

The Turn to Neo-Platonism in Philosophical Theology

At the beginning of the 20th century Philosophy as taught in the Universities and colleges was divided into several schools. Those major schools were Idealism, Realism, Pragmatism, Thomism and Positivism. Between these Schools there was some modest conversation, but on the whole they kept to their own school of thought and Philosophy became a Philosophy of the Schools. This insulation kept scholars from publishing or working in any area other than that in which they were taught. Curiously that seemed to change with the end of World War I. The common man's idealism (Weltweisheit) of the Age of Empires died along with the defeated empires and the world faced new realities. But the Universities were not nearly as quick to abandon Idealism as the common folk view (Populärphilosophie) was.

Idealism persisted although altered in emphasis, and Thomism, originally an anti-modernist school of thought, gradually modified itself leading up to Vatican II. With the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire the scholars and Vienna Circle members emigrated to England and America. In reaction to Hegelian Idealism, the Phenomenological movement turned towards Existentialism, inherited from 19th Century thinkers such as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. The Pragmatists and Realists along with the immigrants of the Vienna Circle turned towards Linguistic Analysis. Psychology and Sociology turned toward the empirical and no longer attached themselves to Philosophy. The tremendous advances in Philology in the 19th century led to an increased availability of the texts of Ancient and Medieval Philosophers, including those of the Hellenistic Period.

By the mid 20th century there arose three distinct ways of doing Philosophy. The Phenomenological-Existentialist Philosophy became generally "Continental Philosophy", while the "Linguistic Analysis" became the leading Philosophical current in the British Commonwealth and America. All the while many Philosophers were doing Philosophy by doing its History. At the same time there arose an undercurrent which represented a turn towards Plotinus and the Neo-Platonists in general. This turn to Neo-Platonism arose primarily in those philosophers doing Philosophy's History, but was not completely confined to that method of doing Philosophy, and culminated in a late Heideggerian, Post-Modernist, Post-Dionysian Radical Orthodoxy. To explain this phenomenon and to understand its impact one needs to examine it in two separate ways, 1) through Historical considerations and 2) through Philosophical considerations. Thus this essay will begin with those Historical considerations.¹

Historical Considerations: Idealism to Bergson

There can be little doubt that the nineteenth century was the Idealistic age, and that the dominant Philosophy taught in the schools was some form of Idealism. From Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel at the beginning of the century to Bradley and Royce at the end of the century, Idealism embraced the problems with which Philosophy concerned itself. Whether some form of Personalism, some form of Absolute or Critical, Philosophy was Idealist. In this era, Germany reigned supreme as the cradle of Idealism

¹ The reader will permit a few broad strokes of the historical in order to place the Philosophical in context.

as set apart from the Idealism of the Berkeley or empirical type. Yet these Idealists took Berkeley as an empiricist ally of their Philosophical speculations.

Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*,² along with developments in Philology in the 19th century, contributed to the legitimization of History of Philosophy as a branch of Philosophy in its own right. In France the collection of Jacques Paul Migne³ of the works of the Church Fathers both Greek and Latin helped to make the work of Christian Antiquity readily available. A new publishing explosion occurred in Germany, France, Holland, England and elsewhere, unrivaled since the early publications of Aldus Manutius, the Estiennes (Stephanus), Zacharis Kallierges, the Elzevirs, and others during the Renaissance. Thus both Classical and Medieval Philosophical texts became readily available for study, making Ancient and Medieval Philosophy accessible, including the Platonists and Neo-Platonists of the Hellenistic period, that period which coincided with the early period of Christianity.

Biblical studies accelerated in the 19th century with the discovery of *Codex Sinaiticus* by Count Constantine Tischendorff, and that surge of Biblical and textual studies that followed. In this way Theology and Philosophy both benefited from textual studies and modern editions. Philosophy, partly because of the interests of both Hegel and Kant in both Philosophy and Theology, saw a growth in Theological studies by Schleiermacher, Albrecht Ritschl and other German Protestant theologians, as well as many Catholic scholars such as Martin Grabmann and Franz Anton Staudenmeier.

In England the influence of Hegel and Idealism can be seen at the latter part of the 19th century with the work of James Hutchison Stirling.⁴ Idealism took hold in England in the late years of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Edward and John Caird,⁵ Thomas Hill Green,⁶ Francis H. Bradley⁷ and John Ellis McTaggart,⁸ all played a part in turning the British philosophic discourse to Idealism. Yet at the same time Dean Inge⁹ and E. R. Dodds¹⁰ were studying Mysticism and the Neo-Platonists,

² G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995) 3 Volumes. Volume 2 contains the sections on Platonism and Neo-Platonism.

³ Jacques Paul Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Graece [PG] et Latine [PL]* (Paris: Garnier Fratres, varii) contains the works of Christian Neoplatonists both Greek and Latin.

⁴ J. H. Muirhead, "How Hegel came to England," *Mind* XXXVI (1927), 438.

⁵ Edward Caird, *The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers* (Glasgow: MacLehose & Sons, 1904) 2 Volumes (Gifford Lectures), Volume 2 (1904) contains large sections on Plotinus and Neoplatonism. John Caird, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1880) and *The Fundamental Ideas of Christianity* (Glasgow: MacLehose & Sons, 1904) 2 Volumes (Gifford Lectures).

⁶ Thomas Hill Green, *Works* ed. R. L. Nettleship (London: Longmans Green, 1918) 3 Volumes.

⁷ Francis Herbert Bradley, *Appearance and Reality* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1916).

⁸ J. McT.E. McTaggart, *The Nature of Existence* (Cambridge: University Press, 1988) 2 Volumes.

⁹ William Ralph Inge, *Personal Idealism and Mysticism* (London: Longmans Green, 1907) and *Studies in English Mystics* (London: John Murray, 1906).

adding ancient support to the Idealist programme. The translations of Plato and the Neo-Platonists by Thomas Taylor¹¹ brought Platonism to the fore and formed a bridge between the Cambridge Platonists of a previous century, and the later Hegelian Idealists. In literature Thomas Carlyle¹² and Samuel Taylor Coleridge¹³ helped to mediate the turn towards German thought and Platonism in Britain during this time, opening a popular public door to the Idealist spirit and Romantic movement.

In the United States Idealism became the principal Philosophy along with Pragmatism which was just beginning with Charles S. Pierce and William James. From Boston to California Idealism dominated Philosophy Departments by the end of the 19th Century with leaders such as Royce, Bowne, the Sage School, Howison and Boodin. There was an historical precedent to this idealism. In a number of ways the New England Transcendentalists as well as Emerson, the St. Louis Hegelians and the Griggs Publishing series led the way to an almost universal adoption of Idealism as the American Philosophy. Even the Instrumentalist John Dewey had an early Idealist stage. Royce and James were close friends, so that the Idealist spirit was not far from the developing Pragmatism of the time. Royce was one of the first graduates of the new University of California and although born in a mining camp of less than wealthy parents, his intellect caught the attention of San Francisco businessmen, who sent him to Germany for a one year study, where he picked up the Hegelian Philosophy. After earning his PhD at Johns Hopkins where he met William James he took a modest tenure teaching English and Logic at Berkeley. Through James he eventually acquired a post at Harvard where he remained the premier representative of Idealism through the beginning of WWI.¹⁴

Borden Parker Bowne, twenty years Royce's junior from Monmouth County, New Jersey, became Professor across the river at Boston University. Although he was influenced greatly by his Methodist theology, he developed a form of Idealism he called Personalism,¹⁵ which was to spread throughout the U.S.A. and to the University of Southern California where it took root. Under the influence of Royce, George Holmes Howison from Marietta, Ohio, became the first Philosophy Professor at the University of California in Berkeley. He had taught Mathematics at St. Louis and joined the Philosophical Society putting him in touch with the Hegelians. He attended Harvard Divinity School and, as did many Philosophers of his day, undertook Philosophy from his

¹⁰ Eric R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1973).

¹¹ Thomas Taylor, *The Six Books of Proclus on the Theology of Plato* (London: Printed for the Author, 1816) as well as many other books of translations of Plotinus, Proclus, Iamblichus and Plato.

¹² Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* (London: Chapman and Hall, n.d.) Carlyle carried on correspondence with Emerson, Goethe and others.

¹³ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Poems* (London Routledge, n.d.). See Michael John Kooy, *Coleridge Schiller and Aesthetic Education* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002) and Bishop C. Hunt Jr. "Coleridge and the endeavor of Philosophy," *PMLA* 91:5 (Oct. 1976) 829-839.

¹⁴ cf. Robert V. Hine, *Josiah Royce, from Grass Valley to Harvard* (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1992) and the foreword by John Smith to Josiah Royce, *Lectures on Modern Idealism* (New Haven Yale Univ. Press, 1964).

¹⁵ Borden Parker Bowne, *Personalism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1908).

Theological perspective. He called his view Personal Idealism,¹⁶ yet he seemed critical of Bowne's approach. Howison was reliant more on the Kantian notion of freedom than many of the Hegelians, and yet his Idealistic Philosophy ran parallel to Royce and many of the more Absolute Idealists.

Amos Bronson Alcott started a school in Concord, New Hampshire, where lectures and seminars in Philosophy were held. Alcott was a self taught farmer who valued education highly. Through essays and lectures, Alcott, together with the other New England Transcendentalists, taught a Platonic Philosophy long before Philosophy became an academic subject in the U.S.A. and before many American Universities included Philosophy in the curriculum.¹⁷

Likewise William Torrey Harris, a non-graduate of Yale who became interested in Idealism through Alcott, started a Philosophy discussion group along with the German immigrant Henry Conrad Brokmeyer. Although they were both influenced by the Transcendentalists, they quickly adopted a more Hegelian stance. Harris founded the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* in 1867. After the group's breakup in the 1870-80s Harris became Commissioner of Education (1889).¹⁸ The S. C. Griggs Company of Chicago, Illinois, published a number of monographs to introduce the public to German Philosophy in the latter part of the 19th Century. The company published works dealing with Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel and Leibniz by noted philosophers and writers of the day including George Morris, John Dewey, Noah Porter and W. T. Harris.¹⁹ John Elof Boodin,²⁰ professor of Philosophy at USC and later UCLA, put Idealism at the fore in Southern California.

After the turn of the century, Ralph Tyler Flewelling along with W. H. Werkmeister and Wilbur Long established the Personalist School of Philosophy at the University of Southern California. Here Idealism was merged with Personalism to the extent that the line between Realism and Idealism became blurred.²¹ Flewelling wrote a monograph on Bergson's personal Realism, which some might consider a misnomer, since they include Bergson in the Idealist camp.²²

¹⁶ G. H. Howison, "In the Matter of Personal Idealism" *Mind* XII (1903) 225-234, and *The Limits of Evolution and other Essays* (New York: Macmillan, 1901).

¹⁷ cf. J. Bregman, "Alcott's Transcendental Neoplatonism and the Concord Summer School", *Alexandria* 5 (2000) 253-270.

¹⁸ cf. James H. Canfield "William Torrey Harris – Teacher, Philosopher, Friend," *American Monthly Review of Reviews* (Aug. 1906) 164-166, and Herbert W. Schneider, *A History of American Philosophy* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1963) 388-392.

¹⁹ John Dewey, *Leibniz's New Essays concerning the Human Understanding* (Chicago: Griggs, 1888), Noah Porter, *Kant's Ethics* (Chicago: Griggs, 1886), William T. Harris, *Hegel's Logic* (Chicago: Griggs, 1890) and George S. Morris, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (Chicago: Griggs, 1886)

²⁰ cf. H. W. Schneider *op. cit.*, 424-427.

