

'POSTMODERN CRITICAL AUGUSTINIANISM': A SHORT *SUMMA* IN FORTY TWO RESPONSES TO UNASKED QUESTIONS

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1. The end of modernity, which is not accomplished, yet continues to arrive, means the end of a single system of truth based on universal reason, which tells us what reality is like.
2. With this ending, there ends also the modern predicament of theology. It no longer has to measure up to accepted secular standards of scientific truth or normative rationality. Nor, concomitantly, to a fixed notion of the knowing subject, which was usually the modern, as opposed to the pre-modern, way of securing universal reason. This caused problems for theology, because an approach grounded in subjective aspiration can only precariously affirm objective values and divine transcendence.
3. In postmodernity there are infinitely many possible versions of truth, inseparable from particular narratives. Objects and subjects are, as they are narrated in a story. Outside a plot, which has its own unique, unfounded reasons, one cannot conceive how objects and subjects would be, nor even that they would be at all. If subjects and objects only are, through the complex relations of a narrative, then neither objects are privileged, as in pre-modernity, nor subjects, as in modernity. Instead, what matters are structural relations, which constantly shift; the word 'subject' now indicates a point of potent 'intensity' which can re-arrange given structural patterns.
4. The priority given to structural relations allows theology to make a kind of half-turn back to pre-modernity. One can no longer commence with modern inwardness: this is only marked negatively as 'intensity' or potential, and

the things that can truly be spoken about are once again external. However, this externality is no longer, as for pre-modernity, an organised spatial realm of substances, genera and species, but rather a world of temporary relational networks, always being re-distributed, with greater and greater 'freedom', as one passes from mineral to vegetable to animal to cultural animal. So the point is not to 'represent' this externality, but just to join in its occurrence; not to know, but to intervene, originate.

5. Externality is therefore a kind of process. One cannot look at this process as a whole, but one can try to imagine what it means, its significance. All cultures, all 'religions', in effect see their temporal processes as microcosms of the whole process. Of course, postmodernism denies the point of doing this, except as a game. Yet to understand one's own proffered words or actions as just arbitrary, itself implies a speculation on the arbitrariness of the process in general: its universal production of the merely contingent. Christian theology, by contrast to nihilistic postmodernism, yet with equal validity, imagines temporal process as, in its very temporality, reflecting eternity; as the possibility of a historical progress into God, and as something recuperable within memory whose ultimate point is the allowing of forgiveness and reconciliation. This speculation is utterly unfounded, is inseparable from a narrative practice of remembering, and yet, in post-modern terms, it is just as valid or invalid as claims about supposedly universal human needs, desires or modes of interaction. Modernity dictated that a sensible theology would start from 'below'; postmodernism implies that conceptions of the 'below'—of human subjectivity and relationship are only constituted within the narrative that simultaneously postulates the 'above'. Once the epistemological approach from the subject is shown to be as foundationalist as pre-modern metaphysics, the latter makes a strange kind of return: but as a necessary 'fiction' concerning the unseen relation of time to eternity, not as a record of 'observation' of this relationship.

6. Postmodern theology does not, therefore, begin with an account of the subject, for this is not neutrally available. By the same token, it is not seriously challenged by modernist discourses claiming to narrate a universally fundamental genesis of the subject in individual lives or in human history: Freudianism, Marxism, sociology. On the other hand, it faces a new and perhaps more severe challenge from the implications of a more thoroughgoing perspectival historicism which is what intellectual postmodernism is really all about. If Christianity is just one of many possible perspectives, then why believe any of them? Is not each perspective a strategy of power, every discourse but the means to assert that discourse? Postmodernism seems to imply nihilism, albeit of a 'positive' kind, embracing contingency and arbitrariness as the real natural good.

7. Whatever its response may be to nihilism, postmodern theology can only proceed by explicating Christian practice. The Christian God can no longer be thought of as a God first seen, but rather as a God first prayed to, first

imagined, first inspiring certain actions, first put into words, and always already thought about, objectified, even if this objectification is recognised as inevitably inadequate. This practice which includes images of, talk about, addresses to, actions towards 'God', can in no way be justified, nor be shown to be more rational, nor yet, outside its own discourse, as more desirable, than nihilism.

