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Editor's Introduction

It is with genuine enthusiasm that I introduce our inaugural edition of the Ottawa Journal of Religion. The journal has come into existence as a venue to showcase some of the best and most innovative work being undertaken by graduate students within our academic community, the Department of Classics and Religious Studies at the University of Ottawa. The essays in this edition are not held together by an overarching theme; instead they reflect the broad scholarly interests of our department. The Ottawa Journal of Religion's introductory edition offers us an eclectic body of work: analyses from within the philosophy of religion (exploring the ideas of Girard, Nietzsche and Vattimo), a textual-historical analysis of the Gospel of Thomas, a phenomenological reading of the Iliad, an ethnographically informed analysis of the Jain community, a socio-cultural critique of religion and food within a Punk counterculture, and a socio-historical review of Black-Jewish communities in North America.

This introductory edition has truly been the collective effort of the entire department. I want to thank my colleagues as well as the Graduate Students Association for their wholehearted support. Special thanks is owed to the Committee of Studies (Professors de Bruyn, Anderson and Piovanelli) and to Professor Margolis for the additional time and effort they contributed to this project. Above all, I owe my deepest gratitude to my co-editor, Julie Sylvestre, who has given tirelessly of her time and talents.

May the journal enjoy a long success!

Anne Vallely

Introduction de l'éditeur

C'est avec enthousiasme que vous présente la première édition de la Revue des sciences des religions d'Ottawa. Ce journal est un moyen pour le département des Études anciennes et des Sciences des religions de mettre en valeur des travaux des étudiants diplômés, les meilleurs et les plus innovateurs. Les communications de cette édition ne sont pas liés par un thème général; ils reflètent les intérêts très larges de notre département. Cette édition d'introduction nous offre un ensemble éclectique: analyses en philosophie des religions (explorant les idées de Girard, Nietzsche et Vattimo), une analyse textuelle-historique de l'Évangile de Saint Thomas, une lecture phénoménologique de l'Iliade, une analyse ethnographique de la communauté Jain, une critique socio-culturelle de la religion et de la nourriture dans la contre-culture punk, et un compte-rendu socio-historique des communautés noires juives en Amérique du Nord.

Cette édition d'introduction est le résultat de l'effort collectif du département en son entier. Je tiens à remercier mes collègues ainsi que l'Association des étudiants diplômés en sciences des religions pour leur support. Je dois remercier en particulier le Comité des Études (professeurs de Bruyn, Anderson et Piovanelli) et le professeur Margolis pour le temps et l'effort additionnel qu'ils ont fourni à ce projet. Par-dessus tout, je dois une gratitude particulière à ma co-éditrice, Julie Sylvestre, qui a donné sans relâche son temps et son talent.

Que le journal vive un long succès!

Anne Vallely

Gianni Vattimo and Nihilistic Christianity: Creating Open Concepts of Truth and Knowledge in the Age of Interpretation

Stuart Chambers

Abstract: Borrowing largely from the Nietzschean and Heideggerian heritage, the works of Gianni Vattimo have been instrumental in promoting a nihilistic approach to Christianity. Vattimo's method entails the weakening of metaphysics (absolute foundations) by exposing the violence so often associated with it. As a consequence, truth and knowledge are maintained as open concepts within the dialectical process. This does not mean that "strong relativism" now prevails as a legitimate philosophical viewpoint. What it does mean, however, is that *T*ruth has simply been transformed into some intelligible form of *t*ruth. Moreover, Vattimo emphasizes that in the post-metaphysical (post-absolutist) world both secularism and nihilism are imperative to expanding truth and knowledge. As a result, it is argued that both philosophical positions are actually complementary to the roots of Christianity. Furthermore, I suggest that nihilism – in its *positive* form – not only expands the Christian message of charity, but also transforms it into its endless human potential.

Introduction

With the rise of secular, liberal democracies in the West, one may ask: Why attempt to construct a new metaphysic when the previous Christian model, as the sole author of first principles, has already been discredited? Those who gravitate towards absolute foundations – in fact, long after Nietzsche declared the "death of God"[1] – continue to do so because it seems frightening

to envision a world without the Bergerian notion of *nomos* functioning as ultimate reality.[2] Undoubtedly, foundationalism has been an integral part of the history of philosophy. Anselm of Canterbury defended the ontological argument for the existence of God as "something than which nothing greater can be conceived."[3] Similarly, Spinoza had depicted Substance as the absolutely infinite.[4] This "essence of being" or "supreme actuality" is said to be beyond temporal reality, implying that it has the property of transcending knowledge. Jacques Maritain summarizes such a claim. "Metaphysics...at the summit of natural knowledge, where it becomes fully wisdom, brings to light in its pure values and uncovers what is enveloped and veiled in the most primitive intellectual knowledge."[5] In fact, metaphysicians believe they can intuitively know the existence of the Absolute, meaning they "purport to render access to a supraempirical and above all foundational level of reality…"[6] In the history of philosophy, this yearning to totalize the transcendent has often led to the treatment of truth and knowledge as closed concepts.

This essay, written primarily for a post-Christian audience, highlights the important contributions surrounding the nihilistic Christianity expressed by Gianni Vattimo. His central themes – metaphysics and violence, ethical hermeneutics, ontology of actuality, the "event of being," and weak thought – are pivotal in understanding broader possibilities for truth, knowledge, and interpretation. Furthermore, Vattimo emphasizes that secularism and nihilism are imperative for expanding debate

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[1] Gianni Vattimo, *After Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 3.

[2] Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990), 3–28.

[3] Paul Edwards, ed. "Ontological Argument for the Existence of God." *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* vol. 5–6 (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc. and The Free Press, 1967), 538–539.

[4] Baruch Spinoza, *The Philosophy of Spinoza: Selected from His Chief Works* (New York: The Modern Library, Inc., 1927), 122–151.

[5] Jacques Maritain, *A Preface to Metaphysics: Seven Lectures on Being* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1939), 19.

[6] Lori G. Beaman, Anthony Gill, and Peter Beyer, "Symposium on Religious Freedom and Religious Pluralism," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42, no. 3 (2003): 336.

in a post-metaphysical (post-absolutist) world. In his view, both positions are complementary to the roots of Christianity. As I hope to demonstrate, nihilism – in its *positive* form – not only expands the Christian message of charity, but also transforms it into its endless human potential.

Vattimo's Nihilistic Christianity: Central Themes

Metaphysics and Violence

The Vattimian perspective begins with a rejection of metaphysics and its relationship to violence and power. Vattimo holds that "[w]herever there is an absolute…metaphysics is always present in the form of a supreme principle…"[7] Vattimo feels that the pluralistic world in which we live runs counter to absolute foundations, meaning that diversity "cannot be interpreted by an ideology that wants to unify it at all costs in the name of a sole truth…"[8] In other words, adherence to absolutes negates the dialectical process, mainly because of the former's obsession with essentializing truth and knowledge. States Vattimo: "[T]he metaphysics of Being as stable and eternal structure, given once and for all…is inaccessible to rational discourse and therefore even more strictly 'objective.'"[9]

Eventually, all metaphysical propositions exposed at the source become vulnerable to empirical disconfirmation. This is because such foundational claims require Humean tests of experience in nature.[10] When challenged, metaphysical beliefs can be seen "as fictions that…dissolve in reference to the explication of the conditions that determined their formation,"[11] or as Nietzsche would say, "the progressive knowledge of the

[7] Gianni Vattimo, *After Christianity*, 3.
[8] Ibid., 5.
[9] Ibid., 43.
[10] James C. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Vatican II* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1971), 52–63.
[11] Santiago Zabala, ed., *Weakening Philosophy: Essays in Honour of Gianni Vattimo* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2007), 402.

origin increases the insignificance of the origin."[12] However, philosophical debate often reverts back to a dependency on the Metaphysical Fact. When Nietzsche announced the death of God, he anticipated that "the latter's shadow [would] continue to be cast upon our world for a long time."[13] Nietzsche warned that the death of God had to be "lived out as the death of the very notion of [absolute] truth itself, otherwise our enslavement to some supreme value or other would never cease: God would only have changed his name, the oppressive effects of the domination would live on."[14]

Vattimo believes that violence is directly linked to metaphysics. He defines such violence as the antithesis of truth and knowledge: "the pre-emptory assertion of an ultimacy that, like the ultimate metaphysical foundation…breaks off dialogue and silences the interlocutor by refusing even to acknowledge the question 'why?'"[15] Through the marginalization of dialogue, the true meaning of metaphysics becomes "will to power, violence, and destruction of liberty."[16] When Christian norms become absolute, they too can be co-opted for violent purposes. According to Vattimo, "[V]iolence found its way into Christianity when Christianity made an alliance with metaphysics as the 'science of Being as being,' that is, as the knowledge of first principles."[17] Perfectionist metaphysics, particularly as a pernicious form of Christian natural law, requires a single conception of truth and knowledge, and as Joseph Heath reminds us, those who disagree must be either punished or killed.[18] For Vattimo, such perfectionism lies in "conforming to the first principle and is persuaded, without question or explanation, of the first principle's force. Here hubris

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[12] Friedrich Nietzsche, in Santiago Zabala, *Weakening Philosophy: Essays in Honour of Gianni Vattimo*, 19.
[13] Gianni Vattimo, *After Christianity*, 11.
[14] Gianni Vattimo, *Nihilism and Emancipation*: *Ethics, Politics, and Law* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 54.
[15] Ibid., 98.
[16] Ibid., 11.
[17] Gianni Vattimo, *After Christianity*, 117.
[18] Joseph Heath, *The Efficient Society: Why Canada Is as Close to Utopia as It Gets* (Toronto: Viking Press, 2001), 31.

and submission are inextricably blended and in contradiction, to reveal the neurotic mindset of metaphysics…"[19]

To expand voices and prevent closed concepts, absolutist metaphysics must be denied a platform from which to operate its command style of ethics. John Ralston Saul explains: "We are then reminded that the urgency which seems to come with 'absolute truths' and ideology is really just bullying. And as with all bullying, if you refuse to panic and if you decline to respond quickly, it deflates and slinks away."[20] As Amartya Sen acknowledges, this kind of theoretical reductionism is a major contributor to sectarian religious and political strife. This is because "singularity has the effect of momentously impoverishing the power and reach of our social and political reasoning."[21] Such fixation on the self-evident only makes suffering inevitable. This is why Vattimo asserts that "pain is the very essence of metaphysics, that there is no metaphysics except the metaphysics of pain…"[22] Therefore, exposing the violence of metaphysics has significant socio-religious implications. For post-Christendom, the goal is clear. "Thought must abandon all objective, universal, and apodictic foundational claims in order to prevent Christianity, allied with metaphysics in the search for first principles, from making room for violence."[23]

Ethical Hermeneutics

Fortunately, the violence of metaphysics is kept in check by hermeneutics. One of the main purposes of this dialectical process is to facilitate the encounter of different paradigmatic horizons. The cumulative effect of broadening interpretations not only weakens the violence of absolutism, but it also makes specific aims more intelligible. States Vattimo: "…[I]t is through the accumulation of the interpretations and through

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[19] Gianni Vattimo, *After Christianity*, 118.
[20] John Ralston Saul, *On Equilibrium* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 2001), 5.
[21] Amartya Sen, *Identity & Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (Toronto: Penguin Group, 2006), xv–xvi, 17.
[22] Santiago Zabala, ed., *Richard Rorty/Gianni Vattimo: The Future of Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 71.
[23] Ibid., 13.

reference to them so as better to corroborate…the resolution of individual cases that the original [foundational] violence is actually consumed."[24] To avoid the inertia of closed concepts, hermeneutics takes on a dual role: "the abandonment of metaphysical foundationalism (first philosophy, philosophy concerning principles, or concerning critical awareness of the a priori conditions of knowledge) and a concept of the world as conflict of interpretations."[25] Any attempt, however, to identify truth outside of hermeneutics – as something that transcends knowledge – leads to what Leslie Armour calls "intellectual fundamentalism."

> For there need not be a world independent of interpretation and explanation and to say that there is while denying adequate access to it would be only to trap oneself…claiming to know that there is a world of a certain kind while claiming at the same time, that it is not possible to have the knowledge which would substantiate what is claimed about it.[26]

In terms of ethical hermeneutics, the idea of closed concepts simply becomes untenable. First and foremost, this means "recognizing that something is better understood the more one is able to say about it."[27]

In contrast to deontological or principle-based ethics, hermeneutics requires the use of situation ethics in the Fletcherian sense.[28] This approach exposes the *a priori* limits of metaphysics, viewing ethics instead as situated, contested, and contingent. This is why Vattimo firmly believes that philosophy should move toward an ethics without metaphysics, "an ethics that no longer pretends, even surreptitiously, to embody the

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[24] Gianni Vattimo, *Nihilism and Emancipation*: *Ethics, Politics, and Law*, 147.
[25] Ibid., 90.
[26] Leslie Armour, *The Concept of Truth* (Assen, Netherlands: Koninklijke Van Gorcum & Comp, 1969), 59.
[27] Santiago Zabala, ed., *Richard Rorty/Gianni Vattimo: The Future of Religion*, 8.
[28] Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1966).

practical application of some theoretical certainty about ultimate foundations."[29] More importantly, locating an ethical consensus does not mean a return to another absolute foundation; rather, it implies agreement to a temporary, fluid solution. Vattimo acknowledges that the "essence" of truth originates from the *effect* of consensus, not from an external *cause*.

> [W]e don't agree because we have found the very essence of reality, but we say that we have found the very essence of reality when we agree…So, even if there is no objective Logos of the nature of reality, every time we agree on something we actually give a sort of testimony, we realize a sort of continuity of the Logos, which is the only criterion we actually have.[30]

The focus on ethics now moves from a God-centred to a human-centred approach, or from Being to being(s). "What we are witnessing," in Vattimo's view, "is a passage from the ethics of the Other (with a capital *O*) to an ethics of the other or the others (with a lowercase *o*) or, to put it another way, the rise of postmetaphysical ethics."[31] Moreover, we are forced into an arena of dialogue and conversation that defies the rigidity of the self-evident. Explains Vattimo: "An ethics that no longer refers to the Other, meaning to a transcendent being, will be an ethics of negotiation and consensus rather than an ethics of immutable principles or categorical imperatives speaking through the reason of everyone."[32] The full hermeneutical process can now be experienced, which entails "[welcoming] the other in the name of the dialogical principle of charity, that is, by listening to the non-violent reasons of the other."[33] Only in the interpretative

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[29] Gianni Vattimo, *Nihilism and Emancipation*: *Ethics, Politics, and Law*, 44.
[30] Santiago Zabala, ed., *Richard Rorty/Gianni Vattimo: The Future of Religion*, 58–59.
[31] Gianni Vattimo, *Nihilism and Emancipation*: *Ethics, Politics, and Law*, 64.
[32] Ibid., 67.
[33] Gianni Vattimo, *Belief* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), 14.

arena can truth and knowledge be directed in a more meaningful fashion.

Ontology of Actuality

When making ethical decisions, it is crucial to acknowledge the uniqueness of one's circumstances – an ontology of actuality – within any given context. Ontology "is nothing other than the interpretation of our condition or situation…"[34] The point of origin for discussion becomes internal and existential, not external and transcendent. One's ontology of actuality is not interchangeable, nor is it something that can easily be decentred or dismissed. As Vattimo poignantly explains, "[T]here is no origin located somewhere outside the actuality of the event."[35] Since the history of metaphysics has often entailed a devaluation of the human condition, an ontology of actuality becomes "a discourse that attempts to clarify what Being signifies in the present situation" as well as the "forgetting of [absolute] Being."[36] In fact, an ontology of actuality offers a more authentic starting point to explore truth and knowledge because it recognizes contingencies. In this way, it promotes "a certain vision of the ongoing historical process and a certain interpretation…of its positive potential, judged to be such on the basis not of eternal principles but of argumentative choices from within the process itself."[37]

However, one's unique ontology of actuality is often constrained by liberal communitarianism. In fact, communitarian discourses used in applied ethics emphasize how individual behaviour will affect societal norms of influence.[38] The result:

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[34] Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 3.
[35] Gianni Vattimo, *Nihilism and Emancipation: Ethics, Politics, and Law*, 87.
[36] Ibid., 3–4.
[37] Ibid., 88.
[38] With reference to communitarian philosophical arguments and their critiques of liberal neutrality and justice, see Ezekiel J. Emanuel, *The Ends of Human Life: Medical Ethics in a Liberal Polity* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994); also see Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice,* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

debate is limited because it is focused in terms of the "social permissibility of the behaviours in question."[39] Therefore, Vattimo warns of this shift in power from the individual to the collective:

> What counts…is the fulfillment of a social duty…more than the personal dilemma, which is no longer central, since it too is seen as connected to social custom, the circumambient culture…It can be summed up as a shift of attention from the inner realm of individual behaviour… to what we might generically call the sphere of the social.[40]

When the community begins to control truth and knowledge rather than facilitate their expansion, it is engaging in a metaphysical exercise of power, something Foucault referred to as its "regime of truth."[41] Vattimo points out that this has become a growing trend in liberal politics. "The left continues to feel the lure of communitarian ideals even today, but, when you think about it, those ideals are grounded, like equality, in a persistent metaphysical prejudice."[42] Although the focus on individual and community rights is contextual and contested, the aim should be to resolve the tension between the two, not presuppose communal ideals as favourable.

The Event of Being

Once exposed, "Being" in the absolute sense is now untenable in a world of open concepts. As Martin Heidegger asserts, "If the question of Being is to have its own history made transparent, then this hardened tradition must be loosened up, and the

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[39] Gianni Vattimo, *Nihilism and Emancipation: Ethics, Politics, and Law*, 61.
[40] Ibid., 63.
[41] Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 73–74.
[42] Gianni Vattimo, *Nihilism and Emancipation: Ethics, Politics, and Law*, 100.

concealments which it has brought about must be dissolved."[43] This metamorphosis into Being as "event" should now be seen as a continuous process that we address and to which we adapt, not a static conception of truth fixed for eternity. States Vattimo: "It is above all because of the experience of postmodern pluralism that we can think of Being only as event, and of truth not as the reflection of reality's eternal structure but rather as a historical message that must be heard and to which we are called to respond."[44] Similar to Buddhist enlightenment and its emphasis on 'awakening,' Being as event "transforms the existence of the person who receives the announcement."[45] Vattimo conceives of Being as "horizon and as light, rather than the general structure of objects," adding that "[s]ince it is not an object, Being does not possess the stability assigned to it by the metaphysical tradition."[46] This is similar to Jacques Derrida's messianic concept of *différance* in which "the sails of deconstruction strain toward what is coming, are bent by the winds of *l'avenir*, by the promise of the in-coming, of the *in-venire*, of the wholly other, *tout autre*, *l'invention de l'autre*."[47] Comparatively, both Derrida's *différance* and Vattimo's "event of being" imply faith in the promise of "absolute heterology" and "infinite alterity," not the hyperousiology of negative theology that "affirms God precisely in God's hyperessential reality" and "claims deep down to 'know' what God is."[48]

None of this implies the complete rejection of previous philosophical discourses; in fact, each new interpretation generates a new form of "being" or continuum of knowledge. This allows "new senses of experience, new ways for the world to announce itself, which are not only other than the ones announced 'before.' Rather, they join the latter in a sort of

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[43] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1962), 44.
[44] Gianni Vattimo, *After Christianity*, 6.
[45] Ibid., 7.
[46] Ibid., 21.
[47] John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), xxiii.
[48] Anselm Min, *The Solidarity of Others in a Divided World. A Postmodern Theology after Postmodernism* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004), 30.

discursus whose logic…consists precisely in the continuity."[49] In point of fact, Being cannot be an object of limitation; rather, it is a continuously arriving event. This is why, as Richard Rorty claims, "it is necessary for human culture to generate infinite redescriptions so that the conversation might continue."[50] Karl Jaspers had previously made this same connection to the event of being by means of a "philosophical faith." In contrast to monotheistic religion, a philosophical faith does not subordinate itself to absolutist propositions. As Jaspers admits, "It achieves no rest in a body of doctrine. It remains a venture of radical openness."[51] Being, therefore, should be seen as truth in motion since "Being 'is' not, properly speaking, but rather 'comes about,' happens."[52] Jaspers believed that truth was "always in movement" and that "it [was] lost when it appear[ed] to have become a definitive possession."[53] However, with the fragmentation of knowledge, how does one interpret the event of being in a meaningful way? Vattimo argues that one must start by "placing oneself (that is, by interpretative listening) within these messages…thus rescuing them from the dispersion of the present and taking responsibility for them."[54]

Weak Thought

To counter closed concepts of truth and knowledge, Vattimo's idea of "weak thought" is to be perceived, ironically, as a show of strength. "Weak thought becomes strong thought, on the one hand, because we realize through it that our life is conditioned by history and, on the other hand, because it is a responsible ethical project, since we must live our lives in an authentic form [non-absolutist]…"[55] Therefore, instead of seeing weakness as some kind of deficiency, philosophers should view error as "a source

[49] Gianni Vattimo, *After Christianity*, 67.
[50] Richard Rorty, in Gianni Vattimo, *After Christianity*, 17.
[51] Karl Jaspers, *The Perennial Scope of Philosophy* (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1949), 11.
[52] Gianni Vattimo, *Nihilism and Emancipation: Ethics, Politics, and Law*, 6.
[53] Karl Jaspers, *The Perennial Scope of Philosophy*, 157.
[54] Gianni Vattimo, *Belief*, 8.
[55] Santiago Zabala, ed., *Weakening Philosophy: Essays in Honour of Gianni Vattimo*, 17.

of the wealth that constitutes us and that gives interest, colour, and Being to the world."[56] This "ontology of decline" actually promotes a shift in power from the infinite to the finite, from the metaphysical to the humanistic. It is

> an invitation to overcome metaphysics by involving it in a relation of reciprocity…because 'innovation' prevails over 'conditioning'…This new, weak way of thought not only opens up alternative directions, it also recovers tradition: the relationship between the believer is not conceived as power-laden but as a gentler relationship, in which God hands over all his power to man.[57]

With the weakening of the Absolute, the dilemma of "strong" relativism – the claim that all interpretations are equally valid – must be addressed. This position would allow knowledge to become infinitely fragmented and, therefore, of no more value than knowledge unified under a single metaphysic. As Vattimo makes clear,

> There is a risk attached to taking a step backward, distancing ourselves from the concrete alternatives, which…may lead to the adoption of a relativistic metaphysics. Relativism [strong] can perfectly well be described as metaphysical because only from a position strongly anchored in some universal point of view can (should we) gaze on multiplicity as multiplicity. Relativism, one might say, is the (self-contradictory and impractical) metaphysical rigidification of finitude.[58]

Hence, the dialectic inherent to a democracy relies increasingly on weak thought. This is because the weakening of Being allows an infinity of voices to contribute to knowledge. Thus, it "supplies philosophical reasons for preferring a liberal, tolerant, and democratic society rather than an authoritarian and

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[56] Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, 170.
[57] Santiago Zabala, ed., *Richard Rorty/Gianni Vattimo: The Future of Religion*, 3.
[58] Gianni Vattimo, *Nihilism and Emancipation: Ethics, Politics, and Law*, 42.

totalitarian one."[59] In opposition to closed concepts, weak thought serves the important function of keeping fascist tendencies in check. As Jacques Maritain points out, fascism does more than lie: it literally "perverts the function of language" and limits the expansion of human dignity and freedom.[60] Therefore, in terms of liberty, democracy, and reciprocity, weak thought could not be more pertinent to the discussion. States Vattimo:

> [T]he emancipation and liberation that mankind has always sought are attainable through a weakening of strong structures, a reduction of claims, and that implies, in general terms…that listening to what others have to say counts for more than measuring objects with precision. In all fields, including science, truth itself is becoming an affair of consensus, listening, participation in a shared enterprise, rather than a one-to-one correspondence with the pure hard objectivity of things…[61]

Secularism, Nihilism, and Freedom

For Vattimo, the solution to ending metaphysical control over the Christian message of charity is to embrace both secular and nihilistic perspectives. First and foremost, secularism is intended to re-centre ontology toward temporal, humanistic concerns. Claims Vattimo: "The world with which Dasein [human existence] is always already familiar is neither a transcendental screen nor a categorical schema…the foundation of Dasein coincides with its groundlessness."[62] For humanity, this implies taking responsibility for our choices rather than deferring such power to the transcendent. In point of fact, Vattimo sees Nietzsche's notion of the eternal return as "a call to responsibility and the assumption of responsibility…[which] really means the end of all guarantees with which traditional

[59] Ibid., 19.
[60] Jacques Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy & The Rights of Man and Natural Law* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 13.
[61] Gianni Vattimo, *Nihilism and Emancipation: Ethics, Politics, and Law*, 35.
[62] Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, 116.

metaphysical man had surrounded himself in order to be free of full responsibility for his actions."[63] In actuality, secularism is not anathema to Christianity but complementary to it because it brings the religious impulse back to its roots. In Vattimo's words, "To embrace the destiny of modernity and of the West means mainly to recognize the profoundly Christian meaning of secularization [rediscovery of charity]."[64]

Problems occur when metaphysicians view secularists as their nemesis. According to Vattimo, the former depict secularity as "a threat to their authenticity, and therefore take it less as a condition of liberty than as a negation limitation that must be overcome."[65] Secularization merely allows Christians to see their faith in a different light. Richard Rorty elaborates on the ability of the secular to strip away only the metaphysical, submissive components of religion in the search for a more profound truth. "[S]ecularization is Christianity by other means. Both represent the triumph of love over law, of kindness over obedience."[66] In point of fact, secularization merges Millian liberalism, and its emphasis on self-regarding acts,[67] with the Golden Rule in an ethics of reciprocity. Asserts Vattimo: "Above all, the establishment of liberal principles in a liberal society and in the political organization (do anything you will as long as it does not infringe upon the freedom of all others) is a secular symbolizing of the Christian message."[68]

Yet, if anything, Vattimo's postmodern philosophy emphasizes freedom, particularly from the nihilistic perspective. This particular brand of nihilism accentuates the affirmative as a widening of dialogue. Positively stated: "[The Philosopher] must pass the gauntlet of complete nihilism and, having rejected the currently dominant values, he must raise other values, by virtue

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[63] Gianni Vattimo, *Dialogue with Nietzsche* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 36.
[64] Gianni Vattimo, *After Christianity*, 98.
[65] Ibid., 95.
[66] Richard Rorty, in Gianni Vattimo, *Nihilism and Emancipation: Ethics, Politics, and Law,* xx.
[67] John Stuart Mill, *The Basic Writings of John Stuart Mill: On Liberty, The Subjection of Women, and Utilitarianism* (New York: Random House, 2002); also see Gerald Dworkin, ed., *Morality, Harm, and the Law* (Oxford: Westview Press, Inc., 1994).
[68] Gianni Vattimo, *After Christianity*, 119.

of which life and the universe cannot only be justified but also become endearing and valuable."[69] Rejecting any unworkable table of values, humankind now "erects another table with a new ranking of values and new ideals of humanity, society, and state."[70] *Positive nihilism* – in both its negation of the absolute as redundant and its acceptance of radical transience – is life-affirming since it involves "the obliteration only of the currently reigning table of values, which is to be succeeded by a heroic and joyous acceptance of life."[71] As Vattimo's biggest influences, the ideas of Nietzsche and Heidegger expose the "purely critical and negative description of the post-modern condition…to an approach that treats it as a positive possibility and opportunity."[72]

For Vattimo, *positive nihilism* provides the intellectual context in which to widen perceptions of truth and knowledge. The positive, active form, as an increased power of human spirit, involves two processes. "First, it doesn't stop at unmasking the hollowness of all [eternal] meanings, structures, and values but goes on to produce and create new values and new structures of meaning, new interpretations."[73] *Positive nihilism* contributes to more than just the rejection of absolute values. For Nietzsche, the basis of nihilism begins with "the dissolution of any ultimate foundation, the understanding that in the history of philosophy, and of western culture in general, 'God is dead,' and 'the real world has become a fable.'"[74] But as Mariana Valverde clarifies, accepting Nietzsche's viewpoint that truth and knowledge can become both redundant and resurrected should not throw us into despair over nihilism. "It is perfectly possible to be interested in small-t truth questions…without thereby claiming that Truth is necessary…Another way of deploying this distinction is to point

[69] Nikos Kazantzakis, *Friedrich Nietzsche on the Philosophy of the Right and State* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 19.
[70] Ibid., 20.
[71] Ibid., 17.
[72] Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity,* 11.
[73] Gianni Vattimo, *Dialogue with Nietzsche*, 135.
[74] Gianni Vattimo, *Nihilism and Emancipation: Ethics, Politics, and Law,* xxv.

out that the opposite of 'lies' is not Truth but rather 'truths.'"[75] Valverde adds that forgetting this has created "truth wars" that have haunted both the histories of philosophy and positivistic science.

