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Student's signature

Kristīne Sūna-Koro

Date

*Opus Dei: Toward the Sacramental Counterpoint of
Liturgy and Ethics in a Diasporic Imaginary*

By

Kristīne Sūna-Koro
Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Division of Religion
Theological Studies

Don E. Saliers, Ph.D.
Advisor

Deepika Bahri, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Dianne M. Diakité, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Mark D. Jordan, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Accepted:

Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.
Dean of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies

Date

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Kristīne Sūna-Koro

B.Th., University of Latvia, 1995

M.Th., University of Latvia, 1997

S.T.M., Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, 2003

Advisor

Don E. Saliers, Ph.D.

An abstract of

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the Graduate Division of Religion

Theological Studies

2010

Abstract

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Kristīne Sūna-Koro

Theological method is the mindscape of perceiving and conceiving God, world, and human life. It is the crystallization of the patterns and practices of religious knowing as well as the axiological structure of culturally and historically embedded organization of knowledge and imagination. As such it cannot be detached from ethical, social, and political imagination and praxis. This project is a quest for ethically inflected methodological envisagements of a non-hegemonic model of relationality from the perspectives of constructive sacramental-liturgical theology in conversation with postcolonial theory and diaspora discourses. The competitive and mutually detractive disengagement between liturgy and ethics is interrogated as a symptom of the binaristic epistemological imagination of Western colonial modernity and its mainstream Christian theological creativity. Liturgical-sacramental discourses have been routinely adiaphorized in dominant Western theology as a matter of methodological value-coding. Similar methodological habits influenced the marginalization of ethics in theological inquiry. Sacramental discourse, however ambiguously, challenges the dualistic and relationally competitive texture of Western modern theological imagination. It resonates particularly aptly with certain recent postcolonial critiques of coercive and non-reciprocal templates of relationality to foster a shared reflection on the nature of asymmetrical, yet ethically invested, configurations of relationality.

The constructive impetus of this project originates from the exploration of a postcolonially colored diasporic imaginary. As a diasporic female Latvian-American theologian, I reflect on it as a trajectory of methodological comportment in theological inquiry. To assess the transformative potential of diasporically situated reconceptualizations of the symptomatic divide between liturgy and ethics as precisely a methodological conundrum, the deeply ambiguous contributions of diasporic Russian Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann and Jewish Lithuanian-French ethicist Emmanuel Levinas are surveyed. From within a diasporic imaginary, I argue that an ethically inflected theological envisagement of relationality in the present era of postcoloniality can be engendered through a conversation between the Eastern Christian idea of sacramentally inscribed synergy and the postcolonial conception of hybridity. To modulate the dualistic gridlocks, the notion of counterpoint as a specification of postcolonial hybridity by Palestinian-American postcolonial theorist Edward W. Said emerges as the pivotal constructive figure of an ethically and sacramentally scored constellation of relationality.

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Acknowledgments

The conception and completion of this dissertation would have been beyond my wildest imagination without so many encounters, travels, challenges, adversities, friendships, experiences, and conversations in many places and in many languages. Indeed, while writing these pages, again and again I was tempted to muse on – rather presumptuously perhaps – the opening sentences of Thomas Mann’s *Joseph and His Brothers*: “Very deep is the well of the past. Should we not call it bottomless?” Historical memories, cultural memories, and personal memories are all woven together to shape the fabric of this dissertation. The insights and the pitfalls of this project did not originate *ex nihilo*. While the depth of the pitfalls remains my sole responsibility, deeper still is my gratitude to those who have accompanied me during my life of incurable addiction to the delight of thinking.

As I look into the deep well of the past, my gratitude goes to the Very Reverend Dean of the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sweden Ieva Graufelde, my mentor, colleague, and dear friend from Stockholm. She opened up the liturgical universe for me to realize that I had lived, breathed and had my being there long before I fully appreciated and understood it.

On this side of the Atlantic, it has been my joy, honor, and privilege to have learned so much from the two greatest English-speaking Protestant liturgical theologians of our time. My abiding respect and gratitude goes to Prof. Gordon W. Lathrop at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia for not only inciting me to explore the depths and breadths of liturgical theology but also demonstrating what it means to teach and theologize with pedagogical and personal integrity. But I could not have come this far without the wisdom, encouragement, and mentorship of Prof. Don E. Saliers, my academic advisor at Emory University. Thank you for your trust, graciousness, and your truly bottomless art of bringing out the best in my thinking, questioning, imagining, and writing. Your invigorating influence in this project is so pervasive that the scarce references to your work can only obscure the full stretch of your thought being the inspiration for this project and my theological temperament.

My profound gratitude goes to Prof. Mark D. Jordan for his intellectual generosity and perseverance from the very beginning of this project, in person and over the distance, in praise and in critique, with acuity of theological discernment in the class of its own. I am grateful to Prof. Deepika Bahri for her erudite and patient encouragement of my interdisciplinary pursuits over the years as I navigated through the intricacies and lures of postcolonialism and to Prof. Dianne Diakité for encouraging me to continue to focus on theological method exactly when I was entertaining the deepest doubts about its relevance in the present theological environment. I am also grateful to Prof. Jill Robbins for rousing my interest in the thought of Emmanuel Levinas as never before and to Prof. Wendy Farley for her wisdom and guidance, academically, collegially, and pedagogically, in the early stages of my doctoral studies as well as for her enduring support as the Chair of Theological Studies in the Graduate Division of Religion throughout these five years.

Last but not least, I thank my husband Philip for his love in too many ways to mention here, for his bottomless and gentle patience, and for his unshakable confidence in me that this project will be accomplished. *Mille grazie!*

οὐ γὰρ ἔχομεν ὧδε μένουσαν πόλιν, ἀλλὰ τὴν μέλλουσαν ἐπιζητοῦμεν

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Introduction

Whence?

How does a theologian live with a haunted history –
disjointed, constantly shifting, and refusing to be fitted into one piece?¹

Kwok Pui-lan

Whatever else it might mean, being “haunted” does not stand for being settled comfortably in any geographical, linguistic, cultural, or confessional location. “Haunted,” that is, by the perplexities of belonging among divergent cultural memories, political allegiances, and theological traditions that co-inhere rather spontaneously in an intellectual sensibility marked indelibly by the experience of migrancy and diaspora. The project I present here is an amalgam of critical and constructive peregrination through some of the most mesmerizing conundrums of the modern Occidental theological method in the era of global postcoloniality from the perspective of a diasporic imaginary. It is a diasporic discourse on theological method. Among these conundrums, competitive dualism as an enduring habit of epistemological and ontological imagination throughout the mainstream Occidental modernity, formally and substantively, emerges as both convoluted and tragic. This dissertation interrogates the habit of dualistic imagination, not limited to but particularly thriving during colonial modernity, which continues to influence theological inquiry into the present day. Be it gender dualism or the competitive oppositionality of body and soul, spirit and flesh, private and public, rational and emotional, visual and aural, written and spoken word, worship and socio-economic life, – dualistic rationalities and imaginaries privilege the logic of “either/or” in all of these contexts. The itinerary of my interrogation traverses the habitual disengagement, or even

¹ Kwok, Pui-lan, “A Theology of Border Passage,” *Border Crossings: Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics* (D.N. Premnath ed.; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007): 110.

the dualistic gridlock, between liturgical worship and the life of exercised faith in social ethics during this epoch as one of the most ominous symptoms of the rationale of competitive binarity.

The centrality of the Holocaust as the pivotal ethical contestation for the Western theological thought in late modernity, as many have observed, abundantly attests to the tragic ramifications of the gridlocked disengagement of liturgy and ethics within the Christian religion. Even though an expanded argument is beyond the scope of this project, at the present context of postcoloniality it is crucial to recognize the equally tragic ramifications of the same disengagement and the same rationale of binarity vis-à-vis the conquering operations of Western imperial powers in the colonized non-Western lands and, perhaps surprisingly for some, even in Europe. The correlation between the dualistic imaginary of Western modernity and the Christian religion as a discourse, facilitating the colonial expansion more often than resisting it, is not accidental. Certain racially inscribed essentializations notwithstanding, Marcella Althaus-Reid's observation flags the often-avoided correlation:

Processes of colonization, for instance, are about spiritual competence but also competition. Western Christianity was able to prove that the white race was superior in spiritual terms to other races. Western theology affirmed its identity in a discourse of 'we are the best', which also justified the pillage of the colonies and the fables concocted to explain economic dependency in our present century. Economic and spiritual competition are related discourses of identity, based on perceptions of human relations as competitive.²

² Marcella Maria Althaus-Reid "Gustavo Gutiérrez Goes to Disneyland: Theme Park Theologies and the Diaspora of the Discourse of the Popular Theologian in Liberation Theology," *Interpreting Beyond Borders, The Bible and Postcolonialism 3* (Fernando Segovia, ed.; R.S. Sugirtharajah, series ed.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000): 46.

As far as the connection of modernity and colonialism is concerned, I am in complete agreement with Walter D. Mignolo that modernity and coloniality are parallel concepts and that “there is no modernity without coloniality.”³ Mignolo argues that “the coloniality of power underlines nation building in both local histories of nations that devised and enacted global designs as well as in those local histories that had to accommodate themselves to global designs devised with them in mind but without their direct participation.”⁴ Thus, “coloniality ... is the hidden face of modernity and its very condition of possibility” even though the fact “that coloniality remains difficult to understand as the darker side of modernity is due to the fact that most stories of modernity have been told from the perspective of modernity itself, including, of course, those told by its internal critics.”⁵

My critical and constructive peregrination through the inner sanctum of Christian theological method and its elective affinities with dualistic imaginaries of God, divine transcendence, power, agency, and the ever exasperating relationship with the creation sourced *ex nihilo*, is situated in the polyphony (cacophony?) of diasporic life. As far as this life is polyphonic it is also inexorably drawn toward the scrutiny of relationality between the multiple, coexisting and conflicting, dimensions of experience and knowledge that so often seem altogether disagreeable at the first glance. The fascination with immensely diverse ecologies of relationality, divine and human, stems from my encounters with truly bewildering inhabited differences of cultures, languages, political

³ Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000): 43.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Walter D. Mignolo, “The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism,” *Cosmopolitanism* (Carol A. Breckenridge, Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, eds.; Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002):158, 159.

and economical systems: how do they coexist and most importantly, how could they coexist fruitfully? In this regard being “haunted” stands for being embedded in a certain cultural and theological hybridity. I was born in Latvia, a multiply conquered and colonized interstice of Europe, starting from the Western European *Drang nach Osten* crusades in the 12th century that promptly brought Christianity there with “fire and sword” – a fact that is not lost on any Latvian mind, Christian or otherwise – to the most recent subjugation by the Communist “Second world” of the Soviet empire. Due to the complex colonial history, theological education in a scholarly sense was never truly possible in my native language, so studying theology meant reading and thinking in English, Russian, German and other dominant languages. The virtually absolute vacuum of theological literature in the early 1990s after the collapse of the officially atheistic Soviet empire facilitated the emergence of a seeker-type eclectic habit of inquisitiveness. Alongside being trained in theology according to the hastily defrosted pre-World War II traditions in combination with newly imported standards of Western Protestant and Catholic theological edifice, it must be mentioned that the Eastern Orthodox theological and spiritual tradition was always around. People read whatever theological literature they could get their hands on, in whatever languages or confessional traditions it came in, and often gravitated to more than one ecclesiastical context at the same time. The emergence of a certain theological creolization was rather inevitable in Latvia, one of the routinely unacknowledged dark undersides of modernity, conscripted into Europe and “the West” through crusade, apartheid, and serfdom.⁶ Even though the country is undoubtedly geo-culturally European more than anything else, it is by no means simply

⁶ Apart from a tiny number of lone articles, the recent collection of essays *Baltic Postcolonialism* (Violeta Kelertas, ed.; Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2006) is one of the few publications dealing with hitherto neglected region in postcolonial studies.

Western. Europe has never coincided with the West,⁷ its effortlessly enduring hegemonic spectacle and its ongoing (neo)colonial disavowals notwithstanding. Subsequent studies, professional training, and ecclesiastical ministry brought me to Sweden, Germany, Great Britain, and eventually took me to the United States. I am no stranger to inhabiting various imperial formations. In these circumstances, what started as a strategy of survival in the midst of theological scarcity and freshly erupted postcommunist religious pandemonium, compounded with a good dose of neophyte exhilaration about the previously forbidden intellectual fruit, eventually developed into a hybrid theological temperament. Yet historically, through the multiple colonizations of what is the present territory of Latvia, there was no original purity of religious tradition in the first place. Indigenous non-Christian religious practices endured alongside and within the various versions of German and Swedish Protestantism, German and Polish Catholicism, as well as Russian Orthodoxy. All of them came forcibly together within the same territory and among the locals and newcomers alike, and lived on throughout the colonial era right into the so-called “new” (the second-tier, non-core, formerly barbarian!) Europe of the former “Eastern Bloc.”⁸ This is the inherited postcolonial and postcommunist hybridity, indeed the *poétique forcée*⁹ (Édouard Glissant) of historical inscription that undergirds the

⁷ I have elaborated on the historical and ethical necessity of that distinction, particularly in the postcolonial context, in the paper “Questioning Ethically and Interstitially: Which Europe and Whose Eurocentrism?” presented at the Emory European Studies Seminar, October, 2008.

⁸ On the postcolonial and postcommunist intra-European antagonisms of colonial origin see *Old Europe, New Europe, Core Europe: Transatlantic Relations After the Iraq War* (Daniel Levy et al. eds.; London and New York: Verso, 2005).

⁹ Glissant describes “forced poetics” as any “collective desire for expression that, when it manifests itself, is negated at the same time because of the deficiency that stifles it, not at the level of desire, which never ceases, but at the level of expression, which is never realized.” Accordingly, “forced poetics exist where a need for expression confronts an inability to achieve expression. It can happen that this confrontation is fixed in an opposition between the content to be expressed and the language suggested or imposed.” What can be done in such circumstances is to “cut across one language in order to attain a form of expression that is perhaps not part of the internal logic of this language. A forced poetics is created from the awareness of the opposition between a language that one uses and a form of expression that one needs,” in Glissant,

unfinished genesis of my now diasporically attuned theological sensibility. In this sense Latvia has more in common with the Caribbean than, say, with its nearest Scandinavian neighbors.

The postcolonial connotations and connections that I find so pivotal for my hybrid theological sensibility might appear rather puzzling since postcoloniality is still routinely perceived as a domain of solely racially circumscribed discourses whose methodological inertias continue to offer homogenized and simplistic constructs of Europe and “the West” vis-à-vis race, subjugation, Christian missionary ideology and certain canonized versions of transmarine colonialism. Of course, the existential actualities of the present postcolonial milieu – as well as colonialism in the first place – are far more complex than that. Thankfully, the complexity of lived realities is starting to merit acknowledgment in more recent postcolonial studies. In the context of these debates, however, my locus of enunciation would probably need to be specified as being, to use Mita Banerjee’s term, “off-white.” It resonates within the postcolonial imaginary of “the tantalizing off-whiteness of Eastern Europeanness” which at present seemingly “falls outside the ‘ethno-racial pentagon’ of both US racial discourse and postcolonial studies.”¹⁰ Where all of that

Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays (J. Michael Dash, transl. and ed.; Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1999): 120-121.

¹⁰ Mita Banerjee, “Postethnicity and Postcommunism in Hanif Kureishi’s *Gabriel’s Gift* and Salman Rushdie’s *Fury*,” *Reconstructing Hybridity: Post-Colonial Studies in Transition* (Joel Juortti and Jopi Nyman, eds.; Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007): 316. Banerjee observes that “Eastern Europeanness verges on the racial difference of an off-whiteness” (314); this “different whiteness” is ethically inscribed. Some see the present geo-cultural moment as post-postcolonial and in this context “the postcommunist takes the place of ethnicity; the postcommunist is the new ethnic” (315) as it also suggests “the new erotic of the postcolonial” (317). The methodological inertias of early postcolonial studies manifest clearly and in my opinion problematically in what Banerjee describes as “no sense of a shared history or kinship between the ex-postcolonial and the postcommunist” (315). Banerjee’s argument reaches well beyond the particularities of Kureishi and Rushdie’s novels; the (ethical) problematic at hand for postcolonial discourses is indeed in the need to acknowledge the emergence of new, previously unauthorized forms of subalternity, among which “the Eastern European appears as the un-or precivilized” while “Eastern Europe has become the other of a now civilized postcolonial world. Disturbingly, not only

leaves me is being suspended somewhere in the middle of a fluid equilibrium of overlapping homing desires. Similarly to Osvaldo Vena, I too, “have this feeling of not being able to pin down my theology. To many I am a sort of theological chameleon...”¹¹ What endures throughout the ebbs and flows of my migrancy and diasporic emplacements is a paramount fascination with the “how” of the relational ontology of existential engagements, cultural-political allegiances and empowerments. The “how,” ontologically speaking, pertains to the “ethics,” or the quiddity, or the distinctly qualitative nature, of relations between the divine and the created as well as among human persons, cultures, languages, races, genders, sexualities, political and economic regimes. But the “how,” epistemologically speaking, also pertains to the “method,” or the mindscapes of perceiving and conceiving God, the world, and human life.

In this context, the possibilities and the always precarious actualities of conviviality, rather than the abundant visions and embodiments of violent clashes, have captivated my analytical and moral reasoning as much more demanding on both fronts and thus also much more interesting. In other words, life so full of interruptions and disruptions has bodied forth a peculiar curiosity about connections, encounters, interactions, intersections, interdependencies, and complex simultaneities not only on the plane of political economy but also on the plane of the economy of salvation. The concern about the nature of relations and connections is, at the end of the day, a concern about survival, a refrain so existentially dear for a displaced subjectivity. And survival, in turn, “is about

is the history of colonization thus reconfigured as a civilizing process, but Kipling’s burden of the civilizing mission has now been transmitted to the erstwhile colonial itself,” (316-317).

¹¹ Osvaldo D. Vena, “My Hermeneutical Journey and Daily Journey into Hermeneutics: Meaning-Making and Biblical Interpretation in the North American Diaspora,” *Interpreting Beyond Borders*, 99.

the connections between things.”¹² Thus the curiosity about the qualitative anatomy of relationality does not simply and solely stem from my labyrinthine interest in the paradigmatic “both/and” proclivity of the Eastern Orthodoxy; nor is sacramental discourse (as the sometimes prematurely written-off locus of Christian theological imagination of obsolete and irrelevant ritual unions and communions) the only theological terminus of this curiosity. In any case, it is this curiosity that undergirds my joining hands with postcolonial theorist Edward Said in recognition that a truly fruitful intellectual struggle is indeed the struggle “to construct fields of coexistence rather than fields of battle as the outcome of intellectual labor.”¹³

Why?

Several prominent fields over the last decades have posited relationality as one of their analytical and constructive hallmarks, feminism arguably being the most consistent among them. But relationality *per se* cannot be naively valorized; it is simply the intrinsically interdependent ontological shape of reality, for good and for ill, no matter how much effort and advocacy it often takes to be acknowledged as such. What is most fascinating is the nature, or the quiddity, the “how” of such a relationality that could be recognized as the interface of ethical conviviality. The “why” of this project comprises the quest for an ethically configured “how” of relationality as a matter of *theological* rationality, or even better and broader, theoretical sensuality and comportment toward all things, holy and mundane, in relation to God. It is a quest for theological envisagements of ethically configured relationality or conviviality through an exploration of the

¹² Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1994): 336.

¹³ Edward W. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004): 141.

notorious disjunctive gridlock of Christian sacramental-liturgical worship and the life of social justice as a symptom of the modern Western theological mindscape and its methodological *modus operandi*. Precisely as an issue of theological method – the crystallization of cultural imaginary, the mindscape of the patterns and practices of religious knowing, and finally the axiological structure of culturally and historically embedded organization of knowledge – the above disengagement succinctly reflects the impoverishing Occidental dualistic logic of “either/or,” so prominent in the colonial modernity.

What follows then is a contrapuntal investigative itinerary rather than a purely linear argument: the *raison d'être* of this project is to approach the resilient disengagement between liturgical worship and life of justice and service as if from a parallax perspective. Namely, from the viewpoint of an interstitial Western-Eastern diasporic imaginary in conversation with postcolonial theory and two other constitutive “outsides” of the modern Occidental theological imagination – Eastern Christian theology and Jewish ethical thought. The West often appears differently to those who are squarely rooted in its metropolitan centers of power and knowledge in comparison to those who were conscripted into it by colonial domination, imperialistic conquest, processes of globalization, or simply lingered in its marginalized “barbarian” interstices and borderzones since times immemorial – even in Europe and in North America. The origin of my parallax view is a *relative outside* of the Western modernity. It is the diasporic space of enmeshment, the space of living on the thresholds of Western and not quite Western socio-cultural imaginaries. None of them exist in splendid isolation and fabricated innocence. So the objective of such a parallaxic exploration is not to issue a

yet another homogenized condemnation of “the Western modernity” *tout court* in juxtaposition to some glorified “East” or some other imaginary space or “golden age” through a Manichean procedure of naïve or ideologically profitable reversal. The Western theological tradition in general, as well as that of modernity in particular, is immensely rich and superbly intricate as it accommodates diverse genealogies of spiritual and intellectual influences, including internal critiques and dissensions. Modernity is not a one-dimensional villain of world history. Nor are its theological traditions irremediably doomed and damned. Hence my parallax view does not intend to reverse hierarchies of virtue and value by derogatory juxtaposing “the West” and the “non-West.” What the parallax view does, with the recognition of the internal diversity of the Western theological mindscape, is to highlight certain disturbing and unproductive patterns within its imaginary that often slip under the radar screen of the more native internal critiques. It is important to stress the word “more” – which is by no means a univocal “contra” – since the diasporic positionality I inhabit is always already, and irreversibly, embedded in an empirical hybridity of multiple belonging. Moreover, the Occidental modernity precisely as colonial – somberly ironic as it is – is not the exclusive property of the Western colonizing cultures and intellectual traditions. The diasporic perception, then, emerging in this context from a postcolonially colored diasporic experience of cultural interstitiality, cannot, is not, and does not intend to be a spectacle of “the wholly other.” Herein, perhaps, hides its “conservative” or even “cunning”¹⁴ moment as Derek Walcott

¹⁴ Derek Walcott, “The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?” in *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism* (Gaurav Desai and Supriya Nair, eds.; New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005):258. According to Walcott, for the ex-colonial cultural formations – such as the “powerless archipelago” of the Caribbean but also the post-Soviet borderzones of the Baltic, I submit – violent revolution against what has been forced upon them is not the only alternative, let alone “spiritual alternative.” Another route, or Walcott’s version of postcolonial mimicry, is “cunning” or “conservative, by

would put it. There is no unspoiled and absolute critical “outside” or constructive difference vis-à-vis the “natively” Western internal critiques to be claimed since postcolonial and diasporic imaginary precisely suspects and problematizes absolute differences! Yet, accentuating the Occidental unease around relationality, the diasporic parallax sentiment, however, cannot escape a certain astigmatism of critical vision. To inhabit the distance of marginality and interstitiality – though never a trouble-free oppositionality – vis-à-vis the Western cultural and theological edifice indeed entails a certain recalibration of the level of sensitivity toward internally exalted nuances and canonized in-house disagreements. Such a parallax view of the Occidental theological mindscape may appear somewhat insensitive toward some internally cherished idiosyncrasies. It lingers, out of its ambivalent rootedness, around those dimensions of the Western mainstream intellectual tradition that are like the “dark matter,” i.e. comparatively invisible, to those who find themselves rooted more organically and less ambiguously within that tradition. The resulting unease, even a certain heuristic homogenization of critiques and their objects, is to be borne with apprehension and resignation as this project invites and endorses lingering on the thresholds of several cultural traditions at once. Highlighting the “quiddity” of theologically conceived relationality as pivotal in ethical terms constitutes the constructive argument of this project in respect to divine-human as well as disciplinary modes of cohabitation and collaboration. Part III will offer a somewhat atonal ensemble of transdisciplinary elaborations comprising the constructive proposal for modulating the symptomatic

which I mean the open assimilation of what is considered from the metropolitan center to be the most *useful*,” *ibid.* Italics added.

disengagement of liturgy and ethics toward an interface of re-engagement according to sacramental counterpoint.

Now what is the often mentioned “quiddity” of relationality, what is ethics and why do they matter? Quiddity, in the context of this project, is a distant and non-technical cousin of its more glamorous medieval linguistic inspiration of *quidditas*. For the lack of a better expression in English, quiddity here describes the essential and qualitative nature of a relation, its type, structure, distinctive particularity and identity. This world is intensely structured in dominance and hegemony across all terrains of created life. Profoundly aware of such structure, ethics comprises the desirable quiddity of relationality as it denotes the qualitative make-up of relation, a configuration of “right relationality,” i.e. justice, integrity, dignity, non-coercion, reciprocal empowerment, and non-violated agency. Most often it is defined minimalistically and negatively – as non-coercive, non-hegemonic, non-violating quiddity of relationality among divine and human persons and agencies. Overall, the notion of ethics plays a dual, albeit again mostly non-technical, role in my project. First, as I just indicated it makes appearances as the shorthand for theologically sourced tonality of “right relationality” for both a morally inflected epistemological imagination – with which I am primarily concerned in this project – as well as for developing a morally and relationally accountable social ontology. While I cannot address the latter in sufficient detail in the present project, it is my deep conviction that both are interlaced exceptionally intimately, for good and very often for ill, as long as the relational timbre of this world remains scored in dominance.

Second, ethics in the traditional sense also expresses the life of Christian discipleship through socially responsive performance of faith in the service of God’s

saving justice through participation in the redemptive *opus Dei*. Ethics, as understood here, does not analyze and evaluate any specific theories of moral life – be they aretological, deontological, teleological or otherwise. Rather, ethics refers to “the concrete way of life.”¹⁵ As Louis-Marie Chauvet suggests, ethics “includes every kind of *action* Christians perform in the world insofar as this is a testimony given to the gospel of the Crucified-Risen One and this conduct, as J.B. Metz has emphasized, concerns not only interpersonal ‘moral *praxis*’ but also the collective ‘social *praxis*’.”¹⁶ Ethics denotes living within and acting from within the web of palimpsestic relations among the divine and human other(s). The relation with the divine shapes as well as feeds off the relations with our human others while both relationalities permeate each other for good or for ill. So, in full accord with Timothy Sedgwick’s maxim that has inspired both senses of ethics for this project, “in the light of the way in which God is perceived to be related to the world, ethics describes the character and form of life that would express and deepen the relationship with God.”¹⁷ Indeed, ethics engenders “the character and form of life” not only materially and socio-politically, but also as it colors the peregrinations of rationality and imagination.

What about the flamboyantly sounding *opus Dei*? It must be said at once that *opus Dei* in this project does not carry any sensationalist overtones in relation to the post-*Da Vinci Code* notoriety of the Prelature of the Holy Cross. Instead, it succinctly denotes the triune divine work of salvation as divine service, as the divine liturgy (Heb. 8:2, 8:6),

¹⁵ Don E. Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994): 172.

¹⁶ Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (Patrick Madigan, S.J., and Madeleine Beaumont, trans.; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995):179.

¹⁷ Timothy F. Sedgwick, *Sacramental Ethics: Paschal Identity and the Christian Life* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987): 14.

which is open to the synergy of human participation in and, most notably in the context of this project, also beyond cultic rites of public worship and individual devotion. If “the justice of God that the liturgy proclaims *is* the Kingdom of God,”¹⁸ then ethics – or “the liturgy after liturgy” is to complete the proclamation by the performance of that justice in incarnational and sacramental way as precisely a liturgical act. Of course, the decisive argument of this project is to suggest that both liturgy and ethics, by grace, are but deeply consonant and contrapuntally intertwined ingredients of the same participatory *opus*. And of course, the decisive argument of this project is therefore hesitantly utopian as it keenly submits to the dictum that “the need to lend a voice to suffering is the condition of all truth.”¹⁹

Where?

The locus of enunciation for this project is *a* diasporic imaginary. Before anything else is said, I must emphasize that recently there has emerged an acknowledgment of a whole host of diasporic belongings and experiences besides the “classical” model of diaspora with its super-glued singular attachment to an original homeland. Similarly, there are various theorizations of the perplexities of diasporic belonging. The understanding of diaspora and its way of perceiving the world that I work with (Part I, Ch.2) represents a perspective, a rather popular perspective perhaps, but only *a* perspective. Now diaspora usually refers to the ethnic and cultural assemblages of people who have been uprooted and dispersed from their homelands by explicit or implicit

¹⁸ Mark Searle, “Serving the Lord with Justice,” *Liturgy and Social Justice* (Mark Searle, ed., Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1980): 17.

¹⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (E.B. Ashton, trans.; New York: Seabury Press, A Continuum Book, 1973): 17-18.

forces of political, military or economic nature – through exile, asylum seeking, or migration – into new countries, cultures, and languages. In the aftermath of the glory days of Occidental postmodernism and its predilection for incommensurable differences, diasporic imaginary suggests another view of living amidst differences and contemplating differences. Amidst broad varieties of diasporic formations and their diverse and increasingly complex inscriptions as forced or voluntary, an earlier migration remains a crucial tenet of these formations. Diasporic imaginary²⁰ then is a distinct way or style of perceiving the world as it is as well as envisioning it as it ought to be. It evolves out of the inhabited experience of having lived in multiple places, having spoken multiple languages, having participated in multiple political, economical, and civic traditions. Imaginary, as the notion is also increasingly being used in theological discourse at the present time, denotes the active inclusion of embodied non-cognitive, affective, performative, and voluntary aspects of human rationality in understanding of the world and the axiological orientations of life.²¹ Imaginary is an amalgam of *ratio* and *αἴσθησις*, of creative imagination and bodily practice, and of the preexisting socio-cultural realities as they orchestrate and are being in turn re-orchestrated into new

²⁰ The term “diasporic imaginary” was introduced by Vijai Mishra, “The Diasporic Imaginary: Theorizing the Indian Diaspora,” *Textual Practice* 10:3 (1996): 421-447 in resonance with Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991). I am using the term “imaginary” in a non-Lacanian sense but rather following the usage Édouard Glissant’s work has disseminated, and in this sense, imaginary denotes the complexity of perceptive, analytical, imaginative, political, economical, and interventional attitudes and responses toward life and world that a culture or a constituency may have. Imaginary is neither imagination nor ratiocination alone. Without doubt, imaginary is also “a landscape of dream and fantasy,” and in the case of diasporic location this landscape, argues Monica Fludernik, “is stocked with a variety of perhaps contradictory landmarks” which in concrete instances congeal around some particular landmarks rather than others, “The Diasporic Imaginary: Postcolonial Reconfigurations in the Context of Multiculturalism,” *Diaspora and Multiculturalism: Common Traditions and New Developments* (Monika Fludernik, ed.; Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2003): xi.

²¹ See, for example, James K.A. Smith’s recent *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009): 63-73. Smith builds on the work of Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), but both, however, point back to the understanding of “imaginary” in the initial context of postcolonial and diaspora studies.

patterns and values of life. In cultural production, including the disciplines of scholarly reflection, imaginary can function as something like a theoretical sensuality and as an aesthetically “thick” methodological disposition.