8. But is this really all that can be said? That Christianity is just 'on a level' with other practices, other discourses? Not quite. First, it may be argued that Christianity can become 'internally' postmodern in a way that may not be possible for every religion or ideology. I mean by this that it is possible to construe Christianity as suspicious of notions of fixed 'essences' in its approach to human beings, to nature, to community and to God, even if it has never fully escaped the grasp of a 'totalising' metaphysics. Through its belief in creation from nothing it admits temporality, the priority of becoming and unexpected emergence. A reality suspended between nothing and infinity is a reality of flux, a reality without substance, composed only of relational differences and ceaseless alterations. (Augustine, *De Musica*) Like nihilism, Christianity can, should, embrace the differential flux.

9. Yet here arises the second point regarding whether Christianity is just 'on a level'. For nihilism, the flux is a medium of perpetual conflict, a pagan *agon* where the most powerful rhetoric will temporarily triumph, only to succumb to an apparently or effectively more powerful discourse in the future. Because there are no fixed categorical areas for different discourses/practices, they ceaselessly overlap and contest for influence. Lyotard and others rightly do not envisage a peaceful co-existence of a plurality of discourses alongside each other, without mutual interference. The best that can be hoped for is some mitigation of the severity of conflict, a set of formal rules of engagement such as is provided by the market or bureaucracy—forms which can survive many changes in the actual content of 'truth'. For this reason, postmodern nihilism remains in continuity with liberalism, and the Enlightenment. Christianity, however, unlike many other discourses, pursued from the outset a universalism which tried to subsume rather than merely abolish difference: Christians could remain in their many different cities, languages and cultures, yet still belong to one eternal city ruled by Christ, in whom all 'humanity' was fulfilled. In this way it appears as a 'precursor' of enlightenment, and any claim of outright Christian opposition to enlightenment is bound to be an over-simplification. But the liberty, equality and fraternity latent as values in Christianity do not imply mere mutual tolerance, far less any resignation to a regulated conflict. On the contrary, Christianity is peculiar, because while it is open to difference—to a series of infinitely new additions, insights, progressions towards God, it also strives to make of all these differential additions a harmony, 'in the body

of Christ', and claims that if the reality of God is properly attended to, there can be such a harmony. And the idea of a consistently beautiful, continuously differential and open series, is of course the idea of 'music'. In music there must be continuous endings and displacements, yet this is no necessary violence, because only in the recall of what has been displaced does the created product consist. Violence would rather mean an unnecessarily jarring note, a note wrong because 'out of place', or else the premature ending of a development. Perhaps this is partly why, in *De Musica*, Augustine—who realised that creation *ex nihilo* implied the non-recognition of ontological violence, or of positive evil—put forwards a 'musical' ontology. Christianity, therefore, is not just in the same position as all other discourses vis-à-vis postmodernity; it can, I want to claim, think difference, yet it perhaps uniquely tries to deny that this necessarily (rather than contingently, in a fallen world) entails conflict.

10. Explication of Christian practice, the task of theology, tries to pinpoint the peculiarity, the difference, of this practice by 'making it strange', finding a new language for this difference less tainted with the over-familiarity of too many Christian words which tend to obscure Christian singularity. The idea that this practice is essentially 'music' would be an example of this 'making strange'. And as a second example, this music implies 'community' in a very particular sense. For Christianity, true community means the freedom of people and groups to be different, not just to be functions of a fixed consensus, yet at the same time it totally refuses *indifference*; a peaceful, united secure community implies *absolute* consensus, and yet, where difference is acknowledged, this is no agreement in an idea, or something once and for all achieved, but a consensus that is only in and through the inter-relations of community itself, and a consensus that moves and 'changes': a *concentus musicus*. Christianity (and not even Judaism, which postpones universality to the eschaton, a final chord) uniquely has this idea of community: this is what 'Church' should be all about. (Lash)

11. Unless it reflects upon the singularity of Christian norms of community, theology has really nothing to think about. For Christian practice, like every practice, is all external, a matter of signs and actions interpellating 'persons'. The tradition already insisted that 'God' is only spoken about with reference to certain historical happenings and memories; a postmodern emphasis will add that God is never seen, never looked at. The response to God is response to the pressure of the unknown, and if Christians ask what is God like? then they can only point to our 'response' to God in the formation of community. The community is what God is like, and he is even more like the ideal, the goal of community implicit in its practices. Hence he is also unlike the community, and it is this inexpressible reality that the community continues to try to respond to.

