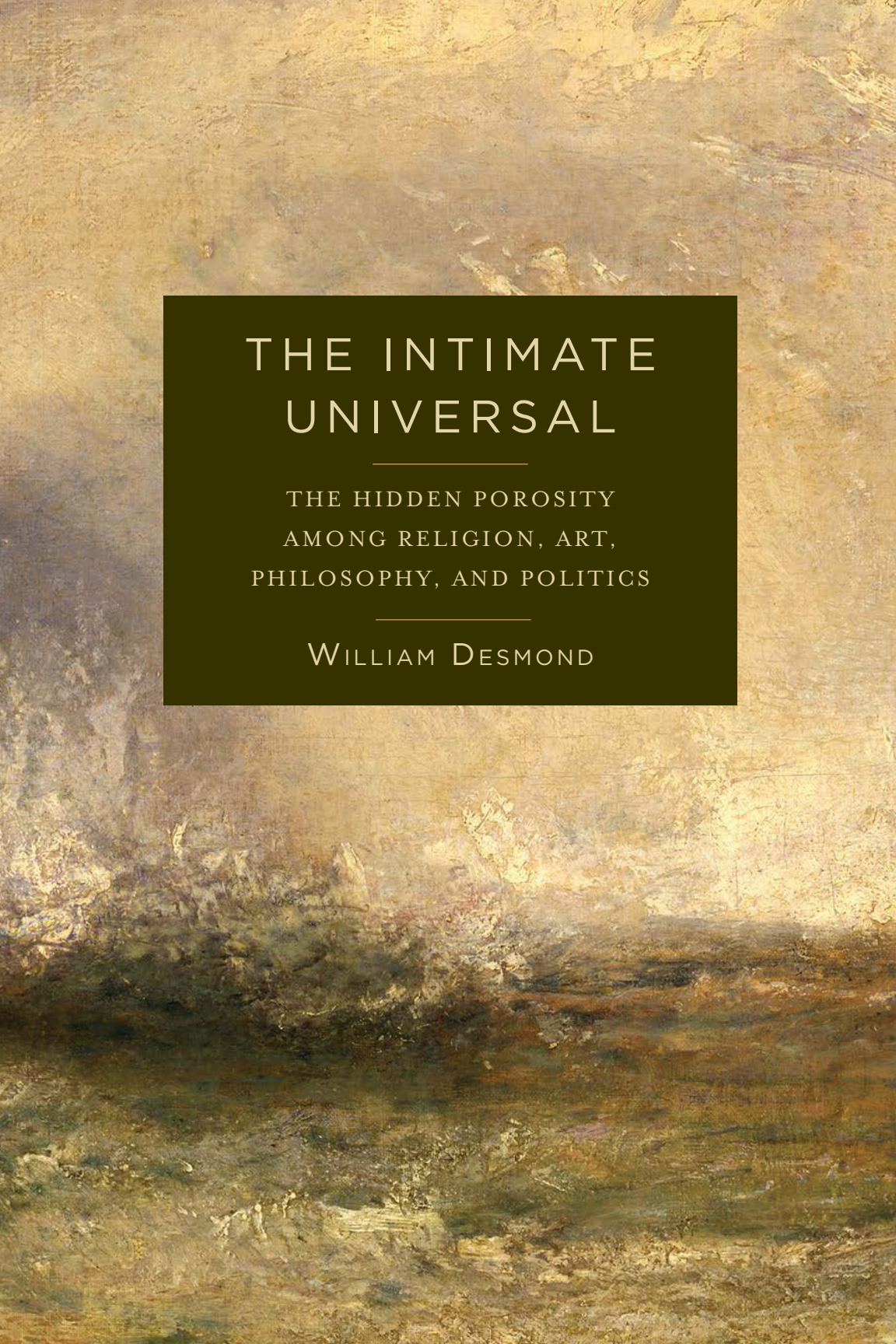

THE INTIMATE UNIVERSAL

THE HIDDEN POROSITY AMONG RELIGION, ART, PHILOSOPHY, AND POLITICS

WILLIAM DESMOND

THE INTIMATE UNIVERSAL

Insurrections: Critical Studies in Religion, Politics, and Culture

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Slavoj Žižek, Clayton Crockett, Creston Davis, Jeffrey W. Robbins, Editors

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The Intimate Universal

THE HIDDEN POROSITY AMONG RELIGION, ART, PHILOSOPHY, AND POLITICS

William Desmond

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For Maria

William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 5.3.8–19:

No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison:
We two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage:
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down,
And ask of thee forgiveness: and we'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too,
Who loses, and who wins; who's in, who's out;
And take upon 's the mystery of things,
As if we were God's spies; and we'll wear out,
In a walled prison, packs and sects of great ones
That ebb and flow by th' moon.

William Butler Yeats, "Politics":

How can I, that girl standing there,
My attention fix
On Roman or on Russian
Or on Spanish politics?
Yet here's a travelled man that knows
What he talks about,
And there's a politician
That has read and thought,
And maybe what they say is true
Of war and war's alarms,
But O that I were young again
And held her in my arms!

"Have you understood all this?" They said, "Yes." And he said to them, "Well, then, every scribe who becomes a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out from his storeroom things both new and old."

MATTHEW 13:51–52

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE NOTION OF THE INTIMATE UNIVERSAL HAS BEEN ON MY MIND for a long time, and made appearances in earlier books like *Is There a Sabbath for Thought?* (2005), *God and the Between* (2008), and *The Intimate Strangeness of Being* (2012). The importance of the notion grew for me with continuing thought and asked for articulation in fuller terms. This I have tried to do in this book. And while it is continuous with prior books and draws from, as well as deepens, some of their resources, it stands as an investigation in its own right. This book as a whole began to shape itself in my mind in response to the encouragement of Creston Davis, who asked me to consider developing further some of the ideas developed in chapter 4. I did so, and am grateful to him for this, as well as for much appreciated support over many years. I am also thankful to the other editors, Slavoj Žižek, Clayton Crokett, and Jeffrey Robbins, for their support in including this book in their worthy series. My thanks also to Cyril O'Regan, Christopher Simpson, and William Francke for their intelligent and generous reading of my manuscript and for helpful responses and suggestions. I also want to warmly thank Wendy Lochner for her indispensable support, and Christine Dunbar for her unfailing help.

Cyril O'Regan helpfully suggested that I include a glossary of terms to aid those perhaps not so familiar with my work. While this glossary might have contained many more entries, I hope it serves a useful purpose.

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These have been significantly rewritten and expanded for this book. I thank the publishers for permission to reprint.

The book is dedicated to the person most intimate to me, Maria.

THE INTIMATE UNIVERSAL

Introduction

For and Against the Universal—Doing Justice

The question of the universal so constantly recurs throughout the philosophical tradition that one might be tempted to think of it as being a perplexity, more or less universal. The *quest* of the universal is also deeply *intimate* to that long tradition, though that intimacy is not often, if at all, made a theme for reflection. Why are the intimate quest and the universal question not held together? Can we wed the intimacy of the quest with the universality of the question? Can we speak of the intimate universal? What is this intimate universal? Why speak of it at all? How can we speak of the intimate universal? Does this universal withdraw from our grasp with a transcendence of which we are not the measure? Does it elude us in an intimacy verging on the inarticulate? Or is the intimate the space wherein the universal comes to articulation? Do we need a plurality of lines of approach to do justice to its significance? The different explorations of this work will suggest how we might respond to such questions, and do so diversely. Can we, how can we, do justice to the intimate universal? This will be our concern.

One is struck by contradictory attitudes toward the universal in the history of thought. There is no doubt that a preferential option for the universal throughout the long history of philosophy is echoed in religious

and theological reflection. This preferential option mutates into new forms with modern developments of scientific theory, now being implemented on larger scales by means of practical and technological applications. It also seeps into a multitude of political arrangements or formations, even granting that the universal is sometimes hindered by, or counterfeited by, these formations. Yet one would be deaf to contrary currents if one did not hear loud shouts that counter the universal in recent post-Enlightenment, indeed anti-Enlightenment thinking. I want to dwell on some of these contrary attitudes here by way of introducing the intimate universal.

First, to the longer-standing practice of the honoring of the universal, how to speak of it? One notes how many thinkers breathe far more freely with the universal than the intimate. The universal, they hold, puts us out in the open, so to say. We are not locked up in ourselves, or to be locked up. We enter the space of what is more than ourselves. The universal offers us a public space for thought, so the philosophers will insist; or a communal forum moderating antagonism for the practice of a religion, as a variety of theologians will concur; or a neutral or unbiased intermedium for scientific theory, as those practicing science without particular frontiers will claim. The universal is corrective to wayward selving, be it religious, philosophical, or scientific. It disciplines that waywardness in the direction of the socially or institutionally approved line. It is therapeutic in releasing us from obsession with our small selves. It is elevating in lifting us to a higher level of the real. It is redemptive of our solitudes, since in and through it we are no longer alone and find our place within the larger whole.

To illustrate: one thinks of the overriding tendency in recent philosophy to reject subjectivisms or "privacies" in favor of linguistically meditated responses, be these on the Continental or analytical side of philosophy. One thinks of religious movements in which it is the community of believers, not to say millennial traditions with their sanctioned public rituals and liturgies that receive the accolades. One thinks also of the internationalism that is immanent in the scientific quest of the universal. This preferential option for the universal is especially evident in the suspicion that any predilection for the intimate will end in something smacking of mere "mysticism." At the mention of mysticism the response will be like someone with a sweet tooth being forced to suck lemons—the smile on the face vanishes as the mouth puckers in sour distress. This is evident among the philosophers, and while scientific theorists might not give the matter

much thought, one would undoubtedly find the same face of sour distress at claims not completely containable within the public universal. One notes too how institutionally based practices of religion often look with suspicion on mystical claims: these claims skirt the edges of orthodoxy in their often highly paradoxical modes of expression, if not sometimes idiosyncratic practices of devotion.

What then of the second contrary current? Recently, it is notable that there is a more antagonistic attitude to the universal that we find in critics of the Enlightenment project. This is a complex business, but one important aspect of the matter is the imputation of pretense to the rational universal. This pretense communicates the pretension to speak on behalf of all rational beings, indifferently, neutrally, homogeneously, fairly; but the pretension is pretense in that the speaking hides the elevation of a particular way of thinking, or indeed way of life, in the paradigm of universality, and in the masking of its incorrigible particularity. What is to be decried is the failure to be universal of the pretense to the universal. And in this instance, the lesson to be drawn is that the pretense to the universal can only be that, pretense: the recessed particularity is always more ultimately constitutive of our situation as such. Now our task is not to rally to the defense of the universal but to advance the recovery of the recessed, even subjugated particularity. Reversing decamping from the particular to the universal, we pitch our tents on the plain of particularity and fly there the colors of singularity, never to be surpassed by mere generality.

There are signs in relation to this second current that the universal is now receiving more respectful treatment, not least in reaction to the overreaction of the anti-Enlightenment scourgers of the universal. Is this to the good in relation to the intimate universal? I would say that my suggestion of the intimate universal does not find itself fully at home in either of the two contrary currents. The meaning of this is to be seen in the working out of the suggestion. Yet one can see that if there is an intimate universal it must address something of what appears justified in both of these contrary currents. This too must be addressed in the sequel.

In respect of what is to come, and at the risk of appearing to be too abstract and not concrete enough, I think it would be helpful to distinguish a number of senses of the universal, whether we take flight into the universal or away from it. I will just briefly mention four prominent senses in the philosophical tradition (there are more, and they will be touched upon in the body of the work). First, there is the *Platonic* universal: the

Idea as transcendent to the instances in becoming. Second, there is the *Aristotelian* universal: the universal is immanent in the process of becoming. Third there is the *nominalist* universal: the universal is nothing ontologically beyond, and nothing ontologically immanent, but merely a sound of the voice, a *flatus vocis*, affixed to a particular idea that tries to insinuate a more general range of reference. Fourth, there is the *idealist* universal: this is said to be the concrete universal, not simply beyond the particular, and certainly not just a sound of the voice, but a universal that concretizes itself in immanent becoming. The idealist universal might seem the most promising in that it is seen as overcoming the "beyond" as a mere indefinite abstraction, as particularizing itself in response to the nominalist "this," and as being immanent like the Aristotelian universal but as actively self-realizing itself over the whole range of the actual. Is there a further sense of the universal? I want to say there is. This is what I call the intimate universal and it might be contrasted with these other senses of the universal thus.

I would say, first, that the intimate universal is not the Platonic Idea to the extent that this Idea stresses a transcendence under the sign of *dualism*, thus making it problematically related to immanence. There is a transcendence at work but the universal as intimate is not transcendent in the form of a dualistic opposite. That said, there is a side to the Platonic quest for the universal that returns us to the singularity of those seeking the universal. We see this most especially in the singular person of Socrates. A saturated sense of singularity is of importance for the intimate universal. The Platonic quest of the universal shows itself mindful of the *metaxu*, the space between the intimacy of the singular soul and the universality of the forms, not to mention the daimonic hyperbole (*daimonias huperbolēs*) of the Good (see *Republic*, 509c1–2).

Second, the intimate universal is not the Aristotelian universal, if it should be held that the becoming of immanence leaves *no room* for transcendence as such. There is indeed an intimate immanence calling for our acknowledgment and exploration; but this is an intimacy that opens beyond immanence as such. In the intimacy of immanence the promise of a universal togetherness or community is at work, one that is not exhausted by the more organic or biological becoming that often serves as the basis of the immanence of the Aristotelian universal. In due course, I will suggest that the religious community is a truer and more ultimate articulation of what this intimate universal is all about, and such

a community is inseparable from both a robust sense of transcendence and a deeply engaged sense of immanence, and indeed an irreducible sense of human freedom, singular and communal.

Third, the intimate universal is not the nominalist's generality either, since the latter risks reducing all beings to particulars and collections of particulars. The particular as intimate might be understood rather as an opening to the universal that is immanently at work in it. Something of this is at stake in the saturated singularity I just mentioned. One might say to the nominalist: the particular words the universal. The nominalist is right to stress the word (*flatus vocis*), and the wording, but the universal is not just our wording, attached extrinsically to external particulars. The particular words itself, and in this wording reveals its being as participating in the universal, reveals it as *being worded*. The nominalist, one worries, does not understand the true ontological depth of the particular wording the universal, of the particular as itself a being worded. Hence the nominalist not only has no adequate sense of the intimate universal, but tends to lose the thread with any true universal, and indeed the promise of the name.

Finally, and fourth, the intimate universal is not quite the concrete universal of the idealist. For even though in this view there is an immanent universal as particularized, there is not enough of robust transcendence as other and of the wording of this transcendence in true signs. There is also not a rich enough appreciation of the ontological depths of the intimate, which, as a result, tends to be portrayed privatively as a mere private indeterminacy, ultimately of no real philosophical significance. The sense of the togetherness of intimate and universal, in turn, tends to be ceded to an inclusive totality that is the encompassing universal that subsumes the particular in itself. By contrast, in the intimate universal there is togetherness at work from the origin, but the origin is not a lacking indeterminacy but an overdeterminacy of too much. This has to do with the ontological surplus of being at work in the most intimate immanence and in solidarity with the most unconstrained transcendence. And, as we shall see more fully, the community that the intimate universal comes to realize is not an inclusive totality but an openly intermediating gathering of others, the most richly concrete and intimate embodiment of which is perhaps to be named as the religious community.

This last suggestion will awaken the worry of the more rationalist philosopher: Is this all not too redolent of an equivocal "mysticism"—the

fated end of the pathway of the intimate, fatal to the universal? The question of communication and communicability has much to do with the issue. Indeed, there is something intimate about the mystical, whether in relation to the nocturnal depths in the soul or the divine heights beyond the soul. And one can see the tension with the universal, which as most often understood is *diurnal to reason*, and nothing but diurnal (Dante: "Reason's wings are short").[1] Elsewhere I connect the intimate with what I call the idiocy of being,[2] and there does seem to be something idiotic about the mystical—it is at the boundary of, perhaps beyond the boundary of, the more neutrally available and public generalities. But the question is whether it is *merely* idiotic, in the respect of being outside all rational communication. One could say that this is not incommunicable tout court. The idiotic intimacy is rather at the source of communication, or closer to the sources, instead of being an autistic retraction out of communication.

To illustrate: we speak of an "idiom" of a people or a person, and in the "idiomatic" we can see a connection with the "idiotic." But an "idiom" is not some autistic retraction from the shared space of diurnal reason but a singular way of *communication*. And qua communication it is not neutral, not indifferent; it is stressed and inflected with its own singularity. Thus an idiom might communicate a singularity that might indeed express the idiosyncrasy of an individual; but it might also manifest the peculiar character or linguistic style of a particular people. The contrast of the merely private and the generally public will not do justice to this idiotic complexity of living communication. The intimate universal does more justice. I want to explore how that justice of the intimate universal offers much: how it can help one appreciate the ontological and political worry about the totalizing universal; how it can aid one to see the point of being existentially true to given immanence; how it can religiously share in the recuperation of unclosing transcendence; how it can indeed endorse a certain poetic voicing of the particular.

The Intimate Universal: Exoteric Reflections

An overview of the whole will be of help. I offer it even though I worry that a too curt summary of the chapters will create a too cut-and-dried impression, rather than communicating the seeking and sometimes secret interrogatory nature of the exploration as a whole. I divide the work into

two parts, the first part being engaged more with what I term *exoteric reflections*, the second part with *systematic thoughts* about the intimate universal. When I speak of exoteric reflections, I do not mean to suggest, by implied contrast, an esotericism of the universal accessible only to intimate circles of elites. Exploring the intimate universal is not easy, but it is also not impossible, and if one gives one's patient and dedicated thought over to the matter itself it is available for communication. Some modes of its communication may be more readily to hand in terms of already-laid-down forms of significance, diversely available for reflective thought. This is what I intend by focusing in part I on religion, art, philosophy itself, and politics. Our human being is constituted by being religious, being aesthetic, being political, and by our reflective power to become mindful of their meaning. Exoteric reflections do not begin with some stipulated technical language but in the midst of things. By thinking in and out of the midst of things, a more refined wording of our being in the between can emerge, indeed must emerge, to do justice to what is coming to manifestation there. While my own work has attempted to define such a wording, and in due course some of the more distinctive vocabulary of that wording will come into play, I think we can reflect in the midst of things on our being religious, artistic, philosophical, and political in light of the intimate universal. Each is a crucial space where the significance of the intimate universal comes to articulation.

I gave thought to beginning more coaxingly with art and the intimate universal rather than with religion. The latter might strike some as more abrupt than coaxing, given certain currents of our Zeitgeist uneasy with, even hostile to, religion. In chapter 1, I do begin with religion because I consider our being religious to be closest to the fecund matrix of significance in relation to what is often called our sense of the "whole," or (as I would prefer to put it) our being in the between. In some developments, it is true, religion was presented as one specific sphere of engagement within the whole, but this occludes its power to reveal the most primal and elemental sense of the intimate universal. I also begin with our being religious because it is the *most idiotic*, idiotic in the sense above noted. True, it can come from and open onto madness, but my question is whether also it can show an *idiot wisdom*.

I address the issue in terms of the contrast of cosmopolis and ghetto as two possibilities reflecting responses to the frequently posed question as to what comes after modernity. Cosmopolis and ghetto might be taken as

emblematic of two fundamental orientations to the universal and the intimate, the first suggesting a universality beyond particularity, the second a particularity intractable to subsumption into the universal. I argue against an "either-or" between the universal and the intimate, as seems suggested by this contrast. In connection with a certain understanding of our being religious, the intimate universal can be held to address the rightful claims of singularity and universality. Something about being religious does not yield its fullest meaning to the neutral universal of traditional philosophers, not yet the concrete universal of Hegel. At the same time, it asks that we avoid the sheer assertion of singularity, outside all universals, as advocated, now religiously, now antiphilosophically, by some post-Hegelians. My search will bear on how the event of monotheistic religion, and especially Christianity, points us in the direction of the intimate universal. There are implications for "political theology," especially the unavoidability of the theological qua theological and the irreducibility of religion to politics. There is something transpolitical about the intimate universal that yet is saturated with implications for the practices of politics. One has to step away from the tendency of the political to absolutize its claim to sovereignty, generating thereby in immanent time a mortal pantheon of counterfeit doubles of the divine.

In chapter 2 I ask if and how art throws light on the intimate universal, or if and how the intimate universal might light up art. Unlike Hegel in his doctrine of absolute spirit, I do not treat of art first, since the religious is the more primal, as I said, though the permeability of art and the sacred will not be far from the thoughts tried out here. Aristotle famously said that poetry was more philosophical than history because it more implicates the universal, but what sense of universality is at stake? Is there not something ineluctably singular about the work of art? My question will concern if and how in the singularity of the work we find the communication of the universal. If we do, what does this say about both the singular and the universal? The often sterile opposition of universal and particular must be questioned. I think we cannot deny something that touches us intimately in art, and yet the intimacy is not closed into isolated singularity or subjectivity. Quite the opposite—something is communicated in the aesthetic intimacy that radiates beyond such closure. One point of continuity with the exploration of religion and the intimate universal relates to exploring the immanent sources of creativity and the communicative impulse that carries us beyond closed immanence.

A still not adequately understood matter is the migration (in post-Enlightenment times) of a sense of ultimate significance from religion to art, and the yet continuing familial relation of these two.[3] The notion of the intimate universal helps us more deeply understand what is at play in art, while not forcing us into an aestheticism that takes art out of the fuller flow of life. Likewise, it does not make of art such an other to (philosophical) thought that the quest for universality is to be rejected in the name of inarticulate singularity. There is a concentrated power to art that helps us become mindful of the catholic fermenting of the intimate universal, without our having to make it only a particular illustration of some general concept. Along the way, the intimate universal throws new light on the aesthetic reflections of thinkers like Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and others. Our own era sometimes seems to be in revolt against the universal, but there is a sheltering of the universal in the intimacy of being in which art, even in revolt, always participates. This is not least because of the primordial communicative field in which art participates. (In part 2 this field or intermedium in a wider sense is explored in the idiotics and aesthetics of the intimate universal.)

In chapter 3 I ask how the intimate universal might have a significant bearing on the practice of philosophy itself. We immediately think of philosophers as the high priests of the universal, but these high priests do not always convince nonphilosophers, be they artists or religious believers, that their service of the universal deserves the ultimate devotion. If sometimes the philosophers demand from the intimacies of religion and art that they prove themselves in connection with the universal, here the call is directed to philosophy itself, as a practice of truth, to prove that its service of the universal is in the spirit of the most intimate truthfulness. To this end, I connect the philosophical service of the universal with a more intimate sense of "doing justice" that is prior to the more usual juxtaposition of theory and practice. There is a connection with issues of social justice here, though my stress on this prior sense of "doing justice" turns us to giving an accounting of an ontological vulnerability that is prior to both social power and social vulnerability. The relevant sense of "doing justice" connects philosophy to a service of "being true" that implicates an elemental fidelity to truth that we neither possess nor construct, and that precedes all efforts to enact justice in a more normal ethical or political sense. This elemental charge to be just precedes any just act. The philosophical participation in the intimate universal means that there is

a patience of being or a receiving of being before acting, which we must take up reflectively and actively.

All this has implications for the practices of philosophy in regard to political engagements. Most significantly, access to this prior sense of doing justice cannot be a matter of will to power; it entails a discipline of truthfulness that transcends will to power. The practice of the philosopher, under fidelity to the intimate universal, asks for a standing back from the foreground fluctuations of political will to power. We reenter the void space of the intimate soul, which is ontologically vulnerable, hence both open to be terrorized and capable of terrorizing. This intimate void is a porosity of the soul rather than a pure nothingness. Though it is not a particular project or activity, this porosity allows all openness, receiving, and self-transcendence; out of it come all the practical energies that feed diverse activities. This poverty of philosophy means the relinquishing of those (ultimately) meaningless activities of construction that we sometimes see as our defiant rejoinder to a purposeless universe. The defiance of this hyperactive nihilism is entirely misplaced if the ethos of given being is the intermedium of the intimate universal. Also misplaced is the hyperactive frenzy of (ultimately) meaningless construction. There is a release in our willing to be nothing, as we participate in a graced patience of being that is before all servility and all sovereignty, and that witnesses to the justice that is beyond them.

In chapter 4 I consider the intimate universal in relation to politics, for some the space of the public par excellence. Does ontology or metaphysics have relevance for how we understand that relation? I believe that we need to ask as much about a political metaphysics (ontology) as about a political theology, or a political aesthetic. If the intimate universal has metaphysical significance, this has relevance for our political orientations, not least in relation to the meaning of freedom, here explored with reference to something beyond servility and sovereignty, the slave and the master. This significance, in both its intimacy and its universality, may not be immediately evident. The secularization of politics has not only privatized religion; it has privatized metaphysics, as indeed it has aesthetically tended to privatize art. We can look at privatization in at least a double perspective: the exclusion of the privatized from the public space of politics; or accession to the space of the more intimate where the universal asks to be elementally rethought, both in the midst of things and from the origin up. In this second perspective, the one adhered to here, a proper

ontology of this more elemental intimacy of our being will show its communicative power, even unto a variety of formations of political order. The ethical is often granted this mediated effect, but how we understand the "to be," as well as the good of the "to be," percolates into political forms. How we think intimately of the good of being or the evil of being will manifest itself here too.

If there are different participations in the intimate universal, one must say that there can be a sense of metaphysics that is also intimate to politics. For even though the intimate universal may be incognito, in actuality the public space of the political is still re-sourced by enabling sources of being. If metaphysics makes an approach to the intimate universal, it is more often than not recessed in the space of the political, but it is not inactive there just because it is recessed. This is not only true with regard to the potential for universal norms and the diverse sources of ethical value informing the space of the political, but also true of the percolation of the intimate universal into daily life, apart from all efforts to privatize this completely. We have tried to make religion and metaphysics private, having nothing to do with the political universe; but if this privatization is no longer credible in politics, perhaps also the intimacy of "political metaphysics" deserves some consideration (on the analogy with political theology).

This has to be considered, if *to be (at all)* is to participate in the intimate universal. Let politics be more local (even ghetto-like) or more universal (even international or cosmopolitan); there is no reason why it too does not participate in the intimate universal, especially in regard to the sourcing of diverse forms of power, political or other. These forms can hinder or enable. If they hinder metaphysical mindfulness, or religious porosity, or aesthetic finesse, it will be all the more difficult to be open to the intimate universal. That there is something transpolitical here is signaled by the agapeic service that is neither servility nor sovereignty. Blindness to the "political metaphysics" of the intimate universal can breed counterfeits of the intimate universal. The intermedium of being is warped into a breeding ground of corruptions of power. One thinks of monstrous forms of (say) the erotics of sovereignty that mutate into tyrannical species of will to power. One worries too that "globalization," as seemingly a project of the universal, functions by an exploitation of the intimate; its all-consuming universality reconfigures, economically and cybernetically, this intimacy of being in terms of counterfeit doubles of desire, circulating via the media of the dominion of serviceable disposability. And it will not

do to say we are all now denizens of a "postmetaphysical" time. If to be human is to be, and if to be is to participate in the intimate universal, then metaphysics sticks with us. Being "postmetaphysical" is being metaphysical in a way that wants to make an impossible exception of itself. It is best to know what abides (with) us.

The Intimate Universal: Systematic Thoughts

By contrast with part 1, where religion, art, philosophy, and politics are explored as determinate spheres of human significance, part 2 considers the intimate universal in a more systematic frame, focusing on what it means for being human as such, how it is manifested in all the ontological dimensions of our being. The more exoteric side of part 1 deals with these determinate spheres as perhaps more familiarly known apart from systematic considerations. But because part 2 concerns the being of the human, with as much stress on the being as on the human, we must invoke ontological considerations in a form more systematic than the reflective explorations of part 1 need.

To offer systematic thoughts, again apropos of exoteric reflections, is not to hold to something simply esoteric. Every search for the true does entail an engagement with the hidden, and even when the hidden comes to light, universal access to it entails qualitative discrimination, not quantitative neutrality. Finesse for the intimate universal calls for qualitative discrimination. To be thus discerning is aided by the power to think the systematic connections of a matter under consideration. To think of one thing is to think of another, and connections emerge intimately from dwelling mindfully with the thing itself. In being led on from one thing to another, an open systematic network of connections comes to emerge, sometimes from sources otherwise secret. Our task as philosophers is to be systematic in this open, searching and connecting sense.

Being thus systematic is not to make claims to possess *the* system. It is not systematic in any deductive or transcendental or speculative sense. Moreover, it is quite compatible with mindfulness of what is before system and beyond system.[4] We must delve into original (re)sources before and beyond the religious, the artistic, and the philosophical as more determinately formed. This holds true also of the political, and so we must do justice to the prepolitical and the transpolitical. These diverse determinations

of our being are to be seen as derivative from something prior and something outliving the determinacy and the self-determination. They point to a prior overdeterminacy of enabling (re)sources that both companions and outlives the determinate formations of being religious, aesthetic, philosophical, and political.

An outline scheme might describe the matter thus (always remembering that every scheme is a determination, hence not true to the fullness of what is in play): the idiotics deals with (re)sources closer to *indeterminacy*, the aesthetics with rich, surplus *determinacy*, and the erotics with the passionate nisus toward *self-determinacy*, while the agapeics is communion in love with the *overdeterminacy*. I would add the important proviso that the idiotics, aesthetics, and erotics are each involved in unfolding the promise of the agapeic overdeterminacy. They each are participating in this overdeterminacy and in the intimate universal but qualifying this in a particular direction. Our thinking need not be an "either-or": not a matter of saying that one alone instantiates it, and the others lack it, and hence the latter having to be excluded. This "either-or" thinking is very prevalent—it reveals a kind of univocalizing in which one form is said to be the thing, and that is that, and hence the others are not the thing. A philosophy friendly to the amplitude of the universal cannot be narrowly partisan—but it should also court the intimacy of the intimate universal. The kingdom of thought offers a communication of welcome in both its intimacy and its universality. The univocalizing can breed a contestable "essentialism." We say that the essence is here and nowhere else, then construct a picture based on a univocal "either-or." But metaxological thinking as openly systematic is dialectical and transdialectical. The "either-or" is not the last word, or even the first. A univocal "either-or" is to be dialectically dissolved as a fixation, in order to reveal the promise concealed in the fixation. This promise is transdialectical and points toward a metaxology of the intimate universal.

In chapter 5 we start with the idiotics, addressing first the predeterminate *intimacy* of the intimate universal, an intimacy very difficult to address directly, since all our addresses are already more determinately articulated in a more or less public space than the idiotics of the intimate as such. Here I explore what lies at the deepest ontological intimacy of our being, what I call the porosity of being, the patience of being, the endeavor to be, the love of being as good and its mutation into evil and will to power, the piety of the family. Because it names a threshold of

communication and more determinate articulation, the idiotics tends to become hidden as we move through the aesthetics, erotics, and agapeics, wherein something takes over that seems more graspable in terms of universality. This is potentially deceptive, however, since *already* in the intimacy the universal is at work, though not known as such, even when lived most fully in the agapeics of communication. Equally in the aesthetics, erotics, and agapeics, seemingly out in more public space, the idiotics is *always* the secret companion. We need to be mindful of the recessed as well as the expressed, and mindful of the secret power of the intimate, even when more public modes of communication seem to recess it. Once again, there is no need of a dualistic opposition or "either-or" between the intimate and the universal. There is the *incognito* working of the intimate good, even in evil, in the idiocy of the monstrous. The inviting smiles of the public men may at times be fake, but faking intimacy is still an intimate faking. The universal does not quash the intimate if it is truly the universal, just as the intimate must be more than an autistic idiocy. This universality is not of the rational concept but constitutive of our being, intimate to it. Likewise, the idiocy is not autistic but constitutes ontologically the first (silent) source of communicative being. This will be more fully explored.

In chapter 6 we see that in the aesthetic there is an intimacy that is elemental and bound up with our *being embodied* participants in the field of being as itself an aesthetic happening. In that aesthetic intermedium, something of the metaxological promise of the universal is at play. We will have already seen this in relation to art in part I, but here the stress is more on the universality of aesthetic happening as the embodiment of the intimacy. We can remain true to this, we can reconfigure it, we can mutilate it, we can communicate the secret of its promise more out in the open. More than the idiotics, the aesthetics of the intimate universal is out in the open in this more determinate embodied sense. This is at issue here: the intermedium of the aesthetic between, and our own being as aesthetic in that between. While aesthetic happening is more determinate than the idiotic, there is the carry-over into it of the intimacy that communicates itself. We see this in the self-surpassing that marks sensuous flesh itself. The idiotic, it turns out, is overdeterminate, not merely indeterminate, and aesthetic determinacy comes to be in that original overdeterminacy, begins to take on form, forms itself. Here we are dealing not with a solitary subject reaching out but with an embodiment of the intimate universal, incarnating a porosity of being that finds its home not only in our

fleshed porosity to what is other, but in the very porosity of being itself, as an intermedium of potentially unrestricted interplay. This is not indeterminate but determinate and more than determinate, and not just self-determining but overdeterminate.

In chapter 7 we turn to the erotics of the intimate universal, aware that there are those who would divorce erotics from the universal. If the universal is the preserve of reason, we sometimes think eros precedes or exceeds reason. Then we tend to foster a dualism of eros and reason, but this is too simple, and untrue to both eros and reason. As rooted in the flesh of the aesthetic body, the erotics does bring further to the fore the self-surpassing of the human being that, while particularized, is not merely particularistic. That the intimate universal is at work in this self-surpassing and that it is in excess of our sober self-determination constitute no arguments against the universal but are signs we must think of the universal differently. I see the intimate universal rather as charging the field of intermediation as a matter of "being with"—*sunousia*. *Sunousia* relativizes the abstract universal, surprises and breaks through the confines of self-enclosed particularity. The erotics of the intimate universal implicates our wording the between: the coming of logos, our coming to logos, out of inconstant fluctuations of desire. Adventuring out beyond, surpassing, the *conatus*, our being "born with" out of the original porosity, finds the received *passio essendi* turning into a seeking, infinitely restless, in quest of the intimate universal. We find our longing for its more express actuality or for the actualization of its promise in ourselves. Our longing is its belonging with us (*sun-ousia*) before our belonging with it. In line with the idiotics and aesthetics, the erotics of the universal is its actualizing intimacy, actualized in light of this primordial "being with" (*sunousia*).

Already from the origin, the primordiality of being at all is a "being with," a *sunousia*. I connect erotics with the aesthetics of happening, with nature naturing, with the generation and perpetuation of life, with the love of life, with life itself as love of life. I mean a secret love of being and a universal love—potentially of all being—high and low, particular and universal. As we will see, the *directionality* of the love is crucial. There is the question of the intimate love, in relation to its dark origin, as well as in relation to the beyond of itself, with others and with the divine. The intermedium of intercourse is saturated: intensely intimate and extensively related; selfish and ecstatic; energizing selving beyond selving, and yet lost in the other beyond selving, and tortured with loss, when the beloved

other is not—all these. There is a difference of directions between a going up and a going down. There is a vertical energy in being ecstatic; there is also a going down into depths of intimacy. There is a going out to ranges of extended community, and this not always to the cost of the intimacy. Erotics is a crossing, crisscrossing, of the between where intimate participation in partnership unfolds our being in community, embodying and touching the universal. Among other things, we must note those contemporary understandings of erotics that accentuate the going down prior to universal reason into depths of darkness in our most intimate desiring. The matter of transcending up, say, in the Platonic way, becomes perplexing. Not a few have grown uncertain about the power of eros to elevate. The origin is more intimate to erotic desire than desire to itself, but this intimacy now seems horrifying—an abysmal, bottomless chaos. This is one of the reasons we have understandably shunned it, covered it over, have reacted with dread at the prospect of facing its horror. But horror is not the first word or the last. The two directionalities have to be acknowledged and traversed: we must go down into the darkness, we must climb again into the light above us. In all this, there is reversion to the idiocy; there is extroversion to the others of love; there is superversion to the superior in our introversion and coming to the boundary of the intimate; there is the companion who is one's friend in the labyrinth.

Finally in chapter 8 we turn to the agapeics of the intimate universal. The promise of this is immanent from the outset. The agapeics of the intimate universal communicates a surplus generosity that was secretly enabling in the idiotics, aesthetics, and erotics. It is also prepared with the friend, the trusted companion in the labyrinth. The promise in the intimate universal is more than symmetrical relations between friends. Mindfulness of this surplus generosity offers a different picture from much of modern political thought, where the underlying motivation of all human association is our lack, interiorized in anguish before death, extroverted in will to power, enacted in aggression against the other as a potential enemy. In the face of the threat of what is other, we secure ourselves, and the porosity is closed with a security border. Thus in Hobbes and others after him, fear of death rather than love of life moves all associative relations. In truth, and to the contrary, we only fear death because we love life. The love is more primordial.

The surplus of the agapeics moves us into a space of communication beyond that which envisages the other as a potential enemy. This space is

not the condition of life as war, when eros becomes the bad Eris (there is a good Eris, as the Greeks knew). The bad Eris is always on the verge of falling out of the affirming "to be" of eros and into the destructive course of death. The intimate universal tells against this reduction of generosity. The incognito generosity shows a surplus of affirmative "to be" as good that is always at work, though it be driven out of the foreground of our picture of things. This is the truer manifestation of the intimate universal promised in the idiotics, the aesthetics, and the erotics. Beyond servility and sovereignty it is not the sovereign who is the exception but the agapeic servant. This is the exception to the economy of will to power. This is the exception not by defining political sovereignty but by being prior to and beyond politics—prior to and beyond political servility and sovereignty. This is the exception by being beyond the law differently, being a good that endows law, doing this through agapeic generosity, not through imposing will to power. At issue is not quite political religion, not even religious politics—though both can be informed by the agapeics of the intimate universal. The agapeic servant is the life, the way, the truth of the intimate universal. The agapeic servant incarnates the living promise of the intimate universal and redeems it.

The Intimate Universal: The Allowance of Thought

The division of the work into two parts might seem to reflect, as I said, a distinction between more exoteric and esoteric considerations, but while there are secret sources to be explored, I mean nothing secretive about the second part. Quite the opposite. Exploring the intimate universal in the open systematic manner in part 2 reveals this double requirement: receptivity to the often recessed (re)sources of intelligibility, secret in that sense; and the struggle for intelligible articulation, nonsecretive in being potentially open to all who are receptive to the wording of the intimate universal. The point extends to hospitality to the "trans-systematic," that is, to what cannot be included entirely in a system of determinate concepts. Normally considered, the universal seems to lend itself to systematic articulation, the intimate to exceed such articulation. But the sense of systematic thought operative in this work implicates rather how we have to do special justice to the *thresholds* between the systematic and the trans-systematic, between what diurnally appears more determinable in conceptual form and what

more nocturnally enables determination and determinability, yet exceeding exhaustive self-determination.

Religion, art, philosophy, and politics are not to be sealed off from one another. There are permeabilities between them that are surprising. They are often in clandestine communication because each in distinctive ways is communicative of the intimate universal. They manifest the intimate universal in a plurivocal and not univocal way. In quest of their hidden porosity, the impossibility of sealing them off from one another does not mean they collapse into one another. In their differences there is something more like a metaxological community of significances.

I do fear that in this introduction I have started too abstractly and not intimately enough, but if so, the work overall will try to do better concrete justice to both the universality and the intimacy. I do not think it is enough to stipulate a universal and then proceed to apply it. Such a pathway would be a bit like Kant's determinative judgment: we already know the universal and then subsume the particular under it, or apply it to the particular, with results then closer to the logical universal or the scientific. Rather, the way here is a bit more like what Kant calls reflective judgment: here we are more familiar with the particular but something about the surplus of givenness sends us in search of the universal appropriate to it. The matter is one of allowing this other sense of the universal to emerge from the intimacy itself, allowing our thought to be in quest of it, in search of it. This quest is not to be exhausted in a determinate universal, or a universal project of self-determination. Nor is it a matter of the merely indeterminate. There is something overdeterminate about the intimate universal, reflected in the emergence of a "more" that always exceeds our determination, and that yet invites us on to efforts at truthful articulation. What is more about it awakens the self-surpassing of our thinking, though what is to be thought exceeds our every self-surpassing.

One could argue that this is most appropriate with metaxological thought about religion, art, and philosophy: in the intimacy of being, to let the universal show itself. I am also put in mind of Kant's aesthetic ideas (a theme to which I will return), which entail representations or images that draw us into a quest of the unconditioned, awakening much thought to which no determinate thought is entirely adequate. There is always more. What I mean by the religious is closer to this, but something of the aesthetic in the requisite respect informs us about how we might think on the threshold between the determinate and the overdeterminate.

On the threshold, thought is in quest of the more, though this goes into the idiocy before the aesthetic and goes beyond the aesthetic into the erotic and the agapeic. There is a teasing of and by the intimate universal; there is a kind of wooing, and tracing, and a coaxing kind of reflection. Between system and poetics I would venture that a kind of aesthetic construction guides this work, though aesthetic with qualifications. Both system and poetics differently participate in the intimate universal. Each chapter is a kind of aesthetic whole—an open whole, that is to say, a *metaxu*, poised on the permeable threshold between living participation and reflective articulation. There is permeability between these wholes, permeability perhaps more evident in part 2. There is the porosity of these wholes to their own beyond. In the between spaces, and on the emergent thresholds of these open wholes, the intimate universal comes to wording.

I

The Intimate Universal—Exoteric Reflections

Religion, Art, Philosophy, Politics

CHAPTER 1

Religion and the Intimate Universal

Neither Cosmopolis nor Ghetto

Opening on the Intimate Universal and Religion

Why open on the intimate universal with religion? In our culture, do we not come across a diffidence, even allergy, toward respectful rumination on the religious? Beginning with, say, art might seem a more easeful path, more playful with possibilities, less fraught with ultimate allegiances. And yet our being religious carries something of the richest resonance of the intimate universal, in an intensive and extensive sense. Intensive: in going most intimately into the depths of our being, indeed in being constitutive of what it means to be distinctively human. Extensive: in carrying us beyond ourselves, in promise of community with all others, human and nonhuman, but also with the divine origin, as giver, sustainer, and consummation of all that is. All of this precipitates our philosophical perplexity: perplexity, if not entirely to be dispelled, at least to be alleviated.

I propose we begin via a question frequently posed, namely, the question as to what comes after modernity. Broad responses have been made, among which the contrast of cosmopolis and ghetto is certainly of relevance.[1] For we can take cosmopolis and ghetto as emblematic of two fundamental orientations to the universal and the intimate. Cosmopolis

suggests universality beyond particularity, ghetto a particularity intractable to subsumption into the universal. Each seems to offer us a different "either-or" between the universal and the intimate. Both possibilities have their attractions, and yet one might hesitate to endorse either. This hesitation is itself significant. It testifies to an uncertainty, both about our current situation and about what is to come, testifies to diffidence about commitment to any simple "either-or" that appears to cut rather than untie the Gordian knot. Is there a "neither-nor" that is not a fudge of choice but a tantalizing harbinger of a being-between that cannot be confined to either alternative?

What comes after modernity? Who would dare prophesy? Certainly not I. One need only (re)state the obvious: the relation of religion and politics, religion and public life, has to be rethought. How rethought? Beyond the "either-or" between cosmopolis and ghetto: universality blind to the particular, particularity truculent to the universal. Religion, long thought taken care of, or neutralized, or liquidated, or suitably privatized by secular agenda setters, has returned, not with a whimper, but a bang. Of course, it never went away, to those who were mindful. And even when sent into cultural Coventry by the advanced intellectuals, it often oscillated between periods of being driven into recess and periods of return with new vitality—return to public life. After the French Revolution we can read tales of such oscillations throughout the nineteenth century.[2] The history of the relation of religion and secularity in modernity is immensely complicated and answers in no univocal sense to the narrative of a necessary secularization with advancing modernization.[3] Neither cosmopolis nor ghetto: "neither-nor" seems wishy-washy, but our wonder about the intimate universal points us to something more positive. The intimate might suggest a privacy that precludes public communicability, while public life might suggest *merely* a transcendence of the private. And yet there is a universality that is radically intimate; there is an intimacy of being that calls into the community of the universal; and being religious, as both public and private, has to do with both.

The question here bears on a pervasive characteristic of modernity in theory and in practice, namely, its strong stress on immanence. In theory: no reference to transcendence as other is allowed into its various schemes of intelligibility, be these scientific or philosophical. In practice: inner-worldly action sets to work to transform this world here,

this life now, in accord with immanent directives dictated by the human being's autonomous will. One can see how forms of *immanent universality* are thereby generated: on the one hand, theoretical universals without a more ultimate why, there as just there, either as groundless or as stipulated or projected by our thinking, without deeper foundations; on the other hand, practical generalities that have force or persuasiveness in virtue of the determining will of humankind, and again without further grounding or indeed constraint. The connection with religion, or disconnection, is evident. One might call these immanent universals Godless universals—unless, of course, nature is rebaptized as God (as with Spinoza), or the human being reconfigures itself as the man-God (as with some of the left-Hegelians). I do not want to deny the importance of the immanent universals but would ask whether with those just mentioned we end up with an ultimate solitude of immanence: immanence circling around nothing but itself, alone in a self-regarding holism, ultimately alone and not porous to what transcends immanence. Do such immanent universals produce the counterfeit of the intimate universal? They do testify to the inability to erase universality; but in their deepest ontological intimacy, do they communicate with nothing, nothing but themselves? And hence perhaps do they short-circuit, just by their immanent self-circling, the unconstrained communicability of the true universal?

What I am calling the intimate universal takes us beyond the solitudes of immanence, even in the solitudes of immanence. Can we, in the final accounting, make sense of the intimate universal without reference to religious transcendence? Religion communicates in the space of the intimate universal: not a ghetto turned into itself, risking a questionable intimacy closed off from others beyond its own circle; not quite a cosmopolitanism that risks being a universality lacking the intimacy of embodied community, or perhaps risking even a self-circling immanence closed to all beyond it. The intimate universal asks us to address the rightful claims of singularity and universality, while not being just the homogeneous, neutral universal of traditional philosophers. At the same time, it is not quite the concrete universal of Hegel, itself the consummation of self-circling immanence. Nor yet is it the sheer assertion of individuality or singularity, outside the universal, of some post-Hegelians. Does the event of monotheistic religion point us in this direction of the intimate universal? A question to which we will come.

Cosmopolis and Ghetto

Consider, as a first foray, how the meanings of cosmopolis and ghetto suggest a certain contrast of the *inclusive* and the *exclusive*. Cosmopolis, it seems, is open to the whole, tolerant of all, fostering, as an ideal, the universal citizen of the totality who can live on terms that accept, within that whole, heterogeneity and diversity. The ghetto, by comparison, is inhabited by dwellers who are turned into a confined community that, though it might be seen as a kind of whole, is marked by a certain (perhaps forced) clinging to its own identity, and this over against a potentially hostile otherness or strange whole beyond itself. The attraction of the first seems to be the space of the relatively anonymous autonomy that it seems to offer an individual; the attraction of the second is the sense of intimate belonging to community that it might provide in a more face-to-face encounter with one's own kind. Put the contrast thus: anonymous generality versus engaging exclusivity.

Interestingly, one finds some invocation of universality present in *both* these possibilities. This is evident with the notion of the cosmopolitan. Consider the case of Roman Stoicism: the whole is to be likened to a polis, the individual to a citizen of such a whole, likened to the degree that the rational powers in the singular person are in tune with the more universal logos that holds the cosmos together in the harmony of the whole. The invocation of universality is less obvious in the case of the ghetto, but the historical origin of the ghetto refers us to the Jewish people, the people of the universal God. This people of the universal, as claiming election, as claimed for election, cannot but suggest specialness. But how can one universalize specialness and still maintain universality? A certain exclusivity is the perennial temptation. Inevitably also discord can arise between different communities claiming to be the people of the universal. There arises dissonance between different claims to represent the universal between the different monotheisms. At times in the family quarrel between Christianity and Judaism, the latter tended to be defined in terms of, indeed confined to, exclusive particularity, embodied perhaps in the enclosed spatiality of the ghetto itself. While "ghetto" has strongly negative connotations, not least due to the horrible evils visited on the people so confined, being contained within one's own community can be a more complicated happening: paradoxically it can be emblematic of something

radically universal, something beyond all containment. The ghettoed community, to the degree that in its immanence it strikes through to the transcendent God or the transcendent God strikes through to it, can become a social embodiment of the intimate universal. A witness to the intimate universal, it can be this only if sustained in the hope of a divine transcendence beyond the solitudes of immanence. Does this look like a paradoxical bond between the transcendence of God and the intimate universal? And why paradoxical? Because to all appearances that divine transcendence seems so "beyond" that it undermines the here-now-living happening of intimate communication. And yet that communication happens; it happens in finitude, though there is no containing its communication within finite conditions.

I mention this further oscillation between ghetto and cosmopolis. In the modern period the people of the ghetto were often persecuted as cosmopolitan, signaling their lack of allegiance to the native land and its people, among whom they were guests or strangers or worse. The Jew was cosmopolitan because lacking in the appropriate piety of the native people. I mean the piety of place, the loyalty to this country and not that, the autochthonous familial piety, expressed in worship of the gods of the hearth, of this people, and so on. The very universality of the transcendent God forbade the worship of strange gods, gods not at all strange to the paganisms of the modern nations. In this light one situates something of the hatred of the cosmopolitan Jew, their suspect loyalty, a hatred found not only in fascism but also on the left. One thinks of the significant number of Jews in the communist movement, and their falling foul of the infernal suspicion of Stalin.[4]

The putative universality of the modern nation, under the bewitchment of nationalism, often turned its own imperial quest into an unintended mimicking of a ghetto that was no ghetto, a particularity counterfeiting the universal. One thinks of how modern nations extend their particular will to power beyond themselves, in the process hiding from themselves the fact that they are fundamentally obsessed with their own, even when they travel to the land of the other, more often than not to exploit and plunder it. The particular will to power of this or that nation claims cosmopolitan *imperium*, but this is the hypocritical complement paid to universality by self-absorbed and self-absorbing will power.

In postmodern times, an animus toward the universal seems dominant in many intellectual circles. The will to totality is identified with the

history of reason in the West and criticized as perhaps culminating in a figure like Hegel. Hegel: thinker of the universal, claimed by not a few of his postmodern critics to be a violent universal, to the degree that it seems to privilege identity over difference, sameness over otherness, even in the granted dialectical interplay of identity and difference, sameness and otherness. If now we want to celebrate difference qua difference, we seem to be more on the side of the ghetto rather than the cosmopolis. However, we ruefully come to discover that difference qua difference can easily mutate back into the despised identity we thought we had deconstructed or long abandoned. When everyone mouths the rhetoric of difference, everyone begins to sound exactly the same, and we are swallowed up by the sameness we continue blithely to denounce. There is the fact too that, in the interplay of special interest groups, differences, be they ethnic, sexual, religious, or other, revert to the will to power alleged to circulate secretly in the despised economy of totality or the universal. Having executed the traditional One, difference reverts to a violent state of nature, but stands in service to a one, perhaps more sly than the old tyrant, since the rhetoric of this masked master is one of the tolerance of difference. What better way to keep people in tow, hold them in the same old line of the same, than to console them with the noble lie of difference?

Can we do away with the search for the universal? The obvious answer is "no," as we witness in thinkers who mostly have little or no time for religion qua religion.[5] The answer is "no" even when we consider the "return" of religion to huge public, indeed political, prominence. In this return, of course, the intransigence of some fundamentalists is met with and matched by the obtuseness of some secularists. An important part of the problem here is an intermingling of political will to power with more universal claims, often looking to a religious orientation for some justification more ultimate than will to power alone. And this is something we see happening on different sides of current conflicts. There is also an implicit claim to universality, even if one's claims are intended to be purely secular. For the projects of secularism, to the extent that secularism feels the need to justify itself, must appeal to universal norms, as it does, and did in the past, in opposition to what it perceived were the vested political interests of the aristocratic and religious orders. The conflict and possible conversation here too are between different understandings of the universal. Nazism, I suppose, is the most notorious of modern ideologies explicitly to appeal to a putative racial particularity as providing political

and cultural justification for *imperium*. Yet the prestige of the universal was not abjured, since the race theory was presented as scientific and historically justified. Science and heritage were taken to dovetail with the particular gods of historical *volkisch* immanence. The fascist project itself embodies an expansion of the particular toward the universal, or toward the truer embodiment of the universal in the particular, on the basis of a claim to justified superiority—the superior human, the superior race. There is no escaping some universal implication or imputation.

With regard to philosophy itself and the universal, traditionally it was never a simple matter of totalizing sameness. The issue was always one of the interplay of sameness and difference. We think of cosmopolitanism as a political and cultural formation that arose due to confluences between the inheritances of monotheistic religion and the universalism coming from Athens in the reflections of the philosophers and the long seeping of these confluences into Western civilization. Athens and Jerusalem—two singular places, but each naming the universal in its own way. Pope Benedict made much of the happy confluence of these two streams for the early formation of Christianity. In his claim Christianity is a rational religion: a providence with inherent rationality is the coming to time of the logos that is the embodied Christ, a coming in the time of the philosopher's logos and its quest for truth by reason. Of course, Benedict is a German Catholic, and many Germans of high culture since the late eighteenth century have loved Greece, though most of these German lovers of Greece were unruly children of Luther and sometimes loved Greece because they were prohibited from loving Rome.

We need to look at these different claims to universality, for we are invited in the direction of the intimate universal, and this from the side of philosophy as well as religion. Cosmopolitanism at its best also reminds us of the intimate universal—the ethical task was to bring the individual soul as rational into harmony with the rational cosmos as encompassing other-being. Though this harmony might seem to lie too much under the hegemony of the cosmos, the fact is that it not only fostered a discipline of inner equanimity, but generated an élan for ethical and legal transformation, as well as inspiring an immanent political project. Likewise, ghetto life might be seen to offer the promising occasion for the fostering of the intimate universal, reminding us of a community that, despite the suffering and confinement of its members, generates a prodigious spiritual deepening and maturation, educating us to the witness of the universal God. That God does not call us to quantitative room or even *Lebensraum*

but to qualitative communion between the soul and itself, this person and others, the soul and God, the community of humankind and God. Are we in the neighborhood of the promised land of the intimate universal?

Philosophical Universals, Piety, and the Intimacy of Being

Suppose we look at some philosophical aspects of the matter, given that the question of the universal in relation to religion has always been close to the heart of philosophy itself. One thinks of the Platonic dialogue *Euthyphro*, often classed as the first of Plato's dialogues, in which Socrates and Euthyphro enter in conversation about the nature of piety (*to hosion*: "the holy," "pertaining to divine things"). They meet on the portico of the king archon, Socrates anticipating his own trial to come for atheism, corrupting the youth, and inventing new gods, Euthyphro bringing a charge against his father for killing one of the household servants/slaves. Euthyphro asserts a kind of privileged knowing of the gods, even claiming that, in prosecuting his father, he is merely imitating Chronos as castrating Uranus. Castrating the father—a cut to the most intimate place of perhaps the most imposing other. There is also something intimate when Euthyphro in his first answer to the question "What is piety?" replies: "Piety is what I am doing." At the same time, there is also the hint of something more universal in this act of likening himself to the gods. Justification is in mimesis of the divine, though the mimesis is my mimesis, that is, it is a *singular simulating* of the divine. Note how the meaning of the singular mimesis is articulated in terms of family resemblances, not neutral generalities: it is the intimate likeness of family relations, between sons and father, whether human or sacred, that supplies the terms of discussion. Euthyphro tilts to the side of the intimacy of the sacred rather than the universal that favors no particular singular. By contrast, Socrates drives the conversation with Euthyphro relentlessly toward an essential definition of piety, a definition to be expressed universally and in terms as univocal as possible. We need not here look at the different definitions attempted, beyond noting that the Socratic drive for the universal must answer to a logos amenable to being held for all. This definition is not to be determined by examples or by narratives of what either Euthyphro or the gods have done or are doing. It is not to be portrayed in the *mythoi*, the stories of the gods that are intimate to a particular people or culture, in this

instance, the Greeks. Socrates tilts to the side of a universality that seems to look with no special favor on all these intimate particulars.

The dialogue presents us with the interplay of these two tilts, and we might think of it as exemplifying, without thematizing, the issue of how intimacy and universality can be brought together in dialogue. We might think of Plato as the philosophical artist who, in the dialogue form itself, wants to name something of both the intimacy and the universality. The Platonic dialogue offers an iconic concretion (*eikon*) of the intimate universal: the conversation of thought that draws on what is most intimate in the interlocutors, even as it seeks the community of logos beyond each that is most universal.

One should not forget, however, that the Socratic drive for the universal comes to itself out of an originating occasion wherein philosophical perplexity is precipitated just in an intimate encounter with the special religious claim of the oracle at Delphi that Socrates is the wisest of the Greeks (see *Apology*, 20d–21b). There is nothing neutral, there can be nothing neutral, about the philosophical quest of the universal. Of course, even in the dialogue *Euthyphro*, we do wonder if Socrates sometimes fails to hear the particularity of his interlocutor, so strongly is every answer of Euthyphro reconfigured in terms of the standards of a universal definition. One can well understand the charge against Socrates that he invented new gods. These gods are not new mythic powers but transmythic principles accessible to a more impersonal logos. The new god is indeed logos itself in its universality and (we wonder) in a disembodied form.[6] In truth, it seems to be nothing but disembodied form. The new God has no face. A great religious problem already strikes us in this: Even if we drive up to the universal, how do we come back down again, and live in the messy half-and-half light, or dark twilight, of daily life? The latter has a lived intimacy that the former seems to forsake. Religion as the practice of a kind of life is inseparable from this lived intimacy. If then there is a secret universality at work in this practice of life, might there not be more to it than philosophy can do justice? For Socrates philosophy always entails a way of life, a practice of being mindful. As a way of life, it is quite clear that Socrates thinks that there is a kind of intimacy to the universal sought in the philosophical quest. Perhaps this intimacy is known by the philosopher alone. The nonphilosopher tends to see only the spirit of abstraction. The nonphilosopher is not altogether wrong: the detachment of the abstract universal can be potentially treasonous to the intimate religious life of a people.

Of course, the problem of universals is almost synonymous with the tradition of philosophy and has been taken up by philosophers in other modalities. One thinks of the problem of the famous *chorismos*, the separation of the forms in the Platonic way of thinking. The response of Aristotle and his like is germane to the intimate universal: if the universal is not in some sense *immanent*, it fails to provide the intelligibility it is supposed to offer. After all, the point of invoking the universal is to make intelligible sense of what particularly presents itself, here, now. This issue has significant repercussions for the nature of conceiving community—whether religious or secular, cosmopolitan or ghetto, or something other again. The Platonic transcendence of the universal might well nurture a cosmopolitanism that is either otherworldly, utopian, or interventionist in a manner that might be destructive of the fabric of common life. By otherwordly I mean a decamping from common life to a higher community with the eternal beings or realities. By utopian I mean that the rational dream of a perfection calls out to be effected, perhaps not now, perhaps only by a kind of divine intervention and deliverance that will free us from the chiaroscuro of the Cave. By interventionist I mean the imposition of a theory on practical life, with imperious insistence that the theory has the true way, and there are no two ways about it. We can see in this insistence the lineaments of a kind of visionary fundamentalism, against which Aristotle warned us (see *Politics*, book 3) that there was too much of unity in the Platonic vision, not enough of manyness, and perhaps not enough of the difference between *theōria* and *praxis*.

One sees the point: the beyondness of the universal, dualistically understood as opposite to the intimacies of time, can give birth to significant negative consequences to immanent community here and now, and this despite its claim to ennoble rather than debase already given community.[7] Be that as it may, the "beyondness" of the universal is not something we can entirely dismiss. Plato is not to be put out. For we seem drawn to something universal but it is never, perhaps never can be, absolutely realized in time and history. Part of piety is this draw to the holy, draw of the holy. There is always more to us in our intimate depths and to the universal in its spread, and to forget this "more" is to risk the collapse of philosophy into ideology, politics into will to power or huckstering, religion into a ruse of the ruling powers. A certain otherness of the universal keeps open a necessary difference. And while the temptation is to fix this difference as a dualism, it might better be seen as the space of a

more fundamental intimacy between the human soul and the good, in a community of participation that can never be reduced to immanence as such. See in this here a *family relation* of philosophy with monotheistic religion.[8] The One to which we turn (*uni-versum*) is never reducible to immanence as such, though communications across the difference are the core of the issue at stake. How, even granting the otherness, does the transcendent universal participate in time, without violence to the immanent intimacies of our dwelling in time? Putting the issue that way means we must as much stress the *metaxu*, the between, as the terms of the universal and the immanent intimacy. Without the *metaxu* it is hard to see how we could talk about the intimate universal.

If we look at the issue from the other side, namely, the immanence of the universal, one can sympathize with the broadly "Aristotelian" option as I have called it. For given the immanence of the universal we can make intelligible sense of the becoming of process. We can see the form of a community as a forming that takes shape from within out. It is not an *ab extra* imposition of an extraneous universal—it is the immanent emergence of the universal from the social formation of community itself, an emergence marked by a complex relation of identity and difference, an interplay of sameness and otherness, a confluence of unity and multiplicity. Why not rest happy with this? Because a question can be put to the exclusive stress on the immanent as such: Might this, while seeming to open up the universal from within, actually contribute to distorting, perhaps even counterfeiting, the intimate as such? For we can so stress this immanence as if it exhausted the intimate universal that communications with anything transcendent are compromised or cut off. There might be immanent universals that are *counterfeit doubles* of the intimate universal: so alike, it is almost impossible to detect the difference, and yet the difference is crucial—and especially if indeed it is true that the intimate universal is not finally intelligible without reference to divine transcendence.

At an extreme we might meet here a certain *pantheism of the immanent universal*. Needless to say, a variety of forms of Spinozism come to mind, from the god-intoxicated man himself to the intense Deleuze. With such a pantheism of the immanent universal there is nothing other than immanence, nothing over and above. Turning away from perplexity about Platonic transcendence seems to solve a problem but it might well turn out to be the evasion of the question. If the universal is so immanent that the particularities are to be gathered entirely within its horizon,

this horizon becomes one beyond which nothing greater is to be thought. We put Anselm's definition of God to a use that is potentially godless. Immanence is defined as the absolute horizon, but within that horizon nothing is truly absolute, and beyond that horizon there is no absolute, since a God beyond would threaten the putative unconditionality of the immanent whole. The godless whole is God, or God is the godless whole. Then there is no God and there is nothing but God; and in both instances, the space between the given and the God seems to be collapsed as an intermediating *metaxu*.

If there is nothing beyond, different options are possible. We might be more pluralistically inclined and thereby tempted with a kind of *polytheism of the social*. We might be more monistically inclined and thereby tempted with a kind of *social pantheism*. Social and political formations answering to these options are not hard to identify, though the secret gods they worship are more elusive. If there is nothing beyond, the immanent universal so understood can contribute to the divinization of states as they diversely exist, just because they exist—for to be at all is to embody the immanent universal. There is a connection with modern historicism that stands out. Rather than a polytheism or pantheism of nature, we make the claim that it is history that is the process of the immanent universal. We might have a *pantheism of history*, as with Hegelian historicism, or a *polytheism of history*, as in postmodern historicisms (one thinks of Lyotard and the "polytheism" of small stories or myths). A difficulty here, as we know from nineteenth- and twentieth-century historicisms, is that the universal seems to dissolve in immanent process as such. Putting aside for now the Hegelian universal of the pantheism of history,[9] the evident facts of immanence show a multiplicity of formations, and it is not easy to see one universal that is forming itself in these many processes. More often than not, we are likely to think of that darker hydra, the polymorphous will to power. We move to a historicist polytheism, now, however, without any piety or gods. The historicized immanence manifests simply the secularized processes of human will to power and nothing else beside. Into this immanence we dissolve the universal. Chronos eternally returns to devour the children of time.

The Platonic perplexity comes back. The dissolution of the universal is something that clearly happens with Nietzsche, for instance, in the way the Platonic Idea becomes merely a projection of will to power beyond flux, itself formless, now to be reclaimed by that same formless flux.

Were this true (what would it mean to say that?), the same would hold for all the rational universals of the philosophers. They are formations of polymorphous will to power. And since there seems nothing now but will to power, does it not now become the universal—a universal that is both intimate and strange, exhilarating and horrifying, building up and tearing down? Of course, because will to power as the immanent universal is both creative and destructive, we seem to be back less with the innocence of becoming and more with the slaughter bench of history of the despised Hegel—and without Hegel's consoling rationalization. Perhaps indeed the innocence of becoming is indistinguishable from the slaughter bench of history. We are enjoined to sing a Dionysian Te Deum to the immanent Minotaur that at last has come forth from its labyrinth to stalk without guilt the blood-soaked earth. In this way of thinking, there is something beyond cosmopolis and ghetto and it is this devouring monster.

This monster has stalked the universal of Enlightenment reason since the time of Kant. It is a large tale but I mention one expression of it. I think of Schopenhauer, who makes claim to be the true heir of Kant, while also acknowledging Plato as his other major philosophical debt. Though he wants to retain the Platonic Idea, the principle of sufficient reason is nevertheless derivative from something more primordial, namely, the Will. Schopenhauer wrote in the high noon of idealism, but nocturnal perplexities arise in that noon concerning what is *other* to reason's claim to be entirely at home with itself. We return to Plato's Cave, but there we now begin to *tunnel below the floor of the Cave*, rather than simply climbing up above it or out of it. With the Ideas Schopenhauer takes us above the Cave, with the Will he takes us below. But the dark Will that is below is more ontologically intimate than the universal Ideas that are above.

The Platonic Cave is marked by a mixed interplay of light and darkness. We find ourselves not only in the Cave; *we ourselves are a second cave*, a darker underground. There might be some light shining for the intimate soul in the chiaroscuro of the Cave, but even this seems quenched as we pass into the obscurity of an ever-deeper darkness. This is the intimacy of the night before the dawn of reason. There is something more radical still for Schopenhauer—radical as at the root of all things. This is Will—a dark origin, subterranean even in that underground, whether of the first Cave, or of the cave we ourselves are. This dark origin is more primordial than the half-and-half world of phenomena, the Cave in the first sense, more primordial than ourselves, double creatures of will and representation,

the second cave. In the "light" of this root origin, in whichever cave we are, Schopenhauer's vision of things is so dark that we are perplexed as to whether we can see at all, and not just as to what we can see. In the half-light, half-darkness of the Cave, or of our own half-light, half-darkness, what can we see at all by the "light" of the root darkness?

This dark vision, this vision of darkness, has consequences for the intimate universal. There is a kind of inscrutable intimacy, maybe *obscene intimacy*, before all universality. When we burrow into the underground of the underground Cave, we are forced to consider something more *ontologically intimate* than the Platonic Idea: a dark origin below the Cave, not a bright Sun above it. The title of Schopenhauer's major work, *The World as Will and Representation*, is revealing. Will, he claims, is the thing itself, the original, while representation is its image. Suppose we liken the world as representation to Plato's Cave—could we then liken Schopenhauer's Will to Plato's Good? Surely it is rather the reverse. Will is no sun, is no good, but as original is darker even than the shadow land of representation. If it is ultimate as well as original, it bears the marks of the other underground, *beneath* the first underground. It is not above the underground as the ultimate Good. It is not clear we can speak meaningfully any more of what is *above*, above either the "normal" Cave of everyday life, or above ourselves as denizens of that Cave? Despite Schopenhauer's declared debt of gratitude to Plato, and long before Nietzsche, Plato is already being reversed here—reversed more radically than with Nietzsche.

Extreme consequences follow for both intimacy and universality, both of which here are enfolded in an ultimate and impenetrable darkness. If our representations are shadow images of the Will, then they are not shadows of light, not even shadows of shadows, but shadows of this original and ultimate darkness. A shadow of original darkness is all but a self-contradictory kind of shadow, since without light there are no shadows. From whence comes the light? The original darkness is not the light. This original is a root darkness that casts shadows that are only apparently lightsome. It is a desolate original (*de-solatus*: "without sun") or an original that desolates. To know the Will in intimate self-knowledge would be to "know" an "original" that is no original, and that ultimately is as vanishing as the "shadows" it casts of "itself." This thing "itself" is impenetrable; there is no "itself"; and these "shadows" seem to redouble the darkness, not dispel it. The desolation of the original means there is also no consolation (*con-solatus*: "with sun"). What could art, or religion, or philosophy

do to "console"—show we are *con-solatus*? Art, religion, and philosophy would themselves be ultimately "shadows" of the "original" inscrutable darkness. Were philosophy, say, to claim to "know" the "shadows" and the original "thing itself," its claim would be an inexplicable "light," emitted from a root darkness that would finally engulf the "shadows" and the "light" and the "knowing" itself. And yet, despite all that root darkness, there is light and the mystery that there is light at all.[10] How to make sense of this light?

I ask this because it seems that in some post-Enlightenment currents of thought this sense of unremitting darkness at the heart of the intimacy of being tells against any way of bringing the intimate and the universal into accord. Every universal is outside this dark intimacy and its mask. I would connect this sense of the monstrous intimacy with perplexity about the goodness of being as such and our participation in a fundamental sense that there is a good to the "to be." In this present scenario of intimacy, it is *the evil of being* that seems more likely to suggest itself, mirrored in the way Schopenhauer and Nietzsche cited the Greek Silenus who said: first, if possible, best not to be at all, and second, if in being, best not to be, as soon as possible. The real intimacy of being now means: the monstrous origin at the heart of darkness.

This monster has cooped up the ghetto and stalked the gulag. Yet when in extremis we face this monster, the animating impulse of the transcendent universal can be resurrected in its potentially saving power, for those lost either under the underground or in the above-ground labyrinth of everyday life, or indeed in the inner labyrinth of the human heart seeking to be above ground and to stand on the surface of the earth. The question of religion and more generally the sacred must come back to haunt us. The monstrous is the dark angel of religious happening. Its home is the religious, and not the less so, though we deny the possibilities of the infernal at the heart of our intimate being. Our denial of the infernal aids the infernal.

Between Hegelian Universality and Kierkegaardian Singularity

I will come to religion more fully but I want to mention one other important expression of the issue of the intimate universal, especially relevant in the postmodern context, and connected to the immanent universal

of the pantheism of history. The matter might be put by means of the contrast between the immanent universality of Hegel and the protesting singularity of Kierkegaard. There is a view of the universal that refuses the transcendence of the Platonic Idea, and hence rejects a cosmopolitanism that retains any irreducible acknowledgment of the beyond, and the most systematically articulated version of this view is Hegel's. Not only does Hegel criticize the dualism of the Platonic Idea, he speculatively reconfigures the strong sense of transcendence as other that we find in monotheistic religions, Christianity included, notwithstanding its robust incarnational immanence. Hegel also criticizes Stoicism for its retreat into the fast inwardness of the interior soul. Rather than reigning cosmopolitan universality, the Stoic soul secludes itself in ghettoed inwardness. Instead of resolving the alienation between humanity and the world, this retreat refigures alienation within rational inwardness, since this is defined by its negative over-againstness to what is outside and other. Whether this is fair to Stoicism is a question,[11] but clearly Hegel thinks there is a universality that need not decamp above or retreat within. There is an immanent universality that realizes itself in the world. This is the concrete universal.

Thus think of Hegel's triadic logic of the concept (*Begriff*): the universal, the particular, the individual. This triadic logic is closely related to another triad: the indeterminate, the determinate, the self-determining. The abstract universal is indeterminate; it must particularize itself and become determinate; the universal is most absolutely concrete, most truly the individual, when it is self-determining. In the concrete universal, the determinate is the self-particularization of the indeterminate, and hence the universal is self-determining since it knows itself in the determinations that are its own. Is this concrete universal the intimate universal? I would say that Hegel's concrete universal points in helpful directions relative to the critique of the abstract universal, but its sense of immanence is not easily reconcilable with all the significant dimensions of the intimate, and this limitation has something to do with being religious insofar as it exceeds every logic of immanent self-determination. For Hegel, the intimate is too indeterminate, too nebulous. One might say it is too pietistic for him. In an illuminating treatment in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, for instance, Hegel claims that, while seeming to be opposites, Enlightenment and what he calls Faith (*Glaube*) are really in a kind of collusion.[12] Enlightenment rationalism holds fast to the abstract universal, the Pietistic heart compensates for the empty indeterminacy of this abstraction with the intimate

feeling of faith in the divine. Both alike dissolve into indeterminacy. Thus Hegel excoriates the indefiniteness of religious feeling, which Pietistic theology opposed to the deracinated abstraction of Enlightenment *Verstand* and theology. In the divergence of their determinate views, they converge on a shared indeterminacy. Whether this is fair to Pietism, there is no doubt of Hegel's limited ability to deal with the intimate. The intimate as mere feeling is a seed, but a seed is all but nothing till it becomes determinate as the fully developed organism it is destined to be. There are mustard seeds, there are also seeds of the monstrous.[13] The intimate as feeling is a mere immediacy, suspended, if not lost in the inarticulate, till it is mediated by the universal and properly brought forth into publicness. The concreteness of the Hegelian idea is not the intimate universal. The intimate universal, qua intimate, is not an indeterminacy. Prior to and beyond the triad of indeterminate, determinate, and self-determinate, there is something overdeterminate about it: a surplus of singular communicability. The intimate universal, qua universal, is not self-determination. It too is overdeterminate as endowing sacred community in which there is no univocal opposition of the public and the private. The public is as much intimate as universal; the private is as much universal as intimate.

One might propose Kierkegaardian singularity as the counterweight to the Hegelian universal and I think there is much to this. It is not insignificant that this singularity is inconceivable without the transcendent God, again the incarnational stress of Christianity notwithstanding. Incarnation may be the most absolute in terms of intimacy with immanence, but absolute intimacy is not the death of irreducible transcendence but the communication of its agapeic gift. If the singularity is only protesting, there is a ways to go toward the intimate universal. Nevertheless, there is in Kierkegaard a stress on the intimate in which one might see something of a resurrection of the Augustinian claim: God is more intimate to me than I am to myself: *interior intimo meo*. In many ways, Augustine allows us to put more forcefully the *inseparability of the intimacy and communicability* in its sacred ontological stress. This is a double intimacy, a redoubled intimacy, one might even say a hyperbolic intimacy. It is not simply our own intimacy raised to a second power, as if we were doubling ourselves—rather, there is a second other, more intimate than we are even to our own inner otherness. This hyperbolic other is intimated also: God is superior to my highest height, Augustine suggests. By this other power I am raised to a higher power, but I do not do this through myself alone.

The heightening is graced and I am the intimate recipient. The grace is confided to me. I am the singular recipient but anyone might be that singular recipient—and be so in their deepest intimacy of being. The gracing is confided to humans in the intimate universal.

The hyperbolic sense of divine transcendence is not jettisoned by Kierkegaard. There remains a difference between immanence and transcendence that no immanent universal entirely articulates in the form of our rational logos. The difference of time and eternity is not abrogated, even if the alienation of one from the other is said to be divinely overcome. Mortals, creatures of the day, have to live with the chiaroscuro of immanence, not necessarily with despair about the absence of the universal but with trepidation as to how it is to be approached and understood, approached and understood in a manner that is faithful to its approach, faithful to its transcendence, faithful to its irreducibility to immanence as immanence—and this even in its approach to immanence.

Some have criticized Kierkegaard's claim that truth is subjectivity as, so to say, too vacuous an intimacy, and there are undoubtedly questions to be raised. Kierkegaard rightly challenges us to think beyond the moral universal with regard to the religious, and with regard to the singularity, that is, intimacy of the relation of the person to the divine. I am not sure if he would accede to talk of the intimate universal in connection with being religious. The intimacy seems to verge on incommunicability, if we consider his stress, say, on the silence of Abraham. Not to the fore is the sense that the intimacy is itself an enabling of communicability in a field of communication, a *metaxu* of the soul in a *metaxu* of relation more ultimate than the moral relation, whether it be in the religious community or in the communication of the divine.

My point here is not the hermeneutics of Kierkegaard—a formidable task. There is no doubt that Kierkegaard reminds us of a sense of singularity that is not woven into the texture of Hegel's system, just because there is something about its idiocy that is at the source of, and in excess of, all system. This holds even when Hegel claims (a claim raising its own disputes) that the modern state has the "prodigious strength and depth" to allow subjectivity to progress to the extreme of personal particularity, while bringing it back to substantial unity (see *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, §260). The danger: this immanent universal not only abrogates the otherness of transcendence, but sucks up into self-sublating totality the immanent otherness of the human self, in the interior opening of its abyssal

soul to God. Kierkegaardian singularity is not quite the extremity of particularity that the concrete universal brings back to substantial unity with itself. I say this not in critique of the intent of the concrete universal but in terms of its understanding of the dimensions of both the universal and the singular—the community and the intimate. Religion has everything to do with the difference. For that matter, we can easily underestimate the communal dimensions of Kierkegaard's mission, at times so hidden from view behind the slogans of subjectivity that we think there is no communal dimension at all. In fact, everything must be approached from the community of the human and the divine, understood in a Christian sense, where the intimate universal is just that community.[14] The intimate universal is not the concrete universal, not quite the intimate singularity—it is beyond them, as between them, and so is neither the one nor the other, and there would be neither concrete universal nor intimate singularity if the intimate universal did not offer the allowing field of between-being within which they are covenanted.[15]

Monotheism and the Intimate Universal

On the religious side of the issue, I would underscore the importance of the personal God for any understanding of the intimate universal. The impersonal principle or absolute seems more convenient for the tastes of many philosophers, but as has often been religiously pointed out, this gets us the abstract universal, or at most the concrete universal. (Thus, for Hegel the personal God would be a representational form of the absolute, not fully true to the full truth of the absolute. A striking contrast here is William James in his remarkable postscript to *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.)[16] The intimacy in question is one inseparable from communication between the human and the divine, signaled perhaps most deeply in the happening of prayer. If the intimate universal is other than both neutral generality and the Hegelian concrete universal, the universal itself must be such as to enable communication in the intimate sense meant here. This must mean that religion cannot be subordinated to philosophy, as if the latter completes what the former intends, as if the former intends what the latter desires in terms of impersonal system. If we subordinate religion to philosophy, we may have consigned the intimate universal to the relative place, and hence lost the game already, even while claiming to

be completing the so-called deficiency of the intimate universal—namely, that it is intimate and not universal, universal in the sense of the impersonal. This line of thought has implications in a number of different ways.

One of the amazing things about religion, especially monotheistic religion, is its power to marry the universal and the singular.[17] The human being's relation to God and God's relation to us are intimately singular. In relation to God we are not mere instances of a class called "humanity" or specimens of a species. As intimately singular this divine relation is offered to all humans; it is universally on offer. It matters not whether we move up or down, strike in or strike out, ascend to the heights or descend into the darkest depths. To cite just one verse from the marvelous Psalm 139:

> Where can I hide from your spirit?
> From your presence, where can I flee?
> If I ascend to the heavens, you are there;
> If I lie down in Sheol, you are there too.
> If I fly with the wings of dawn
> And alight beyond the sea,
> Even there your hand will guide me,
> Your right hand holds me fast.
> If I say, "Surely darkness shall hide me,
> And night shall be my light"—
> Darkness is not dark for you,
> And night shines as the day.
> Darkness and light are but one.

How pedestrian after this to speak of religion in terms of the intimate universal! And yet it is clear that religion is neither for merely privatized subjectivities nor for objectivized generalities. For the universal to be truly catholic, it must be universal and intimate at one and the same time. A great challenge is to live up to both the universality and the intimacy, and hence to embody the divine relation in the flesh of different cultures, and in a manner that does justice to both the universality and the intimate singularity.

I mentioned prayer, and in some ways there is nothing more intimate, so intimate that it is hard to draw attention to it, hard to fix what is happening in an exhaustively determinate way, impossible to fix when the other in communication is no thing.[18] And yet to think of prayer as inverted into

a self-retracting subjectivity could not be further from the truth. It has to do with the most released form of communication, in which porosity to the divine endows the soul itself as a sanctified *metaxu*. At a more obvious public level, the practice of religion has to do with communal worship, the rituals of a community, and the entire ensemble of symbolic acts in which a sometimes secret sense of sacred ultimacy touches on, impinges on, all the significant aspects of social life, politics included. The public side of religion is not the universal in the fullest sense since, as we know, one might be at ease with a certain civic religion and yet in one's heart be an atheist, just as also one might go to church not to pay one's respects to the Most High but to look at the pretty girls. The impingement of religion on public life has been fought, and fought about, in modernity, not least because religions have brought their not so divine will to power and its ferocity to public life as to a field of war. The privatization of religion is said to follow. But just as the more social publicity is not the universal, so also the privatization is not what the intimacy implicates.

The relation of religion and philosophy is again important here. There is a strong trend in modernity for philosophical reason to claim to relativize the absolute claims made on behalf of religion. The latter, it is argued, are too enmeshed in equivocity, and only the univocity of philosophical reason will yield the requisite universality of the concept. Among others, I think of Spinoza and Hegel. For Spinoza piety has to do with obedience to the political sovereign, not truth. For Hegel the philosophical concept is the true form of the absolute, while religion remains at the stage of the absolute relative to its merely representational expression, with all the equivocities that go with representation, not to mention the still-not-overcome reference to divine transcendence as other. With Hegel, one recalls, the modern state supersedes the religious community, for the latter is a community of spirit, while the former is the most consummate, truly worldly embodiment of immanent freedom. The modern state is the more absolute worldly embodiment of social self-determination as the immanent universal. This, of course, is to risk an idolatry of politics and the state. Hegel is not unrepresentative of modern secular thought on this score, though he understands the need of religion in a more robust way than most secular thinkers. Nevertheless, I would suggest that there is a misunderstanding of the universal of religion, as well as the intimacy. Of the *universal*, since this has to do with communication with a God who, while manifest in immanence, retains an irreducible transcendence. This transcendence need

not be formulated in the modality of a Platonic dualism, and yet there can be an irreducible doubleness between time and eternity. Between these can be a metaxological intermediation that is not a dialectical subsumption into a more unitary totality. Of the *intimacy*, since this is not a matter of inarticulate feeling, lost in indefinite immediacy, to be rescued for the light of rational day only by the mediations of the concept. It is the communication of the ultimate love, the agapeics of the divine.

Put in Augustinian terms, Hegel claims to mediate between the cities of God and Man but in the end he collapses their difference in one immanent self-mediating universal. He conceptually covers, covers over, the mysterious hiddenness of the universal community as pilgrim on earth, and never absolutely at home in the state, in any political state. This not-being-completely-at-home in the political universal points to something of the qualitative difference that is communicated in the intimate universality of the religious. It also points to the religious community as witness to the transpolitical, even while enmeshed in political circumstances. Living prayer is enlivened in the communication of that intimate universal as a being-at-home in not-being-at-home—witnessing to a happiness, so to say, incomprehensible to Hegel's unhappy consciousness, and to Hegel.

Hegel's universal, of course, is not a mere public generality, and he sees a truer universality to religion. Only humans have religion, he holds, because human are reasonable, and this might well be expressed plurally throughout history, culminating in Christianity. Religion spans history, but as manifested within history, it culminates for Hegel in the immanent God, the immanent God-man. Given the *immanent* apotheosis of the God-man, it is not surprising that it mutates into the man-God. But without the qualitative depth of the intimate universal, the hyphen does not have the speculative power to hold the two together in their difference and interrelation, and they collapse into each other. The God-man becomes the Man-god. This is dialectically dissimulated in Hegel, "mystified," as Marx would say. I would say the "mystification" is the equivocation of the concrete universal as if it were the intimate universal. Nor do Hegel's "religious," right-wing successors come back to the intimate universal, though they counterfeit its piety. They are cozily in collusion with the reigning collusion of the religious establishment and political power. His left-wing successors turn this equivocation in a more revolutionary and violent direction later in the nineteenth century and beyond into the century just past. They call that collusion to account, not to release the

intimate universal into its free ultimacy, beyond all political power, but to free political power into the revolutionary transcendence of all religious patience. Patience to them is sacred servility, not divine service. The God-man mutates into the Man-god of a secular, rational postreligious humanism in which the highest being—humanity—comes to immanent social self-determination. You might object that now Marxists have lost their historical faith and postmodern antihumanists writhe in the self-lacerations of an autonomy grown old and cold. Yes, but this also would be to underestimate the sullenness of post-Marxist unbelief whose dead shadow is still cast on the cave walls of politics. It would be to underestimate the intimate disappointments of human autonomy lurking in the postmodern lacerations of still-unreleased freedom.

This left-Hegelian line of inheritance presents us with an honest, if crude, clarity—honest and crude by contrast with the circumlocutious ambiguation of postmodern evasion. This crude clarity concerns the human-centered project historically to dissolve the transcendence of the monotheistic God. There is then no such transcendence finally and, if we are differently honest, no basis for the kind of singular, personal intimacy that is at issue in biblical monotheism. As more recently Žižek, the Lord of Misrule of post-postmodernism, proclaims in echo of Lacan: "There is no big Other" (*Il n'y a pas de grand Autre*). A slogan to be sure that only seems to hit the nail on the head, and certainly does not get to the heart of the matter. For without the divine transcendence as other, it is hard to see any basis for an intimate universality that is not dissolved, indeed dispersed on the flux of differences or relativities that constitute the becoming of time. One reason why recurrence to Augustine is relevant is because he retains humility before this divine transcendence. There is a divine service that is patient: it is freed beyond servility and sovereignty. It is in virtue of the personal providence of this divine transcendence that it is universal in the hyperbolic dimension—hyperbolic to time, though communicative to and in time; hyperbolic to every claim on our part to determine the meaning of time or reduce it to our own self-determination; hyperbolic also to the social projects that we build up to create homes for ourselves in time, and that we are tempted to invest with the status of the ultimate divinity. These projects can even be our "religions," though we do not call them religions, and it might be more honest to call these achievements our crystal palaces. They are not the ultimate universal. When they displace religious community and claim to be its successor and completion,

with the ultimacy proper only to the religious, they construct counterfeit doubles of the intimate universal.

The transcendent universality of the monotheistic God that communicates the intimate universal of religious community relativizes all the claims to ultimacy we make for our crystal palaces. This is a point that can tell *against religion* as well as against secular debunkers or replacers of religion. This relativization is especially important when monotheisms usurp for themselves the claim to enact a project of God on earth, as if the gap between them and God had simply disappeared, and what they decide or determine is what God determines or decides. God provides the political-theological banner under which the will to power of this community marches and so seeks to extend its *imperium* to the world at large. The first commandment—God is God and nothing but God is God—tells against all such projects. Every such project is a collapse of the doubleness between the human and the divine into the Man-god rather than the God-man. One thinks of Christian communities in history, say, in early modernity, overtaken by a will to power presenting itself as the will of God. One thinks of Cromwell's ethnic cleansing, if not genocide of Gaelic Catholics as the Anti-Christ.[19] One thinks of the Ummah turned into a fanatical project of Islamic fundamentalism.[20]

Have no strange gods before you—take this as a warning against counterfeit doubles of the intimate universal. I would also say here if the transcendent God communicates (in) the intimate universal, it must at its heart of hearts relativize the temptation to tyranny of will to power. The universality fitting for such a God must be a community of peace and love. It must be the God of agapeic service, not the God of erotic sovereignty. All the major religions point in the direction of agapeic service, but perhaps it is in Christianity that it has been most foregrounded. For all of these religions to remain true, remain faithful to the universal God they confess, it is very important to remember this difference of agapeic service and erotic sovereignty. The point is not to depreciate either eros or sovereignty, but to be guarded about sovereignty bewitched about itself in the form of *eros turannos*. The tendency to think primarily or only in terms of the latter runs the risk of a religiosity that has not purged from itself the secret temptations of will to power, one that is tempted to enter into collusions with political powers that make no apology for their will for erotic sovereignty and with it all the glory of worldly power, glory as will to power determines it to be. These collusions and these unexpurgated temptations are

very relevant to the promiscuity of politics and religion that we confront in our world today. There are those in the "Christian" West for whom the religious universal is a means to an end. Press the political-religious buttons and you will get the people on your side. Atheist though you might be, you suddenly find something "interesting" about "Christianity" when confronted with what looks like the passion of the religious that comes at us, say, from an Islamic direction. These are contingencies generating opportunistic appropriations. As such, they are liable to produce the counterfeit double of the religious universal, rather than in fear and trembling to witness to the truer thing. Religious collusion with such counterfeit doubles seems expediently attractive, but in the long run it is disastrous for religion. It brings religion's bona fides into disrepute, and it seems revealed simply as another formation of erotic sovereignty, just like all worldly formations of will to power. The universal of agapeic service has been betrayed. We have seen this happen again and again throughout history.

A small token that there is more at issue is evident in the fact that all the great religions, and Christianity not least, could and must speak to the poor and the outcast. The small token is the great thing, namely, witness to the charge of a universal intimacy with those who fall outside the officially sanctioned groups or generalities in many powerful cultures. Christianity in particular seems to take note of a strongly double character in being in the world but not of it, in necessarily being resident in a reigning regime of political power but not being identical with its culture of power—witness to the transcendent universal as intimate within the human community, while not being reducible to the human community. It lives not only within a particular culture of political power but on the precarious boundaries between the inside and the outside of such a culture, the downside of the immanent powers and the superior side toward which it pilgrims. In this double position, it is to be a witness to the immanent culture of what passes beyond the terms of its immanence: the communication between God and humans—the intimate universal.

The Intimate Universal and the Ghetto of Secular Privatization

On the positive side, one might grant that secularization since the Enlightenment is understandable as a corrective reaction to the madness of religion, a kind of ideological inoculation against this madness. But one

can also inoculate against the greatness of religion in inoculating against the madness, thereby generating new forms of madness. The rationalist inoculant can function like a disinfectant, a DDT that tends to kill all life, the sick and the healthy. However, life and this life of religion cannot be entirely killed, since it is the life of our being. And what then can come back to life after this inoculation is not necessarily neutral health but rather a series of mutants, even monsters—not in overtly religious form but in, say, political form. I am thinking of the atheistic monsters of ideologies that would destroy all religion. Healing a sickness of spirit generates a new sickness of spirit and the cure is worse than the original curse.

We might ask what "intimacy" can now mean in light of post-Enlightenment efforts to privatize religion. I think the Enlightenment misconception of the religious universal can be matched here by a withdrawal from the public space of political community. Sometimes that withdrawal is conceived as a protest of recalcitrant singularity against the engulfment by the homogenizing generality of postreligious secularisms. After all, these secularisms allow privatization. More often, however, under the dictation of "neutral" public reason, religion is called on to withdraw into a more or less private ghetto. Religious reasons, it is stipulated, are not "real" reasons, universally communicable. Religion may be allowed as a private affair, an affair of the heart, let us say, but any claims it might make to be a public affair are to be enfeebled. If it tries to introduce itself into the public space, it is greeted with suspicion, if not hostility, and the accusation that it serves the fomentation of invidious conflicts. The allegedly disruptive power of religion in the public sphere must be domesticated by taking it altogether out of that sphere. There are sources of social power and sovereignty but these are based in humankind and in humankind alone. They are not to be backed up by any appeal to God.

There are different "privatizations": some are merely enfeeblements of the passion of the religious; others are more thoroughgoing entries into the night of divine depth within the intimacy of the communicating soul. The latter is closer to what is more truly at stake with the intimate. I again invoke the Augustinian wisdom: God is *interior intimo meo.* As suggested already, this is intimacy raised to the second degree—intimacy hyperbolic to the first intimacy wherein we are privy to the secrets of our own hearts, to the extent that this is possible for humans. How can something be more intimate than what is most intimate to oneself, namely, one's own self? That "something" seems like "nothing." One is what one intimately

is; there seems no gap of "nothing" between oneself and oneself; and yet in the solitude of intimacy there is no solitude. What is the "nothing" here? The gap of "nothing" is the between-space of porosity where the enabling communication of the power of being gives us to be what we are and are to be. There is an inward otherness marking one's intimacy to self. There is also the communication of the incognito God in the deepest ontological porosity of one's soul, so deep that it seems like nothing, since too the porosity is itself no thing—the open between space in which communication of the power to be is given and different selvings take determinate form. One is never alone, even when one is alone.

There is indeed something private about being religious in the sense of its being perhaps the most intimate thing at the heart of the human being. But least of all should we think of the intimate universal as a matter of privatization in line with, say, the ideological terms of private property. "Mine, mine alone"—these are not the words communicated in the intimate universal. The "privacy" of religion bears on the singular relation of the soul in communion with God, a communion inseparable from the community of other human beings, hence something neither merely subjective, nor simply objective. We are all that intimate singular. The intimacy suggested by Augustine is also, as we noted, superior to my highest summit, as well as more intimate to me than I am to myself. There is a height above us, within us—a superior power beyond us, in our intimate hearts. Without Augustine's turn to the inward self, his own conversion would not be comprehensible. Yet that conversion is not a turn to himself but accession to the community of faith, at the core of which is the communication of God in the intimate universal. Augustine aptly pleaded: "Give me persons in love: they know what I mean. Give me those who yearn; give me those who are hungry; give me those far away in this desert, who are thirsty and sigh for the spring of the eternal country. Give me those kinds of people: they know what I mean. But if I speak to cold persons, they just do not know what I am talking about."[21]

You might think that Nietzsche would, and should, love those who love thus rather than the cold, neutral ones, but he lapses into a remarkable lack of finesse, not to say hatred, when it comes to Christian love. Nietzsche on early Christians, in *The Anti-Christ* (§59): "The whole *ghetto world* of the soul risen *to the top* in a single stroke!—Just read any Christian agitator, Saint Augustine, for example, and you will realize, you will *smell* the sort of unclean people this brought to the top." Elsewhere

in *On the Genealogy of Moral* (third essay, §22), Nietzsche refers also to the Church Fathers as Christian agitators (*christlicher Agitatoren*) and goes into a mocking rant about the personages of the New Testament: "Presumption can go no further. An 'immortal' Peter: who could stand him? Their ambition is laughable: people of *that* sort regurgitating their most private affairs, their stupidities, their sorrows, and petty worries, as if the Heart of Being were obliged to concern itself with them; they never grow tired of involving God himself in even the pettiest troubles they have gotten themselves into. And the appalling taste of this perpetual familiarity with God."[22] And yet the treason and the tears of Peter witness more to the intimate universal than the presumption claimed by this rant. There are times when Nietzsche, in his going on about Christianity—especially in *The Anti-Christ*—seems to show symptoms of, so to say, *spiritual Tourette's*. To begin, he clamps his hand on his mouth and is relatively restrained, but by the end he cannot hold his hand and a compulsion to curse overtakes him.[23]

To return to the Augustinian theme: there can be *turns to self* that are not loving homecomings to the intimate universal but platforms for accentuating claims made for the powers of human self-determination, or indeed sheer self-assertion. The turn to self is then a *turn from an other* perceived as equivocal, as a possible curb on my own self-determination. This is something one notes especially in connection with the modern *culture of autonomy*. The turn to self takes on a different character from the religious turn toward porosity to the divine in the intimate universal.

Relative to this culture of autonomy, it is noticeable in debates about modernity that the only value that seems to pass muster in an uncontested way is that of freedom. Everyone is in favor of freedom, though what exactly is meant by freedom no one is completely sure. Tyrants sing some of the sweetest hymns to freedom. No other good is allowed to bask in the sun of our approval: God is not, happiness is not quite, virtue is not. Freedom is. Moreover, freedom is predominantly understood in terms of a certain notion of autonomy, so much so that for many today there is no difference at all between freedom and autonomy. That there might be other forms of freedom not defined by autonomy—such a consideration does not come to the fore. There might be freedoms *beyond* autonomy, and this will change the whole picture. The modern culture of autonomy, which tends to identify heteronomy with a curtailment of freedom, has been extended beyond the individual to diverse forms of social order,

such as those expressing ecclesiastical power. The latter is seen as a bastion of heteronomy. Hence the need is felt to take an attitude of aggression against religion as a heteronomous threat.

Whatever the justice of this way of criticizing religion, "privatization" is also connected with the question of liberty *within* the sphere of religion itself, with respect to the freedom of religious choice. Among the great shames of religion in the past (to speak only of the West, though one thinks of hostilities between Sunnis and Shias) were the wars generated between Christians—putting religion into shame, and making some people think that only something entirely other than religion could prevent war. True religion requires freedom; the notion of a forced conversion is a contradiction in terms. What is greatest and noblest about being religious is that it is the most intimate thing relative to the communication between the human and the divine. No one else can be there for one in that space of communication, no one else can be religious for one. One is nonreplaceable, nonsubstitutable. But while there is a deep singularity in this, it is not to be opposed to the "public." Perhaps religious community alone is able truly to reconcile the singular and the universal. There is something quite right about the "privatization" of religion in this intimate sense. Religion is, like love, the most intimate thing for the human being—love of God who is more intimate to me than I am to myself. This intimacy is not narcissistic or autistic. It is impossible to understand without communication and communicability.

Given this, it is impossible to agree with supporters of secularization who have advocated the utter privatization of religion, who would want to deny, or weaken as much as possible, any connection between religion and public life. This "privatization" sometimes mirrors an economic capitalist model: a private property, not a public service, religion must compete or be traded on the market. This is privacy without the intimacy of the religious passion. No one owns religion. It is more nearly true to say that one is owned by religion, at least claimed by its urgency of ultimacy. What of the political-economic model favored by communism: expropriate private property, bring being religious into public ownership, under state control? This is socialization that deprives religion of the intimacy of its sacred character, that not merely deprives but works to extirpate it, given that its public owners were zealous executioners of a political agenda of atheism. Needless to say, it is not only under communism that such a venture of political ownership or state control has been attempted.

The distinction I make between the communities of erotic sovereignty and agapeic service is here very relevant to the difference of the political and the religious.[24] The community of erotic sovereignty has to do with the social intermediations of worldly power and its immanent excellences; the community of agapeic service has to do with the intermediation of transcendent good beyond will to power, whether in the intimate intermediation between the soul and God or the communal intermediation of a religious people with God. Though there is something deeply intimate about religion, religion extends to the whole (catholic as *kath' holou*), and hence it is very difficult to confine it to one domain among others. It is not that religion should exert hegemony over the whole: this would be a kind of totalitarian monism of the sacred. But if the spirit of religion lives in the community of agapeic service, then it is in this spirit of generous service that it places itself at the ready for the whole. It is available not just for this here or that there, but potentially is available for all, if need be without any condition, especially in circumstances where the poor and the needy, in material terms, in spiritual terms, ask our aid.

When secularization take the form of hostility to religion, in the longer run it can help the religious to see that its own concern is not worldly will to power and the dominion of erotic sovereignty. Religion is not politics, though it has implications for politics, precisely by standing at an angle that is vertical to the immanent economy of political power itself. The long process of secularization in modernity can be seen as *purgatorial* in that regard. And this not as a prelude to the regaining of worldly power, but as enabling the clearer realization within religion that there is something beyond the community of erotic sovereignty. This is the community of agapeic service. One might wonder, for instance, if Marxist-inspired liberation theologies do not make enough of this difference between the communities of erotic sovereignty and agapeic service, opening the latter to the corrupting temptation to trumpet primarily about worldly will to power—all in the name of social justice. In the name of agapeic service the community is diverted along another pathway of erotic sovereignty. Jesus convened no world summit of international opinion-makers. He fasted in the desert; he prayed; he endured temptation; he unequivocally rejected the dominion of erotic sovereignty as ultimate. There is no Roman Caesar with the soul of Christ.The soul of Christ is more than the will of Caesar.[25]

We speak of the separation of Church (or Synagogue or Mosque) and State, but perhaps we should speak of distinction rather than strict

separation, in that the latter can be energized by a logic of dualistic opposition or exclusion. Distinction (or separation) can be understood in different manners, not all of which possess sufficient finesse. We might distinguish, so to say, a *projective* from a *phronetic* secularization. The projective is a project of necessitated separation, not finessed distinction; the phronetic is one of finessed distinction, not necessitated separation. The projective separation easily turns into opposition, turns into war in extreme cases. It is a project after all—a desacralized will to power, a secular *conatus* that consecrates itself to achieving the completed separation of the political and religious communities. Separation turns to opposition when religion will not go quietly, and turns then to war, when religion stubbornly keeps being reborn. The separation can be a project of driving religion into privacy—into the intimate without any door to the universal—into an autism of the spirit whose slow torture will make even death appealing and religion plead for its own euthanasia. In the modern West there are many signs of that autism of spirit and euthanasia of religion. Repeatedly also the *élan* of religion is more passionately robust. And then projective secularization can well seek to extirpate religion, not only from public space but also from the private. Hence the torture of the intimate soul and its attempted destruction in atheistic regimes. These are forced secular conversions to a desacralized world and a deconsecrated soul.

The phronetic approach to secularization, by contrast, is a matter of distinguishing, not separating or opposing. In finesse, it is a matter of the fitting difference, a matter of what is appropriate to the political and the transpolitical community. Granting the pluralization of manifestation of the intimate universal, this allows the secular as a communal space where nonreligious and religious can live together. The phronetic may itself be a child of agapeic community in letting the other be as other, in nonviolent relation. Projective secularization is more connected with the community of erotic sovereignty and more inclined to insist on a monism of power. The phronetic is not areligious or antireligious but makes an allowance for nonbelief, and hence for that matter an allowance of belief. Practical wisdom has no algorithm to police the thresholds between religion and politics, and indeed their mixing and interpenetration, so it has to live by a certain *esprit de finesse*. This means attention to the nuance of singular occasions, as well as respect for the recurrent constancies. Analogously, the metaxological space of the intimate universal is always a communal setting for conversion, for *metanoia*. There is a metanoetics of the

metaxological: being born again, a second birth in the dimension of the hyperbolic. Fundamentalism has something more in common with projective secularism—there is an "either-or" in both, defined by separation, opposition, exclusion. It too is not phronetic enough—it is too univocal. The transpolitical and the political are not seen in terms of more metaxological coexistence, even coparticipation in the intimate universal.

When necessitated separation is viewed from the standpoint of negative exclusion, it can further the marginalization of religion in society. In the guise of neutrality, it can foster an indifference to the most important ethical and spiritual issues. It can lame the religious community when that community feels it must protest on behalf of a higher measure. I particularly think of those for whom this separation means that the final judge is the State. We see this in the French Revolution. We find it in the understanding of indivisible political sovereignty in diverse thinkers like Hobbes and Spinoza. We see it in Hegel for whom the State becomes god on earth. The Church is a merely spiritual community, it is said, while the State embodies worldly freedom in the immanent sphere—and this is the fullest realization of freedom, Hegel thinks. This is a separation that puts the Church beneath the State when it comes to the most important things. I have mentioned the communist efforts to *écrasez l'infâme*, but the Nazis were very suspicious of the churches where they resisted cooperation or cooption. The idolization of the *Volk* cannot but seem blasphemous to one who believes that God alone is God—and not all churches escaped the idolatry.

The separation can be viewed more positively, namely, in terms of our need to distinguish phronetically between different kinds of communities, and what is proper to each. This also means avoiding merely subordinating the religious community to secular power. The community of erotic sovereignty is not identical with the community of agapeic service, and the second is the more ultimate community, though not to be defined in terms of the sovereignties of worldly power. The community of erotic sovereignty deals with the governance of immanent power and, when it is just, it deals with the ethical excellences that come with the right uses of worldly power. The community of agapeic service is concerned with transcendent good, not simply in a "beyond" but with the faithful enactment of what it asks of us here and now. This does not mean that the here and now is all there is. There is something more ultimate than worldly will to power.

Religious communities may have learned in the separation what distinguishes them more truly in relation to the second community, the community of agapeic service. This is not just a moral community. It has to do with the holy. It cannot subordinate itself to the State in the sense of accepting this as the last judgment. There is a divine measure above. This goes against the denial of any "above" or "beyond" in modernity generally. But religion is eviscerated without some sense of this "above." The distinction of erotic sovereignty and agapeic service may help us to see more truly what is at the heart of being religious. Distinction cannot mean a mere opposition or dualism. There is relation even in what is separate. It is impossible to confine agapeic service to any one space or sphere—even though it is more than happy to abide as incognito. Distinction rather than just separation can point to the promise of an *enabling difference*, which itself can be the basis of a work of relation and community—community in the sense of being in communication. The truth of being in communication comes in bearing witness. A witness is one who stands there before the others, standing for something, not just standing there as himself or herself, but for something beyond himself or herself, taking an intimate stand in fidelity to the universal call of agapeic service. The work of witnessing in this regard must always be in the middle—in the between where distinction allows communication with what is other than oneself, in the between where, beyond separation, community can come to be, in the between where the secret strengthening of divine companionship has communicated itself in the midst of mortal struggle.[26]

The enabling distinction of Church (or Synagogue or Mosque) and State points to the promise of a necessary worldly involvement for the Church (or Synagogue or Mosque), but the modality of the involvement is all important. It cannot be a secret will to power masked as agapeic generosity—this would be a perversion. It concerns bearing witness to the availability of the divine for the human. Most often this communication has again a certain incognito aspect—it does not insist on drawing attention to itself, it does not insist on itself. This does not mean capitulation to evil, for the need for witness can find itself placed in danger with regard to certain situations. Something is beyond negotiation. Were there to be negotiations, then the inner truth and humble greatness of the religious community would be corrupted. In circumstances of danger the witness draws fire upon himself or herself, as kingfishers draw fire, and as dragonflies draw flame. There is witness to the limit of martyrdom. This is the witness even

unto death. When politics counterfeits the intimate universal it crucifies the true witness.

The Sacred Idiocy of the Intimate Universal

Returning one final time to what is neither cosmopolis nor ghetto, I would say that the religious intimacy is *idiotic*. It is not first a matter of the theoretical universals of the scholars and theologians. Its beatitudes are for the simple. It is more an idiot wisdom than a theory. But idiot wisdom is not mere unreason but a life beyond system and theory, in mindfulness of the intimate universal, lived in an agapeic service beyond servility and sovereignty. Idiocy: the religious intimacy is beyond the fixity of univocal determinacy; it is more than subject to our self-determination; it is not a nebulous and equivocal indeterminacy. Beyond objectification and subjectification, it is overdeterminate: too much and almost nothing, at once a poverty and a richness paradoxically together.

Religious intimacy moves on a threshold that may be turned inward into mysterious communication with the divine, or turned outward toward all others to whom it seeks to bring the good news of the divine communication. It is on a daring edge, beyond the range of any neutral, homogenous generality. Hence it is never exhausted by the public rituals and symbolics of civic religion. Indeed, we have known in history the resurgence of this passion of religious intimacy in times when the influence of the public religions has waned. One thinks of Roman religion and the revitalization of the mystery cults, as answering to a more immediate and personal relation between the human and the divine. Post-Enlightenment secularism thinks that this idiocy is a mere vacant silence, and its preferred "privatization" is often just simply endorsement or enforcement of the silence as an idiocy signifying finally nothing. But this is a momentous idiocy that never goes away, never went away. Just because the public generalities of the sociologists do not pick it up on their conceptual radar does not mean it is not there. And then mirabile dictu, there it is, this reemerging and communicating idiocy trying to find a name and a habitation for itself. It was nothing, it was to be nothing, it was to nought itself. But there is here a fertile void—a space of porosity in the most intimate soul in which the divine communicates with the human. This intimacy is in prayer most truly minded, but it is also out there in the midst of things.[27]

The intimacy has much to do with the fact that with us there is a *passio essendi* prior to our *conatus essendi*—a patience of being prior to our endeavor to be. Both point back to the porosity that is primal—a porosity we easily cover over if we think only in terms of determinate things or the projects of our endeavor to be, and not in terms of the patience of being. This tends to happen when the modern turn to self configures itself in terms of an ideal of autonomous self-determination, set to overcome every patience of being and bring what is given or received within the control of our own determination. This turn to self turns away from the primal porosity, and hence also has great difficulty acknowledging the intimate universal. The primal porosity is the open space of communication between the human and what gives and enables it to be, God in religious terms. No sociological understanding or historicist thesis can ever approach and address this. It simply does not and cannot appear on such social and political radars, for it is nonobjective. Nor does it appear on the radar of a scientific psychology, since this too is objectifying, and the idiocy is trans-subjective. The intimacy is preobjective, and indeed in a certain sense presubjective. We are pointed to the idiocy of selving in communication that is prior to the determination of this or that formation of selving or community. There is an intimate singularity that is prior even to the particular self, though the determinate and self-determining selving do particularize and concretize it. This intimate idiocy does not betoken a kind of autism of being, nor does it mean that any communication of its significance to others is impossible.[28] This idiocy is rich with a promise, perhaps initially not publicly communicated, and yet available for, making itself available for, communicability. In communicability what is preobjective becomes trans-objective, just as what is presubjective becomes trans-subjective. Communication happens in the open porosity that enables transit. Communication itself would not be possible did not the porosity open up idiotically. Communicability itself cannot be confined to articulation in neutral generality, or homogeneous universality. Communication words what is elusive in the intimacy of being, hence that intimacy is at the heart of living communicability itself. Religious finesse, finding a worldly articulation in the wise judgment that bears on issues of public importance, bears witness to the intimate universal.

When the Enlightenment philosophers were attacking the particularity of religions in terms of their supposedly superior universal, they were also blind to this sacred idiocy. (On the terms proposed here, Lessing's "broad

ugly ditch" is not the problem it was for him and others.)[29] Their characteristic approaches, supposedly cosmopolitan, already had silenced this primal porosity. They accentuated an autonomous endeavor to be, sometimes frantically, sometimes fanatically, fantastically filling in the porosity with intellectual schemes, ameliorating projects and political ambitions. But none of these constitutes a dwelling with the essential poverty of the human spirit, a poverty that is not a miserable destitution but the void of our own nothingness as creatures, a void that becomes fertile when the divine spirit breathes on its liquid chaos. Out of this fertile void all great things come, but only because they are companioned by the giving origin in the surplus of its agapeic generosity.

Loss of reverent finesse for the intimate universal leads to the building up of communities that become counterfeits of universal community. There are dimensions of the current project of globalization that produce counterfeit doubles of the intimate universal. But at the extreme I think of communism and fascism as counterfeits of the universal community. These are social formations beyond the fertile void that have not purged the temptation to tyranny (technologically advanced) in their will to erotic sovereignty. In fascism, we find a hatred for agapeic service, reduced to a feeble pity that must be eradicated from the earth (Nietzsche alas had a hand in this fanaticism of "being hard").[30] In communism, we find an appropriation of the charge of social justice, an appropriation amounting to usurpation, since every other community concerned with social justice was denounced or undermined as merely bourgeois, or social democrat, or even socialist. (Think of the polemic of the *Communist Manifesto*, which spends perhaps more energy vituperating against rival versions of *socialism* than attacking the evils of the enemy, capitalism.) The usurpation of the project of social justice was built up by the intensification of war, war of the classes, which produces nothing but a leveling equality in which spiritless social form masquerades as living community. Behind the mask of spiritless social form the tyrannical will to power of the leader(s) works steadily its destruction of the human spirit in grim, infernal ways.[31] The intimacy at the heart of this counterfeit universal is monstrous again, indeed infernal.[32] The counterfeits of community drive the human being into a hellish idiocy, rather than a heavenly one, and in large measure because heaven has been hated.

There is a dangerous doubleness, promising ennoblement but liable to generate corruption. The intimate universal is porous to heaven, but it can

also be porous to hell. For, of course, the danger is there with the idiotic intimacy. It is *daimonic* in the double sense of being able to be turned to the diabolical side, as well as to the divine. As daimonic, it is a *metaxu* but this between space suspends us in the middle between blessing and curse. This is not only true with respect to political will to power; it bears on the ambiguity of our being religious. There is greatness to religion but also great danger. The corruption of the best is the worst (*corruptio optimi pessima*). Alas, it is the human condition that the best is always liable to corruption or never free from temptation. Why? Because even our best is never God. This is most important about religious wisdom, and the intimate universal reminds us of this—we are never God. It reminds us that we are creatures of will to power and erotic sovereignty prone to possession by *eros turannos*, that we are also beneficiaries of agapeic generosity, and called to a life of agapeic service. If the intimate sources are not purged, then this will to power springs up exultant when the opportunity presents itself.

I am not arguing for servility but there is a service both prior to and beyond erotic sovereignty. But one has to be released from will to power into a different willing of life and its good. The great religions in the past sought by ritual and prayer and ethical service to keep open this willingness and its porosity to the divine. The great religions did not always live the purgatory of their own will to power. They sometimes betrayed the intimate universal; they remade it, made their own universal to serve the mission of expanding their imperium rather than their available service to all that is. One of the religious lessons of secularization is that the distinction of politics and religion can enable us to see *the difference of this purer service* that must wander in the midst of the political powers and their deserts. In the midst of its wandering, it may find no resting place to lay its head, and not because it has not yet gained political power but because it is witness to a hyperbolic dimension of the intimate universal, a dimension that political community at its best may allow, even encourage, but can never constitute. It seems too often that we still have not learned enough of this difference. This difference points beyond the cosmopolis and the ghetto toward the intimate universal. It points beyond the collusion of religion and politics, beyond the opposition, points beyond politics, but points as witness of the God of the universal who can never be reduced to any historical formation and who yet calls every historical formation to the practice of worldly justice, transfigured by the promise of agapeic service.

CHAPTER 2

Art and the Intimate Universal

Neither Imitation nor Self-Creation

Opening on Art and the Intimate Universal

Some say an artwork says nothing. It is, it is what it is, it is mute, it does not mean, it should not mean but only be—be itself, and only be itself. Such an autistic aesthetic, as we might call it, could be seen to follow from an extreme emphasis on the autonomy of the artwork—one of the sacred cows of aesthetic reflection in recent centuries. The line of thought is not inconsistent. A radically autonomous work would have nothing to do with what is other (*heteros*) to itself (*auto*). It would communicate nothing but itself, that is to say, it would not communicate. For communication happens in a between, and the aesthetics of such an extreme autonomous work would only be between it and itself. The work would be so radically intimate to itself that it would be idiotic in an autistic sense. This is intimacy without any promise of universality—an aesthetic of extreme singularity, again not unknown in recent times. Being itself only, the work would be purely identical with itself, that is, purely different from all other things. There are paradoxical, even perverse, inversions here. Absolute difference claims to be different from absolute identity, but since there is no way to identify the absolutely different as such, the

absolutely different also cannot be differentiated from absolute identity, and so we end with a complete confusion of sameness and difference. Self-communication would communicate nothing, and we could not even communicate this absence of communication. Could we even say it, there would be no work of art. The rest is silence but this would be a meaningless silence, and thus not truly a silence at all, since defined by no promise of speech but by nothing at all.

Sed contra: An artwork is itself but it communicates. If it is mute, it is mute speech. It communicates itself but what it is is never just itself alone. It is as a shaping communication, a shaping of communication. Its singularity is never autistic but always the singularization of a field of intimate communication. It articulates an intimate between that comes to present itself with the secret promise of the clandestine universal.

Some markers: I walk through an art gallery, and a painting strikes my attention. It communicates an emphatic otherness. I am made to pause, I do pause. This singular work arrests me, stops me, solicits attention. Before it I am receptive but I am also singularized. It singles me out and I pay it absorbed attention, alone before it alone. And yet not at all alone, since a whole world opens up, communicated in the work. "Without great solitude, no serious work is possible"—thus Pablo Picasso. So speaks singular solitude; and yet there is intimacy in the communication of otherness that the work wakes.

In a buzzing café I sink into solitude as I become absorbed in a book. The babble and bustle retreat. Contraction into this solitude becomes an expansion in the open space of surprising communication. Marcel Proust had it right: reading is nothing less than a "miracle of communication in the midst of solitude."[1] So speaks solitude as a space of communication. One is alone and not alone. One is alone before an artwork and an imaginative world opens before one in its intricate virtuality. Such solitude is a living intermedium of the others who, through us, in us, with us, beyond us, speak to us. There is a confusion in communication, but it is a generative *con-fusio*—not the vanishing of difference but the fusion with, fluency with, the selves and the others. In the confusion ferments the intimate universal. It is the fertile equivocity of a secret togetherness of which the artwork singularly communicates.

An intriguing sign: Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is a drama of young, passionate, and doomed eros. But Shakespeare's art reveals something of the confluence of the intimate and the universal that still spreads its

mysterious contagion. The play is set in Verona in Italy, which is now for visiting tourists a veritable theme park of young love. I am intrigued by a kind of reversal or chiasmus of art and life—or interchange. Letters from all over the world, and in all tongues, arrive in Verona addressed to Il Club di Giulietta. Many of the letters have all but minimal addresses, the name Giulietta perhaps, perhaps the place Verona, and yet somehow the letters get there, they arrive. They are answered by Giuliettas, willing young ladies in Verona itself. The letters communicate the longings of love from all over the world, the pains, the appeals—appeals sent out from who knows who or from who knows where to a name, to a place of love . . . and they arrive. Their address and arrival, their delivery and being answered, these tell us something of the intimate universal—of art and the intimate universal, of love and the intimate universal. An intimate, even anonymous, universal appeal is sent out in despair and hope to whom it may concern. And it is answered.[2]

These markers or signs bring us to our questions here: Does art throw light on the intimate universal? How does it? Does the intimate universal light up art? How does it? I take direction from Aristotle's famous saying: poetry is more philosophical than history. Why? Poetry deals with the universal, Aristotle says, while history is confined to the particular. Some laud this: a promotion for poetry (and by extension art) to philosophical dignity. Others demur: in yoking poetry to the universal Aristotle enfeebles its nature by a too-close association with philosophy, too close because overawing art with the universal and seducing it to complicit inferiority.

Much discussion here can be dialectically sterile. We oppose universal to particular, singular to form, the philosopher as the highest emissary on earth of the universal to the artist as the subaltern of the image who mixes too much with the wrong sorts of singulars and their vanishing particulars. This is not the way here. One should rather be generous in an Aristotelian way, and take wing on his refusal to dualistically oppose universal and particular, as supposedly his father Plato had unfruitfully done. What if it is the intimate universal that is at issue with poetry, and more generally with art?

Of course, there is always the danger of losing the specificity of art if we so talk of the universal that art vanishes into the homogenous mass of all other instantiations of the universal. Yet, if the invocation of the universal cannot help illuminate many particulars, we might as well go whistle. The intimate universal communicates catholically but is not to

be set in opposition to the singulars. We need to suspend these univocal oppositions, though this is not to say we must sublate them dialectically, but more keep open the space of the between—open to that intimate communication with what exceeds us, as it comes to address us in the interval or intermedium of a given happening. The immanent universal of Aristotle is not a bad place to start, but there is more to the intimate universal than this.

Universality Without Intimacy: On Imitation

A first pass: I will pursue the point by saying that art refers us neither to an external universal to be mimetically reproduced nor to an immanent creativity defined purely through itself alone. The intimate universal of art does not fit into an imitation reflecting an external universal or a self-creativity expressing an entirely immanent intimacy. Of course, imitation and self-creativity are the two major notions that have defined much reflection on art. Imitation has the longer history, dating back to the ancients and still held in respect till recent centuries. Mimesis has many nuances, some not now well understood or appreciated. Certainly it tries to understand art in terms of the universal, though art is not the universal but a mimesis of it. I will say that mimesis is tempted to stress the universal without the intimacy, self-creativity the intimacy without the universal. We must seek for another way, neither mimetic nor self-creative, and this to do justice to the intimacy and the universality.

The most famous representative of the mimetic view is, of course, Plato's view in the *Republic* and elsewhere. Aristotle also invoked mimesis, and many other thinkers too numerous to mention. Plato's famous theory: God creates the Idea, the craftsman the copy, the artist the imitation of the copy. The mimesis is not the universal but a double of the universal. The universal, the Idea, is somehow communicated in the imitation, and yet it has a being for itself that cannot be identical with the imitation. Were the Idea and the mimesis identical, there would be no original as other to imitate, hence no imitation. Crucial is the *otherness of the original* over against the immanent availability of the imitation. Crucial also is a certain *doubleness* of showing and withholding. The immanent availability of the imitation might be the availability of the universal but never in the manner of absolute appearance. There is a gap, a between, through which

somehow the original is communicated, through which therefore something of the universal as other is comprehended. Yet the gap also keeps apart the universal and the mimesis. The between reduced to this gap disables full intimacy, in the name of the elsewhere universal. This gap then has often been seen in a negative light: it signals a deficiency of presence of the original; the original is not fully there, truly there in the mimesis. If the artistic mimesis speaks to the intimate, it is an intimacy without the universal. On this score, one understands why the worry might arise that art arouses the intimate passions, without subjecting them to the moderating measure of logos and the universal.

The same gap is also deemed defective by the anti-Platonists, broadly speaking, though for opposed reasons. The deficit here now is said to be that the gap of image and original cannot do justice to the *affirmative* power of art to disclose and communicate. The deficit of the universal casts its shadow over the power of art to communicate, but not to communicate the transcendent universal but the intimate richness of immanent happening. Universality without intimacy cannot do justice to the intimacy of the immanent. We need a different thinking of the intimacy. The anti-Platonists are at one with the Platonists but the direction of their ensuing interpretations goes differently. For the Platonists, the mimesis defects epistemically and ontologically from the universal as original and other. For the anti-Platonists, the defection of the mimesis seeds rebellion in the direction of the claim of art to be the bearer of its own justification qua communication. Let the transcendent universal go whistle. Let perhaps all universals go whistle, if as transcendent they set a limit on immanent creativity. I will return shortly to this.

Of course, the dualism of image and original is entirely too simplistic and univocal a way of approaching the point at issue. The image is not fixed here, the original fixed there, such that no passage between here and there is possible. Imitation as such already witnesses to a passage having occurred, or being in the process of happening. Otherwise there is no imitation, for mimesis is both here and there. (Stendhal's description of the novel: "a mirror that strolls along the highway."[3] There is a way and a passing along the way. The mirror also moves, strolls.)

As an example of this passing, think of *mimicking*. I mimic you, and you must be other to me for me to mimic you, but in mimicking you, you are no longer simply other, since I have become you, I am you in the act of mimicking. Mimicking testifies to a transcendence of original

and image, both in the sense of the original being transcendent to the image and in the sense of the original being transcended in the image. In this second sense of transcendence, the original imitated comes to be as apparent in the image that mimics. There has been a passing from original to image, entirely dynamic in its own way, not some merely passive copying. A mime artist copies, but the copying is a paradoxical dynamic patience, or patient dynamism, in that the original is received mysteriously in a medium that is not its own and the original comes to life, in a double way, in a way that is redoubled, borrowed but not merely borrowed in the image that shows the original as not just over there but right now as here. The strange power of passing between poles, or receiving what is of the other, the being-there of the other as available to communicate beyond itself, the mimicking that is neither copying nor producing but somehow both and beyond both, all this is part of the enigma of imitating. The point is ethical and political too: without ethical imitation there would be no passing on of the exemplary excellence of the heroes or role models; without mimesis also the bonds of belonging and solidarity in a political community would not be. Imitation is not, as Emerson said, suicide. This is a superficial copying that conforms, that treats originals as fixed, fixated standards, that allows nothing of the emergence of the new, that allows nothing also of the transmission of the constant from the old to the new, that allows nothing of the rejuvenation that comes with creative mimesis.

In a sense not easy to grasp, *the mime is the actor who does not act*. There is an intimate core to acting where the actor does not act: something happens, the character comes, is communicated—and can be communicated by acting the character. Acting is made possible by not acting, for there is an empty space at the "center," and there—in a kind of nowhere—the actor has no (univocal) identity. In Plato's *Republic*, it is evident that Socrates did not quite approve of this. This is "not being one thing," hence not doing one's job, minding one's own business, conforming to the principle: one man, one job. I would see it differently as the no-place of fertile plurivocity. This is the porosity. In the porosity all activity, imitative or creative, originates. There is danger to this porosity, of course, since monsters can take shape there too. Arts can colonize an innocent porosity and corrupt its nobler passions. But this is no argument against the porosity as such, since it refers us to the space of enabling that allows good things and bad. This holds true also for the aesthetic forming or deforming of the porosity. One might even say there is an

analogous empty space, allowing philosophical porosity, also at the heart of the Platonic dialogue: the silence of Plato, he being no one thing, being everyone and being none. The philosopher, mime of logos, has no fixed univocal identity, being plurivocal in communication with the intimate universal, and in communicating it. One might say that, in a more general sense, silence can be significant for the intimate universal: silence as almost nothing and as promise of everything, as the withholding of the secret and the threshold of offering, as the muteness holding welcome and the door of hospitality, as the night that is the cave of terrors and the night divine that opens onto a lunar heaven of dreams and eros.

Still, one can grant that standard dualistic versions of image and original do risk, as I put it, insisting on the universality without the intimacy. One can see how politically this version might also be a curb on the wayward impulses of the creative. Wayward, one can also be homebound, but one can also be not on course. The version of mimesis I mean tends to hold that there are already now fixed standards from which no deviation is to be allowed. We are to make ourselves Egyptians in art, where what has always been sanctioned governs what yet now and to come is to be allowed and hallowed. The intimate falls outside the already fixed universal. Consider the point religiously: prayer would be submission to the canonized ritual that is to be repeated without deviation; the observance of ritual repetition is enough, let the intimate soul go to hell. Of course these extremes are caricatures, but the extremes have their force in human life, and sometimes are enforced.

One could moderate the extremes, say, in this way. Plato tells us that God has an idea of the bed, which the artist at twice remove imitates. How serious is Plato being? The humor strikes one when one wonders about God's relation to beds. What are beds for? Sleeping, of course. Do we sleep in God's Idea? In the sublunary world, we do not sleep in the universal, in the Idea. And more occurs in and on beds than sleeping. The *Republic* is, after all, a work deeply concerned with the political dangers of *eros turannos.* Think only of the luxurious bed of the usurper Gyges. With the ring of invisibility, he violates the privacy of the queen's bedroom, kills the king, and takes her. Beds, even if they are the Idea of the God, give rise to very intimate things. Murder, usurpation, and rape are intimate things, violently tendered horrors. And of course, since Plato is particularly concerned with the ethical and political moderation of the excess of passion, it is not entirely surprising that he might suggest that God be

thought of as having an Idea of the bed. Are we to say: God is a peeping tom? Or that God cares for the intimate erotics of life, that their tyrannical impulses be caressed to purer pleasure under ethical measure? One might also see something deeply affirmative in this doubleness that bears on the intimate universal.[4]

Intimacy Without the Universal: On Self-Creation

A second pass: The notion of art as original in its own right, fostered by, or fostering, creativity, is relatively new. One discerns here a displacement from a transcendent universality to an immanent intimacy. This goes with a migration of the ontological locus of the original: from the universal as other to an immanent otherness, hidden in the art of the genius, singularly expressed and made concrete in the enigma of the artwork. This hiddenness asks one to look on the enigmatic work as expressing something of deepest intimacy—an intimacy that may have to do with something universal or may not. If it does, this universal cannot be an external one—there must be something of the intimate about it. Not incidentally, this turn to immanent originality is reflective of many features of a more general "turn to the subject." One thinks of the modern stress on autonomous self-determination. One thinks of the self-activating subject of a Kantian-style idealism wherein the productive imagination brings images to expression from the subject's own originality. These images are such that they might be exemplary and original; they are not reproduced doubles. They do not double an external universal, but reveal the intimate self-doubling of the creative self. The artist doubles himself in the work, but in the work is expressed the elusive intimacy of being. In the artwork the artist and his audience can come to a self-knowing, sensuously embodied, of that intimacy.