Without addressing this caveat to nihilism, contemporary philosophers, particularly the French intellectual André Compte-Sponville,[76] have simply equated Nietzschean perspectivism with nihilism's more negative and destructive forms. Yet Nietzsche simply depicts nihilism as "the situation in which the human subject explicitly recognizes that the lack of foundation is a constitutive part of its condition."[77] In fact, those who are destined to triumph without a regression into passive-reactive nihilism (i.e. a longing for the status quo) are the

> most moderate, those who have no need for extreme articles of faith, who not only concede but even love a good deal of contingency and nonsense, who can think of man with a considerable moderation of his value and not therefore become too small and weak…men who are sure of their power and who represent with conscious pride the strength man has achieved.[78]

The openness and flexibility inherent in *positive nihilism* leaves little desire for its metaphysical alternatives. As Leslie Armour points out, "Short of union with the Whole – the mystic's final dream – there can only be better and worse solutions, not final ones."[79]

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[75] Mariana Valverde, *Law's Dream of Common Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 8–9.

[76] André Compte-Sponville, *The Little Book of Atheist Spirituality* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2007), 1–66. Compte-Sponville rejects Nietzschean perspectivism and the "overthrow of all values," believing that nihilism is *the* primary danger because it leads to a dying civilization. Compte-Sponville describes nihilism only in the pejorative. *Positive nihilism* is simply not discussed.

[77] Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, 118.

[78] Santiago Zabala, ed., *Weakening Philosophy: Essays in Honour of Gianni Vattimo*, 402–403.

[79] Leslie Armour, *Being and Idea: Developments of Some Themes in Spinoza and Hegel* (Germany: Georg Olms AG, Hildesheim, 1992), 103.

Although Nietzsche and Heidegger viewed the creation of nihilism from different perspectives, the result was the same: the dissolution of metaphysics through the process of *positive nihilism*. "For Nietzsche, the entire process of nihilism can be summarized by the death of God, or by the 'devaluation of the highest values.' For Heidegger, Being is annihilated insofar as it is transformed completely into value."[80] What this means is that within a nihilistic framework, value becomes reduced to 'exchange-value.' For Heidegger, the reduction of Being to value "places Being in the power of the subject who 'recognizes' value…Nihilism would therefore be, in the Heideggerian sense, the…claim that Being, instead of existing as an autonomous, independent, and foundational way, is in the power of the subject."[81] This view actually coincides with Nietzsche's arguments regarding the death of God and the devaluation of the highest values because for Nietzsche, "values have not disappeared *tout court*: only the highest values – which are in essence expressed by that highest of all values, that is, God – have vanished."[82] Irrespective of their particular viewpoints, both versions are consistent with Vattimo's anti-metaphysical, nihilistic views towards Christianity.

However, a form of nostalgia often occurs in which metaphysicians embrace passive-reactive nihilism by refusing to acknowledge the crumbling of supreme values. The result is the suppression of truth and knowledge. Vattimo elaborates on the effects of such a longing for certainty. "[W]e have faced up to the absence of foundations but have not rid ourselves of our grief at the loss we have suffered, and nostalgia for full Being continues to dominate us."[83] Vattimo realizes that passive-reactive nihilists will "view the loss of transcendence as a disaster to be resisted with all strength, rather than accepting it…as a vocation."[84] Such resistance often results in the "desperation of those who continue to cultivate a sense of

[80] Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, 20.
[81] Ibid., 20–21.
[82] Ibid., 21.
[83] Gianni Vattimo, *Nihilism and Emancipation: Ethics, Politics, and Law*, 140.
[84] Ibid., 64.

mourning because 'religion is no more,'"[85] even to the point of embracing what Michael Ignatieff calls fictive nihilism, a kind of "willed indifference to the human agents sacrificed on the altar of principle."[86]

By overcoming its pessimistic nihilism, humanity can continue to strive toward its endless potential. According to Nikos Kazantzakis, the goal is clear: "the permanent and external tendency of humankind to actualize a new human type – one that is higher and stronger – must be deemed as yet another bridge toward one more, an even more perfect type. And so on, ad infinitum, since the height [humankind can reach] can have no [fixed] destination or boundary."[87] Vattimo is adamant that nihilism can finally arrive at the emancipatory phase of its accomplishment. "[I]t reaches its extreme form, by consuming Being in value. This is the event that finally makes it possible, and necessary, for philosophy today to recognize that nihilism is our (only) chance."[88] As a facilitator of liberty and truth, an accomplished nihilism calls for "a fictionalized experience of [metaphysical] reality which is also our only possibility for freedom."[89] For Vattimo, what proves liberating is not the "cogent evidence of principles" but a Kierkegaardian "leap into the abyss of mortality."[90]

A Nihilistic Christianity

Vattimo's Contribution to the History of Philosophy

Ironically, the death of God (end of absolutist metaphysics) through secularization and *positive nihilism* actually facilitates the rebirth of religion. For Christians, this means embracing the charitable roots of their faith. Since religion can now assume its

[85] Ibid., xxvi.
[86] Michael Ignatieff, *The Lesser Evil: Political Ethics in the Age of Terror* (Toronto: Penguin Group, 2004), 123.
[87] Nikos Kazantzakis, *Friedrich Nietzsche on the Philosophy of the Right and State*, 20.
[88] Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity,* 23.
[89] Ibid., 29.
[90] Ibid., 120.

role without "masks and dogmatism," this makes the death of God a post-Christian phenomenon, not anti-Christian.[91] This "weakening" of the Eurocentric Christian model now deprives it of any objectivist, ontological status. As Michel Gardaz correctly points out, "[I]t is not the metaphysical questions that are dead, but the 'provincialism' of Western metaphysical tradition."[92] For Vattimo, the Age of Faith as well as the Age of Reason had previously assumed absolutist stances in the search for truth and knowledge. The former epoch embraced an Augustinian approach to faith in God, one who alone held the promise of eternal happiness,[93] while the latter accepted rationalism as its god. In contrast, the Age of Interpretation (postmodernism) allows for a greater chance of human freedom, the production of new knowledge, and the unending formation of the self (edification) through higher truths.[94] This can only be accomplished through the end of logocentrism, or the end of any privilege accorded to metaphysical thought.[95] The death of God literally becomes the death of closed concepts.

Since Vattimo accepts the Nietzschean interpretation of the "eternal return," responsibility for ethical/moral choices can be left to no one but humankind. Basically, the ties binding God to man have now been permanently severed. As Michael Luntley astutely puts it, "It is not the world according to God or whoever is supposed to sit at the Archimedean point enjoying the point of

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[91] Santiago Zabala, ed., *Richard Rorty/Gianni Vattimo: The Future of Religion*, 2, 7.

[92] Michel Gardaz. "'The Trojan Horse of Philosophia Perennis': Mircea Eliade's Quest of Spiritual Transformation." *Religion* 38, no. 4 (2008): 343, n. 10. Gardaz acknowledges that one cannot dismiss metaphysics, only its hegemonic application. In other words, a pivotal distinction has to be made between the death of metaphysics and the death of absolutes. As Gardaz notes, "the fundamental questions of metaphysics are still alive and well. The questions of existence, of being in the world and of the human condition are still essential questions to be answered."

[93] Saint Augustine, *The City of God*. Book 1. Vernon J. Bourke, ed. (New York: Image Books, 1958), 39, 65.

[94] Santiago Zabala, ed., *Richard Rorty/Gianni Vattimo: The Future of Religion*, 7.

[95] Ibid.

view of the cosmos. It is the world according to us."[96] In Heideggerian terms, Being is revealed as "time-language," meaning that Being "coincides with the historical transmission of messages that unfold *in time* [italics mine], and of which can never have an exhaustive understanding."[97] For humanity, what is left of Being today is its announcement in "the drift on interpretation," not "the supreme point of the objective world order…"[98] Basically, a Being without eternal structure is one produced by man – by his intellect, his praxis – in the event of being. As a result, the "essence" of truth has been transformed from the Absolute into the most reasonable interpretation our human condition can deduce in the *here and now*.[99] In other words, a transformation has occurred through the cyclical effect of *positive nihilism*. We no longer discuss God as formal *cause* or as *the* creator. Instead, God has become the present *effect* of human knowledge. Don Cupitt admits that such a radical humanism spells the death knell for theological reductionism or moral realism. In his opinion, we are coming to see that "there is no morality *out there* [italics mine], that morality is wholly human, and that we must joyfully posit and love our values purely for their own sakes."[100]

If Karen Armstrong is correct and we are moving toward a new philosophical era, or a second Axial Age,[101] then the Vattimian perspective makes a viable contribution to this new era. Vattimo not only provides the means for overcoming the heritage of exclusivist metaphysics – a method potentially applicable to even non-Christian cultures – but he also recognizes that truth and knowledge must remain contested within an endless, open conversation. This can be accomplished by linking the metaphysical tradition of *B*eing with violence, understanding the importance of hermeneutics to ethical choice,

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[96] Michael Luntley, *Reason, Truth, and Self* (London: Routledge, 1995), 120.
[97] Gianni Vattimo, *Belief*, 6-7.
[98] Ibid., 17.
[99] Ibid., 46, 82.
[100] Don Cupitt, *Emptiness & Brightness* (Santa Rosa, California: Polebridge Press, 2001), 12.
[101] Karen Armstrong, in Don Cupitt, *Emptiness & Brightness*, 7. Armstrong presented the idea at a conference in 2001 at the Westar Institute at Rohnert Park, California.

highlighting ontology of actuality and its inherent contingencies, welcoming the event of being, and using weak thought to defuse foundationalism.

The Vattimian perspective does not thereby ignore the dilemma that arises between unity and fragmentation of knowledge. However, any unified consensus of truth is made more intelligible if (1) the basis of philosophy (and therefore Christianity) remains positively nihilistic (non-absolute) and if (2) the concept of *unity* is clearly distinguished from *totality* or the Metaphysical Fact. The former accepts discernable truths that expand human potentiality; the latter simply dictates the limits of truth from some *a priori* metaphysical stance. If Gianni Vattimo is right, both a nihilistic Christianity and its radically humanistic offspring possess the greatest chance of imparting something meaningful to others because the dialectic is never closed; it simply awaits the arrival of a new interpretation that will reorganize being. In the pursuit of truth and knowledge, how we wish to redefine our humanity is the never-ending labour of philosophy. As Leslie Armour admits, "The foundation for knowledge lies in the possibility of making [sets of interpretations] all fit together in the relevant way."[102]

[102] Leslie Armour, *Being and Idea: Developments of Some Themes in Spinoza and Hegel*, 148.

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The Madman and the Spider:
Sacrifice and Metaphysics in Nietzsche and Girard

Paul Chiles

Abstract: This article examines René Girard's claim that Nietzsche foreshadowed Girard's scapegoat mechanism in his famous aphorism 125 on the death of God called *The Madman*. The role of rhetoric and interpretation in competition between ideas is explored through examining the ambiguity of 'sacrifice' and 'violence,' words which can be metaphorical or literal. Through a comparison of the views and contexts of Girard and Nietzsche I argue that their ideas spring from similar sources of human metaphysical need. However, Nietzsche has no literal conception of metaphysics; rather metaphysics exists only as experienced or constructed as conventions. Girard, on the other hand, tries to banish the metaphysical foundations of other religions as superstition while refounding the metaphysical certainty offered by Christianity. Girard 'sacrifices' Nietzsche as a rhetorical mechanism toward reestablishing this foundational truth and I place the sacrifice in the broader context of scapegoating that Girard's own theory demands, in the context of sacrifice as rhetorical tool, and in the German theological context from which the death of God as a metaphor springs.

The Madman

Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the marketplace, and cried incessantly, "I seek God! I seek God!" As many of those who do not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. "Why, did he get lost?" said one. "Did he lose his way like a child?" said another. "Or is he hiding?" "Is he afraid of us?" "Has he gone on a voyage?" "Has he emigrated?" Thus they yelled and laughed. The madman jumped into their midst

and pierced them with his glances.

"Whither is God?" he cried. "I shall tell you. *We have killed him*–you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how have we done this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What did we do when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving now? Away from all the suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night and more night coming on all the while? Must not lanterns be lit in the morning? Do we not hear anything yet of the grave diggers who are burying God? Do we not smell anything yet of God's decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we the murderers of all murderers comfort ourselves? What was holiest and most powerful of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives. Who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must not we ourselves become gods simply to seem worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever will be born after us–for the sake of this deed he will be part of a higher history than all history hitherto."

Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; and they too were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke and went out. "I come too early" he said then; "my time has not come yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering–it has not yet reached the ears of man. Lightning and thunder require time even after they are done, before they can be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars – *and yet they have done it themselves*."[1]

From *The Anti-Christ*

The god on the cross is a curse on life, a sign post to seek redemption from life; Dionysus cut to pieces is a promise of life: it will be eternally reborn and reborn and return again from destruction.[2]

In *The Founding Murder in the Philosophy of Nietzsche,* René Girard finds confirmation of his scapegoat theory of sacrifice and of Christianity as a non-sacrificial religion. According to Girard, Nietzsche saw that Judeo-Christianity exposes the victimization of the innocent found in all religions and their texts. Girard writes "…for Nietzsche this was a dreadful mistake…Nietzsche chose violence rather than peace; he chose the texts that mistook the victim for a culprit."[3] That is, according to Girard, Nietzsche saw the true nature of Christianity, but he perversely preferred the sacrificial economy that immolates the weak.[4]

Theories of sacrifice have a long history in religious studies and anthropology. Ideas range from simple propositions about the role of sacrifice in ritual communication and gift giving, to more integrated approaches (phenomenological, structural, and postmodern etc.) which assert sacrifice's central role in the human construction of meaning.

Bruce Lincoln understands sacrifice in this latter, more foundational, way. His analysis integrates sacrifice into power construction and social epistemology, arguing that sacrifice is a mode of writing cosmological and political messages on bodies in which negation of one entity, identity, or idea elevates another in the hierarchy. This occurs not only in explicitly sacrificial rites but also in rituals around gender, politics *and ideas* thereby producing particular societal patterns or the privileging of some ideas over others. Such manipulation of the potency held by rival possibilities might also be called establishing control over the parameters of debate.[5] Lincoln writes:

> …sacrifice is fundamentally a logic, language and practice of transformative negation, in which one entity…is given up for the benefit of some other species, group, god, or principle …[6]

I adopt Lincoln's definition of sacrifice in this essay.[7] We can see this negation of one idea for the benefit of another in Girard's treatment of Nietzsche, but also in Nietzsche's understanding of his own role as polemical cultural critic where he aggrandizes the Dionysian by the sacrifice of the Apollonian. I argue Girard himself is ironically a prisoner of such metaphysically foundational behavior as he strives to change the parameters of debate by sacrificing Nietzsche and his text as a scapegoat.[8]

Ambiguous Sacrifice

'Sacrifice' can be a literal blood offering or can refer to the general notion of giving up something, like food or comforts, for a higher purpose. For Nietzsche, metaphorical sacrifice, or giving up one mode of conceptuality for another, is more relevant than blood sacrifice or renouncing physical comfort, yet importantly, he plays with both levels of meaning. In ignoring these shifts and nuances in Nietzsche's work, Girard sacrifices the parabolic in favour of the literal.

For example, Girard quotes Nietzsche's *The Twilight of the Idols:*

> (t)he individual…(in Christianity)…was positioned as such an absolute principle, that he could no longer be *sacrificed*: but the species only survives through human sacrifices…[9]

The full quotation shows that Nietzsche uses the notion of personal sacrifice and ritual sacrifice interchangeably.

> Genuine charity demands sacrifice for the good of the species…; it is full *self-overcoming*, because it *needs human sacrifice*. And this pseudo-humanness called Christianity wants it established that no one should be sacrificed. [10]

Nietzsche clearly plays on the ambiguity between the ritual immolation of a victim vs. the metaphorical personal sacrifice of letting go of the certainty provided by the fiction of God. But

Girard writes as if there was never any such ambiguity. He writes, for instance: "(F)rom start to finish aphorism 125 is identical with the 'victimage theory of religion'. The Nietzscheans will call me mad, but the letter of the text vindicates me."[11]

Girard insists on the letter of the text but metaphor is omnipresent in Nietzsche, for whom ontology, metaphysics, and even empiricism are meta-languages which impose a hegemonic structure over reality. For Nietzsche, Platonic-Christian theology is the most powerful of these meta-languages, but he reminds us that even science, a surrogate for the certainty of theology, rests on faith[12]. In the metaphor of God's murder Nietzsche is demonstrating the undermining of all absolute epistemologies including that of science.

Nietzsche insisted that even though the reality of God's death or irrelevance has been realized, even he himself is "still pious". By this he means that the mental habits of assuming an absolute do not go away just because conscious belief in that absolute has vanished: these mental habits are ingrained in us and in our language. The 'Death of God' has led to a transfer of faith in reason and science as if they can offer a replacement foundation of truth. Nietzsche argues they cannot. Rather, true freedom requires one to abandon substitute vestigial foundations and to sacrifice certainty.[13] The illusion of foundations can only be maintained by sacrifice of the truth, which is that there is no foundational truth. The sacrifice that he demands is not the killing of innocents, but a willingness to cut the foundation out from under oneself. This is the sacrifice required for the survival of the species.

Girard's theory aims at something quite different: he seeks to unmask the "erroneous" façade only to re-impose an ultimate Christian metaphysics. He argues, the

> Cross…utterly discredits the notion that Christianity is…mythological. The world's myths do not reveal a way to interpret the Gospels …the Gospels reveal to us the way to interpret myth. [14]

The crucifixion is *non-sacrificial* in that it does not embrace the legitimacy of sacrifice but exposes the irrational scapegoating of

other religions. Girard characterises the 'Sacred' in the world's religions as based on a victimising mechanism: conflict arising from mimetic rivalry (imitative competition) results in a sacrificial crisis which is resolved by focussing violence on a victim thereby preventing the contagion of violence throughout a society. When peace ensues there is a misunderstanding that the victim has been the supernatural harbinger of peace, leading to the victim's deification thereby providing an external reference point for societal cohesion *and* differentiation. The Bible and the Gospels in particular show that this mechanism is an illusion which can be surpassed, ending the need for the sacrifice of innocents. The mode of Jesus' death and his obvious innocence is meant to draw attention to this deeply repressed mechanism.[15]

It is clear that Girard is a theorist who uncovers the constructedness of metaphysics as a first step toward the elimination of violence. From the Nietzschean point of view however, Girard neglects to follow through to the logical consequences of this insight. That is, once identifying the fabrication and violence of metaphysics deriving from mimetic rivalry, Girard gives Christian metaphysics a privileged as position as *real* in which God has sent a message.

Parmenidean Spiders

In *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* Nietzsche compares the spider to philosophers who like Parmenides or Plato spin an empty reality they call 'Being'. The aphid trapped by the spider is a blood sacrifice to the matrix of the web just as the individual human's 'becoming,' or real life, is sacrificed to the matrix of an ideal non-existent world of pure 'Being'.[16] Nietzsche delivers a tirade against system building and rigid conceptuality in which 'becoming' is sacrificed to 'Being'. He argues that this Platonic mode of conceptuality hypostatizes meaning beyond reach. This is obviously different from the way that Girard uses sacrifice where an actual victim is required. Yet these realms overlap, especially when we consider that 'theory' itself can be seen as an act of ritualistic interpretation that seeks to shape or refound the world in particular ways. I am drawing on J.Z. Smith's insights regarding the "domestication of sacrifice", in which repetition and rigid allocation to categories is germane to both literal ritual sacrifice and its theoretical

dissection.[17] In dual roles of cultural theorist and Christian apologist Girard employs this repetition and allocation in his scapegoat theory which gives him domesticating control over the phenomena. In this way he performs the sacrificial role of Nietzsche's Parmenidean philosopher-spider.

According to Nietzsche early Greek religion was pluralistic, agonistic, and fatalistic. Life was understood to be contextualized by death, creating a context of flux in which life implies death. Therefore the perception or experience of form (life) inexorably led to the perception of formlessness (death).[18] Confronting these limits or allowing these forces to remain in Heraclitean tension produced a plurality of deities representing the diversity inherent to authentic human experience. Christianity was for Nietzsche the anti-thesis of authenticity with its God who offers victory over death and formlessness; ironing out the agonistic wrinkles of creative tension.

The Dionysian and the Apollonian represent the tension between Olympus and the Underworld, articulated in Greek sacrifice and raised to art form in Greek tragedy. While both sides are equally important, Nietzsche emphasized the Dionysian not for its superiority, but because of its neglect in Western thought.[19] In particular, he blamed this neglect on the hermeneutical gap between the genre of Greek tragedy and those European academics who studied it.[20] By focussing on the 'form' of Apollonian art, to the exclusion of Dionysian formlessness, they created the perception that the Greeks were an inherently harmonious people.[21] According to Nietzsche, the classical ideals held by Europeans corresponded to only a small part of Greek culture as reflected in the sculpture and architecture of Athens around the fifth century B.C.E., while the discordant aspects of Greek sacrifice and tragedy were explained away as anomalies.[22] He contended that Platonism, by way of Christianity, provided a distorted filter of a transcendent realm with little room for immediate human experience. His view is nicely encapsulated in his statement: "My philosophy, Platonism overturned: the further one moves away from true being, the purer the more beautiful, the better life is."[23]

The Dionysian-Apollonian dichotomy also introduces Nietzsche's criticism of linear conceptuality upon which Christian historical revelation depends. Nietzsche critiques future orientation through his idea of 'mythic' time and that of

the Will to Power which mitigate life-denying eschatologies. Nietzsche protests uni-linear historical thought by way of this dialectic of the Will to Power (forward moving) and the Eternal Return (mythic recurrence). He creates a curative to Platonic-Christian linear time which hides meaning beyond reach in an as yet nonexistent time just as a hierarchical metaphysic of *Being* puts meaning in an unreachable or nonexistent place. There is a drive to *become* in the Will to Power but always constrained by the Eternal Return of *being*. Clearly, Nietzsche does not offer a literal theory of time but a critique of all eschatologies and the meta-narratives they construct. Girard, on the other hand, requires a linear and metaphysically hierarchical framework for his revelation to make sense.

Sacrifice is a manifestation of how people understand or manifest their understanding of metaphysical reality or *Being*. Both Girard and Nietzsche regard metaphysical thinking as basic to human experience. Despite the fact that Nietzsche is often considered a harbinger of the end of metaphysics, he saw the inevitability of metaphysics. Metaphysics for Nietzsche "is a falsification; but at the same time it is a symptom of deeply–seated needs."[24] Put another way, the deconstruction of unarticulated assumptions is not necessarily the study of error, but the study of something useful and perhaps indispensable.[25] It is these needs that the Madman addresses and saying that 'God is dead' will not be enough to banish the mental habits of having believed He existed.

Girard restates the universal status of his theory as applicable to the full realm of cultural phenomena. He sardonically reminds us that he can find in any masterpiece the plot of mimetic rivalry and desire of sacrificial crisis and the collective murder of a deity. He feigns boredom with his own monomania and hopes that turning to Nietzsche will cure him.[26] After recapitulating the conventional interpretation of aphorism 125 as an exhortation to atheism Girard goes further into the text. There he finds the neglected lines "*We have killed him*–you and I. All of us are his murderers." Nobody, it seems, has ever noticed this collective murder before, but Girard reads the text and "there it is, like the head of John the Baptist on its silver platter."[27] No one reads anything but 'God is dead,' which he

calls the "Pavlovian reflex of modernity."[28]

According to Girard's theory, consciousness of the scapegoat mechanism is repressed to the extent of silencing the messenger. This phenomenon of denial is found in the rejection the Madman experiences in the aphorism and in all subsequent interpretations of it. The sacrifice Nietzsche endured in being the despised messenger drove him mad as he was largely ignored *and* because he did not embrace the reconciling message of Jesus, preferring the violence of sacrifice.

Girard reads the famous lines, "God is dead. God remains dead" and sarcastically rejoices at having found the uncontroversial atheist mantra which may cure him of his *idée fixe*. However, he continues and finds incontrovertible evidence of his obsession.

> God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we the murderers of all murderers comfort ourselves?

Nietzsche has made it graphically clear: it is no natural death, no senile fading into irrelevancy, but a guilt laden murder. He has done so because his readers are wily and will attempt to focus on the mantra of modernity 'God is dead'. Girard now locates the *sacrificial crisis*. The Madman asks,

> What did we do when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither it is moving now? …Away from all the suns? Is there any up or down left?

Here Girard finds his sacrificial crisis, characterized by a lack of differentiation: night is day, male is female, no order can be found and a sacrifice required to refound order. Girard finds the refounding mechanism in the words:

> (h)ow shall we the murderers…comfort ourselves?... What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent?

In this sacrifice of the old god a new religion must be created, redirecting sacred energies into new religious forms.

> Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must not we ourselves become gods simply to seem worthy of it?

Girard tells us that the selfish religion of the 'superman' is what Nietzsche will offer as a surrogate.

Even the misrecognition or ignorance that Girard's theory anticipates is present: the crowd fails to understand the epistemological message of the Madman and falls back to banal atheism. Yet the reason the text is so famous is that it contains this collective murder of God. The recitation of the mantra "God is dead" is a ritualistic repetition of the murder which uncannily thrills even the atheist because of the awe it evokes.[29]

Mimetic Rivalry over the Truth

In the essay *Strategies of Madness: Nietzsche, Wagner, and Dostoevsky,* Girard situates Nietzsche in an unresolved rivalry with Richard Wagner. Rather than a protest against a reactionary and resentful 'slave morality', exemplified by Christianity, Girard argues that the concept of Will to Power is a gross overcompensation for his sense of inferiority in the face of Wagner his mimetic rival. [30] The 'Will to Power' is a perverse quixotic quest against the victors and a juvenile denial of powerlessness. Nor, according to Girard, is the Will to Power a mere description of how power relations work in society to shape conventional reality. Rather it advocates the right of the strong to sacrifice the weak. It is not a sympathetic portrait and we are reminded that Nietzsche's ideas eventually drove him insane.

