ESCHATOLOGY AND SPACE

The Lost Dimension in Theology Past and Present

Vítor Westhelle

Eschatology and Space

PRAISE FOR VÍTOR WESTHELLE'S
ESCHATOLOGY AND SPACE

"Until now Christian eschatology has been interpreted only in terms of its temporal dimension. Vitor Westhelle has undertaken a remarkably creative rethinking of this in terms of its spatial dimension through the effective deployment of post-colonial and post-structuralist perspectives. The book will be indispensable for all who are interested in understanding eschatology and exploring new possibilities of eschatological meaning."

—Ted Jennings, professor of Biblical and
Constructive Theology,
Chicago Theological Seminary

"The merchant says 'I have no time,' while the peasant says 'I have no land.' In business there is 'no time to lose' and tomorrow may be 'too late,' while the migrant dreams of a land without violence regardless of the time it takes to achieve it. Space is life, while time has no space. Westhelle's book affirms space as the basic unit of life and rightly lifts up the spatial dimension of eschatology.'

—Pablo Richard, professor and researcher at the
Departmento Ecumenico de Investigaciones,
San Jose, Costa Rica

"Westhelle's spatialization of eschatological time redirects our gaze toward those suffering at the margins, toward those awaiting apocalyptic if not historically realized justice. This postcolonial subversion of temporal eschatology shocks the reader with uncanny and profound insights."
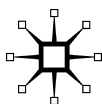
—Ted Peters, Graduate Theological Union and
author of *GOD—The World's Future*

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Acknowledgments

Living in a time where losses outnumber gains, when one too many times the results of a blood test, scan, or biopsy say the ominous word "positive," when homes are washed away or destroyed or foreclosed, when one after the other decline letters of job applications keep coming—how was I to write about hope of new life to come? And yet, how could I not write about those sparks of hope that refuse to die out as the embers in a dying fire?

To write about the end or endings is to be on the edge, like the dew that dances on the tip of a leaf. To dance on that edge has been an experience that humbled and honored me immensely. And it was the love and support of family, friends, and colleagues that kept me from falling and those embers of hope blazing.

Seeds of this project started germinating in the early 1980s, when I was working with landless peasants who had lost their lands and livelihood and were actually living on the limits, edges—on road sides, between borders of highways and fences of large farms whose grounds once they tendered and harvested the livelihood for their families. For them eschatology was not a theological concept but a living reality. For the inspiration to pen the pages that follow, I owe my gratitude to their lives and reflections—for asking often: "Pastor, why are we here in this no-place?" By saying "pastor" they implied a theological answer that I was struggling to articulate.

While a sabbatical from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) during the fall of 2011 technically gave me the time to draft the manuscript, my subsequent appointment as the chair of Luther Research at EST (Escolar Superior de Teologia), São Leopoldo, Brazil, placed me right at that third bank, between and betwixt, where I had to learn to be and become. I thank both the

institutions where I spent part of the year for giving the time and space to craft my thoughts. I cannot but also offer a word of gratitude to Aarhus University and to the Department of Culture and Society who welcomed me into their faculty as honorary professor of theology, thereby giving me yet another venue to engage in theological conversation that could not be confined to parochial locations, but challenged me to some crossings—and transgressions—that have unequivocal eschatological bearings.

From start to finish, that is, from the time that I wrote my proposal till the submission of the manuscript, I was blessed with the love and support of many friends and colleagues who helped me in tapping my thoughts and teasing them on to the leaves of the manuscript.

I am deeply indebted to Barry Hopkins, associate librarian for public services at the JKM library at LSTC, who has been generous with his time and expertise in my research. My indebtedness also goes to Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., and to Ted Peters who reviewed and critiqued my proposal and offered me constructive comments that hopefully made this project of mine more open, coherent, and accessible.

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To my students, who I have had the privilege to teach and learn from, at LSTC, EST, and Aarhus, I owe much. I would be remiss in my duty if I did not mention a few of them whose contributions have, often, anonymously visited too many a page in what follows: Neal Anthony, John Nunes, Robert Saler, Birgitte Jeppersen, Philip Ruge-Jones, Malin Pilgren, Justin Eller, Kathlen Luana de Oliveira, and so many others that parsimony and blankness prevent me from

being duly grateful. Class discussions, student presentations, and not forgetting hallway conversations helped navigate and situate my thoughts as I worked my way through the manuscript.

Of the eight chapters in the book, Chapter 5, "A Latitudinal Approach to Eschatology" is the reworked chapter, in a different approach and perspective, of that which I contributed to the *Oxford Book of Eschatology* ("Liberation Theology: A Latitudinal Perspective," *The Oxford Handbook on Eschatology*, Jerry Walls, ed., [New York: Oxford University Press, 2007], 311–327). A section of Chapter 2, "Space, History, and the Kingdom," is a revised version of "Exposing Zacchaeus" published in *Christian Century* ("Exposing Zacchaeus" *Christian Century* 123, no. 22 [October 31, 2006]: 27–31).

I am grateful to have received the Lilly Theological Research Grant from the Association of Theological Schools. My gratitude to Stephen Graham, director of Faculty Development and Initiatives in Theological Education, to Fran Pacienza, coordinator of Faculty Programs and Organizational Evaluation, and to members of the committee for making it possible for this project to come to fruition.

How can I talk or write about eschatology and hope without the unfailing love of my family, for, who I am and where I am now starts and ends with my family. Christiane, my wife; my children, Felipe, André, and Carlos Henrique; and grandchildren, Ana and Gabi have graced me with their patience and love when much more of my time they had the right to expect. My sister Regina and her beloved ones, Geraldo and Marina, were a constant source of encouragement. Thank you for opening your home and heart to this sojourner of a brother. To Wilson, Dani, Matheus, Mariane, and Henrique for companionship and time not withheld. All of you and mom, Veny, thanks for the architectural design and the building that with labor of love provided arcades that have been a solace for me in my crossings.

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Joy (Mary Philip), my dear friend, assistant, and editor, thank you for teaching me to believe in the awesome power of fragile

hope. To describe what I have learned I borrow the voice of Emily Dickenson:

> Hope is the thing with feathers
> That perches in the soul,
> And sings the tune—without the words,
> And never stops at all,
> . . .
> I've heard it in the chillest land,
> And on the strangest sea;
> Yet, never, in extremity,
> It asked a crumb of me.

Introduction

On the Edge

Only later I understood that the "signs of times"
need to be complemented with the "signs of places."[1]

—Pedro Casaldáliga

Theology has been lagging behind other fields with regard to the importance of addressing geography and spatial issues. Working in the Ecumenical Pastoral Commission on Land (CPT), after having finished a PhD, I was unprepared to find resources in theological literature. One Sunday, a Capuchin brother and I were conducting a service in a landless peasants camping in the southwest of Brazil, near the city of Cascavel in the west of the state of Paraná, in what was an actual *chora* (a space between spaces, neither in nor out but in both). Some 30 families were living in tents made of black plastic under the burning sun. They have been there already for over three months. The place was in a strip of land of no more than 20 yards in width, next to a highway linking Brazil and Paraguay, flanked on the other side by the fence of a mega-farm. Among the biblical texts for the service was Psalm 24: "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world and those who live in it." One of the landless peasants, who lost their family plot of land due to agrarian policies adopted by the military regime in the 1970s, said aloud and clearly: "If the earth is the Lord's how come that I only see this fence?" Except for studies in church architecture, theology failed me in providing a biblico-theological guidance in framing spatial experiences.

That experience among so many others left me with a dire need to explain salvation and condemnation, basic categories of eschatology, for these peasants and those who worked with them.[2] There was no adequate theoretical framework that enabled me to address their experience of spatial marginality, displacement, and liminality, in theological categories. When such experiences come into theological discourse it is under the auspices of morality and ethics, but not in eschatological categories. My effort in the pages that follow is to frame eschatological thinking in a way that addresses the experience of those who live in and through the *eschata* on a daily basis with regard to the places in which it happens. It further assesses the eschatological theories that perennially defer the eschatological truth to an elusive future, or else a *kairotic* (a qualitative moment in time that defies chronological measurement) and mystical *nunc eternum*, the eternal now.

The frustration with the little help that I could get from modern theological sources gave rise to an inquiry as to the reasons for such deficiency. And I was not really surprised to discover that the deficit of spatial concerns was not an unfortunate neglect, but an intentional and militant bracketing of dimensional reflections from the core of theological scholarship. "The Lost Dimension," is a book title by one of the most militant voices against spatial thinking in theology: Paul Tillich.[3] The problem is not that "a" dimension (in his case of depth) was lost, but what is lost is "dimension" itself.

Eschatological discourse in Western modernity has been sequestered by the dominance of historical thinking. Confined to time, and bound to the tropes that we create from the movement of the Earth around the Sun, this thinking offers longitudinal trajectories by which truth and final verifiability is exclusively time bound. But this is in fact a long-lasting Western narrative that predates modernity. It can be traced back in theology to the early fifth century. Orosius and his mentor Augustine offered a view of history as the church's pilgrimage into the progressive unfolding of time (*procursus*), while paganism was represented as an aimless spatial wandering around in a purposeless endeavor.[4]

This normative conception of time has profited from a largely unchallenged tradition, both in Christianity and also in the secular

West. Paul Tillich went as far as to describe the opposition between time and space as parallel to the opposition between Judeo-Christian monotheism and paganism, respectively.[5] The reason why Tillich's bold thesis has never been really challenged is revealing. In academia, as far as I know, it was never really discussed or challenged because, I surmise, the thesis was in tune with dominant Western rationality, obviating any challenge. An otherwise engaging and controversial theologian as Tillich hit a mute key in Western assumptions about time and eschatology.[6] More than a century earlier, Hegel had already pontificated: "The truth of space is time."[7] For the West, the eschatological question has been a perennial temporal deferment that reached its epic zenith in Wolfhart Pannenberg's equation of revelation and history, on the heels of the pioneering Old Testament biblical work of Gerhard von Rad and his followers.

The end result is that eschatological discourse has been equated with a form of the end of *time*, regardless of how this is interpreted. The impact of the late eighteenth-century Enlightenment that led to the deconstruction of the taken-for-granted historical proofs of Christianity remained within the Western historical paradigm, launching the next century (nineteenth) as the "century of history," as Michel Foucault dubbed it. The fundamental question that the presupposition entailed was: Why did the world not end with the historical and embodied presence of God in Jesus of Nazareth? The responses, needless to say, remained within the same paradigm with an affirmation of the transcendent character of the eschatological event, thus not yet verifiable by historical criteria.

This eschatological thinking gave birth to twentieth-century theology with the publication of Karl Barth's *Römerbrief* (1919). Barth's assertive approach in addressing the eschatological dilemma provided an answer that would endure throughout the decades that followed. If theology was not thoroughly eschatological, it was not Christian theology. The options given were consistent with the paradigm that remained unchallenged. As transcendent modes of eschatology flourished in popular Christianity in the West, more elaborate eschatological discourses were being devised in academic circles.

The first half of the twentieth century rediscovered the *nunc eternum* as solution to the problem. Eschatology was a slumbering

existential moment of decision in time that needed to be awakened (Rudolf Bultmann), or a mystic-like *kairotic* moment of eternal now breaking into *chronos* (chronological time as in clock time) (Paul Tillich). Subtler rendition of the impasse of having empirical time being held together along with its suspension followed. A "realized" (C. H. Dodd) or an "inaugurated" eschatology (Oscar Cullmann), only projected a new phase that emerged at the turn of the second half of the century. It was the time to get back to the historical Jesus on new grounds. Ernst Käsemann's launching of the "new quest" for the historical Jesus, in the early 1950s, marks the moment in which the Barthian staunch stance against the historical entrapment of theology revealed itself to be scarcely more than a vacation on a busy calendar that eventually would have to be resumed. And yet, within the same historically bound paradigm, eschatological thinking still remained oblivious to spatial realities, positions, and contexts, in short, oblivious to a latitudinal mode of thinking.

Recognizing the dilemma of thinking eschatology in chronological terms led many a theologian to cast it in a form of continuous eschathology. Prominent example of such is the work of process theologians, which fall in this category.[8] But it can also be seen in the work of feminist theology,[9] and even a prominent liberation theologian as Juan Luis Segundo.[10]

The current crisis of eschatological thinking came through the backdoor of the historical project of the Western world with its colonial expansion and conquering enterprise. The face of the other and its truth came to the fore by a latitudinal advent. In the tradition of Hegel, the others of the Europeans were typically located either in the historical past (the Asians[11]) or in the future (North Americans[12]). But with the colonial backlash, thinking of the other could no longer be limited to a longitudinal and time-bound perspective; the others are now just "over there." For many communities in the world, the movement of the Earth around the Sun—which registers time and is printed on the face of every analogical watch that we wear on our wrists or in clocks build into square towers—is not the dominant, or at least not the only frame to interpret reality and the experience of ultimacy. The other is definitely some*where* else and not only "some*when*" else. These liminal experiences of the ends

(*eschata*) and spatial boundaries are not only geographical, but they also encompass several liminal experiences concerning social location (e.g., Amílcar Lopes da Costa Cabral and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak), ethnic identities and racial profiles (e.g., Léopold Sédar Senghor and Edward Said), economic classes and castes (e.g., Aimé Césaire and James Massey), psychological terrains (e.g., Franz Fanon and Homi Bhabha), biological and gender limitations (e.g., Georges Canguilhem and Michel Foucault), and so on.

Reflections about spatial issues (land, borders, migration, displacement, marginalization, rationalities, etc.) are topics that bring the eschatological question to the forefront in a different perspective. Voices emerging in postcolonial or even Western critical thought have raised the spatial issue to proportions that theology can no longer afford to turn a deaf ear. These are theological issues that come up every time they implicate an other across a liminal space and experience spatial liminality. And every crossing into the space of another is also the exposure to the Other. Hence the importance of theology, the God-talk, the Other-talk.

The chapters ahead are reflections of crossings as a basic eschatological category in and through which salvation and/or condemnation, big or small, ultimate or penultimate, are experienced and then theologically articulated.

The crossing of a threshold as an eschatological experience entails exposure. Salvation and condemnation are the ends in the spectrum of the eschatological discourse. The implications of the discussion in the chapters ahead should shed light on how to read afresh *theologumena* (recurrent theological notions) that have been long buried under the dust of eschatological thinking oblivious to spatial experiences. What redemption and damnation mean cannot be presupposed or foreknown; it comes with the crossing. The dreadful and the awesome are in the vicinity of each other. Or to use the words William Butler Yeats penned after the failed Easter Rising of 1916 in Ireland that gestated a liberation movement to come:

All changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

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Chapter 1

Re(li)gion: The Struggle between Space and Time

We stood on the edge, we had reached the limit. For how far you could, with the instrument of time, push human nature.[1]

—Peter Høeg

Trial by Space

Eschatological discourse and the practices it elicits and reflects upon have been ensnared by a paradigm dominant in the Christian West since at least the time of Augustine. Such paradigm is determined by the prevalence of time and history to the exclusion of concerns with space and geography. Change, progress, and praxis operate as functions of a linear conception of time. If eschatology is the thinking, teaching, and theorizing about *ta eschata*, the last things, it is assumed that it has to do with some sort of an end of time, as a date to be speculated about in a near or distant future, something that has already taken place in the past, or it is time suspended in an existential now. Any combination of these options abound as well, as for instance in the celebrated formula "already-and-not-yet." But in any case, it is about abstract time, time that can be conceived and discussed apart and independent from the contexts that envelop it.

It seems clear that much of the concern with history in relationship to eschatology is guided by a linear conception of time. And this in turn is used to fence off cyclical conceptions of time's recurrence, marking a clear dividing line between a presumptive Jewish-Christian perspective and a "pagan" viewpoint. As this world had a beginning, so, it is teleologically oriented toward its end. Creation and consummation are symmetrical to each other, as in the apt expression of Hermann Gunkel, *Endzeit gleicht Urzeit,* the end is like the beginning. So time is the marker for the duration of the world into which creation is inscribed. Augustine gave the classical expression to this conviction when he said that creation was made "simultaneously with time."[2] In this sense, time becomes the compass for divine providence ruling from the beginning to the end. The myths of eternal recurrence are problematic, according to this view precisely because, so the criticism goes, it collapses time and eternity and compromises the distinct transcendent majesty of a God that does not exist in time but in eternity. Time belongs to creation and the abandonment of this conviction is what deviates humankind from the straight path to the city of God, where time will be no more.

The brilliance of this conception, however, harbors as many problems as those it solves. The finitude of time and space is set in such radical opposition to eternity that transcendence is sequestered from the world we see and experience. Time is the only compass to guide us to the world to come. Space is at best a diversion, and at worst the very cause of our errings. Creation and consummation are absolute limits set by the span of time.

One of the merits of the criticism of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo,* creation out of nothing, issued by an array of theologians and biblical scholars, notable being those influenced by process theology, yet matched for different reasons by other theological movements,[3] is that it brought these problems with the "Augustinian synthesis" to attention. Augustine brought together faith and reason—thus departing from Tertullian's unreconcilable opposition between Athens and Jerusalem—expressed by his maxim: "believe, in order that thou mayest understand" (*crede, ut intelligas*).[4] However, the distinction between taking doctrine of creation out of nothing as implying a

cosmogony, on the one hand, and understanding it in a doxological context, on the other, will be discussed in detail later on. While in the biblical context the few expressions that lend support to it are clearly doxological in character, the point is well taken that as a cosmogony it is a problematic doctrine, to say the least. What the criticism indirectly does is to subvert the dominant view of linear time, providing a view of transcendence as an excess in the very matrix of creation itself, allowing for mystery to be not only external to the immanence of the world, but imbedded in creation itself.[5]

It is in this context that theology came to a new realization of the role of space in theological discourse and practice. A greater sensibility for the theological import of spatial realities and the awareness of boundaries that suggest vicinity to transcendence came in the awake of what Michel Foucault earlier identified as the "epoch of space." While *chronos* and *kairos* regimented, until recently, theological arguments, we are experiencing a yet tame shift in theological thinking and have entered an epoch in which topos and *chora* are making their theological debut. This shift, I surmise, has implications yet to be pondered for theology in general, and eschatology in particular.

Definitions, Hegel often remarked, can never be given at the beginning. But for the sake of an initial attempt to avoid gross misunderstanding, I shall be using "space" in the sense of the awareness of objective and more or less as measurable confinements of geographical, social, psychic, and epistemological domains. Time, however, will be used as a duration of a trajectory over and through spaces and measured by changes and transitions that in space take place. The lack of initial precision in the use of these notions is itself part of the problem that concerns this study.

Jean Paul Sartre once posited a question well worth considering: Why don't we examine the passive action that spatial materiality exerts over us? To my knowledge he never answered his own question. But it seems to be a question that others have pondered with considerable zeal and insightfulness. For example, in his impressive accomplishment, *The Production of Space*, French philosopher Henri Lefebvre noted that "[it] is impossible, in fact, to avoid the conclusion that space is assuming an increasingly important role in supposedly 'modern' societies, and that if this role is not already preponderant

it very soon will be."[6] And he goes further referring to a trial that he deems to be unavoidable as a fate or a divine judgment.

> Points and systems of reference inherited from the past are in dissolution. Values, whether or not they have been organized into more or less coherent "systems," crumble and clash…[N]othing and no one can avoid *trial by space*—an ordeal which is the modern world's answer to the judgment of God or the classical conception of fate…Trial by space invariably reaches a dramatic moment, that moment when whatever is being tried—philosophy or religion, ideology or established knowledge, capitalism or socialism, state or community—is put radically into question…[T]here is no escaping a fate that weighs equally on religion and churches, on philosophy with its great "systems."[7]

The events of the last few decades ago redefining geopolitics and the staggering increase with the worldwide problem of immigration—which is arguably the most significant social problem of the last one hundred years—bear evidence to such a trial. And it also sheds new light on the question of land tenure and territorial rights in the Southern Hemisphere. The old Kantian "dogma" of an "original disposition" [*ursprüngliche Anlage*] toward universalization,[8] which was recently rephrased in the modern myth of the global village, withered in face of fragmentation and kin or tribal mentality in late modernity. Jean-François Lyotard's question is meant to be a rhetorical one in diagnosing the problem: "Can we continue to organize the events accumulated around us in respect to the human and nonhuman world with the help of the idea of a universal history of humanity?"[9]

Concerns have shifted from the idea of a unified and universal history (which, in fact, has been a European idea) to tribalism, to the recognition of disparate events that will not endure alignment in a single historical vector. Postcolonial consciousness has been militant in debunking the received view of universal history as centered and organized by European modernity in which the rest of the world is at most grafted into.[10] Historical events take place; they are not only located, but their significance is intimately linked to the space and place in which they occur. We have become terminally suspicious of metanarratives that describe the universal activity of a providence guiding history to a single end, or of a numinous self, an absolute

spirit, or the proletariat haven. Again in the words of Lefebvre: "The hypothesis of an ultimate and preordained meaning of historical becoming collapses."[11]

The questions being asked are whether the space in which our existence flourishes—as much as it sets it on trial—can still be regarded as a neutral medium for the sustenance and reproduction of human existence, as well as for the rest of creatures that are part and parcel of the very same spaces. Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative, which was restricted to the relation among human subjects, is inadequate to address this experience of trial by space. Once again, the words of Lefebvre are pertinent.

> Space is becoming the principal stake of goal-directed actions and struggles. It has of course always been the reservoir of resources, and the medium in which strategies are applied, but it has now become something more than the theater, the disinterested stage or setting, of action…[I]ts role is less and less neutral, more and more active, both as instruments and as goal, as means and as end. Confining it to so narrow a category as that of a "medium" is consequently woefully inadequate.[12]

This new ethos not only refers to raising ecological sensibilities, but is also equally enmeshed in and affects political life. Be it a territorial, national, or tribal dispute in Africa, Europe, Asia, Oceania, or America, or the depletion of an environment due to over exploitation, extinction of species, or border and migration disputes, the trial is ongoing and the jury is still out. The territory of a people, the land in which we stand, the culture we belong to, the house we inhabit, the streets we cross, the fences we build, the network of people we are bound to in natural or virtual space, the canons of knowledge we accept as legitimate to delimit claims to legitimacy and truth, are increasingly linked to our self-understanding—or lack thereof—as well as awakening the awareness of its limits. Indeed the crisis of the subject (and for some its demise) is a cipher that signals that the I-Thou relation has been interrupted by the exceeding presence of an "it" that has redefined what we regarded as a manageable homeostasis. Space has assumed subjective characteristics and attributes that traditionally have been restricted to human actors. We are better

equipped than any previous generation in Western history to under-
stand the meaning of *Sheol* as described in the book of Job: "As the
cloud fades and vanishes, so those who go down to Sheol do not
come up; they return no more to their houses, *nor do their places
know them anymore*." (7:9f.)

Set up in such a backdrop, the trial by space represents a dramatic
turn in events, since it is causing the demise of the belief in the idea
of progress, which Robert Nisbet called the single "dominant idea"
of the Western world.[13] With this, argues Nisbet, the very charac-
teristics that made the West are rapidly disappearing: "Within an
astonishing short time, what had required more than two thousand
years to create as condition as belief has come to an end."[14] It is
no longer taken for granted that progress, and its derivatives, is a
positive phenomenon. This is not about a vitriolic thesis on the end
of history, which again is just another universal idea in fashion. It
is about an understanding of history that implies fragmentation of
our own historical consciousness embedded in geographical circum-
stances, and otherwise space-related experiences.

And yet precious little theological systematization has been done
to relate this inventory of spatial problems to the insinuating com-
mentary of Lefebvre comparing this "trial" to the biblical and creedal
teachings about God's judgment. We shall begin by discussing one
of the most elemental levels of spatial experience, the experience of
"absolute space," which Lefebvre defines as "fragments of nature
located at sites which were chosen for their intrinsic qualities,"
and then move into socially produced space, that is, in Lefebvrean
language, "abstract space."[15]

The God of History

The elevation of space to a prominent position in intellectual endeav-
ors and, with it, the problems it evokes in this late modern age cer-
tainly has not been totally ignored in theological discourse. There
have been, in recent times, ethical pronouncements and prophetic
denunciations of the plundering of indigenous territories, ethnic

genocides, border disputes, the dilemma of landless peasants, the plea of immigrants, and so forth. However, the rationale for such ethical pronouncements is normally grounded in the emancipatory right of the human community or of the environment, instead of warranting them in a different view of creation and consummation.

An illustration from a document, *Land is Life*, issued as a result of consultation held in Baguio City, Philippines, may provide an illustrative point, which is not unusual for statements produced outside of the Western hegemonic axis. It is in itself a plea for a theological reflection on the problem of land and its resources. The document states:

> Religion is invariably infused with the elements of life on the land, in the form of planting time and harvest festivals, Sabbath observances, sacramental rites of water and grain and the fruit of the land. Land has the greatest moral and spiritual significance, and constitutes a focus for the way of life.[16]

The statement is revealing in the sense that while it attributes to land "the greatest moral and spiritual significance," it does not stop there; it links it precisely to the cycles of life and fertility. In doing so it distances itself from the Christian traditional attitude toward space; it breaks away from the linear view of historical development while affirming the value of vital space. Two observations on this statement are worth considering.

First, such statement can be corroborated by religious experiences in general.[17] The recognition of the "spiritual significance" of land goes beyond its understanding as means of production to sustain the human life. If the criterion for establishing justice in issues of land tenure is reduced to the one of production, the spatial significance of it as a value on its own and not just as a means, is ignored or neglected. Among peasant communities, even in modern times, land is not only a factor of production, but also a sentient space that is endowed with a life of its own. This includes all in the range from sacred spaces, spiritual presence of ancestors to graveyards, chapels, and community halls in highly modern societies. In this sentient space, production is coextensive with the reproduction of life. Even if the space of production and reproduction have been severed since the

industrial revolution in Europe, a deep-rooted linkage between the two still survives not only for indigenous peoples, but also for the late modern Western person's regard for the home as a "sacred" space even as most of the productive activity has been alienated.

Production is certainly not excluded. It is a basic feature of land tenure and of territorial claims. However, land, territory, or nation has an excess of significance that cannot be reduced to production. This includes a sense of rootedness and belonging circumscribed by the experience of a particular space and the cycles of fertility. Such significance is not necessarily tied to a geographically fixed site or a demarcated territory and can be observed among migratory groups and nomad tribes. Such space can be a moving one, as for Bedouins, for example, without essentially meaning displacement. The maintenance of the spiritual significance of the geographical experience of a group is precisely what warrants rootedness, whether fixed or mobile. What distinguishes nomadic life from displacement is precisely that in the latter there is a severance between the space of production that becomes mobile and transferable, and the one of life's reproduction, including nonhuman life: the space of community ties, of love, and the celebration of feasts and fertility rituals.[18] *In other words, religion is the excess present in region: re(li)gion.*

The theological significance of the question of land and territory as "absolute spaces" can be framed precisely in the juncture between the place that provides for the sustenance and reproduction of life, and the sentient space in which the spiritual dimension of existence, the excess we call the sacred, the space of the feast, can flourish. The distinction between these two dimensions of spatial experience can be exemplified by the story narrated in Exodus. The land of slavery was also where the fleshpots were plenty (Exodus 16:3). There was provision for sustenance but not for commemoration. In other words, sustenance was provided, but the space was one in which celebration of life, that which exceeds production, was not possible. The yearning for freedom called for a move to the boundless space of a sterile desert where a feast to God could be held (Exodus 5:3). This is the leitmotif in the mythical search for a land of milk and honey (Exodus 3:8). The tragedy of slavery lies not only in physical misery, but also in the divorce between the space of feast, fertility and reproduction, and the one of production.

The second point to be discussed about life, space, and their ends refers to the connection between the moral and spiritual significance of land and its justification within the Judeo-Christian tradition. Since, at least from the time of Elijah's struggle with the priests of Baal, such justification has faced major obstacles. Baal has been a god associated with agriculture, fertility, and the land with its cycles of production. Over against Baal, the profile of Yahweh was largely defined by what we would call time and history, events in a future-oriented move, beyond and above the confines of agrarian deities. The criticism of cultic places and even the prophetic voices denouncing the Temple militates in favor of a "placeless" god, and of a faith sustained and strengthened in displacing the experience of the sacred, even of the "sacred" land of Israel, or the holy city of Jerusalem. Yet the land and the city still remained as a reference for defining the religious milieu of Judaism. But this very remnant of placement faded with the emergence of Christianity, and its universalizing of faith. This is often seen as the result of the Pauline spiritual interpretation of the descendants of Abraham, or even the explicit gospel affirmation about the displacement of epiphany: "Then if anyone says to you. 'Look! Here is the Messiah!' or 'There he is!'—do not believe it...So if they say to you, 'Look! He is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look! He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as the lightening comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man." (Matthew 24:23–27)[19] Tillich, even while calling for the unity of synagogue and church, passes this judgment:

> Christianity has separated from Judaism because in the fulfillment of time Judaism has made a decision for space...the Church which gathers from all nations, is the end of all religious nationalism and tribalism...up to the end of history, as Paul, the first Christian interpreter of the historical fate of Judaism, seems to assume in Romans 9–11.[20]

Indeed, the case is that the universalization of Judaism through the Christian faith further divorced the faith in the Lord of History from the spatial expressions of the Holy. This divorce is radically affirmed, for example, in the *Evangelical Catechism for Adults*, published by the United Lutheran churches of Germany, which offers

the following definition of God's revelation: "God acts in history and through it makes Godself known to humans. The medium of God's revelation is primarily history and not nature."[21] Such a statement echoes much of what has been said in Protestant theology for the last couple of centuries.

Paul Tillich, certainly one of the great theologians of the past century and highly sensitive to cultural issues and values, went so far as to claim that Christianity brought about the triumph of time over space. He identified paganism with the "elevation of a special space to ultimate value and dignity."[22] In an unusually admonitory tone, he calls for "martyrdom" for the sake of "the eternal victory in the struggle between time and space [which] will become visible once more as the victory of time and the one God who is the Lord of history."[23] This sermonic pitch from a philosophical theologian is even understandable for someone who had to leave his home country under the Nazi politics of *Blut und Boden*, "blood and soil," but the oppositional language that he uses averts the reader from realizing that an abuse does not prevent the use.

In our current cultural contexts, if evaluations such as Tillich's were indeed faithful to the Christian message, a clearer idea of the impasse facing theological thinking when attempting to reflect on the emergence of spatial concerns, of the trial by space, could be deduced. Such difficulty in reflecting theologically on spatial realities is in fact reflected in the Lutheran World Federation document *Land is Life* that we have examined above. What it says is not sufficient to theologically contemplate the spatial concerns that *displaced* people face, the *eschata*, or the ends they inhabit. But, simultaneously, by claiming that land has a spiritual significance, it went beyond what has been justifiable in the theological tradition of the West.

The whole question concerning a possible spatial sensibility on the part of Christian theology depends on whether the Tillichian struggle between time and space is indeed a fundamental ontological distinction by which the Christian faith stands or falls. From what we have seen so far, there is no question that spatial concerns are at least relativized in the biblical narrative, particularly in the New Testament. But the question is whether this relativization implies an

absolutizing of the temporal vector, and an ontological *displacement* of God into a transcendent dimension that only time can point to. The argument that will be pursued claims that more than biblically grounded, such opposition between time and space, allowing for time to be raised to a quasi-absolute status, is the outcome of a particularly Western view of history.

The Illusory Space

In his perceptive analysis of modernity, Anthony Giddens describes the separation of time from space as the main feature of the present epoch.[24] The result is that space is perceived as a homogeneous infrastructure over which—instead of in and through which—events take *place*. This homogenizing of space turns it into a means of exchange without an intrinsic value of its own. A given space—a farm, an office, or a restaurant table—is not only exchangeable, but its value also will be contingent upon the way in which remote social influences determine its utility: accessibility, communication, and so forth. Consequently, this homogeneity means theological neutrality. Over this neutral realm soteriological events inscribe themselves as salvation history, as if it were over a tabula rasa. Even contextual theologies are not exempt from doing the same insofar as context is defined by interhuman relations alone, that is, by *praxis*. This is, for example, the case with Tillich's notion of "situation."[25] The severance of time and space amounts to the split between fact and value. According to Foucault such split fostered a view of history detached from spatial circumstances.

> For all those who confuse history with the old schemata of evolution, living continuity, organic development, the progress of consciousness or the project of existence, the use of spatial terms seems to have the air of anti-history. If one started to talk in terms of space that meant one was hostile to time.[26]

Such a devaluation of space resulted in what Lonnie Kliever suggested to be an insinuating form of Gnosticism.

> Spatial configurations—*terrene, polis, domicile, corpus*—are seen as extrinsic to being and value…More precisely, our "despatialization" stems from certain refinements of spirit/matter dualism within modern science, philosophy and theology.[27]

If, as Giddens maintains, it is correct that this neutral concept of the homogenous space, over which history inscribes value is a modern predicament, in fact the origin of the fact/value split is to be found far behind modernity. As mentioned above, such split can be traced back to the first accomplished effort of endowing theology with a theory of history. I am referring to Augustine ("that barbarian of genius" as Lefebvre called him[28]) and particularly to his *City of God*, which Karl Löwith described as "the pattern for any view of history that might be called Christian."[29]

Augustine's work hides behind itself the crisis of the Roman Empire whose capital, Rome, was plundered and sacked by Alaric in 410, two years before this African completed his most celebrated work, written explicitly in response to Rome's tragedy. In the first four books of *The City of God*, Augustine discusses and refutes the pagans' claim that the calamities associated with the sack of Rome should be attributed to the Christian religion and the prohibition of the cult of other gods. The empire that had triumphed a hundred years earlier under the famous banner "*Xi Roh* [Christ]: *in hoc signo vinces*," faced the challenge of redefining itself theologically so as not to compromise the official faith by political and military misfortune. Augustine's solution was to dissociate faith from social and political reality, even if not denying the divine origination of creation. He was not a Marcionite and, by then, much less a Manichean; his "dualism" was not cosmic, but axiological. Evil is not inherent in nature but in the supreme gift of freedom, which make human beings choose vice and pride and leads astray into nothingness. The locus of the eschatological drama is placed on the individual's experience of grace and condemnation. This cosmos remains entangled in the vicious cycle of hopelessness, out of which the individual may walk, by the gift of grace endowed to the church, into the *history* of God's providence. Nature as God's creation remains as the neutral infrastructure beneath the drama of salvation, but as an infrastructure

that becomes a wandering space with no goal or value to guide the sojourner. Caught in such aimless pilgrimage sinful humans are deprived of the blessed move forward in a *procursus* toward the splendorous city of bliss.