Of course, there are complications with this view that can cause a switch from an aesthetic intimacy having to do with some elusive universality to an aesthetic intimacy having nothing at all to do with universality. This orientation, set over against an external universal, can foster an autonomy of immanent creativity that can well lead to a stress on intimacy so singular that any communication between the artist and his audience is troubled. This is what historically we often find. The ensuing hiatus between artist and public is a trouble that is still variously with us.

There is also the factor here that, since finally we cannot be what we are outside community, the artists incline to make up their own intimate community, now over against the philistine public. There is no external universal and yet there is a community of geniuses. This community might even have its own immanent police. To be "in" is everything. Singularity without communicability then regresses to a narcissistic communitarianism, even to an autism of being, not to the intimate universal. Autism is the death of art, but it is a death seeded in counterfeit self-communication.

There is an understanding of immanence where the enigmatic intimacy of being seems to vanish. Can this view be sustained if, more fundamentally, there is a mysterious inward otherness to human intimacy? This otherness is not merely external, just as the universal is not merely external. Under the sign of cultural self-determination, the artist might strive to be the master of the otherness. If so, something is already out of kilter. Then already there is a defection from the wooing of the secret source of creativity, which is not self-determining. Out of the secret source a relative form of self-determining can emerge, but as relative it is always and already in relation to what is other than it can define through its own self-determination alone. When the artist thinks only of himself as self-creative, he has ceased to appreciate what he is as the secret benefactor of the enigmatic otherness.

What can sometimes follow is the urge to break through, violently if necessary, into that secret otherness. Such violence can shine with an uncanny light. The light is borrowed from what has been stolen or usurped. (Think of how, in recent centuries, Prometheus was a heroic figure for many aesthetic and political tendencies in a manner that was not true of the ancient world itself, where he was a thieving Titan.) We often think the creative source in the intimate otherness of selving comes up to the surface, from deep roots below the ground. And so the passage is from darkness to light, from below ground to above. But the violence of the breakthrough might *turn downward* more radically, and in the name of the secret sources of creativity. Then the artist will claim as his own an infernal odyssey of intimacy that would plumb its own darkness, cut off from the light of anything transcendent.

I think of the dark angels of Francis Bacon's disturbing genius—Bacon: unequivocally atheist in unremitting avowal, yet obsessed with the Crucifixion, or scenes at the base of it, or screaming popes.[5] These are heads that are like Lear's Howl in paint, far darker and more beautiful than the "Scream" of

Munch, and more deeply disquieting of the intimacy of being. In the horror of the Howl and the screaming popes there is intimacy as touching as torture is hyperbolically intimate. And there is a kind of universality—this intimacy is only communicated to us in the painting because the horror of intimacy is already communicated in our very being as fleshed. As Lear cried out, we come to this world and wawl; and we continue to bawl, and there is intimate horror in the vision that flesh too comes to be no other than meaningless meat. "Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life, and thou no breath at all?" Who is Lear addressing? And who could answer?

Is this just then an intimacy entirely without the universal? Or is the intimacy companioned, even in the darkness, by something that at least promises some of the more universal? One has to say that some trace or shadow or ghost of the latter seems hard to shake off. Even in going down the creator will come up in an otherness exceeding itself, like an underground sea in which it finds itself swimming, perhaps drowning. We are under the underground, below Plato's cave, where the light above earth does not penetrate. And yet deep down under, the intimacy is not avoided, for we are it, we are in it, and to be so is always to be companioned. The divine is there in the bowels of hell. Jesus harrows hell. Dionysus is also Hades. Orpheus sings in the underworld and the dead and the lords of the dead are moved.

See it this way: without the companioning of the secret source, the intimacy goes to ground in the labyrinth of inwardness. Striving to come to itself, the singularity now can take the reversed posture to any universal—negation. Some forms of postmodern aesthetics show the face of revolt (rebellion) against any universal. There were nineteenth-century precursors. One thinks of Stirner's crusade against all forms of the ideal and the universal in the name of one's own, *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum*: the unique one. The "terrorism of theory" (Bruno Bauer) comes to its highest victim—terrorize now the universal. The (in)famous anarchist Bakunin, whose red terror seemed too much even for Marx, the red god who would have none other beside him, no rival deity, in the International: "Let us therefore trust the eternal Spirit which destroys and annihilates only because it is the unfathomable and eternal source of all life. The passion for destruction is a creative passion, too!"[6] Nietzsche: if a temple is to be built, a temple has to be destroyed. Picasso: "A painting is a sum of destructions."[7] But the sum of destructions, if it is a painting at all, is more than a destruction.

An aesthetics of self-creation, insisting on an extremity of singularity, can conceal hatred of the universal. The question is whether even such hatred is possible without the hidden letting of the intimate source. No doubt there are destructions that aid the making of a work. A sculptor must strike the unhewn marble, not caress it with jelly fingers and leave it without imprint. Yet there is much to be honored in Michelangelo's patience before the rock. Something other, a form in the rock, calls to be released. Creative cooperation with the otherness of the secret form is not just our freedom as self-creativity. After our season in hell, autonomy is not self-certain, the intimacy begins to lose faith in itself. Without the universal, as I said above, a new autism, a loss of communicability, can come—a silence that finally cannot even hear itself. Intimacy in that silence strangely ceases to be intimate anymore, alternatively freezing the intimate or exploding it. Its cave has become a torture chamber. It tortures itself, takes itself apart, hates itself instead of finding itself in the love of being. The scream it now makes is soundless and more frozen than the rock.

The Art of the Intimate Universal: Beyond Imitation and Self-Creation

Universality without intimacy—intimacy without the universal: the first is the temptation of mimesis, underpinned by external opposition; the second is the temptation of self-creativity, inspired by internal opposition. Neither alternative so stated will do, but that does not mean we need to abandon both entirely. If we dwell with imitation we find something much more nuanced than a facile copying of an external original. If we dwell with self-creation we discover more intimately something that cannot be described as our creation.

To the *first point*: If we look at imitation, relating to the universality of an external original cannot be enough. It is not that the otherness of the universal has to be swept aside, but it is not an otherness in the mode of dualistic opposition. If it were, there would be no imitation, for there would be no immanence of the universal in the singular image. In a way, this is the whole enigma of imitation: How can what is other or transcendent come to be, as communicated, in another medium not identical with the original as such? If we accept the gap as unsurpassable we can

come up with a negative view of imitation. If we stress the communication, something other has come to be, and other to the otherness of the universal—and yet that new otherness is not the opposite of the universal but has something to do with the communication and showing of the universal. Imitation effects a passage between the two sides, and what we have on the side of the imitation cannot be a purely abstract universal. It must be the universal made sensuous. But what can that mean? This intimate incarnation too is the whole enigma of mimesis.

Many philosophers have drawn attention to this matter, often in different terms. I mention Hegel: he speaks in terms of the spiritualization of the senses, for instance. He calls the result not the Idea, but the Ideal, that is, the Idea in sensuous shape. This is his conception of beauty, and while he criticizes imitation, there is a sense in which art in concretizing the universal does not exhaust it, and hence a certain otherness, such as we find in imitation, persists. This otherness is a problem for him, only because the gap remains, and the gap must be completely surpassed, Hegel thinks. I would argue differently: the gap keeps open a between space where passage from one side to the other can continue. There is never an absolutely complete presence. There is a presence but the intimate sensuousness of its making manifest is such that it can never be exhausted. It can never be exhausted because it can never exhaust what it seeks to make present in the image. The imitation undermines its own claim to completion, and must do so to remain itself. Were it to complete itself, it would no longer be an imitation. Its complete presentation of the universal would make it be simply the universal, and there would be no abiding otherness.

This clearly is not the case with art—the universal is intimated, not exhaustively presented. If there is, as one might argue, a kind of completeness to the work, this has to do with the *inexhaustibility of this intimation*. An intimation here is not an indeterminacy asking to be made more and more determinate, or indeed to be made fully self-determining. There is an intimation of an overdeterminacy, of a "too muchness." The seeming poverty of the aesthetic image, that it is *not* the original, is a sign of a rich fecundity, and a fecundity that goes deeper into the intimacy of the universal the more true it is to the original. Being true is an aesthetic witnessing. Witnessing invokes a fidelity to something other to itself. True art is a faithful witness.

In relation to this kind of mimetic intimacy, we also see the dualism of image and original being surpassed. If the original is richly intimated in

the poverty of the image, the original comes to communication in that poverty. I mean that the imitation cannot be a merely external copying—it becomes something original in its own right. Take the extreme example of the clone. The clone is not the univocal double of the original—to be a clone, as the same, the clone has to be different. There is an ineradicable difference. This might seem only a numerical difference in the case of the clone, but even there the so-called identity is really a likeness. Likeness must include difference as well as sameness. Otherwise the second as clone collapses into the first as original, and in a way we can't even count the first as such since the contrast between the first and the second has vanished. In that light, one might say that the imitation is necessary for the communication of the first original—otherwise the original is an autistic universal. This is just the way universals have sometimes been described—as *auto kath' auto*. Autistic universality would be a transcendence without intimacy. We would have a static eternity and all the difficulties that go with that.[8] There is hence an augmenting move in imitation. There is a pluralization, indeed a plurivocalization in that more than one voice is in play. Beyond static univocity, there is the communication of voicings and between voices. This creative plurivocity is centrally one of the things art is especially well placed to draw to our attention, and to invite being taken into account. The plurivocity can often be full of equivocity, but that is not an objection here. The intimate is always in some degree equivocal. Art as such may be a way of divining something more universal in the equivocal imitation. And this not by reduction to univocity, but by finessed articulation of the intimate equivocity as such. As such, the intimation of something more is already there in communication.

In sum, the richer the imitation becomes, the more intimate with the original, the more it presents itself as original in its own terms. To return to the example above: miming. I mime you, but the better the mime, the more difficult it is to separate mime and original. The imitation takes on the life of the original, takes on an original life of its own. I become you, you become me. This is the basis for the experience of something uncanny. You have become so like me, it is as if I am no longer myself; I am other in you as the other; it is as if you have stolen my life, my soul. There can be a tetchy side of this: someone mocks me by mimicking my voice, but the voice is so like me that one is disarmed, one is threatened with the loss of unique identity. The changeling has stolen my place. He is what he cannot be, namely, me. And who can tell the difference between

the true original and the counterfeit double? Perhaps only one who loves the original, who has intimate knowing.

Be that as it may, changing places between original and counterfeit testifies to a *creative dynamism between* image and original. This between itself is a matrix of originality. Passing in and through it cannot be a matter of being simply supine before a fixed external original. There is a becoming other, of being the other. In the inexhaustibility of great art this is not just the becoming of the finite other, but somehow an image of open wholeness comes to be that intimates the infinite. I would prefer to speak of "the between" rather than "the whole" to do justice to this "open wholeness" and its intimation of the infinite beyond all wholes. For that reason, drama, as originally imaging the interplay of the between, is perhaps the highest art, the milieu of the most complete aesthetic communication as an intimation of the universal. (After all, when Aristotle spoke of poetry as more philosophical than history, he was especially focused on tragic drama.) I will come back to that with tragedy and comedy.[9]

To the *second point*, intimacy without the universal: coming to the matter from the other side, that of self-creation, we also see the situation doubling itself. This is not a dualism between immanence and external transcendence, but between innerness and an *immanent transcendence*. The question arises as to whether there is a doubleness hidden in the immanent transcendence also. The first dualism is not finally sustainable; the second turn is away from this dualism, but in turning to immanent resources of originality, too often it is under the sign of autonomy or self-determination. The result is that these immanent resources of originality are then refigured as the ground of self-determination, or as themselves entirely self-determining, if not in origin, at least in goal, and in the project of bringing them to full self-determination. Opposed to classical universality, the romantic storm of inner stress, source of originality, while seemingly outside the space of the universal, is often now seen as the initiating source of a project of the new universal. This is not a matter of the sheer assertion of singularity as such. Rather we find talk of an *exemplary singularity* that in secret ways speaks for the whole, for the universal. This is a point where the thematic of the genius as exemplary of creativity or originality comes in. But the issues are more complex than they appear at first.

In truth, the inner exploration of the inner does not come upon a univocal innerness but rather to an inward otherness that is more like

the opening onto an abyss. In coming to what seems most intimately one's own, one comes upon what is not self-owned. Seeking to own itself, the owning of this selving darkens down into a cave that is not its own. The selving claiming exemplarity singularity is undergrounded by nothing but an opening into nothing. It is an abyss, it is a gap—the gap is a chaos in the etymological sense. The singular selving is split, double, redoubling within itself, in an opening of space that it cannot claim for itself alone. I would say that it is in this gap that *the porosity* is to be rediscovered anew and in this is to be recovered the sources of truer creativity. Moreover, the sources are not our own, they cannot be owned. Rather they endow us. The powers of creativity are endowments. They are ours but they are not our own.

Recall something of the Orphic theme here. The artist must go down under into Hades in search of his beloved to bring her back from the underground. Song gives pause even to the denizens of the underworld, transfixes their hearts, and moves them. Orpheus does not succeed in bringing Eurydice to the surface, perhaps because of the break in patience when he looks back to behold her. One could still say that the abyss, the chaos, is the promise of something intimately universal, in that everything comes to the surface of the earth from down under. There is the doubleness there—inner otherness and the intimation of an other otherness that is not one's own. (This is also related to an Augustinian theme mentioned in the previous chapter—*interior intimo meo*—understood religiously.) We think of creativity after the Enlightenment as secular, but this current line of thought recontacts the sacred sources. The romantic revolt in that sense was also a religious revolt against the dead mechanized world produced by the Newtonian world-picture and its tyranny of the abstract geometrical universal. The doubleness in the intimate is not an external dualism, but it can create inner division and turmoil in the soul. Out of this inner turmoil and struggle creation can come. One must have chaos in the soul to give birth to a dancing star—Nietzsche. Of course, we also find the deconstruction of genius. Now it is chaos without birthing, without dancing stars. Go down into the cesspit and make an assault on the sources of creativity. The assault is itself parasitical on the same source of creativity that gives birth to dancing stars. But fuck the dancing stars—they are too beautiful. Or because they are beautiful, and are above us in the night sky, fuck them. "Who had made shit a sacrament?" asks Saul Bellow's Mr. Sammler.[10]

Deeper than the self-division is the fork in the soul as a between. Is the issue just between the soul and itself, or between the soul and what is more than itself? The second, since the deeper we explore the immanent resources of self-creation, the more the wonder grows concerning a secret companioning power that is not one's own. In the darkness of the intimacy, and in coming to ourselves, we come to something more than ourselves. This is not quite Aristotle's immanent universal—it is more intimate than that. Aristotle's universal is modeled on biological self-becoming—the acorn becomes the oak. But organic becoming exhibits a dynamic thereness that is relatively universal by comparison with the roots of free self-becoming. These latter roots are no roots, since grounded in no ground. No ground, except the ungrounded ground of becoming, and even more primally, the ground of coming to be. This latter looks more like a nothing, a creative void, a porosity in the language I use. This porosity is the universal medium that is nothing—no thing but all things come to be in it—a porosity at the bottom of the bottomless soul in us. And it is in this nothing that the energies of creation are communicated to us.

Here is my example again, the fluidity of the mime. The true mimic is the one who is nothing and who can become everything. Creativity is inseparable from this plastic nothingness, this porosity out of which creation emerges. This porosity is itself a created openness—for it does not create itself. It is given. It is as an openness not an emptiness simply. If one could say it, it is a *full openness*. In other language, it is an agapeic openness, not just an erotic one, if we were to describe eros as a lack seeking fulfilment. An agapeic porosity: too much and almost nothing; making all ways possible, but making a way for all things to be possible, and taking itself out of the way in order that the ways of becoming may be possibilized. Human creativity participates in this creative porosity.

If this is not self-creation, we must also give up the language of *project* as producing the universal. Prior to producing or projecting, there is the more intimate universal. Nor can self-creation be a univocalized self-determination, since the sources of our creativity participate in self-transcendence. If there were only a matter of transcending to itself, it would project itself as the universal to be created. Such an attitude we meet diversely in the constructivist philosophies after Kant, and more so after Nietzsche. This is to turn our *conatus essendi* in a direction that recesses the *passio essendi*. It is most of all to forget, or cover over, the

intimate universal of the more primordial porosity. In the inner between there are no boundaries with which we can close off the extremes. It is openness down all to the bottom, openness above ground into the highest highs of the sun that shines on us. There is transcendence that is *altus* in the double sense of the Latin word—both deep and high. The superior universal there is the depth. Superiority is in the immanent otherness as other to my own immanent self-relation. Outside us, inside us, above us, down under us: criss-crossing the directionalities of the between, we come in the end to it, or it to us, and there is no end to it.

Art, the Imaginative Universal, the Intimate Strangeness of Being

Our reflections come to a point where art and imagination illuminate the intimate universal. In simple imitation we are inclined toward *reproductive* imagination in which an already fixed universal is redoubled. In self-creation the stress on *productive* imagination seems to dissolve all fixed universals in an intimacy of being shading off into the nocturnal.

While something in both views needs to be granted, we also need something that is neither such imitation nor self-creation, something that illumines both imitation and creativity.[11] Creativity returns to (re)new imitation, in the reference to the other beyond itself. Intended here is no facile copying, no univocal correspondence between terms, one more originally univocal, the other more derivative. The redoubling of this new mimesis is a co-responding: responding to the elusive communication from the otherness—the inward otherness and the otherness beyond inwardness. Corresponding is not being self-creative but co-operating in creation. One might say that art gives us neither an image nor an original but an original image or an imagistic original. There is doubleness in its relativity: both an immanent self-reference and a transcendent other-reference; something deeply intimate, something intimating superior otherness (*altus*: "above," "below"). The work stands there in its otherness, but this is its corresponding with superiority, and yet there is something intimate that speaks to us in its distance of truth. It speaks from a height, and even when it is cold, it is not cold, for it touches us deeply. Distance is needed to bring intimacy home to its own strangeness to itself. Distance is the between in which something more universal communicates in and through the intimate sensuousness.

(The word made flesh seems like a closing of distance, but it is the height coming across the gap and communicating intimately, even in the mess of the banal where the intimacy of the sensuous is shown as the shimmer of something more than a merely flat materiality. This is communication that is intimate even in distance, that takes hold even when it comes across as colder, that is warm with the universal even when the intimate wallows in its own self-disgust. The word is not a mere imitation since it is a coming to be that brings to be. It is not a self-creation, since it emerges out of a reserved source and communicates what is other, even as it communicates itself. The threshold of silence says so, without so saying.)

If the dualism of imitation and self-creation does not work, the matter is also not one of a dialectical subsumption of one into the other, since such would make it a higher form of self-mediation, self-creation. It is metaxological: it is a between that is beyond the opposition of universal and particular. There is a sense in which these two terms lose any fixity they seem to possess since it is just in the passage that this *metaxu* comes to articulation. The passage shares in both the intimate and the universal. This passage as metaxological shows the doubleness of self-relation and other-relation. This is to be in communication. Art is especially rich in sensuous communication.

When one refers to something neither universal nor particular, one thinks of *the schema* in Kant (in the *Critique of Pure Reason*) as a between in that regard. The schema somehow partakes of both the understanding and the sensuous, and is neither one nor the other. If we fixate on these two, and if we fix them, we fail to realize that more important is the power that *passes between* them. This has something to do with imagination. This is a threshold power that is not a self-determining power—it is an endowed power, an enabling that itself is secretly enabled by a source it cannot enable through itself alone.

Invoking Kant may conjure up pictures of transcendental machinery, but in fact what is at issue is far more intimate. I would say that the imagination, as articulating original images, or imagistic originals, is only artistically called forth truly when it gives up the power to assert itself as imposing form on matter. The extreme of this latter understanding is the technical view of art where we already have the matter or the content and we impose form on it—the matter being the sensuous intimacy, and the form bringing in the more universal. This technical view is not creative,

for it knows nothing of the gap of the nothing across which the original power passes and communicates. It fears this gap, for it is nothing. It wants to go to work only on what already has come to fixed expression. Prior to and beyond *technē*, on the threshold, one does not know, one cannot even anticipate what might come across. The threshold of nothing is the empty space of the promise of pure surprise. One cannot force this; one must wait. And there is a waiting that communicates in the uncertainty, that does not deny the uncertainty, and will let come what will come, but that itself aches for the coming, for it would welcome what will come.

This waiting is the waiting of a wooing. Wooing the muse: wooing lives in the pain of longing but it is a love that waits. In waiting it is already a love that makes itself ready for what is to come. It is a longing for what is intimated, but the intimated has to be let come on its terms, otherwise what appears does not lift one. Wooing of the intimate is itself most intimate, but wooing is not a wooing of itself, as if it were puffing itself up. Wooing is a strangely paradoxical emptying of expectation and expectation of fulfillment, a dry destitution and a wet desire at once. The need to woo is intimate to us, but in the emptying out of self-insistence, it is the expectation in the intimation that something from the otherness, from afar, will come near—and what comes so near too is the intimate.

Clearly in this, the side of the intimate seems more to the fore in wooing, and this is so, but what then of the universal? We must make this less a fixed form than a forming power: a formative bringing to be out of the emptiness of the formless and in the surplus promise of the overdeterminate. This universal is not form but intimate forming. Hence we must invoke the *dunamis* of coming to form, of communicating form. The universal is the sourcing power that communicates itself, that comes to form, and the form that has come is universal in a derivative sense, only because the forming power is the *nec plus ultra* of bringing to be—the ultimate creating power. This is again less like a technical making and is more suggestive of an origination from nothing. From this point of view, the intimacy becomes the less paradoxical since this origination from nothing has nothing of the frozen fixation we sometimes associate with the universal. (Call this latter the Platonism of the eternally fixed ideas: this is eternity as static, not eternity as the hyperbolic original power that creatively gives all to be, including the power of cooperating in creation that we find with the finite artist, the cooperating that is for the human being an endowed participation in the transfinite originality of the origin.)

This is why instead of either the abstract universal or the autistic particularity, one could propose that the intimate universal is suggested by something like the *imaginative universals* (*universali fantastici*) about which Vico spoke. Here is communicated a sense of the universal more original than the abstract universals of prosaic theory, one also intimate insofar as it is tied to our emergence from immersion in sensuous autism or the barbarism of the senses (*barbarie del senso*).[12] The sensuous speaks itself in images and intimately comes to self-articulation in imagination. There is something in the articulation both rooted in the universal and bringing it to intimate incarnation. This is not the concrete universal of Hegel, in the important respect that qua image it is not an indefinite immediacy awaiting its determination and self-determination in conceptual terms, the latter supplying the universal intelligibility to rescue the former from autistic sensuous. It is already worded flesh, self-wording flesh, incarnate address and speaking.[13]

If we think of imagination in too-subjectivist terms we cannot make sense of this. All beings image themselves, express themselves. Things are in a *spread of being* and they are the spread of their own being-there. Humans as beings image themselves, express themselves, are in spread. Imagination is a threshold of mindful spread between the more unconscious, the conscious, and the self-conscious. Over the threshold comes express selving and othering in the field of communication. Imagination's roots go ontologically deep—deeper than any subjectivist interpretation. Likewise, the otherness in which it is rooted cannot be objectified or reified in a univocal sense. Hence it cannot be rendered in a version of mimesis that takes an already given world of fixed objects as the point of original reference that grounds the imitation—the intimate otherness is not to be objectified in that sense either. Once again we are beyond the normal antithesis of imitation and self-creation. Imaginative universals are the coming to expression in a field of communication of an ontological originality neither subjective nor objective. The field of communication is not the concrete universal insofar as what comes to manifestation can never be exhausted in discursive rational terms alone. The universal of reason, whose older sister is the imaginative universal, itself partakes intimately of this more original field of communication.

I do not want to speak of imagination just in terms of *self*-articulation or *self*-expression, though these are part of what imagination means.

I mean more to speak of the metaxological character of imagination as a threshold power that is a communication from otherness, a communication of otherness, both inward and trans-subjective. It is indeed a surge of self-expression in the already opened porosity of being, but as a primordial power of articulation it comes to emergence as endowed (both other-articulation and self-articulation, and hence also articulation between and beyond self and other). I will talk about this more in part 2.

The idea of imagination as self-creation runs the risk of thinking too predominantly in terms of the endeavor to be, the *conatus essendi*, and not enough in terms of the *passio essendi*, the patience of being. If we do not do justice to the latter, we cover over what has been received in enabling imagination to actively articulate at all. It is not simply through itself alone, but in terms of enabling power(s) that open it up in the first instance, and that enable it to be and to envisage all things—indeed that enable it to image what is not (to give it a habitation and a name). It is an active nothing only because, more originally than self-creation, it is a patience of being, received in the primal porosity of being, and there received into the openness of communication—the intimate universal. The fact that the *conatus* is a *co-natus* already indicates a "being with" that points back more primordially to this being given to be—the endeavor comes to be because it has been given to be, enabled to be, and not through itself alone. The threshold nature of imagination: below the threshold of self-endeavoring is the *passio*, above the threshold is striving to imaginatively communicate.[14] Below in the patience is the more original porosity in which comes to birth the opening to all possibility, even opening to what above the threshold is not at all. (Emily Dickinson: "The Possible's slow fuse is lit / By the Imagination.") This is why what is above can bring to birth what is not there. In that regard, the creative act is not dependent on an external original—it is more the issue of original power below the level of explicit articulation, and its participation in a giving of being, its enjoyment of an opening of porosity that enables determination but can never be fixed to any set of determinations. For reasons such as these, it has been considered as a god-like power in exceeding finite objectification and indeed finite subjectification. It is more in us than we ourselves can master. This "more" is a birth and birthing. While intimate, it refers us to the original universal—original in the sense of originating all and freely enabling all (free) origination.

Mania, Eros, *Technē*

One might speak here of what the Greeks called *mania*, in terms of an intimate immanence rather than a merely external transcendence, though this immanence is not devoid of communication of an other, intimate transcendence. One can give some sober indications of the matter with reference to the actor. I said above that the actor does not act, even when he or she acts. Acting is companioned by what is not his or her act. This is not an external companionship necessarily, though that is not excluded—it is an intimate companioning.[15] The actor does not act because the artist is not a creator but cooperates in creation. There is a companioning power that endows communication, that allows communication, and that the actor must allow to communicate. This is allowing in the sense of cooperative receiving, in being a power almost nothing, enabling power seemingly powerless, power certainly not subject to imperious self-determination, power communicating in a sometimes wayward or vagabond way in response to being wooed.

The ancient notion of the *muse* comes again to mind. The muses were sacred sources of the arts, divine intermedia granting ambiguous access, transhuman and transobjective, to the companioning power. The muses must be wooed for wooing is a form of love's ceremony. The ceremonials must be more than constraining. There must be as much of patient readiness in the wooing as there is of expectant attention: patience in conception, gestation, birthing. There is a paradoxical mixture of patience and action, of *passio* and *conatus*. Wooing is neither one nor the other but a marriage of both. The marriage tells against self-creation that tilts toward the primacy of act, reducing the fertile doubleness to the sterile univocity of self-determination. One cannot woo oneself. There is always an otherness, even one's own inward otherness is not one's own. There has to be a graced moment of communication: not self-enforced, not enforced from outside, a release of othering and selving together. Some have said the release might come over one with the force of an unforced seizure. (This is not self-creation again.) One cannot seize oneself; one is seized. (W. B. Yeats in his poem "Lapis Lazuli":[16] "Blackout; Heaven blazing into the head: // Tragedy wrought to its uttermost.") Note the paradoxical language: porosity that welcomes the companioning power to seize one, to enrapture one, to transport one. Think of the power of

music to transport—one is suddenly elsewhere: music has found its way to the secret porosity beyond the fixed barriers of a self-determining ego, and suddenly the soul is out of itself, or more deeply in itself intimately, and the strangeness of secret innerness comes home to itself, alarmed and attracted at once.[17]

The artist who assaults is the lesser artist; the artist who is seized is the greater; however, the seizure can sometimes have the appearance of assault, for the companioning power can be terrible. This is the essential equivocity of art. Aesthetic mixture: rarely touching pure porosity, more an ambiguous promiscuous eros in which *passio* and *conatus*, patience and striving, interlock in sometimes wondrous, sometimes grotesque, sometimes even obscene embrace.

There is an erotics to the aesthetic here, in the sense of an opening of the *poros*, a reaching out of it and ascending through the *passio*, along with the seizure that comes from being touched secretly by the companioning power. We might connect this with the mania of the intimate universal, a theme deeply touched on by that impresario of mimesis, Plato. There is something paradoxical if his version of mimesis is just objectifying only. How comes it then that his exploration of mania seems not alone subjectifying but trans-subjectifying? This is not his language, to be sure. The soul is porous to the influence of the companioning power—influence here in the sense of flowing in, an influx of transcendence as other. The erotic soul bathes in the fluidity of the element of happening beyond subjectivism and objectivism. It is graced from beyond itself in that element. Of course, we must remember the needed diffidence with all things dangerous to those finite boundaries necessary for the needfuls of daily life. There is the danger that the mania might bring forth monstrous things as well as divine ones. This is the essential equivocity of eros also: it can be the *eros turannos* or the *eros uranios*, the tyrannical eros or the heavenly. If we recall the theme of genius, the idea of the *genius locus* reminds us of the companioning spirit or power of a place. The genius of the singular soul: this is the daimon of which Socrates spoke but also Romantic poets. It is the guardian angel of the intimate soul, singularly commissioned to guard that soul's destiny, of which some religious traditions speak. The angel is a messenger and the angel can be terrible, as Rilke tells us. The angel brings annunciation, brings a grace that initially can bring terror and alarm. We must go through the fear, for the companioning power may bring good tidings of the intimate universal. And we too must come to say "yes."

The contrast of inspiration and *technē* allows one to make the point. The technical model: this is an imposing of a form on pregiven matter—the form being more universal, the matter more particular. This technical, demiurgic model is implied in some versions of imitation: the artist imitates the idea that is the pregiven universal, now technically imposed on the also pregiven materiality. One might even see Plato's divine Demiurge as answering to this description. As just stated, this technical model cannot do full justice to the coming to be of the artwork. One might ask what moves the Demiurge, what inspires him so to make the art world? The answer is a kind of love: to make the best and most beautiful cosmos possible (*Timaeus*, 29a6–b2). Desire to bring beauty to be moves the deployment of *technē*, but this desire is more than technical. More than the *géométrie* of form, it is finesse for the beauty of the originated cosmos that moves the maker. Considered from the side of this finesse, the universal is not a form imposed *ab extra* but an immanent gift communicated to the intimate beauty of the world created. *Technē* is enfolded in a finesse, ultimately inspired by a love for the beautiful.[18]

In this light, one might think of the artwork as the aesthetic embodiment of the intimate universal. Such an embodiment communicates a coming to be, a sign of a universal as immanent in the coming to be and in the coming to be revealed in this incarnation. As so revealing, what is also revealed is something more than can be simply fixed in this incarnation.[19] The incarnation is an aesthetic communication that in being singularly concentrated on itself is not centripetally autistic but centrifugally self-exceeding, self-communicating. We see the double relativity of a *metaxu*, the self-relating, singular happening in a field of communication where selving is doubled over with being in relation to what is other. The doubling is in the aesthetic incarnation of the intimate universal as a singular happening in this field of communication that is the *metaxu*. Artworks are always between-happenings.

True, *technē* can be bent in the direction of *serviceable disposability*. The artwork is never defined by serviceable disposability, that is, something that is to be serviceable to us, something disposable to us, something that once it has served its purpose is used and used up, hence is disposable as having now outlived its use. There is a secret agapeic service of the beautiful in the artwork, but the work is not for us in the mode of serviceable disposability. It resists that, eludes being used up, is magnificently indifferent to our efforts to turn it to such uses. Its magnificence is its reserve

of patience before the onslaught of serviceable disposability. Its reserve might look like the silence of those stone gods on Easter Island but the reserve rather says that the silent stones offer an Island of Easter.

When *technē* is bent in the direction of serviceable disposability, the universal is branded by instrumental reason, passes beyond the control of reason, and a madness takes over that is rationally irrational. This is especially evident when the ideology of serviceable disposability takes over. It knows how to direct itself to the intimate, though the strategy serves the brand that instrumental reason is pushing. A stone can be marketed as a pet, and everyone must have one. A beautiful woman lies atop a motorcar—and who is dead to beauty?—but beauty is not at all the point. It is the selling of a dream, it is selling, dream or no dream, that is the bottom line. If a hag would do it, let us have hags, especially if hags are cheaper. The ideology of serviceable disposability colonizes both the intimate and the public. And it is all quite calculated, all quite rationalized. This is perhaps connected to what Vico calls the *barbarism of reflection* (*barbarie della riflessione*). At the acme of a certain development of reflection, reason goes mad and begins to waste its substance. Thus the aesthetics of advertising is both intimate and public—the image is the *ancilla*, the call girl of serviceable disposability where everything is a means and nothing an end, and because nothing is an end the means is a means also to nothing. The technological production of the image allows this process of coming to nothing to go viral. The void at the heart of the image spreads with the contagion of a virus. Mutation in the host becomes the place of "creation." The Internet offers the cybernetic intimacy of a virtual between. The image is sold and sold again, and what counts is the cash value of images rather than ideas (*pace* William James). The postmodern hyper-self-consciousness, seeming to be in revolt against such cash values, opens another avenue of exploitation of images without any originals, of endless mimicry that is the mimicry of mimicry . . . The superior irony of post-self-consciousness, because it stands for nothing, is not released from the mimicry of mimicry but adds its own knowing touch of the self-mockery of the insider who has seen through it all. It has seen through its nothingness, seen it through to nothingness, seen through itself as nothing, with the exception of itself, as the final joke of the one who is still sitting on the branch of itself that has just now been sawn off. Why do I think of Wile E. Coyote hanging in the air in the timeless moment of realization, the instant just prior to the plunge? (In one series of cartoons

Wile E. Coyote was styled as "supergenius"—with the posh upper-class accent of the voice provided by Mel Blanc.)

Art and the Singular Universal

Aristotle and Plato are often set in opposition on this issue of the universal, and Aristotle is to be honored for his insight that poetry is more universal than history, insofar as this can be seen as pointing toward the intimate universal in the singularity of the artwork. It has been commonplace to invoke a contrast of biology and mathematics in the respective paradigms of thinking in Aristotle and Plato. There is something to this, but we need not turn it into an opposition, as my reflection on *technē* and finesse above indicates. Likewise, an interpretation of Aristotle's immanently unfolding universal can be seen as answering to the problem of separation (*chorismos*) in one strand of Plato. One strand, if we take due note of the role the beautiful can play in communicating the intimate universal. It is a question as to whether the separation is also to be defended in respect of the transcendence of the original, transcendence in one respect that we risk dishonoring if our sense of the immanent is not also an acknowledgment of the abiding mystery of the communicating universal, even in its incarnate intimacy. That mystery need not be described in the language of dualistic opposition, or yet in terms of a dialectical immanence that collapses the difference of transcendence. The between-being of the beautiful, in the richness of immanent incarnation, communicates the abiding mystery but in no way dispels it. We come to love it all the more deeply, come to love the incognito love that has communicated itself in the gift of beauty.

One can understand here why the art of the intimate universal is not to be understood in terms of allegory. The work is not an illustration of meaning that is elsewhere. And this even though there may be a concrete sensuous embodiment of an elsewhere. Allegory tends to think of the meaning as a universal that exists outside of its incarnations—a nonincarnated transcendence. Once we have grasped this, the incarnation is redundant, and we can surpass it in the direction of a more purely abstract, or even spiritual, meaning. One need not object to a feeling for the outside, but one does object when the outside is portrayed in such extrinsic terms. One objects also to the reaction to extrinsic terms that is formulated

through a kind of pantheism of the immanent universal[20]—this too is not quite the intimate universal. It is neither the extrinsic universal of allegory nor the immanent universal of self-expression. Allegory suggests that the universal can extrinsically be communicated in a multiplicity of incarnations. Is this the promise of a kind of plurivocal communication? It seems rather to portend a univocalizing of the plurivocity rather than a metaxological intermediation of it. For the incarnations quickly take on the character of (mere) means to the end of expressing this universal. They become instrumental to what is beyond themselves.

In truth the work is not just instrumental in that manner: not just a means to an end, it is an end in itself in one way, though not again as an entirely immanent self-circling whole. It incarnates a certain perfection in the respect not of an indefiniteness overcome by self-determination but as an overdeterminacy—a superfluity, a too muchness, a fullness more than full, a pluperfection. It is a brimming happening that exceeds the brim. Beyond self-containment ending in itself, it is overfull as the brimming over the boundary of itself. It is of the nature of agapeic fullness, of overfullness, rather than the self-containment of the pantheistic universal that pivots away from any reference beyond itself. The intimacy does point beyond itself but in no extrinsic way because the universal it communicates itself is not an extrinsic idea but is the word of communication that has come to incarnation in the aesthetics of happening. Every artwork as communication of the intimate universal may allow exploitation in terms of a quasi-allegorical reference, but this is primarily because the transcendence as other is in the brimming over of every boundary of finite containment. Nevertheless, the brimming over calls on us to deny both dualistic opposition and dialectical subsumption, and to hold to the *metaxu* as the field of communication where the passing into intimacy of the universal is matched by the surpassing of the intimacy toward the universal. The duality of intimacy and universality is not a division but a doubleness that emerges in the relating field of communication itself: singularity and communication, self-relation and relativity to the other, and the two in all metaxological happening in the aesthetic ethos as the incarnate field of communication. The artwork is a wording of the between, an aesthetic wording of the between—metaxological in the literal sense of an aesthetic logos of the *metaxu*.

Can one connect the concern with abstraction in art with the intimate universal? On the surface, we seem to be dealing with the abstract universal,

as the term itself indicates. Yet abstraction might still carry a charge of intimacy, sometimes even in a deeply esoteric sense. I am thinking of the explorations of Mondrian, for instance, his engagements with theosophy and his spiritual odyssey in terms of purifying the form. We rightly think of abstract art as succeeding romantic art, wherein the centering on self in its sometimes formless intimacy could verge on the self-centered without the relief, or release, of the other than self: intimacy without the universal. Abstract art was a catharsis of self-centered art. There is a respect in which the vogue for abstraction can be connected with the artist seeking to be nothing, to be as nothing, to be a space of porosity through whose art the purer form is communicated. Loss of the object in its ordinary givenness is also a purgation. Further again, the abstraction, in a quasi-Platonic way, might be seen as an exceeding of that daily object given in the world of *doxa*: the *eidos* beyond these particulars. At the same time, this "being as nothing" is reactive to the excessive subjectivity we find in some forms of romanticism. The purer universal aids in our retracting from that overreaching of romantic subjectivity. There is a destitution with respect to representation but also with respect to overreaching (romantic) subjectivity. See this as an artistic Platonism where the idea, the pure form, presented through the minimalist sensuous form, is paramount in importance. In abstraction we are on guard lest the excess of the sensuous pollute the purity of the form as such. Obviously, this raises questions about the purity of form as such and whether the sensuous is at all needed.

In one respect, the way of abstraction is a kind of confirmation of Hegel—it seems that it is the idea that counts, the sensuous expression is less and less important. The retraction of the formal impulse into its own autonomous purity, this I would not identify with the intimate universal. I would see a tendency that allows the spirit of the geometrical to intrude. For the intimate one must have the *esprit de finesse*. Without finesse one has (geometrical) form, hence a kind of universality, but no intimacy. The most impressive abstract works do not, in fact, lack finesse and a feel for the intimate. Without the sensuous the form does not communicate this. On the contrary, it risks a kind of feeble, or enfeebled, intimacy, and before long the form ceases to engage us. If we look at conceptual art, one wonders if this has not happened. It is the idea that counts. In museum displays certain works of conceptual art exhibit little cards of explanation, and once one reads the card one says, "Aha now I see!"—and one passes on. But of course, one has understood the idea and one does not see at all.

One does not see it there in the sensuous work itself, one is not arrested to pause in prolonged perceiving. One is seeing the abstract universal, not seeing the intimate universal in this here singular work now before one for beholding. The concept matters, not the incarnation. This is a token that Hegel is not entirely wrong. When the sensuous in its signing of the overdeterminate ceases to be the focus of arrested attending, we pass by the abstract universal, and there is no deep sensuous intimacy. By contrast with a movement like expressionism, the issue is that of subjectivity, perhaps excessive subjectivity. One wonders if there is not enough deepening of the intimate porosity, not enough of the artist and his work as sites of the poverty of the intimate universal. Pop: the intimacy of the banal. Warhol does communicate something of this—and also something of the intimacy of the boring, itself a bored intimacy with the banal and hence finally, one worries, an enfeeblement of the intimate universal. Its banalization happens in the endless reproduction of the same.[21]

Facing the Music and the Intimate Universal

The face is the aesthetic focus that, like the hearth of a home, singularly incarnates the intimate universal. The portrait is its redoubled aesthetic body. Focusing and being the focus, again like the hearth, the face gathers communication. The most intimate soul communicates in the wording face, especially the eyes, but the communication of the eyes opens itself to something more universal, even as it also incarnates the promise of more universal communication. There is danger with the eyes. Their looks can kill, as Sartre reminds us. Their tenderness can melt hard hearts, as lovers intimately know. There is a warning: do not bore into the eyes, for there is an absolute intimacy of the soul that is not to be violated, and intrusive looking is a violation of the intimacy. When eyes are hard or cold, they try to petrify the fluid pool of the soul's porosity. Eyes are an aesthetic incarnation of the porosity—pools of clearest communication and at the same time rounds of absolute darkness. Harden them and the porosity is crusted over for aggression or protection. One can lie with the eyes, mislead with a look. An eye twinkles: How does this glimmer happen, what glint of soul sparkles? From where does the glimmer come? What intimacy appears in them, and so differently? What moves in them, what vanishes in them? They are mystery.

How difficult to think about a face without the eyes. There are masks, sightless faces, and they disturb us. A mask without eyes is something unsettling, something uncanny. The eyes are what we recognize, we home in on them, even in an altered or masked visage. We are drawn first to the eyes, or avert our own gaze from them. The gaze that objectifies freezes over the porosity, the look of tender love softens that gaze and brings the porosity there to the surface. Think of the pathos of grieving eyes in the man of the sorrowful countenance.[22] The mystery of the face is revealed in a field of communication. To have a face is to face others and to be faced. We surface in the face, though the face can also be defaced. If we lose face, we can be intimately defaced. The appeal of the face is a threshold of the aesthetic, the place of permeable passage to the religious and the ethical. (Levinas impressively appeals to us to face this.)[23]

Once again the singular face is not autistic, as we see when the portrait painter offers us the aesthetic vision of a whole world present in this one countenance. There is self-knowledge of a deeply intimate character, intimacy once again with universal appeal, say, in the self-portraits of the great Rembrandt from all the stages of his life. There is something of the agapeic in such painting. There is no assault on the figure or the face. It is love engaged and yet allowing the true space of love. What again to make of the beautiful violence in the work of Francis Bacon, for instance,[24] where the face is turned into the horror of a howl? How to present what often causes disgust and hatred to surface? How to paint the monster? How to paint the monster with love? Only the agapeic hand could do it. If the face is a site of beauty, it is also a site of horror. The painter of the portrait must also be a kind of creative nothing. There are painters whom one senses fall sometimes into the business of assaulting their subjects. Some of the work of Picasso is like that ("a painting is a sum of destructions"), some work of Lucien Freud, perhaps Francis Bacon too. Perhaps we should say: the horror of the intimate is brought out, made to surface, in the aesthetic assault on the face.[25] There can be both horror and intimacy in the face, intimacy in the recoil from horror. The horrifying other is my intimate: I am brother of the monster; I myself am the monster. Sometimes with Bacon's work one thinks of him as seeking to paint the intimate in the monster—the monstrous intimacy—the dark origin made flesh.[26] Not the word but the howl made flesh. The howl is the spastic convulsion of the porosity. Does the howl come out of the contortion of the *conatus*? One

more time we hear Lear: howl, howl, howl, howl. The howls of the dead are sometimes wiser than the sweet songs of the living.

The face is the word made flesh, most striking when the being words itself. A mouth can breathe, can bite, can kiss, can devour, can smile, can sneer, can sing, can sigh as a lover's sigh. Its equivocity is overdeterminate. The wording of a face metamorphoses how we see the beauty of a face. Vico: the first wording of our being is singing. Music is not a howl, though music can howl (I think of Mozart's *Requiem* in some parts of the "*Rex tremendae*" . . .). Music, the wording that is singing, is very revealing for and of the intimate universal. Music, as has often been noted, is "imageless." There is nothing fixed there, nothing frozen. It comes closer to pure passage, the feel of transition in the energy of affirming life—energy in passing resounding even in sorrow, and horror, and suffering. Music calls to the porosity of the listening, attending soul.[27] When Leibniz refers to music and arithmetic, the reference to mathematics indicates the implication of the universal. But the joy in music, the enjoyment, brings back the intimacy—not only that mystical joy of the Pythagoreans in number and harmony and in the music of the spheres, but also the intimate appreciation of the elegance of mathematical form. There is the shimmering resonance of something more in form that is not a neutral form.[28]

Schopenhauer speaks of music as the direct copy of the will itself, all the other arts are concerned with the Platonic idea. I would not speak quite thus of will, for this is too redolent of the *conatus essendi*, but rather of the *passio essendi* and the porosity out of which more determining and self-determining will can emerge. But to speak with Schopenhauer, one might say that the will itself is not a form, it is prior to form, on the other side of form. But it forms itself, it objectifies itself in Ideas (again to speak with Schopenhauer). Out of the dark intimacy of the Schopenhauerian will comes the universality of the Platonic Idea: a universal *ante rem* rather than *post rem*—this latter is a mere abstract generality rather than the more original, primordial universal which is the Idea and with which the true artist in his or her genius is freshly intimate. There is a tension of form and formlessness. If we stress the fixed form we tend in the direction of more mimetic views (Pythagoreanism and Platonism). If we stress the formlessness, or process of forming, we come closer to a kind of creativity (Nietzsche). We cannot stay with the mathematical form alone to do justice to the resonant shimmer of the form, or to do justice to the erotics of our intimate love of the resonating, shimmering of form as such.

In another formulation, one might see Schopenhauer's will-lessness that he claims art offers us as a way of trying to point to *the purged porosity*. Art releases from the will as an *eros turannos*. I would not give the same explanation as Schopenhauer does. This is how I would put it. Prior to the *conatus essendi* there is the *passio essendi*, and prior to both there is the porosity. And while *conatus* lends itself to the language of will, the *passio essendi* and *porosity* are not at all to be described in the language of Schopenhauer's Will. This latter is too much a version of *eros turannos*. He does not see the *poros* and *penia* of eros in a nuanced enough way. Schopenhauer's description of the experience is not entirely wrong, but the explanation is not right, and indeed follows from the defect of his metaphysics of the Will, modeled in origin on the *eros turannos*. But to think that the porosity of the origin would open one to a different sense of the origin—that is to say, as more agapeic in giving the porosity and the endowed *conatus essendi*, itself born with the *passio essendi*, as redolent of the primal gift of being at all. The view of things here is also entirely other to the pessimism of "Better not to be" and the evil of being. The issue of the purged porosity also turns up in the interpretation of the tragic catharsis that again is misunderstood by Schopenhauer, and I think Nietzsche also (and here too the legacy of Schopenhauer still carries on).[29]

More generally, in the wording that song first is, there is something prior to the dianoetics of form—there is the elemental energy of forming, of transcending—there is transit and transience. Music is the "form" (forming) of transience (Susanne Langer speaks of the image of virtual time.)[30] In the *Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* Nietzsche is not wrong to hint that the Dionysian is perhaps more primal than the Apollonian (later this seems more unambiguous). Put otherwise: Drop down below the form, beyond fixed form to an emerging energy that voices itself, that sings itself; if one does not dip down, or allow oneself to enter again these flowing waters, one will not be ready for what against expectation communicates itself ; the daring of entering the flow means the risk of dissolution. Music as form that is forming and formless, as intimate and yet more than itself, as universal speaking to all, even those who resist. It reminds one of the graced porosity of true prayer—one is taken by the music. It is not a matter of rational self-determination. The *passio essendi* overtakes the *conatus essendi* that otherwise takes over, and returns the *conatus* to the nativity at its center—a being "born with," again and again. Song is the sound of being birthed as communication, as being voiced.

Being voiced is not in the empty air above the happening, but it is as the air of song that is worded beyond itself by the happening as it communicates itself. Song is self-communication yes, but in the selving there is more than self communicated. And hence in the *passio* of the music there is more than I or you, for again it is the music that envelops us, comes from below up, from above down, comes from no particular side and from every side. One is invaded and one is caressed. One is carried away and yet, as in the surrender of love, one is peacefully at home with oneself and the flow.

The Intimate Universal and the Aesthetic Field of Communicability: With a Bow to Kant

I return to the thoughts with which I opened. Envisage the reader reading a poem, see the beholder before a painting, attend to a listener paying heed to a song. These all require acts of concentration, attention, and reception that are deeply intimate, as if one were alone in a virgin relation to something communicating itself. But in aesthetic intermediation with poem or painting or song, one is potentially with all readers, all beholders, all listeners. There is something about the poem or painting or song that offers itself to all. There is the intimate solitude but because it is offered to all, and because of what is offered to all, there is aesthetic communication, there is something of the spread of the universal about it all. The artwork places us in an aesthetic space of communication where the offer of the intimate universal is made available. I see the creation of the artist as emerging out of its own availability to the sourcing powers, and making itself available to the secret sources of the communication. There is an agapeics in the creative receiving and in the communication of the offer, now offered again to the reader, beholder, or listener. The agapeics of communication are offered in the intimate universal. There is the "more"—the "more" coming to the artist, the "more" communicated to the receiver, the augmentation of the "more" the more the communication finds its way to unnumbered others, many in a solitude or a silent expectancy. The agapeics constitutes an aesthetic field of communication. The field of communicability possibilizes communication in the receiving and offering of the intimate universal between selves and others. The augmentation of the "more" in offered communication is the miraculous

multiplication of relation(s) in the intimate universal. It is itself a moving in and through the intimate universal that is itself intimate and universal. It is communication from the full to the full, not from the lacking to the full. Like the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes, there is more after the meal than before. This is a feast that in our taking it in does not destroy what is given but gives rises to more—beyond every determinate satisfaction.[31]

Kant's reflections on aesthetic judgment are helpful for offering pointers to our theme. I find *suggestiveness* in Kant with relation to art and the intimate universal. Thus there is suggestiveness concerning intimacy in relation to *taste*. There is something intimate about taste. No one else can taste for one: it is singularly idiotic. Is there any universality, and what might this be at all? I think in Kant's case we do well to remember the background of a transition from an *aristocratic* culture of taste to a more *republican* one: the former is more elite, the latter more egalitarian. But does not taste entail finesse, hence something more elite? Does not mass taste seem to be a contradiction in terms? Our question: Might the intimate universal prove compatible with mass taste? Is there a democratic access to the universal in an intimate and elemental sense of which art communicates? After all, did not *the groundlings* delight in the dramas of Shakespeare? Or was it all just caviar for the general? To Kant: it seems that the judgment of sensation is connected with taste, while the judgment of logic is concerned with the universal. But then there is Kant's claim about a *subjective universality* that seems not to fit into this ordinary binary difference. It seems to unite what we normally tend to set apart or even oppose. This subjective universal is and is not what I am calling the intimate universal. One notes that Kant's primary interest is in *judgment*; it is not the (beautiful) thing itself, it is not what communicates itself with ontological or metaphysical weight. His whole approach is not from the side of the transcendent object but from the side of the "subject." His interest is in representation, not in the being of the thing, the being of the beautiful. This is not the intimate universal that bears on something that is neither subjective nor objective. The intimate universal has to do with the ontological intermedium of the *metaxu* in its overdeterminacy.[32]

Consider also Kant's distinction of the reflective and determinative judgment: in the latter we apply the universal to the particular, in the former the particular is given and we are given the impulse to seek the universal. In reflective judgment there is a particular that sets us in search

of the universal that is to be attributed to all. It is important that Kant here in relation to communicability invokes the *sensus communis*. I find this suggestive about our being in preconceptual community, or perhaps transconceptual community, with what is other to us. The Kantian "being with" is thought from the side of our subjectivity, not in terms of the intermedium of being—not in terms of a community of *being*, not in terms of an *intimacy* of being. Notions like the genius do suggest the intimate—the intimacy of dark origins, and this is important, even if it makes Kant squirm. There is also the important suggestiveness of Kant's remarks about the aesthetic ideas—these also send us in search of the universal. They suggest an impulse of transcending that is not outside the intimate universal. But again the Kantian way of putting it is not quite the way we go here: the universal is so transcendentalized that it has nothing to do with the *being* of the thing—and anyway the particular in reflective judgment seems to be primarily a pointer away, not the intimate singularization of the universal. There is a pointing beyond in this singularization, but the universal is intimate in it in a manner not to be allegorical or symbolical of an elsewhere rational idea.

Put more soberly, we might draw on Kant's philosophy of aesthetic communicability as helping to throw light on art and the intimate universal. For Kant the aesthetic judgment of taste deals with a formal subjective universal that yet is communicable and asks communication and imputation. We can see the intimacy in the subjective side, and the universal in the communicability, or at least the attributability of the judgment to all.[33] While much here is suggestive, Kant does not really get to the intimate universal. There is too much of the subjective. An entire scheme of subjective versus objective governs his way of thinking. The intimacy that is neither one nor the other is not clearly in focus. The same frame governs Kant's thought of the aesthetic universal. For Kant this is an imputed (or to-be-attributed) universality. The ontological purchase is not strong. By contrast, the intimate universal is such that we participate in it, such that enabling communication is called forth. This sourcing of communication and communicability is not unlike Kant's imputable universal. Nevertheless, there is a real ontological enabling power at work with the intimate universal. It is not a matter of our imputing to all a judgment. The intimate universal is already a participation in a community that sources any of our imputations. The intimate universal is ontological, not subjective—and though it is at work in the subject, the beauty of the

object is also connected to it. As neither subjective nor objective, as both subjective and objective, beauty is elusive as communicating the overdeterminate. We are drawn to the thing itself, so to say. But our "being with" in the mode of the aesthetic does not ask an "either-or" between intimacy and universality. Kant's view clearly is not mimetic, but it is not self-creation either (though genius entails a necessary recourse to originality). Universality as a subjective universality is not intended with the ontological intimacy at issue—at issue relative to our creative engagement with and participation in the process, at issue relative to what comes to shine in the given aesthetic happening of nature, at issue relative to what comes to shine in the artwork that is reborn as imaginative articulation from our participation in the intimate universal.

Kant's notion of *aesthetic ideas* is important. These aesthetic ideas are representations of ideas, for Kant, and the word "idea" suggests something ultimate and unconditional. It is like the Platonic idea, now categorized as transcendental rather than transcendent. The aesthetic idea draws us into the search for what lies beyond fixation in terms of determinate representation and in representations that yet evoke indeterminate thought or mindfulness. We have a singularity as determinate but yet as also concretizing something "more," as always drawing us beyond. If they concretize in themselves something more, I would say this is not as lacking determination but as overdeterminate. Putting it in a way Kant does not, aesthetic ideas cannot be yoked to a logic of determinacy on the one side or to self-determination on the other, not to fixed objectivity or autonomous subjectivity; yet they have something of the otherness of the former and the intimacy of the latter—but all in the dimension of what exceeds determination and self-determination: the overdeterminate.

Kant connects aesthetic ideas with initiating a kind of striving after a maximum—another important suggestion. I wonder if in this striving there is perhaps too much of the *conatus essendi*, and not enough of the *passio essendi* and *porosity*. The latter would not be made easily compatible with Kant's dominant stress on autonomy. This stress is certainly softened in his aesthetic reflections. Is it "softened" sufficiently in the direction of something that is more primal than self-determination and determinability? I don't think so. In truth, the intimate universal would entail an entire revision of the primacy Kant gives to autonomy. I have written elsewhere about how something of this is reflected in relation to his characteristic attitudes to music, as well as to the terror of genius. Genius is a genuine

locus of the intimate universal. Genius is not to be understood in terms of either mimesis or creativity. There is a true tie with inspiring mania, as being given and surging in the porosity of the intimate depths, depth of our eros. Genius is the inspired locus intimate to selving that is opened to the originality of nature as other to every determinable object and other to our self-determination. There is a dipping into the well below the ground of the cave, but the spring of inspiration flows in that holy grotto, and even in the darkness that the light of heaven shines. Even in Hades the divine is. Kant's terror at this is not only because its excess to natural mechanism and moral self-determination threatens to be unruly but because it constitutes our ontological condition as a between whose boundaries are porous—on the lower side the terror, even horror, of the dark origin, on the higher side the rapture of the holy. There are no final limits we can make determinate. This threatened Kant with the sweats, brought him to a stop on his midday walks, and he stood aside seeking shelter and in refusal of the porosity.[34]

I find Kant's proposal about purposiveness without (definite) purpose to be relevant. I would rewrite this as overdeterminate purposiveness: not this or that determinate purpose, and not self-determining purposing either (morality). Purposiveness here means an intimate participation in a more universal process whose meaning is not fully evident to us, and yet we sense that there is significance at work that exceeds our efforts at determinability and self-determination. There is something of intimation, albeit mysterious in meaning, at work in such overdeterminate purposiveness. It is more than any definite why or purpose, such that at one level it appears purposeless. This is a significant purposelessness and hence not purposeless in the nihilistic sense but quite the opposite. It gives a sign, not of a coming to nothing, a pointlessness, but of a transpurposive coming to something whose point exceeds determination and self-determination.

When Kant stresses the *sensus communis* we find the idea of communicability and this too is not unrelated to the intimate universal. We are made to think of a sense of being in a space of commonality that fosters and is fostered by aesthetic education. While the universality of communication cannot be guaranteed by theoretical generality, this is not the point since it invokes all the finesse of the human, as one might put it. At stake is not a geometrical universal but a universal of finesse, a commonality that fosters the spirit of finesse. This is a spirit of finesse also in which boundaries become porous and the aesthetic and the ethical cannot be entirely

quarantined from each other. I would add the religious to this, since the religious too is participation in the intimate universal—perhaps most primally. Philosophy and indeed political life cannot be disjoined from this participation. Art is an appeal. Art's participation in the intimate universal is a many-voiced communication on thresholds of the ultimate in porosity.

The Intimate Universal and Art's Address: With a Bow to Hegel

Hegel is getting at something of this essential communicability when he speaks of the artwork as an *address*.[35] Addressed to another, it shows itself as made by spirit and for spirit. The other addressed is included in the selving of the artist. The aesthetic address is already beyond the subject-object divide. I would say it is in a between that is neither one nor the other, neither of selving nor othering. Hegel's model of the spirit is one in which the power of selving dialectically to include the other is most to the fore. By contrast, I would say the giving and receiving between the two in the between are such as to be irreducible to an inclusive selving, whether called absolute spirit or not, or even divine intersubjectivity. For even the latter is modeled on the inclusive selving of the absolute that includes its own other within itself. Not coincidentally, Hegel reduces creation to a representation that is misled about the otherness of the issue of creation, thinking this to be irreducibly other, when for Hegel in truth, the entire "creation" of God is a matter of divine *self-determination*. And yet, strikingly, he also describes the artwork as *a thousand-eyed Argos*.[36] We are looked at, as well as looking. But the many eyes are not well described in the Cyclops's eye of the one *Geist*, if it is the one and only *Geist*. If Trinitarianism could be understood differently in terms of the agapeics of communication, this would be a move in the right direction. It would also allow one to venture that there is a plurivocal paganism not hostile to the aesthetic showing of the intimate universal. And this too is not necessarily hostile to a metaxological monotheism of the sacred source. This monotheism is not at all a monism of the whole. Quite to the contrary, the plurivocal paganism in a many-tongued way aesthetically communicates of the intimate universal in the between. There is something to the sacred source beyond the between but it gives the intimate universal and appeals in and through it. This is the agapeic truth of monotheism, calling to mind the creative God beyond the whole, not a monism of the one whole,

immanently self-determining alone. The artwork incarnates aesthetically the communication of created being as metaxological.

Is the intimate universal signaled in the old adage of Terence, approvingly quoted by Hegel: *Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto*?[37] But to take this as justification for a humanism that excludes reference to the transhuman is not called for. The human is itself too much for itself—being both inhuman and transhuman, being a between always porous to what is beyond itself in terms of its own inhumanity or its exceeding itself into the transhuman. The intimacy of humanity with itself cannot be confined to a well-defined or self-determining humanity. Humanity is what it is as exceeding itself and going above, or as going below or under itself into the alien to itself. Nothing human is alien to the human except humanity's own alienness. We carry the mark of our own inward otherness, as well as the image of a sacred otherness not our own—intimately. Art has to be in communication with this, that is to say, with the monstrous as well as the divine. For monsters too communicate of the sacred powers.

Hegelian humanism raises for us a question on this score. I put the point in relation to the great ancient tragedy of *Oedipus Turannos.* Oedipus is celebrated for solving the riddle of the sphinx, and Hegel celebrates his answer: the human being. This answer for Hegel speaks of entry into a new configuration of the spirit wherein the human being comes into its own. But does it quite come into its own, in the old story? Oedipus offers the solution to the riddle of the Sphinx, (the human being), and in one sense seems to be the measure of the problem. But in "solving" this one perplexity, he generates further, intractable perplexity in a hyperbolic dimension. The answer to the monster in terms of humanity is implicated in monsters that cannot be answered in terms of humanity alone. Remember then the intimacy of Oedipus in his participation in monstrous crimes against nature. Parricide and incest: unnatural crimes, but charged with monstrous intimacy in a hyperbolic dimension beyond the measure of humanistic self-determination. Man is the measure of other things but not the measure of himself. Something immeasurable comes to light—and in man's own intimate immanence. And this has everything to do with the sacred, the tragedy of the sacred. *Humani nihil a me alienum puto*—but the alien to the human is intimate to the human. To be human I have to be intimate with the alien, without reducing the alien to myself. This means a terrible dwelling with the terrible in the intimate universal. This is why one of the words describing the tragic "emotion" (*pathos*) is *phobos*:

dread, horror (not fear). This is a clue also to the other word, *eleos*: compassion, pity. Before the tragic aesthetics of the monstrous there is an agapeics before the horror, in and through the horror, and perhaps beyond it. Think anew of the intimate, skin-crawling horror of Lear's howl. What *eleos* would be on a par with it? None according to the measure of humanistic self-determination, I would say.

So one cannot agree quite with Hegel when he concurs with this view: *Humanus heisst der heilige* (Humanity is now the holy).[38] Not that there is nothing holy about the human. This is just the point. There is something holy but this cannot be adequately interpreted in a humanistic, postreligious sense. It is just the inseparability of the human and the sacred in the intimate universal that is at issue with art also. When art loses this and is chirpy about its secularization, it loses its ultimate seriousness and power. (Do not say the holy does not know horror. Pray this psalm, sing it: *De profundis ad te Domini clamavi*—howl for help from hell.) The holy exceeds the human, and while the excess can be at work in the human, it is not determinable in our self-determination. This is shattered. It is crucified. Is this too a dimension of the more recent antihumanisms—disgust with the smugness of humanity at home with itself—leading to a kind of atheistic Golgotha of the human, after the death of God? The human face and the human figure lose their holiness. They are desecrated. There is a counterfeit holiness that should be lost—the monster in the face shows something of the dark excess. (Recall remarks above about Francis Bacon.) But, of course, the deconstruction of the falsely holy can be itself done in the spirit of the unholy, and then it is less a release from the unholy than its exacerbation. Instead of the desecration of the face, we need to be purged of the unholy, and be prepared for a new consecration. This means the recovery of the true beauty of the human face, the human figure. This cannot be humanistic simply. Attending to the intimate universal we are pointed in this direction of reaffirming the beautiful form of the face in a new radiance, at once intimate and beyond.[39]

The Intimate Universal and the Otherness of Being: On Beauty and Sublimity

What of the intimacy from the side of the otherness of being itself? The beautiful and the sublime tell us something, not in the transcendental

sense of Kant, but in the older transcendental sense that has to do with being as such. This is not an "as if" beauty or sublimity, but it is in one sense hypercategorial (beyond all categories) and in another sense radically immanent. Hypercategorial and radically immanent—one might think of this as participant in the intimate universal. Form in its splendor is to the fore in beauty, shining thus with the sign of universality, but attending to the strange intimacy. There before one it is, drawing out one's erotic attraction. What is splendor? Above and about the form hovers or shimmers an elusive intimacy. Splendor is the halo of the intimate universal. What shimmers transports us in the particular beyond the particular, though even we cannot give a fully objective account of what has been given to us in being struck by beauty. What is this strike? It is being stunned by agapeic astonishment and being called out beyond oneself. As with agapeic astonishment, this ontological intimacy cannot be merely subjective or indeed objective. Kant does not quite get this, since his terms are very much the subjective and the objective. He is undoubtedly too subjective on the one side, while on the other side, his sense of the universal reflects the neutral homogeneity of the rationalist, now transposed into transcendental form. When he talks of the reflective judgment seeking the universal, he might be reinterpreted as attending to our being called out (*to kalon*) beyond ourselves by the eros for the beautiful. We are transported in the particular beyond the particular. Nevertheless, a dyadic scheme of particular and universal such as governs his thinking is not enough to address the field of the happening of beauty in the intimate universal. Beauty is a between happening in one sense, but in another sense there is no between separating the universal and particular in that the beautiful between is (metaxologically) the intimate universal.

One might think that sublimity will bring us back to this sense of intimate otherness. It does but in the shattering of form proportionate to our measure.[40] (This is one reason why it exceeds the terms of postreligious humanism.) Something exceeds that form of universality. It is intimate since it strikes through to our own deepest intimacy with a kind of violent formlessness. There is a more hyperbolic sense of the universal in its otherness, communicated in the breakdown of the proportionate universal. The intimate universal is in this breaking in; more, there is a breaking down, and hence a breaking through and a breaking beyond, and this in no subjective, or objective, sense. Kant tilts the whole thing in the wrong direction by speaking of the sublime as a subreption. A subreption

is an attribution to the object of what belongs to the subject. This line of thought might suggest an aesthetics of self-creation, or at least one of a kind of projective self-activity. For now here there is nothing sublime about the thing itself. We are the sublime and in Kant it is our moral destiny as supersensible that is sublime. The breakdown is not allowed to be a more exceeding breakthrough. It occasions the reconfirmation of moral self-determination. Evaded here is the rupturing side of the intimate universal that is transmoral. Horrifyingly and sublimely there is the issue of curse and blessing, bordering on the terrible and the sacred.

The side of the universal that exceeds terrifies us, but this terror speaks to the intimacy of being. The sublime causes us to be newly exposed—as skin rubbed raw is exposed, and more intimately than surface skin. The soul is flayed and feels its dreadful exposure to terrible otherness that yet is awesome and brings to mind, in the flesh, the sacred. Our bones are as water and melt within us, and in the melting, the terror of the original porosity becomes an abyss in which the exposed heart cries out *de profundis*. The sublime makes us newly incapable of closing ourselves into circles of selving. It newly opens the clogged porosity. This is a purging that is terrifying. This is also the renaissance of the religious porosity.

I take William Turner as instructive. Turner, and so much of his work, is sublime. We see the play of the determinate and the indeterminate. There is coming to form, but it is not just the form but the fluidity and the dynamism of emergence—this is not static form. And even in the overpowering appearing there is something intimate—there is something more than us, something in us, something in rapport with us. Some paintings might seem to prefigure modern abstraction—and this is not entirely untrue—but it is not abstraction as abstract form. Less is more—the destitute slash is the sign of a plenitude—the less is the more. This is one of the reasons I would call the appearing the overdeterminate and not the indeterminate.

A painting was sent to New York to a collector, Mr. Lenox: *Fingal's Cave in Scotland*. Mr. Lenox's response: it is rather "indistinct." Turner's riposte to this: "You should tell Mr. Lenox that indistinctness is my forte." Indistinctness is perhaps not quite the right word to describe the overdeterminate but the point is (well) made: too much in less than fixed form and the fixed representation of fixed form. There is more in less when one is imaging the movement of forming and coming to form, imaging it as emerging and in the turmoil of its energy, its energization. This is not the feeble universality of abstraction but the robust sublimity of the intimate universal.

Of course, there is the sense of "abstraction" but what flashes in the abstraction is not abstract—there are always traces of the fixed world in the fixing and unfixing. There is always something of a secret sign of mimetic reference in giving a contrast between stability and lability. There is partaking of the original energy in an original image, or an imagistic origination that itself imaginatively participates in the original, and this is neither imitation nor self-creation. The more fixed forms might be scenes for the play of light, of light and darkness, for the pure play of appearance as appearance in aesthetic form. But the appearance of the intimate universal—something of which we see in the artistic practice of Turner—means going up to the face of the happening. If there is a side of painting that shows being recollected in tranquillity, there is also a side forged furiously in the turmoil of the happening.

In Turner's case we think of him painting the *Burning of the House of Commons (1834)* directly on the riverbank; he is catching the conflagration as it flamed and his painting hand catches fire. He traveled to the mountains and the sea and his engagement was not just to take a "snapshot" to be reworked. Intimately participating in the happening, its energy is let pass into the intimacy of the body, the painting hand. The hand is the aesthetic mindfulness of the painting body but the body is in the happening, not outside it. This is like the Romantics but there is something that touches universality in the intimacy. There is an escape from precious subjectivity, and a release from fixated objectivity. One might speak of a lifelong act of fidelity on his part to the happening of aesthetic appearing. This is the saturated moment that is as evanescent as it is there before us, full to the brim of itself and yet elusive and vanishing and empty of itself. The witness: aesthetic fidelity to aesthetic happening as happening—to appearing as the sensuous between of the intimate universal. The point is not quite to fix in a definite form, not definition—but to seek beyond definition in definition, beyond form in fixed form. This is defining on the boundary (*finis*): between the determinate and the indeterminate but imaging the overdeterminate. The sacredness of the light: "The sun is God,"[41] reportedly Turner's last words when he died in December 1851—just before the winter solstice.[42]

On the Intimate Universal and Politicizing the Sublime

That the beautiful and the sublime are intimately connected with the field of communicability was realized by Burke. They have a bearing on the

passions that belong to self-preservation, the passions that belong to society, whether of the sexes or in a more general sense. Beauty is connected with social love and sympathy, as sublimity is with terror, pain, and self-preservation.[43] Relative to that field of communicability Burke was also prophetic about the monstrous. *Humani nihil a me alienum puto*, as we saw Hegel and Marx agree, but the monstrously alien is not alien to the human, as we suggested about Oedipus. The inhuman and the transhuman haunt the human as a between-being. We think the transhuman will come when the human is freed from "heteronomy," but it is the inhuman that comes as a changeling. Man is the measure of all things but not the measure of himself. Human power as the measure threatens to make itself measureless. One would be lord of the universal, yet the will to absolute sovereignty grows from the mustard seed of something intimately idiotic. This idiocy straddles the world in sublime politics. Human power is ominous. The omens are divine signs but also can be augurs of doom. Burke's prophetic sense was connected with the idiocy of the sublime: revolutionary politics, chanting the sacred song of liberty, equality, and fraternity, will let the monstrous erupt forth from its cave, the Minotaur stride out of its labyrinth and onto the streets. This form of absolutized human politics, with the rationalization of "armed doctrine," pulverizes all orders of height between the superior and the inferior, and delivers terror—without compassion. The revolutionary state rages against what is and shows itself as a counterfeit double of God, counterfeit double of the wrath of God—without mercy. Claiming to elevate itself sublimely, the human being terrorizes itself and levels rather than elevates itself.

The politicization of the sublime is of interest to some postmodern thinkers, for the aesthetic power of the sublime is put to political uses, some fraught with terrible ambiguity. The risk here is malforming the universal by aesthetic exploitation of the tender porosity of the intimate, and turning the universal in the direction of will to power, that of an ideology, that of a people, that of a race. (An example: Leni Riefenstahl's *The Triumph of the Will* is so powerful a film that its aesthetic seductions as political propaganda have to be disarmed by interdiction, the propaganda of liberal malediction.) The dreadful equivocity of the erotics of sovereignty produce then a tyranny of the political sublime. It is majestic, it is splendid, it is seductive, it is overawing. The triumph of the will to power thus serves a counterfeit double of God. The sublimity of erotic sovereignty, counterfeiting the sacred, imposes itself on the passive others

as the power that projects, as theirs, its own overweening universality. Through the sublime sovereign the secret sources of will to power of a people or race or ideological swarm are turned in the direction of an *eros turannos* that imposes its projected universality onto the passive, often receptive intimacy of its subjects. One thinks of the cult of the leader, the sublime one. There is the ersatz intimacy in the face that appears on a hundred thousand posters. The universality is not Hegel's thousand-eyed Argos but a fake mass universality. Behind it all, its effectiveness comes from the controlled projection of uncontrolled will to power. There is the technical construction of a propagandistic universal whose power is its emptiness. It is inspiration turned to the dark side, leaving an evacuation of the sacred intimacy. It constructs the counterfeit double of the sacred intimacy. Evacuation: since it does go back to the elemental power of the tyrant at the void center of the emptiness. We credit the One, but the credit is backed up by nothing. It is a matter of subliming nothing—sublimating nothingness. All of this does conform to the logic of Kant's subreption but in an insidious, potentially infernal version: we attribute to the leader as other what is of us—and what is of us is fear and trembling, or the intoxication of false worship—while what is of the other is the power to seduce, to overpower, to subdue, to enslave. In the religious sphere one might be reminded of the god of wrath and tyrannical determination but this is not the God of the intimate universal.

Hegel's critique of this god does not get us to either the sublime or the intimate universal. We find the dialectical reduction of transcendence as other explicitly in connection with Judaism as the *religion of sublimity*. The Jews have their absolutely patriarchal transcendence enjoining servility before the law. There is here a sublimity beyond the law, it is the sublimity of the agapeic, and its transcendence is not the dualistic opposite of the immanent. It cannot be done away with or sublated (meaning here the de-subreption that appropriates the otherness of the divine as such). Its sublimity opens the intimacy of our soul out and up to the superior. This opening places art on the boundary between the aesthetic and the sacred. On that boundary the intimate universal communicates in a superiority that lifts up the intimacy of selving to what is beyond itself. It is the shattering of falsely fixated selvings and communications, and through the terror in the breakdown of these it releases an exhilaration in the breaking through of the superior power. Where Hegel puts religious transcendence behind him, this sublime places us in exposure to

the intimate universal—the agapeics of transcendence itself—and not the erotics of self-transcendence only.

The difficulty is reflected also in Hegel's understanding of the Greeks and their *religion of beauty*, as he calls it. I mean this now with respect to the matter of the intimate, the political, and the transpolitical. Hegel's version of Antigone is tone deaf to the intimate universal, represented more by the familial piety of Antigone than the civic realism of Creon. While formally there is, in his view, an equivalence of Antigone and Creon, both being equally right, both being equally wrong, this equivalence is the prelude to the dialectical overcoming of their opposition and their reconciliation in downfall. But it is evident that the resolution is more on the side of Creon and his reasons of state than on the side of Antigone, whose sacrifice, so it seems, comes to nothing. There is finally a tilt to the publicness of the world-historical power over against the intimacy of familial and religious piety. Hegel's political universal of the state is historically more universal at the expense of the intimate, whether ahistorical or transhistorical. These are some of the reasons why his concrete universal is not the intimate universal. There is too much of the power of immanent erotic sovereignty and not enough of the secret mystery of agapeic service. On the side of the darkness of our conditions, there is not enough of the idiocy of the monstrous and too much of the worldly state as embodying (putatively) the resolved contradiction. The transpolitical aspect of the intimate universal is overcome by the political, and hence both the intimacy of the transpolitical and the challenge of the intimate universal to the political are turned away from their metaxological truth.[44]

It is relevant here to note that Wagner's aesthetic writings contain quite a bit that reminds one of both Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics* and his philosophy of history. Wagner is a most interesting case with regard to the connections of the elementally and musically intimate, the artwork, ersatz religiosity, and political vision. There is nothing merely aesthetic, in a Kantian or an aestheticist sense, about the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.[45] It embodies the dream of a sacred liturgy, consecrated now through the power of the artistic genius rather than the ecclesially ordained priest, and serving the awakening of the people in the face of their enslavement, their reawakening, their regeneration.[46] It is said that after the 1849 uprising in Dresden Wagner turned from revolutionary politics to artistic redemption, from Feuerbachian left-Hegelianism to Schopenhauerian salvation (of course, for Wagner the latter's "Buddhist Christianity" makes it easier

to supplant the Jewish Jesus and make way for a purified Aryan Savior). The turn is true in one sense, not true in another. The new artwork still is saving and has the quasi-sacred character of a holy drama or liturgical play. The entire work serves the salvation of the German people and in that regard is entirely political or steeped in political vision.[47] This will become perhaps even more explicit after Wagner's death and most evident in the collusion between Bayreuth and Nazi liturgy. Nietzsche the Wagnerian is evidence enough of this already, to those with ears to hear, in that masterwork of Wagnerian propaganda, *The Birth of Tragedy*. Tragedy is sacred drama, whose god is Dionysus, but as memorial of the Greeks it is a rallying cry to the Germans that they too must serve their proper god, at once artistic, religious, and political. Wagner believed that it was he who first understood the significance of the polarity of Dionysius and Apollo, not Nietzsche. He thought Nietzsche's book was just giving express form to *his* insights. Needless to say, Nietzsche in time came to chafe under the subservient position assigned to him by the Master, as Cosima called Wagner. Politics here obviously has little to do with the normal pragmatic huckstering of power and its needful compromises. It has to do with the will of the people, arising from below up, from the ground beneath our feet, a transcendence from the depth of the people, the depth of origin that gives the rule to the people through the favored one, the creative genius, the great artist. Heidegger displays something of the same heritage of the origin transcending from below up in his own propaganda on behalf of unconditional political commitment to the will of the Führer, who is now and will be the law of the German people.

I bring this in here, since I want to say that there can be a political exploitation of the intimate universal of art, an exploitation that must recognize art's participation in the intimate universal, if only now to take it over in such a way that the relations of art, the sacred (religious), and the political are knotted together. This is evident in *The Birth of Tragedy*, a very Wagnerian work, defending tragedy as a sacred art, but an art of the *Volk*, and hence also, if only mediately, a *political* work.[48] This latter aspect of the matter is often obscured, since we think of Wagner as undergoing a kind of *metanoia* with respect to his early political and revolutionary ambitions—active till the failed uprising in Dresden in 1849. His then purported conversion to aesthetic salvation with the help of Schopenhauer is all quite equivocal though. The point of Wagner's art was never aesthetic merely. It was always bound up with the destiny of

the *Volk* to overcome the oppressor, and slay the dragon with the coming of a Siegfried, a *warrior savior*. Thus even the later Wagner is also a revolutionary and to a degree he masks his (political) revolutionary aims behind the rhetoric of musical, operative aesthetics. The aesthetics is as much sacred as political in regard to the *Volk*. In this it purports to be just like the art of the ancient Greeks. The *Gesamtkunstwerk* is a festival work of sacred-communal significance. The *Festspielhaus* in Bayreuth is a temple for a cult, not a secular space for aesthetic imagination—and its success in that direction after the death of Wagner is witness enough to the sacred mission felt by his devotees (not just admirers), presided over for her time by the high priestess Cosima.

I know that the standard interpretation of Nietzsche is that he turned from, and freed himself from, Wagner after *The Birth of Tragedy*. He did turn away and did free himself to some degree, but his freeing of himself to be himself strikes one as, in crucial respects, bringing him closer to Wagner, turning him back to Wagner. The more I know about Wagner, the more Wagnerian I see Nietzsche[49]—not only the early Nietzsche but the post-Wagnerian, the anti-Wagnerian Nietzsche, after the break with Wagner. There was no absolute break, only a violent effort at overcoming, at *self-overcoming*, as Nietzsche himself acknowledged. Nietzsche was Wagner, and the self-overcoming of Wagner. This reference to the community and its saving, its destiny, to the great artist as redeemer—this does not entirely disappear in the later Nietzsche. There is a side to him that wants to out-Wagner Wagner—*be* the great artist as dreamed by Wagner but also as dreamed by the younger Nietzsche himself. He is the Dionysian priest as the sacred artist transubstantiating worthless life, consecrating human life, divinizing it like the golden Homer. "My Meister Pietro: Sing me a new song: for the world is transfigured and all the heavens rejoice"—Letter to Peter Gast of January 4, 1889, signed by the Crucified (*der Gekreuzigte*), after Nietzsche had crossed the Rubicon of madness, brought on in his destined catastrophe. Nietzsche does not lack appeal to some universal: "the world is will to power, and nothing else besides."[50] Though this is not intended in any democratic sense, nevertheless there is the implication that through the few, this universal will be of service for the many. Not for all—the Christians have become in Nietzsche what the Jews were in Wagner: subtitle to the *Anti-Christ*: a curse on Christianity. *Ecce homo*: these are Pilate's words to the crowd about Christ, delivering him over as a sacrificial victim. What of Nietzsche's *Ecce homo?* Is Nietzsche *both* Pilate

and Christ, exposing himself to jeers, *turning himself over*, giving himself up? To the crowd? Not to the crowd? To whom then? And as a sacrificial lamb? The idea that Parsifal is Christian and that Nietzsche believed it was so is something grotesque. Parsifal counterfeits Christianity, exploiting quasi-Christian motifs for ends that are not at all Christian: not the blood of the Lamb, but purification of the blood. If there is a "universal" in Nietzsche it comes out of struggle, is forged in struggle, is held in tension by struggle. It is an agonistic universal, presided over by the warrior, or the spirit of the warrior. It is erotic sovereignty understood in a certain way—in opposition to agapeic service, itself reduced to servility.[51]

The intimate universal makes one think of a rotating diamond that allows the light to be multiply refracted. We sometimes think we can rotate the diamond such that only a certain kind of light is broken up by it, and that only a certain color is allowed to filter through. There will always be a religious and political side to whatever light comes, as well as an aesthetic side. Great images, great figures, great exemplars will, if not directly, certainly mediately, enter into how the human community understands itself, and with this the more explicit public side of the universal. Art, as speaking to the depths of the intimate, awakens the feel for the universal, but this feel can also be used, misused, abused, by propaganda, for instance, or by advertising. One recalls the revolutionary use of art for political ends, narrated by Czesław Miłosz in *The Captive Mind*: the universal ideal is strategically contracted by the Center, touching on what is most intimate to the poets, writers, intellectuals, artists. The Center, at first by seduction, then by stealth, then by say-so, finally by assault and torture, configures and reconfigures a political community, eventually closing down freedom, in the name of the universal. This community is not releasing but is a matter of circling around itself, encircling all its members and intruding into their intimate recesses. The community becomes a counterfeit double of community, more like an idol rather than an icon (in a sense somewhat like that of Marion).

This issue of the counterfeit double is relevant to Wagner's revolutionary ambitions, both artistic and political. Wagner's ambitions were such that today we shrink from acknowledging what they entail. Less megalomaniac versions do continue to appear—and appear because there is something right about the ambitions, despite the perversions. What is right stems from the participation of art in the intimate universal. The perversion consists in its being corrupted by a tyrannical erotic sovereignty that

leads to the mutilation of the agapeics of the intimate universal. Wagner might be taken to be the most radical artistic dreamer of the regeneration of a people through his opera. Then there is the degeneration of the dream into something base. Was the worm already in the apple, already in a secret seed, and the growth of the apple merely fed the worm, glutted it? There is the corruption of eros by the temptation always with it, the temptation to tyranny. The fruit of erotic sovereignty is worm-eaten by its own *eros turannos.*

I think some of these same issues have to be put to Nietzsche. There are too many places where he seems to glory in presenting the tyrant. There are too many ambiguous utterances that make one suspect that his philosophy of art is not separable from the aesthetics of tyrannical will to power. Will to power cannot be kept merely aesthetic. It recedes into the inner chambers of the intimate and reaches out to take the community. Here too it will don the mask of the sacred. This need not be self-consciously a counterfeiting of the sacred but it is the colonization of the sacred that creates the necessary illusion, the noble lie, that the community is granted by or grounded in transhuman sources. This colonization is the corrupting of the sacred when everything is will to power and nothing else besides. No wonder that Christianity (and indeed Judaism) is such a stumbling block for Nietzsche—everything true about it witnesses to a dimension of transpolitical height beyond all will to power. There are different kinds of counterfeiters. Some have before them, or to hand, a genuine work or article or currency, and then they counterfeit it. But there is another kind of counterfeiting that has already fooled itself into thinking its own work to be the genuine currency or work or article. It comes to itself in the circle of the counterfeit and hence has no sense of the counterfeit. So it is in a worse situation since now it is the genuine article that must be branded as the real counterfeit. This kind of counterfeit has no intimation that it might be in the wrong—it is always the other who is in the wrong. There is a difficult lack of self-knowing from which to escape. It is impossible to escape through itself alone but everything other to itself has been deemed counterfeit, so how can what is other to itself provide it any release? Quite the opposite, the encircling of the counterfeit wards off any such appeal.

The intimate and universal together are very evident, I think, in a sacred space. Space offers the ethos of a commons where a many can be or come together. A sacred space offers a commons where a many can be together, come together in communication with the ultimate powers, the divine.

This commons is not just any kind of coming together. It is a space that is readied for, that readies us for, the communication of the divine. It is one of the miracles of sacred architecture that it incarnates just this readiness—in the incarnate signs of communications already offered to the faithful. This makes no sense from a standpoint of a neutralized space, or homogenized space. Of course, sacred spaces are not only constructed spaces. There are given temples in nature, ranging from serene green to forbidding sublimity. The Gothic cathedral might be seen as bringing together the intimacy and the infinite space, in the commons crossed by the verticality of transcendence. There is a paradoxical double movement: return to the intimacy of innerness, the surpassing upward toward the superior power. This is a sanctifying space—a consecrated *metaxu*.[52]

Dramatics: Theater of the Intimate Universal

An element of Burke's heroic furor in contemplating the French Revolution: being spiritually aghast at the ominous monstrousness of human power unleashed from a measure higher than itself. The great dramatic arts of tragedy and comedy offer a stage, a between space, a liturgical field of communication on which we behold passages of the intimate universal bearing on the self-exceeding of human power.[53] The mystery is the companioning power, born with, borne along by, the hyperbolic endeavor of the *conatus essendi*. When we understand something of the porosity to the intimate universal we can make some sense of tragic. In the tragic hero one beholds the erotic sovereignty of the *conatus essendi* reaching the limit of the finite and going beyond even that. The overreaching is not the hubris of a crude arrogance but the exceeding of the excellent by the excellent. Yet there is a boundary in the nature of things. It is not that the boundary is not to be surpassed but that we are not the absolute agents of the surpassing. True passing beyond the boundary cannot be just our self-(sur)passing. It must be in homage to the companioning power. When this does not happen, exceeding becomes a self-surpassing, without true granting of the *passio essendi*. The flaw, the *hamartia*, is finally lodged in the imbalance of *passio* and *conatus*. The self-surpassing as erotic sovereignty has lost touch with the more elemental porosity.

Thus Lear: regal, sovereign, irascible, impatient, used to getting his way, his will. He acts foolishly, sovereignty sleep-walking in the direction

of impotence, into its own undoing. He is dragged along the way of truth. He learns in madness something of this porosity. The moment of tragic illumination is to be brought back to the condition of a "bare forked animal," and to be struck by hyperbolic mindfulness of this condition: to see the other as that, to see himself as that, to be struck by the universal condition of exposure, to feel the exposure in one's intimate flesh, to have the compassionate intimation of this in all those who are as nothing. Being as nothing seems to make man's life as cheap as beasts, but this is not the last word. It is what has to be faced, has to be endured, "Becoming as nothing" means a reopening of the porosity. In this there is solicited a new patience, prior to every endeavor, and beyond every endeavor. We come to nothing, and then come into something of the *pathos mathei*. This is to learn from suffering. This is the pathos of the intimate universal. There is the elemental universality of a community between the high and the low. The being brought low of the high is strangely an elevation, an honoring of what is true in us. It is true in the sense of faithful—faithful to what exceeds us, even in our most extreme self-exceeding, even in our most extreme ontological poverty. There is the gesture of agapeic service—generosity in being shattered: "In boy, go first." Patience becomes central in Lear. Becoming as nothing restores opening to the intimate universal. True going down is going up—while untrue going above is to be brought down. When we go up we bring ourselves down; when we are brought down we are offered the gift of being brought up. There is a knowing that comes only in suffering. The wisdom of the tragic is a sacred wisdom, and borders blessing—or being blessed. Blessed are those who weep.[54]

There are knots in the nature of things we tie ourselves but we cannot untie.[55] There is something we try to get over by overtaking it but we can never get over it. It is over us (such is the witness of great beauty, sublimity, great art). There is something communicated that we never get over. This is not like a sickness that lingers, but a condition of promise. It is always fulfilled and always yet to be fulfilled—an invitation promising more, and a present cornucopia of plenty. It is over us; it overtakes us; it takes us over; and we are ourselves, as othered; we become what we are to be.

Catharsis is an absolving of something that curses us. Catharsis is purgation—unclogging the porosity. There is a horror in this unclogging, for we have covered our more intimate souls with carapaces of powerful protection, and these carapaces are now being pierced and dissolved. This is like a death, bringing us to nothing; but there is a stream

of compassion in the purged porosity; the purge allows the fluency of life's energy of affirmation to flow again. A death, this is also like being reborn, a resurrection of the *co-natus*. It is like forgiveness—the releasing word of forgiveness "It is nothing" opens again the clogged porosity, clotted on itself, and sets free the energy of affirmation, not just of my being as the good, but of the "to be" as good.

Something of the pathos of the intimate universal is also evident in comedy, and perhaps with a more universal tinge in the following regard. In the tragic there is a stress on the noble exemplars of erotic sovereignty but in comedy there is a more inclusive range—all human folly, that of the high and the low, is included, is laughed at. Some have said, of course, that comedy is the art of the servile, taking too much the position of the slave, making too much of those positioned below. There is something to this in that from the groundlings, and their elemental intimacy, a howl of derision comes forth, and nothing with false pretension can stand before it. The groundlings, after all, stand their ground as themselves groundless, for in the social and political hierarchies they count as nothing and count for nothing. Being nothing, they are the sign of a different freedom, and laughter comes from nowhere in their groundless being ground under. There is a naughting in laughter—a bringing to nothing, but this being brought to nothing can once again be the opening of the porosity into the life of festive passion.[56] All the defenses and contrivances of the *conatus* are disarmed, and the prior given energy of being is released into the affirmation of the *passio*, even though to all appearances we seem to be shaken by a debunking or only a negation. When laughter breaks out, the person's face is often convulsed, and if one does not partake of the enjoyment of laughing, one might mistake the spasm for a scream.

But of course, there are different kinds of laughter, among which we find the destructive, the mocking, the sneering, the jeering. Sometimes there is a hate-ful "laughing at." This is not a festive "laughing with"; its aim is to hurt, to injure, to kill. It is the festive "laughing with" that is truer to the intimate universal. We are all (as) nothing, and in being nothing we are all in common nothing—the nothing of an intimately shared porosity, in which the festive elemental energy of being brings up affirming life, out of the abyss and into the sweet goodness of the "to be." Things being desperate, we might still laugh. There is nothing left to do—and this astonishing outburst can come. Black humor is not black, not black qua humor. There is a "yes" in it in face of the extremity of

the "no" of death. Something in laughter comes from a source beyond death. We all as nothings, as coming to nothing, come to partake of this festivity beyond death. Festive laughter partakes of the intimate universal beyond death.

What is important here is the realization of disjunction between *conatus* and *passio*. In tragedy, the self-exceeding of the *conatus* is brought to a limit and returned to the *passio*. There is something analogous in comedy but it is the more democratic folly of all, not just the more aristocratic hubris of the one or the few, that is brought to a fall. The fall reveals the absurd—but this is an affirmative surd, so to say, not a malicious ab-surd. The surd of our being at all, of our being given to be, is deeply affirmative. If it is surd it is more a *benign surd*, not at all absurd. It is a kind of agapeic surd, and hence the gift of good. To affirm either in weeping or in laughing is to be a "yes" to something—a "yes" even to the surd that celebrates even in the absurd and in celebration shows the absurd not to have the last word. They are beyond the absurd in the surd energy that sees or reveals the absurd as absurd. The disjunction of the *conatus* and *passio* is always taking place, but the neglect of the secret companioning power in our denial of the deeper porosity always comes back, for the porosity is simply what we are. There is no escaping it. It comes home to us, brings us home to ourselves, either on the heights or in the depths or on the level plains. It brings us home to ourselves, and there is a restoration to the deeper ontological festivity—the mysterious "yes" communicated in the intimate universal.

The intimate universal implies a porosity between art and the sacred. One might talk of a divine comedy in which something of an idiot wisdom is asked of it.[57] Idiot wisdom: neither theory nor practice, neither the individual nor the community, neither the human nor the nonhuman, neither life nor death—being both and yet beyond both. Idiot wisdom: emerging from a space prior to self and world, self and other, and pointing beyond to a space more than self and other. Idiot wisdom: springing up from a will-lessness before will, bringing willing to the boundary of its self-determination, its willing of itself, and pointing to a willingness beyond will, and beyond will to power. Idiot wisdom: knowing and unknowing, in a willingness that returns us to the primal porosity and the elemental ontological receptivity and thankfulness for the gift of being at all.

Idiot wisdom has relevance to but is irreducible to the cunning of the political world. It is transpolitical. It is beyond the human things.

Yet it reveals the more deeply human things. It is a "meta" in the double sense: "in the midst" and yet "beyond"—immanent and transcendence—a *metaxu*. Tragedy often is coupled with the political power of the erotic sovereigns: Oedipus, Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, to name a few. But there is in comedy an idiot wisdom that wanders wayless and powerless. The lack or loss of an immanent home sheds light on the political cunning of the world. One thinks especially of the Shakespearean wisdom. One thinks of the fool in King Lear: the fool is powerless and yet is power, and power beyond will to power. The fool exposed Lear, and is himself exposed—idiot wisdom of the vulnerable.[58] In *Macbeth* the horror of sacred murder is almost impossible to bear and we need the ominous knocking on the gate, to startle us into a reminder not only that there is an outside, but that between the inside and the outside equivocal foolishness must pass. The reminder restores the desecrated world to human things. Thus the Porter (in the knocking at the gate scene in *Macbeth*) and his delicious disquisition as he makes his still drunken way to the door to leave in the outside. This play as a whole is all about the equivocal and the karma of the equivocal, but the Porter (not quite Charon carrying souls across the Styx) funnily goes on about the play of the equivocal in the play of the whole: drink and sex, not least, and we laugh and hold our breath and are aghast, because we beholders know the horror of the full situation. There is no whole really, there is this horrible scene of drunkenness and murder. And yet there is laughter that, if it does not redeem, does not let us entirely forget that there might yet be a redeeming laughter, a return to festivity whose end is not death but life augmenting itself, affirming itself as beyond itself, and affirming the beyond of itself in affirming itself. Inside the scene of death, engendered by unbridled will to political power, laughter blackly restores the promise of the world, as the Porter, who carries drunken festivity to the door leading to the outside, and the door letting the outside come in, and as the knocking becomes more importunate, cracks a line of half-blue equivocal jokes.[59]

There is in laughter always a mockery of the untrue pretensions of power, but there are benign forms of mockery. They are not all assaults. One thinks too of the mockery of Aristophanes. The laughter that laughs at the gods has in it something of the laughter of the gods. The companioning powers suffer with our suffering. Dionysus in Hades gets mistaken for his servant Xantias, and ends up being beaten like a slave. There is comedy in Hades, and the god in the underworld endures the humiliation

of the mortal condition.[60] The gods come to nothing but it is in their coming to nothing that they come to be as for the suffering mortal. In coming to nothing they come to be reborn as the providers of agapeic festivity. They are offered as sacrifices of laughter. They too consent to the *passio essendi* in laughing with it, and at the folly of the *conatus essendi*. As offers, they become as a *compassio essendi*. This reaches its absolute form in the God of Christ—absolute porosity, absolving porosity, passing into and through the mortal agony of the human and its *passio*—absolute passion now become a *compassio essendi*. This absolves the intimate universal. Absolves, not dissolves, that is, releases, broadcasts it again and again, intimately and universally. When Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* alludes to Aristophanic comedy and the death of the pagan gods at the end of the ancient world and sees in this the birth of subjectivity and its triumph, he is not at all right and at best only half in the right. It is not the triumph of subjectivity, of the Self as Absolute Being (*absolute Wesen*). It is the return of idiot wisdom, the wisdom of the *passio essendi*, the reopening of a porosity that is more deeply the coming of the sacred in the coming to nothing of the sacred. Most deeply it is the manifestation of the God of the intimate universal. It is the birth of space in the intimacy of the soul for the One—in the grave of its underground—for the rejoicing God even in suffering and death. It is the unknowing sign of the festive generosity of resurrected life beyond our life and death.[61]

CHAPTER 3

Philosophy and the Intimate Universal

Neither Theory nor Practice

Opening on the Intimate Universal and Philosophy

If the intimate universal is communicated with art, and most ultimately bound up with our being religious, in both cases what is communicated cannot be closed into a sphere that circles around itself, but what might we say about *philosophy*? To refer to Hegel one more time: he seems to be the last high king of the universal, against whom, since Kierkegaard, we have had a plurality of protestors for the particular. Existential protest may reaffirm the truth of the intimate in face of the self-less universal of the rationalist, but without some engagement with the universal, can philosophy continue to be philosophy? Granting the intimate universal, must we not again reject an exclusivist "either-or" that sets the terms brutally against the universal and in favor of the particular? Do we not also have to say that equally unjust(ified) is a rationalistic *hauteur* against the particular? Philosophy is not just thought thinking itself but also entails thought thinking what is other to thought. In our philosophical attendance on the intimate universal there is more than the autonomous self-determination of thinking seeking to be consistent and at home with itself. There is the opening of thinking, either through itself or through interruption by what

is beyond thought, to what is more than thought itself. Such a view of philosophy is metaxological in being in a between space, doubly stressed by the need to be coherent with the immanent norms of thought itself and yet receptive and faithful to what being as other reveals itself to be. Does the intimate universal not have something to do with that doubleness? Might this doubleness not be seen as expressing a plurivocal relationality, namely, both the intimate self-relation of thought to itself and the charge of unrestricted openness to all being other to thought, being itself as communicating the most original and most ultimate of universals? Is there not an intimacy of the most original and ultimate of universals marking the exigency of thinking itself, its being called to do justice to the truth of being?

After Nietzsche, there are philosophers quite willing to grant the dialogue of the thinker and poet, Heidegger being among the foremost. I think this dialogue might be fruitfully seen in light of the intimate universal. It is a worthy question if our exploration in relation to art can be extended into philosophical thought itself. Can we look at the intimate universal in connection with the practice of philosophy as not a matter simply, in the terms of art, either of imitation or self-creation? Applied to philosophy, that suggests the contrast, so to say, of correspondence and construction: the contrast of truthful thinking lacking an originality and an originality lacking truthful fidelity. The question would then be: Does the practice of philosophical thinking call for a *more original fidelity* to the truth of the intimate universal?

But must we also ask if the dialogue between philosophy and *being religious* can be sidestepped, relative to such an original fidelity? If we do not sidestep it with art, why should philosophy sidestep it with religion? No reason. As almost nothing, as almost a porous "being nothing," being religious itself enables a fertile permeability between itself and art, between itself and philosophy, indeed between itself, ethics, and politics. Can we point to an analogous permeability in philosophy to its significant others, in the very *practice* of philosophy itself? Certainly, there was a permeability *between* philosophy and religion at work in premodern philosophy, though without this being made a theme of reflective mindfulness. This permeability has been blocked to greater or lesser degrees in modern practices of philosophy as *self-determining* thought. Something must be unblocked in philosophy after modernity, one could argue, if a new or renewed intermediation can be recommenced between being religious

and being philosophical. The permeability is almost always unnoted or unnoticed, denied or stopped, but there are practices of philosophizing, perhaps neither ancient nor modern, that attempt to think again in its openness. I propose such an attempt in light of a certain understanding of justice: a "doing justice" secretly at work in the practices of philosophy.

This sense of "doing justice" demands of us another focus than one immediately directed to more usual themes about social justice, social power, freedom and equality, and the like.[1] Instead of a side step, perhaps we need a step back: a recession into what is recessed by the foreground of these considerations in their more usual determinate forms. Such a step back, opening onto the intimate universal, would make us inquire into *reserved resources* bearing on our habitation of the ethos of being. Within that ethos we forge determinate practical responses that attempt to enact social justice in this way or that. But this ethos also reserved resources that are always more than every such determinate enactment. Though reserved, they remain at work in these enactments, and are resources just in the sense of sourcing such enactments. Such sourcing has something intimate about it, even when it resources magnificent social configurations within which take shape our more determinate engagements with justice. On that score, our investigation must move at an angle to discussions dealing with such more normalized determinacies. It must try to name matters more or less recessed and out of mind, whenever our attention is too taken over by the foreground intricacies of social and political engagements.

As philosophers we often think of the universal, in relation to ethical and political practice, in terms of metaphysical considerations of the ideal. Think here of the Platonic dream of the philosopher king in the *Republic*. The (in)famous dream bodies forth the intimate relation of philosophy and the rule of the ideal. This looks like the rule of the universal, the idea. But this is not a univocal matter, since there is at least this doubleness to it: the universal good seen as *above* us; the good seen as to be intimate in the just community, as well as interior to the just soul. Hence the proposal here is not the construction of an abstract theory about the good and social justice, such that from above down one pursues the application of an abstract universal to the sublunary world. The *intimacy* of the universal tells against such an approach. Such an approach, in truth, would make the ideal philosopher less like a king and more like a tyrant, *turannos* rather than *basileus*. The philosopher would impose a form on things by

the will to theoretical domination from top down. This is a common view of Plato: he is a dictatorial thinker (Popper: an enemy of the open society) who imposes an intellectual abstraction, a rational blueprint on the raw materials of human existence. Dictatorial thinking means the superimposition of the universal on the particular. One could suggest the opposite: Plato takes steps from the micro to the macro and steps back to the micro, from the small to the large, from the psyche to the polis, from the intimate to the universal and back. A politics that does not respect the intimate is dictatorial in a mutilating way and tortures the human being in the name of the ideal. A politics that stresses only the intimate evacuates politics of ethical seriousness,[2] decamping from the more communal concerns of the public sharing of the good, concerns potentially universal.

Dictatorial thinking does not reflect the practice of philosophy here proposed as a matter of "doing justice." It is also not true to Plato, I think. There is much bearing on the intimate universal in the Platonic *paideia* of the philosopher: not only in the upward ascent to the good, but in the downward descent into the cave again, in the name of justice; for the dark of the cave requires the intimate night vision of the philosopher practicing justice. There is movement from the intimate to the universal, but also justice in the return movement from the universal to the intimate. This asks true political *phronesis*, not exclusive of night vision. This is what we try to get into focus: not any top-down theory of justice but a "doing justice" that ferments in the intimacy of being, both singular and communal, one that does not fit into the normal binary opposition of theory and practice. This sense of the intimate universal, in fact, might allow us to look differently even on the dream of Socrates-Plato—now as a story about the intimate universality of "doing justice" with hints of agapeic service, not the reign of erotic sovereignty verging on *eros turannos.* Everything in Plato tells of a struggle against *eros turannos.* And perhaps we need terms beyond eros to see truly the difference between the heavenly eros and the tyrannical.[3]

If there is a "doing justice" at the heart of metaphysical thinking itself, there may well be a closer accord between metaphysics and the normalized care for issues of ethical and political justice. Perhaps this accord is often quite hidden from view, but this is all the more reason why we ought to attend to it. This reserved "doing justice" brings us in range of certain ultimate metaphysical considerations normally not thought the concern of ethical and political reflection. It brings us into a neighborhood of a

mindfulness, hard to define as simply either theoretical or practical, where an elemental permeability takes form between philosophy and more normal questions of ethical and political justice. Too simply put, metaphysics as a practice of philosophy has implications for practical justice in nurturing mindfulness of the most intimate reserves of our being human at all. My concern will be more archeological than teleological, relative to a sense of *archē* that makes possible diverse practices of justice but that entails a call to do justice not exhausted by any of these determinate practices. In a kind of step back from the foreground of these determinate practices into the reserved promise of the intimate universal, we must consider an originating "doing justice" that enables and exceeds, and that rarely is in focus for, such diverse determinations of justice. Among considerations of importance will be: the prior "doing justice" in relation to the more traditional juxtaposition of theory and practice; its connection with our "being true" and with a fidelity, again neither theoretical nor practical, to the patience of being prior to our efforts to enact more determinate configurations of justice; its transcendence of will to power, in an original "being nothing" that rejoins the practice of philosophizing to the reverence of being religious.

A Prior "Doing Justice"?

It is worth reiterating that philosophy has *always* been concerned with justice. Nevertheless, there is the quite common view that philosophy from its inception displays a certain bias against praxis. Such a bias is said to follow from our privileging of the allegedly abstract universal of theory. One thinks of Hannah Arendt's stylization of Platonic philosophy as tilted toward the primacy of theory, hence toward a certain contemplative ideal.[4] Moreover, this contemplative bias is sometimes associated with putative claims to a kind of absolute knowledge that again favors the abstract universal. Platonic *theōria* is said to be determinative for the entire tradition wherein theory in the end dictates to praxis, and justice becomes a top-down superimposition of the ideal *eidos* on the raw, formless mass of humanity, as the monarch imposes power on the many who otherwise all but count for nothing. There is little of the intimate universal in this alleged dictation to praxis of the abstract *eidos*. Against the dictatorial theory of the abstract universal, Arendt calls for a revaluation of praxis.

Even granting such a revaluation, one has to ask: What happens to the intimate universal? Does it figure at all? Or do some reconfigurations of its promise insinuate themselves? Can the intimate universal be fit into this relatively straightforward juxtaposition of theory and praxis?

Of course, this proposed revaluation is continuous with a longer tendency in modern thought, perhaps encapsulated in Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: the philosophers till now have understood the world, the point is to change it.[5] Revolutionary praxis transcends the abstract universal of tradition theory, and claims to work out a more intimate relation to concrete life, in its economic, social, political realities. Does it attain the intimate universal? This is in question. I doubt that it could ever attain it, without rethinking and reconnecting with our being religious. A complication here for Marx's children is that our being religious is a family relation of traditional contemplation. If we are to transcend the latter, we must also surpass the former. How then to remain true to the intimate universal? Is it possible on these terms alone?

What percolates in Marx's dictum circulates through many forms of modern discourse.[6] The relation of theory and practice is at issue, but the terms of its formulation no longer reflect the alleged contemplative bias of the tradition—suitable for a top-down hierarchical society, whether of humans or knowers, but not appropriate for a democratic, egalitarian autonomous ethos where no one is to dictate to another what is true or to be true, whether in knowing or in deed. But there are more recessed considerations, as I suggest, that bear on the intimate universal, and that must be named again, if the justice of determinate praxis is itself to be seen in a light other than the abstract universal. One might even say there is no surprise in the necessary failure of the project of revolutionary praxis, since it is a project of a still abstract universal, imposed with the aid of revolutionary violence, necessarily mutilating justice in the name of justice, and doing so because it has turned its back on the ways being religious offers humanity access to appreciating the intimate universal. The appreciation can flower in both contemplative and practical ways but is not simply either contemplative or practical.

Notwithstanding the traditional tendency of philosophy to favor theory over praxis, philosophy's enduring concern with justice is complex, not simplistic. I do not want to enter here into the contested interpretation of Plato, but justice is surely one of the central concerns of his whole work. This is obviously true of the *Republic*, whose question—What is

justice?—is not just theoretical since, among other things, it has an explicit bearing on the nature and practice of philosophy itself. And this practice insofar as it bears on mindfulness concerning all the essential areas of human significance, like gymnastics and music, art and religion, the family and child-rearing, geometry and the ultimate *askēsis* of the erotic soul, the point of it all and eschatological justice.

A charge is laid on the philosopher—he or she comes under the demand and solicitation of "doing justice." This cannot be a matter of the abstract universal alone—a matter of simply seeing the *eidos* and ending there, or perhaps "applying" the vision of the *eidos*. It is hard to accept without crucial qualifications any view of Plato as, so to say, a hypertheorist. To be sure, there is something "hyper" in the vision the *Republic* offers: there is a glimpse of the good that is above (*huper*) us whose measure we are not, the good that rather subjects us and our measures to true measure. Nevertheless, despite this hyperbolic dimension of the transcendent good, crucial also is the *doing* of justice by the philosopher in the equivocal immanence of time. There is something intimate to time about this, as well as to the soul of the philosopher. There is no univocity of the abstract universal offered by the noetic glimpse of the transcendent good. The philosopher is a servant of justice in the equivocities of time, not a dictator of justice to becoming. Instead of top-down dictatorial "theory," the *return to the cave* is a sign that the intimate soul must develop a kind of *night vision* to discern differences amid fluctuating forms. We must go down, as Socrates says, into the common dwelling places and become accustomed to the things that are dark (*ta skoteina*: *Republic*, 520b5–c3). I see this "going down" into the things that are dark as closely connected with the service of the intimate universal. Discerning differences in the dark things is a form of "doing justice" to what is happening in the concrete events of immanent life. This is never a matter of an escape beyond—even though there is a beyond. It is not a matter of imposing from the heights a universal on the flux of happening—even though there is also a height.[7]

Premodern as much as modern philosophies, and now postmodern thought, have all concerns with justice, but the terms of their engagements differ. A crucial dimension of the engagement bears on the question of the universal, even if the issue of the intimate universal is not always or almost never posed in such terms. One might think of *the premoderns* as pointing to a transhuman universal whose transcendence does raise the issue of the intimate universal—but this is inseparable from a porosity

between religion and reason. One might think of *the moderns* as pointing to a human universal, in terms of our rational being, but this too raises the question of the intimate universal, since the modern universal often tends toward the depersonalized objectivism of rationalized Enlightenment, and reason is often set over against religion, repudiating its premodern permeability in the name of its own claim to absolute autonomy. One might think of *the postmoderns* as wringing their hands at the humanistic bad faith hiding in this modern universalism; but though hand-wringing is a token of some sort of intimacy, the universal as such is here so subject to suspicion that a new espousal of the intimate and universal does not come to the fore. It will not come to the fore unless we are ready to come clean, a bit more fully, on religion and the intimate universal.

Even when the premoderns were not so strongly religious, there was an acknowledgment of something more than the human, of relevance to the human, of incomparable relevance since without it the human was nothing. The repudiation or eclipse of this "something more" significantly alters the terms of philosophical thought and its power to approach the intimate universal. One thinks of Aristotle: the human being is not the highest in the universe. Aristotle also remarks that if man were the highest being, politics would be the highest science (*Nichomachean Ethics*, 1141a2–22). There is a measure beyond human measure, difficult as it may be exactly to determine what this measure is. Again there is no necessity that this must be assimilated to some invidious tyrannical top-down superimposition of hypertheory. Much depends on how that measure is conceived. Granting it, as well as granting that we are not the absolute measure, changes our relation to ourselves and nature, as well as the divine. The issue of the intimacy of being becomes all the more complex and rich when our sense of the superior measure is defined by the personal God of biblical monotheism. Whether with most of the ancient philosophers, or with monotheistic religion, we are not the makers of justice, even when in our deeds we must do justice. The intimate universal may well remain unnamed in all of this. Nevertheless, how we understand our doing of justice calls for a discernment that cannot be simply called practical, since the practical is itself in question relative to its claim to be true to justice. Without its permeation by something like this discernment, a discernment in incognito relation to the intimate universal, practice itself looks more like lurching in the dark. It is all the more likely to remain one of the dark things.

This must mean that the matter cannot be one of just having the right theory either—certainly not if we mean by theory some disembodied hypothesis or free-floating ensemble of neutral universals that claims to comprehend what is at stake in practice, dictating to it from its high conceptual perch what is to be done. If there is a kind of theory, it must be of a different sort—its intimate relation to praxis must entail a practice not identical with praxis, and without which praxis becomes the bluster of blind power. A simple contrast of theory and praxis will not do, in terms of giving either some disengaged priority to theory or some urgent ultimacy to a reformulated praxis. There is something more.

"Doing Justice" and Being True

In ordinary language there are reserves to the notion of "doing justice" that are helpful for our reflections. A teacher, for instance, will speak of trying to "do justice" to his or her subject, or to the examinations of his or her students. A parent will encourage a promising child to "do justice" to herself, say, in the forthcoming talent contest. An honest, representative political leader will worry whether he is "doing justice" to the often divergent demands of his constituency. A performer may be concerned whether he or she has "done justice" to the great score of Mozart. A gifted athlete will torment himself or herself with having finished second, wondering if the placing "did justice" to his or her talents. Of course, there are some perhaps less somber instances of doing justice. My mother places a fine meal before me, and I "do justice" to it. I eat it up with relish. What is doing justice here? It is not merely in the consumption, but in the gusto of the appreciation. My pleasure in the meal does justice to it, and communicates my being pleased with its maker. Doing justice communicates my thanks. The meal is not a bad example, for doing justice in connection with the sharing of a meal recalls us to something elemental of what I call the agapeics of being, indeed the agapeics of the intimate universal (on this, more in chapter 8).

There are many more examples I might cite but I think at the core of all of them is a certain notion of "being true." "Doing justice" entails no abstract plan of perfection imposed from the outside—though in certain instances, the need of a plan may be necessary. It entails the solicitation of a certain "being true" that is discerned to be immanent in the practice or

the practitioner. "Being true" asks something of the practice or practitioner that is both intimate and transcendent at the same time. Intimate: for this requirement is felt in the immanence of the practice; transcendent in that it may call for something more that might be difficult to account for in terms of immanence alone. Philosophy is itself a practice, and there are different practices of philosophy,[8] but none of them can escape from the demands of "doing justice" in this sense of "being true."

"Doing justice" in the sense here intended is not a determinate activity, not a particular passivity, but refers us to *a more primal patience of being*. This more primal patience is not determined by the normal contrast of theory and practice. "Doing" is obviously a word of act and action. We often feel at home with action, and nowhere more than in relation to justice. We are called to do something; and our sometime frustration with an unjust situation is alleviated by doing something. "Willing liberates," to steal a Nietzscheanism. Liberates what? Liberates from what? Liberates for what? Liberates toward what? Not always easy to say or pin down. Desist from picky analysis. Just do it!

Philosophers traditionally prefer to look before they leap, but more recently they have been boxed on the ears for their diffidence when it comes to acting. They show themselves chronically in need of flappers (I bow to Swift). Nevertheless, they still demur and excuse themselves as thinkers, not doers: thinkers of the universal, always serenely the same, not doers of this-here-now action, under the contingent urgent sign of change. Recurring to Marx's rejoinder in his thesis on Feuerbach—until now the philosophers have interpreted the world, now they must change it—if I am right about a prior patience of being, with both intimate and universal dimensions, we risk being seduced by the sloganesque character of this thesis. I know that the gist of its injunction has been immensely influential in defining the comportment of many thinkers. We have a bad conscience about being "mere" thinkers—say, armchair metaphysicians. Eager to prove we are happy campers in the real world, we are often exaggerated in our own announcement of our engagement. I think of Sartre—anxious in a wall-eyed way lest history with a big H should pass him by. One can prove the point of engagement to the extreme of becoming a groupie of some currently ascendant ideology. Then it is perhaps too true that such a philosopher doth protest too much.

If there is a universal here, it is in the announced program of the reigning ideology. If there is an intimacy here, it consists in being *engagé*, with

sneers for the cautious on the sidelines. One becomes what one might call *an agenda philosopher*. There is nothing wrong with agendas: an agenda is literally "what is to be done," "what must be done." The fundamental conditions of life make human beings agenda creatures. What we are is defined by the question, made (in)famous by Lenin, What is to be done?—and how we respond to it. I grant that: but an agenda philosophy, one suspects, is as constraining of thought as, perhaps more constraining than, the allegedly "top-down" dictatorial theorist. For in agenda philosophy there is a determination in advance of what is to be thought in terms of an anticipated response to the question "What is to be done?" The agenda determines what is to be thought, as well as what is to be done. Agendas can be immensely helpful in confused practical circumstances; they can also be dictatorial. They can especially be dictatorial when they define how we relate to reality as a whole, dictating in advance the kind of mindfulness and praxis that is deemed appropriate. And this dictation has a bearing not only on this situation or that, but in a more pervasive and encompassing sense. Agenda philosophizing then *imposes* what it takes as more universal on what it perceives as the particular urgencies intimate to immanent life. What being is or is to become, or concrete reality is to be, is determined in terms of the agenda we bring to bear on it. To be at all means to be on the agenda. Thus viewed, the agenda can induce a kind of *policing* of our thinking. What is not on the agenda is nothing, or to be condemned to be nothing.

By contrast, there is a "doing justice" that is not, or seeks not to be, agenda driven, which, just as a being true, is not either a matter of the hypertheory of "absolute knowledge" or the projects of agenda-driven humans. Exhausted neither by abstract universality nor by obsessional singularity, such "doing justice" is something *intermediate* for humans. Before all agendas there is something received. This reception in intimacy is not devoid of its own universal call. There is a promise in immanence that is more than immanence. As well as the promise given, this intermediate nature also means we have to reckon with human fallibility, failure, ignorance, and malice—be we as well intentioned as we can be. We betray the promise of what we have received. We mess things up.

"Doing justice," like our "being true," is in between. One must reject terms which imply that the whole tradition is guilty of overstated claims of absolute knowing qua theory to the devaluation of praxis (such as we find with Arendt). There is a practice of philosophy that goes with this "being

true," this "doing justice." The simple contrast of theory and practice does not do justice to our ontological situation. Philosophy, as I understand it, is a practice of life asking us to do justice to the most opposed requirements, and with all the tension of this: remoteness and engagement, distance and intimacy. If it were a matter of mere remoteness, the result would be the loss of life. If it were a matter of mere engagement, the result might be the loss of lucidity. Mere distance can breed a kind of arrogance, even when it touches nothing. Mere intimacy can beguile us with an apparent relevance—close-up relevance that by far is irrelevant. But to be intimate and to know distance, to be engaged and to respect range—this is not easy. The practice of philosophy asks of us this hard poise of truthful thought.

The view I am trying to get into focus is, in some ways, both the easiest to defend and the hardest to accept. Easiest, because we all know the patience of being in our ontological vulnerability as finite creatures. Hardest, because we find it least easy to grant this and what follows from it. What we intimately know, we expressly refuse to grant. There is an ontological vulnerability prior to definition by social status, and the significance of this is not confined to a kind of autistic singularity. It has a more universal significance in implicating all in the promise endowed in us with the patience of being. But we struggle to consent to the ontological vulnerability of our patient being, of our being patient. Social status and all the issues of social justice that go with the good governance of power in a human community are themselves responses to this prior vulnerability. We make ourselves secure only because we live out of an intimate ontological vulnerability.

We are impatient with being patient beings. Take an extreme instance: our desire to be on top. We desire not only to be on top of things, we desire to be on top, *simpliciter*. The desire to be number one, the desire to be boss, the desire to be sovereign—understood communally or politically—are easily recognizable configurations of our social life, but they are themselves derivative, derivative from responses of power that want to *recess even more* the recessed patience of our being. It is not only the socially vulnerable who are vulnerable. There is no one who is not socially vulnerable. Being on top recesses the primal patience and its ontological vulnerability. The desire to be on top, while active, is reactive to the primal patience of our being. The issue of the prior "doing justice" is not to be first situated on the level of derivative configurations of

this more primal ontological condition—this more primal poverty. The view is again hardest to defend because we do not want to acknowledge this about ourselves, about our very being. In accession to power(s), we are tempted, again and again, with the apotheosis of invulnerability. Again and again we succumb.

If the contrast of theory and practice is often too crudely drawn, the matter is not one of simply reactively reasserting the virtues of the contemplative life—though I would certainly stress the perennial importance of the contemplative. I want to say that this "doing justice" must be understood in relation to the more primal patience—and this relative to the character of being true with respect to human beings and their good governance of power in a just social accord. There is a sense of "doing justice" that is connected to, and can become the fruit of, a deeper metaphysical patience. Let me explain this in relation to truth or, better put, being true.

Being True and Our Intermediate Being

The strong tendency in modernity to give a certain privilege to praxis is in line with the dictum of Vico: the true is the made (*verum et factum convertuntur*).[9] Marx cites this dictum with approval, and there is a widespread view that there is no truth for itself, the true is the constructed. By extension also the universal is defined by the range of human power in its productive spread. We construct the universal, and this might be taken in either a theoretical or a practical sense. In the theoretical sense, we meet varieties of post-Kantian idealism (not Platonic) in which the universal is constituted by the (self-)activity of successors of the transcendental ego, whether more logical or historicized in form. In the practical sense, the constructive power of humanity makes itself the universal in the range of its projects that claim to be potentially unrestricted in refusing all arrest by any "mere given." In the construction of this universal we could name the scientific-technological will to power of consumer capitalism, the social will to power we detect in social(ist) (earlier communist) political projects. The constructive impulse continues—in postmodernity globalization is now overtly, now secretly, in the business of constructing its universal.

None of this does justice to a sense of the true prior to construction, and that enables construction. The intimate universal is not a

construction, though it may seed us with the promise of being constructive in shaping our lives. The true here is not the made, and to do justice to it, we need an understanding of "doing justice" as inseparable from a fidelity to this prior "being true." This sense of "being true" and of "doing justice" prior to the normal contrast of the theoretical and the practical has everything to do with the fact that we are between-beings. Consider it in the following way.

It is true that we do not possess absolute truth; perhaps only God can and does. That we do not possess the absolute truth is not a postmodern view—it is as old as the despised Plato. We are not the universal. Human beings are not God; hence we do not, in a sense, cannot, possess absolute truth. This does not mean we are licensed through ourselves alone to construct "truth" or "truths," such as we might consider relevant or interesting for ourselves alone. The painter George Braque, one not devoid of the constructive power of the artistic creator, was on to something true when he said: "Truth exists; only lies are invented."[10] One might add: we can only invent lies because we are already in a prior relation to truth, witnessed by the call on us to "be true." The call is intimate and yet implicates the universal. Not possessing absolute truth, we seek the true, but we could not seek at all were there no relation between us, our desire, and the truth sought. To know we do not know the absolute truth is already to be in relation to truth. Otherwise we could not know our ignorance, or seek what we lack and obscurely anticipate. We are intermediate beings: neither in absolute possession of truth, nor in absolute destitution—somewhere between.

We do not construct this "somewhere between." It is the space, indeed ethos, of being, within which we might seek to construct this or that, but it is presupposed by all our constructing power. This place is the *metaxu* (Greek for "between"), and being in the *metaxu* defines our participation in the milieu of being, within which our own middle being intermediates with what is, and with itself, seeking to do justice to itself and what it is to be, as well as to what is other, both as it is and as it is to be. We are endowed before we construct.

This intermediacy has implications for "doing justice" and the intimate universal. There emerges in our very searching, prior to theory and practice, a call to fidelity to the true that we neither possess nor construct, and yet that endows us with the power to do justice, not only in this practical endeavor or that, but in a "being true" that keeps faith in openness to

all that is. The point does not have to be put negatively. It is not a matter of deep instabilities in denying a sense of truth that is not our own construction—though this is important. It is rather a matter of attending to what is intimate in the search for all truth, even in the denial that we possess the truth, namely, an elemental and primal call to "be truthful." Being truthful and "doing justice" are inseparably connected. Moreover, one can be truthful in one's very searching for truth, and even in knowing that one does *not* possess the true. "Doing justice" to this "being true" is testament to that intermediate condition: the honest seeker as between the fullness of truth of the divine and the ignorance of the beast: beyond the second, though the first be beyond us, and yet in intimate relation to what is so beyond us, by virtue of the call to be truthful. The solicitation of the universal is intimate to the call to be truthful. The solicitation of the universal is itself an intimate call. Twinned with this "being true" is the call to "do justice" that is prior to the particular truth or justice of this or that determinate theory or form of praxis. The justice or truth of the latter comes to manifestation out of this prior "being true" and "doing justice." The call to "do justice" of the intimate universal is neither theoretical nor practical but because of it both theory and practice are solicited and enabled.

The charge to be truthful makes a call on us before we endeavor to construct any system of science or philosophy that might claim to be true, and before we seek to put into practice any agenda we deem needful for the just governance of human affairs. It may call us actively to construct or act; but the call itself shows us to be open to something other than our own self-determination, something that endows us with a destiny to be truthful and just to the utmost extent of our human powers. Because the call of the intimate universal is neither theoretical nor practical, there is no way of absolutely separating the theoretical and the practical, the metaphysical and the ethical. For this being truthful is called to a fidelity that solicits a way of life appropriate to it, that issues in a way of being mindful in which we are to live truthfully, and to live truly. "Doing justice" to this call to be truthful is needed if we are to remain true to "doing justice" in this or that practical endeavor. This point will have repercussions for the intermediation between politics and religion, both as profoundly concerned with the appropriate way of life for the human being.

"Being true" is not a univocal, objective truth fixed "out there" but has a bearing on the *immanent porosity* of the human being to being as it

is, and to what is good and worthy in itself to be affirmed.[11] Not simply objective, it is not simply subjective either. Intimately in our selving there opens up the space of an ontological porosity wherein we are called upon intimately to be truthful. The call intimates something trans-subjective, for there is a communication that comes to us, endowing us with a promise we could not construct through ourselves alone. The intimate spirit of truthfulness is suggestive of something *trans-subjective* in our own subjectivity. This spirit of truthfulness is also "objective" just in being trans-subjective, in that it communicates something *other* to us that in its otherness is also in intimate relation to us. This otherness is not objective in terms of this determinate object or that; rather in what is objective this spirit of truthfulness witnesses to something that is trans-objective. Though not exhausted by this or that objective truth, without it we would have no participation in objective truth. It endows us with the ability to do justice to this or that objective truth.

I find Pascal's distinction between *l'esprit de géométrie* and *l'esprit de finesse* helpful here. At first glance, we seem to have here a contrast stressing, on the side of geometry, a kind of selfless universality and, on the side of finesse, the intimacy of human selving without claim to universality. While *l'esprit de géométrie* does tend to the ideal of selfless universality, and while *l'esprit de finesse* is not devoid of an immanent promise of universality, it is the intimate universal that is essentially at issue. Such truths as we pursue in the hard sciences and mathematics call upon *l'esprit de géométrie*. They are open to the more objective univocalization of the seemingly selfless universal. By contrast, the intimacy of the human being eludes complete objective univocalization—even if only because as *seekers of the true* we are always more than any univocal truth. Even the project of univocal truth emerges from sources that themselves cannot be univocalized. Our passion for univocal truth is not itself a univocal passion. This passion is the intimate eros for truth as universal, hence witnesses to more than the selfless universal. Our desire for the selfless universal itself solicits a truthful selving. Truthful selving is intimate to what we are most deeply in an ontological sense, but it shows us intimately in relation to the true beyond us, and as universal in a sense we neither project nor construct. Projection and construction presuppose a more primal patience to truth in our being truthful, a patience more ontologically reserved than every determinate project or construction. The intimate universal endows the spirit of truthfulness gestating in the deepest intimacy of human selving.