12. If God can only be given some content through community, then speaking of God is not just a matter of words, but also of images, and bodily actions. These all articulate 'God'.

13. The community as substantive peace, as musical difference, is actually performed, ideally imagined, and in both these aspects, contemplated.

14. Augustine already put the idea of the peaceful community at the centre of his theology; thought of God, of revelation from God, was for him inseparable from the thought of heaven, of words and 'musical laws' coming down from heaven. The heavenly city meant for Augustine a substantial peace; but this peace could also be imperfectly present in the fallen world, in the sequences of time, and time redeemed through memory.

15. One way to try to secure peace is to draw boundaries around 'the same', and exclude 'the other'; to promote some practices and disallow alternatives. Most polities, and most religions, characteristically do this. But the Church has misunderstood itself when it does likewise. For the point of the supersession of the law is that nothing really positive is excluded—no difference, whatsoever—but only the negative, that which denies and takes away from Being: in other words, the violent. It is true, however, that Christians perceive a violence that might not normally be recognised, namely any stunting of person's capacity to love and conceive of the divine beauty; this inhibition is seen as having its soul in arbitrariness. But there is no real exclusion here; Christianity should not draw boundaries, and the Church is that paradox: a nomad city.

16. The religions and polities that exclude, characteristically seek to identify one thing that must be removed; a scapegoat, which can become in some ambiguous fashion 'sacred', because of the efficacious effect of its expulsion, bearing away all that is undesirable, together with all the guilt of the community. At the same time, the relationship of the community to the transcendently divine often demands further acts of distinction in the form of 'sacrifice'. The divine demands an offering, the violent separation, by fire or knife, of spirit from body, a purging off, to send up to heaven. Originally these were human sacrifices, then later commuted, symbolic ones, but still, frequently, in addition, the lives of those fallen in holy wars, or else the sacrifice of a pure ascetic spirit that has become indifferent to disturbing emotions.

17. Instead of multiple difference, there is dualism here; the banished, the purged off, over against the included, the subsumed. The law of this dualism implies an ever-renewed conflict both within and without the city-gates. This is the *traditional* mode of violence, whose existence must certainly be noted, though it is different in kind to modern/postmodern regulated and 'indifferent' conflict. Of course, legal monotheism, and Christianity when it has failed to escape this mode, remains half-trapped by this dualism.

Whereas a Christianity true to itself should oppose all modes of violence: the pre-modern violence of law, the modern violence of norms of subjective 'rights', the postmodern violence of total lack of norms. Yet the rejection of dualistic violence grows throughout the Bible: monotheism and creation out of nothing eschew the idea of a 'chaotic' realm over against the divine, in eternal conflict with it. And the Jewish idea of law aspires to the idea of a law at one with life, with Being. But there is still some exclusion of the positive, some attempt to secure in a code the harmony of Being, and no complete recognition that perfect, divine rule is beyond all coercion. In a sense, this is a failure to have a perfect monotheism, and exhibits residues of dualism; in another sense monotheism alone is inadequate, as it cannot think of God as primarily the openness of love to the other.

18. Where there is a positing of a sacred over against a chaotic other, then the supremacy of the sacred can always be deconstructed, for it appears that there is something more ultimate that includes both the sacred and chaos, that governs the passage between them. Is not this passage itself chaotic? Hence there is a hidden connection between pre-modern pagan dualism and postmodern dualism. The latter's self-proclaimed paganism is a kind of deconstructed paganism, for the real pagans were always hoping to subordinate the admitted conflictual diversity of the gods to a harmonious order; an open celebration of the finality of the *agon* was only latent. But Christianity, which is not dualistic in this fashion, and already admits the flux of difference, is therefore outside the reach of deconstruction (in precisely Derrida's sense).