²¹ Thomas O. Buford & Harold H. Oliver, *Personalism Revisited Its Proponents and Critics* (New York: Rodopi, 2002) 307-320.

²² See below notes 27 & 28.

In the Post Napoleonic Era in France, Idealism came to the Philosophic fore with Viktor Cousin. Cousin was not only responsible for bringing the Idealism of Hegel and Schelling to France, but also the philosophy of John Locke. With regard to the turn towards Neo-Platonism, Cousin translated the works of Proclus Diadochus (1820-1827) and Plato,²³ which gave the future generations of Philosophers an insight into the Hellenistic Platonic thinking.

Charles Renouvier brought Kantianism into the French Intellectual milieu in the latter half of the 19th century with a philosophy he specifically called Le Neo-Criticisme.²⁴ By the turn of the century he had turned his philosophical sights on Personalism (1903). Allegedly he had some influence on William James in the United States.²⁵

Other idealists were Jean Gaspard Ravaisson-Mollien, a follower of Schelling and Leon Brunschwig, one of the founders of the *Revue de Metaphysique et de Morale*. Brunschwig undertook to reinterpreting Descartes in more or less idealist terms, bringing Rationalism and Idealism together to match the thought of Spinoza and Leibniz. Jules Lachelier concerned himself with the problem of induction and the relationship between Empiricism and Spiritualism,²⁶ while Émile Boutroux concerned himself in the same general areas of study calling his philosophy a spiritualism. He was concerned with the implications of the Kantian Philosophy for science. All this naturally led to Henri Bergson.

In addition to the work of Viktor Cousin the turn to Neo-Platonism received an impetus from Henri Bergson with his lectures on Plotinus at the Collège de France (1897-1898).²⁷ While Flewelling²⁸ refers to Bergson's philosophy as a Realistic Personalism, others from the Idealist camp see him as an Idealist. Notable among those are Radhakrishnan²⁹ and that famous refused PhD of Harvard University, Mary Whiton Calkins.³⁰ While Bergson attempts to place his philosophical thinking between French

²³ Antonie Vos, *The Philosophy of John Duns Scotus* (Edinburgh: Univ. Press, 2006) 542.

²⁴ Gabriel Séailles, *La Philosophie de Charles Renouvier Introductions L'Étude du Néo-Criticisme* (Paris: Alcan, 1905).

²⁵ See for example: "Letter to Renouvier," in Henry James, *The letters of William James II* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1920) 44-46. See also: William James, *Collected Essays and Reviews* (London: Longmans Green, 1920) 46fn.

²⁶ Jules Lachelier, *Du Fondement de L'Induction suivie de Psychologie et Métaphysique*, Édition Troisième (Paris: Alcan, 1898).

²⁷ See Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (New York: Modern Library, 1944) 384fn.

²⁸ Ralph Tyler Flewelling, *Bergson and Personal Realism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1920) 24-25.

²⁹ Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, "Bergson and Absolute Idealism I," *Mind* 28 (1919) 41-53 and II, 275-296.

³⁰ Mary Whiton Calkins, "Henri Bergson: Personalist," *The Philosophical Review* 21:6 (Nov 1912) 667-675. Mary Whiton Calkins was an instructor in Greek from Wellesley College. After attending lectures and Seminars at Harvard she presented her thesis on 'An experimental research on the association of ideas' (May 28, 1895), before Professors Palmer, James, Royce, Münsterberg, Harris and Dr. Santayana, it was unanimously voted that "Miss Calkins satisfied all customary requirements for the degree." In Harvard's

Spiritualism and Science, his problematic is firmly in the Idealist camp. His interest in evolution harks back to the same interest as Howison and American Idealists. Bergson's interest in Time and Duration as explicated in *Time and Free Will* harks back both to Kant and the Calvinist Jonathan Edwards, in addition to Bowne and the Personalists. Calkins is correct when she points out Bergson's Idealism and his notion of continuous self creation.³¹ But to give Realist interpretations of Bergson a fair hearing, one only needs to point to his connections with the Psychology of William James. One suspects, however, that given the friendship between James and Royce, and their repeated discussions it cannot be said that James was not familiar with the Idealist problematic. In an important sense Pragmatism is not that far removed from Idealism.

Neo-Thomism to Gilson-

Generally Neo-Thomism or Neo-Scholasticism is traced to Pope Leo XIII and the Encyclical *Aeterni Patris*³² urging the faithful to return to the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas as the foundation of Theology and Christian Intellectual Life. But the movement towards the Philosophy of Aquinas has an immediate ancestry in the early and mid 19th century with Kleutgen in Switzerland, Taparelli and Zigliara at the Roman College.³³ Aloysius Taparelli (Prospero d'Azeglio) was a Jesuit Philosopher and Sociologist. Josef Wilhelm Karl Kleutgen studied Philology in the early 1830s especially Plato and the Greek Tragedies, but by 1832 he embarked on a course of study to prepare for the Priesthood. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1834. He taught Ethics at Fribourg and Rhetoric in Brig.³⁴ From 1843 he was in Rome and allegedly wrote the first draft of the *Aeterni Patris* or at the very least consulted on it.³⁵ Tommaso Maria Zigliara was a Corsican born Cardinal, Philosopher and Theologian. He became co-president of the College of Thomas Aquinas in Rome founded by Leo XIII. In addition to the College of St. Thomas, Leo set up the Institut Supérieur de Philosophie at Louvain. When Belgium was under the control of Holland, William I set up a University (Rijksuniversiteit) at

records this communication was noted, but not considered. Harvard refused to grant her the doctorate. Radcliff offered to grant her the degree, but Mary refused because she had attended Lectures and Seminars at Harvard, therefore deserved the degree from Harvard. Mary returned to Wellesley where she continued to teach Psychology, Philosophy, Greek and other subjects. In 1905 Mary was elected president of the American Psychological Association and the president of the American Philosophical Association in 1918. See <http://www.webster.edu/~woolfm/marycalkins.html> (Accessed April 16, 2009).

³¹ *Ibid*, 671.

³² Pope Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris* Encyclical On The Restoration Of Christian Philosophy available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_04081879_aeterni-patris_en.html (accessed April 16, 2009). Paragraph 31 is of most import in regard to Philosophy and Paragraph 30 for the other sciences.

³³ Scott D. Seay, "For the Defense and Beauty of the Catholic Faith: The Rise of Neo-Scholasticism among European Catholic Intellectuals, 1824-1879," *Logos* 5:3 (Summer 2002) 132-146. See especially 139-143.

³⁴ See *The Catholic Encyclopedia* at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08667a.htm> (accessed April 16, 2009).

³⁵ Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 18.

Louvain, but once Belgium became independent the Catholic Bishops of Belgium established the Université Catholique de Louvain³⁶ where it was natural to set up a school of Neo-Scholastic Philosophy.³⁷ Désiré-Félicien-Francois-Joseph Cardinal Mercier Archbishop of Mechlin and Primate of Belgium was made the first head of the Institut and through his courage and hard work through WWI, Louvain and the Institut became the bastion of Catholic education that it remains today.³⁸

One of Mercier's students Maurice De Wulf became the premier historian of medieval Philosophy. Mercier had encouraged De Wulf to go to Paris and contact Hauréau who had made a study of the many medieval manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale and published a definitive *Histoire de la Philosophie Scholastique*.³⁹ De Wulf thought Hauréau's work was somewhat lacking and proceeded to write his own *Histoire de la Philosophie Médiévale* in 1900.⁴⁰ De Wulf subsequently lectured in Philosophy at Harvard (1922) and published a two volume work on the *Philosophy and Civilization in The Middle Ages*.⁴¹ De Wulf took sides with Hauréau against Viktor Cousin by seeing Philosophy in the Middle Ages as independent of Theology. Cousin, who was primarily interested in Early Medieval Philosophy especially that of John Scotus Eriugena, felt as did Eriugena that "True Philosophy was True Theology" for the Medieval mind. De Wulf rectified that situation making the study of Medieval Philosophy something more proper for Philosophers than Theologians, thereby removing some of the parochialism from such study. De Wulf's successor in 1939 was Fernand van Steenberghen who not only was an historian of 13th century Philosophy⁴² and did significant work on Siger de Brabant, but he also was a Philosopher in his own right dealing with Ontology, Epistemology and Philosophical Theology.⁴³ Also in 1938 Herman van Breda, a graduate student, rescued the Husserl Archives from possible destruction by the Nazis and moved them to Louvain. He established the Husserl Archives there, and henceforth Louvain has become a center for both Phenomenology and Neo-Scholasticism. In fact, in the thought of many individuals the two have been combined.

In France the two leading Neo-Scholastic representatives were Etienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain. Both Philosophers were instrumental in the spread of Thomism in the

³⁶ The founding of the University of Louvain goes back to 1425, but it did not become the Catholic University until 1834, when the Rijksuniversiteit closed.

³⁷ Sometimes there is difference between the terms Neo-Thomism and Neo-Scholasticism; in this paper I will refer to them interchangeably.

³⁸ John C. Reville S. J. "The Good Shepherd of Mechlin" *The century Magazine* (1918) 764-778.

³⁹ Barthélemy Hauréau, *Histoire de la Philosophie Scholastique*. 2 vols. (Paris: Pagnerre. 1850).

⁴⁰ Maurice de Wulf, *History of Mediæval Philosophy*, 2 Vols. Trans: E. C. Messenger (New York: Nelson, 1935, and 1938).

⁴¹ Armand Maurer, *Being and Knowing* (Toronto: PIMS, 1990) 467.

⁴² Fernand Van Steenberghen, *La Philosophie au XIII^e Siècle* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1966).

⁴³ Fernand Van Steenberghen, *Epistemology* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1970) and *Ontology* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1970) both trans. by L. Moonan and *Hidden God* Trans. T. Crowley (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1966).

U.S.A. and Canada. Paris born of a Catholic father and Reformed mother, Maritain was baptized into the Reformed (Huguenot) Church. He studied at the Sorbonne at the beginning of the 20th century and married a Russian Jewish immigrant in 1904. Bergson and Leon Bloy were the primary influences which led him to be baptized in the Roman Church in 1906. Maritain was lecturing in the United States when the Nazis took over France in 1940 and he remained in the U.S.A. during the war. In 1948 he took a position teaching Philosophy at Princeton where he remained until his retirement in 1953.⁴⁴ Étienne Gilson was also born in Paris of Burgundian parents. He also studied at the Sorbonne graduating in 1907. He achieved a Doctorate from the Sorbonne in 1913 with a dissertation on Descartes. He taught at Lille, Strasbourg and the Sorbonne and served in WWI as a machine gunner earning the Croix de Guerre for bravery. He became professor of Medieval Philosophy at the College de France in 1932. In 1951 he resigned from the College to take up full residence in Canada at the Pontifical Institute for Medieval Studies which he helped found. He died in 1978 at 94.⁴⁵ Together Gilson and Maritain came to be known as representatives of the Existential Neo-Thomist School. Gilson became embroiled in controversy with Bréhier and Van Steenberghen over his notion of a Christian Philosophy, and it is sometimes thought that this controversy, at least in part, prompted him to leave for Canada.

At about the time of Vatican II, Thomism divided with the development of Transcendental Thomism represented by Joseph Marechal, Bernard Lonergan, and Karl Rahner, who took seriously an encounter with the Kantian Philosophy.⁴⁶ Other Thomists took to the U.S.A. and Canada establishing schools in New York, Washington and South Bend, Indiana. Mostly Jesuit schools, these schools were responsible for the growing influence of Neo-Scholasticism in America. Not all Thomists were Catholic, however, as Mortimer Adler and the Anglican theologians Austin Farrer and E. L. Mascall should also be included in that camp.⁴⁷ Mortimer Adler was responsible for the Great Books movement in the U.S.A. and the establishment of the St. John's Colleges in Annapolis and New Mexico.