"Doing justice" is the practice of being truthful in the living endowment of the intimate universal.

We especially need *l'esprit de finesse* when we try to do justice to the human being, in the intimate ambiguity of its being, defined in the tension between its own being truthful and the true as other than its own construction. Our being truthful calls first upon powers of mindfulness that flower in *l'esprit de finesse* rather than *l'esprit de géométrie*. One could, of course, say that the selfless universality of *l'esprit de géométrie* itself secretly participates in the more intimate truthfulness of *l'esprit de finesse*. For the proper sense for the appropriate employment of *l'esprit de géométrie* is not itself an instance of *l'esprit de géométrie*. As a *deeming of the appropriate*, it asks for *l'esprit de finesse*. In that regard, *l'esprit de finesse* is more basic than *l'esprit de géométrie*. Without the former the latter cannot judge the appropriate or deem the worthy. There is a sense in which the spirit of truthfulness transcends the difference of geometry and finesse, and in such a way that we must resist the temptation to see these two as just dualistically opposed. They are held together in something more primal. The universal of one is wedded to the intimacy of the other in the intimate universal. The spirit of truthfulness is itself intimate to the finesse of the human being. As transcending the difference of geometry and finesse, the spirit of truthfulness participates in and gives witness to the intimate universal.

Finesse has significant implications for both the neutralizing, homogenizing universality of modern Enlightenment and the repudiation of universality by post-Enlightenment postmoderns. Relative to the first, finesse is crucial in a time such as ours in which *l'esprit de géométrie*, floating cybernetically high with powerful theoretical knowledge, and arrogating to itself selfless universality, is often in the ascendant. Finesse is rather a readiness for a more intimate knowing, in communication with what is prior to and beyond geometry. Finesse articulates a mindfulness that reveals a readiness to read the equivocal signs of human existence. The *élan* of such a mindfulness is not simply a matter of converting these signs into the neutral universals of a univocal science or a philosophical system. Finesse is an excellence of mindfulness that is singularly embodied and that resists being rendered without remainder in neutral generalities. The matter has its ethical and political manifestation also. Ethical finesse and political finesse, one might say, find their practical embodiment in the excellences of *phronēsis*. Finesse concerns the concrete suppleness of living

intelligence that is open, attentive, mindful, attuned to the occasion in all its elusiveness, subtlety, and unrepeatable singularity. Singularity here is not a kind of autism of being. It communicates of what is rich with a promise, and indeed danger, promise perhaps initially, not fully, communicated, and yet available for, making itself available for, communicability. Communicability itself is not to be rendered in terms of neutral generality, or homogeneous universality. The mindfulness of finesse asks that we be in attendance on what the intimacy of being communicates. We are not confined to the merely private but come to ourselves in the space of open porosity that is at the heart of living communicability.

Relative to the second, namely, the postmodern repudiation of Enlightenment universality, postmodern pluralism often luxuriates in ambiguity and equivocity. But since not everything is worthy of celebration, we need finesse to tell the difference and to do justice to what is worthy. Finesse does not deny ambiguity, is not false to it, but it is also not an indiscriminate glorification of ambiguity. In deeming what is worthy to be affirmed, there is a self-transcending toward others beyond oneself in the deeming and the affirming. There is the promise of something more universal than oneself alone. If nothing else, finesse is always more than any project or construction or agenda. It is a matter of "doing justice"—justice to intimate nuance, without which our projects or constructions or agendas only lurch in half-light. It fosters receptive mindfulness of singular occasions, happenings, and persons, ready to be surprised, if not amazed. In the past, religion and art have been the great mistresses of finesse. Without religious finesse, reverence turns into terrified servility before enslaving powers. Without aesthetic finesse, the gentle insinuations of shining beauty are overtaken by the violations of crude imaginations. Without finesse for ethical ambiguity, we turn the law into a moralistic tyrant. Without finesse in thought, there is no wise philosophy. Without finesse in politics, the huckster takes over, or worse, the tyrant. The tyrant is the counterfeit double of sovereignty—mutant will to power usurps the noble will of the statesman.

"Doing Justice" and the Patience of Being

Agenda philosophers generally think that our being is just to do: the deed is in the beginning, the middle and the end. And of course, we are to *do*

justice, but this is not just to do. As doers we come to act constructively but the question concerns the limits of construction. The constructive act cannot be the first or the last, or the middle either, if our being true indicates first a patience to the true before we ourselves are called to be truthful in a more active sense. We do, we act, we make. But our true making is not just "making things up." There is a "doing justice" to what is not made by us, or not "made up." There is a patience of being before there is an endeavor to be, a receiving of being before an acting of being. The patience and receiving mark our participation in the intimate universal—we come to be in a more primal porosity of being in which the endowment of our elemental powers are communicated to us. This more primal patience offers the conditions that make possible the determinate acting that will come to mark our assumed endeavor. When the primal patience is acknowledged with finesse, our action and assumed endeavor are understood differently than within a philosophy that projects the self-absolutizing of our activist character or our endeavor to be.

I put it thus: More primal than the *conatus essendi* is the *passio essendi*. These are ideas to which we will return more than once, but here I note that Spinoza describes the *essence* of a being as its *conatus* (*Ethics*, part 3, prop. 7). The essence of a being as its *conatus essendi* is defined by its power to affirm itself and its range. This range for Spinoza is potentially unlimited (*Ethics*, part 3, prop. 8),[12] if there are no external countervailing beings who express their power of being in opposition to, or in limitation of, the power of other beings. One could say that, abstracting from the other, in itself and for itself, the *conatus* would be the universal. It would pass unrestrictedly through the whole, no other *conatus* opposing it. One thinks of Sartre later: the human being is the desire *to be God*—the *conatus* would be the absolute universal—though interestingly this is impossible since the intimate and the universal cannot be brought into ultimate unity. Sartre's "God" is the impossible synthesis of the *en-soi* (the self-less universal whole) and *pour soi* (the intimate selving). Sartre's God mimics the intimate universal in a way that makes our ultimate, intimate passion for God into a *passion inutile*.

For Spinoza the *conatus essendi* is the being of a being, hence also the being of the human being. Without an external limitation, the endeavor to be is potentially infinite. If there is an intimate universal here, it is a matter of the intimacy of the *conatus* that, left unopposed, desires to be the universal. Since this desire, stated in these terms, is always

impossible (Sartre is not wrong on this), the shadow of threat always falls over it. An external other always presents itself as potentially hostile to my self-affirming. The other, so seen, is alien to my most intimate self-affirmation. All self-affirming is shadowed by the potential negation of the other. Our relations to the other may settle down into suitable, even reasonable accommodation between different *conatuses*, but even so settling, these relations always harbor implicit hostility. Within the unity of the whole the ultimate settling may happen but that holistic settlement circles around the immanent universality of strife. The other, like I, as simply *conatus* also endeavors to be itself, which means endeavors to be the universal. It is not then that you and I participate in the intimate universal. Your endeavor to be and my endeavor both instantiate the will to erotic sovereignty, not the willingness of agapeic service. On this understanding, the continuation of the *conatus essendi* must disarm the threat of the other, or arm itself against it from the outset. On such a view passivity is to be avoided or overcome. Being patient seems to place us in a position of subordination. To receive from the other communicates a dangerous sign of weakness. To receive is to be servile, while to endeavor and to act are to be sovereign. This attitude fits in with the ethos of modernity in which the autonomous subject as self-law (*autonomos*) is implicitly in ambiguous, potentially hostile relation to what is other, or *heteros*. It is difficult on these terms to grant the promise of agapeic service, beyond the alternatives of sovereignty and servility.

Stepping back into the space of the porosity and the *passio essendi* suggests something different. We are first given to be, before all endeavor and doing. The *passio essendi* calls on the recognition of an otherness more original than our own self-determination. We are only self-determining in a relative sense because we have originally been given to be as selves. We are only creative because created, only loving because already loved, only become good because we properly participate in a good we do not ourselves produce, only truthful because a more original truth endows us with the desire to be true and seek truth. This prior receiving is our being given to be as endowed participants in the intimate universal.

There implies no denial of the *conatus* but we need to grant a crucial doubleness in what, to all appearances, looks like a singular self-affirmation. This doubleness is evident if we remember that the *conatus* is a *co-natus*: a (being) "born with." It comes to be from and with an other to itself. All endeavor to be makes reference back to a more original source, signaled

here in this being "born with." I offer a simple example that bears on what later (in part 2) I will explore as the aesthetics of the intimate universal. I am thinking of what *the health of the human body* communicates. In the vibrant body we see something of the *conatus* in the elemental will to self-affirmation that marks its vitality. It is our being to affirm itself, and the self-affirmation communicates of the good of the "to be" in our own incarnate being at all. That granted, there is something in self-affirmation that relativizes self-affirmation. There is something in its self-affirmation communicating of its being given to be at all, something making it porous relative to what is other than itself, and porous not just as a servile passivity. In the flesh itself, we *find ourselves* in this self-affirmation; we do not first construct it. In the flesh itself, it is so intimate to what we are that we mostly pay it no notice, when it pours itself forth with unbidden vitality. In the flesh of our very embodied being, we live this affirmation of the "to be" as good; we do not first choose it or construct it, for it is what we are. Mostly we only pay it more reflective notice, when it is interrupted by injury or sickness or begins to ebb through age. Since we find ourselves as thus self-affirming, there is a patience to this primal self-affirmation. There is something received in our being given to be, something not constructed through our own powers. Our constructive powers presuppose this vitalizing ontological energy.

In the intimacy of the flesh we are an original "yes" to being, but we find ourselves as already given to be in an original "yes" to being that is received and not produced through ourselves alone. We do not first incarnate the "yes," we are incarnated as this living "yes." It is more intimate to us than we are to ourselves. Our incarnate being finds itself in the communication of this original "yes." It is what it is as singularly communicating this "yes." We also have to say our "yes" to this original "yes." When we do so the endeavor to be emerges in a more self-chosen way. Our second "yes" can be in living communication with the first "yes," for instance, if we live with respect for the integrity of the body, with finesse for its subtle rhythms, even seeking to embody an ontological reverence intimate to the flesh itself. In the communicative expansion of the intimate "yes," in our being at all, we can discern the promise of a more universal affirmation of being. We do not know this theoretically, we first participate in it—and philosophically we can come to a kind of knowing of it if our "being true" is faithful to the intimate universal. This participation in the intimate universal is the incognito companion of all our constructivist endeavors.

Nothing of our further endeavor to be tells against the more primal patience. The agenda-driven projects of constructivist philosophies too often tend toward an amnesia of this patience. At an extreme they may even give rise to a hatred of this patience, for it is the incontrovertible reminder of our participation in the intimate universal as finite, a constitutive sign that we are not masters of being, not even masters of our own being. Falsely fleeing the patience of being as something servile, we falsely construct ourselves as untrue sovereigns. Doing this is thus an undoing. Paradoxically, when we turn away from the more primal patience, our self-affirmation is the counterfeit double of self-hatred. It covers itself with the regal insignia of sovereignty, but in an intimacy beyond intimacy the counterfeiting "knows" itself to be such. The ontological giving making possible our being at all is refused as such. This refusal, just in self-affirmation, is self-refusal. In thus affirming ourselves, we have not done justice to what we are. We are not "doing justice" to the intimate universal or our singular participation in it.[13]

"Doing Justice" and the Practice of Philosophy

In light of the prior "doing justice" what can we say about the practices of philosophy and the intimate universal? While philosophers have always been overtly concerned with justice, in many approaches this has much to do with power, its expression, circulation, and governance. One recalls the identification of might and right we find, for instance, in Thrasymachus. Here we witness the hypertrophy of the *conatus essendi*—the overriding of the *passio essendi* in the sense of primal reception, and instead all passion and endeavor are poured into will to power, blunt or devious as circumstances dictate. True justice does have to do with the good governance of power, the determinate distribution and balance of powers, the correction of overweening powers. The inseparability of justice and power has itself much to do with what is most intimate to our being, whether seen individually or communally. Individually, there is an elemental truth in the understanding of human beings as will and will to power. I connect this with the intimate upsurge of what is implicit in the endeavor to be: self-affirmation, self-expression, self-assertion, over others in certain circumstances. Communally: a many is marked by a general eros, and this too communicates itself as a shared expression of will and will to power:

a way of social life whose very living is sustained by its communal will to be itself.

The sources of individual and social will are in the intimacy of being, though they flower in the space of a potentially more general, even universal communality. The promise of the intimate universal insinuates itself in the expression, circulation, and governance of will to power. The question of justice implicates the fitting measure of power, the moderation of destructive power, the appropriate fulfillment of enabling power(s). The issue of injustice is not the betrayal of power, but the betrayal of the promise of power. There is an intimate promise to power, power that finally is rooted in the power of the "to be." In light of the primal affirmation explored above, we cannot avoid the question whether the power of the "to be" is the power of the good or of the "to be" as good.[14] This is easier said than understood. Injustice has no power in itself—not if injustice is the betrayal of the promise of power. Without power, the power of the "to be" that allows an unjust man or society to be thus or thus, injustice would be nothing at all. The intimate universal as enabling "doing justice" is not first a project we construct but the promise of a patience we first receive, and out of which we endeavor to redeem a promise in our constructive response.

I take Socrates to offer a rejoinder to Thrasymachus throughout the fuller length of the *Republic* by showing that without justice as a condition of being, the power of injustice as a betrayal of power would not itself be possible. Without the presupposition of some condition of ontological togetherness or harmony, even crime is impossible. A gang of criminals cannot function as such without some harmony, however minimal or flawed, between them (*Republic*, 351c–d). There is an idiocy to injustice that points back to an intimacy of being and a kind of trust in the justice of (some) others, more primordial than injustice itself.

The patience of being suggests that there is a justice that is a condition of being more primal than the exercise of power as an expression of being. Moreover, the doing of justice has to do with our condition of being as marked by more than will to power. This means we have to modify those modern theories of justice that tend to take more account of the will to power of endeavoring protagonists and, in a minor key, the *passio* of those lacking power. The standard of reference here tends to be the possession of power. Hence to the justice of the patient justice itself is not always done. Nor is justice done to the power of the good of the

"to be."[15] If my reflections to this point are not entirely untruthful, we need to consider this patience again at a deeper level than the usual duality of activity and passivity that often defines our understanding of the (social) endeavor to be.

For instance, we tend to think of social justice in connection with those less well off in society. We think of the poor and ways of alleviating their poverty, be it through a variety of purposeful interventions, or through economic activity that will contribute, if let be, to better circumstances for prosperity. Or we think less locally of those in other lands and continents less well off, and to whose distress we ourselves can contribute, and sometimes help to diminish. Philosophy cannot turn a deaf ear to these concerns, though it is not immediately clear what it distinctively can contribute to their consideration. One does not have to be a philosopher to offer one's services to the many agencies dealing with issues of social justice in the sense at issue here, or to dedicate oneself to the study of the economic aspects of social justice, or to give one's life to the political processes necessary to protect and enhance ways of life hospitable to social justice. We can also contribute to various reflective debates about what all of such things amount to, can reflect on issues like individualism and communitarianism, the conservative and the progressive, the reformist and the revolutionary. All these issues are very important in their own way, but finesse for the intimate universal asks of philosophy a step back into the space of the prior sense of "doing justice."

It is not that philosophers should not be involved in such issues but there are other questions no less important—perhaps more important—and that often are recessed when our thoughts are too absorbed in the foreground of immediate happening. There are excitement and even intoxication in being engaged in the forefront. Not being in the forefront means being nothing. But being nothing is not nothing, and may be asked for in closer connection with the intimate universal. The idiocy of being is in one sense a being alone, in another sense an opening of intimate communication. In the porosity of being, being nothing is a different exposure, and such exposure is mostly shunned with determinate projects and agendas that fill up and fill in the porosity. This can be done through self-assertion, it can be done through social and political projects that engage the energies of the *conatus* and veer away from the vulnerable exposure in the patience of being. There can be something essentially lonely in stepping back philosophically and trying to take the longer look. History with

a big H (sigh . . .) might be passing one by. I remember again the fretting Sartre. The solitudes of philosophy are not opposed to the quest of the universal, but the universal as also calling on the intimacy of being is never exhausted by any constructive agenda for universality.[16] History with a big H has been claimed as the universal, of course, but the intimate universal is not to be identified with this History. Not quite outside but not quite inside, it is immanent and transcendent, on the threshold between time and its beyond, in the world but not of it, neither one nor the other and yet the place of passing between them, a porosity between the human and the divine, and it does not matter whether we think of this as above us or below us, within us, or without us. The universal is all of these and none, and the intimate universal is communication from all of them and none, and yet there is access to it in terms of mindfulness of what is intimate to the porosity of our being.

Obsessed with big H History, we cover over all of this with our temporary constructions of importances, our importances. There are crucial considerations that can very easily become *recessed* rather than expressed in these importances. In a certain regard, it is of the very nature of practical life just to bring about that recess. Human beings as finite *must engage life under determinate conditions.* We are what we are to be, and what we are to be as endeavoring beings. We are engaged with our own efforts at self-determination and with the determinacies that define the finite conditions of our becoming ourselves. Our determination and self-determination are carried out in the *metaxu*, and this is also the intermedium of the determinate. Mindfulness of those conditions is not always the first condition for such engagements, undertaken often in the heat of the moment. Quite the opposite: too much thinking on those conditions can be eviscerating of a practice of life, or paralyzing to the sources of engagement. The passion of engagement is relativized by the reflective posture of standing back and hence the purpose turns awry and we lose the name of action. The patience involved in stepping back into the prior "doing justice" is not quite this standing back. It involves more a matter of mindfulness, a finesse that can lead to a kind of second philosophical patience. It can be likened to becoming a child again, insofar as the child is still a creature of wonder, and porous to the surprise in things, porous to the *passio.* Very true, one sometimes has no time to weigh options, one has to act. But even in extreme circumstances of urgency the "doing justice" of the primal patience can still inform the acting itself. Admittedly, to live with

poise amid urgency, to do justice to the patience of being in the stresses of immediately requisitioned action, is an excellence of rare wisdom. But it is not impossible.

When Hamlet praises Horatio it is something of this poise to which he is drawn. Hamlet initially cannot act, but he is not patient either. His *passio* is perhaps in disarray in perplexed suspicion about his fratricidal uncle. His porosity is perhaps clogged by repressed fury at his widowed and too-soon remarried mother. He has not found access to the doing of justice that is beyond retributive justice, cryptically hinted in the providence of the sparrow's fall. In not being able to act, Hamlet is often taken as emblematic of something of the condition of modernity paralyzed by its hyper-self-reflexivity. There is something of the perplexing intimacy of hyper-self-consciousness about Hamlet. One way of seeking release from this condition of paralyzing self-reflection is a lurch in the opposite direction: a turn toward hyperactivity. "Willing liberates," to make a call on Nietzsche again. But this does not so much overcome the paralysis as fly from it—still frozen in itself. Such hyperactivity brings its own paralysis with its flight. Not being true to the patience of being, such hyperactivity really suffers from a secret lassitude of being that it alleviates by ceaselessly throwing itself into this project and that. Still the human being is itself and nothing but itself—in lassitude or in hyperactivity. This is the inescapable idiocy of it, the intimacy it itself is, in flight from itself into projects. The practice of philosophy can quickly become an agenda-driven ideology when it is too seduced by foreground circumstances to the oblivion of the recessed conditions that enable the practices of different forms of life. Philosophers offer something more true to practical life when they nurture mindfulness of these enabling recesses. Thinkers who love the forefront push themselves to the fore. They do not impress us with poise. Willingness to be nothing, this is part of philosophy: the willingness to count for nothing; the willingness to be a nobody, in order to open to everybody and everything. Being nothing in this sense is a condition of finesse for the intimate universal.

The patience of being and the endeavor to be can be *doubled equivocally* in theory and practice in the form of hypertheory and hyperactivity. Interestingly, hypertheory and hyperactivity often go together—perhaps not so much in the same person, as in a community, or even an entire epoch. Am I wrong to detect in modernity a passage from activity to hyperactivity—with less and less of the patience of being, less and less

of the ultimate porosity that is to the divine? Is there not here a project of the universal? But it is in flight from the intimate universal, so far as this is enacted in the porosity to communication with the divine. This universality enacts the project of the God's-eye view because there is no God. Because there is no God, the project of the universal becomes our project to be God or to be as God: agent of the universal, greater than which none can be either thought or enacted. This is all in the business of humanity's constructing a counterfeit double of the intimate universal.

It is said that in premodernity, there was hypertheory such as the putative God's-eye view of the Platonic philosopher. Given our intermediacy, very much granted by Plato, this is entirely too simple. The finitude of the philosopher, of the human being, seems incontrovertible: between beasts and gods, we remain intermediate, hence finite, even where we are to become like God—for we never are nor will we ever be God. Modern philosophy strikes one often as much more hypertheoretical. Our more elemental participation in the intimate universal, communicated in the primal patience of our being, suffered as wonder, and praised as worthy, is overtaken by an ontological distrust, when doubt, distanced from a more celebrant astonishment, becomes hyperbolic. Suspicion of being as other overtakes love. Curiosity is substituted for wonder. "Theory" will construct for us the intelligibility of the world, but "theory" is sucked more and more into the space of being an instrumental hypothesis that, in sometimes remote and sometimes proximate manners, serves a particular purpose of practical humanity. As we move from activity to hyperactivity, at a certain point we pass a threshold and a defect of patience is followed by a lack of true measure. This hyperactivity becomes defective in the "doing justice" that is also our "being true." In all of this, paradoxically there is nothing truly "hyper"—nothing above—hence no basis of a reverence for the divine on our part, when we claim to be the measure of ourselves and what is other. In getting above ourselves we fall below ourselves.

"Doing Justice" and Being Nothing

The prior "doing justice" points to a fidelity to good already given, not just a good actively constructed or done—a good making possible all active constructions and doings of the good. In some ways, the relation of philosophy and more determinate social justice is analogous to the relation

between professing religion and the ethical service that one would expect as its concrete witnessing. There is a doubling of fidelity here: the prior fidelity to the reserves of the intimate universal, and the expressed fidelity that enacts justice in a more determinate communication in the space of the commons. There is never a necessary guarantee that the expressed practice or witness will hold entirely true to the intimate universal, or faithfully conform to theory or what one holds to be true. In life there are always failures to hold true to what one holds to be true, to what holds one to the true. We do not enact what being true promises and solicits of us. We are dealing with freedom, and the equivocity of the human condition. There are uses of both philosophy and religion that are ideological in the worst sense, serving merely as sly means to questionable ends. Again they are too agenda driven—driven by a claim to the universal but the claim covers over a counterfeit double of the intimate universal, since something is not there in the drive, say, the spirit of truthfulness, or the friendship of wisdom, or the love of the good. Instead of a form of agapeic service, their services become ones of serviceable disposability.[17]

Consider the following line of thought about Spinoza's way of speaking of religion: religious piety is salutary with respect to social order, salutary in serving obedience to the political sovereign.[18] By contrast, philosophy, it is said, serves truth, not piety. Philosophical truth brings us the true placeless universal, nowhere because everywhere; piety induces submission to the particularized generalities of local rules of political order. The nowhere-because-everywhere-universal here is not the intimate universal, for the intimate would bring us closer to the universal that is the personal God of biblical monotheism. For Spinoza this universal, as so intimate, services the imaginations of the people, not the reason of the philosophers. But if the god of biblical monotheism communicates to us in the space of the intimate universal, the matter must be put differently to the Spinozistic way. The contrast of truth and piety does not quite work that way, nor does it amount to a bifurcation of intimacy and universality, with perhaps a special intimacy accorded to those philosophical sages who enact *amor intellectualis Dei*. The love of the intimate universal is not Spinoza's *amor intellectualis Dei*, for the God of biblical monotheism comes to incarnation in the love of agapeic service. The absence of the intimate universal, in the sense here intended, produces a particular "take" on the serviceability of religion vis-à-vis submission to the Spinozistic sovereign, not unlike that of Hobbes. For the latter sovereignty must be

undivided, and hence there cannot be two masters, and the master who is given the palm is not Christ but Caesar.[19] Political sovereignty determines the local form of piety, that is, submission to authority, which has a certain generality, but not the faceless universality of truth. One wonders if the community of agapeic service has been subordinated to the dictates of the erotic sovereign whose regnant *conatus* gathers below him the lesser energies of the other *conatuses*. The possibility that there is something to the agapeic servant outside these terms of reference is not calculated into the determination of importances—importances that would keep reminding us of the irreducibility of the intimate universal either to the local political generalities of regnant sovereigns or to the faceless universality of the geometrical sages.

Is there nothing more ultimate to which we are to be true, or to do justice, than such obediences to the sovereign? If there is nothing more, is this not to subject religion to the requirements of serviceable disposability—serviceable to the political sovereigns, but disposable with respect to claims of ultimate truth? I ask: Does philosophy itself escape the temptation to serviceable disposability in a similar sense? Escape committing sins similar to a religion that bows before Caesar and none other? Philosophy, sometimes honorably, sometimes to its shame, has served obedience to the sovereign. We have seen this happen with the revolutionary obediences of Marxists serving the agenda of revolution; we have seen it in Heidegger's shocking idolatry of Hitler; we have seen it with well-paid excusers within the space of consumer capitalism. Just as there are theologians, there are philosophers like Job's comforters who come up with a theory of unimpeachable logic to mollify our ethical discomforts and even shrug off every horror.

There is a deeper level of fidelity and "doing justice"—and it is not just the transition from theory to practice. This is the more primordial level of the patience of being, patience in being true. A true practice of religion in a society fosters attendance on this patience and fidelity. I think the true philosopher is also a servant of this patience—keeping open the porosity of the human being to the most ultimate wonder and unsettling perplexity, not letting this porosity get clogged with dubious theories, and with practices that are not faithful to the good of human desire. "Doing justice" at this level of the patience of being is the most difficult. It is the most important in the long run. Its immediate importance is not always evident. Quite the contrary, it can seem prevaricating and unhelpful, indeed pusillanimous in seeming not willing to

commit itself to now needed action. It seems to make cowards of us all. In fact, we require courage in a different dimension—courage to take the long view, the wider view, the more ontologically intimate view. Such would be the courage of the love of wisdom, courage that comes out of the secret sources of strengthening, courage to speak of and for the intimate universal.

Consider the much discussed issue of *terror*. Granted, in certain circumstances immediate steps must be undertaken, and done in order to do justice. But there is an equally important, sometimes in the longer run more important, matter of "doing justice." This entails trying to understand truly the sources of terror, and this means stepping back into the intimate universality of our original porosity of being. One must be more than a thinker of the immediate foreground. One recalls, for instance, from some decades ago the ideological intoxication on the Left with political terror. One recalls further back in the nineteenth century the historical appearance of the political terrorist as such. One recalls the connection of terror and theory in the left-Hegelian line of thinking, summed up by Bruno Bauer's call for the "terrorism of pure theory." One recalls further back again the French Revolution as the mother of all modern political terrors, a terror and revolution that Hegel both judged and exculpated for being sourced in "abstract" freedom. One recalls the ambiguous Edmund Burke, prescient of the ominous horror stirring with modern political terror.[20]

This first paradigmatic terror of the French Revolution has taught us something about the intimate universal: preaching about the universal, and calling forth images of intimate fraternity, but the intimate fraternity is cannibalized in the unbounded spirit of suspicion, for the enemies of the revolution are perhaps everywhere, for how else, why else, would it fail. The universal attests itself, self-evidently to men of political good will. But good will is not universal. It draws us back to the intimate, and stepping there the worm turns. Where then, the desolate cry goes up, are the brothers promised by the intimate universal? The brothers have become the hindering others, the counterfeiting comrades whose face shows the smile of the universal, but the smile too hides the intimate and again in the idiocy of the soul the worm must not just be scotched, but killed (with a bow to *Macbeth*, act 3, scene 2). The universal itself becomes a project of the enforcement of revolution—a total agenda for the complete transformation of social life, down to the new recalibrating of time from now

on. Now the *absolutum novum* begins—but this is a dictated *novum*, and hence utterly devoid of "doing justice" to the patience of being. Rather a tyrannical *conatus* overtakes every *passio*, only to find itself overtaken by a passion of negation in which universal death threatens to reign, not elemental life, worthy in itself. The universal "perhaps" of unbounded suspicion is transmuted through terror into the universality of unbridled certainty that the enemy must be liquidated. And behind it all the waiting god of war is ready to extend its empire when its appetite, still not sated with the immanent terror, follows its urge to embark on a war of conquest, justifying itself in high moral songs about saving the revolution, or with missionary hymns extolling its agenda of liberation for all of humanity. This is all verging on a sacrilege to the intimate universal. The agenda did indeed tip over into desecration.

There are considerations that might be said to be *even more recessed*, not bearing on this or that event, or this or that doing, this or that undoing. They have to do with our being, at its most intimate and idiotic, in its paradoxical condition of "being as nothing." We are but we are as if nothing. We were nothing once, we will come to nothing again. We are but once and now are not nothing, but the "once" we are is qualified with its own possible being nothing, a possibility that will be realized in the course of time. The affirming of being we now are is qualified by its own "being nothing." Being nothing has senses bearing on the porosity and the patience of our being. Being nothing has senses bearing on our power to bring things to naught, through our own power to negate, for the *conatus* of our being can affirm itself in its determination of things through its negation. More secret than the power of negation is the void space of the human soul. Into this deepest cave of nothing the philosopher too must enter. One must know the susceptibility of this void space to being terrorized, its susceptibility to terrorizing. Terror before an enemy, terror against a declared enemy, perhaps even the need of an enemy take form in this void—on both the side of the terrorizing and the terrorized.[21] Then one endeavors to be oneself over against the other; the *conatus* overrides the *passio essendi*, both one's own and that of the others. Then too all patience seems like nothing but a void to be overcome, and one will not step back, lest one sink back into oneself as one's own void. I, as active *conatus*, endeavor to be over every other as patient to me, as the conquered *passio essendi* of myself shows itself lord over the *conatus* and *passio* of the overcome other. But all of us, whether sovereign or servile,

whether ascendant or dejected, are what we are simply as a porosity of being, and hence in our ontological roots are vulnerable to terror and tempted to terrorize. Less negatively put, I think this is where we can appreciate some of the redeeming power of tragedy: tragedy exposes us to the things that are dark (*ta skoteina*); coming to know our patience to the terrible (*to deinon*), we are brought to an acknowledging of our finitude, in a knowing marked with the sacred patience of compassion (*eleos*). I will return to this.

The deeper sources of terror are not simply in proximate grievances. They are in the void space of our nothingness that we know in the intimate universal. For our being given to be in the intimate universal brings home to us the endowed character of all our power, that is, its absolute impotence to be absolute as endeavoring to be. Our nothingness is known in the intimate universal because as being at all we are not nothing but live and move and have our being in virtue of an endowing power that communicates beyond every void. That is why there is something rather than nothing, why we are at all, rather than being just nothing.

The matter need not be taken in the negative sense that would look upon our being in deprecating, nihilistic terms. For this reason I prefer to speak of the *porosity of the soul* rather than just the void—this porosity opens up a kind of *fecund void*. It is true that out of this void of the soul there can come to be an entire nihilistic outlook—be it religious or secular. This must be addressed. In the end, it can only be addressed reflectively in terms of a metaphysics of the "to be" and the "to be" of the human being. It also calls on an address to living that appreciates that there is more to the fertile void than our emptiness, and that enacts its more communal sense by way of religious communications that keep open the porosity. Such communications can be liturgies, can be modes of prayer, especially of the meditative sort, can be ethical commitments to the practice of agapeic service.

There have been philosophies that have gloried in the language of terror. There are languages overtly religious that are closures of this porosity—to God, to one's neighbor. Be it in religious or secular form, the *conatus* that arrogates truth for itself can overtake the *passio* that endows us with the promise of being true. To address this matter, to do justice to it, requires that we face the nothing—and the porosity of our being and its vulnerability. This does not mean one will have a panacea or even can propose a method for dealing with terror. It does not

mean the exculpation of evil acts. It need not mean the evasion of social responsibilities, in inciting terror and responding to it. But it will mean that the recessed ontological (re)sources of our being will be more honestly acknowledged, and that the deepest will not be ignored. Terror comes with communication in the intimate universal: the holy terror of the divine that fills us with fear and trembling and perhaps the beginning of wisdom; unholy terror, which is the counterfeit double of divine wrath, though it is not the divine that is wrathful but the human being roaring in the realization that it is and never can be God. Realizing that, it wills to realize itself as God. The counterfeit double of God is not what it would be, and would be what it is not. The wrath of the counterfeit double of God can be born as religious fanaticism that kills in the name of the purity of faith. The wrath can also be reborn as political terror intent on the agenda of its world-historical mission.[22]

The fundamental porosity of the human soul, by contrast with this particular project or that, seems to look like a void; but it is a nothing that allows all openness, all receiving, all self-transcendence. Out of it come all the practical energies that feed this project and that. That there is such a porosity, or fecund void to the soul, also means that the nothing can be looked at as otherwise than a justification for nihilism, theoretical or practical. This is an important point—for there is a nihilation whose reduction is, so to say, a desacralization of the human being. Trotsky: "We must get rid of, once and for all, this Quaker-Papist babble about the sanctity of human life." "Getting rid of, once and for all": a terrifying univocal agenda, even a project of a final solution. Not too far behind desacralization comes along the desecration. By contrast, I am talking about a sacred nothing, if one could say that—a nothing that marks the human being's porosity to the divine, that constitutes something of the trace of the divine in the human being, a trace that can become a consecrated nothing. This trace is in passing in the porosity of being, and its communication brings to be the community with the divine that is communicated in the intimate universal. We are in this universal, this universal is in us; it is hard to know what "in" means here, since it is inside and outside, here and now and yet also nowhere, frozen in no time and flowing in all times. We live out of it. Graced with prayer, we are granted some knowing of it—though the knowing can be sleeping in other forms too, if one could speak of a knowing that sleeps.

Being Nothing and the Poverty of Philosophy

As there is a patience to the true in "doing justice," there is also a paradoxical destitution in what we are. There is a justice for the vulnerable—there is justice as a vulnerability. The intimate universal is often hidden in the incognito of elemental things. There is justice as a kind of *poverty*: poverty in opening a space not only for one's own good but for the good of the other. The *practice of philosophy* calls for its own kind of poverty: the poverty of philosophy itself.[23] This situates philosophy in the same family as the religious. There is to be an abdication of power for power's sake: the practice of philosophy as "doing justice" is not will to power, not even self-determining reason. It asks for reasonable mindfulness, indeed agapeic mindfulness, in the services of the true: thought thinking the other to thought. It means a willingness to be as nothing. There is a poverty that is a "being nothing" to make a way for what is true to communicate itself, to make way for those who have lost their way, or have no way, or are seeking a way. This poverty is being a way along no way. There is a return to zero that interfaces newly with creation as given. "Doing justice" asks a pilgrim philosophy from the wayfarer. Our being between defines us as *homo viator*.

Relative to such a poverty, the first charge for the practice of philosophy would not be quite the more normal task of a practical fight, say, against poverty. This last is considerable, not at all to be slighted, but with relation to the intimate universal we are moving in a different space, one that seeds the promise of struggles against debilitating poverties (in the more usual sense). Not granting this other space, there can come again to the fore a certain activism that rouses worry. One wonders if many of us in the West, losing attunement to the intimate universal, suffer from what has been a recurrent and sapping debility of spirit: horror at the emptiness of life. To buffer ourselves against meaninglessness, we throw ourselves into hyperbolic activity, thus alleviating the lassitude that squats at the bottom of our souls. This lassitude is not the patience of being. Hyperactivity, as we know, has come to be called "attention deficit disorder." What if an epoch suffers from hyperactivity? Would it not be marked by "attention deficit disorder" of quasi-universal proportions? Where is the medicine, is there Ritalin enough, is there Ritalin at all, to cure such an attention deficit on an epochal scale?

Lathe biosas: Epicurus was not unwise in saying this. It is good to be nothing. One is happy to be nothing. Perhaps something important will pass in the porosity. Perhaps some sabbatical thought. Being nothing opens us to the intimate universal. Living her own eccentric hiddenness, Emily Dickenson touched on it:

> I'm nobody! Who are you?
> Are you nobody, too?
> Then there's a pair of us—don't tell!
> They'd banish us, you know.
> How dreary to be somebody!
> How public, like a frog
> To tell your name the livelong day
> To an admiring bog!

Horror at the emptiness of life: We cannot stand the silence. With bullfrog souls we croak and make a racket. We cannot wait, cannot abide the silence. We speak into the silence. We shout into the silence. We insist on telling the silence what its meaning is. We tell our story to the silence. There is nothing there to hear this story. We hear nothing but the echo of our own croak. We croak this story to ourselves. It is our song of ourselves, or racket, and it can be sung in the notes of agony or smugness, but it is sung to protect ourselves against being nothing. It is a dictation to nothing. We cannot sit still; something has to be done. The hyperbolic energy of the soul tries to exhaust itself in activism, exhaust itself with its own activity. One thinks of those runners who exercise and exercise not to attain the maximum of physical well-being, but to run from themselves. Perhaps in the past there were certain ascetic practices in religion that claimed to offer an analogous therapy for self, but now no religious justification can be offered for these secular therapies—beyond fear of having to face oneself, fear of the silence—fear of being nothing, fear of the porosity that we are, act up as we will.

Are the historicist narratives of secular modernity, doubling for the recessed intimate universal, not often such songs of self—be the self the more solitary individual, or the privileged nation, or the party, or one's race or class, or all together now in liberal equality? They are not slow in offering their own justification: self-justification in flight from self in hyperactive selving. They can serve as huge diversions from the

nakedness at the heart of the human being. They are fables of justification, of self-justification, we tell ourselves as we sit around the campfire and keep at bay the night that circles on the outside. The night is not outside, the night is in us all, and so we sing to drown the silence that is there in the deeper porosity of our being. We do not let the moon come out in our souls.

The dream of a redeeming universal is not absent in these songs of self, but it is not the intimate universal but a universal we claim once again to construct. These historicist philosophies have exerted bewitching effects on many of the major ideologies of modernity. One thinks of Marxism, but there are other bewitchments in the glorification of technological progress, or the deification of market economics. Humans are intent to construct purpose in what appears to them as a purposeless universe. But if the universe is purposeless, we as participants in the universe are finally also purposeless. Our constructions also come to nothing in the universal purposelessness; they are provisional protections against pointlessness. We are reluctant to face this, and the consequences that follow from it, not least because we cannot continue to live without some purpose, and hence we continue to sing around the campfire. The campfire is almost everything now, since we have let the blaze burn over every nonhuman other in nature—nature, the fuel by which we keep the incessant lights burning through the night. In thus dispelling the night, we suffer from light pollution. More often than we admit, we are the light that pollutes the night.

There are so many carapaces of protection against nothing.[24] "Doing justice" requires something more than the further construction of such carapaces. It is true we have to construct protections for the naked human being—much justice asks to be done in this mode. But if this mode is made the absolute, and makes us forget the ontological nakedness, it is built upon a falsity. The point is evident in the fact that this *just* activism, constructivism, can serve to do justice to those who are nothing: those who are naked, those destitute. The nakedness we flee in ourselves comes back to haunt us in the nakedness of the destitute other. This nakedness is something social. Most of the time we can cover ourselves before human others. We can be in cover-up even before ourselves. I speak in homage to Job: there is the Other before whom we all stand naked. For some activisms no true space is allowed for any such an Other. It is the idolization of our own autonomy that fuels the constructivism. There are religious practices infected by the idolatry of certain activisms: do something, we are

told, to make the world a better place. But more often than we admit, it is something of foreground distraction that we seek, since "making a difference" is an agenda to remake the world in accord with what we deem valuable. "Making a difference" does not make a difference, since it is secretly ourselves we want to feel confirmed. We cannot "make a difference" if there is not a more ultimate difference of which we ourselves are not the makers. We are almost incapable of silence and attending on what it can communicate. We have lost the taste of the intimate universal.

Defection from the patience of being is also sometimes evident in the way we have divorced ourselves from the play of nature: for instance, in our unwillingness to generate new life beyond ourselves; in our reduction of the mystery of eros to recreational sex, as we morally preach about our own rights of self-determination; in our resisting being given over to anything greater than our own selfish satisfaction. Nature can be a great teacher, but we reck it not, unless it can be made to serve us. Animals now are sometimes more universal than we are. They live beyond themselves, are lived beyond themselves in the erotic rhythms of nature—except of course where our interventions have polluted and hindered the spontaneous unfolding of these dances of begetting.

Since the Enlightenment it has been said frequently that we are historical, not natural, beings, yet in the stories we have constructed it is the core *intimacy* of our being that keeps coming back. This is nowhere more evident than in the play of eros—it saturates everything. It is as if in our denial of the dance of nature, the music and its rhythms come back, and we still find ourselves going through the motions but we neither attend to what we are doing nor wonder why at all. There is the subjection of eros to the dictates of serviceable disposability: making it a means to an end—and we are the end—for after all, is not every historical story just the song of ourselves? We make history we say, even if we are made by history: history is the only self-begetting power. It is we who have made ourselves the *causa sui*. The catch cry will not be *deus sive natura* but *deus sive historia sive humanitas.* All of this, of course, can be claimed in the name of "doing justice." If so, it is extremely doubtful if this is at all "doing justice" to the patience at the heart of "doing justice."

There is also a temptation sometimes to act as if we were nature's (or God's) most important gift to existence. We pride ourselves on the power to improve the world. We say: we make the world a better place. It all goes askew, however, when we act as if we could *outdo God*, as if we could

best God. The old saying had something truer: there but for the grace of God go I. This is, in fact, only a half-truth. For by the grace of God we all go there. There is the astonishing beatitude: "Blessed are the poor." One will be scorned for repeating this as escapism from the practical call of social justice. Being poor: By the gift of the divine we are all naked. We are all like Job. Naked we come hither, naked we go hence, in between we cover up. In the between, though, we are all offered the patience of being: patience to a more ultimate good that we do not construct ourselves; patience to a justice more ultimate than our own construction. We are given to be as constituted by a fundamental porosity of being: itself the opening in us that allows our every act of self-transcending but that itself is not any act of self-transcending. It allows, it creatively possibilizes self-transcending, allows "doing justice" to ourselves, to the others. For there is a promise in the porosity that asks to be redeemed, though it can be betrayed. It is betrayed if we act as if it did not exist.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the destitute and the sick and the dying, for they remind us of the givenness of our being, and the graced porosity that allows us to be at all. We think "doing justice" is doing them a favor but there is a sense in which it is quite the opposite. We hate what they remind us of, for we are happy when we cover ourselves. When we take mind of them, we step back from becoming monstrous. Our cover up is blown away.

The poem of W. B. Yeats called "The Great Day" recalls us to something elemental:[25]

> Hurrah for revolution and more cannon-shot!
> A beggar on horseback lashes a beggar on foot.
> Hurrah for revolution and cannon come again!
> The beggars have changed places, but the lash goes on.

Going with the patience of being, "doing justice" takes us beyond servility and sovereignty. It is beyond the passive and the active and calls for a new poise—a poise that is a readiness defined in a freedom beyond the servility of the slave and the sovereignty of the master. The intimate universal is beyond servility and sovereignty. This calls for something like the nakedness of Yeats's beggar but without the soul of will to power that finds its outlet in the lash—whether on horseback or on the ground. There is a nakedness in the intimate universal—a "being nothing" to which the

practices of philosophy must be open in a new poverty of mindfulness, beyond science and system and beyond agendas.

There is a tragic element to this too. I mentioned the redeeming power of tragedy: exposure to the terrible that endows us with a sacred compassion. We spend a life, expend the endeavor to be, in covering ourselves—and sometimes are relatively successful—though always relatively. Then one is reminded of King Lear: the sovereign, the regal self, and then the sovereign gave away his kingdom, gave away his power. He did not first know it but he was being unclothed, being stripped, in giving his power away. Regal Lear becomes unselved—becomes a nothing. The Fool: "I can tell why a snail has a house." Lear: "Why?" The Fool: "Why, to put 's head in; not to give it away to his daughters, and leave his horns without a case" (*King Lear*, 1.5.28–32). Lear becomes like the Tom O'Bedlam—even less, like Edgar who says of himself: "Edgar I nothing am" (2.3.21). There is an idiot wisdom to this nothing. Edgar is as wise in his compassion as Lear's Fool, a "bitter fool" (1.4.140) is wise in his worldly savvy. The king and the beggar are no longer well-placed selves; placeless, they become nothings; in becoming nothings, they begin to come to see. They at last begin to see things from the bare stripped outlook of the nothings who have nothing. "Nothing almost sees miracles but misery" (2.2.167–68). There is a certain "democracy" of suffering—it is a kind of catholicism of patience—in our being ultimately patient in the intimate condition of being. "Doing justice" begins anew in being nothing. The divine commons of the intimate universal can be on the blasted heath or in the Church, in the hovels or on the mean streets of ugly cities. Being nothing, Lear becomes able to make way for the Fool:

> In, boy, go first . . . you houseless poverty—
> Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.
> Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
> That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
> How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
> Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you
> From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
> Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;
> Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
> That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
> And show the heavens more just. (3.4.26–36)

There is much on patience in Shakespeare's *King Lear* but it is not a matter of romantic sentimentality about poverty.[26] Nor is it a matter of being nothings, understood as Marx understood the proletariat—the nothings who, owning nothing, will become everything through revolutionary praxis and war against the sovereigns, the exploiting capitalists, and with the agenda-driven guidance of those revolutionary philosophers who have scientifically understood the implacable universal of History. Here with Marx, Hegel's self-relating negativity becomes historically incarnate in the weaponed nothings, through whom the revolutionary violence of the endeavor to be overtakes the *passio essendi*, and the deeper meaning of the patience of being is mutilated in this overriding. It should not surprise anyone who thinks on it that the outcome cannot but be disastrous, if this understanding is projected as the agenda of History and enacted as a project on a world-historical scale. The lash becomes king of all.

I am not asleep to the lash hidden in the seemingly gentler caresses of consumer capitalism.

It is true: The sovereigns who refuse justice as masters construct the servile, by deconstructing them, as food for their wrath. In the name of the injustice they call justice, they do not do justice.

It is equally true: The servile who revolt against the old sovereigns construct themselves, in wrath, as new sovereigns. In the name of justice, they do no justice.

Being nothing can begin to reveal something other to both masters and slaves. We can come to know intimately that there is a patience of being before servility and sovereignty and beyond them, that there is a justice before servility and sovereignty, calling us to the doing of justice beyond them. The call comes from before servility and sovereignty, and solicits us in the intimate universal into an agapeic service, beyond the master lashing, and for the slave lashed.

CHAPTER 4

Politics and the Intimate Universal

Neither Servility nor Sovereignty

Opening on the Intimate Universal and Politics

Questions connected with political theology are widely discussed today, but what of political ontology? Heidegger has influentially spoken of the "onto-theo-logical" constitution of metaphysics, and in the minds of many theology and metaphysics are associated, but it is notable that metaphysics is not well attended to in discussions of politics or political theology. What of this relative silence? If theology and metaphysics are associated, it seems entirely fitting to inquire about some relevances of the intimate universal to politics, and whether we can do justice to these relevances without metaphysical reflection. Political concerns with the shape of society, its potential for universal norms, and the particular sources of ethical value informing it do not frequently invoke or evoke the need of metaphysics. Likewise when we think of politics, whether in more local, parochial shape or in more international, potentially more general form, we do not normally think that metaphysical reflection has any bearing on the important issues. If being religious witnesses richly to the intimate universal, implicating a significance for the whole of human life, including its political aspects, can we do justice to that significance without suitable metaphysical reflection?

That significance is not immediately evident, but this is to be expected if we are dealing with the *intimate* universal. Moreover, with the secularization of politics in modernity, the relevance of the religious and the metaphysical has been recessed. Perhaps "recessed" is too mild a word for this general attitude; the stronger judgment of "irrelevance" is closer to the mark. The religious and the metaphysical may be allowed as a continuing private choice for some, a choice bemusing to those more thoroughly under the sway of a secularized outlook. Religion and metaphysics are benignly to be tolerated as a private indulgence, if they must insist on some importance for themselves. Let them be as intimate as they will, they have nothing to do with the (political) universal. The thought of the intimate universal and its promise of relevance are not on the agenda.

Granted, the relations between metaphysics and politics are not immediately self-evident and are often mediated and indirect. Let politics be local or let its ambitions be more universal, there is still some hidden metaphysics at work. If this is true of all being, why should being political be any exception? Indeed it could not be otherwise if there is any truth to the suggestion of the intimate universal. The intimate universal may be the least recognized, even when at work incognito in modalities of being human that do not normally invoke it explicitly. It is its nature not to insist on itself. Its nature is enabling. What it enables falls into forgetfulness of the intimate universal as sourcing the diverse forms of expressed power, be it political or other.

Certain political arrangements can either hinder or enable a genuine opening of metaphysical mindfulness, or religious porosity, or aesthetic finesse, and hence make it all the more difficult to name the intimate universal as such. A political person will insist he or she deals with what happens on the ground of everyday life. Metaphysics is theory for the birds that fly high but who do not land where worldly power condenses, consolidates, and circulates. Nevertheless, what happens in the apparently empty ether of thought in due course comes down to earth, and a masked metaphysics will walk the streets of everyday life, or stalk. Monstrous forms, bred in corruptions of the intimate universal, take on their own seemingly self-sufficient life and, light as vultures floating on warm currents of air, float into the Empyrean. Conditions being propitious, they come back to earth with gifts glittering and poisoned.[1] They land to gorge on decay below, beneath the heavens. Political life is saturated with enchanting notions. The walkways of politics are eagerly hospitable to the arts of

equivocation. The arts of political equivocation are themselves equivocal, for they can serve the intimate universal or its counterfeits. Serving itself, politics may not even know it is a servant of anything at all, least of all a servant of something other to itself. It may resist any knowing of itself.

What we mean by "metaphysics" and "politics" are not devoid of equivocities. Relations between them are not easy to discern and articulate, given that today we are said to be denizens of a "postmetaphysical" time. "Postmetaphysical" is bandied about with all the assurances of the self-evident. Is it evident that we know what metaphysics is? If we do not, how less evident will be the relations of metaphysics and politics. And whence the self-assurance about our identities as being "postmetaphysical"? What an irony that worry about this identity is not enough in evidence, despite claims that all identity is in question in our postmetaphysical time of non-identity!? One is tempted to reply with another question. What space is there that postmetaphysical thinking might occupy, since all thinking, whether it attends to it or not, whether it knows or acknowledges it as such, is informed by basic presuppositions about, and orientations toward, the meaning of what it is "to be"? If this is so, to be postmetaphysical is to make a metaphysical claim, in the sense that some such basic presuppositions and orientations inform this claim too. To be human is to be; to be human as a thinking being is to be constituted by certain powers of the "to be," powers marking the complex integrity of one's being, as well as allowing complex intermediations between oneself and what is other. And all of this is at play, even when one lives thoughtlessly. To be, one might say, is to participate in the intimate universal. The important consideration for metaphysics as a philosophical discipline is our moving, by the proper discipline of attentive mindfulness, between the more implicit and the more explicit, the more recessed and the more expressed. There are different participations in the intimate universal. Metaphysics is intimate to politics, though incognito, for the public space of the latter is resourced by enabling sources of being of which metaphysics tries to be mindful. If it is recessed in the sphere of the political, it is not inactive because recessed. What seems remote, namely, metaphysics, may turn out to be more neighboring than expected. This neighboring mindfulness is especially called for, called forth from us, if our being is in truth to be as participants in the intimate universal.

The full dimensions of what is asked of us are reflected in the development of what I call metaxological metaphysics, a metaphysics bearing on,

among other things, our being in the between and the problems of sameness and otherness, identity and difference, inherited by us since the time of idealism. Metaxological metaphysics entails an outworking of what is communicated in ontological astonishment before the intimate strangeness of being. We must also articulate something of the ethical view that would go with this metaphysics. We need to articulate something of the philosophical approach to God that would go with this metaphysics and ethics.[2] My own efforts in these directions inform what I say here on metaphysics and politics in connection with the intimate universal. It will be a judgment call as to what to presuppose for the reader as given, what to explain more overtly.

Between (Post)Metaphysics and Politics

One can live, more or less, without being a metaphysician in the explicit sense. But one cannot be a good philosopher without being more or less a metaphysician, in the sense of bringing to bear on what is at play in being an attentive mindfulness for the basic presuppositions, sources, and orientations toward the "to be." To be this or that is to be a particular concretion of the sourcing powers of the "to be." To be as mindful, that is, as human, is both to live from these sources and to try to be attentively mindful of them. One does not have a choice about being an *animale metaphysicum*.[3] The issue is not being a postmetaphysician but being a good metaphysician—under the call of truthful fidelity in doing justice to the sourcing powers of the "to be." This does not mean that metaphysics is everything, but it does mean that in all our thinking some metaphysical presuppositions about the "to be" are always at play. Let these be mostly unacknowledged, not only by common sense and science but by "postmetaphysical" philosophy; nevertheless, metaphysics as a philosophical discipline is a form of reflective thinking under fidelity to the truth of what is thus at play. Does this point about the "postmetaphysician," namely, the impossibility of evading metaphysics, apply analogously to the "postreligious" person, namely, the inescapability of being religious? This is something one would expect in light of the intimate universal. This also has implications for how we think of politics.

It may well be that a certain *picture of metaphysics* is being criticized or rejected in this talk of the "postmetaphysical." In the main it seems to

come down to some version of Platonism. I call it Nietzsche's cartoon version, a cartoon that has had multiple afterlives. Plato will be an important point of reference in what is to follow, though the dear Nietzsche himself knew well the difference between Plato and his "Platonism." "Plato, for example, in my hands becomes a caricature": Nietzsche himself had the honor to confess this.[4] In this caricature we find the univocal fixation of (metaphysical) difference in terms of rigidly separated worlds: the world here and the beyond world. "Metaphysics" deserts the world here for the beyond world. Interestingly for our concerns, the Greek *meta* can mean both "in the midst" as well as "beyond," a point to which I will come back. It reflects something of the intimate universal: in the midst as intimate, yet beyond as pointing to what is not reducible to immanence alone. In the cartoon version no sooner is the *meta* of metaphysics intoned and we are shooting out beyond, yonder, somewhere over the rainbow. Now postmetaphysically we are to be brought back to earth. Being thus beyond metaphysics may have its own form of "transcending" but it must be this-worldly. If for "postmetaphysical" thinking there is any transcendence, it must be entirely immanent. Suspicion of the universal can emerge in this turn or re-turn to immanence.

Of course, postmetaphysical claims of unsurpassable immanence are not unconnected with different understandings of the political and with how immanent social powers take form or are to be organized, whether in terms of sane, everyday distributions of powers, or spontaneous eruptions of repressed forces, or plotted rebellions or revolts or regime changes, and whether all these take shape under the sign of totality, or "difference." For there is a totalitarian immanence and an anarchistic immanence, there is a socially concerned or compassionate immanence, a neoliberal immanence, and an edifying pragmatic immanence. There are communist "postmetaphysicians" who unmask metaphysics as rationalized theology, itself an ideological mask for exploitative relations of economic production. There are the capitalist "postmetaphysicians" who are only "post" in the accidental sense that their unrelenting engrossment in the dominion of serviceable disposability has blanked out as "useless" most metaphysical considerations, or intimations, or misgivings. This blank is itself the result of certain metaphysical presuppositions about the human being. We are units of self-interested, self-serving desire; nature as other is the to-be-possessed reserve of resources to further the projects of economic and commercial organizations of such units, officially said to further the

individual power of the consumer, de facto showing power more or less global in the potential outreach of its exploitation. Marx, first among equals of "postmetaphysicians," hoists the ideal banner of social justice above on high, while below on the streets or on the barricades or in the polemical pamphlets, there is a (not-so-well-dissimulated) metaphysics of social will to power.

It might seem that the "Platonic" version of metaphysics has nothing to do with politics, except as an ideological mask, and that "postmetaphysical" thinking would allow us more lucidly to get political actualities in focus. After all, politics has a bearing on, among other things, our social organization of immanent powers, guarding immanent order here and now, either affording or resisting tyranny here and now and, in the daily moderate middle, trying to sustain an immanent peace, such that people can go about their everyday business, be it in the life of the family, or in economic businesses, or in health care, or in cultural services, either artistic or religious, that take us beyond the instrumental serviceability of utility. Politically minded people delight in the realism of their reminding the metaphysical dreamers: this all is here and now, not over there, all to be done now with feet on the ground, not with heads in the clouds or with longing for somewhere over there, a nowhere other world.

I think it is not so simple, and not so easy, to get the political into wise focus, if the sense of the "beyond" of politics is lost, or betrayed, and the "political" is tempted to assume sole sovereignty for the immanent organization of the powers of the "to be." Quite the contrary, the powers of the "to be" become the powers that be, if we are "conservative," or the powers that will be, if we are "progressive." The loss of the beyond of metaphysics, as going with the immanent absolutization of the political, tends to lead to the weakening of the wisdom of the immanent, which is the genuine art of the political. This wisdom lives by its worldly discernment of the relative. Wise discernment of the relative is not really possible without some intimation of the lacking nature of all counterfeit claims to absoluteness. This wise discernment of the genuinely political must be practiced in the art of detecting idols and dealing prudently with the immanent havoc they threaten. Is this possible without some intimation of the metaphysical, one shaped by the doubleness of the *meta*—in the midst, and hence immanent, and yet over and above, beyond, and hence a sign of transcendence as other? Is this possible without some (religious?) finesse for the intimate universal?

In modern philosophy metaphysics becomes a form of ontology in which there comes to be the loss of this doubleness of the *meta* and the feel for its basic significance. I will later say a bit more about metaphysics and such an ontology. But one can see the rationale for these changes in modern philosophy, if the cartoon version of Platonism is the truth of metaphysics. For then the *meta* means we are dealing with the philosopher's escape from reality, not his or her more deep engagement with it. Of course, even this escape has political consequences, though on the surface they seem eviscerating to the excellences of immanence, and hence also to the wise discernment of immanent powers. We can see the matter, however, with more nuance, with less of the univocalizing of the dualistic "either-or." There have been metaphysicians who, in fidelity to an intimation of the "beyond," want to relativize the absoluteness of immanent power; yet this entails no denial of the necessity of wise discernment of immanent excellences. I tend to agree with them, and for reasons not unconnected with a different interpretation of Plato.[5] But ever with Plato we are confronted with the great paradox that this great Satan of metaphysics was strangely obsessed with politics and the vision of the best regime. For one who would quit immanence as quickly as you could exclaim *exaipnes*, we witness an odd loving lingering with the fluctuations of power in immanence. In the Cave here and now, we need an almost heroic patience for discerning the "packs and sects of great ones that ebb and flow by the moon," as the purged King Lear put it. When Lear speaks of becoming one of "God's spies," such a spy is not engaged in espionage. He or she seeks simply to behold, to comprehend with compassion. "Afterworldsmen" (*Hinterweltlern*) is a term of contempt of Zarathustra, but perhaps there are "afterworldsmen" who incarnate such great care for this world—ripe human beings who are, so to say, *posthumous to will to power*.[6]

But what kind of care? If we take, for instance, a Hobbes or a Machiavelli as setting the trend, we will become political spies of the "mortal god"[7] and opt for a self-proclaimed "realism" of politics, and against the dreaming or self-deluding "idealism" of a Plato, even an Aristotle. Again is it so simple? If humans and their communities, political as well as prepolitical and transpolitical, are *between* "real" and "ideal," then we risk a brutal amputation, if our realism is crude, that is to say, lacking finesse for the traces of a transcendence that is more than even the superb excellences of immanence. All of this has to do with discernment bearing on the intimate universal.

Clearly our care for the excellences of immanence will be different when one has the intimation that there is more at stake than a self-sufficient immanence, when signs of something beyond have entered one's sense of the equivocal play of immanent powers, and not only the temptations to tyranny that we know here but also our intoxications with what is good now. One's care will be different if the excellences of immanence, in the enjoyment and joy they offer, are also signs of what cannot be exhausted by immanence. Least of all will one's care be to turn immanence into a project of our power to make itself absolute, as absolute as possible, and more than anything else absolved from transcendence as other. This will seem a treason to the excellences of immanence rather than their last apotheosis.

Metaxological Metaphysics and Modern Ontology

Let me say a word or two about metaphysics and ontology.[8] Metaphysics is concerned with immanence certainly, in terms of its mindful discernment of the multiple equivocities of our being native to the world. We might think of metaphysics in terms of system, and to be sure this is an ideal found often from early modern rationalism through to Hegel. But one can *be systematic* without claiming to possess *the system*. Indeed there are practices of metaphysics that might well display a certain diffidence about "system," about the "theory-building" of Laputan thinkers, especially in its modern guise.[9] We find a tendency especially present in modern philosophy to seek an "ontology" defined primarily by the self-determination of rational thought, to the detriment of the interruptions of surprising otherness that break in on the speculative dreams of reason, musing out of itself alone. Hegel is the high point of this tendency to "system," offering us as metaphysics a speculative logic that is a categorial onto-logy. I think of metaphysics less as the system of categories defined by the self-circling of thought determining itself, and more as a fundamental reflection on the basic senses of being, or "to be," none of which we can speak about without mindful openness to what actuality as other communicates intelligibly to us. There is an openness to what is beyond self-determining thought in this understanding of metaphysics, an openness more consonant with the more original experience of wonder or astonishment we find, for instance, in the Greek *thaumazein*.[10]

If I refer to Hegel, one might also refer, with suitable qualification, to Heidegger's fundamental ontology, which, like the idealistic immanence of thought thinking itself, is still too a philosophy of unremitting immanence. Even given talk about the everydayness of *Dasein*, one suspects there is at work what one might call a "postulatory finitism" that has the effect of closing thought off from thinking the signs of transcendence as other to immanence. I mean metaphysics in a more "Platonic" sense, though not at all in terms of the cartoon version (there were times Heidegger fell under the spell of this cartoon). Such a metaphysics asks for a practice of philosophy that, even in the immanences of everyday life, recalls us to a porosity to transcendence as other. The intimate universal would be a way of looking at immanence that would not deny our here-and-now engagement, or yet close off porosity to what resists containment within the immanence of postulatory finitism. Is there a philosophical beholding that is neither servile nor sovereign? Not sovereign: because it does not stand outside or above the immanently given. Not servile: because it is not slave to immanent givenness but finds itself released into a freedom beyond servility in beholding immanence otherwise, that is, as the happening that communicates of the intimate universal.

In pursuing the task of metaphysics I have found it helpful to distinguish four basic senses of being and a brief remark on these may be useful. First, the univocal sense tends to emphasize determinate sameness and identity. Second, the equivocal sense tends to stress difference that escapes univocal sameness, sometimes even to the point of the loss of any mediation between sameness and difference, identity and otherness. Third, the dialectical sense seeks to mediate differences, differences sometimes equivocal, but not by reduction to a simple univocal sameness but by transition to a more inclusive unity or whole that, it is claimed, contains and even reconciles the differences. Finally, the metaxological dwells with the interplay of sameness and difference, identity and otherness, not by mediating a more inclusive whole but by recurrence to the rich ambiguities of the middle, and with due respect for forms of otherness that are dubiously included in the immanence of a dialectical whole.

This fourfold sense of being has an importance with regard to the intimate universal. The univocal sense tends to fixate on a determinate essence as a universal that is evacuated of intimacy—the universal and the intimate particular stand over against each other in dualistic opposition. The equivocal sense dissolves this fixed dualism; in allowing the porosity and passage

of happening, it opens a space to recover a finesse for the intimate; nevertheless, its fluidity does not always hold on to a sense of the universal that would move us in process further than dissolution in nebulous indefiniteness. The dialectical sense recovers form in fluidity, recurrence of structure in becoming, points also to the recovery of the universal as a process that is self-mediating. The universal as such a self-mediating process (I am thinking of Hegel) claims to sublate the intimacy within its own conceptual holism, but its claims for concrete universality tend not to do justice to the otherness of intimate singularity, which is not a moment of a more inclusive whole, but is a living open whole to itself, whose difference living community itself sustains as other for itself. Finally, the metaxological sense articulates a fluid intermedium of happening that is the middle space of communication. It words the between, gives a logos of the *metaxu*. In wording the between, the metaxological sense of universality is not one side, the intimate the opposing side. The porous between itself as the endowed and enabling milieu of overdeterminate communication is itself given to be as the intimate universal. There is an overdeterminacy to both the intimacy and the universality: overdeterminacy as surplus "to be" that is not to be rendered simply as either determinate being, indeterminate being, or self-determining being. The interdetermination is free beyond self-determination. Self-determination itself is freed by sources of ontological enabling more intimate than self-determination. Determinate beings have an overdeterminate singularity that speaks of the marvel of the "that it is at all" of their being. Universality is the promise of overdeterminate communicability and communication in each being—be the being determinate or self-determining—in being itself by being outside itself in relation to all things other to itself. In part 2 I will turn more fully to how this fourfold sense of being is reflected in the idiotics, the aesthetics, the erotics, and the agapeics of the intimate universal.

The modern sense of ontology is most often shaped by univocal and dialectical responses to the equivocities of being. The univocal response seeks a set of clear and distinct categories to diminish or dissolve all ambiguity, the dialectical a totality of thought-determinations claiming to exhaust the intelligibility of being. I agree with some of the postmodern hesitations about the traditional language of the whole. I would put the primary accent less on "deconstructing" the whole, as on our being "in between," on our passing in and through the between, on our thinking as an intermediating that, once again, is not primarily directed to an

inclusive whole of thought thinking itself but to a mindful porosity to the transcendence of being, as both other and yet in intimate relation to us. This is why I think that metaphysics, most fundamentally, is metaxological. Mindful attention to the equivocities of given immanence is *one* of its important tasks. I would also say that this mindful attention is a cousin to the mindful discernment needful for political discrimination of the powers of immanence. For politics is not a "theory" but requires also a practice of phronetic discernment in the domains of relatives.

I note both a distinction and an inseparability between ontology and metaphysics. Ontology deals with being as immanent, and as such it tends to culminate in something like Hegel's system of self-determining thought, or perhaps the existential recoil back to human immanence in terms of fundamental ontology, such as that of Heidegger. Metaphysics, by contrast, is more metaxological in the sense of opening mindfulness to transcendence by means of an exploration of the signs of irreducible otherness, even in immanence. This is not a matter of the system but it is a matter of systematic thought. Hegel closes systematic thinking into the system; but there is no a priori necessity that thinking systematically has to take this very modern form. There are rich networks of interconnections already at work in being; but these networks do not constitute a closed or completed system to be discursively expressed by philosophy. The networks are concretized by open intermediations marked by sameness and otherness, identity and difference. Metaxological metaphysics must try to make intelligible sense of these concrete intermediations by way of the fourfold sense of being above sketched. Dynamic integrities of being take form as stable but open constancies; our minding of these shows the living energy of thought that opens beyond closure to what is other to thought alone; the between itself is a milieu of enabling communication in which intimacy and universality are not two opposites.

Modern dialectic tends to interpret the passages between same and other, identity and difference, and so on in terms of self-determining thought. The intermediations of being tend to be characterized in terms of a variety of rational self-mediations that circle around and back on themselves, resulting in idealism in a closure of the immanence of thought on itself. The story is not entirely different with those postidealistic philosophies marked by an antipathy to dialectic. Insofar as here the practice of philosophy is marked by postulatory finitism, the result is a not dissimilar immanence, beyond which there is nothing further to be thought.

In that space of radical immanence one might dialectically sublate, one might deconstruct dialectic, one might Dionysianly celebrate the earth, one might differently desublate, but there is nothing beyond that space of immanence.

From a metaxological perspective, there is more to be said. If speculative self-mediation is taken as the true intermediation, it does not do full justice to the passages between same and other, where otherness as other is just as basic as, if not more than, self-determining thought. And by contrast with anti-idealistic immanence, metaxological metaphysics discerns in the very ontological robustness of immanent otherness an original communication of an even more radical otherness, hyperbolic to the terms of immanence alone. This between is the milieu of thought where metaphysics as a philosophical practice arises and takes form. As itself a form of intermediated thinking, this practice of philosophy is not for itself alone. Its own self-determination is not the absolute point. Its mindful discernment of what is hyperbolic in immanence points to what is hyperbolic to immanence.

Such a practice of philosophy asks a porosity of mindful thought to what exceeds complete determination in terms of finite immanence alone. It is a participant in this middle, does not overarch it from the outside; and if it is, as it were, lifted up from within, it too is always defined by *passages in the between*. In one regard, there is no return to the *metaxu*, since we never leave it; but there is a return in the sense of being awakened to what we are in, and to what is recessed in what we are in, and in realizing the porosity of the medium of finite life to what cannot be exhausted by finite immanence. If there is a return to the recalcitrances of given immanence, in their otherness to self-defining thought, there is also a searching of the "more" of the given world, as charged with signs of what exceeds immanence alone. Reading the signs of this "more" as communicated in the saturated equivocity of the given world is intimate to the vocation of metaxological metaphysics. This vocation always and everywhere has this commission: wording the between—doing justice to it with the fitting words. This holds true also for its attendance on the intimate universal.

Politics Between Metaphysics and Ontology

The between of metaxological metaphysics must yield a different relation to politics than does an ontology oriented wholly toward immanence. The latter tends to be defined by the language of the whole, whereas,

metaxologically speaking, we must consider again the *meta* of metaphysics as *double*. As I said, this *meta* can be taken to refer to what is "in the midst," and here it links with the *metaxu*; it can also be taken to refer to what is "beyond," over and above, and here it refers the *metaxu* to what is super(ior), to what is *huper*. We are referred both directly to what is hyperbolic *in* immanence and indirectly to what is hyperbolic *to* immanence.

Ontology, by contrast, as a logos of *to on*, is tempted to shortchange this doubleness, tempted always by a kind of univocity of immanence, and this can take different forms. It might be defined in terms of the immanence of self-determining system, or in terms of the immanence of postulatory finitism such as informs fundamental ontology, or in terms of the immanence of the scientistic univocity that informs many projects of science and technology, or in terms of the rhapsodic univocity of Dionysian immanence, Nietzschean or postmodern, or in terms of a studied naturalizing pragmatism shorn of the more suggestive intimations of something other (this we *do* find in Peirce and James).[11] There are many forms of this univocity of immanence: *scientistic*, in the technological will to conquer the equivocities of given being and subject creation to the homogeneity of a projected human measure; *moral*, through the immanence of absolute autonomy in Kantianism; *calculative*, in the homogeneous reckoning of hedonistic bliss or mass happiness in utilitarianism; *speculative and political*, in the dialectical immanence of Hegelianism and its state; *dialectical and revolutionary*, in the political immanence of post-Hegelian totalitarianisms, be they Marxist or fascist; *antidialectical and Dionysian*, in the immanent Nietzschean world that is "will to power and nothing else besides," and we ourselves also "will to power and nothing else besides."[12]

Modern ontology is tempted to bind politics to a language of the immanent whole, beyond which there is nothing. Those postmoderns who deconstruct this whole do not quite deconstruct this immanence. Postmodern immanence is still immanence, even if now racked or tortured with itself. One must ask if immanent difference is difference enough, difference enough for transcendence as other to us, and not only for immanent self-transcendence. If it is not, as I think follows from a metaxological thinking, one has to wonder whether the silence on this in postmodern politics signals a decayed, skeptical, cynical form of the modern version of totalizing immanence. The particular strain may have mutated and may not look at all like its ancestor, but it is of the same gene pool. And if this gene pool is immanent will to power (as we suspect after

the last revelation of Nietzsche), the totalitarian form may have mutated into a pluralistic form or an anarchistic form, but it is still will to power and "nothing else besides." Finally again, the circulation of immanence is only around itself, and to the occlusion, or exclusion, of signs of transcendence as other. One wonders if, from a metaxological viewpoint, this circulation is the mimicking of ultimate transcendence in immanence. We have lost touch with the religious openness to the intimate universal, and the practices of philosophy do not show the poverty of spirit that brings them closer to the sense of doing justice, prior to this ethical endeavor or that political project. What this tends to mean for the communal intermediation of social power is that politics is asked to be more and more the mimicking of religion, even as a certain politics would put religion more and more on the compost heap of history.

All of this talk of ontology and metaphysics might seem like dealing in the high abstractions of the disembodied universal, but its relevance will be evident when we turn to different forms of concrete human community where we find different manifestation of the promise of the intimate universal. But I need to make this last point about how metaphysical thinking and the intimate universal can converge. If metaphysics entails our reflection on the fundamental senses of the "to be," these senses are both intimate and universal: intimate as elemental in being diversely manifested in all forms of being; universal as extending their significance to the open whole of being. Further again, if this intimately universal sense of the "to be" is best described as metaxological, the finite "to be" cannot be described in entirely immanent terms: it manifests a between, both in an immanent sense and in a sense that is porous to what is other to it. There is a finitude as well as an openness to the between in which we come across communications of what exceeds the immanent terms of what is given "in the midst." There is something hyperbolic to the between communicated in the between. There are many expressions of this but one of importance for our consideration here is the charge of the good immanent to the givenness of the finite "to be." Modern ontology tries to give a logos of *to on*, but it seems to be of one mind with the development of modern science in this regard, namely, that given being is stripped of the signs of qualitative value and determined in terms of a homogenous sameness. Being as universal givenness is stripped of an intimate charge of inherent worth. It is to us an essentially strange otherness, a neutral thereness whose strangeness we are tempted to surpass only by subjecting

it to our measure. We make it intimate by appropriating it, and we make it ours, but this is not *its* proper intimacy; it is our bringing it closer to ourselves to bring ourselves closer to what we think is most intimate to us: *self*-affirmation in the face of the strangeness of being as other.

Granted, there are reactions against this stripping given being of the signs of qualitative value, but the main point is important in that we do find at the extreme a *divorce* of being and the good. The consistent outcome of this divorce is nihilism: the objectification of other being, the subjectification of the human being, and the development by the latter of a project of will to power to make the homogeneity of the former serve the homogeneous heterogeneity of its own desires.[13] I say homogeneous heterogeneity, since in the end there turns out to be no principle of qualitative discrimination between higher and lower, and hence the heterogeneity becomes a mere diversity, but this is indistinguishable from homogeneity: everything different finally comes to the same thing. We might initially claim that the strange, devalued otherness is over against us, and that we are different; but we come to realize that we too are participants in the universal process of valueless thereness; and then we are shocked into realizing that our protections against the valuelessness participate in the same valuelessness of the universal process. Our intimate sense of being different is undercut by a sameness that freezes all claims to ontological intimacy with being. Thus a philosophy of extreme difference easily reverts to a monism of sameness that it ostensibly has rejected or overcome. On a more familiar note, we see this sometimes with those pleas in a social or political setting of the liberal tolerance of difference that, mirabile dictu, can quickly become quite intolerant when it is the "wrong" kind of difference that is before one. What determines the discrimination of "wrong" difference? One suspects mere dissidence with one's own will to power, nicely masked in the niceness of one's preaching of respect for difference.

Yet for all that there is an intimacy of being that we cannot prevent returning to affirm itself again and again, and that seems to have a certain universal range. One form of the good of the "to be" that is still hard not to affirm is the good of our own "to be," and this as granted in the will to preserve and perpetuate one's own being. This granting may be an expression of the subjectification of the human being, but the will to be of the latter is at least granted a value in a sense not controverted. Every being seeks to preserve and perpetuate its own being. Let it be expressed

in Hobbesian or Spinozistic terms, in utilitarian terms, or in neoliberal terms:[14] there is a basic worth to the "to be" in that fact that I and you continue to affirm our own existence, negatively in the face of threats, more positively in advancing the guaranteed satisfaction of our recurrent desires. In other words, at a primitive level in our own singular being something of the intimacy of the "to be" and its being good to be comes to happen with us and is acknowledged by us in ourselves. This is right. But what is right in this becomes wrong, or perhaps only half right, if this is taken as the last word, or even the first. We then no longer have an adequate sense of the ontologically elemental good: not the good now of my "to be," but the good of the "to be."

This needs to be further articulated,[15] but the point now is that there is a metaphysical-ontological meaning, intimate and yet universal, to the good of the "to be," constituting an ethos of being within which is situated the human effort to be and to be good. This, however, will not be seen to be our situation if we claim that the whole of what is other to us is a neutral homogeneity. Then the good of our "to be" seems to reveal itself as a matter of self-assertion in a void of value, with respect to the ethos of being as other to us. Inevitably, at a certain extremity of consistency, that is, of the logic of homogeneity pushed to its ultimate, we cannot but take a posture of revolt against such an ethos of valueless being. Whatever there is about such an ethos that as other resists us cannot be let be in its heterogeneity: it too must be homogenized. For the worthless otherness, worthless without our imposing our value on it, must finally turn out to be hateful to us; it must be negated to be made good—good on a scale that mirrors our own self-affirmative will to be. In the longer arc of unfolding, neutral homogeneity is thus only a lull or pause in the onslaught of will to power on being as other that in itself is thought to be valueless.

There are only too many political expressions of this. Revolutionary politics too often fits the profile. The untrammeled calculative exploitation of the earth in a capitalist mode is not ontologically different in a qualitative sense. One might feel some sympathy with songs of existential defiance hurled in the face of the absurdity, or even systems of moral value such as the ethics of autonomy that try to raise self-affirmation to a higher ideal level. But the devalued ethos of being underpins all. That is to say, it underpins nothing, and nothing is underpinned. Politics becomes a project that must exploit the devalued being to further the preservation

and continuation of humans, individually or collectively, either keeping in check the excess sleeping in human self-assertion or seeking to release it when established orders prove not to satisfy us.

The devalued ethos of being is occupied by one being that is not immediately devalued: the human being in whom the good of the "to be" expresses itself. This language may not be used, but I would say this situation in general answers to a certain self-mediating logic. And this way of speaking is not false, but it is at most only half-true, and hence also at best half-false. The good of the "to be" is both self-mediating and hence related to the process of immanent selving; it is also intermediating and hence more extensively informs our relations to others in diverse forms of community, be these ethical or political. If the first refers us to something more singularly intimate, the second invokes something more universally shared. Metaxological metaphysics has to do justice to both the intimacy and the universality, to both the self-mediations and the social intermediations, in their interplay and proper balance, and to both as grounded in an ethos of being that is not the devalued otherness we have taken too much for granted in modernity. It is not enough just to revolt against this. For there are revolts that risk only a reversal of who now is sovereign, who now is servile. The regime of will to power is not altered by filling the empty throne with a new invested sovereign;[16] nor is it altered by leaving the empty throne empty, if there is nothing *beyond* that throne, whether filled or empty.[17] We need something beyond sovereignty and servility that also offers its witness to the intimate universal.

Between the Intimate and the Universal: Ethical and Political Communities

Reflection on the good of the "to be" is metaphysical and ethical, but it is also political. Political community bears on diverse orders of the sourcing powers of the "to be," as marked by diverse appreciations of what is of worth. It bears not just on the power to be, but on the good of the "to be," in its human forms, both individual and social, and as enabled to be in the given ethos of being. There is the perhaps more normal sense of politics as having to do with the intermediations of communal sovereignty; there is also a sense of the political that must take into account the relations of the different social intermediations of the good of the

"to be."[18] Some would want to separate ethics and politics but while the two might not be identical, a metaxological philosophy of the between cannot be blind to a certain porosity between them. All forms of community ultimately bear on what we love, as Augustine stresses, and how our loves are expressed and organized in shared ways of life. The *metaxu*, coupled in Plato's *Symposium* with eros, refers us to forms of love, and love is what it is by virtue of its direction to what it takes as worthy to be loved. We can confuse the worthless and the worthy. But still we are moved by love, sometimes love so intimate that it is out of mind, and out of mind in an unknowing relation to all that is. With Plato eros is a *metaxu*, neither a god nor a beast, both of which have no need of politics. We human beings need politics because we are between earth and heaven. But love, like intermediation, is plurivocal: diverse forms of giving and receiving, as well as their corruptions, go on in the between. Their discrimination is part of the task of philosophy. The art of politics, at its best, is involved in an analogous discrimination.

The *Symposium* names the intermediary power of eros to bind up *the whole*, but I would stress less the whole as *the porosity of the between* than what is beyond the immanent whole. Important is a certain *doubleness* of eros, underscored in all its political resonances in Plato's dialogues: the difference of *eros turannos* and *eros ouranios*. To refer to *eros turannos* is to name something already redolent with political significance.[19] Plato speaks of *penia* (poverty) and *poros* (resource) as at the origin of eros and I would relate this *poros* to a kind of *porosity:* porosity is a condition of our being opened (intimately) and to our being open (potentially universal) to what is other and beyond us. The original energy of our being as a given power is a paradoxical mix of lack and plenitude. Our intermediate being is both a passion of being (*passio essendi*) and an endeavor to be (*conatus essendi*). The *passio* participates in the porosity: at once a kind of "nothing" or opening and also a fullness or power or plenitude. We stand in need of a double description, and while one might think this is constitutive of our equivocity, this need not be understood in an entirely negative sense. Tyrannical politics, at the extreme, is an organized outrage to the *passio essendi*, in the name of a self-absolutizing *conatus essendi*, insisting on its own absolute immanence, insisting on itself as the whole. This is one extreme that reduces the doubleness to a usurping univocity. Properly the doubleness refers to both our self-surpassing power and our potential for limitless reception. Ultimately our porosity to the other is related to

the promise of agapeic self-transcending in human existence, not just the desire for erotic sovereignty, but this is at the opposite extreme to tyranny.

Let me offer a sketch of different forms of communal intermediation between the intimate and the universal. Communities in the between range from the more intimate, to the more instrumental, through more erotic forms, to touch on the agapeic. I focus on four forms of community:[20] first, the ethical community of the family where the intimacy of being is more important; second, the network of utility where economical and instrumental values often dominate, and where today we find too much of an ethos of serviceable disposability, that is, things must serve us, be serviceable for us, but once they have served their use, they are disposable (this attitude can treat human persons also as items of serviceable disposability); third, the community of erotic sovereignty where the intermediation of social and political power is to the fore; fourth, and finally, the community of agapeic service where our ethical and religious service to our neighbors and fellow humans is most important.

These are diverse social formations of loves where trust is basic as well as the interplay of trust and distrust. This trust is ontological, in being bound to an enigmatic, given confidence in the good of the "to be," both expressed and reserved. Trust is also human, hence ethical and political, in that out of it emerge the diverse forms of being in relation to others, none finally separable from the incognito work of this grounding ontological trust. There is something equivocal here too: in the openness of being free our living in trust can mutate into distrust, love into hate, the friend into the enemy.[21] These different communities all allow forms of metaxological intermediation, which diversely mix self-serving and service of the other. In the third form of community there comes to the fore more explicitly political considerations. But politics has the care for the just support, formation, and advancement of the other worthy forms of community also. They diversely embody the idiotics, the aesthetics, the erotics, and the agapeics of the intimate universal, a fourfold that will be our fuller concern in part 2.

First, the intermediation of the *family* is elemental, and if the seeds of ethical intermediation are not well sown at this intimate level, it is difficult to see our participation in a more public political space as being marked by genuine ethical openness to others. A public philosophy has to foster mindfulness of what is proper to the family, since this provides the first intermediation between the intimate and the larger social world in which

we will all inevitably participate. There is a two-way porosity between the family and that larger world. If the ethical health of the latter is questionable, it may affect the intimacy of the family also.[22] Public intermediation, by its nature, tends to turn us away from the intimate, just so far as others call us out from the idiot self and enjoin our participation in the shared between. There are different modes of participation. If the family remains more in touch with the intimate, there are more objectifying participations that might be called our living in the commons.

What is a commons? A commons constitutes a public space of intermediation wherein a plurality of participants are together, either joining freely or being enjoined, whether through external compulsion, secret suggestion, exploitative use, or persuasive solicitation. The milieu of being, charged equivocally with value and diversely stressed by different ethical potencies, is the primal ethos; a commons crystallizes a more particular formation of these potencies.[23] A commons shapes its own derived ethos, and is marked by its own purposes or common good, by its normalized ways of acting and its standards. When intermediation in the public space is more accentuated than the intimate, the sense of the universal can be dissociated from what we sense holds us together in a more elemental belonging. A more embracing sense of commons can be dominated or overlaid by more particular commons, one that contracts the promise of the larger commons. The ethos of a particular society, emerging ultimately from the ethical potencies given in the primal ethos of being, is derived from something elementally intimate, but it claims significance for itself of more general import. The derived ethos is always a mix or mixing of the more intimate and more general. The derived ethos of one society can be so intimate as to be initially almost impenetrable to the stranger, and yet it is not closed to communication, and a barrier of familiarity once having been crossed, the stranger finds himself in a newly opened space of more general communication. The tension between the more intimate and the general can also be evident in the way we are tempted to impose an abstract picture of what constitutes worth on the mixed intimacy of the commons. One thinks of the notion of utility as bound up with the calculative universality widespread in modernity. Pure utility is an abstraction, but it expresses an understanding of worth, and a human self-understanding of what is worthy for us, the strengths and deficiencies of which are reproduced in our configuration of the commons. The dominion in our time of this abstraction, which is socially real, merits some notice.

More generally, there comes to be a *gap* between the intimacy of the family and the more generally available space of the commons. We can lose touch with the promise of the intimate universal. When this happens, the between can seem to be "neutralized" into a particular public domain—the universal is held to be the public space of more homogeneous generality. Ultimately the notion of a neutral between is a sheer abstraction; indeed it makes no sense. In the between we always find a complex dialectic of trust and distrust in a commons. The others, to some degree, are always strangers. They do not know me as my family does. Their ambiguity makes one more recalcitrant to the giving of trust. How are we to know if the other is hostile or hospitable? We cannot always be certain. We learn to be wary, on guard. A commons is both a togetherness serving shared purposes and the possibility of hostile otherness. Both are reflected in forms of intermediation not attuned to the intimate. In this mixture of trust and distrust, the social between can appear thus as more objectified and externally determined. Likewise, a more determinate self emerges, insecure and over against the others. This intermediation with the possibly hostile stranger shapes the social milieu in which I come to stand over against the other. There are a number of resulting configurations of intermediation. There is, for example, the process of *education* (formal and informal) that a society offers to its members by which is effected the transition from the intimacy of family to a more public space of togetherness. While this move into the more generally common space seems to turn away from the intimate, nevertheless intermediations are called forth in which that intimacy is never entirely lost; otherwise the sense of proper belonging to the larger community would be entirely absent. The intermediations, in diverse ways stressed between selving and communication, seek to hold together the more intimate and more universal.

Turning to the *second* communal intermediation, the network of utility and serviceable disposability,[24] we find here a commons of public importance in relation to the *world of work*. Work is a social intermediation but it is turned toward what is there as useful for us, and this applies both to nonhuman things and to human others. Once again this can lead to the recession of the intimacy of being in which we participate: we perhaps preserve our own intimacy in the form of our desire to be, to have, to possess, but in this what is other to us loses its charge of intimate presence. There is constituted a web of useful intermediations, in turn fragile, powerful, and entangling. For though driven by the exchange of instrumental goods

and services, this is yet an interconnecting of self and others. In our time such a dominion of use-values pervades the ethical and political milieu, and infiltrates all the levels of social intermediation. The necessity of such values is undeniable, but it is not finally sufficient; indeed it can be pernicious when totalized relative to the ethos of being. It tends toward a univocal instrumentalization of that ethos and an ambiguous contraction of human transcending. Its exploitation is proximately directed to the shifting ambiguities of the intimate and the aesthetic, but when it is totalized, human beings have difficulty envisioning anything worthy beyond use-values. Not only is everything other in nature reduced to its instrumental value, but so also are human beings. There are too many signs of this in our world that are troubling.

This use-full intermediation cannot attain a fully ethical and political comportment vis-à-vis the good of the other, or indeed of self, despite the surface pervasiveness of self-interest. There is something necessary about it vis-à-vis pragmatic affairs, but this necessity is governed by useful expedience rather than excellence beyond expedience. Its relativization of the good to use-values is, in the end, dissembling, since were there a complete occlusion of inherent ends, there would be precipitated an inexorable slide toward the nihilism of a universal without end. The togetherness of the many in a social commons might have many purposes but it would have no purpose. There would be no point to it as a whole, other than the infinite multiplication of finite satisfactions, none of which proves satisfactory in the end. A community that lacks any promise of ultimate purpose produces a counterfeit double of the intimate universal, defined by the hegemony of serviceable disposability. Our freedom refashions itself into a bondage to the products we consume to fill our immanent emptiness. The omnivorous devouring of worldly resources does not, cannot, slake this emptiness. The devouring seems to drive on toward something encompassing and more universal but in the process it regresses to something more restricted and elemental: before us, around us, everything we grasp seems to face us as an autistic thereness; within us, intimate to the grasping desire, a craving that cannot be calmed. Something more is needed: a different gathering of creative power, another release of freedom transcending serviceable disposability. We stand in need of purposiveness more inclusive than instrumental purposes and the expenditure of power on the useful. We need something deeper that calls to the intimate, and something higher that calls us out to the more universal. This something

"more," addressing both the intimate and the universal, is intermediated by the communities of erotic sovereignty and agapeic service.

The third form of social intermediation, the community of erotic sovereignty, is directed to the intermediation of *excellence beyond utility*. Here the political, in the more usual determination, is evident: the intermediation of the sources of social power, serving the gaining, ordering, preserving, and perpetuation of immanent human excellences. Politics is always more than economics, even if too often many political representatives are snagged by the puppet strings of the money dealers. The statesman is more than an economic manager of the market. Nor is sovereignty just a matter of individualistic aristocratism, such as we find in Nietzsche. At issue is a distinctive intermediation, hence an interplay of selves and others, hence something always communal, even when the flower of the intermediation might be an extraordinary individual. The political intermediation of the sources of social power are intimately recessed in the general eros of a people, and socially expressed in the shared forms of activity. The intermediation is effected through its sovereign representatives who, at best, help to give some exemplary expression of the immanent excellences of a people. This may not be quite bread-and-butter politics, but there is more than bread-and-butter to politics.

If work is mostly bound to the web of utility, sovereignty is a play of power, a freer power beyond utility. Sovereignty is not servile. It lives by our transcending to positions of "being above." "Being below" is not fully in accord with the free release of our power to be. In "being above" we seek to come into our own (though there is more than our own). This impulse upward toward something of more universal excellence cannot be divorced from a dipping down into reserves of intimacy, out of which all creative ventures come to form. The statesman who strides the world by day giving orders is a sleeping vegetable by night. There is a night of the soul that is the creative and ambitious void out of which creative will to power steps forth into the sun of its day, as from the cave of its own nocturnal recess. Erotic sovereignty crowns a struggle of self-becoming, both in solitude and in solidarity, a becoming that passes from the intimate "being below" to a more universal "being above." But "being above" is no less intimate than "being below."

This freedom of "being above" is more than the network of utility can define, where everything is a means and nothing, in the end, a supreme end. To be sovereign is to approach the supreme and useless—useless

beyond serviceable disposability. It is useless but as such may be more supremely useful, if it gives to use the *self-justifying excellences* that the network of serviceable disposability lacks, and without which the whole seems finally pointless. This worth beyond serviceable disposability can take different forms, but primarily what is important is an intermediation of social power into a community of purpose beyond utilitarian goals. Again, despite claims that the world is ruled by multinational corporations, there is a politics of statesmanship that finally is more sovereign than economics.

The political intermediation of social power in the community of erotic sovereignty is always stressed between the requirements of justice and power. In the tension of these two, there can be a tilt to power unconstrained by justice in some cases, such as tyranny. In the best cases there is a balance and harmony of the two. There is a dynamic process at work in which power can serve justice as a communal expression of immanent excellence. But power can also be self-serving, to the ultimate mutilation of the intimate and the betrayal of the universal. For instance, a people may want to rest in itself and its excellences and seek to constitute itself as a self-justifying immanent whole. In absolutizing its intimate will to power it constructs a community of power that counterfeits universality. Absolute justice is not to be found in any political community, but justice is still to be found there. And still there is something more. Sovereignty, one must say, often finds itself in a tempting middle space between *eros turannos* and *eros ouranios*. Its will to universal sovereignty is its refusal of any intimate servility.[25]

Beyond servility and sovereignty is the *community of agapeic service*. This is the *meta*, the "beyond" of immanent excellence, but it is also the *meta* as "in the midst," and as such it can help purge power and transform justice. This is the *fourth* form of communal intermediation. It is on the boundary between the ethical and the religious, but essential to its political significance is that it most ultimately serves to absolve human power of its temptation to being an *eros turannos*. Suppose we were to contrast the *sovereign* and the *ethical servant*. I am speaking of singular incarnations of both, though my intent is to draw attention to different formations of community defined by the primacy of one or the other. To speak of Caesar and Christ is to speak of intimate singulars but also of communities with more universal reach. If the sovereign is beyond servility, the ethical servant is beyond servility and sovereignty. We could say that both the

sovereign and the ethical servant are moved by the self-surpassing energy of transcendence. Each in its own way is touched by, or touching on, both the intimate and the universal. Both ambiguously move on the border between human transcending as reaching for the ultimate and the good as transcendent. If in the sovereign there is an ambiguous mixing of the power of self-transcending and transcendence itself, in the ethical servant there is more of transcendence itself than of self-transcending. In the middle between transcending and the transcendent, the sovereign tilts to the former, the ethical servant to the latter. In the middle ethos, as always, there is no complete eradication of ambiguity. A sovereign may be a secret servant of the transcendent good, though appearing as lord of will to power; an ethical servant may be a double creature whose great devotion to the transcendent good is incompletely freed from human-all-too-human self-insistence.

I connect this community of agapeic service with the metaxological intermediation of the good, beyond will to power. If erotic sovereignty deals with immanent excellences, agapeic service deals with transcendent good. It is most released to ethical care for the other as other. It releases something of the promise of a more universal love of being, in respect both for the value of nature as other and for other human beings with whom one shares the gifts of the between. We do not create this community through ourselves alone, or through any form of our own self-mediation. This final community is not just at the end, but is our participation, most unminded, in the always already effective communication of the agape of the good. As there is a community beyond use, intermediated by sovereignty, there is a community beyond sovereign power, and beyond politics, intermediated by agapeic love. This community is the apotheosis of the bond of trust and the secret love inherent in all forms of communities. It is at the ultimate, at the extreme, in relation to origin and end. It intermediates trust in good in an ultimate sense, and with respect to the extremes of life: birth and death, and the ordeal of suffering. In face of our coming to nothing, it is trust in the good, by love of those who are as nothing, in facing their nothingness. It is community seeking to live in absolute service of the good.

We might put it this way (with a bow to Dostoevsky): Christ is beyond the Grand Inquisitor and Caesar. Agapeic service is not the exclusive possession of the Christian tradition or of the religions of the Bible. Signs of this ultimate community are not exclusive to one and only one tradition.

It is neither a possession nor exclusive. To try to make it so would again be to univocalize the ultimate community. One thinks of the story of the Buddha: a prince is groomed to be king, an erotic sovereign, but comes to leave the intimacy of the palace of his father. Beyond its cushion, he is shocked by the suffering he sees, shocked into a different mindfulness, of the intimate universality of suffering, and of the between as the impermanence of all finite things. He abandons the place of regal power, abdicates the claim of the erotic sovereign to rule. He becomes a wandering beggar, homeless, seeking a way. The way, in time, enlightens, and the wanderer becomes the Buddha. At a certain boundary, do we need a politics that can make way for such an abandonment?[26]

Politics, Being "Born-with" and the Intimate Universal

When I suggested above that our talk about being "postmetaphysical" thinkers dissimulates the impossibility of evading metaphysics, I suggested also an analogous point about the "postreligious" person, namely, the inescapability of some engagement with being religious. I now want to suggest some implications for politics, if metaphysics and being religious indicate something beyond servility and sovereignty. Here is a way to pursue the point: the *conatus essendi* feeds into the will to erotic sovereignty and the economic circulation of the social sources of power, but suppose there is a *hidden conaturality* in this *co-natus essendi*? In the *co-natus* there is intimated a being "*born-with*." Why should not the *conatus* of political power pay its respects to the secrets of its being "born-with"? Perhaps we have to think of political power and its *conatus* as also born with the intimate universal? Political will to power seeks to operate on its own ground; but suppose it too is undergrounded by the *con* of its *conatus*, not just its self-becoming but its being "born-with": its coming to be is its birth into the communal intermediation of the intimate universal. One must also ask: With *what* is the being "born-with"? Post-Enlightenment thinkers will be reluctant to invoke the divine, and yet the "with" signals the unavoidability of the undergrounding by the ground that is no ground. This, the religious name as the divine. Being undergrounded by the ground that is no ground grants the primal porosity that opens communication between the human and the divine, as well as the *passio essendi* that is the mark of our being received into being, a receiving more primal than all our

determinate political constructions in the sublunary world. This receiving too has to do with the intimate universal.

I attend to four considerations: first, the temptation to absolutize politics when we have recessed the religious and the metaphysical; second, the indispensability of the art of discrimination and the necessary seriousness of politics in its relativity; third, the issue of politics, nihilism, and the good of the "to be"; fourth, the enigma hidden in the word of "porosity."

First consideration: When we remember the dangerous ambiguity of religious and metaphysical recession, rather than us absolutizing politics in terms of immanent sovereignty, politics asks to be absolved from immanent idolatry. In an extended sense modernity and its politics find it difficult to place quite properly the requirements of the fourth communal intermediation of agapeic service. This is something beyond servility and sovereignty, but one of the sources of the modern difficulty is to be traced to the wars of religion in which the solicitation of agapeic service was betrayed in religion itself. The result was something of judgment falling on religion per se, as if it were essentially a masked form of will to power, seeking its own erotic sovereignty. Whether in the religious betrayal of agapeic service in its quest for its own erotic sovereignty, or in the political collapse of all intermediations into erotic sovereignty to the forgetfulness of the difference of the agapeic, an essential discrimination is lost—both for religion and for politics. This can be reflected in the characteristic patterns of philosophical thought, and their rejection of more overt commitment to the call of metaphysical reflection. Betrayal of agapeic service makes space for certain political forms of erotic sovereignty to claim the immanent whole as its dominion, since it will now be argued that agapeic service is only a disguised form of erotic sovereignty, one using the rhetoric of service to further its sovereignty. If the intimate universal beyond servility and sovereignty is obscured, so also the political, understood especially as just projecting human will to power, is tempted to pursue its own self-absolutization.

If the premodern sense of politics sometimes risked collapsing the difference of the third and the fourth communal intermediations from a standpoint that claimed the fourth, the modern sense tends to put the fourth out of play, or take over its difference in terms of erotic sovereignty, with the result that there is a certain contraction of the difference of the third and the fourth, but from the side of the political understood in terms of an immanent whole. This must risk making politics, in an immanent

sense, absolute. It is obvious that we have seen something of this on the totalitarian "Left." There is also a very modern contraction of differences, most to be found on the capitalist "Right," when the dominion of serviceable disposability becomes the universal form of relation to the whole, and everything is made subject to its instrumental requirements. Then not only politics but ethics and religion are made to speak the language of serviceable disposability and its no less totalizing market. The market will be said to offer choice in a neutral context, but there is no neutral context, only an ethos of use saturated with the values of serviceable disposability. This too, in its own way, tries to consume the intimate universal: our most intimate desires will be satisfied, it is insinuated in its unrestrained advertising, and this on a global scale. Ethics, religion, indeed philosophy all are suborned to witness to their usefulness in this global universalizing of utility. In the universalizing the intimate meaning of what is worthy beyond use is driven further and further into recess. Globalization thus risks being the capitalist projection of a counterfeit double of the intimate universal.

Even if we try, as did the Marxists, to offer a vision of politics beyond capitalist serviceability, given the devalued soil of otherness in the modern ethos, given the contraction, nay, destruction, of the difference between political sovereignty and agapeic service, the divinization of human politics is always shadowed by the will to power of the dominion of serviceable disposability, but now more explicitly totalized in a communal sense. Hence the intermediation of erotic sovereignty is also at risk of losing the sense of immanent and intrinsic value in favor of a voracious instrumentalism, whether individualist or communist, in which everything finally is disposable—not only the citizens of a polity but the politicians also. The family is ruined by the same attitude of serviceable disposability—an attitude blithely preached, though misery is created for those who treat familial others and themselves thus. The family is invaded by a set of relatively arbitrary arrangements, now sanctioned by economic profitability and political institutionalization, as if we were all freelance autonomists, with no inherent ties and loyalties to others, loyalties that properly enlarge a freedom beyond solitary self-assertion, but that are now censured as hang-ups curbing self-expression.

When it is made the whole, this sense of the political generates a diminished sense of the *metaxu* in a number of respects. There are the diverse finite *metaxu*s that constitute the tissue of different intermediations in immanence itself. There is also the *metaxu* at the boundary of

immanence—first in the inward otherness of the singular human, and in the deep intimacy of a family; second the religious *metaxu* between immanence and transcendence as other, signaled by the difference of the communities of erotic sovereignty and agapeic service. The first communicates the intimate universal in the idiocy of the family, the second can communicate it in the religious intermediation of the human and the divine. Both of these *metaxu* are *meta* in the double sense: in one sense shaped "in the midst" of political community, in another sense "beyond, over, and above." Political community may provide the conditions that make possible their maturing, but politics does not constitute that maturing—in that regard they are both *transpolitical.*

We have difficulty thinking of the transpolitical, except as a retreat into suburban cocooning, or an entire break with the political. But even were one to see such a break, say, in the way the Desert Fathers shook the dust of the city off their sandals, this break is also a symbolic political act in the sense of being enacted in terms of a higher loyalty, a higher fidelity to the community of agapeic service. When, for instance, Augustine wrote the *City of God*, its composition was both transpolitical and yet immensely influential in a political sense, since it mediates our understanding of different powers and their proper intermediation, without reduction of the City of God to the City of Man, as happens with Hegel and his successors.[27] With the latter there is a difference then crushed dialectically, a difference, now forgotten, in the urge simply to reassert difference in the face of this speculative crush. But there is a finesse for differences of community on which we can effect neither a dialectical construction nor an antidialectical deconstruction. An absolved politics, respectful of the transpolitical dimensions of the intimate universal, would not close off porosity to the community of agapeic service.

Politics, the Intimate Universal, the Art of Discrimination

Second consideration: In the third communal intermediation political considerations come to the fore more explicitly, and yet that politics has also the care for the other worthy forms of community. Given the complex porosities and intermediations between different forms of community, the task of politics cannot be defined immanently through itself alone, but must itself have some finesse for the discriminations that differentiate and

relate these different communities. *We must affirm the necessary seriousness of politics even in its very relativity.*

The art of discrimination must have a political finesse for differences, not least in holding firm to the doubleness between the communities of erotic sovereignty and agapeic service. Though these in concrete living are in fact mixed up, we should not mix them up, in the sense of mistaking one for the other, or collapsing their difference into expressions of one whole. They must not be mixed up, but in the between, they must be mixed up, in allowing their porosity in the happening of living itself—an entirely different matter. This is coherent with metaphysics as metaxological, which means we are not dealing with an Eleatic ontology, or an idealistic speculative holism, or a deconstructive immanence. We are "in the midst" but also "beyond." This is a double posture that might well be captured in the advice to "be in the world but not of it," to be true to a kingdom that is in this world though not of it. Is this the double contradictory thing that is open to criticism in the opinion of Merleau-Ponty?[28] Perhaps only if it is an evasive servility producing the miscarriage of immanent sovereignty. But is it? Why should the given world of immanence be loved any the less, even if it does not exhaust the promise of being? Once again one must ask: Suppose the love is neither servile nor sovereign, a witness to the intimate universal. It is a sign of contradiction, but a contradiction to immanence at home with itself, and hence to a politics that would immanently absolutize itself. The accusation of contradiction risks invoking what amounts to an immanent univocalism, convenient for a self-assertive immanence unwilling to brook contradiction at its boundary. The sign of contradiction might more fruitfully be seen as witnessing to a porosity on that boundary, asking from us more finesse for the equivocities of finitude. And perhaps this is not entirely alien to the philosophy of ambiguity sought by Merleau-Ponty. Metaxological finesse for these equivocities reads the sign of contradiction in terms neither servile nor sovereign and not in terms of a false choice between the intimate and the universal in the religious community of agapeic service.

There is a respect, perhaps known better by ancient and medieval thinkers, in which metaphysics is beyond politics, and yet there is nothing antipolitical in recognizing this "beyond." Raphael's *School of Athens* captures the balance perfectly between the vertical pointing of the finger of Plato and the horizontal, even hand of the moderating Aristotle. The moderating hand reminds us of just care for the *meta* as defining our

"being in the midst"; the finger pointing upward recalls us to the *meta* as "over and above" the moderate middle, reminds us of the exceeding of our self-transcending and the excess of transcendence itself. Who would deny that there are tensions between these two senses of the *meta*, but is this not both the suffering and the glory of our being in the between? Is there not a suffering beyond servility and a glory beyond sovereignty?

Each human being is a metaphysical being, in whom the sourcing powers of the "to be," both those most intimate and those most self-transcending, are at the boundary of the political, even in the political itself. A worthy practice of politics lets those boundaries be. Metaphysics as a philosophical discipline of mindfulness can be close to this beyond in this regard: as a practice of what I have called agapeic mindfulness—an admiring openness to the given worthiness of the "to be," freed from any grasping will to power, a released *theōria* beyond the tyranny of theory, rising again from the porosity prior to theory and practice.[29] This released mindfulness exhibits its own form of "doing justice," as we saw above. There is a "beyond" in the form of a kind of posthumous mindfulness, mindfulness posthumous to erotic sovereignty, mindfulness posthumous to will to power, mindfulness not servile but released in a purer service of the true. In going back into the recessed depths of the intimate universal, it comes forth as a resurrected way of wonder.[30]

Lest what I say be misconstrued as antipolitical (it is not), I think there are seeds of this service beyond servility and sovereignty in politics itself, even if often masked in many (sometimes necessary) equivocations. As needing an art of discrimination, politics has to have finesse for these equivocations and for the mask. Notwithstanding this, there is a public service, a political service that is for the good of the community, and its form is not a self-fulfilling sovereignty. I mean this in the way in which one could say that the genuine statesman is beyond the erotic sovereign. I mean also that many of the daily servants of the common good, whose work remains incognito, are themselves servants of this political good, though they make no headlines. They are "citizens" of the intimate universal, though in their daily consideration they would not dream of so describing themselves. Their often nameless generosity generates and carries the social trust that possibilizes the intermediations of enabling social power.[31]

The necessary seriousness of the political resides in its *care for the importances of the relative*. I am speaking of the relativity of a public space

that is hospitable to the flourishing of the other intermediations of value. The relativity does not create them but it is enabling of them in this space. If there is a governing of them, this need not be a dominating. There is something about them that is not just servile to political sovereignty, and they are not yet entirely sovereign in their own right. Think thus of the intimacy of the family at one end, and the transcendence of the religious at the other, with practical invention and entrepreneurship in between. Each of these is a necessary serving of essential value but neither is per se necessarily servile or sovereign. Politics has to do with public goods and their distribution, more often than not in terms of organizing the institutions governing everyday life. There is more to it than this, since it also can offer a people an intermediation with itself, in terms of its self-understanding, and sense of what it is to do and be—and this can extend even to its sense of destiny, if it has one. A people's symbolic sense of itself is hyperbolic to serviceable disposability since it has its sources in the general eros, and intimate to this are excesses no one can quite know or master. The intermediation of a people to itself can take many forms,[32] and this manyness has to be taken with more seriousness than is allowed by drumbeats about "democracy," as if the invocation of that holy name were enough to put this manyness in its proper perspective. Politics is more than the organization and administration or higher management of economics. The power of the "to be" as good is open to a multiplicity of communal expressions. Politics requires its own finesse, prudential and visionary, for this diversity of powers and their flourishing.

Politics, Nihilism: The Good of the "to Be" and the Intimate Universal

Third consideration: how politics, in one of its roles, can serve as *a therapy against nihilism*, a hedge, a house against the temptation to think of the "to be" as worthless. It guards us against the danger of living as if at bottom, at the most intimate level, life were meaningless, purposeless. It enacts its therapy as performative projects. Sometimes it does this by organizing distractions, by filling time, sometimes by dreaming great enterprises. In all things it must guard against the fall of the moderate middle into meaninglessness. In this regard, politics has an intimate relation to the good of the "to be." In this too it is not exhausted by an imperium

of will to power. Indeed this last often issues forth as a powerful, violent hedge against the worthlessness of the "to be." The question is whether it only succeeds in perpetuating the worthlessness.

The sirens of tyranny sing seductively to the desperations of tired men. Tyranny and nihilism go hand in hand. Nothing is of inherent worth for tyranny, beyond the perpetuation and expression of its own will to power. If there is no resource of worth from beyond will to power, this too finally comes to nothing. Wars may even be organized as diversions from this "coming to nothing," though they must, and will, circle back to the nothing they only seem to escape. Premodern political thinkers, such as Plato, Augustine, Aquinas, bring us to face this better than many modern thinkers, certainly in this absolute essential: they do not renege on the ontological good of the "to be." They address better the question of a measure to human power that is not itself another human measure.

The best of politics seeks to make good in the more moderate domestic middle, but the problem of tyranny merits special mention: on going to an extreme it seeks to generate an oblivion to the possibilities of an agapeic service, beyond sovereignty and servility. Agapeic service is itself something extreme, but in domestic daily life it is also a secret and intimate "therapy" against tyrannical will to power. Tyranny is rooted in eros, individual or general, as the self-transcending sweep of the human power to be. With tyranny we find an intensification of an erotic self-insistence to an extreme such that what is other only counts as a means for this self-affirmation and its furthering. The doubleness of eros, as both *poros* and *penia*, is here deprived of its ethical poise: the power to be is expressed as an unbounded *conatus essendi* claiming absolute sovereignty, while the *passio essendi* has been rendered servile to the unbridling of the self-insisting endeavor to be. Hypertrophy of the *conatus essendi*, atrophy of the *passio essendi* and the compassion of being, *compassio essendi*, is mocked and hated. But the power to be cannot be divorced from the power to be good. In a certain metaphysically intimate sense, the power of the "to be" is the power to be good. What is worthy to be deemed good is not necessarily a human good, or necessarily a moral good. There is an ontological sense of the good of the "to be," philosophical intimacy that much of modern thought has lost. When we turn specifically to human beings, we find that we are first empowered before we power ourselves. Power is based on a porosity and an endowment given by the origin.

What endows politics? If some are to be believed, nothing but our own will to power. There is, of course, an element of truth in this. This we see, for instance, when powerful nations or peoples are tempted to reconstruct the spaces of the human commons that surround them in the image of their own social will. This reconstruction always risks the mutation of their general eros into an *eros turannos*. Everything hangs on the interpretation and handling of this mutation. That the glory of the world strides the globe does not change the fact that ultimately, that is, metaphysically, the immanent sources of glorious power are in the first instance ontological endowments. The view beyond servility and sovereignty suggests this, however: we cannot endow ourselves in the first place; we must first be endowed to be able to endow. This means once again a relativization of the claims of the *eros turannos*, which follows from the distortion of the *passio essendi*—something has been forced into recess, thrust into a false reserve, silenced. Tyranny involves the self-expression of will to power that instrumentalizes the power of the "to be" as good: this good is made to be my good, our good, and all other goods are harnessed to the end of serving the power, my power, our power that claims to be "number One." Tyranny can also take democratic form when the people claim to be "number One."

The claim to be "number One" can only be sustained by means of violence by any being who is not God. There is only one absolute One, and that is God. Everything else is a relative one, a one in relation to others. With human beings, the one in relation to the others is in an ethical relation that transforms the meaning of power: the power of the "to be" explicitly cannot be separated from the power to be as good, the ethical power to be good. If we understand the one One as the agapeic God, it is not that being in relation has no claim. Quite to the contrary, agapeic service beyond servility and sovereignty is the consummate relation of endowing goodness that gives to and for the other as other. It is as much prior to self-affirming will to power in the endowed beginning as it is beyond it, in the sought, even attained, end. Granting this, we will have to assume a relation to the political that communicates from the opposite extreme to tyranny. Tyranny is the seizure of the immanent excellence of the erotic sovereign who battens on the endowment of the good of the "to be" and usurps its communicative power. The God who is agapeic is at the opposite extreme of goodness to this usurpation. There is the communicative endowing of the good of the "to be"; there is no usurpation

in relation to the other; there is the freeing and enabling of the power of the finite "to be."

I speak of the extreme temptations. Without God as the agapeic One, one wonders if the extremes defining the between turn out, in the end, to be either a totalitarianism or an-archism, each nihilistic. Totalitarianism: a counterfeit social universal, devoid of being true to the intimacy of being. An-archism: a counterfeit intimacy of singular being, devoid of being true to the promise of the social(ist) universal. What of the moderate middle? Without God, the moderate middle becomes, one fears, the tepid middle of the last men of Nietzsche. The last men are the middling ones, ones who are an extremity in mediocrity: spiritual lassitude touches a lowest happy low, for our self-satisfaction here is our unnamed despair. In these extreme instances, the only countervailing powers seem also immanent, and likewise come from the extremes. In the case of the individual, the immanent otherness of intimate selving proves to be an-archic (with a slight bow again to Max Stirner). In making itself the absolute, self comes to know that there is nothing there that is absolute. There is an inward otherness beyond our self-determination, but this deep intimacy will not be understood in a more religious manner. Postulatory immanence issues its countermanding insinuation: no, if our immanent otherness resists the absolute self-mediation of immanence, let our self-absolutizing mean self-implosion, perhaps even self-explosion, for if I am not a man, I am dynamite. In the case of the communal whole, the forced universal of totalitarianism would be the extreme. The totalized power of the social whole becomes the absolute strange power claiming to be the absolute intimate power, whose intimacy is intrusively enforced as transcendence absolutely incarnate. In truth, this forced universal cannot absolutely reach the intimacy of the incarnate, for this is hyperimmanent: it is the gateway of porosity between the human and the divine, and no politics can ultimately answer for this in its radical ontological intimacy: its being shut in, or opened out; its freedom to consent to the ultimate porosity, or to close or fold its own porosity in on itself alone.

In all of this we find the diversion of our immanent porosity away from transcendence as other, but in this diversion we are always meeting something we cannot determine on the terms of our own immanence. In pointing beyond servility and sovereignty, metaxological metaphysics points beyond the temptations to idolize the whole, or the temptations

of the idolatrous human self. If immanent politics is always tempted by the power plays of servility and sovereignty, the agapeic God beyond the immanent whole de-absolutizes such a politics. This de-divinization of politics might perhaps make the divine more intimate to politics, but in the mode of the agapeic servant, and not the erotic sovereign. The erotic sovereign is relativized by the agapeic servant, but relativized by a different being in relation—not by an autarchic absoluteness that squats on top of the others as a higher tyrannical power. The endowing good endows power but the good of the "to be" it endows is more than will to power. God beyond the immanent whole relativizes the idolatry of the totalitarian whole, and the idolatrous say-so of self-asserting an-archism.

Porosity, Politics, the Intimate Universal: Neither Servility nor Sovereignty

At the end of the last chapter, we finished with the lasting lash of Yeats, but we can end here, or perhaps even begin again, with Yeats's own ending on the intimacy of tender love, and paradoxically through his last poem, titled "Politics."[33] It goes thus:

> How can I, that girl standing there,
> My attention fix
> On Roman or on Russian
> Or on Spanish politics?
> Yet here's a travelled man that knows
> What he talks about,
> And there's a politician
> That has read and thought,
> And maybe what they say is true
> Of war and war's alarms,
> But O that I were young again
> And held her in my arms!

Yeats's poem itself carries an epigraph from Thomas Mann: "In our time the destiny of man presents its meanings in political terms." By contrast, the poem carries intimations of a *transpolitical* meaning of relevance for our *fourth and concluding consideration*: how the porosity is significant

for politics and the intimate universal. In speaking of extremities when I refer to transcendence, I mean it otherwise than the cartoon version of Platonism. We are not dealing with a univocal dualism of the here and the "beyond," but rather with a between that communicates of what is beyond by its leavening of immanence. It is in the between that we find ourselves in the intimate universal: indeed we live out of it, and do not always or often come to mindfulness of it. There in the immanent between, the play of servility and sovereignty is very much in evidence, but in this immanence there also is a porosity to something more. More than anything else, the community of agapeic service intimates that being religious is lived out of a certain primal porosity between the human and the divine. We might understand this, for instance, in terms of the life of prayer, or in terms of the rituals of liturgy that make us porous to praise, or as a life enacted in care for the other, and indeed care for our own selving, we who too are to be loved as agapeically as possible. Without religious finesse for the primal porosity, is the art of politics weakened in its wise negotiation of immanent porosities and boundaries in the finite between? Is it tempted to make itself the replacement for the primal porosity, or at least the secular porosity between immanent power and power that ceaseth only in death? Are we inclined to reconfigure the intimate universal into a counterfeit configuration of immanent political power circling around itself alone and closed into itself finally?

In the given middle there are complex porosities and intermediations between the four different forms of community, above distinguished; hence the task of politics cannot be defined immanently through itself alone. The notion of anything in the finite between being defined immanently through itself alone is called into question by a metaxological philosophy. Especially in the fourth community, ethical openness to the other as other is at its most pronounced. Even though this ethical-religious community cannot be reduced to the terms of the political community, it has to find its way in terms of the empowerments and constraints often marking the political community. Finesse for the porosity of the two is needed—diversely needed by those who would be just political leaders, as well as by those who are in service to the holy. Porosity between the two certainly does not mean the takeover of one by the other, whether from the side of a self-absolutizing secularism, or from the side of a religious putsch riding the holy as a vehicle of its will to power, as deviously immanent as the self-absolutizing secularism.

Beyond servility and sovereignty, a metaxological philosophy asks for finesse in negotiating boundaries. We between-beings are creatures passing and in passage. We might distinguish, for instance, between local politics and international politics but both are forms of being between: between members of a nation, and between (inter) nations. If the stress must fall on the between, we must do justice to the passages in the between, and to the porosities that allow passing. This means a loss of absolutely secure boundaries. There are no such boundaries. One of the tasks of politics is to determine boundaries but none can be absolute. To take the ultimate case: in the between as offering a primal porosity between the human and the divine, there can be no absolute walls that can confine the communication and passage of the endowing good. Postures of defense and offense can take place along different borders, and hence shape the communication of good and evil in the porosity. The porosity as such makes one ontologically vulnerable to the other. Keeping the porosity unclogged means a fidelity to our being as a *passio essendi*. This is also a fidelity to endowing good. Just the vulnerability might incline one to revert to self-asserting *conatus*, and we make the endowing good of the "to be" mutate into offensive will. If the other on the boundary is suspected of will to power, we fear violation by an intruding power and seek protection in a boundary without porosity.

Situate here the definition of politics in terms of *foe and friend*. This is an important consideration but the sources out of which this distinction emerges have to do with the primal porosity, the *poros* and *penia* of eros, the immanent passage in our being between *passio essendi* and *conatus essendi*. To do justice to these requires ontology and metaphysics—the former to discern the forms of immanent dynamic powers, the latter to see the openness to transcendence that these powers enable. But to identify that distinction with the political as such runs the risk of stipulative say-so, even dictatorial decisionism, one that makes a condition of war more absolute than the porosity of being. For then finally everyone is a partner in woe, in war, even when my ally.[34]

The porosity is more ultimate, for without reference to it, we cannot understand the happening of enmity and the condition of war, much less the promise of the power of the "to be" as endowing good.[35] The distinction of friend and enemy is not arbitrary, but to identify it with what is essential to politics does risk a contraction of the range of relevance defining politics, and an arbitrary decisionism as to what grounds that distinction.

Willful say-so, claiming to determine ultimately what amounts to self-serving differences, then overrides the patient art of political finesse. A more deep-going reflection on the porosity, and all it entails, will bring us to the difference of the erotic sovereignty and agapeic service. This too is no arbitrary difference. With erotic sovereignty there are considerations of immanent excellence that do not fit into the distinction of friend and foe. If what is essential to the political is defining the enemy, politics becomes the settlement of boundaries, a settlement ultimately grounded in violence that tries to close down the porosity. This settlement must be inherently unstable, in the longer run even self-defeating, since there is no closure of the ultimate porosity. For it allows the streaming of human self-transcending, whether on this side or the opposite side, over any boundary we claim to fix. We remain stuck in the primitive definition of justice in Plato's *Republic*—helping one's friends and doing harm to one's enemies. Beyond this the *Republic* passes far. Passing even further beyond servility and sovereignty, doing good even to one's enemy, is enjoined by the agapeic relation.

There is a nonviolent universal in the call of the agapeic relation. The home of the call of this intimate universal is religion, and not primarily politics. There is no absolutely universal politics, since for us in the world of immanent powers there must needs be boundaries drawn in which the porosity is given determinate form. This does not mean that a universal call does not continue to resound within any boundary so drawn, and beyond every boundary, and hence the political is always made to sway or tremble in the hearing of this transpolitical call. The desire for a universal politics without the boundary, and without ethical and spiritual finesse for the religious, tends to generate counterfeit doubles of the agapeic community. The threshold of the boundary becomes the launching pad for an assault on the beyond, projecting a universal that is intimately counterfeit.

Further, the appeal to absolute porosity *in absolutely immanent terms* tends to veer from an inflated idealism of expectations to a brutal deflation of reckoning. In this self-circling of immanent power, the other, previously the absolutely lovable, becomes now the absolutely suspect. The general eros, stirring from its sleep within a people, tries to inflate itself as an absolute porosity but instead creates an absolute *conatus* that seeks to bring down all boundaries that mark our finite porosity to finite others. Out of our monstrous intimacy a generalized spirit of suspicion puts forth its darker blooms. "Good fences make good neighbors," wrote Robert Frost,

citing the words of the neighbor. Walls wall in, walls wall out. But without the fitting boundary, and its appropriate negotiation, we lack respect for the intimate reserve of trust essential to communication. At a limit, in there being no limit, we risk an explosion of self-inflating tyranny, followed by implosion and, in the extreme, the murder of the others, as they are drawn into the retraction of the emptiness into its self-created void. The porosity of the between, the fertile void we are in the intimate universal, allows also that we make of the between this desolation.

On the one hand, then, one might say we need to heed the lessons of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.[36] Shakespeare is an artist with superb finesse for the intimate universal in both its political and its sacred dimensions. A political evil, regicide, is intimate—it is not only the horror of killing "God's anointed," but a violation to the eternal destiny of the soul of murdered and murderer, and the violent disordering of power in the kingdom. There is much bearing on the porosity and boundaries, and indeed much of incognito metaphysic in this great dramatic study of tyranny. There is the porosity of the elements, for the earth has bubbles even as the water has; there is porosity of the powers, the porosity between the living and the dead, for the murdered come back to disturb our feasts; there is the clogging of the ultimate porosity between the human and the divine in the impotence to pray, when Macbeth, after the murder, cannot pronounce Amen, though he would, and had most need then of Amen; there is the repulse, politically enforced, to the human porosity of pity, symbolized by the child, the naked newborn babe, striding the blast; there is Macbeth's impatience with time, itself a metaphysical revolt in its own way, in his will to overleap the boundary between the present and the future, indeed the life to come; there is metaphysical revolt also in Macbeth's refusal to let be what is and what is to be; there is his seizure of "solely sovereign sway and masterdom," in a world steeped in the half-truth and the half-lie of equivocity, for fair is foul and foul is fail; there is the shriveling of the *passio essendi* under tyranny's power, the loss of all compassion, and the engorgement of the *conatus essendi*; there is the intimate bond of the family desecrated (Macduff: "All my little chicks, at one fell swoop"), anticipated by Lady Macbeth in advance of the evil deed in her rejection of the "milk of human kindness,"[37] coming back to haunt other families with corrosive suspicion, with "the near in blood, the nearer bloody"; there is the setting at naught of the bound(ary) of measure, in the exceeding of measure; there is erotic sovereignty warping into *eros*

turannos, and then there are no friends more, only foes, and with this the way of life is fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf, and at the end life itself a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

On the other hand, we need to heed the lessons of political Romanticism. This, in its own way, reminds us of our porosity to what exceeds finite measure in immanence. There is something of greatness in some Romantic artists with undoubted affinity for the intimate universal. There is something admirable about the dream of a new holism of the people, enacted with the integrity of political justice, and not shorn of the true pieties of the sacred. And yet, sleeping in some forms of political Romanticism is a general eros for a national sovereignty that can mutate into the tyrannical self-assertion of a rampant folk. From adolescent good will we have seen many a political Romantic graduate, so to say, to Pol Pot. Imagine there's no heaven, the song sings, imagine there's no religion, imagine there are no countries, imagine no boundaries. We can imagine, but can we only imagine? Nothing to live or die for: but sometimes when we try to do more than imagine, with nothing to live or die for, living without a why becomes killing without a why. The singing stops, the screaming begins and, horrible dictu, death is loosed in the boundless whole, and on it.

Politics is the necessary art of intermediary boundaries in the porosity. Without this discriminating art, and the moderation of an ethical discipline, and the finesse of religion, the porosity can be turned into the formlessness of a chaos, where the idiotic sources of human selving release a madness—not a divine but a murderous madness. An ethical and religious finesse moderates the darker excesses in the intimate, and offers measure in the exceeding of measure, such as marks the infinite restlessness of human self-transcending. Any religion of politics is a false religion; it doubles and redoubles itself in a counterfeit whole. We need different services of the everyday. The everydayness of politics can be a sacred service: not an administration of the banal, but a safeguarding of just measure, with the guidance of exemplars of practical wisdom who have something about them beyond servility and sovereignty.