Diasporic imaginary conveys a certain “fabric of imagination” (Wilson Harris) and also a certain fabric of critical consciousness. It strikes me that from within a diasporic lifeworld, differences are always acutely present and yet fluid, mutating, evolving, and allowing for multiple, sometimes contradictory and sometimes harmonious, fidelities. Diasporic imaginary is a mindscape that indwells borderline jurisdictions – geo-cultural, socio-political, ecclesiastical, and intellectual alike. What the diasporic imaginary as espoused in this project does not indwell, despite sometimes using a rather similar language in its self-scrutiny, is “the poststructuralist appropriation of the diaspora” that “aestheticizes it as an avant-garde lifestyle based on deterritorialization.”²² Diasporic imaginary, as my locus of enunciation, is not a predominantly ludic imaginary: it is not nearly as attractive to live as it is to train one’s scholarly analysis on it; it is not a placeholder for the *jouissance* of metropolitan intellectual deracination. Even the peculiar intellectual “pleasures” of migrancy and “exile” that Edward Said rarely and guardedly praised as creative, unconventional, methodologically liberating and eccentrically enlivening neither erase the awkwardness of such efforts nor alleviate the “envying those around you who have always been at home.”²³ This needs to be highlighted, since, as R.S Sugirtharajah recently observed, the present moment in theological history in the West is

²² R. Radhakrishnan, “Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity,” *Callaloo* 16:4 (1993): 764. Radhakrishnan rightly exposes excessive allegorization or metaphorization of diaspora as the fabrication of an alienated post-political and post-representative spatiality through which “high metropolitan theory creates a virtual consciousness as a form of blindness to historical realities. The metropolitan theory of diaspora is in fact a form of false consciousness that has to be demystified before the diasporic condition can be historicized as a condition of pain, and double alienation,” *ibid.*

²³ Edward W. Said, “Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals,” *The Edward Said Reader* (Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin, eds.; New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 2000): 379.

the unfolding “time of the diasporic intellectuals”²⁴ and diasporic hermeneutics. Hence it might be regarded as merely fashionable to drop terms like “diasporic” and “hybrid” in one’s writing to participate in the academic rat race to be part of every voguish theoretical game in town. Yet Sugirtharajah also remarks that it is premature to “speak of a formidable diasporic theology.”²⁵ What is present is a discourse that is “desperately seeking a home and acceptability in the academy, enamoured of and entrapped by its theoretical sophistry and methodological procedures.”²⁶ Undeniably, the present project gravitates in the orbit of such a homing quest. It also resonates – through its preoccupation with theological method! – with the challenge of diasporic theology that Marcella Althaus-Reid also found emerging yet not quite “arrived at” as a part of the “metatheology” of liberation:

However, we are not fully in the presence of a postcolonial or diasporic systematic theology. Postcolonial and diasporic theologies are of a dispersed nature, because, in essence, they are contrary to the more Western notion of systematizing theology. The point is precisely one of opening borders and tunnels under the theoretical constructions of the West, not only in the content of theology but also challenging the order of submission that lies behind systematic theologies. In systematic theology we find the quasi-anthropological compulsion of the West for classifying a theory of understanding of God as theology into neat, closed compartments or systems. Is this administrative, taxonomic and colonial order in which historical experiences of some discourse about God and humanity are comprised challenged in postcolonialism and diasporic thought?²⁷

²⁴ R.S. Sugirtharajah, “Muddling Along at the Margins,” *Still at the Margins: Biblical Scholarship Fifteen Years after Voices from the Margin*, (R.S. Sugirtharajah, ed.; London and New York: T&T Clark, 2008): 13.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁷ Althaus-Reid, “Gustavo Gutiérrez Goes to Disneyland,” *Interpreting Beyond Borders*, 45. Althaus-Reid’s article is a decade old yet her observations have not become obsolete. Interestingly, Kevin J. Vanhoozer has remarked that the very category of “method” might be a too Western category to embrace for some, especially when it comes to the hegemonic “one big fat Greek method,” and suggested that the era of world Christianity inhabits a situation “after method,” which he defines as “a situation in which no one method dominates.” In my opinion, a pluritopic, non-hegemonic hermeneutical ethos and a genuinely multilateral universality does not preclude interest in method, rather the opposite is the case. Yet, interestingly, Vanhoozer’s constructive proposal is to suggest a “diasporadic systematics” of dispersed interpretative

Diasporic imaginary, as I present it here from a methodological point of view, is a mindscape that is *ipso facto* an intellectual and affective borderscape of variously attuned hyphenations. As such, it bears certain deep and irrevocable consonances with my Latvian-American diasporic experience. For nearly 15 years, as a pastor of the Latvian Lutheran Church Abroad in Great Britain, Germany and the United States, I was, in a sense and with much unease, a “professional Latvian.” Yet this project never claims to speak “on behalf” of the Latvian-American, and even more specifically diasporically Latvian Lutheran, theological, ecclesiastical, or political constituency. The aspiration of being a “native informant” is not the guiding star of this itinerary.

Now, proleptically, “in Christ there is no East or West” with all the fears of hegemonic unilateralism eschatologically transformed. Yet in the present palpably unredeemed dispensation, both “East” and “West” are notoriously loaded and ambiguous notions. As I use these terms, “the West” and “Western” most often denote the geocultural location of the “old”/colonialist Europe and the North America of modernity. “The West” is by no means to be confused with the *whole* of Europe and the *whole* of Americas! However, I use terms “Occident” and “Occidental” to denote the particular cultural and intellectual economy of the colonial modernity, its epistemological imaginaries, as well as its cosmologies of power, goodness, and evil. The Occident as a cultural imaginary is not spatially identical with the West. The Occident is the West as a

authority of *mestizaje*, which “will not lord the truth over others from position of power... but will instead witness to the truth from positions of weakness,” “One Rule to Rule Them All? Theological Method in an Era of World Christianity,” *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity* (Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland, eds.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006): 125-126.

“psychological category,”²⁸ not merely a geographical entity. The Occident is the West as a cultural “project,”²⁹ as “an idea, a concept,”³⁰ and as “an epistemological condition, a state of mind.”³¹ And certainly, the West as the Occident is “not just its localized name but also the history of its travels and pernicious effects on other histories.”³² As far as “the East” or “the non-West” is concerned, the usage of these compound and equally convoluted terms is mostly limited to expositions and quotations of my interlocutors. In the work of Alexander Schmemmann, for example, the idea of “the East” is particularly mired in the predicament of appearing as a nativistic construct of a counter/anti-West, albeit being eerily reminiscent of a mere reversed and “Orientalistically” inscribed dualism. Thus ironies abound even within the very basic language that struggles to understand and then also transform the tragic fabrications of the axiomatic force of binarity, coextensive with colonial modernity. Diasporic reasoning is not a panacea nor is it always commensurable to its own claimed emancipatory aspirations. Moreover, certain diasporic discourses can be outright reactionary in their desires for vindictive restorative justice, violent reversals of power allocations, and proliferation of their “closed” ideologies of jealous uniqueness or inequitable privilege. On the other hand, what also

²⁸ Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Oxford and Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983): ix. In this context Nandy summarizes the unquestionable status quo: what I call “Occident,” is what Nandy describes as “the West [that] is now everywhere, within the West and outside; in structures and in minds,” *ibid.*

²⁹ Édouard Glissant, *Le Discours antillais* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997): 14. Glissant, in a footnote, remarks that “the Occident is not in the West. It is not a place, it is a project,” (“L’Occident n’est pas à l’ouest. Ce n’est pas un lieu, c’est un projet”). In the French language the crucial nuance is obvious.

³⁰ Stuart Hall, “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power,” *Formations of Modernity* (S. Hall and B. Gieben, eds; Cambridge: Polity Press and Open University Press, 1992): 277.

³¹ R. Radhakrishnan, “Derivative Discourses and the Problem of Signification,” *The European Legacy* 7:6 (2002): 786. Even though Radhakrishnan’s description literally refers to Europe, I see it pertaining with a broader adequacy to what I call the Occident. Similarly, then, it is rather the ability of the Occident, not merely Europe, “to have influenced the whole world on the basis of colonial modernity that empowers it to function simultaneously as a place and non-place,” *ibid.*

³² R. Radhakrishnan, “Postmodernism and the Rest of the World,” *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies* (Fawzia Afzal-Khan and Kalpana Seshardi-Crooks, eds.; Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000): 55.

abounds amongst these ironies is the diasporic penchant – as I experience it – to be wary of binaristic axiologies, even those that are generated precisely out of certain diasporic predicaments. Perhaps the most valuable lesson that the riddles of diasporic imaginary can teach is the recognition of how tortuous the efforts to find ways of thinking and living beyond dualistic ideologies of culture, race, gender, religion, political tradition and many other things are. Hence, in my project no source or idea, if interesting and useful for critical or constructive argument is *a priori* ostracized because of its origin, allegiance or location in a “wrong” place, or in a “wrong” canon, in the “West” or in the “East,” – geographically, culturally, confessionally, or in terms of gender, disciplinary turf, or time period.

Last but not least, this project is truly and deeply indebted and sympathetic to the constantly diversifying milieu of women’s theological creativity – be they feminist, womanist, *mujerista*, Third world, or otherwise. However, it is not explicitly and preeminently a feminist project even as the category of reciprocity, so crucial and enduringly agile in women-centered and women-generated discourses, appears as the pivotal inspiration for my orchestrations of ethically configured relationality. Impatience with rationales of binarity across arenas of theory, theology, and life also signals a resonance with feminist concerns. What Kathryn Tanner observed about feminist theology remains, I submit, equally pertinent to various women-generated discourses, including this project that may otherwise found to be too traditional and/or conservative for some tastes. Namely, I believe that the influence of feminist discourses indeed “is strengthened to the extent that it wrestles constructively with the theological claims that have traditionally been important in Christian theology; the more traditional the material

with which it works, the greater the influence of feminist theology.”³³ Obviously, the mere focus on sacramental theology signals attention to the tradition – but is it an automatically conservative gesture? Undeniably, in the context of gender discourse, my ardent avowal of the Eucharist as the paradigmatic theological locus of ethically configured relationality ontologically and epistemologically also reveals the most privileged aspect of my locus of enunciation. As an ordained Lutheran clergywoman of the Latvian Lutheran Church Abroad, with no gender-based restrictions (at least at the present moment) for upwardly-mobile advancement through the clerical hierarchy, I am not excluded from any positions of doctrinal, ecclesiastical, liturgical and sacramental authority – even though this is not the case in my native country and its Lutheran church, let alone in so many other Christian communities worldwide. However, in ecclesiastical and confessional contexts where women are still, sadly and scandalously, denied full participation in ordained priesthood and sacramental ministry, the intense focus on the Eucharist is at best ambiguous and can be seen as conservative or even reactionary due to its male-dominated institutional connotations.³⁴ I recognize this sort of ambiguity surrounding the Eucharist not merely as truly disheartening, but indeed sacrilegious.

³³ Kathryn Tanner, “Social Theory Concerning the ‘New Social Movements’ and the Practice of Feminist Theology,” *Horizons in Feminist Theology: Identity, Tradition, and Norms* (Rebecca S. Chopp and Sheila Greeve Davaney, eds.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997):192.

³⁴ The profound ambivalence regarding the Eucharist is particularly clearly manifested in the Roman Catholic liturgical context. Susan A. Ross remarks “while the Eucharist remains central, it also remains painful,” *Extravagant Affections: A Feminist Sacramental Theology* (New York: Continuum, 1998): 219. See also, Susan A. Ross, “Feminist theology and sacramental theology: old and new challenges,” *The Gestures of God: Explorations in Sacramentality* (Geoffrey Rowell and Christine Hall, eds.; London and New York: Continuum, 2004): 116-117. Teresa Berger observes that “in most theological claims about the importance of the Eucharist for the life of the church, there is no acknowledgment of the peculiar ways in which women’s gender has shaped, circumscribed, and, last but not least, restricted their engagement with this sacrament. More than half of the church, in its gendered particularity, remains invisible in these claims about the centrality of the Eucharist,” *Dissident Daughters: Feminist Liturgies in Global Context* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001):222-223. Recently, in the context of her liturgical study Siobhan Garrigan has pointed to her “regret at contributing to an overly Eucharist-oriented view of worship in contemporary theology,” *Beyond Ritual: Sacramental Theology After Habermas* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004): ix-x.

Here I acknowledge my privilege and lament in solidarity with liturgically marginalized women the continuing ignominy of patriarchal injustice across cultures and confessions.

When?

The spiritual and historical chronotope of this project is, broadly speaking, the global postcoloniality of the early 21st century. Postcoloniality, as I use it here, is a condition and notion shared globally; it is not a simple synonym for the so-called “Third world.” On the one hand, in the chronological aftermath of colonialism, from the second part of the 20th century onwards, postcoloniality inhabits both the sovereignties of formerly colonizing and formerly colonized national states in an unequal, inequitable, yet irrevocable way. On the other, due to complex but undoubtedly massive processes of migrancy among colonially implicated geo-cultural and socio-economic spaces in the era of present globalization, postcoloniality is also a traveling *Lebenswelt*. Cultural memories and personal histories of dominance or being dominated – often is the latter that tend to linger most consciously and mournfully through an addiction to mull over them– migrate and find new domiciles as their bearers do. But above all, postcoloniality denotes a relationship of entanglement. According to Achille Mbembe, it can be imagined as enclosing “multiple *durées* made up of discontinuities, reversals, inertias, and swings that overlay one another, interpenetrate one another, and envelope one another”³⁵ – it is an “experience of a period that is far from being uniform and absolutely cannot be reduced to a succession of moments and events, but in which instants, moments, and events are,

³⁵ Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2001): 14.

as it were, on top of one another, inside one another.”³⁶ Related to, yet distinct from postcoloniality as a geo-historical era, postcolonial theory is a multifarious hermeneutical posture that I have found sufficiently subversive of the overarching cultural and epistemological imaginary of the Occidental colonial modernity and also sufficiently concerned with ethical ramifications of historical materialities to be useful for theological inquiry. Fascinated as I remain with postcolonial theory, this project is not a project of “postcolonial theology” in the rigid sense of it being an exercise in translating the Christian theological *loci* into theoretically authorized versions of postcolonial high theory as an academic commodity. Rather, it is a mutually critical conversation between theology and postcolonial theory amidst the multiple *durées* of the global postcoloniality. Hence my postcolonially colored³⁷ theological sensibility interacts with postcolonial theory obliquely to engage in a transformative conversation. To do otherwise, I submit, would amount to an ontotheological posture, theologically speaking, or surrendering to a danger that Homi Bhabha described as allowing “schools of thought [become] prisons of method by misplaced dogmatism of the practitioners or in response to institutional and disciplinary hegemonies,”³⁸ theoretically speaking. A conversation, not a conversion to this or that version of “high postcolonial theory” as if it were an irrefutable dogma, is what inspires this project.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 242.

³⁷ By postcolonially colored sensibility I mean a resonance with what Walter D. Mignolo calls postcolonial *theorizing* in distinction from postcolonial *theories* (with their prominent indebtedness to the Western poststructuralism). As Mignolo suggests, postcolonial theorizing is “a process of thought that people living under colonial domination enact in order to negotiate their life and subaltern condition” and this “enactment of subaltern reason coexists with colonialism itself as a constant move and force toward autonomy and liberation in every order of life, from economy to religion, from language to education, from memories to spatial order, and it is not limited to the academy, even less to the American academy,” “(Post)Occidentalism, (Post)Coloniality, and (Post)Subaltern Rationality,” *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies*, 87.

³⁸ Homi K. Bhabha, “Surviving Theory: A Conversation with Homi K. Bhabha,” *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies*, 377.

With Whom?

The slate of my interlocutors might initially invoke a Tertullianesque smirk: *quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis; quid academiae et ecclesiae?* Russian Orthodox diasporic liturgical theologian Alexander Schmemmann, Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, and Arab-American postcolonial theorist Edward Said – how are they related to this project and to its polyphonic conversation? First, what distinguishes them from a number of relatively minor interlocutors is that their thought enters this conversation not just descriptively, informatively or critically, but also, each in its differently calibrated way, constructively and formatively. But most importantly, the selection of this migrant trio expresses one of my diasporic intellectual “homing desires,” to converse with sensibilities and rationalities that are at least tangentially related to my geo-cultural origins and imaginary homelands. They also share both the pleasures and pains of migrancy, and all it does to one’s perception and conception of the world. Now, the closest I could get to the Baltic states and thinkers interested in liturgy and ethics originating from that interstice of Europe, was to turn slightly East toward Estonia and engage in conversation one of the most famous liturgical theologians of late modernity, Alexander Schmemmann. He was born in Estonia, in the Russian Orthodox diaspora there. Then I turned to the opposite direction, slightly West, to Lithuania, to engage in conversation one of the most famous Jewish philosophers of late modernity, Emmanuel Levinas. He was born in Lithuania, in the Jewish diaspora of Kaunas. Kaunas, incidentally, is also the city my maternal ancestors came from before they settled in Rīga, Latvia, in the early 20th century. Jewish diaspora endures as the “classical” paradigm in

diasporic discourse even as new models of (neo)diasporic experience supplement it alongside with new theorizations emerging from the reflections on new diasporic emplacements. Of course, reading Schmemmann and Levinas together on liturgy and ethics is also somewhat like constantly turning in 90-degree angles ... Finally, the exilic voice of a seminal postcolonial theorist Edward Said opens up this already multifaceted conversation to an innovative constructive thrust not only in terms of postcolonial reasoning but also in reference to a transcultural “imaginary homeland” of mine – music. In short, this project is the itinerary of intertwined conversations with some of those with whom I find myself, as it were, more “at home;” yet, “at home” rather differently vis-à-vis each one of them – an Eastern Christian liturgical theologian, a Jewish moral philosopher, and a religiously deeply skeptical postcolonial scholar who also was a Julliard-trained pianist and an amateur musical critic.

Said’s notion of postcolonially modulated counterpoint – with another figure of some diasporic, exilic, and certainly musical, connections looming large in his critical creativity, Theodor W. Adorno³⁹ – is the pivotal inspiration for the constructive envisagement of non-coercive and non-hegemonic ethical relationality in this project. It is Adorno who consistently connects music and power, society and morality, and it is this connection that attracted Said to Adorno and myself to both. But attraction does not preclude divergence: whereas for Adorno, in music and in life, the predilection toward

³⁹ It is interesting to note that Said rarely fails to make references to Adorno – besides Adorno’s steady emergence in Said’s texts as one of his most fascinating and enduring interlocutors from reflections on philosophy of music to politics – when pondering on the themes of exile and migrancy. Exile, of course, was known by Adorno as a personal experience during the Nazi reign in Europe and his *Minima Moralia* definitely proved particularly inspirational for Said’s own theorizations of exile. Adorno’s role in my project is to insightfully yet sporadically represent the post-Holocaust cultural milieu that has been so decisive as the major ethical critique of modern Western theological tradition, including liturgical theologies. But it is mainly as a principal, indeed a beloved, interlocutor of Said that Adorno enters this conversation on theological method, liturgy, and ethics in the milieu of diasporic postcoloniality. Said’s thought, I believe, can be appreciated and engaged with far deeper if the influence of Adorno is recognized.

permanent dissonance constitutes not only a faithful reflection of reality in critical consciousness but also the privileged model of ethical comportment toward the deeply flawed reality of social injustice and suffering, Said conceives such dissonance as genuine – but tragic and ultimately useless. As it will emerge in Part III, my theological itinerary intertwines with this paradigmatic *Gefühl* of Said's critical trajectory more than it does with Adorno's, regardless of how much it owes to the latter as well. The parting of the ways with Adorno for Said is not antagonistic yet important:

For Adorno, from the beginning of his career to the end of his life, music is in a permanent, contradictory, and dialectical tension with society. As few critics of Adorno acknowledge, music is at the core of his philosophy and understanding of culture. (...) the more you read of Adorno, the more you realize that music is in that state of tension with everything, including itself and including the music that matters most to him. (...) This kind of starkness of what is unreconciled and can't be synthesized is what attracted me to Adorno. Yet he doesn't give this irreconcilability the kind of tragic dimension that for me it has always had.⁴⁰

It is not the dissonance and the irreconcilabilities as such that fascinate Said, but rather the imaginary of counterpoint that acknowledges them with utmost seriousness in life, in thought, and in art, without valorizing them as a robust ethical teleology. So, "in the counterpoint of Western classical music, various themes play off one another, with only a provisional privilege being given to any particular one; yet in the resulting polyphony there is concert and order, an organized interplay that derives from the themes, not from a rigorous melodic or formal principle outside the work."⁴¹ Here counterpoint emerges as a major analytical metaphor for postcolonial criticism as methodological strategy. At the same time, counterpoint also shapes Said's self-reflective critical elaborations of exile

⁴⁰ "An Interview with Edward W. Said," *The Edward Said Reader*, 426-427.

⁴¹ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 51.

and migrancy of his own inhabited experience. In this context, counterpoint is not only a postcolonial hermeneutical strategy but also an existentially engaged specification of hybridity associated with postcolonial displacements. Moreover, as I suggest in Part III, Ch. 1, counterpoint in Said's thought can be seen as a template of emancipatory, perhaps ever utopian, regime of life and knowledge. Out of all these reciprocally related contexts, counterpoint is what undergirds the discursive and imaginative disposition in this project which holds together the most fruitful trajectories from both Schmemmann (liturgy as performance of sacramental relationality in worship and life) and Levinas (the range of the ethical is the range of true liturgy) in a deep consonance within diasporic imaginary with its instinctually preferred option of "both/and" rather than "either/or." If for Said counterpoint offers a sufficiently opaque sonic terrain to theorize postcolonial entanglements without reduction and binaristic axiologies as well as to reflect on the exigencies of his own migrancy, this project, using these valuable insights, takes counterpoint a step further. Counterpoint, I suggest, also offers a sufficiently complex sonic terrain to elaborate on the nature of mystery of hybrid relationality in sacrament, a relationality that is an analogical extension of the paradigmatic trinitarian and incarnational relationality. The unavoidable implication of this project is to acknowledge diasporic experience, particularly its contrapuntal features, as contextually formative for theological imagination at this moment of convoluted globalization.

The intention of this extended conversation with Schmemmann, Levinas, Said, and other secondary interlocutors is not to offer a scrupulous and polemical "close reading" for solely critical or purely comparative purposes. Rather, it is to see what happens when theological imagination indwells several conversations at the same time in a way similar

to diasporic experience. To respect the polyphonic momentum, I have preserved the non-inclusive language in citations of my interlocutors, resisting temptation to domesticate and consequently, disguise, the distance that sometimes separates some of us in a rather irreconcilable way. Also, in a profoundly ironical way, the diasporic locations and worldviews of Schmemmann and Levinas witness to subversive and innovative newness but also, even more strikingly, to the lures of diaspora to clandestinely feed on the same dualistic imaginaries that their thought often questions so passionately. Such a notable discrepancy of diasporic rationalities certainly highlights the actual diversity and complexity of diasporic formations and mindscapes. Yet the itinerary of my constructive argument is not to feed on their (sometimes truly depressing) oversights to advance my insights with a presumptuous gusto of omniscience. Rather the opposite applies: I converse with them through a disposition of generosity – yet not unconditional trust – in order to be both challenged and inspired to write for a life of mind and for a life of embodied historical materiality as contrapuntal as no theoretical envisagement can ever hope to capture adequately.

The lived complexity of diasporic life in conjunction with sacramental and liturgical lifeworlds of embodied *opus Dei* has only increased an irresistible desire to turn to music for an aurally evocative language. It is part for my larger quest for signifying practices that are not hegemonically ruled by competitive visualism and the logocentric fixation on the written word in linguistically infatuated Western modernity. As Vladimir Jankélévitch observes,

the experienced simultaneity of opposites is the daily regime, incomprehensible as it might be, of a life full of music. Music, like movement or duration, is a continuous miracle that with every step

accomplishes the impossible. The superimposed voices of polyphony realize a *concordia discors*, of which music alone is capable...⁴²

It is interesting to note that in the milieu of postcoloniality, the critiques of modern Occidental visualism and textuality often go hand in hand. These critiques definitely resonate with internal Occidental dissatisfactions about the same issues that Said's work addresses in such a fascinating way. From the perspective of the Black Atlantic as the counterculture of modernity Paul Gilroy has noted that music questions the "privileged conceptions of both language and writing as preeminent expressions of human consciousness" thereby challenging the "ideology of the text and of textuality as a mode of communicative practice which provides a model for all other forms of cognitive exchange and social interaction."⁴³

How?

The question "how" is about method or the shorthand for epistemological imagination. It is about the human mindscape and its habits of knowledge-gathering and its axiological discernment. The fabric of diasporic imagination in this project reflects a methodological multiple belonging. It draws from multiple scriptural, creedal and confessional sources in the Christian theological tradition, it converses with sensibilities

⁴² Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Music and the Ineffable* (Carolyn Abbate, trans.; Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003): 18-19. There is also an ethical connection with music that philosopher Kathleen Marie Higgins suggests in her book on philosophical ethics and music. She remarkably argues that music provides models of "flowering and resolution of tension" through "the possibility of graceful navigation within a texture of external and internal tensions" – thus music suggests desirable modes of ethical social interaction. Most importantly, "reflection on music suggests that satisfaction need not be construed as a drastic reduction or elimination of tension. Instead, satisfaction can be found in controlled and coordinated manipulation of tension itself. Musical experience also suggests the fallacy involved in making satisfaction our overriding ethical concern. Risk itself has a positive value in both musical and ethical experience," *The Music of Our Lives* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991):194.

⁴³ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993): 74, 77.

and rationalities pertaining to Western or Eastern Christians and some that avoid such connotations at all. It negotiates among diverse theological and critical norms. Some of these sources and rationalities I inhabit far deeper than others. That accounts for the asymmetry of their presence and influence. There is no pretense for a breathtaking originality or a tantalizing heterodoxy in this project. Rather, it resembles the insightful notion highlighted by Lewis Ayres in the context of patristic theology as “piecemeal engagement.” Ayres’ analysis suggests that the engagement of theology with philosophy (or any other non-theological discourse) in modernity was typically viewed as dualistic and competitive wherein the philosophies were viewed as self-enclosed vis-à-vis the Christian faith, so the only model of negotiation and appropriation would be a theological surrender to philosophy.⁴⁴ Piecemeal engagement, however, denotes a selective usage, or transdisciplinary translation, of elements from other discourses than revealed theology to elucidate theological themes “through the use of whatever lies to hand and that may be persuasively adapted. What counts as ‘persuasive adaptation’ is, of course, something constantly under negotiation and argument.”⁴⁵ Piecemeal engagement emerges here, I suggest, as a patristically informed description of constructive theology. As constructive, theology is inescapably contextual: it has been such in the era of contentious Trinitarian and Christological debates and it is so today. The constructive thrust for a postcolonially colored and diasporically embedded theological reflection, therefore, is curiously not so dissimilar – while being more explicit – to what has been in fact going on throughout the Christian history. As Thomas Cattoi observes,

⁴⁴ Lewis Ayres, *Nicea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004): 391.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 392.

In the contemporary, postcolonial world, the task of contextually minded theologians is thus to pursue in a reflective manner the mediating task that was pursued by Christian theologians in late antiquity, engaging those cultures from Asia, Africa, or Latin America that finally have come to be seen as valuable sources of theological insight.⁴⁶

My project, as a piecemeal engagement within diasporic imaginary and particularly in the context of liturgical and sacramental theology, surely goes well beyond the mutually critical (at least potentially) intra-ecclesial or intra-Christian juxtaposition of dogmatic traditions, scriptural interpretations, theological temperaments, elements and accents of various religious practices and rituals, as well as their ideas of ethics, justice, and responsibility. The “grace-period” of such relatively insular juxtapositions defining the boundaries of theological normativity and accountability—valuable and always necessary as they are—ought to be acknowledged as having expired in this era of post-Holocaust and postcolonial history with the ever present masculine monopoly in most things religious on the top of it all. To restrict theological inquiry to intra-cum-inter-ecclesial critiques in this historical context is to seriously underplay the danger of idolatry. Idolatry is, above all, a matter of relationality: right, wrong, appropriate, harmful, life-giving or outright fatal. So the piecemeal engagement performed in this project attempts to embody an attitude of sacramental—and thus ethical, as the argument of this project ultimately suggests—relationality toward sources and norms of theological inquiry. Here my guide is Nicholas Lash and his insistence (originally in the context of dialogue with Judaism) that

... a form of Christianity purified into recognition that the Christian doctrine of God functions as a set of protocols against idolatry, far from

⁴⁶ Thomas Cattoi, “What Has Chalcedon to Do with Lhasa? John Keenan’s and Lai Pai-chiu’s Reflections on Classical Christology and the Possible Shape of a Tibetan Theology of Incarnation,” *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 28 (2008): 13-25.

‘exclusively’ and arrogantly imposing its claim through argument, Inquisition, or Crusade, would be obliged, *on its own terms*, to be receptive to enrichment and purification from other traditions of speech and behavior, whether religious or secular – for God’s word and presence are not *confined* to that particular tradition which acknowledges responsibility sacramentally to bear witness to them.⁴⁷

What?

What was so offensive in Paolo Veronese’s opulently Mannerist “Last Supper” (1572) painted for the refectory of the monastery of *San Giovanni e Paolo* in Venice to elicit the demand of the Holy Tribunal of the Inquisition to repaint it? Was it the scarcity of enclosing walls, the presence of some Germans in an Italian painting of the Eucharist during the heyday of Counter-Reformation in suspicious proximity to Christ? Maybe it was the parrot present at eucharistic celebration? Perhaps a man with bleeding nose, as well as scores of seemingly apostolically “unrelated” people, and finally a dog where Mary Magdalene was supposed to be? This “Last Supper” ended up being renamed, although not repainted. It became known and is now displayed in *Galleria dell’Accademia* in Venice as “The Feast in the House of Levi” with reference to Luke 5:27-30. However, as initially represented by Veronese, the grounding moment of all Christian liturgy is envisioned as being squarely located at a sumptuously painted yet amazingly ordinary site of convergence of varied people, animals, multiple conversations, movements, and exchanges taking place simultaneously with the eucharistic celebration. In other words, the Eucharist takes place right in the midst of routine living. Was the suspicious intertwinement of the liturgical, the sacramental, and

⁴⁷ Nicholas Lash, *Easter in Ordinary: Reflections on Human Experience and the Knowledge of God* (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988): 264-265.

the shockingly ordinary precisely the reason for Veronese's interdiction? The palimpsestic interlacing of seemingly separate temporalities, spheres of life, creatures and their actions in Veronese's controversial "Last Supper" for me has long been a concise sign of what sacramental liturgy is most profoundly all about. Like Veronese's inquisitorially unacceptable "Last Supper," liturgy is embodied, embedded, and performed in the world, in the world of social relations and values, not merely some canonized sites and occasions of supposedly pure, transparent, agreeable and instantly recognizable self-identity.

In the sacramental economy of incarnation and salvation, this world – not just certain sites and discreet moments – is indwelt by God through Christ and in the Spirit. It is a reality created relationally, fallen relationally, and redeemed relationally. This dissertation proposes that sacramentally configured relationality coincides with the divinely inaugurated interface of ethical relationality. From this perspective, liturgy, ultimately, is the performance of sacramentality as ethical relationality. It is sacramentality *in actu*. Or, to underscore the painfully eschatological nature of such a proposition, it is ordained to be precisely such a performance even when the actual liturgies fall short or distort the vocation. In any case, ethics, in the sense of denoting the quiddity or qualitative nature of relationality, does not enter into theology as an extrinsic impostor at the whim of some extra-theological rationality. The ontological and the epistemological cannot be separated from the ethical in the sacramental economy of salvation. Ethics concretizes the incarnationally grounded sacramental nature of the economy of salvation as well as translates it into the socio-historical realm of routine living. This perception of ethical relationality deliberately contradicts the understanding

of divine salvific power and agency according to the model of colonial conquest, wherein the relation is hegemonic, non-reciprocal, and arrogantly self-referential.