While Neo-Thomism may be described as a naïve or immediate realism, after Aristotle and Thomas, there are some significant aspects of the Angelic Doctor's philosophy which hark back to Neo-Platonism. In fact Aquinas thought is sometimes referred to as an Aristotelian Neo-Platonism as opposed to a Neo-Platonic Aristotelianism. This epistemological immediate realism seems somewhat contrary to the ancient idealism of Neo-Platonists, but remains an important dividing point between Thomism and Idealism. Historically Thomas himself made commentaries on both Dionysius and the *Liber de causis* which deal directly with Neo-Platonist thinking.

⁴⁴ James C. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought from the Enlightenment to Vatican II* (NY: Macmillan, 1971) 391-392.

⁴⁵ See Gifford Lecture Series Biography, at <http://www.giffordlectures.org/Author.asp?AuthorID=70> (accessed April 16, 2009).

⁴⁶ See O. C. Thomas "Being and Some Theologians" *Harvard Theological Review* 70:1-2 (1977) 137-160. for a short discussion of the differences between these Philosophers and Gilson and Protestants such as Tillich, Mac Quarrie and Neville.

⁴⁷ Livingston, *op. cit.*, 387.

Considering that the *Liber De Causis* is a compendium of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, it cannot be but noticed that Neo-Platonism played a large role in Aquinas' thought. He quoted Dionysius multiple times even in regard to doctrinal matters, since it was believed that Dionysius was the disciple of St. Paul.

Neo-Platonism beyond Bergson-

That modern Neo-Platonic studies begins with Bergson is indubitable, not so much in the sense that he had no predecessors who studied Neo-Platonism, but more because of his successors. Émile Bréhier, who was a student of Bergson and his successor, began the modern French Philosophical analysis of Neo-Platonism with his monograph on Plotinus in 1928.⁴⁸ Bréhier was a follower of Hegel and Schelling, but often referred to himself as a Spiritual Positivist.⁴⁹ Here, the lines of difference between the various Philosophies again become blurred. Bréhier was responsible for the edition and French translation of the *Enneads* of Plotinus in the *Collection Budé*, and a *History of Philosophy* of seven volumes.⁵⁰ Towards the end of his life he republished his 1910 monograph on Chrysippus and the Stoics.⁵¹ His controversy with Gilson can be summarized in his statement that the idea of a "Christian Philosophy" is as absurd as the notion of a "Christian Mathematics". Van Steenberghe was closer to Bréhier than might be thought in his criticism of the notion of a specific Christian Philosophy, which for van Steenberghe was nothing more than Theology in disguise and not Philosophy at all. There were, are and may be Christians who do Philosophy, but there is no such thing as a Christian Philosophy, understood as a Philosophy peculiar to Christians.⁵²

Maurice Blondel also combined Neoplatonism with Pragmatism at about the same time. His trilogy of thought, being, and action was evidenced early in his work *L'Action*⁵³ and through *L'être et le êtres*⁵⁴ and his 1946 work *L'esprit chrétien*.⁵⁵ In 1897 he became

⁴⁸ Émile Bréhier, *The Philosophy of Plotinus* trans. Joseph Thomas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962) trans. of the original French *La Philosophie de Plotin*.

⁴⁹ Wayne John Hankey, "Re-evaluating E. R. Dodds' Platonism" *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 103 (2005) http://classics.dal.ca/Faculty%20and%20Staff/Re-Evaluating_Dodds.php (accessed April 16, 2009).

⁵⁰ Three volumes deal with Ancient and Medieval Philosophy and four volumes deal with Modern Philosophy. In addition there are various supplements for Byzantine Philosophy etc.

⁵¹ Émile Bréhier, *Chrysippe et L'Ancien Stoicisme* (Paris: Alcan, 1951).

⁵² For further discussion of this topic see Marcia L. Colish, *Remapping Scholasticism* (Toronto: PIMS, 2000) 7-8 <http://www.pims.ca/pdf/colish2000.pdf> (accessed April 16, 2009) and Avery Dulles, "Can Philosophy Be Christian?" *First Things* (April, 2000) http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id_article=2599 (accessed April 16, 2009).

⁵³ Maurice Blondel *L'Action – Essai d'une critique de la vie et d'une science de la pratique* (Paris Presses Universitaires, 1950).

⁵⁴ Maurice Blondel, *L'être et le êtres - Essai d'Ontologie concrète et intégrale* (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1963).

⁵⁵ Maurice Blondel, *L'esprit chrétien* (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1946).

professor at Lille and retired because of the onset of blindness in 1927. His work was continued however through a secretary.

Jean Trouillard (1907-1984) was professor of Theology and Philosophy specializing in Neo-Platonism especially Proclus. In 1959 he became professor at L'Institut Catholique de Paris. Early his principal works were theses on *La purification plotinienne* and a secondary thesis *La procession plotinienne*. From there he moved on to Proclus Diadochus with a translation of the *Éléments de Théologie*⁵⁶ in 1965 and a small book entitled *L'Un et l'Âme selon Proclus*⁵⁷ and finally with a book on *La Mystagogie de Proclus*⁵⁸ in 1982.

André-Jean Festugière (1898- 1982) was a Dominican who published a number of documents on the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon. But he also worked on the *Corpus Hermeticum*⁵⁹ coming up with a four volume edition to rival that of Walter Scott. He also published editions of Proclus' commentaries on the *Timaeus*⁶⁰ and the *Republic*⁶¹ the former in five volumes and the latter in three. In addition to his work on Hellenistic Philosophy including Epicurus, he published an edition of Erasmus' *Enchiridion*⁶² and studies on Marsilius Ficino⁶³ thus relating Hellenistic to Renaissance Neo-Platonism.

The next generation of Neo-Platonists in France includes Pierre Hadot (b. 1922) who gave a good deal of study to Victorinus and his influence on Augustine, as well as Porphyry and the so called "Western" path of Neo-Platonic influence.⁶⁴ He also was one of the first to bring the thought of Ludwig Wittgenstein to the French Philosophical Milieu.⁶⁵ From the Hellenistic milieu, he determined that Philosophy was in addition to being theoretical, a set of "Spiritual Exercises" anticipating to some degree the work of Michel Foucault.⁶⁶ Pierre Aubenque (b. 1929), though not strictly a Neo-Platonist was interested in the Philosophy of Aristotle and his interests were in the concept of Analogy, brought forth from Thomas Aquinas into Neo-Scholasticism, and Seneca. He, along with

⁵⁶ Proclus, *Éléments de Théologie* trans. Jean Trouillard (Paris: Aubier, 1965).

⁵⁷ Jean Trouillard, *L'Un et l'Âme selon Proclus* (Paris: les Belles lettres, 1972).

⁵⁸ Jean Trouillard, *La Mystagogie de Proclus* (Paris: les Belles lettres, 1982).

⁵⁹ Hermès Trismégiste, *Corpus hermeticum*, 4 tomes. éd. Arthur D. Nock et André-Jean Festugière (Paris: les Belles lettres, 1946-1954).

⁶⁰ Proclus, *Commentaires sur le Timée* 5 Tomes (Paris: Vrin – CNRS, 1966-69).

⁶¹ Proclus, *Commentaires sur la République*, Tomes 1-3 (Paris: Vrin – CNRS, 1970).

⁶² Érasme *Enchiridion militis christianis* (Paris: Vrin, 1971).

⁶³ André-Jean Festugière *La philosophie de l'amour de Marsile Ficin et son influence sur la littérature française au XVIe siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1980).

⁶⁴ Pierre Hadot, *Plotin, Porphyre, Études néoplatoniciennes* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1999).

⁶⁵ Pierre Hadot, *Wittgenstein et les limites du langage* (Paris: Vrin, 2004).

⁶⁶ See: Wayne J. Hankey, "Philosophy as a way of Life for Christians." *Laval Théologique et Philosophique* 59:2 (June 2003) 193-224.

Trouillard, was influenced to a large extent by Martin Heidegger and Heidegger's lectures on Ancient Philosophy.

The recent retrieval of Neo-Platonism is not confined to France. Arthur Hilary Armstrong from England was a writer and scholar on Plotinus. He eventually was senior fellow at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia. He was translator of the Loeb Library texts of Plotinus as well as author of at least one study strictly on Plotinus.⁶⁷ He was also the general editor of the *Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*. He also did a study of St. Augustine and Christian Platonism and a monograph on the Church of England the Methodists and Society. The Hegelian James Doull also took a professorship at Dalhousie and his student and successor Wayne Hankey⁶⁸ represents today a large measure of Neo-Platonic influence in Canada. John Niemeyer Findlay (1903-1987) from South Africa was Professor at Transvaal University, University of Otago in New Zealand, Kings College and Boston University at one time or another, giving Neo-Platonism, Platonism and Hegelianism a multinational face. In his Gifford Lectures he developed what he called a Rational Mysticism where he incorporated the One of Neo-Platonism with an identification to the Absolute of Hegelianism.⁶⁹ He was educated in Analytic Philosophy, especially the Wittgensteinian type, but turned to Hegel, Husserl and Plato. Philip Merlan (1897-1968) an Austrian from the University of Vienna and friend of Heinrich Gomperz after the Anschluss, came to the United States and secured a position teaching at Scripps College and Claremont Graduate School, where he lectured on German thought and offered seminars on Neo-Platonism (Plotinus) and Hegel. He held a doctorate both in Philosophy and Jurisprudence and for some time prior to coming to the U.S.A. did research in both areas. He wrote on a variety of topics with the most important works being *From Platonism to Neoplatonism*⁷⁰ and *Monopsychism, Mysticism Metconsciousness*.⁷¹ He along with his wife Franciszka, also a philosopher, were pillars of the high quality of intellectual pursuits within the Claremont community of colleges.⁷²

⁶⁷ Arthur Hilary Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Cambridge: University Press, 1940).

⁶⁸ Wayne J. Hankey, *One Hundred Years of Neoplatonism in France: A Brief Philosophical History* published with/in: Jean Marc Narbonne, *Levinas and the Greek Heritage* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006) 97-248.

⁶⁹ John Niemeyer Findlay, *The Discipline of the Cave* (NY: Humanities, 1966) and John Niemeyer Findlay, *The Transcendence of the Cave* (NY: Humanities, 1967) see also: J. N. Findlay *Hegel: a Re-Examination* (NY: Humanities, 1964).

⁷⁰ Philip Merlan, *From Platonism to Neoplatonism*, 2nd ed. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960).

⁷¹ Philip Merlan, *Monopsychism Mysticism Metaconsciousness*, 2nd ed. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969).

⁷² Prof. Merlan passed away a few weeks after consenting to be the Chairman of my Dissertation Committee. I dedicated my Dissertation to his memory. I completed my German Language Exam under Franciszka, reading Wittgenstein. She and her husband knew Wittgenstein in Vienna. After completing the exam we had a wonderful discussion of Wittgenstein's artistic personality, something not available in the Analytic Philosophy classroom.