Girard's representation neglects the heuristic of power of Nietzsche's hyperbolic polemic in the direction of truth and the deeper level at which he advances an agonistic tension. Will to Power, is properly understood as *becoming* and a striving for excellence in the absence of a fiction of a transcendent *Being.* It must be considered in dialectic with the Eternal Return which provides a mechanism for balancing the false dichotomy of either pure *Being* or pure *becoming*. Both extremes are fictions of flawed but inevitable human conceptuality which can be mitigated only by not excluding one side or the other.[31]

Despite intuiting the truth of Christianity and the scapegoat mechanism, Nietzsche, according to Girard,

perversely chooses to embrace the religion of the victimizers.[32] Such a conclusion depends on a misrepresentation of Nietzsche as a heartless champion of oppression which does not coincide with the 'facts'. But, Nietzsche famously said, "(T)here are no facts only interpretation and this too is only interpretation."[33] If that is the case, then why should not Girard interpretively sacrifice Nietzsche as a John the Anti-Baptist of Christian truth? Girard's attempt to swing the pendulum back toward Christian foundations is accomplished through a public evisceration of Nietzsche, analogous to Nietzsche's polemics against Paul and Socrates. There is rivalry for Girard with Nietzsche as he undercuts Nietzsche's prophetic role with his own messianic message.[34]

Conclusion

Girard contends that aphorism 125 expresses the collective guilt of killing God whereas, I argue, it is better understood as a poetic expression of the complexity of secularisation and a meditation on the consequences of inevitable metaphysical thinking.

The "Death of God" must be considered in its German theological context in which for a person who feels alienated and sinful God is metaphorically dead. The cycle of Jesus' impending birth, nativity, his crucifixion (with attending limbo period of living without God) and the resurrection is a cyclical metaphor of personal faith going back at least as far as Luther. The crisis of faith crystallized in Kant's critiques placed God outside the realm of the knowable. It was a *de facto* execution of God leaving only absurd faith.[35] Hegel employed this cyclical metaphor in expressing the human relation to knowledge and tried to "resurrect" God through a historical dialectic of teleological perfection. [36] The death of God as a culture wide phenomenon was not new with Nietzsche but was expressed in 1844 in the words "man has killed God in order to become now—*sole* God on high."[37]

This is the broader context in which Nietzsche wrote the aphorism. The death of faith in this cyclic framework demands it be replaced by something new. Clearly Hegel's system of eschatological history can be seen as one of the most influential 'games' the Madman says we must play to comfort ourselves. Another such game might be the pagan-*volk*-nationalism of

Wagner; a consolation prize for epistemologically lonely Romantics missing God.

Nietzsche's Madman does not unwittingly presage Girard's scapegoat mechanism but employs a well-worn metaphor for the loss and reestablishment of faith to explain that the metaphorical death of God entails *real* loss with unrecognized epistemological consequences. Nietzsche welcomes the 'murder,' but God cannot be so easily dismissed, even if He is a fiction. This distinguishes his intention from the Christian use of the 'God is dead' metaphor and *also* from its use as a mantra by atheists, which Girard is correct to point out, is often simplistic.

For Nietzsche, truth does not transcend the flux of life but is forged in the moment. [38] He argued that the pure *Being* of Parmenides via Plato and Christianity are webs of stagnant domination, whereas tension, as found in Heraclitus, is a view conducive to creative life. Nietzsche presciently points out that when religion is removed Christian morality, epistemology, and eschatology are sublimated into other cultural spheres. He warns against surrogate Platonic higher goods that become new ideological systems of violent authority.

Nietzsche speaks metaphorically about embracing the flux and violence inherent to existence, while also recognizing the importance of Apollonian form. But Girard characterizes Nietzsche's embrace of violence as literal and total, ignoring his understanding of the necessity of form in the interest of sacrificing Nietzsche's insights to what Girard sees as the higher good of foundational truth. This is Girard's rhetorical way of re-instituting an external God, thereby rescuing humanity from ambiguity.

It has been asked whether Girard's "tone of brilliant self-confidence is merely the fruit of wide reading with a closed mind."[39] More positively, his work can be seen as an attempt to resist the more extreme forms of postmodern relativism. Nietzsche instigated, or first articulated, the modern sacrificial crisis (to put it in Girard's terms) and resulting disorientation. Girard is trying to mitigate the postmodern crisis through a ritualistic sacrifice of this influential text and its author.

It is ironic that Girard claims Christianity exposes the fallaciousness of the scapegoat mechanism as a basis of social-

metaphysical foundation, yet his treatment of Nietzsche employs exactly such sacrificial mechanisms. He projects his theory onto *The Madman* and attempts to shape intellectual discourse in a way that ironically re-enacts his scapegoat theory. Girard's oblation shows both the power of such sacrifice and why it is tempting to polemically employ scapegoating as a rhetorical tool in the realm of competing claims to truth. Girard may seem too easy a target for such criticism because of the way he mixes studying religion with being religious. However, I think this case is illustrative of the broader question of how polemics are integral to establishing the parameters of debate in cultural theory, even from perspectives not overtly religious like those of Girard.

Notes

[1]Frederick Nietzsche. *Portable Nietzsche.* Trans. Walter Kaufmann. (New York; Viking Press, 1968), 95.

[2] Chris Fleming. *René Girard: Violence and Mimesis.* (Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity, 2004), 126.

[3] Rene Girard. "Interview with René Girard: Comments on Christianity, Scapegoating, and Sacrifice." *Religion* (1997 27, 249–254), 251.

[4] Both Girard and Nietzsche set themselves up as sacrificial Christ-like figures. For instance, Girard writes in *The Scapegoat,* "My hypothesis has existed for centuries and…the transition from uncertainty to certainty in matters of demythification has already occurred once…"[1] It is difficult *not* to read something like a 'second coming' into such claims. The way that Nietzsche wrote of himself as Dionysus, the Crucified and the Anti-Christ is also obviously messianic, even if ironically so.

[5] Noam Chomsky. *Language and Politics*. (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1988).

[6] Lincoln, Bruce. "Debreasting, Disarming, Beheading." In *Understanding Religious Sacrifice: a Reader*, Ed Jeffrey Carter 357-369. (London and New York: Continuum Press, 2003.), 367.

[7] In fact Nietzsche is often seen as the progenitor of such modes of analysis.

[8] Nietzsche and Girard are both writers who sacrifice the comfortable distinction between the rhetoric of studying religion vs. the rhetoric of being religious and together provide an interesting sphere for examining how such a distinction is arbitrary.

[9] Renee Girard. I see Satan Fall like Lightning. Trans. James G. Williams. (Leominster, Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2001), 174.

[10] Bruce Ellis Benson. *Pious Nietzsche: Decadence and Dionysian Faith.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 245.

[11] Ibid., 241.

[12] Tim Murphy. *Nietzsche, Metaphor and Religion*. (Albany: State University of New York Press 2001), 144.

[13] Nietzsche, Frederick. *The Portable Nietzsche.* Ed and Trans. Walter Kaufmann. (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 200-201.

[14] Rene Girard. "Are the Gospels Mythical?" (*First Things* 27-31 April 1996), 29.

[15] Gianni Vattimo. *Beyond Interpretation: The Meaning of Hermeneutics for Philosophy.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 50.

[16] Sarah Kofman. *Nietzsche and Metaphor.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 71.

[17] J. Z. Smith. "*The Domestication of Sacrifice*." In *Violent Origins: Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation*. Robert G. Hammerton-Kelly Ed. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1987).

[18] Lawrence J. Hatab. "Apollo and Dionysus: Nietzschean Expressions of the Sacred," In *Nietzsche and the Gods*. 45-56, Editor Weaver Santaniello. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 48.

[19] Ibid., 49.
[20] Ibid., 10.
[21] Ibid., 14.
[22] Ibid., 3.

[23] Michel Haar. *Nietzsche and Metaphysics.* Trans. Michael Gendre, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 47.

[24] Porter, James I. "The Invention of Dionysus and the Platonic Midwife: Nietzsche's Birth of Tragedy." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* (2004), 468.

[25] Gayatri Spivak. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present.* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

[26] Rene Girard. "The Founding Murder." In *Violence and Truth,* Ed Paul Dumouchel 227-245. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1988), 228.

[27] Ibid., 231.
[28] Ibid., 232.
[29] Ibid., 242.

[30] Rene Girard. *To Double Business Bound.* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press. 1978), 68.

[31] Gianni Vattimo *Dialogue With Nietzsche*. Trans. William McCuiag. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 35.

[32] Girard, *Founding Murder*, 243.

[33] Vattimo, *Dialogue*, 58.

[34] I do not imagine Girard is unaware that since he detects mimesis, rivalry and scapegoating in everything, it simply suggests itself to look for it in his writing.

[35] Eric Von der Luft. "Sources of Nietzsche's 'God is Dead' and it's Meaning for Heidegger." (*Journal of the History of Ideas*, 45 no 2 Ap-Je 1984), 263.

[36] Ibid., 265.
[37] Ibid., 264
[38] Hatab, 46.

[39] Chris Fleming. *René Girard: Violence and Mimesis.* (Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity, 2004), 157.

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To Find a Priest and His Priesthood: Caiaphas and the Thomasine Community

Erin J. Wright

Abstract: The Jewish high priest Joseph ben Caiaphas is best known for his central role in the Passion stories. As the root of the anti-Semitic charge of deicide against the people of Israel, the negative portrayal of Caiaphas and the Jews in these critical scenes of the Gospels has proven itself a source of eternal struggle within New Testament scholarship. In order to uncover a more historical understanding of this problematic figure, the Gospel of Thomas presents itself as a source for Caiaphas which is both removed from the Jewish-Christian conflict of the first centuries of this era, but still sharing in the Jesus tradition of the New Testament. Using a historical-textual approach, the sayings of Thomas are 'canvassed for Caiaphas' by applying historically-based search parameters. From this search a distinct anti-Pharisaical polemic, likely preserved from an earlier tradition, is detectable in Thomas. As a text which is theologically indifferent to the death of Jesus, Thomas' unique contribution to the study of Caiaphas gestures towards an early tradition of negatively portraying Jewish authorities, which may be independent of the canonical Gospels.

Introduction

The historicity of the high priest Caiaphas is attested to in both Jewish and Christian writings, as well as archaeological evidence. We know his name, his family lineage, his status in society, what some of his responsibilities as a high priest would have been, what he would have worn, and possibly even his final resting place. What we are lacking, however, is a satisfactory answer to the question that must be asked: what was Caiaphas' role in the death of Jesus? While the canonical Gospels provide their own testimony on the subject, it is nearly impossible to wrench historical information about a Jewish figure from texts so

deeply implicated in the conflict between Judaism and the emerging Christianity in first century Palestine. One is tempted, then, to look outside of the Jewish-Christian milieu to find a source less coloured by hostilities towards the Jewish people.

A potential candidate that quickly surfaces is the *Gospel of Thomas*. While apocryphal, and likely representative of a Syrian community's teachings, *Thomas* has been described as "the Fifth Gospel," and shares some form of source relationship with the Jesus tradition of the New Testament. It is the intention of this study, then, to "find" Caiaphas where he might not belong: the *Gospel of Thomas*. In doing so, it will be necessary not only to define the validity of considering *Thomas* as a potential resource in the study of Caiaphas, but also to define certain known characteristics of Caiaphas in order to set the parameters of such a search. I would suggest that in doing this it might be possible not only to find Caiaphas within these set parameters, but also to show that *Thomas* possesses a unique value which might enhance the study of the high priest.

Argument for the Relevance of *Thomas*

Before proceeding, I feel that it is necessary to address an obvious concern with this study, that is, the validity and potential worth of considering *Thomas* in the study of a Jewish high priest. Thus, I will outline the most glaring of these problems (time, space, and soteriology), and then attempt to redeem the study in light of recent Thomasine research.

Thomas in Context: Date, Location and Soteriology

To begin with, the dating of *Thomas* is problematic at best. First, the structure of the gospel, a list of sayings, lends itself to "easy" editing, leaving little trace of the addition and deletion of material. Supporting this presumption, we have an earlier and fragmented Greek version and the later Coptic version of Nag Hammadi. Adding to these complications, the striking parallels between many Thomasine logia to canonical Gospels have kept academics in quite a state for more than 50 years now.[1]

[1] On the consequences of so much attention expended on determining canonical dependency, see Ron Cameron, "Ancient myths and modern

Scholars tend to be divided into two generalized camps: an "earlier" camp, claiming *Thomas*' independence from these canonical sources, and thus dating the gospel in the 50 to 140 CE range; those of the 'later' camp, claiming *Thomas*' dependence on the canon, argue dates ranging from 140 CE and onwards.[2] If one subscribes to this later camp, in consequence, *Thomas* is historically removed from Caiaphas and the priesthood, potentially by centuries. In subscribing to the more optimistic and earlier dating, ranking *Thomas* contemporary not with Caiaphas, but at least alongside the canonical gospels, there remains the problem of provenance.

Even if contemporary to the canonical gospels, the Thomasine community itself most likely existed outside the borders of the Judeo-Christian milieu of the New Testament. As a result of this differing milieu, that of early Syrian Christianity, [3] we find a soteriology in *Thomas* contrary to that of the New Testament; as DeConick explains: "In early Syrian literature, the human being regains Paradise lost through his or her own effort of righteous living as revealed by Jesus, not through some act of atonement on Jesus' part."[4] The soteriology of *Thomas*, therefore, renders Jesus' death and crucifixion irrelevant in the eyes of the Thomasine community, and thus, one would also have to assume, waylay any concerns about those involved in Jesus' death, including Caiaphas.

To paint this in the clearest of pictures, if we were to stand on Temple Mount alongside Caiaphas in first century Palestine, we would need both a time machine and a rather powerful telescope to even catch a glimpse of the Thomasine

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theories of the Gospel of Thomas and Christian origins," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 11 (1999), especially 236-239.

[2] April D. DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas in Translation: With a Commentary and New English Translation of the Complete Gospel* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 7.

[3] DeConick, *Translation*, 3-7.

[4] DeConick, *Translation*, 5; for her fully developed argument, see April D. DeConick, "Fasting from the World: Encratite Soteriology in the Gospel of Thomas," in *The Notion of "Religion" in Comparative Research. Selected Proceedings of the XVIth IAHR Congress, Rome, 3rd-8th September* (Rome: L'Erma, 1990), 425-440.

community, who would have been too busy being indifferent to Caiaphas' role in the death of Jesus, to even notice.[5]

This all seems to point towards a rather disturbing question: why bother? How could *Thomas* possibly merit a "search" for Caiaphas? While unequivocally acknowledging these problems, I believe that there remains a light at the end of the tunnel: graciously lighting this path is the renowned and groundbreaking Thomasine scholar, April D. DeConick.

Re-contextualizing *Thomas*: DeConick and the "Kernel Gospel"

Even before considering DeConick's work, it is clear in reading *Thomas* that there is some extant connection to Jewish-Christianity and the Jesus tradition of the New Testament. As already mentioned, *Thomas* contains sayings parallel to New Testament sources, many of which are introduced with the phrase "Jesus said," and some of which obviously address Jewish-Christian concerns such as the Sabbath, dietary laws and circumcision. However, as also mentioned before, there has been no scholarly consensus reached concerning the source relationship between *Thomas* and the canonical gospels, with theories ranging from independence from the canonicals, to dependence, to shared sources. Thus, I would suggest that it is only in considering DeConick's research that we might begin to find answers.

In her most recent publications, the companion volumes *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas* (2005) and *The Original Gospel of Thomas in Translation* (2007), DeConick suggests a rather revolutionary understanding of *Thomas*. Notably, she strips from *Thomas* the label of "Gnostic" which has so long been taken for granted, arguing that no such "umbrella religion" as Gnosticism existed.[6] She instead refocuses *Thomas* as "an ancient "orthodox" text from early

[5] In the same spirit, concerning instead modern indifference of Second-Temple scholarship towards Caiaphas, see Adele Reinhartz, "Who Cares about Caiaphas?" in *Identity and Interaction in the Ancient Mediterranean: Jews, Christians and Others. Essays in Honour of Stephen G. Wilson* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 31-40.
[6] DeConick, *Translation*, 3.

Syrian Christianity."[7] It is in this refocusing, interestingly enough, that we find the solution to the above problems of time and space. As DeConick explains, "The Christianity in Syria as it emerges in our texts shows strong roots and ties with traditions from Jerusalem." [8] These "strong roots and ties" are in fact, as DeConick goes on to argue, material taken directly from the milieu of Second-Temple Judaism:

> In *Recovering*...[I] have offered a new model for understanding the development of this Gospel, a model which is supported by studies in orality and rhetorical composition. The results of the application of my method has led to the identification of early sayings in *Thomas* which belonged to an old speech gospel from Jerusalem, as well as a set of later accretions.[9]

These earlier sayings are what DeConick refers to as "the Kernel Gospel," and have led her to the conclusion that *Thomas* is therefore "neither early nor late, but both."[10] Composed of some five speeches attributed to Jesus, and sharing direct commonalities to Q, DeConick concludes that "The contents of the speeches point to their origin in the Jerusalem mission prior to 50 CE."[11]

Thus, in light of DeConick's recent research, the problems with using *Thomas* for the study of a first century Jewish high priest begin to evaporate. We now have a gospel firmly rooted in the Jewish-Christian milieu, possibly earlier than 50 CE; but what of the gospel's later, Syrian Christian accretions, and, of course, the lack of interest in Jesus' death and resurrection? While these may seem to be further obstacles between this gospel and a search for Caiaphas, I would suggest that, in fact, it is these qualities which provide *Thomas'* inherent *value* in a study such as this. However, before the value of finding Caiaphas within *Thomas* can even be considered, it must

[7] Ibid., 5.
[8] Ibid., 4.
[9] Ibid., 7.
[10] Ibid., 8.
[11] Ibid.

first be proven that a depiction of the high priest can in fact be found.

To Find a High Priest: Who are we looking for?

In order to find Caiaphas and his priesthood within the confines of *Thomas*, we must first define what we are searching for. Looking to Caiaphas scholarship, the high priest usually turns up in the work of New Testament scholars as a character irrefutably intertwined with the events leading up to Jesus' crucifixion.[12] There is one text, however, which provides a look into the life of Caiaphas, and which lends itself nicely to the task at hand: Helen Bond's *Caiaphas: Friend of Rome and Judge of Jesus?* (2004). In *Caiaphas*, Bond attempts most fully to recreate what Caiaphas' life would have been like as a high priest in Roman-ruled, first century Palestine. To accomplish this, she exhausts all available resources: relying heavily on the writings of Flavius Josephus, she also considers other Jewish writings (Philo, Ben Sira, Dead Sea Scrolls, and rabbinic writings), archaeological sources, as well as Christian writings (Matthew, Mark, Luke-Acts, and John).[13]

Important to note is that Bond is by no means claiming to write a "biography" of Caiaphas. She is quick to point out that we really have no verifiable information about "Caiaphas the man," and the majority of the information we have about "Caiaphas the high priest" is, at best, historically questionable.[14] However, in terms of more verifiable historical fact, we do have a general understanding of the roles of the high priest and priesthood, specifically during the Roman occupation.

The Sadducees and the Priesthood of Second-Temple Judaism

Though we know little about Caiaphas' family origins, Bond suggests that "it is probably safe to assume that by the first century B.C.E. they were aristocratic and wealthy, deriving their

[12] See Reinhartz, "Who Cares," 31-40.
[13] Helen K. Bond, *Caiaphas: Friend of Rome and Judge of Jesus?* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 17-22.
[14] Ibid., 17.

wealth most probably from large estates in and around Jerusalem."[15] In consideration of the status Caiaphas achieved, Bond further suggests that his family was likely to have been Sadducean, as entry to the priesthood was traditionally dependent upon lineage.[16] Also important to note, "The hereditary priesthood was one of the defining characteristics of Judean society, and priests enjoyed considerable status and honor."[17]

This priestly status would have been easily identifiable, at least while performing ceremonial duties within the temple, as they wore special "priestly" vestments. Bond provides a colourful account of Caiaphas donning his new priestly attire upon entry into the priesthood, based on the garments as described in the writings of Josephus:

> In the course of this ceremony he would have exchanged his own tunic, soiled by city grime, for the colorful robes of a priest. First, he put on a linen tunic; over this went an ankle-length bodice. This was bound tightly to his chest with a beautiful sash embroidered with flowers of blue, purple, and scarlet. Finally, we would have put on a linen turban surmounted by a cloth cap.[18]

Traditionally, the priesthood would have been, above all, focused on serving the temple, particularly on sacrifice and purity. Aside from specific daily and seasonal sacrifices, the priests would occupy their time accepting individual offerings, praying, and purifying the temple.[19] While these would have initially been Caiaphas' temple duties as well, under Roman rule

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[15] Ibid., 23.
[16] Ibid., 23-24.
[17] Ibid., 24; Bond goes on to explain how this traditional hereditary lineage became complicated under Roman rule. The Roman prefects had the power to depose the current high priest and reappoint someone from a different family, which created complex rivalries within the nobility. However Caiaphas himself, although Roman appointed, is still thought to have been in the line of Zadok, and therefore of the 'truest' priestly lineage.
[18] Ibid., 31.
[19] Ibid., 30-31.

he found himself rather quickly promoted to the office of high priest, a position he would hold for nearly two decades.[20]

Caiaphas the High Priest

Having been appointed high priest by the Roman prefect Gratus, Caiaphas took on a more multi-faceted role in Jewish society. In his new role he would have found himself at the head of daily temple activity, overseeing the general maintenance and running of the temple; however, more importantly, "The high priest was the supreme cultic official in the Jerusalem temple. He was the mediator between the Jewish people and God: only he could make atonement for the sins of the people…"[21] Along with this promotion, Caiaphas' duties were extended to the world outside of the temple. Now in the role of high priest, "he was the figurehead of the Jewish faith, the link with Jewish communities all over the Mediterranean world and as far away as Babylonia."[22] Also, due to the Roman occupation, "He may have also engaged in politics, particularly when issues concerning the temple were at stake. In such cases his authority made him the natural spokesperson for the rest of the nobility..."[23]

Along with the priestly vestments Caiaphas would have worn as a member of the priesthood, there were also high priestly vestments: ceremonial robes worn on the Day of Atonement when the high priest would enter into the holy of holies and atone for the sins of the Jewish people.[24] As Bond describes:

> First, he would put on the long blue seamless tunic and tie it with the brightly covered sash…Over this was a waistcoat…The waistcoat itself was richly decorated with embroidery in gold and bright colors. At the front was a breastplate on which were four rows, each with

[20] Both Caiaphas' appointment to and removal from the High Priesthood are recorded by Josephus in *Jewish Antiquities* (18:35, 95).
[21] Bond, 34.
[22] Ibid., 47.
[23] Ibid., 35.
[24] Ibid., 44-45.

> three precious stones…The overall effect of the high priest in his robes was dazzling.[25]

To summarize, there are a few general characteristics which can be drawn out from this brief treatment of the priesthood and office of the high priest. First and foremost, the high priest represented the religious leadership of the temple cult, both in the maintenance of the temple, and as the "figurehead" of the Jewish faith. Second, in order to enter into the priesthood, one must have been of an aristocratic family. Thus, a high priest by nature, even before attaining this highest office, would have been of the wealthy elite, and had a certain amount of power and influence as a member of the nobility. And finally, the priesthood and high priest would have been easily recognizable to the public because of their special vestments, both those for day to day temple activity, as well as the high priest's ceremonial vestments. Having considered this picture of Caiaphas and the priesthood painted by Bond, we now have a better understanding of who we are searching for in *Thomas*. Keeping in mind these particular characteristics, we can now turn to the text itself, and begin the search for Caiaphas and his priesthood.

Beginning the Search

A Preliminary Search: *Thomas* on Judaism and Jewish Leadership

Similar to the New Testament tradition, as already mentioned, *Thomas* reflects common Jewish-Christian concerns, containing logia which outline the Thomasine community's take on Jewish law and issues of purity (L. 6, 14, 27, 53, 89, 104).[26] As Antti Marjanen explains, "none of the traditional Jewish religious practices has a favorable reception in the *Gospel of Thomas*. It is significant that they are not only regarded as expendable, but

[25] Ibid., 45.

[26] These logia are concerned, more specifically, with fasting, praying, almsgiving, dietary observations, purity, keeping the Sabbath, circumcision, and achieving the Kingdom, with Jesus providing the religious authority on all of these subjects.

some of them – prayer, fasting, and almsgiving – can also be seen as harmful for one's spiritual existence."[27] Thus, these logia would seem to demonstrate a palpable opposition towards Judaism within the Thomasine community. [28] This hostility, however, is certainly not unique to *Thomas*: the canonical gospels also tend to portray Judaism and Jewish characters negatively; Bond addresses this touchy situation:

> Although early Christianity developed from Judaism, the Gospels were written at a time of growing Jewish-Christian hostility. By the late first century, Jewish synagogues had begun to take firm measures against the new messianic sect and were expelling followers of Jesus from their membership…This historical process left its mark in the Gospels, both on a general level and in the shape of some ugly characterizations of Jesus' Jewish opponents.[29]

Caiaphas, naturally, falls into this category of "Jesus' Jewish opponents." But can we find similarly "ugly characterizations" within *Thomas*? In fact, we can: there are three logia in *Thomas* which make direct reference to the Jewish people (L. 39, 43, 102), all of which are negative.[30]

Two of these logia (39, 102) are of particular interest to this study, [31] as both make reference to the Pharisees, a powerful Jewish religious group which, according to canonical gospel

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[27] Antti Marjanen, "*Thomas* and Jewish religious practices," in *Thomas at the Crossroads: Essays on the Gospel of Thomas*, ed. Risto Uro (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 180.

[28] Although based on a communal theory vastly differing from that being assumed here (i.e. DeConick, *Translation*), for a commentary on the 'anti-Jewish' communal rules in *Thomas*, see David W. Kim, "What Shall We Do? The Community Rules of Thomas in the 'Fifth Gospel,'" *Biblica* 88.3 (2007): 393-414.

[29] Bond, 21.

[30] Of these three logia, only one (L. 43) contains a general reference to the Jewish people, referring to them simply as "the Jews".

[31] DeConick (in *Translation*) attributes both logia to the Kernel Gospel, which is to suggest that their origin is in the Jerusalem mission before 50 CE, and thus before the writing down of the canonical gospels.

accounts, were counted among Jesus' opponents.[32] Looking first at logion 39, "Jesus said, 'The Pharisees and the scribes have taken the keys of knowledge. They have hidden them. Neither have they entered nor have they permitted those people who want to enter (to do so). You, however, be as prudent as serpents and as guileless as doves.'"[33] And, of a similar sentiment, in logion 102, "Jesus said, 'Woe to the Pharisees because they are like a dog sleeping in the cattle trough. For the dog neither eats nor [lets] the cattle eat.'"[34] Both of these logia portray the Pharisees, and in the case of logion 39 also the scribes, in a negative light. They are described as obstacles: they prevent everyone from achieving "knowledge," including themselves. But what does this tell us about Caiaphas?