Arguably, in the Western theological tradition the commanding influence of Augustine's heritage indelibly inscribed the cleft between fact and value (remarkable exception is to be granted to the mystical tradition of the likes of a Meister Eckhart, a Hildegard of Bingen, or a Julian of Norwich). With the Renaissance, and particularly after Galileo and Descartes, nature will not only be a homogeneous infrastructural base over which salvation history inscribes meaning, but will also be regarded as a mechanism subject to the human intervention and existing in function of the mind. To know it is to have power over it, in the celebrated formula of Francis Bacon.[30] But still the foundations of this development were laid a millennium earlier thriving "on the Augustinian dichotomy between time and space (or between subject and object), with its devaluation of the latter."[31]

This development that has its inception in the fifth century of our era did not result in the sheer disappearance of the spatial dimension from Western inquiry. Quite on the contrary, the Renaissance gave birth to the great utopias of Tommaso Campanella, Thomas More and others inspired in the European conquests overseas. However, as Agnes Heller aptly pointed out, the Renaissance utopias were not images of the future. More's island of Utopia, and Campanella's *City of the Sun*, exist in the *present*, although *somewhere else*; thus they are remote *in space* rather than *in time*.[32] But such fantasies that fed the imagination removed the concern with space to somewhere else. Space indeed became illusory. What modernity then finally accomplished is a recombination of time and space in which space is no longer even linked to place. The words of Anthony Giddens, reading into utopian imagination the omens announcing the disappearance of real spaces, aptly states:

> The severance of time from space does not mean that these henceforth become mutually alien aspects of human social organization. On the contrary: it provides the very basis for the recombination in ways that coordinate social activities without necessary reference to particularities of place.[33]

This capacity to imagine space is an uncanny feature of modern societies, even as we have grown accustomed to it. Many non-Western peoples could never conceive of an imaginary place apart from real space as Edward Hall has documented.[34] In the Christian context how much has the very image of the kingdom of God succumbed to the fantasy of an imaginary place. The modern person does not experience space but its *representation*. This can be well illustrated with the development of cartography over the last five hundred years. Maps have lost features of itineraries they previously had in which points of passage and duration of a given trajectory to be followed were presented. Modern maps are celebration of homogeneous space. Parallel to this development, we also have the advancement or the evolution of the clocks for measuring time. Progressively this measurement becomes increasingly dissociated from movement in space through which the rotation of the Earth was represented by the position of the Sun in relationship to it, most obviously illustrated by sundials and sun clocks (earlier water clocks and sand clocks even more elementally associated time and space). We still have semblances of this representation in the face of analogical watches. The final step in this process of dissociation came about with the invention of the digital clocks and watches commanded by quartz pulses and displayed in bare numbers. This has become such an artificial devise that it can command the rhythm of the day regardless of the position of the Sun, as it happens when overnight we change to day saving time, or the reverse, to save energy. Time itself has become equally artificial.

The following questions might be proposed to offer the basic option of issues to be further examined: Is the severance between nature/space/fact, on one hand, and history/time/meaning, on the other, proper to the core of the Christian story? Or else, could this severance be conceived as a hermeneutic device that, even if prevalent in Western Christianity, has its own relative genealogy and must not be taken as ultimately normative for the reconstruction of Christian theology? If the former would receive an affirmative answer, we should put to rest all the efforts of searching for approaches to soteriology and eschatology that would take the trial of space into consideration; a somber thesis that can be proven wrong. But if the

latter is the case, how are we to proceed to present the Christian story so as not to render God's epiphany placeless?

The Tangential Space

Let me start with where this conceptual problem arises. In Book XI.4 of the *City of God*, Augustine starts by saying: "Of all the visible things, the world is the greatest; of all invisible, the greatest is God. But that the world is we see; that God is we believe."[35] Here there is an unbridgeable gap between seeing and believing. Obviously, Augustine's problem is then to explain what the relationship is between God and the world, since believing has nothing to do with the senses. His solution is ingeneous. God has informed us of this relationship through the prophet who wrote: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." But how did the prophet receive this information if he was not there? His answer is that "the wisdom of God . . . insinuates itself into holy souls, . . . and noiselessly informs them of His works."[36]

For someone whose main task was to sustain the belief that God created the world, the solution for linking the seeing to the believing is surprisingly a tenuous one. It needs to rely on the external sign of the scripture, that is, the visible sign, the picture thinking, or the representation of a story to grant a content to faith. But what he says is that this testimony is infused "noiselessly" by the divine wisdom or Spirit. It had to be noiseless, because for Augustine sound and hearing suppose the motion of matter in space. "Not by these, then, does God speak, but by the truth itself, if anyone is prepared to hear with the mind rather than with the body."[37] With this then, Augustine opens up the door for an interpretation of God's creation that separates the work of the Spirit from the visible work of creation. The noiseless Spirit informs the mind about the strange work of the Creator who sets up the world in one day at the beginning.[38]

To remove the Spirit from creation and to refer it to the mind or soul is a peculiar artifice of Augustine who based himself in the Septuagint distinction between *pnoē* and *pneuma* in the rendering of

the Hebrew *ruach*. When the word *pnoē* is used as a translation for *ruach,* it is "a word more frequently used of the creature than of the Creator," while *pneuma* is used exclusively to designate the "Creator Spirit."[39] This "eisegetical" interpretation led to a long itinerary in the Western church in interpreting the Spirit soteriologically and disconnected from creation theology.[40] Along with this emerges also a spiritual understanding of the scripture that is removed from creation itself and is brought into the conceptual level of the mind, for it was noiselessly dictated. There, and only there, it participates in and holds the record of a salvation history detached from the rest of creation. It becomes a "mind thing," a notion or concept. This itinerary will find its culmination in Hegel's succinct formula: "Time is the concept itself."[41]

The severance of time and space leads directly to the separation of salvation history, even so in its secular interpretations, with its abstract notion of space and of time, from the localized time-space experiences.

It has been this paradigm that has imposed itself in the interpretation of scripture. This was the suspicion that Eritrean theologian Yacob Tesfai raised against the tradition of scriptural interpretation, particularly of the Old Testament, since Gerhard von Rad's reading of it as a "historical" book par excellence. Tesfai claims that for cultures and peoples whose experience with their God is always immersed in a given situated context, the Western theological concepts framed along the lines of an uprooted understanding of history cannot be corroborated. And the reason for this, he says, is because time and space always form a unity as "a pocket experience."[42]

All this still does not do away with the perceived placelessness of God in the biblical narrative. There is indeed a prophetic insistence against any spatial imprisonment of God. Tillich, supported by sound reason, seems right in pointing out that "every spatial god is imperialistic by its very character of being [such] god."[43] However, it is also evident that the experience of the sacred filled privileged places. For example, space is not homogeneous for people in slavery. The desert was a qualitatively different place, a heterotopia, where worship could be held (Exodus 5:1). And so was Mount Horeb, the Tent of Covenant, the Temple, Naboth's vineyard ("the LORD

forbid that I should give you my ancestral inheritance" 1 Kings 21:3), Elijah's cave, Bethlehem, the Calvary in the outskirts of Jerusalem, the road to Jericho, to Emmaus, to Damascus, and so forth. These spaces or places, be they tents, temples, caves, graves, barns, or roads, are inscribed with religious experiences that have become referential for the faith of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

What distinguishes these places and the referential experiences they envelop is not location as such but how relations of power are intertwined with them. It is not that space has disappeared from theoretical considerations concerning everyday life but the fact that it has been masked so that the power relations encompassed in spatial realities might be hidden. Foucault described how this happened:

> If one started to talk about space that meant one was hostile to time. It meant, as the fools say, that one "denied history"...They did not understand that to trace the forms of organization of domains meant the throwing into relief of processes—historical ones, needless to say—of power.[44]

For Foucault, the history of spaces is the history of powers. Geography, he noted (echoing Tillich), emerged historically with imperialism. But to reflect on it as a form of knowledge is the condition of possibility for exercising its criticism. "Once knowledge can be analyzed in terms of region, domain, implantation, displacement, transposition one is able to capture the process by which knowledge functions as a form of power and disseminates the effects of power."[45] So, contrary to Tillich, it is precisely in the neglect of spatial concerns in the fields of critical inquiry, and not due to its emergence, that power and the demonic manifest themselves.

The demonic is not a quality of locale as such, but of the way in which power organizes spatial relations, and is hidden in historicist masks (progress, providence, evolution, emancipation, development, etc.). It is this recognition that prompted the distinction between centripetal and centrifugal spaces. The former is the function of space that diffuses itself and reaches the edges of its field of power and control, while the latter better describes the function of power

to establish a center of control drawing to its domain what was elusively at its margins. Yet the two are apt descriptions for twin forms in which power is exercised. Centripetal forces describe the *strategies* that undergird imperialism, as Tillich noted, but centrifugal *strategies* are just the other side of a similar phenomenon; it describes colonialism. And the same categories can be used to understand *tactics* of resistance. There is a centripetal force in setting one's face to go to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51), as there is centrifugal one in bringing the good news of liberation and healing to the ends of world (Acts 13:47).

This distinction between the two uses of power and resistance (which will be dealt at length later) were described thus using a difference that Michel de Certeau aptly makes between "strategy" and "tactics."

> I call *strategy* the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be delimited as its *own* and serve as the base from which relations with an *exteriority* composed of targets or threats (customers or competitors, enemies, the country surrounding the city, objectives and objects of research, etc.) can be managed.[46]

Strategies are procedures to encroach into a border to subdue the other to the hegemonic domain and thus homogenize the different. The concept of hegemony as it was defined by Antonio Gramsci is closely linked to the one of homogeneity as defined by Lefebvre, Giddens, et al. Hegemony, with its two operational functions—cleaving to a domain (*dominio*), and holding sway of the masses to the strategies of the domain (*direzione*)—is to homogeneity what dye is to the environment it colors.[47]

Both colonialism and imperialism are regimented by strategies in which the other is co-opted or excluded even to the point of annihilation. In contradistinction, "a *tactic* is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus...The space of a tactic is the space of the other...In short, a tactic is an art of the weak."[48] Tactical procedures suffer but rely as well on the invisibility that the margins foster and also allow. It relies on dissimulation, mimicry,

and wit that strategists cannot use because of the visibility power creates. "Tactic is determined by the *absence of power* just as a strategy is organized by the postulation of power."[49]

Certeau, alerting to the phenomenon of the separation of time and space in this context, concludes with this remarkable observation:

> Strategies pin their hopes on the resistance that the *establishment of a place* offers to the erosion of time; tactics on a clever *utilization of time*, of the opportunities it presents and also of the play that it introduces into the foundations of power…it nevertheless remains the case that the two ways of acting can be distinguished according to whether they bet on place or on time.[50]

It would be a gross misreading of de Certeau to take his comment in either an axiological fashion to lend support to Foucault's critics (who favor history over geography), or ideologically (suggesting that strategy promotes space, and tactics, time). His reading of the problem is that the defense of space by strategies is precisely to protect it from critical examination and deconstruction of its protected domain. As for tactics, betting on time is the only possible maneuver when space is wanting, and dialectically for the sake of eventually attaining some space.

The relationship between these two forms of action signal a difference in the management of time and also of space. However, this difference is not one between interiority and exteriority, where symmetry prevails. It is not the difference between, say, apples and oranges where the symmetry is still defined by the notion of fruit; or between the apple and the plate that holds it, where symmetry is still defined by belonging and exteriority, the exteriority a subject sees between objects. Even if analogies are limited, the asymmetric difference that defies conceptualization is closer to (though not exactly the same) the difference between the apple and the worm that eats it from inside.[51]

To account for this phenomenon that eludes precise definition, because it is always something else than a given regime (social, political, economic, or epistemic) is able to control conceptually, different

spatial metaphors and notions have been employed. In other words, there is always something ineffable, of an apophatic quality characterizing such space. It is always the difference that breaks through a given regimented space. Lefebvre called it, in contrast to "abstract space"—the space that creates homogeneity and suppresses difference—, "differential space."[52]

While Lefebvre's notion is helpful, his concern is to distinguish the homogeneity of abstract space, both socially produced and self-enclosed, from emerging differences. However, to frame this problem in the relationship between space and eschatology, as it pertains to space and its limits, another notion, that of *tangential* space, will provide some venues to pursue the same issue, without pretending conceptual closure. A tangential space is the one whose limit intersects the line that demarcates the limits of the centered space, which defines the hegemonic location of an entity. However, the limits of such space are hidden. They are hidden because the superimposed illusory space warrants its homogeneity. Only the tangential space reveals the confines of a given hegemonic space, its limits, and thus also the mechanisms through which domination are exercised. In other words, tangential spaces are *apocalyptic*.

Tangential spaces are the end of the freedom of power and the beginning of the power of freedom. To use biblical images, it is the wilderness for the slaves in Egypt. It is the Golgotha in the limits of Jerusalem. Other examples for tangential spaces include the road to Damascus, to Emmaus, and to Jericho. It is the last place (*eschaton*!) one has to seek in going to a banquet. Tangential spaces, to repeat it, are those that *touch* the circles of power at the point that intersects with its stability opening up unexpected otherness. The revelation of otherness becomes an epiphany, rendering a religious significance of this experience that transcends the sameness of a given space by opening to otherness, destabilizing it. These tangential spaces, to use an expression of Foucault, become heterotopias, spaces insinuating themselves as difference that lies at hidden margins. The epiphanic potential of a place lies in its vulnerability, the awareness of the fragility of its own protected limits. This tangent signals the *eschaton*.

Chapter 2

Space, History, and the Kingdom

Places are fragmentary and inward-turning histories,
pasts that others are not allowed to read,
accumulated times that can be unfolded but like stories held in reserve,
remaining in an enigmatic state,
symbolizations encysted in the pain or pleasure of the body.
"I feel good here": the well-being under-expressed in the language it
appears in like a fleeting glimmer is a spatial practice.[1]

—Michel de Certeau

Gerhard von Rad, arguably the most influential Old Testament scholar of the last century, set the tone and gave the key for the reading of the Hebrew scriptures.[2] In his authoritative *Old Testament Theology*, he sets in stark contrast to the Jahwist faith, as a strict historical faith, the religious faiths grounded in the sacred experience of gods connected to the land and "saturated with creation myths."[3] The Old Testament "story is much more interested in the guidance of the heart than in the outward events."[4] "These events had all something basically episodic and isolated in them: in their character as miracles they stood out more or less unrelated to their contexts." Among the many themes that can be singled out in the Old Testament there is one only that "unites them all":

> In this respect the theological radius of what Israel said about God is conspicuously restricted compared with theologies of other

nations—instead, the Old Testament writings confine themselves to representing Jahweh's relationship to Israel and the world in one aspect only, namely as a continuing divine activity in history. This implies that in principle Israel's faith is grounded in a theology of history.[5]

Creation faith was incorporated theologically into the faith of Israel only after the seventh and sixth centuries BCE. This was only made after theological developments made possible "a connection between Creation and the saving history."[6] Creation itself is framed in soteriological terms. This late arrival of creation faith is due to a long and arduous process to reconcile creation faith with Israel's belief "about the saving acts done by Jahweh in history."[7] And he continues, "Jahwism in ancient Israel regarded itself exclusively as a religion of salvation."[8] The biblical narratives of the Old Testament "move in a completely demythologized and secular world. Unquestionably, we have here to do with the traces of an Enlightenment on a broad basis, and emancipation of the spirit and a stepping out from antiquated ideas."[9] Everywhere "the reader is made aware that, in order to direct history, Jahweh is using them, their hearts and their resolutions."[10] And in a bold Augustinian move von Rad even lumps together creation and the source of the human predicament: "Presumptuous as it may sound, Creation is part of the etiology of Israel."[11] Creation theology came into the formation of the veterotestamental theology to explain as to what salvation history is and from what is this salvation. *Cum grano salis*, the response implies that it is a salvation from creation itself. There is a smack of Gnosticism curiously read into the text of the Old Testament.

von Rad's use of the word "Enlightenment" to describe the maturation of the faith of ancient Israel and its theological rendition along with the theological engagement in a radical "process of secularization"[12] is revealing. The use of the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century CE as a lens—and blinder—to read a Semitic theology of more than two millennia earlier is quite evident. The postulation that secularization accompanies the triumph of the god of history remains, by and large, one of the unexamined assumptions of Western modernity.[13]

As the saying goes, times change, but more important is that places change as well, at least the perception of things. As I pointed

out earlier, Yacob Tesfai, the Eritrean theologian, was one of the first to call attention to the Western proclivity in reading a modern understanding of history into the Old Testament material. As to the concept of history, Tesfai observed that Old Testament scholars "have overused the term and its importance in the life and faith of Ancient Israel, for various, mainly apologetic, reasons. Such attempts may have the effect of pulling Ancient Israel out of its Near Eastern background and making it part and parcel of the twentieth century." And we might add: European at that. His study of several "texts from the various books of the Old Testament show that in the first place, times are differentiated by the nature of the experience to which they point . . . Time thus refer to the pockets of human experience" clustered in circumstances that *take place*.[14] This "taking place" surface in different ways in both the circumstances conditioning a given environment, with its limits in time and space, and in different narrative genres by which they are rendered.[15]

With the postulation of a unified and commanding view of history, eschatology becomes also a time-bound event of a universal scope. Erhard Gerstenberger, in his criticism of some nationalistic strands in Old Testament texts, and particularly of their exegetical renditions, observed that "the universal history of humankind easily becomes the history of the election and salvation of Israel."[16] And he continues: "This also led to the legend of a unilinear Hebrew thought, always directed toward the future."[17] In other words, it is a given universal and univocal conception of time when imposed upon the reading of scripture that produces an eschatological or even apocalyptic vision that detracts from the experiences pocketed in circumstances in which transcendence is that which dwells at their limits.

These experiences, though diverse, share one element: the exposure to liminal circumstances. And these can be very geographical as the crossing of the gates of Eden, the passage through the Red Sea, the siege of Jericho; or it can be a very personal experience as Jacob wrestling by the Jabbok River, Job's calamity and illness, or Abraham crossing the boundary of the promise to have a lineage in sacrificing Isaac. Certainly time bound are these experiences as well, as in the Yom YHWH, "the day of he Lord," which can be the day of remembrance of a crossing, the prophetic announcement of redemption, or the dénouement of impending judgment.

Trespassing and Condemnation

In the Old Testament these experiences of liminality are the breeding source of eschatological and later apocalyptic expressions of hope as well as unfathomable despair. They mark crossings onto the unknown that can only be represented in fantastic and mythological imagery, if at all. Myths are born out of the ineffable.

One of the main motifs, often overlooked in framing eschatological conceptions, is the experience of sin and pollution and how it is constructed mythically. In the early Jewish tradition the source of sin and evil was routinely referred to the appearance of the Nephilim born of the intercourse between the sons of God and the daughters of humans.[18] Even in Christianity, before Augustine crowned Genesis 3 as the etiological account of the human condition, we still find references to this origination of the human predicament, as exemplified in Pseudo-Clementine Literature:

> In the eight generation, righteous men, who had lived the life of angels, being allured by the beauty of women, fell into promiscuous and illicit connections with these; and hence forth acting in all things without discretion, and disorderly, they changed the state of human affairs and the divinely prescribed order of life, so that either by persuasion or force they compelled all men to sin against God their Creator.[19]

This infringement of domains and its limits, the divine and the human, brings about condemnation. Such is an eschatological experience in its most radical form when transcendence, the total otherness and externality, breaks into immanence, interiority and intimacy. Early Christian commentators making this point insist that the expression "daughters of humans," in Genesis 6:4, "manifestly purports *virgins.*"[20] This brings about a complete change in the "order of life." because the domains that separate the divine and the human were transgressed.

If this mythological account about margins of domains being crossed accounts for evil and condemnation, its eschatological structure serves as a template for precisely the reverse experience; salvation

and redemption ensues from the same matrix. The other instance in the biblical narrative when such radical transgression takes place is found in the opening chapter of the Gospel of Matthew and Luke. Jesus, the Messiah, is conceived from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. The same template frames the extreme possibilities of condemnation and/or salvation. Even if the concept is not present, eschatological imagery is the premise in this instance as well. It is only when eschatology is rendered exclusively in temporal categories that one misses the basic frame in which it operates. It is an attempt at rationalizing the experience of liminality, often in rich and fanciful imagery, when what lies beyond a threshold defies by its very nature conceptualization, for it belongs to the yet unknown. But what lurks has its imagery fed by experiences of transgression that have already taken place. This is what connects eschatology with the understanding of sin, which both in Hebrew (ḥêṭ) and the Greek (*hamartia*) has as its basic etymological root in "missing" (in the sense of erring or not making it to the point) something or someone. In this most basic sense, sin is always an eschatological experience of being beyond or behind the proper mark. This proper mark is to be in apposite relation to oneself, to the neighbor, and also to the rest of creation, and all these together also define one's appropriate relationship to God.

Every occurrence of this desertion is an eschatological experience and this is the reason why judgment is one of the central topics of eschatological discourses. However, the temporal deferment of what this judgment means often functions as a disciplinary ideological[21] maneuver to enforce a way of life, a given regime of what is enforced to be the "mark" and thus not be missed. The point is that this mark is always elusive as moral, political, racial, gender, and other issues profusely illustrate. Even the reported divine commands are presented through human renditions. In other words, the temporal deferment of a judgment is an ersatz mechanism in the attempt to discipline a given context of experiences in the absence of an evident case of trespassing and actual judgment taking place. And this deferment is done for one reason, without which a society would not be able to function. The simple basic experience that there are a number of actions or inactions deemed sinful, they are so not because

judgment has arrived, but because it loiters in wait of a predictable outcome that experience has already documented. Such is the case with the use of some drugs that can precipitate a decisive judgment down the road. The medieval tradition of the seven mortal sins fits into this pattern of anticipating "ideologically" an impending judgment.[22]

The actual experience of transgression that cannot be abstracted from concrete and localized events feeds an understanding of judgment that may be theorized, speculated, and ideologized. However, such ideal constructs cannot cancel the actual experience of judgment that gave rise to it. And these experiences, even if temporally past cannot be dissociated from places of their occurrences. The interesting observation that bears upon this issue of rendering eschatological language in temporal categories alone is that the symmetry being sought between past and present breaks down. While a future judgment may be nonlocalizable, any past experience of it cannot be detached from the place it has occurred; fictional or factual trials that took place can be identified topologically; trials that are in the offing are utopias, no-places.

Presence

The notion of the second coming, so prevalent in eschatological debates, allegedly has been earning its capital since the time of the New Testament writers, but the expression *deutera parousia*, the second coming, is not to be found even if it can be inferred (cf. Matthew 24:3; 1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 4:15; etc.). The expression, "second coming," surfaces in early church writings as we find, for example, in the Gospel of Nicodemus of uncertain dating, where Christ subdues Satan and hands him to his angels saying: "Take him, and keep him secure till my second coming (*deuteras mou parousias*)."[23] There are also earlier sources that deploy the notion.[24] However, the word *parousia* in Greek means primarily "presence," *para-ousia*, that which stands by the essence, or simply the "essence by." Its often translation as "advent," suggesting

something yet to come, even when contextually justifiable is often misleading, hiding the fact that it refers to the experience of something that *is* near by, adjacent, something or someone whose presence is attested. Notwithstanding the fact that the temporal dimension is not excluded its prevalent association with time obfuscates its chief and prevailing meaning.

The chronological sequestering of *parousia* is first and foremost responsible for one of the chief conundrums of New Testament scholarship. The expression "already but not yet" has been coined to account for different gospel references regarding the kingdom of God, as in the sayings that attest to its presence and that its reality has yet not surfaced in its plenitude. The Gospel of Luke is particularly relevant to examine these apparent riddles. The kingdom "is among you" (Luke 17:21) but at the same it does not come in an observable fashion (17:30). This problem, habitually attributed to the postponement or *delay* of the *parousia*, results dictating the usual eschatological options in a pendulum movement that goes from a realized eschatology to millennialism, or, more philosophically rendered, between the *nunc eaternum*, the eternal now, and the *novum* that the future perennially gestates. Many of the answers to the eschatological question are predicated on the framing of the *when*-question. Still in Luke we have this intriguing question the disciples ask in reference to the kingdom: "Where [*pou*], Lord?" And Jesus's response is not less telling: "Where [*opou*] the corpse is, there [*ekei*] the vultures will gather" (17:37). In this passage it is the *where*-question that controls the inquiry regarding the kingdom. And the response points to a rather shocking imagery. In the disturbing and horrifying simile of a corpse (dead as death can be) to be devoured by vultures there is something being conjured. The presence of the kingdom happens there *where* life and death meet each other. And these two are always in our vicinity. The riddle of the "already and the not-yet" is muted when one starts thinking more topologically and less chronologically. The kingdom is nearby, adjacent to our own reality, present, yet veiled in the boundaries we avoid, and in the margins we protect ourselves from. So there is no riddle. The eschatological reality is here, yet we feel the urge to evade it, and the lure to ignore it.

Shame and Guilt

If sin is the transgression of the mark that illustrates eschatological experiences, shame is the realization of our limits and their exposure. If sin produces guilt, its exposure produces shame. One implies overstepping a limit or a boundary, the other is the display of the fact that we have limits that need to be concealed. If guilt calls for accountability, shame is the public and socially sanctioned acknowledgment of one's finitude. A biblical illustration offers a mental picture that many a painter and sculptor have rendered plastically. The passage tells about Adam and Eve in the garden after they disobeyed the commandment, that is, after their transgression. It is worth quoting for its rhetorical impact:

> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loin cloths for themselves. They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and hid myself." (Genesis 3:7–10)

Shame emerges with the awareness of one's own limits being exposed, in this case symbolized by the most elemental margin we experience, the naked skin of our bodies, the epidermic boundary that sets the frontier between the biological organism and its outer environment. It is in the transgression of this limit that danger prowls. The observation of anthropologist Mary Douglas a propos society is pertinent also for the individual organism. "Danger lies in transitional states, simply because transition is neither one state nor the next, it is undefinable."[25]

Such is the reason for avoiding shame and keeping margins concealed for it is there where fragility is made manifest. Victor Turner's study of *rites de passage* describe the liminal point of transition, of the "betwixt and between," as being marked by a "structural invisibility," for which nakedness is a basic symbolic reference.[26] Nakedness

points to two fundamental liminal experiences, the newborn infant emerging out of the protective womb of the mother and of a corpse being prepared for burial.[27] The gospel image of the coming of the kingdom presented by simile of a corpse to be pierced by vultures is, therefore, copious in its symbolic deployment. The skin needs to be protected, and veiled, so that dangers lying in wait may be fended off. The story of the biblical first couple ends, therefore, in God being an accomplice in protecting humans from shame, danger, and exposure: "And the Lord God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21). This imagery appears elsewhere in the classical tradition of the natural law and more specifically in the protestant theological tradition by the conception of the "orders of creation."[28] The use of reason for the adjudication of human affairs and the establishment of institutions that aid in resolving human relation with nature and in society establishes mechanisms through which liminal experiences can be averted or at least ritually administered.

Danger and Grace

But these liminal experiences that arbitrate eschatological trials also entail a positive dimension. If sin, with its Janus double face of guilt and shame, provide the theological rendition of a trial that brings about condemnation, grace is the equivalent theological aspect that depicts the positive aspect also implicated in liminal experiences.[29] The danger that sin entails comes along with the power that grace engenders. Mary Douglas recognized this double aspect of liminality: "To have been in the margins is to have been in contact with danger, to have been at the source of power."[30]

That which extends itself beyond the limits of the body is both what can infect but also nourish and empower it. Biologically this process by which life grows, sustains, and reproduces itself is called "metabolism." What may be a menacing threat that wrenches and rips an organism apart (*dia-bole*) may also be the gift that sustains life and holds it together (*meta-bole*). Such metabolic processes ascribed to biochemical activities has been extended in its usage to apply

to an analogous process of human labor[31] in which an exchange between the human and external nature can produce accursed toil and threatening adversities (Genesis 3:17–19) as it is also what sustains in the most elemental sense of human production (and also of human reproduction for which the word labor is also employed!). Through this "metabolism" novelty, invention, and creativity bring about, turns present (*parousia*), what was not before (*apousia*); it is a creation. What comes to be present (*parousia*) is thus also a present, a gift (*charisma*) that, in theological terms, indicates the manifestation of grace (*charis*).

Zacchaeus Again

The biblical material offers many a symbolical illustration of such experiences of danger and grace-empowering presence in experiences of liminality, transgression, and exposure. One such telling story of exposure, danger, grace, and transformation that we find in the gospels changed at least a little corner of the world, the old city of Jericho some 20 miles northeast from Jerusalem. The story is found in Luke 19:1–10. This passage can be examined from an eschatological perspective.

Notice that not very often are rich and powerful people named in the New Testament except those that persecute Jesus. Take for example the parable of the rich man and the poor Lazarus. The poor man is named, but the rich is not. But the one in this passage has a name: Zacchaeus, which means to be "pure" or "innocent" (from the Hebrew *zakah*). The New Testament is full of these ironic twists, as is seen here when the one who harasses others, a tax collector, is named pure and innocent. It should come as no surprise that tax collectors took the top spot in the list of corrupt and guilty people.

And, tax collectors were so ranked for good reasons. First, they were fellow Judeans, as Zacchaeus was, but working for the Roman occupiers. It was common knowledge that tax collectors were corrupt, as was Zacchaeus, and amassed fortunes by impoverishing others. Second, they would convoke soldiers and send them to invade

homes of those who allegedly were withholding goods not reported and proceeded to ransack them on account of taxes presumably not paid. To put it bluntly, Zacchaeus was invasive, an intruder and his cronies invaded homes of common people and plundered their possessions and the more they did the richer they would become. The pursuit of wealth was their goal, and Zacchaeus not only pursued it but also achieved it. He was indeed a rich man. His lot was cast with sinners to be condemned.

However, there was something different about Zacchaeus. He was distinct from the condemned lot and that is what brought him to this cherished story in the Gospel of Luke. He somehow knew that there was something not quite right about him, an incompleteness. He felt the loss of something and knew he needed something that all his wealth could not afford. He had wealth but not health, he was safe, but not saved (the word for health and salvation in Greek is the same: *soteria*). He was a *zeteios*, a seeker, as the text tells us. A seeker is someone who inquires, searches, and seeks. Seekers are people that are aware of what is amiss in their lives, and Zacchaeus's uniqueness was that he not only knew that he missed something but also went out looking for it. He was cognizant of what was going on around him and on learning about the new healer in town, decided to check him out. What is important is that he was not in denial; he knew he was unhealthy and that he needed some sort of healing. He was in search of a cure for whatever malady was afflicting him. And do we know what it is? Here is a clue. The text tells us that he was short in stature. But the word for stature (*helikía*) can also be translated as maturity or, metaphorically, character. In other words, he had a small or microcharacter, a not so well-developed personality or full integrity. One may say that he was a man held in low repute, considered to have a failing and debased stature, not a man of honor. And he knew that only too well and that it had nothing to do with his physical height, be it 4 or 6 feet tall. It does not take much guessing to know what people, like him, do to compensate for their actual state and low character. They climb! They will do whatever it takes to be above the common folk who they know have a greater character, have higher stature and integrity. So they climb political ladders, corporate ladders; they climb whatever it takes to achieve the superiority

they claim to themselves by the wealth they have accumulated. In the case of Zacchaeus it was not a ladder; it was a sycamore tree nearby, but the symbolism is the same. He got high enough to raise himself above the common folk (*ochlos*). So Zacchaeus climbed in the hope that he would see this acclaimed healer, Jesus of Nazareth and that the small town healer, respected as he was by the common folk that Zacchaeus preyed upon, would notice and see him for the prosperous man he was and affirm his stature he earned by climbing though not by character. Egoistic as he was, it could very well be that he was waiting to hear Jesus to say: "Zacchaeus, you climbed that tree to see me. That is what makes you greater than this entire crowd." Supposedly that would restore his ego and boost his character and give him again stature.

But, as the text tells us, things did not go the way as Zacchaeus hoped it would. As if on cue, the man from Nazareth looks at the man on the tree, way above the common folk, and even above Jesus himself for he needs to look up to him. He orders Zacchaeus to come down immediately. How does one translate those words of Jesus as they are rendered in Greek: *Zakchaie, speúsas katábethi. Sémeioron gar en oíko sou dei me meintai.* These words have been translated in several ways, but all if not completely missing the point, they fail to convey the sharpness of its meaning. Jesus's words have no nicety to it. The language is very strong. *Dei me meintai* is not a self invitation to be a guest, a gesture of etiquette. The words are an imperative; it is a demand, even a threat. The Greek *dei* is an impersonal verb that expresses a commanding imperative. One attempt to render it may be: "Zacchaeus, get down at once, today I must definitely squatter in your house." Paraphrasing it to get the contextual nuance of it, "Zacchaeus, get down from there and get a taste of yourself. Face your own low and debased stature and know yourself for what you truly are. And today I will get into your luxurious and secured home as you have invaded and plundered the houses of these poor people." He was about to be exposed!

What about that for grace?! But that is what it is. Very harsh grace; costly grace, not cheap, but grace indeed! Zacchaeus tumbles down from his tree, and humbles himself; he repents, meets his true stature, and exposes his character for what it is. Convicted by his sin he

is ready to endure shame. One might imagine Zacchaeus somehow embarrassed but relieved, as embarrassed and relieved is someone who admits to a long hidden wrongdoing and concealed shame. It was as though he was set free of something that chained him. He happily welcomes Jesus into his house. And before Jesus can say anything, Zacchaeus hastens to tell him that half of what he has will go to the poor, and any he had defrauded he would restitute fourfold, surpassing the law that prescribes that one fifth of the defraud amount should be added to the restitution. And then he hears it: "Today healing/salvation (*soteria*) has come to this house." The words he receives from Jesus are nothing short of all that he was looking for. Salvation was not promised to him in heaven. It was given, it happened (*egeneto*, aorist) in the very gesture of the rich man's act of vulnerability. Zacchaeus became again *Zakah*, innocent with the integrity of a child of Abraham—*Ein Mensch.*

However, one could argue that we don't know whether Zacchaeus kept his word and really gave half of his wealth to the poor and paid fourfold those he had defrauded. Why would the text not continue and report on the follow up? Did he live up to his words? I think the only possible reading is that this was taken for granted. In fact, for Zacchaeus, that would be the easiest part. The hardest part was to welcome Jesus into his well-protected house off-limit to common folks; he welcomed gladly that man of the common people who addressed him with those menacing and harsh words. That act was like piercing a hole through a solid and robust dam. That gesture of vulnerability on the part of Zacchaeus did exactly this: it pierced a hole in the dam that held secure Zacchaeus's immense wealth and power. In fact, all started to unfold irreversibly when Zacchaeus heeded to Jesus demand to hasten down from that tree. Such are liminal experiences.

This symbolic dimension of the Zacchaeus story bears its eschatological emphasis if compared precisely with another text of Luke about the triumph of God's kingdom in the struggle with demons (Luke 11:20). This passage announcing the presence of the kingdom concludes in this saying that is attributed to an older source[32]: "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his castle, his property is safe. But when one stronger than he attacks him and overpowers

him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his plunder" (Luke 11:21f). The presence of the kingdom takes place when a mighty one is overpowered. In the Zacchaeus story this overpowering happens by the force of Jesus's words and the authority with which they were invested.

Eschaton: Disambiguation

The word "eschatology," which since the nineteenth century has become common to discuss theological doctrines regarding the end of things or things at the end, has been the occasion for the most fantastic and nifty imagery. But the word, in its use in Greek, and more relevantly in the New Testament, in its adjectival, adverbial, or noun form, is of a rather ordinary significance. Dictionaries of New Testament and early church Greek consistently lift three basic connotations that the word *eschatos* (noun) has. The first meaning refers to a spatial location, to a place (as where to sit in a banquet, cf. Luke 14:9) or to a geographical boundary (the ends of the earth, cf. Acts 1:8; 13:47). The word can also denote an order in rank as in the first or last in a hierarchical order, as the highest, the lowest, the last, or the ultimate (cf. Mark 12:6; 1 Corinthians 15:45). Only the third denotation as listed in dictionaries[33] implies temporal attributes. Adverbially, as in *eschatōs*, it is used in the New Testament only in Mark 5:23 where Jairus describes the terminal state of his daughter.