In Germany, Werner Beierwaltes (b. 1931) represents another branch of the retrieval of Neo-Platonism. His interests extended to Proclus,⁷³ from Plotinus⁷⁴ to Eriugena⁷⁵ and the idealist movement at large. He took an interest in Heidegger and took seriously Heidegger's critique of Metaphysics as Onto-Theology, in an important way leading to the post-modern reading of Neo-Platonism. Like Merlan he has a broad range of interests making him a "renaissance man" in the German intellectual scene. As an important part of the retrieval one should also note the contributions of Dominic J. O'Meara who wrote on Plotinus,⁷⁶ edited studies on Platonic and Neo-Platonic Political Philosophy⁷⁷ and also edited the volume *Neoplatonism and Christian Philosophy* for the International Society for Platonic Studies.⁷⁸

With the post-modernists a movement known as Radical Orthodoxy took root. It not only combined certain features of late Neo-Platonism, but the Neo-Orthodoxy of Karl Barth and the Oxford Movement along with some concepts of the Cambridge Platonists. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward are the chief proponents of this movement, though they have many allies including Jean-Luc Marion, to a some extent Jean-Marc Narbonne, and James K. A. Smith bringing Radical Orthodoxy to the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition.⁷⁹

A virtual explosion of interests in Neo-Platonism has emerged in recent times with Stephen Gersh,⁸⁰ Dermot Moran⁸¹ and others interested in the Philosophy of John Scotus Eriugena, the Ninth Century Carolingian Neo-Platonist, Phenomenology⁸² and recent tendencies in Postmodern thought, including Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and the Barthianism of Jacques Ellul.⁸³

⁷³ Werner Beierwaltes, *PROKLOS: Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1965).

⁷⁴ Werner Beierwaltes, *Das wahre Selbst, Studien zu Plotins Begriff des Geistes und des Einen* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2001).

⁷⁵ Werner Beierwaltes, ed, *Eriugena Studien zu seinen Quellen* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1980).

⁷⁶ Dominic J. O'Meara, *Plotinus and Introduction to the Enneads* (Oxford: University Press, 1993).

⁷⁷ Dominic J. O'Meara ed., *Platonopolis: Platonic Political Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: University Press, 2003).

⁷⁸ Dominic J. O'Meara ed. *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought* (Albany: State Univ. of NY Press, 1982)

⁷⁹ James K. A. Smith and James H. Olthuis, eds. *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

⁸⁰ Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena* (Leiden: Brill Archive, 1978).

⁸¹ Dermot Moran, *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena: A Study of Idealism in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 2004).

⁸² Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (New York: Ebooks Corp. Routledge, 2000).

⁸³ Jacques Ellul, *Ce que je Crois* (Paris: Grasset et Fasquelle, 1987) Although Ellul calls himself a Universalist and at times seems to advocate what might be seen as Liberalism this book is distinctively Barthian in tone, and heavily influence by "Word of God" Theologies.

The History of this Neo-Platonic retrieval cannot be understood completely without mentioning the influence of Henri de Lubac and Jean Daniélou and Patristic texts through the development of the *Sources Chrétiennes*, and the studies of many such as Hans Urs von Balthasar⁸⁴ working on the Greek Church Father Maximus the Confessor and his critical study of Karl Barth.⁸⁵

I would be remiss in also not considering the work of Eastern Orthodox Philosophers and Theologians in this brief history of the Neo-Platonism Retrieval. Orthodoxy has always maintained a Platonic world-view from Dionysius and Maximus the Confessor to Gregory Palamas and the Scholars migrating to Venice after the conquest of the Byzantine Empire. But in more recent times the Spiritualism and Universalism of Orthodoxy has again come to the fore with the works of father and son Nicholay and Vladimir Lossky⁸⁶ and even more recently by the work of Edward Moore.⁸⁷ Needless to say as Thomas Aquinas is to the Roman Church, so is Maximus the Confessor to the Eastern Orthodox, and Calvin and Luther to Protestants.

R. Baine Harris has edited a series of volumes concerning *Neoplatonism in Contemporary Thought* for the *International Society For Neoplatonic Studies*. Among these are a volume edited by Lenn E. Goodman on *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, and a volume by a former friend from UCLA student days, Parviz Morewedge on *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*. Other volumes include topics such as Gnosticism, Indian Philosophy, Nature and Western Aesthetics as well as that of O'Meara, already mentioned, on Christian Thought. The reader should not get the impression from the fact that this essay deals primarily with Christian Philosophical influences that Neo-Platonism is confined to Christian thinkers. Today Neo-Platonism's influence can be felt almost everywhere from Art to Social Theory, from Set Theory and Category Theory to Ecology, from Charles Sanders Pierce to Alfred North Whitehead.

Philosophical Considerations-

Ever since Hegel wrote his history of Platonism quoting Plotinus' *Ennead V* concerning the notion of the One:

That Being is and remains God, and is not outside of Him, but is His very self: "Absolute unity upholds things that they fall not asunder; it is the firm bond of unity in all, penetrating all—bringing together and unifying things

⁸⁴ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe according to Maximus the Confessor* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press Communio, 1988). This is a translation of earlier German and French editions.

⁸⁵ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press Communio, 1992).

⁸⁶ Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Yonkers: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1997) originally published in 1976 and N. O. Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy* (NY: IUP, 1951).

⁸⁷ Edward Moore, *Origen of Alexandria and St. Maximus the Confessor: An Analysis and Critical Evaluation of Their Eschatological Doctrines* (Boca Raton: Dissertation.com, 2004).

which in mutual opposition were in danger of separation. We term it the One and the Good...."⁸⁸

the One has been identified with Hegel's Absolute. This identification of the One with the Absolute is quite natural as a connection between the Idealism in 19th century with a form of Ancient Idealism, despite Burnyeat's assertion that "The Greek use of predicates 'true' and 'false' embodies the assumption of realism on which I have been insisting all along."⁸⁹ Burnyeat's notion of the absence of Idealism in Greek thought fails to consider the Neo-Platonists, when making this assertion. Nonetheless Idealists of the Hegelian type recognized a similitude in Plotinus with Hegel and this brought Plotinus' thought to the fore by the end of the 19th century.

Idealism should be seen as the view that ultimately reality and consciousness have the same general structure. While Realism distinguishes between mind and nature, Idealism does not entirely subscribe to the ultimate nature of such a distinction. On the contrary Idealism is often seen as the view "that all reality including both objects and knowings, belongs to a single interdependent and coherent system."⁹⁰ Here, Ontology and Epistemology are mixed so that they ultimately are one and the same subject. Ultimately Idealism becomes a Monism. This is not to say that all Monisms are Idealist, for certainly Materialism and the hylozoism of the Stoics are also Monisms. But it does assert that Idealism reflects a Monist view of reality, where knowing and what is known are intimately interconnected. What Idealism further asserts beyond a Monist view is that ultimately reality is nothing but spirit or thought. The fundamental connection between what is known and what it is that knows is a similitude relation. Platonism, generally speaking, is hereby an Idealism, for the true and ultimate reality for Plato and his followers is ideas, either thoughts or ideals.

Neo-Platonism is a philosophy which essentially sees reality as one single chain of being, where the top of the chain and the bottom of the chain are related to one another through relations betwixt intermediaries and their relation to the top. All that is reality then can be fixed (located) somewhere in that great chain of being. The chain is vertical in the sense of value, though not necessarily in space. What is higher on the chain is higher because it has a greater value than what is below it. The chain becomes a pyramid, where the apex or summit is the One of Plato's *Parmenides*. What makes the chain work is an overall relationship between the summit and all else, one of emanation. The distinction between pagan and Christian Neo-Platonism becomes one of creation or emanation as the defining point for each. Since Christianity adheres to the fundamental idea of creation the Christian Neo-Platonist sees the idea of emanation as a value relation. The One emanates its value to all others in the chain. The One and Many problem is solved in Christian Neo-Platonism by distinguishing the initium of Being from the initium of value that a being has which has been imparted from Being itself, which is

⁸⁸ George W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* Vol. 2 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995) 415.

⁸⁹ Miles Burnyeat, "Idealism and Greek Philosophy: What Descartes saw and Berkeley Missed" *Philosophical Review* 91 (1982) 26.

⁹⁰ Thomas English Hill, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (NY: Ronald Press, 1961) 8.

identified as the One and God. Causality is not only linear, but also vertical. In Linear Causality the cause is prior in time to its effect, while in Vertical Causality, the cause is prior in being from its effect, but may be temporally simultaneous.

By this, reality is hierarchically arranged and each entity has a place in the Hierarchy, from non-being to being to not-possible being. So the chain or hierarchy runs from a non-being by virtue of excellence to a non-being by virtue of absence, through all else which is being by virtue of its connection to the Being or the One. Here Neo-Platonism is a Philosophy which takes the structure of Reality to reflect the structure of thought. Soul and Spirit are dependent on Intellect, and Intellect is likewise dependent on Unity and Being.

Although we know virtually nothing of the thought of Ammonius Saccas the founder of Neo-Platonism, we can surmise some of that thought from his successors such as Plotinus and his philosophical ancestors of Alexandria such as Philo Judaeus. From Plotinus we learn that there are three Hypostases which form the upper end of Reality. They are the One, Nous and Psyche. Here Thought is evidence in Nous defined as the universal mind and Psyche as the universal Soul. Though the One is sometimes referred to as 'thought thinking itself', this is an Aristotelian concept borrowed by some Neo-Platonists to explain the One's position as the universal subject, and as God, in Aristotle's sense. It is useful at this point to note that for the Neo-Platonists Aristotle was one of their own, and the modern day distinction between Platonism and Aristotelianism did not exist in the Neo-Platonist mind. One should note that many if not most of the commentators on Aristotle were Neo-Platonists.⁹¹

To the further parts of this essay and the complicated history of Neo-Platonism one should note that there is a distinct difference between the Early Neo-Platonism of Plotinus and the post-Iamblichus Neo-Platonists. This distinction is parallel between the western group and the eastern group of influences on Christianity. The western, including Porphyry and Victorinus, was more influential to Augustine, while the eastern, including Proclus and Dionysius Areopagite, seem to be more influential to Orthodoxy, the Mystics and finally to modern day Post-Modernists via Heidegger, although it should be noted that since the early ninth century Dionysius exerted a strong influence on Western Christianity with the translations of Eriugena and others. The eastern seem to reflect on the essential mystic experience as a form of ecstasy and theurgy rather than a pure intellectual exercise that is apparent in Plotinus. Hankey here finds a misreading of Dionysius in Jean-Luc Marion and Vladimir Lossky.⁹² But the main difference between the western and eastern is not the nature of Mysticism and the approach to God, but the Ontology of the One. In the one case the One is ineffable and non-being by excess while in the other the One is ineffable in a negative sense that it cannot be reached by thought, but only by a mystical experience or theurgic intuition. Combine that with Heidegger and Barth and a misrepresentation takes place which leads ultimately to Fideism. The chain of being is a one-way street from God to matter and there is no return except through obedience to the "Word of God" (Barth) or by the accusation of onto-theology

⁹¹ See: Antony C. Lloyd, *Form and Universal in Aristotle* (Liverpool: F. Cairns, 1981) 62.

⁹² Wayne J. Hankey, "Misrepresenting Neoplatonism in Contemporary Christian Dionysian Polemic: Eriugena and Nicholas of Cusa versus Vladimir Lossky and Jean-Luc Marion," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 82:4 (Fall, 2008) 683-703. See especially 697.

(Heidegger). There is no Metaphysics in this postmodern use of late Neo-Platonism, only a narrative and Meta-narrative which is only theological.