The critical objective of this dissertation is to interrogate the impact of the modern Occidental ontological and epistemological imagination, with its penchant for competitive dualism, on theological reflection. Christian theological imagination as part and parcel of Western culture has concurrently operated as a constitutive enabler as well as an ambivalent victim of its own power. Within the dualistic outlook, relationality is perceived and enacted through gestures of displacement, competitive juxtaposition, and detraction in search for clearly defined boundaries, as well as transparent and univocal meanings. The rationale of hierarchical binarity finds some of its most sinister ramifications in the disengagement of liturgy and social ethics of discipleship. Nothing tells this lamentable story better than the dreadful history of the Holocaust in the recent past in the heart of the Western world but even more so do the centuries of colonialism and imperialism all over the planet with its profitable syncretisms of the “cross and crown.” Recently, in some liturgical theologies, the same dualistic juxtaposition, the same rationale of binarity becomes curiously fetishized as an allegedly necessary and uniquely productive tension between worship and life. As attractive as the various models of “mutual critique” between liturgy and life may be, my aim here is to caution against the seldom explicitly stated yet underlying dualisms that nonetheless pervade the epistemological landscape of such imaginaries of critique and tension. From liturgical perspective, as far as the chronic disengagement of liturgy and life of discipleship goes, this project reiterates Joyce Ann Zimmerman’s sage judgment that theological emphasis on “adjoining” liturgy and justice already discloses a dualistic ontology that allocates

liturgy and life “in two different spheres of human activity and results in a dualism that simply does not (or ought not) to exist.”⁴⁸ Whenever liturgy and mundane life are *a priori* perceived as separate realms of human – and divine! – reality and therefore locked in a struggle of being somehow extrinsically reconciled then it becomes clear that a fabricated ontological and epistemological dualism is being imposed on the fluid interplay of the doxological and the mundane. And once in place, this fundamental dualistic imaginary cannot be alleviated by the cosmetic liturgical models of extrinsic rejoining, productive tension, and juxtaposition alone. As Zimmerman perceptively notes,

We do not *bring* our life to liturgy, although that is usually how we say it. ... the problem with this kind of language is that it posits a dualism between liturgy and life that cannot be overcome. In such a dualistic approach liturgy and life will always remain two separate entities that are essentially foreign to each other. We can juxtapose them, but we cannot structurally identify them as sharing the same depth meaning. This is precisely the distance we wish to overcome.⁴⁹

This, indeed, is the “distance” that my project also identifies as being foundationally problematic in the theological and liturgical struggles to overcome what cannot be overcome through the ritualistic or linguistic theoretical maneuvers on the surface while the underlying rationale of binarity remains intact. This project takes Zimmerman’s liturgical diagnosis and her theological motto that “the meaning of Christian liturgy is synonymous with the meaning of Christian living”⁵⁰ further into the arena of cultural history and memory. In other words, I historicize the profoundly problematic “distance” of chronic dualism or, more precisely, provincialize it in order to trace the genealogies and resonances of the notorious disengagement within the broader landscape and

⁴⁸ Joyce Ann Zimmerman, *Liturgy as Living Faith: A Liturgical Spirituality* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 1993): 135.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, xi-xii.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, viii.

mindscape of dualistic ontological and epistemological imagination of Occidental colonial modernity. The rationale of competitive binarity is not primarily or exclusively a liturgical conundrum but its manifestation through the disjuncture of liturgy and ethics is surely among the most glaring instances of its uncanny power over the practices of knowing and living well into the present era.

Certainly it is obvious that there exists a tremendous tension between the liturgical reason of praise, extolling such virtues as charity, peace, compassion, on the one hand, and the “pure economic reason” of resolutely non-utopian routine living, on the other. To recognize the excruciating friction among liturgy as the faithful proclamation of God’s salvific love and justice, and the mundane business of craving for individual security and prosperity while consenting more or less willingly to the continued afflictions of others, is only to state the obvious about the lived reality we inhabit. But it is an altogether different thing to valorize this irresolvable tension as desirable, as creative, as a safeguard against idolatry, and even as a sublime *telos* of productive mutually critical relation. Such valorization is not the route this project follows; instead, the grinding tension is rather the point of departure for theological imagination toward an eschatological counterpoint of conviviality beyond grinding clashes and nagging agonies. To inhabit the unrelenting contradictory dialectic of tension is a sufficiently Sisyphean predicament and, not to worry, is here to stay for a very long time. So the refusal to make tension into a discursive and imaginative solace in this project represents a desire for a slow redemptive modulation of tension into a salvific relationality of contrapuntal reciprocity. Here burning discord is not the sole sign of truth. Because a sign of truth is

also an emergent harmony of transfigured irreconcilabilities and the grace-filled wellbeing of over-tensed human bodies and souls.

With these observations in mind, the constructive objective of this dissertation is to propose a modulation of theological envisagement of relationality as ontologically and epistemologically grounded in incarnational sacramentality. Sacramentality thus conceived is the interface of ethical relationality between God and the created reality. From within a postcolonial diasporic imaginary, the ethical ecology of sacramentality can be conceived as contrapuntal. Liturgy, in this context, is sacramentality *in actu*. It is a reciprocally, yet asymmetrically, vectored divine service, or the interaction of divine and human agencies hinted at in the Latvian notion of *dievkalpojums*, which is a junior semantic relative of the well-known German notion of *Gottesdienst*. I suggest that liturgy denotes the participatory *opus Dei* toward salvation through the sacramental counterpoint of synergy. A fruitful re-engagement of liturgy and social ethics within the theological mindscape in this post-Holocaust and postcolonial era of convoluted globalization can be methodologically re-orchestrated according to the notion of counterpoint perceived in all its intertwining epistemological, ontological, and ethical dimensions. Within the contrapuntal interdependency, liturgy and ethics – or “liturgy after liturgy” – play off one another and sound together without detracting from the other, without violating the other’s integrity and authenticity, and without competition for unilateral and hegemonic dominance. Contrapuntal consonance, however, always remains under the eschatological proviso as decisively as it also allows for “at least the beginnings of possession.”⁵¹ It

⁵¹ Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural* (Rosemary Sheed, trans.; New York: Herder and Herder, The Crossroad Publishing Co: 1998): 201. The context of de Lubac’s thought is Gregory of Nyssa’s idea of infinite progress in the knowledge and experience of God, which de Lubac delightfully interprets as not being obsessed with infinite deferrals into absolute difference: “Real advance, effective

precariously obtains whenever and wherever the goodness of human spirit and the wholeness of human action is perfected by grace to participate in the *opus Dei*, concurrently in, under, and with praise and social action of discipleship. Contrapuntal consonance emerges as a fruitful pattern with transformative potentiality to imagine grace-filled redemptive conviviality from within a diasporic imaginary that theologically remains as loyal as ever to the incarnational style of religious life and theological thought. Contrapuntal consonance is more akin to incessantly perfectible communion – never automatic, fated, or coerced – on this side of beatific vision, rather than a teleology of desire for necessarily irreconcilable and infinite (Romantically fetishized?) tension as the safeguard against idolatrous relationality. But at the end of the day, as far as theological method is concerned, “it’s all a question of imagination: our responsibility begins with the power to imagine. It’s just like Yeats said: in dreams begin responsibilities.”⁵²

Whither?

The present dissertation is composed of the Overture, three parts, and the Coda. The Overture situates my critical and constructive interrogation of theological method in the overall framework of sacramental-liturgical discourse and elucidates my diasporic locus of enunciation within it. Part I explores the methodological genealogies of dualistic disengagement of liturgy and ethics as a symptom of the rationale of binarity, particularly characteristic to Occidental modernity and its epistemological imagination (Ch. 1).

movement forward, with the delight it brings, presupposes at least the beginnings of possession” (201) and “the idea of continuing to become without ever reaching any conclusion is not attractive; there must of necessity be some ultimate goal when one will finally be wholly in act. Otherwise the journey can only be one of despair,” (204).

⁵² Harouki Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005): 122.

To search for envisagements of relationality beyond unproductive dualistic constructs I turn to postcolonial criticism, particularly its conceptualizations of hybridity and diaspora (Ch.2). Part II is a conversation with Eastern Orthodox liturgical theologian Alexander Schmemmann (Ch.1) and Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (Ch.2), both of whom, with remarkably different approaches and conclusions yet with similar ardor, challenge the disengagement of liturgy and the life of faith.

Part III contains the narration of my constructive itinerary for a re-envisagement of ethical relation between liturgy and ethics. I start with an inquiry into Edward Said's notion of postcolonial counterpoint in relation to his theoretical elaboration on hybridity as an ethical pattern of relation (Ch.1), turning subsequently to the Eastern Christian idea of synergy as a theological conceptualization suggestive of contrapuntal relationality in the salvific economy of *theosis* (Ch.2).

The concluding section (Ch.3), emerging from a diasporic imaginary, suggests that in theological inquiry the methodological practices or habits of knowing, imagining, and judging are far from being theoretically aloof and existentially irrelevant for theologically grounded exigencies of moral imagination and action. Rather, precisely as imaginative habits and reflective practices they bear an irrevocable ethical accountability particularly in light of the histories of colonialism. The epistemological is never separate from the ethical; the more this intrinsic intertwinement is disavowed the more urgent is the vocation for the ethical and the historical to interrupt and modulate the allegedly free-floating epistemological self-sufficiency. To perform such a modulation I suggest that sacramentality as both an ontological and epistemological template of ethical relationality offers a theological avenue of re-orchestrating the persistent drumbeat of dualistic and

hegemonic cultural and theological imaginaries. Specifically, I propose that the notion of postcolonially colored counterpoint as a concretization of sacramental relationality can serve as a useful *Leitmotif* of both an ethically answerable methodological comportment as well as a fruitful re-conception of the problematic disengagement between liturgy and ethics. Sacramental counterpoint privileges synergistic reciprocity as its structural *basso continuo* methodologically and thematically as an aspiration to analogical performance in knowing, dreaming, and acting of the paradigmatic Christian mysteries of relationality – the Trinity, the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and the Eucharist. At the end of the chapter the tricky questions about the value, authenticity, and the lacunae of diasporic imaginary and its always contested hybridity are addressed to suggest that certain varieties of diasporic difference embody their hybridity as precisely a predicament of *forced* hybridity that cannot find rest in any exotic reifications of alterity.

The brief Coda concludes this project to underscore the pivotal role of the quiddity – or ethics – of relationality within Christian theological imagination as part of the perennial monotheistic trepidation about idolatry, which, in the postcolonial context, acquires new urgency but also an even more profound ambivalence.

Overture

Trinity!!

Higher than any being, any divinity, any goodness!

Guide of Christians in the wisdom of heaven!

Lead us up beyond unknowing and light, up to the farthest, highest peak of mystic scripture, where the mysteries of God's Word lie simple, absolute and unchangeable in the brilliant darkness of a hidden silence.¹

At the first glance, what else could theological inquiry possibly be besides remaining a hostage to the chronic condition of a certain daunting altitude sickness regarding its *telos* of elucidation – never cured, never resolved, never absolved of unknowing and unsaying? It is as if the only non-idolatrous posture of a creaturely activity in encountering, knowing, and speaking of the uncreated God would be to repeat with stubborn and somber dedication the opening lines of Arnold Schönberg's *Moses und Aron*: who else can monotheistic theologies be properly concerned with than the “*einzig, ewig, allgegenwärtig, unsichtbar und unvorstellbar Gott?*”² All the while professing the irreducibility of ontological “height” – together with Moses and Pseudo-Dionysius – of the One Who Is, it is the equally irreducible duty and joy of a Christian theologian to simultaneously profess the divine incarnation as the *Ur*-source of all things Christian, including the practices of liturgy, sacraments, theology and service of vicarious responsibility toward the grace-permeated wellbeing of God's creation. And yes, then there is the Trinity: the creator and sustainer of a supremely relational ontology, that God who is a particular configuration of trinitarian relationality, in whom and by whom a contrapuntal simultaneity of togetherness and otherness exemplifies and

¹ Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Mystical Theology,” *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*. The Classics of Western Spirituality (Colm Luibheid, trans., Paul Rorem et al., eds.; New York, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987): 997A, 135.

² I am referring here to Arnold Schönberg's opera, *Moses und Aron*, Act 1, opening scene.

inaugurates the economy of creation as an economy of salvation by and through the incarnation. It is the always consummate coincidence/co-presence of both the divine transcendence and the divine immanence in the Word who became embodied human person or “flesh”³ and through the Spirit that is the ever perplexing site of rendezvous between the triune God, who remains hidden even amidst benevolent self-revelation,⁴ and theological reflection which bodies forth from this rendezvous. Theology, then, is a rather scandalous enterprise of “sinning,” as it were, indeed very boldly through the divinely instigated audacity to think, love, speak, resent, praise, and act upon the Word that we as human beings can never say unto ourselves by ourselves alone. In other words, theology is what emerges when the enmattered human persons encounter the divine otherness as the most radical otherness, yet not as a hegemonically reified and unrelational otherness. The incarnational rendezvous is not the interface of isolated asymmetrical asities jealously competing, indeed clashing, over a limited supply of power and glory within the same undifferentiated chronotope of being. The incarnation inaugurates the omnipresent precedence of the mystery of “both” over a secluded transparency of “either/or.” In Christian theology the irrevocable and dramatic otherness of God is always co-sonorous with an equally dramatic affirmation of God’s real presence. As Susan A. Ross has insightfully emphasized, it is “in the scandalous *particularity* of the Incarnation” that the all-embracing relevance of divine otherness is found since “it is not maleness, or Palestinian-ness, but human bodiliness that is so

³ Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας. (John 1:14) The Word becomes flesh (σὰρξ) as Jesus Christ not only in the primary sense of full material incarnation, but also to locate the hypostatic union within the real and sinful world of human alienation, injustice, and suffering. Human body in its materiality is the site of incarnation and salvation, or “the hinge of salvation” in the words of Tertullian, “On the Resurrection of the Flesh,” 8, *PL* 2: 852.

⁴ Pseudo-Dionysius, “Letter Three to Gaius,” *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*: 1069B, 264.

scandalously particular.”⁵ Ross highlights the linkage between the indispensable apophatic reserve and the equally indispensable concentration on the incarnation as having taken place in the body of a woman, on the one hand, with sacramental theology, focusing precisely on “God’s refusal to be wholly absent and wholly other and rather to be historically, and thus partially and fragmentarily present to us in our embodiment.”⁶

In the Christian theological milieu, relationality – among the divine and human other(s), among ideas, images, affections, virtues, practices, mindsets, values – is an incarnational as well as a sacramental notion. Rooted in the incarnation, the theological discourse scored in the key of sacramentality seems to offer a most fitting imaginative interface to reflect on the promises and conundrums of relationality. The incarnation grounds and orchestrates the divine itineraries of redemptive self-disclosure and salvific presence through sacraments. Classically, “that which till then [Christ’s ascension] was visible of our Redeemer transitions into sacraments.”⁷ In the incarnational economy of salvation, sacramentality denotes, on the one hand, the very possibility and relational locus for the incarnation of Christ. But the sacraments, in turn, come to existential and imaginative fruition as the consequences of the incarnation. The incarnate Word is the prototypical relational mystery and the apogee of sacramentality.

⁵ Susan A. Ross, “Feminist theology and sacramental theology: old and new challenges,” *The Gestures of God: Explorations in Sacramentality* (Geoffrey Rowell and Christine Hall, eds.; London and New York: Continuum, 2004):114.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Leo the Great, Sermon 74, “On the Lord’s Ascension.” I partially use the loosely translated text of *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Series II*, vol. 12, ed. Philip Schaff, available at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/360374.htm>. Accessed February 12, 2009. Literally, Christ’s incarnated and visible presence has after Ascension “transitioned into the sacraments” (*Quod itaque Redemptoris nostri conspicuum fuit, in sacramenta transivit*). Leo’s sermon joins the post-ascension sacramental presence of Christ with faith by repositioning the focus from “sight” to “faith,” which in this situation expresses the mutually interdependent activities of Christ in sacraments and faith as the gift of the Holy Spirit, enabling human persons to discern and relate to Christ across the interface of sacramentality.

Specifically, it is the vigor and vibrancy of the “coupling and crossing of the outward and inward,”⁸ and of the uncreated and the creation, that carries the interpretive and performative thrust – and risk⁹ – of the sacramental discourse. Sacramentality, from this perspective, denotes the interface of relationality among the uncreated and the created. In the epistemological sense of the word, sacramentality is like, to borrow a most prominent notion of Emmanuel Levinas, as an “optics”: it is the optics of relational and asymmetrically interdependent life, having been created *ex nihilo*, to actually exist as an image and, proleptically also as the likeness, of the triune God. During modernity, sacramental theology has often been (mis)perceived as a discrete and even obsolete sub-field of among marginal disciplines in theology and currents of spirituality. Yet that is only one way of looking at sacramental thought in the age of late postmodernity and postcoloniality. Theology scored and performed sacramentally is not so much a distinct theological discourse, I submit, but rather signals a particular methodological slant, an “optics,” that is particularly, perhaps extremely, loyal to the exigencies of incarnation as the pivotal revelatory event. Slightly paraphrasing Mara Regina Schwartz’s description of sacramental poetics, it could be said that sacramental theology, as I conceive of it, is not singularly preoccupied with the Eucharist or baptism or any other sacramental rites as discreet themes so that such a theme would automatically make a theology *per se* sacramental. Sacramental theology “is not a poetics” – in this case, a theology – “of a

⁸ I am borrowing here the delightful expression by Edward J. Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice. I Systematic Theology of Liturgy*, Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1988): 20.

⁹ Rowan Williams alertly warns about the vacuity of a loosely imaged “sacramental principle” with its “rather bland appeal to the natural sacredness of things that occasionally underpins sacramental theology,” in “Sacraments of the New Society,” *On Christian Theology* (Oxford and Malden: Blackwell, 2000):210. Williams insists, with a slight occasionalist twist but perhaps more with sagacious caution, that to begin “with some general principle of the world as ‘naturally’ sacramental or epiphanic” might result in “pot-pourri of Jung, Teilhard de Chardin and a certain kind of anthropology, sometimes invoked as a prelude to sacramental theology, will run the risk of obscuring the fact that signs and symbols are *made* – even if in response to some sense that the world itself is charged with glory,” in “The Nature of a Sacrament,” 201.

theme”¹⁰ alone. As Aidan Kavanagh argued, “sacramental discourse is not a mere garnish to a dull dish of Gospel,” but instead the “sacrament is to Gospel what style is to meaning.”¹¹ Whenever and wherever sacramental theology, predominantly as a method¹² or a style of theologizing has been ostracized, or reified into unmoored and patriarchally sedimented ritualistic rubric, or fatefully forgotten altogether, theological and confessional traditions have only managed to bring upon themselves more of the momentous difficulties of dealing with the struggle for the mystery of salvation to be embodied in the interpersonal relations of routine living – socially, politically, and culturally.

Sacraments and Sacramentality

It is certainly necessary to further specify what is intended by the notions of sacramentality and sacrament. Above all, a sacrament is neither an objectified product of certain approved consecratory formulas nor an exclusive medium of divine grace trickling down into an otherwise pure and graceless nature as a presumably beneficial yet intrusively colonizing intervention. Rather, a sacrament is an ecstatic aural, intellectual, visual, emotional, tactile, voluntary, olfactory and gustatory interaction, on both individual and social levels, of the uncreated God with human persons in, through, with, and under the perceptual signs of non-assimilative communion. As Peter C. Bouteneff has suggested regarding the intersubjective dimension of sacramentality, “sacraments ...

¹⁰ Mara Regina Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics At the Dawn of Secularism: When God Left the World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008): 8.

¹¹ Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo, 1984): 48.

¹² Thus Herbert Vorgrimler, for example, speaks about “sacramental thinking” as “a way of understanding,” *Sacramental Theology* (Linda M. Maloney, trans.; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992):27.

are all about the intersection of the human and the divine... about uniting the earthly with the heavenly, the time-bound with the eternal, the spatial with the non-circumscribable.”¹³ Sacraments – precisely as inter-actions and intersections – are mysteries. It is not the question of a mere preference of Greek since μυστήριον is the Greek term denoting mystery, i.e., both the incomprehensible divine hiddenness and salvific providential ordering of economy of incarnation in the New Testament. In the course of Christian history, μυστήριον has been the principal Eastern Christian term for the sacramental rites and liturgical actions called “sacraments” (the Latin *sacramentum*) in the West. The pivotal mystery of Christianity is not God or human person or the whole creation alone in their splendid isolation: rather, it is the intertwinement and the coalescing concurrence of both precisely as incarnational communion. Indeed, “there is no greater mystery than the communion of man with God, however mediated.”¹⁴ Now within the interface of incarnational and sacramental relationality as perceived as communion, neither divinity nor the world, nor more specifically humanity, is required to execute or undergo any detraction, diminishment, invasion or assimilatory conquest. This structure of relationality can be texturized as sacramental precisely because it does not obliterate differences in order to unite most intricately and intimately. The sacramental relation allows and accommodates a coexistence of transformatively engaged yet unviolated realities. Relationality perceived as sacramental “is not a thunderous clap from the beyond that flattens the listener into shock,” but rather gestures toward an interaction which always remains a “conversation, not a devastation, and not the kind of

¹³ Peter C. Bouteneff, “Sacraments as the Mystery of Union: elements in an Orthodox sacramental theology,” *The Gestures of God*, 96.

¹⁴ Yngve Brilioth, *Eucharistic Faith and Practice: Evangelical and Catholic* (A.G. Herbert, trans.; London: SPCK, 1965): 285.

overwhelming ravishing that crushes” precisely as rooted in the incarnation and the Eucharist – both being a “mystery of this conversation ‘according to our proportion’.”¹⁵ Sacramentality grounds and disseminates the incarnationally configured template of relationality as “likeness-in-the-very-difference between that which sanctifies (God) and that which is sanctified (creation), between uncreated and created.”¹⁶ Epistemologically speaking, the sacramental tonality of theological imagination recognizes that “human beings find God not by leaving or denying the world, but by becoming immersed more deeply in it” to discover God’s mysterious presence as “shot through the world, in the minute as well as in the monumental, in the particular, and always in ways that escape exact classification.”¹⁷ In this sense, sacramentality is “constitutive of revelation.”¹⁸ Sacramentality, thus conceived, is indeed “the theological ground and liturgical foundation on which all liturgy ... is based.”¹⁹ Yet not only liturgy – but also theological mindscape or method – can body forth sacramentality as its performed preferential option for intertwinement and interaction through the reciprocity of both/and rather than the fragmentation of either/or.

What about the sacraments as rites and as repetitively and variably performed liturgical actions in relation to sacramentality? Sacraments – the sacramental rites and

¹⁵ Mara Regina Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics At the Dawn of Secularism*, 131.

¹⁶ John Chryssavgis, “The World as Sacrament: Insights into an Orthodox Worldview,” *Pacifica* 10:2 (1997): 1.

¹⁷ Susan A. Ross, *Extravagant Affections: A Feminist Sacramental Theology* (New York: Continuum, 1998):35.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Kevin W. Irwin, *Models of the Eucharist* (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2005):43. Moreover, the sacramental imaginary celebrates the redemptive “sacramental permeability” of the creation: “sacramental permeability means that physical matters and actions such as eating and drinking can become vehicles that make transparent the Holy One who gives birth to the Eucharistic life” as Andrea Bieler and Louise Schottroff argue in *The Eucharist: Bodies, Bread, and Resurrection* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007): 5.

liturgical actions, and other non-ritual and inter-personal actions²⁰ through which the Kingdom of God makes a grace-filled apparition – are relational and communicative events. Sacrament, as Jean-Jacques von Allmen puts it, is not a “thing” (*une chose*) but a “‘situation’ (*une situation*): it is where our world is visited, or better: it is inhabited and transformed by the presence of the future eon.”²¹ The sacraments are, as it were, apparitions in the “situational/inhabiting” sense suggested by von Allmen because in them, with them, and through them, in the power of the Spirit, the redemptive *opus* of the triune God appears within the historical materiality of life. Yet the apparition, as I suggest it here, is more heard, felt, and being touched by rather than solely seen. To use a musical analogy, the *opus Dei* appears in, with, and through the sacraments somewhat like the opaquely proximate acoustic emergence of the divine μυστήριον in Olivier Messiaen’s *Apparition de l’église éternelle*. In Messiaen’s *Apparition* a virtually hyper-lucid transparency co-inheres with the densest accumulation of luminous texture and power in an unceasing and uncontainable presence which indwells the senses but evades their complete grasp. Above all, sacrament is the “situation” wherein the supremely physical and multisensory “already” of human reality is sonorously touched, individually and socially, by the most eschatological “not yet” in an opaque foretaste of the glory divine – the grace-filled *salus* of wellbeing, reconciliation, liberation, justice, peace and wholeness of the entire creation.

²⁰ Leonardo Boff’s reminder that contemporary Christians must be educated to see the sacraments “as rites that signify and celebrate the breakthrough of grace into their lives and communities,” as acts of life above and beyond the officially approved numerical organization of seven, or two, sacraments, has not lost any of its critical purchase over the last two decades. Even though I am hesitant to employ the language of breakthrough, interruption, disruption, etc., in relation to sacramental discourse too liberally for reasons outlined in Part I, Ch. 1, Boff’s point deserves a special acknowledgment. See Boff, *Sacraments of Life, Life of the Sacraments* (Beltsville: The Pastoral Press, 1987):5.

²¹ Jean-Jacques von Allmen, *Prophétisme sacramentel* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1964): 13. Von Allmen links this understanding of the sacraments with the re-presencing of Christ as the *Ursakrament*: “...il y a sacrament là où le sacrament par excellence, le Christ incarné, se re-présente,” *ibid.*

Recognizing the recent valuable emphasis on historically and contextually enacted sacraments, it remains true, as Joyce Ann Zimmerman argues, that “sacramental reality is far more comprehensive than its ritualization. In fact, the reality of sacraments is not coextensive with their celebration. Liturgy explodes the cultic occasion.”²² As unfashionable as it may seem in this day and age to write about sacramental relationality as the interface of co-presence and co-inherence without immediately invoking specific eucharistic formulations, I believe there is a pertinent reason for following this route here. Namely, to avoid intimations of nominalistic sacramental occasionalism to which Protestant traditions are especially prone and with which my interrogation of the modern Western theological mindscape is most critically concerned. Among its most notorious victims is the reciprocal relation between the sacraments as specific and intersubjective liturgical rites and sacramentality as the ethically inflected ontological constellation of incarnational relationality. This is a symptom of the dissolution of the economy of salvation as sacramental in favor of a resolutely disenchanting, extrinsic and forensic commerce between competing dualistic and “pure” identities locked in, as it were, a combat between totally supernatural “grace” and resentfully self-sufficient “nature.” Herein abides the vintage problematic of the modern Western cultural, political, as well as theological worldview – the rationale of competitive binarity. The dualistic rationale of binarity perceives difference as substantialist, atomistic, and hegemonically exclusive as it brings to a crescendo the Aristotelian metaphysical conception of relation as accidental and ethically marginal.

²² Joyce Ann Zimmerman, *Liturgy as Living Faith: A Liturgical Spirituality* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 1993): 78.

One itinerary of healing modulation beyond the modern Occidental rationale of binarity is Christological. A pivotal locus of the intrinsic connectivity between sacramentality and the sacraments can be found the person of Jesus Christ as the *Ursakrament*²³ of the triune God. For example, within the horizon of Chalcedonian Christology, Christ as the Son and the second person of the Trinity,

...the only-begotten Son [of God] must be confessed to be in two natures (ἐκ δύο φύσεων [ἐν δύο φύσεσιν]), unconfusedly (ἀσυγχύτως), immutably (ἀτρέπτως), indivisibly (ἀδιαίρετως), inseparably [united] (ἀχωρίστως), and that without the distinction of natures being taken away by such union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature being preserved and concurring (συντρεχούσης) in one Person and subsistence (ἐν πρόσωπον καὶ μίαν ὑπόστασιν), not separated or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ...²⁴

The hypostatic union without confusion, without change, without division and without separation in the person of Jesus Christ as the *Ursakrament* is the “paradigm of all sacraments” and “the paradigm of the union of divine and human in all sacramentality.”

²⁵ Christ is the ultimate μυστήριον or the paradigmatic patterned intensity of relation without extrinsicist division and annihilating fusion as “the antinomial ‘holding together’.”²⁶ So sacramentality, on the one hand, is the particular, divinely inaugurated, interface of divine-human relationality which is the enabling structure/order of the

²³ I am referring to the terminology of used by Karl Rahner and Edward Schillebeeckx, which in German usually receives the compact expression as *Ursakrament* and/or *Grundsakrament*.

²⁴ The Definition of Chalcedon, at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf214.xi.xiii.html>, accessed August 4, 2008.

²⁵ Bouteneff, “Sacraments as the Mystery of Union,” *The Gestures of God*, 97.

²⁶ Alexander Schmemmann, “Worship in a Secular Age,” *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2000):129. Schmemmann elsewhere specifies that *mysterion* entails “the holding-together, in a mystical and existential, rather than rational, synthesis of both the total *transcendence* of God and His genuine *presence*,” in “The ‘Orthodox World’, Past and Present,” *Church, World, Mission: Reflections on Orthodoxy in the West* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1979): 60. It is not clear if the notion of “synthesis” is the most helpful term here, yet it does suggest a dimension of relation.

incarnation. At the same time, the hypostatic union is not only the most fitting sign, “at once inside and outside the sign system,”²⁷ of the sacramental relationality but also, paradoxically, the origin of the enabling structure/order itself. Within the incarnational imaginary, Christ as the *Ursakrament* of the triune God is the perfect score of the sacramental relationality, which in turn, is consequently and subsequently performed in, with, under, and through all the sacraments, preeminently the Eucharist. The Eucharist, or the Holy Communion, or the Last Supper, or the Mass is, then, where sacramental economy is audibly, visibly, olfactorily, and tangibly enacted as a particular lifeworld amidst socio-political arena of human life.

Eucharist as the Sacrament of Incarnational Style

If there is a kind of enduring “categorical imperative” for Christian theology, it seems that only the incarnation would deserve this eminence precisely as the originary and redemptive constellation of relationality, mirrored *par excellence* in and through the Eucharist. The Eucharist entails a “whole economy,” not an isolated cultic moment.²⁸ Against the background of Chalcedon, a certain parallax view of the mysteries of the incarnation and the Eucharist emerge, like the one advocated by Martin Luther: “Thus, what is true in regard to Christ is also true in regard to the sacrament... Both natures are

²⁷ Kevin Hart, *The Trespass of the Sign: Deconstruction, Theology and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 8.

²⁸ Gordon W. Lathrop has used this expression to conceive the Eucharist as the foundational liturgical *ordo* in terms of complex juxtaposition within “the whole economy of word set next to meal, texts set next to preaching, thanksgiving set next to eating and drinking, which makes up the deepest ecumenical pattern for celebration. Eucharist is the every-Sunday assembly for doing this word and meal event set next to the recurring human experience of the week,” in *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999): 16.

simply there in their entirety... both remain there at the same time.”²⁹ Hence, to theologize about the Eucharist is not limited to an elucidation of a single liturgical or sacramental theme, important as it may be. It is so because the Eucharist, in a panoramic view of Alexander Schmemmann, is

...not merely one possible relationship with God. It is rather the only possible holding together – in one moment, in one act – of the whole truth about God and man. It is the sacrament of the world sinful and suffering, the sky darkened, the tortured Man dying; but it is also the sacrament of the change, His transfiguration, His rising, His Kingdom. In one sense we look back, giving thanks for the simple goodness of God’s original gift to us. In another sense we look forward, eschatologically, to the ultimate repair and transfiguration of that gift, to its last consummation in Christ.³⁰

The Eucharist – as the primary sacrament of the true *Ursakrament*, the Incarnate Word – conveys the interface of divine-human relationality. But if so, what would the methodological implications for the practice of theological reflection be? Here I find the stance of Yngve Brilioth insightful far beyond his era: “For the central secret of genuinely Christian theology is the holding in combination of the two contrasted opposites of God’s Transcendence and Immanence; and precisely at this point the eucharist is the surest safeguard of a sound theology.”³¹ Thus there is no surprise that Brilioth consistently – in a book on the eucharistic life of worship! – refers to the elucidation of eucharistic theology as one of the most important tasks of *systematic* theology rather than a sub-specialized sacramental/liturgical theology.³² The Eucharist as

²⁹ Martin Luther, “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” *Luther’s Works*. Vol.36, Word and Sacrament II. (Abdel Ross Wentz, ed., and Helmut T. Lehmann, general ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959): 35.

³⁰ Alexander Schmemmann, “The World as Sacrament,” *Church, World, Mission*, 225.

³¹ Brilioth, *Eucharistic Faith and Practice*, 274.