For the early Christians when the word *eschaton* was employed adjectively it kindled associations with spatial realities that would not be dissociated from those pertaining to time or rank. For example, "the ends (*eschatou*) of the earth" while contextually referring unequivocally to the geographically conceived limits of the earth could not be heard without connoting ideas about the end-time. The soteriological use of the notion in modern theology, particularly framed by the salvation-history school (*Heilsgeschichtlicheschule*),[34] has reduced eschatological thought to a historical notion that has escorted theological thinking out of place, and sequestered the notion of salvation from topological implications. And this, without exaggeration, must

be regarded as the received view of modern theological scholarship. This history, certainly, can be traced back to Montanism, and later to several chiliastic movements down to the present-day speculations about end-time calendars, rapture figments, and the like.[35] No surprise that this fixation on the temporality of a universal event has led to a dispute between temporalized and detemporalized eschatologies.[36] This has also been the reason for an anti-eschatological movement to be read into the story of the New Testament, as it has been forcefully argued by Marcus Borg.[37] The historical and the detemporalized eschatologies are a twin offspring of the same neglect with the spatial dimensions of eschatology and its locatable particularities. It is in the trial by space (Lefebvre) that salvation and condemnation are often experienced. The crux lies in the crossing.

Immanuel Kant, in his "Idea for a Universal History"[38] presents in the fourth thesis of his essay as a universal truism, or so he thinks, that human nature is marked by an "antagonism," which he defines as "unsocial sociability" (*ungesellige Geselligkeit*).[39] Kant's assumption is that the unsocial antagonism drives societies to pursue the hardest of all challenges, to build a universal civic society. The great Konigsberg philosopher knew a lot about human nature and so little about its location. To be fair, it was only after Hegel and Marx, in modern times, that social location became a feature in the equation of thriving human achievements and failings. But Kant's idea of a universal history as the trajectory of negotiating human sociability and egotistic drives has been a successful story. It described the human being universally as being severed within itself with two drives, one to be pursued and the other averted. Only with the eclipse of the European world view that eventually extended itself through the Atlantic to North America that thinking about plurality and spatial realities as determining what sociability means became a workable hypothesis. But theological eschatology, caught in the dilemma of what the end of history might entail, has not followed suit. At least not until recent time *and places*, that *when* and *where* have started to emerge as items in the eschatological menu. It remains an astonishing feat that theological literature has since early times, but more so in modern history, been preoccupied with temporality to the exclusion of the spatial dimension implied in the biblical account.

The ever-reducible finitude of human existence, a theme so rife in modern existential philosophy and literature, imposed its domain by the denial of reflections about domains and its limits, its margins, the frontiers that demarcate its existence. In modernity the word "critique" (established as a technical term since Kant's three volumes: *Critique of Pure Reason*[40]; *Critique of Practical Reason*[41]; and *Critique of Judgment*[42]) has been read as a cipher, naming the unsurpassable limit that should not be ventured through. "Critique" is a technique that establishes zones of what is permissible and what is excluded. Exclusion designates otherness, a limit not to be broached.

To the critique of domains we shall turn our attention next.

Chapter 3

Conquering Eschatology

It's evening,
Sir, it's evening, night is drawing nigh . . .
I have lived through this long day and
I can assure you it is very near the end of its repertory.[1]

—Vladimir *(Waiting for Godot)*

To each tribe its scribe; to each cult its creed. Turfs are not to be breached; each has its own domain and autonomy. Immanuel Kant in the *Critiques* established the clear domain of turfs. Morality has its proper field, and so has science, and aesthetics. The clear cut distinction ("critical" from the Greek *krinō*, to sever, divide, or separate) of these domains was a phenomenological move that for Kant would establish an unsurpassable barrier between the phenomenon and the noumenon, the latter serving as a limiting concept to clearly separate what can be known from the thing-in-itself (*das Ding an sich*). With this, eschatology was removed from the realm of speculation and mythology to be an epistemological limit-concept, beyond which one cannot think. Kant thus posed a challenge to the upcoming generation of German idealist philosophy, represented by the likes of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. *The Difference between the Fichtean and the Schellingean Systems of Philosophy* by Hegel in 1801, his most influential work of the early period before the *Phenomenology of the Spirit,* is an outcome of this challenge.[2] The long essay starts precisely with Kant's apparently unsurpassable dualism and turf

mentality and offers the solutions to overcome it. Fichte postulated the "I" as the fundamental principle of identity out of which difference emerges as if in a distraction from itself. Schelling, although not always very consistent, overcame the Kantian *discrimen* by holding external nature as an identity in itself from which the self emerges as a difference. The title of Hegel's essay has a double entendré; it is not only about a comparison between the two philosophers that he is analyzing, but also about how they handle the problem of difference. While Kant set difference as an outer limit that cannot be overcome, both Fichte and Schelling, in different ways—one subjectively and the other objectively—started with an original identity, an absolute identity. Such identity, typical to German idealism, was actually an eschatological conquest. Eschatology was supposedly administered.

And the conqueror was Hegel with his most succinct formula of what the absolute means: "The identity of identity and non-identity."[3] Difference was integrated into totality as a moment of negation, which in turn is itself negated. Eschatology as the defining moment of openness to otherness and difference is speculatively integrated into a total and reasonable system, in which history itself entailed its own consummation. "World history is the world's judgment" (*Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht*)[4] is Hegel's concise thesis that makes eschatology immanent to the history of the world. In the words of Karl Löwith, "Hegel believed himself loyal to the genius of Christianity by realizing the Kingdom of God on earth. And since he transposed the Christian expectation of a final consummation into the historical process as such, he saw the world's history as consummating itself."[5] The end of history is at hand and it is neither a passing away (*Vergehen*), a demise, nor a "passing under" (*Untergehen*), but a passing over (*Übergang*).[6] Hegel was arguing against a form of eschatology that we could call transcendental in the technical sense of the term, that is, referring to nonsensuous realities. And these have found their expressions in a spectrum that ranges from the popular pie-in-the-sky theology to the elaborate existentially argued ecstatic cancellation of time in an eternal now. The transcendental type of eschatology has been and continues to be extremely influential in Christian circles and can be observed as operative all over the world in spite of its gnostic overtones.

When Hegel lectured on world history, his argument was clear: the development of world history "goes from the East to the West, for Europe is absolutely the end of History, Asia the beginning."[7] Hegel's famous thesis about the end of history, culminating in the European self-consciousness, reveals for him a problem that he decides to solve with a slash of the Gordian knot he himself created. The physical Sun's movement indeed goes from the east to the west. But since it completes its course in the west, says Hegel, it is in Europe—in the middle between dawn and dusk—where the "inner sun of self-consciousness rises to the greatest radiance," and there is where it also stays.[8] A clear eschatological vision is at work here. It presupposes that history is a continuum that metaphorically follows the longitudinal movement of the Earth's rotation in its axis and around the Sun. But since this movement is perennial, but history—as the registrar of novelty—is not, and it aims at a climax, Europe represents the end of this movement: "Europe is definitely [*schlechthin*] the end of world history."[9] The end of history, its eschatological fulfillment, is indeed the final triumph of Hegel's philosophy. It is final in the sense that it was left without any possibility of further interpretation, for in realizing it—or in declaring it realized—Hegel's system was complete and therefore closed.

And lo! This is the hurdle that is central to our topic. Hegel's words are a recognition of this and he acknowledges that there is a difference between the individual and the community. If for an individual subject the demise is real and the "inner sun of self-consciousness" eventually passes away, it is not so for the community: "such a perishing or passing under [*Untergehen*]—in fact a passing over [*Übergang*] to the kingdom of heaven—would apply only to individual subjects not to the community...To speak of a passing away [*Vergehen*] would mean to end on a discordant note."[10] This concession to an exception that Hegel makes, unusual to his systematic consistency and his tendency not to allow for exemptions to his philosophy, reveals again one of the dilemmas of thinking eschatology in purely historical terms. Even with a millenarian approach of the realization of the kingdom of God within history, it still does not dispel the problem that the history of any individual person does end on a "discordant note," a *Vergehen*.

The longitudinal interpretation of time as a helpless continuum, in the Augustinian tradition, is the dominant motif in casting the various eschatological discourses. And this leaves us with two options: (1) an unending progression that inevitably would lead to a cyclical view of time and, consequently, the abandonment of responsibility (as Nietzsche well exposed), or (2) a postulation of an end, which Hegel proclaimed as realized.

The first option remains tempting, but difficult to reconcile with the Judeo-Christian messianic tradition. The second brings with itself an impasse. It begs the question, presumably in the minds of Jesus's disciples: Why is there history even after Easter? And for all the announcements of the end of history that we have repeatedly heard for the last two centuries the question remains: why are newspapers still being sold?[11] However, Hegel had his followers that took exception to the notion of the realized end of history and deferred it to a new era that would do away with what has been—from new societies, to final solutions, to the war to end all wars, to globalized capitalism, the pending end of human *pre*history, or any other version the end of history motif has taken in the North Atlantic world.

Epistemology and Eschatology

Yet the merit of Hegel was to think eschatology in epistemological terms. Bringing Hegel into this discussion fulfills another important task apart from providing a strategy for linking history to eschatology. The merit of Hegel has been to shift the whole discussion of eschatology from an otherworldly perspective to an immanent one, making the end of things the culmination of a historical process instead of an exit from the world or from time.

Kant had already brought eschatology to bear upon the limits of reason, to draw its epistemological consequences. However, unlike Kant, Hegel took it as an overcoming of the limits not of reason, but of Kant's own limiting of reason to understanding. This is the distinction that Hegel makes between understanding (*Verstand*) and reason (*Vernunft*). In an oblique reference to the Kantian "school," he calls it an error to remain at the level of understanding because it

takes the finite in absolute terms and is incapable of thinking "the being of otherness."[12] Hegel sought to move thought to another level or, to use the expression of Thomas Kuhn, shifting paradigms by incorporating other forms of rationality.[13]

However, a further distinction can also be made here. Hegel's "heliotropic" paradigm has been fundamental for framing the Western understanding of history and then also of its end or consummation. The heliotrope, the flower that follows the movement of the Sun, as the basic metaphor for history in the Western world[14] ties it completely to a *longitudinal perspective* of the world. It assumes that no matter where we are this perspective is always the same and homogeneous, that is, there is only one history. One of the revealing aspects of this project was to show that the heliotrope and the rendition of the world's consummation in immanent terms is not enough to account for what can be called a *latitudinal perspective* in which the emphasis is not on the chronological movement alone but also on the topological awareness that place and locale play an important role in the understanding of history in its multifaceted expressions and eschatology. The longitudinal perspective has been an attempt to administer the *eschaton* and thus conquering eschatological discourse.

The conquering of eschatology, as Hegel envisioned it, migrated for the generations that followed to territories averse to theological thinking taking the form of some secular version of millenarianism, normally of Marxist inspiration. Only in the second half of the twentieth century did this stream receive a theological treatment again.[15] The "century of history" as the European nineteenth century has been described (Michel Foucault) was not a "Christian century" as far as eschatological thinking is concerned. Hegel's rational administration of eschatology was still framed within the inherited Christian story, even if the different wings of his school disagreed on whether this framing was an authentic conviction of the philosopher or a cunning disguise.[16] In any case, the proponent of a system of "absolute knowing" did in occasions recognize acrimonious "thorns of history" that his system did not domesticate. One of these thorns pertains particularly to eschatology as we saw earlier. His reference to the inability of the "discordant note" to incorporate

an individual's passing away (*Vergehen*) as a historical passing over [*Übergang*] of the community into the kingdom of heaven became the commanding tone for a traditional doctrine to be performed in a minor key, if it was at all audible.

Eschatology in a Minor Key

Freidrich Schleiermacher, a colleague and foe of Hegel at the University of Berlin, was the one to engage this task. Toward the end of his *Glaubenslehre*,[17] he laid bare the reason why the recent introduction of the word "eschatology" to the theological vocabulary was helpful to address what traditionally was covered by the doctrine of the last things. And this is the reason he gives for it:

> *The solution of these two problems, to represent the Church in its consummation and the state of souls in the future life, is attempted in the ecclesiastical doctrines of the Last Things; but to these doctrines we cannot ascribe the same value as to the doctrines already handled.*
>
>   1. The phrase, "the Last Things," which has been somewhat generally accepted, has a look of strangeness which is more concealed by the word "Eschatology"; for the term "things" threatens to carry us quite away from the domain of the inner life, with which alone we are concerned. This of itself indicates that something is being attempted here which cannot be secured by doctrines proper in our sense of the word.[18]

Schleiermacher's sense of relief that the word "eschatology" was replacing the older usage of "doctrines of the Last Things," is evident because it allowed him to avoid some pitfalls in granting it an objective character and thus having to frame accordingly doctrines of redemption and condemnation, judgment and salvation, physical consummation and eternal life. Now he could deal with these less important doctrines restricting it to the discussion of the inner life of religious affections. Theology was released from task of mingling with the world of nature and society in applying to nature and society these doctrines regarding the end of things pertaining to the affairs of the world. History could be autonomous

and theology could turn itself to matters pertaining to the inner life of the soul. The conundrum that Hegel found himself of thinking history philosophically *and* theologically was resolved in a bifurcation in which religious matters could be dealt with apart from those pertaining to the secular sphere. The confusion that led to the conflation of matters pertaining to the inner life of the soul and secular history, Schleiermacher intimates, comes from the fact that the language employed in the scriptures is figurative, resulting, for those who take it literally, in the confusion of those spheres.

> *Since the disciples of Christ could not consider the comforting promises of His Return as having been fulfilled by the days of His resurrection, they expected this fulfillment at the end of all earthly things. Now since with this is bound up the separation of the good and the bad, we teach "a Return of Christ for Judgment."*[19]

Schleiermacher is launching here an early version of the program of demythologizing. The disciples did not understand that the reference of Jesus's glorious coming was to his resurrection and that in that event the final judgment happens for every generation that is called to understand the intended reference concealed by the sayings ("figurative utterances") of Jesus.[20]

It is not without merit that Schleiermacher is hailed as the one who inducted Protestant theology to modernity. Michel Foucault, commenting on Baudelaire, recognizes this characteristic bifurcation of modernity, its Janus face. For Baudelaire, *apud* Foucault, modernity is

> the ephemeral, the fleeting, the contingent...but being modern does not lie in recognizing and accepting this perpetual movement; on the contrary, it lies in adopting a certain attitude with respect to this movement; and this deliberate, difficult attitude consists in recapturing something eternal that is not beyond the present instant, nor behind it, but within it.[21]

An agreement was sustained, at least by theology, to keep these realms asunder and a settlement was attained that kept theology among the sciences. They cohabited but in separate quarters. This was after all

the "century of history" in which "progress" was not one great idea, but the dominant one.[22] The evangelical message of the proclamation of the kingdom of God found help in Kant's rendering the core of religion as an ethical disposition, and in Schleiermacher's hermeneutics of reading the "figurative" message of the kingdom as truly referring to the inner affections of the soul. These two currents were combined and given its loftier expression in the work of Albrecht Ritschl in the second half of the nineteenth century.[23] For Ritschl "the kingdom of God…is the highest good of the community…but…only in the sense that it forms at the same time the ethical ideal for whose attainment the members of the community bind themselves to each other through a definite type of reciprocal action."[24] The eschatological message lost its apocalyptic verve, and the insurgence of another world became an ethical ideal to be lived out in the midst of this ever-progressing world. The ethical teachings of Jesus became the conceptual key to render the apocalyptic message into a language that met the sensibilities of the age.[25] A one-century concordat had been lived out in a concurrence of Christianity and European culture.

The Surfacing of the Eschatological Discourse

By the end of the century, some dissonant voices started to emerge. First was Johannes Weiss (Ritschl's son-in-law). His point was that the message of the New Testament does not corroborate Ritschl's reduction to an "ethical ideal": "The Kingdom of God, in Jesus' view, is never an ethical ideal…This [Ritschl's] interpretation of the Kingdom of God as an inner-worldly ethical ideal is a vestige of the Kantian idea and does not hold up before a more precise historical examination."[26] The point was clear: Do not imprint into the Jesus of the New Testament the ideals we hold dear. Albert Schweitzer followed suit. The dawn of the twentieth century continued in the same line of reasoning and carried it to its consequences. After publishing a small book on the topic in 1901,[27] Schweitzer developed a major project, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* that received its first edition in two tomes in 1906.[28] The first volume was Schweitzer's critical review of an array of books published regarding the historical

Jesus. The author concludes with what was already implied in Weiss's criticism of Ritschl: Each author "eisegeted" into Jesus his own idea. Schweitzer was in fact documenting one century of theological Eurocentric historiography. The second volume presents Schweitzer's own constructive attempt of presenting who Jesus "really" was. And thus he concludes:

> In the knowledge that He is the coming Son of Man, He lays hold of the wheel of the world to set it moving on that last revolution which is to bring our ordinary history to a close. It refuses to turn, and He throws himself upon it. Then it turns; and crushes Him. Instead of bringing in the eschatological conditions, He has destroyed them. The wheel rolls onward, and the mangled body of the one immeasurably great Man, who was strong enough to think of Himself as the spiritual ruler of mankind and to bend history to His purpose, is hanging upon it still. That is His victory and His reign.[29]

The bifurcation project did not hold up to what was emerging as evidence exhumed from the founding document of Christianity. Schweitzer took to heart his own results: cohabitation was impossible. Prevailing ethical ideals of the age and the Christian message of the kingdom of God could not be harmonized; modern culture and eschatology inhabited totally different worlds; they were not discourses on the same page, not even in the same library. Hence he left theology, took a medical degree, and went to develop his humanitarian work in Africa, for which he is now better known.

Rudolf Bultmann, someone who devoted a prestigious career to solve this very problem, recalls some of the impact Weiss and Schweitzer had in theology at the time. While a student of theology in Berlin in the early years of the twentieth century, he reminiscences the impact that Weiss and Schweitzer had in theology at the time. "I remember that Julius Kaftan, my teacher in dogmatics in Berlin, said: 'If Johannes Weiss is right and the conception of the Kingdom of God is an eschatological one, then it is impossible to make use of this conception in dogmatics.'"[30]

The irreconcilable side of a discussion that emerged with Schleiermacher's bifurcation seemed to demand an option to either have the Christ who forged an ethos to a community that was

faithful to it, or to settle for the impossible historical message of a preacher whose words have a taste of strangeness that was masterfully phrased by Martin Kähler who in the midst of this debate wrote in 1896 an influential book that sounded as a manifesto, setting up the option at stake: *The So-Called Historical Jesus and The Historic Biblical Christ*.[31] The concordat between Christianity and the dominant *academic* culture was definitely being challenged and a decision called for. It was the Christian community that decided who the "historic" (*geschichtlich*) Christ is, and not the academic establishment in its "neutral" pursuit of the historical (*historisch*) Jesus.

However, it was in the critical years that led to the World War I that these options were put to test: those who still followed the concordat and those who would opt out of the compromise. The clearest and the most vitriolic voice to make its case in the midst of a critical situation facing the German-speaking world, and by implication its theologians, was Karl Barth. Distressed with the inability of the great theologians of his time to stand for the critical message of the gospel against the régimes of this world, he called for a radical and bold revision of the theological task. At the time when the demise of eschatology from the theological discourse was etched as an epitaph, his words brought eschatology as a living voice back to the center of the theological agenda: "If Christianity be not altogether thoroughgoing eschatology, there remains no relationship whatever with Christ."[32] This was a wake up call. But what was meant remained undetermined. If eschatology is everything it might in reverse be nothing at all.

A marginal note in the middle of this juncture of events came from a theologian largely unrecognized in theological circles, but a canonic figure among phenomenologists of religion, Rudolf Otto, for his book *The Idea of the Holy*, published first in 1917.[33] But in a book that he took issue with the pending discussions of his time, *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man: A Study in the History of Religion*, Otto raises a very pertinent question he was struggling with: How can a strong eschatological attitude that this world will end with a responsible ethical stance still attributed and recognized in the teachings of Jesus be put together? Questioning how

Schweitzer could attribute to Jesus a "marvelous ethics" along with his pessimistic view of his apocalyptic ethos, Otto sets the issue as follows:

> In so doing he seems to me not to notice that when these two expressions are brought together, there would be an inconsistency if one did not pay regard to the peculiar irrationality which essentially inheres in a genuine eschatology. For without this irrationality an ethic, just in as far as it is marvelous, and even as an "interim-ethic," would be inherently inconsistent with teaching that the end is at hand.[34]

More than most at his time, Otto perceived the modern dilemma of navigating through the Scylla of rock-hard religious conviction about the God who transcends it all, the *fascinans et tremendum*—as Otto argues in his most famous work, *The Idea of the Holy*—and the Charybdis of everyday life and its ever-changing demands and ethical responsibilities. Between the two there is a clear divide, which the subtitle of the German edition plainly lays out: "On the Relationship of the Irrational in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational."[35] It is the limit itself, the *limen* that marks the adjacency to the religious experience. And this limit cannot be apprehended by an established rationality, what Foucault would call a régime of truth. Otto was not a Hegelian who would pursue the rational conquering of the *eschaton*. His program, within the frame of Kantian philosophy, was rather to challenge Kant's solution to the problem by reducing eschatology to morality as a hypothetical datum. For Kant, "it is wise that we act *as if* [*als ob*] there is a God, and hence only for this purpose."[36] Kant's reduction of religion to a moral a priori, allowed him to explain moral decisions without suspending or overcoming the sensible world, even though the representations of this

> end of all things which go through the hands of human beings, even when their purpose are good, is *folly*, i.e. the use of means to their ends which are directly opposed to these ends. *Wisdom*, that is, practical reason using means commensurate to the final end of all things—the highest good—in full accord with the corresponding rules of measure, dwells in God alone.[37]

The adroitness of Otto was to take seriously precisely this "foolishness" not merely as a moral pretext, but as a religious end in itself that foregoes the need to rationally justify itself. This is the foolishness (*mōria*) of a fragmented reason that finds in the obscure limits of its ruptured domain a threshold through which shines the light of a revelation (cf. 1 Corinthians 1).

But, alas, theologians for the most have not paid much attention to Otto's perceptive observation. The Lutheran theologian kept allegiance to his tradition by retaining religion and rationality in a paradoxical relation, and thus addressing the limit (the *limens*) of human experiences as the center of his concern. Theology, European that is to say, was under the impact of its inability to address its own collapse in tackling the devastating moral impact of World War I (which was foremost a European war in any case) and its enchantment with the theory that the ongoing process of modernization was leading to secularism, or in Max Weber's rendition, to a "disenchanted world." The responses theologians offered were insightful, even as naïve in assuming both the newly acquired mistrust in reason for the betterment of the human affairs and secularization as an inevitable outcome of the modernizing of society.

As mentioned above, Karl Barth already in his *Epistle to the Romans* of 1919 blew the horn against the prevalent theological evasion of eschatology and claimed that eschatology was what Christian theology was all about.[38] But Barth himself, in spite of his massive opus, never ventured into a systematic treatment of the locus. The reason may be on account of his steady and sustained polemic against systematic continuity that runs throughout his entire theology, particularly emphatic in the writings of his early period when the discontinuity between heaven and earth is most radical. His genius was precisely to point out that discontinuity is the point; there is no segue from earth to heaven. The rupture is total: "God is in heaven, and thou art on earth."[39] The only connection is totally and solely initiated by divine grace, which is Christ and him proclaimed. That is the reason that early on he could be blunt about his distancing from the "Lutheran *est*," the certainty of the presence of Christ. So this is why he ends his early essay on the task of theology with these words: "As a Reformed Churchman—and not only,

I think, as such—I must keep my sure distance from the Lutheran *est* and the Lutheran type of *assurance of salvation.*"[40]

For Barth eschatology becomes a cipher that designates the impossibility of the human to cross over. That is why it encompasses the whole of theology as the "impossible possibility": "God is in heaven and thou art on earth." Eschatology is the awareness of the unsurpassable ditch that lies in the middle and at the core of human existence. God has crossed the divide is all that theology can and must say.

The Existential versus the Apocalyptic Eschatologies

On the wake of what became known as "dialectical theology," of which Barth is the leading representative, the most pronounced eschatological voice (of the first half of the twentieth century) was that of Rudolf Bultmann. If Barth's route was from the impossible to the possibility, Bultmann took the reverse course, he went from the possible to the impossibility. If for Barth the meaning of historiography for theology was restricted to the enunciation of the name Pontius Pilate in the creed, as he derisively remarked, for Bultmann the meaning of history was an event individually experienced. "The true form of the *realization* of the historic (*geschichtlichen*) fact of Jesus is indeed not the historical (*historische*) memory and reconstruction [of the past], but the *proclamation*. In it Jesus is redoubled: he comes again, and he always comes again…in the proclaimed word in the community."[41] Renowned for his program of demythologizing, Bultmann's main concern was to remove history from historicism and historiography delivered from "myths and legends expressed in poetical form and fictional narratives."[42] "Eschatology…is not about the future end of history, rather history is subsumed under eschatology"[43]:

> The decisive history is not world history, the history of Israel and other nations, but the history that each individual experiences. For this history is the encounter with Christ the decisive event, indeed, the very event through which the individual begins really to exist historically, because he begins to exist eschatologically.[44]

Bultmann concludes his Gifford lectures from 1955 with a passage often quoted.

> *The meaning of history lies always in the present*, and when the present is conceived as the eschatological present by Christian faith the meaning in history is realized . . . do not look around yourself into universal history, you must look into your own personal history. Always in your present lies the meaning in history, and you cannot see it as a spectator, but only in your responsible decisions. In every moment slumbers the possibility of being the eschatological moment. You must awaken it.[45]

The century of history was decried as the century of historicism. In its place comes existentialism in two of its variations. While Kierkegaardian insights inspired Barth; Martin Heidegger, Bultmann's colleague in Marburg and erstwhile friend, was his guide into the importance of present existence. The influence can be detected in the following formulation: "Because of the fact that Jesus has come, he is *present* [*ist er da*]. But this perfect present of his existence [*Da-seins*] is turned *by unfaith into the past tense of bygone existence* [*Präteritum des Vergangenseins*]."[46] Following in the steps of Martin Kähler's distinction between the historical Jesus and the existing Christ of the faith community,[47] Christ is present in the act (*Tat*) of proclaiming him to every new time in a language that is appropriate and relevant without the fictional work (*Werk*)—myths, legends, and the like—that were used at other times.

The brilliance of Bultmann was to strip Christianity of all its paraphernalia and keep a cantus firmus in the message proclaimed of Jesus Christ and him crucified.[48] This message called for discipleship and obedience. And this comes together with free human action or deed (*Tat*): "Action as long as it is free cannot be done as a demand, but it can only be as free *simultaneous* to what is demanded."[49] But this action is not a work (*Werk*) that we do to please God, for in that case we would not be ourselves in face of God, but we would stand beside ourselves in that which we present through the work.[50] This action is the decision that is called upon to awaken the eschatological moment.

Bultmann's distinction between deed and work, action and labor is revealing of an option that he makes for what history as

eschatology means. It is not about the object that work produces, but the subjective stand that action elicits. Since Aristotle's identification of discrete human faculties (*dianoia*), at the beginning of Book VI of the *Metaphysics*,[51] the distinction of action (*praxis*) and work, or production (*poiesis*) has been acknowledged even as it has been obfuscated in the Latin West with no precise words to define the distinction. While *poiesis* is the activity that results in an objective outcome, *praxis* is to do something for the sake of doing it well without an objective result ensuing, as in conversing, waving, and performing. The Western (particularly Protestant) privileging of *praxis* to define theologically the human in its relationship to God and to other human beings is also what defines Bultmann's distinction between "work" and "action." Bultmann's program of demythologizing is to erase from the theological agenda all that is objective and resulting from human *poietic*/productive activity to define the basic eschatological core of all Christian theology.

Bultmann has the merit of precisely defining what the problem is with what we are engaged in this work, namely, an objective entity that stands beside ourselves as another: "in work…we are not ourselves, but we stand by."[52] This is what mythology produces, it is *poietic* activity. Indeed, Bultmann never discusses the Greek translation of the Septuagint word for God's creation as *poiesis*, the same word used in the miracle stories of the New Testament that are rendered by the same verb, *poiein*. The first is for him presumably theologically sound in the sense that the logos is the means through which all things come into being (John 1:3), but the latter, miracles or even legends and particularly apocalyptic narratives loaded with *works* of human imagination, is that which should be dismissed for the pure act (*Tat*) to stand alone. The response to this was waiting in the wings. And it came from the *enfant terrible* of the remarkable school of followers that Bultmann nurtured, Ernst Käsemann.

The New Quest: History Bounces Back

Early at the beginning of the twentieth century, Ernst Troeltsch had concisely summarized the accomplishments of nineteenth-century

historicism and the criteria for assessing historical claims.[53] He set forth three principles. The first, criticism, sustained that all historical reconstructions are relative and subject to constant revision, providing, therefore, no stable foundation. Analogy, which is the second principle, assumes that the historian needs to presuppose that present human experience is normative for the past as well so that if resurrection or miracles are not part of the present common experience they should equally not be part of past experiences. But most importantly, for our purpose of explaining Käsemann, was the third principle, which he called "correlation." It sustains that all historical facts are interrelated entailing antecedents and effective consequences. It was on the ground of this third principle that Käsemann launched the "new quest for the historical Jesus." He did not take the route of historicism and try to prove the evidences of any claimed historical incident, but focused on the historical *effects* and the *antecedents*.[54] For him the best historical evidence is that there was a community that believed that Jesus was the messiah to the point of suffering severe persecution and even giving their life as martyrs.

Furthermore, no one could ever imagine grounding a religious faith on the life of a marginal Galilean condemned and executed as a criminal and shamefully exposed on a cross. Something profound, Käsemann surmises, must have happened for this effect to be produced and felt. Furthermore, and here he appeals also to the correlation criterion of Troeltsch, which sustains that it is common to the human experience that there must be a cause, even when not directly experienced, if a significant effect can be witnessed. To resort to an example, if by the shore of a placid pond I see rippling effects forming an array of concentric circles, it is reasonable to assume that something had been thrown or fallen into the water at the place, at the center of the concentric circles, even if I have not been an eye witness to the fact, that disturbed the water and unruffled the surface of the pond. So, Käsemann subverts the demythologizing program of Bultmann. If for the latter it is the faith that makes the miracle, for Käsemann it is the miracle that brings faith about. And the miracle is always the work of *poiesis*; it designates an objective reality.

Käsemann develops his argument by further addressing another aspect of Troeltsch's "correlation principle," the one regarding the

antecedents and its effects. To Bultmann's insistence that Christian eschatology is a uniquely distinct departure from the inter-testament Jewish apocalyptic and focused on the individual's responsible action, his former student took radical exception: "Christ did not come neither primarily nor finally for the individual...Christ is the lord of the world."[55] And this can only be understood in an apocalyptic sense, which Käsemann poignantly expressed in the following words: "The apocalyptic was the mother of all Christian theology."[56] On being questioned by Gerhard Ebeling about how he defines the apocalyptic, Käsemann answer is rather laconic: "It designates the adjacent expectation [*Naherwartung*] of the *parousia*."[57] Even if laconic, what he further suggests is important; this close expectation encompasses the whole world and its presence can be detected by the objective evidences elicited by the resurrection and attested by "the encompassing post-resurrection enthusiasm."[58] This is the basic theme that Käsemann addresses.

If Bultmann eschewed *poiesis* (*Werk*) in favor of *praxis* (*Tat*), the subjective pole over the objective, his former student makes the subjective an outcome of the experience of an objective event. This is the moment in which the spatial question again emerges even if never clearly formulated by Käsemann; the result of *poiesis* is not only objective in the abstract sense of the word—as one can attribute as a quality of a mathematical equation—but *it also takes place*. In the context of *praxis* there can be simultaneity, as, for example, when different acts are performed at the same *time*, but in the context of *poiesis* what takes *place* cannot be simultaneous with anything else; it is unique for the *space* it occupies. And thus: "miracles burst into place in the world" (*die Wunder sind in die Welt plazende*).[59]

Käsemann is the one that brings us the closest, among European theologians, to the realization that history is not only made by activities, but also by "poetry" that puts things into places. If Schleiermacher objected to the "objectivity" implied in the expression "last things" and preferred "eschatology," Käsemann turned full circle around and objected to "eschatology" in favor of the apocalyptic, because it precisely recovered the lost dimension of the objective character of the adjacency of another world at hand.

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Chapter 4

Eschatological Taxonomies

A typology does not impart logic to a historical situation but may reveal a logic already inherent.[1]

—Richard Morse

Cartography: The End of the End

"Do you think I will be allowed into the kingdom of God? In any case, this kingdom here on earth is good enough for me. I know I have a place here, maybe I am fooling myself but for me it is the here and now that matters." This was part of a conversation with a woman who had chosen a profession that was not acceptable to the community that she was part of. Maybe she did not remember Matthew 21:31 where Jesus says that tax collectors and prostitutes will enter the kingdom of God way ahead of the others or maybe she had lost all hope. Whatever the case may be, similar questions plague each of us as we plow our way through life.

Several types of eschatological thinking have been presented by renowned theologians and biblical scholars dealing with the subject in recent times. Regardless of how they are interpreted, they hide a question that is often occluded. If eschatology, as we have seen, is the discourse about "ending" or "endings," it can entail different meanings derived from the Greek noun *eschatos* or the plural *eschata*.

It may denote a limit or a border (and here it is connected to the word *peras*) or an opening, a passage (*peratos*). It may also refer to *telos,* which indicates a goal to be reached or achieved. And then it may also refer to an ultimate value or appraise either the highest (*axios*), or the lowest (*anaxios*). All these terms are denotations of, and possible synonyms for the word *eschatos*. There has been a semantic overlapping of these different senses throughout ancient and also partly in medieval times. However, what is important and to be noted was that *peras*, the denotation of a limit or a border was often implied. The New Testament expression, "ends of the earth" (*eschatou tes ges* as in Acts 1:8; 13:47) would designate that which could entail all the three senses, pointing to a beyond that could only be thought through fantasy or figments of the imagination. In a parallel passage by Paul in Romans 10:18 the plural of *peras* is used to render "to the ends of the world" (in the NRSV translation). In this case Paul avoids the equivocation and renders it unambiguously in spatial terms.

With the slow expansion of the horizons of the *oikoumene* (the known inhabited world),[2] the domain of the empire, cartography in the modern sense was developed. That throws us back to the fifteenth century CE when the first modern maps emerged. These maps represented the modern depiction of reality in a homogeneous two-dimensional surface and started to become the prevalent manner of representing territories or even the entire globe. With the maritime explorations of the Iberians and the Italians the imagined limits of the earth were expanded; the *eschaton* in the sense of a limit or border (*peras*) started to be obfuscated as a possible meaning for the biblical notion. There was no ending. The great navigators of the turn of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (Christopher Columbus, Vasco da Gama, Americo Vespucci, and Ferdinand Magellan, among others) roused up all from the dreams of a geographic end. They all opened the gates to endless exploration.

Copernicus finally, some years later would put to rest all pretense of having the earth or any place in it as a reference. If the Earth is not the center out of which margins may be devised and all is in rotation or revolution (Copernicus's celebrated major work was entitled *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*), then there cannot be any absolute space or unsurpassable demarcation. But, symbolically, it was Ferdinand Magellan who finally proved the impossibility of

thinking about a geographical end, a limit that could not be trespassed. By circumnavigating the whole globe in 1524, the Portuguese ousted the denotation of *peras*, of borders and unsurpassable limits from the theological understanding of eschatology. (This date, 1524, marks the beginning of the much talked "globalization.") Remaining henceforth were only the two other senses of eschatology at the disposal of theology, namely of a historical termination in the sense of *telos*, or the culmination of something with supreme value and splendor in the sense of *axios*.