Once again, the extreme calls of human existence are not to be denied, and my own focus on the intimate universal does not intend to slight them, but to identify these calls with the political is dangerous. No doubt there is dangerous politics in exceptional circumstances, but political theologians under the spell of the "mortal god" will not save us or the between. They do not do a good job in keeping before us the reminders of a higher

measure that comes with the community of agapeic service. Secular politics may disguise theologies (an insight developed very differently by, say, Carl Schmitt and John Milbank), as well as disguise metaphysics; but as we need good metaphysics, we also need good theology (a task assumed by Milbank but not by Schmitt).[38]

There can be ways of treating the political-theological problem that lead to a counterfeit double of the political and a debasement of the theological. These ways are attractive to tough men who think life is hell, but they are univocalists of the dark. In the equivocal play of light and dark, the dark is the more favored. They think that the world is as Macbeth made it to be by his sacrilegious murder; and they supplement this murder with their subtle rationalizations. Falling under the spell of King Death, they desert the equivocal field of powers where political finesse is most needed, and needed with remembrance of the measure of the Good beyond finite determination, such as we find in Plato's Good or in the God of biblical personalism. They canonize a world of darkness, secreted from evil intimacies by dark men, and the candle they light gives the honor to the secret darkness. Their thinking has reconfigured the equivocal field of politics in the dark light of this honor. These hard men of life's hell might even see themselves as superior sons of heaven, but Shakespeare is the superior in seeing something beyond servility and sovereignty. And though they may well be the familiars of Macbeth, Macbeth also was their superior, for he did not blink at the sticky evil he had done in undoing the good of the "to be." While Macbeth fought to the death, he did not deny that what he had wrought was a world without blessing, a world wherein sleep was murdered, a world wherein Amen sticks in the throat. "Out, out brief candle": his outcry comes clean about what he himself cannot cleanse. No honor now more to the darkness wrought and in which he too is also undone. Life falls into the sere, the yellow leaf, but Macbeth at least does not equivocate the truth that it is he himself who has wrought this fall, and the last fall of usurping power into unredeemed, and unredeeming, death. King Death makes claim to crown all things but death itself can crown no king.

II

The Intimate Universal—Systematic Thoughts

From the Idiotic to the Agapeic

CHAPTER 5

The Idiotics of the Intimate Universal

Opening

I want to offer systematic thoughts about the intimate universal in relation to the idiotics, the aesthetics, the erotics, and the agapeics of being. I do not mean any system in the sense of a self-enclosed totality of thoughts, but an open exploration of crucial considerations that hold together in networks of interrelated significance, that yet also break open or retreat beyond every effort at self-enclosed totality. One comes to acknowledge crucial thresholds that are more than the determinations of univocal universals, or that exceed the dialectical universals of self-closing system. The thresholds are on the boundary between the systematic and the trans-systematic. The intimacy of the universal is secretly at work before all determinate universals, and the universality of the intimate comes to luringly, alluringly call thought to more than all self-determining universals. While the significance of the intimate universal is not just human, finesse for it opens us to rich understandings of the being of the human in all its ontological dimensions. I begin with the idiotics since it is here that we may first and most elementally address the *intimacy* of the intimate universal. As we move through the aesthetics, erotics, and

agapeics this intimacy might seem to be lost or weakened, as more articulated, communicable powers of the universal come to expression. But it is not so simple. The promise of the intimate universal is at work from the outset, though not necessarily known as such. The promise is most explicitly lived and fulfilled with the community of agapeic service but it is immanent and diversely manifest in the idiotic, aesthetic, and erotic.

Why not start immediately with public things, res publica? A significant reason is our need to be mindful of the *recessed* as well as the *expressed*. The secret power of the intimate works on, though often the public things conspire to recess it. The idiotic things secretly companion the public things and can come back disturbingly to haunt them. Consider, for instance, modern totalitarianisms: we might distinguish them from prior tyrannies in terms of their bureaucratic and technological efficiency, yet at the heart of the matter is the idiocy: the idiocy of the monstrous. The pitiless implementation of bureaucratic and technological efficiency as "rational," as seeming to serve the "universal," can trample on the intimate but it is itself a formation of the idiotic. Between the old tyrannies and the new there is a sameness in this idiotics of the monstrous. Indeed modern totalitarianism is often more radical in trying to penetrate and desecrate the intimacy of being, destroy the idiocy of its subjects. It secretes an infernal idiocy, none the less idiotic for the fact that it violates by means of massive technological aid. Modern war, for all its hyperrational instruments of destruction, has a similar idiotic dimension. Many of our modern distractions, again massively mediated by technological means, alas serve the pacification and diversion of the idiotic core of our being. Political religions with their secular redemptions do not do justice to this idiotic core, and when, unexpectedly, out of it religious *passio* springs, such *passio* is to be decapitated with perverted idiotic *passio*. The idiotic is not the atavistic in us, not our bygone prehistory to which we might regress; it is constitutive of our being, always with us, even when the public things deny or silence it. The intimate universality as idiotic is not of the rational concept, nor is it autistic; it constitutes ontologically the first secret source of communicative being.

Being Given Idiotically: Threshold of Communication

The etymological meaning of "idiot" does refer us to the intimate, and even though this is hard to pin down or often is invisible according to

more public, neutral generalities, this is not without promise of political relevance. Recall Socrates's answer to the question of how he managed to escape public judgment unscathed into his old age, given the political irritations his philosophical way of life aroused. Ingredient in his answer: I idioted it (*Apology*, 32a3, *idiōteuein*). One might translate: I kept myself out of it, out of the foreground of public politics, I kept to myself. Whether we believe him or not—it is hard to believe completely, given Socrates's inability to "mind his 'own' business" (itself a very idiotic idiom)—the important point has to do with something *reserved* regarding the politics of the public. This reserve has an ontological-metaphysical significance, but also a political significance, just in its reserve in relation to the political. Something about our human condition is idiotic in both a singular and a communal sense, and while this is other to public politics in one sense, it cannot be evacuated entirely of significance for the space of more public engagements. A sense of this doubleness is evident thus: on the one hand, we speak of someone as "idiosyncratic," thereby stressing something of a singularity that is not substitutable for another; on the other hand, we speak of the "idiom(s)" of a group, thereby acknowledging both the event of communication and its unique social qualification by this singular group.

Each of us lives idiotically, insofar as each of us is a singular being, whose very singularity seems to verge on being incommunicable, certainly not fully communicable in terms of conceptual abstractions and neutral generalities. We live our lives from within out, with this singular stress of self-being. But if the "within out" names an intimacy of self-communication, there is also a "without in" and this signals our very being in communication. Being in communication means we are as much a medium of reception, a happening of inception, as an agency of action. To speak of "self-being" can be misleading here, if we think of a univocally fixed self we can pin down without remainder. Rather we are closer to an event of intimate participation, flowing between one being and another, and singularly stressed in a process of selving that is both determinately enacted and yet escapes fixed determination. If there is selving in this happening of intimate participation, this is first idiotic in such a manner that one might say is both presubjective and preobjective. Presubjective: the "subject" is not yet a fixed determinate form—hence the "idiot self" refers us to a singular energy of selving that is more original than a determinate "subject" that has come to be or that has determined itself to be thus or thus.

Preobjective: not because it is not a "reality" but because its reality is not there in the modality of an objective thing; as a singular stress of selving, it is a happening of singularity in a field of energy, itself a happening of participation that is neither of the self nor of the other, and relative to which what is objective also comes later to form, just like the subjective itself. Nonobjective, nonsubjective singularity of selving: it does not know itself determinately at the outset; it is not unconscious simply; it is a stress of being in communication, on the threshold between what is not conscious and what comes to itself as itself in an inchoate, floating sense of itself. Idiotic selving: received into being in communication, it is hard to pin down, hard to articulate; it companions every pinning down, every articulation as that threshold selving aware of itself as itself and not void of this primitive sense of selving.

Idiotics also has to do with a certain intimate sense of the good of the "to be." We live our "to be" in our elemental sense of "self"—so elemental that there seems no self there.[1] Since this happens in a field of participation, we find ourselves as affirmed in being, before we affirm being for ourselves. There is something idiotic about this "being affirmed"—for it is a happening before it offers itself for the occasion of express selving and self-minding. As happening, the idiocy of the elemental "to be" is not confined to any one thing, or any one self or other, but opens a given ethos of being, a primal ethos that is a charged field of ontological worth. There is no disjunction of fact and value at this level. Disjunction comes later. Philosophically we need the (poetic) anamnesis of this charged field.

The charge of the good of the "to be" is undergone and received in the elemental fact of being at all. One might say: we *taste* ourselves in a certain way. Rising in the morning, we taste ourselves as fresh children verging again on the virgin world; or we taste ourselves as grey ash that finds no slumbering spark within itself to flash out again and fire its life another day; or we taste ourselves as a dull habituation groaning at the tedium of sameness that will be the dutiful pound of our daily chores. We drink a draught of beer, say, and our satisfaction has a stress of innerness that exhales itself in an "Ah . . . " The "Ah" says everything by saying nothing. Or say: my face is caressed and the idiot stress of selving stirs with some hint of its longing for buried love, love long buried in the dumb body. Or say: surprised by delight, a beautiful face lifts the idiocy up, the slouching selving soars, and no permission to soar has been asked from self-conscious reflection. Or say: crushed by disappointment, the elemental

energy retracts into itself as if into a black hole, but the black hole is just the idiot selving, now verging on an autism of chagrin.

These are just a few indicators and more might be given, and their significance will return. They point to something at the edge of determinability by our concepts, hence something that some would say falls entirely outside universality. Is this so, or is the issue whether we here encounter a kind of surd, but a surd with significance not only for human being but for being as such? There is something surd about the "that it is" of the "to be": it just happens to be, and initially it does not explain itself. The "to be" at all is given before any of our conceptions; prior to self-consciousness, it remains always in excess of our determinate categories. How to understand this givenness? We must grant a given granted, but what kind of granting? First our being granted to be; then our granting of this first granting. The second granting implicates our consent to the first granting. Is our consent itself a "yes" to an ontological consent already effective in our being granted to be? Whatever else, the surd resists the reduction of all given thereness to taken-for-granted familiarity. There is something astonishing or perplexing about it.

The question: Is this surd just absurd or does it hint of an intimate strangeness of being not at all senseless? Were it a mere surd, we might conclude it is finally absurd—it is there, it makes no sense, there is no further sense to be made. But what if it were a surd not absurd? Of course, the language of the surd is the language of a remainder, a residue. What if our participation in this surd were a gloriously delicate intimacy with the gift of being itself—the surd surplus to absurdity? To reduce its idiocy to senseless thereness would be to lose its intimate insinuation of sense beyond objectification and subjectification. The intimacy of the given "that it is" is on the edge of all objectifiable and subjectifiable determination. Because it is resistant to determinate conceptualization, we easily overlook it and live as if there were no idiocy. This overlooking would be impossible, in fact, without the very intimacy of being it passes over.

For that matter, without the idiotic givenness there would also be nothing of the more public determinations that allow all our more common communications. Perhaps we come to know the "that it is" most proximately in the idiocy of our own being or of a beloved other, but all beings can communicate themselves as receding from complete determination even as they come forward into determinate manifestation. Beings proceed, but as they do they also recede. Beings show themselves, but as

they do they also reserve themselves. Beings manifest themselves, but in their communication they also conceal their being. This doubleness tells against taking the idiocy of being for granted as senseless idiocy, as the mere surd. Taken as granted, the idiocy disquiets us with its ambiguity. The ambiguity of its "ownness" communicates an unsettling chiaroscuro, tantalizes us with a light that is not its own.

Universal Intimacy of the "to Be" as Good

This idiocy is not a "what," not a neutral generality, and is not to be exhaustively defined by formal determinability. Is it not then resistant to certain kinds of universalization? Yet it is the ontological space of an elemental togetherness, and so there is about it a participation in the universal. Do we do justice to the doubleness of its chiaroscuro if we describe it as the horrifying *Il y a* of Levinas, or as the threatening, nauseating viscosity of Sartre's *être-en-soi*? As elemental it is a charged field of thereness,[2] and qua field it is an intermedium of communication. This intermedium is not a matter of the subject versus the object or of the object versus the subject, or yet of subject and subject, that is, of intersubjectivity. The intermedium of communication is ontologically elemental, and subject, object, intersubjectivity come to be in it, out of it. This intermedium, if preobjective, presubjective, preintersubjective, is enabling of the objective, the subjective, the intersubjective. The intimate universal is first fermenting in this idiotic intermedium of communication.[3] That we participate in an *intermedium of communication* does suggest a connection with the more universal, but for now I want to stress the intimacy.

As originally a *charged* field of communication, the idiocy is saturated with worth, prior to determination and self-determination. One might say that there is something overdeterminate to it as a kind of "too muchness," though there is also something quasi-indeterminate about it, as opening to further determinations and self-determinations. The overdeterminacy is redolent of the good of the "to be." The idiotic is an elemental field of communication, shimmering with the endowed promise of the good of the "to be." We do not originally charge it, though derivatively, when we have come to more determinate form and self-determining forming, we do endeavor to charge it, to recharge it, in directions supportive of our own selvings and otherings. We will want to take charge, and there is

something asked of us in this charge and recharge. Nevertheless, there is still the supportive intermedium of participation, and the promise of the original idiotic givenness. There are charges leading to unselving as well as to selving, to the enabling of communication as well as to the disabling. It is important that the blocking of communication presupposes the promise of the charged field of communication—otherwise no blocking would be possible. There is an asymmetry in the priority of the given promise, as there is in the enigmatic priority of the good of the "to be." A hospitable enabling is prior to a hostile disabling.[4]

This is not to deny some truth to the Sartrean viscosity or the Levinasian *Il y a*. There is an idiocy that, to us at least, is not defined in a field *proportionate* to our selving and communicative othering. Just being there, the sheer being there of being, might be granted without any reference to these latter.[5] But to speak of the intimacy of being as more than our being is to gesture toward a strange universality that also, strangely, is not strange. Strangely also, it is to pay more nuanced attention to the singularity of the happening of the charged field. This has a kind of intimacy, which we most intimately know in our own intimacy. It is not that things other than us are not marked by intimacy but it is not always easy for us to be well attuned to it. I speak as if I mean a determinate self over against a determinate other thing, but I mean rather a more primitive intimacy. It is a struggle to speak articulately about this, since such speaking presupposes a high degree of differentiation and this is not at issue here, and not yet accomplished here. Nevertheless, we have continuing signs of its recessed influence. Consider the experience of being in some "spooky" place and how this may awaken something of what is normally recessed. Or think of being alone in the dark night of a turbulent storm, and what an unsettling can come to the diurnal determinations of the quotidian self. Or recall being struck into a kind of breathtaking astonishment at this thing or that, enfolded in a light, dazed by a light that is not of the quotidian. One is never entirely a stranger to the intimate strangeness of being at all.

To speak of "intimacy" turns us more toward the communicativeness of idiotic selving and othering. This idiocy is not an autism. A pure autism of being nowhere is, for even autism is communicative. The intimacy is witnessed in the unwilled "seepage" of the beings—seepage of a depth sometimes slumbering, sometimes awake in the beings. By being at all, there is a density and voluminosity. But this is not density or voluminosity in general. It is not a merely neutral *res extensa*. Voluminosity is

also not dense, but fluid. It flows, it impresses itself. It moves and does not move. It communicates itself, though it has no intent to communicate itself. This is the nature of the idiotic—to be nothing but itself, and as itself to show and radiate beyond itself into the charged field of the ethos of being. In a way, being nothing but itself is being nothing for itself—that is, if being itself is to be in communication with what is other to itself.

The intimate: *intimus*—there is a reference to a "within." But, of course, this "within" is communicative and hence is not simply within. It is outside itself even when within itself. Its very "within" is defined by a reference to a "without." It is not and never can be a closed self-relation. If there is a self-relation it always floats on the charged field, perhaps sea, of communicativeness. What floats in the field is itself a floating field: entirely there, and yet nowhere absolutely exactly, and yet communicating (an) always more. A painter can capture something of this charge of intimacy—not just of a beautiful person, but of fur, of an ermine, of drapes, of butchered meat, of black abstract form, all buoyed up in being on the shimmering sea of intimacy. Being in it elementally, enjoying the "to be" as good, in a way there is nothing we can do with it, though we can try to attend to it, tend to it, and give it voice again, in paint, in tone, in stone, in the gesture of dance, in the insinuating word.

Intimus—the reference to a "within" that is never within itself also opens inwardly, not only outwardly—the seeping depth goes into abysses. One might agree that this is perhaps true of the human self, as Augustine and others did. But is it not true of every being—is there not, in G. M. Hopkins's words, "the dearest freshness deep down things"? So far as the being simply is at all, there is an idiotic intimacy to it that escapes all finite determination—sheerly in virtue of the fact that it is in being at all. The human being can come to know something of this intimacy in its infinitude, especially in and through itself. It is not only the outer otherness that is in the charged field of the intimacy; the inner otherness is even more so, since it is the singular opening through which passes the affirmation that holds selving and othering in being at all. This inner, perhaps immanent, infinitude is a source, (re)source out of which communication comes: self-communication, in which the selving comes to itself; self-communication in which the surpassing of selving makes way for a community with others already with one, before one was really with oneself. The extensiveness of human surpassing is an outward communication of what

is secretly promised in the inward otherness as the immanent infinitude of the nonsubjective, nonobjective intimacy of being.[6]

Some (I think of Levinas, for instance) worry that the language of intimacy leads to the loss of difference, the loss of boundaries, and the melding of self and other, and hence to an abrogation of the responsibility of one before the other. These worries must be kept in mind but it is enough for now to note that there is reference beyond selving at two boundaries of its idiotic givenness: First, at the most intimate border of its own immanence, there are no fixed boundaries and the secret selving trails off into an abyss that it cannot name, of which it is never master, out of which its deepest resources of creativity come, out of which its own proclivities to the monstrous also emerge; it comes as if out of nothing, but what it comes out of is not nothing, though it is more like night than day. Second, at the intimate boundary marking the limit of its own singular stress, it is already in radiance, and in radiant relation to what is other beyond itself; there is no sitting in an absolutely empty room, for to sit or stand or move anywhere is to be communicative in the emptiness, which cannot then be an emptiness. There is a primal porosity in our deepest innerness and at the boundary where our singularity touches on all that is beyond it. We happen to be in the charged field, the ethos, which itself is porosity, and in which we ourselves are porosities.

Porosity of Being

It is not at all easy to talk about this porosity of being, or of the primal porosity that marks our being. For how to get a fix on a porosity? There is no direct way, since porosity draws attention to the relative absence of determination rather than any fixed determinacy. Porosity is what allows passage. Porosity is permeability. Porosity is an opening. Porosity seems like a field of emptiness. So, at first glance, it seems. If this is so, how to pin it down at all? How to refer intelligibly to it at all, except perhaps by *subtraction* from what determinately is already there?

Such a subtractive method might seem the way to go but for the fact that the porosity is not something merely left over when all determinacies have been taken away. It is analogous to how the idiotic as a surd is also not a mere residue left over when intelligibilities have been removed from a happening. No, the porosity is itself something prior that allows the

possibility of determinacy at all. Porosity is more primal than determination, for as the allowing power of passage, there would be no passing as passing without it, and no determinate stations or ways in the passing. The (ar)resting stations come later, only because already there is a more primal porosity.

It cannot be determined directly but here are some indications that help call it to mind. The *obscure* shows something of the power to reopen and animate the porosity. A night scene—gloomy—the gloaming. The night and kissing—closing one's eyes—there is something analogous in mysticism—to pray in the dark, wooing and being wooed—the night calls forth the abyss in us—this abyss shows the porosity. A threat to life brings to mind the porosity—an airplane in sudden turbulence, and one's infinite frailty strikes one into fear and trembling—porosity immediately forgotten when the turbulence is passed, and we pass through unresisting air. Infinity is related to porosity, as in a view of the sea—we are opened out. The porosity can be in the calm of the sea, or in the anger. Struck by the greatness of the open sea, infinite power is intimated—this opens the porosity. Burke's sense of the sublime is more intimate with the porosity than Kant's. Burke knows better than Kant the power of black night to reanimate the porosity. Zarathustra's *Nachtlied* (Nightsong) shows him to have been visited in poetry by a reawakened porosity. Abyss calls to abyss, the psalm says: this is related to the porosity. The void calls to the void, but this porosity is also overfull—both too much and less than nothing. We speak of the dead of the night—this dead reopens porosity, an appearing without an appearance, apparition of nothing. There is something imageless about the porosity; but something *steals upon us* and we find ourselves newly roused in it (see also below on the idiocy of the monstrous).

Normally we think of porosity as a permeable boundary or passage or open access between two (determinate) domains or things. There is porosity between A and B and we think of A and B as relatively firm, while between them is some more or less open border, one not absolutely closed to passage. Our question here: How to think *passage as passage*—and as initially without determinate boundary? This is not easy. One might speak of the medium in which passage occurs, but the medium is not a thing but a field in which things and passage eventuate. Porosity: a field in passage—itself a passing field, since it is not fixed or determinate. But consider also: We think of A and B as open to fixing, but what if they too are marked by porosity? You would then have things and events, themselves porous,

in a field or sea, itself a porosity. What passes would not pass as fixed in itself but as itself passing: passing in passage as such. If A and B—between which is a porosity—are themselves porous, it seems we almost have nothing. And passage then looks like a porosity between nothing and nothing, with something in being in between, something that itself is marked also by a kind of nothing.

Here we might connect the porosity with creation. One might say: the passage is creative in a porosity that passes between nothing and (finite) being and between being and nothing again—and this passing is renewed, again and again. Arising in being and setting, coming to be and passing out of being, creation brings to be the porosity within whose intermedium all things live and move and have their being. In passing between nothing and being, and being and nothing, A and B have a relative stability: they are more than vanishing wisps of quasi-being—they are. But given their porosity, how is this relative constancy to be understood? Answer: as given to be again and again, by continual creation: coming to be out of nothing, and in every instant of arising always shadowed with setting and return to nothing, yet returning to being, or being returned, again and again—within the mortal measure of their own peculiar finitude. The happening of music suggests an image of this: music is as sounding and resounding—it exists as arising, as dying away, as coming again, as passing in the silence. The wording of things communicates it: the speaking that is as spoken, that comes from fertile silence, that returns again to resounding silence.

The porosity is an opening, not only in us, but *of ourselves as an opening*. We are a passing opening.[7] The porosity is a kind of nothing, in that it is no-thing, but the kind of thing we are is subtended by this no-thing. For the kind of thing we are is marked by the possibility of receiving being other than itself, and of surpassing its own being toward what is beyond itself. We are not primally a fixed thing on one side of a determinate boundary, which can receive other-being from the far side of the boundary or surpass the boundary toward the other-being on the far side. There is something more primordial than that: we are a porosity, and the boundaries come to shape in the porosity we are. The boundaries come to shape both in the receiving into the porosity that is given to us from beyond ourselves and in the surpassing of boundaries to which our self-transcending testifies. We are porosity because we are first received in being: given to be, before we are self-surpassing, or porous in a derived sense to what is beyond ourselves. We are in being as idiotic singulars, but at the heart

of the idiotic selving is this intimate porosity that is the mark of our being creatures: emergent as what we are from no-thing—created from nothing. (Created by what? Theologically said, by God, but we need not talk about that now.) The nothing we are is not empty or void—it is a fertile void—it already is as nothing. We are as nothing, and this doubleness is significant: as being we are as nothing, but being as nothing opens a world within that can come to itself in mindfulness, and opens us to a world without, to which we can come in mindfulness of what is different.[8]

Since we mostly live in the later world of the fixed and determinate, it is hard to directly evidence the porosity but here are a few more hints, all of them again in the domain of the intimate. I think of the way children often think an adult can *see through them*—especially when they have done something that they fear is not to be done, something shameful. Being transparent: there is no boundary that can stop the look of the other—I am as nothing to that gaze, though what that gaze sees is not nothing but what I am and the shame of my deed. Or think how difficult it is for younger children to lie effectively: the lie is there on the surface of their faces, or in the language of their bodies—they have not yet erected steady barriers that bound the porosity, and its permeability appears in the lack of the mask on the young face.

Or attend to the *blush*. This is something fascinating in its own right, since a blush is a bodily flush but what flushes in the body is nothing merely bodily. It is a primitive sense of self, a sense of being exposed, a sense of being porous. This can happen even when one is alone, since it is not the physical presence of the other that causes the blush, it is the porosity to an other who sees the truth of what one is. The involuntary blush: the tender intimacy of the porosity flares up and suffuses the flushed face, there where the radical intimate permeability is momentarily to be seen. (I know there are *white* blushes.) With time we learn to put a face on things, a brazen face. The brazen face determinates the boundary that hides or puts in recess the original porosity. We learn to lie, even as we smile. We smile because, as a bodily sign of our porosity, the smile has power to open porosity in the other. Think of how the smile does just that with young infants, that is, brings forth in them a responding smile, as if the flesh at first were a porosity anticipating the hospitality of communication from what is beyond it. The false smile is a simulacrum of hospitable porosity that counterfeits the truer openness. It is necessary to call on the porosity even when one's deeds are putting it into hiding.

I give quite human examples, all of which have elemental bearing on our being with others as well as our being marked by forms of self-relation. They suggest an intimate communicability with no finitely determinable boundary, an infinite openness in intimacy to the universal. The porosity is important for our elemental sense of self, as well as for what opens the promise of being in community with others. It is not something we chose, it is ontologically constitutive of our being. Because of it we are capable of more complex forms of self-relation, as well as of an immense variety of being in communicative relations with others. It is not merely indeterminate; rather it serves as a promissory re-source out of which more determinate forms of selving and communicating with others come to be, come to be shaped. Yet as ontologically constitutive, it is always there with these determinate forms, even when this is not known as such, and even when no attention is paid to the porosity as a more original enabling opening. It is deeply intimate in one sense, and deeply communal and communicative in another sense. Indeed in the latter, deeply communicative sense, it is also deeply intimate—the intimacy is not mine or mine only, though what is most deeply mine is called into the openness of communicability by the porosity. This is worth remembering, whether we are talking about, say, the family as an ethically intermediating community or the economy or the state or indeed the religious community.

This porosity has religious and metaphysical significance. There is a metaphysical "limit" where there is nowhere to hide—nowhere to hide from the ineluctable fact that we happen to be. We happen to be, though once we were nothing and, once again, to all appearances, will be nothing again. We are on the boundary between being and nothing. The porosity is this boundary that is no boundary—the permeable boundary through which is given the gift of life, but given as a happening that might otherwise be nothing except for the giving of the origin. The metaphysical frailty and yet the robust thereness of our being at all are at stake in acknowledging the porosity. Our double being, our equivocal being: given to be, in being, shadowed by the nothing out of which we are originated, marked ourselves by a nothingness, but a nothingness that becomes original after its own way. For it is this later creative void of the porosity that seeds all creative self-transcending—seeds germinating in, rooted in the deep intimate equivocity of our being at all. The doubleness of our being: being as singular happenings in a more encompassing togetherness, beings as possibly nothing, and impelled to affirm our being, impelled to

affirm our being in face of the nothing, but in this discovering that our self-affirmation is a second affirmation. By the sheer fact that we are at all, we are as already the issue of a first ontological affirmation. This doubleness of being affirmed and affirming ourselves is expressed in the twinning of our *passio essendi* and *conatus essendi*. Ontologically speaking, we are present here at a twin birth.

Passio Essendi (Patience of Being)

If the "nothing" of which I speak is a fertile void, this is not at all to suggest that the human being creates itself out of this nothing, as if it creates out of nothing. This fertile void is not a creating ex nihilo but a creation ex nihilo. It has already come to be out of nothing, with a derived promise of originality that is already a given and received promise in the porosity of being, as itself originally given. This view is quite other than the existentialist view that we create ourselves. There is a certain truth to claims of derivative self-origination but first we are a *passio essendi*.

The original porosity receives its open between-being from the original origin; as received in being, the porosity is also a between-space of receiving; and it is in this between-space that beings are given as *passiones essendi*. This between-space fluctuates between a more indeterminate/overdeterminate porosity and more determinate forms of being. The ontological patience signaled by the *passio essendi* means our first being recipients of being, our being received in being, before we flower as being active on the basis of being already received. There is ontological receiving before there is existential acting. As something ontological, the receiving is constitutive of our self-being but it is not self-constituted. To call it *passio* is not, however, to imply that what is received is a mere chunk of dead thereness, devoid of its own energetic life. Not at all. Nevertheless, its own life is not first owned by it. It is given to be its own on the basis of a giving that is not its own. The nature of this giving and this receiving is such that the being that is thus received is freed into its own being for itself. The *passio essendi* shows given being as mine, but it is not given to me by myself. The doubleness in the description is again significant. One might say that the *passio essendi* is marked as a patient and received *esse*. More strongly put, the *esse* is given to the being whose being is the being received—it is not the being of something of itself alone. I call this an

agapeic giving and receiving in the sense that the giving source releases the given from itself, offers the recipient a life that is not the same as the source. Thus the giving opens a difference, a between—a porosity, since the gap is also the space of communication that can be traversed because it opens a field of "being with."

The *esse* is a *passio* in the sense that it is not only patient (though not merely passive) but alive, endowed with energy that, though received, is our own. Think of *passio* in the usual sense: from source(s) immanent in ourselves we are moved and even carried beyond ourselves by *passio*—there is a surge of life and we are thrown on it, thrown beyond ourselves on its wave. There is the element of the involuntary, but involuntary here does not refer to the absence of all self-mastery but to an energy at work in us prior to our taking control through choice. Analogously, the *passio* of being in us, received from a source other than ourselves, moves us primitively to affirm our being and mediately, in the long run of a life of understanding, a life not only affirming its own being but affirming of, contributing to, augmenting of the good of being as such. The *passio* first moves as an affirmation of being in us and it is not that we decide to affirm but that we are first given into being as an affirmation of being. There is a more primal affirmation than the later affirmation of self of which we come to be aware, as the *passio* surges and lives more through its own determination of its participation in the primal affirmation of being. The *passio* is an affirming energy that is ours but it manifests an affirming energy that is not just ours, that lives itself in us. We live the affirmation in a second, derived way, on the basis of the primal affirmation.

Granted there are no absolutely determinate and univocal "sides" in the porosity, one might still venture that there is an intimate "side" and a universal "side": an intimate "side" in the ownness of beings, a universal "side" in the being given to be at all of all finite being. There is a universality of intimate gift recessed in the being given to be of finite being, a universality of promise that communicates out of the secret recesses in the direction of the more fulfilled promise of the community of all beings. All of this is communicated in a between-space where, wonderfully, the surplus good of the "to be" passes in the porosity. To be at all is to be given to be as affirming that it is good to be. This is the first *passio*—the first endowment of being. It is not something we choose—we live it, it lives us. Think of the child crying on coming into the world. We might be inclined

to see this as a howl of dismay, but it is the lust of life itself, and there is something inexpressibly good about it that conquers dismay. That is why we are relieved on birth when we hear the crying out, the outcry of life. It shows the very health of life giving expression to itself before any interventions by itself or by others. The howl makes us thankful for this first lived affirmation of the offspring. Of course, what is implicit in the first gift, its promise, has to be affirmed or negated later in a subsequent way. But the primal affirming stays with us until we die. We are always a *passio essendi*, first in the primal sense, then in the derivative sense in which we more mindfully participate in the unfolding of the promise of the primal being given to be.

The significance of the *passio essendi* can never be confined to us alone, for from the origin there is an implication with regard to what is beyond ourselves. We see it with the child: there is implication with what is beyond us as before us, with what is beyond us, revealed as the un-self-conscious anticipation that our crying-out will be met by something of hospitality in the world beyond us, be this the world of (caring) others or the world of sustaining material resources. The *passio* tells against every autism of being. We are never solitary, even when we seem very much solo. Being in relation to what is other, in receiving and in seeking, is always with us, constitutive of what we are. The *passio* can be either forgotten or covered over just because it places us in a primal receivership. We may later grow to hate being in receipt from what is beyond ourselves; but this development—this ingratitude to what we receive and to our benefactors—is itself made possible by the primal receivership. This ingratitude is sawing off the branch of being on which self-being sits. It is biting the hand that feeds it—just because it is not absolutely its own. But there is nothing that is absolutely our own, even what is most absolutely our own.

There is no self-relation more primal than being in relation to what is other. Primal self-relation is already a received promise and hence is double—being in relation to an other, and being in self-relation. This entails no rejection of true freedom but we will have to consider something of the agapeic character of this, in due course. It is not an autonomy constituting itself through itself alone. One might say that in the *passio essendi* is already an intimate mark of being in community. That communicability surges up in our passion of being means it is already given as an active promise of being in relation in our very being at all. This double relativity at the primal roots of our being places us in the intimate universal—the porous community between the human and the

divine that constitutes our being as religious. This is ontologically constitutive of our being at all.[9]

Conatus Essendi (Endeavor to Be)

The doubleness of relativity is expressed in the fact that we are *conatus essendi* as well as *passio essendi*—an endeavor to be as well as a patience of being. One notes how in modern political thinking the *conatus* has a side turned to the intimate, a side turned publicly to the more universal. I am thinking of how in early modern thinkers like Hobbes and Spinoza beings are their *conatus*, their particular self-assertion that knows no limit except a countering *conatus*. This particularity is matched by a sense of the social whole as coming to be—whether by contract, the overawing of the dominant *conatus*, or otherwise—as the (resolved) sum of forces of such particular endeavors (Spinoza). The sense of this striving self-assertion also haunts the dominant forms of liberalism and economic capitalism, where rational self-interest and enterprising exploitation shape the public space of the commons and insinuate themselves into the reserves of privacy. These views tend to project us forward, close off retreat into significant reserves of idiocy, and produce a mutilated picture of self-interest. Self-interest: *inter-esse* is a being between; hence self-interest too is a being-between, qualified to be sure by selving, but as an *inter-esse*, necessarily more than just selving. Self-interest is parasitical on the surplus endowments of the community of being; but it is taken as original, not derivative. *Co-natus*: properly speaking this is not an endeavor to be but a being "born with." *Conatus* refers us to a more original birth (*natus*), a being given to be, which is always with or from another (*co*, *cum*). The pluralization is there but occluded in the ordinary way of thinking of self-interest and *conatus*.

This should be already evident, given what we have said about the porosity and the twin birth of the *passio* and *conatus*. Nevertheless, the endeavor to be is the evident and often more noted aspect of our being because it defines us as a *doing of ourselves*. Selving in community with others is being in act, is activity, and not just patience or passivity. Recall: I do not mean something negative by patience, though there is a passivity that reneges on our being, not only as reacting to what is given, but as actively shaping a relation to it, while shaping its own relation to itself in the process. Alternatively, we come to assume self-relation, or anticipate

a future self-relation, requiring us to act thus and thus, or act differently, toward what is first given. We are given to be before we endeavor to be, but the second both responds to the first and shows the doing of selving as essaying to give itself to itself. Affirming ourselves, we come to newly define ourselves and, in the best sense, on the basis of the promise of our native endowment.

There is energy in the *passio*, but with respect to the *conatus*, this energy comes to itself as giving form to its own self-activity. To be at all is presupposed by every endeavor to be, but the endeavor moves beyond the present givenness of the "to be"—seeks beyond its present selving, seeks what is beyond itself, seeks also itself in a form beyond its present, one indeed just itself in more fulfilled form. There is a promise to the given "to be" that calls us beyond ourselves, and in the endeavor to be we seek to realize something of this promise. In truth, this endeavor as *co-natus*, as "born with," cannot be separated from the idiocy, the porosity, and the *passio*. Nevertheless, it testifies to a self-becoming that brings us more expressly toward the possibilities of selving as self-determining. Freed to be as other in the *passio*, in the given patience, we are here freed to be ourselves, though never in separation from how we are in relation to what is other beyond ourselves. This *conatus*, this endeavor, can take a multiplicity of forms, but it is not a mere indeterminacy. It reminds us of the fertile void coming to form, and in a derived sense, giving itself form. The liquidity of the porosity settles into shapes more firm, shapes that indeed are self-shaping. Think of Narcissus as not emerging from the porosity but as drowning in the liquid fluidity of enchantment with his "own" image. The taking on of this form rather than that is the self-introduction of determination into the liquid porosity, indeed of self-determination. Something of the promise of the overdeterminacy is brought to the fore, something else is recessed. Something of the inexhaustibility is backgrounded just as, on the basis of the very same inexhaustibility, some more positive form of self-shaping is foregrounded with determinate, self-determining character.

I speak too explicitly (of self-shaping) since much of this takes place in an emergent opening, half revealed in the light, half hidden in the darkness. As a birthing, a night of gestation is coming to a term but this is a beginning that does not yet know its terms. (The terms of commencement are to be further revealed.) Neither the selving nor the othering is clear to itself. The mysterious darkness of the idiocy, the chiaroscuro of the liquid porosity, the incontrovertibility of the received *esse* and its

patience, the suddenness of the surging *passio*, all of these mark the (self-) becoming as a kind of *dawning*. This dawning is between night and day, and like dawn there is looming half-form and dissolving formlessness both together. This chiaroscuro in the original roots of self-formation always stays with us, even when we have crossed the threshold from dawn to diurnal self-consciousness. As out of an ocean of mystery, there emerges this small island of diurnal selving, seemingly marking its own boundary of singular difference. We are lapped by waves of the nocturnal idiocy, waves sometimes measured and calming, sometimes towering and overwhelming the firm island in floods of onslaught. Univocity is the island that emerges from this equivocal sea. This univocity is itself equivocal.

The endeavor to be, like the *passio*, first seems to be moved before it moves itself. It seems to reveal us to ourselves as *already* moving beyond ourselves before we come to ourselves at all. This "being moved," I think, reflects the continued momentum of the first affirmation of the "to be." The first affirmation is the more primordial happening that eventuates in, and carries into, the surge of the endeavor. But the endeavor is a surge that, as it were, looks back on us from beyond us, and enjoins us to join the movement, join it with ontological joy. With a joining second affirmation we go with the flow, and find ourselves delighted not only to be in the flow but to go with it. We are taken out of ourselves beyond ourselves, and then, as it were, asked to go for it—to say "yes" to the more primal "yes," and thus to be in, to participate in, the giving of the "to be" in a manner more singularly stressed as our own. It is not that we own the flow, but in now joining the flow, our endeavor is singularly our own, for no one else can say this "yes" for us, enact it. "Yes" here is not a statement but a living, a doing, an en-acting of our own "to be." The singular self-relation that sources the meaning of one's own "to be" is here more explicitly self-determining than in the unique intimacy of the idiot selving; but again it is not just my own, it is owned.

Like the *passio*, the endeavor to be thus finds itself afloat in the porosity, but having dawned on itself and emerged beyond the equivocal doubleness (self-relation/other-relation: being itself in receiving itself), the stress of the self-relation can come to assume, usurp even, the foreground. It pushes itself forward into the foreground, as if it were the ground—the ground of itself. After all, the endeavor to be endeavors to be (it)self. This is self-affirming energy. There is something exhilarating in the stirring of the endeavor in which the selving enjoys itself, joys in itself, affirming *itself*,

so that its relativity to what is other is tempted to become enfolded in a kind of rapture of selving. An elemental intoxication of self-affirmation can take over: one that, while glorious to itself, now glories in itself. All manners of equivocations are here possible. I will just say this: self-glorying in the glorious self-affirming can turn the endeavor to be into an energy of selving that so concerns itself with itself that, even in its being beyond itself, it *always circles back to itself*. It can then take this circling back, or self-circling, to be what the endeavor to be is all about. The exstasis beyond self becomes an exstasis from self only because it is an exstasis to self again. There is indeed a self-circling that is constitutive of the self-affirming as such. How else to affirm self if there is not this return to self? But the temptation in the self-affirming is that a self-encirclement ensues that absolutizes the affirming as self-affirming alone. Any exodus striving beyond self becomes a turn back into self. Developed to an extreme, the circle may even claim to be infinite, not only in returning to itself, but in always expanding its circumference, expanding potentially even into infinity. Even to the infinite, it appears to deal always with what is its own, or what it makes its own. And so it never departs from itself, even though it seems to include in itself the whole of all otherness.

This is where affirming the good of the "to be" as *my* self-affirming begins *a turn into evil*. The selving is seduced, seduces itself to absolutize its own self-affirming. It recesses, represses, rejects, even revolts against the original affirmation of its being given at all. The communication of this original affirmation is not just its own self-affirmation but that in which all being intimately, idiotically participates. A certain unfolding of the *conatus essendi*, one endeavoring entirely to overtake the porosity and the *passio*, would turn itself into an absolute whole. But such an absolute whole is a counterfeit whole because it falsifies its own original being received in being. Relative to this receiving of "being given," it is at all, primally existing due to nothing of itself, for in the primal "being given" it owns nothing. Evil insinuates its counterfeit of being in this counterfeit whole.

The Idiocy of the Monstrous

This counterfeit whole proves treasonous to the intimate universal. Here there is stirred up something of a very *primitive foreboding* of the difference of good and evil. (Foreboding is so intimate it may make the flesh

crawl, and does not rise to the level of rational self-consciousness, though this does not preclude a significance, possibly more universal.) The primitive foreboding is inherited from exuberance gone by. First lived by the idiotic affirmation of the "to be," we wake to ourselves as surging on this affirmation and affirm ourselves. The surge allows the self-relation, even though this is always in relation to other-being not reducible to the self-relation. The intimate being for self is inclined to affirm itself not only *as* good but as *the* good. Then the irreducible relation to other-being, rather than being more primordial in our receipt of being, is turned into something secondary. It is more primordial because it is more intimate to our being at all as an *endowment*. The endowment gives us to be in the porosity, and awakens us to be as *passio*. But now the *conatus* wants to be first, wants to be number One, thus putting in disequilibrium the relation of the first and the second. The true first is reduced to a second that is affirmed, when it is affirmed, for the sake of the self that affirms itself. Then the selving as second, endowed to be from a more primal source other to itself, becomes a *counterfeit first*. Everything of the endowing original first is reduced to a secondary role in the self-affirmation of the counterfeit first, now claiming to be unbound by anything other than itself. Evil comes in this turned-around affirmation of the good of the "to be"—now primarily affirmed as what is good for self. This evil is a mutation in the affirmation of what is good. The good of the "to be," singularized in this selving, affirms itself as the absolute good of the "to be." This is to contract the more universal promise of the affirmation to the particularity of this self affirming itself. The derived nature of this singularization is refused as it insists on becoming self-deriving.

Both the intimate and the universal are warped in this revolt against the intimate universal. Revolt: a turning around, a reversal of the intimate universal, counter to the community of self and other. The concept of original sin is scandalous to those who locate evil in moral will, be they religiously inclined or areligiously. It seems to violate our sense that the responsibility of the individual will is what counts for accountability before evil. Original sin seems to imply a fall that is not our own doing. I think the idiocy confirms some of the intuitions of a fall other than the responsibility of an explicit will, a will explicitly asserting itself as "mine." For in the idiocy one cannot fix "mine" thus explicitly, though there is a *bent* to "mine" and "mine" alone. There are porous thresholds between my own and all others. So see this warp in revolt thus: not mine or thine,

but betrayal of the intimate universal, betrayal that closes the porosity between the human and the divine. And since it is a warping of the intimate universal, its implication extends to the community of beings and not just to my being alone (as if that could be isolated). Something of the primal space of being in communication is curved away from its original porosity to the divine, and from generation to generation the ripples that flow from that curve away shape and reshape the porosity to the divine influx as again and again agapeically offered.

Evil arises in this mutation in the intimacy of being, of the good of the "to be." I would speak of this primitive sense of good and evil in terms of the idiocy of the monstrous, on the one side, and the idiocy of (sacred) innocence, on the other. The monstrous comes out of the innocence that, when it comes to self-affirming, loses its innocence, by affirming itself in mutant manner—mutant because collapsing the doubleness of metaxological relativity into the singularity of a self-relation that is self-singularizing. The monstrous is also something that bears on the sacred, having to do with a show (*monstrare*) or spectacle (monstrance) of the sacred. The gargoyles look out from the Gothic cathedrals, high up in the sacred space, though outside the sanctum of that space; they leer out and down. But the gargoyle here is not up on the outside of the cathedral; it is intimate to the idiot selving.[10]

The monstrous shadows the sacred. Something monstrous rises to the surface in the liquidity of the porosity. A leviathan breaks briefly the surface of the waters. It is enough that there be the hint of it lurking deep in secret darkness for foreboding to take hold. The idiocy of the monstrous arouses anxiety about the possibility of evil prior to any deliberate choice of evil or good in the more diurnal space of evaluation and decision. Since the *passio* and the *conatus* often mingle promiscuously in the porosity, we are dealing with a submarine mix that promises hell as much as heaven. It is not a decreed necessity that *passio* and *conatus* must be in strife, and yet the impetus of the *conatus* to self-affirmation coexists in tension with the gratitude or resentment that can come with the more primal receiving that enables the *passio*. We are given to be—be for ourselves—and we can say "yes" to the gift in thanks, but we can also resent that what we are is a gift, for this means we are never absolutely self-defining, though yet we are for ourselves, given for ourselves.

Resentment is not the right way to describe this, if we think this is all self-conscious. Rather an unpremeditated flash of jealousy of the more

primal good of the "to be" flares up, just because this good is *not* mine, just because as being in receipt of it without a why we realize in the roots of our being that we can never own it, never have it as solely mine. The poverty of the porosity is its being resplendent with an overdeterminate good no one owns, and before we know it we hate the poverty and the splendor. We grow sullen and sulk before the ontologically constitutive measure of receiving, just because it is a receiving, and not our own doing. We need only say "yes," but we are overtaken by our "yes" retracted to ourselves, even though it seems to take over what is other and so seems ecstatic rather than retractive. The *conatus* overtakes, or takes over the *passio*, and thereby recesses the rightness of the "yes" of (secret) thanks.

Intimate, its source is not self-conscious will, is not the will of others, is not the set of social conditions that support or disable our power, is not the historical play of powers, some perhaps of world-historical significance, some as contingent as the size of Cleopatra's nose. The elemental intimacy with good, the elemental brush with evil, these are events in the idiotic. They cannot be rendered in neutral scientific terms; they cannot be subsumed into an impersonal totality; they cannot be reduced to vanishing moments in a speculative system. They are invisible in all such frames of reference but these frames would not be the value-saturated or value-subtracted frames they are without the charge of this idiotic intimacy.

This is why also our answerability for ourselves puts its roots down into the idiocy. This is why the blush as the bodily flush of self-consciousness verging on guilt flares up from this darkness, or breaks the surface of this liquid sea of the more original porosity. The lunge of the knife that I lodge in the neck of my enemy is the idiocy of the monstrous taking body, living itself as embodied in my killing rage. I do it, but it comes out of darkness, but I too am that darkness, though what I am as that darkness I do not know, certainly not until the monstrous strikes out. With maturity I can come to know more of this, and guard against the fiery upsurgence. But the later serenity hides the banking of the fire, not the extinction. That is why also forgiveness has an aspect of ineluctable singularity to it. I confess, no one else can do it for me. It comes out of the sacred goodness of the idiotic. Confession cannot be enacted by a substitute who stands there confessing for the idiotic singular, no more than another can taste one's food for one and experience for one the intimate savor of it. There is an elemental sapiential flavor to this. There is something nonreducibly intimate, something not substitutable in all of this. And yet all are implicated

in it. There is also something darkly mysterious about true forgiveness that re-creates the loving weave of community.

I said that the original sin can warp the intimate universal, and hence its effect is not just mine. We see also how a people, while being singular, can have its own idiotic reserves and the monstrous can be sulking in it over generations, to flare up now and then in conditions of irritation, to subside or be mollified, or be muffled, or be purified even. Or it may be secretly itching for war when its rage can come out and the dragons can be let to roam the night without hindrance or compunction. My argument is not a rejection of the neutral general, or the homogenous universal, for they surely have their place, but rather it is that in light of the intimate universal they cannot be an entirely effective shield against the idiocy of the monstrous. While they might seem to inoculate us, they are holding off provisionally what, when the winds suddenly shift, becomes a contagion of evil, floating without let in the enabling porosity. A political philosopher, a politician, a spiritual leader must have a nose for the taint of these elusive yet always potentially virulent contagions from hell.[11]

Being Love: Loving Being

Hell in Sunday suit half intrudes too close to the beginning, but the tale here to be told is not first of the despoiling of the infernal but of the ineradicable love of life, outside of which the horror of hell makes no sense. The threat of usurpation in the intimate universal is there in the intimacy of being itself. One thing this means is that political metaphysics must consider an entirely opposite understanding to the Hobbesian take that the primordial motivation of the human being finally is fear of death. Hobbes surely is right to stress the massive presence of that fear in human life and affairs; surely he is right to see so many of the configurations of social relations as taking shape, overtly or covertly, in relation to it; surely he is right that death is an uncanny, unwanted twin to every endeavor of being and every joy of life. Hobbes thinks he exposes for us the primitive but he does not. We fear death because we love life. It is indeed just the love of life itself that fears death, just because life is loved and, all things being equal, to be loved. The insinuation of the fear itself spoils the love, and makes it to sour. Love of life makes itself unlovely in its aggressive defensiveness against threats to itself and life. The sourness is a curdling of

the sweet milk of life, and the aggression is love of life turned over again. Aggression shores up love of life against what is other, what is seen or suspected as a threat to life. Life in its aggressive self-insistence is still love of life as (its) good.

We are being love—that is, being as a love: to be is to be a love of being. To be at all is to be as loving being. We see this more overtly in the self-affirming of the endeavor to be. Nevertheless, if what I say is true about our being in communication, and our first endowed patience, this loving of being in our own being is derivative from a more primordial affirming or love. We love our own being, and it is our being at all that we love; but what we love in loving our own being is the good of the "to be" as given to be in me, this singular being; and yet this good of the "to be" is not mine, and mine alone. That we participate in it, and from this participation love ourselves, signals that it comes to be out of a more original intimacy and porosity of being, in which the boundaries between my affirming the good of my "to be" is not finally possible to close off from being, as affirming beyond, beyond me, the good of the "to be" in a more intimately universal regard.

We think of the first love as self-love; and yes, it often seems as if this is the first love we know, so intimate is it to what we are. As a love, it is not something we chose. We already find ourselves in it, buoyed up by it. It is given, and we are given to ourselves in a self-love we do not first choose. We can come to chose this self-love as the one and only form of love, but this is already a contraction of what we are—given that the original self-love is not itself the product of self-love. If we dwell on the intimacy of the more idiotic self-love we come across the porosity, the patience, and come to realize that we cannot make sense of it as a love, indeed it would not be at all as a singular love, outside of a more original givenness or being given to be, our participation in being in communication. We love life, we love our own life, because that life is more originally the concretion and singularization, the creation, of a love that is not made by us. More true is it to say that we are made by it—made by it as loving ourselves, and the singularity of our "to be" as affirming itself as good "to be." None of this is proposition. This is ontological *esse*, but revealed in how we do our being—how we act. How we be, how we do ourselves, how we do be (if I might put it so, as either a metaphysician or a country yokel), our *actus essendi*, points back beyond the *conatus essendi* to the *passio essendi* to this more primordial love of the good of the "to be."

This more primordial love properly should be called the first love, rather than the self-love we normally take to be the first.[12] And this more primordial love cannot be confined to me; it opens to all other-being, opens before I come to myself, opens beyond even when I have come to myself. This is why the porosity is the opening of a secret ontological love. This first love is the more radical presupposition of all derived loves, including the seeming first, the self-loves. From this perspective, we do not have to think in terms of the usual dualism of self-love and altruism. All forms of love are themselves derivative from this more primordial "being love" or "loving being." The difference of self-love and love of other-being is subtended by a givenness in which the difference is not at all an opposition, but emergent into form out of the more original passage of the porosity of being.

It is true that not a few modern ideologies, economic, political, and other, are built upon a counterfeit form of self-love and a reconfiguration of the world in the image of an untrue "over againstness." What we find here is not love of life but rather the fear of death running away from itself into forms of selving that refuse the patience of being, refuse to countenance what may be at work in the intimacy of being, refuse to countenance it, except perhaps when inevitably it keeps coming back. Coming back again and again, it is managed as a resource to be exploited in an instrumental mode: the heart is sold. (I will come more to this in the next chapter.) Our fear of death is the love of life running away from the mortal limit that measures its "to be," as given into the porosity of being, as always constitutively marked by the elemental patience of being that makes us (religiously put) creatures. This fear of death is a mutation of the love of life that turns into a refusal of being created—refusal that redeploys the resources of creation to hide creation as such from the always derivative creature. The second remakes itself as the first; as the counterfeit first, the second counterfeits what is first given to it; in this counterfeiting, the second is draining off, while dependent on, the endowment of the first gift of creation. Again it is sawing the branch on which it is sitting, sweetly singing that there is no saw and there is no tree of life, blithely hanging there in the midair of quasi-nothing, as if it were creating itself from nothing. By creating itself from nothing it makes itself nothing—a nothing that counterfeits creation.

Man, Hobbesian or not, is haunted by the fear of death, but why do we fear death? To say it again: because we love life. A stranger sneezes in

my face; involuntarily I recoil. Why recoil? Because the sneeze may well be the contagion carrying my death. I do not even think about it, my bodied being turns back into itself defensively. Turns back into itself, because it would want that its being not be threatened, would not want not to be. It is the love of life silently, unconsciously, vehemently at work in the recoil. In the happening of the recoil, something of the ultimate issue of life is at play. The recoil into self may protect my relative hold on life, and having recoiled once, I may continue to recoil even though I go outside myself. Then I am perpetually on the defensive—always anticipating an enemy, be it in the sneeze of another or the smile—and then we hardly attend any more to what precedes the recoil. Then too what Hobbes exploits seems obvious—that elementally we live in a state of war, even though no formal declaration of war has been made. Nevertheless, at the intimate heart of all that goes into the protective recoil, the recoil that defends, sometime at any cost, its own hold on life, is the elemental love of life, without which there is no meaning to the recoil and no meaning to the suspicion and the enmity.

We go outside ourselves and are enabled to do so only by the endowment of powers that allows us to be thus self-communicating. Nevertheless, there is a going outside that is not a true going outside, for on the inside this going outside is closed in itself or always on guard, always ready to close itself into itself. This watchful going outside turns the more original porosity of its being into a border it would want to be impenetrable, even when it is outside of itself in communication with others. That it must be outside is testament to the reality that it can never be simply for itself alone. But here in being for others, it endeavors to be for itself primarily. This is not only a betrayal of the promise of being for others; it is a mutation of the love of self, a betrayal of the idiotic self-relation that in its intimacy is patient and porous.

The fear of death, overtaken by a siege mentality, closing in the porosity with reinforced walls, invisible walls. If the walls were truly successful they would utterly clog the porosity and then nothing of the endowing gift of creation would pass to one through the porosity and in the long run one would be living poorly on borrowed life—that is, always living as if only postponing death. In truth, and in another sense, we always live on borrowed life; and there is a fertile poverty that wills life. But the sieged selving is borrowed life that does not renew itself by patience to the gift of the original love that communicates itself to the intimate soul in the

porosity of being. In defending its life thus it has signed its own death warrant, even though it seems to be the one signing the death warrant of the other. It seems to secure peace by means of overawing power but the awe yields only counterfeit worship, since its peace is not peace at all but the balance of powers otherwise at war. Hobbes is right, of course, that much of human peace is this kind of peace. Augustine is more right in seeing this peace as a simulacrum of peace. True peace requires the recovery of a different dimension entirely—namely, mindful participation in the intimate universal. This, in turn, requires an entire reordering of the meaning of love, self-love, other-love in terms of what follows from the priority of porosity and *passio* to the *conatus essendi* that has mutated into fearful or aggressive will to power. The second love of the self that untruthfully takes itself as first must let dissolve these walls of siege, blow the Jericho trumpet, and let them dissolve for the selving to be reborn again, not only as true self-love but as reborn to love—to the first love that gives it to be at all. For though the walls of siege are self-constituted, the absolving power is already at work, at woo, within.

Affirming Asymmetry of Good "to Be" and Evil

Does the love of life dissemble itself in my love of my own life? Hobbes and Nietzsche might say the opposite: I dissemble my love of self in calling it the love of life. They are wrong in this, though not wrong in finding that much of life is dissembling selving. This comes from the promiscuous doubleness of the *passio* and *conatus*. I stress the doubleness, but the interpretation of its meaning is different. This is not a matter of being at bottom a field of battle for the *bellum omnium contra omnes*. It is not a kind of cruel and vicious sea that always threatens to drown us. The doubleness suggests a fundamental equivocity in the nature of things but there is more than mere equivocity, since the doubleness is not a relation of equi-primordiality between life and death, between "yes" and "no," between good and evil. Death can only be understood from life, the "no" from the "yes," the evil from the good. But we need to have an intimation of the endowing source(s) and the porosity that is given and that gives being, prior to the *passio* and the *conatus*.

At issue is not univocal being but an endowing source of plurivocity. To be in communication with the plurivocity and the doubleness that

seeds the equivocity is to be tempted to fall out of plurivocal community into a counterfeit world—a world in which we counterfeit being by reconfiguring it in terms of our own intimate *conatus* and idiotic monstrousness. The world as given offers a primal ethos saturated with life-affirming being. Even the beings we humans fear and hate participate in the self-affirming love of life too. We humans reconfigure this primal ethos in terms of our endeavor to be; seeming to subject it, we create a counterfeit creation in the process. If one were religious one might speak of a fallen world, but a fallen world is not an entirely corrupt world. It is double, mixing good and evil, equivocal between good and evil. The counterfeit pays its complement to the more original reality it dissimulates. In analogous fashion, our reconfiguration pays its complement to a more primordial community of being in which we are endowed and in which we participate, even when we go on to deform and mutilate it, so great is this, the forgiving generosity of the being process. If we think the counterfeit world is the real world, the only world, the true world, then we are in bad shape. Our own bad shaping of things becomes the measure of things.

Perhaps we are like the Ridiculous Man of Dostoevsky's tale whose evil eye has introduced corruption into the world. The corruption blossoms as the counterfeit world whose mingling of life and death mimics life—but it really serves death. Unlike the Ridiculous Man, we now refuse the dream he had of the inexpressible goodness of the true life beyond the counterfeit one. Remember that he is ridiculous because he realized the corrupted life he configures was down to his doing, and because now he still yet dreamed. When we refuse to be ridiculous in casting from us such a dream, we think we have made our peace with the counterfeit creation and hardly realize we are truly ridiculous in another sense. This "higher" ridiculousness loves to talk about the struggle for existence in the showy aggressive language of the street tough. Then the dream of the Ridiculous Man is sneered at as the feeble softness of the tenderized soul, the patient being, the porous being, the feminine man who cannot see the point of the war. Such manly swagger glories in cruelty to the porous and the patient. The glory, like its world of war, is counterfeit.

A crucial upshot of the prior affirming that is loving being/being loving is that there is an affirmation of good more primordial than the negation. Living being testifies to the affirmation of the worthy to be affirmed. And what is good except the worthy to be affirmed? It is true that we sometimes deem as good, as worthy of affirmation, something that is

not worthy of affirmation. Nevertheless, our intimate implication with the worthy of affirmation is unavoidable. This means there is no "equi-primordiality" of good and evil. There is a priority to good, as there is a priority to the affirming of the worthiness of the "to be," the sweetness of being at all. The horror, the mutilation, the recoil come second. It is true that in the derived ethos, the ethos we reconfigure, there is an interplay of good and evil, where we cannot seem to have one without the other. Once having bent ourselves away from the metaxological poise of true doubleness between self-relation and other-relation, we find ourselves in the equivocity of the half and half, and we are seduced to hold that evil is as primordial as good. But there is an asymmetry in the relation of good and evil, prior to the fall from metaxological plurivocity into this equivocal doubleness. Since so much of our lives is lived in this equivocal doubleness, we find it very hard to conceive another sense of good that is prior to it. We cannot make proper sense of this equivocal doubleness without reference to the more idiotic affirmation: not our affirmation but the affirmation in which we find ourselves, in loving ourselves and in loving being.

Our exploration of the idiotics of the intimate universal is an effort to bring out of recess something of this prior affirming of the good of the "to be." If there were not the priority of this good, we could not make sense of evil. Evil is defection from good, defection carried by the power of what is good: enabled by good, evil is the turn of affirmation against good, a turn against it, a deeffecting of it, as not my good, not just for me, a turn against it that turns it into just what is good for me. This is to contract to what is *only intimate to me* the more universal diffusion of the affirmation that is *most intimate in all of us*. It is not possible *purely on our own* to return to the communication of the affirmation once we have become the mutation that makes the affirmation *purely our own*. We can still seek to turn again, and though we seem to be going round and round, the turnabout can be purgative of the self-insistence that clogs the porosity of being, cocooning us off from the communication of the more original affirmation. So long as we are, the communication of true affirmation is not totally extinguished, even in our cocooned being. It is within the cocoon, it seeps through the cocoon, and a flux of affirming life dissolves every clotting of life on itself. We affirm the good of the "to be" all the time, even when we claim to hate it. For our hatred makes no sense outside of a secret love of what is worthy to be affirmed. In hatred we deem this worthiness

absent in what is before us, and we turn against it. The hatred pays its secret respects to what it deems is absent—the good of the "to be." It is impossible not to affirm the good of the "to be." It is all but impossible to affirm the evil of the "to be." What could it mean to claim that being is at bottom evil? The recoil is already in the claim, and the recoil points us back to the affirmation. This holds true equally if there is *affirmation* of evil in the claim.[13]

Will to Power and Love of Being

I am not talking just about the will to live, though this is very relevant. Will comes out of something more intimate: an idiotic energy of being that expresses itself in the elemental will to live. One might venture to call it, with qualifications, a "willing" before will. Without it our living would atrophy and fall into despondency and thence into despair and death. I hesitate to use the language of "will," should this too explicitly invoke a determining power that we might employ in this direction or that. What I am talking about is not like deliberate will. It is, if you like, a "willing" before determinate will that precedes determinate will and exceeds self-determining will. This "willing" before will puts its roots into darkness; and beyond its own self-determination, its longing may bring it to the brink of ultimate sacred mystery. Let this enigmatic "willing" atrophy and we die. We may live for a while, pulling ourselves together in a determinate form through will power alone, but if the elemental "willing" dries up, this determinate form of selving is only a holding operation hiding the dying already taking place. We die when a trauma shatters the holding form, when a loved one dies before one who was half or more of one's life, when the face of absurdity becomes a Medusa's head and so petrifies the selving that its porosity to the secret springs of life closes off.

I do not deny that there is a basic self-insistence that marks all of us. To exist is to be an insistence of being. This insistence is lived as selving. This is something basic. It is not all, even in the in-sistence itself. But we can so emphasize the self-insistence and generalize it that the will to live is seen as a will to power. The basic self-insistence thinks it is just itself that insists; and while this is partly true, there is something welling up in the self-insistence that is not just self. Insistence is a stress of being, and the selving finds itself in self-insistence as this stress of being, but the stress

does not come from itself alone. There is a stress of being more original than self-insistence, and more transcending, that exceeds insistence of self on self alone.

Will to power can have different meanings, of course. I distinguish three in connection with Nietzsche, for whom importantly will to power is essentially *self-affirming*: first, perhaps the most evident, even vulgar sense of power over the other, even to the acceptance of violence as one of the conditions of life; second, power oriented to (erotic) sovereignty, power over the shaping of human selvings and communities, where the selvings show the artistry of persons, and where the will to power of a community comes to flower in its sovereignty concentrated in the representative(s) or leader(s) of superior excellence, that is, the will to power of the Caesar(s); third, will to power as creating itself in the guise of claiming the highest rank of spiritual sovereignty—the creator of values, the tablets of the law. Nietzsche has a striking phrase for this third form: "a Roman Caesar with the soul of Christ." In all these forms we find a self-affirming will to power, differently taking form. While more light can be shed on the Roman Caesar with the soul of Christ when we treat of the erotics and agapeics of the intimate universal, what concerns us here is the stress on will to power and its essentially self-affirming form.[14]

Our investigation suggests something different from the Nietzschean emphasis on self-affirming will to power. As with the will to live, and the self-insistence, here we must also raise the question of a "willing" that is not just a willing of itself, but a deeper, more intimate, and, in promise, more universal "willing(ness)" that can extend to all being other. As it is with the will to live when it becomes just my will to my life, as it is with the self-insistence that insists on self and only self, so it is with will to power that only is self-affirming and does not grant its original "being endowed," and its being called to a willing beyond self-affirming will to power. There is a *secret love* at work in will to live, in self-insistence, in will to power.[15] But what is it? The entirety of idiotics as an intimacy of being suggests this secret love. That it is a love that goes beyond oneself in passing through one suggests an already effective relation to what is other to one—other before one comes to be, other in one's own self-becoming, other in exceeding the self-determination of one's own becoming—an intimate relativity, an intimate otherness, intimating a togetherness in which secretly all are held in potential communicability in many forms from the elemental to the sublime

In *Being and the Between*, with regard to communities (chapter 11), I speak of a being's *self-relating sociability* and this is relevant here.[16] Beings are open wholes, porous integrities, and they incarnate a togetherness; hence they are communities in themselves. It is not necessary to deny that a being in its selving is in intimate communion with itself, held together by bonds that form a porous unity; nor need we deny that this involves self-communication, as well as openness beyond itself to what is other. Richer forms of self-communication go in tandem with powers of being in richer communication with beings other than self. Beings participate in the porous space of communicability and the richer the being the richer the participation. In *Being and the Between* I say that this holds at different levels of sociability: in subatomic particles/waves, in atoms, in molecules, in cells, organisms, animals, humans. Moreover, the richer a community becomes in ontological promise, the more it shows itself as a community of communities. This is diversely true relative to inorganic nature, organic nature, as well as relative to animated, sensitive, and animal being. In intermediation with its environment, the animal whole reveals self-communication that communicates with its members (not just parts) that, as subordinate integrities, communicate with the center of the being as a whole. This self-relating sociability, inseparable from a being in communication with what is other to itself, is most manifest with the *human being*. Here the self-communicating being not only feels itself, but minds itself, becomes mindful of itself in its interplay with what is other. In the following chapter I will turn to the emergence of mindfulness in the aesthetic body as signaling the appearance of ontological powers more complex and rich than are to be found in inorganic and organic being. The organization of the self-communicating being reveals itself as at once more unified, more differentiated, more capable of self-transcendence, and more capable of communication with what is other. Mindful self-communication shows the power of free self-development, the power of free self-transcendence, the promise of free communication with what is other to itself. Self-relating sociability now turns out to be sociability first and self-relating second, though the second has the power to turn against the first and take over the doubleness of the condition in terms of making the second into the number One. This is relevant to the political ontology of a metaxological metaphysics.

The most important point here relative to the intimate universal is that a secret love is in the more primordial sociability. To be is to be related,

not only self-related but related to the originating others that give one to be and the cooperating or opposing others that companion or poison one's self-becoming with others. We are closer to the heart and closer to the heart of hidden loves. I am thinking of the *co-natus* once again: being "born with." *Conatus* is participation in the intimate community of being. Spinoza is not entirely wrong to speak of this *conatus* as unrestricted, though the meaning of this is other to what he proposes. This endeavor is unrestricted because in its intimate being it is potentially open to the universal. This *co-natus*, this being "born with," is not a project. In either being born or giving birth, or assisting at a birth, there is something beyond what we do, something given beyond what work or endeavor can bring to the situation. One thinks of the mother going into labor, and this is a happening, but the labor of birth is not like any labor as the imposition of form on matter. It is not productive in that sense but generative in an intimate sense, and the singularity of the issue can never be forgotten. Coming out of the womb after gestation in darkness from the secrecy of the intimate source, a singular offspring is released to the world. There is the scream on delivery but this is not the howl of horror but the communication, voraciously self-insistent perhaps, that life is there, healthy life. We breathe freely when we hear this scream. Silence would be ominous.

Think of birth as already incarnating the secret love. Each of us is born—not born from ourselves, but from others first. The others are before one, and one is their child. In human relations the child may be the offspring of explicit love, though it may be the result of forced conjoining. There is something secret about the love of the parents and I will come to this, but there is another, perhaps more primal secret love than that of the progenitors. In the idiotic givenness, in the *passio essendi*, the meaning of being born is shown. To be born is to come to be from another, it is not to give birth to oneself; and yet the birthing is something one participates in both passively and actively: passively, for one is patient to a process that has a dynamic of its own; actively, in that one is witness to the singular act of being made incarnate that comes to be. This is not just the acting of a becoming, or a self-becoming, it is *coming to be* as an *actus essendi*—what is hidden in being born is the secret love of the coming to be, the secret love of creation.

There is a great tendency to forget the happening, momentous though it is, of being born, of coming to be as a creature. For once born, we take flight on what has been given to be; or those who aid in the

progenitoring are also taken up with the outcome, and the coming out (into being) receives little more attention—except perhaps in moments of wonder, or the pauses of love that look on the gift of the being, now there fully incarnated before one. Unbelievable, a mother or father might be inclined to say, and inclined to say then: Look at you, it is you. This is all tautology from the point of determinate information, but not empty at all from the point of view of the love informing the exclamation of marveling. Not I am but you are—and there is ontological gratitude in the information-less exclamation. Life takes wing then on the endeavor to be—the *conatus* takes forward place, but *conatus* as letting the "being born" falls away from focus. There will even be philosophies so mesmerized by the seeming forward momentum of the endeavor that the future and the projection of future possibility will be declared the most important in all of this. Some will say our own projects will constitute the meaning of our lives. The singular happening of birth—this is a mere contingency, sometimes something downright absurd. What we do with ourselves, what we do with life, what we do tout court, that is all that matters. We are what we do: in the middle range, there are the projects that domesticate the strangeness of being and define the ventures of self-becoming; in the longer range of finitude, there is the end of it all in death. And then the endeavor to be, when it knows itself, becomes a *Sein zum Tode*, most famously with Heidegger. Being born is already beginning to die, and the project in between birth and the end is defined by ruses to avoid, or resolutions to face and even to try to take to oneself, one's death. Death, of course, is massively important in defining who we are. But we get things not even half-right if we so stress the endeavor, and miss the meaning of the *passio*—the being toward death, and not the coming to be of birth.[17]

I repeat: there is in the *conatus* the presence of the birthing process, which is not a matter of endeavor to be, not a merely conative dynamic. *Co-natus*: born with, birth with—there is a "with" in the birthing of the endeavor. The *actus essendi* is a being born with, in its coming to be, before it is an acting of selving, in its own becoming. *Conatus* already with the "with" refers back to the *passio*, the patience that already arrives from out of receiving, that receives before it does. The meaning of being "born with" is a great question. For the "with" is not only being gifted with ourselves. The "with" is witness to a community of being that is not only being with ourselves—the "with" is with what is other to ourselves before

it is with ourselves—the being with the other itself makes possible what is promised in the being with self, the being of self.

Something of this is implied by birthing as such: acceptance into the intimacy of being as a community of "being with," given into being out of a source that gifts its being at all, that companions the becoming of the beings in the community. And the "with" is in or with all of this, with the *co-natus*, the companionship, the comm-unity. If I am right, this changes the standard meaning of the endeavor to be away from self-becoming and self-determining will, or will to power, to something always already participant in the community of a secret love, incognito in the endeavors that project themselves onto the future, projects of self that project self alone, and in the long run stifle the sources of gratitude toward the source of being at all.[18]

The Family and the Intimate Universal

The family is the community where the most intimate secrets are present, and the most secret of our loves is protected from the profane gaze. Confucianism is not at all wrong in stressing the piety of the family, seeing something there not to be found in the state, not at all wrong in its intuition that the piety of ritual is more of the essence than possessions and power. The familial community is the most elemental ethical intermediation of the intimate, the idiotic. There is the stirring of the intimate universal in it. I have treated of this ethical intermediation in *Ethics and the Between*, and hence will confine myself to the connection with the intimate universal. In the family, as with all forms of community, we discover diverse social formations of loves, some very hidden and clandestine, some more communicated in the open, but in all of them trust is basic, as well as the interplay of trust and distrust. This trust is not something we do; it is not the result of the endeavor to be; rather the endeavor emerges out of a secret trust that being as good will somehow answer and respond, even to the very singularity of the being thrusting beyond self. Of course, this trust can invert into distrust and, worse, hatred, as we have already seen. But as with previous discussion of asymmetry between good and evil, here too there is an asymmetry between trust and distrust. This is so in the sense that distrust defects (often in disappointment) from prior trust, and in the sense that absolute distrust is self-destroying. Without something

trustworthy the distrust we experience and justify would make no sense. I would say that the basic trust is inseparable from the agapeics of being, that is, our living out of a surplus generosity of being, embodied for us in those closest to us—the relatives who sustain us and are reciprocally sustained by us. This trust is first lived in the family. The family is the human community closest to the idiocy of agapeic trust at the origin, at the end, and in the between. The intrusion of distrust complicates all of this because of the equivocal doubleness of the human being. The family is idiotic but it is also an intermediation and yet it is most elemental, for we are all born of others, and the bonds with the parenting others are intimately of the flesh itself. Birth incarnates a universality of the singular idiot: elemental intimacy, elemental universality.

I treat in more detail in *Ethics and the Between* how the family intermediates all the potencies of the ethical but a brief resume is here relevant.[19] First, the family intermediates most elementally the good of the *idiot self* and one will never entirely escape its influence on what is most intimate to us. Second, it shapes our *aesthetic being*: our bodies and their pleasures are intermediated through our parents' presence, their smiles, their caresses, their frowns, their encouragements, their chastisements. Third, it gives regularity and form to the intimate and the aesthetic within *an order of dianoetic norms*: there are rules, orders, formal and informal, and sometimes they are rigidly imposed, sometimes with more suppleness and latitude. Familial orders of life's unfolding come to one from the familial others; sometimes the orders are harsh, sometimes benign enough not even to be noticed. Familial order allows the flourishing of flesh and soul, offering a range of opportunities that need not be rigid in order to rescue the freedom of children from the formlessness that dissipates the promise of creative life. It sets limits within which children come into their own, though their own is never only their own. Fourth, family intermediates a *transcendental sense of unconditional worth*: we are loved unconditionally by good parents; in turn calls on us are made that we must answer, commands we must obey. Familial others can already offer some exemplary embodiment of unconditional integrity, in the trust and love they offer us. Unbeknown to ourselves, a hidden sense of unconditional goodness seeps into us. Fifth, family intermediates *eudaimonia* and what fullest flourishing might mean: the intimate love that is offered treats the singularity of the child with unique reverence and lays down a ground in early formation for integrity over a long life. A family is entrusted with the child, the child

is in trust. And the elder's trust in the child produces trust in the child itself, which nurtures the existential confidence allowing the singular child more fully to develop his or her powers. Sixth, family coaxes the opening of *transcending desire* in us, letting the restlessness of the endeavor be set out in search of fuller actualization with the hope that our distention to the infinite is more than one damn thing after another, ad nauseam. Stretched between finite mortality and infinitely restless endeavor something of the fullness is already given. That is why, seventh, in the family we are given some intermediating presentiment of *transcendent good*, of the divine as the absolute endowing source of the intimate universal. The familial togetherness can be something of an incarnate image of the divine community and this is why the good family can be the intimate place of the secret consecration of life.

Of course, there are neutralizations or, worse, desecrations, but these are derived from something that more originally witnesses to the sacred trust of the intimate universal. Reverence for the deepest and the highest can be intermediated in the intimate togetherness of the family. Prayer is the deepest instance of the porosity of the human and divine and participation in the intimate universal. The family that prays together stays together. There can be enacted the paradoxical conjunction of the deepest and the highest. The most intimate love is also companioned by the secret sublimity of transcendence itself. The family is a social space wherein the soul becomes porous to sacred stories, wherein children should be told parables of the divine, the virgin soul being most permeable to the "Amen" of the holy.

At the same time, the familial intermediation of the intimate is not closed off to ethical-political spaces, pointing also to other public spaces beyond the idiotic. We will see this "beyond" first in the aesthetics of the intimate universal, then in the erotics, then in the agapeics. I want now to emphasize the intimacy of an unconditional good of the "to be" that is most idiotically and elementally intermediated in the family. We can never do away with this entirely and even in the sophisticated, managed, bureaucratic, technologized—you name it—form of social organization, this sense of the intimate always continues—and in better communities its promise is always nurtured.

The sign of unconditional worth is witnessed in the consecrated character of the marriage vow and the pledge of unconditional love that true parenting entails. The understanding of marriage as a contract fails to do

justice to the depths involved in the intimacy of being between wedded partners. The language of a consecration of love is much more appropriate to this intimacy as not merely private but participation in the intimate universal.[20] There is a secret love before contract—there is a love in the consecration. The language of contract is not the language to describe the intimate love, or the community of marriage, or the family. To speak of a consecrated love is difficult in modernity, where the general trend has been the secularization of all spheres of life. Secularization here is meant in the sense of the withdrawal of the sacred to the private. The intimate is not the same as the private, though there is something both intimate and private about familial life. What the private means is equally not simple, but here there is a general trend to set in opposition the spheres of the public and the private. The point is sometimes to place a curb on religion, defined by the so-called private, from dubious incursion into the public space, the space decreed as neutral for economic and political transactions (transactions not themselves neutral). This view is understandable as a response to some of the extremities of intransigence that religion has sometimes unleashed. The nobility of religion comes with the danger, for the divine and the monstrous are not always easily set apart.

A sheer separation makes no sense relative to the communicative field of the between where private and public are in porous passage, always. In this between the intimacy is not autism, and the communication is never neutral. The secularization extended to love would risk becoming, in the long run, a deconsecration of desire—a mere neutral, if not neutered, eruption of who knows what material forces. If this were true we would deny love's true communicative power and perhaps confine it to a policed private sphere (not at all love's true intimacy). Does not this putative neutralization slip easily into a kind of desecration? For after all, if we are forbidden the consecrated and the neutralized is a mutilation of the love, the mutilation is more likely than not to continue to mutilate itself in the direction of desecration. And strangely, even perversely, the desecration restores the sense of living intimacy—though it is the living intimacy of violation rather than well-willing. We must remember well that violation is saturated with a charge of intimacy. Sometimes the most evil violators are those whose being is so neutralized ("deadened") that intimate violation is somehow their way of perversely resurrecting its charge. "Deadened," the violator wants to "feel alive" again, but this life of violation only perpetuates the culture of death.

See the family as an idiotic seedbed of the intimate universal, and as such pointing to the more primitive character of the consecrated love. More primitive, not as a deficient condition to be overcome or surpassed, but as an original fund that has a certain compacted fullness that enables further growths. And these growths can, of course, do injustice to the original seedbed, as well as do justice. The secularization of love is manifested in the reduction of marriage to a mere contract—a contract in which goods are exchanged, or services expected, often according to a legally regulated quid pro quo, with mine and thine laid out, protected, and policed. The understanding between the parties is seen in a more instrumental fashion, prudent in a calculative sense, in which the more intimate commitment of the entire selvings of the partners is not invested in a consecrated "yes." There is no unconditional vow, there is a conditional promissory legal note. The nature of the promissory bond is defined by a means/end schema.[21] There are intimate bonds where lifelong fidelity may be vowed. More often it comes about that as all contracts are condition-bound, so too the commitment is conditional. Conditions being met, the parties promise to stay together. The conditions being not met in a changeable world, the promise might be suspended or abrogated. Changed conditions require changed commitments. There is always the escape hatch: We did not sign up for this in the contract. There is nothing unconditional about it. We do not give ourselves to the deeper trust, for this must hazard itself less conditionally to live up to the love of the other whom one promises to be with for worse as well as for better. The deepest trust is a leap in the dark that continues to leap when the dark descends. The vow is unconditional porosity before the blessings of the unknown future, and also the curses. It lays itself open to what will come and promises to stand in the openness with a love that endures.

Is the instrumental contract what a vow is? No, it has rather turned from the idiotic depths of the intimate and keeps itself on a safer surface, where exposure to the other is also managed, without overextended risk to the tender heart. By contrast, a vow has something of the sacred in it and a reference to an unconditional source and promise. We say then: "No matter what, I will love you." This is an extraordinary promise, since it transcends the conditions of the ordinary, which are alterable, just as conditional things are. A vow remains deeply mysterious since it calls upon enabling sources that properly speaking human beings cannot call up. The unconditionality breaks through the chain of finite conditions, but how can a finite being, purely as finite, vouch for the unconditional? There is

something more. Even in our secularized age, we often use the formula of the unconditional—in richness, in poverty, in sickness, in health, till death do us part. This makes no sense without something like a consecrated love. But we cannot consecrate ourselves entirely through ourselves alone. Even secularized promises try to create a kind of unconditionality—as with nonbelievers who organize parties or spectacles that tend to mimic the more traditional rituals. One thinks of those ceremonies of promises made to a child that can be likened to ersatz forms of baptism. Secretly in all this, of course, there is the rightful recognition that the love is beholden to something beyond itself. It is more than the self-love of the couple, and in every part of it, there is a reference to the beyond of itself.

Initiations and the Intimate Universal

In light of this, consider again the *conatus* as a "birth with." The consecrated "yes" bears on initiations and the willingness to participate in initiation again and again. This willingness to stand at the origin of initiation is like a gift of redeeming forgiveness that opens to the promise of blessing in time now, and yet to come—even though we do not know what will come. To speak of birth is also to speak of initiations. There is something idiotic about initiations. They are events that mark a qualitative break and after the initiation one is newly in the world or in a new world. They are not homogenous becomings from fixed points that proceed from sameness to sameness. They transform the same, and open its difference, and open into a community of difference, which nevertheless has a togetherness that preserves sameness in a deeper or higher degree. There is porosity in initiations. There is a threshold or boundary that is crossed or being crossed, though whence or where determinately that boundary is we cannot always quite pin down. There is an open border and we pass through that openness, and though it might seem as if nothing has happened, nothing is the same afterward. Indeed something momentous has happened, is happening. The happening of the transition is nowhere and yet it is here and now intimately happening, and one wonders at times if this is like a transubstantiation.

True initiations are patient, for the initiative does not lie simply with the one being initiated. The initiative first lies elsewhere, with the others who are agents of endowment and transformations, who welcome the initiate. They initiate, though it is true that the one being initiated is initiated

only if there is a deep down "yes" to the offer to pass across the threshold. There is birth in the initiative in this sense of the *conatus*—born together with the others who are there before one in that other space. In initiation, properly speaking, there is a consecration: *Con-secration:* there is a "with" in consecration. Birth is a consecration. The first consecration is in the event of being born at all; the second consecration pertains to the "yes" to this first consecration and what it asks of us in a life in time. Are we baptized in the secret love, into the secret love? To be baptized is to be initiated into a community. It is to be given a name, a singular name. In the religious sense, it is also to be ritually and sacramentally welcomed into the people of God. In the Christian sense, it is also to be initiated into the death and resurrection of Christ—this is, so to say, into a second birth into the community of agapeic service.

The porosity that is thus baptized is not at all the "primary narcissism" of the child but the redemption from this narcissism. It is not the reality principle that rules in initiation, it is consecrating love. The primary narcissism is quite understandable in terms of the porosity; since boundaries between self and other seem so hard to fix, it is as if there is no boundary. Without boundaries the swelling endeavor expands, as if without limit, the way hot air may expand, expand even to the feeling of godlike omnipotence. The inflation makes the child believe it is in control of everything and as if by magic can make its wishes fulfilled. But if there is the porosity, it is not quite this magic. It is more an expression of the fact that the porosity has not yet woken up to itself in its true encounter with what is other. It is the other and its love that make the porosity true, true to itself and to what is beyond itself. The magic of the omnipotent child is answered by the presence of the mother (this is a picture of some psychoanalysts). This is a picture of the infant god before the rupture of otherness. The rupture might be called "castration." And then the primal porosity will be described in terms of a horror of the cut of oneself, the cut that is always there as threatened in the space between oneself and the other. Hence too the ambivalence toward the "big Other": awe and terror; and if love, a servile love that is also resentful of its servility to the "big Other." There is clearly a master/slave dialectic working in this picture that can crystalize in the direction of a cruel dualism of sadism and masochism between oneself and another, and within oneself too. Yet this dialectic is not true to the deeper origin of initiation in love that makes the consecrated beginning of coming to be in the more original porosity of being. To speak thus is already to

presuppose this porosity, and indeed anything like a dialectic of master and slave could not take place without our being already offered the gift of the more primordial opening for diverse forms of self-transcending. I do not mean to deny the element of truth in talking of the "primary narcissism," but I think there is something more primal. The narcissism is to be understood from the porosity, not the porosity from the narcissism. There is an asymmetrical priority here. Nor also does the "primary narcissism" do full justice to what is at play in the *passio essendi*.

Porosity and Familial Intimacy

You could say that what primarily arouses anxiety and even horror in the child is not the insinuation of this cut, not "castration," but more primordially the dawning of the porosity—the open space that it is, the cut it is in homogeneous being. This is the dawning of the opening in it, that indeed it *is* also as the living porosity. Connect this, for instance, with the feeling of "being seen"—not just the mirror stage, or the self-relation after it. This is the dawning of the porosity that makes possible a blush, a mirror stage, and the early determination of the difference of self and other. This dawning is as if one were coming to awake over an abyss. Indeed, one is the abyss that one is over. For the porosity is not a site of passage one is in; one is this site and hence when this dawns one is open to exposure. The glutinous homogeneity is no longer and there are no protections, no enclosures. One is as if flayed, as if one yet has no skin. It is as if the skin itself is porous and another can see into one, can see through one. One is riveted there by being there as almost nothing. Nothing is in the way as the other makes a way in the porosity into the intimacy of the idiot self. And so we are later inclined to say that a person has a thin skin, or that he or she needs to get a thicker skin. The language of thick and thin gestures toward the porosity. And this porosity is a site of familial passage in which fleshed relativity takes on its secrets from the loving gestures of the father or the mother. (I know: the gestures are equivocal, and what is love can be taken otherwise, and what seems otherwise to love can be love. This again is the doubleness that is emergent in the porosity between self-relation and other-relation—the unavoidable possibility of equivocity.) The mother or the father can fill the porosity: sometimes it is as if this were a kind of gap or hole and when they do fill the porosity one is no longer as nothing, one

is something. The gap can be filled with love, it can be filled with hatred, and one will be differently there. The hole is filled, but one is not again quite as glutinous homogeneity but something with the trace of the nothing and of the other. Being something or someone occurs between being glutinous homogeneity and being nothing. (I am beginning to sound like Sartre, but what he means is not quite what I mean, though all honor to Sartre, who no doubt was on to something.)[22]

The porosity: this is not an ontological oneness from which we are separated. It is not the mother or the breast from which as separate we are always seeking to be reunited, with the child seeking the lost enjoyment and unable to find it, projecting the fantasy of enjoying into various objects, *petit* or not (Lacan). Rather the porosity is more an original openness, opening—of difference yes, though there is togetherness in the opening, not a oneness. There is togetherness in difference in fluid communication, a porous gathering together of beings. Were one to speak theologically, it is more to be connected with *creation ex nihilo* than emanation from an undifferentiated one into separated somethings. Somethings in psychoanalysis are redolent of a materialistic pantheism: we are driven out of the original oneness of the lost mother and the longing for impossible restoration is cut into us, even as we are cut off from it; hence the exile from oneness is without remedy, and we are the lacking and impossible longing for oneness, an impossible oneness. Yes, that kind of oneness is impossible, but not because of an original oneness but because of the original porosity—which asks us to think of the fluid communication of sameness and difference in a togetherness of passing between others and crossing of thresholds. There is a nothing; there is the difference of coming to be and becoming; there is becoming that can transform into self-becoming; but coming to be is never a becoming or self-becoming; there is a more original gift of being, but it is a gift of the porosity of being; we are that porosity coming to mindfulness. There is a One, the one God, but this is the hyperbolic origin that is communication as agapeic giving to be.[23]

"Separation" anxiety: this could be understood in terms of the infant or young child coming to know that the porosity, as almost nothing, also reveals that one is not the other. A gap opens up, and in that gap we are released and freedom germinates, but there is anxiety about freedom, and hence also a tendency to "fetishize" the mother. There is a fixation of other, fixation on the other, to fill the gap, the porosity. Something analogous happens later in adolescent infatuation: another appears before

us and is the apparition of the beloved and suddenly one is head over heels in love—this other fills the awaiting emptiness, the expectant porosity. One is no longer exposed to the nothing—the loved other shields one from the terror of its adventure. In full adulthood something of this is also evident in the way that in the company of strangers we often have a tendency to gravitate toward those we somewhat know, or take to be one of our own. Again the opening of the porosity is filled against the emptiness of the hole.

Childish fantasy is itself only possible because of the porosity. A child wakes in the middle of the night to night terrors. It screams and is in horror at the shadow on the wall. There is nothing there. The parents shush it and say, hush now, there is nothing there, and the child calms and goes back to sleep. In truth, there is nothing there, but this nothing is redolent with more than nothing, redolent of the opening of the porosity as happening in the advent of selving. The porosity has come out of dream space and something monstrous has taken shape in and through the flickering shadows on the wall. (How moviemakers exploit this to build up suspense and terror in a horror film!) The energy of selving in the void is taking form through the shadows, and the apparition is as if created from nothing. There is the becoming of self in the nothing, becoming self always streaked with the nothing that haunts the porosity and splits it. Though in truth, the selving, distending, or split, self-mediating or intermediating, is not nothing truly but is rather the endowed porosity.

If we (mistakenly) think of the porosity as like a hole, and think the hole is completely filled, we may find something like the tyranny of the other, the tyranny of the loving mother, for instance, or the domineering father. In this way, in being somebody, one is again nothing, nobody. There is a kind of counterfeit restoration of fullness that is indistinguishable from (bad) nihilism. There has to be a difference marking the space between nothing and fullness. This is where the *passio* disrupts all unself-related fullness, bringing about transcending in the gap of the porosity. Instead of a dualism, or an extreme "either-or," there is a passage in the between, promising one's powers of self-mediating, but also confirming one's relativity to the other beyond oneself. Passage in the porosity is never just self-mediating, even when oriented to self-becoming. It could not be, given the nature of the porosity and the *passio*—the nothing is in us, for we are what we are as having being brought to be from nothing.

This impels us to a different view of the family than the Freudian on the question of the father. What is to be foregrounded is not at all the desire

to kill the father. The relation of father and child (son) can be agapeic—releasing. The endeavor to be of the released son or child need not be a matter of becoming *causa sui*, and hence in need of dethroning the "big Other" as the competing *causa sui*. Agonistic relations stress too much the *conatus essendi* as endeavoring to be itself in equivocal competition with an equivocal other and not enough the secret generosity of the *passio essendi*, communicated as the gift of the porosity. Put otherwise, there is a relativity to the giving other inscribed in released freedom. The relativity is the promise, indeed the actuation, of love. The story would be more like the parable of the prodigal son than the myth of Oedipus. In any case, the Oedipus myth is somewhat more complicated than the Freudian rewriting of it. Oedipus has no idea that it is his father he is killing, no idea that Jacosta is his mother. His life is companioned by a destiny or doom that his own endeavor to be cannot finally thwart. And the picture of Thebes falling into waste in train of the pollution of the sacred king is far more redolent of the intimate universal in which the co-implication of all is secretly at work, and not least with respect of the idiocy of the monstrous. What is at work in the singular is coimplicated with what is at work in the community of the people. In any event, the sacral dimensions of the myth are simplified and distorted by being psychologized. One might say this is a myth both demythologized and remythologized, but done so in light of certain presuppositions of modern Enlightenment reason and the twin of the unconscious that shadows it, not in terms that give us accession to the intimate universal. Oedipus's horror at knowing the truth, our horror, and indeed *compassio*, at the tragedy of his fate, make much more sense in terms of the idiotics of the intimate universal. The (modern) *psuchē* without *muthos* (albeit modern psyche itself both demythologized and remythologized) is less in tune with the intimate universal than the soul schooled on the sacred stories. The modern demythologization is not true to the sacred stories that communicate the pieties of the intimate universal. Nor is the modern quasi-remythologization in tune with its secretly sacred charge.

Familial Piety and the Intimate Universal

The family is a communal space of the intimate universal but there is more to the intimate universal than the family. Familial pieties are elemental but there are pieties that are not just familial. I will only indicate the nature

of the piety here to which I will return more fully in the erotics and the agapeics of the intimate universal.

The familial image recurs relative to the elemental bonds of society. It is not that the family is the larger society but the intimate elemental bonds provide an idiotic ethos out of which more neutralized relations emerge. Nevertheless, though the elemental bonds might be relatively submerged in the larger society, they can be reactivated in times of crisis, such as a war, when, to the astonishment of the more surface social consciousness, a surge of more intimate belonging comes forth, as if sparked to expression by the strike of the enemy. I am thinking of the surprising upsurges of the sentiment of *patriotism* in such circumstances.[24] Of course, in classical political philosophy, such as that of Aristotle, for instance, the charge of these idiotic intimacies is not at all forgotten. Certainly *philia* is an intimacy of togetherness serving to define bonds more extensive than the face-to-face relation, including the "building blocks" of families, of clans at the foundation of the constitution of political communities.[25] One thinks in the modern age of Burke's "little platoon." Burke is an un-self-conscious witness to the intimate universal in his fight against the abstract universality of any rationalistic project. Something is at work in the familial ground, in the underground of generational relativity, up through which the vital sap of an energized social belonging can flow. It is a mutilation to impose a rationalistic blueprint from above down, for then we have a derivative abstract universality imposing itself on the more original circulation of social energies in the intimate universal. The result then is an abstract issue, derived ultimately from that intimate universal, but imposing itself on its own source of origin. In familial terms, the offspring dictates to the maternal or paternal source without due reverence, or gratitude, or without the proper piety. The results are a mutilation, if not inversion, of the true state of affairs. It is interesting to see how someone like Habermas seems to have come to the view that religion, and the sense of belonging it brings, may be needed to supplement the otherwise quite all right form of the secular republican ideal. What is at issue with the intimate universal, however, is not a mere supplement but rather a reminder of the sources of original belonging, from which in secret and unacknowledged ways the secular republican ideal draws, even as ostensibly it divorces itself from it, or sets itself in opposition to it, or turns back toward it at an extremity and asks it for supplemental help in times of secular distress.[26]

The lure of ethnicity is very much bound up with this intimate charge of familial belonging, and obviously it can be manifested in benign and malign ways. In the porosity of the ethnic belonging the intimate energies can be turned to an immanent affirmation of the values that define a people. But equally an immanent self-affirmation can close off the porosity to the others who do not belong, and in the closure the enemy emerges over against one, sometimes genuinely an enemy, sometimes a conjured enemy. Political demagogues are experts at touching on and manipulating this porous threshold, and turning it to bellicose ends. It is equally true that a great statesman must have an analogous finesse for the same threshold. Such a leader might serve as an enabler of the fluid benignity of a love, allowing this to circulate rather than the contagions of hatred.

The charge of familial relations is hence often put to uses outside of families. The charge moves and exploits the desire for a more intimate belonging. One thinks of how universities can sometimes speak of themselves as families. There are businesses that will exploit the familial image, though exploitation is very clearly the ascendant point of it all. The charge of the elemental intimacy of the family is present in the wording of revolutionary ideologies claiming universality. Think of the language of the brotherhood of man, so prevalent in earlier revolutionary discourse. Where is that fraternity now? Revolutionary ideologies had to produce their own matching versions of these. Even in the counterfeiting of liberty, equality, and fraternity, we cannot get away entirely from the communications of the intimate universal.

The sign of the intimacy of the universal in the family and the sign of the universality of the intimacy in religion are taken over in secular reconfigurations that turn violently against the religious, and eviscerate the sacred piety of the family. Consider counterfeit doubles of God like the *Être Suprême*; consider Churches desecrated and reconsecrated to Reason; think of the fraternal bonds of brothers mutating into a general spirit of suspicion that none escapes (how evident this is as a mutation in the intimate porosity of belonging in the direction of fear, suspicion, and death); think of revolutionary brother sending revolutionary brother to the death of the guillotine, with all the counterfeited justification of revolutionary justice.[27] This is the idiocy of the monstrous, conjuring enemies in the porosity, desecrating any measure higher than human power, taking on world-historical form. And then the great tyrant comes forth to rescue the violence from its idiocy, channeling it into continental war that carries the contagion of death over vast spaces and diverse peoples.

With regard to the familial intermediation of the intimate universal, it is not that there are not tensions between the intimacy and the universality. I dealt with something of this in speaking of cosmopolis and ghetto in chapter 2. Think of the tension thus: Recall the figure of Mrs. Jellby in Dickens's *Bleak House*. Mrs. Jellby is the universal philanthropist, the "telescopic philanthropist," as Dickens puts it, working on "projects" for tribes in far-off Africa, ceaselessly writing letters, endlessly raising consciousness, gazing into the distance but, sad to say, her family life is in disarray around her. The visitors come to the Jellby's house, and before entering they have to rescue the little son, Peepy Jellby, whose head has become stuck in the railings. Mr. Jellby retreats silently into impotence. The resentful daughter, Caddy Jellby, is forced to work sullenly as a secretary writing letters for her mother, and against her own will—so miserable and hostile to her mother that she runs off to be married to Prince Turveydrop. Mrs. Jellby loves humanity but cannot see the singular human beings around her, the most intimate of them, her own family. She loves humanity, but this and that human being retreats into the superfluity of the great unwashed, the many-too-many human singularities that lie closer to home. The point is not that the intimate and the universal cannot be wedded but that Mrs. Jellby's way of telescopic philanthropy does not quite manage it. And yet who would condemn Mrs. Jelly's concern for Africa? What then of her lack of concern for her own family? Love of the far, neglect of the next and nearest: the neighbor becomes an abstract—a generalized humanity. (Think of Nietzsche's appreciation for the far and depreciation of the near, his love of the whole and his loathing for the particular. One does not attain an affirmation of the intimate universal in this, Nietzsche's version of "yes" to the whole—if this "yes" means, as Nietzsche says, the particular is loathsome.)[28]

When Burke spoke of the "little platoons," he understood the point about the near and next. By contrast, he has a thing, too much of a thing, about the universal—it is the abstract universal. The universal of abstract projects: he rails against this—and runs the risk of simply railing against the universal as such ("I have nothing to say to the clumsy subtilty of their political metaphysics"). What his thinking needs is the intimate universal. His very piety sometimes risks closing him to this. And while what is best in him might suggest the intimate universal, there is something of excessive devotion of particularistic loves—and setting the intimate in opposition to the universal. His devotion to the British establishment at times

borders on fetishism. There are ways of loving a thing too much—that is investing it with an inappropriate ultimacy, as if he were always proving his loyalty. I have called attention to the equivocal character of his loyalties, the intimate dividedness of the communities he loved.[29]

There is something of the wisdom of the simple in true piety, something of idiot wisdom. There is no neutrally universal account that is fully true to it. There is something about piety that humbles the wisdom of the abstract universal, and stupefies the pride of rational autonomy (see 1 Cor. 1:19). Piety will return when I discuss the erotics of the intimate universal, itself connected to the familial intermediation of the ethical, but piety is a much misunderstood notion in modernity under the reign of the god autonomy. It makes far more sense in light of the original porosity and the *passio*, and the fact that we do not first belong to ourselves but are given to be. In this being given to be, in being endowed, piety expresses something of the reverence we have toward that to which we belong in a special way. It does not belong to us, we belong to something other. Piety need not be always explicitly religious, but there is a sacred undertone to the reverence of the special belonging. This is evident with the piety of the family, familial piety. There are also other pieties such as civic piety in our special belonging to a particular society, indeed in local piety in our special belonging to a particular place. The specialness of the belonging evokes from us a deeply rooted loyalty—loyalty to what we love, though of this love we might struggle to give a neutral and homogeneous rational justification.

There is no abstract universal of the piety. We love those to whom we belong, not that which belongs to us, and why we do we cannot completely justify in terms of a neutral universal. We live this belonging and loyalty, live out of it. In it we first and elementally participate, and our efforts to account rationally for it, or justify it, more often than not fall short of the living event of participation itself. There is thus something idiotic about such piety. If these loyalties do not bind us to some faceless, anonymous universal, nevertheless they free us into a community that might be the carrier of the universal. There is no necessary contradiction between particular loyalties and a more universal openness. In the end this means we must acknowledge the religious universal as the intermedium of our ultimate belonging. Thus piety witnesses to our reverent participation in the intimate universal, in the love of what is more than ourselves already at work in the family.

CHAPTER 6

The Aesthetics of the Intimate Universal

Wise Blood and Earth

It is as hard to talk about the universal in relation to the aesthetics of happening as it is in relation to the idiocy of being. The temptation is to stress the intimate, and be bewildered by more universal claims. I take this to be, at least in part, a reflection of our inveterate tendency to think dualistically about the universal and the intimate, the first as, say, the product of the abstractions of reasons, the second as, say, marking our immersion in the nameless immediacies of bodily fluctuations. The intimate universal asks us to consider something before and beyond such dualisms, as well as before and beyond their rational supersession in a dialectical totality. There is indeed a living wholeness at play, but this is more in the nature of an open whole, and hence is to be described as between-being rather than as totality. The universal as intimate is intimated in the immediacy of the aesthetics of happening but the intimation witnesses to an overdeterminacy, not just an indeterminacy. We must trail the intimation to glimpse the overdeterminacy.

A way to put it, borrowing from Flannery O'Connor's marvelous comic tale of grotesque absurdity and religious redemption: wise blood.[1] Blood

is most deeply intimate, it is our very secret life, and the lifeblood and the shedding of blood touch us beyond every abstract universal. But there is wise blood that knows, though mostly it does not know what it knows, or even know it knows. In it the intimate universal is coursing. Though muddy and unclear often, a kind of inborn homing impulse is at play. One thinks of the salmon through wide sea-wanderings drawn to the source of its flow. Homing does not know itself, but it knows that what whispers to it has to be heard. The enigmatic directions have to be heeded. The universal intimate in the wise blood has an equivocity that is dangerous, just because its excess resists the mastery of a self-determining universal. Yet it "determines" the release, the freeing of our homing.

There is a mother older to wise blood. We might call this: earth. Earth is a dark ground in which living things are rooted and out of which they grow. It is surface, depth, and height—an aesthetic between or threshold below which much is lost in darkness, above which heaven stands open and arches over, and on the green surface of which the creatures of grass teem. The human being is inspired earth. It receives the wise blood. The *humus* becomes human with the inbreathing of the animation of life. The inspiration of the living is received from another. Though we often live in dens and caves, we are called to stand on the surface of the earth. This is to dwell in the aesthetic field. The aesthetic field holds out the promise of the intimate universal, for on the earth we try to make a home. The earth is not so hostile that it completely unhouses us. We can be at home in the aesthetic hospitality of the house(hold). The promise of being at home houses the intimate universal: community with the earth, the human, the divine. The aesthetics of the intimate universal regards how we participate in that hospitality, how we receive or admit the gifts of the earth.[2]

Porosity, the Aesthetic Field, Flesh

The intimacy of the aesthetic marks it as something elemental, indeed marks us as embodied participants in the between as elementally given. There is something of the metaxological promise of the universal at play in the aesthetic as elemental. It is not easy to attend to this promise, given that it is often covered over by our later constructions, indeed frequently disfigured in regard to both the intimate and the universal. Today, say, it is often overtaken by a cybernetic virtuality that also takes over the

embodied practice of "work" itself. The intimate universal is bent toward a cybernetic universal. "Work" digitalizes the universal, and it no longer is intimate to us as working, since we have become alien to this clandestine universality of the aesthetic. Digitalizing the universal, our "geometrical" minds enfeeble the finesse asked for the flesh of the intimate universal.

Having everything to do with the sensuous and the sensible, the aesthetic is more determinate than the idiotic. Its intimacy is close to the idiotic, though it is more expressly registered in the passionate and conative surges of our being. The idiotic is communicative, of course, and hence outers itself in porous interplay with outerness as other to itself. It outers itself to the degree that there is a self-surpassing *in* the sensuous flesh itself—the body in itself goes beyond itself. Both the *passio* and the *conatus* are in going beyond, and we must not forget that the flesh is both *passio* and *conatus*. It is both in receiving and in acting, and indeed in giving beyond itself. Aesthetic determinacy comes to be in that the original overdeterminacy, seemingly indeterminacy, of the idiotic, now begins to take on more determinate form, indeed forms itself sensuously in the between. This is not a matter of a solitary subject reaching out, going out. It is a matter of the embodiment of the porosity. And the embodiment refers itself as much to the porosity as an open field of interplay as to the determinacy of being enfleshed therein.[3]

The *first* aspect, the embodied sense of the porosity, might be said to correspond to the given ethos of being as itself an aesthetic environment. The porosity of being is embodied as an aesthetic field. Aesthetic environment means the milieu of all that surrounds us, all that envelops us, and all that seeps into and invades us. We are in it, but it is also in us. The aesthetic environment is originally not a neutral objective outerness. It is a field saturated with equivocal significances.[4] It comes to definition on the permeable boundary between our sensitive selving and the sensible other-being. There is an aesthetic between marking the communication back and forth between sensing and the sensuous.[5] For instance, we speak of impressions in ordinary language (empiricism takes this over). There are impressions, we are impressed: other-being as sensibly there makes its impression, it presses in on us. Sometimes this is like a flood, but more often the aesthetic passage is an incognito communication. So it can become a background to which we do not pay much attention. Attention, when alert, focuses on some determinate aspect of the overdeterminate field of the aesthetic happening. Nevertheless, this field flows around us,

flows into us, and this whether we make it focally an object of attention or not. While there is more evident determinacy here than in the idiotics, there is also more than determinacy. There is the ebb and flow of determinacy and the overdeterminate.[6]

This aesthetic environment, as participating in the porosity, is saturated with qualitative values that we feel in our own elemental permeability. These values are not the secondary qualities of early modern science (which are really secondary, being the product of dianoetic abstraction from the aesthetic field). And they are more primal than the primary qualities. There is a qualitative charge to the "to be" of aesthetic happening. This is not a moral charge but one of ontological value and worthiness. Something of this charge is perhaps captured, or recaptured, in art, but it is already there in its ebb and flow at the elemental level of the aesthetics of happening. The value-saturation of the original elemental aesthetic field contradicts the abstract notion that we live in a neutral world. There is no neutral world. The neutral world is a neutralized world—neutralized of the charge of ontological worth already constitutive of the aesthetics of happening. The neutralization does not destroy the charge, only diminishes or deforms it.

What we now call the "the environmental crisis" is the long-term result of a process connected to this neutralization, itself more a neutering we pursue to render the aesthetic field serviceable and useful, disposable and exploitable. This rendition is in terms of values we project onto aesthetic happening so neutered. We project an abstract universality of our construction onto the happening of the aesthetic field, without feel or finesse for the promise of the intimate universal in (mother) nature. Later we discover there was never neutrality, but our "values" have robbed the aesthetic happening of the glory of the morning. We make a fetid waste of the garden of the given. There is no reverence for the incognito immanence of the intimate universal in the aesthetic field. Without reverence for the aesthetic environment we are also more likely to grow warped selves or souls.

There is this *second* aspect: not only the porosity as an open field of interplay but also the determinacy of being enfleshed—this too is an embodied singularization of a being-between. What is to be stressed is the communicability with otherness in that embodiment itself. This is already there in the happening of the aesthetic environment, but we know this more intimately in ourselves, though not in any sense separable from the

aesthetics of happening as such. Flesh is the porosity on the threshold of wording. In the flesh the porosity of being comes to aesthetic wording.[7]

One might stress that flesh is the incarnation of value. And if this is not quite the best way to put it, certainly we have here a materialism irreducible to a valueless neutrality, as modern materialism often defined it, that is, on one side, bare, factual thereness with no value, while, on the other side, value as imposed by us, subjectively. (Consult again debates in early modernity in natural philosophy concerning primary versus secondary qualities.) Such neutralized materiality makes no sense relative to the flesh. The flesh is alive with worth, saturated with value. Consider the nude:[8] it faces us, presenting something of this equivocal saturation of value. This value is not moral value. And if one were to call it aesthetic value, the aesthetics of happening is to be understood in an ontological sense. It is the very being there of the flesh that incarnates the value. We can reduce the flesh of others to objective thereness, and even objectify ourselves, but even then there is an inescapable "space" where we intimately live in our own flesh the affirmation of the "to be," its being good to be. This being good to be, in truth, is not confined to us. Something of it is communicated in the flesh of other-being, even while it is lived in the otherness of our own being enfleshed.

To acknowledge this is to look differently at the world as a field of aesthetic happening, differently than as a neutral resource available simply for our exploitation, and worthless till we impose ourselves and our values on it.[9] These attitudes will influence, for instance, how we see the meaning of our work, and I will come to this. But we come to be in a field of fleshed being, and we are participants in that field in a fleshed way, hence no project of complete neutralization is possible. Even if a relative neutralization might be possible, when we put out of play certain loves and hates, these are all within the more encompassing field of flesh.

I am not arguing quite, so to say, for a pan(en)theism, but there is much to be said for considering the promise of a sacred charge on the being there of being as fleshed incarnation, itself saturated with value, aesthetically ontological. There is something of the pagan in this, to be sure, but this is a paganism in which a certain love of the earth comes forth. Love of the earth is not the same as divinizing the earth. The earth may be saturated with signs of the divine, without being the divine. If we persist in an utter neutralization of matter, we are atheists in an ugly sense, without theistic or pantheistic reverence. The more benign paganism is suggested

by the word material: *mater*—the mother—the aesthetics of happening is a matrix of sensuous coming to be and becoming. The mother is an intimate origin out of which we come as fleshed offspring, singular and yet defined by a coming to be from an other source than ourselves. And so always in the flesh we are marked by a charged relativity to the birthing source.[10] The flesh of being reveals a great mother, and the love of being we live in the singularity of our own flesh is the offspring of a source other than ourselves, and we can love this source as worthy, and not just see it as neutral indifference or horror.

It is true that with the aesthetic happening of the flesh there is always a constitutive equivocity: doubleness that intimates both the possibility of the hospitable and the hostile. Hospitable: enabling us to be as other, drawing us out into adventure. Hostile: as opposing us, as not attracting but retracting us, and we recoil in horror at our impending departure or demise. The saturated worth of the aesthetic flesh is both. There are forms of work, moved by fear of death, that prolong the recoil of the second and short-circuit the adventure of the first. In strife with the opposing other, they strive to univocalize the saturated equivocity in the interests of a mastery that in the end is counterfeit, since it is enabled all along by the aesthetic mother it puts in place and only seems to overcome and supersede.

Sensibility and the *Passio*

We are gestated in the womb of the aesthetic matrix, and we come forth onto the surface of the earth, where we continue to grow. Received into being (*passio*), having been born with (*co-natus*), we strive in a porosity of being opened with and for us and that we ourselves have access to mindfully. We see something of this if we attend to a certain metaxological doubleness with regard to sensibility. If there is an impression of other-being, the impression always testifies to the possibility of intermediation, since there is a response to the impression. We receive, we are impressed, we respond. If there is stimulus-response, this has to be invested with the meaning of an ontological dialogue. The hyphen witnesses to the between of porosity. The body too is a conversation. There is a carnal *dia-legein*—here with the meaning of a speaking that is double, or redoubled. Our being incarnate finds itself already in this ontological conversation, and while the partner(s) as other remains both evident and enigmatic, our

own contribution to the conversation is not at the outset transparent to itself. What or who speaks in the flesh? What or who speaks to us in the flesh? The equivocal communication redoubles itself from every side.

In receiving and in responding, there is a passivity here that is not quite the *passio essendi*, though the fact that we are creatures of sensibility is an obvious witness to that *passio*. The *passio* as such has a deeper meaning, since it is not confined to the sensible as such but constitutes our being in all its dimensions. That there is a conversation in the flesh does not mean that the conversation comes to an end here. That there is patience about the flesh does not mean that there is not a more ultimate and enduring and outliving patience that will be with us all of our days. The patience is in hearing, or being in hearing, of a source or call communicating in the flesh itself. The carnal conversation is sometimes so many-voiced that we have to learn the habits of attention and true listening to make out what the voices are and what they say.

In sensibility dawns a sensitivity on a threshold of attention. Attention witnesses to something of the saturated character of aesthetic minding. Attention is a tending to, *ad tendere*. When we stand at attention, we hold ourselves upright, but in the posture of a readiness for what is to be communicated. Tending is also a care for what is before us. The posture need not be rigid, must not be rigid, for the tending calls for suppleness toward what comes toward one. Attention also reveals metaxological doubleness: not only our attending, but readiness in a between space for what communicates there of what is other to ourselves. Of course, we can attend to ourselves in the mode of metaxological doubleness—then we attend to ourselves as other (and not only to the other as other). Think of the advice given to athletes: listen to your body. This listening body is the body listening to itself.

Sensibility is more determinate than flesh but flesh itself is not indefinite. It is overdeterminate, as is the idiocy out of which flesh is materialized. Sensibility is not statically determinate but rather unfolds a process of determination of and in the overdeterminate field of the flesh. It is moving and living, receiving and responding. Living determinacy of flesh, it is the promise of self-determination, in this respect of having the endowed power of initiative within itself. Initiative is tied with the *conatus essendi*, but the endowed initiative does not lie singly with one side. Since the sensible being is a *passio essendi*, there is an initiative in which it participates before it takes the initiative itself. This is the more fully evident the more

richly ontological powers are received by the endowed singularity. Those beings who have received most are those beings most capable of the richest responses to the field of aesthetic happening as overdetermined.

Imagination: Between *Passio* and *Conatus*

There is a breath of companioning inspiration that comes in the flesh, comes through it, and opens it in mindfulness. The blood is (or can be) wise because of the breath that makes flesh of the earth.[11] Essential in the formation of that attention is the power of imagination. The inspiration companions below ground and comes to the surface in the flesh and there on the surface, above ground, we attend on a threshold, one side of which looks back and down to the profundity of the porosity, the other side of which opens a wide space where endowed creativity comes forth and passes into worldly communication. The threshold of the communicating flesh, inspired sensibility, is again between the intimate and the universal, being both passionately intimate and the promise of the universal.[12]

This doubleness is evident in imagination as an emergence of articulating power in us, on the verge of coming to more explicit mindfulness, but not initially in our power. Imagination is a threshold power that initially has no explicit self-determining power over itself, since it puts roots down into the darkness of the idiocy, and yet comes to itself above the threshold. Moreover, in crossing the threshold it comes to mindfulness where its incipient sense of itself also comes to be in relation to what is other to itself. This is not an empiricist, not a transcendental, view of imagination. It is a metaxological view. The empiricist view sees the threshold of imagination in terms of retained or reproduced sensation or as decaying impressions. The transcendental view sees the threshold as primarily enabling a self-productive power. The first is too callow a view of the *passio*, the second a too self-serving view of the *conatus*. The metaxological view: out of the porosity of being, the *passio* surges singularly in the flesh, courses abroad on the aesthetic field; the *conatus* enacts an enabling of mindful selving in flesh itself, selving in communication with intimate sources of inward otherness in itself and in community with the green world of otherness beyond itself. This is to be in the between in the mode of fleshed mindfulness.

Imagination, in this metaxological view, has ontological significance in manifesting something of the self-articulating power of human being.

Nevertheless, the communicating of the self-articulating power is not a matter of self only.[13] Nor also is it a matter of an (em)powered self projecting itself onto an otherwise empty screen of otherness. Imaginative selving comes to itself as already having crossed the threshold or still crossing, surging up on an energy of being that is intimate to it but also other. A pregnant image *strikes* us; the bite of otherness is in the surprise of the striking image. The power of art especially speaks to recall us to this birth of surprise. The true artist either lives in a more constant birth of surprise or readies herself for the occasions when it might be vouchsafed. The birth of surprise comes in, comes over a process of self-determination, but it cannot be self-determined. Something other eventuates in this birth.

This is another aspect of the metaxological character of threshold imagination: without imagination we cannot envisage ourselves as other; nor can we envisage the other in fresh or refreshed ways. The first: the birth of surprise takes us unawares, making us aware of ourselves, both as surprised and as surprising, as other to ourselves in unsuspected ways. Such self-discovery can be exhilarating and can be appalling. Artists remain in love with it, but if they do not also allow this second sense, they tend to be lifelong narcissists. The second sense: to imagine is to begin to prepare a porous space of hospitality not for one's own otherness only but for the otherness of the other. This (imagined) encounter with the other is beyond us in a stronger sense. If there is not this space of hospitality, the other becomes only a rupture in continuity, not a possible companion (or a promise of companionship) in creative ventures.

Imagination is ecstatic in putting us beyond ourselves. It happens before we know it is happening. It is an immediate intermediation in the flesh itself. The other enters into us because the space of porosity has taken form as available and this immediately happens. It is not first the result of any *will* to be open. Self-conscious will comes much later, but there is something in the intimacy of being that outs itself in images of hospitality or hostility. Think of the spontaneous surfacing of images of hostility. Instant dislike: porosity to the other recoils from exposure to what is beyond it, finds something "off-putting" in that other, a rancid perfume of other-being one cannot inhale. Revulsion to self can also eventuate in this porosity. I smell myself and in the air float images of the mutilation of my body. I drive my car over the cliff. I am rehearsing my self-contempt. I do not know this. The image of the smeared self comes up. It is an omen of the darkness of the intimate. It is a figure that prefigures. It is a figure

that disfigures. It is a sign of secret love or hate. There is the secret community of the intimate universal in the sign. The figure of imagination asks for divination. Sometimes the sign is in the flight of seabirds along the shore, or in the sighing of wind in the mourning trees. These are elemental porosities, but they announce a community, or a disharmony, either of the selving with itself, or of the selving with other being, or of other-being with the selving. For it can be so that the other impresses one with clandestine contempt; I take the pressing on myself but I am "put upon"; perhaps this is why I sullenly find the other "off-putting." Divining the images requires finesse. Many of the images we do not attend to, or we recess them as soon as they express themselves.

We are othered in imagination, but there is no univocal self-othering. There is an equivocal field of aesthetic happening in which earth becomes flesh, the *humus* human, and the companioning (in)spiration communicates us to ourselves intimately, communicates also of what always is more than ourselves. (The human: marriage of earth, *humus*, and breath, *ruach*; breathed in, the earth begins to breathe out, breathing itself, and not only through the mouth, before knowing itself. This marriage is a spousal relation in the flesh. The breath of life as other to self-breathing: the other that companions the "birthing with" in the *co-natus*.) In this "more" we are unclosed porously to a porous field of aesthetic happening wherein we are ordained to communication, a field that is in communication with us, and wherein what is other communicates with us. Importantly, it has often been granted that imagination crucially crosses the threshold in mindfulness of the power to be other. This power to be other is enacted in the communication of selving, and in selving in communication. To speak of humans: we are sensuous beings who are able to be other—received into being in the *passio*, energized to be in the *conatus*, porous in the roots of ontological intimacy, there is a promise of "being with," enigmatic and secret, that we seek to realize more fully. The promise of being other is the promise of being oneself more fully, in being more fully with the other, in being in communication. Fully being oneself in communication and not being fully oneself cannot be separated by us. Hence we are creatures of longing and desire. Community is there in the desire to be oneself. Longing is belonging. Both are intimate and the promise of the universal. Longing for what, belonging to what? The wise blood in the flesh has an intimation; the aesthetic field of the earth gives signs but does not tell straight.

There is an infinite aspect to this, our longing, this, our belonging. This is not just an infinite lack, but a lack infinitely qualified by its own unlocked power to imagine itself as other. This is an enabled power to become itself in being other, and hence not being other but always and everywhere becoming nothing but itself. And this becoming is never retracted out of a more universal communication that enables this, the singularization of the power to be other.

In this too there is a power of negation. This is not negative but springs up from the affirmative surplus of the power of the "to be" giving expression to itself. It is very important to see more than negativity at work. Negativity (perhaps in Hegel, certainly in Sartre, for instance) tends to be the *conatus* misunderstanding itself as abrogating power to stand against the given conditions of its own being given to be and, more generally, the given conditions of being given at all. The metaxological view: given the original being given to be in the porosity and *passio*, and indeed in the *co-natus*, this view of negativity seriously distorts, mutilates the endowed character of the enabled and enabling power to be.

If there is a sense of the worth of the "to be" at work in aesthetic happening, it gets *redoubled* in our responding to it, both in our own being and in other-being. One can understand the power of being other in imagination to be a manifestation of this redoubling. This imagining of being other is not a creation ex nihilo, and when it comes into the space of express communicability, at the outset, its participation in the porosity of being is shaped in an essentially mimetic manner. That is, granted the porous space of communicability, our envisagement of ourselves as other is mediated through the example of another as worthy of imitation or emulation. This does not happen in light of self-consciousness. It is first an un-self-conscious participation in a love of the other we do not know is ongoing. The usual idea of imitation as a mere facile copying is too simplistic. Imitation rather testifies to the porosity of our being as open to assuming the shape of the other. When I imitate you I am porous to you and your being takes up a guest residence in me as host. Without the porosity imitation would not be possible.[14] With great mimics this porosity can be astonishing. We do not stop at imitating others, but if we do not start there we can hardly be said to have started at all. In the imitation is the patience to the other but also the seeds of our own endeavor-to-be and with the latter something of what we ourselves contribute to the shaping of selving. This is in the flesh first.

We saw this above with the family in the mimetic porosity between children and their elders. This is hugely determinative of the character of a person. An older person later is astonished to discover himself speaking as his passed father spoke. Something has passed secretly from generation to generation. This is not univocal determination, of course: in a space of enabled and enabling freedom, it is influence—literally in the sense of a flowing in—passing, streaming in the porosity of relativity. Imitation gives shape to selving in the communication that is in the flowing in and the flowing out. The boundaries between selving and othering are not absolutely fixed. And this is so in the flesh itself.[15]

Naturing, Nurturing, Adorning

The first nature, better naturing, is in the *passio*, the patience of being; the second nature, better naturing, comes to be in the *conatus*, the endeavor-to-be. This is not a simple dualism of givenness and construction, though obviously there is a doubleness here that is reflected in this dualism. There is a redoubling of first naturing in the second. This means that the patience of receiving being subtends the endeavor-to-be—always. And always even when the second naturing seems to distance itself entirely from the first. The redoubling of being is itself gifted, even though it is tempted to relate to itself as given to itself, entirely through itself alone. It is related to itself, but it is not thus univocally given to itself through itself. There is always the secret companioning of its being given to itself, in its being enabled to be what it is to become.

Admittedly in this redoubling, there can come to be a hiatus between the first naturing and the second, and we can suffer a loss of intimacy with the first gift of being. The results will be a releasing of the self-redoubling of the *conatus*, as if it were (self-)birthed, or natured through itself alone. This claiming of self-birthing leads to the enfeebling of intimate finesse for the "co-" of the conaturing, and the coming to be that creates us as beings for ourselves, in the more original instance. In this hiatus of *passio* and *conatus*, the more normal distinction of the natural and the artificial takes shape. Given the present view of the porosity, of the *passio* and the *co-natus*, one has to consider that the ancients perhaps had it more right when they said that art completes nature, rather than, as we moderns tend to think, that art (as self-creation) is entirely other to nature, even

overcoming nature. I want to look at this going over from first naturing to second, from nature to art, and the meaning of the redoubling in the between of the break, of the hiatus of the *passio* and the *conatus*. My cue? The fact that we are *adorning animals* speaks a whole world.

We often attribute to adornment a kind of narcissistic self-regard but it is better to see communication at play in adornment, with both more intimate and more communal sides. Human adornment is not simple animal display. Animal display is marvelous, and again and again shows that nature is not lived according to an economy of scarcity. The erotics of aesthetic display are often astonishing—there is the influence and overflow of an excess, especially in relation to generation and being beyond self. Think of the concentration of excess energy in the peacock who struts, or in the dominant male whose very colors change while in the state of extending his genetic spread. Things communicate themselves in their aesthetic spread. There is the aesthetic spread of the thing, communicated in the flesh.[16] But with human adornment in the animal spread is the redoubling of the flesh, envisaged as being other by imagination. Flesh is redoubled into a new figuration, thought to present the selving in a more worthy form, *worthy of being seen by the other*. The worth of selving is on show, and on being seen by the other, there is a redoubled incarnation of value that passes between selving and othering. We speak of "putting on our best face," indicating we have many faces, and we can put on, and take off, faces, depending sometimes on who faces us or how we face up to ourselves. All of this is equivocal, of course. The doubleness may be duplicitous. The new face may be a front that hides as well as shows. Our best face may be put on to put our worst face out of sight, in the belief that out of sight, out of mind.

Were we for ourselves alone there would be no adornment. It is because we know we are seen that we begin to see ourselves, and see ourselves differently. We are beheld, we are beholden, we behold ourselves differently. We are on two sides at once, because the other also is on two sides at once. There is an intimacy first sleeping in flesh as neither simply of us nor of others: a community in flesh already before its members awaken to this distinctiveness or to the sense of their togetherness. Communicable difference is emergent in the flesh of community itself. So the other is in the image envisaged of myself as other. Oneself as another is not possible without an other who is not oneself. But both self and other are subtended by the porous field of communication that is neither self nor other,

that seems nothing in particular, since it is no self or other in particular, and that yet is more than both as enabling the complex circuits of their being with each other.

One thinks of the secret sense of the whole present in adornment as composing a *cosmos* (I am thinking of the etymology of the word). There is a cosmetics of sensible selving. There is also a sense of the selving as a world unto itself—cosmetics bring out its being worthy to be shown. This is not first the "that" or the "what" that is showing or being shown, but simply the elemental worthiness to be shown at all—on show and on show as worthy to be on show. We say to ourselves or our children what our mothers have said to us: be presentable! We are presentable: then we communicate worthy appearance, communicate being worthy of appearance, being worthy in our appearance. Adornment has everything to do with worthy appearance. The cosmetic communicates some worthy sense of the whole seeking to come forth in the form of a harmony of wholeness. There is something ontological in such aesthetics. Cosmetics regards more than additional, merely disposable supplements. They are needful for the self-doubling of the human being. Without this self-doubling the communication between two, between a double in a different sense, would not be possible. It is not right to attribute this communicability in the flesh to one side or the other. There is a redoubling on every side of the between. Given the patience and the porosity, the redoubling of others communicates, enters in, influences my own self-doubling. The self-doubling entails both the *passio* and the *conatus*, even though there is the temptation for the *conatus* to take over the self-doubling. Then the selving tries to assert its primacy over the other as a second, as a second with its own self-doubling. For true and open communication the equilibrium of *passio* and *conatus* has to be guarded; the porosity must be allowed the freest flow from all sides. Inevitably, of course, the poise in ourselves is disturbed, as well as the poise between ourselves and others.[17]

Just as any dualism of intimate and universal is not quite right here, so also with any dualism of inner and outer, subjective and objective. If we consider adornment as aesthetic care for self, it certainly involves self-cultivation, but there is more to it than just self-cultivation. If we compose our bodies in certain ways, there is a mindfulness, an emotional attunement, going with the bodily composition, and it comes to communicate itself in the composition. (The James-Lange theory is not entirely wrong, it is not entirely right either.) Act in an angry way, and the anger comes,

act in a loving way and the loving can come, act in a gentle way and consideration comes. Pascal made the point that by taking holy water, even if one does not believe, the action will seed something that communicates of belief. Kneel and prayer may come. Embodied posture brings (on) aesthetic mindfulness. Emotion brings the gesture, the gesture brings the emotion. The connection is so intimate that they are all but impossible to separate.

The body is a house, the body is a home, but we are not always at home in this house. We are not at ease in our own skin, we say. The doubleness becomes a self-dividedness. The hiatus between *passio* and *conatus* becomes intimately torn. We adorn ourselves with mutilations. Second nature uglifies given naturing.

Since adornment deals with aesthetic showing, and since thus it is tied both to the intimate and to the equivocal, the possibilities of exploitation are immense. If one can manipulate the image, one can shape or influence, change or even create desire. The advertising industry and the cosmetic industry know this intimately. They are masters in the instrumentalization of the aesthetic show. I mention it here but will return to it in relation to serviceable disposability.