While the Pharisees and Sadducees represent two different Jewish religious factions,[35] and Caiaphas thought likely to have been a Sadducee, New Testament accounts of the passion narrative place Caiaphas in the company of Pharisees:

> So the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the council, and said, "What are we to do? This man is performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation." But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all! You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed. (John 11: 47-50)

Bond suggests that "the presence of Pharisees here is probably best explained as John's attempt to implicate the Jewish leaders

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[32] Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: a Sociological Approach* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988), 44

[33] DeConick, *Translation*, 35.

[34] Ibid., 41.

[35] It is important to note that, according to rabbinic records, there appears to have been a rather hostile relationship between the Sadducees and Pharisees, particularly on matters of purity (see Bond 25).

of his own day (the heirs of the Pharisees) in the plot against Jesus."[36] Thus, while logia 39 and 102 might be referencing a religious group of which Caiaphas may not have been a member, they are certainly still applicable to the high priest, especially when considered within the context of the Jesus tradition. From this first trace of Caiaphas in *Thomas*, then, we can see the beginning sketches of what the Thomasine community's views on the priesthood may have been: as an "obstacle" to attaining knowledge. Unfortunately, two sayings are hardly enough to claim a "discovery" of Caiaphas in *Thomas*. I believe that these initial hints, however, can be amplified by broadening the parameters of the search for Caiaphas, and applying a slightly different methodology.

Reconstructing Thomasine Views of the High Priest and Priesthood

Instead of considering only direct references to Caiaphas or the priesthood, I believe that in considering relevant teachings in *Thomas*, it is possible to reconstruct what the community's view of the priesthood, and thus Caiaphas, likely would have been. As for what would constitute a "relevant" teaching, I turn back to the general characteristics of the high priest and priesthood as gleaned from Bond's text: religious leadership, of the wealthy and elite, and recognizable priestly vestments. Thus, in considering logia which address any of these three characteristics, whether literal or thematic, I believe Caiaphas can be found.

The High Priest as a Religious Leader

As mentioned before, the priesthood represented the religious leadership for the temple cult, a hierarchy in which the high priest represented the "figurehead" of the Jewish faith. In *Thomas*, the only discernable "figurehead" is Jesus. While fulfilling more the role of "teacher" than a religious leader per se, it is through Jesus' teachings, as opposed to a "high priest," that the community finds direction concerning the interpretation of Jewish law. There is also little evidence of a hierarchical

[36] Bond, 132.

leadership like the priesthood within the Thomasine community, and instead an overall ideology of "masterlessness." Risto Uro suggests that "In *Thomas* there is no corporate 'body of Christ' which would signify the unity and harmony of the Christian community. The self-sufficiency emphasized in *Thomas* is in this respect more 'individualistic'…"[37]

This independence and lack of hierarchy would seem to be contradicted, however, by the teaching in logion 12: "The disciples said to Jesus, 'We know that you are going to leave us. Who will be our leader?' Jesus said to them, 'No matter where you came from, you should go to James the Righteous One, for whose sake heaven and earth exist.'"[38] Uro provides a possible explanation for this contradiction, however, and from a complex comparison between *Thomas* and the role of James in the *Gospel of Matthew*, concludes that taken within the prescribed ideological framework, "*Thomas* adds to James' leadership a different kind of model, one based on self-sufficiency and independence."[39]

Thus, it is no surprise that *Thomas* contains teachings that negatively portray leadership. This is further attested in a

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[37] Risto Uro, "'Who Will Be our Leader?': Authority and Autonomy in the *Gospel of Thomas*," in *Fair Play: Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity. Essays in Honour of Heikki Räisänen*, eds. Ismo Dunderberg, Christopher Tuckett and Kari Syreeni (Leiden: Brille, 2002), 483.

[38] DeConick, *Translation*, 33.

[39] Uro, "Leader?" 485. In her interpretive comments following the translation of logion 12, DeConick disputes Uro's overall interpretation of this logion, suggesting that it in fact does implies that the Thomasine community had leaders. This does not necessarily challenge the idea that *Thomas* portrays a different "model" of James' leadership than that of *Matthew* (representing here the Jerusalem tradition), keeping in mind that Uro forms this conclusion based on the differing ideological framework, which is specific to *Thomas*. Arguably one could interpret DeConick's further comments on this logion (along with L.11) to support this idea: "The combination of sayings would have given members a sense of assurance that their commitment to this renunciatory lifestyle was worthy and in accordance with the teachings of Jesus and dependent upon the authority of James, Jesus' brother" (*Translation* 82).

final logion (3), which represents the only generalized teaching about "leaders" in *Thomas*:

> (Jesus said, 'if ((your <<leaders>> [say to you, "Look!] the Kingdom is in heaven", then the birds of heaven [will arrive first before you. If they say,] "It is under the earth," then the fish of the sea [will enter it, arriving first] before you. But the Kingdom [of Heaven] is inside of you and [outside.] [Whoever] knows [himself] will find it. [And when you] know yourselves, [you will understand that you are the children] of the [Living] Father. [But if] you will not know yourselves, [you are impoverished] and you are poverty.))'[40]

One might be quick to draw a direct line between this teaching and those concerning Jewish leadership, including, presumably, Caiaphas. However, also of note in Uro's comparison between *Thomas* and *Matthew*, is the interesting contrast which Uro draws out between Matthean critiques of leadership, versus those of *Thomas*: "Whereas Matthew still largely defines the ideal communal structure against non-Christian formative Judaism, *Thomas* is engaged in criticism of Christian leadership and hierarchical formation *within* Christian communities."[41] Following this, then, we must assume that any critique of leadership found in *Thomas* is *not* referring to Jewish leaders, and thus not referring to Caiaphas and the priesthood. How does this, then, change our interpretation of the negative references toward the Pharisees observed earlier? How are we to interpret this apparent contradiction? We will return to these questions,

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[40] DeConick, *Translation*, 36. DeConick uses the following system of symbols to indicate problems or decisions in her process of translating the Thomasine logia: single parentheses surround words that are not in the manuscript but help capture meaning, double parentheses surround text where the translation is based on the Greek manuscript instead of the Coptic, single square brackets indicate lacunae or effacement and the possible reconstruction, double square brackets surround text where a correction of the manuscript tradition has been made, and double pointed brackets surround text based on a possible Aramaic text behind the Greek or Coptic (*Translation*, ix-x).

[41] Uro, "Leader?" 484.

with new insight, after considering some further qualities of the high priest.

The High Priest as a Member of the Wealthy Elite

As members of the religious leadership, a second characteristic which defined the high priest and priesthood was status. As previously discussed, these priestly positions were attainable only to the wealthy elite. It is important to keep in mind that in the world of first century Palestine, wealth and power were generally synonymous, and, from *Thomas*, it is clear that wealth and power were not considered desirable traits within the Thomasine community (L. 35, 54, 63, 64, 81, 98, 110).

First of all, one motif utilized in *Thomas* is that of violence against the "strong" and "wealthy" (L. 35, 63, 98). The most vivid example of this motif is found in logion 98: "Jesus said, 'The Kingdom of the Father is like someone who wished to kill a prominent man. While at home, he drew out his knife. He stabbed it into the wall to test whether his hand would be strong (enough). Then he murdered the prominent man.'"[42] While the violence here should certainly not be taken as a literal teaching, it is clear that, for the Thomasine community, no wealthy person would ever achieve salvation (L. 54, 64, 81, 110).

As opposed to the motif of violence, the actual community teaching concerning what is to be done with wealth and power, we have logia 81 and 110. In logion 81, "Jesus said, 'Whoever has grown wealthy, that person should become a king. But whoever possesses power, let that person disown (his power).'"[43] As for the instruction in logion 110, "Jesus said, 'Whoever has found the world and become wealthy, he should disown the world.'"[44] In light of these teachings, it is clear that for the Thomasine community, those of a certain station in life were not on the path to achieving salvation, the station of high priest certainly counting among these.

[42] DeConick, *Translation*, 40-1.
[43] Ibid., 39.
[44] Ibid., 41.

The High Priests and their Priestly Vestments

The final defining characteristic of the high priest and priesthood to be considered is their priestly vestments, which would have visibly separated them from the masses. In *Thomas*, the image of garments proves to be a popular metaphor (L. 21, 36, 37, 47, 78). The portrayal of garments in *Thomas* oftentimes is coupled with the action of "stripping down" (L. 21, 36, 37); this encratite teaching[45] is most clearly conveyed in logion 37:

> His disciples said, 'When will you appear to us? When will we see you?' Jesus said, 'When you strip naked without shame, take your garments, put them under your feet like little children, and trample on them. Then [you will see] the Son of the Living One and you will not be afraid.'[46]

While logion 37, when taken in its entirety, has a debated theological significance,[47] what *is* significant for this study is simply the portrayed treatment of the garments (i.e. stripped off and trampled upon), and what this treatment of the garments represents: a metaphor with a rich prehistory. DeConick and Jarl Fossum, in a joint and in depth study of logion 37, explain that "Stripping off of garments is a common metaphor in Jewish and Christian literature for the removal of the material body."[48]

The metaphor derives from the biblical account of the Fall of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21), when "God clothed them with 'garments of skin.'"[49] Prior to the Fall, Adam and Eve were considered "luminous beings," and "this light could be seen as their garment, which they lost as a consequence of the Fall."[50] Thus, when Jesus describes the act of stripping naked, the

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[45] On the development of the theory for an encratite soteriology in *Thomas*, see April D. DeConick and Jarl Fossum, "Stripped before God: A New Interpretation of Logion 37 in the Gospel of Thomas," *Vigiliae Christianae* 45 (1991): 123-150; DeConick, "Fasting."
[46] DeConick, *Translation*, 35.
[47] See DeConick and Fossum, "Stripped."
[48] Ibid., 124.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

trampling of the garments that follows represents "the act of renouncing these garments, that is, the mortal body."[51]

In logion 21, Jesus portrays his disciples as fulfilling, in part, the instructions provided to them in logion 37:

> Mary said to Jesus, 'Who are your disciples like?' He said, 'They are like little children sojourning in a field that is not theirs. When the owners of the field come, they will say, "Leave our field!" In front of them, they strip naked in order to abandon it, returning their field to them.'[52]

The notion of stripping down is less explicit in logion 36, with Jesus instructing the audience not to worry, among other things, "about [your clothing] and what you [will] wear"; the action of stripping down is passed over here, but the logion assumes this action, ending with "As for you, when you have no garment, what [will you put on]? Who might add to your stature? He will give you your garment.'))"[53] This final sentiment completes the metaphor which DeConick and Fossum describe, with a reference to the "original" garments of light being returned.[54]

This understanding of the metaphorical use of "garments" in *Thomas* informs our understanding of one further logion (78), in which garments are mentioned in conjunction with "kings" and "prominent men": "Jesus said, 'Why did you come out into the desert? To see a reed shaken by the wind and to see a man dressed in soft garments [like your] kings and your prominent men? They are dressed in soft garments, but they will not be able to understand the truth.'"[55] In this logion I believe that, at last, we have found the closest reference to Caiaphas in all of *Thomas*. We have a man who is dressed in soft garments (priestly vestments), who is therefore elevated to the status of "kings" and "prominent men" (the wealthy elite), and described as being unable to understand the truth. While this last characteristic could simply be indicating again towards the

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[51] Ibid., 133.
[52] DeConick, *Translation*, 35.
[53] Ibid., 35.
[54] DeConick and Fossum, "Stripped," 124.
[55] DeConick, *Translations*, 39.

general body of the elite, it also calls to mind the two logia describing the Pharisees (religious leadership), who are portrayed as obstacles to achieving salvation, which can also be interpreted as "understanding the truth."

Thomas on Caiaphas

Has he been found?

In a literal sense, we can only assume that the "man" is logion 78 is *not* the high priest Caiaphas. This man, however, shares with Caiaphas all of the considered traits of a high priest and member of the priesthood: he is dressed in soft garments, a member of the wealthy elite, and, as Jewish religious leaders are portrayed elsewhere in *Thomas*, unable to understand the truth, and thus achieve salvation. Thus, from this logion, as informed by all of the other relevant teachings uncovered in *Thomas*, we should now in theory be able to "reconstruct" what the community's view of Caiaphas might have been. For this end, it is the last characteristic (religious leadership) to which I now turn my attention.

Returning to those questions posed earlier, I believe we can now explain the contradiction between the Thomasine critique of leadership, and the negative references to the Pharisees. As discussed before, based on Uro's comparison to *Matthew*, we can assume that any critique of religious leadership found in *Thomas* is referring only to leadership within closed, Christian communities. Jewish religious leadership, such as the high priest Caiaphas and the rest of the priesthood, were of no concern to the Thomasine community, at least not because of their status as *religious leaders*. In keeping with Thomasine teachings on wealth and power, however, the high priest Caiaphas, along with all other priests, kings, and members of the nobility, would still have been viewed in a negative light, and unable to achieve salvation. Thus, the logia referencing the Pharisees are not in contradiction to Uro's theory at all, as they too were often members of the wealthy and elite.

Conclusions

It is in this reference to the Pharisees, I would argue, that we might find *Thomas*' added value to the study of Caiaphas. Unlike the canonical Gospels, the Thomasine community had no interest in the Jewish religious leadership as such. While rooted in the traditions of Jewish-Christianity, *Thomas* as we have it today represents an early Syrian form of Christianity. These later accretions to the original Kernel Gospel testify to an encratite soteriology, one which would have also exempted Caiaphas as a person of interest in the death of Jesus. Thus, the logia referencing the Pharisees (L. 39, 102) probably do not derive from the Thomasine community itself, and are likely indicative of a borrowed tradition—one which might have been preserved in *Thomas* simply because it was still in keeping with the community's teachings concerning the wealthy elite. Could this witness to a negative tradition concerning the Pharisees, possibly independent of the canonical gospels, add to our understanding of Caiaphas' portrayal in history? In answer to this I will caution only an optimistic maybe. If this independence could be established, we would possess in *Thomas* one of the earliest attestations to this anti-Pharisaical polemic within a Christian text. This would have serious implications for our understanding of Caiaphas and the high priesthood, especially for how we interpret the canonical portrayal of Caiaphas' role in the death of Jesus. More detailed research into the history of this negative portrayal of Caiaphas and the Pharisees, however, would necessarily be called for. Also, with no scholarly agreement on *Thomas*' source relationship to the canonical Gospels, the ship could be sunk before it even sets sail. However, this is a bridge yet to be crossed, and certainly the concern of another study into the high priest Caiaphas.

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Ecology of Love and Avoidance
Negotiating the Boundaries Between World-Affirmation and World-Renunciation

Melanie Saucier

Abstract: This study examines the intersection between religion and environmental ethics in South Asian traditions, namely that of Jainism. Religious traditions, as they confront the challenges of modernity, are redefining their traditional mores and narratives in ways that are contemporary and relevant. One of the most striking ways Jains are accomplishing this is by interpreting the self as inherently "ecological", and applying "Western" animal rights discourse to traditional Jain doctrine. This study will explore how such new understandings are being established by members of these "living" communities, and argue for the re-evaluation of such reified concepts as "ecology" and "religion."

Introduction

Contemporary India is constantly negotiating the boundaries between the "old" and the "new". Streets are flanked on each side by temples that once stood on the highest ground, but are now overtaken by immense shopping malls – symbols of consumer society. In *The Power of Myth*, Joseph Campbell asserts that the largest building within a society is analogous to what is accorded utmost importance within a given culture.[1] Indeed, in contemporary India, with the exception of the Taj Mahal, which has, in any case, become the site of an increasing tourist industry, the largest buildings are the shopping malls. The polluted air and crowded streets have therefore created a longing among many contemporary Indians for – what is now perceived

[1] *The Power of Myth*. Perf. Joseph Campbell, Bill Moyers, PBS, 1988.

as – the utopian past. The religious traditions of South Asia find themselves at the centre of these negotiations.

From 1996 through 1998, conferences on the subject of religion and ecology were held at the Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions.[2] These conferences led to the publication of massive volumes such as *Hinduism and Ecology: The Intersection of Earth, Sky, and Water* and *Jainism and Ecology: Nonviolence in the Web of Life*. These volumes endeavoured to resolve the tensions between scholars arguing against the inherent eco-friendliness of South Asian religious traditions and academics arguing for the possibility of an ecological hermeneutic within Jain and Hindu doctrines. Indeed, religious traditions, as they confront the challenges of modernity, are redefining their traditional mores and narratives in ways that appear – and are, for several members of these communities, contemporary and relevant.

For Jains, the ecological crisis has given rise a re-evaluation of its traditional *mokṣa-marga*, an ideology which entails complete renunciation of the world of matter and, therefore, of nature. This paper, much in the same way as the above-mentioned sources, seeks to explore the ways in which this is accomplished, and how these new understandings are being established and understood by Jains and by scholars of religion. It also endeavours to demonstrate the fluidity of Jain religious doctrines through a discussion of Orthodox and diaspora Jain experiences of nature both in India and North America. In essence, I argue that the diasporic emphasis on world or "nature-affirmation" and the Orthodox emphasis on world-renunciation, or the avoidance of nature, are both "Jain." It will be important to remember that, in keeping with Robert Orsi's manifesto against typologies and reifying boundaries, I will be examining the lived tradition of Jains, both in India and abroad, in order to avoid any separation between authentic or

[2] Christopher Key Chapple, *Jainism and Ecology: Nonviolence in the Web of Life* (Delhi: Motilal Barnasidass Publishers, 2006), v.

"ideal" and inauthentic or "real" Jainism.[3] In my opinion, those who describe themselves as "Jain" engage in their ideal and real Jainism, and so I will be approaching the material with this standpoint in mind.

Nevertheless, it is important to discuss what is commonly labelled "Orthodox" and "Popular" Jainism in order to understand the ways in which certain scholars, arguing against the possibility of a Jain environmental ethic, draw their boundaries between "Jainism" and "Ecology." In other words, I discuss the reified notions of "Jainism" and "Ecology" as they are commonly understood by these aforementioned scholars. Moreover, a discussion of the ideals of Jainism requires an examination of Jainism as a dynamic and context-sensitive religion. Hence, I examine how Jains in India and North America negotiate their boundaries between old world Jainism and the contemporary issues surrounding the environment.

During my stay in India in the summer of 2007, as a student at the International Summer School for Jaina Studies, I had the opportunity to examine and engage with Jainism as it is traditionally lived and Jainism as it is "packaged". While Jain scholars and religious representatives from Jaipur, Delhi, and the United States presented students with the "public," and thus Orthodox, face of Jainism during formal presentations, "other" Jains, both lay and ascetic, from India and abroad, offered descriptions of Jainism that would have been an anathema to a scholar who held dogmatically to an "authentic" and Orthodox Jainism.

The Ascetic Ideal: Renouncing a Violent World

According to the ideals of Jainism, we are all souls (*jīvs*). All that is alive has a soul, including animals, insects, plants, water, fire, bacteria, and so on. Moreover, Jains argue that, though we are individual souls, we all have the same kind of soul. However, some are more tarnished than others and, therefore, incarnate

[3] Robert A. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 156.

differently (e.g., animal body, insect body, man's body, woman's body, etc). This idea corresponds to the Jain belief in cyclical time, whereby the endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth leads to various incarnations and embodiments that depend on the accumulation or the shedding of karmic particles. These karmic particles are believed to be a physical substance – a kind of "sticky" material known as *ghatiya karma* – that adheres to the soul and modifies it.[4]

The above-mentioned cycle of death and rebirth, also known as *samsara*, is not uncommonly referred to by renouncers as the "vomit" from which all souls must escape.[5] Clearly, the use of this word denotes a negative interpretation of the world of matter. Furthermore, traditional Jain doctrine asserts that it is only possible to escape this world from a human body. In fact, the liberated ones, also known as *Tīrthankaras* (ford-makers) and *Jinas* (conquerors), are said to be "a human being, born of human parents."[6] In essence, only human beings are considered capable of achieving liberation within institutionalized Jainism. Among the Digambar sect of Jainism, it is only human males who are considered capable of achieving the ideal in Jainism (e.g., *mokṣa*), since it is believed that only men are capable of undergoing the most excruciating forms of austerities (*tapas*) for taming the body and burning off karma. Women and animals, on the other hand, are said to be incapable of achieving liberation within this sect, because they are more susceptible to the passions (*kashayas*) than men.[7]

In fact, Digambara spiritual leaders (*acharyas*), such as Kundakunda, have argued that women are incapable of achieving spiritual liberation because of their close association with the world of matter due to their bodies. The same is true, of course, for animals. Nevertheless, though important Jain

[4] Padmanabh S. Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification* (Delhi: Motilal Barnasidass Publishers, 2001), 107-133.
[5] Anne Vallely, *Personal Conversation*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa, April 11, 2008.
[6] Jaini, 3.
[7] Jaini, 39.

scriptures dictate that men are superior to women in their spiritual endeavours, Jain women, both lay and ascetic, have also demonstrated that they are not "passive victims" of this patriarchal system. In fact, Jain women renegotiate the boundaries as imposed on them between their bodies and liberation by the patriarchal doctrines of Jainism. While Digambara doctrine, for instance, denies women the possibility of reaching spiritual liberation, contemporary Jain nuns do not perceive themselves as inferior to their male counterparts. Actually, many Digambara sadhvis perceive the sexualisation of the female body as a non-issue since they understand the body to be simply a tool that aids one on the path to *mokṣa*.[8] Hence, there is no "perceived inferiority" because the body is, for the sadhvis, transient.

As this example regarding the agency of Jain women shows, when discussing ideological concepts within any religious tradition, it is necessary to acknowledge the fact that doctrine does not always coincide with practical life. In fact, as I shall demonstrate shortly, Jain doctrine has been reinterpreted by several Western scholars and members of the Jain community as a way of modernizing the Jain tradition so as to make it relevant to contemporary issues such as the environmental crisis and the animal rights movement. However, before delving any deeper into these issues, I will discuss certain key ideals as set forth by Jain religious doctrine.

A Religion of Prohibitions: "Quarantining Life"

Since Jainism is a *śramanic* or renouncer tradition, it is not surprising that the code of conduct for lay and ascetic Jains has emphasized avoidance, rather than affirmation, of worldly life. In fact, the five major vows of ascetics (*mahavratas*) and laypersons (*anuvratas*), namely *ahimsa* (non-violence), *aparigraha* (non-possession), *satya* (truthfulness), *asteya* (non-stealing), and *brahmacarya* (celibacy), have been defined

[8] Anne Vallely, "These Hands Are Not for Henna." in *Women's Renunciation in South Asia: Nuns, Yoginis, Saints, and Singers*, eds. Meena Khandelwal, Sondra L. Hausner, and Ann Grodzins Gold, 224 (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006).

negatively, which further emphasizes the assertion that Jainism is, ultimately, a world-renouncing rather than world-affirming tradition. As Vallely asserts, "elaborate practices of non-violence are not so much about minimizing death or saving life [as it is in the case of Western animal rights movements and organizations concerned with the welfare of animals, such as PETA and the SPCA] as about keeping life "at bay" and essentially amount to an attempt at the avoidance of life."[9] Though Vallely does acknowledge the multifariousness of Jain practice in her article, she asserts that Jainism is traditionally perceived as a world-renouncing tradition. Yet, she does not accept the argument that a world-affirming Jainism is any less authentic than a world-renouncing Jainism – and rightly so.

Of course, traditional Jain doctrine does consider the fact that those who live "in the world", namely the Jain laity, must engage with the world and, therefore, commit "necessary" acts of violence for their own survival and for the survival of the Jain tradition. Without the laity's willingness to remain in the world, which allows them to prepare food, the ascetic order could not exist since they depend on the laity for physical sustenance.* Therefore, since renouncers have taken the great vows, which focus on *absolute* non-violence to all living beings, they depend on the laity to be less than ideal in practice.

Thus, nature, or the world of matter, is perceived as a obstacle to the soteriological goal since "the emphasis throughout Jainism has consistently been upon the danger that nature causes man through his interaction with it and his careless propensity, ultimately dependent upon *karma*, to cause violence."[10] Certainly, the logic of a soteriological tradition, which has as its ultimate goal liberation from the world of matter, would necessarily emphasize the need to avoid and, thus,

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[9] Anne Vallely, "The Jain Plate: The Semiotics of the Diaspora Diet." in *South Asians in the Diaspora: Histories and Religious Traditions*, eds. Knut A. Jacobsen and P. Pratap Kumar, 12 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004).

[10] Paul Dundas, "The Limits of a Jain Environmental Ethic," in *Jainism and Ecology: Nonviolence in the Web of Life,* ed. Christopher Key Chapple, 97 (Delhi: Motilal Barnasidass, 2006).

to not interfere with nature – a world that would surely implicate one into the violence it commits and into committing violence oneself through harming, either intentionally or unintentionally, a living being. Therefore, *ahimsa*, or non-violence, in this case, requires detachment (*aparigraha*) from the world of bondage.

The Ideal and the Real: Negotiating the Boundaries between Affirmation and Renunciation

During my research in India, the tension between ideology and practice became evident on many occasions at the *ISSJS*. I will illustrate with an example, namely the discussion between Dr. Kamini Gogri, a Jain lecturer at the *ISSJS* who is also a coordinator in Jain studies at Mumbai University, and Dr. Kamal Chand Sogani, author of several books dealing with Jain Ethics and Philosophy, regarding the possibility for non-human animals to achieve liberation. Dr. Gogri argued that the scriptures, especially Umasvāti's *Tattvartha Sūtra*, were not clear as to whether animals could gain karma. She did mention, however, that animals could never achieve liberation if they could accrue karma, since they have no possible way of burning off any residual karmas gained from their previous lives due to the nature of their bodies, and so, with this in mind, *jivs* or souls, according to Gogri, could not achieve liberation from a "beastly" body. On the other hand, Dr. Sogani argued that animals can gain karma because of their close association to *kashayas*, or passions, due to their instinctual bodies, and so he was *certain* that animals could not achieve liberation. In any case, despite their disagreements, Gogri and Sogani agreed with the idea that animals' bodies are obstructions to the entrapped souls' liberation.

This friction between Dr. Gogri and Dr. Sogani exemplifies the fact that Jainism is a lived tradition filled with the contradictions, the complexities, and the "messiness" that one would expect of a dynamic religion comprising of complex and "layered" human beings. This is precisely the problem that Orsi attempts to tackle in his examination of lived Catholicism. According to Orsi, the boundaries that are arbitrarily imposed by scholars of religion, and by religious officials, are reflections of the boundaries imposed by the use of the term "Religion," which

has an extensive colonial history.[11] Essentially, he asserts that any belief or practice that stands outside, or on the margins of, the boundaries of normativity are labelled differently. The static and sterile notion of "religion," which ignores, as Orsi puts it, "the elbowing in the pews," has had the unfortunate effect of excluding certain "popular" practices from so-called "authentic Religion." This critique regarding the construction of boundaries, which excludes the "dirt"[12] or the messiness of everyday practices is also applicable to the Jain case, whereby world-affirming practices are often labelled "not Jain" by so-called "Orthodox" Jains, while world-renouncing practices are labelled "not Jain" by those who wish to modernize their tradition (e.g., Surendra Bothara). In essence, the issue here is one of Jain identity or the question of "Who is a Jain?"