³² *Ibid.*, 144. Brilioth adds, sarcastically, that systematic theology will accomplish such a task “if only it will condescend from its sublime heights to tackle problems such as these,” the problems here consisting in offering a modern presentation of the “spiritual realities which Luther desired to guard” in his *via media* sacramental doctrines vis-à-vis other currents of the Reformation theology.

a sacrament and as the matrix of all liturgy and liturgical rites is not a matter of (marginalized and exoticized) liturgy or worship alone. Instead, the Eucharist is “a meeting-point on which all the issues of theology converge.”³³ In this sense, as Catherine Pickstock has emphasized, “the eucharist is neither instrumental nor pedagogic appendage to the Cross and the empty tomb. Instead, the eucharist and the events of the *Triduum* ... compose one single formal ‘abstract’ picture of the single and simple divine action which is the imparting of himself as love.”³⁴ In this trajectory of theological thought the Eucharist functions like a *breviatum verbum*³⁵ in the sense that in the Eucharist “the content of the whole Christian faith of the revelation of the Creator who is also the Redeemer is focused with unique intensity, and proclaimed with uniquely eloquent brevity.”³⁶ All that being said, this dissertation is a witness to a theological style grounded in the Eucharist as the *breviatum verbum* of the mystery of salvation.

Eucharist as the Sacrament of Communion With and Within Christ

Sacramental relationality is a diffusive relationality. As an interface, it obtains in various sites of divine-human interaction with infinitely varying degrees of

³³ *Ibid.*, 1. Brilioth appears to hint, in an understated manner, at something akin to what many years later was proposed by Louis-Marie Chauvet as “a fundamental theology of sacramentality which would permit a global reinterpretation of Christian existence” through the articulation of “a sort of law of the symbolic order, which is valid over the entire territory we propose to cross,” in *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (Patric Madigan, S.J., and Madeleine Beaumont, trans.; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995): 548, 2.

³⁴ Catherine Pickstock, “A Poetics of the Eucharist,” *Telos* 131 (2005): 90.

³⁵ *Breviatum verbum* or the “abridged word” is a term occasionally used by patristic writers to denote summaries of faith and the Scriptures, such as the creeds understood as symbols of faith, to express briefly the crux of longer texts or teachings.

³⁶ Brilioth, *Eucharistic Faith and Practice*, 283. Also, “the eucharist sums up the Christian faith and the Christian religion with a fullness which verbal definitions can never adequately express,” 54. Brilioth’s argument is consonant with the early Martin Luther’s reflections on the role and significance of the Eucharist as the “testament” or the “short summary of all God’s wonders and grace, fulfilled in Christ,” for example, in Martin Luther, “A Treatise On the New Testament, That Is, the Holy Mass,” *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 35, Word and Sacrament I (E. Theodore Bachmann, ed., and Helmut T. Lehmann, general ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960): 84.

intensification. The Eucharist as a sacrament – not as a static and magic object or “thing,” but as a relationally and doxologically embodied event, a “situation,” i.e., a liturgy – appropriately marks the relentless co-inherence and co-iteration of God’s presence and absence in their sacramental “intensification of signification to an extreme of plenitude.”³⁷ Human participation in the Eucharist is multi-pronged as it simultaneously facilitates two mutually resonant unions: the union with Christ and the union in Christ. Thus “through union with [Christ], in the fellowship of the brethren, [human individual] becomes partaker of the salvation that [Christ] has won.”³⁸ But not only that – “sacramental unity is not only unity with God in Christ, it is unity with each other, unity with all that exists, in Christ.”³⁹ Instead of positing a relation of hegemonic unilateralism, the sacramental interface of the Eucharist inaugurates and accommodates, by an analogical interval, similar styles of reciprocally resonant relationalities – divine and human alike. In the classical formulation by John of Damascus sacramental relationality clearly conjoins the eucharistic body and blood of Christ with the church as it is being born, as well as transformatively and redemptively sustained in and through the Eucharist, as a union encompassing both unity and/within diversity. Thus sacramental communion

... is an actual communion, because through it we have communion with Christ and share in His flesh and His divinity; yea, we have communion and are united with one another through it. For since we partake of one bread, we all become one body of Christ and one blood, and members one of another, being of one body with Christ. (...) For if union is in truth with Christ and with one another, we are assuredly voluntarily united also with

³⁷ Oliver Davies, *The Creativity of God: World, Eucharist, Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004):131.

³⁸ Brilioth, *Eucharistic Faith and Practice*, 54.

³⁹ Bouteneff, “Sacraments as the Mystery of Union,” *The Gestures of God*, 95.

all those who partake with us. (...) ‘For we are one body because we partake of the one bread,’ as the divine Apostle says (1.Cor.10:17).⁴⁰

The communion in question is by no means a purely cultic and ritual communion between Christ and an individual pious interiority. It rather resonates back to the diffusive latitude of the incarnation where the communion with God is always crossed by and coupled with the communion among human persons. The crossing and coupling within the sacramentally configured relationality is, by analogy of the hypostatic union of the incarnation, non-coercive, non-hegemonic, and non-detractive. In other words, the quiddity of this relation is ethical insofar as it is sacramental, i.e., analogically incarnational. It is in this sense that sacramentality “conjures something quite particular about the level of connection or the quality of relationship between self, community, earth and God that the word ‘liturgy’, with its associations of doing work, does not.”⁴¹ Nevertheless, it is in liturgy – as “thickly”⁴² defined as possible – that sacramentality as the pattern of ethical relationality is performed, enacted, and opened up to human participation. Moreover, liturgy as sacramentality *in actu* bodies forth far beyond the enthusiastic cultivation of a privatized pious interiority. Precisely in light of Damascene’s concurrent relationalities among the divine and human others in the Eucharist, the full force of Don Saliers’ insistence on the eucharistic liturgy being a “rehearsal of being

⁴⁰ John of Damascus, “*De Fide Orthodoxa*,” in “Exposition of the Orthodox Faith,” *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Vol. 9 (Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997): 84.

⁴¹ Siobhan Garrigan, *Beyond Ritual: Sacramental Theology after Habermas* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004): 202.

⁴² I find David Fagerberg’s distinctions between liturgy in the “thick” and “thin” sense helpful and generally follow them. Liturgy in the “thick” sense is the participatory work of Christ on behalf of the whole humanity. The Church – constituted precisely through liturgy – performs liturgy as the work of Christ. In this context, liturgy is both what the people of God do and yet it is all God’s work for the benefit of many. The “thin” sense of liturgy refers to the order, the etiquette, and the ceremonial protocols of public worship, see his *Theologia Prima: What is Liturgical Theology?* Second edition (Chicago and Mundelein, IL: Hillenbrand Books, 2004): 10-12, 110-111, 222, 228.

eucharistic in the world” and of “the way we are to become related to one another”⁴³ can be discerned. Being eucharistic in the world is nothing less than being a participant in the salvific *opus Dei* – synergistically, contrapuntally, vicariously, and indeed truly *liturgically* in the thickest, deepest and broadest sense of the word.

Eucharist as the *Ur*-source of Liturgy

I have so far travelled along an expository path which I already admitted was a bit awkward. Namely, it is somewhat awkward to reflect about sacramentality before the sacraments, and even more so – to ponder sacramentality and the sacraments before liturgy. It is time to dispel some of the awkwardness by re-situating and re-joining all three interdependent rudiments of the sacramental discourse. To speak about the interface of divine-human relationality as sacramentality is to speak most likely too schematically, knowing all too well that such an effort is like trying to keep a wave upon the sand. Yet it is the very impetus of this project to entertain the imaginary of re-engagement of things that are habitually and comfortably viewed as mutually un-engaged and sometimes even conscientiously and profitably dis-engaged. Sacramentality as an ethical configuration of relationality is performed and enabled in, through, and as liturgy. It is in liturgy – *λειτουργία* – with both its ritualistic yet also originally non-cultic connotations as a work toward or service benefitting the common good, that sacramentality materializes within and through particular sacraments as liturgical events. Liturgy is sacramentality enacted and embodied as it keeps appearing in, with, under, through, and alongside the sacraments as relational events and rites. Liturgy is *opus Dei* before it is anything else

⁴³ Don E. Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994): 102-103.

within the sacramental economy of redemptive sustenance and redemptive struggle, from the creation until the eschatological transfiguration of the distorted divine image into the divine likeness, when God will be all in all. Liturgy is also concurrently, without competition, the participatory work of the human persons, empowered to become and to enact sacramental signs of witness to the redemptive *opus Dei*. The Eucharist, as the sacramental rite and liturgical action *par excellence*, that is the prototype of all incarnationally, and by extension sacramentally, scored human action and inter-action, both within the convocations⁴⁴ of worship and, even more compellingly, wherever the “liturgy after liturgy” may take those who partake in the Eucharist in this so poignantly un-sacramental and inequitable world. I will return to the “liturgy after liturgy” later and in far more depth in this project – many times. For now it must be noted that from a perspective of sacramental theology to speak about liturgy is to speak about sacramentality and the sacraments *in actu*. Liturgy is coterminous, even though not identical, for all possible purposes, with the sacraments as enacted and relationally configured liturgical actions. All the time, however, it has been strikingly obvious that to speak about liturgy sacramentally is to plunge voluntarily into the discourse of sacramentality as a problem, indeed *the* problem, theologically defined, of the (post)modern Occidental cultural imaginary. And, by extension, as a problem for all those others conscripted or cross-fertilized into the Occidental (post)modernity as a constellation of knowledge and power shaped by “the most profound principles of Western epistemology: its passion for boundaries, its cultural and imaginative habits of

⁴⁴ Robert F. Taft, “What Does Liturgy Do? Toward a Soteriology of Liturgical Celebration: Some ‘Theses’,” *Beyond East and West: Problems in Liturgical Understanding*. Second revised and enlarged edition (Rome: Pontifical Oriental Institute, Edizioni Orientalia Christiana, 1997): 242.

enclosure.”⁴⁵ During a whole epoch these imaginative habits of enclosure have tended to regard relationality as accidental. But relationality, as I have suggested, abides at the very ethical crux of all things in relation to God – and among themselves – considered sacramentally. Thus the fate of sacramentality is conjoined to that of liturgy – and both are now navigating through troubled waters. Yet before briefly surveying the greatest challenges, there is another loaded question in need of a brief elaboration.

Which Eucharist? A Hybrid Eucharist!

Since the days of uncomplicated appeals to a virtually universal eucharistic “shape” or *ordo* which was supposed to structure a uniform liturgical practice are thankfully gone, what can I possibly mean by speaking frequently about “the Eucharist”? In addition, how legitimate are my appeals to situate such speech in a mutually inconsistent variety of sacramental liturgical and theological traditions – Lutheran, Eastern Orthodox, and Roman Catholic? Undoubtedly, the benefits of historically positivist research of liturgical histories do appropriately problematize the relationship of some particularly monolithic and monochromatic productions of *ordo* vis-à-vis their doctrinal and ecclesiastical endowments. The recently recovered and re-appreciated history of liturgical diversity has become instrumental for discerning the genealogies of contemporary and liturgical-sacramental theologies. That being said, when the idealistic exaggerations of the desired ahistoric permanence of an allegedly pure liturgical *ordo* are tamed, there nevertheless remains a sinuous equilibrium of shared patterns of liturgical actions and dispositions in the practices of eucharistic worship, at least among the so-called liturgical traditions. Of course, not all Christian traditions today are liturgical – at

⁴⁵ Bill Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Transformation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001):15.

least in the “thin” sense of the term – and not all of them are eucharistic. What I must say at this juncture, however, is that a diasporic sacramental-liturgical imaginary is an imaginary of multiple belonging – not uniquely so yet perhaps more acutely so. As already mentioned in the Introduction, the polyphonic cultural, linguistic, political, liturgical, and theological context of my inhabited experience in Eastern and Western Europe, as well as in North America, effectively affirms the co-habitation of variously – sometimes conflictually – invested theological and liturgical sensibilities, lineages, and allegiances. The lived reality of multiply colonized cultures, such as my own Latvian culture, is that of a creolized lifeworld with creolized life forms. Liturgy is not an exception – my theological and liturgical tradition is polyphonic to the point where Wittenberg, Rome, and Moscow all coalesce in Rīga only to obtain even more nuanced texture through Stockholm and Oxford all the way into the current diasporic emplacement in Philadelphia and Atlanta. And yet there is an *ordo* – a creolized *ordo* with palimpsestically inscribed motives of Lutheran, Reformed, Catholic and Orthodox spiritual traditions all sounding together.

Admittedly, the theo(ideo)logies of confessional purity or authenticity, including the liturgical terrains, do have considerable analytical value as they are applied in historical and doctrinal research. Yet, they are seriously deficient, indeed reductive, beyond their role as analytical tools if they are indiscriminately applied to the complex existential engagements mired in hybrid constellations of influence, endurance, mutation, and cross-fertilization. The *ordo* of such hybrid liturgical constellations seems to be polyvocal and prone to theological code-switching. Namely, Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox and even indigenous traditions of worship and wisdom coalesce in my hybrid

Latvian *ordo* as it traverses, acknowledges, and negotiates versatile theological and cultural legacies. But even more generally speaking, no culture – including theological and liturgical cultures and discourses – are spatially incarcerated, no matter how “native” it may be presumed to be, especially at this historical moment of remarkable global migration and transculturation. All liturgies “is always culturally embedded and embodied.”⁴⁶ To insist on both tight confessional univocity and absolute difference among various Christian traditions to the point of denying any common structures of Christian eucharistic worship is to promote what Arjun Appadurai in another context described as the “language of incarceration.”⁴⁷ It amounts to purposefully confining theological and liturgical traditions to the immobile circumstantiality of a geo-confessional location for the sake of (desired) confessional authenticity. Appadurai, among others, sagaciously concludes that “groups unsullied by contact with a larger world, have probably never existed,”⁴⁸ and I submit that the same obtains in the world of theological and liturgical practices as well. Perhaps even more so in the present era of an unprecedented human migration. Even more ironically, if it would be accurate that culturally and theologically “native” discursive practices could indeed be incarcerated in uncontaminated localities – in this context, the locality of a doctrine or a rite, – then the present Latvian Lutheran liturgical universe attests to the possibility of not merely of a polyphony, but occasionally an outright heterophony. And it is in that heterophony that the presumed purely “local” authenticity resides.

The most recent Latvian Lutheran Interim Handbook for Divine Service
(*Rokasgrāmata dievkalpošanai LELB un LELBĀL draudzēs*, 2003) for the worldwide

⁴⁶ Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 17.

⁴⁷ Arjun Appadurai, “Putting Hierarchy in Its Place,” *Cultural Anthropology*, 3:1 (1988):37.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

Latvian Lutherans is the “Temporary Agenda.” It is called “Temp-(A)-genda” (*Pagenda*) with quite some exasperation due precisely to the unquenchable heterophony of theologies contained therein. It is designed for the Latvian Lutherans both in the homeland and in the worldwide diaspora. It features an amusing collage of liturgical rites, exhibiting the most prominent theological variety precisely in the eucharistic liturgies. Side by side there are liturgies composed of diverse elements of the Lutheran Reformation as well as Roman Catholic tradition alongside with subsequent mutations through the various eras of colonial apartheid into the present. Besides the typical *ressourcement* gestures of contemporary liturgical movement, there are also Reformed influences reminiscent of the neo-Protestant era German Lutheran liturgical developments. There is quite a polyphony at the level of liturgical texts and rubrics, but even more so at the level of liturgical practices, such as postures, gestures, the use of incense and chrism, to name just the most glaring ones. And then there are the clergy vestments ranging from austere black Protestant preaching robes to fashionable cassocks and colorful chasubles purchased in Rome, different styles of wearing the stole ... The introductory “Structure of the Holy Communion Service (*dievkalpojums*)” helpfully provides a concise bilingual outline of the main movements of the divine service in Latvian and in Latin.

Speaking of liturgical texts, the “Temp Agenda” contains versions of the *Confiteor* that would sound equally in place in Rome as they do in some locations in Rīga; then there are versions that would sound more “native” in Berlin or in Chicago respectively. There is a version of the eucharistic liturgy with *Fractio panis* and a sung Latin *Kyrie*, and there is a version without them. And then there is a whole section of

occasional services in the old Gothic script, visually and semantically signaling its origins in the early 20th century, a presumed golden age of liturgical authenticity in some circles while being the object of ridicule in others. On the top of it all, local (and in the case of the Latvian diasporas in North and South Americas, various European countries, and Australia “local” effectively stands for “glo-cal” even when admitting so invariably invokes the accusations of “inauthenticity”) cultural and linguistic idiosyncrasies add even more liturgical variables to increase the range of differently configured creolizations to the already multivalent textual codifications.

Now which Eucharist is it then? For all practical purposes it is a hybrid Eucharist of the already inherited historical palimpsest in an ongoing dialogue with the new layers of migration, displacement and emplacement. If this Eucharist is locally incarcerated than its confinement is one of a relentless polyphony and its creolized *ordo*. It definitely is not a Eucharist of some fetishized multiculturalism at the whim of a dandyish postmodern *bricoleur*. The hybrid Eucharist of a diasporic Latvian Lutheran finds its location of enunciation in the interstices of the structural terrain of the notorious “Temp-(A)-genda.” On the one hand, it aligns more deeply and enduringly (not, however through defensive exclusivism) with the Western Christian patterns of sacramental rites present and performed in traditions such as Swedish *via media* Lutheranism and the so-called Anglo-Catholicism, both of which have influenced my theological disposition rather profoundly. On the other hand, it is marked primarily yet fluidly by the counterpoint of certain Lutheran and Eastern Orthodox theological trajectories which value the promise and prudence of the imaginary of opaque eucharistic consubstantiality as the template of grace-filled interface of relationality between God and creation, and among and within

the creation itself. This Eucharist may not be sufficiently “pure” according to certain canons of official confessional authenticity. Hence the integrity pertinent here is an “interstitial integrity”⁴⁹ of a complex theo-historico-cultural counterpoint. Rather, it lives and moves within the equilibrium of certain veridical plurality.⁵⁰ It may even be viscerally, for the lack of better expression, resonant with the diasporic *habitus* – a skill of life and survival⁵¹ rather than a fashionable postmodern luxury – of paradoxically holding together experiences, domiciles, languages, loyalties, sensibilities, in a fragile and hybrid equilibrium of lived existential actualities. But is not paradox, as M. Jamie Ferreira contends, precisely the “ability to live together what we cannot theoretically unite?”⁵²

Sacramentality Among Wandering Signs

It may have appeared that the most convoluted one among the modern and postmodern theological *loci* – sacramentality – has been enjoying an idyllic honeymoon

⁴⁹ I borrow this accurate and helpful expression from Rita Nakashima Brock, “Interstitial Integrity: Reflections Toward an Asian American Woman’s Theology,” in *Introduction to Christian Theology: Contemporary North American Perspectives* (Roger A. Bradham, ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997): 183.

⁵⁰ I am indebted here to Sandra Lubarsky’s notion of “veridical (from *veritas*) pluralism” in the context of interreligious dialogue, which “affirms the idea that there may be real and important differences between traditions” yet goes “beyond the fact of plurality to a judgment about the plural forms that fill the world,” in *Tolerance and Transformation: Jewish Approaches to Religious Pluralism* (Cincinnati: Hebrew University College Press, 1990): 6. Lubarsky’s veridical pluralism advocates inclusive and tolerant openness and coexistence of difference for the sake of truth, not for the sake of decadent and indiscriminate tolerance. Lubarsky employs the concept of non-contradiction asserting the truth, yet insists that various traditions may seem to be in an apparent conflict due to the fact that all religious traditions are but partial and particular truths.

⁵¹ Beyond the literal meaning which I fully intend here, I also underscore the connotations of “survival” in the Bhabhian sense as “a way of living on ... not living in seclusion but a living on-ness and a living on the borderlines. Survival, in that sense, is the precariousness of living on the borderline” and it is also “living in the ambivalent movement in between ... these seemingly contradictory or incommensurable moments,” see “Surviving Theory: A Conversation with Homi K. Bhabha” by Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks in *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies* (Fawzia Afzal-Khan and Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, eds.; Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000): 373, 379.

⁵² M. Jamie Ferreira, *Transforming Vision: Imagination and Will in Kierkegaardian Faith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991): 6.

so far. But rather the opposite is true. This project is a constructive interrogation of what kind of imaginary of relationality – a tremendously problematic issue in the late postmodern context – could be possibly conceived in the context of the Western cultural entanglement with hegemonic unilateralism and the coloniality of power in divine and human action. My claim here is that a fruitful imaginary resides in the notion of sacramentality. With the same breath, however, I must note that the appeal to sacramental discourse does not advocate a nativist quest for the elusive golden age of seamless sacramentality to which one must (impossibly!) return. Most importantly, it is the very possibility of sacramentality and liturgy that was most enthusiastically challenged in the modern era. So enthusiastically, in fact, that

sacramental discourse is often thought of as theological adiaphora best practiced by those with the taste for banners, ceremonial, and arts and crafts. It is regarded as an academically less than disciplined swamp in which Anglican high churchmen, Orthodox bishops, and many, if not all Roman Catholics and others are hopelessly mired.⁵³

Evidently, much more is at stake here than mere aesthetical addictions. As Schwartz observes, the “sacramental thinking is completely alien to the way modern secularism has conceived matter, space, time, and language, in a sense that it had to be almost dismantled for modernism to be born.”⁵⁴ She points to the Reformation as the enabling “surge of iconoclasm” which “chipped away at sacramentality until the body of sacramental experience was reduced beyond recognition, and, for some, this meant that God might be leaving the world – yet once more.”⁵⁵ According to both Alexander

⁵³ Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 46.

⁵⁴ Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics*, 11.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Schmemmann and Catherine Pickstock, secularism as modernity's hallmark is precisely a liturgical, i.e., sacramental, and not a general problem of religion. For Schmemmann secularism definitely does not equal atheism, but is the negation of liturgy and sacramentality as non-accidental and as a configuration of relationality with both God and other created beings and the whole universe within a sacramental ontology.⁵⁶

Pickstock argues that modernity is most precisely “characterized by the refusal of liturgy” – refusal of the liturgical life-world – which renders the modern anti-liturgically inscribed secularism “the pre-condition for a capitalist, bureaucratic and technocratic order, however much this issue may be evaded.”⁵⁷

Others trace the genealogy of un-liturgical immanentist modernity even further back into the stirrings of the medieval voluntaristic nominalism which facilitated the emergence of sacramental occasionalism in the then emergent imaginaries of creation as “pure nature” juxtaposed to pure divinity in “jealous autonomy,”⁵⁸ both competing on the same terrain of the newly postulated univocity of being.⁵⁹ The analogical ontology of participation and the correlative sacramental realism whereby a sacrament, i.e., sign participates in the signified as it effectively signifies without becoming identical to the signified – to put it in terms of Neoplatonic logic – is transmuted towards the dissolution of the analogical transparency into what Graham Wards calls the “opacification of

⁵⁶ Alexander Schmemmann, “Worship in a Secular Age,” Appendices, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000):118-124.

⁵⁷ Catherine Pickstock, “Liturgy, Art and Politics,” *Modern Theology* 16:2 (2000): 167.

⁵⁸ Henri de Lubac, “The Mystery of the Supernatural,” *Theology in History* (Michael Sales, ed.; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996): 290.

⁵⁹ Catherine Pickstock notes that the nominalist assertion of the metaphysical priority of “Being” over both uncreated God and created world conscripts God to be “in the same univocal manner as creatures” distinguished only by the “intensity of being.” While this seems to confer a degree of proximal relation, the result is the opposite as “univocity unmediably separates the creation from God” and the real ontological difference previously permitting creaturely participation in the divine life issues into an undifferentiated distance between the infinite and the finite, a distance which is a quantified abyss. Instead of participation, the relation between God and creation becomes unbridgeable and thus contractual, see Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998): 122-123.

nature” which “prepares the metaphysical grounds for the secular, demystified world-view (and later the scientific world-view and the capitalist cult of worldly goods).”⁶⁰

Consequently, an aporetic space opens between the subjectively atomized human person and the objectified sacrament which “the dualisms of modernity, establishing the instrumentality of reasoning, attempt to span. Dualistic thinking substitutes for mediation.”⁶¹ Certainly, in the modern world signs or symbols can be subjectively chosen to be trusted through a deliberating value-judgment (this is what most modern Protestant sacramental theologies have preferred) or not, since the “modern secular thinking is founded upon this ability to doubt.”⁶² Within this worldview the sacramental presence is domiciled within the arbitrary experiential interiority of the modern subjectivity who can choose to – increasingly contradictorily under the auspices of modern *Entzauberung* – make a discrete and relationally secluded space for sacramental moments amidst the dominating reality of mechanistic science, pure economic reason, and the deep suspicion of the aesthetically shaped modes of knowing, feeling, and acting.

However, what Ward has called “opacification of nature” did not seem to have been an univocal process. Concurrently, as the analogical and participatory sacramental transparency recedes, the “rupture of power and love” into “a loveless power and an impotent love” becomes a prominent modern variant of relationality within which the “submission to an inscrutable divine will meant that an extreme, although distorted, piety which stressed God’s ability to change things and work miracles itself encouraged a new

⁶⁰ Graham Ward, “The Church as the Erotic Community,” *Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context* (Lieven Boeve and Lambert Leijssen, eds.; Leuven, Paris, Sterling: Leuven University Press, 2001): 179.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 183.

cult of power in every domain of human life.”⁶³ A new transparency quest ensues, however, as a quest driven by the ideal/idol of a mastered transparency emerges from the crucial modern “desire for an all-encompassing mastery of reality by rational and/or scientific means.”⁶⁴ This mastered transparency is the full, stable, secure, clear, and potentially and progressively penetrable transparency, throbbing in impatient and eager excitement for the next discovery. This version of transparency is the epistemological ideal/idol of the dominant modern rationalities in the penetrating light of which – thankfully on the one hand and regrettably on the other – contemporary sacramental reasoning is bound to interrogate both this very transparency itself and its own nostalgic temptations. For it is unavoidably true that underinterrogated pre-modern notions of sacramentality can no longer be proliferated as accountable to and healing for the reality wherein “the redemption [is] manifestly lacking in an unredeemed world” and thus sacramentality should perhaps most fruitfully be represented as opening up “precisely that unredeemedness, that moment of interruption, to which no hegemonic narrative does justice.”⁶⁵ Perhaps.

As far as the nostalgic temptations are concerned, there has already been a massive postmodern wandering among the (empty) signs to signal the dedication to fight them relentlessly. According to Georges de Schrijver’s observation, the postmodern sacramental (dis)engagements highlight the conviction that “every ready-made transparency that comes forth must be scrapped, again and again, as false, as a fake

⁶³ Pickstock, *After Writing*, 157.

⁶⁴ Gavin Hyman, *The Predicament of Postmodern Theology: Radical Orthodoxy or Nihilist Textualism?* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001): 11.

⁶⁵ Lieven Boeve, “Thinking Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context: A Playground for Theological Renewal,” *Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context*, 22.

transparency that must be unmasked as such.”⁶⁶ Hence the postures and gestures of “‘a-sacramentality’ as an iconoclastic service to the truth,”⁶⁷ since “the postmodern a-sacramentality is a protest against the demonization of a sacramentality oriented toward humanity.”⁶⁸

...one can only be faithful to God by persevering in a situation of brokenness. Contact with the sacred can only be effected via uninterrupted wandering. Only a fragmentary life expresses faith in a sacrality that exists only as a lost paradise. (...) our images of the holy are culturally mediated, and how much special interest groups have thereby played tricks to manipulate the holy.⁶⁹

Against this background, I submit, a useful way to proceed is neither a nostalgic return by pure *ressourcement*, nor a pure *aggiornamento* with (post)modernity. Rather I envision a contrapuntal and fluid re-engagement with both from within an ethically concerned postcoloniality. Indeed, any sacramental imaginary without attending to the ethical universal of human suffering – the only universal worth being generously lenient with in this era sometimes called post-metaphysical and allergic to obsolete grand narratives– is nothing else than a “truncated sacramentality,”⁷⁰ no matter if it is premodern, modern, postmodern, nostalgic, or iconoclastic. As de Schrijver incisively observes,

God’s light is... obscured in a twofold way: through the desperation of wandering have-nots, and the excess of possibilities of free-wheeling tourists. As long as this split remains there as an open wound, the presence of God – and of life as a gift, for that matter – shows only its disfigured appearance. I can scarcely imagine an abundance of sacramental presence in a world at large,

⁶⁶ Georges de Schrijver, “Experiencing the Sacramental Character of Existence: Transitions from Premodernity to Modernity, Postmodernity, and the Rediscovery of the Cosmos,” trans. Susan Roll, *Questions Liturgiques* 75 (1994): 21.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁷⁰ Georges de Schrijver, “Postmodernity and the Withdrawal of the Divine: A Challenge for Theology,” *Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context*, 61.

in which on the one hand excessive glamour neutralises God's light, and dire misery, on the other hand, cries out for mercy.⁷¹ Those who have not experienced gratuity in real life can hardly be expected to understand the meaning of divine gratuity expounded in learned discourses.⁷²

In other words, sacramentality is not an intra-ecclesial issue. By no means is it an adiaphora, at least within an incarnationally grounded theological discourse.

Sacramentality as enacted in liturgy poses a question about the quiddity, or the “ethics,” of the human social and political life while it never ceases to be, at the same time, the question about the quiddity, or the “ethics,” of the interface of divine-human relationality. For, theologically speaking, there always abide “these three: Word, Sacrament, and suffering human beings”⁷³ on this side of the beatific vision – and an ethically inflected theology abides in sounding them always and everywhere together, tenaciously and contrapuntally.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 64.

⁷³ Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 230.

PART I

Chapter 1

Interrogating Disengagement: Liturgy and Ethics in the Gridlock of *Parerga*

The principal challenge, which the contemporary Western theological discourse on liturgy – broadly defined as performed sacramental relationality among God and creation or narrowly defined as the rite structuring the way of performing corporate Christian worship – must prioritize is the necessity to unlearn the methodological adiaphorization of ethics in theological and liturgical inquiry. As it remembers and evaluates its own past, the present post-Holocaust Christian liturgical theology stands under the indictment of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s dictum “only he who cries out for the Jews may sing Gregorian chants.”¹ Of course, theologically speaking, the Bonhoefferian Jews sadly stand not only for the historical Jews under the Nazi persecution, but also for countless other history and context-specific victims of injustice and human cruelty. The histories of colonialism, the Holocaust, genocides, apartheid, ethnic cleansings, racial and gender oppression, economic disenfranchisement, and what a Harry E. Fosdick hymn calls so poignantly an ongoing “warring madness,”² are histories in which the Western Christianity has taken part, often a blasphemous, repulsive, and unjustifiable part. And these histories are far from having been sporadic and exceptional. As Walter Benjamin has warned, “the tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the ‘state of emergency’ in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history

¹ Eberhard Bethge dates the famous statement of Dietrich Bonhoeffer to his students as of 1935, in Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, Revised edition (Victoria J. Barnett, ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000): 607.