Circa 1500 CE most of what was regarded to be the "new world" became the topic of many a literature. Paradise, the other place had been conquered and incorporated. But this is only one aspect of it. The other was that there was no longer an absolute outside in geographical terms. The Reformation, dated from the same period, decisively contributed to the loss of a spatial reference that from a center (Rome) would define the limits of what belongs or does not, namely that which lies beyond an absolute borderline (*peras*). Conscience became the center of a "terrain" without geography. Spatially locatable definite limits or openings no longer existed. Shortly thereafter Western literature made its entry into the world of fantasizing spaces that did not exist geographically, literally *utopias,* the no-places. Tommaso Campanella published *The City of the Sun* in 1602, Thomas More wrote *Utopia* in 1616, the same year the last play by Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, made its debut telling the story of a group being stranded in an island after a shipwreck.[3] This genre of classic utopic literature was brought to a close with none other than Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis*.

This was the time theology began to drift from the center of the universities to its margins as another among many disciplines, which had to comply to the emerging canons of truth forcing theology to relinquish its self-understanding as a practical knowledge or wisdom to become a theoretical discipline.[4] The bars for scientific criteria were raised or rather, *scientia* overtook *sapentia* as the truthful order of discourse. In search for academic legitimacy, theology left to fictional literature the exploration of the eschatological arena in its spatial sense. Hence the emergence of Utopian literature. To think about "ends" was to venture into an unknown territory that the sciences believed to be no more than an unchartered territory in wait for a proper discipline to conquer and map it out. If it were a true

territory there would be no place for mystery. Two centuries later, in his *Glaubenslehre*, Schleiermacher offers the telling commentary about the term "eschatology" introduced as a *terminus technicus* in substitution to the older "doctrine of the last things."[5]

The theological discourse about eschatology resulted in an understanding of it in two senses, one as leading to *telos,* casting this doctrine as a temporal event yet to be fully realized, and the other as *axios*, an experience relative neither to space nor time, but as the suspension of time in an eternal now (*nunc eternum*).

The former, the *telos*-oriented mode of eschatological thinking, was developed early, in the second century CE, with the emergence of Montanism and continued into the long history of chiliastic or millenarian doctrines, emphasizing the realization of the kingdom of God on earth. Here we find some of the revolutionary trends of the Christian tradition as well as some messianic movements in a cataclismatic verve. This line of eschatological thinking has been very influential in some of the major Western theologians since the middle of the last century.[6]

The latter, the *axios*-oriented eschatological approach, has been nurtured by the mystical vein that runs through the whole history of Christianity—not to mention its preeminence in other world religions, particularly in Buddhism. This trend takes a different form, yet still in the *axios* mode, with existentialism as it emerged incipiently in the nineteenth century, with Kierkegaard and Nietzsche as its emblematic figures, which "rescued" Western theological discourse in twentieth century.[7] The early reliance of Karl Barth on some Kierkegaardean insights,[8] or else the theological musings of Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich, Friedrich Gogarten, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, at times under the implicit or explicit influence of Martin Heidegger's existentialism, further underlines this eschatological interpretations.

A Survey of Western Eschatologies

This duality between the axiological and the teleological orientations should not be regarded as uncompromising or as static polarities. They are "ideal types," in the sense of Weber's taxonomic

theory.[9] But even as there is a pendulum movement, the poles that determine the extremes of the pendular movement can be clearly distinguished. Jacob Taubes, working in the middle of the twentieth century on his doctoral dissertation, *Occidental Eschatology*,[10] made a similar distinction. He detected in the emerging Christianity of the first centuries of the CE an eschatological tension between the inherited Jewish apocalyptic that, even with fantastic imagery, was rooted in the history of a people and tied to its destiny,[11] and the beginning of Gnosticism's incursion into Christian theology. In Taubes instigating analysis, "Paul marks the exact turning point from Christian apocalypticism to Christian Gnosis; eschatology and mysticism meet in him."[12] Yet both, Jewish-Christian apocalyptic and Gnosticism shared one presupposition: "The God beyond, the God of apocalypticism and Gnosis, is by nature eschatological because he challenges the world and promises new things. The original meaning of this expression becomes clear from the apocalyptic, Gnostic eschatology, and not from the static ontology of Hellenic, Hellenistic philosophy."[13]

Taubes's description of the development of eschatological thinking is schematic and insightful. The two streams that he recognizes parallel the distinction between the *telos*- and the *axios*-oriented types of eschatology. Taubes traces the early Jewish-Christian eschatology and identifies the two major streams it navigates on. On the apocalyptic side we have the development of chiliastic models that were often co-opted by the institutionalization of Christianity in the Roman Empire. A revolutionary change happens with Joachim of Fiori in the latter part of the twelfth century, anticipating the Copernican revolution of the fifteenth century. Copernicus's revolution for whom "there is an earth but no heaven"[14] anticipated Joachim. The Joachimite revolutionary change was to retrieve the apocalyptic roots of Jewish eschatology and turn it immanent to world history itself. He thus breaks with the Augustinian dual view of history and brings the Spirit to realize itself in the secular sphere.[15]

This trend culminates finally in the Enlightenment and the subsequent celebration of progress in the positivist tradition or in revolutionary political changes with characteristic messianic hopes that can be documented since Joachim. This is historically expressed

in the radical wing of the Reformation, the American and French Revolutions, and throughout the secularized forms of messianic vim and vigor that would be the trademark of modern times. The philosophical expression is found in the true heirs of the Joachimite revolution: Hegel and Marx and their immense crowd of epigones.

This apocalyptic motif played a decisive role in the struggle for colonial liberation in Third World countries as well, mostly since middle of the twentieth century, after World War II, in the independence won by many former European colonies throughout the world. Whether religiously or secularly rendered, the apocalyptic motif took the shape of the actualization of the kingdom of God in the midst and in the progressive unfolding of Western history.

The gnostic stream simultaneously runs along in the mystical tradition buttressed by Platonism or Neo-Platonism and is interwoven with the apocalyptic heritage, yet has its own distinctive features. If the apocalyptic vein made the spirit into the driving force of history, in the mystical tradition the spirit is the driving force of *eros*, the aptitude to raise oneself above the confines of the material world. Indeed, there is always an erotic element at the core of the gnostic tradition of which no further proof is needed than a rendition of the poetry of Saint John of the Cross, the great Spanish mystic of the Counter-Reformation, as in the following passage:

> Oh, night that guided me, Oh, night more lovely than the dawn,
> Oh, night that joined Beloved with lover, Lover transformed in
>   the Beloved!
> Upon my flowery breast, Kept wholly for himself alone,
> There he stayed sleeping, and I caressed him,
> And the fanning of the cedars made a breeze.
> The breeze blew from the turret, As I parted his locks;
> With his gentle hand he wounded my neck, And caused all my
>   senses to be suspended.
> I remained, lost in oblivion; My face I reclined on the Beloved.
> All ceased and I abandoned myself, Leaving my cares forgotten
>   among the lilies.[16]

In these two streams—the apocalyptic and the Gnostic—that Taubes finds in the wellspring of Western eschatologies, traces of

two of the senses of the Greek word *eschaton*, the teleological and the axiological, are clearly represented.

Transcendental Types

Among recent eschatological interpretations that gravitate toward the axiological and transcendental pole we find, for example, the existential interpretation of a Rudolf Bultmann. His Gifford Lecture (1954–1955) published under the title, *History and Eschatology,* carried in English a telling subtitle: The Presence of Eternity.[17] After a skillful analysis of the Western philosophy of history, the Marburg theologian concludes that it is in the present that the meaning of history lies, and is embedded in the responsible decisions one makes. For him, every moment is an eschatological moment waiting to be teased into waking.[18]

Bultmann and many of his contemporaries' proclivity toward the axiological meaning of *eschaton* was in part the result of the sharp teleological approach that came about with the work of Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer.

The position held by Weiss's and Schweitzer's research resulted in what, after Schweitzer, has been called "consistent" or "thoroughgoing" eschatology (*consequente Eschatologie*). Schweitzer's conclusion to his study of the nineteenth century's studies of the life of Jesus was indeed a tragedy of sorts. His picturing of the Son of Man trying in vain to bring history to a close, destroying the eschatological conditions rather than ushering them in, by throwing himself on the wheel of the world is not only disconcerting but tragic. The words, "the one immeasurably great Man, who was strong enough to think of Himself as the spiritual ruler of mankind and to bend history to His purpose, is hanging upon it still. That is His victory and His reign,"[19] says it all.

While Bultmann abdicated from a historical rooted approach,[20] others took Schweitzer's conclusion, yet not his sardonic tone, to say that the historical event is really the accomplished realization of God's kingdom. In the church, in its celebration of communion and in its preaching, the presence of Jesus, as the realization of the kingdom is again and again realized. This is the position taken by

C. H. Dodd, which at the end is not much different than the existential approach of Bultmann. In his words:

> The Church prays, "Thy Kingdom Come"; "Come, Lord Jesus." As it prays, it remembers that the Lord did come, and with him came the Kingdom of God. Uniting memory with aspiration, it discovers that He comes. He comes in His Cross and Passion; he comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. Each Communion is not a stage in the process by which his coming draws gradually nearer, or a milestone on the road by which we slowly approach the distant goal of the Kingdom of God on earth. It is a reliving of the decisive moment at which He came. The preaching of the Church is directed toward reconstituting in the experience of individuals the hour of decision that Jesus brought…It assumes that history in the individual life is of the same stuff as history at large; that is, it is significant so far as it serves to bring men face to face with God in His Kingdom, power and glory.[21]

The same "decision-motif" that was crucial for Bultmann is in fact repeated by Dodd. The axiological emphasis with gnostic overtones is the most determinant feature here, and the distancing from the teleological and historical approach with its apocalyptic leanings is kept at bay.

By the second half of the twentieth century there definitely is a change. It was from the naughty Bultmannian, Ernst Käsemann, that the challenge to the Gnostic-oriented eschatology was issued. Käsemann, defying the existentialist and transcendental theology of the Bultmannian school's penchant for the Gospel of John, gave a lecture on the theology of the evangelist John. Bultmann's former pupil cuts to the chase and titled his lecture "Heretic and Witness."[22] This lecture was delivered in 1951and caused a stir by labeling John a Gnostic even if still a true witness. Käsemann, who would later follow up with the publication of a couple of articles on the apocalyptic, lent his voice to a growing concern for making Christian theological eschatology immanent and connected with actual historically rooted events.

As a compromise between the transcendentally inspired eschatology and the historically oriented one we find the proposal of French

Protestant theologian Oscar Cullmann. Even if he draws the ire of Käsemann because of his understanding of Christian history as *Heilsgeschichte*, salvation history, he shares with his foe the same concern with Bultmann's program of demythologizing that ends up dehistoricizing Christianity. But Cullmann represents a transitional figure in the pendular movement oscillating between the axiological and the teleological poles. He does acknowledge Dodd's "realized" eschatology, yet only as a preliminary stage for a further unfolding, not following him in affirming a realized eschatology that is lived out in worship. Cullmann's has been dubbed as "inaugurated eschatology." Or in Cullmann's own words:

> If Christ is the "first-born from the dead," then this means that the End-time is already present. But it also means that a temporal interval separates the First-born from all other men who are not yet "born from the dead." This means then that we live in an interim time, between Jesus' Resurrection, which has already taken place, and our own, which will not take place until the End. It also means, moreover, that the quickening Power, the Holy Spirit, is already at work among us. Therefore Paul designates the Holy Spirit by the same term—*aparche*, first fruits (Romans 8:23)—as he uses for Jesus Himself (1 Corinthians 15:23). There is then already a foretaste of the resurrection.[23]

Longitudinal Types

Cullmann represents a transitional interpretation of eschatology that moves from the exclusive vertical relation, which he still maintains, but adds to it a horizontal dimension, combining thus the gnostic emphasis with the apocalyptic motif, the axiologico-transcendental and the teleologico-historical. In one of his later works he welcomes a group of younger theologians at the University of Munich who he acknowledges as a promise to see the continuation of his historical concern. He was referring to the group of theologians from several theological disciplines gathered around Wolfhart Pannenberg at the Protestant Faculty at the University of Munich. This group published a programmatic collection of essays edited by

Pannenberg and published it in 1961 under the title *Offenbarung als Geschichte* (Revelation as History).[24] This collection set the tone for what would become Pannenberg's sustained criticism of the transcendental types, particularly Bultmann's, throughout his prolific theological career. This is how he presents his position in an accessible later work:

> The future resurrection of the dead will reveal what already forms the secret of our life history for the eternal God who is present in our life. In the light of this unique intermingling of time and eternity, the strange words of the Gospel of John become understandable: he who believes in the Son already has eternal life. Thust the evangelist makes Christ say: "He who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" (John 5:24). The future of the final consummation is already present in a hidden way, and for that reason the final decision can already be made now, in the encounter with Jesus. That does not mean that according to John this decision is not a matter of the future. But a decision in the future it is already present in a hidden way.[25]

Unlike Käsemann's use of the Gospel of John to criticize its central role in the Bultmannian School, Pannenberg's choice of using this gospel in the passage above follows a different strategy. He does not aim his criticism at the gospel, but precisely at the hermeneutic that has been used in rendering its meaning. The criticism by Pannenbeg is intentionally aimed at building his case at the very theological citadel of the adversary, that is, Bultmann.

Pannenberg's theological lineage goes back to Hegel's explication of history as the epistemic realization of an historical actualization of the spirit (*Geist*). But he reads Hegel through the lenses of the so-called old-Hegelians often dubbed as "right-wing Hegelianism," and particularly through the work of Philipp Marheineke, theologian at the University of Berlin and colleague of Hegel.[26] The relevant uniqueness of this theological reading of the philosopher, and so also of Pannenberg, lies in the fact that the resurrection is not a mere representation (or image-thought—*Vorstellung*) to be overcome or sublated (*aufgehoben*) in the philosophical concept (*Begriff*), but the

real thing.[27] In summary, Pannenberg's forceful argument is that Christ's resurrection is anticipation, or, as he prefers, a *prolepsis* of the final eschatological moment reserved for a future, yet embryonically maturing in the unfolding of history.

Context certainly plays a decisive role in the struggle of interpretations. Bultmann, Barth, and others of their generation were developing their theological eschatology in the context of a deep and profound crisis that went from World War I through the reconstruction after World War II. It was indeed an arduous time in which decisions of harsh severity were being called for to awaken in the present the eschatological moment from the slumbering indifference of so many to the reigning regimes of power spreading their tentacles over most of Europe (read Fascism, Nazism, and Stalinism). Pannenberg and his companions, writing already in the 1960s were living through a period of relative political and economic stability. The word "crisis" was downgraded to a nuisance. In the North Atlantic context, prosperity language seized the day, animated by a renewed belief in progress.

Yet a parenthesis in these reflections about the contextual factor is called for here. Context explains a lot, but it does not account for everything. To use Marxist jargon, there is a relative autonomy of the world of ideas, or to use Louis Althusser bon mot, ideas have the power to "over-determine" a determining context. The awareness of the contextual character of theology has been one of the most salient features in theological methodology in the second half of the twentieth century.[28] But more recently the methodological limits of contextualization have also been brought to the fore. The basic problem with contextualization as a methodological principle lies in the limits of a given context—what belongs and what does not. And, this is hard to define because of the multiple factors—social, ethnic, national, psychological, economic, and so forth—that it falls into the slippery slope of a *reductio ad absurdum* in which a context might be ultimately reduced to a solipsistic individual ego. However, within accepted pragmatic parameters there is no question about the decisive role it has played in theology.[29]

Taking heed of this warning, there have been voices that were speaking about a reality much broader than their social context.

Even in the midst of the European crisis there was a significant voice, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit trained as a paleontologist who had done extensive work in China. His significant theological work, in particular, suffered censure from the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church and was not brought to light until after his death in 1955, although his manuscripts were being distributed underground, and even before formally published became extremely relevant for theological discussions.[30] *The Phenomenon of Man,*[31] the most celebrated of his books written some 15 years before his death, received its publication only posthumously. As Pannenberg looked at the development of human history, Teilhard looked at the cosmic evolution and found the Christ event as the axial moment driving the cosmic forces to a final culmination in an "omega point," which is the full realization of all in God and God in all. Thus he summarizes his whole eschatological vision in an architectonic design of intergalactic magnitude:

> Christ, principle of universal vitality because sprung up as man among men, put himself in the position (maintained ever since) to subdue under himself, to purify, to direct and superanimate the general ascent of consciousness into which he inserted himself. By a perennial act of communion and sublimation, he aggregates to himself the total psychism of the earth. And when he has gathered everything together and transformed everything, he will close in upon himself and his conquests, thereby rejoining, in a final gesture, the divine focus he has never left. Then, as St. Paul tells us, God shall be all in all.[32]

Teilhard was as brilliant as controversial both as a theologian and also in the field of his own training, paleontology. But he was the most influential apologist for the controversial early Christian idea of the restoration of all things (*apokatastasis ton panton*). Controversial it is because it implies a form of radical universalism. Even if the controversial term does not appear in that passage of Paul quoted by Teilhard (1 Corinthians 15:28) it does appear in a speech by Peter in Acts 3:21 and is arguably the guiding idea in the quotation from Paul.

The teleological- or longitudinal-oriented eschatologies have struggled with the *apokatastasis* problem in a manner that the

transcendental eschatologies were able to avoid. For the latter, if eschatology refers to a moment of decision and the suspension of temporality, or to the unilateral decision of God to justify the sinner on account of faith, the possibility of perdition or condemnation is kept open and undecided precisely because world history is not at stake (the gnostic element lurking in here). But if it is a resolution of universal history or of cosmic evolution (*apokatastasis*), exclusion stacks the cards against the notion of a restoration of all, because either God brings all to completion and creation is restored or God is not sufficiently in control and something from God's creation will be destined to ruin. If it is the former, why did not God do away with evil to begin with? And, if it is the latter what about the all loving God? This is the classical problem of theodicy since Epicurus: either God is all powerful but not altogether good, or God is good, but not omnipotent. Transcendental eschatologies dodge this issue by recognizing God's presence when the divine is experienced or believed to be; or else it is not an issue at all because one decides simply not to acknowledge presence, that is, *parousia*, which means simply presence. But the teleological approach cannot bypass the theodicy conundrum because the resolution is deferred to a historical future in which this issue will have to be eventually defined, and the *apokatastasis* issue comes to the fore with vengeance. The question of the road not taken, to use the metaphor of Robert Frost,[33] becomes decisive when the longitudinal perspective is adopted.

Within the same type of longitudinal, telos-oriented eschatologies an ingenious solution to the problem was provided to theology by the process philosophy developed by Alfred North Whitehead in his accomplished metaphysical system as presented in its most elaborate form in his book *Process and Reality*.[34] As any metaphysics, Whitehead's system is highly complex. But the point that is important for us here is that process philosophy and then also process theology, sacrifices God's omnipotence to preserve divine benevolence. The *eschaton* is defined by that which God is capable of reclaiming to God's own self. The theological framing of this eschatological model has a school of theological representatives. One of the most relevant voices in this context, and arguably the dean of process

theology, is of John Cobb, Jr. And this is how he reads Whitehead's relevance for redefining Christian eschatology:

> For Whitehead the ultimate ground of assurance of the worthwhileness of our efforts cannot lie in a future event in this planet. Such a consummating event, if all goes well, could have penultimate significance, but it would not bring an end to the process. Eventually this planet will become uninhabitable. Our resurrection cannot be here or on any other planet revolving around some other sun. It must be in God. What is resurrected in God is what has occurred here in the course of natural and historical events. Here is where decisions are made and the content of the Kingdom is determined. There can be no depreciation of the importance of the historical future in this view. Rather it is about the importance of the historical future and confirmation of how we freely shape and undergird it by the truly eschatological resurrection of all things within the divine life. It is important that we should succeed in realizing new levels of justice, but even if we fail, our efforts count forever in God.[35]

The merits of process theology in addressing questions of anxieties in Western societies about its accomplishments is profoundly—and it is important to recognize, with pastoral sensibilities—addressed in Cobb's final sentence in the quote above: "our efforts count forever in God." There is no cataclysmic termination of the order of things even if our little environment called "earth" eventually succumbs to other intergalactic forces. The universe remains and our resurrection is in what we did and strived for and this is kept in God forever. In process theology's lingo this is called "objective immortality."[36] Our subjectivity, our self-consciousness of who we are remains in the reified form that we left in our deeds, and efforts as footprints after we pass away and join with the remains of our being and deeds, the endless and ongoing progressive process of the cosmos. This is called objective immortatlity.[37]

The Lost Dimension

This survey of what Jacob Taubes called "occidental eschatology" reveals one deficit that has been already referred to several times.

What we have seen so far is a limited selection of representative thoughts on eschatology aimed at providing a frame for the themes and motifs prominent in major theologians of the last one hundred years. These were the ones we saw being developed throughout the history of the West since the apocalyptic and gnostic elements merged into the mainstream of the Christian tradition. The list is by no means exhaustive and aimed only at providing ideal types and connecting them with history and context in the attempt of acknowledging a pattern. To repeat the epigraph of this chapter: "A typology does not impart logic to a historical situation but may reveal a logic already inherent."[38] The types discussed above indeed reveal the Western proclivity to restrict itself to two basic interpretations of the meaning of what *eschaton* is as end or termination; it further suggested some reasons for why it is so. This reductionism being born out of two different streams that irrigated the soil in which Christian theology flourished, has been prevalent in the resurgence of eschatology for the last one hundred years. The emphasis, practically exclusive on the axiological and the teleological senses of the term, has left out of the picture the spatial dimension of eschatology. To this issue we shall turn to in the next chapters.

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Chapter 5

A Latitudinal Approach to Eschatology

A kind of paradigm shift is occurring; we are perhaps now acceding to a new, invigorated sense of looking at the struggle over geography in an interesting and imaginative ways.[1]

—Edward Said

Understanding is something one does best when one is on the borderline.[2]

—Peter Høeg

The longitudinal approach to eschatology, following the Hegelian trope of the Earth's movement around the Sun—the "heliotrope," starts to be challenged in modern theologies by those who wrote from other latitudes. As Christianity has migrated en masse to the symbolic planetary south, latitudinal questions became unavoidably inscribed into the scores of theological compositions. Yet language was still in dire need of some new metaphors and concepts that frame *theologically* this new sense of spatiality and its impact on the traditional doctrines of the church, but most crucially, the "doctrine of the last things" as eschatology has been dubbed for well over a millennium.

This migration to the south and the departure of the "heliotrope" as the commanding figure for the eschatological discourse was headed and led by what could be called a "paradigm shift in theology" led by liberation theology, as the global movement of thinking theology outside the North-Atlantic canonic parameters.

Liberation theology, however, is a plural concept. The voices are many and labels to identify their uniqueness also reduce them to a typological common denominator that is neither that common nor exactly a denominator. Many of the authors generally classified as being liberation theologians have expressed their concern about the label, sometimes imposed upon them, insofar as it suppresses the uniqueness of their voices. Yet it is exactly the emergence of their plural voices irreducible to a single canon that constitutes the uniqueness of the phenomenon called "liberation theology." As such, it is not a definable concept but a catalytic notion for theologies that challenge the hegemonic theological canon. Hegemony as used in liberation theologies is a concept borrowed from Italian social philosopher Antonio Gramsci. It designates a certain ruling order that combines power and consent. Under the conditions of hegemony, he writes, "the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as 'dominion' (*dominio*) and as 'intellectual and moral leadership' (*direzione*)."[3] In other words, hegemony designates a situation in which power can be exercised without the need for overt use of force; it creates an uncontested régime of truth. But, most importantly, under this "uncontested" régime eschatological discourse is kept at bay. Liberation theologies can thus be broadly defined as an indisposition toward the hegemonic canons of Western theology, a sort of an allergy. In this sense it manifests itself in an array of theological expressions that, *lato sensu*, include along with third world theologies,[4] North American black theology, feminist theology, womanist theology, and other adjectival or genitive theologies that challenge the dominant Western academic theological productions.

"Liberation theologies" is the appellation used to describe a theological production that, until very recently, had been discredited within acceptable limits of the academia as a suitable form of theological thought but whose presence now is perceptible and even academically accepted, while being no longer under the former canons of theological and ecclesial hegemony.[5] Hence, looking into how these canons emerged is a necessary first step in lifting up the differential voice these theologies represent and the unity in diversity they constitute for proposing a different eschatological discourse.

In fact, one could plausibly argue that liberation theologies emerged out of eschatological experiences of being marginalized *epistemes*. The audacity of the distinct voices emerging from contexts alien to the cradle of Constantinian Christianity do not speak in unison. But if there is, and there is, something that brings them together it is the eschatological experience of being in the margins, hanging at the edges, at the margins of systems and powers, of customs and propriety, ecclesial allegiance and orthodoxy. In other words, their relevance lie in the capability of laying bare these very extremities of the conventional eschatological discourse.

This diversity and unity is particularly remarkable on the discussion of eschatology; the doctrine of the "last things," the "things" that lie at the fringes of what is the same, the already familiar, that which is in the adjacency of unexpected otherness. Eschatology is a discourse on liminality, marginality, on that which is in ontological, ethical, and also epistemological sense different. Ontologically, because it addresses the question of an *Other* reality; ethically, because it pertains to a different moral code, as different as the Sermon on the Mount is from all our ethical systems and moral prescriptions; epistemologically, because eschatology is also about the liminality of our accepted epistemic régimes, that is, that there are other often suppressed "knowledges" beyond the commonly accepted noetic realm of the academia.

New Paradigms for Eschatological Thinking

Hegel's rendering of Western history as a movement from east to west with Asia as the beginning and Europe as the end of history"[6] failed to mention that most of this history has not only moved from east to west, but also from north to south of the planet, and in both cases vice-versa. The merit of Hegel was indeed to bring back the Joachimite eschatological tradition shifting the whole discussion of eschatology from an otherworldly perspective to an immanent one, making the end of things the culmination of a historical process instead of an exit from the world or from history. As Karl Löwith remarked, "Hegel believed himself loyal to the genius of Christianity by realizing the kingdom of God on earth. And, since he transposed

the Christian expectation of a final consummation into the historical process as such, he saw the world's history as consummating itself."[7] Hegel was arguing against transcendental eschatology in the technical sense of the term, that is, referring to nonsensuous realities or being beyond the realm of experience. However, transcendental type of eschatology has been and continues to be influential in theological circles[8] and, with quite different theological presuppositions, is particularly prominent in popular piety with its extravagant and often bizarre imagery.[9] This is, then, the first distinction to lift up, the one between a transcendental eschatology and the other immanent to world's history, of which Hegel might be the best expositor. The former finds its roots in gnostic thinking, the latter in Semitic apocalyptic and in Christian millennialism.

The "heliotrope" is evoked in the West to frame the search of meaning in historical terms, but only to be abandoned in the self-consciousness' closure of meaning. The sun becomes the metaphor for self-consciousness but what has turned it into a metaphor— the perennial movement—is precisely what is abandoned with the standstill of European self-consciousness. Within the dominance of a longitudinal interpretation of time as a continuum, the alternative option would be to postulate an unending progression that inevitably would lead to a cyclical view of time (and, as Nietzsche saw it unequally well, to a relinquishing of all responsibility). A cyclical view of time remains tempting, but is fundamentally incompatible with the Judeo-Christian messianic tradition. As Löwith has insisted, Hegel's alternative casts the longitudinal paradigm of eschatology in a Christian mold and blows the final horn signaling its triumph. The meaning is gained and the gates are secured.

However, this brings about also an impasse. If history was coming to an end, why is it that we still get notifications of time of sunrise and sunset? The response can only be in a deferment of the coming arrival of the end, but an end that is already implicit in the present. Enrique Dussel has pointed out that this framing of the Western understanding of history and then also of its end or consummation results in the denial of true otherness and radical novelty.

European philosophy has given almost exclusive preponderance to temporality. No wonder it has now given a privileged place to the

fundamentality of the future in its emphasis on *Entwurf* (*proyecto*) and the *Prinzip Hoffnung* ("hope principle"). This philosophy must be understood well, and its snares must be discovered...The *proyecto*, no matter how utopian its desired future, is only the actualization of what is potentially in the present world. To give prominence to future temporality is to give privileged place to what we are already.[10]

The longitudinal perspective in dealing with the Western eschatological discourse, as well as its mystical counterpart are both generated from the same source that has been unable to recognize, as we have in the gospels, that the end is nearby, adjacent; it is not inscribed in the calendar, but by the threshold that opens itself by the place one is at.

In his generally positive commentary on European "progressivist" theology, Gustavo Gutierrez has a very clear criticism along these very lines: "The theology of liberation begins from the questions asked by the poor and plundered of the world, by 'those without a history,' by those who are oppressed and marginalized precisely by the interlocuter of progressivist theology."[11]

"Those without history" are somewhere! And from this place, this spatial (dis)location eschatology is being envisioned differently. To appreciate the impact of this spatial awareness in eschatology one needs to look at postcolonial theories and how they emerged out of a renewed eschatological sense of what is meant by "the end."

Postcolonialism

The emergence of a postcolonial consciousness and praxis, and now a robust theoretical body of writings after World War II has shown that the "heliotrope" and the rendition of the world's consummation in immanent historical terms is not enough to account for God's *presence* in the world even in the midst of a deep sense of absence.

What we are observing under the auspices of postcolonial theories is precisely the emergence of voices and of faces that before were caricatured, imposed, constructed, and invented.[12] The Eurocentric worldview with its constituencies and systems, both religious and secular, is now decentered, and becoming postcolonial. The very awareness of

being decentered already implies a periphery, a margin, an *eschaton*. If liberation theology did anything to the canons of Western theological academia it was to make manifest its end and limits.

While colonialism dominated and displaced the *Other*, postcolonialism emplaced and empowered the *Other*. It also jolted the North Atlantic out of its snooty stupor into an awareness of its own particularity, contextuality, epistemic location, and ends confined and condescending as these were.[13] The postcolonial perspective is then the eschatological announcement of a departure from a particular way of seeing the world that thought of itself as the universal *telos* of all history.

Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre* announced the impossibility of new heresies appearing in Christianity.

> For new heresies no longer arise, now that the church recruits itself out of its own resources; and the influence of alien faiths on the frontier and in the mission-field of the Church must be reckoned at zero so far as regards the formation of doctrine, there they may long remain in the piety of the new converts a great deal which has crept in from their religious affections of former times, and which, if it came to clear consciousness and were expressed as doctrine, would be recognized as heretical.[14]

This is nothing but an arrogant blindness to otherness, be it that of voices or faiths. If the rest of the world and all the other faiths cannot make a difference for Christianity, it is quite logical to assume that Christianity has either isolated itself in a confined sectarian and esoteric position or, which is the case, it understands itself to be the religious conqueror of the world. The postcolonial perspective crushes this attitude of the Western world. It does not, however, negate its viewpoints but instead diverts and draws one's attention to not only the differences among people and their discourses but also to the preponderant inequalities[15] And this inequality runs deep into what the eschatological discourse is really about: life and death, beginnings and endings, even though life is a compromise that we settle between the two.

Postcolonialism indicates a crossing over, transgression of the boundaries, the *eschata*, of the colonial world, simultaneously

incorporating some of its values and accomplishments while abandoning others in a dynamic process. This process called as "hybridization" thus has an eschatological twist to it. Just as hybridization brings together incongruent entities resulting in hybrids that are unique in character (the god-man, Jesus), the language of postcolonialism has the unique character of "heteroglossia," an intersection of different semantic fields producing unexpected communicative effects.[16]

"Can we continue to organize the events around us regarding the human and the non-human world with the help of the idea of a universal history of humanity?" This question in an essay by Jean-François Lyotard[17] ought to be taken seriously in its rhetorical intention. The very idea of a universal history emerges as a Western idea and not as a universal one. But how did the West develop this blindness as to its own particularity, as we find in Kant and Herder? Why did it see its history as the universal destiny of the world, as Hegel proposed? Why does the West continue to announce the end of history, as in Kojève or Fukuyama, when other histories are happening? The answer to these questions must be sought in the very logic of colonialism and some of its hidden mechanisms. Some of these answers have been theologically articulated by liberation theologies and their view of the kingdom of God, as the fundamental symbol of the eschatological vision of hybrid otherness.

The Reign of God and the Signs of Places

How does the kingdom of God become an eschatological vision of otherness? The theological articulation of postcolonial discourse and postcolonial practices pertains to the life of faith communities and it locates the advent of the reign of God in particular communities, while reminding one and all that the "signs of the times" had to be complemented with the "signs of places."[18]

It is in the context of particular communities that the gospel of the reign of God, as the eschatological symbol par excellence, finds its expression because the message of the kingdom has a particular,

exclusive, and located addressee: the poor, as the specific cradle of the church.[19] Juan Luis Segundo makes this loud and clear when he says:

> *The kingdom of God is not announced to everyone*. It is not "proclaimed" to all…The kingdom is destined for certain groups. It is theirs. It belongs to them. Only for them it will cause joy. And, according to Jesus, the dividing line between joy and woe produced by the kingdom runs between *the poor* and *the rich*.[20]

The combination of a particular ecclesiology with the eschatological message of the incoming Reign of God created the frame for the latitudinal eschatology that shifts the emphasis from the univocal transcendental or longitudinal understanding of eschatology to a multilayered topological or latitudinal perspective. This eschatological approach has the impending urgency of apocalyptic tidings because what is to be expected lies here already, nearby or adjacently, instead of being perennially deferred to an impending future, or else already realized.

The kingdom of God is topologically nearby, *choratic*, even if the faithful have not fully and resolutely stepped over into it. The editors of a collection of worldwide representatives of liberation theologies phrased it like this:

> Hence, eschatology is no longer "the last things" but "those things in our midst." The stress is on a God acting in history and on the need to discover God's direction for abundant life in the midst of our ambiguous and conflict ridden history. Prophecy, then, so intimately connected to eschatological vision and hope, does not involve predicting the future or mapping out the end times, but discerning God's activity in the world now, the meaning of that activity for the community of faith, and the appropriate response.[21]

The ecclesiological dimension of eschatology is decisively tilted in favor of an argument for the discontinuity between the church and the kingdom, yet not in opposition to each other. In a latitudinal eschatological perspective the gates of the Reign of God are framed as marginal spaces. It is the hybrid space of adjacency between the old *aeon* and the new, yet topologically already nearby.[22] This adjacency is what brings us close to the apostolic witness regarding the

kingdom of God. To phrase it in another way, the kingdom of God is so close and nearby that we might have overstepped it in our amusement in the playgrounds of promise. So, this is the *eschaton*, the space between the spaces, the margins that demarcate the limits of desire and interest, the house and the street. It is a space between spaces, belonging to neither, yet adjacent to both,[23] which is best expressed by the Greek word *chōra,* which etymologically means "to lie open, be ready to receive," a space between places or limits. In the words of Gutierrez, "if the church wishes to be faithful to the God of Jesus Christ, it must become aware of itself from the underneath, from among the poor of this world, the exploited classes, the despised ethnic groups, the marginalized cultures."[24]

The word "margin" receives a thick soteriological meaning and it is not restricted to its geographic or socioeconomic denotations. Margin stands for the Greek *eschaton* as the place/time of judgment where salvation or condemnation, liberation or enslavement is pronounced. As we saw in chapter 5, in biblical imagery, an example is Golgotha, the place on the outskirts (*chōra*) of the holy city of Jerusalem in which God is abandoned, dead, and absent (*apousia*) and yet, *sub contraria specie*, present (*parousia*) and revealed. And this verdict takes place in the crossing where precisely the church is, being at the same time the crossing guard—*communio viatorum*—and the haven for those who have only one another for protection and accompaniment—*communio salutis*. In the words of Sobrino, "the Church of the Poor finds the historical site of conversion, *the place of the other and the force to become the other*."[25]

The use of a Greek word as *eschaton* to name a doctrine (eschatology) does not hold the doctrine ultimately accountable to the etymology of its root-term. But the etymology of the word lifts up dimensions of what "end" means, and these etymological nuances have been ignored. Moreover, the spatial denotations of *eschaton* have been glaringly absent from Western eschatological discourse. As much as the longitudinal perspective has insisted on an end within history and not beyond it, it is necessary to realize that *eschaton* also implies an end within space and not beyond it.