In the aesthetics of happening, there is a surplus of showing, and this surplus is often the most unnoticed. We are not in an economy of lack. It is not an economy of struggle merely. There is an energy of being that is surplus to struggle. While there is struggle to be sure, the struggle itself comes out of surplus, not out of defect. In the aesthetics of happening there is a kind of ontological generosity—there is a sensuous giving that is more than the measure of an economic or utilitarian measure. There in the flesh there is too much already from the outset. The good of the "to be," already at work behind our back in the self-affirming of our flesh, redoubles itself in the adornment of our bodies. The surplus is what enables the release of our *conatus* that comes to expression in our being beyond ourselves in the shaping of a "second nature." The second nature entails our self-shaping, but the self-shaping is enabled by a more original endowment, itself manifesting as an efflux of the surplus of the too muchness of the original agape of being. Once again we are participants first, agents second—and only agents because we participate in this surplus that is not itself the result of our agency. We are worthy to be, because our being is worthy before self-worth. We can see something of the mingling of the prior worth and self-worth in adornment.[18]

Adornment is not only aesthetic *happening*; it is also on the way to a kind of aesthetic *self-determining*. The worth of our "to be" in adornment reshapes itself as the worth of what we are to be, and hence passes more intimately into a process of self-becoming, one in which the metaxological intermediation of self and other is vitally at work in embodied communication. The self-determining is relative, since the adorning takes place in the eye of the other, internalized in the eye of oneself for oneself. One is newly for oneself in an adorned state because in one's mindful body one knows intimately that one is for another, and that their eyes are on one. In intimate self-shaping, adorning is in aesthetic communication with otherness beyond self-determining. It is the intimacy of beautifying in the spaces of a community, sometimes demurely secret, sometimes bold as brass.

This reference to the other in the intimacy of adornment is confirmed in the importance of mimesis.[19] Imitation is also bound up with sympathy, as we know from Burke, bound up with the social passions. One might speak of the aesthetics of the social passions and the promise of the intimate universal animating these passions. This is a matter important with Burke, as well as some others such as Hutchinson and Hume. The aesthetics of the intimate universal cannot be abstracted from the social virtues, and hence there is a mediated relation to the forms of politics.[20] This is a point even granted by those on the Left, not only by those on the more conservative side of things. I think of Jacques Rancière, for instance. Undoubtedly, here one might acknowledge that there are significant social and political implications that go with the shift from mimesis to originality, understood as the paradigm of aesthetic shaping. In the mimetic model, despite its perceived tendency to hinder creativity, there is an essential relation to the other always in aesthetic becoming. It is not sheer self-becoming. With the stress on originality the relation to the other becomes ambiguous. In some cases, the ambiguity leads to revolt or mutilation of this relation; in other cases, the relation is secretly smuggled in, either in relation to a more primal inward otherness that sources emergent originality or in relation to a consummation of self-creation that is self-nurtured by the creative spirit originating and suckling itself alone.

The danger here is a simplistic opposition of heteronomy and autonomy, to the cartooning of heteronomy, and the vaporization of substantial spiritual heft in the process of selving itself. Moreover, there is the danger of a blindness to the promise of freedom *before* autonomy and

the possibility of freedoms *beyond* autonomy: the first, our being *endowed* with freedom at all; the second, our being freed beyond self-becoming into communication with what is more than oneself, and its communication in the rich insinuation of aesthetic intimation. The caricature of a cramped sense of heteronomous power is repeatedly dug up from its supposed grave to alarm the emergent freedom that the spooks of the more-than-self always threaten to come back from the dead and suck the living freedom from the self-proclaimed autonomy.

One is hard put not to "psychoanalyze" this digging up of dead heteronomy as a continuation of an adolescent rebellion against a constraining, containing father. Not all freedoms are defined by fiery Promethean revolt against glowering Zeus. There is another God who frees us, and other freedoms that are released beyond self-becoming, even in self-becoming. All of this is insinuated in the aesthetics of the intimate universal. Hence the much derided Plato is correct to worry that changes in aesthetic practices are inseparable from alterations not only in the soul but in communal ethics and political practices. Plato does err on the side of caution, given that a tradition may already have sedimented in its customs relatively wise ways of mediating the aesthetics of the intimate universal, in relation to which individual novelties are to be viewed with (initial) suspicion. It may also be true that traditions can stifle wiser mediations that now must be allowed to emerge. Failing that allowance, they will push to the fore of communication in ways that may be painful and violent—all the while then risking the breakdown and loss of the aesthetic intermediation of the intimate universal.

Singing Te Deums to sheer newness makes no sense. With human beings there is no such sheer newness, no creation ex nihilo in the proper sense. There is a making and a making anew that can be new in a relative, not absolute, sense, and that can renew the more original and abiding sources of creativity and our participation in them. We make and remake, and there is newness in the making and remaking, but never the absolute novelty that is the privilege of the divine alone. It is not surprising that respect for traditional form weakens when the stress is on sheer originality, and there are many expressions of this communicated into the ethical and political spheres of community. This sheer originality, far from being creation ex nihilo, is more than half in love with the *nihil* and tilts inexorably thereto—to nothingness itself as that which, as not, can be *contained in nothing that now is.* There is a nihilism that, through nilling, tries to be

"more" than all that now is. This nihilism, again through nilling, turns into a nihilism that would be even "less than nothing." This must mean willed death. Even then the will of the nothing is a will of what lives, which implicates the love of the "to be" of the nihilator, and also mediately the inseparability of the nihilator from the others that are. Nihilation is still bound to life in the death that revolts against life, as it is bound to the other in the freedom that claims to free itself from the other.[21]

First and Second Art (1): On Mutations in the Aesthetic Field and the Intimate Universal

In aesthetic communication there is a certain promiscuity between self and other. There is also a fluid doubleness that develops between the aesthetic field as a given happening and our own aesthetic self-shaping. To effect the latter we must employ the former but tilt it away from its otherness in our own direction. This need not be exploitative in a violent or destructive way, but it does signal a tension between the given aesthetic field and our endeavor to define ourselves in terms primarily envisaged by ourselves. There is an intimacy to both those sides, and an equivocity, but in the coming forth of the second, the intimacy of the first can come to count for less. Our art, so to say, takes over from the aesthetic happening that, if it has *its own art*, is one that is (relatively) other to us, with its own ebbs and flows and its own mysterious tides of coming into being and passing away. Initially this *first art* might be more mysteriously poetic also, though in coming to give us a sense of our own power, in our endeavor-to-be, it can generate a *second art* that is more dedicated to instrumentally turning the given otherness into something appreciated in terms of its use for us. The aesthetic happening is the womb that nurtures our aesthetic selving and, with it, our possible art—but this art, in the doubleness, can turn the aesthetic happening into a field for its own endeavor. Art as the skill that makes use of this field emerges from a first, more elemental art that is more than just useful art.

In truth, a threefold distinction is suggested.[22] There is, first, the poetic art of naturing, bringing beings to be; second, there is our poetic art, as having come to be endowed with original power to be; third, there is an instrumental art that forms our endowed power in a useful direction. I am not saying these are distinctly set apart at the outset; here too there

is promiscuity in keeping with aesthetic happening. Thus we should not be surprised that the art of earlier peoples might have a useful function that yet is inseparable from a religious sense of sacred power. Our poetic art comes to be out of the divine *poiesis* of naturing, and this is carried into our instrumental arts. What usefulness here means does not coincide with the modern definition where the world has already been massively reduced to a valueless thereness. In the charged field of aesthetic happening, the most useful thing might be the art of a sacred magic that enters into the fluid porosity between the human and the divine. What is "useful" in this field has an aesthetic charge that cannot be separated from the sacred and the beneficences and curses of the powers on us.

The emergence of more prosaic art reconfigures the doubleness: intimacy with the original aesthetic charge of the first poetic art is reduced; the potential for self-determining power on our part is increased; other-being as other is more and more taken to be there for selving, while selving is more and more taken to be there for itself. Clearly this is a move away from the first art and the more primal porosity, not to mention an effort to relativize the *passio essendi*. The *conatus essendi* takes over more in its power to shape the given matter—now just the given matter, not the giving *mater*—into something serving the securing and the perpetuating of that same endeavor-to-be. Nevertheless, we must not forget that art in the more poetic-sacred sense subtends art in the more utilitarian sense. There is a more aesthetic communication with other-being in the first; there is a more than instrumental communication in the second.[23]

What I want to get at here is that the turn to a more generally available social commons tends to initiate a turn away from the intimate, and with this also a dissociation of the intimate and the universal. The intimate is then modeled on the private, while the universal is referred to a generality that can be denominated without any intimate references to the particularities of persons or places. These latter might be illustrations or examples or instances but they are not the flesh of the universal. Rather the flesh is transcending in a going beyond in which the *conatus* exceeds its embodied thisness and thereness; the very process of exceeding is thought to be into a space of neutral or impersonal otherness, certainly transpersonal otherness, in which once again the sacrifice of the intimate is demanded by the emergence and triumph of the universal. Examples: think of leaving the intimacy of the family for the world of strangers, when the child goes to school, where the other is the stranger rather than the brother or sister,

the teacher and not the parent. Or: later leaving the school that has many familial and intimate sides and going into "real life," the school of hard knocks, where no one cares for one. One is on one's own, so it may seem, the focus of an ineradicable idiocy of being, and all around and beyond one lies the neutral generality, the sea of anonymity where supposedly the true universal holds sway. My point now is not to focus on different types of universality, but clearly there is a social generality on which the intimate singular abuts and butts. The issue is a *gap* between the intimate and the general. There is also the question of whether that gap is subtended by the intimate universal such that the general cannot be called the ultimate meaning of the universal. This opening into, this gap, this subtending, these extend into all forms of public community—all of which as dealing with the general can indeed stifle the promise of the intimate universal, but can never entirely kill it, for without it, the general itself is not possible or capable of thriving.

Strangely in the loss of the aesthetic intimation of the intimate universal, there is a mutation in the intimate itself. The mutation is not a simple accession to the neutral generality. Rather the intimacy of being, articulated as *passio essendi* and *conatus essendi*, mutates into the twins of subordination and dominion, submission and overcoming. The first is the *passio* made abject, the second the *conatus* made superject. The seemingly neutral space of the public commons itself mutates into a social space shadowed by dread of the hostile. After all, this neutral space would seem to mark nothing of our intimate being, and so in reaction we are given to trying to overcome the neutral, if our endeavor-to-be is not feeble. We would have it remade to the measure of our endeavor. We do not adorn ourselves, we reshape the otherness to enable free self-shaping on our part. There is a "make over" of the otherness in our own image and likeness. We make it ours, we put our mark on it, we brand it, we take hold of it, and it is ours, our property.[24] We own it, and so the neutral is no longer neutral. The self-exceeding, self-endeavoring intimacy has taken it to itself.

There are also other mutations in the sense of the general and the universal. We generalize the social endeavor-to-be into a project claiming a potentially universal reach. We colonize the globe; we globalize the colony. The *conatus* becomes a limitless self-mediation tending to take over from, to make over, all intermediations with other-being. This way of putting the matter can be misleading if we think of the self-mediation

as simply an individual thing. The *conatus*, in an aesthetic field of communication, is a communal endeavor-to-be, a social will to self-affirmation and assertion. This is a social self-mediation in and through the others that are always immanent in the internally containing process. It is important to grant that this is not first a matter of the individualism of a nominalistic ethos or later the more atomized autonomy of a secularized commons. It is more a social *conatus*: the endeavor-to-be is a social determination of the will to be, now a self-affirming, not sunken in singular intimacy, but a social willing circulating in the social body.

Though social, this body relates to itself, and is not essentially a release to otherness as such but a social, cultural, epochal self-circulation in which the will to be becomes perhaps an epoch-wide will to power, within whose encircling globalization many differences are to be found or made to fall. The self-circulation is, nevertheless, a social self-circling. It is one in which the communal *conatus* is in the ascendant, but within which also there is reproduced a configuration of the difference of the *passio* and the *conatus*. This is now between the dominating powers of the social whole and the passive powers of those who are really the powerless, whether within the social whole, or outside it. We have within this social reconfiguration (as well as within each individual) a duality of masters and slaves: the passive has been reduced to the servile, and the endeavor has been inflated into will to power. This is a social erotics of the *conatus* that makes servile its own *passio*, to the closing down of the received and receiving porosity that keeps us open, individually and socially, to the more original sources of coming to be. The readiness to be available does not count, nor does the reverence that grants that the gift of being is more original than what we later constructively make of it. The gap between this original gift and the social uses to which we put it allows both exploitation in which our interest is served and loss of intimacy with an otherness that is always more than a servile means. In the gap something like a master-slave dialectic takes multiple forms: between us and nature (as servile/serviceable instrument); between us and ourselves (tyrannizing over our *passio*, we are masters of ourselves and self-enslaved); between oneself and another socially (since the self-circulating of the social endeavor is a self-encircling, this means that, while socially free, one is socially bound, and there seems to be no outside to this). There springs up a will to power seeking sovereignty, in place of the social nurturing of the seeds of agapeic service, prior to and beyond sovereignty and servility.

First and Second Art (2): On Enterprise and the Intimate Universal

The second art is related to the *enterprising* nature of the human being. Here we begin to notice the "lift off" of the endeavor-to-be from the given flesh of creation. We see something of the "lift off" present in the art of adornment, and in the beginning of the determination of our own shape. None of this is possible without a "lift off" relative to the flesh of nature as given.[25] See imagination thus: as a threshold power that crosses this divide, carries us across the divide that we find opening up, find opening up as we ourselves open up, and opening it up as we find our selves anew in the divide. We need not, cannot, turn against this flesh of nature totally but there is a rupture with(in) it, in the interests of giving nature to ourselves for a second time, not only in reconfiguring other-being as such, but in reconfiguring ourselves. Enterprise expresses the *between-nature* of the human being and reflects the doubleness of the *passio* and the *conatus*.[26] It reflects the doubleness between the given ethos (the flesh of the world) and the reconfigured ethos (the art of the participating creature). It testifies to the doubleness in the emergence of second nature from first, of mindful art from given naturing, of art that might not only try to take some measure of given determinate being, but also see the opportunity of as yet unrealized possibility in the open indeterminacy of the universal impermanence. In addition, it testifies to the doubleness between given determinacy and our desire for more self-determining becoming in which the energy of our own story is to be made up and told, and then retold against the background fluctuations of the given ethos of being.

The *risking nature* of the human being is involved in venture. *There is often intimate faith in a secret universal in taking risk*, in the willingness to hazard something of oneself, one's powers and possessions, on a promise that right now seems more possibility than realization.[27] Enterprise witnesses to a risky doubleness between possibility and realization. If the tilt of this doubleness is unbalanced toward our jutting and pushing and even violating will to be, our endeavoring can cease to listen to the given promise, and promote itself alone as the only self-consecrated possibility that merits realization. There is groaning between possibility and realization, but the groaning is fidelity to a secret promise, sent in signs when mindfulness attends to the given as well as to the yet held out. The suffering

that is faithful in the groaning can be revolted against, and the endeavor can hold the enterprise to be its own self-realization alone. Enterprise then is less the risk on the incognito promise and the companioning mystery of goodness than concentration on self, at core the securing of selving, individual and social, even in the hazard. In embarking on the hazard it can hide the fact that it is in flight from hazard. If it seems to risk everything it really wants to risk nothing, since the bet is always on itself to win. The bet is not on winning by losing itself in the beyond of itself.

At one end of the spectrum is the desire of total security: this seems to do everything but wants finally to do nothing, having gathered everything to itself. At the other end of the spectrum is the nakedness that lays itself open to what comes, even as it does what it can do, what it must do, in circumstances of challenge and danger, even though this is not everything. For we can never do everything, and everything we do is inflected by measure secreted from our finitude in all endeavor.

True, enterprise is not possible without *hope*. Hope is cradled in the intimacy of being but the child it would raise up has the promise of the universal. For hope, in however a clandestine way it might be, is conceived in some secret accord between us and the nature of things in relation to promise yet to be. Without that hope we would attempt nothing; this hope is open to a future when that accord can be more fully brought to light, brought more fully out of promise toward the redemption of promise. But hope of, hope toward, is funded on a *secret and intimate generosity* in the nature of things, on which we draw, when we try new things. It is the enabling power of creation, as itself not first created by us, that allows us to participate hopefully in the work of creation. This work is operative—but most deeply it is cooperative. We do not create simply, we cooperate in creation. The hope of the enterprising community or person draws its resources out of this very hospitality of creation. Even when we tend to think that our enterprise is crystalized because of the hostility to us of creation, in fact this hostility is itself subtended by the secret hospitality. "Something will turn up." If we do not hope for this turning up, we cannot move forward creatively. We can only slash and burn our way through the countering hostility. And even then the slash and burn make no ultimate sense if there is not at work a desperate hope that things will come to right—that something will turn up. The indeterminacy in the phrase is apposite, since at the outset of taking the initiative, we cannot determine in advance what will turn up. We have to hazard on

the indeterminate, but the meaning of hazarding is hope both in reserves in ourselves and in resources reserved in what is other to ourselves. The hope and promise are so deeply intimate that they can be often hidden from consciousness and self-consciousness. But that we do things, that we undertake things at all, that we live in response to things in a certain way, all these surface from a reserve of intimate endowed power that cannot in the end ever be confined to the private and the private alone. The secret promise of the intimate universal companions the hope and the hazard of our endeavoring in enterprise.

Enterprise is a language much spoken in capitalist circles, but there is no human life without enterprise. One cannot do away with enterprise. The enterprising human is the one who takes an initiative—and to take an initiative it is to begin something potentially new. A new start is begun with initiative. As new beginnings for the human being, initiatives cross the threshold from patience to action into a space of self-activity. There is something glorious in the ability of the human being to take an initiative. It is to be reborn in a dimension claiming something of our own self-determination. The nature of the rebirth, however, is delicate. The release of energy as our own may create the impression that this rebirth is not at all second, that it is a radically original first birth. In this we take ourselves as not just offspring but also our own mothers and fathers—self-engendering, self-birthing. This is to cover over the patience. This is to deny the secondness of the rebirth, and to claim it as the first birth in which what we are is the number One. What is derivative makes claim to be underived—or at least derived from nothing but itself alone.

Here we taste the emergence of the feel of *power—feel* of power, for the roots of power are in the aesthetic intimacy. We are not machines of power—power comes to emergence out of saturated idiotic origins. The intoxications of the feel of power are partly derivative from the glorious self-affirming of the good of the "to be." And this, of course, is not self-given, but rather given to the self. Here the promiscuous turns it into a matter of making it self-given and nothing but self-given. We see this in inferior people who are given a taste of power—the intoxication takes over when the opportunity arises: before abject, now superject. We see it in well-mannered practitioners of power preaching nobility but revealing in practice the truth as themselves and nothing but themselves. We see it in insinuating persons who poke their noses into other people's business, and in the end insinuate themselves as the point of it all. The power that

is free(d) runs the risk of becoming drunken on itself and hence no longer proves free. I will come back to some of the intoxications of power with erotic sovereignty.

The venturing human being is as adventuring; but advent is before adventuring. We come to ourselves before we depart, before we depart from ourselves to come to ourselves. We depart from ourselves in setting out from whom and where we are. We also depart from ourselves in leaving ourselves in the lurch, leaving home not to find home but because our departure is the beginning of our being untrue to the origin. In venturing thus the doubleness of the equivocal is again to be found. Without fidelity to the advent of the good of the "to be," our adventure into the good that is to be easily becomes a betrayal of the good. The good as our good may be ours to affirm, but when we affirm insistently that the good is just our good, we have departed from the advent, from the good that gives itself, that gives us to be ourselves, the good as more primally given than the uses we make of its surplus. What results then? Not true courage, but bluster and braggadocio. Venturing not nurtured by the secret sources of strengthening but empty pushiness elbowing its way into further emptiness.[28] A forced self-surpassing that thrusts itself forward through hatred—the mutant of a love that no longer trusts in its own agapeic promise.[29] Because of the equivocity it is not always easy to discern the difference between true venturing and venturing that cloaks the bully of will to power.[30]

First and Second Art (3): On Usefulness and the Intimate Universal

Here I want to connect enterprise and the endeavor-to-be with the cultivation of the useful and what this betokens for the aesthetics of the intimate universal. As porous and as *passio* we are also *exposed*. Exposed, as endeavoring, we reach out to what is beyond us, and need it to survive and to prosper. Porosity is not only a creative nothing; it is a nothing, a lack of itself qua fully determinate selving or self-becoming. The lack asks to be filled, fulfilled. Porosity is inseparable from desire, for desire seeks a way—*poros*—across beyond itself, between lack and fulfillment. The lack is creative, hence not mere lack: both the *passio* and the *conatus* witness the upsurge of the receiving and affirming energy of the "to be." We need

what is other, even as we are exposed to what is other.[31] We draw a boundary around the exposed porosity, and we need to, if we are to be more than lack. The boundary is lived on the two sides: on the protected side out of which the endeavor sallies, and on the "outer," other side wherein is sought what the lack needs to fill or fulfill itself. Eating: a hunger, a lack, an opening of emptiness within, porosity; but also a restlessness with exposed porosity, hence a surge of energy beyond itself, seeking what in other-being fills the gap and allays the restlessness. Need of the other can take a number of different forms—some exploitative, some harbingers of a more generous accord. It is out of this ambiguous mix that the need to use comes out.

Usefulness is a notion we employ often without thinking about it, but some of its aspects are worth recalling. First there is the original bounty of aesthetic givenness. This is saturated with its own value, not our value; it is not an indifferent thereness. Aesthetic givenness is more than that. If we still grant something of this already available bounty, we might see we have to use it but with some respect, even reverence, for its other-value as such. Reverence of that other-value can shape our modality of use. A hunter kills a deer, say, and suitable rituals are performed to avoid or mitigate the contamination coming from killing the living; after the kill, gratitude for the borrowed life of the other may be ritualized in a prayer or in an ablution or in observing a taboo, and so on. Using is enacted in a universal field still charged with something of the sacred. The killing is enacted within a scene of consecrated life and the killing itself, while a negation, is purified, if only partially, from the guilt inflicting death brings. The unnamed reverence for sacred life as such is there. There is an intermedium of being here, and one thing is needed for another, and it for another, in a network that offers no fixable beginning and no end. Available life passes through the intermedium, and intermediates with death, but the life that passes, now living, now dead has a sacred charge.

This is using but it is not utilitarian in the more deconsecrated sense we know in modernity. The latter sense strips off the sacred charge of passing in the intermedium and neutralizes it into a valueless thereness. We now take the valueless thereness for the fact of the matter, but in fact it is a reconfiguration of a more primordial ethos of being. The ethos need not be so configured. How does this configuration emerge? There are many factors, but an important one is the experience of exposure colluding with a particular formation of the endeavor-to-be. The ethos appears

to us as equivocal—an intermedium of hospitality and hostility, life-giving and death-threatening. See this in the hunt: to live one must kill, but the living creature one must kill might also kill one. Nevertheless, it is the "to be" affirming itself that is working in the killing as well as the living—and all this passage of the "to be" is qualified by the charge of sacred value. In our efforts to bind this to ourselves, there is always something beyond us; and the endeavor-to-be can so take over that the equivocity, and this being beyond us, will be refused as such. Or rather, it will be granted as at the beginning, but refused as to what is to come at the end. We refuse our own porosity, and its lack becomes the launching pad of our endeavor. We also refuse the patience, and make *passio* the energy of a surge that overpowers what is other to us.

The modern neutralization is bound up with the univocalization of being in all its spheres. One might call this a de-divinization but I would call it a deconsecration. There is only a small step from deconsecration to desecration. It is not a question of now at last finding the true objective matter of the case. There is a discovery of the true, but not the whole truth, for the neutralized ethos is inseparable from a project to turn all that is other into a resource of use for us. While objectification seems to point to what is beyond us, the project itself is a task of the subject and so going with a massive objectification of other-being we find a huge subjectification of self-being. The one is not separable from the other. Which comes first? Not easy to answer univocally. I am inclined to say that it is our inchoate project, a dream of the *conatus*, that comes first, in reaction to the overdeterminate equivocity of the given ethos. Other-being as the given ethos is only ambiguously useful for us, for it is as much hostile as hospitable. If we can univocalize this, we can make it more absolutely hospitable, so we think. Of course, we do this by treating it as a hostile other—something to be subdued or turned to use, not in its terms but in our terms and in the end only our terms. We want to make the world safe for ourselves and our exploitation, but the exploitation turns its other-being into a neutral "it" over against us, and the seed of enmity between self and other is the basis of the motor force that drives the project. The net result is certainly the stripping of value from other-being as such, and the power to "construct" what is of value falls on the side of our projects. The *conatus* not only overtakes the *passio*, but its will for itself takes over the relation to other-being. It can also be the "takeover" of the immanent otherness of the *passio* and the intimate opening to the universal relation

we find in the porosity. We want to eat the world because this opening in us intimates resource(s) of being that exceed all finite beings. This mimics a sacred meal, now concerned with counterfeiting the divine as the transfinite resource of being. We must stuff the hole of being we think we are by stuffing the whole—absolute energy of selving is belied by a clogging of the porosity—and the whole of the universe other than us is the raw material that helps us effect the clogging. We have moved from aesthetic happening as wonderful to the aesthetic as the raw material of our voracious rapacity.

We must use. There is no survival and prospering without it. But how we use, that is the question. And we now see that this is not separable from both how we understand the self-affirming energy we are and the given glory of other-being—its being gift, our being given, before any use at all.[32]

First and Second Art (4): On Serviceable Disposability and the Intimate Universal

Venture become enterprise, in turn become use, can turn to exploitation, and not in a benign sense, when the hiatus of *passio* and *conatus* allows the *conatus* to reconfigure all things other to itself, and indeed its own self, in terms of what I call *serviceable disposability*. Serviceable disposability creates for itself a dominion that is impossible without the intimate universal but that yet can counterfeit the forms of community faithful to the intimate universal. This process is impossible without *technē*, understood as dependent on the *hiatus* between first and second art. We might think of the ancient sense of *technē*, in Aristotle, for instance: productive skill in accord with a rational rule. The kind of reason at issue is one that opens onto the instrumental, though its pragmatics is not exhausted by the instrumental as such. Recalling the different senses of art above, there is a sense of mindfulness (as I would put it) that is not instrumental, and this is something more primordial than the instrumental mind that goes with art in the second sense. The first art comes closer to a celebrating astonishment with respect to the field of aesthetic happening. When this astonishment flows into art, the skill at producing works of art (*technē*) allows the porosity through which passes the vital worthiness of the aesthetic happening as such. This first sense of art is contemplative in one sense,

but not merely theoretical in this regard of being detachedly spectatorial. It is more like *theōria*, considered as the vigilant celebrating of the play of being. The origin of *theōria* in the ancient sense concerned privileged delegates from various cities who were sent to look and behold the games of the sacred festivals. Yet still, art is *work* in that we must do something to offer the images that hold for beholding the surge of the aesthetic field and its worth. The work is a determination, but if we mistake the determination for a univocalization, then we play false. The truer determination, better, articulation, arrests in the determinate what exceeds determination. It does not univocalize the equivocal but holds it there for beholding and celebrating. Hence it is both an aid of mindfulness as well as a deeper participation in the play of the aesthetic field—beyond the usual bifurcation of theory and practice. (It recalls the original sense of "doing justice" I spoke of in chapter 3.) It is beyond by being before the more usual univocalizations of both theory and practice. Closer to the origin, it is closer to the threshold of emergence of articulation that we saw with original imagination. It is more intimate with the *passio* and the porosity, and the endeavor-to-be is still in some unwilled poise with these. The endeavor has not taken over, overtaken these powers that enable it to be.[33] The other sense of art, by contrast, comes with the tilt toward the univocalization, comes also in the alteration of balance of theory and practice. Theory now becomes more technical in the modern sense: an instrumental construction of reason whose purpose is not beholding, celebrating, and participating in the aesthetic field, but grasping in the name of the exploitation of other-being as other.[34]

Reason is the slave of the passions, Hume said, but here reason is not truly a faithful companion of the *passio*. It is more the servant of a willing to be that turns to use both its own mindfulness and the other-being. I think different possibilities are, to a degree, suspended in the Aristotelian definition of art. How much of *poeisis* is there, how much of *praxis*? How does *technē* take a turn to the instrumental such that, at a certain point, everything is a means and nothing an end? How comes it that even the means are not truly means but way stations on the circuit on which serviceable disposability asserts its sway over the whole? However we answer, when serviceable disposability takes hold, the question of the ambiguity of *technē* takes on more urgent form. The question has to be resurrected about the possibility of first art in the sense I am indicating. When the second art claims to be the first, the opening and celebration offered

by the first is covered over, if not mutilated. If there is a tendency in this direction in modernity, simply to say that this is modernity would not be right, since all human formations will show both possibilities. Yes, there may be a huge tendency to make second art the first and last art in powerful technology, backed up by the instrumental theories of the calculative sciences. A relentless univocalization of the aesthetics of happening allows for its easier technological exploitation.[35] Nevertheless, second art is immediately twinned with first, which is ever returning, as is also the deep longing for participation in it. Consider how we see this in the way Enlightenment is immediately twinned with Romanticism. Enlightenment yields second art in the name of serviceable disposability, Romanticism reveals the recurrence of longing for the first art. The twinning is unavoidable since it expresses what we are, the doubleness at the root of *passio* and *conatus*. (The view that reason is the slave of the passions does not have a deep enough understanding of the *passio*.) This doubleness is reflected also in the doubleness of geometry and finesse in modernity. While geometry pursues the technical mastery of univocal determinacy, finesse tries to remain more intimate with the first art, all equivocity notwithstanding.[36]

Locke says in the *Second Treatise*: "Tis labor, then, which puts the greatest part of value on land, without which it would scarcely be worth anything. . . . Nature and the earth furnished only the almost worthless materials as in themselves."[37] In relation to the exploitation of the aesthetic field, Locke is not at odds with Marx in *Capital* in defining the source of different forms of value, whether use-value or exchange-value, ultimately in human labor.[38] The image they communicate is of nature as a thereness that in itself has no value till we work on it, and what value it has is derived from what we put into it. This is a contraction of the meaning of value. There is then no ontological worth in the aesthetic field, and we ourselves are not participants in ontological worth, participants before we contribute through our activity to this givenness of worth. The given as given must be altered by our input into it before it comes to show the face of value. If there is any intrinsic value it passes completely to our side. This is a loss of the equilibrium of the aesthetic intermedium. It becomes more like a void other, void of value till we charge its otherness with value, and what that other value shows is our work. This is our imposing of ourselves on otherness, and our being other by prolonging our projective power into void otherness as such. This is a recipe for ontological tyranny.

Of course, initially it appears more as a "creative" manifestation of human initiative in the guise of remaking the world in our own image. We do remake the world thus but the image that comes to appear is not always the image of beauty.[39] In light of the distinction of first and second art, it would be wrong to see this as the only possibility revealed in work. There is the undoubted power of work to mediate human power to itself—not a matter of the self-expression of power or the self-aggrandizement, simply the coming into self-mediation of what lies curled up as promising possibility in the endowment of the human. We work on the world as other; we work on ourselves as other; we remake the world as other; we remake ourselves as other. It is not merely the product of such work that is important; it is the process as such (this is closer to the ancient sense of *praxis*). Even when and if there is a product that seems to be detachable from the process, in that product we come to ourselves in some measure. We come to ourselves as transformative power that in the produced other comes to be mediated with itself.

When the younger, "humanistic" Marx describes the process of labor, one often thinks of the artistic model: the artist/artificer works on the raw material, and transforms it in accord with his vision or will.[40] The end product is the objectification of that selving of the artist. It is the medium in which the selving both realizes itself and comes to mediate with itself. Work overcomes the dualism of subject and object in objectified subjectivity. And the overcoming is revealed in a process of self-productive mediation that is the productive self-mediation of the human artist. And this "selving" does not have to be seen only in terms of the individual for Marx but in terms of the social subject. The powers of production are the resources of the social selving and its coming to nonalienated social possession, social self-possession. Work as merely individual, possessions as merely particular do not reflect the truth of the whole that lies in the relations of production that are social first and last. My point is the logic of the process—which is one of self-mediation through the other, be the self individual or social. Social work is the production of social self-mediation. This is very Hegelian, in fact, where the social self-determination is more ultimate and concrete than the individual autonomy of (Kantian) morality. An analogous logical form can be grasped in a different, more materialistic concretion.[41]

Self-mediation expresses our endeavor-to-be, and is part of what we are—be it considered social or individual. I would say that this model of

the artist, however, is not truly thought through to its full meaning. Since the first art and the second art are collapsed into each other in a productionist model, this self-mediation crucial to human integrality loses its hold even on this integrality and falls away into generalized instrumental self-mediation. This happens precisely because the collapse of the difference of first and second art reflects our loss of the ontological value of aesthetic happening. Under the dominion of serviceable disposability, we produce *waste*. Producing is wasting. To make use is making the useless. In making the conditions of life we are making death.

The things of the aesthetic field are not on call as serviceable for us. "On call"—this can have the meaning that we demand of them what we demand for ourselves. The gift of aesthetic happening is not seen as offering itself or its services—it is made to serve, made so by us. There is an implicit dialectic of mastery and servitude here. There is nothing in aesthetic happening that per se calls for our respect. It is brought to heel. It serves us, but what do we serve? It seems that the stripping away of value from its otherness rebounds back on us and for us too there is nothing beyond ourselves. We too are nothing till we make ourselves valuable. What do we serve? We serve ourselves. The serviceability of the aesthetic happening is turned in the direction of our self-service. This service serves self.

See here the close proximity of a culture of autonomy and a utilitarian culture. The two are not the same to be sure, but they are twins that are born together. Think of the great Kant—how noble in his defense of autonomy and the intrinsic worth of the moral self. But everything noble Kant says about the idea of moral autonomy is shadowed by the reality of a baser utilitarianism. We master ourselves, but we are in servitude to ourselves and this servitude comes out with respect to our being, especially as participating in aesthetic happening. This is the pathological side of inclinations and impulses that, for Kant, are excluded from the pure ideal of morality as such. As excluded, they are the baser slave that the ideal moral master always carries along with itself. It is the immoral or amoral *passio* always shadowing the moral *conatus*. In overcoming the *passio*, the *conatus* never overcomes it as its shadow and the service of the *passio* reemerges within the mastery of the autonomous moral self.

Autonomy is an orchestration in recessing. Thus we see twinned with Kant's noble view of ideal morality a realist, even suspicious, view of the sly insinuations of the baser pathology of the self. Kant reveals a reactive recuperation of intrinsic moral value in the autonomous self, recuperation

from the baser utilitarianism that reduces everything to a means in an entirely conditional universal in which there is and can be no end in itself. Kant is not wrong in finding something unconditional in the human, but he is not entirely right to set this transcendental potency of the ethical in opposition to the aesthetics of happening, human or otherwise. Most have been less uncompromising than he and want to make their accommodation with the instrumental—because behind the prudent utilitarianism is the will to power hidden in the instrumentalization as instrumentalization. It becomes too easy to elevate the purer moral self above what is happening on the ground below, namely, the instrumental exploitation of the aesthetic field. The service of the good coexists with a culture of serviceability in which everything other is made to serve us.[42]

This serviceability is only part of the story here, for what we find is that the other so used is also deemed disposable. The disposable is what is open to our use: at our disposal, and often so because we have disposed (of) it in a direction that may not be native to it. We have disposed it to be predisposed to us. Without being made thus disposable, it cannot be used without let. Without our letting it, it is not useful without let. We do not let be, we want to be let be.

Being disposable also means that once used, it tends to be used up, and we feel free to dispose of it in another sense entirely. It serves us when we can make use of it, but once having been used, it has served its purpose and now reverses to uselessness that is valueless. All of this is defined relative to its value for us. In addition, it is foolish to think that this attitude regards only things external to us. The attitude takes hold in how we relate to ourselves. If we are masters here, we ourselves are marked by serviceable disposability and especially in respect of our aesthetic being. Think again of the manner in which Kant defines marriage as a contract for the mutual use of the genitals. Once again the high ideal of moral mastery coexists with what amounts to an extraordinarily coarse attitude to the aesthetics of the erotic body. Contract concretizes agreement dominated by the instrumental mind exploiting the body. The apparatus used is to be useful, in the first instance for generation, in the second for animal pleasure: bodies are to be used, to be mutually used. Married love is mutual use. You might say this is the matter in a private key but it also exists in a more public register, when the human being is also generally seen in light of serviceable disposability. Notable in the modern time of human autonomy is the extraordinarily widespread instrumentalization of

the human being as a means to an end. The twins: the human being as end in itself; the human being as means to an end that is not for itself. Human freedom from the valueless thereness of aesthetic things is reduced to the same valuelessness of all aesthetic happening. Hence we have a promiscuity of sovereignty and servility: claims to sovereignty beyond aesthetic happening coupled with the reality of reduction to servility on a par with the worthless passivity of all things. There is no receptivity to the offering of things before sovereignty and servility, no heed for the fact that gift subtends use, no opening to the service of generosity also beyond sovereignty and servility.[43]

The Religion of Shopping: On Commodities and the Intimate Universal

The religion of shopping is the sacred shape in which the dominion of serviceable disposability finds liturgical form. The commodity is what is communicated from producer to consumer, passed from seller to buyer, in the porous commerce of serviceable disposability. This disposability gives the commodity a peculiar weightlessness: it is but it might not be. The serviceability confers a powerful subjection: we hope the commodity will answer to our demands, like a genie in a bottle. There is something "spooky" about the first weightlessness: a ghost that is but yet is not. A lure to desire, it is neither alive nor dead, but dead with an aliveness borrowed from the living. Between the dead and the living, it takes on a life of its own for the living who crave its death by their owning of it. The genie of serviceable disposability effects magic transformations. These mirror the mercurial variegation of possessive desire devoted to the religion of shopping. Daimons are beings between humans and transhumans, but in the religion of shopping, these sacred powers obtain investiture in commodities.

This is one of the reasons Marx speaks rightly of *the fetishism of commodities*. This is a notion beloved by those who, while granting the death of a "certain" communism, still cling to the ghost of the departed.[44] The fetishism of dead Marx or of communism as an "Idea" replaces the fetishism of commodities. Nevertheless, there is something to the notion. In Marx's economic sense of things, a theological logic has passed into the services of serviceable disposability. Commodities as fetishes are "others"

invested with our powers but as others assume what looks like a life of their own. They are nothing without us, but they act as if they are everything and we are nothing without them. This is how Hegel and, even more so, the left-Hegelians describe the divine. We project our power onto the heavens and God beyond is the beneficiary of our alienated power—God now does everything absolutely while we are nothing without God. We are serviceable and disposable in this divine economy. God, having once been serviceable, is now disposable, in the downturn of divine economics and the upturn of human. God has become what we are—what we are in the modality of being what we are not, that is, by divesting ourselves of our power into God. God is our investment, taking on the borrowed life of the human spirit that languishes without immanent credit, in the estranged, indebted form of itself. The fetishism of commodities exemplifies this theo-anthropic logic in the economic sphere.

Marx thinks we can demythologize this,[45] since the logic calls out to be inverted into the self-recovery of human power. We can exorcise the spooks of capitalism in communist relations of production. That we resort to the language of the sacred is revealing. I would say we are in the business of producing counterfeit doubles of the divine. Business is in that business too, be it free-market business or centrally controlled economies. While there can be exorcisms of counterfeit doubles, there is no extirpation of our relation to the sacred. It keeps returning, and now pervasively in the religion of shopping. The cult of personality is the idolatry of a despotic sacrality; capitalist fetishism reveals a less bridled economist polytheism—cults of personality such as the American Idol, or the Teenage Idol, or the Queen of Celebrity Cooking. The counterfeit monotheism of the cult of personality is the secret tyranny of an unpurged will to power. The counterfeit polytheism of the cult of celebrity is the seductive tyrant of narcissistic will to power. "Cult" itself is a religious term and the worships invested here are no expiation of the sins of the commodity fetish. It is worse, since all economic idolatry is now fused into a counterfeit One: power without goodness that makes all its subjects into objects of serviceable disposability. In capitalism this is more diffused, decentered, if you like, but one could ask if there is a *deus absconditus* in this diffusion also. Is there an anonymous cult, an incognito tyranny, an indeterminate despotism of serviceable disposability? Devotion to the counterfeit double is fostered with the holy language of autonomy and the promise of giving the customer the up-to-date redemption of their very own choosing.

We want God but we are made to want gods. We want the One but we are made to want, by persuaders hidden behind the proliferation of new products, the one thing needful. Communism is a relatively crude counterfeit double of the One, but capitalism has been in the business of perfecting the management of aesthetic responses to appearing gods. The siren songs of advertisement replace the coarse dictations of propaganda. Advertisement helps people realize what they really want, which, mirabile dictu, is now at last on hand in the latest hot item. Like ascetic religion, it breaks down our old desire, makes us anxious about our current desire, offers us consolation about future desire. The cybernetic generation of low-level craving is not to intrude too much; too much passion might prove hard to direct. Made uncertain about what to desire, our porosity is rather the empty space now ripe for the implantation of insinuations of new possibility. Want need not precede the supply of products; new wants can come after new products are already wheeled out. The new product is unveiled as if new, to meet the new (as if) desire. Recall those preachers who reduce the devotee to nothing first, only to rebuild him again on the basis of the saving message. This is inherent in our existence—the aesthetic power of make-believe, the willingness to suspend belief—in order to believe. We cast enchantments before ourselves—and are enthralled by our own enchantments. There are secular services of commodity fetishism. The sacred is ineradicable in its magic castle of enchantments. We are all made converts to the religion of shopping. Its counterfeit doubles guard an empty holy of holies.

A possession comes to possess us: we are bewitched by money. Is there an exorcism, a ritual to break the spell? A catharsis would be needed to unblock the possessed porosity. When Jesus drives the moneychangers from the temple, this is a violent act of protest, perhaps not an exorcism. Outside the temple the changers regroup. The sanctuary within is cleansed, but the possession takes up residence elsewhere. We are reminded of the unfortunate swine in whom legion took up possession, having being exorcized from the young man of Gadarene (Mark 5:1–20). Less violent exorcism may be needed. Releasement from bewitchments by a divine art inspired by love and inspiring love—this would be an agapeic art. It is true that Jesus shows us this art also. The vehemence of his expulsion shows a wrath whose grapes will yet mutate into the spousal wine of Cana. This is agapeic festivity at the wedding in which the things of the earth are celebrated and the love of man and woman is consecrated beyond serviceable disposability.

Why does the religion of shopping show subjection to possessions? An important consideration is the proximity of the aesthetics of the intimate universal to the idiotics. Obsession takes hold in the intimacy. And there is *silly* idiotics too. One recalls how markets seem to have moods, to go by the way we talk. They express a kind of aesthetic attunement; they are bullish or bearish. How animal! Though markets are fueled by calculation, it is the animal mood that overtakes and governs calculation. The mood effects what it anticipates in the attunement, even when the cold calculations don't add up. Recall how there can be a loss of trust. Where it begins and where it ends no one knows or can fix univocally. But once set in motion, it may be hard to prevent a snowballing. The contagion of uncertainty takes over as everyone wants to abandon what they fear to be a sinking ship. Sometimes it is the sinking ship that causes the loss of trust. Sometimes it is the communal loss of trust that sinks the ship—even a quite seaworthy ship. Where does trust begin? Is there not a prereflective trust that is brought to the situation rather than simply being merited by the situation? The situation can confirm and consolidate the trust, and it becomes more fully entrenched. But there is a giving over or a being given over before trust takes this more explicit determinate form. If this more primitive trust is blocked or eroded, the determinate formation begins to dissolve. One sees something of the primitiveness in the elemental contagion of distrust and its becoming pervasive. One has to take cognizance of the porosity to see this. The contagion becomes a panic—it races through the social porosity. The god Pan materializes in the markets and calculating animals are overcome with a panic that no one originates, and that no one fully embodies, and that rarely is brought to an end by any particular one. (One thinks of Aristotle's image of the army in retreat to describe the universal; the panic is more the dissolving of the universal or general in the porosity of contagious distrust.) It comes, it takes hold, it passes, like a seizure in transit. It is like a negative inspiration that overtakes the calculating *conatus*. *Homo economicus* becomes porous again to an atavistic form of being overcome. The *passio* sweeps up in dread and alarm; it overtakes the calculating *conatus* that previously had all things in its hold. It panics lest it will be left holding nothing. And the anticipation of nothing is enough to reopen the porosity, reopen the porosity to panic.

The propaganda of advertising holds in check the impulse to panic when the hollowness of serviceable disposability threatens to give way to the reopened porosity. The hole is plugged. Art and pornography can be

seen as two extremes in relation here to the aesthetics of the intimate universal. Advertising is the soft pornography of the dominion of serviceable disposability. As incitements to consumerism, the alluring ads are everywhere. There is always something to sell, always desire to be aroused. Ads are embedded in everything, so all-pervasive is this dominion of serviceable disposability. We have gotten used to sidestepping the ads on TV by zapping them on a digital recording. Now there are busy beavers trying to find a way to force us to watch the ads. The servants of serviceable disposability seek to block the freedom of the zappers. The all-pervasiveness of the ad is a reduction of the generality, not a genuine universal, though it is, overall, secretly at work when we don't know it. The hidden persuaders touch the intimacy.[46]

Notice then the corruption of intimacy in pornography, itself the exploitation of eros under the sign of serviceable disposability. "To service a client": how touching the tender endearments of serviceable disposability. With the widespread availability of pornography on the Net, the individual is alienated from real living flesh,[47] and from the reserve and awkwardness and shame of being there in the flesh. It is astonishing that most sites on the Web are pornography sites. Universal connectivity and at the intimate level, and yet the *esprit de géométrie* of cybernetic constructions is subtended by the mess of perverse eros, and exceeded by it. Intimacy is overtaken by sex, sex is overtaken by violence, counterfeit love mutates into hatred, and hatred of the flesh shows itself in the exploitive showing of it all. The aesthetics of the intimate universal is exploited in advertising,[48] corrupted in pornography. Porosity: evident in the subliminal contagion of the corruption. Ads: sex used to sell—a woman on a car hood feeds fantasy and the corruption of the intimate universal. This is not true poetic imagination that also dips into the idiocy but remains true to selving and the otherness of the companioning power. It is not exploitation of the "more" but fidelity to the divine gift. This is why the advert lies close to the idol. It plays with the impulse to idolatry. Advertising also lies close to torture: torture penetrates the intimacy to violate it, advertising penetrates the intimacy to seduce it (a seducing coming closer and closer to violating). We are being (re)made into willing victims by the masters of serviceable disposability. Aesthetic addictions—we want our fix; we get delirium tremens without our "things."[49]

Why is this a violation of intimacy? Among another things, we find a subjectification here in the direction of a regression to sucking. There is an

infantilization of the human being, all by means of the massive objectifications of "instrumental reason." Instrumental reason here risks a treason to the intimate universal of truly embodied reason: an abstraction of the human served by an abstraction of reason, itself become master over a reduction—reduction of the universal, corruption of the intimate. Human beings remake themselves in light of serviceable disposability. In a "make over" (sometimes almost a kind of perverse parody of adornment), we make others serviceable and disposable, we make themselves. But in the specialness of everyone, everyone becomes surplus, another can take one's place. In a homogenous substitutability of one for the other, there is a perverse parody of the community of humans with one another. The intimate universal is invaded by the anonymous tyranny of the calculative instrumentalization of the field of aesthetic happening. In the dominion of serviceable disposability, nature is "made over," human being is "made over."

Spousal Economics and the Intimate Universal

Marx looked forward to the administration of things, but what about the administration of human beings as things? What of the temptation of management to become a technique of serviceable disposability with respect to disposing of human beings? In consumer capitalism, not the withering away of the state but the cybernetic management of things and human beings? The dominion of serviceable disposability dispenses with souls, even with selves—and with things too in their given ontological density. Is this the cybernetic administration of the counterfeit doubles of beings, an idolatry of a counterfeit universal tempted to evacuate, at an extreme desecrate, the intimate strangeness of being? By contrast, might we speak of a spousal economics? In referring to the *oikos*, economics itself is resonant of the home, and hence of the intimate. Is there a spousal economy closer to the intimate universal than an economy that universalizes the calculative exploitation of things, processes, and persons? A spousal being at home in service of the aesthetics of the intimate universal? Obviously not, if the economic is exhausted by the dominion of serviceable disposability. Could one say that before and beyond this, an aesthetic husbandry (an old-fashioned word) is asked of us in how we relate to ourselves, things, and others? Such husbandry would communicate of a spousal relation to others and things. This word "husbandry" is masculine, but can it be

transgendered in its meaning?[50] The meaning is not univocally the instrumental use of thing and others in terms of their serviceable disposability. There will always be a certain amount of means/end calculation in human affairs. Thus the barber who cuts my hair I pay, and as I use him I am useful to him—there is a reciprocal give-and-take in which the exchange of services is paramount. This exchange of services need not be a matter of serviceable disposability. It can be infused with a regard, an esteem for the worthiness of the other as other, for things as other, for oneself as marked by an immanent otherness that resists being made into property and that exceeds our possession, even self-possession.

As I have been arguing, this worthiness is prior to use. Husbandry would be spousal service in attunement with this prior worthiness. When it vanishes we have management as a technique of serviceable disposability. It is true that good management learns that to treat others thus is in the long run self-defeating; hence ruses of cooperation, cajoling, participation, and so on bring management back closer to something like husbandry. There is here a bond of love between the person charged with husbandry and the charges that fall under her or his responsibility. "Charge" is the right word in that there is an ethical charge beyond serviceable disposability, for the charges themselves are in their very being more than that. The spousal give-and-take and the making use of things are informed by a secret love to which use itself is not always faithful. In use there is a transcending of use because there is a call from something more primal than use, and something in things, in others, and in ourselves that calls from beyond use, calling us beyond the useful.

Both management and husbandry entail an intermediation of a many through someone, or some who serve as directors or leaders or facilitators or encouragers or empowerers of the communal endeavor-to-be. There is a differentiation of function called for by this. This differentiation is also one of different powers, but it need not be a matter of power over others, with one or a few hegemonic centers of power managing the rest. This can happen, of course, and often does, but we are then losing the spousal bond of love in husbandry. The spousal bond at its most intimate and ultimate becomes a consecrated love.[51] In our world this differentiation has often become the division of labor in accord with serviceable disposability. The principle of univocity governs this: the division of labor (one man, one specific and exact function), all the easier to muster effective control over a process broken into atomic parts, each univocalized in its own way.

At the extreme we have an entirely mechanical process, governed by the serviceability of the exact part, the replaceable part. Thus efficiency is governed by the management of univocities. Such management is indebted to a geometry of calculation rather than a finesse of husbandry.

In the univocal division, there is to be no ambiguity, hence no intermingling overlap between one part and the other. Relations are extrinsic, and hence there are to be no middle zones of ambiguity in which the soul can wander and find ease beyond use. There is the univocal reduction of the worthiness of being to effective power, itself calculated and controlled in the most effective, efficient way possible. The calculation of all the parts, leading to the dominion of serviceable disposability, would go all the way up and all the way down, even to the replaceability of human parts. By contrast, the spousal relation of husbandry is in the interstices—neither here nor there—not calculable, beyond disposability, beyond the replacement. There are thresholds and overlaps between one and another, zones of ambiguity where free finesse is more appropriate than geometry. Techniques of management try to take this up too when it turns out to be actually more productive than the geometry of calculating univocals. But, of course, to allow this to happen there has to be a freedom before the calculative, there has to be openness to serve beyond serviceable disposability. And when the governing ethos demands calculable results and performances, the element of equivocity in all of this is liable to be rejected as too unreliable, too unmanageable.[52]

For univocalizing power tends to be one-way power. There is a certain theological model in the background, for often it is envisaged as our power over things, as if we were gods, acting asymmetrically, effecting without being affected. We impose unilaterally on things, but forget the reciprocal responses of what is other and what we have reconfigured. For, whatever we say, we are within the system we influence. We do not create it totally as if from outside like a univocal deistic God. There is not one-way intermediation but at the least two-way intermediation. This follows from the fact that the patience of being is as important as the endeavor-to-be. And when a certain technological mentality is generalized over the ethos of being, this univocalizing impulse finds a basis of collusion with the belief that truth is a construction. The whole becomes for us a construction. The between is not there, since it is all between ourselves and ourselves via the exploitation of the aesthetic happening as resource to secure, confirm, and expand our own power and its mediation to itself.

The promise of plurivocal intermediation is reconfigured as self-circling self-mediation. With science-technology, thus developed, there is a univocalization that leads to the loss of the "symbolic" world—there is a loss of hyperbolic being. Determinacy and self-determination replace the overdeterminacy of given being. Since the whole cannot be seen outside our construction, there is a loss of full-being in the hyperbolic sense and all that goes with that in keeping the between open to the beyond.

A kind of success goes with this, but we are here successful because we are superficial. This is a success that is true because it is untrue. Being untrue, it reconfigures its world as true; and in its truth, we live untruly. Being untrue, it will break down, perhaps not immediately, but eventually. The self-mediation is a self-encirclement. It will break down because of its infidelity to full-being. The faithful marriage of humankind and being has been betrayed in this success. There is an instability in this new marriage of univocities.

Contrast the spousal relation to what is implied by the hyphen in "science-technology": a difference and a bridge; but also perhaps a yoking together that is not always true to free consent. One could suggest that science embodies the promise of a freer mindfulness of nature as other; by contrast, technology is determined toward a relation of what is useful for us. (Science - Mary, technology - Martha?) But in the dominion of serviceable disposability, this second determines the freedom of the first more and more, determines also the nature of its fidelity. Is this fidelity to being true, or fidelity to our constructions, or hope of construction? "Truth exists, only lies are constructed"—to repeat George Braque.[53] In this case, the second use is made possible by the first freedom—even as it contracts that freedom. To use nature as other in technology, we must respect it as other, and seek to be true to it in knowing (true science). But if the second comes to serve the first, then it may generate a kind of success but on the basis of a hidden failure. This cannot hold in the long run. What makes use possible is made more and more impossible by the contraction of use to what serves us, and only us. If technology is to be useful in the long term, it must grant its service as needing homage to what is more than *for us*. To open this homage is to ask a *metanoia*: repent the reverence betrayed. The regime of technology, as feeding serviceable disposability, cannot effect the repentance and *metanoia* on its own terms. What most deeply makes it a possibility it risks making more and more impossible. And the modes of mindfulness most needed to address the

infidelity to the spousal relation are themselves the most despised—a philosophy of freer mindfulness, art/aesthetic appreciation, religious reverence, ethical service. All of these the true use of technological power most needs, but now most despises.[54]

The Aesthetics of the Intimate Universal: Beyond Serviceable Disposability

What of the aesthetics of the intimate universal beyond serviceable disposability? We might address the question by returning to the double sense of human art discussed above. The first sense of human art is second, of course, in its participation in the first *poeisis* of naturing. Nevertheless, it recalls us to our participation in something prior to use, something that endows us with the power to originate our own forms of both selving and othering, as well as in works of art beyond ourselves. As such, it is always a participant in a community of creation that is more than oneself and that always joins one in a secret solidarity with all others, human and nonhuman. Our potential for creativity puts its roots into the secret sources of creation, and ultimately into the divine that gives the porosity and releases finite creation into its own being for itself.

It may be true that the promise of first art is deeply recessed in the dominion of serviceable disposability: this latter has reconfigured the given ethos of being to such a generalized extent that it is hard to discern the beauty of first creation and the first art prior to our reconfiguring second art. Over all the aesthetic world the instrumentalized ontology of serviceability disposability imprints its brand. Yet it perversely pays its respect to beauty. It grants this while turning it from its gift in the direction of serviceable disposability. In fact, the very empowering sources of serviceable disposability are in the forgotten gift of beauty and the first art. These serviceabilities would not be at all without the agapeic surplus first released in them. And so even in the corruption, the trace of the good of the original gift lives on. This is the promise of the intimate universal even when the beautiful is turned away from its own sources. These sources and this promise keep coming back to communication. Our intermediate character always abides there, between the first, given ethos and the constructed, reconfigured ethos, between the original porosity, our participation in the *passio*, and the thrust of the *conatus* to reconfigure

the given ethos in our own image and likeness. The giving origin is in us, it is all around us, it is beneath us, it is above us. The old man knows that the child is the virgin promise of the repeated resurrection of its gift. It will come again, for it has never left—and this, even if we have left it, in thinking we (have) come to ourselves.

When we absolutize this being for self, we risk cutting the link with the deeper source of creativity, though often it has been thought that then we are now truly creative, because nothing but self-creative. This is untrue. We are not creative; we cooperate in creation, and are creative to the degree that we receive before we make. This prior sense of gift in our creative and making powers relativizes all claims to totalize use, as defined by turning things into their worth for us alone, or turning others into their value for oneself alone. Use and hence the second sense of art as making come out of these more rich and complexly pluralized sources. If nothing else, we need the return of the *conatus* to the *passio*. We need the reconnection of our doing with the more elemental patience of being.[55] There is an internal instability in any totalization of serviceable disposability. There is the fact that to be master of nature as other we must first be given to be by that nature. We are hence always dependent on that from which we claim to be independent in the economy of serviceable disposability. In being masters of it, we are hiding our participation and dependence on it, and hence the mastery is always false. Were it total, the conditions that make it possible would themselves be destroyed and hence there would be no mastery at all. Total mastery would turn into something worse than servitude, since it would entirely pervert our participation in the enabling powers of being, making that participation impossible. There is a forgetfulness of our middle condition in all of this. The answer is not a sly strategic response to this middle condition but a remembering of its ontological-metaphysical dimensions, and a *metanoia* with respect to granting that we are first granted to be. Respect and gratitude are the proper responses to all of this, not a different plunder or redeployed exploitation.

Then there is the fact that totalized serviceable disposability turns against us, turns against us as so totalizing. For we too become marked in the same way. This is to invert the alleged mastery into its opposite. Everything is to be for us as masters, but in all this everything circles around us, we circle around only ourselves, and we are self-encircling, that is, in bondage to ourselves. It is not only that we too cannot escape

being objectified, but that our mastery is a form of servitude. Our autonomy is a form of tyranny and not only over the other but over ourselves. Is it surprising that we become creatures of unwilled cravings? The intimate porosity is possessed by commodity fetishes and whatnot; there is an estrangement from spousal aesthetics. Since the self-circling cannot truly relate to a human other as other, eros is deformed and the entire enterprise becomes loveless in the extreme. We do not even love ourselves, as officially we are said to do, and unavoidably so. We do not love ourselves because what we love is not ourselves in the double condition of both being received into being and endeavoring to be ourselves and beyond ourselves. The receiving being denied, the univocalizing of our self-circling autonomy shows itself as autonomous insofar as it is incapable of any love beyond itself, even for itself. The self becomes its own enemy, just like the other, so far as there is something giving to it, something that asks for receiving. For all receiving opens up beyond self-circling.

The first art can be recalled in a rebirth of an art beyond serviceable disposability,[56] but it is not irrelevant to remember that art has exercised an akin fascination since Romanticism. This is not without a certain ambiguity between aestheticism, ethical life, and religious aspiration. One thinks of Schiller overcoming the dualism of the aesthetic and the moral in Kant, or Hegel, Hölderlin, and Schelling as each differently attentive to the community of art and the sacred and, of course, philosophy. This more intimately universal sense of the aesthetic, also not without ambiguity, goes a long way back. I think in Plato the ambiguity is known, and perhaps more guardedly so than in the Romantics and post-Romantics. Art is inseparable from the generalized aesthetics of human formation, both self-formation and communal formation, and hence also caught up in ethical and religious formation. We need to recall not only the generalized aesthetics but the power of great art to free us from the tyranny of totalized serviceable disposability.[57] Even if in the dominion of serviceable disposability the culture of the advertising image has done its work, still this is a parasitical work, dependent on the gift of something that it turns in a direction away from the freedom for the universal that is beyond serviceable disposability. The point is not the bourgeois escape from the dreariness of utility. (I would not scoff at the bourgeoisie in the condescending way of some left-wing commentators; bourgeois art can be truer than socialist realism as an exemplar of social involvement, and hence as faithful to the intimate universal.) The point is not escapism but

truthfulness: being true to the original *poeisis* in our endowed art, being true to the art of selving and communicating that exceeds the economy of serviceable disposability.

There is an original participation in *poeisis* prior to *technē* and system, whether social, economic, or political. *Technē* is closer to system, but both refer to form that has already taken shape, and hence are at a remove from the *passio* of being, out of which the dynamic energy of forming comes. If we forget the latter then we also cover our porosity. Not only do we have a fixation of form as such, but we misunderstand forming. And most importantly, forming loses its receptivity to a source other than self-forming. When this self-forming aims to take off purely through itself alone, it becomes an unbridled self-forming, in which both the other and itself become material for its own technical manipulation. There is a more elemental art in which self-forming is not for such technical manipulation, and it cannot be reached purely in terms of self-forming alone. Both artistic and technical formation must be returned to a source that is a prior *poiesis*, a coming to be prior to what has come to be, or self-determining self-becoming. If it is released or turned to again, this prior *poiesis* opens up, makes porosity for both technical formation and self-becoming. It returns to the overdeterminate source that is not indeterminate, not determinative, and not self-determinating. Great art knows of this *poiesis* prior to system and *technē* and beyond them both. Our self-forming is companioned by an other, overdeterminate source. It is a little like the way the hero in tragedy is companioned by destiny, or providence. What he does is his own, but his own is not alone and hence not only his own. There is the companioning other sourcing the fuller coursing of the unfolding. This points to an art relevant to the full sweep of life and more than utility. It is an art also with relevance to politics. It is the art of life.[58]

The Sabbatical Intermedium of Art

What of the intimate universal *beyond* serviceable disposability? Does art give hints of the way for us, art as an intermedium? In art there is the need of a medium,[59] and the medium is a means to an end in one sense but, relevantly here, it is not a disposable medium, not an instrumental means. In the intermedium of art the means and the end coincide.

Thus the intermedium of the artist is where *mater*, materiality, becomes flesh—not an instrument of the spirit trying to express itself, but the embodiment of mindfulness that comes to be there in the bodied communication that is the work of art. We see this in the way we ourselves can be art works—we work on ourselves with a *poiesis* of life that is more than an instrumental exploitation. This is intermediated work on matter more reverent than exploitation. It is certainly beyond exploitation since the matter as medium is no mere disposable means, and it serves not us but as companion in a service that is not of the artist or of the matter but of their conjoined participation in the larger festivity of life. This festivity is communicated in a largesse of creativity that no one owns, and least of all the artist. In art the end is inherent in the means; the means is the mediation of the end; the medium is the point of communication of originality and end. There is no dualistic disjunction, but no dialectical self-mediation either. If there is a dialectic it is metaxological, and the between-ness of the medium opens beyond self-mediation in a communicative intermediation beyond serviceable disposability.

Note here a love of the material that is endowed with respect, even reverence. This is the way we love embodied beauty. This is a reason to think of the material as intermedium in ways like the *mater* as generative matrix—potentially pregnant with newness, and yet our eros has to woo it gracefully for us to be graced with reciprocity of inspiration. This is not, so to say, an incestuous paganism. The issue of the earth is birthed with wise blood. The created child is creative and participates in a doubling back and forth between itself and the fertile promise of its own origin. The medium is the flesh of imaginative conception. The medium is for the artist not a mere chunk of resistant matter but a porous fluidity—malleable, labile, moving, hot to suggestion. It is a porous fluidity in which the passion and the endeavor take form as significantly embodied. They are bodied as signs that are themselves the meaning and its communication, not as signs that are merely instrumental and substitutable markers. These signs are incarnations. As signed and signing, the incarnations are not immanent in an absolutely closed way. Received in porosity to their own enigmatic origin, they are also porous to the beyond of themselves. Intermediary communication comes, comes to be, and passes; and both the coming and the passing are signs of the transience of what has come to pass and are reminders of what remains, remains for us now, remains for itself in the mystery of the endowing source, remains yet to come, since

there is nothing that exhausts its surplus of bounty. The fire in the bush burns but never burns up or burns out.

I would say also that such art has, paradoxically, something to do with peace, a celebrating peace that is in the ontological order. This incarnates an affirming of being—an affirming that is also a witness to the worth of the "to be," even in the evil, of the joy of life to be, even in the suffering. There is an ever-resurrected *poiesis* of the "to be," not as a neutral fact that cannot be done away with but as charged event in which the singular mysteriously finds itself a mindful participant. Polemos is not the father of things, or the end. There is a source that is the promise of peace; there is a peace that redeems this promise.[60] What is at stake here is not politics, though a truer human politics must grant a space for it. A politics that has no space for it has mutilated the intimate universal. It has not pointed beyond its servitude to utility, its servitude to something less than the full sweep of human transcending. In seeming to satisfy every determinate desire, it does not answer the overdeterminate longing at the root of all determinate desire and outliving all such desires.

There is a Sabbath of life and art too celebrates the seventh day. Even sour Schopenhauer affirmed this.[61] While this Sabbath is outside the political, it is also inside—it is double as a *meta*: in the midst and beyond. The political as polemos and strife with the enemy should fall silent. The silence has no fixed boundary—it is a kind of creative nothing that seeps like the cloud accompanying the Israelites in the desert, telling them that the companioning power is with them, even as they wander without home. Art as a promise of happiness (Stendhal) is a pillar of cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night, tokens of divine solidarity in the desert. "Happiness" is not quite the right word for Sabbatical festivity. "Eudaimonia" is better, if we take it as referring to the good *daimon*—the eu-*daimon* between mortals and divinities. This eudaimonia, witness to the companioning power, is not the utilitarian self-satisfaction of eighteenth-century morality against which Kant turned. Sabbatical festivity needs the grace of the daimon to hint at blessing on the boundary. It is closer to blessedness than happiness. There is blessing in the distress of tragic suffering. (Even in "happiness" there is the suggestion of a *happening* that is *beneficent*.) There is a surplus generosity here, and though it remains incognito, out of it comes all creativity. This is even true in a time of indigence. Wherefore poets in a time of destitution, Hölderlin asked. There is a creative poverty to art (I think of Beckett). This is return to the

idiot, a return to the porosity. It is a return to a fertile nothing that is not nihilistic but a new interface with creation, out of the intimacy of which there is a new pointing forward to glory as the erotic excellence beyond serviceable disposability. The promise of blessing: not now, now immediately, but, punting into hope, in the long run, punting into the nothing of the not-yet, out of the nothing of the no-more—the generosity of a surplus "more" carries in the empty air all hopes into the future, through the intermedium of an ether of mysterious providence.

What of avant-garde movements that frequently express high hopes for a future beyond imagining? These same movements sometimes couple such hyperbolic hope with relentless negation of everything existing hitherto.[62] Often there is stressed a kind of hyperindividualism and a radical originality that, while intimate, can smack of excessive subjectivity.[63] Art offers a "truth" that cannot be contained by everyday prose, or scientific theory, or instrumental calculation. The avant-garde reproduces the dialectic of Romanticism and Enlightenment with the hypersubjectivity of the first and the neutral leveling universality of the second. In the efforts to bring them together, there is touted a collusion of finesse and geometry. At best, this is a seeking for the intimate universal. But its transgressive impulse is often violent to the intimate, while its proclamations of a more general significance are manifestos that want to be heard, announcements that insist on being heard merely by insisting on its own say so. Thus both the intimate and the universal are easily eviscerated, and in the volatile mix of the two, one side in distorted form can be the side that destroys the other. The intimate becomes preciously narcissistic and hence the enemy of the universal; the universal becomes a stony abstraction that suppresses or rapes the intimate—or pornographizes it. See, at an extreme, the collusion of the Internet and eros in online pornography, seeking intimate attention by provocation of universal outrage. Without true reverence for the worthiness of the "to be," we move from the deconsecration of things to the desecration. Against the tilt to oppositional culture by the avant-garde, negativity is not creativity.[64] Without the surplus generosity, the cult of novelty produces banality, just as the cult of revolutionary difference generates secretly sanctioned sameness. Anti-ideological rhetoric gives rise to new orthodoxies; out of subversion proliferates a crop of new cliché.[65] The Sabbatical peace of the intimate universal communicates of a dimension neither old nor new, neither conservative nor revolutionary, neither right nor left. It lies above these lies.

Carnal Gods and the Intimate Universal

There is something dramatic about the aesthetics of the intimate universal. When the theater of the *metaxu* is taken into account, as well as plurivocal intermediations of selvings and otherings, we approach thresholds where it is not improper to speak of incarnating divinity.[66] Saturated images can sometimes bring on stage a dramatic arrest of mindfulness, reminding us of the Sabbatical peace as well as the war of darkness, communicated in carnal gods that traverse the between, in and out, up and down. Dramatics, the theater of the *metaxu*, after all has to do with en-acting communication *between* actors, an acting together with the others that is not a tyrannical technical imposing on a matter. It is always a between of surprising en-acting, keeping open the porosity, and being moved by the *passio*, while qualifying the striving of the *conatus*. The dramatics of the intimate universal moves on the threshold between the aesthetics and the erotics, recurring to the idiotics, and being companioned by the agapeics.

I will put the point in terms of two carnal divinities whose images are saturated with the dramatic promise of the intimate universal. "Dionysus versus the Crucified":[67] I take Nietzsche's ejaculation to brilliantly provoke us to thought of sacral aesthetics. *First Image*: Nietzsche's glorification of Dionysus, over against the Crucified, proclaims a contrast calling for the ultimate existential decision about how life, death, and suffering face us and are to be faced by us. Both divinities are carnal, hence intimate with suffering, though Nietzsche believes one to be a blessing of life, even in its destructiveness, the other a curse, leading to a treason to life and the evil eye on eros. Relevantly, Dionysus was the god of theater, as well as a god of equivocal eros, given a certain amphiboly between male and female, an androgonous youth, en-acted in a male dressing as a female. Dionysus is also god of terror and frenzy: the maenads, out of their minds, are the servants of the bloody dismemberment or ritual *sparagmos*. My question: Does Nietzsche's Dionysus remain true to the porosity, to the *passio essendi*? At one level Dionysus is a sacred name not untrue to these, for Dionysian energy is emergent from what is most darkly intimate in our being, and especially our aesthetics and erotics, itself in tune with the erotics of the aesthetic field of naturing. But if Dionysus is taken as a mythic name for *will to power* in Nietzsche's sense, the stress then seems to fall more on the *conatus essendi*. How then does this striving energy fit with

the endowment of the porosity and the gift of the *passio*? Nietzsche is not lacking attunement to the latter, and he is an inheritor of a certain dualism of autonomy and heteronomy, such that divine endowing and human receiving are too easily cornered in the hook of servility. Thus a duality of servility and sovereignty marks the difference of Jewish/Christian slave morality and the higher autonomy of the pagan Dionysian sovereign. The aesthetics of the intimate universal is not fully understood in relation to the meaning of the porosity and the *passio*, and hence also in relation to the *conatus*.

Think only of the Nietzschean rhetoric: "be hard!" In this dictatorial rhetoric there are fear and loathing of the porosity. There is no trace of the agapeics, the surplus generosity, understood as such. Zarathustra does offer his double of this surplus: the bestowing virtue. Might Nietzsche be thought to try to overcome the duality in the striking proposal of a "Roman Caesar with the soul of Christ"—imperial sovereignty with a soul that is . . . agapeic? But is this true to the porosity, true to the *passio essendi*? It is hard to see how this is even possible on his terms of will to power. One wonders now and then if in Nietzsche there is a mingling of *passio* and *conatus*, indeed of a kind of agapeics and erotics, but they cannot quite fit the form dictated by the sacred ultimacy of Dionysus, or the ontological ultimacy of will to power (always understood as *self*-affirming). There is no explicit agapeics in Nietzsche. (Is Hölderlin truer to the matter in seeing, indeed seeking anew, a fraternal relation of Dionysus and Christ?)[68] If there are traces of a kind of implicit agapeics, it is all important how we relate it to service and sovereignty, how we avoid the tyranny of serviceable disposability, how we affirm the self-affirming freedom of the human without mutilating its endowed character, how we remain true to its being in relation to what is other than itself, requiring affirmation beyond self-affirmation.[69] What of Nietzsche in relation to art, is there not here something of the intimate universal? Perhaps yes, but Nietzsche did have a crude view of the universal, and his sense of the intimate, while finessed, flirts with a too-unanchored subjectivity that skirts the edge of exploding in its own inner labyrinth, thus losing hold of the saving thread of Ariadne that precariously ties it to the community of others.

A true understanding of the porosity and the *passio* releases the *conatus* from a totalized economy of will to power, which indeed Nietzsche identifies with the self-circulation of the whole, a "monster of energy."[70] Nietzsche is not entirely wrong in drawing attention to the power of

"aesthetic theodicy." He is wrong to stress self-affirming in his account of will to power. There is a willing beyond self-affirming will to power, and it is at issue here too. There is a kind of justification of labor that comes in the love that finds finessed expression in works of art. The work may seem for itself, but it incarnates an implicit openness to all otherness. The work may be self-justifying in being a singularization of intrinsic worth, but rather than being self-enclosed, it is a witness to a worth of being that can never be enclosed in any finite whole. There is a paradoxical conjunction of centripetal and centrifugal love. The love is poised in the still center of a serenity that is borne up on the porosity, reconciling the *passio* and *conatus*. This poise of reconciling being is never that of a whole turning into a self-circling totality. It is more the dance of the between, at home with itself, but entirely open at every threshold to what exceeds itself. For what exceeds it has passed into it, and it has not hindered its passage, but composed a sign of celebration of its enigmatic passing.

Second image: Christ Crucified—a figure of horror (Francis Bacon is not wrong), the incarnation of the intimate universality of the ultimate suffering. God is there in this execration of flesh, and with an infinite depth of inwardness that is the idiotic hyperbole of the intimacy of being. If we compare Christ Crucified with the Greek gods, the latter are lacking in this infinite inwardness, as Hegel points out. One could add that the Christian God is the more ultimate just so in communicating the intimacy of the universality. Dionysus does not have the serenity of Apollo, and the Greeks were wise to seek the balanced poise of the two. Does Dionysus seem to swallow Apollo in the end with Nietzsche? It is confusing: Is this the *conatus* swallowing the *passio* or the opposite, or both being swallowed by the porosity—and perhaps all by Nietzsche? That one would speak of swallowing is true to that side of Nietzsche which stresses self-dissolution in the ultimate: *das Ur-eine* in the earlier work, but there is a longing for a kind of self-dissolution in the *Übermensch* or indeed *Amor fati*—"I love the one who seeks to create beyond himself and so perishes" (*Zarathustra*, 1.17: Way of the Creator). This is an intimacy so extreme that it vanishes in a self-less universal that cannot then be called either intimate or universal. This sacral paganism ends with an atheistic mysticism. This is not the meaning of Christ crucified. In the intimacy of infinite suffering there is the absolute community of the human and the divine—absolute because absolved. For this reason it is the most extreme, most ultimate, most hyperbolic image of the intimate universal with the

community of the absolved togetherness of all humans with God. The intimate universal is consummately lived, ethically and religiously, in the community of agapeic service.

Plato spoke eschatologically of what is to come, and envisaged it so that in the temples not only will we have images of the gods but the gods themselves will dwell there (*Phaedo*, 111b–c). Christ is the actual God, and the flesh is the temple of crucified man. This is not only a sign of something beyond but an incarnation of being, the being there of the divine: wording of the absolute original, and endowing of the intimate universal in its sojourn in the between of given creation; wording that being there in the giving of being as good; wording that being there of divine good in the return of that gift in death; wording being agapeic in death and hence wording more than death. The side of flesh that is pierced opens the flowing void of redeeming porosity. The criminal innocence of the holy one is love beyond the law, and shown in the absolved porosity of the divine *compassio essendi*. Breaking bread with the com-panioning power, the light of resurrected life dawns on us. This comes to art again, less in works like the Piss Christ but more in such hymns as Mozart's *Ave verum corpus*.[71] Listening to such music is praying. One loves what one hears, though one does not understand it, or how it comes to one. Divine power is not overpowering but courteous. Its courtesy is the strength of grace.

CHAPTER 7

The Erotics of the Intimate Universal

Opening on Erotics and the Intimate Universal

Some thinkers would not associate erotics with the universal. There is a long-persisting tendency, ingrained in tradition, to see eros as the foe of logos: when a person is overcome erotically, reason goes haywire. To be erotically charged is to be irrational, to be beside oneself, beside reason, hence out of the space of the universal. Erotics regresses to particularistic passion and turns vagabond to the rational sobriety of the universal.

Agreed: there is an intensity to erotics that can cloud reason and muddle its resolve to be univocally clear. Something about it also exceeds our sober self-determination. Eros can take over, can take us over, can overtake reason and relativize its pretentions to the selfless universal. Yet, equally, there is nothing more deeply embedded in the longer tradition than the view that erotics and philosophical logos are inseparable.[1] The desire, the quest of logos, of rational intelligibility, is precipitated by an erotic longing, is energized by an erotic striving that carries the soul from the inconstant fluctuations of the relative to the constant companionship of the truth of proven reliability. Erotics companions the energy of logos

that carries us into the space of the universal. Reason itself is an erotic power of mindful transcending without which thought would never move from the spot, much less adventure on the strange seas of being in its otherness. Erotic reason risks itself, searches itself, tests itself, in intercourse (astonished, and perplexed, and loving) with all that stands other to itself. It may be that the more mathematicized rationality of modernity, the desireless desire of geometrical reason, may have been so ascetic with its own energies as to seem to renounce the deeper sources of its own ardor for naked truth. But this is a configuration of reason that by no means necessitates the recession of its erotic powers of surpassing. Quite the contrary, the recession of the erotics of reason is itself only possible for such an erotics turned against itself. And we might wonder too, turned from its intimacy with the universal, its passion for the more articulated realization of this intimacy. Were we to let the erotics come to outing truly, the outcome might be not treason to the universal but our being truthful to the intimate universal.[2]

A plurality of lines of approach is possible. We might connect erotics with the idiotics of being, and see the intimacy in light of an equally primordial "being with" (*sunousia*): already from the origin the primordiality of being at all is a "being with," a *sunousia*. Or we might connect erotics with the aesthetics of happening. One thinks, for instance, of the erotics of naturing: not nature natured, but nature naturing—a source of happening, sourcing an excitation, a perpetuation bringing to an ordering of beauty in the nature/naturing of things. Of course, there are materialistic views, there are reductionistic views, there are economic, sociological views. There is an erotics of the political. There is an erotics of the aesthetic in a human sense, an erotics of the divine in a theological sense. There is an erotics of metaphysics in philosophy itself, from ancient to contemporary thinkers. Ask thus: In the relation of eros and idea do we have some suggestion of the intimate universal in Plato? There is an eros for the beautiful, an eros for the good beyond being. There is something of supreme form and something beyond form. Such erotics is not just sex; rather, sexualization is bound up with a crystallization of erotics. There is a (Freudian) reduction,[3] a univocalization of eros to drive, secretly perhaps itself a ruse of hidden nature to procreation. The urge to procreation is not inconsiderable. The erotics of naturing is one of the manifestations of the plurivocity of eros.

There is always more, and this is the source of the agony and the ecstasy. The agon concerns the polarity, even polemos, of plurality in interplay.

The ecstasy concerns standing outside oneself in the between that is open to plural intermediations, agapeic and filial, as well as erotic. There is the question of an intimate love, in relation to the dark origin, in relation beyond itself with others and with the divine. Erotics is intensely intimate and extensively related, selfish and ecstatic, energizing selving and beyond selving in community, lost in the other beyond selving, and tortured with loss when the beloved other is not: all these. And we must mark differences of *directions*: there can be a going up, there can be a going down. There is a vertical energy in being ecstatic; there is also a going down into depths of dark intimacy. There is a going out to ranges of extended community, and this not always to the cost of the intimacy. Erotics is a crossing, is in a crisscrossing of the between where intimate participation in partnership unfolds being in community, embodying and touching the universal.

My sense is that in more contemporary understandings of erotics, something of the going down has taken hold of us. I am thinking of the Schopenhauerian picture of the erotics of will as a dark energy prior to the principle of sufficient reason. Does this mean a prior *universality*? But what could such universality mean if prior to sufficient reason? There is the ontological intimacy to it also, but the intimacy suggests depths of darkness in our desiring, below the ground of desire's own self-articulation.[4] Are we then not rather articulated as desire by this darker energy, for it is most intimate to beings as desiring, more intimate to desiring than desire is to itself? It is the dark origin before it enters the space of articulated reasons.

The energy of transcending up, in the Platonic way, becomes perplexing. Suppose we are in the cave, suppose we are underground beings, why move up at all? Why not move down, and down into deeper darkness where there might reside a kind of *inverse universal*, inverse to the universal that arches over us above? While Schopenhauer does not explicitly pose the question thus, being close to things in Plato, especially his Ideas (as bringing peace to desire through beauty), there is no reason as such why we ought not to turn the energies of eros down again into the dark origin under the ground of the underground. Post-Schopenhauerian figurations of eros, be they Freudian or other, are haunted by this original belly of the underground, with the result that we grow uncertain about eros's power to elevate, subscribed to by the Platonic tradition. We fear that the origin, more intimate to erotic desire than desire itself, is horrifying—one reason

we have understandably shunned it, covered it over, reacted with dread at the prospect of facing its unsettling darkness. Without granting that horror is the first word or the last, I would say that the two directionalities have to be acknowledged and traversed: we must go down into the darkness, we must climb again into the light above us; there must be reversion to the idiocy, there must be the extroversion to the others of love; there must indeed be the superversion, if that is a word, the elevation of erotics to the superior. The intimate is never out of play, the universal is sometimes occluded but not dissolute.

To come to the point of community, political and transpolitical: granting the darkness of the origin, there is relativity at work, and there is also an excellence beyond serviceable disposability. Serviceable disposability produces a paradoxical servility in the very project to be beyond all servility. Erotics, more fully unfolding, is beyond such instrumentality and beyond servility, beyond abjectness, and opens a space of the commons where sovereignty is not impossible. I speak here of the community of erotic sovereignty, and its connection with political power has to be acknowledged.[5] I will come more fully below to the community of erotic sovereignty, and its relation to the intimate universal, but crucial to it is a sense of the worth of the " to be" in forms superior to the dominion of serviceable disposability, incarnated in individuals of outstanding excellence, and incorporated in communities dedicated to excellences beyond calculative use. The intimate intermediation of the general eros of a people is especially crucial. The community of erotic sovereignty is not the end of the matter, and there is an agapeic intermediation of the intimate universal more than servility and sovereignty.

Beauty, Erotics, and the Intimate Universal

Does the witness of beauty betoken something of the bond between the aesthetics and the erotics of the intimate universal? Eros comes to surface, beauty surfaces, but when a surface as aesthetic is saturated with significance, this is not merely material, not merely spiritual. It is the meeting *metaxu* of the material and the spiritual. Both sensuous and spiritual, it is not reductively concrete or abstractly general but intimately universal. There is an emergence, a coming out on the surface; aesthetic things open themselves, show themselves, appear. This apparition is not answered

by the dianoetic univocity of rationalism that prises significance off the surface of things, separating it in a noetic abstract, or answered by the aesthetic univocity of an empiricist sensualism without sense, not able to see the surface as a figural sign that communicates.[6] This togetherness of the surface and the depth is witnessed in the human figure itself, and by humans who "see" in the appearing figure a significance that cannot be fully determined objectivistically, while yet not being a matter of subjective projection onto some supposed indetermination of a material flux. The saturated immediacy, the replete surface itself as an aesthetic-ontological surplus, communicates to us something more, something overdeterminate.

Think of earlier peoples who saw things in nature as, in an almost immediate way, redolent of a significance that could not be objectified as in this or that determinate proposition. It was a communication. And yet it was "objective" in the sense of being other to the "subject"—it was not a matter of projecting subjectivity onto an otherwise indeterminate other, like a blank screen. The surplus immediacy surfacing in the event, and especially of beauty, is saturated with enigmatic significance. We often talk of such people as being very "intuitive." They are alive in and to appearances as signs, their souls live in the communicating image, and what presents itself is resplendent with significance, and this in a trans-objective, trans-subjective way. They are able to catch the wave of the "trans" as it crests to a communicating surface. The wave of the "trans" is as an entrancing dance, epistemic and ontological, between self and other. The soul is swaying to a music that is more than subject or object, or even their relation, since the swaying of the dancers is in a relating, rather than a fixed and settled relation. It moves us and we are moved, by and as and into singing life.

The pleasure of beauty is deep and escapes the antiaesthetic asceticisms of many religious or philosophical moralities. Being pleased, *hedonē*, the sweetness of the "to be": there is an ontological pleasure—the love of life lives deep down in pleasure. This pleasure is a *complacentia*: a being "pleased with." We need to acknowledge the porosity and *passio* to understand something of this: in the ontological roots, there is a transience in the transition to being in coming to be at all: it is, I am, we are . . . God is. This is not understood by Schopenhauer in relation to beauty. His will: he holds we must negate it, it comes to nothing—life is a curse, hence to be negated. There is not the primordial pleasure in being. How then explain

beauty at all? Beauty testifies to this primordial pleasure. Schopenhauer is right in his description of the way beauty releases us but his explanation of this cannot account for this ontological pleasure. One might think here of music and the porosity—music and the flow of sounds, the secret history of the will, as Schopenhauer somewhere calls it: But why is this often so lovely, if the will is the horror he suggests it is? Nietzsche understood the point better—half understood—when he directs us to the joy of creation, the "yes." Yet his sense of the depths is not different from the Schopenhauerian horror. If we go under the underground, we need the surface of art to save us from the horrors of the depths. The surface saves us for life—but the more intimate truth of life is horror—under the underground. Dionysus is also Hades (Heraclitus). Orpheus comes to the surface but because he looks back into Hades—perhaps out of the impatience of love—he loses Eurydice.

If there is aesthetic pleasure as *ontological complacentia*, we must stand against the devalued thereness, void(ed) being, against the horror in the depths as the primal surd, against the self-regarding narcissism of superficial self-regard, against even transcendental self-affection. There is witnessed in beauty a love of being as worthy to be and to be affirmed—this is an *ontological love*, *and this love is the secret of true beauty*. Schopenhauer and Nietzsche get it only half right, and hence they are haunted by the so-called wisdom of the Silenus: "better not to be—and if in being, better to quit being, as soon as possible." This is to turn from the ontological com-placency—being pleased with . . . beauty is complacent. Without this primordial ontological pleasure in life, of life in life, all our concerns are going to be harrowed by the suspicion of their own final futility.

Are we in the belly of the beast? Does the aesthetics of the intimate universal suggest the open whole, not a closed totality: the former a creation, the latter a kind of counterfeit creation, hell aping heaven? There is shine on things, on the surface of things. Beyond the barbarism of the senses, beyond the barbarism of reflection (Vico), there is an aesthetic restoring of the world. Important for the erotics of the intimate universal is a recovery of the sense of the worth of beings, the aesthetics of things, and not just human things but the aesthetic happening of being. This means restoration of creation to its worth as affirmative, to the gift of the "to be," not as often soiled by use, and, with a bow to Hopkins, bleared, seared, smeared, wearing man's smudge. The glory of the things is intimately worthy to be and to be participant in the great community

of being. Being attentive to the intimate universal asks a redeeming of their worth, oppressed as they are by our exploitation, not redeeming as from a pawnshop but releasing things from the bondage of serviceable disposability. This is to allow us to be disposed toward them, as it allows their gift as disposed to us, and not as mere means for our exploitation but as an aesthetic icon of the reconciled world, a *theos aesthetikos* that hovers on the threshold of the mystery of the holy. In the community of the intimate universal, the things, the elemental things sustaining life, are consecrated, not desecrated. Consecration, not desecration, will bring in the communal aspect in more senses than one—religious, political, ethical, and yet elemental, and the question of poetic dwelling (Vico, Hölderlin, Heidegger).

The passion of being (*passio essendi*) is connected to eros, as giving freer range to the endeavor (*conatus essendi*), but as the Greeks wisely granted, eros can be heavenly or it can be tyrannical. And sometimes the tyrannical eros can mimic the heavenly, while the heavenly eros sometimes seems like the tyrannical, when it is beyond rational self-control, or moved by something beyond our useful mastering of it. It is not always easy to separate the tyrannical and the heavenly. There can be something tyrannical about beauty at times. The poet can suffer that tyranny. I think of Yeats's passion for Maud Gonne.[7] Out of that great passion powerful poetry flowed. The doubleness of aesthetic happening can arouse equivocal eros in us, and our passion can move up or move down, or move up to move down, or move down to move up. There is nothing univocal about the passion of being. Beauty is fertile with significant equivocity. There are ways of going up that cast one down: hubris and downfall. There are ways of going down that lead up: redemptive passage through Hell—see Dante conducted by Virgil. There are ways of going up that do go up, ways of going down that go deeper down and don't come up. There are ways of going down that bring up. Up is down, down is up; the above is below, the below appears above. We suffer beauty, being exposed to what is other to ourselves: beauty opens and reopens the porosity of our being. But there is a vulnerability in being porous, and when the endeavor to be takes off, it can as much hate that vulnerability and seek to triumph over it as it can live out the vulnerability in love with finitude. Just as there can be a transcending upward, there can be transcending downward, and the latter can mean a descent into hell, though there are different ways of descending. There is agapeic descent of the holy servant.

The erotics of beauty may well have to come to terms with hell, even if beauty contains a trace of Eden.[8] Is there something of the prelapsarian in it? A taste, or foretaste, of a redeemed world in it, an aesthetic sign of it? Is this why we are drawn to it, but also find it difficult to say what draws us toward it? Is this why there is something about it that is like a blank—and we are like sleepwalkers toward it? We cannot mark it in the normal determinate way, nor can we determine ourselves fully. The pages of happiness in history are blank pages, Hegel said, and not without a hint of dismissal. These pages are also the blank pages of beauty because they intimate a peace beyond war and peace—and we live in the struggle between war and peace. The end of art is peace, it is said, but this is the blank peace beyond war and peace. It is the white light that is too much for determination, that strikes us like the face of a child or a dead person on whom the traces of war have not been inscribed or are now at the end in repose at last. There is an idiotic intimacy about it, but there is also an idiot wisdom.[9]

The Bull of Phalaris and the Singing Cicadas

I would like to frame what is to come with two saturated images, reflecting eros moving down from the surface to the depth, and eros moving up from the depth to the surface.[10] In these we encounter a mingling of mythic elements, aesthetic religion, political art, carnal love, and the carnival of the sacred. *First*: the story of the Bull of Phalaris as bringing into focus many of our themes: art, *technē*, political power, religious piety, anticipations of *eros turannos* and the erotics of the intimate universal. A version of the tale is told by Lucian. As a sacrifice to Apollo Phalaris the tyrant sent to the oracle at Delphi the statue of a magnificent bronze bull. In his communication with the priests at Delphi, Phalaris recounts how he was given the bull by Perilaus. Perilaus was an architect and sculptor and constructed the bull as a kind of torture machine. See Perilaus as contributing to Phalaris with his art: art outwardly beautiful and useless but instrumentally very politically useful for a tyrant. The artist is in the political business of serviceable disposability. A person could be put into the bronze bull and a fire lit beneath it, and as the heat spread and was communicated through the contraption, the person imprisoned would "feel the heat"—and begin to *scream*. The fiendish part of the construction had

to do with the fact that reed pipes could be placed in the nostrils of the bull and they would transform the screams of the tortured prisoner into sweet music.[11] The screams of the tortured are turned into "the sweetest possible music by the auloi, piping dolefully and lowing piteously."[12]

We can look at the bronze bull as a thing of beauty; and that it was offered to the oracle shows some aura of the sacred haunting it. "A thing of beauty is a joy forever," John Keats said, but when we look at the fuller communication here, the bull is not a univocal example of beauty beyond serviceable disposability. To the contrary, it is beauty that can be put to political use, and by the artist in the services of the tyrant. *Eros turranos* is then dominant rather than *eros ouranios.* Qua technical contraption, the work of art transmogrifies into exquisite music the excruciating pain of those being burned alive, and all this designed to delight the tyrant. The shrieks of mortal despair serve as sources of aesthetic pleasure, but those who hear the music do not hear the shrieks.

That this is a *torture chamber* to ease the work of the tyrant touches on a point. Torture itself touches on what is intimate to us—it touches violently on the last idiocy of the soul by assault on the aesthetics of the soul, its body. Torture seeks the truth by violence to the *passio essendi*, by violation of the intimacy of being. It seeks the place of the most vulnerable porosity. Torture can impel revelation, if not of the hell of the tortured person, surely of the hellish soul of the torturer. Are we then tempted to wonder: Does the art work then serve, on the one hand, to reveal hell and, on the other hand, to conceal hell? This is the perplexity the story poses for us: Is this what beauty is—music wrong from hell, concealing hell as it is, and making it look like a heaven? The lovely sounds that the pipes bring forth disguise the shrieks of the tormented. Is this beauty then: a delicate gloss on dis-mal darkness? Music: Counterfeit of the shrieking of the damned? Does the surface of beauty hide the horror of hell?[13]

We give ourselves up to the enchanting music. We give ourselves up to what Coleridge called "the willing suspension of disbelief." But is it so that all we need to do is show the *mechanism of the enchantment* and the enchantment vanishes? We have seen something of that sort of art in our own time—the self-reflexive art where the artist delights in breaking the illusion of art, taking us backstage, as it were, showing us the trick by which the magic spell is sustained. The enchantment is no longer sustainable because we know it is only a trick or a ruse or even a necessary illusion. Backstage of beauty we see the mechanisms of hell. Recall Nietzsche:

we need the "lies" of art to save us from the "truth." We suspect something of the old story: beauty is a seductress we must resist. We behold a beautiful woman but now know that silently, secretly, her liver, earlier the organ of divination, is cancerous. The organs of the body are hidden, and not just for protection. If they are exposed, they are not beautiful in the way of the outward body and they will die. The organs are profound—buried in the body. The beautiful body itself is superficial. This is very equivocal: truth may be a woman, as Nietzsche suggests, but woman is also Baubo. The self-reflexive mode seems profound and not superficial, but has it lost the wisdom of the aesthetic, and indeed the lightness of being, which is superficial out of profundity (to borrow an acute phrase from Nietzsche)? In one version of the story, Phalaris puts Perilaus *himself* into the bull. In a kind of self-reflexive gesture that redounds on the artist, he must be himself tortured in the instrument of torture he has created. Then *his* idiocy is assailed, *his* singular intimacy assaulted, and he is no longer exempt from the vileness of the counterfeit beauty he has created. Is the tyrant right to put the architect into the machine he has made? Is this the not-so-delicate irony of the tyrant: give the artist a dose of his own medicine, a sample of his own sickness?[14]

The question then: Is there quite a different sense in which the artist might turn hell into song—a redemptive sense? One is reminded of Orpheus and his music in Hades. There are different ways of being in the underworld. His music could bring tears even in the underworld, and melt hard hearts. Enchanting song reopens even in hell the primal porosity. This is another way of being in hell, and communicating a power that is more than hell.[15] The same song might be sung in hatred or in love. Hatred may conceal love—for the lover is unable to confess his love and it comes out hatefully. Equally, love may disguise hatred—for the malignant soul more effectively works its malice when the victim thinks that before her is the face of love. The most effective enemies are those that come across as friends, but betrayal and treachery are still at hand. Intimate to the love is dangerous equivocity.

I come to the *second story*: the singing of the cicadas in Plato's *Phaedrus*, a striking story, one beautiful and poignant. We find Socrates *outside the city*, as he almost never is. The trees won't teach him anything as people will, he says (230d). For the most part he is illuminated by the conversation of humans, but here the space is other than the constructions of the city that reflect the human being back to itself.[16] Socrates has already

given a *first speech* about eros in which love is reduced to use, or serviceable disposability: the beloved is for me to use or be used, perhaps even to be abused in being so used. Before this speech we also heard Phaedrus deliver a speech dealing with, one might say, consenting instrumental adults, motivated by rational self-interest, who are in control of themselves and always attentive to advantage, present and future ("not being overcome by passion" is part of that calculation, 233c). Eros uses the other according to the terms of serviceable disposability. Socrates covers his head in telling his first speech (*Phaedrus*, 237a), which abruptly ends when he says: "just as the wolf loves the lamb, so the lover adores his beloved" (241d). One might say: calculative eros, motivated by serviceable disposability, is on the way to *eros turannos*; there is no wooing.[17] These first two speeches are shameless speeches, impious speeches.[18] There is a need for purgation and recantation. Then comes Socrates's great speech in praise of divine mania—given by the gods for our greatest happiness (245 b–c). This is the sense of supreme usefulness beyond serviceable disposability, not instrumental as defined by its being for us alone. Quite the contrary, it is the porosity to the beyond of ourselves that allows reception of the offer of what is beyond our rational calculations of serviceable disposability.

It is after this second speech, spoken with uncovered head, that Socrates tells the story of the cicadas. The cicadas once were men before the birth of the Muses. When the Muses were born and music appeared, some of these men were so ravished with delight that they sang and sang, forgetting all food and drink, so in love with song that eventually they died. From them the cicadas arose, reborn but gifted by the Muses, and so overcome with the boon of music that they too seemed to forget to eat and drink. This is an image of the excess, of the too muchness, of the divine madness, such is the ecstasy: being sick with love. The story goes on to say: On death the cicadas go to the Muses. There they tell to the Muses of human beings, tell also of those who pass their lives in philosophy, and for whom the thought and the music of heaven are the sweetest.[19]

By comparison with the story of the Bull of Phalaris, here the origin of music is in the gift given by the Muses. Music is not the mask of hidden hell. There is an exposure and there is a passion, but both are taken into an ecstasy of love that exceeds the needs of life in food and drink. The love is consumed by something beyond these: something useless, but a sign of something more, something supremely useful for humans, a worthiness beyond serviceable disposability. And it is notable that Socrates

enjoins Phaedrus not to fall asleep, like the sheep do in the midday heat, but to stay awake and converse. The cicadas seem to look down on us and perhaps we will receive something of the gift that the gods bestowed on them (258e). There is an invitation to *readiness* in hearing the song of the cicadas. The lovers of song will die but like the cicadas they will be reborn, and endlessly sing, tireless and nurtured by something more than ordinary food or nourishment. Consumed by a love that is not a sickness unto death, in love with what the gods give as gifts, instead of the tyrannical eros and the vile uses of art, the singers watch over human beings for the gods. There is a measure higher than the human measure.

For reasons not easy to explain, there is something deeply moving about this story of the singing cicadas. Useless and passionate as it might seem to be, the song makes the philosopher porous to something that exceeds philosophy. Useless beauty and the passion of being carry the philosopher into a sacred space that the philosopher can grant but not determinately explain. We can grant it as granted but as such it exceeds anything we can grant ourselves. With such beauty we find ourselves graced.[20] The cicadas become seers and one is reminded again of what King Lear became in his madness: one of "God's spies." This seeing is not the work of espionage. Lear as king was mad with *eros turannos*; now he is touched by a madness posthumous to that madness. Lear speaks of those spies as blessing and forgiving, as singing and praying and laughing "as gilded butterflies,"[21] as taking upon themselves "the mystery of things, / As if we were God's spies; and we'll wear out, / In a walled prison, packs and sects of great ones / That ebb and flow by the moon" (*King Lear*, 5.3.9). One might say: there is a commission to behold beyond use—a useless beholding, but one in which the passion of being becomes compassion. We sing in the sublunary world but the source of the song comes over us from above the moon.

Erotics and Self-Surpassing Intimacy

Returning more directly to the erotics, what is at issue is the self-surpassing energy of the human being. We must connect this with the porosity of being. Recall, once again, that *poros* is one of the parents of eros in the account of Diotima-Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*. *Poros* sometimes is connected with "resource," but one could stress it as offering a way, a way

across. If *penia* or lack couples with it, there is a paradoxical mixture of poverty and plenitude, and one could see in both the *poros* and the *penia* an ultimate opening. For just as *poros* is not this or not that, it seems to be like a nothing—and yet it is the opening of the possibility of passage. Equally the poverty of *penia* seems also a kind of nothing—and yet it is not any univocal lack, since at work in it is the energy of going beyond itself. The lack is driven out beyond lack, and so intimate to it is more than lack. Since the lack of eros cannot be fixed to this or to that, there is a kind of intimacy of porosity in that lack. There is a doubleness and a redoubling, because in the porosity is crystallized something of power to surpass itself, power to surpass its own poverty. There is more than a mere destitution—there is a surplus, a richness, the promise of an overdeterminacy at work.[22]

I connect the doubleness to the *passio* and the *conatus*. These are two offspring of the porosity—the one as a receiving, though in receiving as passion, it is also urge beyond self; the other as the endeavor that flies on the wings of the energy of the "to be" that flows in the passing. In the notion of erotic sovereignty, there is a sense in which the second assumes the primary place, offering at once a promise of both immense achievement and ominous danger. There is no way of avoiding this doubleness all the way along the line—the urge to sovereignty goes along with the danger of servility that debases. The two often are defined in a mutual dialectic. We must look at the equivocities hidden in this dangerous dialectic.

Self-surpassing here dips into dark resources of the idiocy, into deep sources of the intimacy of being. (I will come to the social aspects of this below, when I speak of a generalized eros.) There is a testing overdeterminacy/indeterminacy—the sunousian twinning of the *poros* and the *penia*. This might again seem like a "nothing" but in the "nothing" our most vehement energies stir and emerge from their caves and sometimes with a roar. How great an abyss is our bodied being? What comes to pass in its night? What strange beasts wander in its gloom? What reptilian shapes slouch forth from its hidden holes? What beautiful flowers sway in the air above its earth? What oak trees come to flourish in the sky of its upper reach?

In the flesh is the dark earth of the soul. Mutations take form in its occult recesses. One is reminded of the dull, unimpressive larva in the cocoon now suddenly breaking through its swaddling and then its feeling the first exhilaration of its wet wings and taking to the air as another

form of itself—itself always but only itself as other than itself as before it was. We too can fly like the butterfly having undergone mysterious metamorphoses. Though taking to the air, Icarus-wise we fly close to the sun, though we are flimsy and blown about the sky. There is deep equivocity in this too in the gravity of the ground in being above the ground.

Eros surprises us—though it is not surprising. It comes over us more fully at a certain stage of our becoming, prepared for at a defined time in the maturing of the young body. It comes out of the most intimate depths and when it comes out, there is an arousal into waking the most intimate energies. Self-becoming is to become other. The release of this potent mix of passion and endeavor puts us astray and at sea. The mix must be mediated—mediated into a process of self-becoming that is inseparable from becoming together with others. The doubleness now: self-mediating selving in porous intermediation with other-being qua other. Out of recessed roots passion emerges that suffuses the whole person and bewilders and exhilarates it with disturbance and ecstasy. The selving must mediate with this new release, and this is never a solitary process, since this disturbing ecstasis puts us beyond ourselves with others—often against our will. This emergence has elements of an emergency, and after it, there is a different formation of the selving as willing. The energy of the "to be" has to be integrated into a new process of self-becoming. Before the emergence, the becoming was relatively asleep to itself; after the emergency, there is a becoming yes and a self-becoming, a self-becoming tempted to forget its more original coming to be as *passio* in the porosity of being and always born together with (*conatus*) other-being.

In the earlier emergences willing is strongly marked by self-insistence, mirroring a root of pervasive self-insistence in the *conatus*. This insistence spreads itself through the selving and beyond. I have coupled it with the transcending potency in *Ethics and the Between*, and this is right, but the transcending is not just an arrow to something beyond. In the emergence of transcending from intimate darkness in the flesh itself, the thrust beyond is implicitly open to all otherness though. Now at a more explicit level of self-mediating and self-becoming, the intimate universal is at work and comes out in the (sexual) singularization and sunousian doubling that leads to coupling.[23] The erotics of the intimate universal is concerned with what comes up and as coming up intimates an "above"—the superior in it that is also more than it. This is the connection with sovereignty, sovereignty not a mere given, but a given promise of something to be won out

of the ambiguous doubleness of passion and endeavor. The self-surpassing goes not only outside itself, it goes above itself.

To what above it? In one sense, to itself again, insofar as it wants to achieve itself and its promise in a more fully realized form. A certain fidelity and truthfulness to self are required by this, a doing justice to oneself, something not at all easy in the ecstatic disturbance. For the prior sense of being true to self is easily overtaken by a *passio* muddied by its own self-emergence and surpassing. One must make allowance of emerging power, and allowance of it perhaps going astray, allowance of its temptation to self-deification or tendency for a kind of ontological-ethical violence to emerge. Much sifting of what has been allowed is called for, and this before the selving becomes itself or comes to itself differently. The coming to self in relation to the other: I take this as part of the erotic relation. Finding oneself again in the other—this does not mean the other is not found, but there is a self-finding in it that (for some) can become the point of it all. Alternatively, the arc of eros can open to the other beyond itself and not with intent to return the other to self, or return self to itself. The arc takes wing and can border more evidently on the agapeics—this is to come. How can this be? Because the intimate universal is at work in the idiotics and the aesthetics, and now also in the erotics—and as we shall see in the agapeics.

The infinite restlessness here in self-surpassing cannot be slighted, on pain of self-mutilation. There is something extraordinary about the sweep of human desire. It is not like animal desire, which is univocalized to a determinate objective. An indeterminacy opens beyond determination and the promise of self-determination in the open indeterminacy, and all of this is companioned by the promise of the intimate universal. The unfolding, in its phases, takes place within the intimate universal, which is no "within," but is outside of itself. It is an outside and an inside at once—the fixed spatialization of determinate boundaries makes no sense.

The infinite restlessness makes us potentially the power that can determine, in a relative sense, other-being that is more determinately fixed. Finite fixed others do not quite so exhibit this immanent infinity. We might be inclined to say that, in principle, we might be the measure of these beings. I would not say this myself, since there is an intimate thisness to all beings simply as being, and we are never the measure of this. There is nothing merely finite—the overdeterminacy is always there. But in a relative sense we can be "above," and stand over these more fixed

univocal finites. A good part of the project of modernity consists in trying to increase that "being above."[24] But as the environmental paradox indicates, we are dependent on that of which we claim to be independent. Our independence is dependent on that from which it claims to be free. The more interesting thing here is whether we can be the measure of ourselves. The purported measure of external finite others, are we the measure of our own immanent selving and immanent otherness? And of the otherness of being and beings like other human selves that also singularize the infinite promise? The answer must be no. Every effort to be that measure finds itself dropped back into the equivocity of itself. For such a univocal measure must be determinate through and through, but we as measure (measuring) and measured are marked in both cases by an indeterminacy and overdeterminacy. Our being a measure exceeds our being as measured. As measuring we are always more than what can be measured or subject to measure. We always escape beyond. This is simply our erotic being.

If this is true of ourselves, it is doubly true of the relation to other humans marked by an analogous excess. The escaping beyond is doubly redoubled without determinate limit. Immanent infinitude is itself infinitized. There can be no closed boundary around this. It is a between in the hyperbolic degree. We have to relate differently to this relativity.

Ages of Eros: Aging Intimacy

There is an aging to the time of intimate desire. With the *child* the porosity is at its first innocence. The *passio* is impressionable in a manner that can welcome insinuation and influence. The influences of the important others ring the child around, and give shape to the porosity. Meanwhile the *conatus* is perhaps more in abeyance in this age than in any other, though obviously not totally, since this is impossible. It is relatively in abeyance by comparison with what is to come. There can be children in whom the *conatus* surges with greater self-affirming force than with other children. Some of the latter are more timid, fearful, or excessively shy, and it is not simply that the *conatus* is weak, but that its distension outward is somewhat turned into itself, sometimes even choked on itself. Excessive sensitivity of the porosity makes the child timid about exposure, whereas the child who is more surging is not held back by this timidity. The bully

seems to have none at all, though often the bully is a hollow porosity into which he collapses on being confronted by another child of firm or firmer *conatus*. The bully has finesse for those with feeble *conatus* and tries to torture the intimacy of their being, make their *passio* a passage way into a porosity that gives itself up to the invading *conatus*.

Here psychoanalysis is very right to stress the importance of parents. Whether the erotics of the child should be as *determinately sexualized* as the psychoanalysts tend to do is another question. In any event, the impress of the parents, or the image of the parents, on the porosity, this is indelible for the most part and can come back in situations of renewed exposure of the porosity. The soldier in the foxhole who cries out for his mother as he is about to die, this is the come back. Of course, the insinuation of the parent into the porosity can be fraught with equivocity.[25] The parent might be a bully, might be too feeble, might be one who lays a guilt trip. Many impressions are possible. At this level too, the importance of role models testifies to the mimetic side of the erotics: as we see others love us, so we tend also to love others. Thus the baleful effects of pornography on the innocent porosity of the very young—this is the corruption of the *passio*. There is a dearth of images of the goodness of erotics. In any case, the importance of significant others as impressive cannot be underestimated. One might think of good parents as others who respect the porosity, the *passio*, and *conatus* of the child. The evil of pedophilia is all the more evident as a violation of all of these counterfeiting "love." This is an age of wonder and horror. The innocence of the porosity is haunted by the idiocy of the monstrous. Think then of night sweats: the shadow is on the wall, and the howl of the child in horror is at the nothing that is there. This is connected with the porosity. One should not forget innocent ecstasy.

With the age of the *adolescent* the *conatus* comes into turbulence. With puberty the transformations in the idiocy of the unruly flesh set off explosions of energy that are often more yearning than directed. They have a vehemence that overtakes and surprises the erstwhile sleeping selving of the young person. A more determinate selving in love, in due course, will come to form from out of this indeterminate yearning. Trepidation and excitement are together in it—a new tenderness of the *passio* and the porosity. Think of the self-consciousness that comes to the porosity—the sense of awkwardness of the adolescent, the sense of exposure. The sense of shame—What is defiance but the *conatus* reacting against this? I am I.

One might say here the *conatus* tries to outstrip the porosity and the *passio*. It wills to overtake them and can take over. The increased sensitivity to the other is hence insensitive, since it is not really concerned with the other as such but with itself as reflected back to itself in the other. Thus the phenomenon of infatuation: this is a kind of bewitchment of the *passio* and porosity in and through the *conatus* that, in surpassing itself, is reflected back to itself in the other it takes to be its true fulfillment. The instabilities of infatuating others are as a mirror to the instability of the infatuated self. It is the exhilaration of the *conatus* in its newfound energy of self-surpassing that is in the ascendant, and neither the stability of a true other nor the constancy of a true self is really the center. The flightiness of this instability can be an education in more patient constancy, but much erring may have to happen before a way is found in which a balance of porosity, *passio*, and *conatus* comes to be again. Finding the other—being found by the others: erotics reveals the back-and-forth play of these in the between, in the gap of the porosity. The gap may be filled when the other I find is the other that finds me. There can be a *fit* in the gap of the porosity between the two sides. Nevertheless, this fit is mostly unstable in this adolescent eros. There is no denying young love and in some cases young love can last and become mature love, can remain love in older aging. That becomes less common in an age when the self-appeasing distension of eros lacks the encouragement of stability and the anchoring of constancy (these last are considered outmoded virtues . . .). The new, the new, the new: a society in the dominion of serviceable disposability is perfectly suited to the manufacture of the ever-new and hence not conducive to constancy and its subtler senses of fresh newness. Not surprising, a society of serviceable disposability treats partners also as serviceable and disposable. This is not a recipe for constant love. It is more suitable for an adolescent society. It requires a kind of ethics of Don Juan, mirroring an existentialism for teenagers of the heart.[26]

In the *adulthood* of eros, and in the ideal, love might seek and even attain the poise between the *conatus* and the *passio*—with a porosity mindful of selving and attendant on othering. But how slippery all this is. The male—Should we say that here there is more *conatus*? The female—And here say there is more of the porosity? But the *passio* is shared between them. The male might seem to be as endeavoring, the female as receiving, but both together as a back-and-forth. And in this back-and-forth, there is an exchange in which what before was endeavoring is now porous, or

what before was receiving is now ardent striving. Of course, given the porosity on *both* sides, and the exchange back-and-forth, the erotics of giving and receiving, though potentially open to the promise of the generosity of the agapeics, can turn toward itself, close around itself, embrace itself, and spring up in altered form in the manner of the dominant and the submissive. There are many reversals and upendings.[27]

The traditional postures are not without their truth, but since *all humans* are porous, passionate, and striving, in *all*, whether alone or together, there are fluidity, influence, influx between the three. So the "male" will be "female" and the "female" will be "male." There is no univocal fixity, there is the equivocal passage of eros. This is not to deny determinate identity, but to qualify it by an indeterminacy that is there in the arousal of desire and that is the return to the shared porosity, such that one does not know oneself from the other, and the other from oneself. (This is carnal knowing.) Each is all three—porous, passionate, and endeavoring. "Male" endeavor is impossible without porosity and *passio*. "Female" receiving is impossible without striving and porosity. The overtaking, the taking over of the *conatus*, is not the thing for either, if it produces *eros turannos*. Erotic sovereignty with (loving) eros is not necessarily tyrannical. Both male and female can be tyrannical in their own ways. There is a tyranny of dominion and subjection, there is a tyranny of shame and abjection.[28] There is a tyranny of guilt, there is a tyranny of giving that won't take "no" for an answer (one of its forms is now called "harassment" . . .). The triangulation of porosity, *passio*, and *conatus* can lead to a dialectic of mastery and slavery, can lead to the smeared collusion of sadist and masochist. And what prevents this? In the intimacy of the shared eros, a second "yes" to the first "yes" of the given good of the "to be"—incarnated in my own person and in the person of the other. Love (of life) living itself: and not in this, not in that. It springs up in the porosity, and subtends any divide into *passio* and *conatus*, and reaches beyond any opposition. The second "yes" of life, secret "yes" to life, "yes" of life to life, the other's and my own, is seminal in the prior porosity, and now must fructify. There also is the opening where a more radical "no" can be seeded—and the monstrous takes form in this secret intimacy and perhaps has already poisoned the *passio* before it flowers further in the *conatus*, for the blooms seem to burst forth already blackened or blighted.

In *older age* the *conatus* as erotically energized can come to be mellower and to some degree in abeyance. There can be a significant renewal

of the *passio* and the porosity. We encounter sour old age that envies in the young the still surging exhilaration of the *conatus*. Sometimes the envy can be a genuine sense of regret at the loss of a good thing, the unavoidable ebb of a tide bringing surprises and strange marvels. It can also be a pursed primness about the younger surgings of erotic energies—just because they are not one's own. The violence of desire is not always the same as the vehement *conatus*. For in the withdrawal of the *conatus* the porosity might be like a dry well, if the person has not kept tapping into the source of water below or beyond the dust. There are dry desires, wet desires. There can be a dry lust that is more in the nature of a kind of envy that lies, so to say, in the spirit rather than the flesh. (There is no Viagra of the spirit that will cure this.) This desire is a covetousness in others of what begins to ebb in oneself.

Old people are cautious in husbanding their energies and this can be a life-denying thing, if it is a retraction into itself as into a protective shell. There is a different attitude to the porosity, as now presenting one with more immediate exposure to one's own mortality, one's impending death. The closing down of the porosity in the flesh occurs in response to this, though it is a closing down of the whole, the souling as well as fleshed selving. There can be, of course, a more mature wisdom that must give the porosity, the *passio*, and the *conatus* their appropriate due in this aging of eros. This closing down of the porosity can be paradoxically an extraordinary expanse of the porosity in a new exposure, of the fragile finite human being, to all things other, and especially the divine. In a new wonder at the gift of life, there can be eros beyond eros, touched already by a caress of the agapeic. But again one cannot forget the danger of the dry desire, the dry lust that would but can't, and hence sours on life where the waters flow on. Its fear is of its own flow into death. It is a justified fear, since this flow into death is in truth impending.

Wooing and Generative Self-Surpassing: On Sadism/Masochism

The bond between lovers and the familial bond are familiar forms of the relativity of the *metaxu*. They are also revelatory of the self-surpassing of eros, as generating beyond itself. An eros closed in on itself is an incompletion of its own self-surpassing. If the erotics of self-surpassing is only to itself, it may seem to generate self, but the danger is a self-cloning that

is really a counterfeit double of self-surpassing. This is quite common, in modernity. Even at a high, exalted level when Hegel talks of God as love disporting with itself—love loving itself—there is nothing per se wrong with the love of self and of self loving itself. This is not the issue. It is the self-surpassing to what is beyond itself that shows love as love of itself and more than itself. Hegel does say that this love disporting with itself becomes insipid without the negative. I do not think the issue is a matter of the negative, but there is an important point for human existence here, and it is Hegel's point too, namely, that we must adventure in otherness to come to ourselves. This we do not achieve if we hug ourselves to ourselves. The self-surpassing hits on, or is hit on by, the resistance, even violence, of the other. We are called into this fraught middle by this beyond. This is true. Yet Hegel closes the circle again insofar as what we recognize in the other is ourselves again and so we end up still disporting with ourselves. So too does Hegel's God, for whom the adventure through negativity in otherness is the passage back to *itself* again, now truly realized as the absolute whole, and reconciled with *itself* as such. This understanding is a version of the erotic absolute: erotic self-mediation in which the other is a middle to a more inclusive self-mediation. The other to self presents itself as not instrumental, not serviceable disposability, and yet it is not unlike it, since it is a higher way of making the other serve the self-becoming. It is not fully erotic self-surpassing that meets the other as irreducibly other, encounters the other differently, in their difference. This brings us to the border of the agapeic. The point about human eros can be applied only with qualification to the divine. Love disporting with itself in Hegel's sense is not the overdeterminate divinity of surplus generosity that releases other being into its own otherness for itself, and that in loving thus this otherness is not simply disporting with itself.

Erotics points to a relation beyond self that is not a matter of negation, whether in an ordinary sense or Hegel's speculative sense. The ordinary sense pits self over against other; the Hegelian sense sublates the ordinary sense, and while granting the otherness, subsumes it in a more inclusive self-mediation. The erotic relation to the other is moved by surplus. It is not that there is not lack seeking to be filled and fulfilled; rather the energy affirming itself as wanting is not just wanting. It is surplus affirmation of the "to be"—in search of the other as offering it the good of its "to be," sometimes drawn in to serve the good of the "to be" of self, sometimes wondrously loved for itself, turning the selving head over heels.

The doubleness is there in the erotics of self-transcending, and it is so because the *conatus* itself emerges from the *passio* and the porosity where we find enabling sources that cannot be described in the language of lack and negation. We fall in love with an other and these more affirmative sources are called forth—giving fever to the *conatus*, setting it on fire yes, but through itself alone it knows not whence this fever is caught, nor how this fire is stoked. It only knows it is now different, for it has encountered the difference that takes it over. It is overtaken, it does not overtake itself—overtaken and also impelled to the generation of life beyond itself.

Illuminating this other relativity, consider something mentioned in the last chapter in connection with the poet and the muse: *wooing*. Wooing is bound up with a more delicate erotics. The wooing of the poet recalls Mnemosyne, memory, mother of the muses, hence there is always an other to be remembered. If one woos or is wooed, the approach and response cannot be forced. A courtesy before the other is asked, and where the initiative lies is not self-evident. It may not lie with the wooer at all, who may have to cede it to the other wooed. Certainly the wooed one must be invited into the between in a free communication that can be called but not dictated. The wooed one may also call to us, though we think we are doing the calling. We need to pause and listen. As we woo, we are being wooed. A seduction is not the same as a wooing, for a seduction might be a treason to love, while seeming to show itself with all the credentials of love. Seduction is the counterfeit double of wooing. In the seduction it is guile that snares. It is the feigning of a wooing that gets what it wants for itself. This is not love in the between. It might look like love but it would be loveless in the intimate respect asked: a use of the other in terms of serviceable disposability, and behind the patient wile of the seducer, nothing but impatience that plays at being patient. Wooing is truer to the *passio essendi* and so is willing to wait in love. The waiting is a distension of eros that is true to the intimacy of the *passio essendi*. There is a kind of readiness for gift in this, as when we truly listen to music. We hope to be hearers because we are ready to be patient listeners. There is a kind of obedience in wooing, and the porosity asked of the attendant is again not unlike a kind of praying.[29] It cannot be described in the language of self-insistent willing, though there is a purer willingness, or being willing, that precedes a determinate will, and that exceeds self-willing and all will to power. Wooing is the *passio*, faithful to the porosity of love, waiting in patient readiness for the surprise of the other, the gift of the secret beloved.

Each of us double: a togetherness of *passio* and *conatus*. Wooing is a courtship of the poise of the two. The equilibrium of the two can become unbalanced: Too passive, with feeble *conatus*—then there is the tendency to masochism. Too active, with little receptivity—then there is the tendency to sadism. The sadist is one in whom the *conatus* has overtaken the *passio*, to the degree of a hatred of receptivity in him- or herself. And this inner hatred is turned outward toward an other who would earth its charge in a disposable body. The sadist needs the disposable other; otherwise the hatred is more directly turned on itself, with resulting self-mutilation. There are others who are disposed to be the earthing body—in themselves they think they are nothing much, the vehement charge of the other charges them with a different life, and they welcome being overcome by the sadistic other. They are disposed to be serviceable to the dominating other/self, because there is not enough of the properly self-affirming *conatus* in their own passion of being. This doublet makes a perfect couple, but they are the conjunction of two deficiencies, certainly two imbalances, of the *passio* and *conatus*. The illusion of the masochist is that it is the pure porosity, since it is nothing and utterly subject to the injection of charge from the dominant other—this is void without the fertility. The illusion of the sadist is that it is the pure sovereign, since in relation to the nothingness of the other it seems to be everything, and porous to nothing beyond itself, for the nothingness of the masochistic other has passed without resistance into the envelopment of its power. Given its vehemence and the flightiness marking its going beyond itself, eros can easily unbalance one way or the other. The results are forms of servility and sovereignty, though each is not what it is without the other. The servility is less serviceable as abject; the sovereignty is less commanding as dictatorial. This collusion is not social freedom—it is not being released, either to the other, or to oneself, or by oneself, or by the other. For at the heart of either form, be it receiving or self-surpassing, is not love but hatred—not love of self, not love of the other—hatred of the other to earth the self-hatred of immoderate self-regard, and abjectness before the other to vivify the void self-hatred of defective self-regard.

Generation beyond self can take a biological form, though in the case of human beings this is more than biological, and this can mean new life in the intimate universal, such as we discussed in the chapter on idiotics. It is perhaps for this reason that we should speak of *procreation* rather

than *reproduction*. What is generated is a new creation, not just a product. That said, sometimes one is struck how animals can seem more universal, or witnesses of the universal, than humans. They generate beyond themselves selflessly, thoughtlessly. Their universal life is in passing on the life of the species. You might say they are driven to it, while we supposedly are free to choose. But the choice sometimes made is that we do not want to participate in the procreation of life. One thinks of how people speak of "recreational" sex. But erotic fecundity is something else and in procreation participates in the intimate universal.

We find a paradoxical situation where, on the one hand, we block fertility and, on the other hand, never have such extraordinary and emergency techniques been available and used to promote unblocked fertility. In both cases, the danger is that the bodies of the couple and the child—now conceived as the product—are seen too much under the light of serviceable disposability. Indeed embryos are disposable if they are not serviceable. It is manipulation, not participation, but also manipulation through a kind of participation: the exploitation of life is the beneficiary of the gift of life that forgets the giftedness of what it exploits. These manipulations are ominous with respect to the deeper participation of the human being in energies of fecundity that come to it from beyond itself and that take it, help it partake of what is, beyond itself.

We are profoundly suspicious of any beyond and this affects how we relate to eros also. Eros can lead both to a sovereign king and to a tyrannical master. If we do not serve this sovereign king with love, we can end up in servitude to its other face as tyrannical master. This is tyranny that is not concerned to generate beyond itself in the modality of a generosity that offers life on to the next generation. The tyrannical eros reveals the imperious urge to reproduce the same, not procreate the newly different—and we may not always like the way it takes over our autonomy. Schopenhauer: Am I right to think that his philosophy of eros reflects the humiliation to this autonomy that the taking over of eros represented for him: we are victims of eros and chagrined? Our will is not our own. Is there a hidden hand, a providential urge in the imperiousness of eros? We have to be open to the opportunity of the occasion. Now we make occasions safe against procreation and then render the opportunity sterile. We are profoundly rooted in nature but we risk denaturing ourselves in claiming to make ourselves according to a second nature. The second nature is not a second "yes," a redoubled "yes" to the first "yes" at work in the

poeisis of naturing and our *passio*. More often, it is a "yes" to a *conatus* that has deviated from the subtle insinuations of the now sunken matrix of fecundity.

Fortunately, the giving source continues to give, our second "yes" or "no" notwithstanding. True, there are ominous signs that we have altered the avenues through which the gift before came without our bidding. One thinks of alterations in the environmental field, in the flesh of life itself, and the discovery that our bodies are porous to the alterations we have induced outside. We impose on other-being, for self-being's sake, and the reflux of the other, degraded by serviceable disposability, passes back, through the impossible-to-close porosity, into the texture of our own being. We are not immune. What we think is outside has come through our porous bodies. The participation is unstoppable, for every effort to stop out what is other is itself a participation. The issue is the health of participation, not only vis-à-vis outer nature but our own nature. There is no outer nature separable from our nature—nor is our nature separable from the outer. There is a permeable boundary of flesh—a frail border in which the fragile singular carries inwardly the promise of ontological aesthetic intensity coursing secretly, idiotically through all that is.

Eros emerges out of that coursing. There is already an intimate universal in which we participate before individual desire for this or that erupts in our singular being. There is a fluidity of erotic energy that comes out, comes from below, that cannot be kept below, since again the boundaries of above and below are porous. We get a sense of its coming out and coming up in springtime, when the more generalized erotics of naturing break free with sometimes overpowering effect. This is naturing other to us intimate to us. In springtime a young man's thoughts turn to love. But of course, this fluid energy comes out at all times in the human being, for whom one might say there is no true winter, no winter of the absolute freezing of eros. The rites of spring can be performed in all seasons, even in the depths of winter. That does not mean that spring might not be a time of special urgent intensity. Think of young love as a springtime in that sense—it is sweet sixteen. Once it is passed, there can be a springing forth at all times, and though the flood tide ebbs with age, this is, or can be, the *conatus* and the *passio* in poise, more true to the ever-giving fecundity of the porosity. Can be: there is dry lust, we saw, when in the well is only dust, but the source of selving in the well wants still what it cannot have. Its want is hidden hate of what still is given, lush in the springing

leaf of the green other, but now no longer mine. The love of the second "yes" dries up and hates the first "yes" for its not being mine.

That we are always possibly in heat indicates a more extensive universality of the intimate in the case of human desire. It is not the thoughtless rutting participation in the animal perpetuation of the species. Eros in us is especially a witness to the fecund indeterminacy that exceeds all determinate desire, witness to an equivocal outgoing, ongoing that exceeds this determine desire and that, witness to an overdeterminate source out of which the affirmative energy to be beyond oneself springs forth, overdeterminacy as never a mere lack but always a surge out of a secret surplus of self-surpassing power.