Since religion is fluid and dynamic, rather than calcified and static, I would argue that both world-affirming and world-renouncing Jains are "Jain." Thus, the "increasingly conspicuous discourse within the diasporic community [of attempting] to position Jainism as an ecological/animal rights tradition [is both a modern and a valid interpretation of Jain doctrine]."[13] While I agree with Vallely that contemporary Jains attempt to modernize their tradition through their syncretising of Jain doctrine and animal rights/ecological discourse, I would add that this dialogue between "old" and "new" is also occurring within the Indian context. In fact, there are three essays within Chapple's volume on Jainism and ecology, written by Jain practitioners, which argue for the possibility of a development of a Jain environmental ethic, as well as for the inherent eco-friendliness of the Jain tradition.

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[11] Orsi, 157.

[12] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An analysis of concept of pollution and taboo* (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2002), 2.

[13] Vallely, "The Jain Plate: The Semiotics of the Diaspora Diet," 17.

World-Affirming in India and Abroad: Jainism *is* or *can be* an Ecological Tradition – Taking Jainism into the 21st Century": Developing a "Green" Jainism

> It would appear that religion has hardly anything to do with such *physical* and technical things as the environment and ecology. This is because the artificial dividing lines originally drawn between different disciplines for convenience of management have now become *barriers.*"[14]

The above-mentioned quote is, indeed, indicative of the tensions that exist between world-affirmation and world-renunciation within the Jain tradition. In fact, Surendra Bothara, author of *Ahimsā: The Science of Peace*, is one of many Jain scholars arguing for a modernizing of the Jain tradition. In his opinion, Jain concepts, such as *ahimsā* (nonviolence) and *aparigraha* (non-possession/non-consumption), are suggestive of the fact that Jainism was the first tradition to approach the environment and all its macro- and micro-organisms from a *scientific* and environmentalist perspective.[15] However, over time and place, says Bothara, these concepts, especially the notion of *ahimsā*, have lost their "original" meaning to, in turn, become institutionalized in the form of mistaken ritualism.[16] Hence, the current *mokṣa-marga* or renunciant ideal of Jainism, which has been propounded as authentic for centuries, is, according to Bothara, the result of centuries of "false" interpretations.

In Bothara's view, "hard-core traditionalist[s']"[17] interpretations are not just erroneous because of their emphasis on a negative definition of *ahimsā* (e.g., *avoidance* of life),[18] they are also misguided in terms of their calcification of a dynamic concept. In fact, I would argue that, though Bothara

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[14] Surendra Bothara, *Ahimsā: The Science of Peace* (Jaipur: Prakrit Bharati Academy, 2004), 1.
[15] *ibid*, 5-6.
[16] *ibid*, 7.
[17] *ibid*, xxxii.
[18] *ibid*, xxii.

also places his own boundary between "old" and "new" in his attempt at modernizing and universalizing the Jain tradition, some scholars of religion studying Jainism would fit into his category of "hard-core traditionalist" because of their reification of Jain belief and practice as well as their delimitation of ecology as a Western concept. For instance, Dundas' assertion that Jainism is not inherently ecological, because it is a *śramanic* or renouncer tradition, is part and parcel of setting boundaries between authentic and inauthentic ecology. He argues that the "soteriological path" of Jainism does not "fit the requirements of a modern, [and] ultimately secular, Western-driven agenda."[19] But surely, one can ask whether ecology is solely a "Western" concept. Does it belong to "us" and not to "them"?

Other scholars, such as John Cort, argue that it is possible to *develop* a Jain environmental ethic, but that it would be "dishonest" to acquiesce to the inherent eco-friendliness of an ascetic tradition. Though Cort is open to the fact that Jainism is fluid, dynamic, complex, and "messy," he does not do the same in regards to the concept of "Ecology." Nonetheless, before discussing this "othering" through the reification and calcification of Jainism and Ecology, it is important to discuss the ways in which Jains in India and North America are "developing" a Jain ecology. It should become apparent, throughout this discussion, that the idea of *developing* a Jain environmental ethic stems mostly from diaspora Jains, while the idea of the *inherent* eco-friendliness is found mostly, though not exclusively, among Jains in India.

Young Jains of America: Ecology of Love

Certainly, scholars specializing in the Jain tradition, especially those with a tendency to associate this tradition solely with ascetic ideals, would be surprised to come across a link to the PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) website on the Young Jains of America homepage. Indeed, a statement such as, "Khloe Kardashian's Sexy New Naked Anti-Fur Ad and Giveaway!" is definitely "out of bounds" with regards to

[19] Dundas, xix.

traditional or Orthodox Jainism.[20] Nevertheless, the socio-centric ideal of PETA, which puts forth an ethos of engagement with, rather than withdrawal from, "nature," does coincide with the ethics of diaspora Jains in North America. As Vallely asserts, "Rather than through the idiom of self-realization or the purification of the soul, ethics are being expressed through a discourse of environmentalism and animal rights [in North America]."[21]

Yet, she also argues that this socio-centric attitude towards nature is a recent diaspora development, which moves away from the traditional mores of Jainism as it has developed in India.[22] Of course, it is not unprecedented that a community espousing certain ideals prior to immigration will modify them in order to "fit in" to their new surroundings, and so one of the ways in which Jains modify their tradition is through the reinterpretation of the Jain principles of *ahimsā* (nonviolence) and *aparigraha* (non-possession) and, in turn, applying them to Western animal rights and environmental ethics discourse. This reinterpretation of Jainism as an "ecology of love," while valid for North American Jains, especially Jain youths, is often labelled "inauthentic" by Jains espousing traditional practices and beliefs. In fact, "a number of [Toronto's] first-generation immigrant [Jains] believe that Jainism as practised in Canada is less "authentic" than that practised in India, and readily attribute the perceived "degeneration" of Jainism outside of India to the absence of ascetics."[23]

As mentioned earlier, Jain ascetics are completely restricted from committing any violence, even to the minutest life-forms, called *nigodas*, and so any form of travel, which

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[20] PETA: People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. "Khloe Kardashian's Sexy New Naked Anti-Fur Ad and Giveaway," http://www.peta.org (accessed December 15, 2008).
[21] Anne Vallely, "From Liberation to Ecology: Ethical Discourses among Orthodox and Diaspora Jains," in *Jainism and Ecology: Nonviolence in the Web of Life,* ed. Christopher Key Chapple, 193 (Delhi: Motilal Barnasidass, 2006).
[22] *ibid*, 193.
[23] *ibid*, 195.

would necessarily implicate these renunciants in involuntary violence, is strictly prohibited for those who are furthest on the path to liberation. Hence, fully initiated monks and nuns are non-existent in the diaspora, which, according to Vallely, has been one factor in Jainism's development of a socio-centric over a liberation-centric ethos. Although Jainism has traditionally been concerned with *harm done to the self* through violence done to others, "for most Jain youths [in North America], violence refers principally to harm done to *others*, and *ahimsā* is primarily about alleviating the suffering of *other* living beings. Self-realization [here] is subordinate to this overarching goal."[24] In essence, socio-centric Jainism concerns itself with the well-being of "others," and not with the fear of accruing karma by intentionally or unintentionally harming or killing nonhuman life-forms. This certainly does explain how North American Jains were able to develop a Jain ecology that greatly resembles Western environmental ethics and the discourse of the animal rights movement.

Protecting Life by Avoiding Life: Jainism as *Inherently* Ecological

Since the purpose of this essay is to attempt to deconstruct any preconceived and reified notions and/or definitions of concepts such as "ecology," and to demonstrate the fluidity of the beliefs and practices of religious traditions, such as Jainism, I would argue that it is necessary to discuss the ways in which Orthodox Jains renegotiate the boundaries of ecology, as it is traditionally understood by Western scholars, in order to put forth a uniquely Jain environmental ethic. Questions, such as 'Who is an Ecologist? What does an ecologist look like? What are the ideals of ecology, and are these ideals purely Western,' which have also been applied to Western Feminism, are, indeed, relevant to this discussion. In fact, as Feminism is now understood as "feminisms," environmentalism is yet another "-ism" that must be understood as multifarious in nature. Thus, a discussion of the necessity to be open to a uniquely Jain ecology will be necessary in order to instigate a constructive "global" dialogue on the environmental crisis.

[24] *ibid*, 205.

Though Vallely asserts that there exists a significant difference between the ecology of diaspora Jains, who, especially those of the younger generation, adhere, for the most part, to Western ecological values, she also confirms my point regarding the possibility of perceiving world-renouncing Jainism as inherently ecological. She states:

> In spite of their divergent views… Jainism and environmentalism do share much in common, and… Jainism has an important role to play in fostering a new social ethic. Indeed, Jain ethics (both in the diaspora and traditionally) are deeply concerned about relationships with the nonhuman environment, reflecting an ontology whereby moral value is constituted, above all else, through interactions [either by avoidance or by interference] with "nature." Its ethical commitment to the avoidance of harm to all life-forms, however this is reasoned, offers an important restorative to views which treat nature as a mere backdrop for human activity, as are common within the Judaeo-Christian tradition.[25]

Though the *word* "ecology" is certainly context-sensitive, the presence of this context-sensitive *concept* in Jain doctrine is, to many Jains, obvious.

At the outset of this paper, I mentioned that many Jains argue for the inherent eco-friendliness of the Jain tradition, three of whom have written articles for Chapple's volume on Jainism and ecology. While a discussion of all three perspectives would certainly be stimulating, I will narrow this discussion to focus solely on Sadhvi Shilapi. Indeed, as a Jain nun, she represents the ideals of Jainism, which fervently argue against any kind of interaction or interference with the natural world. Yet, as a human being, she represents the paradoxical, complex, and layered nature of us all. In her discussion of the narrative of the six *leshyas* (e.g., states of mind; see Appendix), Sadhvi Shilapi demonstrates a concern for the environment rather than for personal salvation. Traditionally, this narrative is meant to demonstrate that "through passion, desire, and hatred, the *jīva*

[25] *ibid*, 194.

attracts karma," and, thus, prevents one from achieving liberation.[26] However, Shilapi, in her version of the narrative, reveals a concern for the depletion of natural resources and the potential of traditional Jain principles, such as *ahimsa* (non-violence) and especially *aparigraha* (non-possession), to remedy this situation (see Appendix). In essence, this narrative, which was originally meant to promote non-interference in nature, has been redefined in a way that appears, and is, for several members of various Jain communities, contemporary and relevant. Indeed, by syncretising "old" world values with cutting edge issues, such as the environmental crisis, Shilapi demonstrates, what she believes to be, the *inherent* ecological nature of Jainism.

Conclusion

Throughout this essay, I have argued that several scholars specializing in Jainism, as well as Jains themselves, assert the need to develop a "Jain ecology." Nonetheless, while some scholars argue that Jainism is inherently ecological, others do not. Those who argue that Jainism is ecological often refer to Jain concepts such as *ahimsa* (non-violence), *aparigraha* (non-possession), and to the famous Jain saying "*parasparopagraho jivanam*," which essentially asserts the interdependence of all living beings on this planet. Though these concepts and sayings may appear to confirm the argument that this tradition is inherently ecological, other scholars, approaching the Jain tradition with a "hermeneutic of suspicion," argue that since Jainism is ideologically concerned with individual salvation and "withdrawal from" rather than "action in", the world, it is not inherently ecological. They argue that a soteriological tradition discouraging any attachment to physical matter, and, thus, to nature, cannot possibly put forth an ecological ethic. Nevertheless, as I have tried to demonstrate, these scholars only take into consideration the ideal of the Jain tradition – they do not consider the fact that most Jains *live in the world* and, thus, *engage* with the world. Moreover, the "live and let live" ethos of

[26] Christopher Key Chapple, *Nonviolence to Animals, Earth, and Self in Asian Traditions* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 14.

the ideal of world renunciation could, in itself, be perceived as ecological, which therefore questions which definition of "ecology" these scholars have in mind. As Cort asserts, an open mind on the part of Jains, scholars, and environmentalists could "potentially [lead to] fruitful interchange with the principles, practices, and worldview assumptions of environmentalists [Jains, and scholars of religion]."[27]

Indeed, just as certain contemporary Jains negotiate boundaries in an attempt to modernize their tradition, scholars specializing in the Jain tradition, as well as any scholar of religion, should keep an open mind when considering concepts such as "ecology" and "Jainism" in order to avoid any reification and, therefore, misrepresentation of the complex and lived realities of members within various religious traditions. Furthermore, though certain practices may not seem "ecological," it is important to remember that, though the word is context-sensitive, academics in the field of religious studies should avoid drawing overly narrow boundaries that would prevent further constructive dialogue on the issue of the contemporary ecological crisis.

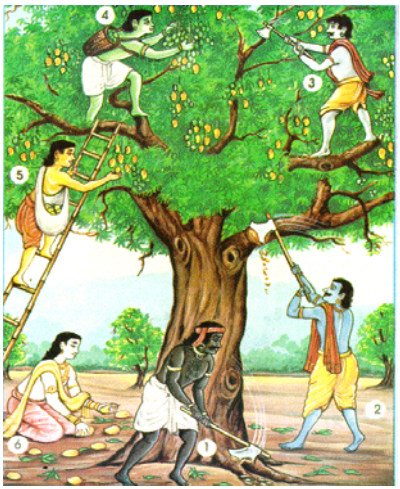
Endnote

*It is important to note, here, that laypersons and ascetics would generally not admit to the idea that the food is prepared for them (e.g., the ascetics), since it would indirectly implicate these renunciants in the violence committed in the cooking and killing of innumerable life-forms, which would, in turn, result in the ascetic accruing bad karma (*punya*).

[27] John Cort, "Green Jainism? Notes and Queries toward a Possible Jain Environmental Ethic." in *Jainism and Ecology: Nonviolence in the Web of Life,* ed. Christopher Key Chapple, 69 (Delhi: Motilal Barnasidass, 2006).

Appendix: The Six Leshyas

The Jain way of using resources is beautifully illustrated in the following story, which may be familiar to some readers. Once upon a time, six friends went out together. After a while, they were hungry and thirsty. They searched for food for some time and finally found a fruit tree. As they ran to the tree, the first (1) man said, "Let's cut the tree down and get the fruit." The second (2) one said, "Don't cut the whole tree down, cut off a whole branch instead." The third (3) friend said, "Why do we need a big branch?" The fourth (4) friend said, "We do not need to cut the branches, let us just climb up and get the bunches of fruit." The fifth (5) friend said, "Why pick that much fruit and waste it? Just pick the fruit that we need to eat." The sixth (6) friend, quietly, "There is plenty of good fruit on the ground, so let's just eat that first." This shows how destructive one can be if one fails to think through the consequences of one's actions and consider possible alternatives.[1]



(photo from Jain World website, Jain World. "Leçons pour les juniors: Leshyas," *JainWorld.com* http://www.jainworld.com/JWFrench/jainworld/education/juniors/junles16_enfr.htm)

[1] Sadhvi Shilapi, "The Environmental and Ecological Teachings of Tirthankara Mahavira." In *Jainism and Ecology: Nonviolence in the Web of Life,* ed. Christopher Key Chapple, 164 (Delhi: Motilal Barnasidass, 2006).

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Veganism and Punk – A Recipe for Resistance: Symbolic Discourse and Meaningful Practice

Julie Sylvestre

Abstract: This study explores the construction of meaningfulness through an analysis of food – a powerful conveyor of meaning which, in many traditions, serves as an indicator of religiosity and identity. Food can be viewed as a mechanism through which humans define, understand, and experience themselves as authentic individuals; it serves as the interstice where the "sacred" and "profane" can be demarcated, and through which the desires, passions, hopes, and fears of the individual (i.e., the key ingredients to seeking meaning in the world) are expressed. My paper examines the role food plays in the day-to-day lives of Vegan Punks. In particular, it seeks to explore the way food is used ideologically in the creation of distinct beliefs and practices among a community grounded in a sense of ethical righteousness.

Introduction

To assert that Punk is political is a truism. Punks literally "wear" their non-conformist anti-establishment critique against the violence, corruption, and oppressiveness of the "system". This paper seeks to move beyond the obvious to explore one of the ways in which Punks embody their purposeful marginalization, namely through their diet. Although Veganism is not the ubiquitous dietary practice of Punks, it is a popular expression of resistance within the movement, and serves as a tool of critique. In the context of Punk, Veganism becomes a powerful force dedicated to upholding a way-of-life that promotes awareness and responsibility. As Anthropologist Brad Weiss noted in his research on consumption, commoditization, and everyday practice of the Haya communities of Northwest Tanzania: "Certain qualities of food make it *the* most appropriate vehicle for describing alienation" (quoted in Clark 2004, 19). By

analyzing Punk discourse and Vegan dietary practice from within its political context I will demonstrate that it is the symbolic discourse and meaningful practice, or the "quasi-religious" characteristics, that make Veganism a powerful symbol and tool of resistance – basically, that Veganism is a powerful way of "living and breathing" Punk. The ideology surrounding what Punks eat, and with whom and what they engage, is "religious-like" in behaviour, and therefore strengthens the cohesion of the group, enabling them to develop a viable form of resistance to the establishment, both locally and globally.

A Matter of Definitions

In the popular imagination, the term "religion" carries significant baggage, mostly as conformist, organized, predictable, hierarchical, limiting, etc. It was not until the creation of the concept "religion" that western society began to define and categorize as "religious" a rather narrow range of belief and behaviour that (allegedly) references a transcendent domain. Of course, the academic study of religion has long permitted a broader definition of what constitutes "religion" and it is within this framework that I situate my work. There are certain qualities and/or patterns among the Punk communities that I interpret as "religious-like behaviour" and these pertain to the meanings and symbols that Punks use to convey meaning of a profound or existential nature. For this reason, I refer to these elements of Vegan Punk discourse and practice as "quasi-religious". They are "religious" in the broadest sense of the term, but they are social and political as well. Of course, symbols are polyvalent and can be infused with transcendental qualities as well as strong social and political ideologies. Malcolm Hamilton defines this idea of "quasi-religious" in a way that seems appropriate to the context of Veganism and Punk:

> … they reflect the rapidly changing, diverse and diffuse character of 'religious' life and activity in contemporary societies. A variety of ideas, beliefs and practices seek to address those aspects of life, issues, concerns and puzzles which religion has traditionally addressed, but in

> a very different manner; undogmatically, individualistically and without recourse to notions of the supernatural …it seems to capture the very ambiguity with which we are trying to deal in confronting a phenomenon which is 'sort of' like something but not quite that thing. (Hamilton 2000, 64-66)

Veganism is yet another term requiring clarity. Although certain people would describe themselves as "Vegan" there are different reasons why someone may choose to be labeled as such. The two main reasons why an individual may choose to adopt the label of "Vegan" are: health and ethics.

> Moral vegans distinguish themselves from moral vegetarians in accepting and practicing prescriptions or altogether avoiding benefiting from animal exploitation, not just of avoiding benefiting from the killing. Vegans take the killing to be merely one aspect of the systematic exploitation of animals. (Zamir 2004, 367)

I deal specifically with ethical or ontological Veganism where the individual chooses to eschew all animal products (food, clothing, body products) to protest against what they believe are harmful and oppressive practices, such as animal husbandry/factory farming and the hegemonic ideologies of the dominant consumer capitalist system. The term "Veganism" is relatively new and I would argue that its creation marks the need to clearly define the diet in ethical terms. It has gained currency in response to the increasingly dire consequences of industrialization and the mass production of animal flesh ("meat"), as well as the negative ecological impact of production and uneven distribution of goods and capital worldwide. In addition, Veganism is a political stance against anthropocentrism - the belief that humans are of a higher moral category than other living beings, or a part of a single moral category excluding all other living beings. Therefore, the exploitation and killing of animals on a massive-scale, and its rationalization via the idea of human superiority vis-à-vis other beings, sparked a need to

create a dietary practice eschewing all forms of animal exploitation.

Punk

There is much debate regarding the status of Punk as a movement. Punk is above all else about "*dis*-organization". Because Punk is anti-establishment, it is more appropriate to consider it counterculture than label it a subculture (O'Hara 1993, 24). Initially Punk consisted of working-class youth bent on rebelling against their position of powerlessness to the system. At the outset, Punk had less political rhetoric and was more about shocking or destabilizing convention through dress, music, and a non-conformist extreme DIY (Do-It-Yourself) attitude:

> For the large number of people on welfare – or "the dole," as it is known in Great Britain – especially young people, the outlook for bettering their lot in life seemed bleak. In this atmosphere, when the English were exposed to the seminal Punk Rock influences of the New York scene, the irony, pessimism, and amateur style of the music took on overt social and political implications, and British Punk became as self-consciously proletarian as it was aesthetic. (Tricia Henry quoted in O'Hara 1993, 26).

Therefore, the economic hardships experienced by youth in Britain, combined with the Punk Rock influences in the U.S. created the modern Punk scene – it is here where we observe the transformation of Punk from a rather "mild" subculture to a politicized countercultural movement. The politicization of Punk opened up new avenues of resistance. Being "against" the system no longer simply meant being reactionary, but now involved a commitment to resist capitalism, conformity, exploitation, and oppression (racism, sexism, speciesism, etc.). It was, and is, a rejection of mainstream culture with its supposed mindless focus of work, profit, consumption/materialism, and the suppression of the individual.

> Perhaps the most essential value professed by the punks was a genuine disdain for the conventional system. Their use of the term *system* here referred to a general concept of the way the material world works: bureaucracies, power structures, and competition for scarce goods. This "system" further referred to the ethic of deferred gratification, conventional hard work for profit, and the concept of private property. (Fox 1987, 352)

Today, everything from Punk language and ideas, as well as their unconventional style is politicized. For example, their unconventional style reverses ideals of beauty, branding, order, and cleanliness. In addition, a Punk way-of-life reverses traditional ideas of home and work. The acquiring of a "career" and investment in a "home" are considered capitalist fabrications ensuring that individuals remain dependant on the system. In sum, Punk is a way-of-life that stresses the importance of becoming an authentic individual – an individual who in their opinion does not require mindless consumptive indulgences and false securities.

Punk Cuisine: "good(s) to think with as well as good(s) to eat" – Food as a Symbol of Resistance

I chose to quote Claude Levi-Strauss' (1969) commentary of food as "good(s) to think with as well as good(s) to eat" because it embodies the meaning of food in Punk praxis. Veganism is not only a matter of eating good food, but a matter of transcending its physical properties and symbolizing all that is wrong with the dominant culture. "We feed not only our appetite but also our desire to belong. Foods express social values, and by consuming them we acknowledge a shared set of meanings" (Fiddes 1991, 34). Conceiving the intangible out of the tangible, that is, producing symbols and meanings from food, Punks conscientiously transcend everyday thought and discourse through dietary practice. Veganism becomes a place for Punks to express and implement an ideology of critique against oppression. The non-conventional or "misfit" dinner table without the items of exploitation becomes a symbol of

resistance. Dylan Clark quotes: "In punk veganism, the daily politics of consumption and the ethical quandaries of everyday life are intensified" (2004, 24). Clark bases his analysis of Punk discourse and praxis on Levi-Strauss' conceptions of the raw, cooked, and the rotten, however, Clark appropriates the "tripolar gastronomic system…basic to all human cuisine" (*ibid*, 19) and places it within a different context so that the categories become part of Punk discourse. "Food practices mark ideological moments: eating is a cauldron for the domination of states, races, genders, ideologies, and the practice through which these discourses are resisted" (*ibid*, 19). With this basic principle in mind, Punks eat and talk about food in a manner that expresses their alienation and disdain for exploitation, as well as their desire for a "revolution". It is important to note that Punks generally do not conceive of completely overthrowing the establishment, but rather aim to create fissures in society that shake the taken-for-granted norms and influence change at the social, economic, and political levels in various possible forms.

Punks who practice Veganism are those who adhere to an ideology of anarchism, animal and human rights, ecological well being, etc. Punks do not practice what they call "yuppie" Veganism, that is, dietary choices from high-end grocers at high-end prices. Instead, desirable food is that which is considered discarded food (day old or ripened food whose fate is the trash) or what one may scrounge from store dumpsters (dumpster diving). Whatever is considered unwanted or "not good enough" for mainstream society is considered by Punks as ideal to consume. By accepting society's "rejects", Punks are making a very blatant statement about their own marginality and their own rejection of the mainstream.

> American food geographies have shifted toward processing (or cooking) food. Industrial food products are milled, refined, butchered, baked, packaged, branded, and advertised. They are often composed of ingredients shipped from remote places, only to be processed and sent once more around the globe. From a Levi-Strauss perspective, then, punks consider industrial food to be extraordinarily cooked. Punks, in turn, preferentially seek food that is more "raw": i.e., closer to

> its wild, organic, uncultured state; and punks even enjoy food that has, from an American perspective, become rotten – disposed of or stolen. (2004, 20)

Punk discourse and practice is imbued with symbols and meanings of the pure and polluted – their rejection of mainstream culture is not only politicized but reified in creating a symbolic set of meanings that structure their worldview in terms of what represents the "good" (ethical, aware) life and what does not. Their creation of clearly defined boundaries between themselves and the "other", as well as the symbolic representation of the content of such boundaries suggests utopian, if not quasi-eschatological predispositions. The future for which many Punks are striving is an idyllic state where humans and non-human animals, as well as nature, are no longer exploited or oppressed.

For Punks, then, processed or "cooked" foods ("frakenfoods") are "polluted" due to their industrial manipulation, as well as the massive ecological consequences of such manipulations, and by the fetishism that goes along with the commodification of food on a mass-marketed scale. The foods Punks choose to eat possess certain "magical" properties by carrying with them pristine or sought-after "tainted" qualities. Raw organic, local farmed food, brandless, bulk, or home-grown, DIY goods are considered "pristine" or pure. The polluted false symbols (e.g., brand fetishisms) of corporate food are rejected in favour of purer symbols of social and political awareness and group solidarity. "Through a dialogue of symbols and meanings, social actors develop collective discursive repertoires, which they use to collectively diagnose a social problem and advise a specific route for social change" (Cherry 2006, 158). Rotten food is rejected by normative culture because it no longer qualifies as "good", meaning it is no longer "shiny and new". This makes it pure within Punk counterculture. In addition, polluted or "cooked" foods can be reclaimed by removing them from their original context and imbuing them with new symbols.

> By bathing corporate food in a dumpster or by stealing natural foods from an upscale grocery store, punk food

> is, in a sense, decommodified, stripped of its alienating qualities, and restored to a kind of pure use-value as bodily sustenance…This behaviour suggests an axiom of punk culinary geometry: in the act of being stolen, heavily cooked food is transformed into a more nutritive, gustative state. Stolen foods are outlaw foods, contaminated or rotten to the mainstream, but a delicacy in punk cuisine. (Clark 2004, 21)

It is difficult to discern how widespread dumpster diving and upscale grocery theft is, as acts against consumer capitalism, since individuals choosing to participate in such acts are not organized within a set group or geography; however, unconventional lifestyles based in Punk and/or anarchist ideology are much more inclined to acquire food in such a manner. Transformative processes of decontextualizing certain foods is "quasi-religious" since symbolic discourse transforms the status of the food – what was once totally and utterly inedible to Punks is now considered even more powerful since its polluted symbolic properties are transformed. Clearly food is a powerful symbolic vehicle capable of carrying an ideological message. It can be saturated with notions of the pure, liberated, or free, just as easily as it can carry ideas of the polluted, exploited, unwanted, and fetishized.