But for Neo-Platonists reality is one thing (a whole) with the One at the top. This One is not the whole, and stands above as a hypostasis, while matter represents the other pole of the whole as a substrate. Both poles are non being. The one is οὐκ ὄν while the other is μὴ ὄν. Being becomes then a group entity bounded on both ends from outside by non-being. Neo-Platonists, contrary to their modern counterparts, see each individual soul as ascending to the upper pole and descending to the lower pole. The One is identified with the Good or form of the Good in Plato, and from this evil can be explained as a matter of distance from the One. Matter is farthest from the Good, so in one sense it is evil, but only ontologically by distance. All beings can be seen as both good and evil, and their distance from the Good determines the evil that they might do, or possess. So a soul by turning towards its baser elements becomes evil, and a soul is good by its turning towards the One or God. But the soul turned upwards is not a total mystic experience or an emotionally grounded intuition, but the soul turns upward through a sort of intellection, a love of Wisdom (Philosophy) and dialectic the intellectual ground of Metaphysics guided by Nous, the intellectual principle.⁹³ The Neo-Platonic world view thus becomes both a Cosmology-Ontology and also a manner of being through love, with a religious quest for the Primal Unity found in the One.

Theology for the pagan Neo-Platonist is the highest aim of Metaphysics, and for the Christian who finds favor in the Neo-Platonic world view, an elaboration of what reality is and our place in it under a creator God who emanates value to all beneath Him through his act of creation and providence.

There arises within the Neo-Platonic milieu two conceptually different Theologies, Positive (*kataphasis*) and Negative (*apophasis*). These play an important role in the postmodern post-Heidegger developments of Christian Theology. The former is confined to metaphor and symbol, a narrative of that of which one cannot speak, or know. The latter is a negative approach to the superiority of God by denial of metaphysical categories of existence and epistemological reflection, because God is that of which one cannot speak accurately.

Armstrong distinguishes three forms of Negative Theology in Plotinus: 1) the mathematical or negative Theology of the traditional, 2) the negative theology of Positive Transcendence, and 3) the Negative Theology of Infinite Subject.⁹⁴ The first is simply the understanding of the One in terms of limit and predication that results in the negation of all measure to the One. The second is a more or less positive in that it leads to the absolute transcendence of the One with a religious aspect or perspective that yields a first cause and *pronoia* or providence. In the third, Negative Theology yields an abandonment of all distinctions between subject and object in the One. The One becomes God hereby becoming the unlimited self where "all things are resolved into a unity in which knowledge and consciousness, in the ordinary sense of the word, become impossible."⁹⁵

⁹³ Plotinus, *Ennead* I, 3, 4-6.

⁹⁴ A. H. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1967) 29-37.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 34.

Some might want to see the idea of a chain of being as Gnostic, but this would be a mistake for although the Gnostics posit an hierarchical structure to reality, as did many others, the Gnostics held to a doctrine of a secret wisdom (gnosis). Plotinus was quick to write against the Gnostics,⁹⁶ even though he failed to see the Gnostic-like structures in his own thought. Some may want to see the Chain of Being as leading to a Pantheism like Spinoza. But this would also be a mistake for although there is a pantheistic tendency in Neo-Platonic thought, the One is not the sum total of reality, but the apex of a reality and is in a sense apart from reality by virtue of superiority. All that has being has it in virtue of the One, so in a sense, the One is the Being imparting that value to all others. But the Being of the One is not that of negation, but paradigmatic of what being is by being the Being. Here in Christian terms the One becomes the Being, the "I AM" of Exodus, and the Form (*eikon*) of all that has being. God is thereby the paradigm of being. In an important sense God is the only being by having true being in Himself and by virtue of nothing other than Himself. If this is a Pantheism, then it is the ultimate implication of a theistic view. For the Christian only the God of the "Burning Bush" can assert "I AM" without qualification. All else is mere being in virtue of that "I AM". There is a mysticism in this approach to reality and God, and this is the impetus for Mystics in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition. It should be noted however, that the mysticism of Neo-Platonism is ontological, that is from the contemplation of reality, and different from some mystics which are more psychological, that is from the contemplation of inner thought. Edward Caird points to the mystic and pantheistic nature of Plotinus.

Both, therefore, follow the *via negativa*, and regard our ordinary view of finite things as one that must be abandoned, and even inverted, by him who would know the reality which is hid beneath appearance. But here the similarity ends. For, in the first place, the Pantheist—at least if we take Spinoza as representing Pantheism in its most characteristic form—is one who thinks it possible to have knowledge and, indeed, scientific knowledge of the Absolute; while for Plotinus the Absolute is beyond knowledge, and can only be apprehended in an ecstasy in which all distinct thought is swallowed up and lost.⁹⁷

But one should not be misled to think that the ecstasy of which Plotinus speaks is a mere emotional response to reality and has no epistemic content, for it is at bottom, an ecstasy of intellect, or an intuition of the Absolute nature that is at work here. There is no rejection of Reason as such, but an excess of Reason is affirmed as a power of insight. Thus in an important sense God is not reached through intellect or reasoning alone, but by an excess of reason which comes to us from the higher orders of reality. In other words the principle of intellect has through emanation bestowed on the individual the

⁹⁶ Plotinus, Ennead II,9. See also William Ralph Inge op.cit. The Philosophy of Plotinus I, 103-108

⁹⁷ Edward Caird, *The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers* Vol. 2 (Glasgow: MacLehose, 1904) 234-35.

power of reason and thus by insight beyond reason⁹⁸ comes a knowledge of the Intellectual principle and the One. Ultimately the movement of an individual to the One is first through the soul to the Intellect (Nous) to the One. God is not reached at the level of soul, and not even at the level of intellect, but finally beyond intellect. So the gateway to God is not mere soul or intellect, but through the soul to intellect and beyond.

But again this is not the entire picture as we are reminded by Evelyn Underhill.

It has been said by some critics that the ecstasy of Plotinus was wholly different in kind from the ecstasy of the Christian saints: that it was a philosophic rhapsody, something like Plato's "saving madness," which is also regarded on wholly insufficient evidence as being an affair of the head and entirely unconnected with the heart. At first sight the arid metaphysical language in which Plotinus tries to tell his love, offers some ground for this view. But whatever philosophic towers of Babel he may build on it, the ecstasy itself is a practical matter; and has its root, not in reason, but in a deep seated passion for the Absolute which is far nearer to the Mystic's love of God than to any intellectual curiosity, however sublime.⁹⁹

Here it is that Love so prominent in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition that provides the motivation for the upward way that an individual travels towards a union with the Absolute that tradition sees as perfection. While emanation provides the call to perfection, Love provides the answer to that call. But Love is not merely relational or motivational, Love is also a Hypostasis, or a person in the MacKenna-Page translation.

That Love is a Hypostasis [a "Person"] a Real Being sprung from a Real Being—lower than the parent but authentically existent—is beyond doubt.¹⁰⁰

It is confusing in Plotinus as to whether Love is a separate Hypostasis, or another name for Soul or Intellect. It is not clearly stated in this *Ennead*, and for that matter must be understood in the Greek text. Yet what is clear is that Love is a subject, but 'Person', is a claim of the translators, which should not be understood in a modern sense,¹⁰¹ and leaves open the question as to whether the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is the God of the Philosophers. A "personal God" for the religious may not be present here.

However one ought not be led to believe that all Neoplatonism has to offer is a radical transcendence of God as a Metaphysics. The contrary is more than may be at first apparent. That the Non-Being emanates something of itself to all other beings provides a

⁹⁸ Bréhier described this in terms of "vision." See Bréhier, op. cit., *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, 143-145.

⁹⁹ Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (Whitefish: Kessinger, 2003) 445.

¹⁰⁰ Plotinus, *Ennead* III, 5, 3. ὑπόστασιν δὲ εἶναι καὶ οὐσίαν ἐξ οὐσίας ἐλάττω μὲν τῆς ποιησαμένης, οὐσαν δὲ ὅμως, ἀπιστεῖν οὐ προσήκει.

¹⁰¹ Although "*hypostasis*" can be understood as meaning "person" the more modern meaning of person is in Greek τὸ πρόσωπον.

natural move towards immanence. God is thus not only transcendent but also immanent in the reality He created. This affords a welcome metaphysical justification to Christian belief and theism in general. It is therefore no wonder that the Eastern Orthodox Church in all its many forms has always clung to a Platonic Neo-Platonic Metaphysic. Much of the Platonic Neo-Platonic world view leads to ecology and interpersonal relations for the general hypothesis is the fundamental unity of type of all things under a protective and providential sovereign, who is not only a political-social-legal sovereign, but also an ontological sovereign through a creation-emanation relation. That the deity is king is not only king in the usual sense, but also King in an ontological sense. God is the Being of whom, and to whom, all other beings no matter their degree or kind of being belong. Being is a relation here and the fundamental component of reality is by relation to Being. But Being is while all other beings in some sense become, so that the fundamental distinction of being and becoming is preserved. The Hierarchy of Being tends to preserve the being of Being, and the becoming and possible perfection of all becoming in a return to Being. Thus the relationship between the One and all else is one of emanation-creation and restoration. And thus salvation is defined not in terms of forgiveness for human frailty or sins of commission and omission, but ultimately in restoration to the deity, usually referred to as *theosis*. This divinization process extends not only to persons but to all creation. That is to say that, in some mystical way, all reality returns in some final end to the deity. Thus both the *arche* and *telos* of any given thing (being) is identically the same, either as the One of the Pagan or the God of Judeo-Christian-Islamic traditions.

Negative Theology is the point at which Neo-Platonism can be divided into earlier and later. For Plotinus negative Theology is a kind of "taking away", where what is said of the One is a taking away of finite properties, leaving as a result the nature of the One or Deity.¹⁰² In this way early Neo-Platonism sees a direct connection between the One and the individual Soul, and the purpose of the "upward way" is to achieve union with that One which is transcendent and above all Being and properties. But in later Neo-Platonism there is a shift to seeing an intermediary between the three Hypostases especially the Universal Soul and the soul of each individual. In this way Proclus Diadochus talks of a One of the individual soul as the One in us.¹⁰³ The difference is between what is termed *aphaeresis* and *apophasis*. Dionysius following Proclus might seem to be more on the "One in us" end of things, but he combines in his *Mystical Theology* a bit of both. The process of Negation (taking away to denial *aphaeresis-apophasis*) results in a superlative affirmation for Dionysius.¹⁰⁴ Thus superlatives and negations are wed, and this may seem contradictory, but it is the contradictory nature of thought that leads one to a mystical experience, and it is at this point that Neo-Platonism becomes a form of mysticism. The form of this mysticism is clearly more Ontological than Psychological and experiential, though the psychological and experiential are also

¹⁰² Ben Schomakers, "The Nature of Distance: Neoplatonic and Dionysian Versions of Negative Theology" *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 82:4 (Fall 2008) 595.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 601. Schomakers references Proclus' *In Parmenidem* and *In Timaeum*, but one ought also to compare with Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, Prop. 18, and *Platonic Theology* II, 1.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 609-611.

present in a knowing which is elevated to a "Cloud of Unknowing." Schomakers sees the cloud as reminiscent of Moses ascent to Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19).

...we are already allowed to conclude that Dionysius, too, defended an ascent which consists of two different stages, one preceding the other, which are logically related but which do not automatically lead to each other. In the allegoresis of the life of Moses, the cathartic life and the purificatory rituals that occur on the lower slopes of Mount Sinai usher Moses to the vision of the cloud, while the step into the cloud is a different phase. This step is not undertaken by Moses at his own initiative or made possible by further preparations, but rather by radically abandoning everything that had proven to summon him to come to the cloud.¹⁰⁵

Thus the *aphaeresis* is seen as preparatory to the "transcending unification with God" (*theosis*) as a form of abandonment (*apophasis*).