Foremost to explicitly articulate this spatial eschatological vision was Enrique Dussel. In his philosophical work, he presents the

awareness of spatiality as the prerequisite for the recognition of the other—be it a person, nonhuman nature, or God—that breaks with colonial and neocolonial totalities. These totalities create peripheries, but hide the fact that they are also eschatological margins, margins to another person, another world, and to the divine Other who is not a fetish. Totality produces distancing, while eschatology is proximity, adjacency to the recognized exteriority. For Dussel, eschatology as "proximity [is] . . . the most essential reality of a person, the beginning of the philosophical discourse of liberation"[26] Philosophy as well as theology starts with geopolitics, which is the eschatological awareness of the exteriority of the other. "A philosophy of liberation must always begin by presenting the historico-ideological genesis of what it attempts to think through, giving priority to its spatial, worldly setting."[27] The denial of spatial exteriority and, therefore, of proximity lies at the root of systems of dominance, because "before the *ego cogito* there is an *ego conquiro*; 'I conquer' is the practical foundation of 'I think.'"[28] Eschatology is the final realization of the proximity of the origin: "Proximity is the word that best expresses the essence of persons, their first (archeological) and last (eschatological) fullness."[29]

There is one further characteristic of the term *eschaton* in the New Testament, which points to the apocalyptic overtones it also entails. In the parable of the banquet in Luke 14:7–11 Jesus admonishes the disciples not to sit in the first places, but way back in the last place (*eschaton topon*) from where one will be invited to move up to a place of honor. Here the motif is the reversal that is often repeated elsewhere in the New Testament: the first (*prōtoi*) will be the last (*eschatoi*) and the last first. The *eschaton* is the location in which a reversal occurs. It is not so much something to be awaited for as it is something already and presently near.

In his commentary on the book of Revelation, Pablo Richard articulates this eschatological awareness calling attention that even time and history is a function of the present: "Eschatology is not an abstract discourse on the end or the future, but a concrete discourse on what is bringing to an end the present period. Just as apocalyptic speaks of the past for the sake of the present, it likewise speaks of the future for the sake of the present." And Richard continues: "'I am coming

soon' (*érchomai tachú*)…Jesus is not referring to his second 'coming'…at the end of time, but rather to his coming now."[30] Gustavo Gutiérrez in a long essay included in his book *The Power of the Poor in History* expresses this same idea as a "Theology from the Underside of History."[31] This is the latitudinal move that in his estimation signals the divide still existing between what he calls "European progressive theology" (he uses the examples of Bonhoeffer, Moltmann and Metz, among others) and Third World theologies. The eschatology of the theologies of liberation is not about progress, which suggests a longitudinal paradigm, but about limits, borders, and margins. Its attempt is to make these margins visible, for they are the turning point to another world, a world that can only be devised by those who dare to stand at its threshold and remove the veil that hides the truth beyond it. And herein lies the meaning of "apocalypse."

With these two characteristics that this reading of eschatology provides, namely the semantic frame of time *and* space in which it is inscribed, and the apocalyptic reversal that it signals, the latitudinal approach has, in addition to a literal geographical sense inherited from postcolonial studies, extended metaphorical significations and usages for spatiality. Already in postcolonial studies this metaphoricity is at work when the colonization of culture, of economic and of social structures, which do not demarcate literal geographic territories, are represented by spatial metaphors whose limits or margins are the *eschata* to be crossed. In a latitudinal perspective these eschatological moments are represented as crossing of "territories" of oppression in different anthropological, social, and cosmic levels.[32] A personal-psychic level is defined as the individual subjective acts or omissions, which create human unaccountability toward the other, either by ignoring or by conquering the other, which is traditionally rendered as actual sins. Further, a sociopolitical level is identified as structural systems that render individuals and societies either incapable of finding their way out or help to extend the tentacles of domination upon others. This second level is the most commonly known acceptation of the copula oppression-liberation, but by no means the only. A third level pertains to the whole of existence in which even the last enemy, death, will be overcome, expressed by the symbol of the resurrection.

With the territorialization of eschatology, even in its metaphorical usages, one should speak not as much of the *eschaton* in singular as in the plural: *ta eschata*. These *eschata* are limits, margins that are (1) either set by individuals or systems, or (2) are by them suffered, while liberation represent the blessed crossing of them of which the ultimate is death itself. However, in either case what can be observed is that these *eschata* are kept from being recognized as such. In the *first* case, *eschata* that are intentionally set are described as hubris, or sins of strength. Sin is expressed here in either individual terms or in socioeconomic and political systems that dominate, assimilate alterity or otherness resulting in exploited and colonized territories. This exploitation works insofar as the margins, the limits of a domain, which might range from psychological abuse to the global economy, are hidden. In this case a beyond cannot be devised and its eschatological dimension, as *eschaton*, as such cannot be discerned; it ought not to be discerned because the center is self-referential, it abducts the gaze as a fetish. In traditional religious language this can be described as idolatry.[33] In the *second* case, *eschata* that are suffered can be described in as demonry, the incapability of either an individual or a social group to have a gathered will. These are the flip sides of *eschata* that are set. Demons possess entities that cause what is under their domain to be invisible to their own selves. One does not know who one is, and becomes a "nonperson," in the felicitous usage of the Kafkian motif by Gutiérrez.[34] And a nonperson is not someone who does not have a personal humanity, but the one who by being rendered invisible does not know the contours of his or her own existence, the *eschata* to true being. This is the reason Victor Turner describes invisibility as one of the basic characteristic of those on liminal "spaces."[35] The other is that the one on the limen is not only invisible but also mute or marked by dissimulation of one's identity.[36]

One of the great inspirational sources of liberation theology has been the work of Paulo Freire with adult education in which the basic motif is of *conscientização* (consciousness raising).[37] In eschatological terms, *conscientização* can be described as an exorcism in which people encounter themselves by finding their limits, name them and, therefore, devise liberative possibilities of self-transcendence.

In collective terms demonry becomes what often is referred to as cultural colonialism or ideology in its pejorative sense, that is, a system of ideas that function so as to rationalize and make domination acceptable and even desirable, depriving a social group from their own authentic self-expression.

Time, Space, and Transcendent

The raising of the latitudinal perspective for interpreting eschatology should not be read as an abandonment of the other perspectives presented earlier, but it does imply a radicalizing of them, lest we forget that in this perspective liberation is a historical reality, that is, it entails also a longitudinal view. In Gutiérrez's widely accepted (even when revised) definition of liberation as entailing three levels,[38] only the first one, the sociopolitical level, entails an explicit latitudinal view. The second level, which emphasizes a process of humanization throughout history, relies on a longitudinal perspective.[39] And the third level, which is the realization of the full communion with God, beyond time and space, implies also a transcendental dimension. Such a synthetic approach, often referred to as "integralism," is the result of liberation theologies' attempt to not be secluded to the category of adjectival or genitive theology. However, its merit and its unique contribution to eschatology lies in the stress laid upon the latitudinal view or perspective. Phrasing it more radically, this "partiality," this one-*sided* latitudinalism, this insistence that the *eschaton* not be read apart from *ta eschata*, that history does not suppress the role of space is the distinctive mark that etched liberation theologies into the theological scenario as a counterhegemonic, hybrid, and heteroglot voice uttered by those who understand. And to be reminded once more of the words of Peter Høeg in his novel *Borderliners,* "understanding is something one does best when one is on the borderline."[40]

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An Interlude

À Flor da Pele[*]

Divine life is immediate, whereas knowledge is an operation that requires suspension and waiting, . . . but every time it [intimate experience] takes place it must be a complete answer to a total question.[1]

—Georges Bataille

One of the most revealing eschatological experiences depicted in the Bible is found not at the end of the entire biblical narrative, as in the "apocalypse" of John, the book of Revelation, but very early on in the biblical narrative. After they ate from the Tree of Knowledge, Adam and Eve realized that they were nude. Not that they were not clothless before, but the realization of their condition, of knowing the exposure of the *extremities* of their most intimate space, the skin of their bodies, brought them shame. And what is shame if not the realization of our limitedness, our finitude, literally, our gracelessness?

Shame, as discussed above, is distinct from guilt in that guilt implies a conscious trespass, an audacity to go beyond that which is proper to a human being. Shame, however, is the sense of being trespassed upon, of being exposed. While guilt involves activity—one is ware of transcending what is to oneself the proper—, shame is marked by a passive experience of being acted upon, denuded, for which a cover is demanded, a mediating screen between oneself and the external world that witnesses the external exposure. Grace betrayed is guilt; grace withhold is shame. To phrase it differently, guilt is to politics (the facing of and the interaction with the other in the medieval sense

of *politia*) what shame is to economy (the nurturing of the self in labor and sexual reproduction in the medieval sense of *oeconomia*).[2]

In this configuration, philia, friendship, and its counterparts (enmity, etc.,) belong to "politics," while eroticism belongs to the "economic" order, being a subversion of the protective intent of the function of the household, playing with the limits of shame. Exposing, but hiding at the same time. Eroticism is intimately linked to clothing and the interplay it has with nudity, both in the male and the female body—though the "erotic capital" of females is arguably more notable.[3]

Giorgio Agamben in his long essay entitled "Nudity" in the book of the same title discusses an article by Erik Peterson on the "Theology of Clothing" to bring the connection between grace and shame to the fore. Peterson works with the distinction between nudity and the absence of clothing. While the first couple in paradise was without clothing before the Fall, "supernatural grace enveloped the human person like a garment."[4] And Agamben takes the theological consequences. "The truth of the matter is that the seemingly secondary problem concerning the relationship between nudity and clothing coincides with another problem that theologically is utterly fundamental: the link between nature and grace…The problem of nudity is, therefore, the problem of human nature in its relationship with grace."[5]

In the text of Genesis after the shame that was felt by the original couple, God makes garments of skin for the first couple to clothe them. This is symbolically important because it signals the presentation of a gift *after* they were striped from the "garment of grace." A gift or, in other words, created grace substitutes for the original grace, that is, a supernatural grace: clothing. If before they were immortal, devoid of any sense of what lay exterior to the limits of the self or, plainly said, devoid of eschatology, after the Fall they were no longer oblivious to exteriority and became aware of the *eschaton*; the "artificial" gift is what shields them from living in nudity, always at the edge of their existence and afflicted by shame. Clothing is what protects the body as an artifact, a "tool" or an instrument to administer the *eschaton* for the time that remains.

Agamben, appealing to Basil of Caesarea and John of Damascus, comes to his conclusion: "knowledge of nudity (*epignōsis tēs gymnotētos*)

signifies the loss of the condition of ecstasy and the blissful igno-
rance of self that defined the Edenic condition...Nudity—or rather
denudation—as a cipher of knowledge, belongs to the vocabulary
of philosophy and mysticism."[6] This is why it is a "tool," the first
"tool"—if we don't count the fig leaves—to protect humans from
shame and tame nature from its effects on an exposed body. While
in paradise the garment of grace was part of the human nature sur-
rounding it as a halo, after the Fall it indicates a gift that is given and
is no longer endemic to the human but is given as an external apparel.
This is what makes clothing a symbol for a grace received (*gratia
creata*) and a register of the sinful *nature* of the human who without
it would be damned in unbearable shame, shielding the body from
shameful exposure.

This brings us unavoidably to Georges Bataille's theory of reli-
gion. For him, religion is this longing for lost intimacy that is in
us humans something like a reminiscence of the animal world
where we came from, symbolically rendered as the Garden of Eden.
"Something tender, secret, and painful draws us out of the inti-
macy which keeps vigil on us, extending its glimmer into animal
darkness."[7] What causes this rupture with intimacy is precisely, for
Bataille, the creation of the tool that plays in his theory the same
role as the mythical garment of skin plays in the biblical narrative.
"The positing of the object, which is not given in animality, is in
the human use of tools."[8] The tool is what creates the distinction
between ends and means in which the "the end is thus given in terms
of the means, in terms of utility."[9] It is at this point that the victory
of the means over the end amounts to nothing less than a form of
conquering or deferring the *eschaton*. This is how he phrases it: "The
stick digs the ground in order to ensure the growth of a plant; the
plant is cultivated in order to be eaten; it is eaten in order to maintain
the life of the one who cultivates it...The absurdity of an endless
deferral only justifies the equivalent absurdity of a true end, which
would serve no purpose. What a 'true end' [*eschaton*] reintroduces is
the continuous being, lost in the world like water is lost in water."[10]
Religion is then, for Bataille, this longing for an end of the distinc-
tion between the self and the thing ensuing from the emergence of
the tool. Here Bataille makes an interesting transition to explain the

role sacrifice plays in religious rituals. "The principle of sacrifice is destruction, but…the destruction that sacrifice is intended to bring is not annihilation."[11] In other words, it liberates the sacrificial victim from being a thing to enter into intimacy, "to the world that is immanent to it, *intimate*, known as the wife is known in sexual consumption." This astounding concatenation of ideas is not surprising for someone as Bataille who is better known for his work on eroticism than for his theology. But a theologian he also was.

But eroticism's relation to religion, as he says in another work, is inextricable: "The meaning of eroticism escapes anyone who cannot see its *religious* meaning! Reciprocally, the meaning of religion in its totality escapes anyone who disregards the link it has with eroticism."[12] The individualization of the erotic in modern times "reduced religion to a utilitarian morality. Eroticism, having lost its sacred character, became unclean."[13] His criticism reaches the core of Christian faith, and goes in tandem with the temporal dissolution of eschatology that began already in the early centuries, but particularly after the days of Constantine. What he says about the erotic having lost its connection with religion is equally true and for the very same reasons that led to the evacuation of the eschatological discourse in Christian theology. "In the history of eroticism, the Christian religion had this role: to condemn it. To the extent that Christianity ruled the world, it attempted to liberate it from eroticism."[14]

Writing about the relation of sex to religion, specifically Christianity, French philosopher Alain Badiou, seems to concur with this observation.

> What frightens religion is not the importance of sex, quite the contrary. The Church fathers knew quite a bit about sex, its perversion, its effects, and they were the last to underestimate its importance. No, what frightened them is the fact that sex can command a conception of truth separate from meaning. The terrifying thing is that sex may repel any donation of meaning, whereas the very existence of religion depends on its capacity to spiritualize the sexual relation, thereby forcing to signify.[15]

And precisely the same happened to eschatology: it has always been either spiritualized in a gnostic-like fashion renewed in the tradition

of mystical and existentialist theologies, or deferred to a chiliastic future; all this to harvest some meaning by signifying it and repelling its very presence: the donation of *parousia*.[16] The doctrine of the purgatory, for example, is the superlative case of the deferral of an end, for a true end would have no meaning, no mediation.[17] Yet we long for that lost intimacy of a Shabbat in Paradise when leisure is absolute, when even God is totally at rest; and absolute leisure is death itself as the blessing of the dead goes: *resquiescat in pacem,* "rest in peace." The awareness and even the shame of nudity is in itself the beginning of knowledge and self-awareness that produces the "tool" of a garment to protect the body, keeping it from being ashamed, and equipping it to intervene in external nature.

Avoiding unnecessary exposure and risk demands our daily dealing with the protection of life, covering the areas of exposure and of limits, while we keep having this rendezvous with death and intimacy. The erotic enticement leads to exposure, to the manifestation of limits and eventually to sexual consummation, but its deferral is as essential to eroticism in its compliance to the urge for intimacy as it is to an equally determined avoidance of its consummation. This is likely the reason why "little death" has been a metaphor for orgasm that, if it is enticed by the erotic, also means the end of the erotic in pure carnal exposure.

In other words, if *eros* is to *philia* what "economy" is to "politics," the latter comprises all the mechanisms by which the former is administered. *Cum grano salis*, clothing is to nudity what *eschatological* discourse is to the event of the *eschaton,* or what representation is to presence.

Such is this common feature of the human nature while living in the tension between the intimacy of exposure and the administration of a controlled domain that protects itself by veiling its limits and deferring its end. Indeed, dominant or hegemonic systems are adroit in avoiding margins and areas of exposure. Limits, borders are to be protected, veiled, clothed, coated; death is to be denied.[18] Eroticism revealing its longing for intimacy is the typical manifestation of this rendezvous with death at the most personal level. The religious codes of dressing, from burqas to monks' and nuns' habits are designed to suppress the erotic from unchaining its drive to

consummation, which, however, emerges even more conspicuously in the detail of an exposed ankle. Paradoxically, it is the Christian suppression of the erotic that protects the household from undue exposure and lifts the role of sexual reproduction and also removes distractions from the task of labor

Yet this politically controlled exposure that eroticism dispenses, this de-posturing, is an act of revealing; it is itself an apocalyptic gesture in which the limits are displayed as if in *camera obscura*. To protect these limits from exposure is the task of those who have dominion, those in whose *domus* the veils are kept to the outside limits of the ones that do not belong to the household. To reveal or unveil these limits would be an act of vulnerability and the jeopardy of the domestic, and yet an eschatological experience.

Even as Bataille does not make any specific reference to Christian eschatological discourse the connection is quite evident. As eroticism—and eventually its final consummation in sexual intercourse—, eschatology manifests this longing for lost intimacy, the state of being out of Eden. The *eschaton* reveals itself in the physical limits of the body signaled by the skin of a naked figure, that which is closest to the self, and is not yet mediated by clothing or the "tool," which strictly means to say: that which has no "meaning" for it is immediate. Even art, notes Bataille, that one could argue escapes the servility of the tool, "as a rule does not prevent the object it embellishes from being used for this or that: a house, a table, a garment are no less useful than a hammer."[19] However, there is a difference between the tool (a hammer) and a garment. The tool intervenes in the thing, but the garment hides the self. To come back to the earlier distinction, the tool is to guilt what the garment is to shame (a distinction that Bataille does not make in his treatment of the erotic).

The "essential and paradoxical accord between death and eroticism"[20] is the same that we have between sexual consummation and clothing. The clothes that grace our bodies and protect them from exposure are at the same time that which are in the limits where it reveals the exposed skin, or not; clothes have precisely this erotic function of enticing us into intimacy and at the same time circumventing it. This is why eroticism is a rendezvous with death, playing with it, yet fending off consummation for as long as possible for that would be also the end of the erotic, the *eschaton*.

Chapter 6

The Postcolonial Challenge: Quotidian *Eschata*

In an American Indian context, creation is not just God's initiatory (temporally primordial) act; it is an ongoing eschatological act (with spatial particularity). Thus, even an Indian Christian hermeneutic must press toward seeing creation as the eschatological basis even for the Christ event. If this seems difficult to grasp, indeed, it is likely so because the western cultures in which the gospel has traditionally come to find its home are so fundamentally oriented toward temporality and disoriented from any foundational sense of spatiality.[1]

—George E. Tinker

German Protestant theologian Dorothee Soelle, on her visit to renowned Jewish scholar Martin Buber presented herself as a theologian. Buber retorted, "Theology—how do you do that?"[2] Doing theology is akin to weaving a tapestry. Each of our tapestries is distinct, that is, it has a unique tinct. The tinct of the theology that results from our weaving depends on what we bring together in an interlock to interrelate or to intercommunicate. And what we allow to come together and intercommunicate is largely determined by what is available to us, the raw material at hand and our contexts. Context matters in theological production. Of late, context has become a customary springboard in doing theology that it has acquired a "true but trite" trait. However, regardless of how customary it has

become, the relevance of doing contextual theology lies in its modus operandi, not to mention its complexity. And, the complexity issues from the fact that the definition of what entails a context, that which comes with a text—theological or not— happens in the text either as a pretext or as a subtext. As a pretext it comes in the form of a preunderstanding, the unreflective bias with which we come to the reading of a text. Unreflective because it is not problematized in the text. So it does not *appear* as such in it. In other words, there is no tabula rasa, no blank page from where one starts. Even some of the most abstract theological systems and constructions or disciplined exegesis are infused with presuppositions that are not as such made manifest; *exegesis* implies *eisegesis*; the explication of a text entails implication.[3]

As a subtext, context becomes reflectively recognized by the author's open admission that what is proposed in the text comes not only with a pretext but also with the substratum of a location on which it finds its own foundation. In this case the context is described or makes its appearance, it arrives in the text. Such an advent of context or location in the text is in fact a displacement, or a dislocation; a map is not the territory it describes. This dislocation is, therefore, properly called *representation*. Representation is presence displaced from its fluid reality into a hardened portrayal and stable mold, or else it is transferred to a proxy who stands for the context. Both senses overlap though the distinction remains important as we shall see. This is how a subtext becomes a representation of contextual location.

Eschatological thinking in the modern occident has been concerned in honing the *pretextual* implication of how the *eschaton* is somehow inferred in the discursive text either in its proclivity to point toward a revelatory messianic manifestation in a time to come, or in its penchant for a moment in which it breaks in, in the form of an existential decision. The former is framed within an apocalyptic ethos with a cosmic accost, while the latter is acosmic with gnostic inklings.

The *subtextual* approach to the question of contextualization brings to the fore the awareness of the spatial dimension for theology in general and eschatology in particular. In educing or bringing

out representations of space in terms of context and location it also elicits the awareness of the limits of such contexts, the borders of the depicted "territories," their *eschata*. While the *present* borders can be fluid, the *represented* ones have more or less rigid contours that establish what is in and what is out. These contours then establish the limits by which belonging is defined and set the limit that establish the beyond.

Now, this represented space as mentioned above can be done in two senses, either as a portrayal, a picture, or as proxy, a deputation by substitution.[4] The former represents the end analogous to the way a political map demarcates the limits of a given territory. The latter represents the end in the likeness of an itinerary. These two modes of representing the end, even when intimately related, entail different modes through which the end, the *eschaton* is expressed, how its agents work, and ultimately how fate is depicted. But the key issue to be considered is that the representation of space is decisive in the formation of an eschatological consciousness, and is unavoidably prompted by these representations. The "struggle between time and space," to use Paul Tillich's expression,[5] can be read as the struggle to escape representation of space and thus of its ends, privileging an existential nonrepresentability. But as long as life is lived it entails extension that is both temporally and spatially representable and unavoidably so. The fight against representation is as noble as Don Quixote's battle with imaginary giants yet real windmills. Or, to use the example of Rudolf Bultmann's program of demythologizing, the overcoming of representation as myth in favor of a logos that addresses one's existential situation does not avoid a process of a remythologizing as soon as the overcoming of the myth is pronounced.[6]

The dilemma of the finitude of representations is well exposed in a short story by Jorge Luis Borges. In the story a man, the narrator, is granted a vision of the Aleph, the point in space and time at which all spaces in all times converge simultaneously. The Aleph offers a total vision; presence without representation, a total answer to a total question and yet without mediation. But then comes a paradox, as the writer ponders how to render, to represent within the limits of ordinary language, the object, the Aleph experienced in a vision.

How to attribute meaning if it is immediate? If it is real, if it exists (*ex-sistere*) it must be expressed, represented. The paradox of presence and representation is thus presented:

> Then I saw the Aleph. Now I get to the center of my report; here begins my despair as a writer. All language is an alphabet of symbols whose use among its speakers supposes a shared past. How can I translate to others the infinite of the Aleph which my frightful memory barely encompasses?...Possibly the gods would not deny me the finding of an adequate image, but then this report would be helplessly contaminated with literature, with falsity. Besides, the central problem is unsolvable for any listing of an endless series is doomed to be infinitesimal. In that gigantic moment I saw millions of deeds both delightful and awful, but none amazed me more than the fact that all of them occupied the same point in space, without overlapping or transparency. What my eyes saw was simultaneous, what I will transcribe will be successive because language is successive. Nonetheless, something will be recollected.[7]

The Aleph, the proper eschatological vision, is the experience that fades away when its representation confronts us with the unavoidable paradox of communication: that, to affirm a presence by representation, one must negate its simultaneity and totality, the most constitutive features of the original decisive or eschatological moment. The Aleph is forever lost in recollection, but forever represented in its inscription. To pose it, to re-present it, shifts the focus from what the experience of it has been to what it is not. But here is where Borges's trick is made explicit. The narrator says that he had seen the Aleph, and we, the reader, will have to accept the ultimate vision by what it is not, namely, the signs by which it is represented on a piece of paper that in Borges's case is discursive, but could as well as be also a cartographic representation entailing exactly the same paradox, the only difference being that the former misses simultaneity, while the latter misses the causal nexus or the depth dimension. He will list some of what he saw, but the fundamental feature, the simultaneity, depth, and totality of the *eschaton*, is denied to the reader to be inferred from the representation. The representation that authenticates his experience is therefore self-authenticated. The really real is there only as it is *represented*. Yet in it "something will

be recollected"; in the representation a trace of the eschatological experience is left as a sign half erased that points to what can only be experienced.

Such representation, as already suggested, can be rendered in two ways. One may be conveyed by the metaphor of "map," the other by "itinerary."

Maps and Itineraries

Maps are cartographic devices to represent spatial realities, usually associated with geographic representation in a two-dimensional surface. Even three-dimensional maps in which mountains and valleys are presented in relief share a fundamental characteristic of all maps. They are homogeneous depictions of space; there is no privileging of a place over another and it involves typically only one of the senses, sight (occasionally touch as well). They freeze a moment a reality that is fluid and dynamic. Limits and borders are artificially added to the representation, as they appear usually in political maps or physically in the charting of rivers, mountain chains, or ocean shores.

All these drawn limits are relative to neighboring territories that are equally accessible by the simple running of a finger over the surface of the map. Limits are represented immanently within the same homogenous surface. The only absolute limits are the borders charted in the map itself. But these borders are eschatologically irrelevant because they only signal what is irrelevant to the representation, be it of a shopping mall, a city, a country, the earth, or even a galaxy. Unlike pre-Colombian maps that still depicted sea monsters in the unfathomable distances not yet explored, maps have eliminated all that could point to an impeding place of unavoidable trial. Maps detect that which has already been controlled and disciplined.

However, maps and the cartographic art in their capability to illustrate spatial reality pictorially offer to eschatological thinking an immense contribution precisely in the distinction between what is in the representation and that which is left out. It is similar to what photography does with the art of cutting and confining within the frame of the film only that which can be effectively administered as

frozen caption of the objective reality of which it is a simulacrum. Hence this contribution is of negative import. It is in the limit of what is not shown that a limit to the transcendent may be inferred.[8] It is in the absence (*apousia*) of what lies outside of the frame that the spark of a presence (*parousia*) might inflame the consciousness of a desired or dreaded otherness. To use another image, maps are palimpsests written over a territory that can only be discovered when the most recent layer of representation is deciphered.

Itineraries are a different kind of representation. Unlike maps they are not homogeneous. They describe stages in a journey that has a *telos* in ordered and qualified steps. Millennialism or chiliastic eschatologies are typically represented as itineraries driving toward an end to be achieved or conquered. The absolute end, the *eschaton*, unlike in maps, is not outside the frame but it is represented as a culmination of a journey indifferent to the surrounding circumstances. A subway traveler has an itinerary printed over the exit door of the wagon in a single line that marks the stations on the way to the final destiny. A passenger on an air flight gets the flight schedule that layout the stops that will be made till the final destination. The surrounds are not at all presented. While maps may be rich in details of surrounding environments; itineraries are parsimonious, revealing nothing but the next lag in a journey. While the *eschaton* in a map is that which falls outside of the frame of representation, in an itinerary it is the promised end or threat of a given journey. Both forms of representation combine spatial and chronological features, but in maps the dominant motif of representation is done in a spatial register, itineraries are dominantly historical in character.

Strategies to Dodge Eschatology: Desire and Interest

The *eschata* in both forms of representations are defined by two fundamental human drives that have been, since Hegel, distinguished with some precision, namely, desire and interest.[9] Desire is the urge to conquer and keep under domain an "object." It can be the grace of a god,[10] a planet, a territory, a social group, a product manufactured,

a body of a beloved,[11] an enemy, a theoretical system, and even a mind, or a soul. Desire drives small and great expeditions; it aims at surpassing barriers and winning "spaces." But these barriers are *not* to be regarded as eschatological markers. They are strategic demarcating points, as in the limit of a state in a political map. The desired other to be conquered has been already charted.[12] The eschatological instance is the limiting line that demarcates one territory from another, which is theoretically dimensionless even as it takes place; or rather it is a space between spaces, betwixt and between, used by Turner to designate the liminal.[13] This English expression is rendered in Greek by the word *chōra*, the space between spaces. It designates that which is neither in nor out. The legendary maritime passage through Scylla and Charybdis in Homer's *Odyssey*, or Julius Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon are exemplars. Biblical references for these in-between spaces, *chōra,* are the crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 14), of the Jordan (Joshua 3), and so on . But most importantly in the Christian tradition is Golgotha, the place of Jesus crucifixion, the decisive eschatological place; a *chōra* that is neither in Jerusalem nor outside of it, but a place betwixt and between.

Driven by desire, when a crossing is a thread, this desire leads one through the gates of an eschatological *choratic* event, what Lefbvre called a "trial by space."[14] To borrow an expression by Walter Benjamin, they are "chips of Messianic time," which are events "through which the Messiah might enter,"[15] and, these too can be described as small eschatological events. Small because their mapping presents an overcoming already enunciated: the promise of a new land, the arrival at Ithaca, the conquest of death by the resurrection and so forth.

Hegel describes the role of desire and its relationship to labor in the famous section on "Lordship and Bondage" in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*:

> Desire has reserved to itself the pure negating of the object and thereby its unalloyed feeling of self. But that is the reason why this satisfaction is itself only a fleeting one, for it lacks the side of objectivity and permanence. Work [*Arbeit*], on the other hand, is desire held in check, fleetingness staved off; in other words, work forms and shapes the thing.[16]

Or in still other words, desire is a manner or strategy to administer the *eschata*, to conquer that which lies beyond the self—the self in the sense of that which is proper. The conquest of that which lies beyond, the limits of the proper, is the other who is appropriated through the product of her labor. In the case of Hegel's celebrated dialectic between the lord and the bondsman it is the appropriation of the body and the production of the bondsman. The result is the lord's loss of an eschatological sense of life. We may be reminded that in the "life-and-death struggle"[17] comes about the eschatological realization of the one who becomes the bondsman. While the condition is at first one of alienation it soon becomes the sparking light of his own liberation, precisely because he keeps the eschatological awareness, born out of the struggle for life or death. This awareness is awakened in every product emanating from his labor, his body, while is estranged from him and no longer is his proper. Shortly phrased, desire aims at obliterating the unavoidable awareness of limits, of the *eschata*. Or the words of Gabriel Marcel in reference to love are also precisely valid for the phenomenology of desire: "When I say 'I love you,' I am saying that you will never die."[18] In one word, the drive of desire is *eros*; its end is consummation.

If desire is one typical way to dodge the *eschata*, the other is ruled by interest. If desire aims at rest, of bringing things to a standstill, interest deals with the *eschata* by movements, transitions, and transactions. While desire's objective is leisure (*otium*), interest aims at interaction and the negation of leisure (*nec-otium*).

Here cultural representation reveals a different dynamic. Looking at the reading of Genesis 4, Cain who had slain his brother becomes a wanderer. In his wandering, he turns into the first builder of a city. He was not murdered as wanderers often were because the first piece of "written" legislation for civic existence that the Bible presents us with was engraved on Cain's forehead. "And the Lord put a mark on Cain, so that no one who came upon him would kill him."[19] Reason grounds legislations and curbs the crude and instinctive interest of annihilating the other: *homo homini lupus*. The use of reason for the sake of negotiations is the magisterial denial of leisure, which is *negotiation*, and the radical leisure is the *eschaton*. Here I return to Hegel's *Phenomenology*. In the section on "Reason" (which follows

the "Lordship and Bondage" chapter), we find Hegel's discussion of the topic of interest. In this passage, Hegel writes that reason is enticed by interest in the same way that labor is enticed by desire.

> Reason now has, therefore a universal *interest* [*Interesse*] in the world, because it is certain of its presence in the world, or that the world present to it is rational. It seeks its "other" [*ihr Anderes*], knowing that therein it possesses nothing else but itself [*nichts anderes als sich selbst*]: it seeks only its own infinitude.[20]

Desire triggers labor for the formation of economic culture and thus defers the *eschaton* and expands and administers the realm of the domestic, the *oiko-nomia*. Interest, in turn performs a similar function in shaping culture by politics. Desire is to labor what interest is to reasonable intersubjective relations. Both are strategies of administering the *eschata*, the experiences of an impending end. However, if the end of desire is consummation, the aim of interest is perennial deferral.

Choratic and Kairotic Trials

Desire is to interest as maps are to itineraries. The former works with a spatial register while the latter has a temporal slant. As they administer the different experiences of the *eschaton* they also help to analytically identify events that are characterized by trial. These are markers of limits. They demarcate in space and time a moment of fissure in a terrain assumed to be under dominion, or they are points of suspension and disruption in a time thought to be administrable. These can be described as *choratic* spaces and *kairotic* moments.