19. If pre-modern religions and postmodern nihilism are secretly akin; indeed, different moments of a 'dialectic' (postmodernism claims to refuse dialectic, but this is the instance of its failure to do so; it is right to make the effort), then, by contrast, one can trace in the Bible the slow emergence of opposition to the common factor of violence in all human norms. For it gradually takes the part of the scapegoat, and starts to place a ban on revenge against those who first violently excluded their brethren (the protection of Cain by God). The Hebrews were originally nomads, and chance and prophecy constantly recalled them to their nomad status. (Girard)

20. In the course of this nomadic history, sacrifice is also commuted. Finally, in Christianity, God is thought of as asking only for the offering of our free-will, in a return of love to him. This is no longer in any sense a self-destruction, or self division, but rather a self-fulfilment, an offering that is at the same time our reception of the fullness of Being. It is receiving God: 'deification'.

21. In a world dominated by evil and violence, self-offering, to God and others, inevitably involves suffering. This is why there is suffering at the heart of Christ's perfect self-offering to God.

22. This is not, of course the offering of a blood-sacrifice to God. Before the cross, comes the preaching of the kingdom. The kingdom is really offered by Christ to humanity, and the cross is the result of a rejection of this offer. However, this very rejection tends to suggest the 'original' character of human sin; to sin, theology has speculated, is to refuse the love of God, and so to render oneself incapable of recognising God, by substituting the goals of human pride in his place. The putting to death of God shows what evil is: its nihilistic pointlessness, its incomprehensibility. (Schwäger)

23. This speculation continues: evil cannot fully see itself as evil; therefore only the uncontaminated good, God himself, can fully suffer evil—not in eternity, which is beyond suffering, but in the human creation: hence the necessity for the *Deus Homo*. Such a speculation is an important part of Christianity, a theoretical component which a postmodern approach can recognise as actually 'taking off' from the narrative sources, as *not* fully grounded in them, and yet as validated merely by the profundity of the picture of God which results, merely by the pleasing shape of the conceits which it generates. However, at the same time a postmodern approach must do more justice to the narrative, practical, social level than in the past. For if Jesus's perfect suffering belonged to his 'interiority', then how can it make any difference to us, how would we know about it? Much past theology has seemed to suggest that there is a change, consequent upon the atonement, in the divine attitude towards us, a change to which we are just 'extrinsically' related, and which is just 'positively' revealed to us. However, if the perfect character of Jesus's suffering is recognised by us, then this can only mean that it is more present 'on the outside', in his deeds, and words, and even in the words used by others which compose the record of Christ; for it is only the recorded, interpreted Christ who saves us, and this mediation does not conceal some more original, 'self-present' Christ—that would be a mere asocial phantom. The speculation about atonement is grounded in a narrative relation to which we must constantly return: the Church considers that in all its actions it can learn to suffer truly (and thereby perceive our previous original sin of unperceived egotism) from the story of Jesus, so that its plot can be fulfilled universally. Does this practical situation imply the finality of Jesus, his identity with the divine word? The more subtle reply is, not quite, for practice cannot claim to 'know' the finality of what it treats as final. Even a theoretical, speculative discourse conceived as having a 'second order', 'regulative' function is finally excessive (in a positive sense), and makes its own peculiar contribution to the content of Christianity, thereby insinuating itself back into first-order discourse from which it is only relatively distinguished (as all speech both orders and regulates, and regulates only in giving new orders). Thus, in the New Testament itself, speculative considerations about the atonement are celebrated in poetic, devotional terms. Already the metaphors and mythical 'metanarratives' implying incarnation and atonement are 'somewhat in excess'; they not only

secure the first-order level of 'historical' narrative recitation, they also go speculatively beyond this to suggest a particular 'mythical' picture of God as becoming incarnate, suffering in our stead. Nothing justifies this speculation except itself, and the way it then enriches the stories told, and re-doubles the perceived significance of Christian practices.