² I refer to Harry E. Fosdick’s “God of Grace and God of Glory,” where the third stanza starts with “Cure your children’s warring madness...”

that is in keeping with this insight.”³ Christian theology, and the liturgical and sacramental discourses in particular, also “must attain” to the conception of itself as intrinsically related to and accountable to, *coram Deo*, for its participation in these histories, permeated by human suffering. Hence the exceptional need of a Bonhoefferian soberness, since liturgical and sacramental discourses are particularly often perceived and portrayed as insular, ethically self-absolving, and peculiarly prone to ludic oblivion toward social injustice and systemic moral evil. It is clear that it is possible to indulge in pious doxology while simultaneously participating into destruction or even unleashing it all around. It is possible to sing whatever sublimely uplifting liturgical chant one’s spiritual taste fancies while succumbing to suspended spectatorial resignation toward one’s own suffering or that of the others. Arguably, the 20th century was the historical moment when this perversely sublime counterpoint reached its crescendo at least in the reflective awareness of the Western theological culture, if not – it must be apprehensively acknowledged – in the range of future possibilities for oblivion toward the unjust suffering and one’s own participatory role in it. The insight with which liturgical theologies must “keep” is the acknowledgement that it is no longer ethically feasible to speak about liturgy and sacraments as redemptive, liberating, and transformative sites and events innocently and automatically. History has demonstrated that liturgy and sacraments can be and often are continuing to be sites of exclusion, despair, as well as of a racial, gender, and sexual injustice. For women in particular, but not solely for women, liturgy and sacraments have been sites of pain alongside being sites of survival, healing,

³ Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *The Frankfurt School on Religion: Key Writings by the Major Thinkers* (Harry Zohn, trans.; Eduardo Mendieta, ed.; New York and London: Routledge, 2005): 266.

and empowerment.⁴ Hence liturgy is already a desecrated space all the while it is also a consecrated space for liberative transformation toward the grace-filled wellbeing (*salus*) of created life. At the present historical and cultural juncture it is still possible, even urgent, to underscore the idea of liturgy as a whole to be “the sacrament of the Kingdom of God”⁵ while acknowledging that liturgy is an always vulnerable site vis-à-vis numerous idolatries and injustices. What it means is that the divine kenosis in Christ’s incarnation historically, and his insignification in the Eucharist and in the convocation of discipleship as the Body of Christ sacramentally, position liturgy as a non-coercive and non-controlling, and thus an extremely vulnerable, interface of interaction among God and human persons. Liturgy can, and often has, become vulnerable to deployment as a stultifying mirror not only of “the dominant social gender relations” as Teresa Berger accurately observes, but even beyond the gender specific context as a “mirror or memory”⁶ of the templates of relationality across multiple terrains of race, class, geography, and ethnicity. The prevailing concern for liturgical and sacramental discourses at this point in time in the late modern, post-Holocaust, and postcolonial era is, I submit, that Christian theology must attain to the insight of its own precariousness and

⁴ The problematic complexity of the liturgy’s idolatrous inscription in binaristic gender hierarchies and its enabling role for such detrimental dualisms is attentively disclosed, among other works, in Susan A. Ross’ *Extravagant Affections: A Feminist Sacramental Theology* (New York: Continuum, 1998) and *For the Beauty of the Earth: Women, Sacramentality, and Justice*, 2006 Madeleva Lecture in Spirituality (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2006), in Janet R. Walton’s *Feminist Liturgy: A Matter of Justice* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), in Teresa Berger’s *Women’s Ways of Worship: Gender Analysis and Liturgical History* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), *Fragments of Real Presence: Liturgical Traditions in the Hands of Women* (New York: Crossroad, 2005) and in her edited volume *Dissident Daughters: Feminist Liturgies in Global Context* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), in Gail Ramshaw’s *Liturgical Language: Making it Metaphoric, Keeping It Inclusive* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), and in Siobhan Garrigan’s *Beyond Ritual: Sacramental Theology After Habermas* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

⁵ Alexander Schmemmann, “Liturgy and Eschatology,” *Liturgy and Tradition: Theological Reflections of Alexander Schmemmann* (Thomas Fisch, ed.; Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1990): 95.

⁶ Teresa Berger, *Women’s Ways of Worship*, 153.

to the “fragility of sacramental actions of the Christian assembly” as precisely the sites of redemptory yet potentially abuseable “divine vulnerability” wherein the “risk is both divine and human.”⁷ Due to the most radical divine kenosis in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, liturgy is precisely a risky, fluid, and porous interface which can and often has become an arena of truncated sacramentality, failed relations, distorted justice, oppressive good news, and blasphemous peace. The transformative fecundity of liturgy can never be presumptuously and prematurely taken as self-evident, even to the point of dubious self-assurance that liturgy by design always already incorporates its own prophetic and self-reforming critique, especially if liturgy is perceived as overall restricted to being the ritually structured *ordo* of intra-ecclesial corporate worship.⁸ Hence to speak about liturgy as always and everywhere necessarily and infallibly sacred, liberating, and transfigurative is at best treacherous and at worst – unethical.⁹ Instead, I submit, it is time to inquire more intensively and more broadly into the vistas of interaction between the trajectories of negative theology in relation to liturgical and sacramental discourses. Obviously, it is beyond the scope of this project to become a full-blown constructive exploration of negative liturgical theology¹⁰ even

⁷ Don E. Saliers, *Worship as Theology: Foretaste of Glory Divine* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994): 61.

⁸ On the ambiguities involved with the emphasis on the otherwise fascinating notion of the liturgical *ordo* as the vehicle of its own reform and critique see Steffen Lösel’s Review Article “What Sacred Symbols Say about Strangers and Strawberries: Gordon W. Lathrop’s Liturgical Theology in Review,” *Journal of Religion* 85 (2005): 634-648. A question of utmost importance for contemporary liturgical theology indeed is: “Is there not too much optimism here about how liturgy reforms both itself and the habits of the heart, and too much pessimism about how the church must witness to God’s kingdom in the world,” 646.

⁹ Andrea Bieler and Luise Schottroff highlight the risks involved in essentializing liturgy – “there is no ‘essence’ of ritual...that is always liberating. It is rather the case that rituals can also sustain and foster the order of dominance. As always, everything depends on the context,” *The Eucharist: Bodies, Bread, and Resurrection* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007):102.

¹⁰ Here I draw inspiration from Mark D. Jordan’s suggestions about the usefulness of “the contribution of negative theology to liturgy, among many other things,” most importantly moral theology and pastoral care. I use the notion of negative/apophatic theology during the course of this dissertation in a methodological sense, which I believe is what negative theology is all about, and which seems to be implied in Jordan’s use of the term as well: “The argument of negative theology is that we fail radically in naming God or

though the scenario for such an endeavor is most fascinatingly located in the amazing apophatic-liturgical counterpoint at the pinnacle of Christian apophatic thought in the corpus of Pseudo-Dionysius where “The Names of God” and “Mystical Theology” stand interlaced to “The Celestial Hierarchy” and “The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy.” It seems, however, that interrogating the allergic tensions between liturgy and ethics can serve as an itinerary of apophatically configured theological inquiry to scrutinize certain, mostly modern, Western theological proclivities in theological methodology from a perspective equally loyal to sacramental-liturgical and ethical discourses. Above all, it addresses the proclivity toward exclusionary and binaristically competitive rationality, in which the obsession with boundaries of certainty and reality has not entirely abated, and of which the chronic disengagement between liturgy and ethics is just a symptom. In addition, as it will become clearer in Chapter 2, if relationality, divine and human, is truly the object of inquiry, the self-absorption of the Western discourse must be interrupted in theology as well, and perhaps – especially in theology, by allowing the presence of postcoloniality to enter the theological imaginary. For now, I must perhaps slightly contrapuntally yet complementarily in relation to the Overture, note that the sacramentality as the God-created and God-revealed interface of relationality between the triune God and humanity, and liturgy as the interface for the enactment of this sacramentality, is not a sacramentality of instantly recognizable necessity, unambiguous ubiquity, and predictable seamlessness. As Ann Loades has remarked:

To speak of the mediation of divine presence, transfiguring or blessing or gracing our world or some part or aspect of it, has everything to do with

capturing God’s operation in human speech. The proposal of negative theology is to apply a process of negation, to stage an event of denial at every point in Christian theology, in order to hasten the union of believers with God,” in *Telling Truths in Church: Scandal, Flesh, and Christian Speech* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003):75-76.

simply allowing for the possibility of it, of relishing it wherever is just so happens to be around, to surface perhaps, to be not merely unmistakably but perhaps even very ambiguously just ‘there’. Further, divine presence may very properly be associated with the fleeting, the contingent, here today and gone tomorrow, with ‘travelling light’. Indeed, most of the ‘material signs’ of specific sacraments or of sacramental practices are fluid, or consumable, transient, except in their immediate or longer term effects on human persons.¹¹

If liturgy is indeed the church as the convocation of discipleship – the Body of Christ – *in actu*, then the action which effectively signifies and causes the Body of Christ, itself is an implementation and actualization of a specific relationship. After all, what is liturgy if not a faith enacted, and what is faith if not a particular *religio* (a relational bond/ing), wherein “faith is not a knowledge known but a relationship performed?”¹² If so, the liturgically enacted *religio* of faith is a “liturgical-sacramental practice” which, according to Edward Kilmartin, “implies a comprehensive interpretation of reality which can be unfolded with constant reference to the practice itself.”¹³ The adjective “comprehensive” signals the orthodox range of liturgical concern and care for all things in relation to God and particularly of the human life “at full stretch” before God. Hence the issues of ethics – of the quiddity or *how*-ness of human interrelations and interactions across the coordinates of the social, political, the economical, the racial, and the sexual landscapes of lived reality must be situated non-accidentally and non-occasionalistically within the scope of liturgical, indeed Christian theological, orthodoxy. Orthodoxy, as George Florovsky, Aidan Kavanagh, and Frank Senn have rightly insisted on drawing from the semantic

¹¹ Ann Loades, “Finding New Sense in the ‘Sacramental’,” *The Gestures of God: Explorations in Sacramentality* (Geoffrey Rowell and Christine Hall, eds.; London and New York: Continuum, 2004):162-163.

¹² Oliver Davies, *A Theology of Compassion: Metaphysics of Difference and the Renewal of Tradition* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2001): 252.

¹³ Edward J. Kilmartin, S.J. *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice*, I. Systematic Theology of Liturgy (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1988): 95. See also Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998):1.

structure of the Greek term itself, is “primarily not ‘right opinion’ (as it is usually interpreted in the West), but rather ‘right glory’, i.e. precisely, right worship”¹⁴ or “the true worship of the true God.”¹⁵ Therefore the reflection on orthodoxy must really be about “a sustained life of right worship.”¹⁶ In the light of the Bonhoefferian dictum, the argument of this dissertation proceeds from a necessity to challenge those theological imaginaries of orthodoxy (the right worship or the right liturgy, as well as the right teaching or belief) that ignore the full critical and constructive purchase of Bonhoeffer’s stance for Christian theology. Today, as faithfully as ever, it is the theology shaped by its embeddedness in Christ incarnate, crucified, and risen for the salvation of the palpably unredeemed world. But it is also the theology conscious of its age, even more precisely, the theology conscious of its having come of age, having reached its *Mündigkeit* in the age of postcolony, of the relatively recent Holocaust, and during what Arjun Appadurai has aptly called “the decade of superviolence, a decade characterized by a steady growth in civil and civic warfare in many societies as a feature of everyday life.”¹⁷ Appadurai refers to the 1990s decade of high globalization with the large-scale culturally motivated violence in the South Eastern Europe, Rwanda, and India, only to be superseded by the new sort of permanent global war on terror taking place across the multiple plains of our “worldwide civilization of clashes.”¹⁸ The pivotal question in such circumstances,

¹⁴ Georges Florovsky, “The Elements of Liturgy,” in *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement: Documents and Statements 1902-1975* (Constantin G. Patelos, ed.; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1978):172.

¹⁵ Frank C. Senn, *The People’s Work: A Social History of the Liturgy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006): 55.

¹⁶ Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo Book, 1984): 81.

¹⁷ Arjun Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006):1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

Appadurai suggests, is to consider the peculiar violence of our times in relational terms, which I suggest, makes his concern a theological concern as well:

The large-scale violence of the 1990s appears to be typically accompanied by a surplus of rage, an excess of hatred that produces untold forms of degradation and violation, both to the body and the being of the victim: maimed and tortured bodies, burned and raped persons, disemboweled women, hacked and amputated children, sexualized humiliation of every type. What are we to do with this surplus, which has frequently been enacted in public actions, often among friends and neighbors, and is no longer conducted in the covert ways in which degradation of group warfare used to occur in the past?¹⁹

The issue of the quiddity of relation in a thoroughly intersubjective and interrelated reality presents the most nagging conundrum in the contemporary cultural milieu, including theological discourse. For theology in particular, it stretches reciprocally across the whole interface of divine-human relationality as well as interpersonal relationality. In this context, the definition of orthodoxy as the sustained life of right worship, I submit, has everything to do with the non-detraction of ethics, or the discourse on the quiddity of relation, from theological discourse proper – liturgical, systematic, fundamental, and all others in their own way. My concern regarding specifically liturgical theology is focused methodologically: what kind of relation between liturgy and ethics could and should be construed to fittingly reflect the divine-human relationality conceived as sacramental? Sacramentality, as I argued in the Overture, is always already an analogous reflection and enablement of a particular constellation of relationality, or a certain quiddity of relation. It configures the hypostatic union christologically, and the economy of salvific Incarnation sacramentally. The relation between liturgy and ethics is thus a question about the right kind of “speculation” or “mirroring” for the “right worship.” It is about

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

the orientation toward the imaginary of sacramental relationality under the dually “dark” proviso of apophasis and eschatology (1.Cor.13:12) vis-à-vis an orientation mirroring in a liturgically “stale mirror,” as Berger argues, more comfortably the patterns of dominant social relations of the surrounding culture than a transformative evangelical newness as a “space where multifaceted, vibrantly new, life-giving, God-sustained gender-roles are being practiced that allow all human beings and all creation to flourish.”²⁰ As already mentioned, Berger’s focus on the gender hierarchy should be extended to similarly challenge the coordinates of culture, race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality as well. Perhaps especially so, keeping in mind the imaginary of the “civilization of clashes” as a most disconcerting cultural configuration of power, identity, and difference in the present globalized era. Interrogating this kind of relationality – focusing on the liturgy and ethics in particular, but aware of the rhizome quality of relational patterns across the vast panorama of relations immanently and transcendentally – is the objective of the present project. This, however, might appear to be a problematic and provocative objective in the specific context of liturgical theology. To some problems involved here I will now turn.

1. Liturgy: Whose Work?

Liturgy is a hybrid notion with multiple layers of meaning and usage. The semantic origins of the term λειτουργία are in Greece. In the classical Greek, λειτουργία did not connote a specifically and exclusively religious or ritual activity, but denoted a work (ἔργον) vicariously performed as public service on behalf of the people (λαός). Projects intended for the common good in various areas such as education,

²⁰ Berger, *Women’s Ways of Worship*, 153.

defense, and entertainment were called λειτουργία.²¹ The “religious turn” of λειτουργία occurred when it was used in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (LXX, Septuagint) to denote the ritual worship and sacerdotal services in the temple. In the New Testament, λειτουργία has been used to refer to sacerdotal ministry of priests and Christ (Lk.1:23, Heb.8:2, 8:6, 9:21), to the ministry of proclaiming the Gospel (Rom.15:16), to charitable activity on behalf of the needy (2.Cor.9:12), to the worship of God (Acts 13:2), and even to the service of angels (Heb.1:7, 14). Gradually λειτουργία was used in a more narrowly specified way to describe in the Eastern Christian milieu the eucharistic rite – “the Divine Liturgy.” In the West, λειτουργία returned after a long period as *liturgia*, to be actively used in the aftermath of the Reformation and its reforms of public worship and to be substituted for the Mass among the Protestants, while also being used more widely as the term to denote the rites or orders of Christian practices of worship. Often the meaning of λειτουργία has been rendered as the “work of the people,” comprising the doxological action of the church in its public worship.

Two things are rather clear about liturgy: First, the polysemy of liturgy suggests a remarkably multifarious field of complementary actions of Jesus Christ and people, ranging from Christ’s priestly work as a λειτουργος (Heb. 8:6) performing the redemptive *opus Dei*, to the service of Christ’s followers enmeshed in relations between individuals, community, and state. Liturgy is an *opus*, divine and human, with fluidly overlapping causalities, agencies, orientations, scopes, and goals within the economy of

²¹ Among other sources, see Lawrence J. Madden, S.J., “Liturgy” in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship* (Peter E. Fink, S.J.ed.; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990):740-742; Adolf Adam, *Foundations of Liturgy: An Introduction to Its History and Practice* (Matthew J. O’Connell, trans.; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992): 3; Frank C. Senn, *New Creation: A Liturgical Worldview* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000): 3.

salvation. Second, the historical specification and semantic compression of the notion of λειτουργία into the increasingly well demarcated sphere of sacramental worship in general, and into the varieties of the *ordo* of ritual public worship in particular, has progressively problematized the understanding of liturgy in the present. What is the appropriate scope of liturgy and whose agency is the liturgical agency, given the initial multivalence and subsequent “disciplining” of liturgy? Most importantly, what could be the desirable configuration of a non-hegemonic co-presence and co-working of liturgy and ethics depending on the understanding of what liturgy is?

First of all, there appears to be a broad consensus, at least among the so-called liturgical traditions within Christianity, that liturgy is the identifying or “characteristic”²² action of the Christian church and the defining marker of identity of a convocation of Christian discipleship. As the identifying action of the church, liturgy is in the most general functional sense “an ordered way of performing its public worship before God and the world.”²³ More specifically, liturgy is, as Norman Pittenger summarizes,

the public action of worship by a community, with the use of prescribed and established forms, thus guaranteeing the possibility of common participation – liturgy is ‘common prayer’, and that requires agreed words and agreed actions, so that the fullest sharing may be possible for those who take part. And in the historical Christianity, there can be no doubt, the liturgical action par excellence has always been the Eucharist, the Lord’s Supper, the Holy Communion – call it what you will.²⁴

Regarding prayer, according to Don Saliers, liturgy is even more specifically the Christocentric “ongoing prayer, proclamation, and life of Jesus Christ – sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise – offered to God in and through his body in the world. That is,

²² Norman Pittenger, *Life as Eucharist* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973): 22.

²³ Senn, *New Creation*, 42.

²⁴ W. Norman Pittenger, *The Christian Understanding of Human Nature* (Digswell Place: James Nisbet and Co, 1964):180.

Christian liturgy is our response to the self-giving of God in, with, and through the One who leads us in prayer.”²⁵

But the meaning of liturgy stretches further. Liturgy, as Alexander Schmemmann puts it, is “the Church *in actu*.”²⁶ It is the “church caught in the act of being most overtly itself”²⁷ in the words of Aidan Kavanagh. Liturgy is in a certain sense coterminous with the church. Simon Chan emphasizes that there is “no separation between the liturgy and the church.”²⁸ Frank Senn reminds that the church is “visible only where the people assemble to do those things that constitute them as the people of God – proclaim the word of God and celebrate the sacraments of Christ.”²⁹ Finally, David Fagerberg states that in the “thick sense” it is liturgy that “creates the Church”³⁰ as the body of Christ, and therefore liturgy itself is “the participation by the body of Christ in the activity of the Trinity,”³¹ while Edward Kilmartin stresses that the nature of liturgy is “the common action” as the dynamic medium of church’s gradual “growing” into the body of Christ.³²

The ascending complexity curve in the conceptualizations of liturgy shows that there is an impressive range of theological positions of initial understanding of liturgy from a liturgical minimalism (order of worship) to a “high” sacramental ecclesiology presupposing a participatory *theo-ontology*. What is common to most descriptions of liturgy, understandably, is the focus on action, i.e. the “work of the people.” But herein

²⁵ Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 86.

²⁶ Alexander Schmemmann, “Renewal,” in *Church, World, Mission: Reflections on Orthodoxy in the West* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1979):155.

²⁷ Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo Book, 1984):75.

²⁸ Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshipping Community* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006): 42.

²⁹ Senn, *New Creation*, 7.

³⁰ David W. Fagerberg, *Theologia Prima: What is Liturgical Theology*, Second edition (Chicago and Mundelein: Hillenbrand Books, 2004):10.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

³² Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 77.

resides a difficulty. Namely, the “work” has evolved into one of the most loaded theological notions, especially since the Reformation and all the concerns about the heretical Pelagian features of meritorious “works” in relation to the justification by grace and salvation. The contemporary ecumenical critique of liturgy as “the work of the people” focuses on the concerns about the ascendancy of the images of liturgical assemblies as the “owners” of the “work” of liturgy. A current of critique has been directed toward the tendencies to install the human, indeed sinful, “we” – the liturgical assembly – as the dominating subject of the liturgy rather than the triune God. Thus Michael Aune contests the disposition to give “more pride of place to what the worshipping community is *doing* in the liturgical event” with the result of tripping “the balance of divine initiative and human response”³³ which Aune attributes to what he calls formidable and even verging on the hegemonic “Schmemmann-Kavanagh-Fagerberg-Lathrop Line” in the English speaking liturgical theology. In a feisty Protestant manner, Aune reminds that λειτουργία does not univocally signify community activity, i.e. “the work of the people,” and that

...there is a short step from liturgy as ‘the work of the people’ to an emphasis on human action as the primary dynamic of the event. While liturgy is, in some sense, something that believers *do*, this does not justify a wholesale theological shift from God’s action to the worshipping community’s action.³⁴

While it is beyond the scope of this project to challenge the surprising presumed homogeneity and pertinence of Aune’s “Line” as I believe should be done, his arguments against the misleading and unproductive spin-offs of Prosper of Aquitaine’s *legem*

³³ Michael B. Aune, “Liturgy and Theology: Rethinking the Relationship,” Part I. *Worship* 81:1 (2007): 60-61.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 63-64.

credendi lex statuat supplicandi and the ahistorically and dualistically coerced clashes of *theologia prima* versus *theologia secunda*³⁵ are timely and useful. Moreover, his call for the refocusing of attention on liturgy as *opus Dei* before being anything else and for an inquisitive revisitation of the theological potential within notion of liturgy as *dievkalpojums/Gottesdienst* can, I submit, be useful precisely in reimagining the relation of liturgy and ethics, albeit I suspect in a different way than Aune would do it. In fact, Part III of my dissertation envisions to do precisely that.

Another current of the critique, resonating but not coinciding with both Berger's and Aune's concerns, represents a perspective for which the issue of liturgy being an obedient "mirror" of the *Zeitgeist* again comes to the fore. In the Western cultural context, Kavanagh – to name but one of the critical voices – forcefully decried the "modern middle-class *Volksfrömmigkeit*" whose dominant agency is shaped by civil religion and inscribes the gospel into the middle-class values such as "comfort in affluence, participation in approved groups, consumerism, and a general optimism which seems to have lost its grip on reality."³⁶ The consequence of such prioritizing of human agency is liturgy becoming, in his famous words, "a tiresome dialectical effort at raising the consciousness of middle-class groups concerning ideologically approved ends and means."³⁷ Expanding Kavanagh's concerns to ethnocentric and nationalistic horizons, it becomes clearer that liturgy can indeed easily become a self-centered "autocelebration"³⁸ of a liturgical assembly and its pseudo-eschatological ideologies. What is unforgivably

³⁵ See Part II of Aune's article in *Worship* 81:2 (2007): 141-169.

³⁶ Aidan Kavanagh, "Liturgical Inculturation: Looking to the Future," *Studia Liturgica* 20 (1990): 102.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ This is a reference to Josef Ratzinger's (Benedict XVI) liturgical critique, see John F. Baldwin's "Cardinal Ratzinger as Liturgical Critic," in *Studia Liturgica Diversa: Essays in Honor of Paul F. Bradshaw* (Maxwell E. Johnson and L. Edward Phillips, eds.; Portland, OR: Pastoral Press, 2004): 64.

lost is the redemptive exteriority of God and the corresponding attitude of eschatological and apophatical reserve as it should be incorporated into the *sacrum commercium* of the triune God with the liturgical convocations of discipleship. Under the circumstances of autocelebration the salvific exteriority is interdicted by a “liturgical ‘coup’ in which the sacred is eliminated, the language trivialized and the cult turned into a social event.”³⁹ In short, liturgy becoming an autocelebration constitutes an abdication of the liturgical vocation to participate in the order of salvation. In this context, Berger and other women-centered theologians of liturgy and sacramentality are rightly concerned with the unholy “mirroring” work of liturgy in the ongoing facilitation and proliferation of oppressive gender relations. In the postcolonial context, the attention also understandably goes well beyond the mostly simplistic, unilateral, and cunningly “universal” models of “liturgical inculturation” administered by and mirroring the “Western spectacle”⁴⁰ of theological rationality.⁴¹ At the same time, from a Protestant perspective, Aune is concerned with the manipulation of proper liturgical agency in significant segments of recent constructive liturgical theology at the expense of divine *opus* of grace and responsible appreciation of the human condition of sinfulness. Aidan Nichols similarly condemns the “derailing of the essentially theocentric act of worship into sidelines of social edification and group-

³⁹ Godfried Cardinal Danneels, “Liturgy Forty Years After the Second Vatican Council: High Point of Recession,” *Liturgy in a Postmodern World* (Keith F. Pecklers, S.J. ed.; London and New York: Continuum, 2003): 9.

⁴⁰ Barnor Hesse defines the “Western spectacle” as “a discursive organization of an imaginary social representativeness that rests on a cultivated social exclusiveness,” which functions by globalizing “the ‘non-European’ (‘non-white’) other, outside the chosen people, as irredeemably deficient, deviant and disorderly. Invariably narrowly cast as an outsider, an inferior, a threat, a margin, an amusement, an exoticism, an after-thought; the ‘non-European’ as ‘non-white’, and vice-versa, is situated within the imperial vision and governmental landscape of an idealized Western panorama and paranoia,” in “Reviewing the Western Spectacle: Reflexive Globalization through the Black Diaspora,” *Global Futures: Migration, Environment and Globalization* (Avtar Brah, Mary J. Hickman and Martin MacGhaill, eds.; New York: Palgrave, 1999):130-131.

⁴¹ I will return to this issue in more detail in Part I, Ch. 2.

psychological therapy” with its “entertainment ethos.”⁴² From the perspective of (Occidental) theological aesthetics the undesirable outcome of such displacements, according to Nichols, is a “liturgical horizontalism” that rejects the *Hochformen* of (Western) “high culture” as indispensable means of liturgical practice and issues in a “distinctively Christian version of *philistinism*.”⁴³

But alongside these, there is another kind of concern about uncritical “mirroring” of culture at large and the potentially manipulative exaggeration of human agency in liturgy, with a more ambiguous objective and with a rather direct bearing on the relation of liturgy and ethics. It appears in the critiques of those versions of “autocelebration” which are perceived as transgressive of the “untouchable quality”⁴⁴ of the liturgy. According to this type of concerns, within the “ownership” model of liturgical agency, liturgy becomes a “property” of the celebrating assembly and a “terrain given over to their ‘creativity’.”⁴⁵ Liturgy is seen as a component of an ahistorical and universal order of preservation: the liturgy pre-exists the celebrating community and is a “pre-established, divine and spiritual architecture.”⁴⁶ According to Danneels,

...liturgy can never be a self-fashioned concoction of the celebrating community; we are not creators, we are servants and guardians of the mysteries. We do not own them nor did we author them (...) the fundamental attitude of the ‘*homo liturgicus*’... is one of receptivity, readiness to listen, self-giving and self-relativizing. It is the attitude of faith and of faithful obedience (...) It is an attitude of listening and seeing... an attitude so alien to the ‘*homo faber*’ in many of us ... an attitude of prayer, of handing ourselves over to God and letting his will be done in us.⁴⁷

⁴² Aidan Nichols, O.P. *Christendom Awake: On the Reenergizing the Church in Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999): 31.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 37, 30.

⁴⁴ Danneels, “Liturgy Forty Years After the Second Vatican Council,” 8.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

What Danneels calls the “untouchable quality” of liturgy seems to be the (now contested) *ordo* or the grounding structure or “shape” of liturgy, but not only that. The flipside of the otherwise appropriate concerns regarding liturgical agency for the critiques like Danneels’, Nichols’, and Kavanagh’s – among others – is the identification of the *ordo* or the “untouchable quality” of liturgy not with the immensely versatile, even though not arbitrarily chaotic, liturgical tradition, but with a distinct imaginary of the liturgical past. Certain historical imaginaries of the divine initiative, theologically and liturgically, border on being mistaken for the divine initiative when a particular liturgical form is enthroned as untouchable for correction, augmentation, modulation, and re-imagining. Divine initiative thus comes dangerously close to being, in fact, identified and confused with the domineering Western European cultural, and especially aesthetic preferences, and with the hegemonic social, especially gender, relations expressed in what the feminist critiques have rightly called a linguistic injustice of the liturgical language to name just the most obvious liturgical component of the “masculine monopoly in religion.”⁴⁸ Divine initiative can be identified with certain “creativity” of the past historical and cultural moments since liturgy as an *ordo* is indeed a creative production of human liturgical convocations of discipleship in response to the vulnerably kenotic divine self-revelation in Christ, and thus in no way infallible as all human responses necessarily are. Kavanagh, half-ironically calling himself a reactionary, can deride the “*embourgeoisement*” of the consumerist liturgical dialectics while only a couple of paragraphs later lamenting the aggressive, ill-considered, and unilateral alterations of liturgical language and its

⁴⁸ Elizabeth A. Johnson, “Imaging God, Embodying Christ: Women as a Sign of the Times,” *The Church Women Want: Catholic Women in Dialogue* (Elizabeth A. Johnson, ed.; New York: Crossroad, Herder and Herder, 2002): 46.

biblically and conciliary grounded ways of naming God⁴⁹ in response to the attempts to rectify precisely the linguistic injustice in relation to gender, culture, class, and race. Even more ironically, when otherwise thoughtful and necessary critiques –such as Danneels’ – proceed without sufficient investigation of their frequent confusion of the salvific divine exteriority with the exteriority of the past and with the exteriority of a particular cultural chronotope, it is indeed important to notice the ambivalence of such pronouncements as: “The liturgy is not a feast we have laid out for ourselves, according to our own personal preferences. It is God’s feast. We attend at God’s invitation.”⁵⁰ The emphasis on God’s prevenient *opus* can become precisely a feast that a certain kind of “we” lay for themselves according to their very personal preferences. It is helpful not to forget that by such “work” and such “initiative” a profitable re-entrenchment of injustice and indifference toward the existential religious exigencies of internally and externally subaltern fellow human beings can be camouflaged.

Of course, in the context of liturgy as *opus* and especially in the light of the multipronged liturgical critiques of the “work” imaginary of liturgy, it is advantageous, I submit, to turn once more to the liturgical language in search for a constructive imaginary that remains true to the biblical pluriformity of λειτουργία, its dynamic nature as a work, as well as the indispensable primordially of divine action. Of course, the reliance on the linguistic aspects of theological notions in such constructive endeavors has been sometimes criticized.⁵¹ But as a non-native speaker of English, I cannot but notice a formative role of linguistic consciousness in theological inquiry. Indeed, “to speak a

⁴⁹ Kavanagh, “Liturgical Inculturation,” 102.

⁵⁰ Godfried Danneels, “Liturgy 40 Years After the Council,” *America* 2007 (August 27-September 3):14.

⁵¹ Robert F. Taft, “‘Thanksgiving for the Light’: Toward a Theology of Vespers,” *Beyond East and West: Problems in Liturgical Understanding*. Second revised and enlarged edition. (Rome: Pontifical Oriental Institute, Edizioni Orientalia Christiana, 1997):161.

language is to take on a world, a culture.”⁵² For example, I have never been quite able to understand the diffuse term “worship”⁵³ in all its myriad usages in liturgical theology, especially when it is used as a synonym for liturgy or divine service. It is probably so because my native Latvian language uses the word *dievkalpojums* to describe the public divine service in exactly the same way as *Gottesdienst*⁵⁴ is used in the German language, or *gudstjänst* in Swedish. *Dievkalpojums/Gottesdienst* has the capacity in a single word to imply the double agency of God rendering the work of service to us and us rendering the service of praise, thanksgiving, lament, and supplication to God. Two orders of agency and causality are united dialogically (or hybridically, as I will argue in Part III) in one “service of God” wherein

the phrase ‘of God’ must be taken not only as an objective genitive but also as a subjective genitive; that is, not only does the community serve God, but God also serves the community, in the saving service he has performed for it in Christ, who said that he had come ‘not to be served but to serve’ (Mt.20:28, Mk.10:45).⁵⁵

The imaginary of *dievkalpojums/Gottesdienst* provides a rewarding interface for a univocal affirmation of liturgy as *opus Dei* indeed before it can be any other kind of *opus*. Their close connection to the work of service (the verbs are *kalpot* and *dienen*) preserve the terms’ theological linkage to the aspect of vicarious performance initially inscribed in

⁵² Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Charles Lam Markham, trans.; New York: Grove, 1967): 38.

⁵³ “Worship” as Dwight W. Vogel has noted, is “the human response to that which is worshipped, including such elements as prayer and praise, lament and thanksgiving, confession and commitment,” in “Liturgical Theology: A Conceptual Geography,” *Primary Sources of Liturgical Theology: A Reader* (Dwight W. Vogel, ed.; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000):5. Also, as Senn suggests, “worship is more than liturgy because it includes the creature’s response to God in personal devotion as well as the community’s corporate prayer. Worship is less than liturgy because liturgy is a species of rite (*ritus*) which involves actions, ceremonies, and forms of proclamation as well as devotions and prayer,” in Senn, *New Creation*, 6.

⁵⁴ Senn (among others) argues that the Lutheran Reformers (especially in the early sacramental theology of Martin Luther) in particular promoted the insight that *Gottesdienst* includes both the aspects of public worship and public ministry, i.e. the service of God is “both God’s service to us in Word and Sacrament and our service to God in worship and in love toward our neighbor,” *The People’s Work*, 185.