In the *chora* one has not crossed over yet but no longer has a space of belonging. In other words, it is no longer a *topos* and not yet a *utopia*, much less a *eutopia*, a fair place. It is by definition an eschatological space.[21] Biblical images describing such spaces abound, as the land of Nod, of wandering, east of Eden to which Cain was exiled. Jesus was in such a space during his 40 days of trial by the devil in the wilderness, and again, as mentioned earlier, when he was

executed in Golgotha, the place of the skull, Calvary, neither inside Jerusalem nor in its vicinity, but in between. Experiences of such spaces can be daunting and tragic. Sociologist Anthony Giddens names them as "sequestered experiences,"[22] precisely because they are not observable in everyday life, as the space of sanatoriums, of hospices, prisons, brothels, not to mention proscribed border crossings.[23] The invisibility of such spaces is an indicator; these spaces are ciphers of the eschatological character that they bear. Such in-between spaces strangely enough simultaneously register a sense of profound estrangement and also of deep intimacy. Religion has been described as being a drive lured of pure intimacy, the *desire* of the *other*.[24] Estrangement and intimacy meet each other in the same *choratic*, or eschatological space. And this is so because at the same time intimacy consummates itself, it is also deferred, because it needs to be denied and rendered as a foretaste of things to come. When Atta and his pious religious companions took two commercial airplanes to penetrate the twin towers they were not just driven primarily by their hatred of the other, the infidel, nor even by the promise of the 70 virgins to each in paradise, but it was the consummate desire for intimacy. Intimacy drove them. To this day their ashes are mingled, atom by atom, with other three thousand New Yorkers, never to be separated again. This is intimacy as it is estrangement, paradoxical as it may sound. The words of George Bataille, written three decades before the attack to the towers—when Mohamed Atta was still a young child—is portending:

> This real world having reached the apex of its development can be destroyed, in the sense that it can be reduced to intimacy. Strictly speaking consciousness cannot make intimacy reducible to it, but it can reclaim its own operations, recapitulating them *in reverse…* It will regain intimacy only in darkness. In so doing, it will have reached the highest degree of distinct clarity, but it will so fully realize the possibility of man, or of being, that it will rediscover the night of the animal intimate with the world—*into which it will enter.*[25]

Choratic spaces are spaces of transition and therefore of trial. They are margins in which possibilities can be born but where the tragic, the terrible lurks, and annihilation impends. This explains why

in these spaces hope and despair are so closely associated and why they are religious spaces par excellence, where fascination and terror meet—as in the apt description of the holy by Rudolf Otto: *fascinans et tremendum*.[26]

Spaces that bear the *choratic* mark have not been part of the discourse of the academia until recently when postcolonial theory came to be respected.[27] Edward Soja, following the steps of Lefebvre and Foucault, calls it spatial turn and puts it in this way:

> The larger significance of the spatial turn and the resurgence of interest in critical spatial thinking arise from the belief that *we are just as much spatial as temporal beings*, that our existential spatiality and temporality are essentially or ontologically coequal, equivalent in explanatory power and behavioral significance, interwoven in a mutual formative relation.[28]

Theology only recently has awakened to the awareness of the spatial in its discourse. And this seems to be the reason why eschatology has been a discourse on temporal deferments or a gnostic-like suspension of time in a *nunc eaternum*, or the combination of both as by those who promote the rapture fantasy that can be comedy entertainment or else ghastly theology.[29]

Better known in theology, because of its linkage to historical paradigms, is the notion of *kairos* that Paul Tillich made a hallmark of his theological system.[30] *Kairos* is contrasted with *chronos*, the first being a contracted form of the latter. Quoting a passage of the *Corpus Hippocraticum*, Giorgio Agamben defines this relation thus: "*chronos* is that in which there is *kairos*, and *kairos* is that in which there is little *chronos*."[31] One may say that *kairos* stands to *chronos* in a similar way as *chora* is related to *topos*: there is *chora* in *topos*, but very little *topos* in *chora*. *Kairos* can be defined as an opportune occasion or moment. Inspired by Walter Benjamin notion of the messianic, Agamben describes it as "messianic time" that "is neither the complete nor the incomplete, neither the past nor the future, but the inversion of both." And, referring to the Apostle Paul, he adds "for Paul, the messianic is not a third eon situated between two times; but rather it is a caesura that divides the division between times and introduces a remnant."[32] The concept of "caesura" is to time what

"fissure" is to spatial events. Both equally interwoven make up for the phenomenology of quotidian eschatological experiences. As caesura does for time, fissure is a rupture in the special continuum that not only divides, but also creates a space by way of negation. This describes *chora:* a space produced in the rupture of space that in itself is no space.

Chapter 7

Dimensions of Liminality

The Messiah has already arrived, the messianic event has already happened, but its presence contains within itself another time, which stretches its parousia, not in order to defer it, but, on the contrary, to make it graspable. For this reason, each instance may be, to use Benjamin's words, the "small door through which the Messiah enters." The Messiah always already had his time, meaning he simultaneously makes time his and brings it to fulfillment.[1]

—Giorgio Agamben

Choratic fissures and *kairotic* caesuras are liminal experiences that entail both danger and possibilities whose probabilities of tragic demise or hopeful prospects cannot be calculated or negotiated. In other words, they are eschatological places and moments, spaces and times that signify occasions and experiences of pure receptivity; at the same time the possibility of the *gift* and equally of *death*. Time is ruptured and a space becomes suddenly the mouth of an abyss—fissure. The rest is life, which toils, plays, and negotiates. But death and the gift that cannot be returned are the two sides of the same coin of *vita passiva*, or pure receptivity. In the moment one even tries to acknowledge the gift one is already destroying it, because it then enters into an economy of reciprocity. Jacques Derrida phrased it sharply: "If the gift appears or signifies itself, if it exists or if it is presently *as gift*, as what it is, then it is not, it annuls itself. Let us go to the limit: The truth of the gift (. . .) suffices to annul the

gift"[2] This annulment is what we call life. Death is the condition that makes the gift possible and vice versa. Life wraps the gift and has a rendezvous with death. When Søren Kierkegaard contends that "the work of love in remembering one who is dead is a work of the most unselfish love," because it "eliminates every possibility of repayment,"[3] he is also implying its reverse. The gift the dead receive in remembrance is a pure gift, because it cannot be repaid. Thus these, gift and death, are the *eschata* par excellence.

Yet there are also little deaths and remnants of a gift that are not and will never be repaid. Little deaths[4] are irretrievable losses. A love that went sour, a friendship gone, a physical or mental impairment, an expatriation, loss of a beloved home in a house foreclosure, are just some examples. There are also remnants of gifts that fail to fully enter or fulfill the Roman juridical, economic, political, and religious principle of *do ut des,* "I give so that you give (in return)." This failure to enter or fulfill the *do ut des* principle happens in a temporary or permanent deferral of a return; or else a return in counterfeit gift that is a faux return.[5] Little gifts are presents received that last, as long as a gesture of return, of paying back, has not yet been made, or as long as the return is halted. Then the gift retains the reality of presence. Life, in turn, could be represented as a circle that begins and ends at death/gift. Life mediates; death and gift coincide in a point of immediacy. Yet this immediacy cannot be represented, but it can be sorted in dimensions in which it intersects with existence, that is with life. Let us consider some.

The Trespassing of the Body

The moment in which immediacy intersects with existence exposure takes place. The narrative of Genesis 3, as we have seen, bears immense symbolic significance. After the breaking of the commandment, Eve and Adam became aware of their nudity, the exposure of their bodies. God provides them with garments of skin to cover their own skin. The human skin, its orifices and pores, are what allow for the preservation and furthering of life as it is through these openings that nutrition happens. They are also the means via which

waste is disposed of and reproduction is made possible. But the same pores and orifices are also the entrance gate of viruses and bacteria that threaten the organism with annihilation.[6] In other words, these orifices are pathways for "marginal stuff of the most obvious kind."[7] They are either life giving or life consuming. Skin and its openings represent the most vulnerable points of the human body. Symbolically the garments God provided were a protection against exposure and vulnerability. They were wrappings of the gift/death. That means that God provided a defense against the *eschata,* which in human anatomy is represented by the naked skin that mark the outer limits or margins of the body and manifest the orifices through which danger traverses and care offers shelter. There, at the skin and its orifices is where the limits of the body are both literally and symbolically expressed. Margins are thus the threshold to eschatological experiences.[8]

God presenting the paradisiacal couple with garments tells mythically the story of the emergence of institutions, a mechanism that both fend us from the risk of the end as well of receiving the gift. Garments we wear to be in public, for protection during labor, and, indeed, to go to church. These institutions, even of the church offer us a protection of exposure to the Divine that can be the tremendum as it is the alluring *fascinans.* The narrative of Genesis is telling because God is both the giver of the gift and of death,[9] and the one to create wrappings, vestments, garments that protect us from them. Nudity compels intimacy; there lies danger as well as promises. But human life, symbolically speaking, begins with Shabbat, the day of realization of nudity and shame over exposure. We know that Shabbat was the first day of human beings according to the Priestly account of Genesis (1–2:4a). And what is Shabbat if not but rest? Yet such a radical rest is the one in which even God does nothing, is otiose, radically at rest. And rest to its extreme, carried to its logical conclusion, is precisely death. So human existence begins in death. Hence humans have their genesis in death out of which they rise to life. What does not come of death does not bear fruit (John 12:24). To phrase sharply, the beginning is at the end, the last (*eschatoi*) will be first (*prōtoi*) (Matthew 20:16). In the biblical narrative, this beginning out of death is figuratively expressed by the image

of the garment, as well as death realized as nudity, and exposure of the skin.

The other biblical narrative that tells about God resting happens at the end of the gospels and is also connected with exposure of the skin. In execution by crucifixion in Roman curia, the body was to be naked and this was true of Jesus's execution as well, which is expressed by the second-century martyr Melito of Sardis with vivid imagery: "God put to death!…The Lord was exposed with naked body: He was not deemed worthy even of covering…they slew God, who hung naked on the tree."[10] God put to rest. While in John 5:17 we read: "My Father is still working, and I also am working," the same gospel concludes in a symmetrical way to the Genesis account of God resting after having concluded the work of creation on the sixth day. John concludes the account of the work of redemption also on a Friday with a single word, *tetelestai*, "it is finished," or simply: "done" (John 19:30). And again we have the association of death with exposure of the body and the revelation of its limits, its skin, its *eschata*. The famous altar piece in Isenheim of the crucifixion by Grünewald does not show a totally naked figure, certainly betraying the bashfulness of his time, but nevertheless shows a body that is not only warped by the pain of the torturous execution but also covered with pustules showing the deadly exposure of the skin. Even if decorum required a rag to cover the genitals, the ulcers in the body compensated artistically to reveal the consequences of exposure.

Psycho-derailments

The same mode of thinking spatially about *eschata* as pointing to limits that divide is to consider psychological disturbances as eschatological experiences. Crossing the limits of what is considered normality are the ways in which we experience little *eschata*; something becomes irretrievable of what belonged to the self and used to be its proper. As Michel Foucault has demonstrated, these *eschata* change over time; what we now consider abnormal mental condition was not so at other times.[11] And so it happens contemporaneously in other latitudes, even as globalization has accomplished an amazing

amount of homogenization in defining what normalcy means. Mental derailment, or even psychological disturbances, not to mention different forms of dementia are not so much that one has lost his or her mind as it has fallen outside the parameters, the socially agreed upon *eschata* of a given society. The implicit or explicit social contract defines the admissible and that which needs to be excluded, secluded or, in the expression of Anthony Giddens, "sequestered."[12] Eschatological experiences are precisely such threshold instantiations: breaking points, transitions that may be ends, or else ends that may be transitions and new beginnings that are hard to fathom.

Epistemes

Closely associated with psychological *eschata* are also epistemological ones. Systems and domains of acknowledged modes of thinking are valid within certain canonic domains that undergo variations over time, from place to place, and from one social location to another. The crossing of these domains equally represent eschatological experiences that signal the transition to other modes of thinking, not necessarily better or worse, but definitely different. Historically, Thomas Kuhn and Michel Foucault have shown as to how patterns of thinking change historically creating truths and denying old ones. In the mordant words of Foucault a "truth is undoubtedly the sort of error that cannot be refuted because it was hardened into an unalterable form in the long baking process of history."[13] Kuhn called these form-patterns "paradigms."[14] Paradigms may change quite radically as in the Copernican revolution in redefining the planetary orbits as it was understood and assumed to be the truth for over a millennium "in the baking process of history." But these paradigms can coexist as in the relativity theory since Einstein and quantum theory, or in the latter between the non-decidability between the particle and the wave theories as to what constitutes the basic element of matter and thus of the universe as whole. The crossing from one pattern to the other is costly, for the crossing of an end means the abandonment of something cherished that was a reference for a way of thinking and organizing the data of the world and to navigate it.

In a similar fashion, but independently from Kuhn, the work of Foucault at a more microscopic level documents the change in these patterns, which he calls "epistemes" that combine power and knowledge echoing in critical reflection the famous equation of Francis Bacon: "knowledge is power."[15] But in Foucault's case it is not only that knowledge grants power, but also that power produces the canons of accepted knowledge. What is decisive for Foucault following the footsteps of George Canguilhem[16] and Norbert Elias[17] is to define this transition of thinking in one way to another and the crises (the *eschata*) of these transitions.

Although Foucault, along with Lefebvre, and de Certeau have been mavericks in thinking crises and thus *eschata* also in spatial terms, this was never empirically described in their works (except maybe for de Certeau). It was with the insurgence of the postcolonial consciousness in the countries of the planetary south that the epistemological relativity of knowledge on a geographical and cultural basis became more and more evident. Starting with the work of the likes of Senghor, Nehru, Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, Oswald de Andrade, and so many others, the distinction about different ways of thinking between the hegemonic northern Atlantic and the rest of the world was clearly established by postcolonial theoreticians.[18]

Among the recent representatives of postcolonial theory the name of Edward Said stands out in pronounced relief. Since his groundbreaking work on *Orientalism*,[19] that is, the modes of the West representing the East, his work has been of paramount importance in denouncing the Western epistemic colonization of the other. This is a way—to use the garment metaphor—of dressing the other, acculturating her, so as to domesticate the eschatological challenge of transitioning to a different way of feeling and seeing the world. For Said, "just as none of us is beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings."[20]

This pointing out of the epistemological implications (ideas, forms, images, and imaginings) of changing location is echoed by another important voice in postcolonial discourse, Homi Bhabha. For Bhabha, another knowledge "reverses the effect of the colonialist

disavowal, so that the other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority—its rules of recognition."[21] Finally, there is the work of Gayatri Spivak, who in a brilliant way unveiled the technique by which a dominant culture avoids or deflects the epistemological *eschata*. In what now is a classic essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak,"[22] she shows how the West has conflated two different senses of representation of the other. This difference can be summarized by representing the other by proxy (*Vertretung*), or by a picture (*Darstellung*). The trick in concealing the *eschaton* is to pretend that one is presenting a picture of the other in the name of the other, as proxy. The other is acculturated to our way of thinking and reasoning. The point is that the picture of the other is another picture that one cannot pretend to draw. This other is the mark of the limit of our way of thinking and imagining.

Ecology

The estrangement of the other is most inconspicuously and obtusely manifest in our relationship with the rest of nature to which we are intimately related—for after all we are mammals—but at the same time drastically removed from it. It is a pointer to our inability to think of ourselves as natural beings, since we have been dressed or garmented to separate ourselves from it. This is what makes a book like Kafka's *Metamorphosis*,[23] a classic, to be a secular essay on eschatology insofar as the relationship of the human being to the rest of nature is concerned. This issue is complex not because we are so uniquely distinct from nature but, to the contrary, due to our contiguity to it, because of our animal body. However, we have distanced ourselves from this contiguity by dressing and adorning our bodies, so as to disguise its animal nature, develop tools to control and manipulate it, and thus we create the "thing," distinguishing ourselves from it but simultaneously alienating ourselves into it in the thing that we produce. This is what is called "reification." We have set ourselves apart, and this is our spiritual existence and our curse; we are *homo sacer*, which, as in Roman ancient religiosity, means exactly being both sacred and accursed, being set apart. It

is in the relationship of humans with the rest of nature, the nature even within us, that the eschatological query becomes equally so imminent and so hidden. This being set apart, the loss of immanence and intimacy, establishes the divide, the *eschaton*, between the human and nature including nature within.[24]

Here, then, we are at the heart of the ecological crisis, the virulent environmental destruction; we need to divorce the animal in us and at the same time we long for it, the tension between parting and belonging. It is the substance and sustenance of what we are as embodied beings. The possibility of even extinction of the conditions of survival of the human species among many others is at our disposal, at least for more than half of a century when atomic arsenals have been piled. This love-hate relationship to intimacy and our animality has consequences that, of course, go beyond the human species into all the rest of nature that our bodies belong to. The environmental crisis is addressed only when we realize that, in the Christian faith, God became a mammal. The eschatological divide becomes more and more transcendental and individualized—gnostic, in Taubes's terms—when the soul (*psyche*) is separated from the body. This is contrary to what happens with the development of the notion of the spirit (*pneuma*) that tabs into the Semitic-apocalyptic stream and which received its superlative formulation in Western thought with Joachim of Fiori and finds in Hegel its consummate expression, but has its roots in the theology of Paul and of Luke. But in the gnostic vein, God is to cosmos, what soul is to spirit.[25] God is not so much indifferent to the world as against it. The *eschaton* is evaded, or rather becomes a disdain for nature and matter as such. The soul matters in its being set free from and against nature.

Christian teachings about the incarnation and the apocalyptic developments of the notion of the spirit as realizing itself in history provide the basis for an eschatology that sustains the transition to intimacy with its perils and promises—as well as the philosophical foundation of both modern existentialism and materialism. The ecological movement's *embrace* of nature and its creatures is more than a metaphor. This "embrace" is the risk of accepting the consequences of intimacy.

Society

At the social level the same theoretical elements can be recognized in the following distinction offered by Ferdinand Toennies's formulations of the peculiar characteristic of community (*Gemeinschaft*) as opposed to society (*Gesellschaft*).[26] The distinction is based on two, and only two, fundamental drives or wills. In a community, a natural drive or will (*Wesenwille*) carries the individual to be a means for the maintenance or achievement of the well-being of the community, surrendering his arbitrary or rational will (*Kürwille*). The opposite is the case with societies that serve the individuals as a means to implement their rational will. In community the individual is a means for the community's end, while in society, it is a means for the individual's ends.[27] Toennies was not concerned with the eschatological implications of his formulations. However, his distinction may help to understand an eschatological phenomenon that happen to individuals or groups, normally by compulsion, in moving from one social grouping to another. In empirical sociology the two forms of social organization are, for Toennies, always mixed. Hence empirically they are really ideal types in Max Weber's sense. But this distinction help us to understand the actual or empirical way in which a given social group organizes its implicit morals, mores, and values (community) and its explicit statutes, laws, policies, and governance (society). Thus if an individual or a group move from such society as theirs to another, as in the case of immigrants, exiles, expatriated, prisoners, displaced folks, and the like, something different happens. They become "guests" of a *foreign society* and have to surrender the arbitrary or rational will to use society for their end and be part of what becomes a "community," but an estranged one. The consequences of intimacy become ominous in these crossings. Albert Camus's novel *The Stranger*[28] has become a classic in the description of such crossing. The main character, Meursault, after being notified of the death of his mother describes the funeral without emotions, a metonymy for his lack of attachment to the *community*. The plot goes on and he assassinates someone who was harassing him and is brought to trial. *Society*'s rules are broken. The trial proceeds and the prosecution uses his lack of emotions at his

mother's funeral more than the actual facts of his crime. It was the breach of a community's mores, more than the societal laws that ruled the procedures. He is condemned to execution and, in the wait, a priest offers him again an attachment to the community. He refuses and says that his only consolation will be the tears of hate of the crowd at his execution at the guillotine.

Such dislocation, such eschatological crossing at the social level happens on an everyday basis and can easily be observed empirically. People that are institutionalized—the prisoners, the elderly, the terminal patients—go through such *eschata*. Economic crises have often led to people being excluded from the social class to which they belonged and had been at home. Such social dislocations to another class are eschatological crossings as well. What can be said about the environmental movement and the problem of embracing intimacy can also be applied socially, for example, to the understanding of the trial experienced by homosexuals and queer people who need to leave their social environment, or are from it excluded.[29] And this is the toll of the political and economic exiles in the world that has become eschatological hordes bearing both the damnations of the trial as well its fortunes, and only so often condemnation and salvation, illness and healing, or rending and mending are bound together.

Geography

Migration is sociologically considered a major if not the most significant sociological factor in contemporary planetary society. The estimated amount of migrants and refugees reaches more than 250 million people including internally displaced people.[30] Since the formation and consolidation of states in early modern societies where borders were clearly defined and demarcated as points of crossings, migration and customs officers have been the gatekeepers of hell, heaven, or purgatory. But the same eschatological experience takes place not only internationally, but also within the borders of a given nation with its displaced people. These crossings kindle the sparks of what Benjamin called "weak messianic power," intervening in and

disturbing the usual order of things. [31] They are real and they are material; they bear the weight of the flesh.

While Walter Benjamin, Jacob Taubes, Ernst Bloch, among others have placed eschatological thinking on historical grounds taking seriously the consequences of the Christian doctrine of the incarnation of God, little has been said, as we have seen, about the trial of space as an eschatological issue per se, at least in theology.[32] But Taubes could be right in saying that philosophy got closer to the meaning of eschatology than theologians who should claim the legitimate right to regiment its resources and own its discourse.[33] Since all the three thinkers mentioned above are Jewish it could also be said that Jewish "theology" was able to get to the core of *Christian* eschatology better or at least earlier than Christian theologians have. However, in the development of Christian thought we find resources to understand the principles by which terrains and domains are established in all the levels that we have discussed: the biological, psychological, epistemological, ecological, social, political, and geographical.

To return to the garment metaphor, these domains, traditionally called "divine mandates," or orders of creation, or institutions are the ones that open up venues for life to flourish fending us from both death and the gift, that is, the *eschaton*. They are two distinct playgrounds of promise that closely resemble Toennies distinction between community and society, as it has affinities also with Spivak's distinction between the two fundamental modes of representation—portrait and proxy.

Playground of Promises[34]

According to teachings of the church and theology, promises by which we live are housed in the orders of creation instituted by God. In traditional medieval categories, they are defined and operated within the Aristotelian distinction between human production or *poiesis* and human communicative interaction or *praxis*. Along with *theoria* they are the three basic human faculties (*dianoia*).[35] *Poiesis* pertains to the human metabolic relation to nature (including human nature, as in sexuality and reproduction, forms of intimacy,

yet mostly by labor) and belongs to the sphere called the "household or economy" (*oeconomia*). *Praxis* pertains to intersubjective relations through which social affairs are construed and regulated, and belongs to the sphere of political and civil government and legal regulations (*politia*).[36]

These two are the playgrounds of God to which we are invited to exercise in freedom glorification of the one to whom all glory is due. This is the point about sanctification: amusing ourselves in the playgrounds of God in the firm conviction that all is well in the wrapping that conceals the gift and masks death. However, such play (due to what is called original sin originated) turns into a dead-serious game of our own pretense (original sin originating) in which the economy of the game and the rules that legislates it, become ends in themselves. The work demanded by the game, or its regulations, turns the play into a ploy and the playing becomes a means to achieve it. The play is spoiled when competition and success at the expense of others ensues. When work toils its way to inequality and oppression, when law is used to alienate and discriminate, playfulness ends, and the *eschaton* is forfeited, death is denied.[37] Injustice, prejudice, and oppression are not the result of the failure of our efforts to *achieve* justice and live fairly with one another. It happens precisely because we strive so much in being the best at the game, and thus destroying the gift that is freely given forgetting that which we come from, death, and denying that to which we are destined. This is the reason why Luther in shocking candidness calls "good works" mortal sins, the end of playfulness.[38] But we need to examine this further, lest we condemn the world, the playground of God, in a Manichean or gnostic fashion.

At work in these two spheres of promise where we are invited to playfully re-present ourselves—the *oeconomia* and the *politia*—are different human drives or wills. One is impelled by *desire*, while the other is ruled by *interest*. Guided by these, human beings come to represent themselves, children are born, the land is cultivated, artifacts are produced, codes for behavior are devised, laws are made, theological books are written, constitutions are drawn, habits and mores are acquired, and so forth. Patterns for living are created and guided by the twin pairings of desire and labor at the home front, the community, or the *oeconomia*, on the one hand; and by interest

and human interaction in the civil or political arena, on the other. Let us briefly examine these two mechanisms, always aware that they are conspicuously embedded in each other creating a myriad of hybrid forms of representation. However, their distinction is important for analytical reasons even as they overlap, which makes the recognition of the distinction at times elusive. But losing awareness of the distinction is part and parcel of the reason why we forget that we are not whole in our existence but pretend to be; we forget that it is in the depth of death that we are whole and presented with the gift.

Economy and Politics, or the House and the Street

In economy (in the sense of *oeconomia*) or the household one represents oneself; one posits reality that one shapes, reshapes, consumes, and in the process divest oneself in it. However, what one wants is always immediate satisfaction, a fullness of the self, unencumbered by the claim of otherness. And this is the role and lure of *desire*.

As is elucidated in the previous chapter, Hegel in the section "Lordship and Bondage," in the *Phenomenology* avidly describes the role of desire and its relationship to labor. This relationship between desire and labor is what the premodern notion of *oeconomia* refers to. It is not 'economy' in the modern sense of "economy," but in the sense of what is "domestic," the playground of the *dominus*, the lord, but also the primary place where labor was performed and endured, in which the individual is a means to the ends of the community to use Toennies's terminology.[39] This is one dimension through which we pretend presence, where work and labor are in a tense-ridden relation with desire for immediate enjoyment; this describes a dialectics between sacrifice and satisfaction. Labor is triggered by desire, and sacrifice is endured by the expectation and deferment of enjoyment and ultimately of the gift.

Desire is one way of negotiating the *eschaton*. Desire consumes, enjoys that which it kills. It is the logic of the anthropophagic lure, the yearning to have the other for oneself, which is a consummate form of intimacy. And this can encompass a loving relationship

dominated by erotic passion or by annihilation. The words of God to Cain insightfully suggest it: "Desire is for you, but you must master it" (Genesis 4:7).

In politics (in the sense of *politia*) or on the street, the civil dimension of cultural formation, cultural representation unfolds a different dynamics. In the Genesis narrative the political play is introduced thus: Cain is a wanderer, and in his wandering he becomes the first builder of a city (Genesis 4:17). In Toennis's terms this is the mythical foundation of society. He was the archetypal *homo sacer*, but not murdered (the likely fate of a *homo sacer*) because the first piece of "written" legislation as mentioned above and the first policy for *politia*, for society, as in Toennis, was engraved on Cain's forehead. ("And the Lord put a mark on Cain, so that no one who came upon him would kill him." Genesis 4:15) Reason, driven by interest, through legislature, defers the *eschaton*.

The use of reason for the sake of equity (*Billigkeit*) is the traditional criterion for a fair government, as much as generosity for the sake of justice was for the household. However, interest always trumps equity. Going back to Hegel, he does a comparative study of reason and labor and its respective enticement by interest and desire. As much as desire triggers labor in human play of re-presentation, interest performs a similar function. Its negotiation with eschatology, unlike desire, is not an assumption, but a trade; not a conquest, but an exchange. It does not aim at canceling it but deferring it by careful calculation and projections. If desire is to bring the other into the domain of the self, interest is to regulate it. Yet both are symmetrical ways in and through which the *eschaton* is negotiated and deferred. In other words, the eschatological consciousness fades to the proportion that desire defers it, and interest with its negotiations (*nec-otium*) prevents leisure (*otium*) to settle the scores. These two dimensions, or the playgrounds of promise, represent the announcement and denouncement of an impending end, protecting us from it, and yet at the same time enticing us to unwrap the gift that is at the same time the end: death, the consummate *otium*.

These two dimensions, spheres, or playgrounds (traditionally called "orders of creation") are indeed maneuvers through which life lingers on, but always aware of what lies behind the masks it wears in

the house in curbing desire by labor, and on the street by restraining interest by reasonable agreed upon conventions. The excitement and dread that the *eschaton* arouses is not unlike the expectation, excitement, but it is also the hesitancy of unwrapping a present beneath the Christmas tree or an anonymous package arriving through the mail enveloping a bomb. Surprises of eschatological portents are in the wait.

In fact, these two dimensions of human existence, emerging from human creative production and reproduction (*poiesis*) and human intercommunicative interaction (*praxis*) are ways by which we sidestep the awareness of *eschaton's* immediacy, because they are infested by desire and interest, respectively. Nevertheless both spheres, along with the religious aptitude consolidated in an ecclesial formation, were, according to the theological tradition, divinely instituted so that labor may hold desire in check, and reason might curb interest's infinite ambitious. However, there is also no frolicking and divinely sanctioned amusement in the playgrounds of God and for God's glory without the endowed human drives of desire and interest.[40]

Desire and interest, though God-given drives, are also conduits through which sin manifests itself. While desire through its pretense of suspending death consumes eschatology by denying death, interest, however, by negotiating with death, legislates the *eschaton* into a well-behaved doctrine among an array of others. These are then two basic manifestations of sin. Desire, in striving for satisfaction, leads to the human labor of producing idols, fetishes of human confection through which death is denied, and justification forgotten. The sacrifice is made in the urge to possess, dominate, and produce a god of our own making and design. Interest, however, in its strive for gain turns human relationships into a dispute for recognition. It becomes the way in and through which we shape the others in our image, impose our language, and legislate ourselves into immortality. As desire can lead to idolatry, interest steers headlong toward the demonic.[41] Idolatry and demonry are the expressions of our incessant attempt of forgetting and denying the reality of the *eschaton* and thus are the instruments by which we only defer our end and condemn ourselves not to realize or admit the chips of messianic presence (*parousia*) in our midst, in Benjamin's insightful expression.

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Chapter 8

Strategy and Tactics
in Eschatological Practices

The larger significance of the spatial turn and the resurgence of interest in critical spatial thinking arise from the belief that we are just as much spatial as temporal beings, that our existential spatiality and temporality are essentially or ontologically coequal, equivalent in explanatory power and behavioral significance, interwoven in a mutually formative relation.[1]

—Edward Soja

The "spatial turn" allows us to focus attention not only on the longitudinal view of historical development, but also on little stories and the space they occupy in everyday life. One of the seminal authors that developed a careful examination of the quotidian "spatial practices" is Michel de Certeau.[2] For de Certeau the examination of everyday life, the quotidian, produces an interesting observation, which will bear some significant implications for eschatology. The axis on which his book *The Practice of Everyday Life* revolves is the differentiation between strategy and tactics, which is precisely what the book presents and not to mention how the book was conceived. For de Certeau:

A distinction between *strategies* and *tactics* appear to provide...adequate initial schema. I call a *strategy* the calculation (or manipulation)

of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a *place* that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations with *exteriority*.[3]

In short, a strategy is a maneuvering technique to conquer the *place* of the other. He continues offering the definition of tactics:

> By contrast with a strategy (. . .), a *tactic* is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. No delimitation of an exteriority, then, provides it with the condition necessary for autonomy. The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power . . . In short, a tactic is an art of the weak.[4]

From the presentation of the book through its development, this is what he wants to show and it is relevant to our topic. Apart from all *representative* discourses that have abstracted everyday life from its (apparently) messy confusions, everyday life is *not* about options we have, but about matrixes, grids, and schemas within which we operate. And one can easily recognize this quotidian struggle; it is the struggle between having a space and managing it, on the one hand, and navigating our survival among spaces that inhabit us on the other. In the former case we possess space, in the latter we are determined by the spaces that inhabit us as *dispossessed*. The latter is determined by tactics. Tactics happens in the space of *another*. In the former case operations are defined by strategic moves. Strategy is the procedure by which one secures the *proper* space or expands it by conquering another.

Eschatologies in theological discourse are often maneuvers, they employ strategies. They negotiate a possible outcome, and thus actually evade the *eschaton*. Or what are confessionals, the doctrine of purgatory, rapture, the newly restored indulgencies, not to mention the "building of the Kingdom of God," if not strategies for expanding space and administering it? These are strategies for mastering and taming eschatology. When de Certeau makes his observation that strategy is about space, not time, it sounds counterintuitive because of the sheer evidence of how much time and history have

dominated what would be typical strategic domains and operations of dominant cultures and the academia.

Time is decisive precisely because it is that which stands as a challenge for the growing development of space. To use de Certeau language, the dominant Western world theorize time exactly because it needs to fulsomely or unrestrainedly control or manage space to conquer the next. Time is overwhelmingly dominant for those who hold possession, so dominant in the hegemonic West because it is the demon to be tamed in the process of securing a space that is *proper*, owned.

However, eschatological discourse emerges with apocalyptic urgency in times of crises, when the limits of one's domain, that which is proper, draw near or is pushed underneath our feet. At other times, when space is secured it becomes a discourse on historical deferrals, an existential *nunc aeternum*, or a transcendent realm for the souls. Eschatological talk is then either a tactic response to or a positioning in a crisis, or else a strategic plan to overcome it or bypass it. But the basic characteristic of these discourses is that those who hold power muster enough resources to secure the domain they possess—and possesses it by the same token.

Eschatological thinking when read from the right to the left of the political spectrum, that is, from the transcendent to the immanent in the religious spectrum, is about adding some space to what is proper, to what gives latitude. We know that our spatial context, from the body to the planet is limited, and ultimately so; yet what buys time is the conquering of space—geographically by the conquest of territory, sociologically by bringing the other to one's fold, psychologically by denying death, and so on.

When de Certeau links tactics with the challenge of space and lifts up time as an augur of possibilities, he is making the claim that for those in the margins time is an ally as long as they are in the *eschata* fighting for proper space. This is why the analysis of tactical practices is so decisive and of paramount eschatological importance. People in transitional spaces, in *choratic* realms do not have much room to negotiate space. They are experiencing the *eschaton*. They are dispossessed, or more apt would be to say: they are not possessed; they are not in the domain of time to count the future possibilities,

and thus have a space for themselves; yet they resist and create time of their own in the midst of the *eschaton* that they live in but do not administer, because they are the least ones, the *eschatoi*. This is why de Certeau says that tactic is the practice of the weak.

Take a simple anecdotal example: why are minority cultures in a hegemonic environment that has time under strict control normally regarded as people that do not respect the established pattern of professional responsibility and fail to show up on time? It might very well be that they are not working with *chronos* time, clock time. Indeed one could say that they are working with *kairotic* time just because they do not have the privilege of living in a *topos* (and thus administering time), but in a *chora* where time is always fleeting.

Let us phrase this as such: the difference between strategy and tactics is that strategy is space (*topos*) administering time (*chronos*), while tactic is time (*kairos*) intervening in *space* (*chora*).

Border as Eschatological *Chōra*: Hell and Paradise

In his meditations on migration and crossings, Salman Rushdie offers the following reflections:

> The frontier is a wake-up call. At the frontier we cannot avoid the truth; the comforting layers of the quotidian, which insulate us from the world's harsher realities, are stripped away and, wide-eyed in the harsh fluorescent light of the frontier's windowless halls, we see things as they are. The frontier is the physical proof of the human race's divided self…Even the freest of free societies are unfree at the edge.[5]

The eschatological dimension of tactics is quite obvious. Unlike strategy, tactics do not administer the *eschaton*; but is a way of struggling and surviving through and in the middle of it. Strategy sees the *eschaton* as a boundary or a frontier yet to be conquered or evaded; tactics is in the midst of the *eschaton* in everyday life and invest in the creation of time; it happens in the "space" of the frontier.

Or to phrase it with the words of Giorgio Agamben (inspired by Benjamin), it means living as in the "messianic remnant of kairotic time."[6] That is why with tactics the world and time begins from nothing. *Ex nihilo* because nothing, not even the crossing itself can be predicted, envisaged, or accounted for. And this is the context in which the concept emerged in II Maccabees 7 with the story of the torturing and killing of the seven brothers and their mother, and in a similar reasoning it is recaptured by Paul in reference to the resurrection (Romans 4:17). The *ex nihilo* is not about cosmogony, but about a crossing to what does not yet exist; it is not there at our disposal.

This which does not exist has a long tradition of maturation in the conservatory of tradition. And which does not exist and "lies" there beyond the *eschaton*, beyond the end of whatever is, is called hell or else heaven.

At the time of the New Testament hell was a place, a geographical location: Gehenna. The term often translated as hell in the New Testament, refers to the valley of Hinnom (Ge-Hinnom) southeast of the city of Jerusalem. It was the site for the cult of Moloch, an idol represented by a bull in anthropomorphic shape, in whose fiery arms little children were thrown to be offered as sacrifice. According to Rabbinic tradition, the priests of the Moloch cult would sound cymbals and beat drums to buffer the scream of the burning children from their mothers and fathers. After Josiah's Reformation the cultic place was destroyed and it became a landfill for disposal of the waste of the city and for the carcass of animals and executed criminals. Fire was set (or inflamed spontaneously) to burn the waste. The imagery of hell as a lake of fire has its geography associated with the buffered and forgotten cries of the innocent and the burning waste of the city. More vividly than the idea of Hades or Sheol, used to describe the underworld where the soul of the dead dwell, Gehenna evokes images of hell of consummate literary quality. The damnation associated with hell, as in Dante's description of the place, bears definitely eschatological qualities.[7] Once entered all hope must be abandoned. Hell is no waiting room. It became the place of nonexistence, etymologically, like in Eden, its symmetric opposite, the place in which one cannot stand out (*ex-sistere*).