24. For the traditional speculation, God cannot endure the contradiction of sin; creation must offer itself back to God; evil prevents it from doing so; therefore God must offer creation back to God, through the incarnation of the *Logos*, who includes all things. Yet for early Christianity, it is clear that God suffers a contradiction until all make for themselves the offering already made by Christ. The 'incarnation' has no meaning, therefore, except as 'the beginning', the foundation of the Church, a new sort of community of charity and forgiveness, as a space for the possibility of this offering. For Augustine, it is the *Church* that is the adequate sacrifice to God; in other words the realisation of perfect community. The centrality of incarnation and the cross in no way contradicts the truth that the central aspect of salvation is the creation of perfect community.

25. Christianity is primarily about this hope for community. But it offers more than hope: it also remembers perfect community as once instantiated by the shores of Lake Galilee; this is a memory compounded only of words and images. But there should be no pathos here, and Christianity has too often been sunk in this pathos. It is not that we have a few fragments of memory in lieu of the 'real presence' of the resurrected Christ, but that these fragments are the real saving presence; they provide us—within the whole network of tradition within which they belong—with a new *language* of community. The Christian claim is that the narratives about Christ show what love—a difficult and demanding practice requiring more subtlety, style and correct idiom than mere 'well-meaning'—is. That here is the *logos*, the lost harmonic pattern of genuine human life, which can now be re-appropriated.

26. What are we to make of the fact that a 'resurrection' forms a part of this memory? Resurrection is no proof of divinity, nor a kind of vindication of Jesus's mission. And no very good 'evidence' survives, only the record of some strongly insisted-upon personal testimonies. What we have is the memory of community, of 'ordinary' conversation, of eating and drinking, continuing beyond death. Without this element, there could not really be a memory of a moment of 'perfect' community, for this is normally inhibited by the forces of nature as we know them, and by death, especially.

27. To remember the resurrection, to hope for the universal resurrection, is a 'political' act: for it is the ultimate refusal of all denials of community. The return of all the dead in reconciliation; the innocent, the guilty, the oppressed and the oppressors, is looked for. (Peukert)

28. The resurrection is about the persistence of the ordinary, and the doctrine of the incarnation locates God in the ordinary, even if this is an ordinariness 'transfigured'. Although this doctrine is a radical speculation, that was only gradually articulated, it is also a rebuke to attempts to formulate metaphysically the divine perfection; one can make groping attempts, but finally God's perfection is most like this particular life, historically obscure, almost lost to view.

29. God is most to be found in this life recognisably like our own, yet also recognised as uniquely 'other', because we take it as judging all other lives.

30. The doctrine of the incarnation—of Jesus's 'identity' with the divine *Logos*—secures this practical relation of the Church to Jesus, yet also goes beyond and reinforces it in the way suggested above. Its real validation is in allowing us to imagine a peaceful, totally charitable God, who cannot force us, and yet cannot let us go. Also, by returning us to the narrative, by tying us to contingency, it suggests that divine goodness is no generalised intention, but always takes a very particular 'form'. That it is inseparable from aesthetic harmony.

31. Yet in the memory of Christ we are given the language of salvation, and not formulas for how to use this language. For the universal offering to be made, the Church must creatively construct her own response to Christ. This is why there is a work of the Spirit that can be distinguished from that of Christ, even though this response itself is ideally and infinitely fulfilled within the Godhead.

32. For if evil is truly overcome in the perfect harmony of Christ's life in community with his followers, and in the language of this community which we remember, this still does not mean that here we possess a *gnosis*, in the sense of a given formulaic wisdom that we must just recite or magically invoke. Instead, this language allows us to *escape* from the dominating effects of human discourses which totally subsume all differences, new occurrences, under existing categories. Atonement means that the flux is permitted to flow again, that the *Logos* only really speaks with its real intent in the ever-different articulation of our responses. The Holy Spirit is associated with this diversity of answers. But they all form the continuous unity of the body of Christ.