Yet following Proclus, Dionysius asserts quite clearly that "He who is the pre-eminent Cause of all things intelligibly perceived is not Himself any of those things"¹⁰⁶ The God (One) in Himself is in some sense unapproachable, at least by intellection. The Mystical Union is required in order to know God as creator and providential Lord of all Being. So in effect negative theology does not work in like sense, because God is even outside the scope of negation. In an important way Dionysius seems to do away with Philosophy in this limited sense of knowing God. It is not clear that Philosophy or Theology for that matter can even in any sense approach the greatness of God, because the "I AM" of Exodus is veiled in a cloud, where even our negative judgments are inadequate.

Yet this does not tell us about our inadequacies and the inadequacies of Philosophy-Theology. This should really be understood as referring to the superlative nature of God. In other words it is Metaphysics and not Epistemology. It is not a story about our failure through original sin or as Adam's progeny. It is not an Epistemology of not knowing Noumenon from Phenomenon, or any accompanying Metaphysics of Reality. It is, in an important sense, both. It is about our capacity to know and simultaneously also about the ontological Majesty of God, such that He "transcends all affirmation, and the simple pre-eminence of His absolute nature is outside of every negation—free from every limitation and beyond them all."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 605.

¹⁰⁶ Dionysius, *Mystical Theology* Chapter V.

¹⁰⁷ Dionysius, *Mystical Theology and Celestial Hierarchies* (Fintry Brook: Shrine of Wisdom, 1965) 16. ἐπεὶ καὶ ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν θεῶν ἐστὶν ἡ παντελὴς καὶ ἐνιαία τῶν πάντων αἰτία καὶ ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν ἀφάρεσιν ἡ ὑπεροχὴ τοῦ πάντων ἀπλῶς ἀπολελυμένου καὶ ἐπέκεινα τῶν ὄλων. *Mystical Theology*, V.

Critique of the Theological Turn in Postmodern Neo-Platonism-

Postmodern Theologies and Philosophical-Theologies which find themselves on the side of the recovery of Platonism, rely to a significant extent on Heidegger's critique of Metaphysics as Onto-theology, along with some anti-philosophical views of Karl Barth. For Barth no natural theology or metaphysical account of God is relevant to the Theological enterprise. Theology loses its hold on the logy of Theology and becomes a Theo-doxo, or Dogmatics rather than Systematics and philosophical. It is generally anathema to Barth and his followers to accept a systematic approach where Philosophy grounds the Theological enterprise in reason or logic, for properly Theology is reflected in the "Word of God," for Barth and his followers. The "Word of God" is interpreted to mean Scripture and in a very important sense Barth becomes a soft-fundamentalist.

Unlike hard-fundamentalism where the Bible is literally true and no explanation other than what is written is required, Barth and his followers appeal to the "Word of God" as coming from the subjective response to the Biblical word as opposed to the text itself. Thus the text envelops the "Word of God" as read, and understood by the believer and not in the text itself. The text is a witness to the Word of God and not the Word itself. There is a vague hint of mysticism here, but rather than a complete mysticism, Barth and his followers rely supposedly on the message received rather than on the message encapsulated in a text—a meaning beyond the literal. For Barth and his followers the task of Theology is the proclamation of this "Word of God", or preaching.¹⁰⁸ "This word comes from God to man, that is to say, the movement is the reverse direction to all human science and research."¹⁰⁹ Revelation here is extremely important and as if Theology has an absolute monopoly of revelation, Theology has no need whatever of Science, History and Philosophy. By this, Theology is God speaking without man.

If one is to ask questions for which God is to answer, one would expect Philosophy to have a primary role, at least as questioner. But this does not seem to be the case for Barth and his followers. Philosophy cannot really ask of Theology as Man cannot ask of God in any real sense. All that can be done is for God to answer, which amounts to telling; and God telling without man asking or responding to the telling except in acceptance, is tantamount to God demanding as opposed to commanding. The com- is not a part of the enterprise, so commands of God become demands.¹¹⁰ Imperatives become orders as opposed to simple, categorical or hypothetical imperatives. Von Balthasar criticizes Barth for not seeing Philosophy as concomitant to Theology, pointing to the fact that Christology forces us to construct a doctrine of God from the ground upwards.

This unavoidably introduces "philosophical material", but Barth is forced to do this without making clear the decisive nexus between *verbum Dei* and the *verbum hominis*. God speaks; but does man really respond with his own

¹⁰⁸ See Brand Blanshard, *Reason and Belief* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1975) 302.

¹⁰⁹ John MacQuarrie, *Twentieth-Century Religious Thought* (London: SCM, 1971) 321

¹¹⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I, I (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975) 90. Although Barth uses the term "Positive Command," his use of such terminology amounts to "de-mands."

word? Barth's own example of the "reflector lights" on an automobile that reflect light to the motorist, but only when the car in back is shining its own headlights, clearly shows that, for Barth, the creature indeed responds, but not really with its own light and word.¹¹¹

It is not true that Philosophy is altogether meaningless for the Barthians. However, it gives no weight to the Theological enterprise seen as Biblical (Word of God). Barth does not deny that Philosophic ideas can be useful in exegesis ("legitimate and fruitful"), but they are so only if they are subordinated to the Biblical text and what follows that text, the "Word of God."¹¹²

The ideas drawn from secular thought are different in principle from those of the text, about which only the Holy Spirit can enlighten us. Philosophy cannot put the word in question nor can it confirm the word, but is itself always put in question by the word.¹¹³

By this, lack of grounding of Theology in either the text as an objective reality in itself, as is the case in Hard-fundamentalism, or Philosophy, as in Traditional Catholic Orthodoxy, or History as in "Liberal" Theology (Harnack), Theology in Barth's sense becomes subjective and unfortunately becomes a troubling form of fideism. This defensive posture on the part of Theology in Barthian terms goes beyond apologetics to the exclusion of all other human subjects as relevant to the enterprise of Theology. Science and Philosophy not only have nothing to say to Theology, but they stand to be opposed by Theology in a typical Fundamentalist fashion. There is therefore a situation where discoveries of the nature of the world and discoveries of God's word are so radically distinct that Theology has the unique function of acting and "doing its thing" on its own terms alone, without regard to changes in culture and or knowledge about culture or the world (History). It is difficult to see in such a situation where Theology has any relevance beyond itself, except as an opposition to any progress in the Sciences, Arts and Humanities. This opposition is in many ways contrary to former Theologies, but also to the common sense of a discerning believer. Can Theology stand in opposition so radically that what it says stands against all other endeavors? It is useful to remember that Theology is also done by men and women, not by God or gods. To make Theology so radically separate over all other human endeavor is to make gods of Theologians, and in an important sense an idol of Theology itself.

Jean-Luc Marion as a Philosopher and Theologian takes a different tactic. Following Heidegger, he takes the Phenomenology of Givenness as his point of

¹¹¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth* trans. E. T. Oakes S.J. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992) 393.

¹¹² One should note the use of the phrase "A Biblical View" or some equivalent phrase as a subtitle to many authors expressing a Barthian viewpoint.

¹¹³ Macquarrie, *op. cit.*, 322.

departure. Being becomes a verb meaning "given."¹¹⁴ From the German idiom "Es gibt" for "it is", givenness becomes part and parcel of the existential condition of consciousness. But ultimately givenness relates to the Theological concept of revelation.

Developed in the early work *L'Idol et la distance* as the "Christic mode" of subjectivity and later in *Etant donné* as the "adonné," Marion gives a phenomenological description of the subject as one who fundamentally receives before intending or comprehending. Marion therefore can argue for a privileging of the theological language of praise (open to the claim of alterity) over the philosophical language of predication (unable to properly approach alterity).

Specifically for Marion, the attempt to engage radical alterity *qua* God through the exploration of the enigmatic or 'saturated' phenomena raises what he believes to be the essential matter at stake in theology—the question of revelation.¹¹⁵

In his critique of Marion, Boynton takes up Marion's notion of the difference between icon and idol and relates that to Heidegger's notion of Artwork. He finds in the idol only a reflection of self, while in the icon there is an open-ness to what is beyond it. In the case of God, the invisible is presented as invisible. Following Marion's *Dieu sans l'être*, Boynton points out that for Marion

The idol mirrors an enworlded gaze, "returns the gaze to itself" while the icon signifies from an infinite depth that saturates its visibility—in the visibility of the icon the invisible is presented as invisible. The icon precedes the gaze that in the idol is simply mirrored back, so that its unconditioned "appearance," its excessiveness, cannot be reduced to the aim or condition of subjectively constituted enworlded experience.¹¹⁶

Marion follows Heidegger in a critique of onto-theology quoting extensively from *Identity and Difference* where Heidegger makes the most of his claim of onto-theology against Metaphysics. But Marion doesn't claim that Metaphysics is in error, rather that one recognizes the absolute alterity of God as encountered when metaphysics is freed from Onto-Theology. In general Marion's use of phenomenological investigations seems

¹¹⁴Jean-Luc Marion, "Remarques sur les origines de la Gegebenheit dans la pensée de Heidegger" *Heidegger Studies* 24 (2008) 167-179 and Jean-Luc Marion, Jeffrey L. Kosky Translated by Jeffrey L. Kosky, *Being given: toward a phenomenology of givenness* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2002) 2.

¹¹⁵ Eric Boynton, "Enigmatic sites and Continental Philosophy of Religion: Must Philosophy once again yield to Theology?" in Deane-Peter Baker and Patrick Maxwell eds. *Explorations in Contemporary Continental Philosophy of Religion* (NY: Rodopi, 2003) 50.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 51. Boynton points to Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being*, trans. Thomas Carlson (Chicago: Chicago Univ., Press, 1991) 10, 12.

to allow for a more careful and close cooperation between Philosophy (specifically Metaphysics) and Theology. But alas that is not the case. Marion like many other Post-Heideggerian Philosophers, tends to disparage metaphysics as done by Philosophy. Metaphysics for Marion is most properly done by Theology. At this point there is a substitution, following late Neo-Platonism, of a henology for ontology, and one finds Theology to become heno-theology as opposed to onto-theology.

Heidegger does not represent the only influence on Marion. Marion attended the seminar of Rene Roques (1972-73), the famous Dionysius scholar, and from that experience Dionysius becomes a permanent influence on Marion's thought.¹¹⁷ From Dionysius he espouses the notion that God is above all predication, and sees Dionysius' mysticism as a way around the unknowable-ness of God. Here Marion sets Dionysius in opposition to other Neo-Platonists and sees a convenient way to make the "Theological Turn" away from Metaphysics. The mysticism of Dionysius is seen as a naming of the deity, thus bringing *Divine Names* into consonance with *Mystical Theology*. At this juncture Marion places Theology above Philosophy, even though his phenomenology is properly more philosophical than Theology *per se*.

The old problems between Philosophers and Theologians again come to the fore. While Marion depends on Heidegger and Dionysius, he turns his back to Philosophy by making the Theological turn, putting Theology above Philosophy, and as a result, like Barth, Philosophy is not meaningless as such, but nonetheless subordinate to the demands of Theology. Again Philosophy becomes the *ancilla theologiae*, but not a handmaiden in the sense of support to Theology, but a silent subordinate to the Theological enterprise, and no partner in any real sense. So that, if one is somewhat misogynist or priggish in the class struggle, is what a handmaiden is, a serf¹¹⁸ not a free laborer? Following Gilson there is an undercurrent that Theology is "Christian Philosophy" in Marion's phenomenological investigations. All that was evil in the conflict between the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Theology in the Medieval University still persists. The Gilson notion of a specific "Christian Philosophy" remains despite its apparent absurdity.