> There are pollution powers which inhere in the structure of ideas itself and which punish a symbolic breaking of that which should be joined or joining of that which should separate. It follows from this that pollution is a type of danger which is not likely to occur except where the lines of structure, cosmic or social, are clearly defined. (Douglas 1966, 140).

Vegan creations are considered an expression of resistance: the preparation of food and its consumption represents the struggles of life –good foods and transformed foods are reminders of why one is Punk, as well as Vegan. Although Punks may not "identify" with their food on a superficial level (brand-identity: I buy therefore I am), they are ingesting a way of life in such a

way that food is no longer simply a matter of sustenance, but also of the *substance of a meaningful life*. I would argue that similar to how food is considered "rotten" the context in which food is prepared is also "rotten", because it rejects the conventional notions of hygiene and sanitation. Cleanliness for Punks is symbolic rather than superficial (cleanliness equated with wealth). Aesthetically Punks choose to reverse conventional ideas of cleanliness and dress. In the case of food, Punks also reject the conventional ideas of "clean" food – sanitization is polluted whereas the symbolic "rottenness" of food is clean. These reversals have "quasi-religious" implications in that they transcend their original meaning and create new symbolic contexts, which enable the forging of alternative beliefs and practices. Essentially, sanitization is polluted due to its real toxic qualities (chemical based cleaning products, pesticides, etc.). In addition, metaphorically sanitization represents the sterile, dogmatic, and oppressive hegemonic ways of a capitalist patriarchal society. The conventional ideas of what is "clean" or "right" is appropriated and placed within a Vegan Punk discourse to represent their opposite, that is, the "dirty" and "wrong". Clark comments on the context of an anarcho-Punk Vegan gathering place located in Seattle known by Punks as the Black Cat Café:

> The place and the food rejected strict adherence to conventional conceptions of hygiene, where even the appearance of filth somehow infects the object or the body. Here hygiene was associated with bleached teeth, carcinogenic chemicals, and freshly waxed cars, and operated as a code for sterility, automation, and alienation…what to make, then, of a restaurant which rarely produces a tahini salad dressing the same way twice or a pile of homefries without a good many charred? What of a restaurant with spotty service, spotty dishes, where the roof leaks, and the bathroom reeks? For five years, the Black Cat found a way to thrive in spite of, or because of, its unorthodox practices. (Clark 2004, 22)

It is important to note that "rotten" foods are not only foods of marginal status (expired, cosmetically damaged, etc.), but foods which represent grander ideas of gluttony, waste, and the injustices of corporate greed and exploitation. It is a critique of the capitalist system of food production and distribution which depends for its success on greed and over consumption, as well as on the stratification of people (rich/poor) by means of (among other methods) food costs (healthy expensive foods vs. processed cheap foods).

Vegan Punks emphasize the correlation between food and power. Food becomes a symbol of gender relations and geographic locations. Punk feminists consider food as a site of repression perpetuated by a patriarchal culture in its stifling of female individuality and independence by controlling what, how, and how much women eat. Certain Punk feminists reclaim their independence by adopting a Vegan ethic and rejecting the diet of "meat" (patriarchal power), and "cooked" foods, which they consider to symbolize the subordinate: just as foods are extraordinarily processed and commodified, so are women. By adopting a Vegan Punk ethic women are transforming their bodies and perceptions into something "raw" or pure:

> Thus, many punks identify the body as a place where hegemony is both made and resisted. Punks are critical of the beauty industry and of the commodification of the body. They argue that food is part of a disciplinary order in which women are taught to diet and manage their bodies so as to publicly communicate in the grammar of patriarchy. (Clark 2004, 23)

It is important to note that this idea of "raw" or pure is not necessarily a "romantic" idea of woman returning to nature, or being "raw" and closer to nature. Rather, it is the idea of reclaiming an authentic identity. Therefore, by means of food female Vegan Punks reclaim their bodies, and create their own individual definition of what *woman is* and shed expectations and suppressions (rather than pounds). In sum, it is clear that food is a site of power. Punks are participating in a dialogue with normative culture and by reversing the status quo Punks reclaim power.

Punks also deliberately use food as a weapon in their protest against globalization (or imperialism) of western capitalist principles and ideologies. “Free trade” is critiqued as an unequal relationship in which the West profits from the exploitation of smaller nations in order to increase western luxuries, choice-consumerism, and cheap goods – all of which Punks reject.

> For punks, mainstream food is epitomized by corporate-capitalist “junk food.” Punks regularly liken mainstream food geographies to colonialism because of their association with the Third World: destruction of rainforests (allegedly cleared for beef production), the creation of cash-cropping (to service World Bank debts), and cancer (in the use of banned pesticides on unprotected workers and water supplies). (Clark 2004, 20)

And:

> Ultimately this vortex brings about the complete objectification of nature. Every relationship is increasingly instrumentalized and technicized. Mechanization and industrialization have rapidly transformed the planet, exploding ecosystems and human communities with monoculture, industrial degradation, and mass markets. (Watson quoted in Clark 2004, 21)

Adopting a Vegan diet and imbuing it with Punk philosophy creates an ideal form of political and metaphysical protest.

Punks employ a specific kind of discourse and practice to politicize everyday life and to reclaim the power of the individual. Whether the individual stands alone or is part of a group, the voice and individuality of that person is recognized. Punks choose to stand apart from the mainstream and by doing so, distinguish their speech and actions from that of the norms. Boundaries are clearly demarcated as an indicator of their disdain for the system. By radicalizing the way they think and talk about food, and by consuming their symbols, Punks are

literally living and breathing their ideologies. When Vegan Punks eat together, the symbolic implications of their meal are often ritualized. What they ingest is consciously chosen and ideologically informed; it holds power and this in turn empowers their discourse. In the words of Mary Douglas, "Ritual recognizes the potency of disorder…ritual expects to find powers and truths which cannot be reached by conscious effort" (Douglas 1966, 117).

Ritual reversals are present in the very specific choosing of foods that are rejected or abhorred by mainstream culture – this food becomes saturated with symbols of egalitarianism, freedom, independence, etc. Every meal reclaims power, as well as re-establishes and reinforces the Punk way of life.

Punk and the Global Framework: Coming to Terms with "Globalization"

Although Punks do not constitute a global movement, it is important for many Punks to know that other Punks in different parts of the world share similar concerns, and this acknowledgment strengthens the movement's cohesiveness at the local level. Punks, and more specifically Vegan Punks, communicate via different mediums, such as Punk shows, Vegan potlucks, the Internet, and Zines. Zines, in specific, are an excellent networking source from country-to-country and city-to-city, whether in hardcopy form or via the Internet[1]. Zines are underground anti-professional bodies of writing that people share; in the Vegan Punk context, they function as a critique of mainstream culture whether by means of personal expression, recipe sharing, poetry, etc. Zines are an opportunity for people to share and acquire knowledge. Basically, Zines offer a medium of expression, namely of discontentment, especially regarding western foodways.

> Punks perceive in everyday American food an abject modernity, a synthetic destroyer of locality and

[1] Ethical cross-cultural interaction is a form of "globalization" which punks support

> diversity. The "cooking" of foods, to which punks vociferously object, is an outcome of the industrialization and commercialization of modern food production, which are made visible and critiqued through punk culinary practice. (Clark 2004, 26)

Clark incorporates a quote by David Harvey in order to elaborate on the perception that Punks have regarding the consequences of mass-marketing and mass-consumption at the local which are caused by the intensive and often invasive labour and/or business practices of monocultures (cash-cropping and limiting biodiversity – maximum yield at minimum cost):

> The whole world's cuisine is now assembled in one place…The general implication is that through the experience of everything from food, to culinary habits, music, television, entertainment, and cinema, it is now possible to experience the world's geography vicariously, as a simulacrum. The interweaving of simulacra in daily life brings together different worlds (of commodities) in the same space and time. But it does so in such a way as to conceal almost perfectly any trace of origin, of the labour processes that produced them, or of the social relations of their production. (Harvey quoted in Clark 2004, 25-26)

By means of their diet, Vegan Punks reject this disconnection from their food source, as well as the ecological, animal, and human exploitation involved in certain food production practices; in addition, they reject the class differentiation stemming from the pricing, selling, and advertising of food.
The Punk movement and its position as anti-establishment can, of course, only exist in light of the "establishment other". Although Punks are suspicious of certain contexts of globalization (political-economic), they are not removed from that process, and seek to affect change from within. They remain directly involved in the process of globalization and *glocalization* typically as critics and agitators for change.

> Modernity temporalized its universalism: eventually all would/could become modern. Globalization spatializes it: the local has to come to terms with the global. It (re)constitutes itself in the way that it does this. The reverse side of this mutual relation is that the global cannot be global except as plural versions of the local. Hence globalization is always also glocalization (Robertson 1995), the global expressed in the local and the local as the particularization of the global. (Beyer 2007, 98)

What Punks say and do, or what they eat and how they eat, is a local representation of their experiences with the global. Although the Punk movement remains relatively young, their ideologies of resistance are rooted in western imperialistic and colonialist history and their resistance is a local representation of contemporary modes of western "imperialism" and/or cultural domination on a global scale. Their local expressions are indicative of what they believe is occurring at the global level – they are a piece of the puzzle that concretizes globalization. What Punks choose to consume symbolizes their protest – by swallowing symbolic goods, they are living-breathing-walking representations of resistance. "By promoting vegan ideals through punk subculture, and by interacting with other punk vegans…punk vegans [create] publics and frameworks of belief through which they and other punks [understand] the world" (Cherry 2006, 163).

Punk-Vegan Fusion: A Viable Form of Resistance?
Conclusion

By adopting a Vegan diet Punks literally embody their resistance. Vegan Punks embody a contested place – every action, word, or morsel of food is political, but also more than that. Consuming their frustration and symbolizing their struggles and resistance in the meticulous acquiring, preparing, and consumption of food ensures the ideological realm of Punks transcends the superficial and becomes an integrative system of deep-seated meaning embedded within their everyday life. In this way, their world is made meaningful. One could argue that

a kind of religious behaviour is in the interstices of Punk vernacular and praxis – it is within the conversations at the Black Cat Café, or in the transformation of "cooked" food scrounged from the dumpster. It becomes quite clear that through diet Punks are doing much more than just eating and talking – they are shaping their existence in meaningful terms and staying true to Punk as a way of life, and that way of life is in interaction with many different facets of society as well as with the global community at large. Punks are local observers and critics of the global – they see and feel the effects of exploitive cross-cultural interactions and express their disdain for such abuses by forming new systems of meaning, especially by means of food. For Punks, Veganism is a recipe of opposition; their bodies vehicles of resistance through the ingestion of symbols. What Vegan Punks choose to eat and how they choose to live symbolizes the raw power of our everyday experiences and practices which seep into the fissures of convention and stir up the taken-for-granted norms.

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Running From Olympia to the Isles of the Blessed Sacrifice, Athleticism and Cosmology in a Panhellenic Hero Cult

Stephen Quinlan

Abstract: This study explores the ritual features of the Pelops cult at Olympia from roughly the sixth century BCE to the second CE. It attempts to arrive at a sense of the meaningfulness of the sacrificial operations the cult contained, as revealed in the writings of Pindar and Pausanias. Of concern is how the ritual sacrifice, the blood offering, discloses a sense of mortal, embodied existence as it was experienced by the Greeks. Additionally, it seeks to explore the relationship between athletes and heroes within this context. The historical sources already noted are informed by means of comparative description with relevant material drawn from the poetry of Homer and Hesiod.

Introduction

This study seeks to explore the meaningfulness of sacrifice in the ancient Greek hero cult context. While the sources reveal that heroes were worshipped and were offered sacrifice in a variety of ways, most of which were locally determined by the traditions specific to the worshippers, the heroes nonetheless occupied a discrete religious modality that was general to ancient Greece in its entirety; heroes and their cults had a both Panhellenic range of devotion and a coherently uniform religious modality within that range. Expressed as generally as possible, the hero was believed to have been a mortal who, after death, was granted cult honours, but, more typically, was regarded as the child of a divine parent.[1] Heroes in epic poetry were also believed to have been the last mortals of mythic time, the demigods of the Heroic Age, who existed in a time immediately preceeding the contemporary age, when gods mingled freely with mortals.

[1] Eckroth (2007) 100-101.

Also, the heroes, despite their deaths, were regarded to have a strong connection with the living and, owing to this, were granted honours in the form of sacrificial cults in order both to placate their potentially destructive wrath and to curry their creative beneficence.

My interest here is to explore a specific cult, that of Pelops at Olympia, as a paradigmatic instance of hero worship given that it pertained to the entire Greek-speaking world. In attempting to arrive at the meaningfulness of the cult's sacrificial operations, I have engaged an inter-textual analysis that seeks to inform the details provided in the historical sources by means of the mythic utterances of the epic poets, Homer especially. In so doing, I wish to demonstrate that the sacrifice seeks to achieve a specific ritual objective, namely it serves as an allegorical form of alimentation that placates the hero's anger and grief at being isolated among the dead and, most especially, serves to energize him to move joyfully to his immortal destination, the Isles of the Blessed, where he experiences the full benefits of undying fame. What is more, this ritual trajectory, from death and suffering to glory and immortality is also inscribed in the performance of athletic competition, itself a ritual activity that seeks to connect the accomplishments of the victorious athletes with those of the former mortals, the heroes of the mythic age.

The Pelops Cult in the Literary Sources

Writing in the 2nd century CE, Pausanias supplies invaluable detail to the sacrificial aspects of the Pelops cult first mentioned by the epinician poet Pindar over six centuries earlier.[2] In addition to the physical description of its precinct, the Pelopion, Pausanias adds clarity to the specific cult sacrifice, the

[2] While such a lengthy span in time may appear to invalidate bringing both together to reconstruct the Pelops cult in the ancient and classical periods, the precedent for doing so has been established by Walter Burkert (1983) 93-103. Archaeological investigation has effectively confirmed the continuity of the physical elaboration of cultic space in the Olympia sanctuary, from the 6th cent BCE-2 CE, leaving only the matter of victim selection as a legitimate point of contention.

haimakouria, or blood-offering, first mentioned by Pindar.[3] Pausanias states that it was Heracles who first "sacrificed into the pit to Pelops" (Paus. 5.13.2). Continuing into contemporary time from the cult's mythic foundation in the Heroic Age, the local magistrates maintained the yearly sacrifice to Pelops by sacrificing a black ram to the hero. The verb that Pausanias uses in his description is not appropriate to the "blood-offerings" Pindar speaks of, but to the sacrifice that precedes festal dining, *thuein*. However, in this particular instance, it is clear that the victim's flesh is consumed by only one ritual participant, a temple slave identified as the Woodman. This curious figure was ascribed the ritual task of consuming the flesh from the ram's shoulder and neck area exclusively, but anyone else who partook of the victim could not enter the presence of Zeus (Paus. 5.13.3).

Regrettably, Pausanias was not an eye-witness to the blood rites at the Games, and therefore it is arguable that the yearly sacrifice he describes differs from the *haimakouriai* mentioned by Pindar. While this imprecision is vexatious, a reasoned speculation as to the nature of the rites of Pelops at Olympia can still be managed from the relative wealth of detail.[4] Most important in this regard is Pausanias' description of the

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[3] Pindar *Olympian* 1. 90. The blood offering is a sacrifice that is directed to cult entities, such as heroes and the chthonic expression of certain gods, who were believed to reside below the ground. Typical of this was the use of a black coloured victim, sunken altar, night time setting, followed by the immolation of the victim, rather than a feast. Blood offerings were matters of purification and, in the hero cult context, appear closely related to the hero's own murderous activity. The pouring of blood counteracts the lingering pollution caused by recollecting the hero's hubris and therefore represents a preliminary ritual act required for creating the sacred conditions under which the feast, or banquet occurs (Burkert 1985: 80-82; 205). While this is most certainly the case, I wish to draw attention to its alimentary aspect insofar as it can be seen to revitalize the hero languishing in the grave, energizing him to partake of the feast in the sacred realm the poets refer to as the Isles of the Blessed.

[4] The authoritative account of the Pelops cult under discussion is in, Burkert (1983) 93-103. I shall engage Burkert's description in detail further below.

Pelopion, the hero's tomb,[5] in which the following features are identified:

- Located at the fording point of the confluence of two rivers draining into the sea;
- Sectioned off by a wall and entered through a west-facing gate;
- Contained a grove of deciduous trees;
- Concealed a pit over which sacrifices in the form of blood-offerings were performed.

These identify the Pelopion as a hero-shrine of the funerary sort that conforms with Pindar's identification of it as the hero's tomb and the location of the blood offerings (*Ol*. 1. 90-93). Pausanias, in stating that Heracles first sacrificed over the pit, implies that the blood of the victim, the black ram, was drained into it as an offering to the hero. While the participation of the Woodman may mark an innovation of the rite introduced after Pindar's time, or it may relate only to the sacrifices held on non-Olympiad years, the type-defining prohibition against consuming the victim's flesh is evident in the details provided by Pausanias, including mention of the fact that it extended also to the seer. This ritual element, along with the grave site context, solidifies the funerary and propitiatory nature of the cult. In both Pindar (*Ol*. 2. 3-4) and Pausanias, Heracles was assigned the role of cult founder, and he set the precedent of pouring the blood into the grave pit in honour of his ancestor Pelops.

The Pelops Cult and the Olympia Festival

In his recreation of the rite, Walter Burkert conjectures[6] that the blood-offering to Pelops was held under the full moon on the

[5] The hero's bones were kept apart in a bronze chest close to the Artemis Kordax temple where victory dances were held (Paus. 6. 22. 1). The storied shoulder blade of the hero, gone by Pausanias' time, is recollected in detail (Paus. 5. 13. 4-6).

[6] Burkert (1983) 96-97. Burkert comes to the conclusion that the blood offering to Pelops occurred on the night prior to the Zeus largely by means of a structural analysis of the site and the scholiast

night preceding the great sacrifice to Zeus. This would mean that the Games were well under way prior to the resident hero's ritual acknowledgment, at least this was so in the early fifth century, following the ostentatious refurbishment of the site in the mid-sixth. By Pindar's time, a five-day schedule was fixed and anchored by this moon; with the opening procession, boys' competition and equestrian events occurring under the waxing gibbous phase, and the Zeus sacrifice, the men's' stadium events along with the victors' ceremonial banquet under the waning phase.[7] While the precise scheduling of the Pelops cult within the broader programme of the Games cannot be confirmed by the sources, it most certainly was held on a night prior to the foot race and the Zeus sacrifice, an important fact that leaves either the night of the first day or that of the third day, the night of the full moon, as the two most likely possibilities. While the sources do not permit complete assurance on the matter, Burkert's scheduling of the blood offering on the full moon night prior to the Zeus sacrifice is entirely reasonable.

I shall return to the temporal dimension of the cult following my discussion of its spatial context, its location within the sanctuary itself. What I am seeking to draw attention to here

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reference stating that Pelops was honoured before Zeus and the Sun.

[7] The lunar chronology is alluded to by Pindar in *Ol.* 3. 20-23, and the five-days' schedule is given in *Ol.* 5. 6. By the early fifth century, the schedule was as was as follows:

- Day 1 saw the procession departing from Elis and arriving at the sanctuary at midday with the entry of athletes and officials into the precinct for the swearing of the oath, the determination of the program and the evening religious observances.
- Day 2 featured the stadium competitions for the boys.
- Day 3 began with the equestrian events and concluded with the pentathlon. The night was given over to the propitiation of Pelops.
- Day 4 was the climactic day beginning with the grand procession to the altar of Zeus, the sacrifices and then the men's stadium events beginning with the foot races and concluding with the fighting competitions.
- The fifth day was given to feasting the winners.

See Valavanis (2004) 148-151. Mallwitz "Cult and Competition Locations at Olympia" in Raschle (1988) 79.

is the way in which the specific topographical features of the Olympia precinct setting are taken up by Homer in both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in order to situate the poems within a cosmological context. By recreating the setting of Olympia in his depiction of the Trojan plain, the Homeric poet appears to be drawing an association between the athletic competitions of the Games and the mythic battle undertaken by the mythic Achaean heroes to win Helen back from the Trojans. While this cannot be fully developed in this study, my hope is that a focussed treatment of the Pelops cult in relation to the Homeric narratives can be sufficiently persuasive as to encourage a broader, more sustained analysis of the Greek hero cult, Homeric epic and ritual athleticism such as the competitions at Olympia.

The Topography of the Olympia Sanctuary and the Homeric Depiction of the Trojan Plain

Olympia is situated on the bank of the Alpheus, a river with its sources in the mountains to the east, from where it skirts the slopes of Mount Lykaion before flowing into the plain of Elis. Joining its streams in confluence with the Cladius, a smaller river flowing out of the flatlands to the north, it drains into the Ionian sea a short distance from the sanctuary itself. These features are quite distinctive, especially the confluence of the Alpheus and Cladius which is located close to the fording point at the Olympia sanctuary's entrance. As Pindar states, the tomb of Pelops is at the fording point of the river Alpheus (*Ol.* 1.90-95). It needs also be noted that the Alpheus has many tributaries draining out of the mountains, of which Pausanias identifies seven as most important (5.7.1). This topographical information matches precisely the relevant features Homer[8] attributes to the Trojan plain (see appendix).

[8] The references to the rivers in Homer are as follows: The gathering at the west bank of the Scamander (having the divine name Xanthus) by the army following prayers, sacrifices to Zeus and a processional passing under the aegis (*Iliad* 2.442-468); the fording point of the Scamander 14.433; 21.1; 24.692); the meeting in confluene of the Scamander and the Simoeis (5.773-774; 6.4); the main tributaries watering the Trojan plain (12. 19-22)

Homeric Troy is located in a great plain with the Hellespont to its west and the vast Ida mountain range at its east. It is described by Homer as a land of abundance, producing exceptional horses which, in turn, have generated vast wealth for the plain's inhabitants. The Ida mountain range to the east of the Trojan plain has an ancient Zeus altar atop its highest peak, the Gargarum (*Iliad* 8.47-8). These tall mountains cup the beneficent winds, the North and West, and gather their clouds to dispense the life-giving rains upon their slopes. Draining down from the mountains, the rains collect into a very distinctive network of rivers, of which the Scamamder (*Iliad* 2.467) is the main waterway. Before releasing its fresh water into the barren sea at the extreme westerly point of the plain, the Scamander joins in confluence with his "brother," the gentle-flowing Simoeis, and, in so doing, creating a river belt around the vast plain (*Iliad* 4.773-4). Sharing a common source in the eastern mountain range, where "cloud-gathering" Zeus has his precinct, the fresh waters cascade down the mountain slopes, collect into a network of rivers on the level ground of the plain and mingle together in the west before emptying into the salty sea. In addition to these two rivers, Homer names six other "divine" tributaries, forming a network of eight Trojan rivers.

Not only does this topography evoke an ideal pastoral setting (high mountains to the east, open sea to the west and a lush, level plain striated by a network of rivers) it also imprints an *imago mundi*, or a model of the cosmos as the Greeks had conceived it. Earth, in the ancient Greek conception of it, was belted by a world-encircling river, Oceanus, from which all rivers originate (*Theogony* 337-345). The abode of the gods, or course, was conceived of as having its placement atop Mount Olympus where the pantheon convened and worked to enact the will of Zeus. In stark contrast to the snowy peaks of Olympus, was the dim Tartarus, the underworld region, with its depth as far below the surface of the earth as the peak of Olympus stood above. In this way, the cosmos was conceived of as three layered, having the heavens at the peak of Olympus as the stratum of the immortals where they exist in perpetual beauty and vitality and the chasm of Tartarus as the lower region of darkness, death and banishment where the former cosmic rulers, the Titans, are kept in a state of banishment (*Theogony* 722-731).

In relation to the setting of the *Iliad*, the cosmic model expresses itself in the two main points of reference; the tomb of the eponymous founder of Troy, Ilus, which is located at the extreme west of the plain, where the Scamander and Simoeis join and where the fording point stands, and secondly, the Gargarum, the highest peak of the Ida mountains to the east, reflecting Mount Olympus, and the location of the ancient altar and where Zeus first fathered the Trojan people (*Iliad* 20. 215-218). In order to draw out the cosmic dimensions of these opposite points in the epic setting, two scenes may be recalled. Firstly, the Gargarum stands as the cosmic homologue to Olympus when Zeus is described as overseeing the events on the plain from its vantage point. Enacting his world-ordering justice from atop the Gargarum, "cloud-gathering" Zeus raises his golden scales in order to signal the outcome of the battle taking place in the plain below (*Iliad* 8. 47-50; 68-72). Additionally, the Gargarum is where the royal couple, Zeus and Hera, join in sexual union concealed in the clouds above the peaks (*Iliad* 14. 346-349). The high peaks in the east capture and gather the clouds, causing them to dispense their life giving rains which in turn collect together on the steep slopes to form the rivers that create the optimal conditions for a pastoral culture.

At the opposite extremity of the plain lies the tomb of the founder at the bank of the river. Along this bank, the fighting is always the fiercest and it is where youths die in vast numbers; it is where their souls depart down to the House of Hades (7.327-330). The confirming scene in which the tomb evokes the entry to the underworld comes at the final night of the poem, when Priam undertakes his night-time journey to Achilles' hut in order to retrieve the body of Hector.[9] Instructed by his wife Hecabe to pray to Zeus of Ida and to pour him libation, Priam sets out in a mule cart with the festal equipment selected for the ransom of his son's corpse (*Iliad* 24. 228-237). Having received the favourable omen, Priam sets out through the gates with his herald, the aged Idas, on their westward journey across the fording point and into the enemy camp. At this point in the poem, the plain has been blighted by fire and the river clogged with the corpses of Trojan youths following Achilles' return to the battle, evoking the gloom of the underworld. When

[9] See Mackie (1999)

they reach the tomb of Ilus, they are met by the god Hermes, guider of souls into the House of Hades, who, disguised as the youthful attendant of Achilles, replaces Idas and takes up the reins of the mule cart in order to cross over the river and enter safely into the camp (*Iliad* 345-351).

The Trojan plain, belted by rivers sharing a common origin in the eastern mountains atop of which is located the Zeus altar, join in confluence at the extreme west where lies the resting place of the dead founder-ancestor. [10] Thus, the rivers encircle the plain that has at its high point in the east (Zeus altar) the point where the life-giving waters fall from the heavens and reunite again in confluence at a fording point (ancestor's tomb) before washing out into the sea in order to re-form into clouds, get moved eastward by the winds and begin the cycle anew. This, to repeat describes an *imago mundi* that expresses itself at Olympia exactly as it does in Homeric Troy, despite the geographically distinct place setting. It must also be recalled that the Trojan War marked the cosmic struggle that put an end to the mythic Fourth Age, the age in which the demigods populated the earth (*Works and Days* 156-165) while Olympia recalled the cosmic struggle that put an end to the First Age, the Golden Age, and ushered in the reign of Zeus.