33. The doctrine of the Trinity is a statement of faith that God is, 'in himself', as he has been imagined by us to relate to human history. Here we imagine him to speak once as a word that unifies all other words, and as continuously achieving that final unification of all other words by articulating a manifold response to the one word. So God involves not just the first difference of expressive articulation of content (inseparable from content), but also the second difference of interpretation of expression (inseparable from expression, making expression always already conversation). Without this

second difference, we would be tempted to think that the expression just carried us back to a pre-formed content, or else that God was but a single *ratio*, which would be little better than seeing him as but a single person. With this second difference, one truly has a moment of response to expression in God, which goes beyond, is 'excessive' in relation to the expression. Hence the love that subsists between Father and Son is communicated as a further difference that always escapes, or, as Stanislas Breton puts it, 'an *infinite* relation'. (Derrida and Labarri re)

34. God as Trinity is therefore himself community, and even a 'community in process', infinitely realised, beyond any conceivable opposition between 'perfect act' and 'perfect potential'. A trinitarian ontology can therefore be a differential ontology surpassing the Aristotelian *actus purus*.

35. 'In the image of the Trinity' means that 'human beings' are moments of particularly intense and adaptive 'recollection' within the temporal process, although such recollection is constitutive of the temporal process itself. For a present moment 'is' in its repetitive holding of the past, yet in this 'remembering' it escapes at one level the temporal continuum and arrives as a 'meaning' which has a free capacity for adaptation and expansion. (Augustine, *Confessions*; Deleuze)

36. The human mind does not 'correspond' to reality, but arises within a process which gives rise to 'effects of meaning'. It is a particularly intense network of such effects. Our bodily energies and drives (for Augustine in *Civitas Dei* the *ingenium* which images the power of the divine Father) are made 'present' and articulate (so alone constituted and sustained) through the happening of linguistic 'meaning', which is also the event of a 'truth' which cannot 'correspond'. For Augustine this second moment is the cultural training of the artist's *ingenium*; it is also that active memory by which we constantly learn through repeating our individual and collective biographies. Knowledge 'surfaces' as the process of learning, which is true if divinely 'illuminated'—it is not a knowledge of an object outside that process (God being this process, in its infinite plenitude).

37. The mind is only illuminated by the divine *Logos*, if also our 'preceding' energies, and our 'emergent' desires, correspond to the Father and the Spirit, respectively. We know what we want to know, and although all desiring is an 'informed' desiring, desire shapes truth beyond the imminent implications of any logical order, so rendering the Christian *logos* a continuous product as well as a process of 'art'. Moreover, if all that 'is' is good and true, then no positive reality can be false as a 'mistake', or as 'non-correspondence', but only false as deficient presence, embodying the short-fall of an inadequate desire. Now desire, not Greek 'knowledge', mediates to us reality.

38. All desire is good so long as it is a restless desire (a more-desiring desire) which is moved by infinite lack, the pull of the 'goal'. Such desire is non-violent for it could only be content with the unrestricted openness, non-possessiveness and self-offering of resurrected bodies. Yet this is not the cold 'detachment' (both in relation to creatures and away from creatures) of a 'disinterested' *agape* sundered from eros. This would imply that finite reality, as for Neoplatonism, by always lacking, always being unworthy of erotic attachment, must always be evil. For Augustine, Christianity goes beyond this by conjoining to 'the goal' also 'the way', which means a constant historical determining that desire is well-ordered, not just through its deference to infinite fruition, but also by a particular selective pattern of finite use. The *appropriate* preferences of *eros*, the 'right harmonies' within a musical sequence, alone ensure that this sequence 'progresses' towards the infinite goal. For every new act, every new word, may be either enabling or inhibiting, and although inhibition is mere negation, this can only be registered by the 'fine judgement' which recognises an aesthetic distortion. (*De Trinitate*).