The latest Movement in Theology and Philosophy which relies on Neo-Platonism is called Radical Orthodoxy by its proponents. As a movement opposed to secularism and liberalism, and although its foundation has been in the Anglo-Catholic and Anglican confession, Radical Orthodoxy enjoys a trans-denominational appeal and concern throughout Christian Theology, both Catholic and Protestant. This movement has generated conferences at Calvin College in Grand Rapids Michigan (2003),¹¹⁹ in Rome

¹¹⁷ See Wayne Hankey *op cit* *One Hundred Years of Neoplatonism in France*, http://classics.dal.ca/Files/One_Hundred_Peeters.pdf (accessed April 16, 2009). (I reference this on-line edition) 85.

¹¹⁸ Barth uses the word "child" in this context. See *Church Dogmatics* II, I, 217- 219, but he also speaks of Christ as Master to his slaves (*Church Dogmatics* I, I, 145).

¹¹⁹ James K. A. Smith and James H. Olthuis eds., *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005). Calvin College is associated with the Christian Reformed Church, a Protestant denomination of Dutch heritage. For the most part the so called Reformational Philosophy is an outgrowth of the Philosophy of Dirk Hendrik Theodoor Vollenhoven and Herman Dooyeweerd and their successors at the Vrij Universiteit in Amsterdam, an arm of the Gereformeerde Kerk in the Netherlands.

(2008),¹²⁰ and drawn the concern of Feminists, Liberation Theologians and others.¹²¹ Radical Orthodoxy is committed to a view of theology as separated from Culture so entirely that Modernism and Liberalism are held responsible for all Theological misrepresentation today. Culture is seen as opposed to Theology to such a degree that the task of Theology is to stand opposed to culture. In this way overcoming Metaphysics is seen as only possible by Philosophy, and Metaphysics, being done through Theology. At this point, Radical Orthodoxy comes close to, and in some respects depends on Barth's disparagement of Philosophy.¹²² Radical Orthodoxy hereby is subject to some of the same criticism that is given to Barth. Philosophy is associated with Culture for Radical Orthodoxy and in a sense there is a Schleiermacherian tone to an opposition to Philosophers as Cultured Despisers of Religion. But Radical Orthodoxy does not take the Schleiermacher road to higher criticism, and instead opposes all attempts to do Theology from a Philosophical methodology. In this way Barthian anti-Philosophy is very much a part of the background of Radical Orthodoxy's thinking.

Radical Orthodoxy though Post-Modern insists that it is not anti-Modern as such, yet seems to put the blame for all Modernist thinking on John Duns Scotus and his notion of the Univocity of Being.

Scotus's clarifications are revisionary in important ways. They do signal a shift in the ongoing elaboration of Christian natural theology away from the central significance of God's exemplary causality toward an intensified emphasis upon final causality as guarantee of the unity and theological character of human knowledge.¹²³

Here Scotus is blamed for a shift from thinking of God as an exemplary Neo-Platonism to a more Modernist view of the nature of reality. God becomes in some sense a being among others and not the Being which grounds the being of all other beings. In some ways, it becomes almost unbelievable that Reformed Theology allies itself with Radical Orthodoxy, since it is clear that the Reformed Tradition is one of the heirs of Scotus' Natural Theology.¹²⁴ Radical Orthodoxy's attempt to recover an *analogia entis* seems out of step with the Reformed Tradition's rejection of an *analogia entis*. Von Balthasar

¹²⁰ The conference was called "The Grandeur of Reason: Religion, Tradition and Universalism" held in September of 2008. I await publications of papers from this conference. A review may be found in *Minerva-An Internet Journal of Philosophy* 12 (2008) 119-133. <http://www.mic.ul.ie/stephen/vol12/Review.pdf> (accessed April 16, 2009).

¹²¹ Rosemary Radford Ruether and Marion Grau eds., *interpreting the postmodern: Responses to Radical Orthodoxy* (NY: t and t Clark, 2006).

¹²² Graham Ward, "Barth, Hegel, and the Possibility for Christian Apologetics" in Smith, Olthuis *op. cit.*, 45-52.

¹²³ Robert Sweetman, "Univocity, Analogy, and the Mystery of Being according to John Duns Scotus" Smith, Olthuis, *op. cit.*, 86.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 87.

levels the criticism against Barth, that he substitutes an *analogia fidei* for an *analogia entis*.¹²⁵ It should surprise the reader of Radical Orthodoxy that the Radical Orthodox accept so much of Barth.

Another interesting facet of Radical Orthodoxy is its attempt to recover a Platonist theory of reality. There is in that assimilation of Platonism by Radical Orthodoxy a rejection of some of the more important aspects of Christian Platonism.

If the Reformed tradition sees it as necessary to *overcome* Platonism, there is a sense in which RO sees it as necessary to *recover* Platonism.

The recovery of Platonism is, one might assert, really just a recovery of Neoplatonism, and what is being recovered is not the dualistic Neoplatonism of Plotinus but rather the *theurgical* Neoplatonism of Iamblichus (ca. A.D. 250-325) as well as that of Augustine.¹²⁶

Here the Reformed Tradition comes face to face with one of the great enigmas of Calvinism, namely that while at the same time the universe is Beautiful and Good, Original Sin casts its shadow on all that is not God, in that darker side of Calvin and his followers.¹²⁷ While God's creation has the merit of Goodness, creation especially man is tainted with the ability to disobey God and thus in post-lapsarian terms sinful and in need of redemption. But on this darker side of Calvinism, it is not only human persons in need of redemption, but in some rather overall sense, all of nature. Here one might see a connection between the Eastern Orthodox notion of *theosis* and the redemptive act of God in Jesus Christ. But one should not make too much of this because Calvinism and the Reformed tradition has always seen redemption not in terms of deification, but only in Salvation, Justification and Sanctification terms. Radical Orthodoxy may very well have more in common with Eastern Orthodoxy than does Calvinism and the Reformed tradition. Although there is a distinct effort in this tradition called Reformational Philosophy to do Philosophy from a Theological perspective, including the Modal Ontology of Herman Dooyeweerd, there is a rather interesting commonality between the Reformational Philosophy of Calvinists of this post-Kuyper¹²⁸ milieu and Radical Orthodoxy.

¹²⁵ Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *op. cit.*, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, 49-50.

¹²⁶ James K. A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004) 104. Throughout this book RO stands for Radical Orthodoxy.

¹²⁷ For an interesting article on the compatibility between Calvinism and Platonic Orthodoxy, see Michael D. Gibson, "The Beauty of the Redemption of the World: The Theological Aesthetics of Maximus the Confessor and Jonathan Edwards," *Harvard Theological Review* 101:1 (Jan. 2008) 45-76.

¹²⁸ Abraham Kuyper was a Politician and Theologian in the Early 20th century. He was educated in Philosophy and Theology at the University of Leiden and served as Prime Minister of the Netherlands between 1901 and 1905. The contemporary Philosophers Alvin C. Plantinga, William Alston and Nicholas Wolterstorff associated with Reformed Epistemology are heirs to this tradition of thought.

To illustrate the influence of Radical Orthodoxy and its effect on multiple Confessional Theologies one only has to look to D. Stephen Long of Marquette.

Steve was baptized by the Anabaptists, educated by the evangelicals, ordained and pastorally formed by the Methodists and given his first position as professor of theology by the Jesuits, which makes him either ecumenically inclined or theologically confused.¹²⁹

While Long and others such as Fergus Kerr¹³⁰ take lessons from Aquinas, yet they read the Angelic Doctor through Barthian eyes. Rosemary Radford Ruether in her Critique of Long points out that

Radical Orthodoxy makes use of the postmodern deconstruction of Enlightenment universalism and liberalism, but this is a temporary alliance that must lead back to the only thought system that rightly subordinates ethics to faith. This is Catholic orthodoxy rooted in revelation and best expressed in the theology of Thomas Aquinas. Thus radical theology understands itself as a recovery of a theology normative for all times, not as a "modern theology" that overcomes the past.¹³¹

Ruether further makes clear that Radical Orthodoxy's anti-secular, anti-liberal perspective leads the movement to an anti-natural theology and hence anti-philosophy position. Here Barth seems to loom large over Radical Orthodoxy, no matter where and what it professes concerning a recovery of Platonism. "Orthodox Christians should reject liberal tolerance and epistemological "humility" in order to assert and claim the fullness of truth which they know in Jesus Christ."¹³² This notion, which Ruether attributes to Long and his Radical Orthodoxy colleagues, points to the virtual inescapable conundrum that Christianity stands opposed and over culture through its clear and assured "knowledge" of truth through Jesus Christ. But this can only lead to either a blindness of any critique or natural theology which follows a philosophic line of thinking.

On the creational side of Christology, Long fails to reckon with the classical patristic theologies of the Logos that affirmed that the Logos of God incarnate in Jesus is the same Logos through which the world was created.

¹²⁹ Marquette University Faculty page for D. Stephen Long <http://www.marquette.edu/theology/long.shtml> (accessed April 16, 2009).

¹³⁰ Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).

¹³¹ Rosemary Radford Ruether, "The Postmodern as Premodern: The Theology of D. Stephen Long," in Rosemary Radford Ruether and Marion Grau, *interpreting the postmodern* (NY: t & t clark, 2006) 78.

¹³² *Ibid*, 82.

Humans and indeed all creation participate in the goodness and being of God through their creation.¹³³

Here it becomes obvious that what is lacking in Radical Orthodoxy is the cosmic nature of the Christian message which was so prominent in the Patristic period. Clearly the Radical Orthodoxy movement is anxious to overcome metaphysics, but in the process overcomes what has been the tradition of Christology since the time of Origen, if not earlier. Here Radical Orthodoxy fails in its recovery of Platonism and leaves aside that essential aspect of Orthodoxy both Eastern and Western, a cosmology in which the Word, the Logos, figures prominently. It is almost as if Radical Orthodoxy in its exuberance for a Barthian "Word of God," overlooks the cosmic aspect of the Logos of Philo Judaeus of Alexandria and that Middle-Platonist poem with which John begins his Gospel.¹³⁴

Some tentative conclusions-

There is a long journey from the Idealism of the nineteenth century to the Post-modernism of Radical Orthodoxy, but what is common throughout that journey is the attempt to recover a Platonic view of reality which fits the Christian message. It is a wonder that the Post-modern Theologies have not adapted some form of the mystical and universal common to Eastern Orthodox Christian denominations.¹³⁵ What is clear is their dependence on "Western" Christianity and in fact a turn away from developments after Scotus and a reliance on Augustine. In fact one might describe the history of the recovery of Platonism by the twentieth century, whether in the Post-Modern or their French Neo-Platonist predecessors, as a turn towards Augustinianism. It is a turn toward Augustine, but also a turn toward the subjective as evidenced by its failure to give a cosmological-ontological dimension to its Christology.

Thus the Greek Fathers appropriated from Plotinus both the apophatic and the kataphatic modes of discourse, seeing both as equally necessary for the articulation of Christian belief. One might expect that Augustine, with his knowledge of Plotinus, would have followed a similar path. But in fact he did not. Augustine characteristically thinks of God as Truth, the Truth that is present to our minds enabling us to know. In line with the classical identification of thinking and being, he also describes God as *ipsum esse*, being itself. These two descriptions together yield what is in essence the Plotinian understanding of Intellect. Augustine has no use for the other side

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ "Logos" indeed means "Word" and occasionally "Law" as in "Natural Law" as distinguished from "Nomos" or positive law, but in the metaphysical tradition "logos" means something close to "raison d'être."