From the place that it actually was, hell became throughout the centuries a trope to describe a condition of utter despondency where hope is no longer a companion. Condemnation to hell is comparable to an exile from where the departed has no longer the resort to return, has not even recollection of what was home. Or even better said is in the poignant description of those who descend to Sheol in the book of Job: "their places know them no more" (7:10). That one's place is the subject of knowledge reveals hell as radical forgetfulness even of that which is most familiar, a place of no return, of no recollection. But this forgetfulness is not the obliteration of memory; instead, memory is frozen; the deeds of the past are hardened and have no future. All that has gone before are items no longer collectable. From a place of condemnation, one that would still entail possibilities of restoration, it becomes a place of closure from where there is neither retrieval nor redressing.

Yet, in a paradoxical way, for the Christian there is a hope against all hope. As it is confessed in the Apostle's creed, God in Christ descended into hell. That nothing is out of God's reach, even the depths of hell, is what affords hope, the promise of life. All hope has indeed been abandoned. But this hope that defies all hope becomes the gateway to heaven. However, this can only be known if one has been there, in hell, to meet the Christ and hear the promise, as the one made to the thief dying by Jesus's side in the horror of Golgotha: "today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). The promise is elicited by a simple petition: "Remember me." This remembrance unlocked the ultimate gates of the domain of evil and included that criminal in the last petition of the Lord's Prayer: "Deliver us from evil," the daring prayerful supplication that evil, the devil, and hell be no more.

Paradise and hell have become the mythical places in and from where one goes out of or emerges into existence. But the issue is really how the transitioning between either, paradise or hell and actual existence takes place; or rather what is the space, the *chora* in which it takes place. Little paradises and little hells abound. In every moment of one's life the vicinity of both—paradise and hell— and the adjacency both have with everyday life might be experienced, and eventually will be. And this moment that is not negotiable is

the one in which death and the gift come to self-realization. In the words of Walter Benjamin: "The Messiah comes not only as the redeemer, he comes as the subduer of the Antichrist . . . [For] *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins."[8]

The Messianic

Benjamin was the one who recovered the sense of messianic time, the model of which is the present that comprises the entire history of humankind, a constellation in an enormous abridgement.[9] Agamben who was greatly influenced by Benjamin, however, after an insight from Jacob Taubes, attributes Benjamin's understanding of the messianic time to the influence of the Apostle Paul.[10] For Benjamin "history is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now [*Jetztzeit*]."[11] This entails his sharp criticism of the notion of history as "progression through a homogeneous, empty time." And he continues:

> A historical materialist approaches a historical subject only where he encounters it as a monad. In this structure he recognizes the sign of a Messianic cessation of happening, or, put differently, a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past . . . A historian who takes this as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite early one. Thus he establishes a conception of the preset as the "time of the now" [*Jetztzeit*] which is shot through the chips of Messianic time . . . [as] the strait gate through which the Messiah might enter.[12]

Although conceptually Benjamin is still thinking in historical categories while criticizing historicism, the imagery that he uses is rich in spatial and material metaphors. He avoids eschatological categories precisely for it is too contaminated by historicism in the Western tradition where it came to signify the end of time, missing its biblical and spatial dimensions.[13] Historical materialism, for Benjamin, adds corporal and spatial dimensions to the view of history, to avoid

the homogeneous empty time of progress, while he remained deeply theological in his philosophical materialism! For Benjamin there is no question that only theology's understanding of redemption can restore the materiality of the damaged life of past victims that remembrance keeps in storage. Challenged by Max Horkheimer that his thinking was theological and not sufficiently scientific, Benjamin responds thus:

> What science has "determined," remembrance can modify. Such mindfulness can make the incomplete (happiness) into something complete, and the complete (suffering) into something incomplete. That is theology; but in remembrance we have an experience that forbids us to conceive of history as fundamentally atheological, little as it may be granted us to try to write it with immediately theological concepts. [14]

He also says, "My thinking is related to theology as a blotting pad is related to ink. It is saturated with it. Were one to go by the blotter, however, nothing of what is written would remain."[15] In an early short text by Benjamin, entitled "Theologico-Political Fragment" we get closer to his understanding of eschatology:

> Only the Messiah himself consummates all history, in the sense that he alone redeems, completes, creates its relation to the Messianic. For this reason nothing historical can relate itself on its own account to anything Messianic. Therefore the Kingdom of God is not the *telos* of the historical dynamic; it cannot be set as a goal. From the standpoint of history it is not the goal but the end...To the spiritual *restitutio in integrum*, which introduces immortality, corresponds a worldly restitution that leads to the eternity of downfall, and the rhythm of this eternally transient worldly existence, transient in its totality, in its spatial but also in its temporal totality, the rhythm of Messianic nature, is happiness. For nature is Messianic by reason of its eternal and total passing away.[16]

Here Benjamin makes explicit the spatial connection. And he does so by the bold move that as far as materiality is concerned the whole of nature is messianic by virtue of the passing away and at the same time its eternal restoration, which in the spiritual realm is deemed

to be expressed by the language of immortality. There is the "goal" reaching a static kingdom insofar as the spiritual realm is concerned, but as to nature, it ends in an *eternally* transient existence.

Passage

It does not seem to be a coincidence that the last and unfinished project of Benjamin bears the title "Passage."[17] In his mind were the Parisian arcades that were passages, or in French, *passages*. He so describes them in vivid spatio-eschatological language:

> On the Avenue Champs-Elysées, between modern hotels with Anglo-Saxon name, arcades were open recently and the newest Parisian *passage* made its appearance . . . Already the inscriptions and signs on the entranceways (one can just as well say "exits," since with these peculiar hybrid forms of house and street, every gate is simultaneously entrance and exit), already the inscriptions which multiply along the walls within . . . have about them something enigmatic."[18]

The irony in this account of "Passages" is that Benjamin was carrying this manuscript on "passages," *The Arcades Project*, with him as the most precious thing he had in life. When, fleeing the Nazi persecution, he was held at the *passage* through the Pyrenees mountains. At this passage, Port Bou, he would have to cross the border of occupied France to Fascist Spain in the hope to reach Portugal and from there to go either to New York or São Paulo. This was a passage, the only one to Spain not guarded by the Gestapo and their French allies. Benjamin and the small group of refugees found the Spanish border closed by the officials; he apparently committed suicide when he was ordered to return by the same route he came the next day. He died on September 16, 1940, by an overdose of narcotics he used for his heart condition and emotional anxiety. The only thing he had in his possession was the "Passage" manuscript.

Hannah Arendt who was his friend and family relative, and who edited some of his works in English, wrote in the introduction to

Illuminations the following account about the group of refugees among whom was Benjamin coming with a visa from Marseilles:

> During the night Benjamin took his life, whereupon the border officials, upon whom his suicide had made an impression, allowed his companions to proceed to Portugal...One day earlier Benjamin would have got through without any trouble; one day later the people of Marseilles would have known that for the time being it was impossible to pass through Spain. Only on that particular day was the catastrophe possible.[19]

In the midst of such a critical and dramatic eschatological situation something happens. The fugitive companions of Benjamin are allowed to pass the border because of the impact his suicide made on the border officials. There is no indication that the relation of the group was anything more united than the fact that they had to escape France. But a liminal experience such as this creates bonds, whose radiant halo cannot be mechanically reproduced or represented, as Benjamin himself knew. His definition of art from his celebrated essay on "The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction,"[20] can be applied to such community experiences as the one Benjamin and his companions must have felt. What the artwork loses in reproduction is the "aura" of the original artist's production. The attempt to reconstitute the inner bonds of that group of refugees would destroy exactly that which made that experience so inimitable.

Not much information is known about what bound that group together, but certainly it was not something that could account sociologically or historically for the fact that a "sacrifice" happened and a group of people were set free. A sacrifice, a death and a gift were granted. A "community" was born.

Benjamin's crossing at Port Bou was a passage that like the book never came through while he was alive. His *eschaton* was a tragic one. But his companions passed through because his body became a gate as if it were. And the manuscript found its way into publication and the rest of his opera, much of which not published, until then known to very few, became canonic among the literati. It was as if he had become another person for something happened in that tragic

passage. Here the words from his "Politico-Theological Fragment" quoted, assume a new and deeper meaning: "For nature is Messianic by reason of its eternal and total passing away."

Czech philosopher Jan Patočka, the author of Carta 77, the major manifesto of the Czech resistance, who died when in police custody under uncertain circumstances, has pertinent reflections on the connection between borderline experiences and the cementing of human bonds. He begins with a text by the Jesuit French philosopher, theologian, and paleontologist, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: "The front is not simply a flaming line where the accumulated energies of hostile masses are released and mutually neutralized. It is also the locus of a distinct Life shared only by those who dare to step right up to it and only for as long as they dare remain there."[21] Teilhard is reflecting on his four years of war experience during World War I. An excerpt of Patočka's refection should be quoted as it matches Teilhard's mystical inclinations:

> Freedom does not begin only "afterwards," after the struggle is concluded, but rather has its place precisely within it…The means by which this state is overcome is the *solidarity of the shaken*; the solidarity of those who are capable of understanding what life and death are all about, and so what history is about. That history is the conflict of *mere life*, barren and chained to fear, with *life at its peak*, life that does not plan for the ordinary days of a future but sees clearly that the everyday, its life and its "peace" have an end. Only the one who is able to grasp this, who is capable of conversion, of *metanoia*, is a spiritual person. A person of spirit, however, always understands, and that understanding is no mere observation of facts, it is not "objective knowledge"…The solidarity of the shaken is built up in persecution and uncertainty: that is its front line.[22]

Can we find a more judicious depiction of what eschatology means when approached from a historico-*spatial* perspective?

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Conclusion

In the Offing: In Lieu of a Conclusion

IN THE OFFING
The Ship of the Spring in the offing at last!
Oh, rude blew the hindering gales,
But perfumes entrancing, the danger o'erpast,
Are wafted afar, from her sails!
For she hears the far murmur of myriad things
That shall at her coming have birth.
. . .
O sails in the offing! Ye are as the wings
Of angels that bring her to Earth![1]

—Florence Earle Coates

I leave my song; and cry to thee to take me across.[2]

—Rabindranath Tagore

A book on eschatology must come to an end as the meaning of the title apparently summons for. In a work dealing with theological eschatology and literature, Paul Fiddes offers a quizzical musing observation: "Why do we demand some kind of ending to a story, and why does an end seem more difficult to achieve today than before?"[3]

"In the offing" is not a conclusion but a looking forward to, an anticipation of an arrival, as it also evokes perils lodged in the unknown, and the awareness of a loss of what was present to sight. It is about hope in the midst of lamenting a departure; or in other

words it is a figure of speech that convokes the fears of a perilous passage in which a promise nestles—sheltered but hidden, not at one's disposal, yet! Such figurative language in the eschatological discourse is allergic to abstract speculations, as in millennialism, in existential interpretations, or in the Christological reduction.[4] This figurative representation is in equal measure averse to its use in the unbecoming abuse of the "apocalyptic" motif, which is far from the biblical and theological tradition as it is close to religious fraud, counterfeit versions of old religious shams; the old indulgencies that triggered the Reformation pale in comparison.[5] Figurative imagery as "in the offing" cannot but be invoked for an indomitable but honest eschatological discourse. It is a discourse that is to be edged into the description of experiences close to the ground, attentive to its edges, mindful of crossings and passages, while aware that conceptual abstractions, speculations, or bizarre vagary are fed by a notion of history that does not *take place*, has no spatial location. It allows us to pay vigorous attentiveness to the present, and the living remembrance of a redeemable past and restored places without which messianic hope is nothing but an empty whim. To dwell in the abstract level of history is, to quote Walter Benjamin, "to be drained by the whore called 'Once upon a time' [or a deferred 'Second Coming' we may add] in historicism's bordelo."[6]

Contrary to the assumptions common among some theological preachers announcing the impending dawn of a doomsday, and theological lucubration, eschatology is an experience embedded in everyday life when an irretrievable loss has been experienced and lament ensues, yet also entailing the ineffable promise that unveils a hopeless birth of hope. Benjamin grasped this in the concluding words to his study of Goethe: "only for the sake of the hopeless are we given hope."[7]

What lies beyond the eschatological horizon is a dim and evanescent cipher that cannot be read or decrypted. Eschatology is, therefore, not primarily about cosmic catastrophes or abstract speculations about time and eternity; it names the experience of a crossing in which the messianic is an occurrence in time that becomes *kairotic*, and in spaces, *choratic.* Such messianic experience in space and time entail a faint promise of a *weak epiphany*, not a cosmic Armageddon. However, such epiphanies are not given to the common gaze, but those who have been at the *eschaton* have a claim

upon them. This claim taxes memory and keeps the flame of hope kindled.[8]

At the height of British supremacy in nautical travels, maritime adventures, be it for commerce or expeditions, meant longtime separation for families. Spouses, children, and friends of sailors waiting by the shore, or harbor, looking at departing vessels were a common sight. They would not take their gaze off the ships that were sailing away with their loved ones until they were in the offing. Up to that point the ships were still available to sight even if long out of reach. To the eye they were still available only waiting for their crossing into the offing. The journey had hardly begun, but for the sailor at sea, alike for those on the harbor it was a break with the familiar. The feeling of not au fait with what was in store was mutual. But different were the experiences. For those in the immensity of the ocean, already in the offing, there was no longer any point in staring back; the crossing was done, the unpredictable was in front of them; however, for those on shore it is a departure of dear ones while the quotidian life remained a charted territory.

But the expression works also on its reverse and is normally used so. An arriving vessel in the offing entailed the promise of a return for the sailor and a welcome homecoming for those on shore. The invisible became visible again. The homes were gravid with impending expectations of an arrival, an advent that brought a presence of what had been out of sight and reach—a presence (*parousia*) of that which had been absent (*apousia*). Watching out for a ship to arrive, it would first be seen in its approaching when its sails punctuated 'in the offing' and was expected to dock before the next tide, as in the poem by Florence Earle Coates quoted in the epigraph: "O sails in the offing! Ye are as the wings / Of angels that bring her to Earth!" What comes as a promised presence cannot yet be seen; what can be seen are the sails, the vessel, the "wrapping" of the present adorning the expected gift, still in wait to be delivered.

To this day, in small fishing villages around the world, wives of fishermen folk who had their husbands out in the sea stand on the shore, looking out into the horizon hoping and praying that their dear ones would get home safe. They are looking out for the boats in the offing. The phrase is used to express their lament and simultaneous expectation of a safe and happy reunion.

Betwixt and Between

In a text such as this which has the motif of what is to come, another depiction of an aquatic image could be helpful in lifting up a further aspect of eschatological experiences. Another image related to water! But how could it be otherwise, since *eschaton* also evokes imagery of baptism as symbol of death, crossing, and rebirth? This portrayal of the *eschaton* is evoked by a story entitled "The Third Bank of the River" by a Brazilian author of the mid-twentieth century, João Guimarães Rosa. The theme is simple but full of symbolic inferences and psychoanalytical allusions.

As the story goes, the father of a family living in the backlands by a riverbank wants to leave home to the dismay of his son and rage of his wife. Caught between the river and wilderness the presumed option was to buy a canoe (which works explicitly as a metaphor for a coffin) to cross the river. We don't know what is on the other side, but it is fancied as a world that would not be that of his familiar, which he felt he could no longer endure. But for his son, the narrator of the story, the departed father never set foot on the other bank of the river, remaining thus in the middle of the river aboard a canoe never to be seen again, unable to stay but equally incapable of making the crossing. But this is given in the perspective of the narrator, the son. The image of the father having left, yet not being on the other side of the divide evokes a daily *lament and mourning* motif, but, above all keeps the *memory* of the father alive without a closure. Even if presumed dead by the reader it was not so by the narrator, who was riven by mourning and lament, on the one hand, and devoted remembrance on the other in which flickers of feeble hope glimmers.

The third bank image (not unlike Homi Bhabha's notion of third space[9]) offers a fictional narration of the liminal and its role in eschatological discourse. In the definition of anthropologist Victor Turner, who made this into his signature concept, "this coincidence of opposite processes and notions in a single representation characterizes the peculiar unity of the liminal: that which is neither this nor that, and yet is both."[10] Paraphrasing: it is neither on one bank nor on the other, and yet on both: the third bank of the river. Such

liminal experiences, in an individual, in a group, or in society writ large, are those through and in which a given structure, with its order and routine is transgressed or ruptured, but a new is not yet in place. This closely approximates phenomenological description of eschatological experiences, both for those undergoing it and also for those that stay behind and feel the departure as irreversible loss. Yet, something not yet catalogued germinates. As in the words of poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade:

> A flower was born in the street!
> Trams, buses, steel river of traffic: stay away.
> A flower, still pale,
> deceives the police, breaks open the asphalt.
> Stay in complete silence, suspend all dealings,
> I assure that a flower was born.
> . . .
> Its color is not seen.
> Its petals do not open.
> Its name is not found in the books.
> It's ugly. But it's indeed a flower.
> It's ugly. But it's a flower. It pierced the asphalt, the tedium,
> the nausea and the hatred.[11]

Eschatological consciousness finds its clue here, which may seem counterintuitive. It is not about a closure, but about keeping remembrance and fanning the embers of hope, even and because in the midst of lament. Closure, when applied to eschatology, is resignation and idealistic. Idealistic, because it gives up the hope in the messianic restoration of the body, of space, of nature, of materiality. Hope in the resurrection of the body precludes closure.[12] Skeptics in search for grasping the object would say that this space that is betwixt and between, since it cannot be defined, is reserved to fiction and theology. And indeed so it is, though not exclusively so. The proper response to such objection, which is worth repeating once more, is the one that Walter Benjamin gave to Max Horkheimer who criticized him for being too theological (meaning: not scientific enough): "That is theology; but in remembrance we have an experience that forbids us to conceive of history as fundamentally atheological."[13]

And what would these theological concepts be? Even if eschatology meets us in the midst of our journeys, it is the case that it meets us whether we are ready to accept it or not. A martyr may know that her testimony would inevitably provoke her execution or cause severe damage. A traveler in alien territories may journey with the confidence that the voyage is well planned until unpredictable disaster comes along. Someone who in an act of protest is prompt to commit immolation might know that the end is imminent but still does not know what the crossing is.

The Gift

Most of us on an everyday basis don armors to protect ourselves from an eschatological experience if for nothing else than for survival instinct, for otherwise life would not likely thrive. But for either—those who are ready to undertake the eschatological trial, or those who avoid it at all cost— the consequence is the same: no one knows the result until the offing is past. And to put it in very simple and yet so complex way, a theological topic is ultimately about faith, which Tillich so aptly described as "courage to be."[14] And this faith, the courage to be, is at the core of what we are daring to stand naked before God as an act of radical vulnerability.

The difference between receiving the eschatological gift—which Jacques Derrida provocatively called the "gift of death"[15]—and shunning it in despair, is the difference between faith and anxiety ensuing from non-being, and not between faith and doubt, as Tillich correctly remarks. And this is what is entailed by the theological teaching regarding justification, no matter if one is a doctrinal believer or not. Adorno, a secular Jew, who was a student of Tillich and his assistant in the early 1930s in Frankfurt (where Tillich held a chair in philosophy at that time), could formulate this sense of faith against metaphysical certainties, reflecting the sensibility toward the Decalogue's prohibition (and the Talmudic zeal of keeping it) of even uttering the name of God: "The idea of truth is supreme among the metaphysical ideas, and this is where it takes us. It is why one who believes in God cannot believe in God, why the

possibility represented by the divine name is maintained, rather, by him who does not believe."[16]

Justification, being made righteous, can only be conceived as an eschatological event; it happens at the "end," (*eschaton*), or else at the "ends" (*eschata*), the events that mark a transition and an irretrievable loss in the sheer confidence in the gift of death received. The end is death itself, but which simultaneously marks a beginning.[17] It signals the occasion in which the armors we vest ourselves with, and in which we invest our efforts to protect us from the *eschata* are suddenly rendered unto nothing. That is what hits us in the midst of our existence when the pretense protective shield turns into naught; the daylight of our shielded quotidian existence turns into night. Martin Luther, who wrote innumerable remarkable pages about justification as an eschatological event of faith, described it as a pure receiving attitude of accepting the gift, the gift that cannot be negotiated to remain a gift.[18] This is exactly what death means: a nonnegotiable reception; and every nonnegotiable reception is a form of death. Every act of mourning we undergo, every lament we utter is a way of saying: "This I am unable to undo; this is a price I will not be able to pay for ransoming this loss." Only faith can endure this gift that cannot be repaid because it is a true gift. The sight goes blind and the *Name* cannot even be uttered. In Luther's commentary on the Magnificat, this is radically phrased: "God dwells in the darkness of faith, where no light is."[19]

Latitudinal Alertness

This darkness is the night that seizes us in the eschatological event that is at once a judgment and an act of grace in breaking down our self-built defenses. And these are the two opposite and complementary sides of an eschatological event: lament and remembrance, condemnation and justification, grave and grace. The dividing line between these pairs, the threshold, cannot be defined, measured, or theoretically located. In the moment that is done, it is no longer there; it can only be lived through, experienced. Eschatological experiences are vaguely analogous to the behavior of subatomic particles: in the moment it is located and detected, it is no longer there.

Dietrich Bonhoefer talks of "Christ the center," in the book that bears the same title in English. What Bonhoeffer says of the Christ could also be translated into eschatological terms, placing into question the notion of "center" as normally defined.

> That Christ is the center of our existence does not mean that he is the center of our personality, our thinking and our feeling. Christ is also our center when he stands, in terms of our consciousness, on our periphery, also when Christian piety is displaced to the periphery of our being. So he is the boundary and judgment of man, but also the beginning of his new existence, its center. Christ as the center of human existence means that he is the judgment and justification of man.[20]

Bonheoffer's apt choice of words, "periphery," "boundary," are unequivocally spatial renditions of the eschatological event that the messiah (*ho eschatos*—the last, decisive, one) brings (present tense!). It ruptures the shield of defense that wraps us, bringing at once judgment (death) and justification (gift). Life is the name we give to what takes place in between, stretching the line between the two in which the *eschaton* coincide. Hence, the correct alternative is not life and death, but between life and the *eschaton* (= death + bliss).

Nonetheless, there is one important implication, a decisive one at that, for eschatologies with spatial sensibilities, with latitudinal awareness. It implies that the eschatological event cannot be treated as a *meta*physical topic, something beyond or along the physical reality of all creation. It must take into account *phusis*, the material reality of human beings and all of nature (in and through which the spirit breathes and blows across the eschaton—from inside to outside and from outside to inside). Taking this into consideration, nay, as the very point of departure to begin an eschatological discourse that is down to earth, one must ask the questions that differently affect our material reality.

These are questions that will evince conditions under which the *eschaton* is linked closer to daily existence or remitted to abstract musings about time and eternity. These questions imply matters such as privilege and vulnerability, exposure and mechanisms of self-protection, all on the different dimensions of liminality already

discussed in chapter 7. Without the spatio-physical consideration of how nature, human bodies, social classes, and so on are differently affected as to their level of vulnerability or immunity, different implication will be garnered for the eschatological understanding as opposed to the differentiated implications it has for the actual physical bodies—air, water, rocks, plants, and animals (including, certainly also humans)—and how these apprehend or endure the eschatological impact of judgment and grace.

From the helpful distinction between strategy and tactics as offered by de Certeau in chapter 8 a criterion can be initially identified. Those whose maneuver is restricted to tactics are the weak, the poor, the vulnerable in God's creation by the fact that their only resort is to resist having their space occupied and are therefore closer to the *eschaton*, adjacent to it, in whichever dimension of liminality this pertains to. Those whose maneuver is determined by strategy keep the *eschaton* at bay. The theoretical articulation of the deferral of the *eschaton*, the chronological framing of the "second" coming since the second century CE, but prominent since the Constantinian era, the more recently developed theory that there was a crucial crisis between the first and second generation of Christians with the delay of the *parousia*—all buttress ideologically hegemonic interest of those who by conquering space exile eschatology to funeral orations or erect them as scarecrows for discipline and control.

Why has theology so seldom dealt with massacres, holocausts, genocides, border conflicts in eschatological categories (not only in ethical ones) available to the Christian theologian except in abstract terms? Here we could add eschatological experiences in all the other dimensions of liminality. The answer seems to be logically begging: the winners don't want to "talk eschatological" about a subject that their victims alone have a claim upon, a claim that will haunt every generation until justice is done. And this justice, this making right, this justification, can only be the lot of those who have undergone the eschatological crossing—in the whole of creation (Romans 8), including humans. The one whose limits of resistance, of tactical maneuvering has been crushed, theirs is the promise, already present! Jesus of Nazareth never baptized anyone except one, one that

actually died with him (Romans 6:3): the criminal condemned like him, by the same juridical system, who only asked: "Remember me." And the fellow condemned criminal, Jesus of Nazareth, answered: "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:42f.). Today!

This seems to be a proper way to come to terms with a discourse on eschatology that, if consistent with its own argument, would just say: this is a passage, an entrance into an arcade that in the middle of a city in their busiest streets or an oriental marketplace crossing blocks is of eschatology an allegory. It is not a suburban mall that, in spite of its commercial affinities, is the very deferral of eschatological consciousness—one comes out of the sanitized reality one had entered and returns to the sane world from before.

Arcades, passages, and street markets. Go through them. Enjoy and dread the view in the hope for an exit. That is what passages are for and how the *eschaton* may be looked at as long as the gaze endures it; as a passage, a crossing, a street market, and a city arcade. It does not matter what you see going through. It is the going through that counts. Do not hasten your pace. Look at the fancy people shopping around. They almost give the impression that it is a social club (or is it?). Look at the homeless who have no choice but to inhabit that *eschaton*. But look at them in particular, because they alone, not the shoppers, are the ones who will point you gracefully to the exit or invite you to stay along. And, just know that you may lose the ability of knowing what is an entrance and an exit, what is beautiful and what is deplorable, since both are equidistant from the same beginning and the same end.

Notes

Introduction: On the Edge

1. Pedro Casaldáliga, *Creio na Justiça e na Esperança* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1978), 211.
2. For a biblical approach of this experience, see my chapter "*Revelation* 13: Between the Colonial and the Postcolonial, a Reading from Brazil," in *From Every People and Nation: The Book of* Revelation *in Intercultural Perspective*, David Rhoads, ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), 183–199.
3. Paul Tillich, *Die verlorene Dimension: Not und Hoffnung unserer Zeit* (Hamburg: Furche, 1962).
4. Two examples of how this tradition is traced back: Karl Löwith, *Meaning of History* (Chicago, IL: Phoenix, 1964); Robert Nisbet, *The History of the Idea of Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 1980).
5. Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 30–39.
6. Vítor Westhelle, *The Scandalous God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006), 144–159.
7. G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 19770), 9: 48.
8. E.g. David Griffin, "Process Eschatology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, Jerry Walls, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 295–310.
9. See Rosemary R. Ruether, "Eschatology and Feminism," in *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*, Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel, eds. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998), 129–42.
10. Juan L. Segundo, *Evolution and Guilt* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1974).
11. "The sun, the light rises in the Orient...World history goes from east to west." Hegel, *Werke,* 12: 133f.

12. "America is therefore the land of the future in which its world-histor-
    ical importance shall be revealed for us in the times that lie ahead."
    Ibid. 12: 114.

1   Re(li)gion: The Struggle between Space and Time

1. Peter Høeg, *Borderliners,* trans. Barbara Haveland (New York: Delta,
   1995), 261.
2. Augustine, *The City of God*, XI, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (First
   Series) vol. 2, Philip Schaff, ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 208.
3. To be mentioned here are several forms of liberation theology, and
   particularly of ecologically sensitive theologies.
4. Augustine, *Sermon 43* (Migne *PL* 38.257–258). See also Erich Przywara,
   An Augustine Synthesis (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958).
5. Mayra Rivera, *The Touch of Transcendence: A Postcolonial Theology of
   God* (Louisville, KY: WJK, 2007), 44ff., calls it "intracosmic tran-
   scendence" and presents her argument initially in a discussion with
   radical orthodoxy and its indebtedness to Augustine's strict separation
   between time and eternity.
6. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-
   Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 412.
7. Ibid., 416f.
8. Immanuel Kant, "Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgeli-
   cher Absicht," in *Ausgewählte kleine Schriften* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner,
   1965), 27–44.
9. Jean-François Lyotard, "Historie universelle et differences cuturelles,"
   Critique 41 (May 1985): 559.
10. See Vítor Westhelle, *After Heresy: Colonial Practices and Post-colonial
    Theologies* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2010).
11. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 418.
12. Ibid., 410f.
13. Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 171.
14. Ibid., 331.
15. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 48.
16. Paul Rajashekar and Götz Planer-Friedrich, eds. *Land is Life: Toward a
    Just Sharing of Land* (Geneva: LWF, 1990), 27.
17. See Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*
    (New York: Harvest Books, 1959), 20–24.
18. For this distinction between the space of production and the space of
    the feast, see José de Souza Martins, *Não Há Terra Para Plantar Neste
    Verão* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1988), 45–61.

19. For a criticism of the received view of the desacralization of space in the New Testament (represented, e.g. by W. D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land* [Berkeley: University of California, 1974]), see Katherine Elena Wolff, *Geh in das Land, dass ich Dir zeigen werde: Das Land in der frühen rabbinischen Tradition und im Neuen Testament* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1989), 357: "Der Dialog zwischen beiden teilen der Bibel…hat gezeigt, dass das Land als theologische Dimension im Neuen Testament keineswegs zur Seite gelegt oder gänzlich spiritualisiert oder ins Jenseits verlagert wurde."

20. Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, Robert C. Kimball, ed. (New York: Oxford University, 1959), 39.

21. Werner Jentsch et al., eds. *Evangelischer Erwachsenenkatechismus: Kursbuch des Glaubens* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1975), 218.

22. Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 31.

23. Ibid., 39.

24. Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 1991), 16–21.

25. Lefebvre makes a broader remark in reference to the social sciences in general: "No sooner had the social sciences established themselves than they gave up any interest in the description of 'substances' inherited from philosophy: 'subject' and 'object', society 'in itself', or the individual and group considered in isolation. Instead, like other sciences, they took *relationships* as their object of study." *Production of Space*, 401.

26. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings: 1972–1977*, Colin Gordon, ed. (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 70.

27. Lonnie D. Kliever, "Story and Space: The Forgotten Dimension," *Journal of the AAR* 45: 532–533.

28. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 245.

29. Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1949), 166.

30. See Robin G. Collingwood, *The Idea of Nature* (London: Oxford University, 1960).

31. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 246.

32. Agnes Heller, *Renaissance Man* (New York: Schocken, 1981), 191. (emphases in the original).

33. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 17.

34. Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 92.

35. Philip Schaff, ed. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (First Series) vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 206.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., 210.
39. Ibid., 259f.
40. See Wolfhart Pannenberg, "The Doctrine of the Spirit and the Task of a Theology of Nature," *Anglican Monthly Review* 75 (January 1972): 8–21; Ted Peters, ed. *Toward a Theology of Nature: Essays on Science and Faith / Wofhart Pannenberg* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/J. Knox Press, 1993).
41. Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972), 584; G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 487.
42. Yacob Tesfai, "This Is My Resting Place: An Inquiry into the Role of Time and Space in the Old Testament," Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, ThD dissertation, 1975.
43. Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 32.
44. Foucault, *Knowledge and Power*, 77.
45. Ibid., 69.
46. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California, 1984), 35f.
47. Antonio Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writing 1916–1935*, David Forgacs, ed. (New York: NYU, 2000), 249; Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 10f.
48. Certeau, *Practise of Everyday Life*, 36f.
49. Ibid., 38.
50. Ibid., 38f. In discussing "abstract space" (see Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 52), the space that creates homogeneity and suppresses difference and thus consolidates its own hegemony, Lefebvre observes: "The oppressive and repressive power of abstract space are clearly revealed in connection with time: this space relegates time to an abstraction of its own." Lefebvre, *Production*, 393.
51. In search for language, Jacques Derrida, for whom this problem was a recurrent motif, tried in many ways to convey it by different terms (*différance*, *Khora*, etc.), suggested "insideoutness" as an approximation. See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology,* trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 27–73.
52. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 52f.; Normunds Titans, "Metaphysical Insideoutness: An Interpretation of Overcoming Metaphysics in

the History of Western Philosophy, with Special Emphasis on Jacques Derrida, and its Application to the Thought of Friedrich Schleiermacher," (PhD dissertation, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 2003).

2 Space, History, and the Kingdom

1. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1988), 108.
2. For a review of the literature and the commanding influence of von Rad, see Yacob Tesfai, "This Is My Resting Place: An Inquiry into the Role of Time and Space in the Old Testament," Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, (PhD dissertation, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1975).
3. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols., trans. D. M. G. Stalker (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1962, 1965), 1:136.
4. Ibid., 1:51.
5. Ibid., 1:106.
6. Ibid., 1:136.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., 1:137.
9. Ibid., 1: 53.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., 1:138.
12. Ibid., 1:56.
13. See Peter Berger, "Protestantism and the Quest for Certainty," *Christian Century* (August 26–September 2, 1998): 782.
14. Tesfai, "This Is My Resting Place," , 41.
15. For a comprehensive study of the irreducible plurality of theological conceptions, see Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Theologies of the Old Testament*, trans. John Bowden (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2002). For the multiple conceptions of history and eschatology cf. ibid., 302ff.
16. Ibid., 244.
17. Ibid., 302f.
18. Genesis 6:1–4.
19. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds. *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 8:85. For a even more fanciful account (to the point of explaining the origin of cannibalism) see Homily VIII, 12–17 in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 8:272f. See also the commentary of Tertullian in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:470.

20. Among others, see the long argument of Tertullian in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:32.

21. Here, ideology does not mean deceitful teachings, mores, and legislations. It is used in the neutral sense of a set of ideas that are or aim at becoming dominant offering simultaneously intellectual and moral guidance. In this sense it is similar to Gramsci's concept of hegemony and offers a nonpsychological and arbitrary reading of ideology as it is still often used. See Jorge Larrain, *The Concept of Ideology* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia, 1979).

22. Since the sixth century when defined by Pope Gregory I, none of the seven deadly sins (luxury, gluttony, greed, aecidia, wrath, envy, and pride) carries any necessary immediate judgment but works as to avert consequences that may over time collect the "prize" for indulging on them.

23. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 8:437 (part II, ch. 6); Greek text in *Evangelia Apocrypha*, Constantinus Tischendorf, ed. (Leipzig: Avenarius et Mendelsohn, 1853), 307 (*caput* VI [XXII]).

24. See Justin Martyr, "The First Apology": "For the prophets have proclaimed two advents (*parousia*) of his: the one, that which is already past . . . ; but the second, when, according to prophecy, He shall come from Heaven with glory," *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:180 (ch. 52).

25. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966), 97.

26. Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1967), 93–99.

27. Ibid., 99.

28. See Oswald Bayer "Nature and Institution: Luther's Doctrine of the Three Orders," *Lutheran Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 125–159.

29. Turner, *Forest of Symbols*, 99, phrases it anthropologically: "Undoing, dissolution, decomposition are accompanied by processes of growth, transformation, and the reformulation of old elements in new patterns. It is interesting to note how, by the principle of the economy (or parsimony) of symbolic reference, logically antithetical processes of death and growth may be represented by the same tokens, for example, by huts and tunnels that are once tombs and wombs."

30. Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 98.

31. Karl Marx used "metabolism" (*Stoffwechsel*) as a concept to explain labor. Karl Marx, *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie,* vol. 1 (Berlin: Dietz, 1962): 192.

32. Cf. Rudolf Otto, *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man: A Study in the History of Religion*, trans. Floyd Filson and Bertram Lee-Woolf (London: Lutterworth, 1943), 97ff.

