yet between attachment to the past, immersion in the present, and

preparing for the future, one already depends on networks of giving and receiving, availability and interdiction, collecting and sharing. Not only is no (narrative) language private—neither do the tenses exist only for the self; not that they are inherently communal, but rather that communities are formed through the various networks and patterns of relating to them. People may act in freedom without having to become aware of this quality of their agency beforehand; nevertheless, it is a learnt way of being. For a human being who has only ever existed alone, the question of freedom would not arise—there would perhaps be competition and companionship with nature, mastery over one's powers and one's territory, but no language in which desire may be expressed, challenged, refined, or overruled.³³

What we desire is not a language all to ourselves, but being able to express ourselves 'fully', to bring to light something that one's true self.³⁴ Freedom is how we let ourselves be known by others, and even to ourselves. If knowledge is not at stake, a theory of narrative freedom may lose all connection with the question of truth.³⁵ The purpose of positing or claiming self-expression is not to identify the self with any set of stories, but rather to preserve the mystery of individuality, responsibility for oneself. From the idea of freedom as the discernment and imposition of order in change there is a straight path to the understanding of freedom as constant responsibility for self-transformation.

In other words, freedom cannot be reduced to commitment to one of several coexistent self-coherent models of autonomy. Linguistic creativity and exchange cannot offer a perfect model of the idea of freedom, as the production of desires in a communicable self-relating configuration, because the pragmatic situation of communication is a constitutive part of the phenomenon of language. The variety of biblical languages of freedom is inspired by God's singular but consistent actions. In its own way, theology reveals the

³³ Cf. Pippin, *Hegel on Self-Consciousness*, 67: 'Only in the presence of such a challenge [of another subject] ... does the subject's self-relation become normative, not a natural expression of animal desire.'

³⁴ For an introduction to the aporias of this situation, see Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), esp. 67–69.

³⁵ See Arendt, *Human Condition*, 17, and for the constraint of 'facts', 97. For Pannenberg's affirmation of this principle, see Ch. 2, ii.

element of faith that is inherent in our relation to language. Denying that there exists a univocal divine-human language describing the whole of reality, which God's people would have to mechanically appropriate, theological insight sustains itself by faith, which is the transformation of one's self-understanding in relation to God's living word.³⁶ Freedom is received not through the infusion of a capacity for absolute vision, but through an inspired response to God's self-revelation, be the latter through prophecy, instruction, or consolation.³⁷ In the Incarnation, God took up human freedom into his freedom of revelation, giving a centre and model to the understanding of own freedom. The soteriological aspect of the idea of Christ as the fulfilment of the law is certainly to be considered as essential to the New Testament idea of Christian freedom, but just as important is the fact that the Incarnation opens up the communication of freedom through the Spirit's infusion of love in the Christian community, not only through language but even beyond it, in its eschatological supersession.³⁸

The unchangeable future

As noted above, the idea of freedom as the external execution of an ordered project, as an expression of an anticipating will, is bruised by the confrontation with objective time and its hidden operation on the agent.³⁹ Inevitably then the need for order becomes contaminated with the experience of regret. In our regret there is an underlying sense, which sits as a question mark along the awareness of the chance nature of the events,

³⁶ Cf. Oswald Bayer, *Freiheit als Antwort: Zur theologischen Ethik* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1995), 5–6, 13–16; cp. Rowan D. Williams, 'Language, Reality, and Desire in Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*', *Literature and Theology* 3 (1989), 138–50 at 142f.: 'A language which indefinitely postpones fulfilment or enjoyment is appropriate to the Christian discipline of spiritual homelessness, to the character of the believing life as pilgrimage.'

³⁷ For Gutiérrez's use of this variety to describe a biblical temporal form of freedom, see Ch. 4. i, v below.

³⁸ 2 Cor. 3:2f., 17f. See below, Ch. 2, for Pannenberg's view of the role of the Law as historical. For a defence of eschatological vision as a form of love, see Jean-Louis Chrétien, 'La Vision et l'amour', in *Le Regard de l'amour* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2000), 205–258.

³⁹ Brent Adkins sees the role of communal consciousness in Hegel's phenomenology as that of a power able to absorb 'the negating power of death as its own work.' (*Death and Desire in Hegel, Heidegger and Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 82.)

that—whatever the number of excuses or explanations—the experience of misfortune depends on and mars our freedom.⁴⁰ Even those who have been only passive observers of tragedy, whose only guilt is to have been mysteriously chosen to witness a particularly distressing spectacle, may later experience their freedom as condemnation, rather than enjoyment.⁴¹ As trauma subsides in time, with the restoration of freedom the power to enjoy it may not return. Consequently, the need for order may develop pathologically, into anxiety or obsession, or equally pathologically shrink into despondency; only via repression can the idea of freedom as achievement (if only of normalcy) reassert itself.