39. 'The way' is not theoretically known but must be constituted through judgement in the repeated construction and recognition of 'examples', which cannot be literally copied if they are to be genuinely 'repeated'. The first example, Christ, by being first, inevitably defines the way, because this way is considered to be a single way (if not single we are back in agonistics: this is the only reason its singularity matters). Because Christ is remembered as a *founder*, whose character is by definition not representable in terms of prior cultural orders, it is inevitable that his character will *entirely coincide* in its representation with the new categories of the new ecclesial society. Hence as founder, Christ is also the total realised collective character of the Church which is yet to come, and will itself include all cosmic reality. It follows that the *topos* Christ-founder surprisingly bears in itself the elements of a 'high' Christology. The correspondence of Christ to God, or the identity of the entire 'pattern' of his life (which is what *persona* really implies, not any substantive 'element') with the *Logos*, only makes sense within the broader context of the correspondence of the ecclesial 'way' to God. For the 'pattern' of Jesus's life is only provisionally and canonically complete; as the 'context' for the new society it cannot 'belong' to an 'individual' and this is why one should hold onto, but re-interpret, the Chalcedonian insight that Jesus possessed no human *hypostasis*. For the 'patterns' or 'coherencies' of our lives, never belong to us, are not 'completed' at our deaths, and can be repeated, or even more fully realised, by others: this is supremely true of a pattern that is taken to be canonically normative, as eschatologically coinciding with the identities of all of us, as omni-repeatable and so as 'divine'.

40. Furthermore, 'the way' is not defined solely as such a repetition. Were this the case, then we would be remaining within the logic of parts and

wholes which characterised Greek thinking both about the individual and society, and tended to exile individual awareness and expression to the asocial realm of *theoria*. By contrast, as Augustine saw, the primacy (or equal primacy) of desire, implies that 'individuality' arises only through the constant rupturing and 'externalisation' of the subject. To contemplate is now to desire the other, to enter further into relation both with God and with human beings and angels. And the way is a community, not just Christological supplementation, but from the outset the inclusion of interpretative response in the relations of Mary, of John the Baptist, and the disciples to Christ. This is why there is a historical happening of Christ not *just* as the image of the Father, but also as the relation to the father, which as invisible, and indeed only 'imagined' in language, can only be made present as the inner-relatedness of the Church, including its 'initial' relation to Jesus in his own relatedness to the traditional imagining of a Father-God. Desire exceeds even the Christian *logos*, and yet fulfils it and therefore does not after all exceed it (according to the logic of 'substantive relations'), because the *usus* of the cultural product, understood 'aesthetically' as a work of art, is not exhausted even by a sympathetic judgmental attentiveness to its 'perfect' specificity. Desire, through re-application, both respects this perfection and undoes it through joining the work to the continuous musical series. Hence the way is Christ, but equally the Church. And both are 'real' as the cultural happening of 'meaning'; 'liberal versus conservative' debates about the historicity of the resurrection etc. will have no place in a postmodern theology.

41. 'The way', which is redemptive, is only the proper occurrence of creation. This is why Augustine is right to think that the 'economic' trinitarian series of Paternal voice-Christ- Ecclesia discloses to us a trinitarian ontology which allows us to describe the universal happening of humanity in and through time. In this account of participation in the Trinity (presented as 'trinitarian vestiges' in the soul) the historical mediation of the Trinity is upheld by Augustine *more* than by others, precisely because he makes this process the metahistorical context for all historical reality, and so wisely and necessarily obscures its singularity: it is not just one revelatory event within an order that is quite otherwise. (*De Trinitate*)

42. Creation is always found as a given, but developing 'order'. As the gift of God, creation also belongs to God, it is within God (together with the infinity of all articulations that there may be) as the *Logos*. But existing harmonies, existing 'extensions' of time and space, constantly give rise to new 'intentions', to movements of the Spirit to further creative expression, new temporal unravelling of creation *ex nihilo*, in which human beings most consciously participate. Yet even this movement, the vehicle of human autonomy, is fully from God, is nothing *in addition* to the divine act-potential, and not equivocally different in relation to him. The latter conception would be 'pagan', 'gnostic', 'Cabbalistic', whereas it is God

himself who is differentiation, ensuring that this process is 'music', not the ceaseless rupture and self destruction of a differentiation poised 'univocally' (Deleuze) between an 'indifferent' transcendence and an anarchic finitude. The trust that in our linguistic and figurative creations we can constantly recognise, when it arises, the aesthetically 'right' addition, which is, in its specific content, a criterion of self-validation, is now the mode of recognition of a transcendental/ontological possibility of 'participation'. (Kant) And so translates for us, 'faith in the triune God'.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to my colleague Dr. Richard Roberts, for suggesting the description, 'Postmodern critical Augustinianism' for my theological project.

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