In concluding this observation, the geographical location of Olympia on the western coast of the Peloponnese shares the same cosmic template as Homeric Troy in the following way: Just as Gargarum lies in the eastern distance within the Ida[11]

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[10] In the foundation myth of Troy, cloud-gathering Zeus first begat Dardanus, ancestor of the Trojan people, in the eastern mountains of Ida (*Iliad* 20.215-8), while Dardanus' great-grandson Ilus founded the polis (*Iliad* 20.216-7)

[11] Mount Ida is significant in the lore of Olympia as this is where the Daktyls trained Zeus to defeat his father Cronus after the earth had raised him there. (Paus. 5.7.6-10). Hesiod identifies this mountain, containing the cave in which Zeus was reared from a godling to become the ruler of the cosmos, as Mount Aegaeum in Crete (*Theogony* 484). Pindar, in his praise of Zeus the Saviour, identifies three iconic features of Olympia; the Hill of Cronus, the Alpheus and, finally, the "holy cave of Ida" (*Ol.* 5.40-41) The use of the word Ida serves as a semantic connector linking the epic setting of the *Iliad* with the district in which Olympia was located. This encryption is disclosed early on in the *Iliad* by Achilles when

mountain rage of Troy, so too does Mount Lycaeum, site of an ancient Zeus shrine, stand thirty five kilometers to the south east of Olympia. At its western point, where the sanctuary is located, the meeting of confluence of two rivers occurs, just as it does in the Homeric Trojan plain. Rather than the Scamander and Simoeis, however, the rivers Alpheus and Cladius intermingle before they drain in confluence into the Ionian Sea. What is more, Pausanias identifies the same number of rivers watering the plain of Elis as Homer names in relation to Troy.[12] Just as the respective Zeus altars lie on the far off peaks on the eastern horizon, so too in both Homeric Troy and in Olympia do the ancestral founders' respective tombs lie in the western lowland, at the point of confluence between two rivers where a fording point is located. Homeric Troy, site of the cosmic battle that brings the end of the Heroic Age, the mythic time of the

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he reminds his mother of the time she rescued Zeus from the divine revolt. Reflecting Zeus' defeat of the Titans, the hero recalls to Thetis the time when she brought up Briarius to Olympos and freed the father of the gods from his fetters. Briarius was one of the three Hundred Handers whose suppression within Gaia caused the first cosmic succession and whose hiding place underneath the earth was revealed to Zeus so that he could defeat Cronus and thereby achieve the third, final cosmic succession. Achilles states that the divine name of this monster is Aigaion, so named because he was better in strength than his father (*Il.* 1. 403-404) In so doing, the poet touches off a series allusions to Olympia, the site of the cosmic struggle that put an end to the Golden Age, within the context of the Trojan Plain, site of the battle at the twilight of the Heroic Age. While this point requires more development than I can provide it here, my main interest is to indicate the topographical correspondence between the Pelopion and the location of Ilos' tomb at the bank of the Scamander (*Il.* 24.349-350)

[12] The correspondence of rivers is as follows:

Troy (*Iliad* 12.20-22)		Olympia (*Paus.* 5.7.1)
Scamander	-	Alpheus
Simoeis	-	Cladius
Rhesus	-	Helisson
Heptaporus	-	Brentheates
Caresus	-	Gortynius
Rhodius	-	Buphagus
Granicus	-	Ladon
Aesepus	-	Erymanthus

demigods, is modelled on the same cosmic paradigm as the Olympia sanctuary, the site of the cosmic struggle that inaugurated the reign of Zeus and put an end to the Golden Age. Homer, in depicting the contests between bronze-clad Achaeans and horse-taming Trojans over the winning of Helen, embeds into the epic setting the ritual topography, the cosmological model in which earthly existence is played out, of Greece's most sacred Zeus shrine, the sanctuary of Olympia.

ii. Temporal Correspondences Between the Ritual Athletics of Olympia and the Iliad

The events related in the *Iliad* occur in the tenth year of the campaign. At the beginning of the epic, on the morning of the first day of fighting, Odysseus recollects to the Achaeans their gathering at Aulis ten years previously. He states that nine years have passed since their departure and, now in the tenth year, they shall win Troy (*Iliad* 2. 303-332). With the fighting set to begin, king Agamemnon holds prayer and sacrifice to Zeus at the Achaean encampment and forms the army into its battle divisions. As a means of emphasizing the sacredness of this event, the poet states that the goddess Athena stands over the warriors shaking the aegis of Zeus above their heads in order to implant courage into their hearts as they move in procession towards the plain (*Iliad* 2.421-468). After crossing the river at the fording point in silence, Agamemnon is joined by the Trojan king Priam and the two offer sacrificial oaths of faith prior to the commencement of the contests[13] (*Iliad* 3. 96-110).

Once again, these preliminary events accord with the staging of the Games. Rather than gathering at Aulis before sailing to Troy, as the Achaean heroes do, the Greek athletes, their trainers and the umpires gathered in Elis on the tenth month following nine months of training in their respective homelands. Following their arrival, they underwent further training in the facilities under the plane trees of Elis (Pausanias 6.23.1). During this preparatory period, the umpires, the Hellanodikai,

[13] In the scene that introduces Helen into the narrative, she is weaving a tapestry of the Trojan War. The battles between the armies fought for her sake are described as a athletic contests (*Iliad* 3. 125-128)

whose task it was to match up the athletes in the contest heats (Pausanias 6.24.1), occupied a room built over the grave of Achilles, the magnanimous arbiter in the Funeral Games of *Iliad* 23.

Ritual Setting and the Relationship Between Heroes and Athletes

In bringing into focus the space-time correspondences between the Panhellenic *Iliad* and the Panhellenic celebration of the Olympic Games, I wish to draw attention to the ritual dimension of athleticism at Olympia by identifying a modelling process between athletic competitors and heroes of the mythic past. Both Burkert and Nagy have identified in the performance of athletic competition a ritual trajectory that proceeds from a preliminary condition evocative of death, the consequence of hubris, to one of immortality, or, rather, the form of immortality conferred by fame and glory. In this light, the athletes in training nine months before journeying to Elis adhered to dietary restrictions and other forms of abstinence that served to homologize this preliminary stage with that of "death."[14] This preliminary stage was of ten months' duration, the first nine of which were spent in the athlete's homeland under the supervision of their trainers while one month immediately prior to the festival was spent gathered as a collective body in Elis. As I have sought to demonstrate, this chronology reflects that of the campaign against Troy in the *Iliad*; the Achaeans, the mythic hero-ancestors of the Greeks and descendants of Pelops (Paus. 5.25.10), set sail from Aulis to gather in the camp at the Hellespont before crossing the fording point of the Scamander and entering into the Trojan Plain, taking Troy on the tenth year (*Iliad* 2.301-32). [15] The name given to the army, the Achaeans,

[14] Burkert (1983) 101-102; Nagy (1990) 118-119.

[15] The name Scamander suggests athletic competition, as the *skamma* "the furrows" were the marker lines in long jump contests and were also wrestling pits. As such, the name can be seen to translate to mean "the Marker of Men". See Mackie (1999) 497-489, in which the rivers of Troy substitute for the infernal waters following the blighting of the plain by Hephaestus in *Iliad* 21. Mackie very aptly identifies the night time journey undertaken by

roughly translates to "the aggrieved"[16] and denotes the Greek-speaking collective gathered together to engage in "contests" for Helen's sake (*Iliad* 3.126-8). The epic poem, when viewed in this light, does not memorialize a great accomplishment in the prehistoric past so much as it allegorizes the experience of athletic competition at Olympia by projecting its contextual features, its time and space, back into the mythic age of the demigods and the great battle that brought about the end of the Heroic Age. The *Iliad* does not recount the fall of Troy and the return of Helen, rather it relates the extreme sufferings endured for Helen's sake as a means of establishing an effective link with the mythic past and, in so doing, generates a ritual association between the athlete and the hero.[17]

The ritual process of athleticism that seeks through the accomplishment of glorious deeds and the attainment of victory to move the contestant from a state of preliminary exclusion and a figurative death to the goal of victory and immortality through everlasting fame is, finally, embedded in both the blood offering identified in the Pelops cult. What I have attempted to demonstrate here is that both the setting of the *Iliad* and the ritual environment are modelled precisely upon each other, as a reflection of the *imago mundi* as the Greeks conceived it. As such both stand as sacred enactments of the same ritual experience, the movement from the conditions of death and the underworld (hubris), to immortal life lived free of care (dike). I now wish to turn my attention to the specific details of the blood offering as they are related by Homer, not in the *Iliad,* but in the *Odyssey*[18] in order to demonstrate this same ritual process of generating life from death.

Priam under the guidance of Hermes to the huts of Achilles as an underworld descent.

[16] Nagy (1990) 83-93.

[17] Curry (2005). This association is the basis of Pindar's victory odes.

[18] Whereas the *Iliad* relates the tragic events in the life of Achilles who was fated to die before Troy fell, the *Odyssey* presents the return journey of Odysseus, the hero who successfully captured Troy.

The Blood Offering as Ritual Alimentation

The blood offering given to honour Pelops at Olympia appears to be reflected in the sacrificial procedures Odysseus follows in consulting the spirit of the seer Tiresias in *Odyssey,* Book 11. Firstly, attention must be drawn to the setting of the sacrifice as it retains the same elements as both Ilus' (ancestor of the Trojans) and Pelops' (ancestor of the Achaeans) tombs by the confluence of two rivers (*Odyssey* 10.508-515). Odysseus is instructed to sail to the ends of the earth, past the sun and across the Oceanus where a grove of poplar and willow stands. This is the cosmic grove of Persephone, the goddess who lives half of the year with her consort Hades in the underworld and the other half with her mother, the Olympian Demeter, the goddess who gnawed at Pelops' shoulder in her grief over her daughter. The grove of Persephone too stands at the confluence of two rivers, the Periphlegethon and Cocytus which mingle their waters before emptying into the Acheron. Leading the black ram designated for the rite into the grove, Odysseus digs a pit at the designated spot and sacrifices the ram to the spirit of the seer in a manner that is identical to the blood offering to Pelops at Olympia, with the exception that no one consumes any part of the victim.[19]

Sated and with his prophetic acumen enlivened, the seer describes to Odysseus the travails he must undergo in order to atone for his hubristic dishonour of Poseidon before he can settle into a long life of ease and prosperity. Finally, the seer adds the significant detail that his fellows, the people around him, will be blessed by his presence (*Od.* 11.134-137). This scene identifies a pattern of movement that contains the following features:

- It begins in the Grove of Persephone, the funerary locale where the blood offering is performed;

[19] That the sacrifice was in effect a ritualized feeding procedure can be garnered from the identification of the other substances that were drained into the pit before the sacrifice occurred. During his prayers, Odysseus offers libation of a mixture of milk and honey followed by wine, water and white barley, a nourishing porridge that has a spermatic appearance and a appeasing effect for the dead who are radically separated from the world of life and growth.

- It points to a testing period of travails and hardship resulting from crimes against the gods (Helios, Poseidon);
- It concludes finally with the assertion of a life of ease and prosperity

This sequence of events suggests the ritual trajectory of athletic competition at Olympia. Reflecting the prospects of Odysseus after completion of his travails and his sacrificial propitiation, the victors too, following the contests and the sacrifice to Zeus, were granted eternal fame and the means of life at state expense for the duration of their lives.[20] Again, like Odysseus, the people around the victor at Olympia, his fellow citizens, regarded themselves as having been blessed by his "god-like" presence.[21]

Not only does the sequence of events suggest athletic competition at Olympia, the Grove of Persephone is described with features held in common with the Pelopion and the tomb of Ilus, and thus also evokes the ritual environment in which mortal accomplishments move those who achieve victory from death and exclusion to immortality and celebrity. Summarizing then, the blood offering to Tiresias identifies the following relevant features that connect it with the ritual setting of the Pelopion at Olympia:

- The sacrifice takes place in a land of eternal darkness (11. 15-16) that suggests the night, the western land beyond the sunset and therefore the gravesite locale of the dead;
- The locale is within a grove of poplars and willows (10. 509-510);
- It is located at the meeting of two rivers (10. 515);
- The ritual procedure requires a black ram as sacrificial victim (11.46);

[20] Pindar Ol. 1. 97-99. For the material benefits attending Olympic victory, see Barringer (2005) 237-238

[21] The heroization of athletes is discussed at length by Currie (2005) 120-157. That the victorious athlete was regarded as a blessing to his countrymen is suggested by having a victor accompany the Spartan king in battle, see Barringer (2005) 228

- A pit into which the blood is drained serves as the conduit to the dead who await the offering (10. 517);
- The rite is the preliminary ritual operation in a broader worship of a god involving subsequent travails and sacrifices for the ritual performers;
- The sacrifice resolves itself with a prognostication of a long life of ease and prosperity following successful completion of travails.

The Blood Offering and Achilles' Race to the Isles of the Blessed

Later in *Odyssey* 11, Odysseus encounters the spirit of Achilles in a scene that is arguably the climactic encounter of the underworld journey, given that it is the meeting between the two epic protagonists. This particular scene too reveals a similar pattern of movement as the ritual process of athletic competition, moving as it does from a state of initial despair to one of joyfulness following nourishment from the sacrificial blood. This is evident in the following way: The spirit of Achilles, formerly the best of the Achaeans, approaches the blood in an initial state of disconsolate grief (*Odyssey* 11. 472). Achilles is depicted as languishing in the underworld and bitterly demands that Odysseus account for his presence among the dead. Responding to him, Odysseus takes an "obsequious" tone and identifies Achilles' elevated status, first by recalling how he was honoured as a god in life and then observing how he enjoys a similar status in the world below. Despite this reverential acknowledgement, Achilles remains bitterly hostile, but thinks to inquire as to the well-being of his father and son. When Odysseus describes to him the exploits of his still-living son and confirms to him the fact that he fathered a noble man who has performed glorious deeds, the spirit of Achilles is transformed and relieved of the gravity of despair that afflicted him at the outset of the encounter. Odysseus concludes his telling of the encounter by stating how the spirit of Achilles, after hearing him speak, ran with bounding strides and with a joyful attitude across the plain of asphodel.

The Homeric depiction of the underworld is typically treated as a gloomy container in which the dead flit about as

quasi-substantial psyches.[22] But such a morose and static view leaves out the fact that Achilles is transformed by the encounter with Odysseus. The spirit of Achilles is strikingly presented as transitioning from an initial state of bitter grief to a one of joy as he runs away across the plain from the Grove of Persephone towards an unidentified destination. The Grove of the goddess Persephone, who divides her year above and below the earth in equal measure, marks the point above the House of Hades, the underworld locale where the dead languish. But this is not the only afterlife destination identified by Homer who, earlier in the *Odyssey*, mentions also the Elysian Plain. This is in reference to the conclusion of Menelaus' life and identifies the hero's final destination situated beyond Oceanus where life is easiest for mortal men. The general inference is that Menelaus, like the heroes honoured in cult, is to be granted immortality and to live free of care beyond the earth-encircling river Oceanus, where he will be in the presence of the noble magistrate Rhadamanthys (*Odyssey* 4.561-5).[23] Tiresias' prophesy that Odysseus is to expect a life free of care followed by an easy death and, finally, to be regarded as a blessing to his people, alludes to a similar prospect as Menelaus is to experience. By analogy,[24] Odysseus,

[22] Bremmer (1983) 84-85, Burkert (1985) 294. The Homeric presentation of the afterlife is typically placed in stark contrast to that of the Mysteries. The difficulty is that Homer is of course supplying a narrative in which the underworld acts as a setting and not, of course, putting forward a broader conception of the underworld. My treatment permits the narrative context the underworld supplies in the *Odyssey* to be seen as conforming to broader Greek conceptions, such as those put forward by Pindar, *Olympian* 2.53-83.

[23] Hesiod *Works and Days* 168-169, Pindar *Olympian* 2. 68-83. Nagy (1999) 167-173.

[24] See Cook (1995) 66. Who demonstrates the parallelism operating between the account of Menelaus' return (*Od*. 4. 351-480) and Odysseus' own *nostos.* In both instances the following features punctuate the homeward journey:

- A difficult return because the hero dishonoured the gods;
- A period of suffering and isolation in a remote place;
- Intervention by a goddess;

despite the difficulties of his current lot, can expect to feast on the Elysian Plain and enjoy the perfect justice achieved by the presence of Rhadamanthys after Poseidon's wrath has been propitiated and after he has lived out his long life of ease and prosperity.

The Homeric mention of the Elysian Plains as Menelaus' final destination, along with the future prospects Odysseus is to enjoy, identifies in my view the ritual objective of the hero cult. By means of the blood offering, the languishing hero, transits from the putrid House of Hades, where the vast legions of the anonymous dead accumulate and, "revitalized" through the ritual operations of cult, "runs" across the field of asphodel so that he can settle into the immortal feast with his similarly immortalized peers. This trajectory of movement from death and exclusion (hubris) to glorious acknowledgement and immortal life (dike), to repeat, also underpins the selective process of ritual athleticism as it was carried out at Olympia.

The Location of the Pelopion in Relation to the Other Ritual Areas of the Olympia Sanctuary

I have attempted to demonstrate that Homeric poetry has embedded the hero shrine at Olympia into both epic poems as a means of establishing a correspondence between ritual athleticism and hero myth. The contests undertaken by the bronze-clad Achaeans and the horse-taming Trojans for the sake of Helen evoke the travails of athletic performance undertaken by the Greek men and boys under the midsummer heat at Olympia. The selective process of competition, ritualized as an acknowledgement of Zeus' cosmic supremacy and as an attestation of his abiding rule, seeks to identify the best among the Greeks and to provide these with honour, glory and a life lived like the former mortals, the Golden People, but in the contemporary, non-mythic age. Whereas Olympia marks the site where Zeus ascended to rule over the cosmos and put an end to the Golden Age, the time when mortals lived like the gods on earth, the Homeric Trojan plain, encoded with the same iconic,

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· A prophetic consultation in which additional travails are identified, sacrificial instructions are given and a successful out come is forecasted, along with a life of ease and prosperity.

topographical features as the Olympia shrine, marks the site of the epochal battle that brought an end to the Heroic Age, and to mythic time as well. The Olympia sanctuary and Homer's Troy both describe a topography that stands as an *imago mundi* and, as such, provide the context for mortal existence as ordained through the will of Zeus; to suffer through strife and travails but to endure and prevail through excellence and persistence.

I have also identified the pertinent features that establish a ritual correspondence between the Homeric Grove of Persephone with the Pelopion, the hero's grave and location of the blood offerings at Olympia. In seeing Homeric epic as a mythic evocation of athletic competition at Olympia, the just-discussed scene in which Achilles is described as running across the plain of asphodel suggests the Olympia stadium foot race. Unlike Odysseus and Menelaus who receive prophetic indications of a joyous afterlife in Elysium, Achilles dies at Troy before the polis is conquered and is fated to die without a glorious return. In the broader mythic cycle of Troy, it is related that the young hero is conveyed to the Isles of Blessed by his mother as his body awaits the funeral fire. This too is told to us by Pindar in *Olympian* 2; he recalls how Thetis carried her boy off to the Isles of the Blessed to join his father, and to experience after death the righteous will of the perfect judge Rhadamanthys.

The Greek Achilles cult was multilocal and highly complex, but poorly attested in the sources.[25] Although the cult was primarily focussed in the geographical area of Troy, it also formed part of the broader devotional complex associated with the Games, especially at Elis. At sunset, on the eve of the processional march to Olympia, the Elian women beat themselves in lamentation as a form of honour to Achilles (Pausanias 6.23.3). Also at Elis, a grave marker to the tragic hero of the *Iliad* was located in the umpires' room where these matched up the competitors in the foot race before sunrise and at noontime for the pentathlon (Pausanias 6.24.1). These cult features suggest that Achilles was honoured, in the first instance, as a heroic exemplar to the losers; to competitive defeat, the loss of youth, and the wrenching cleavage of the maternal bond. The grave over which the umpires determined the heats in the stadium events reflects the Iliad narrative as well, where Achilles

[25] See Hedreen (1991).

presides over the Funeral Games as the magnanimous and just arbiter of the contests, as the exemplary hero of the Games' referees.

The Pelopion was exclusive to the hero Pelops and the blood offerings were specifically given to him in order to purify the sanctuary of his own miasmic crime against Myrtilus and to ritually transition the hero from the house of Hades to the Isles of the Blessed in preparation for the worship of Zeus. In *Olympian* 1, Pindar clearly models his account of Pelops' coming of age myth, his chariot race with Oenomaus, on the Homeric portrayal of Achilles.[26] In both accounts, the hero prays to a god at the seashore and, upon declaring the necessity of death and the folly of remaining aloof from the contest, is finally rewarded by the god with gifts of golden equipment.

Reflecting both the Grove of the goddess Persephone and the ancestral tomb of Ilus in the Homeric poems, the Pelopion identifies the location of cult honour to the dead hero. This honour, as discussed previous, expresses itself in the form of the blood offering to the hero who was, as the *Odyssey* reveals, conceived of as languishing in the world below, beneath the earth in the putrid House of Hades. The offering, along with the reverential praise, was thought of as a form of ritual nourishment that served to revitalize the hero, transform his disposition, and energize him to run across the plain to his final destination on the Isles of the Blessed, the happy locale at the ends of the earth where Cronus rules and the heroes recuperate in death the existence of the first mortals, the Golden People

Also within the Olympia precinct, stood a high hill to the north of the stadium called the Tower of Cronus. At the foot of this hill was a particularly auspicious area where the shrines to the goddesses, the treasuries and the banquet area reserved for the victors were located. Pindar equates this northern section of the sanctuary with the Isles of the Blessed (Ol. 2. 68-76), allegorizing it with the afterlife abode of the heroes, where Cronus rules and Rhadamanthys dispenses his perfect justice, dike. This area where the victors were exalted, then, identifies the place of the perfected mortal life--as exemplified first by the

[26] Griffith (1989) 171-4.

Golden People,[27] then by the heroes Odysseus and Menelaus and, finally in non-mythic time, by the feted victors at the Games--in which the travails have been gloriously completed, the gods honoured, and the life of ease achieved. Secondly, it symbolizes the joyful locale, the Isles of the Blessed, where Zeus relocated the heroes he had granted immortality after their deaths and sufferings in Hades. Finally, it was the area in which the victors were feted for their accomplishments. Considered as a sacred geography in which the cosmic layout is embedded in its ritual elements, the Hill of Cronus describes the area in which mortals gain immortality by means of the "undying glory" - the victory that the Games confers.

Achilles was fated to die before the fall of Troy but, like victorious Odysseus who propitiates him with the blood offering, was also granted by Zeus an immortal life on the Isles of the Blessed. The underworld encounter between the two great Homeric heroes, suggests that the immortality conferred upon the demigods was conceived of as dynamic and transitional. What is more, it was an immortality that was also regarded as contingent upon the enactment of the blood rite insofar as the hero, although dead, was conceived of as still requiring the vital substance otherwise unavailable to him in the underworld. Honoured through the cult acts and "enlivened" by the ritual offerings, the hero, in this case Achilles, is depicted as to running from the western location of the cosmos, the Grove of Persephone, to the northern "Hyperborean" shore of the Oceanus where the Isles of the Blessed lay. In this way, the cult entailments of hero worship reflect the same ritual trajectory as athletic competition; of moving from hubris to dike, from death to the immortality conferred by a glorious victory.

[27] In the mythic lore of Olympia, it is where the Golden Men first worshipped Cronus (Paus. 5.7. 6) and where Zeus won cosmic supremacy by defeating his father (Paus. 5. 7. 10).

Appendix- The Ancient Greek Cosmos as Imago Mundi

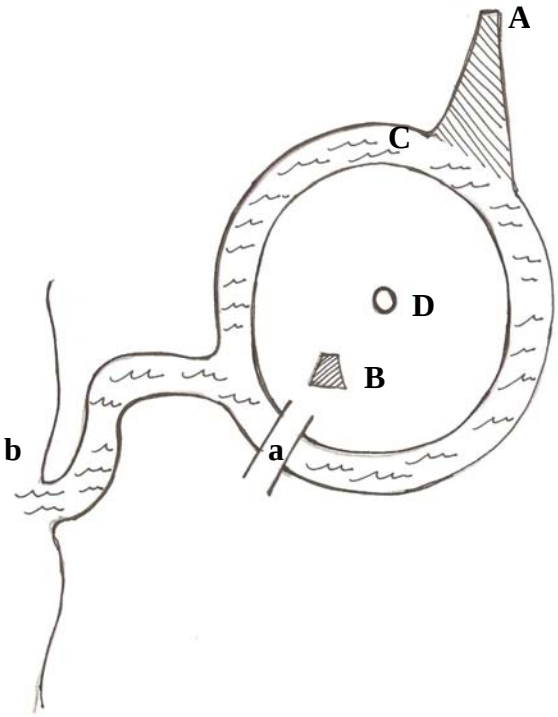
A 1. The Cosmos: Mount Olympus
2. The Trojan Plain: Mount Gargarum
3. Olympia: Mount Lycaeum

B 1. The Grove of Persephone
2. The tomb of Ilus
3. The Pelopion

C 1. Oceanus
2. The Scamander-Simois
3. The Alpheus-Cladius

D 1. Delphi
2. Troy-Pergamus
3. Zeus altar in Altis

a. The Fording Point
b. The Salt Sea



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The Star in the Banner:
Studies on North American Black-Jewish Communities

Kwaku Boafo

Abstract: The elaboration and development of black-Jewish identities are a multilayered and complex dynamism that does not take to one particular shape or form. Black groups in America have amalgamated Jewish traditions, thoughts, and cultures creatively upon their initial encounters. This bibliographic review paper seeks to ask "in what ways has Jewish identity been appropriated amongst black groups in America?" and "what role has Christianity played in developing these black-Jewish identities?"

Introduction

The African American religious experience in America is a phenomenon that has attracted scholars (Landing, Wynia, Chireau, Pinn *et al)* of all backgrounds to document, explore, and advance relevant research in the field. The intricacies of black religious movements are fascinating to many, but remain shrouded in mystique, at times tangled in webs of misinterpretations and "cultural imperialisms" especially when concerned with the notion of identity. Since the advent of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, identity for blacks in America has assumed malleable properties. It can be argued that religion plays a solid role in the grounding of these identities, both individually and collectively. It is safe to locate Christianity as a point of departure when assessing the black religious experience in America. The Christianization of African slaves has served as an umbrella for the appropriation, re-interpretation, rejection, and syncretism of Christianity to black religious thought. It is within this framework that I investigate the significance of Judaism to African-Americans.

Black Nationalist discourse and black religious thought re-surfaced as a momentous movement during the American Civil Rights era in the 1960s. Much of the discussion revolved

around the Christian integrationist ethics of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the separatist ideologies of Black Muslims, (i.e. Nation of Islam vis-à-vis Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X). Interestingly enough, discourse surrounding African American Judaism remained partially hidden from the aforementioned "mainstream" attention, yet progressed hand in hand with the other black movements.