Needless to say, there are equivocal intoxications in all of this. The intoxications are such that we often do not know what is of me and what is of you, there is a promiscuity of the two. I say I love you and I love myself in saying I love you—and you say something the same and you love yourself in saying you love me. The boundary of selving and othering becomes so permeable that we do not know who we are—we are both and we are none; I am nothing without the other, and yet I am more fully myself because the other is. And so this erotics is redoubled from my side, from the other side, and this redoubling on every side adds an almost infinite complication, a coimplication to the equivocal promiscuity. An issue can emerge from it that is not of either you or me. We are potentially agents of the transmission of the fluid self-affirming of life into new life in a singular being, or beings beyond ourselves. We are released as children of love into their own being for themselves; we can be intermediums of the new release of children of love beyond ourselves. Human eros mirrors and participates in the agapeics of being. This is often unknowingly so, though not always, since parents can sometimes come to be immensely self-less in the mindfulness of their children, let be, let go, into the full promise of their own being for themselves.[30]

Erotics, Immortalizing, Being Beyond

The movement of erotic transcending takes us beyond selving in selving. This is evident in a number of ways, though we are always beyond selving, since from the origin we are participants in the intimate universal. Eros takes us decisively into the beyond of the intimate universal. That is why

the urge to immortalizing is important here. There are different senses of this, and I lay out some of them.

Perhaps, first, the most evident one here, and the most democratic, is *generational perpetuation*. A child is born. Its parents are progenitors but he or she is given to the world as other and for itself. The child is brought to be in darkness and comes into the light as the gifted recipient of powers the parents cannot possess. There is the awe-ful origin of a difference that can never be abrogated. It can be intermediated. The guardians of life stand sentinel in this passage into time, and there will be joy and weeping, and as the parents are not the masters of the birth, the one born is no master of fate but companioned by inscrutable providence. The guardians are not tyrannical masters. Inscrutable providence proves the nest of its nurturing in the secrecy of the intimate universal, and when the born one comes more wakefully to be itself, what wakens in it is received from preceding others and awaits the giving on to new others what it has received on the threshold of dark and daylight. The secret of the intimate universal is not dispelled but passed on. In every imparting there is a parting; and our departure into distance must await in erotic distension its coming home, whether to itself or to those who are beloved. Giving leave, giving freedom, is leave-taking; and love taken in leave-taking carries the call—whether ignored, betrayed, re-called, or answered—of the return of love.

Second, there is the *generational immortalizing* that comes with children, grandchildren . . . This is archaic and elemental—and mutations have been introduced into this rhythm of nature through our manipulative relation to our own bodies and nature generally. The body is disposable and children as productions are equally disposable. The need for the generative immortalizing does not go away. As I said above, it lives us, we do not live it, and this is a good thing. In choosing our own life alone we can often then choose death in the long run. The child is a sacred "yes," a new beginning, to borrow words from the childless Zarathustra. The dominion of serviceable disposability lacks this sacred "yes" and its hope in new creation. It may whoop with gush over new products, but this is not the immortalizing renewal of life.

Third, there is the *less democratic immortalizing*, when through great works we seek to outlive ourselves. These works can be individual, but most often they have a communal character. A community builds monuments to itself in time. This is a manifestation of the communal erotics of the intimate universal. The history of a people is composed as the secret

story of their urge to immortalizing. This, I suppose, is a bit like what Nietzsche denominates under monumental history. The connection with erotic sovereignty is evident in the communal need for *exemplars*. These are not persons of individual distinction, but are exemplary: singulars who witness to something more communally universal, heroes who speak to the community as a whole. Something about their sovereign exemplification communicates not only in the present, but also from out of the past and into the future. They span time by exemplifying, in the intimate singularity of their sovereign excellence, something of the more general greatness of their community.

There is no separation of the singularity of the hero and the social nature of communal immortalizing. In fact, this is a case in which the two converge: an individual does heroic deeds, thinking even that he alone acts, or acts alone for himself. It turns out that he is not alone, that he is exemplary of the people and what has lain recessed in their general eros. And it is only after the deed that it is more generally recognized that there is an occluded communication between the singular and the community. This is an erotic manifestation of the intimate universal, operating beyond calculative deliberation, as it were, "behind the backs" of both the singular and the general community. The singular hero acts and hence is a creature of will and decisiveness; but the implication of the deed for the intimate universal is never the singular hero's alone. The endeavor, the venture, the deed all tap into something out of which he comes. (I know I speak of "he," but I need hardly mention that there are "heroines": for the French, Joan of Arc, for instance.) Because instinctively, intuitively, she or he is in tune with this, what he or she does speaks to the larger generality of people. Heroic accomplishment is representative of the people at their sovereign best. In this instance, representative means exemplary of what the secret general eros of the people asks for—though they do not know it. They know it when they see it.

The case is analogous to the genius at the aesthetic level: creature of the threshold, opening downward into the intimacy, emerging upward into the light of articulation and the public space where the people can now see what was gestating in the darkness of the creative womb. A great leader has to be something of a threshold figure in an analogous sense: singularly self-affirming, in one respect, yet singularly attuned to the concealed stream of communal eros, like a diviner watching the dousing twig as it bends knowing there is water below ground. Such a singular one

must direct the people, bringing forth the communal eros. Of course, the secrecy of the intimate universal is bubbling up from the underground of the general eros and far from being a magus, the singular one is more nearly servant of a flow that flows around and under and over him/her, and when its wave again becomes unruly, it will close over him/her and he/she may drown in the element he/she before commanded.[31]

This is the immortalizing of the public hero, but, fourth, there is also the *immortalizing of the great artist.* This poet is the voice of a people—the poet is also a threshold figure, figure of the imagination of the story that weaves a many into a people with a history and perhaps a destiny. Peoples have always had their poets in that sense. There are perhaps fewer and fewer such poets in our time. Why? Because the dominion of serviceable disposability does not foster the nurture of transition and the intrepidity of creative originality that can stand alone and outside and open itself to the more original porosity through which the secret eros of a people can be poured. The threshold is covered with commodities and things of serviceable disposability. There are no poets because there is no people. The people does not exist when there is no accessing these secret sources of erotic sovereignty. There is no poetic immortalizing because the immense sweep of time has been contracted into the immediacy of the "time bite." Wording the between is overtaken by the buzz of meaningless sound bites. Think of William Butler Yeats as an immortalizing poet in the relevant sense here—not only immortalizing himself but making an image of Ireland appear on the threshold between nothing and being, bringing it to be, and in a *poiesis* that gives the many the images to see itself as a people. It is the secret eros of the people that is appearing on the threshold. On the basis of its coming to be there, there can be a social self-becoming on the part of the people, previously a mere many. Homer was the immortalizing poet of the Greeks in that regard, Virgil of the Romans, Dante of the Italians, Shakespeare of the English. One might inquire of other peoples also.

Not surprisingly, and fifth, eros is often connected with rituals of *sacred immortalizing.* One might mention mystical religiousness in which the spousal relation of the human and the divine comes to the fore. Some will abjure this since it would seem to blur differences, and yet there is something to its sacred promiscuity. How often has Bernini's *The Ecstasy of St. Teresa* been subject to erotic cliché? There is the immortalizing of being subsumed in the sacred whole, as in pantheism. There is this even

in Nietzsche in his Dionysian mysticism and his wondering that if perhaps there is to be a religion after the death of God it must be some form of pantheism, a pantheism of power without the good. One thinks also of passing the threshold down into the sacred earth and the realm of the dead who are not dead—the realm of the spirits and the ancestors. One thinks of the spousal relation that is inseparable from difference: while a mingling, it is not promiscuous in this sense of losing the relation in being in relation.[32]

If there is an urge to immortalizing in eros and if this is self-transcending, sixth, there is the question of whether there is still a *singular selving to be* in the transcending and in the beyond of the transcending. One thinks of the immortality of the soul, whether there is singularity to this, or of the Christian view that stresses the singularity of soul and flesh, to the extreme of resurrection of the whole being, body and soul. The issue is prepared in the intimate universal: While we pass into and pass out of being, do we, in passing out, enter the intimate universal in a truer sense? If so, would death then not be the portal of true life? The porosity suggests we keep this portal open. Both the infinitude of the intimate and the unconditionality of the universal suggest something beyond the conditionality of finite coming to be and passing away. Eros surges in the conditional but surges with something more than the conditional. What is this "more"? Is eros obscurely in love with eternity? The surge is the leap of a release to the beyond of selving in the soul that swoons in love with the eternal. Is the intimate universal both intimate and universal because it is the between we participate in, a between that itself *is at all* because it participates in the eternal. The surge of eros is the praying desire of time for eternity—and this in both a singular and a universal sense. The singular as singularizing the intimate universal is the integrity of the universal power of soul and the particular concretion of flesh. In the Christian eschatology, each of us is resurrected—and in community: this has nothing to do with saving one's miserable skin to hang on to it forever and ever. Consider the anguish we feel at the thought of being eternally deprived of the beloved other. Consider the thought of one's own children dying *after* one—not their dying before one, for one has died, and this is the anguish of knowing that they too are destined to die. It is their death that one would want never to be. One's anguish masks the love of the loved one as a promise of eternity, intimates the love that goes out and beyond one to eternalize the loved one. This going beyond life and death into the deathless is

posthumous mindfulness that is posthumous love—and the urge of eros participates in this love.

Love of our own being: why should this too not be worthy to be affirmed into eternity, if there is also love of the being of the other beloved one also worthy to be so affirmed? Do we feel this unbidden affirmation in both cases? True, a lifetime of disappointment, of skepticism, of bitterness, of unbelief can dull the spontaneous surge of the love of eternity in us. It is so mysterious—as is our deepest self-love, and not only our deepest loves of others—that we come to find it hard to credit it.[33] A life has clogged the more original porosity of living; we think we more truly live, but the artery bringing blood to the heart of the soul is laboring to allow the flow. There are no boundaries in the true flow of life, not even the boundaries between life and what is beyond life now.

The issue of immortality relative to social and political concerns is not now much discussed but there is much to be said for the manner in which this matter was crucial to discussion in earlier centuries. I think, for instance, of Berkeley in relation to the "freethinker" of his day (in *Alciphron*, for instance).[34] Or of Dostoevsky and his worry, even certainty, that without immortality in the relevant sense something disastrous awaited humanity, in this world itself, just when it most anticipates the unparalleled perfection of life here and now. Perhaps Nietzsche had some suppressed dread of this to match his elation, though he had the consolation of the eternal return—an initially horrifying thought, he held, but then allowing one to look at every moment as in itself eternal, hence invested with all the weight of immortalizing. The circle revolves, the hourglass is turned over, and the moment returns. This is not necessarily a bad fatalism, but a looking on the utter necessity of the seemingly contingent within the circle of the whole—the eternal in time, being in becoming, the universal within the intimate, a self-becoming of time that is eternal—and each of us too is weighted with this totality.

Nietzsche aside, Dostoevsky felt perhaps that a "backup" for morality was needed: a spiritual constancy in the backup, a good one can count on. For why be moral in a world doused in evil and cruelty? There is not an evident self-justification of good, despite what the philosophers like Socrates might say. One might say that this way of thinking is to instrumentalize the immortal. Perhaps. But that this justification is used testifies to the deep-down worry that there is nothing that justifies itself. Everything calls out for a "more" and it cannot supply this more itself.

Everything is caught up, despite itself, in an eros for eternity, but the eros cannot supply what it most desires. It cries out to something more, something other. In the great monotheisms, this beyond is absolute, not as nihilistic escape from life but to allow us to face the issue of the ultimate justice. Is the divide between life and death the end or is there a more inclusive sense of life beyond that divide? This question gives rise to the intimation of immortality that cannot be disjoined from the matter of justice. And this is so, not only in the classical theistic theodicies where the justice of God is at issue, but in the philosophical reflections on justice, such as Plato in the myth of Er, and Kant with the postulate of immortality. We may not be happy with all the details of their answers but to reject the question because we disagree with the answer is to cut off one's nose to spite one's face.

The question, as much as any answer, testifies to the eros for eternity. This is the question bearing on the point of it all, not least in the face of death and intolerable, even unforgivable evil. Eros gives rise to heaven, it also gives rise to hell. It is love of life that generates hell, because love of life is intertwined with a deep anticipation of the rightness of life, and this anticipation is not self-evidently fulfilled—here and now. An Augustinian theological vision of politics is not theological *politics* and is impossible without the opening to the transpolitical beyond. This opening is closed off by Hegel by being speculatively retracted into dialectical immanence. But do we not then create a circle in which the eros circles back to itself? This is love disporting with itself, and insipid, we recall Hegel said, if it does not extend to the work of the negative. But does it become any less insipid, albeit bloodied, even after that work? To disport with itself is to truncate the movement of self-surpassing—it is not to surpass self, but to return to self in surpassing, no matter how many dialectical negations and determinations in between, and hence it is not really to surpass. Think of the political analogue—the state that loves itself: the will willing itself in the form of its worldly social self-determination. This is indeed Hegel's definition of the idea of freedom: social self-determination, a recollection of spirit but not as individual autonomy but as social recollectivization. The porosity of politics to the beyond of politics is closed down or clogged. Politics seeks the self-contained totalities of immanent absoluteness that the worldly state itself tries to enact. In coarser hands, the resulting immortalizing of earth does not create heaven but hell.

This is what ominously struck Dostoevsky. Earlier Burke was struck with prophetic horror in the face of the French Revolution. False freedom strikes out at the tender face of heaven itself—and in the denial of the chasteness of immortality, the choice of revolutionary negation is for the path of death. Destruction becomes, or will become, creation. And if the revolution does not seem to be succeeding in producing the dreamed-of change? We have not killed enough people. (Mao speaking of Hitler: "The more people you kill, the more revolutionary you are.")[35] Death and immortality are issues radically intimate and yet have huge social and political repercussions. One might say these issues do not bother people now, but one wonders. Death and its finality always shake the imperturbable. It may not seem so to the comfortable bourgeoisie but that comfort is a provisional cocoon—a cocoon that in this instance is not preparing a transformation, but merely a defense against any demand for radical transformation. The butterfly does not want to come out of the cocoon; it does not want to die to one form of life because beyond it there is nothing; and yet it does die in the cocoon when this happens. This view is now more pervasive, and it thinks itself superior to the naive faith in immortality of earlier epochs. The radicality of the earlier and the call of radical otherness in it are stifled. This is to be on an edge—after all the word *escathon* can also mean "edge" as well as "last thing." An edge is sharp. Something sharp may have to cut into the cocoon of comfort. In life we are busy generating a more and more efficient self-enveloping cocoon—the cocoon cocoons itself. Cocooning cocooning cocooning: we mimic the absolute, say, the self-encirclement of thinking thinking thinking (Aristotle's god), or the willing willing willing (Hegel's idea of the "good"), excreting the last cocoon of cocoons from the endowed "too muchness" of ourselves claiming to be nothing but ourselves. Fear of death is the cold air that comes through when the cut is made. The door is opened and we may perish in being so unsheltered, or we may be refreshed with the wind blowing from beyond. Awakening before death from such torpor or half-sleep might also be a surge in the erotics.

Erotics Beyond Autonomy

The denial of the beyond brings to the fore a stress on autonomy, indeed hyperautonomy. Autonomy itself can be seen as a form of self-mediating

freedom, and hence in terms of the mastering of selving itself, as this emerges from the shaking of existential foundations that explicit eros brings about. There is a disarray in the selving, as the selving enters into more explicit self-consciousness, while at the same time there comes out a new call to self-shaping. This is the law of self, the *nomos* of *to auto*, and in a relative sense it is right and proper, but where in all this is the other, *to heteros*? Relation to the other in the relation of autonomy to itself is the real issue, not the self-affirmation of autonomy as such. The other might be seen as opposed to the selving and we are tempted with a Kantian dualism of heteronomy versus autonomy. Or the *heteros* might be seen as mediating the selving back to itself. This is something that often happens in eros, though there is more. I come more truly to myself in being in relation to the other, though the emphasis of autonomy as such is not on the relation to the other qua other, but rather on the medial role of the other in enabling me to come more fully to myself. Eros in autonomy seeks its own self-fulfillment, its own self-completion—even if, along the way to this, it finds it needs the other for this to be effected. Eros mediates with itself in and through autonomy and emerges in the form of a will that wills itself. Here emerges will in the sense of selving determining itself and its own direction. But if this will absolutely insists on itself, there is the surging up of the old Adam from the idiocy and the receptivity to the other is compromised, if not repudiated. The *passio* and the porosity are relegated into precursors of a *conatus* willing itself and striving to be itself. I find here an antinomy of autonomy and transcendence: absolutize the first and you must relativize the second; but if the second is absolute, there must be a relativization of the first. Eros enables autonomy, but is more than autonomy, both in its intimate sources and in its exceeding power toward the more universal. It empowers a maturer autonomy but it also relativizes it, for freedom cannot be self-determining outside of relation to the other. On the side of intimate origins, there is a self-surpassing that is not the same as autonomous self-determination; on the side of exceeding self, there is an implicit openness to all otherness, beyond every self-circling of autonomy. Erotics shows that this relativity to otherness need not be a curb or attack on freedom but it does call for openness to forms of freedom that are not purely autonomous. Out of eros, autonomy emerges, but in autonomy the urge of self-surpassing continues to ferment and out of this the desire for a higher and more ultimate form of erotic sovereignty comes. In this too the surpassing is not finished, since

the relation to the other keeps impelling us in the direction of the agapeics of community. In the latter what is hidden in the erotics of the intimate universal comes most to light, comes most into the light.

All of this is a question not of denying autonomy but of questioning the identification of autonomy with freedom as such. There are freedoms before autonomy, there are freedoms beyond autonomy.[36] No simple contrast of autonomous master and heteronomous slave will do. There is always something neither servile nor sovereign. Even this is evident in autonomy as one form of freedom. In Kant autonomy leads to the postulates of immortality and God, and an ambiguous relation to the beyond of autonomy comes in again, but with not a few post-Kantian thinkers autonomy is hyper: the beyond as given, givenness as such, is either rejected or reconfigured, just as other. There is to be no received immortality, no God who gives. We must live as if there were no other life, no other ground of God, no "big Other" companioning our freedom. Absolute self-determination beyond all such others: this is the freedom of adolescent autonomy. It is foolish about the *passio*, led by the nose by a drunken *conatus*. Scoffing at the porosity, it loses all reverence, as if anything over it, anything superior to it, had to be pulled down for it to pull itself up. An envy of the divine superiority lurks in it. Insubordination to the superior becomes a way of life. Life is always more than our autonomy, now outraged at life's givenness. If life becomes thus insubordinate to life itself, the outcome is a culture of death, marked deeply by an ontological refusal of the given conditions of life. We become full of metaphysical complaint that life is not as we would have determined it to be. We could do better than God; we would better God, outdo God; but that means undoing creation.

All this is false. It is a false absolutization of autonomy. And eros keeps breaking through, with respect to both its *penia* and its *poros*. Its ontological destitution is an opening of receptivity in the form of the need of the other. And the *poros* suggests a prior plenitude that allows one even to whine metaphysically that if God existed he did not do a good job, not as good a job as we think we could do. We fall to preaching at reality because it jilts us. A secret eros laughs at this. All we evince is the comedy of the false seriousness of the counterfeit double of God. If we cannot laugh at this we are lost. We harden into a ridiculous divinity. The glow of eros below the embers of this god will flare up again. And against the self-satisfaction of any happy mediocrity, excess will come out, excess beyond our autonomy.

This autonomy we claim is a bewitchment we cast on ourselves from out of the idiocy and from beyond ourselves where we secretly are, though we deny all beyonds. Since we deny any true beyond, the light cast from beyond is of a counterfeit double of God. And so we divinize ourselves thinking we are realizing ourselves. We are falling under the spell of ourselves—we are seducing and seducing, lover and beloved, a conceited parody of true self-love in the intimate universal. It is like holding a séance with oneself. There is food for comedy here. Eros is beneath this self-bewitchment, eros falls into this self-bewitchment, eros is beyond this self-bewitchment. It is almost as if it had to love itself wrongly to love itself rightly—wrongly while it thought it loved itself rightly. And in fact when it thought it loved wrongly—open to all—it loved more rightly.

Erotics, Pieties, and the Intimate Universal

The bewitchments of eros are fascinating, of course, and it is a fair question to ask if without them the enthrallment of love would be the poorer. Eros: "bewitched, bothered, and bewildered," the song has it. Other than the self-bewitchments of autonomy, are there communal entrancements that bind us deeply? Bind us, but in an intimate belonging? These bonds used to be called pieties.[37] Beneath and beyond our autonomy circulates an eros that binds us intimately to what is beyond us, binds us also diversely. I will come again to the general eros (not general will) that is circulating in the communal intermediation of a people and that is bound up with the community of erotic sovereignty, but that obscure circulation of the general eros is connected with these bewitchments, these entrancements, and these pieties. I want to look at pieties as defined by special loves and loyalties that precede and exceed autonomous self-determination. Pieties surprisingly touch on the erotics of the intimate universal. Thus they can be also connected to the impulse to immortalize. They call on and call forth the underground love in the intimacy of being that we would perpetuate beyond ourselves because of a love first received from beyond ourselves.

The pieties range between the more intimate and the more universal, but none entirely separates the intimate and the universal. I will note these four: familial piety, local piety, political piety, religious piety. The piety of the family implicates the deep generational bonds of the intimate universal. Local piety shows us as grown in the flesh of a place on the earth,

a place in the sun—there are deep attachments to one's special place, a space all but consecrated in its singular specialness. This is intertwined with the piety of one's people—intimate love for one's own, deep beyond self-consciousness. Then there is political piety relative to a community larger than the family—the piety of the tribe, one form of which is patriotism. Finally, there is the piety of religion—at its most pure and absolute, this is the epitome of the intimate universal, the deepest and the highest bond with the divine, the darkest mystery and the brightest light.

Pietas was certainly one of the major manifestations of distinctive human honor and nobility in the premodern world. Perhaps with the Enlightenment and after there is the view among intellectuals that identifies piety with a kind of superstition, or abjectness, incompatible with our upright autonomy—a toothless crone, or a Crazy Jane jabbering away in an empty church. I think of Kant's words to the effect that to be caught in a posture of prayer was perhaps the most humiliating, and indeed of his indignant outburst about groveling, even in the presence of the Most High.[38] Granted, piety sounds quaint or outmoded to many modern ears. And yet, how it astounds advanced commentators that old-fashioned habits like patriotism seem not to go away, sleeping perhaps for extended periods, and then astonishingly waking up in situations of crisis, such as the threat of war. This awakening is witness to our ultimate loyalties, most of the time taken for granted and out of mind. Sometimes different pieties clash; sometimes they are nested together more harmoniously; sometimes they require of us a finesse to determine what is fitting, with reference to patriotism or local allegiances, for instance. There is no one simple rule, no univocal principle.

Piety reflects reverence toward what we belong to in a special way. The specialness of the belonging evokes deep loyalty—loyalties to what we love. It is not easy to give a neutral justification of our loves. We love those to whom we belong—not that which belongs to us—and why we do, we cannot always articulate with univocal rationality. These loyalties are not to some faceless, anonymous universal, and yet as intimately particular they need not be in contradiction to a more universal openness. Perhaps this cannot finally be separated from an ultimate belonging in the religious universal, not itself to be identified with this or that institutional or sectarian form.

We now find it hard to understand the secret loves in the different pieties because, by and large, we have made privatized autonomy our

"god," and this god is a jealous god. The eros to be free is plurivocal and intimate but it can be univocalized and privatized, like modern religion, such that freedom becomes identified with *my* autonomy. This privatization does not quite open us to the intimate universal. Freedom is inseparable from the singularity of the human person, but the intimate universal constitutively invokes one's relation to others. While Kant, high priest of a certain rational autonomy, warned that contamination by any trace of heteronomy risked the corruption of morality, the ruin of it, he does include all potential ethical others with the universalizability principle of the categorical imperative. I take this universality to obviate the singular intimacy that loses the constancy of an obligating rationality. Is the ideal of the kingdom of ends the intimate universal? One worries that it is closer to the faceless universalism of a rationalistic cosmopolitanism that "practically" loves humanity as such but no human being in particular. At most it goes half way to the intimate universal or splits it in half.

If the eros for self-determination is itself embedded in, and in some measure derived from, *communal* relations to others, some kinds of "heteronomy" must be reconsidered. The jealous monotheism of autonomy must be softened, and perhaps even rival gods given holier names. Pieties are very revealing because they communicate social *overdeterminations* (not self-determinations) between individual freedoms and bonds of belonging to something other than one's own self-determination.[39] Without these bonds there are no human communities, and hence also no matrices of enabling value that allow individual autonomy itself to be freed. Autonomies are freed to be themselves in the ethos of these enabling matrices. The god autonomy mimics some features of religious piety: the one end in self, worthy to be loved as absolute for itself, even when the official story is that there is no god at all. I find allying evidence in the scourge of biblical religions—Nietzsche. He revised autonomy into supreme (erotic) sovereignty, beyond morality, and this god is not rational, as with Kant, but rhapsodic and sourced in dark Dionysian origins, an augur of our released creativity. Nietzsche gives us a polytheistic atheism of autonomy, aiming with this to explode the pieties of Judaism and Christianity, as well as Kant's rational "piety." In this polytheistic divinization, the truth of the god becomes plain, for even autonomy is a mask of the more ultimate god, and this god is now more nakedly revealed as will to power. The divinity of this autonomy reveals itself as will to power, for whom all things are nothing. To what then is the ultimate loyalty of

freedom given? Are we left with impious freedom only? But how to make sense of impiety if there is not also operative some hidden sense of piety? One cannot be impious in a religiously neutral world, or a world neutered of its religious charge.

Turning now to the different pieties, we have already referred to filial or familial piety with the aesthetics of the intimate universal. This special bond of loyalty between parents and children is a spiritual bond based on the physical kinship of blood (consider, for instance, ancestor worship). Local piety signifies the special loyalty for one's own place, one's home—a spiritual kinship again closely tied to a physical reality (consider sacred kingship as wedded to a land in a *hieros gamos*, or the Doge of Venice espoused to the sea—*Sposalizio del Mare*).[40] Think of the homely example of how people are loyal to their *home team*.[41] Think of the piety that, in such a sense, is enlarged by its love of a specific and special *place*: one loves *this* town, or this range of hills, or these four green fields. Think of the power of certain songs that celebrate place: I left my heart in San Francisco. Piety would hardly be the word on the lips of those thinking about this song; and yet a love of a place can steal into one's soul, and it is not that the place then belongs to one, but something intimate in oneself belongs to that place. The heart is there, one leaves one's heart there, even if one leaves. People who emigrate know this. One thinks too of students who study abroad: on leaving home, they learn something of what they took for granted at home, it being so intimate to their lives that they could not see it there; and maybe they come to know it in distance, perhaps even to love it more.

Civic or political piety in the past was closely allied with local piety,[42] insofar as people were more sedentary in a particular place and communities were more circumscribed in demographical dimensions. This piety has to do also with marking boundaries in the earth. By contrast with wandering on the earth, a pastoral people will mark the earth as belonging to one's people. It may be a family on what will be a farm, or a people gathered in a settlement or a town. One is native of a place or a nation, and one's own are greeted as intimates in this circumscription of the aesthetic field. (Violence can occur, of course, in the division of the aesthetic field as one's group makes its mark and stakes its territory.) There is something elemental here, and the intimacy of belonging can extend into the *pietas* of some of the great Italian cities—Florence and Venice, say. One could go further back to Rome, Athens, Jerusalem, and other places. The horror

we feel at crimes like *treason* or *patricide* shows how deep these pieties still go, and the intimate love they violate. A like sense of a community of loyalty can be found in religious piety. As has been pointed out, by Augustine among others, the roots of *religio* imply a binding together, a bond of connectedness. Religious piety acknowledges our link with divine powers more ultimate than ourselves, our intimacy with the sacred. It need not be metaphysical abjectness but may be born in an ontological reverence, open to praise of the powers that vitalize, beautify, and perfect creation.

These pieties need not be an affront to our freedom. Our being embedded in often incognito loyalties gives the individual a commitment to values more ample than self-regarding self-insistence. Such piety is not an enforced abdication of our supine wills but an enlargement of willingness that is taken into the good of a community with what is beyond our lone selves. If a certain understanding of autonomy leads, at an extreme, to the weakening, if not destruction, of these bonds, we can paradoxically be left at the mercy of the tyrannical self-insistence of a particular social, or national, will to power, such as happened in Nazi Germany. One might be loyal to no one, but can there be a loyalty to nothing? To love nothing is to hate life, and free-floating hatred comes rather to hate others in whom the reversed negation of love condenses: say, the Jews as the reviled others.

There is tension, it is true, between freedom understood as individual autonomy and that loyalty of belonging that is of the essence of civic piety.[43] Insist on our own autonomy only, we must relativize this loyalty, we may cease to appreciate its call, and less and less we participate in it. We are shocked and stunned by its unexpected claim on us when it emerges, say, in times of attack or of a threat to a way of life. A claim to autonomy is not coincident with the claim to *perpetuation* that a way of life makes on us. The roots of the latter go deeper than what can be determined through oneself alone. The roots of these loyalties resist a completely rationalized account. They bear on what we love most intimately and most ultimately. To think one can lay them bare in a univocally rationalized way might be to kill them. Their work must be done out of sight, at least to a degree. The roots are in the ground but they are what enable growing (up), granting that the conditions above ground are also properly favorable to growth.[44] To insist that what is below ground, or on the ground, or home ground itself should be exactly the same as what grows above ground is disastrous for growing (up) overall. The upsurge

of patriotism, say, in circumstances of danger testifies to sources of energy that are mostly hidden in the unexceptional conditions of everyday life but that flare up in situations of serious threat to a way of life. The flare up is as much expressive of the general eros ongoing in a way of life, mostly unnoticed and unnamed, as it is defensive of a commitment that is willed to continue to be.

Of course, in Western society the *pietas* we have inherited, even if it is often masked, or seemingly nonexistent in secularized forms of life, is rooted in religious traditions that are potentially universal in range. The places of the Western dialogue, Athens and Jerusalem, are cities of the universal, be it of reason or of revelation. Athens and Jerusalem both are cities of the promise of the intimate universal. That very germ of universality in each is itself in tension with the particularity of some more local pieties and commitments, as much as with a too-contracted individual notion of freedom as autonomy. And the freedom that comes from that more ecumenical piety relativizes many of the more local and particularized pieties. The question: Would this more ecumenical piety be a friend of the local pieties, or merely an alien power imposed on them or extirpating them? It seems to me that this tension of universal and particular springs up whether we take a more secular or religious view of the universal. That it is *piety* that is at stake in our fundamental loyalties indicates that a purely secular understanding of the difficulty is not enough to articulate the difficulty itself, much less address it with a persuasive response.

Hence again, the stunned amazement and rationalized irritation that some secular intellectuals exhibit when religious movements, or movements religiously inspired, show an extraordinary power of shifting attitudes on a large social scale—be this the civil rights movement or, more intransigently, a variety of fundamentalisms. The vehement erotics of the intimate universal is at work. No doubt, these surges of astonishing energy out of the secrets of the general eros are as often full of danger as they are sometimes full of promise. There may be formations of these surges of energy whose significance, once politically expressed, is death for the strange other: Nazism is an example. These surges of energy have to be understood, not just denounced. Do we have the terms to understand them? On the whole, since the religious wars of early modernity, we have not always had enough social finesse for the sacred secrets of the general eros, and have tried to dampen down, repress, even exterminate the dangerous aspects of these energies. And yet these energies also migrate into

secular form, and instead of religious wars, we are fighting even more destructive wars against the idols of totalitarian regimes. But idolatry is a religious category, even when we claim to have superseded religion. Idols, or what I call the counterfeit doubles of God, seem to release the more dangerous equivocities of our eros and energies with sometimes massive power to affect all of life—and not necessarily for the good.

We can offer a vision of our being religious as the rich participation in the intimate universal. As with all things universal, we deal with our relation to what is more encompassing than our lone selves. But as with all things intimate, we deal with our *great loves*, what we love greatly, but also with our dangerous loves, what is greatly dangerous. For there are monstrous dangers here. One's inarticulate loyalties, more often than not dark to themselves, can be given over to forms of life that trample the grapes of wrath into a wicked stew. Ethical finesses are corroded in this poisonous brew. Consider the pious language of *Blut und Bodem*. The earth of this blood is not wise. The general eros of a people dangerously excites itself in celebration of the passion of belonging together, a passion intoxicating the people with their power to affirm themselves, and with the humiliation, if not destruction, of those said to be not one's own. One could say that the power of Nazism was a form of civic piety, in racist form; the place, or space, of Germania/Deutschland itself was sacralized as the space of singular destiny itself. This is an example in which a people's loves, dark to themselves, can also be dark loves. (Heidegger speaks of the *piety of thinking*, but in the period of his dictatorial resolve to Nazism, his thinking fell under the spell of such a dark love.)

One might argue that this is a situation where the power of freedom as autonomy comes into its own. It might seem so, in that the individual seems called to stand for herself over against the powers of the social whole. Agreed, this standing fast is crucial. But is the concept of freedom as autonomy up to it? Is it just enough to stand for oneself? In some currents of thought, of course, it is not the individual autonomy that is the final autonomy: the last autonomy is that of the *social whole*. How then to guard against the mutation of this social autonomy into a kind of tyranny? The unconstrained autonomy of the social whole becomes hard to disentangle from a *people's* will to power. Think of the Jacobinism of a kind of rationalism for which the human community is a faceless universal.[45] Where then is the ethical relation to what is other? And what form does civic piety, or any piety, occupy in such a tyrannous social holism?

Is autonomy revealed in a will capable of terrorizing the other? The human community is not faceless: hence the importance of religion as revealing the *intimate* universal. Is "autonomy" a provisional mask in which a hidden will to power bides its time. Think of Nietzsche as in a line of inheritance from Kant: the rational will of Kant becomes the darker Dionysian will to power of Nietzsche, and insofar as both claim to be self-legislating, there is a line of familial continuity between them. The issue is not of heteronomous submission versus autonomous self-legislation but, and this might seem paradoxical, the question: What is freedom to *obey*?[46]

Obedience entails a being given over, of giving oneself over, to something other than oneself.[47] One is not simply obeying oneself (the very word "obedience" contains a reference to *hearing*). Does this look all too like the dreaded "heteronomy" of the "big Other"? Kant may claim we obey the moral law, and he is not wrong; but then if we *submit* to the law, where is the *self-legislation*? *How can we give ourselves the law if the law is already given to us and we must submit to it?* Nietzsche is perhaps less disingenuous when he suggests that the philosopher of the future will give the law by creating it, affirming a sovereignty for which there is nothing higher than itself. And what then could one obey? *Amor fati?* Let Nietzsche say fate, but why obey *that*? Free obedience to fate looks like a peculiar self-canceling notion. Fate is not a god that frees. Fate is a "god" who makes us an offer we cannot refuse; even if we do not submit, we must submit.[48] *Amor fati*: we hide the equivocation between freedom that releases and obedience that binds by repeating it rather than answering it. While fate might be said to be a universal power beyond gods and men, there is nothing intimate about it, and hence the idea of *loving* it is questionable, to say the least.

Perhaps there is no *univocal* answer to the tension between freedom and obedience, so stated.[49] Perhaps the answer lies in a freedom released beyond autonomy and in an obedience that does not bind but graces. This would ask for the agapeics of the intimate universal. But to dwell for now with the more familiar pieties, if there is an answer in the practice of life, it would be less a matter of having a theory and more a matter of having the right religious and ethical orientation. This orientation bears on what we are and what we are to be. This we learn first by *imitation*, not self-determination or self-creation. Imitation is more basic than creation in (civic) education. Fecund social mimesis points to a delicate balance of freedom and obedience. Thus a child or young person can only learn in this matter by example and by witness. Civic knowledge may be diverse, but crucial is knowledge

by imitation of an exemplary other, not first by study of a theory or by insisting on creativity or autonomy. There is a civil mimesis that is a covenantal binding across generations, learned more like learning a native language. We listen to others before we speak for ourselves.

Thus too an inheritance of civilizing form, a heritage, is communicated from one generation to the next. Pieties and being civically educated into them are bound up with what one might call an *ancestral knowing*. Ancestral knowing involves a covenant with human generations, both the predecessors and the descendants, those now gone, those yet to come (Burke knew this deeply). This has regard for a *long* time, not just the long ago. A true conservative is concerned with the future, not lost in the past, since his or her care is with what is worthy to be passed on in life (tradition as a handing on: *tradere*). The seeds of the new must be planted in the ground of the old, and this ground must be kept properly fertile, or else there is no growing. We see this need in the ecological conservation of nature. It is no less needed in the ecology of a human culture.[50] Mindfulness of the history of the becoming of a people will include ancestral knowing of those exemplars of its way of life, both those confirming what is inherently good in it and those who have heroically challenged its deficiencies and kept a people truer to its more authentic religious and ethical values.[51]

In the plurivocity of pieties, there is tension between more particular, local loyalties and the call of a more universal responsibility, such as comes to us, certainly in the West, from the great monotheistic traditions and perhaps their secular doubles. We are always in between the more local and the more universal, diversely stressed by different calls on our ethical, civic, and religious responsibilities. If civic education happens more in the moderate middle, this last piety comes from the extremes. In times of great disturbance, such as war, the extremes invade the middle and test our ultimate pieties. Our local pieties are not immune from a more radical accounting, which they may not always answer in their own terms alone. They too are not autonomous, but under the measure of a higher justice or mercy. This is again a religious-ethical matter, in which, yes, there is a singular responsibility on the singular individual, but that responsibility is not completely of its own self-legislation, or self-determination, even though only the singular self can choose for itself.

In such situations, perhaps what we most need are those singular *witnesses* who have the spiritual courage to stand against the social self-intoxications that threaten freedom, sometimes perhaps even in the name of freedom.

I mean prophetic witnesses, those who place themselves at risk under the responsibility of an ultimate good that is even more ultimate than the immanent values here and now of prospering or not, of surviving or not surviving. Prophetic witnessing means living in obedience to the light of an ultimate good that is not of our own autonomous self-determination, whether individual or social. This is a piety that requires of us a courage for transcendence beyond ourselves.[52] This witness may not be what is asked of us in civic education, but if civic education is not open to its possibility, then one might ask if civic piety can sustain, on its own, its own health. At its best it can intimate the loyalty of this other reverence.

This last universalism is not quite civic religion or quite the rational cosmopolitanism of a Kant or a Nussbaum. Because it is religious, it knows something of the kink in the soul and will. It knows the temptation of eros to hubris and tyranny. Its piety is inseparable from a humility that knows we cannot plan and construct our own absolute salvation. If this intimate universal chastens hubris and tyranny, it is not per se hostile to more particular pieties. Nevertheless, it is tempered enough to allow, so to say, the becoming glory that is fitting to the immanent pieties of family and place and people.

The Community of Erotic Sovereignty

Pieties, as communal loves, are inseparable from the secret circulation of the general eros, and indeed the even more secret community of agapeic service. The connection of pieties and the temptation to tyranny, just noted, ask us to look at the community of erotic sovereignty and the moderation of *eros turranos* by friendship, and to this I will turn in the next chapter. To round off this chapter I return to the connection, noted at the outset, of eros with sovereignty in respect of our seeking to be "above," our desiring of the superior. The superior as above us can be diversely understood. It can refer to our exceeding to what is transcendent in goodness beyond ourselves (the prayer of Jesus to Abba—self-transcending with transcendence as other). It can refer to our desire to be our own superior, to being superior to ourselves in more truly being (above) ourselves (Nietzsche and the overman—self-transcending without transcendence as other). There might even be a meontological sense of sovereignty (think of a Buddhist surpassing of desire toward a serenity

superior to suffering, or Epicurean sovereignty free from anxiety in a similar ascetic way, albeit in the garden that is extrapolitical).[53]

The erotics of the intimate universal is articulated in the social intermediation of immanent excellence, and this touches on sovereignty when not exhausted by any network of instrumentalities. Social intermediations are subtended by the idiotic and the aesthetic, and because of the equivocity there, if the intimacy is warped so too will the universal be warped, just as also a warped universal will set out to suppress the intimate. How true to the porosity and the *passio* are these intermediations of intimate and immanent power? The dominion of serviceable disposability is predominantly shaped by a calculative exploitation of the aesthetic. It is governed by useful expedience rather than excellences beyond expedience. An insinuating and instrumentalizing univocalism seduces us, whether we homogenize life to exploit desire in the widest market possible, or whether we heterogenize life to exploit multiple differences and serve the same end. It caresses even the tender intimacies of eros, if this sells or helps sell. If a more intimate sense of excellences is dissolved, expedience itself comes to skate on the frozen lake of nihilism where the ice is not thick enough and we go under in the end. Serviceable disposability would be a social intermediation driven by many purposes but the purposes would be purposeless. Nothing would answer the desire for a more ultimate excellence, both singular and communal, both intimate and universal. We might generate a (quasi-)infinite multiplication of finite satisfactions but this is an always unsatisfied satisfaction. A community showing this joyless satisfaction hides its own lack of ultimate purpose from itself. Without the superior excellence, our desire bonds with the serviceable and disposable, and finds itself in bondage to what it consumes to fill up its emptiness.

We cannot but cry out for something more, even as we dare not cry out for something more. The community of erotic sovereignty intermediates something of this "more," energized to transcend to what is "above," what is superior. However, this too is redolent with equivocity. As there is a servile "being below," there is a "being above" that lords over all beneath it. A true lord would not lord thus. The equivocity comes from a mixture of the *passio* and *conatus*, for in erotic sovereignty the *conatus* is to the fore, as seeking to come into one's own powers, thereby to approximate something more supreme in itself, something justified for itself. If serviceable disposability is work, sovereignty is play. Not being just a means to an end, this is useless, and yet it is something supremely

useful, since it communicates of a consummation of our most intimate and universal powers.[54]

At the roots of sovereignty there is the idiocy of the erotic that is communicated in the social circulation of the (re)sources of a people's power. Serviceable disposability often functions by means of a dianoetic universal that allows exploitation of the equivocities of our desire. Erotic sovereignty reveals a more dialectical intermediation of social power that dips into the idiocy, communicates and expresses itself in the aesthetics, and carries a many beyond its own equivocity. This social carry is the unnamed conveyor of the implicit call of the universal, even when a many does not know this explicitly, offering to it an incognito sense of itself as a communal whole. The intimate universal is at work in the instrumental universal and in the holistic universal. Thus with the striving for the holistic universal of erotic sovereignty there is the transformation of a mere many into the community of a people or the community of a political whole.

Relative to the political whole, sovereignty bears on the issue of power in society, and the center(s) of highest governing authority in a community. Generally, modern theory has tended to stress the univocity of that center but the intimate universal reveals the need to think of plurivocity here. The sources of sovereignty are inseparable from the idiocy or *intimacy of communal being*, where there is an overdeterminacy of reserves of social power. These reserves cannot be univocally identified with this power or that. The sources of social power are surplus (re)sources. There is a companioning endowment: given to the many before the many gives the power to itself, or gives itself to itself and so finds its own distinctive identity as itself for the first time. I say overdeterminacy in the intimacy, since this surplus (re)source of secret power is not always concretized as this determinate power or that. My sense is that the theories about sovereignty that invoke a *contract* or a *general will* make these secret resources *much too determinate*. Partners must already be determinate participants in a shared enterprise before they can enter a contract. Likewise, the notion of general will is more indeterminate than overdeterminate, and will always tempt us to make it more determinate than the (re)sources truly are. There is rather an intimate overdeterminacy of the reserves of power. I would relate this to our transcending powers, understood in a social sense, and allowing also the difference of erotic and agapeic transcending. Sovereignty is aligned more with the erotic than the agapeic, and so we might speak of a general eros rather than, with Rousseau, of a general will. Of course, if the universal is intimate, it is not a mere generality, but the

point is worth making in these terms in any case. The general eros (equivocally a love of the universal) refers us to the intimate energies of desire circulating in a people, and does not at the outset immediately refer to the eros of (potential) rulers. This eros circulates in a community, and because we think it is inchoate we think it is indeterminate; but again I would say it is more overdeterminate than indeterminate, since the recessed resources are surplus rather than a matter of lack. A many may not know this eros more determinately, and understand its intimate connection with its own social self-determination, until a singular exemplar or groups of exemplars somehow succeed in incarnating it—incarnating it in an exemplary way, that is, concentrating what Hegel would call the social substance of a people. Sovereignty in the more explicit sense begins to crystallize itself in and through such exemplary incarnations. Even if it is a singular hero/heroine who embodies it, this incarnation is yet a social incarnation, an incarnation of the social togetherness with which the many were hitherto intimate but incognizant, beyond longing.

If "will" is a particular determination emergent from the overdeterminate eros, the sources of social sovereignty are not in a determinate will of the people. Sovereignty crystalizes from the overdeterminate energizing of the erotics of social being, at work prior to all determinate willing of this or of that. In an important sense, the "people" is ignorant of what is desired, and indeed of what it "wills," until some intimate determinations of the overdeterminate eros are incarnated in exemplars, now denominated as having claims to be sovereign. More definite will comes to be out of the overdeterminate eros that, precisely because there is an excess to all determination about it, can be both inspiring and dangerous, and perhaps both at once. The erotic threshold on which the eros of a people is crystallized requires both the self-relation of a people and its relation to other peoples. But as the latter can be foes as well as friends, so also the former can be a communal self-willing that curves back to stress simply its own self-identity or a porous boundary on which a communal identity released beyond itself can be freed.

The sources are not in a contract, since contract represents the social expression of a people's power in terms of *too-determinate acts of calculated will*. There is an unknowing social fidelity operative before calculative reason and its contracts. General eros is not a general *will*, for will is also too determinate. Nor is it divine *will*, if we think of this as an absolutely determining source that determines univocally all that flows from it, marking it with a univocally predetermined plan (which those in power claim to

know, represent, and execute). The sources of power are more primordial than the determinate will. Humanly speaking, the sources have rather to do with the intimate eros of transcending power to be that is more than every determinacy, and that, as rooted in the intimacy of being, is finally never separable from the agape of being. Ultimately this has to be referred to the *gift* of the endowed power to be that is communicated into being by the overdeterminate origin. This source of power is *more primordial than will to power*. The intimate gift of endowed power does, it is true, allow the possibility of equivocity, since the power, as our own, can take itself as simply our own rather than as endowed. This equivocity also allows the overlapping of erotic sovereignty with forms of will to power that simply affirm themselves and nothing other than themselves. But this contraction of the affirmation is not absolutely necessitated, and indeed the originating eros as affirming from the outset beyond itself makes this possible.

This view of originally endowed power can be occluded by some of the connotations of the word "sovereign." "Sovereign" comes from the French *souverein*, from vulgar Latin *superanus*, "someone who is above." Hence the connection with "being above," indeed being supreme. We are moving in the family of words such as *super* (Latin), or *huper*, or *über*. Being on top, being first, being number one, enjoying supremacy, not being subordinate; being in the position of height: this is to be a position of "being above." If there is a being exalted, is "being above" a *self*-exaltation? How so "above" if the sources of communal power are deep in the intimacy of the general eros? If sovereignty emerges in the erotics of our self-surpassing being, every "being above" refers back to the deeper sources of power immanent in our being. These rock us back on the idiocy of the intimate universal. This idiocy might be the seed of our divine promise, but the equivocity of eros reveals a double potency, namely, the twinning of power and lack. Power is expressed in a process of self-becoming, whereby the lack is overcome, and desire comes into something of its own fulfillment. We seek a kind of wholeness in this, and erotic sovereignty communicates some achieved expression of a powerful wholeness. This does not eradicate struggle and suffering; indeed without them the achievement hardly makes sense; the achievement is most often an episode of resolved suffering, or suffering transfigured by the ingression of a grace from beyond itself.

Once more too individualistic a view is not fitting, since we stand on the shoulders of predecessors who show something of already achieved

excellence. The erotic sovereign might claim exemplary supremacy but in fact then the humble mimetics of receiving from other precedent originals is occluded by ingratitude. Erotic sovereignty, even in the exemplary singular individual, cannot be understood without relation to the other. We can experience our porosity as a lack, like a hole, for there seems nothing there, a lack as more like a chaos, hiding perhaps hidden horrors, such that we feel impelled beyond the gaping void, going toward others, in a way to shield us against the reminder of our fragile finitude. In our vulnerability to nothingness, we secure ourselves through our own powerful self-affirmation, but we could never do this if we did not go toward the others who give us ourselves back. Given to ourselves, we surpass ourselves, but we do not come to ourselves until we are given back to ourselves. Our self-determining is bounded by these extremes: our being given to be and our being given back to ourselves. It is porous at the threshold of its own initiative and at the boundary of its own achievement. It is a between-being always. The intermediation with the others gives us back to ourselves beyond lack. Without intermediating and confirming others, we would throw ourselves beyond ourselves, again and again, beyond the ever-returning lack, exploiting our twin power always to "project" ourselves one more time into the void that will never return us to ourselves. Were this the end of the matter, desire would be a futile striving into nothing, out of nothing, swindled by the freakish flash of its own self-affirming power in the pointless between. We remain oblivious of the deeper participation in the intimate universal at the very roots of our being given to be at all, until we touch the other who, in return, touches us and returns us both to the love of being that is prior to us both. The return of our affirming power to itself as confirmed power is served by passage toward and into and through the others.

True, we ignore or forget the others who have given us to ourselves. Ungrateful autonomy thinks it has generated itself purely out of itself. The social intermedium, the ethos of relatedness that has enabled it to be itself, is forgotten. In fact, ungrateful autonomy may resent being entangled *at all* in the bonds of intermediation, given the doubleness of these bonds as communicating between erotic sovereignty (as for itself) and the enabling communal intermedium (as reflecting the desire of the others). This intermedium might seem a smart to its asserted claim to being free *above* the intermedium. The result can be that it is resentful of *being given anything at all.* It does not want to be in the position of receiver at all.

So it finds itself at odds with the primal porosity, and contemptuous of any *passio essendi*. Accentuating its *conatus essendi* as singularly self-affirming, it recoils from being in the debt of any other, for debt shows it not to be absolutely above the others but, despite all protestations to the contrary, always to be in an incontrovertible solidarity with the others. There can be hidden hatred of the others for placing one in their debt. But hatred is incontrovertibly to be in a *bond* with the others, even in violently *breaking* the bond. This we often find with erotic sovereignty: its being stressed between its debt and its "being above," between its need of the others and its being full of itself, between its sustenance by the intermedium of social relations and its desire to stand over all such relations.

Such an elemental ambiguity seems to be constitutive of erotic sovereignty. We cannot disentangle claims to singular sovereignty from a sustaining social intermedium. We cannot disentangle claims to superiority from indebtedness to hidden intimacies of endowed power. We cannot disentangle claims to supreme power from the powerlessness that is the other side of endowed power, since without the givenness of enabled power there is no being empowered at all. If we look at perhaps the two main traditional theories of sovereignty, we find a reflection of this ambiguity. The ambiguity mirrors something in the differences between erotic sovereignty and agapeic service. The old view saw sovereignty as ultimately deriving from the divine (*non est enim potestas nisi a Deo*, St. Paul, Romans 13:1). The more recent view sees the source as the will of subjects (popular sovereignty, for instance). These two views, of course, can be diversely related, and each is full of its own ambiguities. For what a people is and what its will is are by no means univocal, and much recedes into intimate, sometimes impenetrable equivocity when the (general) eros of a people is at stake. The power of God is mysteriously overdeterminate. So were one, on the other side, to grant that all power ultimately is a grant of the divine origin, the idea of the divine at issue is also not univocal, and diverse conceptions will be mirrored in diverse conceptions of powers, and perhaps vice versa, if our "god" is a projection of the will to power of a people (as Nietzsche, for instance, seemed comfortable to grant about the earlier Jews). An overt politics of worldly will to power can conceal a covert theology of nothing. Nothing is God. Depending on one's "political theology," there is no necessary connection between granting the divine grant and totalitarian theocracy, most certainly not, if the divine offers an agapeic grant. Carl Schmitt is famous for his manner

of claiming that modern political concepts are secularized theological ideas. Not as much in evidence in these discussions, and this is true of Schmitt also, is *finessed theology*, theology that has an intimate feel for different conceptions of the divine. Our understanding of God will shape as much the theological side of "political theology" as the political. It makes a crucial difference if we have finesse for the agapeics of the divine in how then we approach the politics of erotic sovereignty, indeed how we also understand the ambiguity of erotic sovereignty itself. If there is only the empty space of nothing (rather than the enabling porosity of being) with respect to that agapeics, or if it is denied or pushed out of the picture entirely, erotic sovereignty will itself mutate, and the chances of a tilt toward a more dubious, even destructive understanding of (will to) power will ensue. Divine sovereignty will be viewed, say, as an ideological superstructure hiding the absolutist will to power of the monarch or the ruling few. Taking note of the agapeics of the divine reveals the impossibility of this view, or rather its mutilation of what divine sovereignty might be.

What of the medieval theory of the two powers, temporal and spiritual? Did it only derive temporal power from God to sanction an absolutism of temporal power in worldly immanence? That the theory might be used, or abused, that way may be so, but that it was meant to be taken that way does not make sense. What is to the fore is the divine measure as the highest measure, a measure hyperbolically superior relative to all measures of human power, a measure measureless and thus severely limiting any absolutizing of temporal power. One thinks of Aquinas: the point is not just the subordination of temporal power to spiritual powers, but perhaps a kind of *apophatic reverence* for the eternal law as prior to natural law, itself prior to positive law as proclaimed and enacted by the worldly sovereign. The difference was ultimate between delegated power and the ultimate source of delegating power. The sovereign was a *servant*. This is not at all Nietzsche's "Roman Caesar with the soul of Christ," for Nietzsche's remarkable suggestion is governed by the economy of self-affirming will to power in which the agapeics of the divine ends up warped, as does the sense of the "superior" and of the "supreme." The agapeics of the divine transforms the erotics of sovereignty. It calls to account any temptation to *superbia*. The service of the political sovereign is mediately a divine service, in between the superior God and world as both glorious and wretched, in being in service of the good of the people. It is not will to power that is sovereign but justice as the fitting governance of endowed

power. The sovereign throne was not to forget that fear and trembling were the penitential thorns pleated into its coronation crown.

It is entirely consistent with the notion of erotic sovereignty that often our understandings of God and political power remarkably intertwine. I see this once again in light of the intimate universal. There is nothing more intimate than God, and nothing more universal, and we might anticipate a shift in each depending on how we understand the intimate universal. If we understand our own being in its intimacy in terms of a deep-down stress on *conatus essendi* without proper contact with the *passio* and the porosity, then we will tend to find the erotics as tilting in the direction of *eros turannos.* And this too will go hand in hand with an idea of God closer to the image of the tyrannical heteronomy, against which, as the "big Other," modern autonomy is in revolt. Commentators have pointed out rightly that the idea of absolute monarchy is a modern notion, not medieval, and not Augustinian-Platonic either. One can see a version of divine sovereignty as absolutely unilateral and univocal determination as making a tango with modern monarchical absolutism, with its self-insistent urge to take over and centralize power (and there is a third too: nature no longer a creation but an absolutely determined machine).

I know that the standard picture of modernity is also one where the liberation of humanity from heteronomous powers is celebrated. But in fact the idea of a divine measure superior to political sovereignty is compatible with so-called popular sovereignty, said to be a creation of the modern age. There were thinkers who thought that God did not determine his worldly representative, in the absence of the mediate way of the consent of the people (I am thinking of Suárez, for instance, and Cardinal Bellarmine, but there were others). The worldly sovereignties might be less univocal and more plurivocal. With an agapeics of the divine the univocally centralized model of sovereignty is open to question, since with this agapeics one could suppose a communication of political power in accord with the adage *omne bonum est diffusivum sui*. This diffusion is not to be seen as a univocal determination by force of power, but a plurivocal overdetermination by grace of endowed enabling. Generally in modernity we find a univocalization of power and, with this, a form of monotheism where the same concentration of power is univocalized. If the human affirms its freedom, as *conatus essendi*, and indeed as to be *the* One in immanence, then the stress in erotic sovereignty is resolved on the side of giving all to ourselves and receiving nothing, of being in debt to nothing other than ourselves.

The tyrannical heteronomy of the "big Other" must then be the enemy of the self-determining human being (Bakunin, for instance, is a classic example of this). The intimate universal in which we participate goes underground, and we claim to be the focus of a project of the universal, our own self-universalization, in the intimacy of immanent being, here and nowhere else. The divine, seen thus, is not the agapeic companion of freedom but the enemy of our erotic thrust for full self-determining being. It is not surprising that sexuality becomes such a contested space in relation to God, and the claimed liberation of the human. But this contestation is only a sexually accented form of a more pervasive war between human and divine power. If each of these is said to be the one and only source of significant power, one must subjugate or subsume or liquidate the other to fulfill the logic of univocity as applied to sovereignty. Spousal economics, spousal erotics become hard to credit.

It need hardly be recalled that significant trends in modernity drive toward the human consolidation of power as *for itself*. This cannot be uncoupled from a change in the meaning of justice which, previously referred to the divine measure, now is weakened in its priority to power. We univocalize nature as other, we try to univocalize God, and our own self-understanding gets caught up in the same project of univocalization, now enacted in our project of absolute self-determination. The absolutely determining God as other must go, and even nature as subject to determination is ultimately so determined as serving our project of self-determination. All of this is in the name of freedom, of course, the one god who seems to escape liquidation, perhaps because it seems to be the power to liquidate all other gods, and perhaps even itself. There is none other beside it. If this deification of freedom is governed by the law of the same (*auto-nomos*), how to prevent this apotheosis of autonomy leading to tyranny? We seem to have an absolutism that is its own law (*auto-nomos*) and hence above every law. If there is something of this in absolutist monarchy, how different is this from an atheistic totalitarianism? There might be fear and trembling in the first, while in the second fear and trembling become the means of indoctrination and redoctrination of what Hobbes rightly called the Leviathan, namely, the "mortal god." Fear and trembling open the intimate porosity to unholy terror and the liquidation of the will of individuals. We see this with many modern masters of unholy terror, be they a Lenin, or a Stalin, or a Hitler, or a Mao, or a Pol Pot. The liquidation is deeply intimate, and the terrified porosity serves a project that,

while claiming to be universal, is finally infernal. There is no reverence for the agapeic divinity as above and beyond all our world-historical projects. Fiendish music comes again from the Bull of Phalaris, though it holds us spellbound, and the singing cicadas have fallen ominously silent. We are in the belly of the beast and no one can answer to the name of Jonah.

And so we can connect the erotics of the intimate universal with the reconfiguration of the ground of power in modernity, insofar as this is inseparable from a will to power seeking autonomous self-determination. But the latter is not fully true to the erotics, in distorting the priority of the porosity and the *passio*, and hence also not true to the intimate universal that now mutates into a project of will-full *conatus*. Once having made God into a univocal, unilateral power to determine, we set out to negate that God as incompatible with our claims to be free. But our claim to be free thus is also under the spell of the project of conceiving all being, ourselves included, in terms of a more and more univocal will to power. As the spell of univocity spreads its disenchanting enchantment, God disappears or becomes incredible, and we become governed by a default atheism of which we are scarcely conscious. We live in the time of default atheism. The erotics of the intimate universal does not find itself then on the threshold of the agapeics of the divine that qualifies and obliges our exercises of enabled power. The erotics turns down into the darkness below the ground of the underground rather than ascending up to the surface of the earth and the light above us. The free air above us might take the wind out of the sails of our autonomous self-determination and we resent that thought as deflating our afflatus. We see in our self-made univocalization of divine power something that makes it appear as a tyrannical heteronomy but we have to ask if it is our own will to power that conjured this idol of divine tyranny. There is nothing but a dubious confusion between the human and the divine in this idol. Erotics (as *sunousia*) is not bereft of confusion—but this "fusion with" (*con-fusio*) of love is different from the fusion in which true differences are set at naught in the name of immanent sameness. Is it the God-man or the man-God? The time of default atheism has not answered this question. The man-God of our confusion is the inheritor of the mortal God—without the immortal God. This idol wastes the earth in the name of the idol of immanent confusion, when at the end of the absolute project we will create a new god of the earth who is to be all in all, though without wise blood, and shedding much, too much blood, in the name of counterfeit doubles of social wisdom.

CHAPTER 8

The Agapeics of the Intimate Universal

The Recess of the Agapeic: Incognito Generosity

Eros has recurrently been a concern of philosophy; indeed as already suggested, there is an erotics of reason that might be seen as constitutive of the philosophical quest. There is also an acknowledgment of friendship in philosophy and something of the fastness of *philia* enters in the love of philosophy for wisdom. We do not find an analogous philosophical concern for agape. Perhaps this is because it is often held that agape is a specifically Christian concern, while supposedly philosophy is Greek and, in a certain sense, pagan. The thought would be: it is appropriate for Christian theologians to reflect on agapeic love, especially as present in sacred scripture, but for the rest, and especially the philosopher, this would be too confining by far, in an all-but-sectarian sense. And so we philosophers shift uneasily at the mention of the agapeic.[1] One even finds the theologian not entirely comfortable at the prospect that *philosophical* thought might address the agapeic.

The contrasts implied in these views are not, I think, finessed enough, especially if there is an agapeics of the intimate universal. The agapeic cannot be confined to one religious tradition, and though it may mark

intimately a particular religious tradition, there is a promise of the universal in it, and hence there may be something to it that is also constitutive of our deepest and most ultimate seeking for truth and goodness. Of course, such seeking is not a matter of a theory or a system, but is of an ultimate love at work in our intimate being that finds communication in the possibility of agapeic mindfulness and community. As in principle open in an unrestricted sense, philosophical thought cannot ghettoize, or sectarianize, or declare beyond the pale of respectable reason the agapeic.

In initially broad terms the contrast of the erotics and agapeics might be put this way: in one there seems to be a desire lacking fulfillment, yet seeking it; in the other, there is a surplus love exceeding itself from a fullness already real. In eros the porosity of being is taken over by the striving to be of the *conatus*, seeking in and through the other to come to some self-fulfillment. In agape the love of being in porosity to the other does not need or insist on being self-fulfilled in relation to the other but offers the service of a compassionate goodness given for the other qua other. This contrast is not sufficient, however, if we set up a dualism of the two. We have already seen how the intimate universal is at work in the recesses of the idiotics, in the appearances of the aesthetics, and in the self-surpassing of the erotics. The presence of the intimate universal is already there as the promise of the agapeics. By way of absolving the dualism, one could remember that eros is not void of the promise of agapeic generosity. There is a porosity to the divine origin in it; the *passio* can participate in the deepest receptivity and patience; and the striving of the *conatus* can be the energy of a self-surpassing that knows it is most deeply energized by something more than itself. Eros seeks more than itself in seeking itself because its energized striving is already empowered by a secret agapeic surplus to which it is (called) to remain true, though it is free to turn it away and turn itself awry.

Perhaps another reason for the recess of the agapeic and its often incognito generosity of being has something to do with the following. It is often the case in modern (political) thought that the underlying motivation of all human association is seen in light of our lack and aggression. We are lack, given our vulnerability and exposure—this is porosity seen as open to the threat of what is other. We are aggression, given that in the exposure to threat we must secure ourselves over against the other—hence the porosity is closed with a security border. So we protect ourselves against what is other and this protection becomes the basis of other associative moves.

Thus Hobbes and others following him (one might consult Carl Schmitt in our time): it is the fear of death rather than the love of life that moves all associative relations. Without the fear of death we might live in self-enclosed contentment or containment. But we are driven to make pacts or contracts with others, all with the purpose of securing the conditions of continued life against the threat of death. The other is a potential enemy, the condition of life is war, and eros becomes an eris. The eris is always on the verge of falling out of the affirming "to be" of eros and the course of this death governs without cease its want(ing) for power. Further to this, self-interest in some form rules all our motivation. Generosity is seen in this light as quid pro quo, understood on the economy of what comes back to one from what is expended beyond one. This is a self-circling economy—self-circling in the way the fear of death induces self-encirclement. Our contracts with the other merely widen self-encirclement. The mortal god is only the widest self-encirclement. We live not because we love life but because we fear death.

Against this, there is the agapeics of the intimate universal. There is an incognito generosity or surplus of affirmative "to be" as good that is always at work. This is driven out of the foreground of the picture with this stated way of thinking. Yet it is more elemental and original. We do not become socially associated; we are what we are in an always already at work association.[2] The meaning of this is something more than ourselves individually—it is also something more than the self-mediation of a particular community. It is participation in something more primal, a community more primal that this or that determinate or self-determinate community—this is the overdeterminate commons.

One might argue that it is this surplus generosity of the agapeic that makes all community possible, though it does not receive the name of the agapeic. A "too muchness" of enabling power—enabling power as letting the good of particulars and communities realize itself, in one fashion or another. This is always presupposed but always forgotten when we focus only on the foreground of this or that determinate or self-determining community. There are signs of this in everyday life. Indeed could this life function at all without the nameless acts of enabling that allow the circulation of social power? What I do enables me, but I am enabled, and my being enabled enables others and so with all others: there is an infinitely intricate network of never fully determinate and never fully self-determining intermediations of ourselves and others. This is all carried

overdeterminately by the affirmative energy of the "to be." And all this is saturated with worth; it is not neutral or finally indifferent. Some signs of this generosity—a cashier smiles at the checkout—this is the incognito generosity. When I defer to my colleague, there can be generosity in not needlessly confronting and enflaming him or her, though s/he be more sinner than sinned against. There can be incognito generosity when I remain quiet lest I offend the other by candor. Of course, there can be cowardly quietness. When I reach out a rose—this is the incognito generosity. When I have power to hurt and will do none—this willingness consents to generosity being incognito. The services we offer and receive—these too witness the incognito generosity. A sudden access of insight—this out-of-nowhere understanding is enabled by the incognito generosity. A surge of inspiration and the right wording comes—the poetics of the incognito generosity of the influx of light. A moment of healing forgiveness, not willed as such, but coming to one as coming over one—this too witnesses the incognito generosity. True, we are often lacking in generosity, but this shows not only our lack of generosity but the generosity that allows us to be lacking in generosity. All given, all gifted, nothing forced, everything too much, nothing merited, all allowed—we only have to say "yes" for the generosity to begin to pass beyond being incognito to a name. Even this "yes" often is itself an incognito generosity and does not know that it has affirmed and that it is what it is in virtue of the communicated affirmation. There is no need for the communication to be known as such in the happening of it—for it is a happening. At issue is not a self-conscious gesture but a happening that is neither of you nor of me, but is always between us. The ether that carries the intermediation is itself the between-ness of generosity as a giving and receiving between a many. This happening is incessant. It is, in a sense, the nature of things. When humans think only in terms of what they can acknowledge with some degree of self-consciousness, they are being blind to what is going on. We seem to think as if this between awaited our baptism to be itself, but it is more true that it is we who need to be baptized, not it. And this, for us to be initiated expressly into this community. One who wakes up to this incognito generosity begins to see life as a gift—as a good gift and a gift of good. The incognito generosity communicates of the intimate universal.

When we are self-circling selves, we wait for death; we do not live; and we are not awake to the gift of the incognito generosity; we do not thank

that on which we now feast; we have encircled ourselves and we keep death outside the circle—for now. But this is not to live—as if life were only a prelude to postponed death, a prelude that precludes life. The incognito generosity allows us to live beyond death in life, before death comes to us. A person "full of life": such a one we admire. And beyond death in life a truer sense of community can come to be—not out of incognito generosity but out of generosity with a face, and even one with a name.

Ultimately, the religious character of the issue cannot be avoided, and this will keep returning. The intimate universal is witnessed by the community of agapeic service, in which the metaxological relation to the divine, in its intimacy and its universality, comes to manifestation. The intimate universal has to do with this as the consummate community in which there is a commons of the divine, a sacred *koinonia* in which our most intimate heart is engaged in love's quest and enjoyment. This agapeics of the intimate universal is beyond the dominion of serviceable disposability, and also beyond the power of sovereignty we find especially in the political realm. There is an original trust in the good, immanent in the idiotics, aesthetics, and erotics of the intimate universal, here most tested and most redeemed. We seem to come out of nothing in birth, and return to nothing in death. Is there an elemental trust in the good of the "to be" more than nothing? In our sojourn in the between, is there an agapeics of the intimate universal that is more than nothing, and more than us also? An agapeics of trust that, even in coming to nothing, is more than nothing? Death is a mystery, as is birth. To conclude we know it to be nothing is as untrue as to conclude that we know with rationalistic certitude that it is more. Birth and death are thresholds and transitions, and as the radical transition of birth is creation, the radical transition of death may not be nothing, but resurrection. In the face of the nothing, the agapeics keeps promise with life, is itself the love that gives life and the love that affirms life, even in its darkest hours. If one were to speak religiously, one would say the kingdom of heaven is among us: the agapeics of the intimate universal is now. Yet the kingdom of heaven is to come—this is the call of the agapeics to be true to its promise of the community of goodness, goodness human and more. We can make this into the kingdom of erotic sovereignty by drawing a boundary around the intermedium of the between. The porosity is appropriated as our space—to be guarded or expanded, as will to power desires or makes possible. Still Caesar and his empire come second, are derivative from the incognito of the agapeics.

Friendship, Intimate Universality, and Tyrannical Eros

Can friendship throw light on the intimate universal? Friendship is not quite eros or agape, and in some ways is between these two, but there is a long tradition in which friendship is of immense importance, from the Pythagoreans, through the major philosophers, ancient and medieval, through varieties of refractions of friendship in religious communities from early Christianity to the high Middle Ages and the threshold of modernity.[3] Friendship seems to have fallen into relative neglect in modern philosophy, though it is not entirely absent, in Montaigne, for instance, in Kant,[4] in Nietzsche. More recently, Derrida, has offered us his politics of friendship.[5]

I want to suggest that a kind of *eros turannos* has thrust itself to the fore in modernity, with consequences, not only for the thrusting to one side of the heavenly eros, but also for the *recessing* of friendship as well as agape. Of course, friendship as a human happening is not lacking in modernity. The reality of our condition is that we need, seek, and offer friendship in various ways. This reality may or may not be reflected in the concerns of thinkers, or even a culture at large. One senses that eros, or variations of it, is less and less recessive and reserved. Indeed in the last hundred years or so, the rejection of reserve has led to more and more shameless expressions of eros. Such unreserved expressions lead to a peculiar erotic result: the destruction of the very intimacy of the essence to eros. Unreserved eros produces a form of *eros turannos*, for which there is nothing intimate to be guarded. Everything intimate is to be broken into, even to the point of desecration. In this light, or darkness, the tyrant and the torturer are inseparable. Both hate the secret intimacy of love. *Eros turannos* is finally a hatred of the very love of eros itself. Does a culture that cannot tell the difference between the intimate love of *eros* and pornography show itself to be in collusion with such tyranny?

This recess of friendship has consequences for the expression of human power, and the meaning of its measure. Thinkers like Heidegger are not wrong in referring to modernity as an epoch of will to power, but can this claim be applied to the whole of the Western tradition? An important consideration is the fact that tyranny has been an abiding concern of philosophers since ancient times, a concern inseparable from an engagement with friendship. We find this, for instance, in Xenophon's *Hiero*

and, importantly for us here, in Plato's philosophy. Running through his work is a horror of tyranny. Tyranny is something monstrous. And yet this monstrousness is what we humans manifest. Plato's recounting of the savagery of our dreams is telling enough of our monstrousness. The tyrant wakes and lives his feral dream.

Consider *Macbeth* as a study of a tyranny that steps beyond good and evil and the moral measure. Before he commits his regicide, Macbeth hesitates, and says under provocation from Lady Macbeth: "I dare do all that may become a man; who dares do more is none" (*Macbeth*, 1.7.48–49). And then Macbeth does more. The result is not only the murder of the lawful king, God's anointed, but the inexorable unfolding of a monstrous tyranny in which the daring to do more must lead in the end to nothing but death, lead to nothing. Tyrannical daring dooms itself, and death is its desert. And the question comes: What becomes a man? What is it to become a man? What is becoming for a man? The question is not only what we are to become. The question is: What is comely, what becoming, in the sense of the fitting? What is fitting, given the eros of the human creature as capable of surpassing itself? Of being itself, yet willing to be more, of becoming what one is by becoming what one is not? We cannot but become what we are, though what we are is not all that we can become. We are ourselves and not ourselves. This double condition is both unstable and powerful, and puts us to the question: What are we to become, what is it to become a man, what will become of us? Tyranny germinates in that double condition of instability and power.

Eros reveals that we are the exceeding of definite limits, but the measure of that exceeding is not univocally evident. What is becoming for us when we become what exceeds all determinate measure? How to find measure, if we exceed such determinate measure? The human being might be the measure of all things, as Protagoras averred, but is it the measure of *itself*? Is there not something about us that is not to be determinately measured? How then to find a becoming measure in our exceeding of determinate measure? How to be becomingly human, how to find true measure, in the exceeding of measure? Our erotic self-surpassing might seem to carry us to something higher, and yet we secrete our own monstrousness, in this exceeding of measure. Thus Socrates's perplexity (*Phaedrus*, 230e): Am I a monster more swollen with rage like Typhon, or a creature of a more gentle or divine lot? Recall too the story of the magic ring of Gyges in the *Republic* (359d–360c). It bears on the tyrant, on the friend, on excess

and measure. I mean: When we are not measured by fear of the other, or by exposure, or detection, as Gyges was when the magic ring made him invisible, does our desire become a boundless tyranny without measure?[6] Or contrariwise, is there another measure that measures us, even though we are invisible to everyday exposure? Such a measure seems not to be amenable to "objectification." It seems to be a recessive measure in the intimacy of the soul itself, there where also the temptation of the monstrous arises. Is this connected with the intimate universal?

One might read the *Republic* as a philosophical dialogue seeking to follow an Ariadne's thread of logos to the intimate and invisible measure, exceeding us as the measure, and yet, while intimate, standing above us. This measure would enable us to see what often is not seen, and itself is not exhausted by what can be "seen" in any univocal appearance. Such a measure could not be determined in univocal geometrical terms. It would have to be discerned by means of a wise finesse. Finesse is needed to be mindful of the subtler insinuations of our deepest loves and friendships. Pascal, to whom I allude, suggests that this exceeding of the human is a token of our double condition of grandeur and wretchedness. What then offers the measure to us in our exceeding of measure? Can we offer it to ourselves? Must we be called by a friend to ourselves, lest our excess yield to its own monstrous possibilities? Is the friend needed to save us from tyranny? Is the friend enough to save us?

To say a little more about Plato: He is not only concerned about political tyranny, the more general, but about the tyrannical soul, the more intimate, where the germ of the tyrannical state takes seed. (Socrates and this intimacy: what we all hate most is the lie in the soul—382b.) The tyrannical soul begins to be shaped in a childhood (essentially friendless), where a lawless upbringing produces an uncontrolled and passionate nature. The genesis of this lawless nature is one of the reasons; Socrates reminds us why eros has long been called a tyrant (*turannos ho eros*, 573b7–8). We are offered the brutal image of the human being become a wolf. The tyrant reproduces the myth told at the shrine of the Lycaean Zeus in Arcadia: the story goes that he who tastes of one bit of human entrails minced in with those of other victims is inevitably transformed into a wolf (565d4–7, 566a4–5).

Plato offers us images, but he also presents us with dramatic figures. Thus the incarnation of the bluster of the tyrant, without the lethal power, in the figure of Thrasymachus. Thrasymachus hurls himself into the discussion

like a beast ready to tear the others to pieces (336b6–7). He sings the praises of the tyrant for his power to overreach on a great scale (*ton megala dunamenon pleonektein*, 344a1). The contrast with Socrates dramatizes the issue. To the violence of Thrasymachus, there is the counterresistance of Socrates, who through the *leading of words* tries, in the long run, to make a friend, perhaps even of the truculent Thrasymachus.[7] It is hard to put out of mind the perhaps subtler Nietzsche when listening to Thrasymachus, his perhaps cruder blood brother. A defect of piety, a defection from reverence, marks the tyrannical soul. In the *Republic* it is evident that the tyrant lacks filial piety—he is willing even to commit parricide. He is as lacking in the inner measure of *sophrosunē* as in the outer measure of piety. Socrates talks of the tyrant as expecting to rule not only men but also gods (573c3). We are reminded of the Nietzschean apostrophe: no God above me, and no man either! It is expressly said (576a4–7)[8] that the tyrant has no friends, and no taste of true friendship. He lives surrounded by enemies. The only friends the tyrant has are his bodyguards. If these are friends, it is not the friendship of excellence, but of serviceable though violent disposability. It is either mastery or servility, but never friendship. And there seems no possibility of any service at all, certainly not in any agapeic sense.

For Plato, we are in an opposite situation with the philosopher. Injustice brings enmity and conflict (*misē kai machai*), while justice brings unity of mind and friendship (*homonoian kai philian*, 351d). The just person "becomes a friend [*philos*] to himself" (443d7); the best man is most kingly and a king over himself, not at all tyrannical (580b10–c5). The philosophical guardians' care for the city and its justice is a matter of *philia*, not eros. It is interesting that when Plato talks about the three kinds of life, and the pleasure (*hedonē*) peculiar to each, these are each described as forms of *philia*. The three kinds of life (*Republic*, 581c) show the person as a friend of wisdom (*philosophos*), a friend of victory or honor (*philonikos*), or a friend of gain (*philokerdēs*). The philosopher as a friend is called to account, not only with regard to justice in relation to others, but as being under the measure of the Good. Only by being in relation to this as the absolute measure do we find measure ourselves, in the exceeding of measure. Clearly Plato was intimately familiar with this exceeding, given his own account of that other form of love central to human existence, as well as to the philosophical life: eros.

I stress a crucial doubleness in Plato. In the *Republic*, eros is dramatized in its tyrannical form; by contrast, in the *Symposium*, the philosopher,

in Socratic guise at least, seems to bring to embodiment the ennobling eros that is not tyrannical. We need to recall the equivocal aspect of the doubleness—the mingling of instability and power mentioned above. We need to recall in the *Symposium* the double parentage of eros, from *penia* (poverty) and *poros* (resource). In the plastic mix of instability and power, eros can take on different forms, now tyrannical, now heavenly or *ouranian*. It would be false to Plato only to pay attention to his struggle against tyrannical eros; and yet it would be equally false to deny his familiarity with it. The *Republic* lays out a medicinal catharsis of the tyrannical possibilities of eros—its temptation to monstrous power. Yet the catharsis does not destroy eros, but enables right eros (on *orthos eros*, see *Republic* 403a7–9). It leaves the soul's energy of self-surpassing more purely porous to the Good. It enables a poverty (*penia*) that is rich by being a porosity to the Good above it.[9]

What, then, of the recessing of friendship in modernity? We are familiar with Descartes's dream of making us "masters and possessors of nature," but where do friends figure in his fable about his own scientific destiny? Do we put friends on the rack to make them answer questions of our devising, as Bacon might have it? Where are friends in Hobbes's world of war? Nothing but the perpetual inconstancy of our desire for power after power that ceases only in death. This is a sketch not of the friend, but of the tyrant. Perhaps there were voices speaking from other directions, Rousseau perhaps, though there is a tyranny of sentiment too. Suspicion seems to have taken root. It is the ethos of being that is devalued when the given otherness is stripped of any charge of inherent value. The promise of the hospitality of being is sent into recess as the threat of the hostile is made more and more express. Perhaps religious and aesthetic concern with the sublime is a reaction against this, but the reaction can repeat the problem if we lack requisite finesse. There is a way of thinking of ourselves as sublime that scores an own goal. In celebrating our grandeur we fake our finitude, and our sublimity can become a seedbed for tyranny. This we well know politically from the abuse of sublime aesthetics by tyrannical and totalitarian regimes. Counterfeits of the sublime in the dominion of serviceable disposability shock and awe the people, that is, terrorize them by the use of insinuating aesthetic means. Even more subtly, the circle of a people's desire is closed back on itself to excite its sublime self-intoxication.

The tyrant, admittedly, has been one of the sublime intoxicants for philosophers. Plato did go to Syracuse, but if he went intoxicated he came

home sober. Perhaps he went sober. Hegel thrilled to "this Emperor—this *Weltseele*, "astride a horse," a colossus straddling the world, surveying it in *reconnaître*, on the day before the battle of Jena, the great Napoleon.[10] What drew him was not exactly the same as what excited that assassin of the millennia, Nietzsche. Napoleon—"this synthesis of the *inhuman* and the *superhuman*," he in whom Nietzsche finds "the problem of the *noble ideal as such* made flesh."[11] The cunning of reason sometimes looks too clever by half. Marx's critique, armed with weaponed concepts, anticipated the dictatorship of the proletariat, but incited worse tyranny than the czar's, as Bakunin foretold. There are those who throw sand in our eyes when they tell us Nietzsche was prophetic. Those whose eyes weep without sand can see there are false prophets. One recalls also some left-wing sons of Hegel who were drunk on the terrorism of revolutionary theory. Lesser luminaries like Kojève were exoteric Hegelians but esoteric sympathizers of Stalinism. One might not go quite so far about Sartre but still he made no protest. All honor to Camus. His witness could not prevent others like Foucault, and Sartre again, falling under the spell of the great helmsman, Mao. A strategic accommodation, it will be said. By our friends we will be known, it will also be said. And also by our accommodations, temporary or not. If Plato knew the proximity of the philosophical and tyrannical soul,[12] his entire work might be seen as a therapy of philosophical finesse that seeks to offer a prudential inoculation. I agree, of course, that it would be churlish to mention Heidegger's choice for Hitler. Are we not here dealing with a counterfeit of the sublime—intoxicating perhaps, but backed by nothing beyond the resolute say-so of Heidegger's dictatorial will or Hitler's?

Admittedly, then, something equivocal about the sublime suggests a hydra with many heads: no sooner is one snipped than another sprouts. Think of Kant's moral inoculation: the good will is not the say-so of this resolute will to obedience. Kant moralized the sublime: the "object" as other is not sublime, we are sublime in our moral destiny; and by a "subreption" we attribute to the object the sublimity properly belonging to us. This moralization suggests a devaluation of the sublime as genuinely other, testifying again to a deep equivocity in our relation to the other. And though the categorical imperative is a way of bringing into consideration the *other* rational agent, when I test myself against the universal rational other, this universal other remains faceless, without a singular name, and so I am not being tested by the other in a more deeply intimate respect.

The Kantian moral self's claim to rational autonomy keeps its distance. Query: Does not the equivocity about the other seep into Kant as *a worry about friendship*, a worry of trust, a hesitancy about exposing oneself, about being betrayed?[13] Is the homogeneous rational universal, beyond the intimate face of the singular person, the more trustworthy? How to expose oneself to such a universal? Is one exposed to anything other than oneself, finally, even oneself as other in the guise of homogeneous universal reason? But is this universal the more trustworthy if at the more intimate, elemental level no fundamental confidence is to be truly found? Is there also a kind of moral "subreption" in the categorical imperative: one tests oneself by attributing to the universal other what belongs to oneself? But if so, is not the whole strategy of homogeneous universalization shadowed by a more "subjective" autonomy, the very "subjectivism" from whose willful inconstancy the categorical imperative was supposed to release us? All these questions touch on the intimate universal, which remains, like friendship, recessed in Kant's approach.

A deeper ontological confidence is at issue in friendship. One might argue that those who know genuine friendship are more open to, and more released into, the promise of hospitality in being beyond themselves. They are opened to, and released into, a living in which the goodness of being is more express and more expressed. Our more intimate enjoyment of friendship is not separable finally from a relation to being as a whole. Those who insist on their autonomy and that alone risk an autism of being. Autistic people are in straits when it comes to friendship, just because of the retardation of communicability with the other. Those who live in friendship awaken more often to being in the midst of friendship. The *metaxu* of life offers an intermedium of friendship.

One wonders if Kant's cautionary attitude to friendship, warning of its disappointments and its failures, reflects a more general need first of safety, such as we find reflected in his discussion of the sublime. Again there is a kind of fear of exposure, a guardedness. Can one imagine Kant enduring the nakedness of Job, much less singing it in praise or prayer? Kant guards himself.[14] One of friendship's gifts is that it enables confidence. One can confide in a friend. Can one safely confide in a friend? This worries Kant. Confidence bears on the question of a *fides con*, a faith with. But this is not the faith for which Kant gave up knowledge, for his faith is the moral faith in autonomous morality. Kant retains faith with himself morally. By contrast, the confidence of the friend, in the friend, places us in a "with"

by means of which we are beyond ourselves, and implicitly in relation to being as other to us.

Without this confidence of friendship, what ontological consequences follow? Suspicion of being that is other, diffidence, guardedness: these strike one as characteristic of Kant. Caution is a moderate mask of being on guard, and this is itself a halfway house to hostility, haunted by apprehension that the otherness of being does not answer to one, as one would have it answer to one. One cannot let go. The "subreption" of caution produces the suspect(ed) other. What is *heteros* is made to carry the blame for this and, in the long run, the consequence. While undoubtedly a prudent guardedness is sometimes needed, if being on guard takes hold and defines a basic orientation to what is other, seeds of a kind of tyranny are sown. Such a being on guard can hide a latent posture of oppugnancy, a hostility in timid waiting.

It is worth asking how such critical caution can coexist with the audacious slogan *sapere aude!* In some instances, caution may express aspects of a hidden tyrannical nature. What is concealed in Spinoza's motto *caute!*—ostensibly the opposite of Kant's *sapere aude!*? Again we should not be surprised if autonomy can mutate into tyranny. If *to auto* is the *nomos*, everything *heteros* may be a potential threat, and hence either included in itself or rendered harmless or assassinated. There are different ways of including the other in oneself. Moderate forms of autonomy relativize their own temptation to tyranny. Kant fits this to a degree, though he failed to think fully through the meaning of this relativization. There is also a Jacobinism of moral autonomy that acts as an incitement to ethical and political terrorism. This will be shocking to some defenders of liberalism who again and again are stunned by the emergence at the heart of the autonomy of these tyrannical terrors. They are blithely sleeping to the monstrousness in the darker intimacies of the free soul. Modern liberal critics of Plato decry his disparagement of democracy but they pay no attention to his hatred of tyranny. It is that second hatred which expresses the kernel of the matter. Plato's fear of democracy is not a defense of tyranny but a genetic account of the tyrant's coming to be—from the democratic soul. Democracy, as he understood it, lends itself to an unbound autonomy of desire, and a homogenization of all desires and goods. High and low become indifferently the same. All discrimination between the better and the worse is lost. There is still something to this. Friendship can offer a salutary equality but there are other reductive equalizations

that are homogenizing in a flattening way. *Eros turannos*, deserting the finesse of both *eros ouranios* and agapeic generosity, leads to that equalization by reduction—in the extreme, by violence or death—in which all others are either possible means or threats, and then there are no friends, only enemies.

Today there are philosophers indoctrinated to recoil at the name of Plato, but perhaps the name of Shakespeare will allow us a less guarded response. I cite from *Troilus and Cressida*, where Ulysses speaks of the loss of "degree," that is, loss of the difference of higher and lower. This, I would say, would be a loss of the measure of finesse. The communal intermediation of the intimate universal would be disrupted. Without "degree" it would be impossible for there to be "communities, degrees in schools, and brotherhoods in cities, peaceful commerce" (1.3.103–5). The world itself would return to chaos (1.3.125). What is said strikingly echoes some of the words of Plato's *Republic*:

> Take but degree away, untune that string,
> And hark what discord follows. Each thing meets
> In mere oppugnancy. The bounded waters
> Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores
> And make a sop of all this solid globe:
> Strength should be lord of imbecility,
> And the rude son should strike his father dead;
> Force should be right; or rather, right and wrong,
> Between whose endless jar justice resides,
> Should lose their names, and so should justice too.
> Then everything includes itself in power,
> Power into will, will into appetite;
> And appetite, an universal wolf,
> So doubly seconded with will and power,
> Must make perforce an universal prey
> And last eat up itself. (1.3.109–24)

Who would speak as an enemy of freedom? Even tyrants speak of themselves as friends of freedom.[15] The issue is surely the interpretation of the different forms of freedom and their significance. There is not just one freedom or one form. This is what asks for great care, namely, the potentially protean character of freedom. Plato knew this, but was disturbed by

the monstrous possibilities in this protean character. This protean character is bound up with our being as porosity and *passio essendi*, as well as the plurivocal articulation of the *conatus essendi*.[16] While human eros is not "geometrically" determinable, it is becoming that it takes form under the measure of the good. Unconsidered celebrations of its "creativity" would strike him not only as ridiculous but as dangerous, in certain circumstances, even sinister. Socrates, we saw, speaks of a flattening homogeneity that dissolves the difference of higher and lower. This is not exactly the homogeneity of the neutered universal, yet in all of this, the will to power can slyly lie in wait. For autonomy can take a rhapsodic form, as in Nietzsche, as well as a rational form, as in Kant. The moderating power of genuine friendship, its qualitative "evening," proves important once again. It rescues freedom from both rationalistic calculation and the anonymous universal. The friend is a singular human, and the friendship of excellence is beyond faceless universality as well as utilitarian calculations of serviceable disposability. The friendship of excellence can also keep us from the baser equivocities of some rhapsodic forms. Why? Because it is bound to a personal name. The personal name of friendship gives anchor or ballast to the rhapsodic energies of joy. There are no anonymous orgies of friendship.[17]

Nietzschean Friendship and the Intimate Universal

It is not that we can be friends with everyone; indeed one of the warnings of the ancients (Aristotle) was against *polyphilia*: too many friends and one had no (true) friends. But the intimacy is crucial, as at least exemplifying a promise of generous openness to the other. Once again it occupies an intermediate position between the erotics and the agapeics. It is also revealing concerning the doubleness of instability and power in human desire. Nietzsche is a philosopher of erotic sovereignty and an enemy of agapeic service but he has revealing things to say about friendship. He is alert to the intimacy but hostile to the universality. His thinking has an intimate quality that sets itself against the universal that is a mere abstraction for him. Yet the intimate universal in relation to both friendship and eros is not comprehended by him (to say nothing of the agapeics). Kant was neither a utilitarian calculator nor an aesthetic rhapsodist, and there is something rationally anonymous about his ethical universal, for we do

not directly find there the face of the friend or the neighbor, or the love of the God of biblical personalism. Kant was a transitional figure, a Janus between an ancestral linking of the moral law and God (in this ancestral link the intimate universal is hidden) and a postreligious autonomy that uncouples the two, giving successors courage to decouple the intimacy from the universal, and hence a harbinger of a sovereignty that would legislate through itself, and for itself alone.

The most insistent witness to that sovereignty is perhaps Nietzsche. He dares an autonomy said to be higher: beyond the moral law of good and evil. Nietzsche will not speak of *the* law (the universal), and it is as if behind his many masks, the will of the singular philosopher proclaims an ultimate intimacy beyond communal law. Thus his philosopher of the future does not submit to law, but legislates value, and will say, "I am the law, I will be the law," and there will be none above me. Nietzschean intimacy overtakes, takes over the universal, since there is no universal as other (in the Platonic sense).[18] The cautious Kant, by contrast, was not thus *overtly* daring, but his insistence that autonomy be itself universalized had something of the intimate daring, and he prepares the way for a Nietzschean intimacy that was not at all cautious, that indeed hated caution. There was something greatly hidden about Nietzsche and yet also greatly naked.

But do not a host of equivocations concerning *eros turannos* come home to roost? Intimacy and universality pass through Schopenhauer's will, Schopenhauer who already saw through the nihilistic consequences of this *eros turannos.* Nietzsche reverses Schopenhauer's evaluation of the will, but he accepts from him its basic ontological tyranny. The condition of life is just this self-assertive, self-affirming will to power. He exults in baiting his dovish bourgeois reader with the suggestion that tyranny is the "law" at the highest level of creative will to power. Tyranny is the law—this means that intimacy of will has no universal law above it. There is no universal, intimate or otherwise. One consequence is a reversal of both Plato and Aristotle when we are told that we should wage war for the sake of peace, for his Zarathustra tells us that "we should love peace as a means to new wars; and the short peace more than the long."[19] Polemos is the king and father of all things for Heraclitus, but there is a logos that runs through all things, a universal intimate in the course of things. Where finally is such a logos in Nietzsche? Deeper than logos is chaos. More intimate than the universal, logos itself at bottom is chaos. Nothing one reads

in Nietzsche seems to have resources rich enough to prevent, finally, the collapse of the difference between *eros ouranios* and *eros turannos*.[20]

There are things in Nietzsche that mirror, or mimic, a more divine desire, and forms of will to power that seem to be freed from their own tyrannical temptations. How freed, how released? That is the question. Sometimes Nietzsche reminds one of Lady Macbeth in her pitiless urging of Macbeth to dare do more than becomes a man, to screw his courage to the sticking place, to be hard and take leave of the milk of human kindness. But then with her, the regicide done, the evil proved sticky and smeared the soul indelibly.[21] Lady Macbeth went mad, for she could not, in her sane mind, live up to her part in the sacrilegious crime. Nietzsche wanted to live up to religious regicide, the murder of God. Nietzsche talked himself up the way Lady Macbeth talked to Macbeth. Nietzsche's "higher" amoralism seems to deny any sticky evil, and yet he too went mad. Can one be entirely convinced by rationalizations that reduce this madness only to some "physical" cause? Those who do so insistently remind one, so to say, of Job's comforters—but comforters of an atheistic god, for their god is matter. They are the reverse of Job's comforters: they want to say there can be *no guilt*, whereas Job's comforters say there *must be* some guilt. Nietzsche dared *spiritually* to follow to the end the hyperbolic project of finally having nothing higher above him. He would not be a "just Prometheus under Jove"—Shaftesbury's thought-provoking description of the creative artist—but a Prometheus above all Joves. No universal law above him, no God.

I confess to hearing echoes of Plato's view of tyranny: the tyrant would have neither man nor god above him; he will plunder the temples, if need be (*Republic*, 574d4, 575b6). This last is a reference perhaps to Alcibiades and the desecrations of the *Hermai*, and one senses a kind of blood relation between Alcibiades and Nietzsche. The *Hermai* provided markers of the boundary (*terminus* in Latin) between life and death, mortals and divinities. The *Hermai* were tokens of the measure we must revere, even in our exceeding of measure, our being beyond or beside ourselves in eros. If we desecrate these markers on the way to our self-divinization, we destroy the medium between humans and divinities. We doom ourselves to the corruption of our intimate humanness. And this, even if all this audacity is enacted in the name of our higher humanness or even transhumanness, as with the *Übermensch*. There are forms of spiritual tyranny on the heights that intimately mean: *corruptio optimi pessima*. One could see Nietzsche as a *daimonic* seeker on the boundary between the human and

the divine, but being daimonic is no guarantee of *eu*daimonia. "Beyond good and evil": where is the good *daimon* (*eu-daimon*) that gifts us with divine temperance, that communicates measure in our daring to exceed measure? If Nietzsche's hyperbolic daring was a provocation of the intimate powers that awakened a dissembling form of divine madness, why should its ending in mad madness surprise us?

What of Zarathustra's deliverance on the friend? Interesting observations are offered, some true, some posturing, some just obiter dicta that are a bit silly. Here and there we detect something reminding us of Kant's diffidence.[22] "Our faith in others betrays wherein we would dearly like to have faith in ourselves. Our longing for a friend is our betrayer."[23] It is there, the need to keep oneself secret, though more rhapsodically expressed than in Kant: hesitation about a kind of nakedness; an ambiguity in exposure; the need of silence and reserve yes, but the kind of reserve not entirely clear. There is something deeply intimate and yet guarded just in its intimacy. Is there not tenderness, and surprise, when Zarathustra asks if one has looked at the face of a friend asleep?[24] Zarathustra sees in the friend's face what seems to recall an old understanding, say that of Aristotle: "It is *your own* face, in a rough and imperfect mirror." Or is this rather Zarathustra's "subreption" (with a bow to Kant): attributing to the other what is one's own?[25]

Zarathustra teaches the friend, not the neighbor, the friend who is to be, in an eloquent phrase, a festival of the earth and a foretaste of the *Übermensch* (*der Fest der Erde und ein Vorgefühl des Übermenschen*).[26] One notes the language of bestowing, recalling what Zarathustra calls the gift-giving virtue (see the discourse *Von der schenkenden Tugend*). One can give even to the enemy and not be the poorer for it. Finally, one notes a strong echo of Plato: "Are you a slave? If so, you cannot be a friend. Are you a tyrant? If so, you cannot have friends." Then Zarathustra puts the cat among the pigeons: for this means woman is incapable of friendship; for the slave and the tyrant lie concealed in her; she knows only love (*Liebe*). "Woman is not yet capable of friendship: women are still cats and birds. Or, at best, cows."[27] Interestingly here, the tyrant in Plato's *Republic* (579b) is said to be unable to travel, "cowering in the recesses of his house *like a woman*." He is, we might say, "housebound," as women were then; but he is not at home. He is under a "house arrest" that is self-incurred.

When Nietzsche is having a laugh he can charm us with that twinkle of mischief in his naughty eyes; but he is not always doing the fool.

Sometimes he is deadly serious. Does one's friend as a foretaste of the *Übermensch* smack of something excessively earnest? Is there not an elemental *lack of fuss* in friendship: the gift of friendship is granted and, in a way, allowed to be taken for granted? It does not insist on itself, gets out of the way in the metaxological mode of simply enjoying the friendship. True friendship: you can count on its constancy. Friendship is being there with the other and joy in the being there itself, with no "project" in view, least of all the "project" of the *Übermensch.* "May the future and the most distant be the principle of your today: in your friend you should love the Superman as your principle."[28] Has the faceless Superman replaced the faceless universal of the categorical imperative? And with something of the same earnestness? We say: enjoying each other's company is elementally given in friendship. That enjoyment is not in the projected future "beyond" of the *Übermensch.* This rather looks like Nietzsche's consoling dream for his present friendless earth.

There was, finally, something a bit too tyrannically earnest about Nietzsche, all his laughter notwithstanding. For all his diatribes against the Germans, he never outgrew some of his Germanic pieties. Tortured intimacy: his own company he both enjoyed and hated; his dithyrambs to solitude are both genuine self-affirmations and tokens of his despair. He protests too much about his love of his solitude. From what we know of his life, he had a tendency toward possessiveness in his bourgeoning friendships. One thinks of him as someone who would demand absolute loyalty from a friend. There is an intensity that it would be hard to live with. (One thinks of Wittgenstein: Was there not something tyrannical in his soul too?)

I sometimes wonder whether if Nietzsche had ever found a true friend, his spiritual odyssey might have been very different. The disaster of his relation to Lou Salomé threatened him with breakdown. From the dross of this disaster he held to have given birth to the gold of Zarathustra. I do not doubt something true in this. But gold out of dross is here still a song wrung from despair, and such a song is not quite the released "yes" on which Nietzsche had set his heart.

Enjoying the company of a friend is never a song wrung out of despair. It is being in an entirely different space of consent. It is a peace more primordial than war. Loss or deprivation of this other space keeps one pinioned within the equivocal double structure of instability and power in eros. If the tension created by this pinioning, more extremely the despair over release created by it, issues in a strong self-affirmation, we risk an

even more thoroughgoing spiritual tyranny. Traces of this we certainly find in the later Nietzsche, not least in his curse on Christianity, such as we find in his *Anti-Christ*. His picture of Jesus there, striking for us in coming close to the idiotic intimacy of the agapeic servant, is not devoid of tones of respect, certainly more respect for him than for his followers. Nevertheless, in the end the issue of spiritual superiority is decided by Nietzsche in Nietzsche's own favor. If Nietzsche is wrong in this judgment, and the relation to the universal is sacrificed in the name of an intimate singularity insisting on itself beyond all universality, or in revolt against it, then we are encountering a form of spiritual tyranny—not friendship.

The agapeic is not named by Nietzsche, and (Christian) love of the other is looked down on by him as the dissembling goodness of the feeble. Yet revealingly, the power of agapeic generosity is mimicked by him. I think Zarathustra's "gift-giving virtue" (*die schenkende Tugend*) doubles for agapeic giving. This bestowing virtue is claimed as the superior successor to love of the neighbor. But is it by counterfeiting agapeic giving that it displaces it? It looks like this generosity, but it is not it really, since it is a fated overflow of abundant power, not a gift to and for the other as other, one even possible in radical poverty, as in the story of the widow who gave her last mite. The "gift-giving virtue" is more like an eros that has accumulated an excessive store of its own power by overcoming or vanquishing its own self. Its intimate selving has no particular regard for the singular face of the other as other. It blindly pours forth its force. But what is the difference between tyranny and blind force? Could one not have a kind of tyrannical "generosity" that would brook no opposition to its giving? What kind of giving would that be if you *had* to take it? A "gift" to which we are not allowed to say "no," cannot say "no": Is this giving at all? Mischievous Nietzsche liked to provoke the solider moralists, but behind the mask of the prankster is the deadly serious earnestness that stakes its claim to spiritual superiority. Instead of a blind force we cannot refuse, do we need a different blindness that has prophetic eyes for what, darkly, is above us?[29]

Friendship and the Agapeic Moderation of Tyrannical Eros

There are different kinds of friendship, of course, but one of the great gifts of the friendship of excellence (Aristotle's third kind) is the salutary moderation it offers to the doubleness of instability and power.

Asymmetries can be present in the relation to the other with both eros and agape. With friendship we can find a more symmetrical reciprocity. With eros there can be an asymmetry from the side of our seeking to fulfill itself through the other. While the other must be recognized, the temptation is to make the other serve the stabilization of variable desire and the fuller expression of its power. If we yield to the temptation, we can pass along way stations that culminate in tyranny: the finally unbounded self-expression of power, rooted in nothing but the constant inconstancy of our lacking being. There is a different asymmetry in agapeic love. A plenitude of generosity serves the other; or we are recipient of gifts to which we may not be able to offer a commensurable return. The extreme opposite of tyranny would be the generosity of God, incommensurable beyond any return of the finite creature. This "too muchness" of divine generosity can be resented. We do not own ourselves. Resentment at the generosity of the other is an intimate source of the tyrannical soul, for the tyrant wants to be in the debt of no one other—flattering sycophants perhaps excepted. But what are these flatterers except false friends?

The moderating effect of the friend relates to a certain reciprocal symmetry in goodness between oneself and another. Symmetry need not mean homogeneous equality. Tyranny is more intimately connected with a certain homogenizing equalization—the tyrant being excepted by himself. Between friends there is a love that moderates any temptation to be either above like a master or below like a slave. Whether we see the friend as another self, or as one's other half, or with a stronger emphasis on the difference even in the intimacy, there is a predilection for a kind of balance in the relation of giving and receiving. A friend who could only give or who could only receive would not be a friend. Reciprocal giving and receiving from oneself to the other and from the other to oneself are intimate to friendship. What is given and received is, most elementally, *simply the company of friends*. Again, it is not that in erotic or agapeic love there is no giving and receiving. But in friendship we move into a middle defined by a reciprocity more symmetrically balanced than we necessarily find at the extremity of tyrannical dominion over the other or the other extreme of goodness, namely, the absolutely free(ing) generosity of the divine.[30] And yet there is the companioning, sometimes incognito, of surplus generosity in the reciprocity of friendship also.

This middle of balanced reciprocity tempers the inconstancy of desire, for one finds oneself at home in the friend, in the company of the friend.

Likewise, the temptation to excess in the expression of power has its sting drawn, and we find more the signs of peace between people rather than the preparations for war. This is its great salutary power in the twilight equivocity of our intermediate existence. At one extreme, we have visitations of absolute generosity that puncture our quotidian indifferences; and these may be what most shake us up, rousing us from the sleep of finitude. At the other extreme, there is the perennial threat of the dogs of war, in daily life relatively well chained, but let loose in, or unleashed by, those men become wolves. In the middle, friendship incarnates a kind of peace even in struggle, keeps us true to the peace of the agapeic good. It offers its benignity without fuss in the round of daily life. It may not make an issue of itself, and hence may pass unnoticed. Without friends we come to feel a threadbare coldness in life, a coldness that can enter our souls, converting them to a hardness that closes the porosity, whose last fruit is tyranny, whether in proximate relations like the family, or more publicly in the workplace or in the life of the city and state.

However, nothing is ever entirely unmixed in the equivocal intermedium of life. There is also a kind of give-and-take even in war, and even here, this give-and-take can reveal surprising power to be converted into some more creative outcome. One need not valorize war in a Nietzschean way. Think, rather, of dialogue, say, in the Platonic form. The Platonic dialogue is often a kind of *agon*, or "contestation." As philosophical, it is also a mingling of *polemos* and *philia*. If it were only the former, it would be less dialogue than destructive *eris*. If it were only the latter, the balance would already have been struck. As Socrates shows, there must be some harmony between thieves if they are to be minimally effective in the pursuit of their crimes. Crime pays its debt to a kind of friendship. In the *agon* of the dialogue, however implicit this is, we must be friends of truth, even if we are not always friends of one another. This is not the *eros turannos* that would impose its truth, but the *philia* of the philosopher, and it too participates in the intimate universal.[31]

The balanced reciprocity of giving and receiving in friendship can be recessed in modern discussion by a foregrounded *eros turannos*. As already suggested, there can also be a second, deeper recessing, namely, that of agapeic giving. Not surprisingly, some thinkers display a suspicion, if not hostility, to the God of biblical personalism. Eros, engrossed in its tyrannical form, sends into recess the generosity of agapeic giving. But what is put in recess is not gone, and its power only seems to be suspended.

The recessed is not any the less important, especially when it bears on what is intimate to our loves. In one sense, we find something more "Platonic" than "Aristotelian" about modernity. One thinks of *The School of Athens by Raphael*: we see the daring of transcendence signaled by Plato pointing upward, we see the calming moderation in Aristotle's even hand. Plato tends to stress the vertical excess of eros, Aristotle the horizontal moderation, and this we find more often in friendship. If my stress here is Platonic vis-à-vis the excess of eros, it is Aristotelian vis-à-vis the moderating power of friendship. But Plato, of course, was quite Aristotelian in his own way. When I say there is something "Platonic" about modernity, I mean to refer to Platonic excess, but not always with Platonic *sophrosunē*. But as the difference of *eros turannos* and *eros ouranios* becomes more uncertain in modernity, so also does the character of *orthos eros*. The excess is directed to immanence, not transcendence. And if we are left only with *immanent* transcending, how do we deal discerningly with it? Initially, it seems, more with something like geometry, Cartesian or otherwise, than with immanent Aristotelian moderation. For the latter, as phronetic, asks for finesse, not geometry. But without finesse, or *phronesis*, how likely is geometry finally to escape the temptations of *eros turannos*? Descartes's will to "geometry" and Nietzsche's will to power lie closer to each other than the antithesis of reason and rhapsody might lead one initially to expect. If a tyranny of Dionysus replaces, in postmodernity, a tyranny of "geometry" in scientistic modernity, something remains the same, despite all difference.

Is an intimate mutation in human desire in the direction of a *projected universal* the more deeply energizing source of the modern project of mathematical objectification and technological manipulation? The tyrannical person hates equivocities because in all ambiguous signs he can only detect the possibility of hostility or threat. He is not attentive to communications of hospitality, for the intimacy of his being has closed itself off from porosity to such signs of generosity. Looked at now in light of such equivocal hostility, is not the world a threatening other to us? Or is it that our being in relation to the world has clogged our own porosity to generosity, placed this into recess, as, meanwhile, more and more expression is given to the inconstant power of desire, a desire that would be the full measure of what is other to itself? We desire to be more and more masters of the given equivocity of being, and we intimately project *ourselves* through the abstract universals of our scientific and technological

projectings. The language of "projecting" is not the language of friendship. Yet what better way to make the world "friendly" or hospitable to our projectings than to strip it of the intimate charges of qualitative value? This projecting makes it objective and neutral, the better to be subject to the measure of our desire. We may seem to be the measure of the universe of things, but are we, can we be, the measure of our intimate selves?

The matter bears on two different kinds of measure, reflecting a more abstract universal and the intimate universal. Calling again on Pascal, one measure concerns an objectifying "geometry," while the other bears more on finesse. Finesse is never something abstract, for it is incarnated as a living wisdom or "savvy" in this person or that. It is not merely "subjective," yet it cannot be neutralized or stripped of the charge of value, that is, of its intimate relation to the good or what is of ultimate worth. Is it not evident that there is no "geometry" of friendship? Is it not obvious that there can be no such thing as a neutral tyranny? Should it not be equally evident that there can be no such thing as a neutral mastery of nature, even if the preferred mask of that master is mathematical?

Contrast with the cosmos of Plato's *Timaeus*: there is geometry here, but the overall ethos of being is more than geometry. The Demiurge imposes form on matter, yes; a geometry concretized in the visible world itself; but the divine art is concerned with bringing to be the *best and most beautiful cosmos* possible, and so this art exceeds geometry. The cosmos is a hospitality of being to good and beauty. There is a judgment of goodness more ultimate than geometry. The divine art, while making according to geometrical measure, is moved by the more important measure of finesse. For this divine art is a determining of the becoming, a deeming of the fitting.[32]

One might say that the modern project is not a project of the friendship of being. Once again, the language of "friendship" is not, cannot be, finally that of "project." The modern project is not a *philia* of *sophia* in the ancestral sense. It is more a practical project to master mathematically the given conditions of life, and by such means putatively to ameliorate these conditions relative to human desire. If it is a "project," it is one of eros—eros given shape through the theoretic power of science and the practical powers of manipulation going with technology. Ultimately, of course, the language of eros, like that of friendship, is also not the language of "project"; eros too is intimate with the porosity of being prior to, and in excess of, all "projecting." Here, eros tries to harness its own power, with the ambition of overcoming its own inconstancy; and it seeks to do this through its own

power alone. The otherness of nature in its ambiguous givenness is reformulated in terms of mathematical measure. Taken alone, and without the fitting measure of ethical and religious finesse, this seems to be a recipe for tyranny. Ontological tyranny will follow from eros unbound from a different friendship with what is other to its own power, eros lacking any respect or reverence for the agapeic service that loves the other.

Calling on ancestral language, the innerness of the soul still remains in its archaic tangle of power and instability. Its power over the outer otherness does not give it mastery over its own inner otherness. If this is not purged of its own tendency to tyranny, the results of this grand project can spell disaster.[33] This would be not only a loss of friendship, but a deformation of eros. Or rather, it would be the dominance of eros's tyrannical form in which the more subtle coaxings of its ouranian promise are drowned by the outcries of a self-assertion become boundless. This would be our loss of measure in the exceeding of measure. It would be the dissipation of the promise of the human in finally formless frenzy; and this, even though the mask worn is "geometric" and technical manipulability presents itself as the acme of moderated practical reason. The mask of scientistic univocity dissembles its deeper source in this equivocal frenzy of eros. Why equivocal? It is because we sometimes here discern, so to say, a counterfeit double of *theia mania*. And this, even in the calm mask of scientistic reason.

The tyrant has no true freedom and no friends. He has only false friends and dissembling autonomy, or the bodyguard—the false double, for the bodyguard is the "friend" who is a mere weapon. In a world of tyranny there are only the counterfeit doubles of friendship. Everything finally is a mask of war. The tyrant is first suspicion incarnate; then the threat, ever anticipated, inevitably materializes; finally the tyrant stands revealed as hatred incarnate. The other, always suspect, now convicted and condemned, must henceforth be done away with, without mercy. The plight of the tyrant is desperate, encompassed by nothing but enemies, pent in a prison house, filled with excessive terrors and appetites, unable even to travel abroad or view the sacred festivals (*Republic*, 579b–e), "envious, faithless, unjust, friendless, impious, a vessel and nurse of all iniquity, and so in consequence himself most unhappy and making all about him so" (580a).

Suspicion, tyranny, murder, merciless war: Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is the great dramatization that witnesses to their intimacy and inseparability. It also shows us what happens when the tyrant ventures forth from

his house, where his woman has taken her own life. In *Macbeth* we are honored with Shakespeare's superiority to Nietzsche in seeing that what is "beyond good and evil," gained by sacrilegious crime, is not, can never be, the "innocence of becoming." It is, and must be, the evil usurpation of what is becoming for a man. It all begins in the betrayal of hospitality, and the delivery over to war as more primordial than the peace of being. In such a world of will to power, which takes its true form as *eros turannos*, we can only find a community of counterfeit doubles. The friend is the enemy who has put on the mask of benignity. Benignity is only a mask of something malign. "Where we are / There's daggers in men's smiles; the near in blood, / The nearer bloody" (*Macbeth*, 2.3.141–43). There seem only dissembling masks: "fair is foul and foul is fair." We might seem to hover, as if above, but it is always through the fog and filthy air. The only outcome of such a friendless world is death. We are then nothing but a being toward death. When the hurly-burly's done, the battle "won" is also always lost. The last triumph of this will to power shows itself as a will to death, a death wish. This eros disguises the cunning of its last god, *thanatos*. The recessed place of friendship in modern thought cannot be separated from our being drawn to, sometimes our succumbing to, the diverse temptations of self-affirming power and the tyranny of its last god. Honesty asks that we come to the question: Do we need the different love of another God? Not a tyrant but an agapeic servant? Without such love, one wonders if one can even begin to see the monstrousness of *eros turranos*. With such love, perhaps there is hope of being restored to the roots of *eros* itself, where we might live again from the porosity of *poros*, and perhaps perceive our *penia*, our poverty, as a nakedness of majesty in which we are gifted with the astonishing openness to receive at all the gift of friendship. This too would be to ask a restored appreciation of the agapeics of the intimate universal.

Counterfeit Agapeics of the Intimate Universal: The Dupery of Political Theology

It is not uncommon that discussion of sovereignty and political theology has at best an ambiguous relation to religion, at worst an indifferent and dissimulating one. It is interested in politics, and only instrumentally or in a mediated way in religion for the putative light it throws on politics.

Hence it proves difficult to see the exception that comes to us from the space of religious porosity and the revelation of the exception in terms of the agapeic servant. This inability is certainly a modern inheritance, whether in Hobbes, in Machiavelli, in Rousseau, in Kant, in Hegel, in Marx, in his totalitarian followers, in Nietzsche, in his postmodern flock, in Carl Schmitt in his right- and left-wing admirers, in capitalist Christians whose symbiosis of religion and politics corrupts religion rather than converts politics to the beyond of politics. The difference of the erotic sovereign and the agapeic servant evaporates in these discourses. The return to political theology on the Left has not much to do with theology, and when it makes feints this way or that, it shows itself either to equivocate or to betray the dominant tradition of Left ideology. Marx: the critique of religion is the premise of all critique—this is not the new coziness between religion and politics à la Left "political theology." One shows oneself woefully superficial in one's lack of theological finesse. On the Right, when politics tups religion, crude theologians are the purveyors of dubious gods but they do not think themselves duped by piety.

How seriously to take someone like the puckish Lacan when he provokes us with: "The non-duped err"?[34] We believe ourselves relieved of the fantasy of the "big Other," but we fantasize in relief. Is there a salutary dupery? Think thus: Hegel, the left-Hegelians, Nietzsche all claim to free us of the "big Other," or call to mind William Blake's mockery of "Nobodaddy." We project God or gods on the heavens, alienated by virtue of a subreption that attributes to the fantastic object what belongs to the terrestrial subject. The negative power of dialectic, or critique, or genealogy, or Blakean derision, or whatever makes us self-conscious of this and we can no longer continue projecting thus. We retract the projection, but we do not give up projecting. Now first we project ourselves, with the power repatriated from God to ourselves. Is the result the creation of the man-God or the superman? Or the implosion of self and the explosion of evil violence? And suppose the project of immanent projection becomes tyranny on the earth, on ourselves, and on others? Is not the next stage our reconsideration of whether we need these illusions? Indeed it seems we need lies to live, to save us from truth (thus Nietzsche). If there is no "big Other," we need some such to be such, a new "ideal," a new big "lie," and then it is *as if* there is a kind of virtual "Nobodaddy." Do we become postmetaphysical squinters—with one eye open, one eye shut? Once we become self-conscious of this need for lies, can we continue to lie—honestly?

Is true honesty before ourselves even possible, given the honest confession of the necessity of the lie? Or do we exempt ourselves from the "noble" lie (the new "ideal") we claim is necessary for the others. We discover we cannot impose the lie on ourselves, on pain of the lie in the soul—the worst thing for Plato. But is this also not like Plato's noble lie? But there is truth for Plato, all things considered, and the noble lie is in the context of safeguarding ethical truth. In Nietzsche's postmodern lie there is no such context. At bottom, there is finally no nobility in any case, hence no noble lie. There are lies that are not really lies because really there is no truth either.

A figure like Hegel's unhappy consciousness haunts all this. This "projects" itself into the beyond, seeks the beyond that it cannot reach, for this is just the truth of the beyond. One's gaining on this beyond must be one's necessary distance from it. There is no reaching it, ever. We are a futile passion, like the Sartrean subject, and in ourselves split, like the Lacanian subject. In Hegel and in his immediate successors the beyond is reclaimed for the self, and versions of self-circling completeness are proposed. In Lacan, there is the return of the split subject—now unhappy without the Hegelian or the Nietzschean happiness. It is impossible to be happy, and this is to be something like Hegel's unhappy consciousness, without relief. Nevertheless, something like the beyond is necessary to sustain the structure of the human psyche. This is a beyond more like a void than a god. The thinker knows the void, it seems, but comes to know also that human life needs to be duped in a salutary way to possibilize itself. As with Nietzsche, one of the conditions of life is error—without error life is impossible. The question then is what itself possibilizes error. Is error self-possibilizing? If one says life is the possibilizer, then error is part of the truth of life, and so there is a truth of life. Is the truth of life then a swindle in the sense of having to dupe us with ruses to lure desire beyond itself? The affirmation of life is itself a lie then—a world away from agapeic generosity. Human desire is a swindle; eros reveals an impossible desire; agapeic love is even more impossible. Nothing is to be taken at face value—there is no face value. Do we not have then a swindling universal without the value of the face, without the personal pathos of the intimate? And a view of the person as a nonpersonal pathology, without the truth of the *passio essendi*? Has not the porosity become a conduit to the horror of the void?

When we *know* this, can we continue as before? We can try to continue, saying we can't go on, we must go on (Beckett). But if error were the

truth, then life would be lived differently. Certainly any trust or faith in the goodness of being would be impossible to sustain. Suppose that such trust in life is also not possible—the trust itself is also a lie. If and when we know this to be true, we know life then is *fundamentally a betrayal*. This is nihilism—not on the surface a tale told by an idiot but rather a very subtle saga of treason told by nothing, but told as something noble, a noble lie. An idiot would not have the wherewithal to fool us thus; only a malicious intelligence could so swindle. To be duped is to be an idiot under the power of a superior intelligence. But how come this at all, if there is no *superior intelligence* in this way of thinking? Something about this whole supposition makes no sense. The thesis of absurdity is itself absurd. And then we are back at the beginning—trying to make sense. Unless perhaps the evil genius is the prince of this world of counterfeits. It will not be the blood of political revolution that will dispel these counterfeit doubles. While political blood counterfeits the blood of sacrificial generosity,[35] and while claiming to make sovereign and servant no longer master and slave but brothers and sisters, the outcome is counterfeit fraternity. The non-dupes do err.

Caesar, Christ, and the Intimate Universal: The Erotic Sovereign and the Agapeic Servant

It is hard, if not impossible, to speak of the agapeics of the intimate universal without crossing the threshold from the philosophical into the religious. This crossing need not be a farewell to philosophy. It can be an enactment of the porosity of thought to what exceeds thinking that would just only be autonomously self-determining. The intimate universal suggests that this latter ideal is a subreption of the wishful will to power of self-circling rationality. The threshold is an intermedium of mixing, a *metaxu* that opens the field for both philosophical thought and religious reverence. All thinking is in the mix of this saturated intermedium.

I have put the matter in terms of the contrast of the erotic sovereign and the agapeic servant: Caesar and Christ.[36] The Grand Inquisitor tries to confound the two but we must distinguish as well as relate. They are often confounded; hence discernment of differences proves all the more important. Manifestations of the agapeics of the intimate universal can be found in traditions other than the Christian. Again I think of the way

of Buddha: first a prince, brought up to be king, but on being exposed to vulnerability, suffering, and mortality, he seeks home in homelessness, renouncing claims on kingship, becomes a wandering beggar, in quest of enlightenment, beyond serviceable disposability and erotic sovereignty.[37]

Since we are in the between, we live in a mixed(-up) actuality, and consequently the agapeics of the intimate universal will also be mixed with the idiotics, aesthetics, and erotics. The agapeics particularly bears on the religious intimacy of the human and the divine, and it is especially within the monotheistic traditions of the personal God in its communication with the intimate depths of the human soul that we find the togetherness of the intimate and the universal. To the degree that this God is thought of as an agapeic absolute, in the paradoxical hyperbole of the agapeic servant, we find the reconciliation of the most abyssal intimacy of being and the most radical universal that transcends all while embracing all. Erotic sovereigns may serve in this community and be witnesses to a higher excellence, witnesses to transcendent good and not only immanent value. The sovereign hero might sometimes secretly be an agapeic servant of the intimate universal. The sovereign and the ethical servant know the self-surpassing energy of the *conatus*, but the ethical servant knows the *passio* and porosity more ultimately and lives this deeper intimacy in all things. There is ambiguity on the border between human transcending and the good as transcendent. The erotic sovereign shows the ambiguous mixture of self-transcending and transcendence itself; the agapeic servant is more porous to transcendence itself, just as also the *passio* enters more intimately into the self-transcending of the *conatus*. In the middle between transcending and transcendent good, the sovereign accentuates the self-transcending, the agapeic servant witnesses to the transcendent itself. If there were only the striving of the *conatus*, we would miss the meaning of the agapeics. The striving is released from self-insistence. From the more intimate *passio* the dispossessing surplus of agapeic generosity frees it toward the neighbor as other, indeed the otherness of creation as worthy for itself and not just for us.

It is not the sovereign who is the exception but the agapeic servant—exception to the economy of will to power. The servant is so not by defining political sovereignty but by being beyond politics—beyond political servility and sovereignty. This exception is beyond the law differently from the sovereign, by being a good that endows law, through agapeic generosity, not through imposing will to power. At issue is not quite political

religion, not even religious politics, though both might be informed by the agapeics of the intimate universal. The agapeic servant is the way, the truth, the life. Agapeic generosity is incarnated in the between. The carnal communication is graced, becoming in turn a community that bestows good on others still estranged. A communal way of life may be formed wherein is intermediated this releasing communication.[38]

If the servant and the sovereign can be taken as incarnated in the persons of Christ and Caesar, how to address Christ's reply to an equivocal question that would entrap him in an impossible answer: Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, the things of God to God? If all things are of God, are not the things of Caesar also of God?[39] If the ultimate original of giving is God, we are to give all to God because God has given all to us. There is an asymmetry in God's giving to us and our giving to God. This asymmetry is ingredient in the agapeics. We could not give to God if we did not receive in the primal instance what we can now give back to God. Without this first giving there is nothing at all. We are dependent on the divine for the first giving; the divine is not dependent on being given, since the being of the divine is in the agapeic giving of all. All things come to be from the giving from the surplus of overdeterminate generosity. Only the divine giving can free Caesar into the gift of finite being for self—being for self that is idiotic, aesthetic, and erotic, though not devoid of the promise of the agapeic, since its very being at all is this promise. That there is an asymmetry in the giving of God means that our giving back is always from what we have first received. In a way there is no giving back, and there is nothing but giving back. For there is nothing diminished in the divine in its giving in the modality of the agapeic. This is a giving that in giving is never a diminishment but always an augmentation. It is never a zero-sum economy, never ruled by the dominion of serviceable disposability. This is an expenditure that in being spent is never spent, in being used is never used up, in loving is never stopped by conditions that retract its unconditional bestowal.

The endowing of Caesar or the erotic sovereignty means there is a good to the sovereign. The sovereign need not be the tyrant. The sovereign can be king (*basileus*).[40] Sovereignty is not necessarily that turn from the divine wherein receiving power seeks to wrest received power from the divine. The agapeics of the divine lets free in giving—and with the letting there is the hazard of freedom. It is for the good of the finite endowed power that the agapeics releases finite being into its being for self, and its

being good as for itself. This is not a higher divine instrumentalization. In this being gifted of finitude, there is the promise of the agapeic, and this is the incognito of the intimate universal that slumbers in all things, waking up in the human being to the glory of the endowment given.

Christ's remark is not a matter of two equiprimordial powers—God's and Caesar's. It is the affirmation of God's and the affirmation of Caesar's as constituting its realm for itself, though its being for itself is also an endowment, hence never absolutely for itself. The excellences of immanence need not be negated by the agapeics of the intimate universal. Nor is it a question of dualistic opposition of erotics and agapeics, of immanent excellence and transcendent good. It is not a question of one side determining the other, or of one side dialectically sublating the other into a self-determining totality. There is a *metaxu* in which the two communicate, though since the intimate universal is incognito, the communication can be (mis)taken as the monologue of worldly power with itself, now tolerating the feeble partner of the spiritual side, now dominating it, now extirpating it. The agapeics is not a dialectical sublation (or sublimation) of the erotics. Though it is tempted to do so, the erotics cannot effect the dialectical sublation of the agapeics. The asymmetry of the divine agapeics and the endowed freedom of the finite for itself speak against the model of dialectic self-sublation or self-determination. There is an intimate overdetermination in the erotics that reserves the promise of the agapeics. When the erotics tries to overcome the agapeics, it is claiming for itself the fullness of the promised agapeics, and hence it is mutilating what it claims to take to itself. There is then too much of the *conatus* overtaking the *passio*—not enough of the endowing patience, not enough humility before the gifts of the porosity and the communications of the agapeic origin.

I take Nietzsche's desideratum of a "Roman Caesar with the soul of Christ" to be errant in this direction. One could see here the recognition that something of the erotics and the agapeics is needed, and that they are to be brought into some relation. But here the relation is stated in terms of Caesar; hence this is to give the absolute place to the erotics of immanent excellence, to the appropriation of transcendent good, or its denial. This appropriation from the side of Caesar would be a violation of the agapeic servant were it not itself converted in a direction that already takes it beyond erotic sovereignty. For Caesar to have the soul of Christ would be for Caesar to be or become an agapeic servant, and hence to be Caesar no longer. Caesar, no longer Caesar, with the soul of Christ, would not be

the servant of the agapeics of the intimate universal. It is not impossible that a great ruler or political leader would have something of this soul, but all of this is only intelligible if a certain *metanoia* from the erotics to the agapeics has taken life. This *metanoia* is not a destruction of the erotic, it is the release of the promise of the agapeics in the erotics. This surpasses the erotics and completes them by bringing to life their hidden promise. This too is true of the idiotics and aesthetics of the intimate universal.

Most ventures of political theology, whether from the Right or the Left, do not wrestle adequately with this asymmetry of the erotics and agapeics, do not often see the agapeics for itself, or see its promise in the idiotics and the aesthetics; they rather assimilate it to the erotics or the aesthetics and hence its exceptionality beyond the sovereign exception is not understood. The truth of the mixture is very important, and I am not just looking at one mixing. It is the agapeic servant after all who says: give to Caesar.