⁵⁵ Adam, *Foundations of Liturgy*, 7.

Λειτουργία and subsequently appropriated in the notional range of λειτουργία in the New Testament. As Senn accurately points out,

Christian liturgy as acts of rite and prayer instituted by Jesus the Christ and inspired by the Holy Spirit in the history of the church is also the work of God (*opus Dei*) ...it is the work of God's people only because it is the work of God.⁵⁶

Moreover, from the hybrid perspective of *dievkalpojums*, it is only pertinent to be more precise about the naming of the liturgical communities. So far, when not quoting or referring to other authors, I have used the expression of “liturgical convocation of discipleship.” “Convocation” is a term I borrow from Henri de Lubac and Robert F. Taft. If liturgy is indeed first and foremost *opus Dei*, then the church as a liturgical community “is a *convocatio* before being a *congregatio*.”⁵⁷ Taft elaborates that the church as εκκλησία denotes precisely the “calling together” and not merely “coming together” on our own initiative, thus the church is not, properly speaking, an “assembly” but “convocation.”⁵⁸

To sum up, at this point I believe it is helpful to rehearse the stance of the Overture to specify that liturgy is the enacted interface of the entire economy of *sacrum commercium* or sacramentally configured relationality between God and creation. Even more, liturgy in its broadest Pauline and patristic sense, according to Taft, is the “salvific relationship between God and us.”⁵⁹ As *dievkalpojums* or *Gottesdienst*, liturgy is an *opus* in which divine and human agencies and causalities interact and co-act. Liturgy is *opus*

⁵⁶ Senn, *The People's Work*, 6.

⁵⁷ Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (Lancelot C. Sheppard and Sister Elizabeth Englund, OCD, trans.; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988): 64.

⁵⁸ Taft, “What Does Liturgy Do? Toward a Soteriology of Liturgical Celebration: Some Theses,” *Beyond East and West*, 242.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 240-241.

Dei in and through human *opera* as far as these *opera* participate in Christ's work through the power and the inspiration of the Spirit. Or, according to Taft's analogy, "if the Bible is the Word of God in the words of men" then liturgy perceived as work is "the saving deeds of God in the actions of those men and women who would live in him."⁶⁰

2. Ethics: Which Ethics?

Now what about ethics? What about the relation – or lack thereof – between liturgy and ethics? Being in the habit of defining the most important concepts and images broadly, ethics is no exception to this proclivity. My understanding and usage of the term "ethics" does not presume an endorsement of a particular theory or school of moral philosophy, or some tightly disciplined body of knowledge. If indeed ethics would be understood as a neatly limited set of philosophical expert-discourses on moral dilemmas and the prescriptive models of solutions to reject or to subscribe to, then envisioning the desirability of liturgical and theological discourses entering into a relation with such ethics would raise the question of an ontotheological slippage in the Heideggerian sense of "metaphysics." Namely, the site of the relationship would be similar to the site of hegemonic philosophical conditions determining the way of "*der Gott*" entering philosophy,⁶¹ with the specification that here it would be, in Heidegger's language, something like a non-"metaphysical" cultic practice of falling in awe onto one's knees

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 247.

⁶¹ In "Die onto-theo-logische Verfassung der Metaphysik" Heidegger remarks that "dann kann der Gott nur insofern in die Philosophie gelangen, als diese von sich aus, ihrem Wesen nach, verlangt und bestimmt, dass und wie der Gott in sie komme," in Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002):123.

and making music and dancing before God⁶² that now forces itself upon a moral theory in accordance with such theory's judgment of "that and how" such an entrance must take place. This perception of liturgy-ethics relation is, I submit, partially to explain – without justifying – the reluctance of liturgical theologies to become ethically engaged and to exaggerate rather disjunctively the ludic nature of liturgy. I will return to this issue later in the next section of this chapter.

Yet pondering over the locus of ethics in theological reasoning is not primarily and merely about the methodologically justifiable navigation among various, sometimes mutually allergic, disciplinary universes but rather about the relation of theological discourse and what Edward Kilmartin aptly calls "routine living."⁶³ To paraphrase Dietrich Bonhoeffer, it could be said that the responsible question about ethics and theology, or rather, ethics in theology, is akin to asking "not how to extricate [oneself] heroically from the affair" – here the affair of disciplinary alienation driven by the modern romantic yearning for purity among other things – "but how the coming generation is to live."⁶⁴ Ethics is "essentially social" as "an inquiry into living well and getting along with others."⁶⁵ On the other hand, the vector of ethically colored reflection certainly traverses the multiple terrains of life as lived relational complexity, penetrating into, but not arresting itself around, specifically focused social, intellectual, political, religious, or economic discourses with their immense hinterlands of theories, methods,

⁶² I am using here Heidegger's description of the presumably appropriately worshiped "göttlicher Gott" versus "der Gott" perceived "metaphysically" or ontotheologically as a sterile *causa sui*: "Vor der Causa sui kann der Mensch weder aus Scheu ins Knie fallen, noch kann er vor diesem Gott musizieren und tanzen," *ibid.*, 140.

⁶³ Kilmartin, *Christian Liturgy*, 79-81.

⁶⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "After Ten Years: A Reckoning made at New Year of 1943" in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Letters and Papers from Prison*. Enlarged edition (Eberhard Bethge, ed.; New York: Touchstone, Simon and Schuster, 1997): 7.

⁶⁵ Kathleen Marie Higgins, *The Music of Our Lives* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991): 8.

debates, and prejudices. The field of ethics is the whole of life in both its mutually related reflective and praxeal aspects, according to Kathleen Higgins:

Ethics ... is concerned with thought-mediated human behavior. The range of behavior involved extends from action chosen as a result of detailed deliberation to habitual, even 'mechanical' behavior, but in all human behavior, thought or attitude plays some causal role. Ethics uses reflective consciousness to influence our behavior. Ethics is also the practice of self-consciously cultivating attitudes and habits, including habits of thought.⁶⁶

To sum up, ethics, as I have already hinted several times before, is about the quiddity and quality of relations: the divine-human relationality and equally and simultaneously the inter-human relationality. Deliberately I have tried so far to say both aspects of relationality, divine-human and inter-human, in one breath – impossible as it is in all media of human signification except in music. I attempt to do so here following Martin Buber – and later Emmanuel Levinas in a certain sense as well – by applying his pivotal analytical metaphor of “relation” (*die Beziehung*) analogically to the whole interface of relationality. In *Ich und Du*, Buber envisions inter-human relationality as the truly real similitude of the relationality between God and humanity.⁶⁷ The quiddity of inter-human relations is simultaneously the site of disclosure, discernment, and judgment of the relation with God, and vice versa. Relation functions like a double-sided mirror in which the theological conceptions, religious dispositions, and liturgical performances are opened up for interrogative transparency, always interlaced with and always answerable to the actualities of human cohabitation, and vice versa. Buber’s dually vectored relation encompasses the whole of created life; in human life the division and separation between the supposed “real relation to God” and “unreal relation of the I-It attitude toward the

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Martin Buber stated that “die Beziehung zum Menschen is das eigentliche Gleichnis der Beziehung zu Gott,” *Ich und Du* (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1977):122.

world”⁶⁸ can only be an idolatrous fabrication. Another crucial aspect of the dually vectored analogical relation is that it is not mutually competitive since it is precisely the uniqueness (*Einzigkeit*) of the real relation to God to accommodate the absolute exclusivity and absolute inclusivity of relations.⁶⁹ Hence my insistence on speaking of both kinds of relation – divine and human – in the same breath as far as the quiddity, i.e. ethics, of both is concerned. Evermore, the same template of dually vectored, reciprocally answerable, and non-competitive⁷⁰ relationality ought to, I submit, be considered as the most fruitful appropriate methodological imaginary for the re-engagement of liturgy with ethics without reductive instrumentalization of either. In fact, such a methodological imaginary would be fruitful beyond this particular modern disengagement of theological disciplines and sensibilities – perhaps first and foremost, to phase out the dualistic civilization of the *lex orandi* versus *lex credendi*, *theologia prima* versus *theologia secunda* clashes.

Surely the kind of relationship among specific areas of religious knowledge and knowing, such as liturgical theology, doctrinal theology, and theological ethics – or lack thereof – is part of the broader, indeed infinitely broader, network of theo-ontological relationality. This relationality definitely includes the habits of thought as one of the crucial sites of ethics among other sites ethically invested in “a refinement of want, an

⁶⁸ “Man kan sein Leben nicht zwischen eine wirkliche Beziehung zur Gott und ein unwirkliches Ich-Es-Verhältnis zur Welt aufteilen, – zur Gott wahrhaft beten und die Welt benützen. Wer die Welt als das zu Benützende kennt, kennt auch Gott nicht anders,” *ibid.*, 127.

⁶⁹ “Einzig in der Beziehung zu Gott sind unbedingte Ausschliesslichkeit und unbedingte Einschliesslichkeit eins, darin das All begriffen ist,” *ibid.*, 118.

⁷⁰ I have used the term non/competitive quite often and I acknowledge my indebtedness to Kathryn Tanner’s notion of radical divine transcendence and the corresponding non-competitive relation between creatures and God whereby the zero-sum model of relation is replaced by an understanding that “creature does not decrease so that God may increase.” As a result, since God is beyond any such contrasts, “the glorification of God does not come at the expense of creatures,” in Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity, and the Trinity: A Brief Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003): 2.

education of vision, a revelation within one's innate desires of the beauty present in all otherness (even when deeply hidden)."⁷¹ Imaging ethics in narrower terms of theoretical labor in theology, it seems to be about the habits of thought pertinent to a reading/reflection practice that – and here I feel particularly in line with Rey Chow's observation – "is always tactical" and carries "with it a willingness to take risks, a willingness to destroy the submission to widely accepted, predictable, and safe conclusions."⁷² Especially, given that the "anxiety about being accused of conservatism and political incorrectness can cause to hold back observations of what is equally exploitative, coercive, and manipulative in so-called 'oppositional' discourses," ethics as discursive habits of mind engenders a capacity for risk-taking by supplementing "idealism doggedly with non-benevolent readings."⁷³ Accordingly, I propose, ethics is a pivotal and indispensable ingredient of theological discourse, embedded in and accountable to relationally conceived theo-ontology. It is so especially since Christian theology is based on the sacramentally configured revelation of a triune God – the God whose nature is "triune relationality without remainder."⁷⁴

Finally, it seems to be too minimalistic to invoke ethics without mentioning justice. Here I find particularly interesting that Beverly Wildung Harrison's idea of justice gravitates around the notion of right relationship. For Harrison with her sustained special attention to the problematic of liberation over decades, justice "is our central

⁷¹ David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2003): 84.

⁷² Rey Chow, "Introduction," *Ethics After Idealism: Theory-Culture-Ethnicity-Reading* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998): xxii. "Tactical" inscribes a reader practice as ethical – it "seeks to uncover the theoretical part of even the most specific 'cultural' study ... and the implicit cultural presumptuousness, aggressivity, and violence in even the most pristinely 'theoretical' pronouncement," *ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 2000): 227.

theological image, a metaphor of right relationship, which shapes the *telos* of a good community and serves as the animating passion of the moral life.”⁷⁵ Justice as right relationship, I suggest, has much to do with the notion of orthodoxy, already encountered in the previous section in the context of the sustained life of right worship/service. Of course, it is fairly obvious that for theological reflection focusing primarily on the issues of method in particular it is true that “while theological notions of justice specify neither the range of concrete goods and values for which we ought to strive in the immediate future, nor principles of sufficient specificity to adjudicate conflicts of interests ... they give us some clues for prioritizing our principles and identifying our concrete goals.”⁷⁶ It is important to notice that the “prioritization of principles” turns out to be not only a question of Christian ethical orthodoxy as an intra-disciplinary orthodoxy but of theological orthodoxy *tout court*. Harrison is completely right, as I see it, to evaluate the “prioritization” of ethical principles as making an appropriately overriding difference since the point of the prioritization she advocates is nothing less than construing “a vision of justice” – right relationship! – “to be substantive and central to our *theological* vision.”⁷⁷ Even though I do not believe that “prioritization” (with its connotations of competitiveness) of justice as ortho-relationality is the most beneficial way of re-imaging and re-orchestrating ethics as a native and indispensable part of theology as a discourse, the critical and constructive purchase here is, first of all, to situate relationality in the center of theological enterprise as a whole. In fact, such is the thrust of certain liberation

⁷⁵ Beverly Wildung Harrison, “The Dream of a Common Language: Toward a Normative Theory of Justice in Christian Ethics,” in *Justice in the Making: Feminist Social Ethics: Beverly Wildung Harrison* (Elizabeth M. Bounds et al, eds.; Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004):16. Harrison adds that “justice as rightly related community may be claimed legitimately as *the* core theological metaphor of a Christian moral vision of life,” *ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

theologies. Justice or ortho-relationality is radically inscribed “at the center of not only a theological *ethic*, but of *our vision of God*.”⁷⁸ It remains for me to add at this juncture that I do have reservations about the language of “prioritization,” Harrison’s and liberationists’ alike. Prioritizing gestures often privilege competitively and dualistically. These reservations will receive a fuller treatment in Part III as part of the constructive argument for a contrapuntal conception of relationality. However, the conviction that justice as ortho-relationality belongs irreplaceably – not adiaphorically and not as an illegitimate impostor of some theo-ideology – within theology as the “ever-renewed risk of trying to talk about God”⁷⁹ and thus within the “prolongation of the message of revelation,”⁸⁰ also points toward the possibilities of a fruitful re-engagement of liturgy and ethics. But before getting there, it is now time to take a closer look at the lingering disengagement.

3. Ambiguous Adiaphorization: Liturgy and Ethics as *parerga*

In these times of post-postmodernism, to invoke modernity is to suggest, almost predictably and routinely, an attitude of critique without restraint toward this “already and not yet” dissolving epoch. But of course, no epochs – especially as envisioned theologically even “in face of despair” by contemplating them “from the standpoint of redemption”⁸¹ – are beyond the possibility of discerning the redemptive and redeemable

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Johann Baptist Metz, “God: Against the Myth of the Eternity of Time,” in Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Johann Baptist Metz, Jürgen Moltmann, Eveline Goodman-Thau, *The End of Time: The Provocation of Talking about God* (J. Matthew Ashley, trans.; ed.; New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2004): 26.

⁸⁰ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology: I The Word Made Flesh* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989):196.

⁸¹ Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections On a Damaged Life* (E.E.N.Jephcott, trans.; London and New York: Verso, 2005): 247.

aspects.⁸² Modernity is a far too complex and ambivalent constellation of lifeworlds and lifeforms to be either fetishized or demonized without care and attention to its many colonial, universalistic, and imperialistic “undersides.” Regarding the conflictual, even occasionally oppositional, relation of liturgy and ethics it must be said, however, that modernity has provided a context of particularly problematic imaginaries of unproductive binarism and competitive dualism within the Western habits of thought. These convoluted aspects of modernity have facilitated a maliciously fecund ground for the mutation of faith and spiritual life into fetishization of liberal individualism and privatized pietism, and the mutation of theological discourse into alienated disciplinary archipelagos which bear virtually no resemblance or relation to the intertwined actualities of lived religion as an integral part of all human existential engagements personally and communally.

The facet of modernity most relevant to the disengagement between liturgy and ethics – practically and academically – can be summarized as addiction to the discursive and imaginative tendency toward “overpitched polarity.”⁸³ According to Gavin Hyman, modernity as a worldview or sensibility is characterized by “the desire for an all-encompassing mastery of reality by rational and/or scientific means.”⁸⁴ It has permeated various cultures and disciplines, but

was always marked by the trace of an exclusion. This is because in order for this mastery to be accomplished, the system itself had to exclude, expel, or negate that which was deemed to fall outside it, namely ... the nonrational or nonscientific. This was the great paradox of the modern

⁸² See Anthony J. Godzieba’s careful argument for the access of eschatological transformation of all historical and cultural eras and against the assumptions of irretrievability and unredeemability of modernity in certain postmodern philosophical and theological circles in “Incarnation and Imagination: Catholic Theology of God Between Heidegger and Postmodernity,” *Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context*, 279-298.

⁸³ I borrow this expression from Terry Eagleton, “A Response,” *Literature and Theology* 19:2 (2005): 136.

⁸⁴ Hyman, *The Predicament of Postmodern Theology*, 11.

desire for mastery: that in its quest for universal and totalizing comprehension, its system was obliged to *exclude* or *repress* that which lay outside it, thereby calling its universal and total comprehensiveness into question.⁸⁵

Certainly, a less Occident-centered view would necessarily add that alongside the excluded/expelled nonrational and indeed “feminine,” all things non-Occidental were and still are equally excluded or at least suspected within the modern desire for mastery. Also, an enduring fixture of the imaginary of mastery is the desire for purity. It operates according to the law of the excluded middle, i.e., the logic of competitive “either/or.” The application of the law of the excluded middle, i.e., “both,” constitutes “a core project of modernity.”⁸⁶ Consequently, as a *habitus* of imagination, rationality, and praxis,

...modernity itself is just this contradictory, even duplicitous, attempt to separate and purify realms – the natural, social, and empyrean realms, with their things and people and gods – that have never been separate and pure, and still are not.⁸⁷

But the double desire for mastery and purity – or the imperial passion for perspective of panopticon, surveillance, and observation with an implied viewer with an elevated vantage point⁸⁸ – is not simply “modern.” It pertains to a specifically *Western* modern idea of possessive enclosure and boundary. As Bill Ashcroft argues, the trope of boundary is fundamental in Western epistemology; but it does not merely mean epistemological limit and contradiction, but also control.⁸⁹ Left undeconstructed, boundaries “are a sign of the need to resolve ambivalence, to regulate and categorize

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

⁸⁶ Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, Carol A. Breckenridge, and Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Cosmopolitanisms,” *Cosmopolitanism* (Sheldon Pollock et al., eds.; Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002):11-12.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸⁸ Bill Ashcroft, *Post-colonial Transformation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001):141.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 166.

difference.”⁹⁰ Boundaries are fundamental for Western European modernity: not only as regulatory practices of Western epistemology – such as boundary between the subject and object – but also in a much more sinister way between the civilized (white, Western European, male) self and the primitiv(ized) others. Far from being a cultural or solely epistemological caprice, in conjunction with the idea of enclosure and tendency toward Manichean reification,

boundaries of various kinds and forms of boundary-making are central to the colonial relationship, from the most material forms of spatial enclosure to the most abstract modes of Western thinking. None of these boundaries is easy to ignore, and the ultimate force of imperial hegemony lies in their invisibility, for boundaries, erected as forms of conceptual enclosure and social regulation, become ways of understanding ‘how things are’.⁹¹

Yet, as postmodern and postcolonial discourses have demonstrated, the repressed/excluded is by no means the non-existent and is therefore always liable to return to call modernity into question, thus proving the inherent instability, let alone ethical malfunction, of the modern (and colonial) project.

Theologically, the indulgence in epistemological dualisms has led to an overall truncation of sacramentality (see the Overture) into fragmentary and mutually allergic discursive fixations which serve the thrust of mastery and purity. It endorses dualistic thinking habits that constrict the reflection on lived reality in all its complexity and ambiguity and artificially divide reality into axiological hierarchies. The outcome, as Susan Ross has observed, is that the subtle sacramental complexity, ambiguity, fluidity, and multivalence are constricted into a detached realm of an “official” sacramental

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 182.

system, which, being dualistic has a predilection toward legalistic discourse of validity and no toleration of metaphysical ambiguity, and

...poses ... dual realities over and against each other... resists complex and fluid relations between dual realities, and defends instead clear and distinct boundaries. Qualities belonging to one by definition do not belong to the other, and the two are often hierarchically related: one is superior to the other, or one has jurisdictional power over the other.⁹²

In the context of sacramentality and liturgy, the modern Western trope of boundary and the desire for mastery and purity have produced a double disjunction: first, between doctrinal (or dogmatic, or systematic) theology and sacramental-liturgical theology, and second, between theology, including most disturbingly sacramental-liturgical theology, and ethics. It is beyond the scope of this project to investigate a pivotal moment of the modern Western theological “turn to purity,” namely, the Reformation of the 16th century.⁹³ Yet it is in the epistemological, rhetorical, and imaginative posteriority of the Reformation that the dualistic logic of exclusion facilitated the acceleration of the already present tendency of liturgical “externalism and ritualistic sacramentalism” with the dissolution of the liturgical community and the triumph of the private mass in (the Roman Catholic context)⁹⁴ into the perilous invisibility of “how things are.” But the way how

⁹² Ross, *Extravagant Affections*, 54. Andrea Bieler and Luise Schottroff also list hierarchical dualism in rationality and hermeneutics as a colonial “captivity” of imagination, promoting “a monolithic theology of disembodiment” to the detriment of women-centered eucharistic theology in particular, *The Eucharist*, 45-46.

⁹³ Susan R. Boettcher has argued that “the rhetoric of early modern religion was one of competing purities and the narratives of these purities were integral to the growth of evangelical confessions as aggressive colonizing forces” and that “the contest over purity is a central element of all rhetorical activities by the parties to the 16th-century religious uproar,” see Boettcher, “Post-Colonial Reformation? Hybridity in 16th-Century Christianity,” *Social Compass* 52:4 (2005): 443-452. Also, Regina Mara Schwartz points to the sacramental controversies as the locus of origin of the modern secularized worldview, *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism*, especially Ch.1.

⁹⁴ Robert F. Taft, “Liturgy in the Life and Mission of the Society of Jesus,” *Liturgy in a Postmodern World*, 43, 38. The present views of the state of liturgy in the Middle Ages are highly contrasting, ranging from Taft’s thoroughly critical judgment on “a degenerate medieval view of liturgy” (41) to Catherine

things “were” – and still “are” in many respects – within the modern liturgical space is indeed ironic.

On the one hand, the modern Western imaginary of dualistic compartmentalization, especially between the “sacred/otherworldly” and the “secular/worldly,” accommodated the slippage of the deeply ingrained Christian primacy of personal relation with God in Christ into the relegation of other kinds of simultaneous human relations to a subordinate position. This, as Marie L. Baird points out, created the setting where the spiritual focus is squarely on the relation (*religio!*) with God “usually encountered in devotional and liturgical practices.”⁹⁵ The assumed and assigned pure and uncontaminated space of religion is supremely characterized by sacraments, liturgy, privatized devotional practices, and preoccupation with personal salvation. Certainly, such centrality of personal relation with God liturgically and devotionally does not comprise a problem, except when it is privileged disproportionately, exclusively, and competitively – most paradigmatically at the expense of ethical engagement. Yet this is precisely what confronts the Christian spiritual life and theology in the aftermath of the Holocaust according to Baird and, I must add, after the colonial modernity in general: there is indeed

...something amiss with a Christian spirituality that would continue to exclude a primarily *ethical* dimension from its self understanding and basic definitions. Perhaps such an exclusion is the last bastion of dualism that still considers ‘action’ to be the outcome of a ‘contemplation’ whose ultimate focus is in fact ‘otherworldly’.⁹⁶

Pickstock’s preference of the medieval Roman liturgy as the ideational model of a genuinely post-modern and post-dualist liturgical worldview, see, for example, her *After Writing* among other shorter articles.

⁹⁵ Marie L. Baird, *On the Side of the Angels: Ethics and Post-Holocaust Spirituality* (Leuven, Paris, Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2002): 7.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 22. In response to this situation, Baird’s thesis is to situate the personal self-transcendence in ethical engagement with the incommensurable other as the way of constitution of ethical and fully human subjectivity, *ibid.*, 29.

Envisioned competitively and in isolation, the liturgical space – set apart narrowly and neatly from the rest of life – seems to be the exclusive center of spiritual self-transcendence in the life of faith and bears the full weight of being the privileged site of personal salvation. As far as the life of exercised faith or lived religion is concerned, the disengagement of liturgy and ethics ruefully reflects the epistemological and cultural *habitus* of enclosure. Even though Baird singles out Roman Catholicism in her relevant analysis of Christian modernity, her conclusions reach further across the spectrum of traditions less liturgical and sacramental but no less devotional than the Roman tradition:

In our desire to approach God through liturgy, devotional practice, as well as sacramental participation for Roman Catholics, we often seem to have forgotten that this God exhorts us repeatedly to care for the other beyond the get well card, the gift at Christmas or birthday, the check written out to our favorite charity. Traditional models of Christian spirituality as currently practiced have unintentionally encouraged this forgetfulness all too often. So too have other models of spirituality to the extent that they neglect ethical responsibility as an integral part of their self-understanding and practice. A primary intent of the post-Holocaust spirituality ... is to incorporate ‘good works’ into the heart of self-transcendence itself, rather than relegating them to the status of ‘altruistic outcome’.⁹⁷

Yet on the other hand, as far as theology is concerned, the invisible regime of “how things are” appears to be rather the opposite. In the context of theological reflection the same dualistic and exclusionary logic of mastery, boundaries, and purity plays out in a different setting. The trajectories of privilege – or the teleologies of purity – regarding liturgy and sacramentality vis-à-vis dogmatic/doctrinal theology follow the paths of variably configured adiaphorization – rationalistic, moralistic, and aesthetic. Or, using a more theological term to describe the teleologies of desire for purity, the particularly modern inclination in liturgical adiaphorization is an inclination toward a certain

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 128.

Monophysitism⁹⁸ – the inability to hold together palimpsestically the multiple causalities, significations, and performative efficacies of liturgy as enacted sacramentality.

First, the modern Western *Entzauberung* and its correlative (theo)ideologies of secularism⁹⁹ left in their wake the attitude toward liturgy and worship as being irrelevant, addictively nostalgic habits of reasoning, relating, and living in the best case, and as dangerously distractive, useless, and manipulative practices in the worst. The more or less clandestine continuation of this attitude of anti-liturgical secularism in theological inquiry, most notably in the modern systematic/dogmatic discourses, has contributed to the disengagement with and marginalization of the liturgical reflection and practices to the fanciful outback of theological *parerga*. The disenchanting style of theology has curiously ignored not only the “usual suspects” of the instrumental and mechanistic rationality – human embodiment, relationality, affectivity, and generally the dimension of αἰσθησις in human ways of knowing, suffering, and acting – but also a fact which was not lost on Friedrich Nietzsche in the very prime of modernity. Namely, the fact that “man is a venerating animal” while recognizing clearly that the time of “being at home with our venerations”¹⁰⁰ has yielded to the era of systematic suspicion, mistrust, or even

⁹⁸ Henri de Lubac has pointed to a similar problem in ecclesiological context: “... we reject Monophysitism in ecclesiology just as we do in Christology, but none the less strongly do we believe that dissociation of the divine and the human is in either case fatal. If necessary, the experience of Protestantism should serve us as sufficient warning. Having stripped it of all mystical attributes, it acknowledged in the visible Church a mere secular institution; as a matter of course it abandoned it to the patronage of the state and sought a refuge for the spiritual life in an invisible Church, its concept of which had evaporated into an abstract ideal,” *Catholicism*, 75-76.

⁹⁹ As I have already noted in the Overture, secularism, in Alexander Schmemmann’s words, consists in the negation of the liturgical act. Hence secularism is the negation “not of God’s existence, not of some kind of transcendence and therefore some kind of religion. If secularism in theological terms is a heresy, it is primarily a heresy about man. It is the negations of man as a worshipping being, as *homo adorans*: the one for whom worship is the essential act which both ‘posits’ his humanity and fulfills it,” in “Worship in a Secular Age,” Appendices, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2000): 118

¹⁰⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (Bernard Williams, ed., Josefine Nauckhoff, trans.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 204.

nihilism. If nothing else, Nietzsche's open ended gesture toward a strange coupling of the abolition of worship and nihilism¹⁰¹ should definitely kindle some passion about de-marginalization of liturgy. As far as the routine methodological landscape of a typical disciplinary divide goes, the de-marginalization of liturgy and sacramentality offers epistemological alternatives which, as I will argue in Part III, can facilitate a modulation of the lingering methodological addictions to disciplinary hermeticism but most importantly, the dualistic Western Christian theological penchant for imaging liturgical practice and compassionate service as mutually competitive.

But more specifically, the rationalistic theological adiaphorization of sacramental liturgy consists in the attitude of sacramental and liturgical "*ex opere operato* minimalism."¹⁰² The minimal requirements for and conditions of isolated sacramental validity here become the virtually exclusive focus in the epistemological framework of dichotomously juxtaposed realities of the "sacred" and the "secular."¹⁰³ The theological implication for liturgy in such circumstances is what Alexander Schmemmann calls "tragic nominalism"¹⁰⁴ which mutates the liturgical forms into an end in themselves by divorcing them from all other aspects of the life of faith. Liturgical nominalism is a formalism polished into the perfection of flawless inertia of self-referential empty repetition in splendid isolation from the interaction with other theological modalities. The compartmentalization resulted in liturgy becoming an oppositional activity in respect to the "profane" spheres of life and theology

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Robert F. Taft, "Liturgy in the Life and Mission of the Society of Jesus," 39.

¹⁰³ See Alexander Schmemmann, "Worship in a Secular Age," 119-130; also "The World as Sacrament" and "The Underlying Question" in *Church, World, Mission: Reflections on Orthodoxy in the West* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979), see 221-222 and 22-24 respectively.

¹⁰⁴ Schmemmann, "The Underlying Question," 14, 23.

shifted to a purely ‘cultic’ inquiry, which is centered always on the question of the validity and modality of a rite. Considering the sacrament exclusively from the point of view of the elements (transubstantiation, consubstantiation, etc.), theology practically ignored the liturgy itself, considering it as non-essential, symbolical ‘framework’ for the minimum of action and words necessary for validity. The whole liturgical action ceased to be understood as *sacramental*...¹⁰⁵

The genealogy of Western liturgy becoming a theological *adiaphora* is a complex one and its commencement is definitely not confined either to modernity alone or to any particular liturgical tradition alone. Modernity, however, accommodated and even facilitated the metamorphosis of philosophical and theological rationality wherein liturgy was frequently conceived as “an external shell” and as “just the ceremonial frosting, something nice but not essential, useful not in itself, but because it could edify and arouse devotion”¹⁰⁶ in the cultural environment of devotional privatization of piety. On the top of it all, “the ceremonial” becomes “a disturbing factor”¹⁰⁷ appealing to the peculiarities of aesthetes lacking Christian sincerity as a mere external decoration and generally expendable in terms of the authenticity of spiritual inwardness. The “frosting” perspective curiously resonates with another modality of liturgical adiaphorization which is also closely related to the same dualistic alienation, exacerbated by the modern Western *Entzauberung* – only in this case the adiaphorization is moralistic.

The adiaphorization of liturgy by reducing it to an instrument of Christianity as the moral religion *par excellence* in some quarters of the Enlightenment assigns liturgy to the status of *parerga*. The modern sensibility of rationalistic, non-embodied, and

¹⁰⁵ Alexander Schmemmann, “Theology and Liturgical Tradition,” *Liturgy and Tradition: Theological Reflections of Alexander Schmemmann* (Thomas Fisch, ed.; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1990):19-20.

¹⁰⁶ Robert F. Taft, “Liturgy in the Life and Mission of the Society of Jesus,” 39.