¹³⁵ See for instance Eric D. Perl "'Every Life is a Thought': the Analogy of Personhood in Neoplatonism," *Philosophy & Theology* 18:1 (2006) 143-167.

of Plotinus, the understanding of God as beyond being and beyond intellect.¹³⁶

For fear of Pantheism, Radical Orthodoxy and others have eschewed what has been called Cosmic Theism for a Personal Theism.¹³⁷ Yet there is a strong case to be made that throughout the history of Christianity the Cosmic aspect of the Logos has played an important part in explicating the Faith in Philosophical and Theological terms.

One of the things Post-Modern Theology and Philosophy rejects outright is a notion of autonomous reason. While it is true that everyone is conditioned to some degree by their culture, faith and previous training, this does not necessarily entail that there cannot be a "neutral" and or autonomous reason. The purpose of Philosophy is to engage thought in a neutral way and weigh its value against some standard of truth. The Kierkegaard mentality of a personal truth as opposed to an absolute Truth may be correct in some contexts, but nevertheless one ought to measure one's truth not only personally, but inter-subjectively, else meaning is vague chatter which cannot come to conclusions. If there is no autonomous rational approach to the problems of God, Man and the World (cosmos), Theology becomes wholly confessional and unable to become in any sense inter-confessional or ecumenical with a Truth objective. The encounter of Theology with culture seems to require a Philosophy apart from any particular confession, to bridge the gap between culture and Theology. If Philosophy is done only through Theology it become confessional also. As Pope John Paul II proclaims in *Fides et Ratio* "...theology needs philosophy as a partner in dialogue in order to confirm the intelligibility and universal truth of its claims."¹³⁸ Needless to say a conversation between two or more individuals requires some sort of agreement in meaning, and likewise some standard of truth that is acceptable to all parties in the conversation. Without Philosophy as autonomously investigating the meaning and the nature of truth, Theology becomes nothing more in its contact with culture than a "NO" opposition to whatever culture has to offer. Perhaps this is the meaning of Barthianism's claim of opposition to culture, but it is misguided in the sense that it thus stands as an obstructionism to cultural progress.

Any theology of any faith which hopes to be apologetic, must rely on some sort of neutral ground upon which meaning and truth agreement is possible. This requires a Philosophical analysis of that ground in both the apologist and the one to whom the apology (defense) is made. Philosophy from within Theology becomes a clanging gong of negativity and opposition with no intent of honest communication. A Husserlian *epoche* or suspension of judgment is at minimum required. One might suggest that the *epoche* guarantees the neutrality and that can only be done on Philosophic ground which pays no judgment or attention to a given confession. The proper province of Theology is the explication of a confessional faith and as such it needs Philosophy to provide the

¹³⁶ David Bradshaw, "The Concept of Divine Energies" *Philosophy & Theology* 18:1 (2006) 115.

¹³⁷ See: G. H. Howison *op. cit.*, *The Limits of Evolution*, 269.

¹³⁸ John Paul II, Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, Paragraph 77, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_15101998_fides-et-ratio_en.html (accessed April 16, 2009).

cultural and conceptual framework from which Theology can speak.¹³⁹ This can only be accomplished authentically if Philosophy is not wholly a part of that confession. There may well be Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists or Moslems who are Philosophers, but the notion of a Philosophy wholly encapsulated within any one of these faiths makes it wholly captive to that faith and thereby unable to truly engage any of the others in a meaningful dialogue. Philosophy must in its investigations of meaning and being remain neutral or, though not necessarily, non-committed to any particular confession, when doing Philosophy. The philosopher may be committed, but in the act of doing Philosophy he/she ought to set aside that faith commitment.

Philosophic thought provides the ground upon which conversation between various confessional theologies can communicate.¹⁴⁰ The post-modern theological turn is somewhat misguided, if it does not take into consideration the independence of Philosophy, not only for its Logical and Linguistic-semantic investigations, but also for its Metaphysical, Epistemological and Ethical investigations. Philosophy cannot be a true partner to Theology unless it is a freedwoman and not a serf. To make Philosophy subordinate to a confessional Theology is not to make her a partner (wife) but to make her a servant (slave) and perhaps no *ancilla theologiae* at all. To put it in other less harsh terms, Philosophy ought to be an independent subcontractor to Theology, just as in business one often hires (out-sources) a professional for some of its ancillary work. If Philosophy is truly *ancilla theologiae*, it cannot be done "in-house" but must be an independent subcontractor doing its part in its own most professional mode possible.

Wayne Hankey and Douglas Hedley¹⁴¹ object to Radical Orthodoxy on similar grounds, attempting to make room for Philosophy. Hankey particularly seems to think that Marion and Radical Orthodoxy misread Dionysius' negative theology, leading Radical Orthodoxy to a misreading of Augustine and his Platonism.

What distinguishes these [Trouillard and Breton] and our medievals from Gilson, Marion, Lossky and others like them—for example the Radical Orthodox—is the refusal to divide religion from philosophy so that each turns into an exclusive totality. Among the costs, as Nicholas [Cusanus] knew well and tried to prevent in his *De pace fidei*, is inter-religious war as sects whose irrationality belong to their nature take up this form of interaction as natural. The retreat of religion into itself derives from a sense of its weakness. As its

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, Paragraph 93.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, paragraph 104.

¹⁴¹ See Douglas Hedley, "Difference: Cambridge Platonism and Milbank's Romantic Christian Cabbala" in *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy: Postmodern Theology, Rhetoric, and Truth* (London: Ashgate, 2005) 99-116, and also Douglas Hedley, "Should Divinity Overcome Metaphysics? Reflections on John Milbank's Theology beyond Secular Reason and Confessions of a Cambridge Platonist," *The Journal of Religion* 80:2 (April, 2000) 271-298.

power now returns terribly in our time, we may hope that it will cease to fear intellect and the *cogito supra intellectum*.¹⁴²

What Hankey points to is the other side of the coin of the battle between the Post-Moderns and culture. Not only is Philosophy needed as a neutral ground for conversation with secular culture, but also a neutral ground to facilitate conversation among the several Post-Modernisms. But it goes somewhat further if one theology retreats into itself so as to protect its truth from any contamination from another theology, the theological conversation breaks down completely, and Theology becomes nothing more than a theology of the various sects. Without a philosophy there is no conversation between Barthians, Bultmannians or Brunnerians, and no conversation between any one of them with a Catholic like von Balthasar or Liberal like Tillich. The only conversation that can be had is a "NO!" or "you are wrong...", where the questions of why, how and what error of logic or interpretation have never entered the conversation. Without a Philosophic ground to Theology, there is no communication because to the accusation of "you are wrong...", there is no acceptable answer and the entire Theological enterprise becomes at best a relativism and at worst a complete subjectivism. There must be Natural or Philosophic Theology to keep theologians from going off in some ecstatic reverie of self appreciation without its object, the Theo- of Theology.

In addition to feminist critiques of Radical Orthodoxy, there is something hinted at in Ruether's critique of Long which points to a seeming contradiction in Radical Orthodoxy. While Radical Orthodoxy claims to desire and also attempts to reclaim a Platonic world view, it simultaneously rejects any of the built in dualism of Platonism. No distinctions between Noumenon-Phenomenon, Matter-Spirit, Soul-Body and or thing-idea, is acceptable to Radical Orthodoxy. So what we are left with is a monism where the distinguished are merely poles or extremes of the grand monism. This puts the Radical Orthodox in the Neo-Platonist camp as distinguished from Platonism. Yet it also points out a rather troubling feature of their anti-modernist agenda. Radical Orthodoxy does not rely or scarcely, if at all, on the Greek Patristic era, where Platonism is the world view and Ontology. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, the Cappadocians and Maximus the Confessor do not fit anywhere in their alleged retrieval or recovery of Platonism and Neo-Platonism. The Post-Moderns rely almost entirely on the Western Church's Neo-Platonism, with the exception of Dionysius, but do not adequately consider John Scotus Eriugena whose Philosophy-Theology is a combination of Augustine and the Greek Fathers. In fact, Eriugena was accused of being "more Greek than Latin", and this may be the explanation. But it seems only natural to this writer that if one is to attempt a retrieval of Neo-Platonism one ought to look for sources which have been and still remain essentially Neo-Platonic in orientation.

Finally, it is the considered opinion of the author that Radical Orthodoxy, as well as some of the Neo-Orthodox, have gone astray with their turn to the late Heidegger and his criticism of Metaphysics as Onto-Theology. Heidegger seeks to separate the Onto- from the Theo- in Onto-Theology, because being is the proper subject of Philosophy

¹⁴² Wayne J. Hankey, "Misrepresenting neoplatonism in Contemporary Christian Dionysian Polemic: Eriugena and Nicholas of Cusa versus Vladimir Lossky and Jean-Luc Marion," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 82:4 (Fall 2008) 703.

(Metaphysics). His criticism is not only leveled at Hegel and Idealism, but also the entire Neo-Platonic tradition where there seems to be no distinction between Philosophy and Theology. But, Heidegger also levels his criticism at Aristotle, seeking to go back to the Presocratic era of Parmenides and Heraclitus. Here Plato also falls under Heidegger's critique. Yet there is something perverse in Post-Modernism's use of Heidegger here to deny Philosophy a legitimate role in the thought enterprise and asserting the Ultimate role of Theology in that enterprise. To read Heidegger as overcoming Metaphysics in that sense is wrongheaded and leads to a wrongheaded Theology as a portion of the endeavor of human thought. Ultimately Neo-Orthodoxy (Barth) and Radical Orthodoxy (Milbank) leads to a Theology where its truth claims are determined solely by faith, become dogmatics as opposed to dogma, defined as acts of that faith and warranted by Grace.¹⁴³ Fundamentally it becomes a private knowledge within a faith community, a *gnosis* or "Secret Wisdom," which is the defining characteristic of Gnosticism.

To radically separate Theology from Philosophy leads to closing the door on the eternal questions mankind faces. To have only a theological answer yields nothing but perpetual questions that without a faith commitment do not get answered. In some cases this questioning invites the cultured to abandon faith commitments altogether. No-one appreciates being told what to believe or do, even the child becomes rebellious at some stage, if his questions are dogmatically answered or remain unanswered. The child who asks "why" is not always satisfied with "because" for the answer. Philosophy not only answers the questions, but develops the framework from which the questions are and can be asked. Philosophy frames the conditions for the possibility of questions. Yet, the questions may go unanswered.

What we do in response is to live as best we can, to make certain judgments and to take certain stands which are inevitably inadequate to the full complexity of a given situation. We have no alternative. We live ontotheologically and there is no sense in overcoming existence.¹⁴⁴

It may very well be true as Dionysius says that God is beyond every predication, and that would make Philosophy a futile attempt, or confines Philosophy to what is other than God. But it needs be remembered that Dionysius *is* doing Philosophy. It may be true that ultimately only the mystic can achieve the unknown and unknowable God of the Areopagus. It is quite possible that Wittgenstein is correct "Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen."¹⁴⁵ Perhaps, Philosophy cannot speak of God and must keep silent, but can only Theology speak? Perhaps it is only the Poet who can speak:

¹⁴³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I, I, 17-18.

¹⁴⁴ Jeffrey W. Robbins, "Overcoming Overcoming: In Praise of Ontotheology," op. cit., *Explorations on Contemporary Continental...*, 20.

¹⁴⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966) Prop. 7, 150.

The sun, the moon, the stars, the hills and the plains—
Are not these, O soul, the vision of Him who reigns?

Is not the vision He? tho' He be not that which He seems?
Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?

Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb,
Are they not the sign and symbol of any division from Him?

Dark is the world to thee; thyself art the reason why;
For is He not all but thou, and hast power to feel "I am I?"¹⁴⁶

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¹⁴⁶ Alfred Lord Tennyson, "The Higher Pantheism."