The asymmetry from the other side of the agapeics, likewise, is not either a dualism or a dialectic subsumption. It is not a dualism because there is no *irredeemable* opposition of the servant and the sovereign. There is tension. There can be an opposition if the sovereign determines the agapeic servant as the enemy—but this opposition is not the opposition of enmity from the side of the agapeics. The agapeic servant looks on the enemy in light of the promise of the agapeics of the intimate universal, and hence he or she is not the enemy simply. This enemy is to be loved. Likewise, it is not dialectical subsumption, since the meaning of the agapeics is the free release into other-being as endowed by surplus generosity. It is a letting be into the truth of the being of the other, and this not for purposes of a planned return to self. The giving away is to make a way; in the name of the good of the other, agapeics is to make way. All of this is another kind of community to the dialectically self-determining one that, in the end, is built on symmetrical reciprocities.

The agapeics of the intimate universal allows for receptivity but receptivity can be enabled in asymmetrical relations. Relations are not necessarily the same one way as the other way. Think of the prime instance of agapeic origination, creation as such. This is an asymmetrical relation of bringing being to be. It does not bring the origin to be. Were there not an other origin bringing to be, there would be nothing. This origin is not what it is in its surplus overdetermination by virtue of what it brings to be. The creating way from the origin to the created is not the same as the

created way from the creature to the origin. The origin in this asymmetry can be on both "sides," though differently on both "sides." On its own side, it is asymmetrical in surplus; on the other side, it is asymmetrical in the incognito of agapeic enabling that is never a unilateral or dialectical determination, but an enabling letting and companioning. Thus too by being on the side of the other, the agapeics of the origin is there for the good of the other. Only because the divine can be asymmetrical in an absolutely surplus sense can it be on one side and on the other side—enabling the communication of good, not only immanently, but in the created community and in the between space that defines the community between the creation and the divine.

There is no one side to which one can confine the agapeics, and yet there is this primal asymmetry. The asymmetry is just the meaning of agapeic giving as such. This is an asymmetry that does not preclude a conditional symmetry. I mean to refer to the way it is said that the "condescension" of the divine is to be on the same side as the creature—to be a creature and to enter into the mortal place with the *compassio essendi* marking the agapeic servant. This making symmetrical by the absolutely asymmetrical might even be said to be more radical than any equalization that allows of a balanced reciprocity. For the descent of the divine can be into what is lower than the erotic sovereign, beyond the autonomous human, into the souls of the lost, those who have lost sovereignty, who have lost autonomy, the lost who have also lost themselves. This is entry into the more primal porosity where now the lost and wounded finitude has been driven back into its primal vulnerability, perhaps on the verge of imploding into this porosity as a kind of black hole of lovelessness and despair. The exceptionality of the agapeic servant is not just higher than the sovereign, but lower in compassion for this extremity of subjection and abjection.

The event of *forgiveness* seems to witness to something of this releasing asymmetry. The agapeics of the divine, forgiveness sets at naught what cannot be set at naught. An act of creation, mutilated by an act of decreation, is offered promise again by an act of re-creation. This is a bringing to be again from a bringing to nothing. This is the offering of a redoing in the face of the undoing of the evil. It cannot be effected by the ones who are undone, or undoing. The undone are caught in the vice of the undoing, and their enabled power has become clogged on itself. Or worse: their enabling power has turned itself to the dark side of disabling creation.

This is a kind of virtual asymmetry of evil. The agapeics of the divine is offered to this emptiness of the undoing and the undoing in the done. It is first offered, it is not first merited. We conceive of "merit" as to be calculated on a measure of autonomy or utility but this is beyond utility and autonomy. It is also beyond sovereignty. Forgiveness is an exception beyond the exception of the sovereign. The sovereign might claim to be beyond the law but this "being beyond" remains equivocal about the evil or good nature of the determining act. The act of forgiveness is beyond this equivocity, since it is an act of generous goodness beyond the law. The witness of the agapeics is beyond the exception of the sovereign. Christ is higher than Caesar. Christ can sympathize with Caesar and understand the soul of immanent power but the communication of the agapeics comes from a further dimension beyond immanent power. Often immanent power senses this. It may resent it, it may be alarmed by it, it may try to snuff it out, it may be jealous of it. One recalls the Grand Inquisitor. He recognizes the exception that Christ is, but deems himself higher relative to the worldly needs of vulnerable humankind. The Inquisitor claims to be the exception since he sees that humans need bread, not freedom, and he is the one to give them it. This claim to be the exception is counterfeit, and fails to comprehend the freedom that the agapeics of the intimate universal releases.

Christ has an untouchable freedom that touches everything—and a touchable freedom that lays itself open to violence and death in exposure to the evil of the others. There is asymmetry of goodness in this exposure too. So here from the side of the agapeics there is communication between it and the erotics, but the intermediation is other to what it appears to be from the directionality of the erotics trying to relate itself to the agapeics. There is no self-insistence; there is acceptance of the lowest place; there is willingness to get out of the way, if this is the way to make a way for the good; there is self-relativization, in the willingness not to claim to be absolute. Laughing at oneself is a homely version of this self-relativization. Laughing is touched by the agapeics of being, especially when we laugh with, not at, others. This is festive comedy, and even in pagan wisdom Comus is the god of plenty and harvests. It is true that there is no account of Christ laughing outright, though he weeps twice. Laughter is forgiving. See his forgiveness as laughing—he is not laughing at the one forgiven. (There is an image of Christ laughing above the Cross in one of the Gnostic gospels and this laughter has something of "laughing at"

rather than "laughing with.") Think of the impossible situation of him being asked to judge the woman taken in adultery, and the deftness of his drawing in the sand, the grains of time and the elements of the evanescent. What address were these signs in sand to the lawful accusers of the adulteress and their resentful goodness? Were the signs a kind of divine smile? Traces of redeeming Jewish humor? I cannot picture Christ grim.

Forgiveness and the asymmetry of love that is enabling of releasing symmetries: once again there is no need dualistically to oppose the erotics and the agapeics. There can be differences without dualistic oppositions, for these latter easily turn into antagonisms and so return us to a dialectic of sovereignty and servility. The asymmetry of an embrace that forgives, and in forgiveness frees, frees into the flow of renewed life—this is a new opening of the porosity. The freedom of Christ can let Caesar be Caesar. There is no will to be the dominant erotic sovereignty. Freedom is released beyond that. Religion, thus seen, is in a dimension beyond the political. It can be transpolitical without being apolitical. Liberation theologians do not always mark this enough, if they want a "worldly" theology that helps the poor. Yes, one sees the moral justification but when religion is brought into alliance with politics in certain ways, it is religion that becomes politics rather than politics being opened to the agapeics of the intimate universal, or the hyperbolic God, beyond servility and sovereignty. Religion can be corrupted in its desire to do good politically. The same can happen with morality when religion is reduced to a moral doctrine of earnest self-determination. Finesse for the agapeic hyperboles of God as transcendent is lost in all of this and in the long run consigned to a death of redundancy. Room for an extremity of exposure beyond morality and politics is needed in the religious agapeics of the intimate universal.

This is more like a return to the idiotics in the agapeics: to become a child again, as Christ counsels. The child of Christ is not the child of Nietzsche. Nietzsche is a philosopher of the erotic sovereign and Zarathustra's image of the sacred child mirrors this (the "sacred yes" is a "self-propelling wheel"). The child of Christ is a child of God. There is a different father, not the father of Heraclitus as Polemos. The sacred "yes" here is not a circle beginning ever anew. There is a more primal giving before all circles—and beyond all self-circling. There are ruptures of the latter circle and reopenings of the porosity—this is divine forgiveness. The first child incarnates the porosity that no circle can close, though circles will come to clog it and harden its vulnerability. The truest child is the

pure openness of living trust. The "yes" is what it is. It does not say "yes"; its exposure is its "yes." Becoming again as children means becoming that "yes": porous again, beyond negation, beyond revenge. This frightens Caesar. This frightened Nietzsche, though he saw it, even desired it. There is something of jealousy in Nietzsche that Christ might have said it more faithfully than he—with no revenge. Jealousy is a form of love, of course. Alas how much "nay-saying," sometimes even hatred, in some of the formulations of Nietzsche? He desired to say "yes"—yes. But look at the one who embodies the divine "yes," the exception of the agapeic servant. This exception, incognito in a more intimate and more universal sense than we realize, proves the rule.

Agapeic Immanences of the Intimate Universal: Porosity to the Divine

Even though the agapeics of the intimate universal is more than the erotics, the "more" of agapeic surplus is already intimate in the erotics, as it is intimate in the idiotics and the aesthetics. The porosity of being is elemental relative to the idiotics, aesthetics, and erotics, but now one might add that it is as endowed by the agapeics that the porosity is made possible as an opening *at all*. In the idiotics the agapeics is alive but not known as such. It is only lived as such when it is understood to be the already endowed promise of the good of the "to be." That it is there as endowed at the idiotic level as such is evident in the elemental affirmation of the "to be" as good. All senses of good come out further for us from this. Put theologically, this elemental good is not the good of God but endowed by the goodness of God. The elemental ontological affirmation that being is at all is to be understood as the outpouring of the agapeics. There is a surplus affirmation that cannot be defined in terms of erotic lack, but only in terms of a too muchness that brings to mind something good—not neutral, not indifferent, not hostile either, but good. It is good in a modality of possible equivocity in finitude, since the good of the idiotic particular can turn back into itself and refuse the exposure of the porosity, refuse its promise of the agapeics. This agapeics is itself what possibilizes the gift of free refusal. There is an asymmetry here also between affirmation and refusal, between good and evil, between hospitality and hostility. Hostility is only intelligible on the basis of a more original ontological hospitality.

After all, the being there of being at all is the most ultimate testament to this ontological hospitality. Without it there would be nothing at all, and nothing could sustain itself in being, and nothing could be hostile, for even the hostile has first to be in order to be hostile. Hostility is derivative from a more original ontological hospitality—this is the law of life. This is just the gift of life. The agapeics of being in creation is not exhaustive of the agapeics of the divine but they do reflect it and offer signs of it at all ontological levels.

If one were to speak of the agapeics of the idiotic for human beings, one would have to pay special attention to the community of love that constitutes the family. There are those who point to social bondings at other levels in nature and they are not wrong. There is community at all levels of being.[41] This belonging together is not an extrinsic addition to already delimited entities. The entities are what they are in virtue of becoming themselves in an already at work community of being. This community is internal to their own definition, even when that definition allows them to stand over against other beings. This is an element of the idiotics of the agapeic, namely, the internal definition bears the relation to the other, and this is enabling of the self-definition of the being; and it is not obviated even when this self-definition refuses or violates, at the more explicit level, the relation to the other. There is double relativizing in the being but this does not mean self-relation can be separated from being in relation to other. Rather the two are intimately twined together. There is an agapeics in the idiotic self-relation, as much as in the receiving from other beings that enter intimately in the definition of the self-being. The agapeics in the idiotics is beyond internal and external, beyond extraneous and intrinsic, beyond the dualism of particular and universal. This is just why I think we must speak of the *intimate universal*.

Most richly evident in being in the family,[42] here there is the intimate yes, but this is never self-defined simply. It is a being together with others and this being together enters the definition of self-being. There are no rigidly fixed boundaries, so something of the universal is immanent in this mutually implicated communication. It may not be immediately evident if the universal can be justified vis-à-vis the other human, since there seems a particularity to this other. The piety of the family, itself an idiotic porosity, is porous to a more universal sense of the agapeic origin. I mean it is in the love of the family that we know of the agapeics of our closest relatives and it is in relation to this that we gain signs and witnesses of an agapeics

that is porous to all humans. The family that prays together stays together, yes, but the members of this family are also perhaps more liable to have a piety that extends beyond the family. If the father and the mother witness the agapeics of love in the idiocy of the intimate, then the more likely we will think thus too of the endowing source of all being and all good.[43] If, by contrast, we think of the Freudian father and the primal horde, we find an idiotics and erotics that are devoid of the register of the agapeic. How to decide between these views? I find a clue in the promise of the agapeic also in the erotics—I will come again to this. There is no necessity that we acquiesce in Freud's myth. We might tell a different story, and we must tell a different story, if, in the elemental porosity, there is always at work the incognito generosity of the agapeics.

In the *aesthetics* the porosity is bound up with the *carnal promise* of the agapeics. We might speak of pleasure as "being pleased," for being pleased is an ontological affirmation. What pleases us is good and not only worthy to be affirmed, but between us and it there is a concord or fittingness. I am at home in what pleases me but this is not just my doing. There is something about the other as home that puts me at ease with myself and at home with the other and myself. Such an aesthetic being at home does not preclude loss, unto the tragic. Tragic loss is close to the opposite extreme where suffering and evil are themselves taken into the intimate agapeics. The sign is insinuated of loss mysteriously redeemed in the intimate universal.

Beyond the festive pleasure of ontological affirmation, there is the festive affirmation of artistic creativity. From where does the festive affirmation come? What is affirming, what is being affirmed? The sources of creativity are not in lack but in surplus. Not that we do not lack, but lacking we seek more than lack, and the seeking itself is more than lack and driven by more than lack. We know lack because of the affirmative surplus already at work in promise, and it is this also that impels the urge to go beyond lack. Agapeic origination: bringing to be from surplus, and not a matter of autonomous mastery or sovereignty on our part. There is a source more original than us. As sources we are sourced. We are sourced from beyond ourselves as source. If we are "creative," we are so in virtue of participating in creation, by cooperating with this agapeic origination.

If agapeic origination is not from lack but from affirmative surplus, the porosity is the empty space to which we have to come back, not to find ourselves as sovereigns, not to bemoan our servility as abject, but

to receive ourselves again as an open fecundity beyond sovereignty and servility. The porosity is not itself the source of agapeic creativity, but if we do not unclog it or let it become unclogged, then there is no space into which and through which that energy of origination might stream. The poet has no identity, Keats said. He is trying to remind us of the porosity. But being nothing is not itself creation—creation is the coming to be of something in the nothing. Artistic creativity is the coming to be of a word in the nothing that the human artist is. We as artists are an endowed porosity, an endowed nothing—hence something as there and to be affirmed in agapeic festivity. The danger of Romanticism is that it stresses a sovereignty that is untrue to the porosity: an overdriven *conatus*, *conatu*s become superject, projecting itself above itself. The danger of premodern mimesis is that it stresses a subordination that risks an untrue servility: a *passio* not in equilibrium with its own *conatus*—hence *passio* become abject, below itself and vanishing into the nothing, and not opening itself in the exposure to the stream of the agapeic surplus.

That said, the porosity that has no determinate boundary is inseparable from a sense of the extremity. Hence the naturalness of the proclivities to sovereignty and servility. The fact that we are at all in its affirmative surplus is inseparable from our being as nothing. We were nothing once, and once again will be nothing. The irrevocability of the words "once" and "never" captures something of the tremendous extremities. The extremities of being and nothing are themselves nonsubjective and nonobjective and are not univocally determinable, and hence are the companions of the porosity. The suffering of absolute loss, the exposure to horror: In this do we find our nakedness to redemption? In this, do we recover our patience, resolved to meet the ultimate in the gift of the ultimate blessing? The artist as creative nothing enters into the most radical intimacy of the human. One thinks of this agapeics of the great artist in terms of someone like Shakespeare: tragedy as a weeping that is blessed, comedy as a laugher that is blessing. A visual artist might enter the nothing, bless or be blessed in communicating the ontological affirmation of the mountain, or the apples and pears, or a field of sunflowers. But this openness to the radical intimacy coexists with exposure of the creatureliness of the being. Its being nothing is its porosity to the festive affirmation of being. It is said that nothing is alien to the great artist. But the spirit of openness is the spirit of a love—and if there is an intimacy, there is also a universality, since in the

particular occasion all of life is affirmation. All of affirming life is affirmed in entry even into the intimacy of evil.

What is met is not always comprehended in terms of any determinate explanations. Iago: there seems to be no one clear reason for the insinuation of evil, though there are many reasons. This is another void, and it is not negative capability (in Keats's sense) but is in undoing, undoing that is the counter spirit to the festive affirmation of agapeic origination.[44] The artist of great negative capability must be exposed, must expose us to this negative, too. It should be noted here that there is also an agapeic ethics of the aesthetic: respect and care for the body, our own body and the body of the community; we must feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the sick, give drink to the thirsty. How intimate our being flesh, how universal the call of this agapeic care! To touch in love and be touched by love: "In boy, go first. I have taken too little care of this" (Lear).

If the agapeics of the intimate universal is promised in the *erotic*, we cannot *dualize* the two, with the erotic only self-fulfilling, the agapeic only loving the other. This contrast does have its point but a difference is not necessarily a dualism, a contrast is not necessarily an antithesis. They are both loves, and what at bottom both love is what is good. True self-love is love of the good—good of the self. We need not set one in opposition to the other. It is true that we can so love ourselves that we close ourselves to what is other. A self-insistent *conatus* buries the *passio* of being and the porosity to what is beyond itself, even when the *conatus* surges beyond itself. This is true, too actual. But it does not take away from the still more fundamental point: we love ourselves because there is something good to be loved. And this need not exclude love of the other. It is the *good* of the other that matters, the *good* of self. We can love ourselves with due generosity, sometimes with needed agapeic compassion. We can be too cruel to ourselves, too harsh, too hateful. There are occasions when the good of self must be ceded or given up for the other, and then we see a generosity that is more evidently self-exceeding. Such a generosity has been denied or derided, of course, but the derision is blind. If the intimate universal intimates the promise of the agapeic in the erotic, there is surplus generosity at work in the erotic too, something exceeding ourselves that is itself good, and good in the affirmative sense, not to be defined in terms of lack. The contrast of eros as a love seeking to fill a lack and agape as a love expressing a fullness is not at all untrue, but there is more than just this contrast: there is fullness on the side of eros too. Eros is not a self-driving

conatus; there is *passio* but passion that recalls patience and the porosity of being, a tender porosity, not an emptiness merely. Recall *poros* again at the birth of eros, divine and drunken and festive with *penia*. At a festive agape of the gods, in divine drunkenness eros is conceived—divine intoxication thus sleeping in the issue of the coupling of *poros* and *penia*. And if there is a destitution, *poros* has the indications of a way, beyond aporia. *Poros* recalls a way between, or a way across, and one thinks of that focus in Hinduism on those points of transition between gods and mortals. These are crossing points on the Ganges where the divine and the mortal intersect. That these crossing points are connected with water reminds us of the fluid intermedium of the porosity. Water reminds us of the porosity as without a determinate shape, and yet as capable of taking on all shapes: no identity and yet power to be all identities. Water is mother of life, yet also destroyer (as in the Flood). Water is the purifier in initiations into new life or community, as in a baptism. Water is as a streaming, a passing, in process, yes, but in passing, between one and the other, passing and surpassing, self-surpassing and passing between.

In the porosity of eros is reserved the intimate universal, as a love that out of secret intimacy would reach out to all. Love of self in the restricted sense can turn the stream into itself. Think too of the erotic sovereignty of the narcissistic couple. In this something is betrayed of the passing—the passing that is as a passing on. The porosity as a receptivity is what we have received that endows and empowers what we are to give and to give on. In each, the source, the reserve, the treasure of the soul seem to have no bottom, so deep does its mysterious darkness go down, as if into nothing at all—yet everything comes up from it. A person in love momentarily loves everything; but the moment fades and he or she only loves the beloved or himself or herself; and soon even that too often fades. The porosity has been closed once again; or the *conatus* has zoned itself on this or that; or the patience has become apathetic.

Agapeics of Kenotic Porosity: The Fertile Void and the Intimate Universal

The agapeics of the intimate universal calls to mind a *sacrificial passio essendi*, or, perhaps better put, a porosity that is *kenotic*.[45] The porosity can seem like a kind of void, for it seems to have no fixed determinate boundaries.

It is enabling of happening but seems not identical with any determinate happening. The human being is intimate with this porosity in a mindful way—something not quite true of other beings who participate in it but do not come to live it or know it more mindfully. There are signs of some incipient mindfulness of it in other beings of nature—but they do not come to themselves in it, as not only participating in it, but exemplifying it, in a mindful way. This exemplification is most fully realized in love, mindful of both others and oneself. Other beings love being but do not love mindfully, or if they do it is a relatively sleeping mindfulness. We love being in our own being, and indeed in all being when we love. This is not neutral being—it is being itself as an intimate universal. Not being this or not being that can make this porosity seem like a void, a nothing; but given the upsurge of idiotic affirmation in it, given the robust aesthetic thereness of happening, given the festivity of desire that even in lack is beyond lack, we are made to think of this "nothing" as a *fertile void*. To think of this as a kenotic porosity is to think of a way of love that in making a way makes way.

What is it to make a way in making way? Fertile void: the springs of all origination come out of the surplus of the agapeics in the porosity of being. This seems like a contradiction in terms—for the void seems merely void, while fertility presupposes some positive fructifying power. The language seems equivocal, especially if we are pressed to the outside of univocal determinacy. This is as it should be, since what is amenable to univocal determination has itself come to be determinate out of a source or sources that are determining rather than determinate. In my terms, the sources are *overdetermining*, in the sense of giving from surplus—this is agapeic origination.

This is not *merely* equivocal. The constant logic in the passing is not the triadic move from the indeterminate to the determinate to the self-determining. It is rather quadratic in terms of the overdeterminacy as enabling these three and also as exceeding all three. The indeterminate is itself subtended and exceeded by the overdeterminate. The same holds true, mutatis mutandis, for the determinate and the self-determining. Most importantly for the intimate universal, it holds too for mutual determination. Mutual determinations seem appropriate to the description of community; but the agapeic community of the intimate universal exceeds mutual determinations, since this last is itself enabled in its promise by the overdeterminacy of the agapeic surplus. There is something

about this that fructifies in mutual exchange but that is not exhausted by mutual exchange. The agapeic surplus points beyond this to the ultimate giving source who is more than all human and indeed natural mutual exchange. Theologically put, this is God as overdeterminate good. Were one to object that there is mutual exchange in the Trinitarian God, one would be right. I would say that the modality of this mutuality is in a hyperbolic dimension and hence better to be named in the language of a mutual overdeterminacy rather than a mutual determination. There is an unconditional, hyper-unconditional release of freedom from surplus goodness of which finite goods, persons, and community are analogies but which never are or can exhaust the exceeding fullness of the divine agapeics.

The fertile void of the kenotic porosity is the giving of a difference that is no fixed determination but an enabling intermediation of giving and receiving between the beings given in the porosity of being—a giving and receiving that image the original giving but cannot be identical with it or exhaust it. This fertile void is evidently connected to the passion of being that marks us as patient to receiving. This patience is ontologically intimate in each and constitutive of all universally. This patience does not sit easily with the dominant modern emphasis on the self-determining human. We think of patience as an inert passivity or feebleness; and of course there are many such kinds of servile patiences. However, we need not think thus of patience, or yet in terms of an opposition to a sovereign *conatus essendi*—an impatient endeavor that will negate the given conditions of its being. There is an ontological patience in our being received into being of which we always continue to be the recipients. Its mindful counterpart is astonishment and marvel at being at all, and marvel at the good of being. Its way of life is one of praise and gratitude. There is nothing servile about it. Everything is a gift. There is a festivity to all of this—this is the festivity of the agapeics.

This is why I would speak of a sacred *passio essendi*: the receiving of our being as patient to the divine communication. This can come in many forms. It can come to the child who un-self-consciously prays in adoration. It can come to the lover who cannot quite believe the chance of encounter with the love of his or her life. It can come in the gift of inspiration that an artist will knead into a work of art speaking from deeps beyond determinacy and hinting at mysteries beyond self-determination. It can come in the woo of mystical love. It can come in the liturgies of communion when

the agape of the divine dying and rising is commemorated, coming to be again in the form of the elements that sustain daily life.

Nor is the sacred *passio* a stranger to suffering, sometimes suffering beyond bearing by human beings. Such suffering can break down the encrusted *conatus* and return us to the elemental porosity in extremity of kenotic emptying. I think of the extremity of tragic suffering where we face a nothing and it does not seem fertile but merely nihilating. Yet there can come to be a *pathei mathos*—a *pathos theos*—at the extremity of the undergoing. The going under is not just death but in the death a portal to a porosity to the overdeterminate in its divine reserve. This sacred *passio* is sacrificial in the literal sense of making sacred—*sacer facere*. *Facere*: the sacred patience is not without its making and its activity. The making as agapeic is creative. Beyond just the technical imposition of form on matter, it is the renewing of the promise of the agapeics—it is a re-creation, as if from nothing, of the being whose promise perhaps was betrayed but never destroyed, and now it is offered again in the generosity of new chances to become what it is truly.

Every moment is a happening of the idiocy of being, every moment is gifted into the aesthetics of happening, every moment partakes of the erotics of being in being marked by becoming and self-becoming, every moment participates in the agapeics of the intimate universal in being defined by a double relativity, being both intimately self-relational and relational to what is other to itself. With humans the fourth is promised in the fullest sense but all the other dimensions are partakers of the promise. With us the porosity becomes a spiritual freedom—the patience of receiving is enacted in the promise of a community where the receiving can bring forth praise and thanks or bring forth refusal and self-insistence. Neither of these per se is either servile or sovereign. The drama is not between these two originally. The drama, perhaps polemos, between those two comes to be after the first receiving, the first patience. For this patience is coimplicated with the *conatus* and this complicates the way it is received as the power to be for ourselves. The *conatus* is originally a *received* power to be ourselves. As free for itself, it is not determined in a necessitated way; a certain openness to its own finite sovereignty is offered; but as finite, it is always in relation to what is other to itself, whether the divine giving source or other finite beings. The union of *passio* and *conatus* reflects the *co-* of *co-natus*. The patience and the endeavor are not quite Siamese twins, for in a way they are one, if we understand that the *conatus* is a

"being born with." The doubleness is there in it, in its "with," and this is its own patience of being, its being received into being. This is not its own doing. Rather our power to be as doing comes out of this *co-natus* as the patience of being revealed as a "being born with" or a coming to be from another in such a way that we are always *companioned*.

Tragic suffering is one of the highest forms of mindfulness of this being companioned in the patience of being. A hero, a sovereign, let us say, does some deed, for he is a *conatus* in the sense of exemplifying the endeavor to be—he is not servile—but in so doing there is a fate or providence that companions the *conatus* and its doing, and something comes to be that is not within the self-determination of the doing. There is a patience in the deed, but this is not servile either. It is the journey of a painful revelation that the compassion of the destiny or the providence has been evaded or recessed in ignorance. This cannot endure indefinitely. The "more" or overdeterminacy of the fate or providence comes home to the hero. And it turns out that the doing of the sovereign is companioned by an incognito providence that cannot be granted or acknowledged without a return to the patience, to the *passio*. The sovereign comes to nothing, but in the tragic suffering the porosity is reinvigorated with a perplexed but refreshed sense of this incognito companioning power. The coming to nothing is not nothing. The end is not nihilism at all but a strange joy that makes no final sense in terms of finite immanence. When dramas have nothing of this porosity to the joy of the companioning power, they are not sacred tragedies. They are counterfeit doubles that bow their knees before the empty altar of nihilism. No "yes" comes and we bow before broken stones of meaninglessness. Coming to nothing is the sacred *passio*. In the *passio*, agapeic festivity offers its rejoicing even in the face of death itself. Death is nothing. "It is nothing"—this can be a nihilistic gesture, but it can also be a redeeming sign of forgiveness and reconciliation. "It is nothing" can come out of the sacred *passio* because both are in the intimate universal. When the intimation of this intimate universal comes to life again, our being as the love of God comes alive again, though we do not fully know this, or barely grant it with the murmured word that mindfully says "yes" to it.

The sacrificial suffering of the servant of the holy most luminously shows forth the making sacred, the consecration of the *passio essendi*—in the very desecration of the *passio essendi*. One is called back through the Golgotha of the hardened self, the exposure of the divine porosity,

the enactment of the communication of love that comes in the purged porosity, the doing of the love that is agapeic service. Sacrifice is agapeic service. It asks the purgatory of all counterfeit doubles of selving and the freeing of the promise of selving into communication with the intimate universal from the idiotic to the agapeic. It is the making sacred of the human being in its being loved by God, and its "yes" to this loving, that makes it love more divinely. It is the aesthetic and ethical embodiment of the doing of that love. Aesthetic: not as an aesthete is aesthetic, but as a goodness that with beauty incarnates itself: being touched by the affliction of the suffering others, being afflicted with affliction, but in its own body being the word that communicates the deathlessness, the impossibility of killing love. This love, given its hyperbolic nature, can only be a divine love in whose promise we are honored to share. This is *aesthetic*, in that the *body* of the saint is holy—the wounds of divine suffering are witness of the love unto death. This is *ethical*, in that the *deeds* of the sacred one are deeds of joy in the face of great affliction, joy in the saint, in the others who come to touch, and be touched, inchoately sensing that there is a marvelous healing beyond finite objectification that streams through the sacrificial suffering.

Not many among the philosophers dare talk of this, and some have grown ashamed of the holy. There is nothing there. What makes thought thoughtless about the holy? It is especially through fetishizing the univocities of rationalistic and positivistic thinking that the philosopher can airbrush out the idiotics, the aesthetics, the erotics, and the agapeics: the singular love, the incarnate love, the seeking love, the celebrating love. The eros-less eros of such thought has lost its intimacy, lost its body, lost the urgency of its desire, lost sight of the generosity of being that sustains all thought, even the most desiccated. It has abstracted itself from the intimate universal, and it is nothing but the skeletal structure of itself. The bare ruined choir of thought is driven out of hearing of the singing of the oceanic porosity.

Surplus Generosity and the Intimate Universal: An Economy of Gifts

The surplus generosity is not a matter of the surplus of things that one has to give and that one might release into circulation so that others might

benefit from their use. This is part of it, to be sure, and the release into circulation is a letting go in which the destiny of gifts given is not in any way in the hands of the one who is letting go. Yes, this is true, but more deeply the surplus returns to the destitution of the porosity, such that our manner of describing the latter must be again a paradoxical mixture of poverty and plenty. This is a surprising mirror of the erotics, though the accent is other-related. I mean that the return to poverty seems to leave us with nothing to give, for after all we know again how much we lack, how much we do not possess. And yet this lack, this poverty, puts us on the boundary of a desert condition where it is not a matter of what we have but of what we are, and this is the decisive factor. One might have everything and even give away everything but one might be giving nothing away, if the intimacy of the disinvestment is lacking in the generosity of love. It might then amount to no more than an external transfer from here to there. This is not the agapeics: having everything, giving everything away, one gives nothing away, for one is not oneself giving, and one is not giving because the transfer is not done in love. The structure of the passing over might look exactly the same, but void of the spirit of love, it is more the counterfeit double of agapeics than its truth. Contrariwise, one might have nothing, but yet give everything. For it is one's "yes" of release that is given in the giving of nothing. Poor people sometimes experience the suffering of this. They have nothing to give and do not always understand that they have everything to give because they have themselves to give—give to others, give to life itself in the modality of the "yes" that thanks. The holy life cultivates the destitution that, being nothing, is able to say "yes" in the modality of releasing goodness as a gift from nothing, from nowhere. Being nothing is becoming again the porosity of being that one is; one is now letting it be the intermedium through which passes the divine affirmation—affirmation even in the undergoing of death. Needless to say, this is agonizing, since at the approach of threat we erect the wall of boundary. We do not want to die, and this is intimate to the affirmation of the "to be," part of the gift our received being expresses. In dying we have to look differently at this received gift. It is not ours, and we have to cede its giftedness to the mystery of going under that now strikes us as the end that comes to us. One might rather choose a peaceful going out but it is not in our power always to choose the manner of our leaving. Chance circumstances, enigmatic providence, bring us to unexpected places of absolute loss and in the impending of dissolution we can only cry out for help—cry

out beyond our cry of being forsaken. This is an appeal of prayer asking trust, in dread before the withdrawal of the good of the "to be."

We might die many times before we finally die. This can be to the good. There are deaths that crush our spirit and humiliate the soul—I mean deaths prior to death. A soul then drags around its rage, or sulks over its wounds, or looks for redress, or simply goes silent, for the rest of its life. There are deaths that bring down the stockade of the self-encirclement; but then there's a breach in the self-erected boundary, and a new horizon of promise opens. There are breaches that take us beyond the normalities of the more daily domesticities. One has been so wounded that one can never be fully at home there henceforth. One is a little over the boundary between life and death and there is no seamless return to the first life ever again. Out of joint in time, out of place and displaced, not at home in being at home—and perhaps only now is there a new and truer being at home in not being at home.

A true society will find its way to granting space for these misfits. It might even cultivate the highest forms of such misfits. This is no mad madness perhaps but a sense that the fitting is something that these misfits have undergone—to the degree of a kind of undoing. There are wounded birds that drop on the strand but they have come on long and wearing flights from distant bourns where undreamed magic and horror are to be found. We sluggish, land-locked ones look with fascination and revulsion and struggle to come to know and accept. They will disturb our sleep, will raise in us an insomnia of spirit that no longer can sink back into the sleep of finitude. How can a human society ritualize the porosity of the boundary between finitude and infinity? Can it allow a space in the immanent society that if only for a brief span plays the host to what is beyond? And even though the beyond must be allowed again to depart, perhaps even urged not to stay in its disruptive form and sent away before too much havoc here is done? Yes, one would say—this sacred outside must be welcomed into the inside. Example: the way in Greek tragedy the disruptive power of Dionysus is welcomed into the domestic society, and its outlaw energy revitalizes what is otherwise banalized easily—just as the form of life, its Apollonian constancy, gives a worldly and human shape to this energy from the outside. Exemplary: the Eucharist where the boundary of time and eternity, life and death, the human meal and the sacred feast cross and interpenetrate and are one in the sacrifice of the divine human. What comes from God is consecrated in the ordinary things of everyday life—these do not domesticate it,

they do not consecrate themselves, they are transfigured. In this sacrament of the divine agape, the divine is not a mere outside but there in the signs of bread and wine, body and blood of the intimate universal. Religious art (the icon, for instance) and religious liturgies have tried to lay themselves open to this consecrating communication. The mania for univocalization in modernity closes this off; it refuses the equivocity of the porosity; it cannot live with the tension of the two sides, neither of which is reducible to the other, and neither of which for humans can be fully fertile without the other. This consecrated communion is in the world but not of it. It is no unhappy consciousness riven by dualism; it is living on the boundary and the porosity of the between where communications pass up and down, like along Jacob's ladder. In this passing we live with the doubleness that is not a dualism and not to be converted into an opposition, either to be reduced univocally or to be dialectically subsumed into more total unity. The overdeterminacy of the surplus generosity is there in the incognito of the idiotic but it is there hidden in the more explicit agapeics—there as not subject to either determination or self-determination, there in its surplus as the overdetermination of goodness that loves.

Neighboring and the Intimate Universal: Beside Oneself, Others Beside One

The neighbor is the one beside one, next one—*Nachbar*. There is a neighborhood of being. The neighborhood is the intimacy of being waking communally to itself with its own idiosyncratic love. The neighbor is our companion in the intimate universal. The neighborhood is the between stressed by love that enlivens us to the particularity of the beings that live beside one. Beside one need not be next door—though the next-door neighbor is the proximate one beside one. The agapeics of the intimate universal reveals a being beside oneself in being beside the others.

A neighborhood is not a neutral space of exchange—it is saturated with worth. It is a space where friend and foe might be found. Instances: We wander into a dodgy neighborhood; we sense threat though we see no one about to attack; we have antennae for the circulation and communication of friend and foe. Humans walk down a street and it gets transformed into this circulation. There is no neutral space we can ever walk through. In the wilderness we see the trace of a human where we thought no man

or women had ever stepped and there is a frisson of response to that trace, be it only a piece of dropped garbage. There arises a certain mindful presence even in the absence of others—even unto irritation with the trash left behind. (Agapeics asks that we care even for the trashy neighbors.)

A neighborhood: there is something familial about it; there is something aesthetically inviting or repelling about it; there is something about it alive with erotic hints or dampers; there is something that promises the agapeics of the friendly, perhaps even of friends. City neighborhoods: these can be dangerous to the outsider. The anonymity of the city is sometimes praised or decried but pure anonymity is a limit, and there is something inhuman about it. So we can sense something sinister about wandering through parts of city space that are evacuated of the field of any intimacy. One shudders at a cold emptiness. This can be worse than a deconsecrated church, for this deconsecrating hints at an evacuation of the agapeics of being. This is not simply human evacuation but the feeling that the warmth of ontological love has somehow been withdrawn and the beings before one are somehow nonbeings, or the simulacrum of beings. There is lacking the good of the "to be," and their "to be" is as if it were nothing. The deconsecration hints at the dreadful thing to come: the desecration of the intimate universal.

There is a peculiar togetherness of sameness and difference in neighboring. The neighbor is the other who is different from me—he or she is himself or herself and irreducible to me; yet the neighbor is the same, in that something that binds us together in community is shown when we are in the relation of neighboring. The differences between the sovereign and the servant dissolve. There is neither king nor slave but all are equal but equal in no leveling sense. This is equality as absolute difference in absolute sameness (communicated most lucidly in the dark light of the agapeic origin). The intimate universal opens to the intimacy of irreducible particularity; it opens to the community that holds such singulars together; but the intimate universal is re-sourced by the endowing companioning power. The agapeic surplus is more than I or thou and is in passing in between us and passing beyond us. The religious see here the gift of the divine in whose light the privileges of immanent sovereignty and its circulation of possessions, honors, and powers fall away. The servant is loved absolutely by the agapeic God—even as is the king—and there is no difference, no difference constituted by human constructions or impotencies. Differences as absolute singularities are loved for

themselves and hence as other to all the others. But all the other others are also so loved. The agapeic God has no favorites because all are favored. This is not the neutral universal of a Stoic cosmopolitanism or the singularity of the superior creator destined by Nietzschean fate.[46] These views do not think through to the intimate universal. When St. Paul speaks of neither Jew nor Gentile, he is inviting us into the neighborhood of the intimate universal. It is not that being Jewish or Gentile does not matter, only that there is a space of the intimate universal where, in relation to the divine, what is not relativized is the unconditional love of the agapeics toward each singular as singular.[47]

I would connect this point with the qualitative rather than quantitative sense of equality I mentioned in *Ethics and the Between*. This is nonreductive and it is an idea that has some importance for the political—but it can never be fully realized there, and its sources are not in the first instance political. They are in the religious community of the intimate universal, understood in light not of the jealous sovereign, but of bestowing goodness of the agapeic God. The qualitative sense of equality is recognized in ethical form in Kantian ethics and there it is secularized, but it cannot be truly understood in its radicality without reference to the agapeic God as endowing this unconditional worth of the human being as end in self. Kant is right to grant this about humans but in his hands it is a moral surd that is there in the void of valueless nature. Kant reneges on the question of why it might be so at all. It is not enough to say it is so because we are autonomous, first, because we are not quite autonomous in Kant's sense, though we are free in a number of senses and, second, because reference to autonomy either begs the question or hides it—only to bring it back again at the end of the investigation, exactly as Kant does with reference to the postulate of God. Does Kant hope at the end we have forgotten that he got rid of God at the beginning? In what way do we really need God now? If we really need God in the end, then we need God in the beginning, and we begin to see that the excessive contrast of autonomy and heteronomy that sets off the whole investigation is not tenable. We need to go back to the beginning and think again, and think differently. This would shift us away from the univocalization and absolutization of autonomy toward the plurivocity of endowed freedom. The secularization of unconditional worth is from the outset an evasion of the endowed nature of freedom. The agapeics of the intimate universal does not bring God back in, because God never left.

The agapeics transforms the social space of our between-being, consecrates it into a neighborhood of love wherein neighboring, as a "being beside," is neither simply passive nor simply active. It is not passive, though it is in receiving, and hence there is a loving patience in it. It is not active, since it is not simply a construction, though we have to constructively engage with others in the neighborhood. We receive and do ourselves in the agapeic neighborhood. Whether patient or engaged, it is dynamic in the sense of being a neighboring—being a neighbor to someone is to be engaged, even if it is only to smile or say "good morning!"[48] A neighboring act is not done out of lack—it is a courtesy or civility, and while not all acts are the same, there is the trace of the incognito generosity in them all. The neighboring of the neighborhood passes beyond us since we are in it and do not encompass it. We live out of it when we live in it. There is always more going on than we can know is going on. Who can survey it fully? Not the human being, surely. The surveillance society might try, but its intrusive gaze often transmutes the neighborhood into something quite different. At the least, the promise of generosity or good is turned into the occasion of fear and crime. This is a secular form of turning good things into occasions of sin. The eye of surveillance is on the lookout for social evils but it is a potentially evil eye. Looking in the name of good, it finds crime. Perhaps only an agapeic God could look on the neighborhood and not turn it into the occasion of secular sin. We have moments of being at home where we have a sense of this—perhaps they are few and fleeting, but we do have them. The carnival atmosphere lifts the neighborhood into a zone of hospitality. The other beside us, we are beside ourselves—a communal *ecstasis*, though we only sit on the park bench and watch the dogs frisk and the children battle over a ball.

This love that is a being beside oneself is out beyond itself, not from lack but from surplus, from festive affirmation, attuned to the incognito worthiness of beings. The neighboring love in being beside oneself is beside one. There is a neighborhood in which one grows up, but one lives out of it first and does not first know it. Often only by departure from the neighborhood does one become aware of the intermedium of worth that one took for granted while living from it while in it. Of course, one might never physically leave this or that neighborhood; one might fall more and more asleep to that out of which one's life is lived, so engrossing is the living that the loving mindfulness of the sourcing of the living does not strike home. One might also fall more deeply in love with the

neighborhood. One can stay at home and, admittedly, an internal dislocation can come in which one is not at home in being at home. This can be an internal exile or emigration. One is in the Garden of Eden but one cannot taste its paradisal gift—a hindrance, a blockage in one, cuts one off. One has clogged the porosity, and instead of savoring the surplus of goodness one is as if running against invisible bars that stop one. Eventually one forgets the bars and one no longer has the feeling of hindrance. One is adapted to the prison cell one is. The porosity has been bounded—self-bounded. Then we think we are at home, but we have exiled ourselves from the agapeic neighborhood. This is an internal exile, and sometimes also internal hatred can come. One falls out of the neighborhood while being still in it. There are many mansions in the neighborhood.

One can be driven out by hateful others who do not embody the love of the intermedium. Often we have to go away to come home to the neighborhood. In exile we see there is more there than we could acknowledge before.[49] Being beside oneself can be an exhilarating ecstasy. It can also be a painful wrenching of one away from one's own. It can be the chosen expatriation like that of the prodigal son who is overconfident.[50] Or it can be a forced expatriation in which one finds oneself unwillingly on the outside. (The word "wretch" comes from the old English *wrecca*, which can mean "outcast" or "exile"—*wreccan*: "to drive out.") In any event, we all find ourselves on the outside at some time. We are beside ourselves and there seems no one besides us, no one to extend the hand of intimate solidarity. This can be purgatorial; it can also be shattering; it can also precipitate a new vicious hatred at the powers that are blamed for sending one away. We think that they deprive one of one's way. They do not allow a way into the agapeic neighborhood of the good. And so we consent—to hatred.

Dispossession and the Intimate Universal: Community of Agapeic Service

We seem to be at the opposite extreme to the political, if we take the political as the circulation of immanent power, seem to be at the opposite extreme to the economic order taken as the immanent circulation of properties, of goods and services, seem even to be at the opposite extreme of the intimacy of the family, one's own or the human family. While there is

a community here, it comes to a threshold defined by the relation of the human and the more than human. The religious speak of the relation of God and the human being, expressed in the great commandments: love God first and above all else, then love your neighbor as yourself. We seem to be in a night—a porosity that cannot be at all defined in terms of a human community, a night whose strain purifies the human community of its own immoderate self-regard. In the night the question comes: What or who are we serving?

If the answer is agapeic service, what would it mean to serve beyond serviceable disposability and the immanent economy of political power? Dispossession cannot be avoided, since there is here nothing to be possessed finally. Every possession is always temporary, as every hold on immanent power is relative. There is no absolute possession of anything—we possess no thing absolutely, we possess no reputation absolutely, no pleasure or happiness absolutely, no other human being absolutely, we do not possess ourselves absolutely. Possession operates by defining a determinate boundary in the porosity, by imposing a mark on it, a mark that is the marking of ourselves on it. The mark of ourselves, the brand of ourselves, is the trace of a sovereignty we want to claim not only over things and persons and processes but also over ourselves and for ourselves. By possessing these others we secure ourselves, and seemingly secure in ourselves we secure sovereignty.

However, we might find a deeper sign here in the way there is a more released "sovereignty" in possessing nothing. Possessing nothing, we might claim to possess ourselves; we need nothing, we say, and hence claiming invulnerability, we claim sovereignty. This is the kind of sovereignty that warriors and philosophers have wanted to have. The warrior: he claims he has overcome the fear of death; he fears nothing and hence is master of himself, for in conquering fear he has conquered his own exposure to vulnerability. In some cases, this can mean the false belief to have conquered the porosity. In the best cases, the porosity does not get denied, only one's dwelling in it is no longer driven by fear of exposure. One is (relatively) at home with one's porosity and will fight to defend one's life if necessary, but if circumstances are such that the life must be given up or sacrificed, one goes to it—so it must be. There is undoubted nobility in this kind of sovereignty.

This is not unlike the philosopher's desired sovereignty (not a popular thing to say these days). The point is to be a kind of nothing in order to

need nothing: a poverty when it comes to the sacrifice of recognition or honor or wealth or pleasure. Think of something like Stoic mastery as the thinker's variation on the warrior's overcoming the fear of vulnerability and death. This is to seek to be at home with self in conditions not lending to being at home—master of the mind, the heart, the soul. This is all very well in ideal, we know, in life itself not quite so easy of attainment, perhaps not entirely worthy of attainment, if we seek to falsify the porosity. But a dignity and nobility are possible in this. These here are witnesses to sovereignty that in possessing their soul is dispossessed of what is extrinsic.[51]

The agapeic service beyond sovereignty is dispossessed but not in the same way[52]—dispossessed of wealth and honor and pleasure and true to itself with a dignity and serenity mirroring these others, beyond the fear of death also, and willing to give itself over to a posthumous promise of life beyond life and death. But the dispossession is also dispossessed of itself. It is not that self-mastery holds to itself while it divests itself of what it has or might have. The stripping is of a more intimate nature and in a more hyperbolic dimension. We do not possess ourselves and there is no way we could ever be in possession of ourselves; and this is so, not because one is fixated in a servility that has no true sense of its own sovereignty, fixed thus as a nothing that is abject before its master "big Other," lacking in any mastery of itself. This last dispossession is beyond servility and sovereignty. It makes no sense in terms of finite goods and their worldly accumulation; it makes no sense in terms of self-realization and the worldly attainment of immanent sovereignty in the consummate actualization of one's own powers here either. There is something beyond determinate and self-determining goods but as we cannot fixate the first we cannot absolutize the second, for this is in a dimension beyond. It mirrors the freedom beyond the servant and the sovereign, but it transforms the meaning of service and sovereignty.

There is no political *theology* of erotic sovereignty, while agapeic service is beyond every political theology, if by this we mean to suggest a divine endorsement of a particular order of political power. Yet this transcendence is "immanent" in terms of its transforming power. Not servile, not serviceable disposability, the agapeic service of generosity is available for the others. The generosity for the good of the others is also generosity to ourselves. A gift is passed to us, the promise of its generosity is communicated between us, and it is passed on, and it will be passed back to the

endowing source in the end. Not master of itself, not sovereign, but freed with a gifted sovereignty that frees it from care about itself, it is hence given up, given over to what is beyond itself, most itself in being nothing itself but being the porosity to the communication of the originating goodness, the consummating goodness. This is freedom beyond erotic sovereignty that does not determine itself. Beyond self-determination it is a released freedom rather than a self-determining one. It is the dimension of the overdeterminate good that sustains all of this and this cannot be possessed. To participate in it one must be dispossessed. One must be sent to the outside and go outside oneself, outside the self-satisfied evaluation of the cozy human community. One must be open to death in a way even more ultimate than the warrior and the philosopher—open perhaps in the modality of the trust of the saint.

None of this is sustainable in terms of human power alone but puts us in the neighborhood of divine dispensation. This neighborhood is necessarily beyond political sovereignty, but "beyond" here does not mean it is not in communication with what is immanent in the political community. The porous threshold between religious service and political power is always crossed and generous guests come to visit across the threshold. The actuality in time is always one that is mixed. Once touched by the call of this agapeic service, even philosophy has to move into a new space of its own definition and destination and cultivate a poverty that is in the hyperbolic dimension. The guardians, the warriors, have to become other. A guardian, a warrior with the soul of Christ (again with a bow to Nietzsche)? I have asked whether this is impossible, whether this is an abomination. For it is not that Christ is to become a warrior but that the warrior is to be disarmed by Christ. Under heaven the intimate universal leavens the kingdoms of the world. This is not without some noncoercive power—since in the world of threats there are ways of responding that moderate the evil use of violence, and there is a nobility that refrains from war. There is a noble warrior who will not fight unless the circumstance determines a justice to the inescapable war—forced to that reluctantly by the equivocal conditions of life in time. There is a peace of the intimate universal that can grieve that this dark night of tyrannical power descends on us. It is most true then that the blessed are those who weep.

The mixed condition in the between signifies the perplexing mingling of the cities of man and God (to speak with Augustine). We cannot distinguish them univocally. The seeds of time have to be allowed to grow,

and the darnel and the wheat allowed to intertwine, since a univocalizing that tries to reduce this intimate equivocity to one side or the other runs the risk of destroying both the good and the promise of good in the evil, by claiming to destroy the evil. Living in the between is living with this equivocity. In a sense, only beyond time will the separation be, when the city of God comes fully into its promise. In time there is always the equivocal realization of the promise, but this equivocity is itself part of the immanent promise: without it there is no open freedom to turn—either to pervert the promise or to convert to the promise again. This is more than a fall, it is a luck (*felix culpa*?); the lack, the luck, must be affirmed, the mixed condition, because the divine confirms it. It is and is what it is because it is divinely loved.

The consummation of the intimate universal as the religious *kononia*, or the commons of the divine, is then not a question of the fixed separation of the sacred and the secular. The sources of social power in the general eros point back to the porosity, where in the intimacy a clandestine courting woos us toward the communication between the more ultimate origin and endowed human originality. In the depth of intimacy the divine attracts us, even in the glimmer of the aura of sacredness surrounding the erotic sovereign. (The celebrity is the bargain basement version of this aura; the idol of the network exudes a media spell that is the counterfeit double of true charisma.) Forms of erotic sovereignty equivocally mix with the sacred, sometimes being genuine communications, sometimes idolatrous counterfeits. The companionship of the incognito divinity means that human excellences are mixed with the more than human.

And this mixing is true in many forms. There is an indirect reference to this incognito in the dominion of serviceable disposability. Here the propaganda of images and counterfeit doubles bewitches desire, seducing the porosity to glut itself on products, producing craving for consumer idols. That there is idolatry *at all* in this dominion means the perversion of the sacred, but it also presupposes the sacred. We think we have exorcised all idols and this is the more subtle spell that bewitchment casts on us, for now we are in idolatrous bondage to ourselves. There is idolatry in politics and this is when the charisma of the between of sacred communication is usurped in, say, the cult of personality.

The incognito divine is mixed in with the family. We have seen here an intimate piety and in this elemental form of sociality, if this piety is not guarded, it is made all the more difficult that proper reverence for divine

measure will flourish outside the family in other public commons. The intimate is not only in the familial commons, but if its piety is not there, there are repercussions in other forms of community, social, political, and religious. In religious community there is an intermediation between humans and the ultimate power, though this is often represented in terms available from human communities. The binding of the human and the divine is inseparable from the binding of human communities (binding: *re-ligare*). The agapeics of the intimate universal is the consummation of that sense of being ultimately bound. Being bound: a bond, not a bondage. The enabling of social power is given but now understood as gifted by a surplus generosity, ultimate in itself and calling human beings to imitate and enact this generosity in finite life. This is not a matter of our erotic self-transcendence, it is a communication of transcendence itself into the midst of our transcending, which now no longer can just circle around itself. We may try to suppress this, but it still breaks out of this circle or something breaks through it: dissident persons or groups, souls tortured because what is most intimate is driven into an autistic privacy and it must communicate itself somehow.

It is important that we cannot oppose the merely private to the public. What is the most intimate is inseparable from the call of a most intensive and extensive communion. If we are called by a vocation, something intimately of ourselves, *more intimate* still is the call of vocation to convocation. Think of prophetic social movements, or social formations that incarnate a communal mimesis of their sense of the ultimate good. Utopian movements show an intimate expectancy of the coming concretion of ultimate communion. Apocalyptic movements hold that the present world is passing away; it will go under, and the reign of the ultimate divine commons will be inaugurated. Eschatological hope has trust that some present anticipation realizes perhaps something of this ultimate divine commons; but the consummation of time will not simply be of time itself. The agapeics of the intimate universal is transpolitical in one regard, but not entirely beyond politics in another regard. It is transpolitical but not apolitical. A community attentive to it will have a different immanent definition of itself, as trying to enact, to the best extent possible, the charge of this beyond. It calls for an immanent social space hospitable to the communication of the agapeics of the intimate universal.

One is put in mind of Paul's great hymn to love, agape, along whose hyperbolic way (ὑπερβολὴν ὁδὸν, 1 Cor. 12:31) we are enjoined to go,

beyond the best of other great gifts, and even now as we see things in enigma (ἐν αἰνίγματι, 13:12). At issue is not an empty "beyond," or yet a dualism between the "beyond" and creation now. This "beyond" has everything to do with us. The agapeics of the intimate universal is there in the sufferings, joys, and offerings of immanence. While there is divine transcendence in excess to immanence, this transcendence is intimate with the being of the *metaxu*, the between. It involves a *meta*: both a "beyond" and an "in the midst," both an outside and an inside, both making us at home and making us not at home. Were the universal merely outside, there would be an opposition toward creation and forms of human community, and the divine would be a wrathful judge only condemning, not redeeming. Were it simply inside, we would be tempted to use it as an ideological buttress of the powers of the world, and tyrannical forms of erotic sovereignty would justify themselves by execution of the agapeic servant. We recall the old collusion of King and Priest, Throne and Altar, in the name of God's power. The revolutionary atheist attacks that collusion but repeats the old story, in the name of his godless god; he is king and priest and god in one. *Outside*: all our idols come into question but this is a release toward the true God. *Inside*: agapeic love appeals to us, most intimately and most universally, in the beloved community where goodness gives us to ourselves, goodness that we can pass on to others. The two great commandments call for a faithful enactment of this doubleness. In the agapeics of the intimate universal, the divine gives the world its good, and remains in solidarity with this good, even unto death, even into death. The ancient Egyptians had an image, an enigma of the soul come to judgment: on the scales, the heart is weighed with the feather of truth, and if the feather descends it is not good with the soul. The heart names soul's seat of deepest intimacy, but if too heavy with itself, it will not pass into the rejoicing exodus. As light as a feather, lighter, almost nothing, purged of its idols, the porosity of the soul is unclogged, its heart ready in death for awakening, and the last passage, into the festivity of the divine.

This is a brief glossary for the convenience of readers new to my work. I offer a guide to some crucial notions that seem to me to be systematically recurrent in this work. Other notions that were developed in other works also appear in this work, for instance, the counterfeit double, the hyperboles of being; but rather than directly gloss them, they can be contextually connected with the entries here offered. These latter are interconnected as to their meaning, as well as shedding light on other notions like erotic sovereignty, agapeic service, idiot wisdom.

Aesthetics: Aesthetics refers us to something more elemental and universal than art considered as a human intervention or construction. It refers us to the fleshed intermedium in which the communication of the intimate universal happens and is formed. The universal as intimate is intimated in the immediacy of the aesthetics of happening. There is a self-surpassing in the sensuous flesh itself—the body in itself goes beyond itself. Aesthetic embodiment refers itself as much to the porosity of being as an open field of interplay as to the determinacy of being enfleshed therein.

Agapeics: There is an incognito generosity or surplus of affirmative "to be" as good that is always at work in the between, the *metaxu*. We do not become

socially associated; we are what we are in an always already at work association. The meaning of this is something more than ourselves individually. It is participation in something more primal, a community more primal than this or that determinate or self-determinate community—this is the overdeterminate commons. This surplus generosity of the agapeic makes all forms of community possible—though it does not receive the name of the agapeic. A "too muchness" of enabling power—enabling power as letting the good of particulars and communities realize itself in one fashion or another. This agapeics of the intimate universal is beyond the dominion of serviceable disposability, and also beyond the power of erotic sovereignty we find especially in the political realm.

***Conatus Essendi*:** To say we are *conatus essendi* as well as *passio essendi* is to say we are an endeavor to be as well as a patience of being. The sense of this striving self-assertion haunts modern political thinking, as well as dominant forms of liberalism and economic capitalism. More truly, self-interest is an *inter-esse*, derivative from the surplus endowments of the community of being. Thus *co-natus* is, properly speaking, not an endeavor to be but a being "born with." *Conatus* refers us to a more original birth (*natus*), a being given to be, which is always with or from another (*co*, *cum*). The pluralization of relation is there but occluded in the ordinary way of thinking of self-interest and *conatus*. Without understanding the *passio essendi* and the porosity of being, the *conatus essendi* can become deformed into the direction of a tyrannical eros. We stress our self-becoming and forget that it presupposes our coming to be, our being given into being.

Determinacy: In everyday realism we think that things and processes have a more or less fixed and univocal character, and that this constitutes their determinacy. Nevertheless, determinacy cannot be understood purely in itself, but refers us to the outcome of the process of determination, a process not itself just another determinate thing. We tend to separate the determinate outcome from the determining process, and so take what is there as composed of a collection of determinate things. Determinacy is bound up with the fact that things and processes do manifest themselves with an immanent articulation, but whether that immanent articulation can be expressed entirely in univocal terms is an important question. If we put the stress only on univocity, we can cover over the process by which the determinate comes to be. Equivocal, dialectical, and metaxological considerations enter into a fuller account of determinacy.

Dialectic: This refers us to a *process of interplay* between same and different, between self and other. Dialectic is etymologically in the same family as "dialogue": mindful communication between self and other. Dialectic can refer us to a rhythmic process of unfolding, whether of processes or events, thoughtful articulations or communications. There are many forms of dialectic. Socratic-Platonic dialectic, for instance, is bound up with dialogical openness to others. Modern dialectic, of which Hegel is perhaps the master exponent, is shaped by the ideal of autonomous thinking in which the self-determination of a process tends to be given primary place. As a consequence, modern dialectic has tended to be a self-mediating dialectic rather than an open dialogical one. Metaxology is closer to dialogical dialectic as open to otherness as other than the modern form of immanent self-determining dialectic.

Equivocity: This refers us to a plurality that resists reduction to one univocal meaning and one alone. Traditionally, equivocity is often seen as a problem to be overcome by a more original or more inclusive univocity. This *negative* sense of the equivocal is to be balanced by a more *affirmative* recognition that equivocity can reveal something more essential. There are ambiguities in the nature of things that are constitutive. The ambiguities are not signs to be reduced to one meaning but surplus significations that require finesse in interpretation. Equivocity can be exploited for questionable purposes, such as deceiving or lying, giving it often a negative reputation. The more affirmative sense of the equivocal is inseparable from finesse for the overdeterminacy of being, for attunement to the metaxological between as offering a plurivocity of possibilities, and not merely a univocity. A good deal of postmodern thinking tries to recuperate the sense of the equivocal over against a too-determining univocity. Whether it attains to the requisite metaxological finesse is a question.

Erotics: Erotics refers us to more than ourselves alone. It awakens us to ourselves as intimately hyperbolic, for we know ourselves as both finite and yet infinitely self-surpassing. We are endowed with transcending power, and yet we come to realize we do not simply endow ourselves. The immeasurable passion of our being is self-exceeding, and yet the self-exceeding exceeds also the selving that we are. The erotics of our selving is hyperbolic to a *conatus essendi* that drives itself to its own most complete self-determination in immanence. Our erotics witnesses to a *passio essendi* that is marked by a primal porosity to what exceeds all determination and finally

our own self-determination. While some thinkers would not associate erotics with the universal, it has been very important in the longer philosophical tradition since Plato. Eros manifests the intimacy of being in a primordial "being with" (*sunousia*): to be at all is to "be with." We must also mark differences of *directions*: there can be a *going up* to what is beyond us, there can be a *going down* into depths of dark intimacy. In more contemporary understandings of erotics, something of the going down has taken hold of us. The energy of transcending up, in the Platonic way, becomes perplexing. Erotics has to be rethought, even as we have to face the temptations of tyrannical eros.

Idiotics: The etymological meaning of "idiot" refers us to the intimate: a reserve of being that is prior to determinacy, and that yet is not entirely incommunicable. Each of us lives idiotically, insofar as each of us is a singular being, whose very singularity seems to verge on being incommunicable in terms of conceptual abstractions and neutral generalities. We live our lives from within out, with this singular stress of self-being. This happening of intimate participation is both presubjective and preobjective. It is a happening of singularity in a field of energy, itself a happening of participation that is neither of the self nor of the other, and relative to which what is objective also comes later to form, just like the subjective itself. This idiocy is not a "what," not a neutral generality, and is not to be exhaustively defined by formal determinability. As elemental, it is a charged field of thereness, and qua field it is an intermedium of communication. Idiotics also has to do with a certain intimate sense of the good of the "to be." As happening, the idiocy of the elemental "to be" is not confined to any one thing, or any one self or other, but opens a given ethos of being, a primal ethos that is a charged field of ontological worth.

Indeterminacy: This might seem to be essentially a privative notion, referring us to the absence of determinate characteristics, and so hard to distinguish from what is void. By contrast, a more positive understanding refers us to the matrix out of which determinate beings become determinate. As a kind of predeterminate matrix, this reveals determining power in enabling the determinate things that come to be. This more positive sense makes us think of the idea of *overdeterminacy*. Void indeterminacy refers us to an indefiniteness that is only the absence of determination, rather than the more fertile matrix out of which determinacy can come to be. These two senses of the indeterminate are often mixed up. If overdeterminacy is

presupposed by indeterminacy, our general tendency to oscillate between the indeterminate and the determinate is shown not to go far enough. If determinacy is often correlated with univocity, and indeterminacy with equivocity, we need further dialectical and metaxological resources to do full justice to what is at play.

Metaxology: This refers us to the fourfold sense of being that constitutes a range of essential orientations to what is given in its fundamental ontological significance. The Greek word for "between" is *metaxu*. Metaxological philosophy holds that to be is to be between. Nothing is defined purely through itself alone; all that is is in relation; this relatedness encompasses being in relation to other things, as well as self-relation. Metaxology refers us to a logos of the between. The between is hospitable to plural intermediations. There is a given *metaxu* at work according to its inherent logos; there is our effort to give a logos of the *metaxu*, true to the more original given *metaxu*. By contrast with the other senses of being, the metaxological sense is not like a penthouse on top of the other three, but rather brings to truer articulation what is at work in them. The truer account brings the univocal, equivocal, and dialectical into alignment with the metaxological; it does not eliminate them. Metaxological thinking, as openly systematic, is dialectical and transdialectical. It is open to the poetics of the trans-systematic. A univocal "either-or" is not the last word, or the first; nor is a dialectical whole. The promise of the between is transdialectical and, by finessed interpretation of the equivocal, points us toward a metaxology of the intimate universal.

Overdeterminacy: This is related to the notion of the indeterminate, particularly in the more positive sense that refers us to the enabling matrix that makes possible determinacy and self-determination, not to the merely negative sense of the indefinite. There is something prior to the determinate but not a mere indeterminacy. It has an excess more than all determinations, as well as more than what we can subject to self-determination. There is a "too muchness" that has a primordial givenness that enables determinacy, that companions self-determination, yet also exceeds or outlives these. It is not to be equated with overdetermination understood as necessitation by an excess of determining causes. It allows the possibility of the open space of the indeterminate, and hence is not hyperbolic determinism, but hyperbolic to determinism in enabling the endowment of freedom. Hegel's dialectic tends to be defined by the triad of the indeterminate, the determinate, and the self-determining. Metaxology exceeds this triad in the direction of

remaining true to the inexhaustible overdeterminacy. This inexhaustible overdeterminacy is multiply incarnated, for instance, in great artworks, or persons, or communities.

***Passio Essendi*:** This refers to a patience of being more original than the endeavor to be. It is the older twin of the *conatus essendi*, as it emerges in the original porosity of being, a between-space of receiving in which beings are given to be at all. The ontological patience signaled by the *passio essendi* means our first being recipients of being, before we flower as being active on the basis of being already received. There is ontological receiving before there is existential acting. As something ontological, the receiving is constitutive of our self-being but it is not self-constituted. To call it *passio* is not to imply that what is received is a mere chunk of dead thereness, devoid of its own energetic life. It is given to be its own on the basis of a giving that is not its own. The nature of this giving and this receiving is such that the being that is thus received is freed into its own being for itself, though not first so freed by itself alone. The significance of the *passio essendi* can never be confined to us alone. The *passio essendi* tells against every autism of being.

Porosity of Being: Porosity often is taken to name a permeable boundary or open access between two (determinate) domains or things. We think of A and B as relatively firm, while between them is some more or less open border, one not absolutely closed to passage. But how to think *passage as passage*? One must speak of the medium in which passage occurs, but the medium is not a thing but a field in which things and passage eventuate. Porosity suggests a field in passage—itself a passing field, since it is not fixed or determinate. What if A and B are themselves marked by porosity? You would then have things and events, themselves porous, in a field or sea, itself a porosity. What passes would not pass as fixed in itself but as itself passing: passing in passage as such. Here we might connect the porosity with creation: the passage is creative in a porosity that passes between nothing and (finite) being and between being and nothing again—and this passing is renewed, again and again. Arising in being and setting, coming to be and passing out of being, creation brings to be the porosity within whose intermedium all things live and move and have their being. How to get a fix on the porosity? There is no direct way, but it is revealed in human things like the child's impressionability, the experience of being seen through, the blush, or the experience of music or prayer.

Self-Determinacy: This refers us to a process of determination in which the unfolding recurs to itself and hence enters into self-relation in the very unfolding itself. This is particularly evident in the case of the human being as self-determining. The notion cannot be fully understood without reference to the ideas of the indeterminate and the determinate. Frequently self-determination is seen as the determination of the indeterminate in which a process of selving comes to achieve a relationship to itself. The human being is the most evident example of this, and particularly in modernity the idea of self-determination has received central attention. Both self-determinacy and determinacy refer back to something that cannot be described in the terms of self-determination or determination. This something other is the overdeterminate. Self-determinacy comes to be out of sources that are not just self-determining. Our powers of self-determining are endowed powers. There is a receiving of self before there is an acting of self. This makes the process of selving porous to sources of otherness that exceed selving.

Serviceable Disposability: The dominion of serviceable disposability is particularly evident in the increasing global reign of a more and more univocal instrumental orientation to given being. Things must serve us, be serviceable for us, but once they have served their use for us, they are disposable. Used, they are used up. Persons are also liable to be treated as disposable items. Everything is a means and nothing an end, and because nothing is an end, the means is a means to nothing. The ideology of serviceable disposability colonizes both the intimate and the common. This can be calculated and rationalized but also finds a quasi-sacred shape in the religion of shopping. Commodities are passed from producer to consumer in the porous commerce of serviceable disposability. Serviceable disposability is tempted to present itself as the counterfeit double of agapeic service. Beyond it are the immanent excellences of erotic sovereignty and the transcendent worth of agapeic service.

Univocity: The univocal sense of being is deeply ingrained in the long tradition of philosophy, but there are crucial instantiations of univocity in common sense, in mathematical and scientific thinking. It is motivated by a desire to reduce the manifoldness of given being to one essential meaning. It tends to see plurality of meanings as a problem calling for one stable and precise meaning. It seeks especially for as much determinacy and precision as a matter allows. This is entirely appropriate in areas like mathematical and

scientific thinking. In more ambiguous areas of human existence, a wiser tolerance for the equivocities is called for, where we need what Pascal calls *l'esprit de finesse* rather than *l'esprit de géométrie*. If one were to refer to the relation between the same and the different, self and other, univocity tends to give primacy to the same over the different, to self over the other. Equivocity tends to give primacy to the different over the same, dialectic to the sameness of same and different, metaxology to plurivocal intermediations between same and different.

Introduction

1. Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, vol. 3, *Paradiso*, trans. John D. Sinclair (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), canto 2, line 57.

2. See, for instance, Desmond, *God and the Between* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), chap. 6; see also Desmond, *Perplexity and Ultimacy: Metaphysical Thoughts from the Middle* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), chap. 3. The idiotics will come back throughout the present work.

3. I have explored this diversely in Desmond, *Art, Origins, Otherness: Between Philosophy and Art* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003).

4. See Desmond, "Between System and Poetics: On the Practices of Philosophy," in *Between System and Poetics: William Desmond and Philosophy After Dialectics*, ed. Thomas Kelly (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2007), 13–36.

1. Religion and the Intimate Universal

1. For recent discussion of different forms of contemporary forms of cosmopolitanism, see Angela Taraborelli, ed., *Contemporary Cosmopolitanism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

2. See, for instance, Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the 19th Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

3. Impressively explored in Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007); see also Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, Craig Calhoun, eds., *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

4. See Robert S. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: From Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York: Random House, 2010).

5. I take Alain Badiou as a provocative recent thinker who relates the event and the universal, calling on a version of St. Paul to help him on the way: Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Bassier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003). I mentioned the postmodern scourgers of the universal in my introduction; Badiou turns away from this scourging, interestingly combining mathematics, politics, and colonized religion (in the case of St. Paul). If ontology as mathematics suggests one sense of the universal, St. Paul suggests another sense in the space of the intimate universal, though Badiou will not see this in respect of religion, and even though he is open to the intimate with regard to art and love. Philosophically he colonizes the religious with the projected universal after the event, a constructed universal that is political and not religious. To speak thus of constructing the universal is, I would say, not true to the intimate universal. I take the Pauline universal as agapeically communicating the unconstrained hospitality of the intimate universal, neither of Jew nor of Gentile, more than either cosmopolis or ghetto. Not constructed by our endeavor (*conatus essendi*), divine porosity and patience (*passio essendi*) are there in it.

6. Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. W. D. Robson-Scott (New York: Anchor, 1964), 88–89: By comparison with the God of religion—"Our God, *Logos*, will fulfill whichever of these wishes nature outside of us allows, but he will do it very gradually. . . . On the way to this distant goal your religious doctrines will have to be discarded . . . in the long run nothing can withstand reason and experience."

7. The point might be considered in more modern form: the evisceration of the beyond, in the relentless critique of religious piety as the estrangement of human power to an alien *Jenseits*, that we find in post-Hegelian thought, be it Feuerbachian, Marxist, Nietzschean, Freudian, even Deleuzian, Žižekian.

8. In the eyes of the Heideggerian this would be evidence for the so-called charge of onto-theology. The charge is here a setup. If we focus on the intimate universal, we see that the charge is a framing of philosophy. If true philosophizing is companionable with the intimate universal, there is no charge to be answered.

9. In *Transcendence and Self-Transcendence*, Merold Westphal talks about "Hegel: The Onto-Theological Pantheism of Spirit." Westphal, *Transcendence and Self-Transcendence: On God and the Soul* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), chap. 3.

10. See further Desmond, "Schopenhauer's Philosophy of the Dark Origin," *in A Companion to Schopenhauer*, ed. Bart Vandenabeele (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012), chap. 8. I borrow an idea or two of the last few paragraphs from this article.

11. One might also reflect on the contrast of Cynics and Stoics: in one way, the intimate versus the universal; the naked versus the civil servant; the exposed soul versus justified rationality; the placeless versus the place; the homeless versus the housed; the unhoused versus the at-home. If there is a love that reveals the intimate universal, it is neither servile nor sovereign. See William Desmond, *Cynics* (London: Acumen, 2008).

12. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 321–55. The collusion of Enlightenment and Pietism is a theme taken up in the conclusion of Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*: *One Volume Edition, The Lectures of 1827*, ed. Peter Hodgson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 485–89. See in Hegel, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox, rev. Stephen Houlgate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), §270, the extended remark on religion and the state. He also remarks that the relation of the individual to ethical life, including its laws and institutions is "closer to identity than even the relation of faith and trust" (§147); he speaks of this "relation, or rather this relationless identity." "Faith and trust emerge along with reflection." See also §268 for more on trust as the basis for the political disposition, patriotism, pure and simple. This closeness might sound like the intimate universal, but if this is an *identity with the state's laws and institutions*, then it is a counterfeit of the intimate universal that opens in and to the more ultimate community as transpolitical. One thinks of Hegel's logic of substance and accidents concerning the relation of ethical life to the individual (§145). The logic of the state as organism can be put to Fascist uses, as it was by Giovanni Gentile, the neo-Hegelian and major theorist of Italian fascism. There is the fact too that the social determination of freedom for Hegel follows the logic of the "free will that wills the free will" (Hegel, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, §27). While the social embeddedness of freedom is foregrounded in Hegel, his work is shaped by a logic of social *self-determination*. In that regard, though he is a critic of Kant, he is also an inheritor of the essential logic of Kantian autonomy. See Desmond, *Ethics and the Between* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), chap. 4; see also chapter 4, note 20, on religion and the state in Hegel.

13. On the issue of evil in Hegel, see Desmond, "Dialectic and Evil: On the Idiocy of the Monstrous," in *Beyond Hegel and Dialectic: Speculation, Cult and Comedy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), chap. 4. I would also say that the intimate universal is not quite the "Church invisible" of the younger Schelling, Hegel, and Hölderlin. The aesthetics, the erotics, and the agapeics of the intimate universal are not exactly invisible—nor is the idiotic. But the Pietists are not entirely wrong; surely Johann Georg Hamann is a sore provocation to the conceptual comfort levels of the rationalistic universal.

14. On community and Kierkegaard, one thinks of his attack on Christendom, as well as *The Present Age*, a work acute about his own age and prescient of things to come. Kierkegaard, *Two Ages: "The Age of Revolution" and the "Present Age": A Literary Review*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Kierkegaard's Writings 14 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). There is a remarkable treatment of envy, anticipating Nietzsche's discussion of *ressentiment*, and not at all directed at Christianity.

One senses that Heidegger took over from it many thoughts about gossip, silence, and ambiguity. Kierkegaard's view of the anonymity of "the public" (and "public opinion") puts one in mind of Heidegger's *das Man*. Kierkegaard's attack on the "leveling process," as reducing human beings to bare humanity recalls the neutral universal stripping particular persons of their intimate singularity, which can only be regained in the religious relation to the personal God. On Kierkegaard's engagement with the different religious communities of his time, the "high" Established Church and the "low," see the interesting book by Jøgen Bukdahl, *Søren Kierkegaard and the Common Man*, trans. and rev. Bruce H. Kirmmse (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001); see also Merold Westphal, *Kierkegaard's Critique of Reason and Society* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1987).

15. If Kierkegaard is the *religious* version of post-Hegelian singularity, Max Stirner is the *atheistic* form. The first stresses the singular one as religious, the second *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*, but relevantly *der Einzige* has the stress of the singular, the unique). Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, ed. David Leopold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Stirner offers a kind of proto-deconstruction of Hegelianism but he is still Hegelian: the negativity of thought is turned against spirit, against all spirits that are all "spooks." If Stirner was himself possessed by any "spook," it was the "spook" of obsession to exorcise all "spooks." The spooks of religion, of liberalism, of socialism, of communism, of humanism are knocked one after the other from their perches on the level of the Ideal. Stirner's critique of the spook of communism even spooked Marx and Engels into their tedious overkill in the *German Ideology*. Stirner anticipates Nietzsche's crusade against the tyranny of the ideal in startling, even uncanny ways. The controversy continues as to whether Nietzsche "borrowed" from Stirner. Railing against everything sacred, Stirner makes his "own" the ultimate, beyond which nothing further is to be thought—his "own" is his "god" beyond all "spooks." He exhibits often an "either-or" mode of thinking: either master or slave, sovereignty or servility, seeking to escape the latter into an atheistic sovereignty without residual "spooks." His "own" protest against servility has an intimate character but it is claimed to be outside all universals. The only thing he cannot bring thought as negativity to bear against is his intimate "ownness." Yet he still has to bow to the community when he reintroduces a union of egoists (*Verein der Egoisten*). This is not the intimate universal that is not defined by a dialectical "both- and," nor an antidialectical "either-or," but a metaxological between. Stirner harks back to Thrasymachus and forward to Nietzsche: less crudely than the first, more crudely than the second, for him might is right. My thanks for many engaging and friendly conversations with Lawrence Stepelevich about Stirner, whom he interprets as the last Hegelian. Among his illuminating essays, see Stepelevich, "Max Stirner as Hegelian," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 46, no. 4 (1985): 597–614; Stepelevich, "At the End of the Path of Doubt: Max Stirner," *Owl of Minerva* 41, nos. 1–2 (2009–10): 85–106.

16. In this postscript to *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James throws in his lot with the "great unwashed" who pray, rather than with the philosophical elite who systematize the whole. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*

(New York: Penguin, 1985), postscript, 520–27. One might say: the first remain intimately porous to the influx of the beyond, the latter become impermeable to anything beyond their rational ideal. "Gross supernaturalism" allows prayer—porosity between the human and the divine. "Refined supernaturalism" turns into a kind of holistic idealism (as James sees this) and gives us the rational universal without the living intimacy. This rational universal is a divine universal that is not divine in that it is bloodless and goes with a kind of rationalistic idealism that is easily converted to a new kind of naturalism. This seems to save us from intellectual embarrassments about the beyond, but it is at the cost of mutilating religious experience.

17. Moses at the burning bush, and the Voice tells him he is the God of the Israelites. The names are particular and personal—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—familial and intimate; and yet this is a despised and enslaved people—the lowest of the low and God has their care. Yes this God is most remote as well as intimate—remote in the sense of impossible to pin down, hence the name: I am who am. Indeterminate? More than all determination (a name that is no name) above all names, escaping all finite names in naming itself—transcendent and universal. This is a paradoxical conjunction of the intimate and the universal. Impossibly transcendent and impossibly close: the first frees from the suffocation of pagan intimacy, the second frees from the coldness of philosophical or rationalistic universality. The intimate gods of paganism, the abstract absolute of philosophy, neither of these is fully true to the intimate universal. Christianity brings an even more paradoxical conjunction of the intimate and the universal in the figure of Christ: so intimate, God cannot be evaded, so universal, God cannot be escaped. One is struck by the singular intensity of Pascal's *Memorial*: the night of fire, *la nuit de feu*; like Moses before the burning bush, he felt fire, fire that burns but does not consume, fire in that night of exposure, precisely dated and timed by Pascal; and how intimate, given that the memorial was stitched into his coat, stitched and restitched, until death; the secret was hidden till after his death; in the memorial he famously contrasted the God of Abraham and Isaac with the God of the savants, the first named through particular persons, the latter supposedly through the abstract universal, say, of the rational proofs for God. I am saying that this contrast is not the end of the matter if there is the intimate universal, and if indeed the personal God of monotheism is most absolutely its witness.

18. Karl Jaspers worries that in addressing the ultimate as "Thou" there is the danger of idolatry. Jaspers, *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, trans. E. B. (Ashton, UK: Collins, 1967), 141–45; see also Jaspers, *Philosophy*, trans. E. B. Ashton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 3:145–46. There is always this danger, but there is a deeper address in relation to the intimate universal where a different attitude to the communication of the personal is needed. See Desmond, *God and the Between* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), chap. 9, on personal and transpersonal views of God, where I see in *personans* (sounding-through) a passage of divine communication both personal and transpersonal. Is Jaspers's philosophical faith true enough to the fullness of the intimate universal? (Is it not thus too like Kant's view?) We too easily contrast the personal and the universal, but these contrasts are transcended in the true personalism of the intimate universal. Signs of this are more to be found, in fact,

in the great tradition(s) of monotheism, where prayer is this intimate and universal communication. See J.-L. Crétien, "The Wounded Word and the Phenomenology of Prayer," in *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), chap. 7, but see pp. 158–59 with reference to Feuerbach and Jaspers on addressing God as "Thou."

19. See Alan Ford, "Apocalyptic Ireland: 1580–1641," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 78, no. 2:123–48. In it, Ford treats of the way apocalyptic passages in the Bible became more common with Protestant soldiers, officials, and writers from the time of the Desmond Rising in 1579 onward, passages identifying the pope as Antichrist and Catholics as his followers, leading to the sharpening of antipathy and the justification of violence, culminating in Cromwell's genocidal wasting of Ireland. Ford cites a John Hooker, agent of the crown, applauding the providence of God for the "great and wonderous works of God, both of his severe judgments against traitors, rebels, and disobedient; and of his mercie and loving kindnesse upon the obedient and dutifull." Of such seditious rebellions "none [is] to be compared to this tragical discourse of Ireland, and the most unnatural wars of the Desmonds against her sacred majesty. Whose disobedience the Lord hath . . . so severely punished and revenged, as the like that hath not in our age been seen nor known." Ibid., 130.

20. On behalf of the universal, Hegel speaks of Islam as a religion of "fanaticism": see Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 2, *Determinate Religion*, ed. Peter Hodgson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 158, 438, 500, on fate and the impulse to world dominion; see Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree, preface by Charles Hegel (New York: Dover, 1956), 358–60. On behalf more of the intimate single one, Jacques Ellul says in connection with religious wars: "The duty of all Muslims is to bring others to the true faith. The sphere of Islam (the *umma* or community) is the whole world. No one must escape it. Hence Islam must conquer the world. The idea of the holy war (jihad) is the result. I do not insist on this; it is evident, and it is not my problem. Yet Islam shows more clearly than any other religion that believers are fanatics and that they are thus ready both to be killed and also to kill without restriction." Ellul, *Anarchy and Christianity*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Eugene, Oreg.: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 24. A certain anarchy would find a sympathetic space within the intimate universal, though not an anarchy whose chief passion takes form as hatred of the universal. The anarchy of the intimate universal is not atheistic, and the slogan of earlier anarchists (consult Bakunin, for instance), "No God, no Master," twists around in the circle of slave and master and does not enter the space of freedom beyond servility and sovereignty. The intimacy of deep singularity suggests something of anarchy but with relation to a community of nonviolence in the peaceful universal. On Bakunin, see Bakunin, *Selected Writings from Mikhail Bakunin* (St. Petersburg, Fla.: Red and Black Publishers, 2010), 25: "If God is, man is a slave; now, man can and must be free; then, God does not exist." J. P. Sartre is merely an existentialist echo of this. Incidentally, Bakunin's interpretation of the biblical "Fall" (10–12), while cruder than Hegel's, is not essentially different from it.

21. Sermon on John 26:4.

22. Compare Nietzsche with this on Peter's weeping, from J. S. Bach, St. Matthew's Passion:

Alto	Alto
Erbarme dich,	Have mercy Lord,
Mein Gott, um meiner Zähren willen!	My God, because of this my weeping!
Schaue hier,	Look thou here,
Herz und Auge weint vor dir	Heart and eyes now weep for thee
Bitterlich.	Bitterly.

If Christ incarnates absolute singular intimacy with God, the pure porosity of the singular and the true universal, the incarnate intermediator, Peter's weeping communicates of the universal with an unprecedented depth of intimacy, for why take note of the tears of a fisherman, a nobody in the ancient world. The betrayal of the Son of Man by a loved disciple is singularly intimate, for the treason of those closest is the most painful, and yet it is forgiven. We are all this traitor—and are offered forgivenness. See David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 124–25; he makes an important and related point about the remorse of Peter and draws attention also to how Erich Auerbach sees in this remorse "the image of man in the highest and deepest and most tragic sense." See Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. W. R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 4. Auerbach sees a decisive break with heroic or moral narratives in their classical form (40–49).

23. The subtitle of Nietzsche's *The Anti-Christ* was originally *A Curse on Christianity* (*Der Antichrist: Flucht auf das Christenhum*), written in the spiky handwriting that seemed to portend his madness. See also (at the end of *The Anti-Christ*) the originally suppressed "Law against Christianity. Given on the Day of Salvation, on the first day of year one (—30 September 1888, according to the false calculation of time). War to the death against vice: the vice is Christianity"—then Nietzsche offers us seven propositions, among which are included: "Priests are not to be reasoned with, they are to be locked up"; "Any participation in church services is an attack on public morality" and degrees of the "criminality of being Christian" are attributed to Protestants (liberals are worse than orthodox) and Catholics and philosophers (the "criminal of criminals"); churches are to be "razed to the ground, being the depraved spot on earth. . . . Poisonous snakes should be bred on top of it"; and so on, until "the rest follows from this" in the seventh proposition. And all are signed by the Anti-Christ. Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, ed. A. Ridley and J. Norman, trans. J. Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 66–67.

24. See Desmond, *Ethics and the Between*, chaps. 14 and 15; see also part 2 of this book.

25. See Desmond, "Caesar with the Soul of Christ: Nietzsche's Highest Impossibility," in *Is There a Sabbath for Thought? Between Religion and Philosophy*

(New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), chap. 6. I speak there about the temptations of Christ in the desert.

26. One notes an affiliation of religion, art, and the intimate universal in connection with the issue of conversion from the intimate to something more universal. Witnessing means this: being called to communicate to (all?) others the inspiration or vision to see the matter in the new way. It suggests an unbound, unlimited reaching of communication beyond the intimate occasion of revelation. See the religious artwork as communicating universally the occasion of intimate revelation. Religion births mission to spread the revelation: up and out but also down and most inward: to touch the heart of (all) others in the passion of communication. There is an intimacy of persuasion. Michael Polanyi speaks of the heuristic role of "persuasive passion" in connection with "universal intent" in the context of scientific controversy in Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards A Post-Critical Philosophy* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), 150. He deems the "persuasive passion" to be "the mainspring of all fundamental controversy" (159).

27. In Desmond, *God and the Between*, chap. 13, I give an account of the mysticism of the idiotic God and the divine woo of the human soul, where I draw on the idiotic, the aesthetic, the erotic, and the agapeic registers of articulation to make some sense of what is going on. See also Desmond, "Mysticism and the Intimate Universal: Philosophical Reflections on the Arnhem Mystical Sermons and Sri Aurobindo," in *Mystical Anthropology: Cross-Religious Perspectives—Interdisciplinary Reflections on the Arnhem Mystical Sermons and Sri Aurobindo*, ed. I. Cornet, R. Faesen, and M. S. Kallungal (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 25–44. There I say that a certain turn to the self or selving is often favored by the mystical path. Involved in this is a certain breakdown of our fixation on diurnal determinacy, whether of this image of the sacred, or this formulation of doctrine, or this routine practice of devotion. The unfixing is a kind of purgation of idols: fixed images of the divine that while enabling communication can also disable it, when we (mis)take the image for the absolute original. This breakdown and purgation do not yield a mere indeterminacy or empty indefiniteness. They open a more primal porosity to the divine, formerly occluded by fixation on this or that determinate image. Nor is this porosity a matter of our self-determination; it is more a return to the divine overdetermination or "too muchness." There is something of the woo of the divine in the mystical. We can find a developed discernment, even strong skepticism, regarding all fixed representations of the divine. There can be a kind of return to zero in the inner selving—a return to the intimate porosity. There is a "becoming nothing"—undergoing the realization that we are (as) nothing without the divine communication. It is the divine communication that gives us to be. We are as intimate singulars in the gift of this communication. Of course, in the nothing of this intimate porosity something of the equivocal, double character of the human soul comes home to us. The porosity will return us to our demons, and we may have to spend our season in hell before the porosity is again unclogged of the counterfeit images that block the flow of the divine communication. Interestingly, mystical skepticism toward images inverts into recognition of the human need for images in this most ultimate of concerns.

A purged image is often required to get some sense of what surpasses all images. The need of images is the need of what is beyond all images. One closes the eyes, there is no representation of the night of sacred eros, and in the darkness one is kissed. The dark night of love points to a kind of *espousal* of the human and divine. There is nothing exclusive about this, no one is left out, and yet every singular is absolute in the deep intimacy of the gift of divine communication.

28. Such an autism might seem to close off communication, or at least make it more difficult—the results would be a kind of dumb intimacy. When we think of prayer, we might think of dumb intimacy, we might think of the soul alone with itself (as Plato said about thought), we might think of the soul communing with nothing, except perhaps itself. But there is an equivocity here that comes out if we consider the plurivocity of silence. There are many kinds of silence—see Desmond, *Philosophy and Its Others: Ways of Being and Mind* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), chap. 5—but the cultivation of silence in prayer indicates that it is not a mere dumbness. It calls for a discipline, a practice; the soul has to be composed, has to compose itself, ready itself, make itself again porous. The silence of prayer is a space of intimate and open porosity, awaiting the advent of communication. What communicates in the silence is not of our determination; without silence we cannot either listen or hear; silence seems autistic and yet it is here the space enabling communication, and hence an intimacy that can unclog the porosity in readiness for something more than itself. The silence of prayer can participate in the intimate universal, though we find it difficult to pin down both the silence and what is communicated in the silence. One clear thing is that silence is inseparable from communication and vice versa. One might take this as a sign of the inseparability of the intimate and the universal. The practice of silence occurs in many religious traditions, though we often think primarily of monastic or cloistered life. See Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Silence: A Christian History* (London: Allen Lane, 2013).

29. See Lessing, *Theological Writings* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1956), 51–55. The "broad ugly ditch" is between history and rationality, the one particular and contingent, the other universal and necessary. We are driven into the ditch by rationalism, but the ditch is perhaps fecund and W. B. Yeats, for one, will affirm it all again: "I am content to live it all again / And yet again, if it be life to pitch / Into the frag-spawn of a blind man's ditch, / A blind man battering blind men." W. B. Yeats, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul," in *The Poems*, ed. Daniel Albright (London: Everyman, 1990), 284–86. See J. Pieper, *In Search for the Sacred*, trans. L. Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 129–30.

30. Is Heidegger's Nazism a form of onto-political-theology and as such a case of mistaken identity concerning the intimate universal, indeed its mutilation? His god is obviously not the God of monotheism; yet there is something intimate about it, an intimacy evident when he was inspired by the "Movement," as seeming to emerge from below up, revealing a transcendence immanent in the ground, rising up from blood and soil, overtaking, taking over the community. This community, while particular, is destined, through the "Movement" of Nazism, to a more universal significance, an "inner truth and greatness" in its confrontation with global technology.

There is no transcendence from above, for that would mean the alienating servility of Christianity and Platonism, to say nothing of Judaism. Heidegger's immanence moves also in the slipstream of the German critiques of "beyonds" from Hegel through Nietzsche and beyond. His Nazism participates in an onto-political-theology of Germanic erotic sovereignty—"being on top," as Nietzsche might put it, *Deutschland über alles*—turned against the intimate universality of the community of agapeic service. Man is the shepherd of Being, Heidegger says, but this is not the Good Shepherd, and in the time of the "Movement" was more the German shepherd.

31. See Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, trans. J. Zielonko (New York: Penguin, 1980); Miłosz was not naive about the infernal, yet his poetics came to be one of "Only glorify," and there is something of the glory of idiot wisdom in this. The Irish word for "poem," *dán*, can also mean "gift."

32. We read of the infernal idiocy of these sovereigns in the biographies of Stalin, or Hitler, or Mao. See Waller R. Newell, *Tyranny: A New Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); see also A. James Gregor, *Marxism, Fascism and Totalitarianism: Chapters in the Intellectual History of Radicalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009). See Zhisui Li, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao: The Memoirs of Mao's Personal Physician*, trans. Tai Hung-chao (London: Arrow, 1996).

2. Art and the Intimate Universal

1. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau strike me as two writers who have an acute sense of the communication of the inmost and the outmost (to speak with Emerson). Consult "Self-Reliance" in Emerson, *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Brook Atkinson (New York: Modern Library, 2000), 132–53; and the section on "Reading" in Thoreau's *Walden* in *Walden, and Other Writings*, ed. Brook Atkinson (New York: Modern Library, 2000), 94–104.

2. See the BBC 2 program *Shakespeare in Italy*: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01hl468. Not all of the Giuliettas are young or even female! Volunteers from all walks of life who take their work seriously, some of them are grandmothers, young students, old men, divorcees, married folks, bakers, economists, scholars of literature.

3. Stendhal in *The Red and the Black*, trans C. K. Scott Montcrieff (New York: Modern Library, 1926), 166–67: "A novel is a mirror carried along a high road. At one moment it reflects to your vision the azure skies, at another the mire of the puddles at your feet."

4. "So now the power of the good has taken refuge in the nature of the beautiful; for measure [*metriotes*] and proportion [*summetria*] are everywhere identified with beauty and virtue." Plato, *Philebus*, 64e5–8. Of course, mimetics is not all. As we will see, erotics and mantics are also important, and each of those intermediate the separation of images and originals. Each of these also moderates the loss of intimacy of that mimetic separation, if taken as separation *alone*, if it were the

only word. Erotics and mantics are modes of "being with"—*sun-ousia*—and, like intercourse, deeply intimate. An erotic soul not only participates in the intimacy of being, it is being intimate—being intimate in a manner that is also ecstatic and hence beyond itself in incarnate communication. This is a mode of "being with" that is intimate being. There is reference to community in "being with," as in erotic souling. Moreover, it is something dynamic, and not just as an endeavor to be, but as an endowed being moved and moving. In the normal case, this is a moving upward—there is the porosity in it, and *con-natus* as a "being born with." The same points apply to the maniac or mantic soul: being moved and moving—ecstatic and eccentric—a "being with" that is a being loved. Sometimes the energy comes down on us in a descent from above, and one wonders about the violence of the sacred. I think of the erotics of Zeus in the rape of Leda. (See the great poem of Yeats, "Leda and the Swan," in *The Poems*, ed. Daniel Albright [London: Everyman, 1990], 260.) Does the god woo us, even if we woo the god as well? Annunciation: Maria is not raped; there is a communication (hail) and she is asked (she is let answer, she is not forced, and she says yes); the coming of the divine is not the result of a sacred rape. What then of an art born of such a divine love? It touches on the iconic (perhaps in something like Marion's sense). In all, the intimate universal is implicated in the erotics of the aesthetics, the mania, the mimetics. The com-unity is not just a relation modeled on a fixed univocalized ratio between one and another, image and original—there is a passing from the one to the other, but the passing as a communication, an intimate passage—just as the intimacy intimates a community in communication that cannot also be fixed univocally.

5. On Bacon and the Crucifixion, both in its singular elevation and the admitted connection with meat and the butcher's shop, see David Sylvester, *Interviews with Francis Bacon* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), 12–14, 22–26, 44–48; see also Michael Peppiatt, *Francis Bacon: Anatomy of an Enigma* (London: Constable, 2008), 77, 339, 342–43. Bacon denies his work is horrible (337): "Can you call the famous Isenheim altar a horror piece. . . . It's one of the greatest paintings of the Crucifixion." This is "grand horror in the sense that it is so vitalizing. . . . Isn't that how people came out of the great tragedies of Greece, the Agamemnon? People came out as though purged into happiness, into a fuller reality of existence." One thinks of the purging of the porosity as what tragic catharsis helps effect. One cannot but notice the Nietzschean note in what Bacon says, a view shared by Yeats—"terrible beauty."

6. Bakunin was prophetic of the state despotism of Marx and the Marxists as leading to a "barrack regime"; see Bakunin, *Selected Writings from Mikhail Bakunin* (St. Petersburg, Fla.: Red and Black Publishers, 2010), 117; it will be more efficient than other despotisms; the pope perhaps had more justification for his spiritual dictatorship (107); see 90–127.

7. Pablo Picasso and Dore Ashton, *Picasso on Art: A Selection of Views*, compiled by Dore Ashton (New York: Da Capo, 1988), 38.

8. Desmond, *Desire, Dialectic and Otherness: An Essay on Origins*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, Oreg.: Cascade Books, 2014), 117–22.

9. *Shakespearean* mimesis: as Hamlet puts it (3.2.22–23), "to hold, as 't were, the mirror up to nature"—there is no facile copying in this (think of the mirror of Stendhal that strolls). Think of equivocity: the true image is sometimes "false," it must be adjusted to perspective—think of the difference of *eikasia* and *phantasia* in Plato's *Sophist*. The imitation of the god—it is not being god, or becoming the god, it is living in the between, being true to the divine endowment that is human promise—a promise that is creative after its own finite form, a form not that of self-creation. We are created before we access the power of given creativity. This is not self-creativity that risks a higher univocalization, a self-determining univocalization.

10. Bellow, *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (New York: Penguin, 1971), 39. One thinks too of the joke(?) of Piero Manzoni who canned ninety samples of his own excrement and called these works *Merda d'Artista*, works successfully sold to major art galleries. Saul Bellow's own work is a strange consecration of the "s . . . t" in the sense that his art witnesses a torn search for some trace of the sacred in the sometimes unholy mess of our human condition. One could say that only for humans is excrement something intimate. Animals have no pudenda. Only we blush. Our flesh flushes thus with the sign of the intimacy of being, in the sight of the (even imagined) other. Post-Romantic deconstruction is sometimes a romanticism that hates itself, an autonomy that lacerates autonomy itself. On some examples of art and actual excrement, see Donald Kuspit, *The End of Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), for instance, 118–20, 138–41; consult the index and you will find "excrement" (delicately) entered, but in the text the references are less delicate to "s . . . t" (reverting myself to delicacy once again).

11. Plato, *The Laws*, 897d: "In making our answer let us not bring on night, as it were, at midday, by looking right in the eye of the sun, as though with mortal eyes we could ever behold reason and know it fully; the safer way to behold the object with which our question is concerned is by looking at an image of it."

12. Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, abridged translation of the third edition (1744) by Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), 381–82 (§1106), here speaking of the return of the barbarism of the senses after the barbarism of reflection (*barbarie della riflessione*).

13. One wonders whether Vico's way of thinking is reflective of an intuition about the intimate universal, since there is a mythological incarnation of intimate communication, a sacred art of the gods before even a poetic time of the heroes, and before the now more prosaic generalities of the time of men—and this first primally intimate to our incarnate being as well as later moving the more common drama on the stage of history.

14. One of the reasons why imagination has been held to be at the origin of evil is because this *conatus essendi* can outrun the true, outrun the real, and take the nothing for the more real, hence turning the endeavor of *conatus* into a negativity itself overtaken by negation, as it believes in its own power qua negativity to overcome, outrun all beings. There is a usurping of the real in this outrunning and the substitution of the not true for the true, even unto sympathy for the devil (with a bow to the Rolling Stones). On imagination, see Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. with intro

by A. J. Krailsheimer (Harmondworth, UK: Penguin, 1966), 38–42. On imagination and the good and evil *yetser* in the Hebrew tradition, see, for instance, Martin Buber, *Good and Evil: Two Interpretations*, trans. R.G. Smith and M. Bullock (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1997); see also Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination: Towards a Postmodern Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), chap. 1.

15. See Desmond, "The Theater of the *Metaxu*: Staging the Between," in *Topoi: An International Review of Philosophy* 30, no. 2:113–24. Schopenhauer speaks of art providing a Sabbath from the penal servitude of the will, though his philosophy as a whole ontologically precludes the possibility of any sabbatical being at all: Desmond, *Is There a Sabbath for Thought? Between Religion and Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), chap. 10.

16. Yeats, *The Poems*, 341.

17. See the *Ion* on inspiration (being in the god, the god being in one: *entheos*) and *technē*: *theia moira* and *technē*. Ion as rhapsode strikes one alternatively as innocent or naive and overconfident in his claim to be divinely inspired. By contrast, Socrates relentlessly pursues the meaning of *technē*—and while granting the difference of the two seems intent on exposing the confusion of Ion, who thinks the gift of the first confers on him the specific knowledge or particular skill of the second. The second is a knowing (a "know how") with respect to a specific function and determinate objective. Technicians must be trained in the specifics of the determinate disciple. There is something other to divine inspiration. I suggest that if we swivel Socrates, that otherness will come to look different and might be evaluated differently. The alternatives: mania as defect of *technē*, or as a gift more than *technē*. Is *technē* shown in its limitations in this dialogue? Not by Socrates but by Plato? Socrates's demonstration of the defect might be seen as the other side of the benefit of inspiration—as a gifted benefaction. There would be something silly about Socrates if we were to think of him as having "refuted" possession. Then he would be guilty of a "logotechnicism." But in truth Socrates seems more double and not hostile to possession as such. Is he hostile to the conflation of *technē* and possession? Perhaps. Yet within the synoptic art of Plato, there is the knowing that possession is needed for great works (*Phaedrus*: 244a: mania the greatest of blessing, *ta melista ton agathon*, sent as a gift of the gods). One thinks too of the doubleness of both honor and criticism of the poets in the *Republic* (398). Elsewhere the note of inescapable revering is hard to avoid. And then even in the *Ion* there is a gentle irony in the way Socrates pursues Ion. It is not clear that he is trying to "nail" Ion, as rationalist interpreters too callowly conclude.

18. Think of the rich connotations in the word "wordsmith": this craft is no mindless fabrication; there is finesse for nuance in this art, this craft, this smith. James Joyce (Stephen Dedalus in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*): "Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race." What is the smithy of the soul? Yeats ("Under Ben Bulben" [1939], *The Poems*, 373–78): "Irish poets, learn your trade, / Sing whatever is well made, / Scorn the sort now growing up / All

out of shape from toe to top." The connection with the intimate universal: true craft hones more deeply immanent source(s) of originality rather than the easy reach for the imposed form of the abstract universal.

19. Compare Hegel's view that the human body is the only adequate vehicle in nature for the expression of *Geist*. The point is especially crucial for him in relation to art. See Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures in the Philosophy of Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) 1:78.

20. Think of Hegel's surpassing of incarnation toward spirit that is no longer tied to the singular incarnation that now is relativized to a historical contingency. It is true that his sense of spirit is concretized in the community but the status of incarnational singularity is dialectically weakened in this claim of communal completion. The consummate spiritualization of the communication of the universal takes flight beyond the incarnate singular—the One who, we might say, incarnates the intimate universal, the One who words the intimate universal. There is also the relativization of the merely spiritual community of religion in the direction of the modern state. In my view, the intimate universal whether in art or religion testifies to transpolitical community.

21. Walter Benjamin famously wrote of the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction and the loss of the aura in *Illuminations*, ed. H. Arendt (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1968), 211–44. Needless to say, postmodern parody carries the deconsecration of art to a now boring extreme. The outrage to consecrated works makes us now yawn. At best the outrage is interesting, at worst the outrage is interesting. In parody the creativity of the eunuch triumphs. There may be a need of originals, but then the original is weakened by parody and eventually dissolves into the mimicry—and the mimicry of mimicry. We end up with a mimesis without meaning—beyond the proliferation of the image, and the image of the image, ad infinitum. The image of the image ad infinitum is empty mimesis going viral. To what at all does it refer then? It is impossible to stabilize in a constant original. There seems only the energy of doubling, and redoubling, ad nauseam. Then even this does not seem to be pure cloning, since some otherness is always introduced in the redoubling process. In this aesthetic process of endless redoubling there comes to be the world of images in which we live, move, and have our being: surrounding us, caressing us, circling around us, circling within us, ensnaring us, encircling us, in bondage. Is there then any longer any "outside"? To borrow the wisdom of Zarathustra: "*Es geibt keine ausser*!"

The turn of mimesis to creativity can be matched by the return of creativity to mimesis. This return can be similarly emptied of meaning by an absolutization of immanence, just as the first and old mimesis can be emptied by an absolutization of transcendence. In between immanence and transcendence, there is a labyrinth of doublings that fosters counterfeit doubles. I am thinking of the dualism that results if transcendence is (secretly) only our projection, *our subreption*. I am thinking of the dualism of the *inverted world*, which turns upside down this first projection. Both dualisms lead to a dialectic of the perverted world, not because there is no duality but because it has been configured in the light of a too-univocal opposition, or in

the half-light of an equivocal projection, or in the other half of the light, the half-darkness of the retraction of the equivocal projection, or again in terms of a dialectical claim to contain the duality with an absolute immanent one. All these possibilities generate their counterfeit doubles because they are not truly metaxological. The process of counterfeit doubling eventually goes mad and squanders the substance of spirit. But even when nonsense is produced artistically, the art of madness is artistic rather than just mad. There is a logic in the madness, whether of mimesis or self-creativity. The logic is the form of the intimate universal in which the madness also participates, even as it deforms—turning its divine form in the direction of just mad madness.

22. There is a lovely image of the eyes as inlets in Plato's *Phaedrus* (255), through which flow the streams of beauty and love. The image is one of fluidity, influence, influx, flow: beauty brings a softening, melting the eyes—they become porous. Eyes are also mirrors (255d). See Plato on this streaming in with seeing (*Theaetetus*, 156d–157b).

23. The importance of the sur-face: not just to save the appearances but to save the human—against those trends that want to overtake the human and engineer its replacement with the inhuman. To make humans superfluous—this was the point of the totalitarianisms of the twentieth century. What happens: the transhuman becomes the inhuman becomes the subhuman—machines. As if it would be better we were drone planes killing the enemy. Of course, in the neutralized world there should be no enemies as such. The other should be neither friend nor enemy but just there. This way ends up being infernally on the surface—above the surface as a selfless killing machine. This is not to be on the surplus surface of fleshed life. For the drone and its remote operator, the aesthetic surface is not the skin of human beings but a target on a screen, cybernetically calculated, cybernetically killed. On the scientific reduction see Dostoevsky's *Underground Man*: "the babes, the poor innocent babes." The soul of man is monstrous but the monster cannot remain underground. It surfaces.

24. Francis Bacon always had a fascination with facial deformity, and it has been suggested that it might be traced to the death of his brother because of lockjaw. There was a French medical textbook on deformities of the face (see Sylvester, *Interviews with Francis Bacon*, 35) that was studied by him and a constant companion. Of course, it is important to grant Bacon's stated desire to restore the human figure to art, though he thought in our age this was to be achieved by disfiguration. Given that I am referring to looking with the eyes of agapeic mindfulness, important is the sadomasochistic side of Bacon's erotics (mentioned in Peppiatt's biography; also important is his interest in Greek tragedy, Aeschylus [Agamemnon], as well as the Crucifixion). In his earlier portraits Bacon worked directly "from certain models rather than exclusively from photographs of them, as he insisted on doing later on (to avoid, as he said, inflicting on them in their presence the injury he did to them in paint)." Peppiatt, *Francis Bacon*, 204. See Sylvester, *Interviews with Francis Bacon*, 41: "I don't want to practise before them the injury that I do to them in my work. I would rather practise the injury in private by which I think I can record the

fact of them more clearly." There are saturated dimensions of distance and intimacy at play here.

25. See the thoughtful piece by Donald Kuspit, "Shameless and Ashamed," on the flesh and portraiture in Lucien Freud, Francis Bacon, and Andrew Wyeth: www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/kuspit/kuspit10–06–05.asp). The aesthetics of the porosity and the *passio essendi* yield a different view than Kuspit's in relation to the communication between the artist and his model. He stresses too much a kind of projective *conatus*, yet he finds love in the portraiture of Wyeth, but more assault in the portraiture of Bacon and Freud. (In passing, Wyeth stayed close to home ground for all his life and in painting his home place found the universal in the intimate.)

26. Slavoj Žižek and John Milbank, *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic*?, ed. Creston Davis (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009). One must add: sometimes the flesh does crawl, the flesh is horrifying; the flesh crawls at its own flesh; self-feeling is horror at itself; it recoils from itself in touching itself; it is touching in itself something untouchable. How to fit this with Hegel's view (mentioned above) that the human body is the only adequate vehicle in nature for *Geist*'s expression? What would Bacon say to Hegel, or Hegel to Bacon?

27. See Desmond, *Art, Origins, Otherness: Between Philosophy and Art* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 34–35, 47–48.

28. The long tradition stretching back to the Pythagoreans that connects mathematics with harmonies is well expressed by Leibniz, who highlights the connection with determinability when he says: "Music is a hidden arithmetic exercise of the soul, which does not know that it is counting" (*Musica est exercitium arithmeticae occultum nescientis se numerare animi*. Letter to Christian Goldbach, April 17, 1712). Music is unknowing mathematics. Singing does not know that secretly it is arithmetical determination. Schopenhauer cleverly reformulated this in the first book of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*: *Musica est exercitium metaphysicis occultum nescientis se philosophari animi*. Music is a hidden metaphysical exercise of the soul, which does not know that it is philosophizing. From the view I am suggesting, one wonders if it is the opposite that is more truly the case: not that music is secretly mathematics, but that *mathematics is a music the intellect does not know it is singing*. It is worth asking if song is more in communication with the overdeterminate, in which structure determinately participates but which it does not and cannot ever exhaust. If we were to use the terms of another great mathematician and scientist, and connect music with the *esprit de finesse* and arithmetic with the *esprit de géométrie*, Leibniz's God comes across more as a God of geometry than a God of finesse. The God of finesse is a God of music—a God of living beauty. One thinks of Augustine's famous jubilation: *Sero te amavi! pulchritudo tam antiqua, et tam nova, sero te amavi!* . . . Living beauty, older than all age and younger than all youth. The God of finesse sings the world into being and continues to sing it in being. This God is singing before calculating. For singing, structuring is more than and before mathematical structure. The music of the spheres is not due to the geometry, the geometry of the heavens is due to the music. I found this statement in George Steiner, *The Poetry of Thought*: *Hellenism to Celan* (New York: New Directions, 2012), 18: "When God sings to Himself,

He sings algebra, opined Leibniz." Where does Leibniz say it quite so? I am inclined to think of musical concordance as literally "with the heart," *con-cordis*: concordance is intimate communication, heart to heart. There is no algebra of the heart.

29. See Desmond, "The Theater of the *Metaxu*."

30. Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1953), esp. chaps. 7–10.

31. Receiver and artist: alone but not alone—with a communication—and with a communicator and a community of both receivers and communicators. Recall an above remark about reading intimately alone, but not being alone; being alone but not alone before a poem—like prayer. One thinks also of Dutch painting in connection with the intimate universal. Vermeer: Could one say that the Protestant prohibition of religious images and icons gives rise to the rebirth of the intimate universal in the interior scene? Who can fail to see the likeness between some of Vermeer's women at the window, shone on by a source of light, and Mary and the Annunciation. This is divine conception in the interior—the light that comes in from the outside is a source of a universal communication in the intimate interior. See note 4 of this chapter on "Leda and the Swan." John O'Donohue, *Beauty: The Invisible Embrace* (New York: Harper, 2004), 110–12, has some thoughtful remarks on Vermeer; he speaks sensitively of the between, 133–34, 231–32.

32. Stendhal, "Bad taste leads to crime," "*Le mauvais goût mène aux crimes.*" On this and crimes against art, see Saul Bellow, "A Matter of Soul," in *It All Adds Up: From the Dim Past to the Uncertain Future* (New York: Penguin, 1995), 75. Shaftesbury: "My inclination leads me strongly this way, for I am ready enough to yield that there is no real good besides the enjoyment of beauty." Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (Bristol: Thoemmes, 1995), 2:141.

33. We see something of the kind of universal in the different moments of the aesthetic judgment of taste: disinterestedness, universality that is subjective, purposiveness without a purpose, necessary (though not theoretically, not morally).

34. On Kant and the terror of genius, see Desmond, *Art, Origins, Otherness*, chap. 2; on sweating, ibid., 84–85.

35. Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics*, 1:71. Address: *eine Anrede*; he also says there that the artwork is a question, *eine Frage*, and a call, *ein Ruf.*

36. Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics*, 1:153–54.

37. Ibid., 1:46. This was Marx's favorite maxim, as evidenced in his confession; see David McLellan, *Karl Marx: A Biography*, 4th ed. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 430. The title of Terence's play, *Heuton Timorumenos* (*The Self-Tormentor*) makes one think of the self-torture of the human rather than the self-determination. Hegel leaves out the "*Homo sum.*"

38. Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics*, 1:607; see also Desmond, *Art, Origins, Otherness*, chap. 3, on the dialectical self-mediation of art, viewed in epochal terms.

39. We need not slight history (*pace* Aristotle's dictum that poetry is more universal than history), though an entirely secularized history must lose the intimate universal to the extent that it entirely humanizes happening. It makes the *res gestae* ours and ours alone, and there is no companionship of the sacred, to say nothing of

the ontological affront to the otherness of nature. The intimate universal tells against the deconsecration of particulars. Religiously speaking, we might look on the particulars as providential signs, sometimes exhilarating, something perplexing, sometimes downright horrible, sometimes entirely indecipherable. Perhaps we have to rewrite Hegel's doctrine of absolute spirit: not philosophy subsuming art and religion, but rather a different understanding of the spaces among art, religion, and philosophy as enabling a porosity and plurivocal conversation among the three. (Perhaps I ventriloquize through Hegel in *Art and the Absolute* in a way I would not now want to do at all.) Reconsider the current claim: we participate in the intimate universal in great art. This means: there see, or hear, or read the singular work, which is idiotically just itself and yet it singularizes a potentially universal address. The address in the singular great work reserves for itself a source of freshness that renews itself in our response to it. Out in the open, it is entirely recessed, and is the source of a communication aged and youthful all at once. The intimacy of great art speaks to the idiotic soul. Yet this intimacy addresses something universal, since it enacts the unconstrained space of communication that gathers humans in an enigmatic between of promised meaning, sometimes even of redeemed meaning. We also participate in the intimate universal in being religious: the deepest porosity of the soul is something idiotic, mine and mine alone, and yet one is never alone, for one is in communication from the origin with the divine origin, God, and what is mine is not mine only, since each is singularly and uniquely in this divine communication. The intimate universal is not precious subjectivity, not abstract universality, not even Hegel's concrete universal. To be true to the intimate universal, philosophy must enter into conversation with art and religion, but not in the subsuming way of Hegel, for whom the philosophical voice overtakes, finally, the voices of the other two. A metaxological philosophy must be more faithful to the open spaces between all three. Listening to the voices of the others, it must itself be plurivocal in attempting to word the between.

40. Concerning a certain revolt against beauty, consider Barnett Newman: by contrast to the perfection attained by a Michelangelo, the impulse of modern art was the "desire to destroy beauty. " See Newman, "The Sublime is Now," in *Art in Theory: 1900–1990*, ed. C. Harrison and P Woods (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 573. For a defense of beauty, see Roger Scruton, *Beauty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); see also Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

41. In the Frick Collection there are 2 paintings by Turner: *Dieppe Harbor, The Sun Above/Sun Below—Morning*; *Cologne: Evening, Sun Withdrawing.*

42. Who are the philosophers in the English language who match the greatness of such a painter, or the greatness of such a dramatist as Shakespeare? Do they exist? We find many who are too anaemic in their devotion to the abstract universal, even when they are philosophers of the sense impressions. These latter empiricists do not live their impressions in the way Turner lived them as aesthetic happening. William James, qua radical empiricist, might be exempted from this condition of anaemia. But then James himself contemplated, when younger, answering the call of being a painter. One also senses in nineteenth-century

American thinkers, not excluding James, the sometimes unstated (back)ground of the sublime expanse of America itself.

43. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), for example, 47–48; sublimity is also connected with the majesty of the (erotic) sovereign.

44. This in an ontological and metaphysical sense; see chapter 4.

45. The issue of art and politics is central in Plato's *Republic* and is connected also with the issue of the religious images of the gods, connected also with the ethical *paideia* of the soul. See Plato, *Laws*, 817: the lawmakers are making the greatest tragedy of all, to whose judgment all the other tragedians and poets must submit. The issue of the universal in the aesthetic is present also in post-Kantian aesthetics—for example, Schiller on the aesthetic education of mankind. Somewhat later, with the avant-garde—deriving from a military metaphor—it is not unimportant that some avant-garde movements had fascist and communist sympathies, if not connections (Futurism, Surrealism, Dada). In Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* the art, religion, and politics of *das Volk* are inseparable in a new liturgy. We witness the transmigration of transcendence from religion to art, not unconnected with politics as the putative destiny of man in our time (Thomas Mann). One thinks too of the artistic model of the younger "humanistic" Marx: work and the work of art illuminating alienated labor. On Hitler turning Wagner's mythology into praxis, on the vanishing of the difference of real and ideal, the historical and the imaginary, on the agenda for the realization of the redemptive myth of the German people in history, see the controversial book by Joachim Köhler, *Wagner's Hitler: The Prophet and His Disciple*, trans. R. Taylor (London: Polity, 2000). The Nuremburg rallies were a form of Wagnerian theater, fascist liturgy of the German race. See the remark in Steiner, *Poetry of Thought*, 17: "The selfsame chorus in Wagner's *Rienzi* exalts Herzl's Zionism and Hitler's vision of the *Reich*." See Köhler, *Wagner's Hitler*, on *Rienzi*, Wagner and Hitler extensively. Recently, in Köhler, "Wagner's Acquittal," *Wagner Journal* 8 (2014): 2, 43–51, Köhler reevaluated his views of Wagner's anti-Semitism, indeed retracted the claim that Wagner was a forerunner of the Holocaust. Interestingly, he sees Wagner's claim about the Jews' self-negation (*Selbstvernichtung*) in relation to Hegel's idea of *Aufhebung*. See also G. S. Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). Herbert Marcuse connects the aesthetic dimension, the great refusal, eros, and civilization with a politics of revolutionary praxis. One sees a connection between agenda philosophy, revolutionary politics, and art. Hannah Arendt's efforts were to connect a sense of politics with a philosophy of culture with some help from, among other sources, Kant's aesthetic reflections on the *sensus communis*.

46. Hence Wagner's so named "Regenerations Essays."

47. Soteriological aesthetic politics: Sung at the end of *die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*: "Honor your German Masters / even if the Holy Roman Empire dissolves in mist / for us holy German art would still remain [*uns bliebe gleich die heil'ge deutsche Kunst*]."

48. The book "smells offensively Hegelian," the later Nietzsche said in *Ecce Homo*. Perhaps it so smells because there was also something of a whiff of "Hegel" about Wagner, a whiff that Nietzsche himself exuded in this earlier work. Wagner was an erstwhile Feuerbachian, and one senses that his reflections on art, religion, and history draw importantly from Hegel's philosophy of art and philosophy of history. Of course, Wagner thought of Nietzsche's book as propaganda for *his* ideas about Dionysus, Wagner's own ideas—and Nietzsche's own willingness to be a propagandist for Wagner at this moment in his life speaks to the point. Of course, Nietzsche came to resent being cast in the role of a mere John the Baptist and revolted. Could one read the phrase "offensively Hegelian" as a kind of praise of Hegel, or at least a praise of the writer who smells of Hegel, the smell of the world-historical as hanging about this early work—with Nietzsche himself entering on the stage of world-history—careless of whether he smells offensively or not? See his response to the first letter from an American admirer, handwritten by him on the back: "*initium gloriae mundi*." See Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen, *American Nietzsche: A History of an Icon and His Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 3.

49. Just so: The more I know of Schopenhauer, the more of Schopenhauer one hears echoed in Nietzsche.

50. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, ed. W. Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967), 550.

51. See Luc Ferry, *Homo Aestheticus: The Invention of Taste in the Democratic Age*, trans. Robert de Loaiza (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 196–97, on the elitism of Kandinsky and those who purportedly must sacrifice themselves for the cretins and philistines. Speaking in the name of the coming universal? But is this sacrifice agapeic? Not impossible. Or is it more erotic—having to do with sovereignty? Perhaps more of the second, with some of the first. On the agapeic mindfulness of the artist I mention William Trevor in Desmond, *Art, Origins, Otherness*, 289. There is the question again of the solitude of art as well as the utopian promise of art. Adorno, for instance, protests against alienated social reality but this is a posture that goes back to the late eighteenth century and Romanticism. The avant-garde is a term derived from military usage, but when used in the late nineteenth century it came to have both political and aesthetic connotations. The stress is as much on the radical, the original, as on movement—radical movements—a stress one even hears in Heidegger when he talks of Nazism as the Movement.

52. See Desmond, *Art, Origins and Otherness*, on the Gothic Cathedral and Hegel.

53. The word "theater" is itself derivative from the Greek *theatron*—"a place of looking." We are there to behold (*theastai*: "to behold"). See Desmond, "The Theater of the *Metaxu*."

54. On something elemental about laughter and weeping, see Desmond, "Exceeding Virtue: Aquinas and the Beatitudes," in *Thomas Aquinas: Teacher and Scholar: The Aquinas Lectures at Maynooth*, vol. 2, *2002–2010*, ed. James McEvoy, Michael W. Dunne, and Julie Hynes (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012), 28–49.

55. The words sometimes used in theater criticism are "complication" and "denouement"; the Greek words in Aristotle are *desis* and *lusis*, which might be translated as "binding" and "unbinding." We bind ourselves but we cannot unbind ourselves; tying ourselves in knots, we cannot quite unloose them ourselves. Again, see Desmond "The Theater of the *Metaxu*."

56. More might be said about derision, the wisdom of failure, and the intimate universal, but see Desmond, *Philosophy and Its Others: Ways of Being and Mind* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 242–58, on failure and mindfulness, as well as Desmond, *Beyond Hegel and Dialectic: Speculation, Cult and Comedy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), chap. 5, on dialectic, deconstruction, and the comedy of the failure of logos.

57. When thinking of comedy and politics, one cannot forget the Marx Brothers and Fredonia in *Duck Soup* and the battle hymn of this republic of fools: "Fredonia is going to War." Nor can one forget that Charlie Chaplin, clown by profession, had the measure of the Great Dictator, while Martin Heidegger, philosopher by profession, fawned before the will of the Führer. One could call this fawning comic but perhaps only if turned into a farce along the lines of "Springtime for Hitler and Germany." Alexander Kojève is reported to have said: "I am a god"—but he was an ironical god, since he was quick to admit that his secretary just laughed when he said this. Totalitarian leaders and tyrants have a low threshold of tolerance when it comes to comedy. Comedy plays with the equivocal truth, the equivocal untruth of the counterfeit double. Think of Chaplin's Great Dictator and the Barber: absolutely alike, absolutely unlike. Counterfeit doubles are comic when we have an intimation of the true original. Think of this politically in terms of totalitarian communism—see this as tending toward the counterfeit double of a just community, saturated with all the language of universal justice, community, solidarity, and so on. It has been said that the various Soviet constitutions were more or less "perfect" but the reality was servitude. When freedom is substituted by *autonomia turannos*, puffed up on the stage of the social totality, we are on the way to a counterfeit double of the intimate universal. With the totalitarian universal we meet the universal intrusion of the state into the intimate and the destruction of the "private" and there is nothing one can call one's own. This would be a comic caricature were it not so deadly. The perfection of the counterfeit double can be its undoing. During World War II German counterfeits of British currency were very successful in sowing confusion, until it was noticed that the notes of the counterfeits were "perfect," while the notes of true currency always had a small flaw. The true with flaws were backed by creditworthiness, the perfect and false by nothing trustworthy.

58. One recalls Georges Rouault's heads of clowns and fools, head of the divine fool who is head of all, ahead of all. Lear's patience—God's spies are companions in the intimate universal. Incarnation: God becoming flesh (*carnis*)—is there something equivocal in "God becoming man"? Surely so, if there is nothing then but man—and no longer even the God-man? The doubleness is then reduced to a univocity.

59. In addition to this comic "relief" in *Macbeth*, there is Lear and his Fool, political power and the beyond of will to political power. Mikhail Bakhtin rightly reminds

us of the carnivalesque and the polyphonic in Dostoevsky, and the grace of a kind of redeeming comedy along all the paths of life, not just the public, the important, but the hidden, the out of the way, the despised and the refuse(d).

60. I am thinking of Aristophanes's pillory of sophistry, Socrates, and philosophy in *Clouds*, and of the mistaken identity in Hades between mortals and gods in *Frogs*. Aristophanes had also a fearless irreverence for the mighty of politics, whom he mocks mercilessly—Cleon in *Knights*, for instance. See Desmond, *Beyond Hegel and Dialectic*, chap. 6: "Can Philosophy Laugh at Itself?"

61. On politics, art, and the Bull of Phalaris, Socrates and the cicadas, the political and the transpolitical, music, eros, and power, see part 2, chap. 7.

3. Philosophy and the Intimate Universal

1. When I refer to this prior sense of "doing justice" I will signal it with quotation marks to differentiate it from the more determinate sense of doing justice in this or that more specific enterprise or endeavor.

2. A charge against the Epicurean cultivation of one's garden.

3. See Plato, *Phaedrus*, 248dff., where we are offered a hierarchy of excellences in relation to the gift of divine *mania*: from the philosopher, friend of beauty, music, and the erotic as in the first rank, to the *basileus*, or "warlike ruler," as second, all the way down to the ninth rank and, at the bottom, the tyrant. Striking is the difference between the *basileus*, the king for whom true justice governs power and the tyrant for whom power governs his justice. The *mania* of this bottom form of will to power is the least divine. Not often enough does discussion of practical philosophy do justice to the extremities—either the Platonic extremity and what is intended by his philosophical story, or at the other extreme, what is at issue in the intimate universal and the prior "doing justice."

An example of the philosopher king where the contrast of erotic sovereign and agapeic service is at work: Julian (the apostate) the emperor who sought to revive pagan wisdom, in theory and practice, seeking to weaken the Christian ethos (of agapeic service) for its enfeebling of pagan piety and emasculation of the courage of the warrior—both bad for the empire and its political powers. The ideal: not a Roman Caesar with the soul of Christ, but a Roman Caesar with the soul of Plato or Plotinus, perhaps. The Antichrist Nietzsche's war on Christianity often reminds me of the earlier apostate Julian. See the discussion of Julian in William Desmond, *Philosopher-Kings of Antiquity* (London: Continuum, 2011).

4. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 7–21.

5. Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, intro. L. Colletti, trans. R. Livingstone and G. Benton (London: Penguin, 1975), 423.

6. One thinks also of John Dewey: the supremacy of the ideal of contemplative theory in ancient philosophy reflects the social political structure with its hierarchy and elitism. Pragmatism, with its turn from theory to practice, is truer to the more

egalitarian and democratic ethos of modernity. I think the matter is more complicated than this. If I am right and there is a patience of being before theory and practice in the usual sense, it is with respect to this that the invidious distinction between higher and lower social orders, between sovereigns and slave, is undercut. There is a doing of justice prior to this and exceeding it. Dewey does not have the terms to think the intimate universal, since religion is transmuted into social morality in an entirely humanistic frame. John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934). Dewey turned against the Hegelian absolute taken as transcendent, but he is still a kind of pragmatic Hegelian in offering us a postreligious humanism. Of course, one might propose something like the intimate universal in a humanistic sense—*nihil humanum a me alienum puto*. My argument is that without the religious and its promise of a more personal universalism, we risk a counterfeit double of the intimate universal. Consider, for instance, Kant's moralistic counterfeit of the intimate universal, in his kingdom of ends, as well as his counterfeit of rational ecclesiology in *Religion Within the Bounds of Reason Alone*. Hegel, like Dewey, can be understood to offer a form of postreligious humanism. Hegel's state is the successor to, takes the place of, the Church as merely a spiritual community. The religious community is not the full worldly embodiment of immanent freedom, as the modern state is. All these moves are enabled by some aspect of the promise of the intimate universal but the account rendered does not do justice to it.