¹⁰⁷ Romano Guardini, “An Open Letter,” *Foundations of Ritual Studies: A Reader for Students of Christian Worship* (Paul Bradshaw and John Melloh, eds.; Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2007): 4.

privatized religious inwardness unproblematically accommodates the instrumentalization of liturgy by reducing it to moral utility. Interestingly, here it is the moral utility and the concern about liturgy as precisely the distraction from ethical life that foregrounds the competitive juxtaposition favoring religion conceived in terms of morality over religion conceived in terms of sacramentality and liturgy. The logic of exclusion and enclosure operates in such a way that an always worthy and vigilant concern about what Immanuel Kant describes as “the danger of producing nothing but hypocritical veneration of God instead of a practical service of Him – a service which never consists of mere feelings”¹⁰⁸ can only be prioritized in a hierarchical either/or relationship of zero-sum competitiveness. For the “religion within the limits of reason alone” outlook, sacramental liturgy is suspect of being an illusory and idolatrous formality capable of inducing “that sinking mood, called *adoration*, annihilating men, as it were, in their own eyes.”¹⁰⁹ Now this is seen as clearly pointing to the dualistic and competitive conception of divine transcendence and creaturely immanence,¹¹⁰ so characteristic of the Western modernity. In an unsurprising Protestant gesture – for his era at least – Kant relegated all things sacramental and liturgical to the marginality of *parerga*. The wordplay around *ἔργον* is particularly suggestive of the remarkable perspectival shift regarding the status of liturgy as the “work” which constitutes and identifies the Christian convocation of discipleship – the church. For Kant, the “means of grace” – a technical term also for sacraments – are

¹⁰⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* (Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson, trans.; New York: Harper and Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1960):186.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹¹⁰ On the issue of competitive/contrastive view of divine transcendence and the problems involved with it see, among others, Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural* (Rosemary Sheed, trans.; New York: Crossroad, Herder and Herder, 1998), Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), and William C. Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence: How Modern Thinking about God Went Wrong* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996).

parerga which “do not belong within [religion] but border upon it.”¹¹¹ In his earlier *Critique of Judgment*, Kant denotes *parergon* as an ornamentation and augmentation, and as “only an adjunct, and not an intrinsic constituent in the complete representation of the object.”¹¹² Thus religion as ethical life is juxtaposed to the *Nebenwerke* such as the sacramental liturgy of the Eucharist which can be useful for promulgation of Christian communal equality and even cosmopolitan moral community, yet reminding about the dangers of clericalism, Kant warns that

...to assert that God has attached special favors to the celebration of this solemnity, and to incorporate among the articles of faith the proposition that this ceremony, which is after all but a churchly act, is, in addition, a *means of grace* – this is a religious illusion which can do naught but work counter to the spirit of religion.¹¹³

The shift that Kant represents in such an exemplary manner reifies the dichotomy between sacramentality, liturgy, and ethics – among many other dualistic epistemological construals of reality. It is this juxtapositional epistemological trajectory that underlies most of the subsequent struggles and passions around the mutually exclusive center versus periphery configuration of liturgy’s relation to ethical life. From a methodological point of view, it does not make a tremendous difference what gets installed in the center – liturgy or ethics – since the *ergon-parergon* allocation remains unchanged. Consequently, as long as the sensibility and rationality of dualistic disengagement continues to lurk in the background of all attempts to produce a more fruitful and life-like template of

¹¹¹ Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, 47.

¹¹² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (J.C. Meredith, trans.; Nicholas Walker, ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007): 57. In the context of sacraments, to appreciate the full thrust of Kant’s statements it is helpful to remember that he invokes picture frames, draperies, and colonnades as examples of *parerga*.

¹¹³ Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, 188.

relationality, the struggle to re-engage what has previously been enclosed away will continue.

As far as the aesthetic adiaphorization is concerned, it is not surprising that even those theological dispositions which represent the direct and sometimes reactionary backlash to the theologies prioritizing ethical primacy in religious discourse in general and in the liturgical-sacramental life in particular, repeat the same paradigmatic gestures in their administration of priorities. Only here the liturgy is associated with the aesthetic order of playfulness and ethics takes place of its *parergon*. To counter the reduction of liturgy to a didactic instrument of hegemonic moral, philosophical, and ideological agendas, gestures of aesthetic re-envisioning of liturgy are suggested. To wrest the liturgy out of the clasp of modern Western *Zweckrationalität*, Romano Guardini famously suggested that liturgy pertains to the ludic order of self-referentiality and artistic self-sufficiency.¹¹⁴ Developing this trajectory, Godfried Danneels (among others) carefully and pertinently highlights the perils of reductive liturgical subordination by emphasizing that liturgy is an end in itself and not a “warm-up” for anything else; life and liturgy remain in permanent and irreducible dialectical relationship where the two do not coincide.¹¹⁵ Of course, the question remains whether guarding the unquestionable irreducibility precludes the possibility of a non-reductive and palimpsestic coincidence. Moreover, within the aesthetic slant of center-periphery logic of adiaphorization it is the theologies of liberation¹¹⁶ that routinely (but only occasionally deservedly) bear the brunt of critique by liturgical conservatism which itself operates within the same modern

¹¹⁴ See particularly Romano Guardini, *The Spirit of Liturgy* (Ada Lane, trans.; New York: Crossroads, Herder and Herder, 1998):61-72.

¹¹⁵ Danneels, “Liturgy Forty Years After the Second Vatican Council,” 26.

¹¹⁶ Danneels also refers to unnamed “others” who maintain that “liturgy and life coincide and that true service to God takes place outside the church in one’s daily life,” *ibid*.

dualistic and reductive paradigm that it assigns to other theological orientations. Yet admonition against “the overvaluation of ethics” by the “militant version” of “tilt toward ethics” at the cost of “devaluation of liturgy” through overall forgetfulness of the uncomfortable biblical tension between the two is present also within sacramental theologies that emphatically seek to re-image and re-enact the vital relation, such as Louis-Marie Chauvet’s.¹¹⁷ I will return to Chauvet’s proposal of holding the vital yet uncomfortable tension between liturgy and ethics later, but at this juncture it needs to be mentioned that the dangers of mutual absorption are dual while Chauvet prefers to single out the absorption of liturgy in ethics alone without addressing the dangers of the other option.

Among the merits of the ludic emphasis is the valuable re-engagement of liturgy and theology in general with the realm of human aesthetic experience to move toward recovery of the incarnational “fundamental consanguinity of intelligible and sensible.”¹¹⁸ Also, it is the gesture toward full restoration of aesthetic discourse as an intrinsically – incarnationally and sacramentally – theological concern. However, I believe that in the aftermath of the Holocaust and in the present condition of postcoloniality and superviolence, this particular slant of liturgical discourse ought to be extremely vigilant about its own entanglement not so much with aesthetics but aestheticism. Aestheticism in this context consists in the separation (boundaries!) of aesthetics from ethics and other

¹¹⁷ Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Madeleine Beaumont, trans.; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001):54. Chauvet, working from a phenomenological perspective in sacramental theology also makes a thinly veiled reference to liberation and otherwise politically responsive theologies after 1960s alluding to a “militancy” against liturgy, and other stances that present “the danger of a tilt toward ethics,” *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Margaret R. Miles, “Foreword: The Eye of the Beholder,” *The Subjective Eye: Essays in Culture, Religion, and Gender in Honor of Margaret R. Miles* (Richard Valantasis et al, eds.; Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2006): xx.

discourses of struggle for truth and justice as a “pretension to paradise within sin.”¹¹⁹ This kind of aestheticism comes across as acutely decadent when the necessary arguments for non-reductive imaginaries of liturgy guarding against the catapulting of worship into political frames of discourse are accompanied by judging “oppression, war, injustice, hunger, racism, classism, sexism, western culturalism, and hierarchical power” to be nothing else but “strategic abstractions” invoked in emotional rage.¹²⁰

To sum up: all trajectories of dualistic adiaphorization – of religion from life, of liturgy from theology, of ethics from liturgy, and liturgy from ethics – testify to a methodological *habitus* of disengagement under the logic of dualistic exclusion and enclosure. Specifically, ethics, or something fuzzily thematized as “liturgy and life,” has been typically comprising the last chapter of liturgical theologies in the same way as the topics of sacraments and liturgy continue to be relegated to the last chapters of systematic or dogmatic theologies. Occasionally, this typical last chapter on liturgy and ethics even manages to unseat the chapter on eschatology from the position of the absolutely “last things,” coming right before the back cover of a book.¹²¹ None of the adiaphorizing trajectories presents an orientational openness for discursive and performative fecundity in liturgical theology and worship practices if the goal is to re-engage what has been divided, alienated, and made mutually jealous. All prefigure and continue to haunt what I see as the defining challenge of the present era in Western liturgically and sacramentally inscribed theology – the bringing together of what simply cannot be (be)held together

¹¹⁹ Н.Бердяев, *О назначении человека: Опыт парадоксальной этики* (М.: Республика, 1993): 247.

¹²⁰ Kavanagh, “Liturgical Inculturation,” 98.

¹²¹ See, for example, David L. Stubbs’ tellingly titled concluding chapter “Ending of Worship: Ethics” which comes after Martha L. Moore-Keish’s “Eucharist: Eschatology,” and of course, after Christology, revelation, sin, grace, etc., in a book published under the auspices of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship *A More Profound Alleluia: Theology and Worship in Harmony* (Leanne Van Dyk, ed.; Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2004):133-153.

under the auspices of unproductive binarism and infatuation with reifying enclosures and boundaries. Of course, the pivotal issue here is the quiddity of holding together or the quiddity of relation between liturgy and ethical life of faith. The relation of repetitive adiaphorization is certainly a sort of relation – competitive, segregating, and solid – as it is. This mutuality is a mutuality of disavowal. But is the relation of fissures and enclosures the most appropriate and desirable one for the sacramental economy of divinely inaugurated *salus* for clashing communities, races, classes, genders, and cultures, and most importantly, for the suffering and afflicted human bodies stretched and scattered in between all these terrains of life? What are the itineraries of an ethical re-engagement of liturgy and ethics beyond the solid compression of the dominant Monophysitic imaginary of the “either/or?”

4. Re-orchestrating the Overpitched Polarity: From Shock and Awe to Oscillation and Rehearsal of eucharistic Living

The epistemological and cultural imaginary of dualistic gridlock, into which the figurations of liturgy in relation to ethics have frequently been constricted, seems to require a fluid enlargement in order to modulate the unproductive overpitched polarities of Western modernity in particular. The modern Western desire for mastering the segregated purity of various segments of reality and life, of disciplines and discourses, of minds and bodies, and all that can be administered by the logic of the excluded middle, can be called into question by the Christian theological insistence on the pivotal event of Incarnation and the envisagement of the whole created reality from the perspective of potentially redemptive sacramentality. Or, to be more precise, it ought to be called into question by a trinitarian and incarnational liturgical discourse conscious both of its

pivotal theological identity and of its age. The discursive and imaginative habits of enclosure and their uncritically codified certainties are paradigmatically contested in the Christian incarnational discourse. Precisely as incarnational – and hence as sacramental, I must add – this discourse and this worldview harbors the preferential openness for overlaps and for leakages that spread out, opacify, and make more liquid concepts, beliefs, identities, differences, and imaginations. This is the pivotal premise for sacramental-liturgical theology and its methodologies for which the borderlands of sensible mediation of the transcendent is the primary *locus operandi*. And this premise, interestingly, has even been noticed and acknowledged outside the guild of Christian theology.

Reflecting on Erich Auerbach's intricate analysis of the influence of Christianity, especially the incarnation, on Western European literature, Edward Said – with all his skepticism regarding religion – has drawn attention to the “mingling of styles” characteristic of Christianity. Said remarked that “Christianity shatters the classical balance between high and low styles, just as Jesus' life destroys the separation between the sublime and the everyday.”¹²² Similarly Terry Eagleton points to the “revolutionary continuity between the special and the common” in which “an act of extremity becomes the foundation of the ordinary.”¹²³ Against the background of concerns about the dangers of coincidence with, or absorption of liturgy as an “extreme occasion” of sorts in the routine living, Eagleton's references to incarnational Christianity suggest that it opens the possibility for “the sublunary sublime.”¹²⁴ Theologically speaking, the sublunary sublime

¹²² Edward W. Said, “Introduction to Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*,” *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004): 106.

¹²³ Eagleton, “A Response,” 135.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

that Eagleton speaks about is the paradoxical and preeminently sacramental “holding together” of the transcendence and immanence, of which, again, the Incarnation is the source and summit. As Eagleton sees it, in the sublunary sublime constellation of reality “the whole cosmos is at stake in the giving or withholding of a cup of water...”¹²⁵ The dualism that encloses God and the creation, body and mind, male and female, the liturgical and the mundane, the ethical and the aesthetical, the intelligible and the sensible, and the sacred and the secular in a reifying gridlock of competing purities is indeed detrimental for Christian liturgical theology. Perhaps, with great caution, the word “heretical” would be in order here. In any case, the re-orchestrating of the gridlock of overpitched polarity is a complex and intricate endeavor in order not to gravitate back into the pattern of mere re-revolution wherein the same pendulum would be swinging back and forth in between the same dualistic trajectories. Considering that some of the most interesting proposals for recalling the liturgy from the periphery of theological and spiritual *parerga* lean toward re-revolutions, indeed reversals, which do not alleviate the binary construals of relationality, Eagleton’s observations on the temptations involved in reconfiguring unhelpful oppositionalities are very timely. They respond – as if by anticipation – to the theological gestures of reconceptualization of liturgy and ethics that I will expose and engage with to a greater or lesser extent in Part II and Part III. Hence, I believe it is worth quoting Eagleton at some length here:

This dismantling of the opposition between the privileged and the commonplace is particularly relevant today, strung out as we are between a complacent postmodern consecration of the everyday... and a philosophical spurning of the quotidian in the name of some all-privileged

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* Immediately after proposing that Christianity is an example of such a sublunary sublime, Eagleton adds that Marxism is the post-Enlightenment equivalent of Christianity, since for Marxism the heroic is the anti-heroic masses (135). It is beyond the scope of this project to investigate this analogy, with which I am, however, in complete disagreement.

moment of rupture with it. This latter, to be sure, is a characteristically Gallic gesture... The French, not least the supposedly radical among them, are old hands at discovering exciting new ways of devaluing the dreary prose of everyday life for the poetic intensity of that which transcends it, whether you call the latter the symbol, authenticity or the *être-pour-soi*, the Event or the Other, Theory, the sublime or the perpetual non-advent of the Messiah. Such thought returns incessantly to the break, crisis, disruption, paralogism or epiphany of otherness which will tear you free from everyday inauthenticity – from *doxa*, *das Mann*, the consensual, beauty (as opposed to sublimity), the practico-inert or *être-en-soi*...¹²⁶

If the dismantling of an unhelpful opposition actually reinscribes “this whole overpitched polarity” even more dramatically, albeit with a reversed vector of preference, then this strategy is problematic for a theology aware of the need to dismantle the hierarchical binarism, especially as it (dis)figures the sacramental relations of divine-human agency and the “division of labor” of *opus Dei* into a pattern of hegemonic unilateralism. Occasionally, an otherwise promising enlargement of liturgy turns precisely into a “shock and awe” kind of totalizing saturation wherein the human agency gets so overwhelmingly disrupted/interrupted that it borders on being meaningless and expendable. The enlarged imaginary of liturgy – liturgy being released from the confines of constrictive and adiphoric enclosure in deep periphery of life and faith – suggested by Jean-Yves Lacoste provides an example a path to be appreciated but not followed.

Lacoste, drawing on the philosophy of Martin Heidegger and phenomenology, suggests similarly to some views already noted in this dissertation, that liturgy is a transgression of the radical immanence of the being-in-the-world. As such, liturgy is “everything that embodies the relation of man to God” in a wholistic and non-dualist

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 136.

sense.¹²⁷ Moreover, liturgy is “the logic that presides over the encounter between man and God writ large” while liturgy coincides but also “exceeds the limits of worship.”¹²⁸ Liturgy as relation to God exposes human person to the Absolute and posits a distance from the world. Liturgical interstice is a site of double superimposition over against the limits of human “facticity,” since both, relation to God (*religio*) and relation to goodwill (ethics) are not intrinsic to the “facticity” of human condition.¹²⁹ Liturgy is a divertissement from the actual – fallen and sinful – world in the very movement of disclosing the world as precisely such. This, Lacoste argues, must not arouse suspicions of ethical rationality since the liturgical divertissement does not bracket the world in which “goodwill reigns.”¹³⁰ For Lacoste, liturgy and ethics function analogically: both bring subversion in the world. Liturgy and ethics are both non-native “nonplaces” in the world. They are both provisional homelands of the eschatological kingdom of God. The kingdom is “implicated inchoately and thus in a non-symbolic way” in enacted ethical fraternity as it is in the “entr’acte of liturgy.”¹³¹ Liturgy, or the relation with God, however, tilts the analogical relation of “circularity” by antedating ethical relation of fraternity. Liturgy prefigures ethics by enabling “us to dwell in the world and on the earth by superimposing on our facticity the order of ethical vocation that alone authorizes us to let the Kingdom invest itself in world and earth in advance.”¹³² Liturgy – very broadly conceived – grounds ethics, yet Lacoste insists on not inscribing tension or contradiction between the two: “the work of liturgy and the labor of the ethical” are the “two poles of a

¹²⁷ Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute: Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man* (trans. Mark Raftery-Skeban; New York: Fordham University Press, 2004): 22.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 72-73.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 74-75.

unique structure” which is “that of the definitive’s hold over the provisional, and the Kingdom’s hold over the world and history.”¹³³ The stakes for liturgy and ethics are the same – to challenge the provisional in the name of the eschatological. Hence the analytical metaphor of “circularity” in which the “liturgical reason and ethical reason is the fundamental rhythm of existence... transgressing its native conditions,” ultimately desiring “the accomplishment of the human beyond what can be derived from our facticity.”¹³⁴

Lacoste’s “circular” re-envisagement of liturgy and ethics as attending to *opus Dei* sounds the depths of a most fruitful orientation for the conundrum of ethic-liturgical disengagement. His emphasis on liturgy engaging and subverting the whole of human experience in the world carries the necessary tenacity to deliver liturgy from the gridlock of *parerga*. Where I must part the ways of otherwise substantial agreement with Lacoste, however, is his preference for a so profoundly disoriented/diverted human agency that the “nocturnal” liturgical non-experience and non-place indeed seems to be also a site of annihilation of human agency. Thus I must inquire further into the nature or the quiddity of liturgy as the relation of human to God. For Lacoste, liturgy transgresses and disorients the egocentricity and self-glorification of (I have to clarify at once by adding qualifiers modern, sovereign, male) subjectivity. The liturgical relationality is a relation of “man’s pure *exposition* to God.”¹³⁵ Human being as a “soul” – pure passivity vis-à-vis the God that liturgy brings to impose into human life and consciousness – is installed as an object of the divine gaze.¹³⁶ Liturgy as a “relation” and as a “logic” can be humanly rejected,¹³⁷

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 152.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 150-151.

but if it is not, then liturgy, as Lacoste presents it, can be best described as hegemonic in a Gramscian sense: it is the surrender to God who then compels a human person to exist before God as an object, while the very entering into the liturgy, i.e., the divine-human relation, “dismantles the constitution of subjectivity.”¹³⁸ Consequently,

man fundamentally exists only within the dimension of exteriority; ... he is “in God’s hands.” It would be by no means aberrant to say that his objectivity is, then, yet more radical than that of the flesh, and is similar to the objectivity of the thing – to say, therefore, that he is in God’s hands as clay (which is not conscious of this) is in the hands of the potter.¹³⁹

The liturgical disruption for eternity is a disruption into uselessness (*inutilité*) and boredom – of the liturgical work and of the human liturgical subjectivity and agency. If the work of ethics – is still to be done, then the ethical agency must at some point return to the limits of human cohabitation alone and thus become disjoined from the “circularity” of relation and vocation. The work of God requires the cessation of the human work in the same way as some phenomenologically oriented conceptions of faith have posited the relation of faith as a pure painful suffering of God’s transcendence.¹⁴⁰ The competitive template of the clash of agencies is merely reversed, not transgressed, in Lacoste’s otherwise fecund project. The “fundamental rhythm of existence” is here disrupted back into tension and contradiction – seemingly against Lacoste’s own warning, but this time it circles back to the uninterrupted competitive dialectic of transcendence and immanence. As I hinted already in the Overture in relation to Lieven Boeve’s postmodern envisagements of sacramentality around the popular trope of

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ See for example, Paul Moyaert, “On Faith and Experience of Transcendence: An Existential Reflection on Negative Theology,” *Flight of the Gods: Philosophical Perspectives on Negative Theology* (Ilse N. Bulhof and Laurens ten Kate, eds.; New York: Fordham University Press, 2000): 382-383.

interruption or disruption,¹⁴¹ there is a good reason to remain critically vigilant about the seemingly universal panacea-like aura of the image of disruption as necessarily and properly characterizing all *religio* as human relation to God – or liturgy in Lacoste’s terms. Particularly so, when it comes to human subjectivities other than the sovereign, predominantly white, upwardly-mobile male subject of Western modernity with his desires and practices of mastery, compartmentalization, and dualistic purity. Influential and attractive as it was and still is in many respects, this is just one kind of subjectivity. For this subjectivity and the cultures and discourses produced around this subjectivity, the trope of interruption is indeed timely and fitting as its virtually iconic place in the postmodern rhetoric has amply demonstrated. But for the lives and subjectivities always already disrupted – constantly disrupted by mastering gazes and profitably romanticized delusions of sexual and racial purity and impurity in the various undersides of modernity and beyond even those undersides – what can be truly new, transgressive, or liberatingly diversive about being a thing-like clay also in the liturgical space of *opus Dei*? On the other hand, the totalizing and essentializing proclivities in all cultural, religious, and theoretical traditions, including Christianity, mandate the expediency of epistemological, ethical, historical, and cultural interruptions as “protocols against idolatry” to counteract the always lurking tendency of in-curve into and onto itself, into which all genders and all races are increasingly enmeshed precisely as the gender, class, and race discriminations are assuaged. The decisive issue is not to reify and not to exaggerate interruption as always necessary and fitting, i.e., not to mold it into a culturally circumscribed yet universalistically projected metaphysical fetish.

¹⁴¹ Boeve, “Thinking Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context,” *Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context*, 20-23.

The theological and historical debates regarding the precise birthdate of modernity notwithstanding, the most persistent modern challenge for liturgical-sacramental discourse consists in the imaginary of dualistic epistemology pre(dis)figuring ontology. When there is an infinite, absolutized, and jealously guarded chasm between God (primarily marked by a supreme and irremediable epistemological transcendence) and God's created, yet unmoored in its "pure nature" humanity, the imitative fragmentation of theology as religious knowing and knowledge into similarly monadic and mutually allergic components does not strike as surprising. If it is true that epistemology prefigures ontology in the (post)modern Western worldview, then such a methodological inertia between thinking God in terms of coercive and competitive relationality and thinking one's own ways of thinking about God in a similar vein is to be expected. But what is at stake is not just an academic nomenclature and its turf wars, but the role of theological discourse as the enabler and sustainer of an ethically detrimental view of worldly reality and human life. Yet again, the most sinister heir to such competitive fragmentation is the preferential option for the often painfully and occasionally profitably compartmentalized Christian *religio*.

Responding to the theological and spiritual carnage that dualistic figurations of liturgy and ethics, or more comprehensively of the "sacred" and "secular," have brought upon the late modern sensibilities, several trajectories of modulation have emerged. In the last chapter of his magisterial *Doxology*, Geoffrey Wainwright acknowledges the dangers of detraction, inherent in the underlying dualistic juxtaposition between "the sacred"/"the secular," and consequently in its proliferation into the separation of liturgy from ethics.

He suggests the model of “oscillation between worship and ethics.”¹⁴² The “oscillation” builds on the reciprocal relationship between God and humanity, which is the enabling condition and content of worship.¹⁴³ Louis-Marie Chauvet insists on the mutuality of liturgical re-reading of ethics and ethical re-reading of liturgy against the absorption models, advocating for their relation to be conceived as uncomfortable tension not to be abolished, but to be managed in the salvific “passover” from the letter (Scriptures) to the body (ethics).¹⁴⁴ Don Saliers underscores the continuity of the Eucharist as a ritual action with ethics by envisioning the eucharistic liturgy as the rehearsal of living eucharistically in the world in relation to one’s fellow human persons.¹⁴⁵ For him, liturgy in its root meaning as the “whole ‘work of the people’” already implies the interrelatedness of the cultic, social, and ethical features.¹⁴⁶ Alongside Saliers, also Cesare Giraudi, Kevin Irwin, and Ion Bria advocate searching for the continuity of liturgy and “liturgy after liturgy,”¹⁴⁷ or the theologically inviolable interpenetration of *lex orandi*, *lex credendi*, and *lex agendi/lex vivendi*.¹⁴⁸ The multifaceted commonality of these theologies – to which I am gratefully indebted – consists in their inclination toward what Clare Watkins in her proposal for a post-liturgical sacramental theology calls the “biggering” of the liturgy and the whole eucharistic rationality and practice beyond the fatal dualisms of either/or

¹⁴² Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life: A Systematic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984): 410.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 462.

¹⁴⁴ Chauvet, *The Sacraments*, 65-66.

¹⁴⁵ Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 102-104.

¹⁴⁶ Don E. Saliers, “Afterword: Liturgy and Ethics Revisited,” *Liturgy and the Moral Self: Humanity at Full Stretch Before God: Essays in Honor of Don E. Saliers* (E. Byron Anderson and Bruce T. Morrill, S.J. eds.; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998): 215.

¹⁴⁷ Ion Bria, *The Liturgy After Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996): 23, 85.

¹⁴⁸ Saliers, *Worship as Theology*, 187; Cesare Giraudi, S.J. “The Eucharist as *Diakonia*: From the Service of Cult to the Service of Charity,” *Liturgy in a Postmodern World*, 131-132; Kevin W. Irwin, “Liturgical Actio: Sacramentality, Eschatology and Ecology,” *Contemporary Sacramental Contours of a God Incarnate* (Lieven Boeve and Lambert Leijssen, eds.; Leuven: Peeters, 2001):111-123 and *Models of the Eucharist* (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005): 29.

between communion and mission, and contemplation and action.¹⁴⁹ My argument so far has been in favor of the dilation of theological imaginary of sacramentality, sharing similar concerns with other theological objectives noted above with appreciation, regarding methodological re-engagement beyond the reductive and stifling dialectics of *parerga*. It is then a matter of conceptual decompression in order to modulate the dualistic entrapments of theological rationality into more fluid and non-competitive modes. And these modes require a certain theoretical imaginary capable of responding both to the tradition of the theological multivalence of λειτουργία and to the ethico-sacramental exigencies of liturgical life beyond the enclosures of pure cultic reason alone.

To conclude the chapter, I suggest that it is the emphasis on non-coercive mutuality and reciprocity – among the most prominent tropes of feminist liturgical critique¹⁵⁰ – that provide the *Leitmotifs* toward the truly desirable liturgical *divertissement* within the arenas of life with which liturgical discourse intersects. With Lacoste and others similarly concerned about the erroneous dualism in which liturgy – here duly and generously magnified to aspire to reflecting itself and reflecting about itself according to the largesse of actual world as God has created it – and ethics are

¹⁴⁹ Clare Watkins, “Mass, Mission, and Eucharistic Living,” *Heythrop Journal* 64, 2003: 447. Watkins’ argument for the “‘post-liturgical’ positioning of sacramental” develops as a critique of the overemphasis on liturgy hijacked by the dualistic conceptions of cult and ritual which has resulted in the overspending of theological energies and resources – mostly in the Roman Catholic context – on ritual refinement, while neglecting the dimension of sacramental discipleship. Watkins emphasizes the need to transcend the dualistic notions of nature and grace which she also sees as grounding the problems of the eucharistic liturgy being reductively conceived in a limited ritual manner. What is needed is an overhaul of “our ecclesiology, Christology, and theology of grace and the world, and then allow these ploughed fields to be the places of nurture for Eucharistic thinking. On the whole, I suggest, this has not happened, and this had brought about a persistence in the opposition of Church and world, sacred and secular, with has allowed Eucharist to be restricted to liturgy, to the detriment of the whole Church and the Gospel mission entrusted to it,” 452.

¹⁵⁰ See, for example, Bieler and Schottroff, *The Eucharist*, 166, and Walton, *Feminist Liturgy*, 45-46.

unnecessarily entangled, it is vital, I suggest, not to reproduce other dualistic imaginaries onto the terrain of divine-human relationality *tout court*. The dualistic zero-sum conception of the relation between liturgy and ethics is a symptom of a much larger dualistic imaginary – that of divine transcendence and human immanence. It is when liturgy is seen as it should be – broadly, as the enacted sacramental relationality of humanity to God spilling over into the overlapping dimensions of creaturely existence – that the underlying problematic of the most fundamental importance can really be recognized. Namely, the dualistic and competitive understanding of divine and human relationality. This is what Lacoste’s work brings to the fore probably better than any other proposals: the solution of the harmful liturgy-ethics dilemma appears useless or at least decadent if the either/or kind of relation between God and creation itself remains outside the spectacle of methodological *divertissement*. Hence, to interrogate the possibilities of re-imagining the tense relation of liturgy and ethics most fruitfully would, I suggest, do well to consider an itinerary for theology proposed elsewhere by Jean-Yves Lacoste. Lacoste muses that

theology, then, must have its ‘method’, for itself and for anyone to whom it speaks, which is to make a detour by way of another language and another world simply to acquire a language of its own...The speech that counts, the speech that pretends to speak the truth about essential things, comes out to meet us from its housing in particular languages and times.¹⁵¹

The particular detours which are called for regarding the resilient gridlock of dualistic imaginaries of the Western modernity would, I submit, lead to an engagement with other

¹⁵¹ Jean-Yves Lacoste, “More Haste, Less Speed in Theology,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 9:3 (2007): 280. It must be noted that Lacoste’s primary concern here is the pertinence of theological openness to the past languages and “worlds” of the theological tradition and its hermeneutics. I translate Lacoste’s idea beyond the original context in my argument.

languages on liturgy. Specifically, with the Eastern Orthodox larger-than-life lifeworld of liturgy as exemplified most impressively in the work of Alexander Schmemmann, and with the disagreeable lifeworld of post-Holocaust ethics as it rattles the optimistic liturgical self-sufficiency in the work of Emmanuel Levinas. As Lacoste indicates, the other languages make accessible other relations to the world. Here these other relations are Eastern Christian tradition and Judaism. Yet these liturgical detours – both contrastively ambiguous in their diasporic locations of enunciation in the West – no longer quite suffice to address the problem suitably without giving equal consideration to both the “Western” and the “modern” components of the gridlock of dualistic imaginaries of enclosure and the interlocked desires of mastery and purity. Another detour into the conditions of “speaking the truth about essential things” is virtually unavoidable for the present liturgical theology conscious of its age – a detour into the “housing” of the present world in postcolony and the diaspora space. Before conversing more exclusively with Schmemmann and Levinas, a conversation with postcolonial criticism is in order to implement the Bonhoefferian dictum for liturgy conscious of its age and the exigencies of ethical habitation in this age.

Chapter 2

Beyond Revolutions and Reversals: The Postcolonial Nuance

Broadly speaking, the epoch of so many “posts” – post-totalitarian, post-Holocaust, post-modern, post-secular, post-Christian, post-liberal, and so forth – situates theological reasoning within the limelight of irretrievably lost innocence regarding its motivations, capabilities, limitations, and implications. Retrospectively, the Holocaust has been the decisive unsettling ethical challenge for the late modern Western Christian theological and philosophical traditions. Christian theology that is conscious of its “age” has been responding dramatically diversely to the internal Western critiques of racism, totalitarianism, imperialism, and capitalism. Postcolonial criticism, however, disturbs the very intra-Occidental equilibrium of both the disconcerting conditions and their critiques precisely by bringing to the fore different and often disagreeable histories, epistemologies, and anthropologies from variously related and (dis)empowered locations outside the antithetical West/non-West deadlock. The greatest critical and creative merit of postcolonial critiques, I submit, is that they contain potentialities to “provincialize” and “creolize” the Western cultural and intellectual edifice and the enduring methodological dominance of the “Western spectacle,” especially its proclivity toward dualistic regimes of knowledge and representation. Christian theology is undeniably a part and parcel of the Western cultural edifice. But the virtue of the postcolonial challenge does not consist in a mere dismissal and “defrocking” of Western theological traditions as singularly invalid or irrelevant vis-à-vis non-Western religious traditions and sensibilities. It challenges to re-envision the relationality among the traditions, norms,

methods, temperaments, and authorities in the practice of theological reflection on all things as they relate to God in the emerging polycentric world.