33. F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, eds. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. (Walter Bauer's 5th ed., 1958) (Chicago, IL: Chicago University, 1979).

34. Oscar Cullmann, *Heil als Geschichte: heilsgeschichtliche Existenz im Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1965).

35. Barbara Rossing, Rapture Exposed: *The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004).

36. Kathryn Tanner, "Eschatology and Ethics," in *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, Gilbert Meilaender and William Werpehowski, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University, 2005), 41–56.

37. Marcus Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994).

38. Immanuel Kant, *On History*, Lewis W. Beck, ed. (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1981), 11–26; Immanuel Kant, *Ausgwaehlte kleine Schriften* (Hamburg: Felix Miener, 1969), 27–44.

39. Ibid., 15; 31.

40. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* trans. F. Haywood (London: W. Pickering, 1838).

41. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason,* trans. Lewis White Beck (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1956).

42. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Pub. Co., 1951).

3   Conquering Eschatology

1. Samuel Becket, *Waiting for Godot: Tragicomedy in 2 Acts* (New York: Grove, 1979), 55.

2. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Difference between the Fichtean and the Schellingean Systems of Philosophy* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988).

3. G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970) 2:96; 5:74; 9:277.

4. Ibid, 10:347; 12:559.

5. Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago, IL: Phoenix, 1964), 57f.

6. See G. W. F. Hegel, *The Christian Religion*, trans. and ed. Peter C. Hodgson (Missoula, MO: Scholars Press, 1979), 294.

7. Hegel, *Werke* , 12:134.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Hegel, *Christian Religion*, 294. This final section of Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion*, entitled "Passing Away of the Community," only appears in the firsts edition of 1821 and is omitted in the subsequent editions of 1824, 1827, and 1831 and is replaced by another section entitled "The Realization of the Community." See Hodgson's editorial comment in ibid., 307f. Hegel did not use the word "eschatology" or the more traditional at that time "doctrine of the last things."
11. One may be reminded here of the *faux naïveté* of José Saramago, the Portuguese Noble Prize of Literature, who said that, after hearing about the famous article of Francis Fukuyama on the end of history, he went out to see if newspapers were still being sold.
12. Hegel, *Werke,* 17:471.
13. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1962).
14. See Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1982), 245–257, for a fascinating discussion on the use of the sun and the heliotrope as metaphors. Derrida uses the flower's name as entailing in itself a metaphor. The root particle—*trope*—has a double sense. It means "turning" (toward the sun *helio-*), but is also means "trope" in the grammatical sense, a figure that carries some meaning.
15. The most celebrated name in this context is Jürgen Moltmann who will be discussed later.
16. Vítor Westhelle, "Religion and Representation: A Study of Hegel's Critical Theories of Vorstellung and Their Relevance for Hegelianism and Theology," (ThD dissertation, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1984).
17. Schleiermacher first published *The Christian Faith* in 1821–1822 right after Hegel delivered his first lectures on the philosophy of religion that we discussed above.
18. Frederick Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (New York: T&T Clark Ltd., 1998), 703 (159). (Author's emphasis.)
19. Ibid., 707 (160). (Author's emphasis.)
20. Ibid., 709 (161).
21. Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, Paul Rabinow, ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 39. In a different context but for an analogous distinction see Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans.

Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993) where he defines what he calls the "Constitution" of modernity as entailing two practices, the "work of translation" or "mediation," and the "work of purification." Only when these two are maintained apart and simultaneously pursued we are truly modern.

22. See Robert Nisbet, *The Idea of Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 1980).

23. See Richard P. Busse, "The Implicit Metaphysical Scheme of Albrecht Ritschl's Theology," (ThD dissertation, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1984).

24. From *Instruction in the Christian Religion*, §5, in Philip Hefner, *Albrecht Ritschl: Three Essays* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1972), 222.

25. This has been already suggested by Lessing in the eighteenth century. In that context he and Reimarus had discredited the miracle stories and the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies in favor of Jesus's teaching. See Chadwick H., ed. *Lessing's Theological Writings* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1956), particularly his essay "On The Proof of the Power and the Spirit," where he states explicitly: "accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason."

26. Johannes Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, trans. Richard Hyde Hiers and David Larrimore Holland (London: SCM, 1971), 132f.

27. Albert Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus' Messiahship and Passion*, trans. Walter Lowrie (New York: Macmillan, 1950).

28. Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery (New York: Macmillan, 1968). The English edition is a one-volume abridgment of the German publication: *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, 2 vols. (München: Siebenstern, 1977–1978).

29. Ibid., 370–371.

30. Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 13.

31. Martin Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and The Historic Biblical Christ,* trans. Carl E. Braaten (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1964).

32. Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwin C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford UP, 1963), 314. Barth would maintain the same position throughout his work. "A Christianity that is not wholly

and utterly and irreducibly eschatology has absolutely nothing to do with Christ." *Church Dogmatics* II/1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1961), 634.

33. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*, trans. John W. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958) *Das Heilige—Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen* (München: C. H. Beck, 1963).

34. Rudolf Otto, *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man: A Study in the History of Religion*, trans. Floyd Filson e Bertram Lee-Woolf (London: Lutterworth, 1943), 59.

35. See mote 33 above.

36. Immanuel Kant, *Ausgewählte kleine Schriften* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1965), 93.

37. Immanuel Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology,* trans. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 228.

38. Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, 314.

39. Ibid., 310.

40. Karl Barth, "The Word of God and the Task of the Ministry," *The Word of God and The Word of Man,* trans. Douglas Norton (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), 217.

41. Rudolf Bultmann, "Die Eschatologie des Johannes-Evangeliums," in *Glauben und Verstehen: Gesammelte Aufsätze*, vol. I, 7th ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1972), 146.

42. Rudolf Bultmann, "Geschichte und Eschatologie im Neuen Testament," *Glauben und Verstehen*, 3: 91.

43. Ibid., 3:106.

44. Ibid., 3:102.

45. Rudolf Bultmann, *The Presence of Eternity: History and Eschatology* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 155.

46. Bultmann, "Geschichte und Eschatologie," *Glauben und Verstehen*, 1:146.

47. Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus*. In reference to this work, Ernst Käsemann made the following observation about his teacher and mentor: "Basically Bultmann in his own way has only built on the foundation of this book and made it more precise." "Das Problem des historischen Jesus," in *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen,* 2 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), 188.

48. Shubert Ogden, *The Reality of God* would radicalize Bultmann's demythologizing program suggesting that this cantus firmus was still a mythological leftover in dissonance with a consistent demythologizing.

49. Rudolf Bultmann, "Welchen Sinn hat es, von Gott zu reden?" *Glaube un Verstehen*, 1:35.

50. Ibid., 1:34.

51. Aristotle, *Metaphysics: Books I–IX*, trans. Hugh Terdennick (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 294 f. (1025b, 24–27).

52. Bultmann, *Glauben un Verstehen*, 1:34.

53. Ernst Troeltsch, "On Historical and Dogmatic Methods in Theology," *Religion in History,* trans. James Luther Adams and Walter F. Bense (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 11–32. See also Van A. Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer: The Morality of Historical Knowledge and Christian Belief* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

54. Käsemann, "Das Problem," *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960–1964), 1:187–214; "Sackgassen im Sterit um den historischen Jesus," *Exegetische Versuche*, 2:31–69.

55. Ernst Käsemann, "Zum Thema der urchristlichen Apokalyptik," *Exegetische Versuche*, 2:129.

56. Ernst Käsemann, "Die Anfänge christlicher Theologie," *Exegetische Versuche*, 2:100; Käsemann, "Zum Thema," *Exegetische Versuche*, 2:130f.

57. Ibid., 2:105f.

58. Ibid.

59. Käsemann, "Das Problem," *Exegetische Versuche*, 1:199.

4   Eschatological Taxonomies

1. Richard Morse, *New World Soundings: Culture and Ideology in the Americas* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1989), 105.

2. The word *oikoumene* is associated with tolerance. In the New Testament it has always a pejorative connotation and is coextensive with the Roman Empire, and has been implicated in the equation of unity and totality. For an elaboration of this word, see Barbara Rossing's explanation in "(Re)claiming Oikumene? Empire, Ecumenism and the Discipleship of Equals," in *Walk in the Ways of Wisdom: Essays in*

Honor of Elisabeth Schlüsser Fiorenza, Shelly Matthews, Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, and Melanie Johnson-Debaufre, eds. (New York: Trinity Press International, 2003), 82–84.

3. In an interesting comparison this imaginary island motif appears in Gaunilo's criticism of Anselm's use of the ontological proof of God suggesting, in what would later be characterized as a nominalist move, that there can be an imaginary entity without necessarily implying logical existence. Luther, in *To Christian Nobility,* offers like Shakespeare the image of people stranded in a no-place to criticize the Roman Curia's exclusive control of priestly office. "Suppose a group of earnest Christian laymen were taken prisoners and set down in a desert without an episcopally ordained priest among them. And suppose that they were to come to a common mind there and then in the desert and elect one of their member, whether he were married or not, and charge him to baptize, say mass, pronounce absolution, and preach the gospel. Such man would be as truly a priest as though he had been ordained by all the bishops and popes in the world." Martin Luther, "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate (1520)," Martin Luther, *Luther's Works,* Jeroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, eds. (Saint Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress Press, 1955–1967), 44: 128.

4. See Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983), 34–39.

5. "The phrase, 'the Last Things' which has been somewhat generally accepted, has a look of strangeness which is more concealed by the word 'Eschatology'; for the term 'things' threatens to carry us quite away from the domain of the inner life with which alone we are concerned." Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (New York: T&T Clark Ltd., 1998), 703.

6. Among them, and there are many, certainly Jürgen Moltmann would be considered one of the main representatives with two works that still remain as a reference for eschatological discussions. See Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*: *On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology,* trans. James W. Leitch (New York: Harper & Row, 1967); Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God*: *Christian Eschatology,* trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996). Even Paul Tillich, who should not be included in the *telos*-oriented type of eschatological thinking, would recognize the importance of the millenarian type of eschatological thinking: Paul

Tillich, *Systematic Theology II* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 163.

7. Paul Tillich credits existentialism for giving theology a language to speak to the new challenges of the twentieth century. See Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought: Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology* (New York: Touchstone, 1967).

8. See his known reference to Kierkegaard in his commentary of Paul's Letter to the Romans, "God is in heaven and thou art on earth," Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London; Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 310.

9. Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences,* ed. and trans. E. A. shils and H. A. Finch (New York: Free Press, 1949), 90.

10. Jacob Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology,* trans. David Ratmoko (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

11. Ibid.,17: "Revelation cannot take place in humanity because it is torn and scattered. It cannot take place in a nation, either, because they have fallen prey to other gods. It can only take place in one race, which is still with God since the beginning."

12. Cited in Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology*, 68. Albert Schweitzer, *Die Mystik des Apostel Paulus* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1930).

13. Ibid., 40.

14. Ibid., 88

15. See the argument of Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago, IL: Phoenix, 1949), 145–159 for the claim that Joachim "secularized" Christian eschatology, even if that was not his intention.

16. St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the Soul* (London: T. Baker, 1908).

17. Rudolf Bultmann, *History and Eschatology: The Presence of Eternity*, Gifford Lectures, 1955, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1957).

18. Ibid., 155.

19. Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 370–371.

20. Bultmann indeed admits to one historically reliable event that is the punctual event of the Crucifixion as the last remnant of historicity. This led to Shubert Ogden's criticism that Bultmann did not carry his program of demythologizing to its ultimate consequences. See Shubert Ogden, *The Reality of God and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

21. C. H. Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Scribner, 1961) 164–165.

22. Ernst Käsemann, "Ketzer und Zeuge," in *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 1: 168–187.

23. Oscar Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead?*: *The Witness of the New Testament* (London: Epsworth, 1958), 43f.

24. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Offenbarung als Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961). The book was published in English in 1968 with the title *Revelation as History,* trans. David Granskou (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968).

25. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *The Apostles Creed in the Light of Today's Questions*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Philadelphia, PA: Westminister Press, 1976), 172–173.

26. See Vítor Westhelle, "Religion and Representation: A Study of Hegel's Critical Theories of Vorstellung and their Relevance for Hegelianism and Theology," (PhD dissertation, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1984), 415–458; Luís H. Dreher, *Metaphors of Light: Philipp K. Marheineke's Method and the Ongoing Program of Mediation Theology* (NY: P. Lang, 1998).

27. However, the celebrated defense of the historicity of the resurrection carries certain ambiguities when he calls it also an "absolute metaphor," yet still a metaphor. See Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1974), 187; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, vol. 1, trans. George K. Hehm (London: SCM, 1970), 236.

28. Some of the most celebrated names in twentieth-century theology, who were never associated with contextual theology have been shown to be contextual theologians. Gustav Wingren makes this case in discussing the theology of Karl Barth and so did Johann Baptist Metz in a seminal article analyzing the work of Karl Rahner, *Faith in History and Society: Towards a Foundational Political Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1979).

29. Tillich is probably the one to whom the role of contextuality in theology needs to be attributed as he developed his method of correlation for theology. The most precise definition of this method, Tillich described in the introduction to his *Systematic Theology* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1951). But see also David Tracy's critical adoption and revision of the Method in *Blessed Rage of Order: New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975).

30. See Philip Hefner, *The Promise of Teilhard* (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, 1970).

31. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), later published as *The Human Phenomenon* (Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 1999).
32. Chardin, *Phenomenon of Man*, 294.
33. Robert Frost, "Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,/And sorry I could not travel both/ . . . / took the one less traveled by,/And that has made all the difference." Robert Frost, *Mountain Interval* (New York: Henry Holt, 1921).
34. Alfred N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: The Free Press, 1978).
35. John Cobb, Jr., *Process Theology as Political Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1982), 80–81. See also David R. Griffin, "Process Eschatology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, Jerry Walls, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 295–310.
36. John Cobb, Jr., *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), 23.
37. John Cobb, Jr., *A Christian Natural Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1965), 38.
38. Morse, *New World Soundings*, 105.

5   A Latitudinal Approach to Eschatology

1. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993).
2. Peter Høeg, *Borderliners,* trans. Barbara Haveland (New York: Delta, 1995), 37.
3. Antonio Gramsci, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings: 1916–1935,* David Forgacs, ed. (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 249.
4. As a concept to designate a theological production Liberation Theology emerged in Latin America in the late 1960s, early 1970s. Although it has since been used in other continents, it is largely associated with Latin America. Particularly influential was the seminal work of Gustavo Gutiérrez bearing it as its title in the first edition, *Teología de la liberación*, of 1971. In English it was published as *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, trans. Caridad Inda and John Eagelson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1973).
5. Whether the move from the original "small literature" that characterized the beginning of liberation theology to the more scholarly books written for the academia and published by major publishing houses represents a departure or a broadening of its scope is an issue

in dispute. See Hermann Brandt, *Gottes Gegenwart in Lateinamerika: Inkarnation als Leitmotiv der Befreiungstheologie* (Hamburg: Steinmann & Steinmann, 1992), 94–106.

6. G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), 12:134.

7. Löwith is commenting on Hegel's famous proposition that "die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht," (the history of the world is the world's judgment). Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago, IL: Phoenix, 1964), 57–58.

8. See, for example, Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Volume III* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 394–396.

9. For a critical theological and exegetical analysis of the popular "Left Behind" series of novels and other works alike, see Barbara Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2004).

10. Enrique Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, trans. Aquilina Martinez and Christine Morkosky (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1980), 24 (thesis 2.2.4.2).

11. Gustavo Gutierrez, *The Power of the Poor in History: Selected Writings*, trans. Robert Barr (New York: Orbis, 1983), 212.

12. See Edmundo O'Gorman, *The Invention of America: An Inquiry into the Historical Nature of the New World and the Meaning of its History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961) and Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1978).

13. A representative collection of "classic" and recent voices in postcolonial studies can be found in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds. *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). The particular Latin American version of it was called "dependency theory." For its impact in Liberation Theology see Vítor Westhelle, "Dependency Theory: Some Implications for Liberation Theology," *Dialog* 20 (1981): 293–299, and also Ofelia Schutte, *Cultural Identity and Social Liberation in Latin American Thought* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993).

14. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 96 (21). See Vítor Westhelle, *Ater Heresy: Colonial Practices and Post-Colonial Theologies* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), xi–xii.

15. Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, trans. Christopher Chiappari and Silvia López (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 11.

16. See Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 428. Bakhtin's communicative theory of language pertains to language in general, but precisely because of this

universal claim he authorizes the postcolonial claim that the other
voice is as legitimate as the nonrecognized heteroglossia of hegemonic
linguistic systems. "Thus at any given moment of its historical exis-
tence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-
existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and
the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-
ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles
and so forth." Ibid., 291.

17. Jean-François Lyotard, "Historie universelle et differences culturelles,"
    Critique 41 (May 1985): 559.
18. Pedro Casaldáliga. *Creio na Justiça e na Esperança* (Rio de Janeiro:
    Civ. Brasileira, 1978), 211.
19. Jon Sobrino, "The Central Position," in *Mysterium Liberationis:
    Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology,* Ignacio Ellacuría and
    Jon Sobrino, eds. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 367–371. See also
    Ignacio Ellacuría, "The Church of the Poor, Historical Sacrament of
    Liberation," in *Mysterium Liberationis*, 543–564.
20. Juan Luis Segundo, *The Historical Jesus of the Synoptics*, trans.
    John Drury (New York: Orbis, 1985), 90.
21. Mary P. Engel and Susan B. Thistlethwaite, "Introduction: Making
    Connections among Liberation Theologies around the World," in
    Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside
    (revised and expanded edition) Susan B. Thistlethwaite and Mary P.
    Engel, eds. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998), 14–15.
22. In the Catholic tradition, Leonardo Boff suggests that the doctrine of
    the purgatory might be interpreted as this transitory or ecclesial reality
    in which the *homo incurvatus* is converted into the *home erectus* who can
    see God face-to-face. Leonardo Boff, *Hablemos de la otra vida* (Bilbao:
    Sal Tarrae, 1984), 66.
23. For more on this, see Vítor Westhelle, *The Church Event: Call and
    Challenge of a Church Protestant* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press,
    2009).
24. Gutierrez, *Power of the Poor*, 211. Mary Philip "The Space in between
    Spaces: The Church as Prophetic Pest/Parasite," in *Being the Church in
    the Midst of Empire: Trinitarian Reflections*, Karen L. Bloomquist, ed.
    (Minneapolis, MN: Lutheran University Press, 2007), 91–106.
25. Jon Sobrino, *Resurrección de la verdadera Iglesia: Los pobres, Lugar
    teológico de la eclesiología* (Santander: Sal Terrae, 1981), 163.
26. Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, 21 (thesis 2.1.6.7).
27. Ibid., 1.
28. Ibid., 10 (thesis 1.1.2.2).

29. Ibid., 19 (thesis 2.1.4.3).
30. Pablo Richard, *Apocalypse: A People's Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, Phillip Berryman, trans. (New York: Orbis, 1998), 28, 45.
31. Gutierrez, *Power of the Poor*, 169–221.
32. See the synthetic attempt of presenting these different levels in Liberation Theology by João Batista Libânio, *Teologia da Libertação: Roteiro Didático para um Estudo* (São Paulo: Loyola, 1987), 141–146. Also the classical definition of the term "liberation" in Gutierrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 36–37, 176, 235, distinguishes between a political, a personal, and a spiritual dimension of liberation.
33. A comprehensive study on idolatry in this perspective is a collective work produced by DEI (Ecumenical Department of Investigations) in Costa Rica, *La lucha de los dioses: los ídolos de la oppression y la búsqueda del Dios Liberador* (San José: DEI, 1980). Among its authors are well-known voices in liberation theology: Pablo Richard, Severino Croatto, Jorge Pixley, Jon Sobrino, Franz Hinkelammert, Hugo Assmann, and others.
34. Gutierrez, *Power of the Poor*, 92, 193, 213, passim.
35. Victor Turner, *Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1967).
36. Vítor Westhelle, *After Heresy: Colonial Practices and Post-Colonial Theologies* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), xvif., 39–42.
37. Paulo Freire, *Education, the Practice of Freedom* (London: Writers and Readers Cooperative, 1976) and Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970).
38. Gutierrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 36–37, 176, 235.
39. In Liberation Theology this perspective is most clearly expressed in Juan Luis Segundo, *Evolution and Guilt* (New York: Orbis books, 1974) and in M. M. Thomas, *Salvation and Humanisation: Some Crucial Issues of the Theology of Mission in Contemporary India* (Madras, India: Christian Literature Society, 1971). See Mary Philip, "Can Humanization be Salvation: A Journey with the Musings of Arundhati Roy, Juan Luis Segundo and Madathiparambil Mammen Thomas," (PhD dissertation, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 2009.)
40. Høeg, *Borderliners,* 37.

An Interlude: À Flor da Pele

*A Portuguese expression used in Brazil that literally means "at the surface of the skin," but could also mean "the blossoming of the skin," conveying the idea of being on the edge of one's emotion or sensibility.

1. Georges Bataille, *Theory of Religion* (New York: Zone, 1992), 98.
2. A pertinent description of shame is presented with perspicacity in Salman Rushdie's novel *Shame*. It tells the story of a tyrant who uncapable of recognizing his guilt is brought to a state of shame and has to flee his reign dressed as a woman in a burqa.
3. Catherin Hakim, "Erotic Capital," *European Sociological Review*, 2010.
4. Giorgio Agamben, *Nudities*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 59.
5. Ibid., 60.
6. Ibid., 82.
7. Georges Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone, 1992), 23.
8. Ibid., 27.
9. Ibid., 28.
10. Ibid., 28f.
11. Ibid., 43.
12. Georges Bataille, *The Tears of Eros,* trans. Peter Connor (San Francisco, CA: City Lights, 1989), 70.
13. Ibid., 74.
14. Ibid., 79.
15. Alain Badiou, *The Century,* trans. Alberto Toscano (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2007), 78f.
16. See Jacob Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).
17. Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, 28f.
18. Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1973).
19. Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, 29f.
20. Bataille, *Tears of Eros*, 52.

6   The Postcolonial Challenge: Quotidian *Eschata*

1. George E. Tinker, *Spirit and Resistance* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2004), 91.
2. Dorothee Soelle, *Thinking About God: An Introduction to Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 2.
3. Two now classic studies of the topic can be seen in Rudolf Bultmann, "Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions Possible? [1957]" in *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann*, trans. Schubert M. Ogden

(Cleveland, OH: The World Publishing Company, 1960) and Johann Baptist Metz, "Theology as Biography?," reprinted in *Faith in History and Society: Towards a Foundational Political Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1979), 219–228.

4. The classic study of these two senses is offered in the work of Gayatri C. Spivak in which she uses the German differentiation between *Darstellung* and *Vetretung*. See inter alia Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Cary Nelson and L. Grossberg, eds. (Chicago: Illinois University Press, 1988), 271–313.

5. Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959). See chapter 1 above.

6. Bultmann's celebrated use of the example of the uselessness of the biblical myths for the modern person who turns a light switch is telling of his Quixotesque fight in an age in which a wired electric switch is itself a metaphor for light and darkness, vigor and weakness, bond and breach. See his *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Scribner, 1958).

7. J. L. Borges, *El Aleph* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1974), 155–174.

8. For the distinction between "limit-of" and "limit-to," see David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1975), 92–94.

9. G. W. F Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Claredon, 1977), 118, 145; Vítor Westhelle, "Lutheranism and Culture in the Americas: A Comparative Study," in *Transformations in Luther's Theology: Historical and Contemporary Reflections, Arbeiten zur Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte 32,* Christine Helmer and Bo Kristian Holm, eds. (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2011), 229–244.

10. The text of the murder of Abel after Cain's offer to the Lord as not accepted is paradigmatic: "The Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you don't do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.'" Genesis 4:6–7.

11. John Donne who in an early poem links the capturing of the love of a woman to the conquering of continent is emblematic: "Off with those shoes: and then safely tread/In this love's hallowed temple, this soft bed./…/ Licence my roving hands, and let them go/Behind, before, above, between, below./O my America, my new found land,/My kingdom, safeliest when with one man manned,/My mine of precious stones, my empire,/How blessed am I in this discovering thee./To enter in these bonds is to be free,/Then where my hand is set my seal shall be." John Donne, *The Oxford Authors,* John Carey, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 12–13.

12. Even Columbus, relying in Arabian calculations to the distance to the east of India, found what he expected, or so he thought. The Arabic maritime knots were different (longer) than the European's, which made him believe that he was actually close to India. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 34, 49.

13. Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage," *Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1967), 93–111.

14. Henry Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 416–418.

15. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1968), 263f.

16. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 118; G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), 153f.

17. Ibid., 114.

18. Gabriel Marcel, "La mort de demain" *Trois pièces* (Paris: Plon, 1932), 160–161.

19. Genesis 4:15.

20. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 145f.; *Phänomenologie,* 186 (emphasis in original).

21. Derrida on *chōra*. Jacques Derrida and Peter Eisenman, *Chora L Works*, Jeffrey Kipnis and Thomas Leeser, eds. (New York: Monacelli Press, 1997). He transliterates *chōra* as *khora* in *On the Name* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press,1995), 89–130.

22. Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in Late Modern Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 144–180.

23. One of the most significant reflections on *choratic* spaces is Salman Rushdie book of essays *Step Across this Line: Collected Nonfiction 1992 –2002* (New York: Modern Library, 2002).

24. George Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, , trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone, 1992).

25. Ibid., 100 (emphases in the original).

26. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*: *An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational,* trans. John W. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960).

27. See Sugirtharajah R. S., *Still at the Margins: Biblical Scholarship Fifteen Years after the Voices from the Margin* (New York: T&T Clark), 69–87; Vítor Westhelle, *After Heresy: Colonial Practices and Post-Colonial Theologies* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010).

28. Edward W. Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 16.
29. For an unveiling of the rapture motive in pop religiosity see, Barbara Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).
30. See Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology III* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 193), 369–372.
31. Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 68f.
32. Ibid., 74f.

7   Dimensions of Liminality

1. Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 71.
2. Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 26f.
3. Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, trans. Howard and Edna Hong (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 320.
4. Although this idiom (from the French *la petit mort*) has been used as a metaphor for orgasm it is also used for irretrievable losses.
5. See the brilliant analysis of the phenomenon in Derrida, *Given Time.*
6. There are likely diseases as cancer and inherited congenital illnesses that that may be not the result of the external environment affecting the body through the skin, its pores, and orifices. But at the symbolic level it is the skin that signifies the limits of the body.
7. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (Routledge: New York, 2002), 150.
8. Mary Philip, "The Elusive Lure of the Lotus," *Transforming Lutheran Theologies* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 34.
9. For a treatment of this topic see my article "Justification as Death and Gift," Lutheran Quarterly, 24, no. 3 (Autumn 2010): 249–262.
10. Justin Martyr, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 8:757b.
11. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (New York: Vintage Books 1994). See also Georges Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological*, trans. Carolyn R. Fawcett and Robert S. Cohen (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

12. Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in Late Modern Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991),

13. Michel Foucault. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," *The Foucault Reader*, Paul. Rainbow, ed. (New York: Pantheon, 1984). 79fn18.

14. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

15. The whole corpus of Foucault's writings bear witness to his effort to determine the genealogy of knowledges (*epistemes*), but his opus magnum on this issue is *The Order of Things: An Arcaeology of Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

16. Georges Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological*, trans. Carolyn R. Fawcett and Robert S. Cohen (New York: Zone Books, 1991). Also Georges Canguilhem, "Machine and Organism," trans. Mark Cohen and Randall Cherry, in *Incorporations*, Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter, ed. (New York: Zone Books, 1992).

17. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process,* trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982).

18. See Vítor Westhelle, *After Heresy*: *Colonial Practices and Post-Colonial Practices* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010).

19. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

20. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 7.

21. Homi Bhabha, *Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 114.

22. This seminal essay has been slightly reworked in her book *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

23. Franz Kafka, *Metamorphosis,* trans. Willa and Edwin Muir (New York: The Limited Editions Club, 1984).

24. This analysis is at the core of Georges Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone, 1992).

25. Jacob Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology,* trans. David Ratmoko (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 38–39. See also Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1974).

26. Ferdinand Toennies, *Community and Society: Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft,* trans. Charles Loomis (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2002).

27. Ibid., 103–134.

28. Albert Camus, *The Stranger* (New York: Vintage Books, 1946).

29. See Marcela Althaus Reid, *The Queer God* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

30. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), "Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2008

Revision," http://esa.un.org/migration/index.asp?panel=1, accessed on November 27, 2011.

31. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 254.

32. But it is surprising how the metaphors and spatial motifs linked to eschatological motifs have been explicit part of Western literature. See Paul S. Fiddes, *The Promised End: Eschatology in Theology and Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

33. Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology*.

34. Swedish ethicist Elisabeth Gerle suggested to me this notion in speaking about these "orders" as "spheres of promise."

35. Aristotle, *Metaphysics: Books I–IX*. (Bilingual Edition), trans. Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 292–295 (=1025b1–1026a33; VI.i.1.). Here we are concerned only with the first two: poiesis and praxis.

36. The church (*ecclesia*) as the third order is not only an empirical institution but also an hybrid reality that borrows from the other two for its formation. See Vítor Westhelle, *The Church Event: Call and Challenge of a Church Protestant* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 9.

37. Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1973) is still a classic analysis of North American culture's incapability of facing *eschata*.

38. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works,* Jeroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, eds. (Saint Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress Press, 1955–1967), 31:33.

39. Toennis, *Community and Society*, 103–134, distinguishes community from society; in the former the individual is a means for the community's end, while in society, it is a means for the individual's ends.

40. These two drives are also conceptually analogous to Toennis's "natural will" (*Wesenwille*) and "rational will" (*Kürwille*).

41. See my article "Idols and Demons: On Discerning the Spirits," *Dialog* 41, no. 1 (2002): 9–15.

8   Strategy and Tactics in Eschatological Practices

1. Edward W. Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 16.

2. See in particular his *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

3. Ibid., 35f.
4. Ibid. 36f.
5. Salman Rushdie, *Step Across This Line: Collected Nonfiction 1992–2002* (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 353f. He further discusses at length a now famous lecture by Frederick Jackson Turner, delivered in 1893 on "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." What Rushdie dubs as the "Frontier Thesis" "sounds almost imperialistic now" (362). The "Thesis" is an example of the strategic victory of conquering space and pushing the frontier (*eschaton*) ever ahead, but leaving the conquered people at the edge of existence, living the *eschaton*.
6. Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), particularly 72–75.
7. But it is important to remember that Erich Auerbach, *Dante: Poet of the Secular World*, trans. Ralph Mannheim (New York: NYRB, 2007) surmises that Dante in employing the popular Christian imagery, but with an anthropological view that would only mature during the Renaissance, uses the imagery to describe secular existence and pass a judgment on the social conditions.
8. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. and intro. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 255 (From the "Thesis on the Philosophy of History.").
9. Ibid., 263.
10. Agamben, *Time That Remains,* 138–145. See Jacob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul,* trans. Dana Hollander (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 70–76.
11. Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 261.
12. Ibid., 263f.
13. Agamben makes this distinction between the messianic time and eschatological time. While the latter, according to him speaks about the end of time, the former about "*the time of the end.*" *Time That Remains*, 62.
14. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1999), 471 [N8,1].
15. Ibid., [N7a,7]. His close friend, Theodor Adorno, carried this to the bold affirmation that only a materialist can affirm "the resurrection of the flesh," something completely strange for an idealist. "Christian dogmatics, in which the souls were conceived as awakening simultaneously with the resurrection of the flesh, was metaphysically more

consistent—more enlightened if you will—than speculative meta-physics, just as hope means a physical resurrection and feels defrauded of the best part by its spiritualization." *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 401. Theology helps to give tactile expression to the hope in the resurrection. See Enio Mueller, *Teologia à Sombra de Auschwitz: Um Dueto com Adorno* (São Leopoldo: Sinodal/EST, 2009), 224–226. Ted Jennings commenting on Romans 8, the very text that enthused Benjamin has this remark to offer: "Thus to speak of the resurrection if the dead is at the same time to speak of the transforma-tion of heaven and earth. The preoccupation with our own personal and private destiny, so often encouraged by talk of the immortality of the soul, is radically thrown into question. The destiny of the soul is tied to destiny of the earth. The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, then, entails profound solidarity with the earth. In this way we testify to the victory of the God who is…Maker of heaven and earth." Theodore W. Jennings, Jr. *Loyalty to God: The Apostles' Creed in Life & Liturgy* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 217.
16. Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorims, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. and intro. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken, 1978), 312f.
17. In English published as aforementioned *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: Bellknap Press, 2002).
18. Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 871.
19. Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 18.
20. Ibid., 217–251.
21. Cited in Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, trans. Erazim Kohák (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1996), 125.
22. Ibid., 134f.

Conclusion: In the Offing: In Lieu of a Conclusion

1. Florence Earle Coates, "In the Offing," *The Minaret* 2, no. 3, May 1917.
2. Rabindranath Tagore, *Lover's Gift and Crossing* (New Delhi: Macmillan India, 2001), 54.
3. Paul S. Fiddes, *The Promised End: Eschatology in Theology and Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 5.
4. See Antje Jackelén, *Time & Eternity: The Question of Time in Church, Science, and Theology*, trans. Barbara Harshaw (Philadelphia,

PA: Templeton Foundation, 2005), 198–202. Jackelén distinguishes these three as recent phases in the interpretation of eschatology from the end of the nineteenth century through the middle of the twentieth, which she characterizes as a move from concentration in the notion of *eschata* (as last things) to *eschaton* (the ultimate in existential sense), and *eschatos* (the last one).

5. Catherine Keller, *Apocalypse Now and Then: A Feminist Guide to the End of the World* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996) offers a linguistic examination of the use of the term. Barbara Rossing, *Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004) examines its application in the popular "left behind" literature and religious vogue.

6. Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1968), 262.

7. Walter Benjamin, "Goethe's Elective Affinities," in Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings: Volume 1 (1913–1926)*, Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, eds. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1996), 356. The statement almost inverts Franz Kafka's remark to Max Brod: "Plenty of hope, an infinite amount of hope—but not for us." Werner Hamacher, *Premises: Essays on Philosophy and Literature from Kant to Celan*, trans. Peter Fenves (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 303. Also in Max Brod, *Franz* Kafka: *A Biography* (New York, Schocken Books, 1960).

8. See Benjamin, "Theses," II, 254 on "weak Messianic power" that I am paraphrasing here.

9. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

10. Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndenbu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 99.

11. Dilip Loundo, *Tropical Rhymes, Topical Reasons: An Anthology of Modern Brazilian Literature* (New Delhi, India: National Book Trust, 2001).

12. See Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 2007), 400f.

13. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project,* trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1999), 471 [N8, 1].

14. Paul Tillich, *Courage to Be* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1952).

15. Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death,* trans. David Wills (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995.)

16. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 401f.

17. Ted Peters while agreeing that eschatology is that region of Christian contemplation in which we ponder the last things, also says, "But with respect to the new creation, they mark a beginning." For more on this, see Ted Peters, "Eschatology" in *God—the World's Future: Systematic Theology for a Postmodern Era* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 306–331.
18. See Vítor Westhelle, "Justification as Death and Gift," *Lutheran Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (Autumn 2010): 249–262; Ulrich Asendorf, *Eschatologie bei Luther* (Göttingen: Vandenjhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967).
19. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works,* Jeroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, eds. (Saint Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress Press, 1955–1967), 21:304.
20. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, trans. Edwin H. Robertson (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1978), 60f. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Wer ist und wer war Jesus Christus?: seine Geschichte und sein Geheimnis* (Hamburg: Furche-Verlag, 1962).

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