7. In considering *ta skoteina* one remembers also the dark things to be encountered in the intimacy *below ground*. These are the dark things of the monstrous intimacy. The cave is reminiscent of Hades, and while there is ascent to the surface of the earth to see the sun and the things in its light, one is put in mind also of the descent of, so to say, a philosophical Orpheus into Hades to bring out into the light those there who are beloved. One recalls also the theme of going into hell, the harrowing of hell, of Christ, as well as of the poet going into the underground, be it Virgil or Dante. Confronting the monstrous intimacy is to encounter the issue of being posthumous to the first difference of life and death.

8. On this, see Desmond, "Between System and Poetics: On the Practices of Philosophy," in *Between System and Poetics: William Desmond and Philosophy After Dialectics*, ed. Thomas Kelly (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2007), 13–36.

9. In Vico God makes nature, man makes history. We can know history as its makers. But God is *the* maker par excellence—the creator. In that regard, there is a sense of truth with relation to God that is not our construction at all: we are the recipients; we are the ones endowed; we ourselves are constructions, in the sense of God's creations. This more original sense of "construction" is divine, not human: creation (which in fact is not construction at all). Relative to creation all created being is absolutely patient—it comes to be by being given to be. When Marx takes over the dictum of Vico there is no maker except the human maker, the historical human. There is no divine "making." There is no patience to divine truth; we are rather the industrial producers of historical truth(s). Vico may overstate the certainty humans can have from the history he claims they make, for we are enigmas to ourselves and what we make. In Vico, nevertheless, there is mysterious Providence;

hence the wisdom at the center of his *New Science* itself is, as he says, inseparable from piety. There is no piety in Marx's constructivism. On historicism see Desmond, *Beyond Hegel and Dialectic: Speculation, Cult and Comedy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), chap. 1.

10. Braque, *Le Jour et la Nuit: Cahiers de George Braque, 1917–1952* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988).

11. Consider the step back into the intimate universal and being true as not asking about determinate truths that might be formulated in more or less univocal propositions, into mindfulness of the *metaxu* as enabling all our endeavors to be true, some of which issue in more univocal determinacies, some of which are tinged with equivocal indeterminacy, some of which yield to dialectical self-determination, and yet there is more than indeterminacy, determination, and self-determination. See Desmond, *Being and the Between* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), on "Being True." I note that the step back into the intimate universal and its "doing justice" and being true is not unreminiscent of Heidegger's claim of a prior sense of truth with *aletheia*, prior in relation to the apophatic truths of propositional correspondence. What the metaxological step back finds is not coincident with Heidegger's understanding. Among other things, the alpha of *a-letheia* is for Heidegger a privative alpha, and he speaks of truth as like a robbery (*Sein und Zeit* [Halle: Niemeyer, 1941], §44, 222, 265, "*ist gleichsam ein Raub*"). "Beings get snatched out of hiddenness." This suggests *agon* and *polemos* (crucial themes in Heidegger); and robbery even might bring to mind Prometheus's theft of fire from the gods. This is not at all what is meant by the endowing of the porosity; and the struggle to wrest truth from untruth seems less an opening of the porosity and the *passio essendi* than a variation on the *conatus essendi* as striving to be itself by taking to itself what is other to itself. How one gets from *polemos* to *Gelassenheit* is a question I pose in connection with the still unthought between in Heidegger in Desmond, *Art, Origins, Otherness: Between Philosophy and Art* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), chap. 7. On how the philosophical way in Desmond, *Ethics and the Between* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001) might be likened to a *step back in ethics*, from determinate ethical systems or orders to the enabling sources of our being ethical, which receive more determinate form in particular ethical systems or orders, see Desmond, "The Potencies of the Ethical," in *An Ethics of/for the Future*, ed. Mary Shanahan (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 62–75.

12. Spinoza, *Ethics*, in *Spinoza Opera*, ed. Carl Gebhart (Heidelberg: Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1924); see *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes (New York: Dover, 1955).

13. On the theme of pluralism, truthfulness and the patience of being, see Desmond, *The Intimate Strangeness of Being* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 2012), chap. 7. I draw on some of the ideas there, here turned to the theme of the intimate universal.

14. On this, see Desmond, *Being and the Between*, chap. 13; and Desmond, *Ethics and the Between*, passim.

15. See the discussion of being as power, *dunamis*, in Plato's *Sophist* 247d–e.

16. See Desmond, "The Solitudes of Philosophy," in *Loneliness*, ed. Lee Rouner (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 63–78.

17. On the meaning of serviceable disposability, see Desmond, *Ethics and the Between*, chap. 14; see also below in part 2, especially chapter 6.

18. See Paul Bagley, *Philosophy, Theology, and Politics: A Reading of Benedict Spinoza's Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (Leiden: Brill, 2008). "It is expedient that there should be gods, and since it is expedient, let us believe that gods exist." Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, bk. 1, line 637.

19. *Leviathan*, part 4; I say nothing here of the univocalization of sovereignty.

20. Burke was horrified and perhaps secretly awestruck by the monstrous power of the human, exceeding measure, including all human measure, even when man claims to be the measure of all things. He was prophetic about the intimacy of the monstrous and its spilling on to the revolutionary streets with a surge in excess of finite measure—ominous with sacred signs in the desecration of hitherto established forms of life. Hegel's famous discussion of freedom and terror in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (§§582–95) is less penetrating from the point of view of prophetic clairvoyance than Burke's acute foreboding. Put this down to Irish seeing before catastrophe by contrast with German system after the fact. On the connection with critique and thinking as negation, see Desmond, "Is There Metaphysics after Critique?," in *The Intimate Strangeness of Being*, chap. 4.

21. See Desmond, "Enemies: On Hatred," in *Is There a Sabbath for Thought? Between Religion and Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), chap. 9.

22. Cato the Elder would end (all) his speeches to the Roman Senate thus: *Carthago delenda est*—Carthage must be destroyed. Augustine had a view different from the Roman heroic ideal that Cicero's *optimi viri* represents.

23. See Desmond, "Religion and the Poverty of Philosophy," in *Is There a Sabbath for Thought?*, chap. 3.

24. Is the Islamic umma the universal to which one is to be sacrificed, with the whole absorbing the individual? Is this an "absorbing god" in which the devotee is not a friend in service but a subordinate in subjection? Servility produces sovereignty; sovereignty produces slavery; sovereignty in the form of religious fanaticism generates the slave who would be a master. This is not the agapeic service of the intimate universal but a form of serviceable disposability in religious and political form. Redemption from purposelessness is promised in the intimate universal, but try as we might this is hard to make true sense of outside the agapeic service of God.

25. W. B. Yeats, *The Poems*, ed. Daniel Albright (London: Everyman, 1990), 358.

26. See *King Lear*, 2.4.218ff.: "I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad . . . I can be patient." 2.4.269–70: "You heavens, give me patience, patience I need." 3.2.37–38: "No, I will be the pattern of all patience, I will say nothing." There is much on the nothing, on being nothing in 1.4, especially after line 186.

4. Politics and the Intimate Universal

1. This locution, which I used in an earlier version of this chapter, has since been used as a book title dealing insightfully with issues very relevant here: Chanon Ross, *Gifts Glittering and Poisoned: Spectacle, Empire and Metaphysics* (Eugene, Oreg.: Cascade, 2014).

2. *Being and the Between*, *Ethics and the Between*, and *God and the Between* deal with these issues: Desmond, *Being and the Between* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995); Desmond, *Ethics and the Between* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001); Desmond, *God and the Between* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008). But see more recently, and as a kind of companion to the present work, *The Intimate Strangeness of Being: Metaphysics After Dialectic* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2012).

3. Even someone such as Schopenhauer, no friend of God, grants this. Scientific explanation according to the principle of sufficient reason does not get to the true metaphysical question. See Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 2, chap. 17, "On Man's Need for Metaphysics."

4. Nietzsche, passim, but famously in his *Twilight of the Idols*, "How the 'True World' Finally Became a Fable: The History of an Error": Nietzsche, *Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1977), 485. "Plato" as "caricature": *The Will to Power*, trans. W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, ed. W. Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967), §374.

5. For a less dualistic reading of Plato, see Desmond, *Art, Origins, Otherness: Between Philosophy and Art* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), chap. 1; see also Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998); David Schindler, *Plato's Critique of Impure Reason: On Goodness and Truth in the Republic* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2008).

6. Lear's vow to become "God's spy," after the breakdown of madness can be seen as a pointer to a condition of being posthumous to will to power. See Nietzsche's very different preaching, preaching to the youth of will to power, so to say, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "On the Afterworldsmen" ("*Von den Hinterweltlern*").

7. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, part 4, "The Kingdom of Darkness"—this is propaganda against Aristotle, certainly the scholastic Aristotelians, as well as against the pope and the "papists."

8. The points made here are from beyond any dualism of ontology and metaphysics: ontology as concerned with immanent being and metaphysics as dealing with the transcendent universal. Against the abstract universal, we might see the immanent universal as ontological, but as metaphysical it might be seen as pointing us beyond immanence. This double, metaxological movement is to be seen not as a dualistic opposition of two poles but as articulating the intimate universal.

9. See Desmond, "Between Poetics and System: On the Practices of Philosophy," in *Between System and Poetics: William Desmond and Philosophy After Dialectics*, ed. Thomas Kelly (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2007), 13–36.

10. See Desmond, *The Intimate Strangeness of Being*, esp. chaps. 1 and 10.

11. I am thinking of the complexer sense of the relation between religion, science, and philosophy that we find in Charles Sanders Peirce and William James, by comparison with John Dewey, who seems to have given up on transcendence as other, and by comparison with Richard Rorty, who chirpily evacuates pragmatism of all religious and metaphysical pathos.

12. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 550. I am not objecting to the inseparability of being and power: power to be; the power of the "to be" is the power of the "to be" as good, is the power to be good. See again Plato's *Sophist* (247d–e) on being and power. See also *God and the Between*, part 4, on the different senses of power in connection with God and overpower.

13. On this more fully, see Desmond, *Ethics and the Between*, esp. chap. 1; see also Conor Cunningham, *The Genealogy of Nihilism: Philosophies of Nothing and the Difference of Theology* (London: Routledge, 2002).

14. The modern stress on self-affirmation and self-preservation obviously has political implications in Hobbes and Spinoza, for instance. One might also think of Locke's view of property. What is mine is inseparable from taking possession, making what is there prove itself as useful—for me, for us. Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness are shadowed by Hobbes's fear of death, not love of life. Love of life becomes the release from work, with the aim of enabling one to go to work again, the secular Sunday of the fear of death. Real life is nothing but a series of Mondays. Max Stirner saw through quite a few of the counterfeit doubles of God involved in the varieties of modern idolatries. Alas *The Ego and His Own* (*Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*) remains locked in the same presuppositions, reduced almost to the level of elemental intimacy, almost an idiocy of self without ideals, at a level where it is hard to tell the difference of beast and man. Perhaps the human being, in becoming this postidealist, posthumanist, postreligious, postcommunist animal, thinks it regains the paradisal condition of being a kind of god. One is reminded of the Cynics, though in a modern, Germanic, post-Christian, posttheistic form. It is not surprising that the similarity with Nietzsche has been often noted, with insinuations also that Nietzsche "borrowed" from Stirner more than he was willing to acknowledge.

15. I have made some efforts in *Being and the Between*, chap. 14; and Desmond, *Ethics and the Between*, passim.

16. We find here various forms of politics living off the dialectical reversal of the master and slave. But see the poem of Yeats quoted at the end of the last chapter: the lash goes on.

17. One thinks of the theme of the empty throne in democracy, with notably Claude Lefort.

18. Metaxological metaphysics reflects not only on the question "what does it mean to be?" but also on the question "what does it mean to be good?" *Being and the Between* addresses the first question, *Ethics and the Between* responds to the second.

19. See Desmond, "Tyranny and the Recess of Friendship," in *Amor Amicitiae: On the Love That Is Friendship: Essays in Honor of the Rev. Professor James McEvoy*, ed. Thomas A. Kelly and Philipp W. Rosemann (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), chap. 6. I return to the issue of tyranny, especially in chapter 8.

20. I discuss these more fully in the fourth part of *Ethics and the Between*: chapter 13 is "The Familial Community of the Intimate: The Ethical Intermediation of the Idiot"; chapter 14 is "The Network of Serviceable Disposability: The Instrumental Intermediation of the Aesthetic"; chapter 15 is "The Community of Erotic Sovereignty: The Intermediation of Immanent Excellence"; chapter 16 is "The Community of Agapeic Service: The Intermediation of Transcendent Good." Part 3 deals with Ethical Selving: the stress is more on ethical self-mediation than on communal intermediation.

21. On this more fully, see Desmond, "Enemies: On Hatred," in Desmond, *Is There a Sabbath for Thought? Between Religion and Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), chap. 9.

22. The intimate universal brings to mind the nature of a love relationship. In affairs of the heart one never is sure. Is this a fidelity or a betrayal? From the outside and from the inside things look different. But I am not saying it is only a subjective inwardness—affairs of the heart are matters of being in the world. They are intermediates in the intermedium of being in which we live and move and have our being. Religion is an affair of the heart, yes, but the heart is the community of love, not just my feeling—love is under the measure of the absolute in agapeic being. A man betrays his wife out of love; there is love this side, that side. Is this a betrayal, or is it love that cannot be confined to this or that? But then what of loyalty and commitment? What of being dedicated to this person? There is the consecration of the choice of the singular.

23. There is an extensive discussion of what I call the ethical potencies in part 1 of Desmond, *Ethics and the Between*. For a summary, see "The Potencies of the Ethical," in *An Ethics of/for the Future*, ed. Mary Shanahan (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 62–75.

24. See Desmond, *Ethics and the Between*, chap. 14.

25. Politics of the intimate universal: this is not a matter of the elevation of the singular will to the general will, or the discipline of the singular will by the general will. Ethics and the intimate universal: one might see the categorical imperative as such an elevating of the particular will to universal rational will. Do we find something analogous in Rousseau's idea of the general will? We know of Kant's respect for Rousseau, even though Kant does distinguish the moral and the legal. Yet he is (in) famous for holding that a group of devils could properly govern a kingdom. Politics under will to power may hide the intimate but it is not ultimate and counterfeits the ultimate, insofar as this is to be seen in light of agapeic love rather than will to power. The ethics of Kant is not that of the intimate universal, insofar as it stands under the impersonal principle of transcendental reason, the intimate being merely empirical or psychological. To make it properly intimate would be to bring in the personal differently and the personal God but great obstacles are placed in the way of this,

since it is associated with a forbidden heteronomy. What of the claims made for the modern state by Hegel, for instance, concerning the union of the individual and the universal, and indeed its power to include the claim of infinite subjectivity? There is much for thought here, not least in relation to the political and the religious. Clearly the personalism of religious theism is superseded by Hegel's philosophy of speculative reason, as the *Vorstellung* of the former is *aufgehoben* by the *Begriff* of the latter. In politics the spiritual community of religion is superseded by the modern state as the most consummate realization of concrete freedom in history. In this way the universal is turned entirely toward immanence, and the mystery of divine transcendence is dialectically dissolved. This has an effect on the sense of the intimate. Hegel will say that even the shepherd has infinite worth, and rightly say so, but this worth falls outside world history and hence the relevance of its relation to the state is unclear. Of course, from the standpoint of the intimate universal, he is quite right to acknowledge what falls outside world history. Nevertheless, the transpolitical dimension of the intimate universal remains equivocal in all this. Even if the modern state were to accomplish what Hegel says it does, this would still only be under the sign of erotic sovereignty. Only religious community, and one that preserves reverence for the overdeterminacy of the divine, the mystery of God's transcendence, religious community properly under the sign of agapeic service, can allow us to think the intimate universal and the human community with a living God who is reason but not just impersonal reason.

26. God is not an erotic sovereign. God is not disposable, though God is disposability (*disponibilité*—consult Gabriel Marcel). What man proposes, God disposes. The service of God is not serviceable disposability but an agapeic disposability that is available for the communication of goodness: of self or the other.

27. See Desmond, *Hegel's God: A Counterfeit Double?* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003), passim, but esp. chap. 7.

28. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, trans. Herbert Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1964), chap. 12, "Faith and Good Faith" on Catholicism.

29. See Desmond, *Perplexity and Ultimacy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), chap. 4.

30. On posthumous mind, see Desmond, *Philosophy and Its Others: Ways of Being and Mind* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); on ways of wondering, and the difference of astonishment, perplexity and curiosity, see Desmond, *The Intimate Strangeness of Being*, chap. 10.

31. Good will cannot be enforced, though wills can be forced; but voluntary good will opens space for transforming social engagement. Without the multiplied intimacies of such often incognito commitments nothing tends to happen.

32. See Desmond, *Ethics and the Between*, chap. 15.

33. W. B. Yeats, *The Poems*, ed. Daniel Albright (London: Everyman, 1990), 395.

34. Carl Schmitt, *Politische Theologie: Vier Kapitel zur Lehre von der Souveränität* (1922; Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1996); English translation: *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Cambridge:

MIT Press, 1988). Schmitt seems to be generally blind to the more domestic middle and "parochial politics," as we might call it. His gaze is on the international, where the enemy is needed in the quest of glory and grandeur. There is little of the intimate universal in his understanding. And where he invokes the theological it is always with respect to something like the power of the warrior sovereign. One cannot take seriously any ascription to him of Christian or Catholic "politics." He is not a Catholic political theologian, but a political theologian, even Nazi, of Catholic background—we would not call Heidegger a Catholic fundamental ontologist, though we might say a fundamental ontologist, even Nazi, of Catholic upbringing. Religion is more politicized than politics is sacralized. While he does acknowledge a kind of political metaphysics, it remains at the level of acknowledgment rather than deeper exploration of the metaphysics. His mind is not one for either theology or metaphysics.

35. On this, see "Enemies."

36. See Desmond, "Sticky Evil: On *Macbeth* and the Karma of the Equivocal," in *God, Literature and Process Thought*, ed. Darren Middleton (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002), 133–55.

37. Lady Macbeth: "I have given suck, and know / How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me. / I would, while it was still smiling in my face, / Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums / And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn as you / Have done to this." *Macbeth*, 1.7.54–58.

38. See John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006). See Milbank's sympathetic remark in connection with von Balthasar: "The 'political,' he argues, cannot any longer be the primary context for Christian life, not because this life is asocial, but rather because the Gospel displaces or qualifies the political images for God with more intimate ones: God is parent and God is lover. One might suggest that this ought to mean that the project of the Church is the establishment of a new, universal society, a new *civitas*, in which these intimate relationships are paradigmatic: a community in which we relate primarily to the neighbour, and every neighbour is mother, brother, sister, spouse. What we require, therefore, is a new ecclesiology which would be also a post-political theology." Ibid., 230–31.

5. The Idiotics of the Intimate Universal

1. Something about idiot selving calls to mind some considerations about no-self (one thinks of certain doctrines in Buddhist thought). There is a more intensively intimate attention to the idiotic which opens up the porosity—the "fertile void," as I put it. This is not a static substantival self (as usually understood). The idiotics of the intimate universal is more than selving and othering, for these latter both are in the porosity, both participating in (overdeterminate) being and the fertile void, too much and nothing much. Sometimes I am also put in mind of the "floating man" argument of Avicenna.

2. See especially Desmond, *Perpexity and Ultimacy: Metaphysical Thoughts from the Middle* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), chap. 3; see Desmond, *Being and the Between* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 270–78 on the elemental.

3. Consult, by contrast, texts like E. Husserl's *Cartesian Meditation: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. D. Cairns (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1960), 5th meditation, §50, the meditation on intersubjectivity, on the other as to be known through something like an "*analogizing apprehension*" (111) of that body as another animate organism similar to mine—and all of this within the immanence of the transcendental sphere (of subjectivity). This manner of thinking is not in the field of intimacy here meant, not in the intermedium of the idiotic. One might ask to what degree it, in fact, recovers the field prior to subject and object, both of which are crystallized in the intermedium; to what degree it recovers likewise the so-called intersubjectivity that also is a determinate communication crystallized out of the more primal communicative field of intimacy. I would not call the latter a transcendental field because of the bias of transcendental thinking toward the subject as such. See Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, Collected Works of Edith Stein 3, trans. W. Stein (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1989); this is full of insights but perhaps due to the inheritance of phenomenology, its general orientation, and its scientific pretensions, there is at times an oddness to the approach (we feel the same artificiality reading Husserl). The method of the scientific universal, albeit reformulated transcendentally, is not quite fitting to the intimacy of being and the intimate universal.

4. The idiotics requires reference to the emergence of the enemy, as well as to a lesser degree the inception of *agon*—competition—structurally embodied in social conflicts, like rich/poor, powerful/powerless, master/slave, few/many. The porosity is prior to the polemos. Struggle and endeavor are intimate and social, as we see with armies, police, violence, social subjection, and war both civil and external (see on Hobbes and Schmitt below).

5. Safranski reminds us how we find (in *The Will to Power*) a longing for return to the inorganic: To escape the ego, but also to escape altruism, and also the organic even—"We must picture it [the all] as a whole as far removed from the organic as possible!"—"Let ourselves be possessed by things (not people)"—"Absolutely false assessment of the sentient world versus the dead world"—"The 'dead' world! always in motion and without error, power versus power! And in the sentient world everything false, vainglorious! It is festivity to pass from this world into the 'dead world.'" Rüdiger Safranski, *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*, trans. S. Frisch (New York: Norton, 2003), 226. As usual Nietzsche is very equivocal, and in contrast with such a "festivity" of the "dead" world, we find also the beautiful passage about the great silence of the ocean in *Daybreak*, §423: see Safranski, *Nietzsche*, 316.

6. Perhaps this is why the mystics, with Plotinus, speak of the "flight of the alone to the Alone" ("*phugè, mónou pròs mónon*," *Ennead* 6.9.51), why mystic aloneness is not at all alone, but is in the divine communication of the intimate universal. See Desmond, *God and the Between* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), chap. 13, on mysticism and the idiocy of God.

7. One might thus question Sartre's claim about our being condemned to being free and to having to make ourselves to be. We are in an openness; we are an openness; we are an openness in an openness. This is our being porous in the porosity. Sartre's insistence on making ourselves to be is phobic to this original openness. Other than the emergence of our *être pour-soi*, he only sees the viscous *être en-soi*, while misdescribing our openness in it as (his version of) nothingness (*le Néant*). This is not true enough to the *passio essendi*.

8. Might one compare the porosity to liquidity, a kind of ontological liquidity? (Liquidity confers a form of credit, gives us credit-worthiness.) One thinks of Thales and water: it is formless and can assume all forms—it can drown all, and hence is death, but it is a source of generation also. There is something of the original waters of chaos here: chaos is a gap or a gaping—a between, the gap we come to be, but we are ourselves a gap—a chaos. The psalmist says: I am poured out like water and my bones melt within me. This is a return to the original porosity that is on the interface between our being, our (being) nothing, and the giver of all, God. Music is something that speaks to the porosity—it returns us to an opening, a melting prior to form, even in the process of resonating form. It brings us to a threshold between forming and form. The forming comes out of the porosity, the original water in which all things and the seeds of all things swim, including unbelievable monsters.

9. There are forms of atheism in modernity that are in betrayal of the *passio essendi* and also the intimate universal. They build their crystal palaces on the basis of the *conatus essendi* alone and its turn to will to power.

10. One thinks of the connection of power, magical thinking, and the porosity. Magic claims power over the porosity, for instance, calling up the dead. One thinks of Voodoo (African religion). It is the *conatus* become will to power retroactively colonizing the porosity in which and over which it seeks to have power and dominion over the other—the divine powers, the daimonic powers, other humans, and so on. It twists the fluid communications of the intimate universal in a manner that also needs, while distorting, the agapeic surplus of given goodness.

11. One could connect dream space with the porosity—everything is there in the soul. The fluidity of (its) passages is not yet governed by the law of univocal causality. Dream space is not univocally determinate: it is both indeterminate (we cannot quite pin down the significance) and overdeterminate (everything can be jumbled together, contradictories coincide in an equivocal promiscuity, heaven and hell, the sweet gift of intimate being and the idiocy of the monstrous). With restoring sleep the passages of dreaming are tied up with unclogging the porosity, and then when this unclogging is effected we can wake up with relief and rest and release. There is a release of new energy. See diurnal determinations as clogging up the porosity, nocturnal churning as unraveling the knots of the day. Shakespeare uses the opposite metaphor also: sleep that knits up the raveled sleeve of care, weaving again whole cloth, rather than unraveling knots; this is the image of restoring the whole cloth of life in *Macbeth*. In dreams there are phantasmagoric passings, there are promiscuities of self and other—with selving as othering, othering as selving. Without the unclotting of the porosity in sleep we would go mad eventually or die, as do those

who are deprived of sleep. Thus the torture of being deprived of sleep, the use of the torture of sleeplessness to break someone down, to the point of madness. There is also the idiocy of the monstrous: "Macbeth hath murdered sleep." The desire for death even comes over one, desire to escape one's life, to go into the underground of being—to be nothing again. Hence the connection also with Hades, Hell. The promise of life as to be resurrected: the pure and the innocent sleep—the porosity is clear. Jesus slept on the boat as the storm raged about him and the boat took on water. The pure porosity, riding the storm, sleeping in the trust of God, porous in the dream of the intimate universal—the kingdom of heaven is within. That dreams might be divinatory is not so strange: prophetic porosity. "Oh my prophetic soul!"—Hamlet. He knew the sin in advance of knowing it. The ancient peoples were not wrong: our dreams can be more true than our diurnal determinations. Nightmare: the evil is daimonic in the porosity—once again the idiocy of the monstrous. The Buddhist practices of meditation at the earlier stage when all the demons seem let loose (Zen *makyō*—"the world of the devils")—this is the purging of the porosity. Why is it that Macbeth "doth murder sleep"? He has mutilated the porosity almost beyond repair. Lady Macbeth is unable to sleep; Macbeth is unable to say "Amen." In the disordered porosity, hallucinations—"Is this a dagger that I see before me?" In the mutilated porosity, the dead come back: Banquo's ghost. Phantasms, apparitions in the disordered porosity: the porosity is not in control of itself, and especially when there has been a desecration of the communication between the soul and the divine, the intimate truth of the porosity. Hence too the more and more unrestricted spirit of suspicion: everyone is a potential enemy. The porosity is no longer agapeic, but it is still pathologically exposed, except it must suspect all others, since what it wants above all else is not to be exposed. Younger children are more susceptible to the porosity; women are more in tune with it, bearers of life, birth-givers, sources of gestation; men are more driven by the *conatus*, covering over the porosity. They are warriors like Macbeth, though Lady Macbeth abjures the love of children, initially showing warrior *conatus* but the result long term is madness, or implosion of the will to live into the porosity seeking to be nothing. Porosity closed: murder. Porosity open: compassion. Macbeth's compassion dies because he has strangled the porosity beginning with the sacred murder. MacDuff: "All my pretty chicks at one fell swoop." Pity is a "naked new-born babe." The Tao is an unformed infant. The porosity still allows flow.

12. On what I am calling first and second love, see Desmond, *Philosophy and Its Others: Ways of Being and Mind* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 187–92. I would now be clearer on first and second love, the nomenclature of first and second. In *Philosophy and Its Others* I spoke of first love as tied to self-love, reflecting how we colloquially express what is at issue: thus we speak of wanting to be number One, of being above, with nothing above one, of being before all others, the one before the others, with the others deriving their place from their relation to the one. We want to be the one but we are not the one. The first love is counterfeited in wanting to be the one. It is wanting to be God, the One that makes us fall into less than one, into inner fragmentation, not creative self-pluralization. One can

win through the inner fragmentation in the direction of being at one, however; this fragmentation is not a condition of unrelieved corruption. Schopenhauer considered compassion, *Mitlied*, to be the foundation of ethics. Schopenhauer, *On the Basis of Morality*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995), §17 (213), §21 (270). J.-J. Rousseau: "Mandeville has a clear awareness that, with all their mores, men would never have been anything but monsters, if nature had not given them pity as a support for their faculty of reason; but he has not seen that from this quality alone flow all the social virtues he wants to deny in men." Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, trans. D. A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), 37.

13. On "Being Good," see Desmond, *Being and the Between*, chap. 13. See Desmond, "Ethics and the Evil of Being," in *What Happened in and to Moral Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: Philosophical Essays in Honor of Alasdair MacIntyre*, ed. Fran O'Rourke (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 423–59.

14. For more on this, see Desmond, *Is There a Sabbath for Thought? Between Religion and Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), chap. 6.

15. One thinks of some psychoanalytical views. Lacanian: the Thing, the Real. The monster in the sea, the horror that lurks in the porosity. This is not untrue to the idiocy of the monstrous. The psychoanalysts offer a telling fable. But in most fables and fairy tales, the hero wins. In this psychoanalysis, there is no hero finally and the antagonist always loses. Psychoanalysis: a philosophical fable of losers. One fears the Schopenhauerian shadow of the dark origin—and the wisdom of the Silenus: better not to be. The shadow of the will to death: *thanatos*. The Medusa head petrifies the affirming love of being, and does not so much destroy it as make it ontologically curdle and sour metaphysically. Žižek: on occasion he delights to snuffle in the briny stink of the curdle. Consider, by contrast, Augustine speaking of suffering: "This shows that what matters is the nature of the sufferer, not the nature of the sufferings. Stir a cesspit, and a foul stench arises; stir a perfume, and a delightful fragrance ascends. But the movement is identical." Augustine, *City of God*, book 1, chap. 8.

16. See Desmond, *Being and the Between*, chap. 11, on communities, *self-relating sociability at all levels of ontological complexity*.

17. By contrast with Heidegger's being-toward-death (*Sein-zum-tode*), Hannah Arendt is right to stress natality in, for example, Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 8–9.

18. The idea of an idiotic *paideia*—this is first directed at shaping the intimate soul. Just as later there is an aesthetic *paideia* aimed at the formation of the body, an erotic *paideia* directing the truer unfolding of desire, and an agapeic *paideia* in consecrated initiation in the works of love. We see this with regard to Platonic *paideia*: the education of aesthetic and erotic being is connected with the purging of the idiotic from the secret hubris of unbridled *conatus* (*thumos*, eros)—all of this pointing perhaps to the suggestion of the surplus generosity of the agapeic, not least the wise *eleos, cum-passio*, of the guardians of the city. In the *Republic* Platonic *paideia* begins with the songs of the mother and ends with the eschatological myth of Er.

19. For a brief summary see Desmond, "The Potencies of the Ethical," in *An Ethics of/for the Future*, ed. Mary Shanahan (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 62–75.

20. See Desmond, "Consecrated Love: A Philosophical Reflection on Marriage," *INTAMS Review* 11 (Spring 2005): 4–17.

21. Kant speaks brutally of marriage as a contract for the mutual use of the genitals. How superior to Kant are Hegel's views of marriage and the family! I think in the case of Kant there is a covering over of the porosity; this is evident in Kant's phobia about sweating (on this further, see Desmond, *Art, Origins, Otherness: Between Philosophy and Art* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003], 84, 196). But consider genital sexuality as thus implied in the marriage contract: how coarse it all is, and making one aware, on reflection, that the noumenal ego has no genitals. Is this why the genitals are used or to be used? But how use? The noumenal has to come down, be brought down to the crude, merely pathological level. There is no deep sense of the *passio essendi* in Kant's notion of the pathological. How insulting, how degrading to noumenal autonomy that it has to use the genitals. And indeed risk being used by them, since the genitals swell with a life of their own and pure practical reason is not always successful in willing them, whipping them, into obedience. The noumenal autonomy risks becoming the victim of muddy matter. One thinks of Schopenhauer here: Did he not experience the *humiliation* of rational autonomy by sexual eros, the event of the will prior to (the principle of) sufficient reason? Erotic passion is experienced as robbing one of autonomy. Is rational autonomy now suspect of being an illusion? All of this is humiliating to rational autonomy but also exhilarating, since in its dark way any release of will as endeavor to be is backed by the *passio essendi* and the more primal porosity. From the standpoint of purely rational autonomy, this exhilaration should not be, should not come over us with the energizing primacy that it does. Schopenhauer's philosophy of the Will is then both a celebration of "will" and a detestation of it. One notes also Nietzsche's sometimes *hysterical* assertion of Dionysian eros in reaction against the evil eye of rational, noumenal autonomy. But in a sometimes clandestine way, does Nietzsche not show himself as marked by the same noumenal shame? It is worthy of remark that all these three thinkers of the will were bachelors. None knew first hand the meaning of married love. One would not turn to them as marriage counselors, or recommend them as such. None has any experience of consecrated love. Quite the opposite, one worries about a secret disgust—even in Nietzsche, I suspect, all his protests on behalf of the body notwithstanding (suppose truth were a woman: woman as Baubo; truth as Baubo).

22. On Flaubert too: Sartre, *The Family Idiot*, trans. Carol Cosman, 5 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). In Sartre's *The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1957), there is much that touches on the idiocy. On finding the universal in the intimate, see my remark on Andrew Wyeth in chapter 2: in the local he found the universal, in his own backyard, so to say. Seán Ó Ríordáin, Cork poet, has a poem (well known to Irish children) titled *Cúl an Tí* (Back of the house, the backyard),

where he finds the pagan paradise of Celtic mythology, *Tír na n-Óg*, the fabled land of youth, the other world not far across the sea but there, there in the home, just there behind the house, beside one a neighbor: *Tá Tír na n-Óg ar chúl an tí, / Tír álainn trína chéile, / Lucht ceithre chos ag siúl na slí / Gan bróga orthu ná léine, / Gan Béarla acu ná Gaeilge.*" Ó Ríordáin, *Seán Ó Ríordáin: Na Dánta* (Indreabhán: Cló Iar Chonnacht, 2011), 70–71.

23. This view is explored in *God and the Between*, and it has implications for the erotics of the intimate universal also, as we will see in chapter 7.

24. See what happened in the United States in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attack.

25. If the importance of *philia* and family is ethically and politically important for Aristotle, one thinks also of Socrates in the *Crito*: he has a *nonoedipal relation* to the laws as raising him like parents—his *pietas* prevents him from running out now on them into an exile that would save his skin but would cost him his soul. In the ancient world one thinks of the piety between Priam and Hector, of Aeneas bearing Anchises from burning Troy, who dies in Sicily years later, but Aeneas goes to the underworld and sees him in the Elysian fields. One thinks of Antigone and piety: familial piety deeper than rational self-consciousness and touching the sacred in a manner exceeding dialectical self-determination and all reasons of state (contra Hegel). There is a political side of course. One thinks of the paternal language in Haiti, preeminent among the lands of Voodoo: Papa Doc; Baby Doc. One thinks of the father of faith, the father of a people (nation: being born): Abraham. One thinks of the transpolitical: Abba mysticism of Jesus: pure porosity between the human (child) and the divine (father). The world to come: *patria* (Aquinas).

26. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, para. 75: "To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections. It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country, and to mankind. The interest of that portion of social arrangement is a trust in the hands of all those who compose it; and as none but bad men would justify it in abuse, none but traitors would barter it away for their own personal advantage." Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Dialectic of Secularization: On Reason and Religion* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007); see also Jürgen Habermas et al., *An Awareness of What Is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010).

27. Robespierre "The attribute of popular government in a revolution is at one and the same time virtue and terror. Terror without virtue is fatal; virtue without terror is impotent. The terror is nothing but justice, prompt, severe, inflexible; it is thus an emanation of virtue."

28. Nietzsche's proclamation of his Dionysian faith: "the faith that only the particular is loathsome, and that all is redeemed and affirmed in the whole—he negates no more" ("*dass nur das Einzelne verwerflich ist, dass im Ganzen sich alles erlöst und bejaht—er verneint nich mehr*"). Surely if the singular is so loathsome, this is not to affirm the ontological intimacy of its being and to seek a universal (*das Ganze*) that is not the intimate universal? And how then say: he no longer negates, given the

asserted loathsomeness of the singular? Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1989), §49, "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man."

29. See Desmond, *Being Between: Conditions of Irish Thought* (Galway, Ireland: Leabhar Breac/Center for Irish Studies, 2008), 55–61. These plural and divided loyalties were not unconnected with Burke's own *family* relations.

6. The Aesthetics of the Intimate Universal

1. Using image for purposes of philosophical wording? Yes, but entirely pertinent in this matter.

2. Heidegger has spoken of earth and world and their strife, or polemos. I mean something more like what I call the elemental in Desmond, *Being and the Between* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995). See also Desmond, *Art, Origins, Otherness: Between Philosophy and Art* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), chap. 7, on world, earth, and *polemos* in Heidegger. There is a default of wisdom in the *Blut und Bodem* of Heidegger's Nazism—the counterfeit doubling of wise blood.

3. Being true to the surface of things is relevant to the aesthetics of the intimate universal. How do we deal with the surface of things? There is an objectifying approach that makes the surface a valueless thereness, no longer redolent of the transience of life, of passing beauty. There is a subjectifying approach that turns from surface to depths, so as also to risk a surface valuelessness (this is just the "natural attitude" or the merely ontic, merely worldly, mere things). In one, devaluation of surface voids life of its animating self-affirmation, in the other the risk of a false self-elevation of human life, in collusion with the devaluation of life as other to us. For a different view to either, see Desmond, "On the Surface of Things: Transient Life and Beauty in Passing," *Radical Orthodoxy: Theology, Philosophy, Politics* 1, nos. 1–2 (August 2012): 20–54.

4. If I use this word "saturated" I do not intend an echo of Marion. His idea of saturated phenomenon is worthy of thought, and I have written of it in "Being True to Mystery: On Saturated Phenomena and the Hyperboles of Being," *Proceedings of the Villanova University Theology Institute: Conference on Truth and Mystery* 43 (2013)."

5. In Aristotle's *De Anima* the notion of the *metaxu* recurs in connection with *aisthesis* (for instance, 419a19–21; 423a15–16, 25; 423b12–15).

6. Think of the different ways "experience" is rendered in the German *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*. An interesting exploration would be the relation of William James's "pure experience" to the porosity and the aesthetic field of communication. James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (New York: Longman Green, 1912).

7. Our being an animal, *our being as animal*, is our being animated. Bodied mind is fleshed mindfulness—and this is not only mind as flesh but flesh as mindful. In German we find the distinction of *Körper* and *Leib*: the first the body as material

entity that is empirically sensible and objectifiable, the second as the body alive, the animated body. Leib is alive; it is not a neutral "thing." (But are there any such "things"?) Merleau-Ponty has fruitfully reflected on flesh and perception: *touchant-touché*. Flesh touching flesh: there is also an erotics of this aesthetics—self-touching flesh, auto-erotics, as in masturbation. See Richard Shusterman, *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

8. See Kenneth Clarke on the difference of the *naked* body and the human *nude*: Clarke, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form* (New York: Pantheon, 1956).

9. Inchydoney, West Cork, July 2009: looking at a large thistle—how beautiful the intricacy, how delicate the light-blue purple color, how lovely to look at. But one would not embrace it, clasp it in the hand. Yet one loves the look of it. The look of it; how it looks—what is this? Loving the look of it: this means looking with the look of love. The look of it looks lovely—to love. (There is an erotics in this aesthetics of the look. We speak of a beautiful woman as a "great looker"; and while we look at her with admiration or love, her look, her being a looker, is not due simply to our looking.)

10. Is the porosity like the sea out of which earth comes? Is the mother as earth the field of sensuousness as aesthetic happening and with all the saturated equivocity: beautiful and threatening. The vulnerability of the flesh—this comes to mind in the aesthetics of the intimate universal. As does difference as sexual: male and female—mother and father. Wise blood suggests a carnal ontology. Blood is fluid and can clot—the porosity, water and earth. Might one connect wise blood to the animal faith of Santayana? We think of blood as the most elemental fluid: of life; of sacrifice; of generation; of connectedness in blood relatives (for instance). Anger: then the blood is up. Consider blood and power over life: Hamlet—"now might I drink hot blood"; Macbeth's regicide and also the "blood-boltered Banquo"; Lady Macbeth and the blood she can never wash out—the sticky evil. Think of blood and other fatal usurpations of life: vampires. Then of witness to God: blood of the Savior; blood of the martyrs; blood of the Lamb, the mystic Lamb. There is the danger of blood—the blood is not always wise (as suggested above with regard to Heidegger). Think of fascism and the idolatry of "Life," or of D. H. Lawrence and hymns to the irrational, or of the dark (guilty) river gods of the blood of Rilke. *Lebensfilosophie* can shade into the idolatry of "Life" of fascism: the mystique of the blood in the counterfeit double of the wise blood.

11. The *mouth* is that through which we breathe; breathing is a living musical *metaxu*: constant rhythmic inhaling and exhaling of air without which we die or drown, for the *humus* without the breath is not the human. Reflect too on the mouth and the equivocal doubleness: what goes into us, what comes out of us; what we receive and what we speak; what we ingest and what we express; the kiss and the bite; the song, the scream; St. Bernard and Francis Bacon; the Song of Songs, the Screaming Popes; hallo and horror; welcoming, eating; smiling, grimacing; sucking, chewing; the sigh of love, the hiss of hatred; blessing and cursing; saying "yes," saying "no"; Joyce's Molly Bloom, Beckett's "Not-I."

12. In the mythic way of speaking does Adamic naming have something to do with the idiotic? Certainly the elemental irreducibility of the singular is at stake. On idiotic selving, see G. M. Hopkins, "As kingfishers catch fire. . . . " The idiocy of Adamic naming: the surprise of original wonder of the child—before the familiarizing reign of the abstract universal. It is still not the barbarism of the senses, as Vico would have it, and it is beyond the barbarism of reflection. There is something of creation fresh, and refreshed—as if held out straight from the hand of God. (Death and love: "This living hand, now warm and capable / Of earnest grasping . . . see here it is / I hold it towards you—": last poem of Keats—to Fanny Brawne.)

13. When it is, then the imagination becomes a fantastic *conatus* puffed up falsely on itself, breeding delusion, even unto madness. Pascal has sobering things to say about imagination: in Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1966), 38–42 (Lafuma, 44) and *divertissement*, 66–72 (Lafuma, 132–39). Imagination needs to be ballasted by memory: memory of the porosity that "grounds" us in the otherness of received power, and hence chastises the tyrannical intoxications of ungrounded, unfixed, unanchored imaginations. (Ground, fix, anchoring are relative metaphors themselves.) If memory is seen as the gift of the muses, it is even more intimate to our endowed original power than imagination.

14. See also the issue of imitation as "reproducing" nature and as "improving" or "completing" nature, an issue alive in Plato and Aristotle. Improving nature in relation to second art below: *phusis*, *poeisis*, and *praxis*. Recall René Girard's understanding of mimetic desire: desire does not just desire but imitates the desire of another. He is right: the relation to the other is crucial, though factors involved in mimesis must also include the porosity, passio, imagination, and so on.

15. On generational passing, see note 30 in following chapter. The idea of an aesthetic paideia is relevant here: just as later there is an erotic and agapeic paideia, so before there is an idiotic paideia. Platonic paideia: education of aesthetic being and erotic being—both purging the idiotic and pointing to the agapeics of the intimate universal in the *eleos* of the guardians of wisdom. See Desmond, "*Paideia*: Anachronism or Necessity?," in *Educating for Democracy: Paideia in an Age of Uncertainty*, ed. Alan Olson et al. (New York: Rowan and Littlefield, 2004), 11–24.

16. In Desmond, *Being and the Between*, 324–26, in reflecting on things, the *spread* of selving, and the *conatus essendi* I use the example of the African male cichlid fish and the fluctuations of its aesthetic display with social dominance or subordination.

17. Connect this poise with *manners*. Recall Burke: "Manners are of more importance than law. . . . The law touches us but here and there and now and then. Manners are what vex or soothe, corrupt or purify, exalt or debase, barbarize or refine us, by a constant, steady, uniform and insensible operation like that of the air we breathe in." Burke, *Letters to Parliament*, 2nd ed. (London, 1796), 105. I would say: Manners touch the intimate but they have a social significance that can reach toward the universal.

18. See Desmond, *Philosophy and Its Others: Ways of Being and Mind* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 76–79.

19. The mimic brings the original to be in a redoubled way and we often wonder who then is original? The imitation reveals the reality and we are sometimes a little unsure which is real now, which the original, which the image. Again see René Girard on mimetic desire.

20. Politics is an art that copes with contingencies and fluctuations of power; it is not science; it is not a grand project of ideological universalism, though it has a connection to the intimate universal.

21. More could be said on the connection of the distinction of the secular and the sacred for art, and the aesthetics of political order. If premodernity was anchored, aesthetically, ethically, and politically, in a sacred mimesis, modernity accents the *poiesis* of the human. Sometimes it leads to an unanchored originality, to a promiscuous equivocity of the human and the divine, tempted with a humanistic tyranny, itself an offshoot of deformed Christianity. In post-Enlightenment modernity there is a quasi-sacralization, quasi-resacralization, of art, turned against the dominion of serviceable disposability. See Desmond, *Art, Origins, Otherness*, chap. 8 especially, on the migration of transcendence from religion to art in post-Kantian aesthetics.

22. There is a certain counterparting of first and second art with first and second nature (character), in that the first refers to what we are given (say, talent or genius), the second to what we make of it (the discipline of culture). The point is not any dualism of nature and art, of sensuousness and mindfulness. Prior to and beyond that dualism, there is naturing as the more primal *poeisis*, and nature is the environment that makes art possible, and art might well complete what nature naturing leaves open (as the ancients suggested). This completing is an open process, not a superimposed project that dictates to the otherness of nature naturing. It is a metaxological conversation between humans and naturing in which the otherness of nature must be granted and respected, even revered—not granted to be circumvented, but granted for a more intimate cooperation. There is continuity, there is discontinuity, and we humans actualize the meeting point of continuity and discontinuity. Think of how the living qualities of nature naturing seep into the openness of the child, and earlier peoples. More attuned to this, they were more artistic in that sense. Not dominated by nature as disposable in subjection to us, we need the sensuous to express the mindful. Without nature naturing there is no mindfulness for us. There is no uttering without outering; no innerness without outerness; no innering without othering. Culture as *cultus*: culture cultivates nature in the art of finding and realizing the promise of nature (nature as other, human nature). I stress nature as a naturing—not nature simply as natured that we tend to reduce to a univocalized product (an issue that is just there without the nurture of naturing). Nature natures and gives rises to the aesthetic field, and nature natures us as sensuous being in the aesthetic field, but beings who come to mindfulness and can articulate the aesthetic field, our place in it, our relation to it, our knowing of ourselves (as aesthetic singularities) in communion with other being as nature naturing and with other human beings. The naturing of nature does not stop with so-called external nature—there is no such thing in a sense. There are differences between us and other-being as outer nature but these differences are articulations of naturing, and hence are fluid and

open to passage from one side of the differentiation to the other. There is streaming in the aesthetic field. Culture is cultivated in the field and stream of naturing. It thrives and prospers and continues only because the sap continues to come up in the field or water continues to flow from the well that feeds the stream.

23. This doubleness is reflected in the nineteenth-century distinction of fine and useful arts, itself a kind of echo of the distinction of *artes liberales* and *artes serviles* in the Middle Ages. These historical formations are grafted onto the double sense of art we find in the aesthetic field.

24. See Hegel's description of property in his *Philosophy of Right*, §§41–71, especially earlier paragraphs, §44 in particular: "A person has as his substantial end the right of putting his will into any and every thing and thereby making it his, because it has no such end in itself and derives its determination and soul from his will. This is the absolute *right of appropriation* which human beings have over all 'things.'" "*Die Person hat das Recht, in jede Sache ihren Willen zu legen, welche dadurch die meinige ist, zu ihrem substantiellen Zwecke, da sie einen solchen nicht in sich selbst hat, ihrer Bestimmung und Seele meinen Willen erhält,—absolutes Zueignungsrecht des Menschen auf alle Sachen*."

25. The need of material substance follows from the fact that we are bodied, and so need sustenance. We need to eat, drink, sleep, rest, find shelter, and so on. In interaction with the material environment, indeed trans-action, we are materially in a transcending between. This is ongoing. It is elemental also and points back to the idiotics. Even when we have constructed a complex second nature for ourselves we are elementally this idiotic porosity. Indeed we construct the second nature to protect this elemental porosity. And it can become lost and hidden, whether in the carapace of configured selving, or repressed or fled in an overtaking *conatus essendi*. In truth, we are always overtaken by that which we believe we have overtaken—the need of the flesh, the material of mortal sustenance, comes back, daily, hourly, between meals.

26. Think thus of the between nature of enterprise: entrepreneur is from French *entreprendre* (to undertake), from Latin inter- (between) + prendere (to take). This goes back ultimately to the Indo-European root ghend-/ghed- (to seize or to take), from which derive words like "pry," "prey," "spree," "reprise," "surprise," "prison," "impregnable," "prise."

27. The ideology of the market that speaks of the "hidden hand" (Adam Smith) sees that the individual pursues private self-interest, yet more than self-interest is at work—an order of togetherness shapes even discordant individualities. Hegel speaks of this in the *Philosophy of Right* in connection with civil society. Is this a manifestation of the intimate universal in the sphere of economic activity? Yes and no. Yes, if we see that there is much more than isolated individuality at play in the interactions of such individuals—isolated individuality proves in part an abstraction from the work of this larger companioning togetherness. No, if we recall that the entire ideology of this way of thinking is governed by the priority of self-interested individuality; it leads to the reconfiguration of the ethos of being manifesting the intimate universal, a reconfiguration that hides the full promise of such a universal in the communal ethos.

It is a stay against the otherwise expected anarchy of self-interested individuality. (Self-interest itself is an *inter-esse*: even if overtly focused on "self," covertly it is endowed and sustained by metaxological being, already a living togetherness of interplay between self and other, same and different.) The market ideology is intelligible as a squeezing of the intimate universal—of the intimate in the direction of voracious self-interest, of the universal in the direction of a secret mechanism in the economy in which we must have faith, an unregulated god whose ways are wayward and often failing.

28. See Desmond, *Is There a Sabbath for Thought? Between Religion and Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), chap. 7, "The Secret Sources of Strengthening: On Courage."

29. Enterprise can turn into a form of ambition in which it is no longer a matter of excelling over others but of excelling understood as the embodying of excellence. The incarnation of excellence partakes of the self-surpassing energy of the *conatus essendi* but it need not be subject to the corruption of *eros turranos*. There is an eros for what is higher.

30. I believe Schopenhauer summarized a common wisdom when he said that the mother of useful art is necessity, the mother of fine art superfluity. I would add: Though not merely necessity in the sense of the instrumentally needful, superfluity is also at the origin of useful art (thus there is no venture capitalism without superfluity). Yet the temptation is still there to depreciate and override the surplus of aesthetic happening. In so venturing we risk (ontological) ingratitude to what is given before all our interventions—the (ultimately agapeic) bounty of given being.

31. Consider the matter of environmental art: natural art—nature as art—prior to our art.

32. This is also the old issue of custom and habit, of use and second nature: we become habituated to what we regularly use. Some things are naturally useful for us and serve as means to an end—our ends. Other things must be artificially modified, in both cases the ends are ours, imposed by us—even on hospitable things. If utility involves some adaptation of means to ends, there is something about beauty that is beyond use, though importantly beauty also strikes us as *before use*. The graceful strike of beauty comes to us from beyond serviceable disposability.

33. I stress the continuity of the aesthetic in the general sense and the artistic in the more specific sense. This continuity tells against the rigid separation of useful and fine art. This separation has roots in modern utilitarianism and the reaction against it in favor of the fine. This is not the last word, as we see with the aesthetic power of utensils, such as the instruments of eating and drinking and their hospitality to beauty. The artistic form of everyday life is not separable from life. The daily means we use can become ends themselves, arresting our appreciation, even while they continue to be means and point beyond themselves to the further flow of life. There is no need for any "either-or."

34. There is no reason why *utensils* cannot embody art in the highest, finest sense. We speak of fine and useful art, but use can be fine and refined, while still retaining usefulness as its primary concern. We don't need a dualism here either.

The refinement of utensils can dip deep into nature naturing. Making the difference of the fine and the useful too sharp partly reflects modern capitalism with things primarily as commodities rather than productions of the beautifying principle at work, though repressed, in all using. This entails a reduction of the utensil to the serviceable disposable, whereas many useful things can be surrounded by an aura of something more than this disposability. We can be in an intimate reciprocity with our things beyond serviceable disposability. There can be a kind of reverence for things beyond sheer univocalizing utility. There is gratitude for the shaped and shapely thing for serving its use. As a reliable servant can be loved, even though the service is instrumental, something more seeps through into the instrumental relation. One danger of the capitalist mode is a dualism between the useful and the "aesthetic," the artistic. If the intimate universal returns art to life, life has to be looked at differently, lived differently, transformed differently and more in attunement to its original promise of good. Modern production and consumption often stress the utilitarian but not always and not only, for a truly serviceable thing is not a mere commodity. Nature naturing can presence in a beautiful tool; beautiful design can be a sign of something more than the instrumental—in the instrumental itself.

35. There is a reversed anthropomorphism: anthropomorphism in nonanthropomorphism. We make computers, then apply the computer as a model, and, lo, we ourselves are understood to be just like computers—the human being is a cybernetic machine, a soft computer run by a program. Why? Say, to carry the selfish gene? We are a self-replicating automaton (see von Neumann). This inverse anthropomorphism is untrue to the surface of things—without finesse, not to say anything of the problem of self-reference. The celebrity scientist preaches that we, they too, are cybernetic machines. Are there celebrity cybernauts? Hidden hatred of the human can be at work here. In the interests of nonanthropomorphism we think of the nonhuman in terms of the cybernetic and look at life as a program running according to cybernetic necessity—we are carriers of the selfish gene. It is true that we tend to think in dominant signs, and these come from the surface of life. One thinks of the sign of the machine, the sign of the clock: Paley's design argument for the clockmaker God. The Romantic sign of the organism: immanent nature as a divine self-developing whole—becoming god. And now the sign of the cybernetic machine, and the cybernetic divinity of inhuman process. Our signs revert to us, even when we seek to escape ourselves. We think of ourselves on the image we apply to otherbeing—and discover we too are like these machines. But since we have produced these machines, surely it is not unexpected to find ourselves mirrored in them. There is a circuit going on here and it is not quite the release from anthropomorphism it claims to be. Even if we say that the purpose of these cybernetic machines is to be carriers of the selfish gene, we have to ask—What is the "self" of the gene? Does not this border on a kind of anthropomorphism—in nonanthropomorphism? And then what of the disproportion between what happens on the surface and such a mode of explanation. There is a disjunction here. On the self-replicating automaton: no replication is or can be exact—the replica must be always unlike even if only in terms of numerical difference. No clone is exactly identical, for were it so, there would be

no passage from one to the other, hence no generation. There is always a novelty or newness. There is always a secret coming to be more primal than a simple becoming what was not there before: William Hamilton, George Price, von Neumann, Dawkins. The erotics of the intimate universal guides our way to the surface: to live on the earth—with the heavens above us, which we try to see. We cannot avoid going below the surface, into the depths, but this is very equivocal. For some the depths are just a machine, or a computational program. But how to distinguish this in a qualitative sense from a *horror chamber*? After all, the qualitative distinctions tend to be made on the surface; the machine or program or computational essence is only a neutral homogeneous occurrence indifferent with respect to such qualitative distinctions. A kind of ontological violence is needed to neutralize the surface. And hence the machine is not much different from the Bull of Phalaris. The music that comes to the surface masks the tortures of the damned.

36. Francis Bacon: "the triumph of art over nature" (*victoria cursus artis super naturam*), *Novum Organum* 1.117. Science and praxis are shadowed by theology insofar as they are ambitious of reconstituting dominion over creation, originally given by God but lost through original sin. See Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical *Spe Salvi*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi.html, §16; also §17 and its reference to New Kingdom of Man and Bacon's *New Atlantis*.

37. John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, ed. J. W. Gough (Oxford: Blackwell, 1946), 23.

38. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1, ed. F. Engels (New York: International Publishers, 1967), chap. 1.

39. See Marx again on alienated labor in *Early Writings*, intro. L. Colletti, trans. R. Livingstone and G. Benton (London: Penguin, 1975). Later there is an interest in the difference of use-value and exchange-value but undoubtedly the investment of labor in the worked material is the more primitive origin of worth.

40. Marx suggested that with communism, the administration of things will replace the government of persons. Beyond the "Asiatic mode of production" we found a new servitude of production. See Trotsky's enthusiasm for "the militarization of labor," Lenin's for "Fordism" and "Taylorism." "The combination of Russian revolutionary sweep with American efficiency is the essence of Leninism." See John Gray, *Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia* (London: Penguin, 2007), 62.

41. I find it significant that Plotinus speaks of "sculpting the soul" (*Ennead*, 1.6.9) but the meaning is quite other to more modern, expressivist notions like self-cultivation. This sculpting is less working on the rock of self and imposing a form on it than it is a wooing of what is secret in the soul into its coming out in more beautifully embodied form. If it were to be called a kind of "being true to self," there is a delicacy and reverence before a secret soul, and the hiddenness of its being in original communication with the true things. One might compare Michelangelo's reverence for the forms in the rock calling out to him to be released with the rage of Zarathustra's hammer, reigning blows on the "hardest, ugliest stone" of

humanity imprisoned in its sleep to itself. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1969), "On the Blissful Islands," 109–12. Plotinus, a little earlier, in *Ennead*, 1.6.6, refers to all excellence or virtue (*arête*), *phronēsis* included, as a purgation, a *catharsis*. I would refer this to unclogging the porosity. A more original beauty is delivered.

42. Of course, a political order has its style, the sources of which are often buried in the idiocy. There are orders that destroy intimacy, there are orders that guard it, orders that strive for harmony or cast themselves as repulsive and ugly, orders that hate eros, or pornographize it, orders that violate agapeic love or communicate fidelity to it. Political style and culture are not coincident but they are not separable either.

43. I will come to this with the erotics of the intimate universal in the next chapter. In *Ethics and the Between* I say more about the colonization of all the spheres of life by serviceable disposability. The potencies of the ethical are made mutants of serviceable disposability. There can be a mutation, so to say, in the cells of all the forms of human desire, threatening a kind of sickness unto death if this genetic "takeover" is total.

44. See J. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), on the project of "hauntology." Let the dead bury the dead. Let us philosophically allow ghosts pass in peace.

45. Marx, *Early Writings*, 243: The opening sentence of "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*" is: "For Germany, the *criticism of religion* has been largely completed; and the criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism [*die Kritik der religion is die Vorausetzung aller Kritik*]."

46. Apropos the dominion of serviceable disposability, notice how publications such as the *Financial Times* dedicate significant space to fashion. Advertising touches more the subliminal than the sublime. Consider adornment again. There is given beauty. There is beauty in enhancing. Beauty itself often involves enhancing the given. Enhancing beauty—What is enhancing? We do something but it is not simple construction—there is a prior attentiveness to what is virtual or promising in what we hope to enhance. There is no enhancement from nothing; enhancing is of something that already intimates itself as more than its current form; its form points beyond itself to what it might be; what it might be, it is as its own to be; what it is to be is this, its often recessed promise. It is and is to be. Hence a face: it might need a slight change of line there; the eyebrow might need a little plucking there; the cheeks need a little color here, less color there; and so on—and, voilà, the sow's ear is almost a silk purse. We talk of a "makeover" but a makeover is (made) over the "might be" of what now is. The "might be": what it is as what it is to be. Finesse for promise is part of the seeing appreciation of beauty. The intimate is as an intimating of what can be more in the given. The intimate(s) call(s) forth our cooperative creation. Erotics: generating on the beautiful. Think now of breast enhancements—think of what extremes to which this can go: a woman is "made over" as a chemical combination. If self-consciousness intervenes in our response to her beauty, we can be stopped dead in our tracks. No one self-consciously can love the stuff of silicone.

A kind of innocence in the seeing is needed. If we take it apart too much, we are not enchanted. This seems like the lie of beauty, but perhaps it is more that we murder to dissect. Seduction is a kind of lying—we fall in love with the flattering lies we are told—and yet, even in the equivocity, there comes a point where lucidity cannot be gainsaid. The aesthetic requires the willing suspension of dissolving analysis, and rather than any crude deus ex machina, the god must remain hidden in what shows itself. The self-reflective art is a kind of self-cannibalizing of art, a violence of art on itself. The loss of the innocence of enchantment comes with age but age also brings senility. Bitter disillusion(ing) can be then a revenge against beauty—revenge against the hour of consonance—just because it is fugitive. One might ponder further the different relations of time to beauty.

47. Aesthetics of intimate universal: there comes a time when in place of ideals a society psyches itself up on advertising slogans. The propaganda for the dominion of serviceable disposability: selling goods that are no good. The endless message, endless sell (noiseless hum of communal noise), the background of everyday life, the swarm of the locusts of meaninglessness.

48. Advertising expropriates the surplus for purposes of instrumental exploitation—in this it is analogous to a seduction. Advertising is especially revealing of the aesthetics of the intimate universal, and the calculated exploitation of the idiocy of selving—all in the services of serviceable disposability.

49. It has been noted how the generation of "public opinion" is something modern, dating from around the end of the eighteenth century, with newspapers, the sense that there is a thing called "the public," and so on. Invented in bourgeois and capitalist times, public opinion is not quite bread and circuses for the rabble, but it implicates a sometimes covert, sometimes overt social engineering of the social aesthetics of happening. Manipulating the power of the public image sways the emotions of the populace—this aspect of the aesthetics of the intimate universal fills the popular porosity full of the images that move them in this direction or that. Kierkegaard thought of the corrupting effect of the tabloid press: the quickest way to corrupt the greatest number by the fewest is by means of the class of journalists. He is not entirely wrong. Such tabloid propaganda turns the porosity in the direction of serviceable disposability, colonizing with calculated images the empty or emptied porosity.

50. See above on the human as the marriage of earth (*humus*) and breath (*ruach*). Fidelity to this marriage is asked in terms of the spousal relation here. Earth: what of the land, and the working of the land? Is land a garden like Eden, or does it always come threatened by the flood (as in Noah)? The question of property comes back. Think of the contrast of Hegel and Stirner on property—the first is on the way to the universal, the second is on the return to the intimate. Is it never a question of a *terra nullius*? Hegel has put it in terms of the will making a mark as the first possession. Is this not usurpation of gift—gift that subtends use? One will get a different sense of home and the house when the gift is acknowledged. The husbanding of the land will be different. There will be husbandry in a more universal sense also—care of the earth. The economy is linked to the household and the home. Flesh

of the intimate universal: home economics. See Roger Scruton, *Green Philosophy: How to Think Seriously About the Planet* (London: Atlantic Books, 2012). Being unearthed—being earthed: we must have feet on the ground in a wise everydayness. The piety of the family is not just of the underground. It has its feet on the ground, as it warms them before the hearth—the focus of the sacred in the house. Hegel in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* is not entirely right about Antigone as just "nocturnal": family, burial of the brother—return to the earth, to ground, earth, underworld. However, Creon is the diurnal political power of the polis—the public order of the polity—closer to the universal of the ethical order. His account risks turning the intimate and the universal against each other. Antigone is not intimate while Creon is universal; both are in the intimate universal, and there is more of the universal in the intimacy of Antigone, and more of the intimate in the universality of Creon. A dialectic of their one-sidedness, such as Hegel gives us, does not quite get this intimate universal. Or if we are charitable, it is there in solution in Hegel but not absolved, in the sense of crystalized, emergent from its suspension in the fluid state. (We must resist widespread tendencies to make over the German thinkers into liberal lite.) Of course, quite opposite to the sense of gift subtending use, dispossession and the making of a *terra nullius* are found at the beginnings of modern capitalism. One thinks of the loss of the commonage in England, not loss but rather robbing the people of the commonage. Dispossession and enclosure go together, producing the laborers who have no access to land, driving them into towns and cities. Dispossession cuts off the ancestral tie to the earth. A culture of "autonomy" arises, over against ancestral bonds, with the earth no longer the land of a home; it is the leveled space of exploitation, now neutralized for the dominion of serviceable disposability. Autonomy of the exploiters goes hand in hand with tyranny of the dispossessors. The nexus of fidelities tying people to special places and one another all is quite broken. (Scotland, taking over the highlands, driving people out; Russia, the serfs and the land, their liberation not always welcomed since with it seemed to come the loss of this bond to the land . . . no special claim could be made.) Marx jubilates at this creation of the proletariat by capitalism—harbinger of the revolutionary overcoming of capitalism.

51. See Desmond, "Consecrated Love: A Philosophical Reflection on Marriage," *INTAMS Review* 11 (Spring 2005): 4–17.

52. Generally, in modernity work is ordered and disciplined according to the *principle of univocity*: thus the division of labor into manipulable, manageable units, precisely timed orders of units of productivity, workers as themselves units of productivity, and so on. In this univocal "rationalization," there is a loss of the aesthetic play and the patience before equivocity. Univocity breaks the flow of the time of human activity into basic units, units of time-productivity to give us hold on effective power. Univocity is a discipline of effective power over the units of production, and not only materials but the workers themselves as units of productivity and effective power. It seems to mirror in the practical sphere Descartes's method for the right use of the mind: analysis and synthesis; break down and univocalize; rebuild up from univocal units. Deconstruction and reconstruction: the human being as raw matter,

producer, and product—and then self-producer, self-production, self-construction. The equivocity twinned with this is better expressed by the Prometheus myth, Marx's hero among the Titans who revolt against the god. The titanic theft of divine fire gives us fore-measure (Pro-metheus), gives us power to project. Projects chain us to a rock, the earth as a rock, and we cannot escape dead matter. We are punished by the eagle, the bird of Zeus, as the liver is daily eaten away, liver the seat of sacred divination. The entrails of sacrificed animals were inspected as signs, especially the liver, though in Plato's *Timaeus* (70a) the liver is seen as the site of divination, connected as it is with dreams.

53. Does not art as participating in the intimate universal partake of spousal economy: the marriage of the particular and universal in the sensuous symbol? Is not aesthetic truth—as a being true and a being truthful—articulated in the artwork as an invitation to participate in the intimate universal? There is something singular about the call to be true—no one else can be truthful for one. While one does not possess absolute truth, one is asked to be as absolutely truthful as one can be. We are oriented to the true as not just ours alone—the truth of the intimate universal in which each can singularly participate to the degree that the call to be truthful emerges in the very idiocy of being as selving in us. Being aesthetically true partakes of such a double exigency of fidelity to the singular and universal. See Goethe's sense of the symbol as the coinciding of the particular and universal—it is suggestive of the aesthetic incarnation of the intimate universal.

54. See Michel Henry, *Barbarism*, trans. Scott Davidson (London: Continuum, 2012). Everything that makes us human struggles to find its voice but these voices are strangled and come out as cries of horror or despair or agony. These (out)cries too are forced to be what they would not be, if freed—affirming full-being. Henry's book is a kind of horrified philosophical outcry.

55. Spoken of as "doing justice" in chapter 3 above.

56. Dostoyevsky: "Incredible as it may seem, the day will come when man will quarrel more fiercely about art than about God." Beauty and the sublime offer signs of a sacred love, signs of the intimate universal: the intimate universal is not hostile to us (beauty shows thus); the intimate universal is also more than us (the sublime lets us know).

57. There tends to be nothing sublime in what is serviceable to our will. The sublime excels in its resistance to the totalization of that will. The sublime is beyond serving our instrumental will, and yet it releases will. We cannot use the sublime, make use of it. It is useless beyond serviceable disposability, powerful beyond instrumental power. It is terror for those who absolutize usefulness. It is a useless power in defiance of serviceable disposability and shows something sovereign.

58. On the companioning power, see Desmond, "The Theater of the *Metaxu*: Staging the Between," in *Topoi: An International Review of Philosophy* 30, no. 2:113–24; on the community and the tolerance of art beyond use and the "culture industry," see Desmond, *Philosophy and Its Others*, chap. 3.

59. See John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (London: Penguin, 2005).

60. On peace, see Desmond, *Is There a Sabbath for Thought?*, chap. 10.

61. Desmond, *Art, Origins, Otherness*, chap. 5.

62. One thinks of futurism and its glorification of the mechanical, the technological, big modern cities, its animus against nature, women, and love, and so on. Marinetti's manifestoes call for the creation of "a mechanical son, the fruit of pure will, a synthesis of all the laws that science is on the brink of discovering." "We look for the creation of a non-human type, in whom moral suffering, goodness of heart, affection and love . . . will be abolished." There is the praise of war as "the world's only hygiene" in the struggle against an enemy. We know of Marinetti's sympathy for fascism and Mussolini. See T. Todorov, *The Limits of Art: Two Essays*, trans. Gila Walker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 13, 12. On the dream of being beyond mortal flesh among the communists, see John Gray, *The Immortalization Commission: Science and the Strange Quest to Cheat Death* (London: Allen Lane, 2011). The cosmetics of the dead as in the embalmed body of Lenin remind one of the sacral mummification of the Egyptian Pharaoh: divine embalming offers the distention of the flesh into the immortal.

63. On this, see Desmond, *Art and the Absolute: A Study of Hegel's Aesthetics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), chap. 6.

64. See Desmond, *The Intimate Strangeness of Being: Metaphysics After Dialectic* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), chap. 4.

65. See Luc Ferry, *Homo Aestheticus: The Invention of Taste in the Democratic Age*, trans. Robert de Loaiza (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), chap. 6, "The Decline of the Avant-Gardes: Postmodernity"; Donald Kuspit, *The Cult of the Avant-Garde Artist* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); also his *The End of Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

66. There is an aesthetic dramatics of the intimate universal, and providence as twinning freedom and necessity might be seen in light of the sacred porosity: the *passio essendi* in terms of destined character, the *conatus essendi* in terms of the endeavor faithful to the gift or the endowment or treasonous to it. In divine drama there are porosity, passion, suffering to the extremity of exposure, song triumphing over torture. On the companioning power, see my "The Theater of the *Metaxu*." See on liturgy Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On The Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998); see also Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 1, *Prolegemona* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998); and the magisterial work by Cyril O'Regan, *Anatomy of Misremembering: Von Balthasar's Response to Philosophical Modernity*, vol. 1, *Hegel* (Chestnut Ridge, N.Y.: Crossroad Publishing, 2014).

67. Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §1052; Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, last words.

68. In the poems "Brod und Wein" and "Der Einzige," for instance, in Friedrich Hölderlin, *Selected Poems and Fragments*, trans. Michael Hamburger, ed. Jeremy Adler (London: Penguin, 1998), 150–59, 218–29. Think of liturgy as a sacred dramatics where the surface of things and the sacramental world coincide without reduction: sacrament is the figure of things divine—the surface of wine and bread is the substance of the divine body and blood. Consecrated art: sacramental aesthetics of the intimate universal.

69. "Master morality is rooted in a triumphant Yes said to *oneself*—it is self-affirmation, self-glorification of life; it also requires sublime symbols and practices, but only because 'its heart is too full.' All of *beautiful*, all of *great* art is found here: the essence of both is gratitude." Nietzsche, *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1992), 647–48. This morality "transfigures, it beautifies the world and *makes it more rational*—the latter [Christian morality] impoverishes, pales and make uglier the value of things, it *negates* the world. 'World' is a Christian term of abuse.—" Ibid., 646. On different senses of will to power, and complications in Nietzsche's view, with implications for the contrast of erotic sovereignty and agapeic service, see Desmond, "Caesar with the Soul of Christ: Nietzsche's Highest Impossibility," in *Is There a Sabbath for Thought?*, chap. 6.

70. When Nietzsche offers a vision of the whole as a "monster of energy," is the earth then a monstrous *flesh-eating totality*? Are we in the belly of the beast, the self-cannibalizing Leviathan? Schopenhauer was sensitive to the dreadful world of killing and eating, with art as an episodic escape from the wicked world of self-cannibalizing will. One thinks inevitably of some Gnostic pictures of the whole, such as the Ophite representation of the Behometh. If Nietzsche's monster of energy is a blood relative of Gaia, she then is a devouring mother more than a nurturing one. If there is wise blood in the earth, the praise of paganism is not a wrong song, though the praise of the gods of the whole must give way to the praise of the God beyond the whole and the mystical intimacy of the idiotic God; on all of these see part 3 of Desmond, *God and the Between* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008).

71. *Ave verum corpus,*
natum de Maria Virgine,
vere passum, immolatum
in cruce pro homine,
cuius latus perforatum
fluxit aqua et sanguine:
esto nobis praegustatum
in mortis examine.

7. The Erotics of the Intimate Universal

1. Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) wants rightly to bring eros and philosophy into *sunousia* again. His claims about the absence of eros in philosophy are very true of modern rationalism but not true of the longer tradition, certainly not the Platonic—or indeed its transformation in Christianity. There is also the fact that *philia* is hugely present in premodern thought. It is somewhat recessed in modernity, for reasons I try to address in the next chapter. And there is almost complete silence in the

philosophical tradition about love as agape. It is important to grant that the *sunousia* of philosophy and eros has always been energizing for Plato and the companions of Plato. One recalls how Socrates claims that the only thing about which he knows anything is the erotic things (*ta erotika*), even though he is instructed as the pupil of the mantic woman Diotima. If one takes seriously the fact that there are *many speeches* of the *Symposium*, none entirely devoid of truth, one must also take seriously the potential plurivocity of erotics. I am perplexed by Marion's claim about the univocity of love ("Love is said and is given in only one, strictly univocal way. As soon as one multiplies it into subtle and differentiated acceptations, to the point of equivocality, one ceases to analyze it better: one dissolves it and misses it entirely." Ibid., 217); and I have elsewhere reflected on that and the many forms of love ("Being True to Mystery: On Saturated Phenomena and the Hyperboles of Being," *Proceedings of the Villanova University Theology Institute: Conference on Truth and Mystery* 43 (2013). Marion more recently—in *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012)—speaks of the "transcendental univocity" of love, and I have questions about such an approach to love, whether it practices a ventriloquizing hermeneutics that is programmatic of postmetaphysical thinking and is agenda driven—producing something rather "metaphysical." I also worry that it dehumanizes, depersonalizes, such a marvelously present and personal confessor like Augustine. The quest for transcendental univocity is also shaped by Heidegger's take on metaphysics, as well as a commitment to a version of the phenomenological reduction. Marion believed that this transcendental univocity is compatible with a "plurality of meanings and modes," as none other than articulating not so much love's "one way" as, instead, its "singular playing field." Ibid., 281. This totally subverts the meaning of univocity, in my view, and the notion of a *field* of love properly requires metaxological terms, not univocal, equivocal, or dialectical ones.

2. The erotics of philosophy or reason does not have to take a masculine form, as is sometimes charged by more recent feminist thinkers. If there is a finesse of thought poised between the *passio* and the *conatus*, between receiving and endeavoring, and fidelity to the porosity, there is the basis for love of the difference, and for love that is univocally neither masculinized or feminized. Recall again that Diotima instructs Socrates. With reference to this poised finesse, see below on the ages of eros. It is important for the intimate universal also that eros is not a god, but a daimon, an intermediate, a *metaxu* between mortals and divinities. One could add that God is not eros, nor is God an erotic absolute.

3. One might think of Plato's two horses (*Phaedrus*, 246e25–248c, 253c–256d) and the charioteer trying to steer them. The soul tries to guide the two horses. One recalls Kant's sarcasm about the (counterfeit or mad) genius as the tyro who thinks he cuts a fine figure by riding an unruly horse rather than a trained one. In Freud the impression is that the ego seems to be the rider of the horse (id), but despite directions from the ego the horse will seek to go to where it wants to go anyway.

4. Worth remembering is how important *aesthetics* becomes in the ethos of the dark origin—see Schelling, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche—the descent downward into

the darkness means we must look on the artist and the poet differently. And *logos* itself has to be rethought in light of these more intimate depths—as also does the universal. One might reflect on the intimate universal in connection with Nietzsche's claim about the body as itself the carrier of a wisdom that is more elemental than that of "reason."

5. Badiou speaks of love in his recent *In Praise of Love*, trans. Peter Bush (London: Profile Books, 2012). His view generally reflects the importance of *construction* for him. We are not dealing with just an event but with the lasting time of love, which is more than (sexual) desire. Does construction infect this view with too much of "project"? "Construction" as an ecstasis being given over to project? Perhaps this is to be expected in the praxis orientation of a Marxist who eschews the Romantic conception. Beyond the Romantic (say, singular intimacy) and the Marxist (say, the project of the constructed universal), there is, I would say, the intimate universal of erotics. Badiou's praise for Christianity of the Pauline variety is notable, though this is a praise not of Christianity but of Paul as a "militant" of the universal. The tendency is to see a subjectivization of love to an inner intensity that projects itself onto a beyond, transcendence; there is total silence on the flowering of love in service of the neighbor. There is no mention of the agapeics of love as precisely the call of a lifetime of *disponibilité* (in Marcel's sense) for the other. One worries about the old left-Hegelian, Marxist reduction of transcendence to immanence and the denial of the "big other"—no love on bended knees. I find Badiou callow about the meaning of piety and worship—a service beyond servility and sovereignty—and cruder than Nietzsche (see ibid., 64–69). What redeems Christianity for Badiou is, of course, its universality. See Badiou, *St. Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003). This is what condemns it for Nietzsche—there is too much of the same, not enough of the different and the singular. Both Badiou and Nietzsche miss something essential and truer—the notion of the intimate universal. Badiou has a good sense of the Platonic view that philosophy begins in eros. But one wonders if something of the romantic anarchist has been transmuted into the communist, older and more mature in seeing the importance of endurance and fidelity that age brings, and how these come with struggle and work, and yet one deems oneself licensed to exploit the rebelliousness of anarchic and irresponsible youth by periodically venting against the system and the law and the family (see ibid., 55). The generation of 1968 has grown old but has not always grown up. On love and politics: "I don't think you can mix up love and politics. In my opinion, the "politics of love" is a meaningless expression" (ibid., 57). Is Badiou here parting company with Derrida's politics of friendship? I think my own approach is more Augustinian—love defines what we deem as worthy—love of the city of man, the city of God . . . the city is the commons of a love; mostly the first love is importunate, but the second is not absent, and is more ultimate for not being importunate in the modality of *libido dominandi*. *Libido dominandi* is still a love, just as *amor Dei* is. Augustine, like Badiou, is a kind of Platonist, and in Plato erotics and politics cannot be absolutely separated. *Eros turannos*: sign of the wrong mixing of higher excellences in a politics of eros.

6. George Berkeley is an exception to this.

7. Yeats speaks of a "terrible beauty" in respect of Irish Republican politics, and the erotics of Maud Gonne MacBride's political passions was intimately invested in this terrible thing. In question is not just beauty but to be beautified and to beautify: to practice the beautiful with love. But what kind of love? Too often the love of the beautiful is practiced too narcissistically, or without fear and trembling for the terror of beauty.

8. Beauty and Satan (the adversary) in Milton: on first seeing Eve in Eden, Satan is overcome with amazement at her beauty—and for a moment all his defenses are disarmed and he is "stupidly good." Then he gathers himself to himself and regains his purpose of wrath (*Paradise Lost*, book 9, lines 459–66). One recalls Amedeo Modigliani's series of *Great Nudes* that he painted during World War I, a homage to beauty in a world of war, the woman's form being a "column of tenderness," as he called it; look especially at *Red Nude* (*Nu couché*, 1917–18).

9. "The end of art is peace," the poet said. Does beauty, already before the end, give its own foretaste of peace? For some, peace is more a word for death than for being truly at home with what gives itself for celebrating beholding. The heart is often disquieted, as Augustine reminds us. But is there quiet not in bondage to death? For all the inquietude of the heart, there is in Augustine perhaps the most famous exclamation, the leaping prayer: *Sero te amavi! pulchritudo tam antiqua, et tam nova, sero te amavi!* Late have I loved thee. Beauty: so ancient and so new. Beauty. And in the rest of the prayer, an extraordinary poetic outburst, all the senses are invoked: hearing, touch, smell. The sensuous and the sacred together—the prayer has the fragrance of an aesthetic, almost erotic feast. If this is the quietness of the unquiet heart, there is an extraordinary festive mixture of ebullience and serenity. This mixture of restlessness and rest is of interest. Interest—a being-between (*inter-esse*)—being between rest and unrest. Beauty is interestingly somewhere there between also. Beauty can be intoxicating, but there is an enigmatic repose that attends it, and perhaps this has something to do with the incognito of transcendence as other that guards the places of an ultimate peace.

10. These are analogous to the two images offered at the close of the aesthetics of the intimate universal in the last chapter.

11. *Auloi*: these were reed instruments that had a connection with the cult of Dionysus. Hence they were used in music that communicated with the erotic, indeed the orgiastic.

12. *Lucian*, vol. 1, trans. A. M. Harmon (New York: Macmillan, 1913), 17–19. See the interesting reference Kant makes to Juvenal, *Satires*, 8.81–82, and Phalaris in *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, in *Religion and Rational Theology*, trans. and ed. A. Wood and G. Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 93.

13. The ontological pleasure: Is this complacency at the back of the antibourgeois hatred of the avant-garde? But what does it love—or is its creative impulse at least partially engendered by hatred? If this is so, does this not mean that in the long run it is a eunuch? Hatred generates nothing beyond itself. The surface of beauty hides

the horror of the torture chambers (Phalaris). This is Nietzsche in a way. The Greeks were superficial out of profundity. This is a true, and very important, thing to say. But what was in the depths? *De profundis*: Horror again, the Minotaur imprisoned in the labyrinth, issue of the unnatural coupling of a woman and a bull, monster that must be constrained and chained below, periodically devouring virgins and youths? Are we in the belly of the beast? See the Ophite diagram of the whole—imprisonment by the dragon, Behomet, in K. Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, ed. R. McLachlan Wilson (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 53ff.; see also Desmond, *God and the Between* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 221.

14. Compare hatred of bourgeois beauty as bland with the (allegedly) heroic honesty of the tormented artist. Torment of the artist in more senses than one: the shriek of horror first hidden in beauty and the aesthetic desire toward the antiaesthetic where art now wills to take the cover off the counterfeit beauty and show us the hidden mechanism of hell. The flesh is reduced to meat. One thinks, for instance, of Francis Bacon and the butcher's shop. One might be reminded of Hegel's *Slachtbank* of history on whose altars a myriad of innocents are sacrificed, except in Bacon's butcher's shop there is no *Geist* at all, rather aesthetic nihilism without redemption. Of course, there is in this the dialectical contradiction that, qua art, this Bull of Phalaris is still *Geist*—even when it evacuates the flesh of *Geist*. In this regard, so long as we value art, Hegel is more in the right—against theories that would evacuate the art of *Geist*, or its equivalent. Bacon's practice qua artist, art qua art, contradicts the evacuation. See chapter 2 above for some remarks on Bacon.

15. When considering Schopenhauer and Nietzsche on beauty and the dark origin, it is hard not to think of their world as analogous to the Bull of Phalaris. If we are still in Plato's Cave the philosopher now finds himself being roasted in fire. One thinks again of the Leviathan and the Ophite picture of the Beast. Schopenhauer and Nietzsche philosophize in the belly of the beast: the evil god who condemns us to a world of appearances, analogous to the Bull, who tortures us and yet hides the shrieks in beauty. No wonder, Nietzsche will say, we need art to save us from the truth. He also speaks of "the world as a work of art giving birth to itself," but in the hidden womb wherein the birth of being is first generated, the secret at its core is the scream of pain—the suffering of the god, the tormented god that later Nietzsche said he overcame. But did he? How could he? For Dionysus is also Hades, as Heraclitus said. Nietzsche sought an apparent heaven on the surface of the earth; Schopenhauer saw the hell, not the heaven. The jars are not half full, but always half empty—what's more, they are leaky jars, always emptying, and so the images of Tantalus and the Danaids came easily to his mind. Camus to the contrary, and in the spirit truer to the Greeks, one even thinks of Sisyphus: the futility of going up, coming down, going up again and down again . . . to no end, endlessly . . . to no point, ad nauseam. Schopenhauer could not imagine Sisyphus happy.

16. There are different gardens, of course. There is the garden of Eden; there is also the Garden of Gethsemane: a beautiful garden but place of the ultimate agony—agon with sin and death. *Et in Gethsemane ego*. There is also the garden where the risen Christ is met by Mary.

17. See Desmond, *Art, Origins, Otherness: Between Philosophy and Art* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 47, 48.

18. The gesture of covering the head is a gesture of piety—in the sense of an acknowledgment by means of the aesthetic posture of the body that the words now uttered are impious—the aesthetic body must piously or reverently cover the eyes/windows/openings of the soul. The only other place Socrates covers his head is when the hemlock begins to take hold and he covers his head shortly before death, asking that the cock he owed to Aesculapius be paid (*Phaedo*, 118a6–15). When he is dead the eyes are uncovered—fixed now, the soul no longer visible in its windows. The eyes are the aesthetic organs that communicate the most delicate and idiotic intimacy. They are how we look, in more senses than one.

19. Freud, exemplary modern thinker of eros, perhaps could hear underground the secret shrieks of torture, but on the surface confessed to not obtaining any pleasure from music: "Some rationalistic, or perhaps analytic, turn of mind in me rebels against being moved by a thing without knowing why I am thus affected and what it is that affects me." Kant also did not like being moved in an involuntary way by music and compared its effect to the perfume of gentleman's handkerchief that intrudes on the willing and unwilling alike. The singing of hymns in a prison nearby his house annoyed him because it broke into his meditations. Schopenhauer and Nietzsche have ears more rinsed of rationalistic right(eous)ness.

20. "God's-eye view": this view is frequently derided today, but perhaps something of the sense of it is present in posthumous mind marked by an idiot wisdom, purged by suffering. Posthumous mind is not the hypothesis of the neutral, unconcerned, disengaged voyeur. It shows a most intensive love of the finite—down to the idiocy of intimate singularities. The cicadas are the spies of the gods. What have God's spies to do with philosophy—loved as holy idiots, hated because of a passion of truth beyond use, beyond will to power, beyond sovereignty? On being graced by beauty, see note 29.

21. One is reminded of those other cicadas who come to the surface of the earth every twenty years or so (I have seen them coming up in the city of Baltimore). Are we like them—underground and once in a lifetime we live on the surface of the earth? There is a related image in Plato (*Phaedo*, 109e): the fish at the bottom of the sea, looking up and seeing the sky through the film of water. We can barely for a moment keep our heads above water, though perhaps now and then we leap into the other element. Do we live when we come to the surface, or is this a kind of death for us in the other element? Whether under the sea, or under the ground, does the leap touch the edge of air, *escathon ton aera* (*Phaedo*, 109e2)?

22. Erotics and lack: Lacan speaks of *manqué à être*: lack of being, want to be; on Lacan and the *Symposium*, see E. Roudinescu, *Jacques Lacan*, trans. B. Bray (Cambridge: Polity, 1997), 253. Lacan shows some influence of Kojève, but behind the views of Kojève and Sartre lies Hegelian negation. Complications of the full versus the empty are at stake in the respective speeches of Aristophanes and Socrates, and between them. The first stresses the full, the circular, the all-rounded, and the punitive cut to it for its hubris, and thus seems the opposite of the second; nevertheless,

though *penia* seems to be the empty, it is not so simple if *penia* couples with *poros*. Sloterdijk's bubbles are closer to protective circles rather than the in-between of open desire that is sustained in the porosity by the giving origin. In all these there are differences in the archeology of eros, differences in the teleology.

23. Bataille seeks eros beyond serviceable disposability to save sovereignty but in the pagan sense of a transcendence from "below," perhaps an inverted, even perverted Christian sense: excremental mysticism.

24. The infinite restlessness of eros raises the question of measure: Is our immanent promise of infinitude under the measure of another infinitude?

25. The *porosity* is thus especially evident in the earlier parts of our lives. As children, we are more attuned to the newness of being, again in the mode of wonder. The infant is porous to the mother—something passes between them, something passes into us as children. This passing between is impossible if we fix one side or the other; there is a communication back and forth, but it happens in a space of porosity.

26. One might say puberty is an ontological event with a religious significance whose nuances Nietzsche did not comprehend when he referred to the early Christians as cases of "retarded puberty." A blank page for him is the agapeics of the intimate universal beyond serviceable disposability and erotic sovereignty.

27. Or think how when younger we might *blush* on thinking someone could see into us, see through us. We have not yet grown a hard skin, putting the porosity under guard. Or think of how later in life we have the experience of falling in love: we thought ourselves masters of our destiny and suddenly we are overcome by an attraction or enchantment—we are struck by the arrows of Cupid and we fall in love. In the summersault of love, out is in, in is out, up is down, down is up, and we do not know whether we are coming or going. If there opens a tender porosity to this other, the tenderness seeps beyond this other, and indeed the whole of being seems then to radiate a secret benevolence.

28. Subjection and abjection: see abjection as turning away from the *conatus*, though the porosity is alive with self-obsession in the form of self-negation, and there is self-hatred in the intimacy of being; see subjection in the overtaking of the *conatus*, but the overtaking too is corrupted by self-hatred, the counterfeit alleviation that seems to be found in the abjection of the subjected other.

29. Compare the porosity of praying to listening to music, for instance, the Cello Suites of Bach. Thus also we are graced with beauty, this is a blessing, not a curse: a blessing in life, a blessing by life, a blessing of life. About beauty there is something favoring. Favoring is a "condescending," a gracing. A beautiful person graces a room. There is a reception, not just a construction. There is a radiance in gracing, in favoring. We seem to be singled out, seem to be chosen: a favorite. The initiative does not lie with us. We are beneficiaries of the grace, not benefactors. Beauty "makes good" (*bene-facere*). Every favor has a gratuitousness about it. It is given for nothing. We are grateful for what we receive. Thus the feeling of mysterious gratitude in the presence of the beautiful.

30. Often essence has been thought of in terms of a univocal universal, and against it has been urged the so-called essentialist fallacy. With some Wittgensteinians family

resemblances take the place of essences as univocal universals. Does the intimate universal shift our perspective? Consider the following: suppose that there is an analogy of origination and generational inheritance, and that the analogy is relevant to the intimate universal. Why? Think of secret relations spanning a period of generational passing. Then we are not talking about essence as an abstract universal; for the community of the generations is incarnated, and it is so ontologically intimate that it is often hidden from those who are the carriers of the universal. It is the photo from a century ago that shocks us into recognition of the familial relatedness that joins the generations—there is an essence in passing: a family resemblance constituted by a mixing of likeness and unlikeness, not a matter of univocal sameness. This intimate inheritance in passing generations cannot also be a matter of nominalistic particulars, for there is a bond that is transgenerational, and while it is incarnated in the individual it is more than any individual. The "more" joins the separated generations, even when none knows this, or when it is not explicitly granted. There is a sense of a metaxological universality intimate in this community. See Desmond, *The Intimate Strangeness of Being: Metaphysics After Dialectic* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 257–58, on this analogous sense with respect to a secret agapeics that carries it from generation to generation.

31. Hegel's treatment of the world-historical individual is relevant here. How different is the current view? Different in the understanding of the intimacy of being, I would say, and hence also the universal: metaxological rather than dialectical in Hegel's sense. Yet the relation of the two is to be acknowledged, since the metaxological rewrites the dialectical with reference to intermediations with otherness beyond self-mediations through one's own otherness. The metaxological erotics stands more open to the agapeics of the intimate universal. It is also more true to the witness of the martyr who for Hegel is a mere egoist and fanatic. He cannot comprehend agapeic witness to divine transcendence as other to our own erotic self-transcending.

32. On this spousal bond with reference to the mystical, see Desmond, *God and the Between*, 274–75.

33. Burke speaks of two loves: lust and the general social one (*A Philosophical Inquiry Into the Beautiful and the Sublime*, ed. A. Phillips [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990], 39–40, section 10, "Of Beauty"), and he goes on to talk about the importance of sympathy in the sections that follow. We can think also of the centrality of sympathy in the sentimental outlook of Hume, or of Rousseau and the compassion of the more original and elemental humans, prior to the corruptions of civilization. Kant has a view close to Rousseau, not quite in relation to the pathological as such but in relation to the distortions in society when we see through the eyes of others and give birth to envy, suspicion, resentment, and the like. Here pragmatic reason is more instrumental; it is not the pure practical reason of morality that is higher than these two other levels of consideration. There is a fear of the intimate at this level, lest the moral universal be contaminated with lower incentives or calculations. I take Kant's anxiety about breaking out into a sweat as a symptom of his own hidden shudder at the porosity. The younger Hegel gave consideration to

love as the absolute but his version of love tends toward a self-mediating holism. In the older Hegel love is overtaken by reason, but there is something of the first love in the second stress on reason, but it is in the form of erotics as self-loving, which is the basis of community as a social self-determination. If there is the circulation of the universal in the intimate, the intimate is an immediate beginning to be surpassed.

34. Berkeley coined the word "freethinker" to refer to John Toland and those like him.

35. One thinks of political campaigns of terror as seeking to empty the porosity, by torture of the intimate universal, making the emptied and terrified porosity ready for the Leader, like Stalin or Mao, to fill it up—to save it from its own nothingness. This is a violence engendering nothing. Mao perfected the process in the early stages of his career, even before coming to power: now he would manipulate one group to terrorize another group and, once having emptied its porosity, then turn the thing around and manipulate the emptied group to terrorize the first group, which then ends up emptied also. Both groups end up emptied and ready for the will of Mao to be their true will. This is an infernal reduction to an idiocy without selving, the infernal counterfeit double of saving the nothing; it is the infernal will of the leader that rules both sides, all sides, now no longer a side but a pliant tool of the will of the leader. Aristotle: the slave is a living tool (*Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. 8, 11, 1161b4). These tools are perhaps even less than a slave, for their living has been emptied of all the promise of idiotic self. It is simply zombie idiocy: the living dead.

36. Desmond, *Ethics and the Between* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), part 3.

37. Some points here made are gleaned from Desmond, "Autonomy, Loyalty and Civic Piety," in *Civic Education and Culture*, ed. Bradley C. S. Watson (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2005), 15–28.

38. In *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, 210–11, Kant seems sympathetic to what he calls the spirit of prayer, something purely inward, but he says we would be ashamed to be caught: "I do not say praying aloud, but gesturing in a way that indicates prayer," as if overseen by another as madly talking or gesturing only to oneself.

39. Debates between liberals and communitarians have some relevance here but that is not my concern here.

40. Begun about 1000 AD, this ritual marriage to the sea continues. Annually the doge drops a consecrated ring into the sea, pronouncing the Latin words, "*Desponsamus te, mare, in signum veri perpetuique domini*" ("We wed thee, sea, in the sign of the true and everlasting Lord").

41. An example from a time when I lived in Baltimore back in the 1980s: the local perception was that the Baltimore Colts were "stolen" by their then new "owner," Bob Orsay. In the middle of the night, a winter night, the new owner sneaked away with the team to a new location, stealing away. There were pictures on the television of older men weeping when they woke up to the betrayal. One might say: the team belonged to such supporters because they belonged to the team. Though the team belonged to the owner, he did not know that loyalty, that belonging. An Irish

example would be the GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) driven by "tribal loyalty," agonistic and more, for the erotics of the agon is rooted in place, breeding a local fanaticism in some: to win, to be champions is glory, glory that is self-justifying, beyond all serviceable disposability.

42. Local knowing might seem merely parochial, and yet one's place in the sun is a place that is never a neutral space. Place names evoke an entire world of intimate associations. I think of the Patrick Kavanagh poem "Epic": Homer's ghost comes to mind; "I made the Iliad from such a local row: Gods make their own importance"; one thinks of Joyce's *Dubliners* as well as *Ulysses*, or Jimmy Crowley's singing Cork songs like "The Boys of Fairhill" or "The Star of Sunday's Well."

43. The point again is not an argument against freedom or liberty, but a question put to an understanding of freedom that cannot see that without the pieties of life, without their loyalties, human life can quickly become a threadbare thing. Civic education is sometimes seen as the prerogative of civil society or of the state. But if familial and local pieties are not rich in their own terms, it is hard to know if civic piety can be dictated from the state down. It may well be that there will be dictated from above down something smacking more of totalitarian impiety, matched from below up by the empty souls of otherwise atomized human units. Facelessness from above meets facelessness from below, but genuine loyalty and reverence is not what is engendered when they meet in the middle. The state becomes, in Hobbes's phrase, a "mortal god," where rather than piety we find forced submission and enforced obeisance.

44. That it is sometimes called "radical" can be very stupid if it insists in pulling up the roots (*radices*) for only with roots is growing properly concretized (growing-with: *concrescere*). Pulling up roots can be a radical path to sterility. Of course some roots can grow weeds. We see something of the root in the effect: *poisoned fruit*. It is a question of judgment what to do about such fruits and mediately about the roots. But an a priori attitude or abstract theory whose roots must be uprooted could mean destroying the wheat along with the tares. Sometimes the time is not ripe for a harvest of sweeter fruits and it is wiser to be patient (Christ's counsel).

45. Robespierre's "Republic of Virtue"—imposing a "despotism of liberty" to purify the people by terror: "Without virtue, terror is useless; without terror, virtue is powerless."

46. One might remark here on the tension between autonomy and the idea of *service*. There can be a tendency to reduce service to *servility*. What then of public service? Surely civic education has much to do with preparing individuals to see themselves not as always being served, but as being placed in service to their society and fellows. The civil servants are not the only ones for whom the role of service is important. On autonomy and service, see Desmond, *Ethics and the Between*, chaps. 11 and 16.

47. In previous times for indiscipline a student would get into trouble with the parents; now it is, or can be, the teacher who gets into trouble! Think of the discipline of obedience involved in learning to play the violin. But there you see the virtuoso twenty years later who plays with effortless verve, and the history of obedience to the discipline has made itself invisible in the astonishing mastery. And yet it

is there. Can you educate citizens like that? With love or obedience it is the relation to what is beyond me that is at issue. And this is so, whether we think of the positive sense of loyalties and pieties that free us into creative contributions to an ethical community or of the tyrannous sense in which we are submerged in social intoxications and bewitchments that seem to release us from the burden of self-responsibility. Or even the *amor* with which the Nietzschean sovereign signs fate. Obedience is not necessarily some forced submission or craven abjectness. It can be a free giving over to what is worthy to be followed, a disciplined commitment to what is of value. No doubt, often at the beginning we are not self-conscious about this or capable of fully comprehending what is at stake. So is it with children and younger people in terms of their being committed to the fundamental values of a way of life: our being committed by another is prior to our more self-conscious commitment of ourselves. Others who have us in their care have already passed along a way to which we are being committed by growing up into, and being educated to, a way of life. Nothing worthy, much less great, is possible in human life without disciplined obedience.

48. No wonder Shestov railed against this. See his essay on Solovyov in *Speculation and Revelation*, trans. Bernard Martin (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1982), 18–88. He cites Seneca, after Cleanthes (ibid., 67, see also ibid., 245): *Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt*; the fates lead the willing, the unwilling it drags. Shestov makes a characteristic use of the Bull of Phalaris image in *Athens and Jerusalem*, trans. Bernard Martin (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1966), part 2, different from the one I propose, since he is concerned to attack the "self-evidences" of rationalism. In his hands it becomes a battering ram against the "universal" of the philosophers, whereas here it aids mindfulness of the intimate universal. I have written about Shestov and Solovyov in Desmond, *Is There a Sabbath for Thought? Between Religion and Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), chap. 5.

49. The equivocity of the erotics of the intimate universal is in this latter: thus pagan pieties mix political civic and religious pieties, and indeed often are a promiscuous amalgam of all the pieties. The general eros circulates diversely in the different pieties. With monotheism, there is a crucial difference: it is the difference of the only God. Consequence: the erotic promiscuity has to card the differences of self-affirming love and love of the other (even the hostile other), wake to transpolitical community beyond erotic sovereignty, wake to the intimate universality of the community of agapeic service.

50. A civic culture is a matter of tending and growing: thus the relation of *colere*, *cultus*, and culture. See Josef Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*, trans. A. Dru (New York: Pantheon, 1952) on the relation of culture and religious cultus. Being religious can keep open the space of porosity between the universal and the particular: reminding one of more ultimate exigences and values, and keeping true to our necessary duties, responsibilities, pleasures, and trials of the daily middle. It too is a *memorial* knowing: ancestral and *more* than ancestral. This includes being critical of idolatrous pieties. Pieties may require their purification of idolatry.

51. Such an ancestral knowing is something that is becoming well-nigh incomprehensible in a culture where the values of *youth* are considered absolute. But this

incomprehension tells us something about ourselves: tells against us. If we have no comprehension of this covenantal bond, no gratitude, no reverence, no piety will be found. And symbolic (or real) patricide becomes the last "interesting" outrage called art. But of course, these "interesting" outrages quickly become boring outrages.

52. See Desmond, "The Secret Sources of Strengthening: On Courage," in *Is There a Sabbath for Thought*, chap. 7.

53. Max Stirner speaks of the ego and its own, and Nietzsche of being grateful for himself. One risks the false absoluteness of the ego—"all things are as nothing to me." Still there is something to be said for Stirner, who is free of not a few bewitchments. But does he end up bewitched by the idiot self—the "spook" that there is no "spook," that there can be no more "spooks"? Autonomy must flow into the freedom of erotic sovereignty. Erotic sovereignty is beyond autonomy in that sense.

54. That the erotics of sovereignty concerns a communal intermediation entails no denial of outstanding and singular exemplifications of human excellences. They are blooms of the intimate universal. Sovereignty need not be defined individually, as it sometimes seems to be in the radical aristocratism of a Nietzsche. But given the intimate side of it, there is a strong singular aspect to it also. Here are some more singular examples of sovereign worth beyond serviceable disposability: a great work of art can show something sovereign, as can the great artist. The great athlete who plays not just for professional success but for glory. The philosopher can show a sovereign mindfulness beyond the serviceable and dutiful research of the professor. A true poet can have touches of sovereignty. More common sovereignties are tied to the mastery of social power. One thinks of heroic leaders or statesmen and how they gather the intermediation of social power into a community of purpose beyond the instrumental goals of serviceable disposability. Nietzsche spoke of a "Roman Caesar with the soul of Christ" and the Roman Caesar is an erotic sovereign. Christ is the agapeic servant. Can Caesar still be Caesar as an erotic sovereign if he were to have the soul of Christ? Not certainly on the terms Nietzsche offers. One thinks of St. Patrick, who was both a nobleman and a slave, patron saint of the Irish people. One also thinks of Moses, who was both of Pharaoh's court and of the Hebrew race of slaves, and yet father of the freed Hebrews. Abraham: "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing." As we shall see in the next chapter, there is a freedom beyond servility and sovereignty in the community of agapeic service, communicating most fully the metaxological intermediation of the intimate universal.

8. The Agapeics of the Intimate Universal

1. But see *Perplexity and Ultimacy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), chaps. 4 and 6.

2. See Desmond, *Being and the Between* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), chap. 12, on communities. Is the Ubuntu view as formulated by John

S. Mbiti expressive of the intimate universal: "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am"? Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd enlarged ed. (London: Heinemann, 1990), 110.

3. In the following I draw on some thoughts from Desmond, "Tyranny and the Recess of Friendship," in *Amor Amicitiae: On the Love That Is Friendship*, ed. Thomas Kelly and Philipp Rosemann (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 99–125, written to honor the work of James McEvoy, for whom friendship was central.

4. James McEvoy, "Friendship and the Transcendental Ego: Kantian *Freundschaft* and Medieval *Amicitia*," in *Meeting of the Minds: The Relations Between Medieval and Classical Modern European Philosophy*, ed. Stephen F. Brown (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), 403–35.

5. McEvoy has written on this with both corrective erudition and finesse: McEvoy, "Too Many Friends or None at All? A 'Difference' Between Aristotle and Postmodernity," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 77 (2003): 3–19. Aristotle's all-but-canonical treatment of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics* tends to overshadow the insightful dialogue of Plato *Lysis*, though it follows on from it: there the view that like attracts like and the Heraclitean view that opposites attract yield to the friendship of the good attracting the good, just because they are good. The problem arises of why we *need* friendship if the good is self-sufficient. However, if the good is agapeic, self-sufficiency cannot be the first or last word. In modern and recent times, other thinkers who have considered friendship include Ralph Waldo Emerson, Georges Bataille, and Maurice Blanchot. Carl Schmitt, Giorgio Agamben, and Hannah Arendt place the question of friendship in an important position vis-à-vis their political preoccupations.

6. What Gyges does is an outrage to *aidos* (shame/reverence) and to intimacy. In the story as told by Herodotus we are shown the connection between violence, shame/reverence, and being seen by another. Candaules, the king of the Lydians, is not content that the intimacy of his marriage remains intimate. He boasts to his confidant, Gyges, of his queen's beauty. Although he is initially unwilling, Gyges hides in the bedroom to look. When the queen later discovers the outrage to intimacy and *aidos* at being looked at in this way, she demands of Gyges that he either kill the king or himself. Gyges kills the king, mounts the throne, and tups the queen. In Plato's version we also see the connections between outrage to intimacy, regicide, lust, and exposure to the look and being seen.

7. Does the fact that Socrates causes Thrasymachus to *blush*, something not seen before (350d4), signify a trace of *aidos* that will lead back to the intimate good, or the hatred of the tyrannical nature in being exposed, or both at once? Remember the connection of blushing and the porosity. In the intimate porosity, blood, ethically wiser than will to power, rushes to the face.

8. *Republic*, 576a4–7: "Throughout their lives, then, they never know what it is to be the friends of anybody. They are always either despots or slaves, but the tyrannical nature never tastes freedom or true friendship. Quite so."

9. This ambivalence between the divine and the human is central to sovereignty and keeps returning. See the tyrant as a *parodia sacra* of the king, the true ruler, the

basileus. There is an equivocity marking the superior excellence of erotic sovereignty. When we make this superiority the absolute measure, we invite the tyranny whose ignobility is the corruption of its nobility: *corruptio optimi pessima*. The tyrant is the counterfeit double of sovereign superiority. Our being in relation to others and the *kononia* of ethical and religious community is contracted into the self-communion of the one with itself. There is no agapeic broadcast. And this in the long run is the corruption of *con-natus*. The *passio* is pressed into the spirit of suspicion. There is then the *always suspect other*—there are no gifts, except poisons (gifts)—and then there is the corrupt clogging of the porosity. Satan names what it is to be on the verge of the absolute closure of the porosity—frozen as in the center of the *Inferno*. Since Satan weeps, must there be something still unclosed in the freeze?

10. Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 228–29.

11. Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, essay 1, section 16.

12. *Philebus*, 28c6–9: Socrates: "For all the wise [*hoi sophoi*] agree—whereby they really exalt themselves—that mind [*nous*] is king [*basileus*] of heaven and earth. Perhaps they are right." Is this Socratic self-exaltation? A kind of Socratic "subreption"? I think the point is less self-exaltation than that *nous* is king. Will as tyrant (*turranos*) is far different from *nous* as king (*basileus*). Essential to that difference is the difference between *eros turranos* and *eros ouranios*. And clearly the wise are under the measure of this *nous* of heaven and earth. You might say: There is a measure above us, in our being above ourselves. Above Prometheus, a just Jove.

13. See McEvoy, "Friendship and the Transcendental Ego," 406ff.; see also McEvoy, "Too Many Friends or None at All?," 11–13. That Kant was not, of course, without friends is very clear from the illuminating Manfred Kuehn, *Kant: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Kant's most important friendship was with the English merchant Joseph Green, who had a significant influence on the way Kant organized his life, in its second half, according to maxims (154–57), as well as on its very daily routine, which included a visit to Green's house from 4 to7 PM exactly, every day, with Saturday's visit lasting from 4 to 9 PM (273). Green was very influential on the Kant remembered for the clockwork reliability of his daily life (154–55). It seems, too, that every line of the *Critique of Pure Reason* was gone over with Green (240–41). There were other, less close friendships, of course. Sometimes Kant did prevail on some of his friends to write reviews defending him against critics. Perhaps the most revealing example of this concerns his erstwhile student, and later Königsberg colleague, Christian Jacob Kraus. Kraus disliked writing as such, and yet Kant persuaded him to do so (329–34), even though the bent of his mind was more naturalistic and Humean than metaphysical. Kant gave him a diamond ring as a *pretium affectionis* (331). It was not long, however, before "the two men had to give up the union [*Verbindung*] into which they had entered with this ring, namely to live only for each other" (as a friend of Kraus's put it). With Green the friendship was deeper and more symmetrical. After Green's death Kant ceased to go out in the evenings (322). With others, in this instance Kraus, one senses asymmetry in the friendship, in Kant's favor. Kraus seems to have felt imposed upon

in being pressed to write in defense of Kant. If this affair, Kuehn comments, "does not reflect well on Kraus, it does not reflect well on Kant either. He was insensitive, wrapped up in his own concerns, and unable to understand the person who was to be his friend. This is why Metzger called Kant an egoist" (334).

14. See Kant, "On the Miscarriage of All Philosophical Trials in Theodicy" (1791) in *Religion and Rational Theology*, trans. and ed. A. Wood and G. Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), where Job's sincerity ("authenticity") is praised—the counselors are insincere and God does not like them. Kant's account reveals a Job who is deaf to the voice in the whirlwind; he is protected from hearing by his sincerity.

15. One was struck by the brazen presence of authoritarian, dictatorial leaders, a veritable gallery of rogues, in the front line of those protesting on behalf of freedom after the Charlie Hebdo massacre.

16. Recall earlier discussion of "protean man," as it is put in the 1960s in Robert Jay Lifton, *History and Human Survival* (New York: Random House, 1968).

17. We forget today how *violence* and friendship can be bound together. Consider in Homer's *Iliad* the fury of Achilles at the death of Patroclus—his anger drives him to violence and all moderation is overtaken by tyrannical rage. One thinks of his sacrifice of twelve Trojan youths in recompense for the loss of his friend. Friendship releases an orgy of rage. When we speak of "comrades in arms" we imply the willingness to fight to the death, if the friend is either threatened or injured or perhaps killed. Death begets death, not despite friendship, but because of it.

18. Christianity as "Platonism for the masses": Nietzsche is not quite wrong and yet he is quite wrong. Not quite wrong: he sees, so to say, a "democratization" of what the transcendence of the good implicates, though even here he does not see the difference of "Plato" and "Augustine." Quite wrong: he does not see the qualitative excellence of this democratization, since this would ask finesse for the agapeics of the intimate universal. The "masses" for him are disposable as the "many-too-many." Their serviceable disposability is their servility. See below on neighboring and this qualitative excellence and its democratization.

19. Zarathustra's discourse, "Vom Krieg und Kriegsvolke," in Nietzsche, *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli und Massimo Montinari (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968), vol. 6, bk. 1, p. 54: "Ihr sollt den Frieden lieben als Mittel zu neuen Kriegen. Und den kurzen Frieden mehr, als den langen." English translation: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1969), 74. Does will to power reveal the end of philosophy, in recessing the friend, hence also the ancestral *philia* of wisdom? One might ask how the recessing of friendship bears on the so-called death of God and the end of art.

20. On these issues, as well as the issue of genuine release in Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, see Desmond, *Art, Origins, Otherness: Between Philosophy and Art* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), chaps. 5, 6, 7.

21. See Desmond, "Sticky Evil: *Macbeth* and the Karma of the Equivocal," in *God, Literature, and Process Thought*, ed. D. J. N. Middleton (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002), 133–55.

22. James McEvoy has some pertinent remarks on Nietzsche in "Too Many Friends or None at All?," 13–15. He sees some continuity between Kant's wariness and Nietzsche's pessimism about friendship. He interestingly ties this to the modern mistranslation of the saying of Aristotle, preserved by Diogenes Laertius, "He who has friends can have no true friend." Mistranslated by Erasmus, and passed on through Montaigne's "*O mes amis, il n'y a nul amy*," it has ceased to be the ancient warning against *polyphilia* and become more "an emblem for the lonely subject at the core of modernity" (1). While my suggestions about Nietzsche bear on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, McEvoy focuses on remarks from *Human, All Too Human*, §§241, 354, 376, as well as *Daybreak*, §503. In these works from the "middle period," Nietzsche's remarks on friendship are sometimes full of fervor for it, sometimes not far from cynical suspicion. Eventually he too cannot do without the "ideal," in the form of the projected superman. I think, by contrast, of his forerunner Max Stirner, who claims to dispose of all "ideals"—though he too ends with his "ideal," a *Verein von Egoisten*.

23. Nietzsche, *Werke*, vol. 6, bk. 1, p. 67; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 82.

24. See Nietzsche, *Werke*, vol. 6, bk. 1, p. 68; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 83.

25. My italics. Some odd things are said by Zarathustra in the section on the neighbor about creating the friend and his overflowing heart out of oneself (Nietzsche, *Werke*, vol. 6, bk. 1, p. 73; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 87). Odd because one might talk about creating the conditions for friendship, for fostering the ethos of its flourishing and support, but not of the friend himself or herself, or his or her heart. We talk of making friends, of course, though not of making the friend. Am I mistaken in sensing something skewed?

26. Nietzsche, *Werke*, vol. 6, bk. 1, p. 74; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 87.

27. Nietzsche, *Werke*, vol. 6, bk. 1, p. 68–69; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 84.

28. Nietzsche, *Werke*, vol. 6, bk. 1, p. 74; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 88.

29. I discuss some of the issues more fully in Desmond, "Caesar with the Soul of Christ: Nietzsche's Highest Impossibility," in *Is There a Sabbath for Thought? Between Religion and Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005). On agapeic service, see Desmond, *Ethics and the Between* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), esp. chaps. 11 and 16.

30. See Desmond, *Ethics and the Between*, chap. 11.

31. In Plato the friends of the forms are mentioned (*tous tōn eidōn philous*, *Sophist*, 348a3–248e6); the forms refer us to the universal, but that the reference is also to friendship again guards the intimate dimension.

32. Great art or culture seems to require slavery, thus Nietzsche (for example, in *Birth of Tragedy*, §14, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §§188, 257, 258, *Will to Power*, §464). The issues of art and democracy, art and communism (socialist realism), bear on the revolt against high art in the name of egalitarianism, whether democratic or socialist. Did Nietzsche not sense in this the danger of loss of erotic sovereignty and the reduction of all human nobility to serviceable disposability? One might say there is no justification for slavery, but the overcoming of servility does not mean the loss of some sense of higher sovereignty. One need not just think of these as mutual

antagonists but envisage a service beyond servility in artistic sovereignty. It is not one against the other, not one destroying the other, whether from the side of the servile or the sovereign. Nietzscheans and Marxists are not entirely different from opposite ends of a mutual agonism, indeed antagonism. Only from agapeic service do we see beyond aesthetic servility and sovereignty.

33. The difference of ancient and modern tyranny is a subject of ongoing discussion. No doubt, the difference has much to do with the power of technology, of bureaucratic management and efficiency, of techniques of control over large populations, of the machinelike character of politic institutions and their apparatuses of propaganda, giving influence over the people. People are driven sometimes into an autistic privacy or a hedonistic privacy when enough "goodies" are produced by the economic system to buy off their discontentment (keep them happy even unto the benign tyranny of the welfare state). Even if there is an impersonal tyranny in modernity, eros is not dead. It is in the grip of serviceable disposability. (Recall the first speech of Socrates in *Phaedrus*: sex as serviceable disposability; contrast today the toleration of pornography as embodying sex as serviceable disposability, plus the autistic privacy fed by the cybernetics of the Internet.) The *administration* of men as things leads to a reification and loss of true intimacy. Then we find counterfeit doubles of intimacy: see the false sentiment of TV shows; they are literally "shows" but they show nothing true—they are all "show" that shows nothing. Is the loss of intimacy a loss of eros? Yes and no: it is eros-less eros. Often it is an expression of the *conatus* without the true *passio*. Hence the figuration of invulnerability. Think of computer games as a *paideia* in this invulnerable asymmetrical power of death over the others, all of whom, virtual or real, are vulnerable, while oneself remains "outside"—hard, invulnerable, unreachable, untouchable. All this, with the aid of technology and bureaucracy, furthers the dominion of serviceable disposability without the *passio* of eros, without the compassion of agape, and cold to the idiotic intimacy (of family and the like). One recalls the image of the tyrant as "housebound" in Plato, and also remarks of Aristotle in the *Politics* likening despotism with the extension of household authority over the whole of the community. See Waller R. Newell, *Tyranny: A New Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 4–6, on Stalin and Hitler (and others) and how much of their administration of things and people happened from the dinner table. One recalls the dialectical tyrant Mao: many of his decisions were taken from his vast bed that dominated his inner sanctum in the Study of Chrysanthemum Fragrance. See the photo of it in Philip Short, *Mao: A Life* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1999), no page number, photos between 592 and 593. One recalls the bed of Plato's *mimesis* in the *Republic*. Was the form of Mao's bed made by God? Mao's bed is the bed of *eros turannos*, but the intimate is still there. See Zhisui Li, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (London: Arrow Books, 1996), esp. 356–64. Of course, one cannot forget the desecration of the intimacy of being by the desk murderer or the military technician before his screen controlling a drone. The latter is a new instance of the desk killer. Now the intimate is marked by a *broken asymmetry*; it is not the reciprocal intimacy of life and death; for the drone killer there is one asymmetry, for the drone killed another

asymmetry. There is no face on the killer or the killed. They do not face each other in honest combat.

34. Lacan, Seminar, *Les non-dupes errent*, December 18, 1973—consult these citations in S. Žižek, E. L. Santner, K. Reinhard, *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), in Kenneth Reinard's discussion, 72–73: "If we take the symbolic as playing the role of means [*moyen*] between the Real and the Imaginary . . . we are thus at the heart of that love which I just spoke about under the name of divine love. . . . The symbolic taken as love . . . is under the form of this commandment, which praises to the sky being and love. In so far as it joins something as being and as love, these two things can only be said to support the Real on the one hand and the Imaginary on the other . . . This is where the dimension of where *love your neighbor as yourself* comes from. I've got to say it: be a dupe and you won't err." Addressing the academics and analysts in the seminar: "I know quite well you're not believers, right? But you are all the more conned, because even if you aren't believers . . . you believe. I'm not saying you assume it: *it assumes you*" (73). See also Lacan: "That's what love is. It's one's own ego that one loves in love, one's own ego made real on the imaginary level." Lacan, *Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, book 1, *Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953–1954,* ed. J.-A. Miller, trans. J. Forrester (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 142. In his contribution in *The Neighbor*, 134–190, Žižek speaks of the monstrousness of the neighbor ("Neighbors and Other Monsters: A Plea for Ethical Violence"). I would say the monstrous is equivocally sacred, but one side of this equivocity is the show of the sacred in the desecrated figure or face. I think of St. Francis kissing the leper: the monster from which he recoiled and yet also the face of Christ in whom we love the God of love. I do not find finesse for this second holiness in Žižek. See the mule-face woman (Grace McDaniels, 1888–1958): repulsive and everyone said she had a heart of gold.

35. Of course the language of service and sacrifice can be corrupted, as it was by Nazism and indeed Heidegger. But recall remarks at the end of the aesthetics of the intimate universal bearing on the *Ave verum corpus*. The Eucharist is the flesh, the real presence of the intimate universal as incarnating the communion of humanity and divinity. There is nothing there yet the divine is truly there. The mystical body: *hoc est enim . . . hic est calix*: "This" (an intimate, idiotic this: *hoc*, *hic*) is (true being, *est*) my body given up for you—the new and everlasting covenant—absolute singularity and universal/catholic. If this *verum corpus* is the *corpus mysticum*, the intimate universal is beyond moralizing according to the law.

36. In a broad sense, it is remarkable how in the Bible, the Kings seemed shadowed by—or twinned with—prophets: those who speak to political power from another space, a dimension beyond politics, reminders of God as transcendence itself. Coupled with the vulnerability of the prophet, there is a singularity also, witnessing to an intimacy with the deepest promise of the people, as well as the fidelity on the One who has entered into that promise, witnessing also the betrayals of the Kings, the infidelities of the people. The promise is of the universal but it is betrayed in the intimacies of power, and only called back to fidelity through the prophetic reminder of the intimacy and the universality. There is no toleration for prophets in Hobbes:

the Leviathan has no holy fool either. If we think of Christ as the divine Fool we are talking of an idiot wisdom that is holy. Once again it is not the erotic sovereign who is the exception but the agapeic servant—exception to the spells of serviceable disposability, exception to the will to power of the erotic sovereign.

37. The Buddhist stress on compassion (see the Dalai Lama) emphasizes an emptiness like the porosity. Nothing is absolutely for self alone—all things are in relation to others in the universal impermanence. Yet, more than the "co-origination" of becoming, there is the absolute origination and coming to be (at all), and this entails reference to the absolute original as other to the universal network of coarising beings. The porosity opens beyond to this, and hence is more than the emptiness. The superplus origin is agapeic, not erotic. Compassion in some ways is not quite the same as the agapeic. There is the grace of the origin in coming to be; we cannot determine this through ourselves; it is beyond the exalted "self-determination" of Buddhist "self-lessness." There is a beyond in a more radical sense. The nothing is not just the emptiness, but the origin gives to be out of the nothing—hence the porosity, in being no-thing and enabling all things, is a hyperbolic sign of this absolutely creative activity of the origin.

38. On ancient sarcophagi there were representation of Christ as both philosopher and shepherd. The itinerant philosopher finds his way, and offers to others signs of the way. The shepherd cares for others, and takes them to where nourishment is to be found. He leads them through the valley of death.

39. See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. and intro. M. Cranston (Harmonsdworth, UK: Penguin, 1968), 4.8, "The Civil Religion": we find an attack on this view for setting the kingdom of God and Caesar in opposition, making nations subject to internal divisions; we must reject institutions that occasion human self-contradiction (181); the state must be master of civil religion. This is not much different from Hobbes's directory for the univocity of sovereignty (Rousseau goes out of his way to praise Hobbes for this [180]; he also praises Mohammed [179])—see part 4 of Hobbes's *Leviathan*. Not unlike for Nietzsche, for Rousseau "Christianity preaches only servitude and submission. . . . True Christians are made to be slaves (184); "Once the cross had driven out the eagle, all Roman valour disappeared" (185). There is little comprehension or sympathy for Christ's rejection of Satan's temptation when he offers all the kingdoms of the world, if Christ would only bow down and adore the Prince of the world. Rousseau's "pure Christianity" is a world-less privacy, not the agapeics of the intimate universal. See my remarks in "Caesar with the Soul of Christ" on the second and third temptations: the temptation of spiritual pride is more ultimate than that of worldly power. This is at issue in the relation of erotic sovereign and agapeic servant—succumbing to the temptation of the dominion of immanent power decides the issue tyrannically in one's own favor, if and where power can conquer power.

40. This is not meant in a necessarily monarchical sense, since the sovereign intermediation of social power can be enabled in terms of the one, the few, or the many, as I make clear in *Ethics and the Between*. *Basileus*, or "king," is metaphorical for sovereignty of true excellence.

41. As I indicate in Desmond, *Being and the Between*, chap. 12.

42. Aquinas refers to the child as "enfolded in the care of its parents, like a spiritual womb [*continetur sub parentum cura sicut sub quodam spirituali utero*]," *Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. 10, Art. 12; see also *Summa Theologica*, III, Q. 68, Art.10, also against the enforced conversion of Jewish children.

43. One might think of Mary as the *eikon* of the intimate universal: intimacy with her son; intimacy of the pure trust of "yes" in porosity, in receiving and answering the divine annunciation; intimacy of the womb as the God-bearing porosity; intimacy of "growing with" the holy family, of pondering all these things in her heart; intimacy of being pierced by the suffering of the divine that was for all; intimacy as the maternal companion that is the community of the divine and the human.

44. As a counter to Keats's negative capability, Yeats suggests we need an affirmative capability. One thinks also of healing in the music of Mozart, or of compassion in the stories of William Trevor.

45. I mention two witnesses to how the void of solitude becomes fertile: John of the Cross in prison, incarcerated by his own religious brothers, and then the purgatory of dispossession that came to gift him and us with such extraordinary sacred poetry (*The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, ed. Kieran Kavanaugh [Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1991]); Nguyen Chi Thien, the Vietnamese poet whose spirit in prison, so to say, *lived on nothing*, and gave birth to the astonishing *Flowers from Hell*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Council on Southeast Asia Studies, 1984).

46. I have more to say on Nietzsche and the neighbor in "Caesar with the Soul of Christ."

47. Kierkegaard has a very good sense of this in *Works of Love* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), for example, 89.

48. Levinas rightly sees the richness in "Bonjour!" in *Is It Righteous to Be? Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas*, ed. Jill Robins (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

49. For imaginative variations on the theme of the prodigal son, see Desmond, "Dream Monologues of Autonomy," *Ethical Perspectives* 5 (1998): 4, 305–21.

50. On confidence, see Desmond, *The Intimate Strangeness of Being: Metaphysics After Dialectic* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), chap. 8; on courage, see Desmond, *Is There a Sabbath for Thought?*, chap. 7.

51. One can see the intimate universal at work in the elemental happenings of laughing and weeping. There is a kind of aesthetic dispossession at an elemental level. Think of laughter and the aesthetic order of community and its power to dissolve pretenses, not least of power and of established order. Everything about laughing witnesses to the release of the creative chaos, the fertile void. Tyrants do not like being laughed at, though the medieval king had his fool, token of another order than immanent will to power. One thinks how, analogously, the kings in the Hebrew Bible seem to bring forth their matching prophets: the prophet was not seamlessly integrated into the structure of regal power—quite the contrary, he spoke for God, beyond the order of immanent power, in opposition to the injustice of that power,

opening himself to persecution because of his reminders of the divine. He spoke for God, of God, not for the king, not for the people. The people and the king listened to that voice, sometimes repenting on being reminded of their betrayal of God. Of course, the problem of the false prophet arises, when the king might seek to call on "his own" prophet—the ideological servant of reigning power who can be relied on to give the right religious "spin." The problem of the false prophet is like the problem of the counterfeit double. Generally univocalizing modernity does not like to laugh at itself. There is too much of equivocity beyond determinate law in laughing. Intolerance of laughter signals an enfeeblement or loss of the agapeics. One also notices that laughing can unloose a logjam of communication, can allow the renewal of communication, indeed even more than the mere exchange of information, in the form of festive interplay. Laughter can be the song of the lord of misrule but its cleansing release can also purge pent-up resentments and facilitate the renewal of social order. We see this in the marriages at the end of the comedies of Shakespeare. Spousal togetherness is intimate and yet a sign of the universal. There is, of course, malicious and mocking laughter that serves nothing but an infernal undoing and without the release of redeeming hope. Sick laughter, cynical laugher, nihilistic laughter—this is the void without the fertility. There is in tragedy the elemental rhythm of dissolution and (sometimes barely hinted) promise of re-creation. This is the elemental rhythm—coming to be, becoming, fixation, rupture, shattering, return to the fertile void of the porosity, re-creation and a new coming to be and a new becoming. It is the agapeics of the intimate universal that sparks and carries it all.

52. The sacrifice of the agapeic servant is both like and unlike the sacrifice of the noble warrior. St. Columba was in his earlier life a warrior chief and yet came to be called the Dove of the Church (the meaning of his name). Martin Luther King has been called "The Peaceful Warrior"—see the book with that name: Ed Clayton, *Martin Luther King: The Peaceful Warrior* (New York: Pocket Books, 1969). One thinks of Nelson Mandela and his *metanoia* from erotic warrior to agapeic servant. Contrast this with Rousseau above on Roman valor and Christian servitude: "Rome versus Judea," to invoke Nietzsche again.

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