This observation reinforces the progression attempted above beyond order as control to order as understanding: the experience of trauma puts at a distance the language in which order is constructed socially. Therapy attempts to establish contact between that experience and a shared language. Its methods, however, usually only aim at individual healing and depend at least on the resources of optimism and time. Sometimes such optimism is taken for granted, as it was by Max Scheler, who believed in repentance as a ‘natural function with which God endowed the soul’, ‘equivalent to re-appraising part of one’s past life and shaping for it a mint-new worth and significance’. Not only does Scheler believe each individual capable of it, he extends (the year of the initial publication his essay being 1921) the idea of self-creation through reflective memory to entire nations: ‘history comprehended frees us from the power of the history we live.’⁴² After World War II, we might be more inclined to the view that collective trauma can only be dealt with (inasmuch as it can) by turning to a juridical mode of procedure, which first and foremost means assigning responsibilities, condemning or vindicating persons.⁴³ The biblical

⁴⁰ Cf. Paul Ricœur, ‘Sur le tragique’, in *Lectures 3: Aux frontières de la philosophie* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1994), 187–209 at 202–4. Schleiermacher can only turn it into a positive moral inspiration by disguising regret under the doctrine of necessity (*On Freedom*, 78/293–4).

⁴¹ Ricœur, ‘Sur le tragique’, 197f. For Gutiérrez’s confrontation with this problem, see below, Ch. 5.

⁴² The assumption on which these conclusions are based, namely that ‘no sooner does a section of objective time enter into that extension-category of our experience which we know as our past, than it is deprived of that fatality and completion which past events in nature possess’, seems in fact to contradict the possibility of communal cohesion. (Max Scheler, *On the Eternal in Man*, tr. Bernard Noble (London: SCM, 1960), 39–42.)

⁴³ See Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, (rev. edn., Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), 277 and ‘Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship’, in *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken, 2003), 17–48 at 26.

eschatological promise is, however, that freedom can be eventually restored even where understanding is thwarted and language fails to give resonating descriptions.

The New Testament starts by repudiating the assumption that we act by freedom in the ‘normal’ order of things. This argument needs to be reconstructed from several different Johannine and Pauline strands of thought.⁴⁴ John 8 attacks the idea of freedom as the guaranteed pre-eminence of Israel in history and the eschaton—the background being precisely the traumatic loss of political independence. Against this self-conception comes the proclamation of the light that lights all coming into the world and of freedom as the welcoming reception of God’s self-communication,⁴⁵ a potentially traumatic encounter were it not for God’s abounding love. As in Judaism, for Paul the contrary of freedom is sin, but Paul characteristically appeals to freedom in opposition to the Law as the foundation of a Christian ethic. The challenge of a theology of freedom is to describe how an experience of freedom which goes beyond language—liberation from the silencing traumas of sin and death—returns to language and avoids the temptations of self-conceit and legalism.

Part of the answer to these temptations could be the Lutheran attitude which Kierkegaard developed into the concept of the Christian incognito.⁴⁶ Its basic suggestion is that a Christian’s faith and free ethical motivation may be hidden under the appearance of an externally unremarkable social contribution or even under the appearance of scandal. In other words, Christian freedom does not develop its own ostentatious vocabulary, but borrows from the language of the ordinary, aiming not at the latter’s objective transformation but at indirect communication through it. Taken absolutely, this suggestion might sever any connection between Christian and political freedom. However, besides its potential for encouraging individualism, this approach does justice

⁴⁴ To the extent that such ‘Johannine’ and ‘Pauline’ conceptions can be reconstructed; see Wayne Coppins, *The Interpretation of Freedom in the Letters of Paul: With Special Reference to the ‘German’ Tradition* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), for a linguistic-contextual case against following such reconstructions.

⁴⁵ John 1:9, 8:36.

⁴⁶ Søren Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity*, tr. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 132.

only to the idea of Christian freedom as a return from beyond language, whereas the Bible gives at least equal time to a presentation of salvation as the culmination of the human search for freedom; in other words, Christian freedom should be able to communicate from under the cloak of religion at least as much as through secular languages. This much at least needs to be believed if others are to turn and listen to theologians discoursing on freedom.

The experience of the tragic and the possibility of reviving freedom from beyond language seems a suitable stopping point for this study of a never-ending theme. I have tried in this conclusion to indicate more precisely what this study has found to be of theological interest in the problem of freedom. The problem of determinism and the quest for a certain heterogenous spatial structure (interior or material) which endows the organism with its own free will offers a rather prejudiced and limiting framework for the question of freedom. Instead, this study has been concerned with how, tied as we are to the experience of change and destined to articulate it through language, the desire for control develops into a desire for freedom. If we begin from with the production of order in anticipation and confrontation with change, we notice that this order is not limited to purposeful planning, which time unsettles and defeats, but is capable of assuming diverse linguistic forms; and while currently there seems to be a particular preference towards narrative as the most flexible and satisfying of these forms,⁴⁷ the language itself that the narrative seeks to mould is never a personal property, nor is the narrative pure soliloquy. The desire for control cannot be fully sublimated into commitment to an objective order, even an idiosyncratic one. Over time, narrative is tested against the individual's autobiographical authority, which has to be shared with those inhabiting the same times and spaces. What is at stake in this process of interpretation is the attainment of personal truth, which is what transforms autonomous desire into desire for freedom. How is this process shared in the community of faith? To what extent is it dependent on the language and hermeneutic instances of the political? It is the transformation of the question of freedom into these practical questions which I attempted to trace with the help of

⁴⁷ Perhaps this is why the first nine books of Augustine's *Confessions* are generally so much more gripping than the last four!

Pannenberg and Gutiérrez. Theirs is undoubtedly not a neutral, but a theological path; however, political theory itself may better understand some of the horizons and limitations of its own concept of freedom, its own language, by listening to religious exegeses of it.

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