The nature of this research is not primarily to document the historical development of Black Jewish tradition and thought, thus a large body of information regarding sub sects and their progression will be omitted. However, there is always a dominating group responsible for setting particular trends and those groups will serve as the respective example from which others follow. An analysis of groups such as the Church of God Saints of Christ and the Commandment Keepers of Harlem will confirm this point amongst others. The first section of this paper observes the historical relevance of Christianity in Black Judaism as predecessor and ensures the consideration of context. The following section will comprise of an analysis of groups, specifically their beliefs and traditions, and will attempt to illustrate the manner in which they identify with Jewish belief and practice. The final section consists of a brief discussion on race, religion, and identity.

Christianity and the Black Church

Though Black Judaism in America is mostly associated with states such as New York and Chicago, the origins are deeply rooted in the American south. In James E. Landing's book *Black Judaism: Story of an American Movement*, Landing argues that the roots of Black Judaism are found in Christianity, particularly in the Holiness and Millennial movements of Protestantism. Landing directs his initial attention to the impact of the first and second Great Awakenings that took place in North America in the 1800s. He considers these events as catalysts for both the study of "nonconventional Jews" and the establishment and indirect influence of the southern black churches on Black Judaism. The correlation between the Holiness or "perfection" movements blended flawlessly with the emerging prophetic movements, which were based on the Second Coming. Landing ascertains that "If Christian perfection was necessary as

preparation for 'the end,' the 'signs' that would foretell the Second Coming needed to be understood" (2002: 18). Certain aspects of the prophetic movements gradually picked up significance. Landing describes them as:

> … a renewed interest in the prophecies [of the Bible]; second, a renewed interest in the millennium, especially the premillennial advent that, according to scripture, could only occur after the Jews had been restored to the Holy Land; and third, a renewed interest in the state and location of the Jews (2002: 18).

Landing describes societies as the London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews, as playing a key role in proselytizing Christianity all around the world, sending missionaries as far as Ethiopia to enquire of the Falashas (Ethiopian Jews). This sort of work was conducted and especially successful in the hands of Henry A. Stern. Stern is credited for bringing knowledge of Falashas to the rest of the world (Landing 2002: 21, 34).

During the Civil War, coupled with the many schisms between the Holiness, Pentecostal, and Bible Prophecy movements, both black and white churches adopted looser interpretations of scripture and placed increasing emphasis on oral traditions. Landing confirms that the focus on oral traditions has a direct correlation with the level of literacy; Holiness movements and "Pentecostalisms" had less to do with exegetical and textual exercise than the more phenomenological attraction of religious experience (Landing 2002: 32). Thus, the role of the independent churches is fundamental in the development of Black Judaism.

The rise of the independent black churches was in part a response to the socio-economic conditions of the Jim Crow era. Following the Civil War, blacks liberated from the chains of slavery were immersed into a society based on white supremacy. The black church "became the social refuge from a hostile white world" (Landing 2002: 43). As an institution, the black church allowed blacks to organize and re-establish a society based on their own values. In fact, Landing confirms that "black groups had to develop their own buildings, maintain their financial base and assets, maintain a clergy, and … provide the only schools for

blacks in the South" (2002: 43). The roles of organization and self-sufficiency are strong motifs carried and illustrated through the development of the first Black Jewish congregations. It is important to note that the structure of the black church is strongly reflected in the congregational formation of Black Jewish institutions, a development which will be clarified in the following sections.

Anthony Pinn details briefly the various types of black churches in his work *The African American Religious Experience in America.* He refers to Baptist, Methodist, and Pentecostal churches, however, does not provide details of their history and formation. Pinn's main argument is that blacks "Africanized" Christianity to suit their existing conditions. He focuses on a concept commonly referred to as the "Invisible Institution," which is a term "used as a reference to the secret religious meeting held by enslaved Africans, also called hush arbor meetings, during which they worked out religious symbols, myths and doctrine" (Pinn 2006: 12). Furthermore, Pinn argues that the invisible institution manifested itself visibly in the form of the black church. Christianity, according to Pinn, was not necessarily enforced on slaves but assimilated by slaves. For example, "the importance of water baptism and spirit possession complete with 'dancing in the spirit'" illustrates the "soft presence of African structures" (Pinn 2006: 14). Thus, in order to understand Black Judaism, Christianity must be considered in context of the conversion of blacks. Pinn states that "conversion in the context of black religion and initiation in the context of Africa both involve symbolic death and rebirth through which the individual releases old ways of being in the world and embraces new understandings of life and how it should be lived" (2006: 14).

The type of Christianity associated with the early black church is also responsible for the earliest black-Jewish congregations. Thus far, we have considered the roles of institution, organization, and formation while withholding the theological significances; however, the latter will appear self-evident as we assess specific black-Jewish groups. The significance of the Holiness, Prophetic, and oral traditions coupled with lax scriptural interpretation, serve as the theological framework for Black Judaism. Amidst the Great Migration and the First World War, many Southern blacks

migrated to the North, which was a time known as the "Exoduster" period. The theological affinity to the biblical exodus insinuated much talk of Moses and the Promised Land. Landing substantiates that "the biblical allusions, the messianic declarations, the millennial analogies, the belief that blacks were appointed to a special mission... [joined with] the belief that the end was near… [created] a time for prophets and messiahs" (2002: 45). This religious fervor gave rise to an atmosphere from which Black Judaism arose.

The Church of the Living God

In 1886, Prophet F.S. Cherry founded the Church of the Living God in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The main message portrayed by Cherry was based on a vision where the Lord appeared to him, revealing that the true Hebrews of the Old Testament were black. Cherry believed that even "God and biblical figures such as Adam, Eve, and Jesus were physically black" (Pinn 2006: 78). According to Cherry, all mankind was black until the births of Jacob and Esau. Jacob purchased the birthright of Esau; therefore, the descendants of Esau became red or white and hated by God. The descendants of Jacob became black and loved by God. Blacks who could trace their lineage through the tribe of Jacob were the authentic Jews (Landing 2002: 341). Merrill Singer, however, proposes a different theory. According to Singer, Cherry believed that white people were the offspring of Gehazi, a servant who Elisha cursed with skin "as white as snow" based on the account of II Kings 5:27 (2002: 58).

The sacred texts of the group were both the Bible and the Talmud. Landing suggests Cherry may have mistaken the Torah as the Talmud since "there is no evidence that the prophet knew anything about Talmudic literature" (2002: 343). Arthur Fauset provides the most detailed account of the beliefs and practices of the group in his book *Black Gods of the Metropolis.* What distinguished the group as particularly Jewish was their observance of the Sabbath, Passover, and the Ten Commandments, as well as their strict observance of certain dietary restrictions, such abstaining from the consumption of pork. They observed purification rites before Passover and attended services on Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings (Fauset 2002: 38-40). Their place of worship was not referred to

as a synagogue but a house of prayer. The walls of the house of prayer were decorated with images of Hebrew characters (Landing 2002: 341). The basis for this distinction is drawn from Revelations 3:9 which references the "synagogue of Satan," which they, in turn, associated with the "edifices of the white Jews" (Fauset 2002: 34). Male members dressed in yarmulkes, and women wore blue and white capes; in addition to their specific style of dress, all members wore a Star of David.

The Black Jews (as Cherry followers were called) also had strong Christian elements within their tradition. They observed baptism and substituted Communion for Passover. Although they were known to avoid celebrating Christmas or Easter, Jesus nevertheless played a central role in their doctrines (Fauset 2002: 39). They believed in Jesus while rejecting his whiteness; they knew Jesus as black. It is difficult to discern whether they saw him as the Messiah, but Cherry castigated white Jews for rejecting Jesus. Nevertheless, Cherry's congregation is an example of a Christian-Jewish hybrid. The belief structure "is clear evidence of a strong association with fundamental, millennial Christianity" and the ceremonial structure did not follow Judaic tradition but "a veneer of the Old Testament tradition laid atop an existing Christian Organization" (Landing 2002: 345). Cherry's followers believed that Jesus did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. They also believed that slavery and the deliverance of the black man would follow at the end of the "Age of the Gentiles" when Jesus returns to usher in the millennium (Landing 2002: 342).

The Church of God and Saints of Christ

William S. Crowdy founded the Church of God and Saints of Christ in 1896. In a manner similar to that of Prophet Cherry, Crowdy also received instruction by way of revelation. On September 13, 1893, Crowdy had a vision that he was in a large room where tables descended from above. Each table was stained with vomit and had the name of a church inscribed on it. According to Crowdy, the table labeled "Baptist" had the most prominent stain, which made Crowdy vow never again to attend a Baptist church. In his vision, a clean table finally descended inscribed with: Church of God and Saints of Christ. Crowdy believed this was his divine sanction to establish the true church.

In his vision, Crowdy proceeded to consume a Bible and soon afterwards was revealed the Seven Keys, which were rules and guidelines from which to live by (Wynia 1994: 21).

Crowdy received his visions in Guthrie, Oklahoma and began his preaching there. Soon after, he moved to Chicago and converted many before returning to Lawrence, Kansas where he structured his organization (Wynia 1994: 22). Singer recounts Crowdy's description of African Americans as the "heirs of the ten lost tribes of Israel". Crowdy adopted many Jewish rituals and symbols such as "circumcision of newborn boys, the use of the Jewish calendar, wearing of skullcaps, observance of Saturday as the Sabbath, [and the] celebration of Passover (Singer 2000: 59). For Crowdy's congregation, Passover was celebrated in a literal manner where the blood of an animal was smeared on the outside of the house (Landing 2002: 53).

Due to their Christian character, the congregations belonging to both Crowdy and Cherry shared many similarities. Yvonne Chireau mentions that although Crowdy's church observed Jewish customs and even maintained an office of the rabbinate, Jesus Christ and his teachings were nevertheless emphasized on an equal level. Chireau argues that "selecting components of Judaism and preserving theological and doctrinal perspectives from Christianity was typical of a number of groups in the early establishment of black Jewish Communities in the United States (2000: 21). It is within Crowdy's Seven Keys that the Christian element is truly defined. The Seven Keys of Crowdy are as follows:

1. Repentance of Sin
2. Baptism by burial into water upon confession of faith
3. Received unleavened bread and water for Christ's Body and Blood
4. Feet washed by elder as is written in John 13:1-23
5. Agree to keep commandments
6. Breathed upon with the holy kiss
7. Taught to pray as it is written in Matthew 6:9-13 (Wynia 1994: 25)

Both Pinn and Landing confirm the Seven Keys were altered in later church publications. The "new" set of the Seven Keys are as follows:

1. The Church of God and the Saints of Christ
2. Wine forbidden to be drunk in the Church of God forever
3. Unleavened bread and water for Christ's Body and Blood
4. Foot washing is a commandment
5. The Disciples Prayer
6. You must be breathed upon and saluted into the Church of God and Saints of Christ with a Holy Kiss
7. The Ten Commandments (Landing 2002: 52, Pinn 2006: 83)

In addition to being minister and leader of his congregation, Crowdy was also considered a prophet. By bridging the Hebraic tradition with Christianity, Crowdy assumed a role of leadership (prophet) but also provided (through Jesus Christ) a practical example to follow. Crowdy stressed the life and works of Jesus Christ as an ethical compass for the group. The heart of Crowdy's message was based on the redemptive message of Jesus, which was concerned with human oppression and treating one another with dignity (Wynia 1994: 52). It is important to note that although Crowdy points to Jesus as a model of conduct, he and his congregation do not refer to Jesus as the Messiah (Pinn 2006: 82).

Thus far, the two groups assessed have all shared the commonality of a Christian base for their Jewish beliefs. Landing references smaller similar groups in his book *Black Judaism*, which I have omitted for fear of redundancy. The congregations of both Cherry and Crowdy serve as the primary model for what Chireau describes as "Hebraic-Christian or Judeo-Christian formations" which is a characteristic of the earliest black Jewish congregations (Chireau 2000: 21). It is fair to say that Crowdy and Cherry found their Jewish identity by means of Christianity. The upcoming groups in the following sections will illustrate the other side of the spectrum where black Jewish identities are formed through a rejection of Christianity.

The Commandment Keepers of Harlem

Two of the most significant names associated with the Commandment Keepers of Harlem are Arnold Josiah Ford and Wentworth Arthur Matthew. Arnold Ford provided the basis for "orthodox" Black Judaism by removing many Christian elements from its structure. Ford emphasized the Hebrew language, denied Jesus Christ as Savior, and incorporated Judaic symbols and dress (Landing 2002: 129). Wentworth Matthew became the most well known black-Jewish rabbi in Harlem and continued Ford's work.

Arnold Ford's philosophy was grounded both in Ethiopianism and Garveyism. As a member of Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), his political commitment seeped through his heavy nationalistic undertones. For Ford, all of Africa and Arabia was inhabited by Ethiopians at the time of Abraham. He believed there was no difference between the Semite and the Ethiopian (Landing 2002: 133). It was Ford who, like Garvey, proposed that blacks return to Africa as the rightful children of Israel. Chireau confirms that "Garvey's brand of black nationalism and the older ideals of Ethiopian destiny came to be a dominant feature of African American Judaism during this formative period (2000: 23). Ford elaborated on his theories of origin and believed the original Hebrews were the Hausas of West Africa, who eventually migrated to Egypt. He believed Nigeria was the cradle of the Hebrew race and that the ancient traditions must be passed down orally (Landing 2002: 135). The oral traditions reflected a cabalistic understanding. Since the Nigerians lacked the written Torah (due to the burning of books by Europeans), the Ten Commandments were hidden in the form of tribal markings. Ford believed "only Africans exhibited the high moral and intellectual character of Hebrews, for they did not use the credit system out of trust in one another and deliberately made fetishes grotesque to deter their worship by other people" (Landing 2002: 135).

Ford accepted the rabbinate of Beth B'nai Abraham (House of the Sons of Abraham) in 1923. He was fluent in both Hebrew and Yiddish as he studied the Torah and Talmud under the patronage of white Jews (Chireau 2000: 26). He was a strong advocate of emigration since he believed the United States was

not the true home of the real Jews. In fact, Ford rejected the word "Jew" and replaced it with "Hebrew" considering "Jews" were western whites (Landing 2002:135). He eventually retired to Ethiopia as an official delegate to the coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1930. He established himself in Addis Ababa and pursued efforts to secure territory in Ethiopia for black Jewish émigrés. Ford would die in 1934 in Ethiopia without ever realizing his dream (Chireau 2000: 26).

Rabbi Matthew continued Ford's work and established the Commandment Keepers of Harlem as a congregation in 1919. Pinn recounts Rabbi Matthew's teachings as a rejection of African American identity grounded in slavery. Like Ford, (who ordained him Rabbi), he argued that "African Americans are Ethiopian Hebrews, a part of the original Israelites spoken of in the Bible" (Pinn 2006:85). Rabbi Matthew connected the lineage of blacks to the offspring of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Bernard J. Wolfson documents the founding of the Ethiopian Hebrew Rabbinical College in 1940 to Rabbi Matthew. Within this school, he ordained over twenty black rabbis (2002: 48).

Howard Brotz is the first known student to conduct an academic study on the Commandment Keepers. Brotz documented the congregational activities, as well as the groups' theological bedding found in the Twelve Principles of the Doctrines of Israel and Scriptural Proof. The Twelve Principles were compiled in Matthew's *Minute Book* reminiscent of Crowdy's Seven Keys. The Twelve Principles start with the New Creation (one) and conclude with the Theocratic Age (twelve). In between are principles "referring to dietary laws, kosher foods, and ritual practices such as observance of the Ten Commandments, divine healing, washing of feet, holiness, and the restoration of Israel" (Brotz as cited in Landing 2002:228). Brotz observed that the principles included Bible passages meant to supplement their understanding. However, Brotz states that the correlation between principle and scripture was not so clear, thus allowing Matthew to establish a system where only he could explain the principles. In essence, this gave him an aura of mystique and sacredness (Brotz as cited in Landing 2002:229).

Rabbi Matthew was an advocate of esoteric knowledge, especially in the "Cabbalistic Sciences". Though he led his congregation through Sabbath services where the Twelve

Principles were observed, his Ethiopian Hebrew Rabbinical College (of the Royal Order of Ethiopian Hebrews and the Commandment Keepers Congregation of the Living God, Inc) offered additional biblical studies (Pinn 2006:86). Offered in a wide variety of languages, such as Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and French, the classes aimed to study hidden meanings in books on Jewish history, the Old Testament, and the Talmud. According to Rabbi Matthew, the training "allowed the well trained, through assistance of angelic forces, to cure various illnesses, bring about prosperity through control over those with evil intentions, and bring children back from the dead" (Pinn 2006:86).

There is an obvious distinction between the Commandment Keepers of Harlem and the congregations of both Crowd and Cherry. Ford and Matthew clearly endorsed a more nationalistic approach promoting a theology based on origin. The dream to create a black-Jewish community in Africa seemed to be their pinnacle of understanding. Both Prophet Crowd and Cherry used Christianity to make sense of their current condition, however, simultaneously turned to Judaism to authenticate the experience. The Black Hebrew Israelites continued in the line of Ford and Matthew, but took the vision to a much higher physical reality. With Ben Ammi as leader, they re-draw the map of Africa to include Israel, thus maintaining that Africa was also the home of the Jews. Through much struggle and turmoil, they eventually relocated from Chicago to Dimona, Israel.

The Black Hebrew Israelites

Ben Carter, also known as Ben Ammi, is the leader of the Black Hebrew Israelite community and was a member of the A-Beta Hebrew Israel Culture Center in Chicago. The organization believed that African Americans should relocate to Africa, following in the footsteps of the philosophy of Marcus Garvey. Due to a vision he experienced in 1966, Ammi believed "it was time to establish the kingdom of God by leaving the United States" (Pinn 2006: 87). Many of the members were appalled by the lifestyle and crime rate of the inner city, which increased their desire to leave the United States (Markowitz 1996: 197).

In May 1967, three leaders of A-Beta flew to Liberia to investigate the possibility of relocation. Upon their return,

members began selling their possessions to finance the trip since the pioneers secured a forested settlement. Though many of the Black Hebrews were raised in the city, Liberia initially became a home of refuge (Singer 2000: 64). But the struggles were soon to come as the Chicago community could not cope with the hardships of their new home. Rather than relocate to an urban settlement, the pioneers secured a settlement in the remotest areas of Liberia. In addition, at the time there was no clear direction of leadership. The community slowly disintegrated from interpersonal conflict and many wished to return to United States. According to Singer, one member stated: "In the land of captivity [the United States], you light a match and you have a gas flame. In Liberia, if you wanted to eat you had to chop your tree down, bring it back, chop it up, build a fire" (2000:64). Rakhimim, a member interviewed by Fran Markowitz, states:

> We chose to stay there about three and a half years in order to get rid of the foolishness of America. To make a person born again. To die from the hell we came out of, to get rid of it-to learn…Liberia was always conceived as the place where we would learn to be righteous. Those of us who wanted to do right shedded of the hate and came home to Israel (Markowitz 1996: 197).

The symbolic understanding of the time in the "wilderness" painted a picture reminiscent of the Exodus. The community felt they lost divine favor as religious traditions, such as Passover became increasingly difficult to observe. The community experienced great difficulty finding an "unblemished" kid for sacrifice, causing Ben Ammi to inform members that through revelation God told him the sacrifice of animals was never desired, rather, obedience was the greatest sacrifice (Singer 2000:65-66). By means of his insights, Ben Ammi slowly elevated to the status of sole leader of the community.

Ben Ammi was convinced the next relocation would be Israel. For Ammi, Israel was the true home of Black Hebrews, and he considered Liberia simply a test. In 1969, the group began relocating to Israel. They claimed the right to Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return. They had requested settlement in Jerusalem but the Israeli government gave them a settlement in the Negev desert town of Dimona. They were

denied Israeli citizenship, work permits, as well as state benefits (Michaeli 2000:74). In 1986, many members were arrested and some deported due to working illegally and abusing visitor permits. In 1992 a truce was made between the Israeli government and the Black Congressional Caucus of the U.S Congress where the group was granted temporary residence, under the conditions that no new members would join until immigration issues were resolved (Markowitz 1996:197). The deal brokered between both governments "allowed the Hebrew Israelites to expand their housing and develop a specialized school that combines an education in modern Hebrew, science, math and Israeli civics with Hebrew Israelite spiritual tenets" (Michaeli 2000:74).

Upon his initial arrival to Israel, Ben Ammi told Israeli authorities that he and his people were not Jews but Hebrews: "Our customs are different from yours. We believe only in the Torah, not what was added later" (Singer 2000: 67). Ammi believed that the term "Jew" was a corruption of the word Judah. Like his predecessors, he believed that white Jews were interlopers. He would later soften his views and adopt a more inclusive perspective. The group's beliefs, rituals, and lifestyle reflected "action as opposed to genealogy" (Pinn 2006: 89). The Africanisms of their tradition were very visible and served as the ground for Markowitz' application of Foucault's "subjugated knowledge" which is defined as:

> … a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity…a particular, local, regional knowledge, a differential knowledge incapable of unanimity and which owes its force only to the harshness with which it is opposed by everything surrounding it… (Markowitz 1996:194-195)

She argues that the "Divine Geography" (Israel being physically drawn into the map of Africa) is a counter hegemonic strategy based on Foucault's notion of "subjugated knowledge," being converted from idea to practice (Markowitz 1996:193). The conversion of this theory to practical action is illustrated in the

group's distinct beliefs, rituals, and lifestyle. Ethan Michaeli observes that "men wear long African print shirts with the biblically prescribed fringes known in Hebrew as *tsitsit*, as well as head coverings called *kippot*. Women wear long modest dresses and follow the biblical rules concerning menstruation, known as *niddah*" (Michaeli 2000:75). The amalgamation of African tradition and Jewish tradition illustrates that the group's connection to Israel-as-Africa surpasses genealogy and translates into practice.

The Black Hebrews consider Ben Ammi to be the Messiah and believe they are locked in an "apocalyptic struggle with the forces of evil" (Michaeli 2000:75). The group eventually labeled Ammi as "Adoni Rabbey" (My Lord and Master) for leading them out of the United States to the promised land of Israel (Pinn 2006:75). The Hebrew Israelites observe all the Jewish rituals such as Passover, Yom Kippur, and Sabbath; however, some are combined with African American Christian activities (i.e. Gospel Music) (Pinn 2006:75), which are presumably solely based on musical aesthetics as opposed to a message of Jesus.

Ben Ammi would later soften his beliefs that only blacks were God's chosen people, especially after the Israeli government ameliorated their living conditions. The main catalyst for this change, however, was after the Jewish residents of Dimona provided "food, work, and other necessities to the Hebrew Israelites when the political situation prevented official support of any kind" (Michaeli 2000:81). After this event, Ammi would state that some Jews were also part of the "Chosen People". Following a failed Iraqi attack on a nuclear reactor in Dimona, Black Hebrews hid in bunkers side by side with their neighbors. Ammi stated that the destiny of Israel was undeniably tied to Black Hebrews. "We want the whole load. When it's time to cry, we will weep together. When it's time to rejoice, we will rejoice together" (Michaeli 2000:82).

For the 3000 Black Hebrews who settled in Dimona their statement is clear, Israel is part of Africa and they have a divine claim to the land as true Hebrews. They maintained no nationalistic connection to the United States since they saw it as representative of Egypt – a place filled with bondage and a threat to their identity. The apocalyptic worldview of the Black Hebrews culminated in their return to the Promise Land. Even

though they found themselves "among people they [initially] disdained, practiced a form of religion totally unfamiliar to the Israelis, [they] wished neither to emulate Jews [nor] to practice Judaism" (Landing 2002:424). The steadfastness of their tradition and their beliefs transcended geographic boundaries and resonated deeply within their African Jewish identities.

Discussion and Conclusion

The four black-Jewish groups discussed here were chosen to serve as an archetype and model from which many smaller groups emulated, diverged, or shared similar theological affinities. The development of Black Judaism is initially flavored by a Christian story that eventually fades into the background as groups increasingly become "orthodox". Within the two main types of Black Judaism here presented, black-Jewish identity is understood through symbolic association and physical lineage. The thread of cohesion between groups is in the redefining of identity, criticism of socio-political climates, and the use of the Old Testament as a cosmological tool.

The concept of identity is fundamental to all black-Jewish discourse. Fran Markowitz acknowledges identity in her assessment of the Black Hebrew Israelite community. In another article "Soul Citizenship", Markowitz, Sara Helman and Dafna Shir-Vertesh argue that, through the example of the Black Hebrews' hardships to settle in Israel, "soul citizenship" suggests "a model of citizenship that opens new space for misplaced people(s) to gain membership in the states that meet their cultural aspiration and nourish their souls" (Markowitz et al 2003:302). This idea of race and religion is expanded upon in Henry Goldschmidt's article "The Voices of Jacob on the Streets of Brooklyn". Goldschmidt illustrates how Black Hebrews and Lubavitch Hasidic Jews in the Crown heights area of Brooklyn use race and religion as hagiographic tools in order to validate genuine lineage to Israelite descent[1]. He argues that race and religion function as "symbolically charged tropes within

[1] The discourse between Black Judaism and Rabbinical/Normative Judaism is an ongoing discussion primarily focused on the monopolizing claims of authenticity. The topic is expansive and cannot be addressed entirely in this paper.

historical narratives, rather than clearly bounded categories of identity formation" (Goldschmidt 2006: 390).

Identification with narrative is an important element in Black Jewish identity. The socio-political context from which it was born, combined with the physical realities of African American hardships, made it easy for blacks to feel they were simply continuing the biblical narrative of Moses and the Exodus. To bring this issue into a more contemporary light, Susannah Heschel compares the theological affinities between the writings of Abraham Heschel and Martin Luther King, Jr. Though King is a known Christian ethicist, Susannah Heschel is able to draw the comparisons based on King's understanding of the Old Testament. She draws points of intersection through their understanding of the Exodus, the immanence of God, and his responsiveness to the needs of his people and the nature of the prophet (Heschel 2000: 171-172). A careful look at these similarities is reminiscent of most, of if not all, Black Jewish congregations.

Black Judaism is a religious movement as well as a political statement. Like many other black religious traditions, it has reflected an attempt to redefine identity in light of one's present context. The manner in which it has been assimilated and understood by different black groups is multifarious, thus resulting in multi-dynamic black-Jewish identities. The role of Christianity in the development of Black Judaism is monumental. The Holiness, Prophecy, and Millennial movements have all contributed to the theological formations of Black Judaism[2]. The messianic expectations of black-Jewish eschatology can also be attributed to the "other worldliness" dimension found in Christian apocalypticism. In Bernard Wolfson's interview with Rabbi Funnye, Funnye states that black Jewish movements "were in the vanguard of black self-realization and were the forerunners of black nationalism and black power" (Wolfson 2000:51). This is arguably true, but many continue to overlook the movement due to media attention

[2] Black Judaism is a Bible based tradition. Anthony Pinn clarifies this point by illustrating that for Black Jews "great attention [is] given to a fairly literal reading of the Old Testament, and this sacred text [tends] to take precedence over Talmudic tradition for most of these communities" (Pinn 2006: 90).

surrounding Black Muslims and Christian Civil Rights ethics. Black Judaism is a unique story that continues to unfold. With increasing research being conducted within the field, further discourse and new discoveries will not only increase the understanding of black Jews, but also add a new dynamic to the black religious experience in North America.

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