Postcolonial critiques interrogate the constellations of asymmetrical relationalities and the quiddity of empowerment and agency involved in these relations. Postcolonial discourse, as I understand and use it, does not operate as a metaphoric blanket term for all sorts of contemporary cultural differences, critical technologies, and marginalities. This type of application has recently become increasingly popular. Postcolonialism describes a “specific set of practices that are grounded in ‘the discursive and material effects of the historical ‘fact’ of colonialism”¹ in its various manifestations. Moreover, postcolonialism is not a historical or discursive space of cleanly and righteously executed reversals of unjustifiable hierarchies of subjugation with some utopian final victory already in sight. Far from it. Rather, it seems to be a quest for a chronotope of repositioned relationality in which the relations of unevenly spread empowerment can be renegotiated and wrenched out of the universalizing modern Western gridlock of unproductive and oppressive binarisms. The post-Holocaust era brought along the “turn to the ethical” at least in some segments of theological inquiry. Postcoloniality confronts theological reasoning with an equally nonnegotiable and thoroughly related claim for the enlargement of the “turn to the ethical” as “turn to the other” in view of the histories of colonialism. The question is about the importance of being consistent in the ethically grounded theological lament, so that this lament does not comfortably revolve around the emblematic Western preoccupations with itself and itself alone as the sole center of value, or at least the sole center of universal tragedy if more congratulatory self-centering gestures are no longer feasible.

¹ John Thieme, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Essential Glossary* (London: Arnold, 2003):123.

Colonialism and imperialism are not insulated political, military, or ideological postures alone. They effectively mutate to become religious and ethical worldviews and cosmologies of divine power. The histories of Christianity's complex entanglement with colonialism reveal the disturbing collateral damage and irreparable complicity that Western theology in the aftermath of classical colonialism will have to live with penitentially *coram Deo* and in relation to the wronged fellow creatures of God. But more specifically, it is worth noticing that already in the critical anteriority of the high postcolonial theory, a linkage of colonialism and Holocaust has been detected. Frantz Fanon pointed out the similarity between Western colonialism and the fact that "Nazism transformed the whole of Europe into a genuine colony."² The most passionate indictment of the colonial blind spot in the internal Western critiques of modernity comes from Aimé Césaire. He redirects the internal Western gaze to the ostracized underside of modernity – colonialism:

Nazism ... is barbarism, the supreme barbarism, the crowning barbarism that sums up all the daily barbarisms; ...it is Nazism, yes, but ... before [European bourgeoisie] were its victims, they were its accomplices; ... they tolerated that Nazism before it was inflicted on them, ... they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples; ... they have cultivated that Nazism, ... they are responsible for it, and ... before engulfing the whole edifice of Western, Christian civilization in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps, and trickles from every crack.³

² Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Richard Philcox, trans.; Foreword by Homi K. Bhabha; Preface by Jean-Paul Sartre; New York: Grove Press, 2004): 57. Of course, from Fanon's Marxist perspective which continues in a similar vein among many postcolonial theorists, he does not find it necessary to acknowledge the equally appalling Russian/Soviet colonial policies and practices before, during, and long after the Nazi period in European colonial history. This occlusion is a common feature in postcolonial criticism.

³ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (Joan Pinkham, trans.; introduction by Robin D.G. Kelley; New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000):36.

Césaire's parallel of colonialism and Nazism is summed up by highlighting that Adolf Hitler "applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the 'coolies' of India, and the 'niggers' of Africa."⁴ The theological significance of the colonialist imaginary and praxis lies, ethically speaking, in the avowed recognition of colonialism as "the vicious aspect of modernity"⁵ or "the armed version of modernity"⁶ implemented, more often than not, in the tandem of "crown and cross," of *ecclesia* and *mercatura*. Yet what is "postcolonialism," or "the postcolonial," or "postcoloniality" – words that I have allowed to leak into these reflections on so many occasions without rushing to define them?

1. The Ominous "Post": Which Postcolonial/ity/ism?

Postcolonialism means different things to different people. The precise beginnings, meanings, and transgressions of the "post" in post(-)colonial/ity/ism have remained under unrelenting interrogation since the earlier in-depth analyses in the 1990s.⁷ The "post" in "postcolonial" is most definitely not a simple matter of chronological time⁸ in the sense of describing the "after" of the "classical" colonialism as

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Configurations: An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2003):4.

⁶ Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (Oxford and Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983): xiv.

⁷ On the tricky workings of the "post" see Ella Shohat, "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial,'" *Social Text*, 31/32 (1992): 99-113, Anne McClintock, "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-Colonialism,'" *Social Text*, 31/32 (1992): 84-98 and Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?" *Critical Inquiry*, 17:2 (1991): 336-357, R. Radhakrishnan, "Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity," *Callaloo* 16:4 (1993): 750-771, among others. On the diverse genealogies of postcolonial criticism, see Deepika Bahri, *Native Intelligence: Aesthetics, Politics, and Postcolonial Literature* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), especially Ch.1, and Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London and New York: Verso, 1997), especially Ch. 1.

⁸ See Ray Chow, *Ethics After Idealism: Theory-Culture-Ethnicity-Reading* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998):150-151.

an accomplished victory of decolonization. Colonialism, according to Stuart Hall, is more than the exercise of direct colonial rule since it signifies “the whole process of expansion, exploration, conquest, colonization and imperial hegemonisation which constituted the ‘outer face’, the constitutive outside, of European and then Western capitalist modernity.”⁹ Despite the colonial penchant for the omnipresent binary oppositions, under the aegis of colonialism “differential temporalities and histories have been irrevocably and violently yoked together.”¹⁰ Hence “no site, either ‘there’ or ‘here’, in its fantasied autonomy and in-difference, could develop without taking into account its significant and/or abjected others”¹¹ any longer. In this context, postcolonial criticism is the analysis of an age – the age of “postcolony” – which according to Achille Mbembe, “encloses multiple *durées* made up of discontinuities, reversals, inertias, and swings that overlay one another, interpenetrate one another, and envelope one another: an *entanglement*.”¹² “Postcolony” as a concept-metaphor is a “figure of a fact – the fact of brutality, its forms, its shapes, its markings, its composite faces, its fundamental rhythms and its ornamentation.”¹³

Now colonialism is a relationality imaged, legitimated, and executed in the mode of violence and coercion. Postcoloniality as its ambiguous posteriority is above all, I submit, a trajectory of desire for an intersubjective and intercultural chronotope as “an arena where inequalities, imbalances and asymmetries could historicize themselves ‘relationally’, an arena where dominant historiographies could be made accountable to

⁹ Stuart Hall, “When Was ‘The Post-Colonial’? Thinking at the Limit,” *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons* (eds. Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti; London and New York: Routledge, 1996):249.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 252.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2001): 14.

¹³ Achille Mbembe, “On the Postcolony: a brief response to critics,” *African Identities*, 4:2 (2006): 151.

the ethico-political authority of emerging histories.”¹⁴ Despite the recurrent problematic connotations of the “post” as premature, overly celebratory, or even dangerously misleading in postcolonial theory’s (often accurately) suspected textual and cultural suspension of history and politics,

postcoloniality, for its part, is a salutary reminder of the persistent ‘neo-colonial’ relations with the ‘new’ world order and multinational division of labour. Such a perspective enables the authentication of histories of exploitation and the evolution of strategies of resistance. Beyond this, postcolonial critique bears witness to those countries and communities – in the North and the South, urban and rural – constituted, if I may coin a phrase, “otherwise than modernity.”¹⁵

The “post” in postcolonialism suggests a dialectical relationality of the past and present. It displays prominently a simultaneous “epistemological break with and an ironic continuity”¹⁶ of the colonial modes of living and knowing. If colonial imagination is inscribed within the universalizing tropes of dualistic boundaries, then, according to Ella Shohat,

the term ‘post-colonial’ would be more precise, therefore, if articulated as ‘post-First/Third Worlds theory,’ or ‘post-anti-colonial critique,’ as a movement beyond a relatively binaristic, fixed and stable mapping of power relations between ‘colonizer/colonized’ and ‘center/periphery’. Such rearticulations suggest a more nuanced discourse, which allows for movement, mobility and fluidity.¹⁷

Postcolonial critiques offer conjectures toward post-binary thinking and imagination not by abolishing difference – frequently struggling and failing mightily in their own efforts

¹⁴ Radhakrishnan, “Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity,” 762.

¹⁵ Homi K. Bhabha, “Introduction,” *The Location of Culture*. Reprint edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2006): 9.

¹⁶ See Lingyan Yang, “Theorizing Asian America: On Asian American and Postcolonial Asian Diasporic Women Intellectuals,” *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 5:2 (2003):146.

¹⁷ Shohat, “Notes on the ‘Post-Colonial’,” 108.

not to repeat the essentializing habits of modern colonial imaginaries – but by calling into question the inertias of binary logic, especially when they are enthroned and projected as universal. The aspirations of postcolonial criticism are vectored toward the imaginary of (cultural) hybridity as a space that obtains “in-between the designations of identity” and that “entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy.”¹⁸

In the context of this dissertation, the decisive critical and constructive appeal of postcolonialism consists in its interrogation of the Western paradigm of epistemological imagination. For this reflection on theological method, postcolonialism is relevant as a distinctively shaped trans-disciplinary critical subjectivity and as a hermeneutical strategy:

Postcolonialism ... is seen as an oppositional reading practice, and as a way of critiquing the totalizing forms of Eurocentric thinking and of reshaping dominant meanings. It is a mental attitude rather than a method, more a subversive stance towards the dominant knowledge than a school of thought. (...) It is a reading posture (...) It is a discursive resistance to imperialism, imperial ideologies, imperial attitudes and their continued incarnations in such wide-ranging fields as politics, economics, history and theological and biblical studies.¹⁹

Within such an enlargement of the “postcolonial” lies its hottest critical purchase as well as its abundantly theorized hazards, for the idea is, as Benita Parry rightfully warns,

fluid, polysemic, and ambiguous. The consequence to this plenitude of signification is that the word has come to indicate a historical transition, an achieved epoch, a cultural location, a theoretical stance, and indeed in the spirit of mastery and impenetrability favored by Humpty-Dumpty in his dealings with language, whatever the author chooses it to mean.²⁰

¹⁸ Bhabha, “Introduction,” *The Location of Culture*, 5.

¹⁹ Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Configurations*, 15.

²⁰ Benita Parry, “Directions and Dead Ends in Postcolonial Studies,” *Relocating Postcolonialism*, (David Theo Goldberg and Ato Quayson, eds.; Wiley-Blackwell, 2002): 72.

As a critical theory, postcolonialism has sought to “challenge the grand march of western historicism with its entourage of binaries (self-other, metropolis-colony, center-periphery, etc.).”²¹ This challenge has been accompanied by destabilization of the very “binaristic premise” which, whether employed epistemologically, culturally, or politically, has been “designed to subserve a larger if concealed project of power and hegemony.”²²

However, it is the distinctive acknowledgment of the “ethical pre-text” – “the idea that postcolonial criticism is itself an ethical enterprise”²³ – that enables postcolonial critical practices to advance the quest for justice in ways that poststructuralism and postmodernism would not. Postcolonial critique is aligned with the impetus that Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has repeatedly described as the joining of hands between history and literary criticism “in search of the ethical as it interrupts the epistemological.”²⁴ The “ethical pre-text” bears most directly – even though often implicitly – on the inherent “object relations referenced by the binary oppositions” so that the “destabilizations of the binaries are often proffered as attempts at rectifying disorders in the extra-textual world of social relations.”²⁵ Kwame Anthony Appiah links the particularity of postcolonialism – vis-à-vis postmodernism – as grounded precisely “in the appeal to an ethical universal” which is in turn grounded “in an appeal to a certain simple respect for human

²¹ McClintock, “The Angel of Progress,” 85.

²² David Theo Goldberg and Ato Quayson, “Introduction: Scale and Sensibility,” *Relocating Postcolonialism*, xii. Goldberg and Quayson succinctly indicate the deep linkage of the rhetorical strategy of postcolonial discourses with poststructuralist theory in that “all binary oppositions are value-laden, with the first term often implicitly assumed to have an ethical or conceptual, normative or indeed logical priority over the second,” *ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ See, for example, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “In Memoriam: Edward W. Said,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 23:1&2 (2003): 7.

²⁵ *Ibid.* Goldberg and Quayson point out the paradox involved in the “foundational” role of the ethical pre-text which confronts the suspicions of metanarratives within a generally anti-foundationalist theory as a sort of ethical foundation for critique of the structures of power, *ibid.*

suffering.”²⁶ The postcolonial challenge of the oppressive legitimating narratives across the interlinked terrains of epistemological and cultural imagination all the way into political praxis of cohabitation, recognition, and inclusion, proceeds “in the name of the suffering victims.”²⁷ It is this ethical tenet of postcolonial criticism – contradictory, elusive, and provisional – that constitutes its particular appeal for theological search of quiddities of relation beyond the conceptual gridlocks of binary logic. As Sugirtharajah points out in the context of biblical interpretation, postcolonial criticism “provides openings for oppositional readings, uncovers suppressed voices and, more pertinently, has as its foremost concern victims and their plight.”²⁸ Ethics, as I have said repeatedly, is about the quiddity, or the quality and pattern, of lived relations. Postcolonialism as a sustained scrutiny of variously motivated and (dis)empowered relationalities can be useful as a critical tool, interrogating the ethical conditions and ethical *desiderata* of living together among outrageously discordant variations of life within the irreversible entanglement of global postcolony. Without claiming omniscience and renouncing slippages into false theoretical messianism, if postcolonialism as a discourse about the problematic of relationality is to be useful for living and thinking, then its pivotal concerns are worth being recognized as cooperative and solidary. It is so because the quiddity of relations concerns the intimate texture of everyday lives of all people, materially and imaginatively. Then its ethico-political authority can become an “intervention in the general scheme of things” and thus a “matter for general concern and awareness and not the mere resentment of a ghetto.”²⁹ It is as an intervention in the

²⁶ Appiah, “Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?” 353.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Configurations*, 4.

²⁹ Radhakrishnan, “Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity,” 767.

general scheme of Western habitual economy of knowledge, imagination, and representation that postcolonialism becomes an irresistible conversation partner for theological inquiry in search for post-binary envisagement of relationality.

2. Postcolonial Reasons For Theological Reasoning

What have liturgical and sacramental modes of theological inquiry to do with postcolonialism? Judging from the still prevalent scarcity of engagements between liturgical, and especially sacramental, theologies with postcolonial discourse, it may seem that the answer is – not much. Meanwhile, in the slowly emerging conversation of Christian systematic theology and postcolonialism,³⁰ it has become a virtually mantric gesture to quote R.S. Sugirtharajah’s observation that “what is striking about systematic theology is the reluctance of its practitioners to address the relation between European colonialism and the field.”³¹ I follow the ritual gesture of quoting Sugirtharajah here only because his observation still holds true regarding doctrinal reflection, especially when it comes to axiological preferences of what (“proper”) Christian theology supposedly is and what the legitimate method of theological inquiry must be. But in this regard, systematic theology is rather ironically similar to postcolonial studies. Postcolonial discourses have shown a consistent disinterestedness – if not an open hostility toward – in religion, let

³⁰ The recent works in this current of thought include books such as Marion Grau, *Of Divine Economy: Refinancing Redemption* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), also the interdisciplinary collection *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* (Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner and Mayra Rivera, eds; St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005) which addresses a larger spectrum of theological problematic in relation to colonialism beyond feminist thought, Wonhee Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox, 2006), Mayra Rivera, *The Touch of Transcendence: A Postcolonial Theology of God* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox, 2007), Susan Abraham, *Identity, Ethics, and Nonviolence in Postcolonial Theory: A Rahnerian Theological Assessment* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Mcmillan, 2007). What is common to all these texts is the prominence of Occidentally-located diasporic theologians and feminist theologians among the authors.

³¹ Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Configurations*, 143.

alone theology, until very recently.³² On the other hand, for example, Edward W. Said frequently used a certain notion of “religion” in his postcolonial theorizing but for him it functions as an ambivalent and idiosyncratic concept-metaphor for virtually everything that is indefensible and unacceptable from a critical postcolonial and secular humanist perspective.³³ It would surely not be wise to underestimate the deterring effect of the unholy “synergy of conquest, commerce, and Christ”³⁴ in the maintenance of the West-centered colonial world order as an understandable reason for the postcolonial eschewing of productive engagement with theological milieu. Yet as elitist and ultimately unfruitful as such Marxist bias unfortunately has been, in the present situation of the world being “as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever”³⁵ it seems simply evasive to shun religion and theology as sources of meaningful action and even liberation across many arenas of life from the epistemological and the political to the aesthetic.³⁶ In addition, the occlusion of religion in most versions of the high postcolonial theory curiously (nostalgically?) repeats the aging modern gesture of separation among

³² In the May 2006 conversation between Achille Mbembe and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak on religion, theology, and politics, Mbembe advocates an interrogation of the “secular fictions at the basis of Western modernity” while Spivak demonstrates, not surprisingly, a pronounced reticence about critical engagement with religious and theological discourses (“religion is a bad word”) and reports being “terrified” by theological appropriations of her own work. See “Religion, Politics, Theology: A Conversation with Achille Mbembe,” transcription by Nichole Miller, *Boundary 2*, 34:2 (2007):149-170.

³³ This conceptual lineage continues from Said’s essays “Secular Criticism” and “Religious Criticism” onwards, see his *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983):1-30, 290-292. “Religion” signals a general attitude akin to “Orientalism” which function as “agent[s] of closure, shutting off human investigation, criticism, and effort in deference to the authority of the more-than-human, the supernatural, the other-worldly,” 290.

³⁴ *Postcolonial Theologies*, 14.

³⁵ Peter L. Berger, “The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview,” *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (ed. Peter L. Berger; Washington DC and Grand Rapids, MI: Ethics and Public Policy Center and Eerdmans, 1999):2.

³⁶ This fact has been pointed out in more detail by R. Sugirtharajah, see for example his essay “Complacencies and Cul-de-sacs: Christian Theologies and Colonialism,” *Postcolonial Configurations*, 157-159, and also by Susan Abraham, *Identity, Ethics, and Nonviolence in Postcolonial Theory*, 1-2, 196-197. Abraham succinctly points out that the elisions of religious and theological knowledge in high postcolonial theory are “comfortable” for a good number of theorists who thus “demonstrate an inability and unwillingness to provide for religious and theological agency in the quest for justice,” 197.

the political, social, cultural, and religious aspects of life. Herein hides one of the weakest “post” and simultaneously one of the strongest aspects of Occidental modernity in postcolonial theory. Such methodological imaginary of disjunctive enclosure ironically proliferates nothing else beyond the fatigued “secular fictions” of Western modernity which Achille Mbembe has rightly lamented.

Other disciplines, such as biblical and historical studies, and notably feminist theology, have engaged more extensively with the religious inspirations and implications of colonialism and imperialism. Yet it remains by and large true that “colonialism has never been a popular subject for theological enquiry in Western discourse.”³⁷ Moreover, Sugirtharajah’s analysis is ever more true regarding liturgical theology. As Michael Jagessar and Stephen Burns note, “the study of Christian worship is as yet to be appraised – at least in print – through the optic of a sustained and developed postcolonial perspective.”³⁸ They rightly emphasize that the thematic fixture of “inculturation”³⁹ within liturgical theology must come under the scrutiny of postcolonial optic precisely because of its likely deployment as yet another invisible “form of hegemonic control,

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Michael Jagessar and Stephen Burns, “Fragments of a Postcolonial Perspective on Christian Worship,” *Worship* 80:5 (2006): 429. The step towards such an engagement – implicitly at least – is Teresa Berger’s edited collection of liturgical reflections *Dissident Daughters: Feminist Liturgies in Global Context* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001). A more recent contribution towards sacramental discourse is by well-known Asian Jesuit theologian Aloysius Pieris, “An Asian Way to Celebrate the Eucharist,” *Worship* 81:4 (2007): 314-328, even though here too postcolonial discourse is present rather implicitly. The interdisciplinary collection *Beyond Anglicanism: The Anglican Communion in the Twenty-First Century* (Ian T. Douglas and Kwok Pui-lan, eds.; New York: Church Publishing, 2001) has contributions gesturing toward the dialogue of worship studies and postcolonial concerns. In Andrea Bieler and Luise Schottroff’s *The Eucharist: Bodies, Bread, and Resurrection* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007) the category of “colonialism/colonization” plays a prominent role even though postcolonial theory is again not explicitly engaged.

³⁹ In a larger theological context, Peter C. Phan (among others) has called attention to the risks of “inculturation” that is not aware of its colonial proclivities in “Betwixt and Between: Doing Theology with Memory and Imagination,” *Journeys at the Margin: Toward an Autobiographical Theology in American-Asian Perspective* (Peter C. Phan and Jung Young Lee, eds.; Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999): 113-133 and “Multiple Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church,” *Theological Studies* 64 (2003): 495-519.

empire building and colonization.”⁴⁰ By “inculturation” Western theological discourse usually describes the process of implantation and integration of Christianity in predominantly non-Western geocultural locations. The unacknowledged prolegomenon of this paradigm is an assumption that the versions of Christian theology and liturgical practice to be “inculturated” are akin to the once highly esteemed idea of the abstract, ahistorical, and otherwise culturally naked “essence of Christianity” without being recognized for what they really are – culturally specific and mostly Occidental versions of Christianity. In an emerging polycentric world it is clearly discursively and ethically *passé* to maintain the legitimacy of often historically experienced non-reciprocal directionality of “inculturation” (or, its conceptual and ideological synonyms “indigenization” and “contextualization”) without a meticulous and critical self-interrogation. Susan Abraham, like Peter Phan, has pointed out that often “inculturation” in a global setting has practically demanded conversion not merely to Christianity as a religion, but renunciation of one’s culture and epistemological outlook as well. On the one hand, “inculturation” indeed acknowledges the porous boundaries of cultures, while on the other it disavows the necessity for reciprocal openness such porous boundaries would seem to entail:

It is one thing to say that Christianity can take root in other cultures because of the openness of those cultures. It is quite another thing to demand the same openness of oneself in the manner that one is able to provide for inclusive models of relating from within the tradition.⁴¹

The discourse of “inculturation” is not coextensive with postcolonially engaged theological discourse. Under the paradigm of “inculturation,” in the present era of “world

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Susan Abraham, *Identity, Ethics, and Nonviolence in Postcolonial Theory*, 98.

Christianity” it has become more popular to utilize the contributions of non-Western or marginally Western theologians as a sort of boutique *florilegia* to the otherwise straightforwardly Western patterns, preferences, normativities, and temperaments of theological disposition. Such endeavors tend to conscript non-Western or marginally Western theologians as “native informants.” In the words of Patrick A. Kalilombe, the officially approved multicultural appendixes often reinforce only too stealthily the image of non-Western Christian theological rationalities as “purveyors of exotic, raw intellectual material to people in the North.”⁴² Demographically and culturally it is obvious that Christianity is a truly global faith tradition. Indeed, it has never been a purely Western faith tradition. Yet theologically – especially regarding the methodological criteria and preferences of theological inquiry – the Western constellations of theological normativity continue to reinscribe themselves as universally adequate, appropriate, and conductive in practically all contexts. A laudable recent attempt to engage with postcolonialism was the 2009 annual meeting of the North American Academy of Liturgy that included a panel of relevant papers under the auspices of the Emerging Critical Resources for Liturgical Studies Group.⁴³

Moving beyond the “inculturation” imaginary, I also need to say that postcolonially engaged theological inquiry does not *necessarily* coincide with decolonization of theology either. Decolonization as a gesture of reversal – laudable and righteous as it is in certain situations – entails the impetus of “stripping theology of its

⁴² Patrick A. Kalilombe, “How Do We Share ‘Third World’ Christian Insight in Europe?” *AFER: African Ecclesial Review*, 40:1 (1998): 19.

⁴³ See the 2009 Meeting Agenda for the Emerging Critical Resources for Liturgical Studies at <http://www.naal-liturgy.org/seminars/postmodern/>, last accessed on November 13, 2009.

westernised mould, its Eurocentric character.”⁴⁴ Decolonization as rectification by reversal, often rather violently, shifts the focus of theology away from imposed/imported questions that rarely matter outside the constellations of Western theological normativity. However, engagement with postcolonial theories and discourses, I submit, provides a possibility for another itinerary beyond both colonially complicit “inculturation” and decolonization as a (impossible) reversal of forced “inculturation,” for those locations of spiritual praxis and theological enunciation which cannot be extricated from their ongoing participation in tremendously complex and overlapping realities. The state of mutual contamination among not just different, but profoundly unequal cultures and traditions of thought, worship, wisdom, suffering and survival, is irreversible in the present circumstances. Postcolonial discourses can therefore be instrumental in bringing this multifaceted state of affairs and its non-negotiable epistemological polyvocality to bear on the culturally established – and frequently entrenched in their dominance – theological rationalities within the West. For theological rationalities and imaginations which belong to the late modern Western cultural milieu unequivocally – by virtue of an internal subalternity or a diversely vectored diasporic “double consciousness” – postcolonial discourses might just be the interpretive “optic” best positioned to attempt to respond non-reductively, at least in aspirations if not in implementations, to the convoluted complexities of lived experience. Of course, no theory can ever be an adequate representation of lived reality. No finite conceptual framework can equal the infinite texture and complexity and entanglement of actual life phenomena. Hence, I submit, postcolonial discourses ought most emphatically not to be cheered as yet another

⁴⁴ George Mulrain, “The Caribbean,” *An Introduction to Third World Theologies* (John Parratt, ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004):166.

ersatz master narrative of fashionable theological rejuvenation – or yet another adventure of a domineering theory framing the conditions for “a deity’s entrance” in theology. What they do facilitate is, I believe, an emergence of theological sensibilities better equipped to articulate the increasingly widespread existential engagements of lives being lived through multiple belongings, in multi-vocalities of expression, and under interstitial integrity. Additionally, to move beyond certain persistently unproductive theological tribulations – such as the resilient disengagement of liturgy and ethics precisely as a symptom of a broader predicament of dualistic Western (theological) reasoning – the postcolonial discourse of hybridity as inciting modulation of the Manichean⁴⁵ habits of thought and agency can be a particularly useful ally. What I envision is a conversation between theology and postcolonialism – not a conversion! – stretching beyond the still systematically underrated sinister complicity of Christianity as socio-cultural force and of Christian theological imagination with the colonial and neo-colonial escapades across so variously scathed terrains of subjugation and despair. This conversation intrudes right into the doctrinal and methodological inner sanctum of theological enterprise. The thrust and range of postcolonially scored theological reasoning obtains most fruitfully, I believe, when “the word ‘postcolonial’ signifies an attribute of mind being applied to the doing of theology”⁴⁶ rather than a delineation of discreet themes and disciplinary boundaries within some incarcerated “postcolonial theology.” Of course, this is neither a

⁴⁵ I am referring to Frantz Fanon’s notion of “Manicheanism” which for Fanon and for many currents in later postcolonial thought represent the dualistic logic of either/or. Colonialism is “the organization of a Manichean world, of a compartmentalized world.” The Manichean divide or compartmentalization of colonial world order is based on mutual exclusion between the colonizers and the colonized, and one of the parties is superfluous according to the Aristotelian logic since no conciliation is possible. In this context, the Manicheanism of the colonial system is reversed in the substituting process of decolonization – a necessarily violent event for Fanon – by the Manicheanism of the colonized. These two movements are congenitally antagonistic operating within the system of reified difference of Manichean colonial logic. See in particular Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1-7, 14-15, 43.

⁴⁶ Abraham, *Identity, Ethics, and Nonviolence in Postcolonial Theology*, 8.

sole possible nor a sole legitimate understanding of postcolonially colored theological sensibility and practice. But wherein consists the theologically relevant fecundity of postcolonial critiques – as avenues of inquiry for a certain intellectual catholicism – in relation to the disengagement of liturgy and ethics?

3. Hybridity as an Attribute of a Postcolonially Colored Diasporic Theological Temperament

Hybridity is among the most popular analytical metaphors in the theoretical arsenal of postcolonialism. Unsurprisingly, it is also among the most problematic and elusive components of postcolonial discourses. What makes hybridity a supremely interesting and relevant notion is the fact that hybridity is arguably the signature postcolonial imaginary of subversion vis-à-vis the colonial mode of coercive, binaristic, and hegemonic relationality. As such, hybridity brings into the conversation between theology and postcoloniality a valuable challenge and opportunity, particularly since the quiddity of relationality presents itself as one of the pivotal predicaments for theological imagination of this age to struggle with. In relation to the quandary of disengagement of liturgy and ethics, the opportunity that appears here is that hybridity sounds out a possible way of inhabiting and entertaining difference relationally without its “doxa”⁴⁷ and without an assumed or imposed hierarchy, to put it in a somewhat Bhabhian way.

As there is an unruly plurality of postcolonialisms, there is also a dense plurality of approaches to hybridity. Complaints about the malleability and vacuity of the term

⁴⁷ Rita Felski’s expression “the doxa of difference” rightly draws attention to the disproportionate enamoration of critical theory with difference as an “unassailable value in itself” whereby “difference has become doxa, a magic word of theory and politics radiant with redemptive meanings,” see “The Doxa of Difference,” *Signs* 23:1 (1997):1.

abound.⁴⁸ On the one hand, hybridity is used to denote the cultural and racial syncretism, creolization, or *métissage* that increasingly characterizes the unprecedented transnational migration and interaction, materially and virtually, throughout the present globalization of culture. From this perspective, the notion of hybridity describes the process of constructive fusion and mixture of cultural identities, knowledges, languages, races, sexualities, and ethnicities. This kind of hybridity marks the present, historically postcolonial and globalized, era of previously unprecedented migration of people, goods, services, and ideas. In this sense, hybridity is akin to what Mikhail Bakhtin termed the unconscious “organic” or unintentional hybridization.⁴⁹ In this, comparatively generic sense, the embodied hybridity describes the unceasing negotiation of difference that underlies the experience of translocality of migrants, exiles, refugees, displaced persons and even those who encounter such people from the relative stability of their own more permanent domicile.

On the other hand, there is a stubborn insistence in the postcolonial critical sensibility on the specific character of hybridity as precisely not being “any given mixing

⁴⁸ Conversing with the notions of hybridity and diaspora involves the navigation through the hazards of Parry’s lamented Humpty-Dumpty-like textual idealism which often propels these notions into elitist theoretical abstractions, divorcing them from historically specific experiences of hybridity where there is less triumph but more suffering of the displaced, the refugees, the immigrants, etc. See, among others, the already referenced R. Radhakrishnan, “Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity,” Benita Parry, “Directions and Dead Ends in Postcolonial Studies,” Ella Shohat, “Notes on the ‘Post-colonial’,” as well as *Hybridity and Its Discontents: Politics, Science, Culture* (Avtar Brah and Annie E. Coombes, eds; London and New York: Routledge, 2000), Marwan M. Kraidy, *Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalization* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005), Virinder S. Kalra, Raminder Kaur and John Hutnyk, *Diaspora and Hybridity* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, 2005), Deepika Bahri, “What Difference Does Difference Make? Hybridity Reconsidered,” *South Asian Review*, 27:1 (2006), Anjali Prabhu, *Hybridity: Limits, Transformations, Prospects* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), Simone Drichel, “The Time of Hybridity,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 34:6 (2008).

⁴⁹ See Mikhail Bakhtin’s work *Вопросы литературы и эстетики* (Москва: 1975):170-173, known in the English-speaking world as *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Michael Holquist, ed., trans., and Caryl Emerson, trans.; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981): 358-359. The other type of hybridization, related yet distinct from the historically organic or dark hybridity, is for Bakhtin the intentional or conscious hybrid. This type of hybridity, theorized explicitly in literary contexts, entails not merely two voices or accents, but socio-linguistic consciousnesses and cultural epochs that have consciously come together and are struggling within the same literary utterance, see *Вопросы литературы и эстетики*, 172.

of cultural materials, backgrounds, or identities, but [implying] a markedly unbalanced relationship”⁵⁰ across the relational interface. This perception of hybridity, materially and theoretically, appears to be supremely fascinating for theological inquiry, especially as such a constructive effort also resonates with the broader “organic” lived reality of hybridization. It is beyond the scope and besides the objective of this project to dwell too extensively on the manifold theoretical aporias of the celebrity-concept of hybridity. The ideas of hybridity I converse with represent only those perspectives that come across as critically and constructively useful for this project. Suffice it to say that within many postcolonial perspectives, particularly remembering the “ethical pre-text,” hybridity is often suspected as a glib sublation of the very metropolitan oblivion (“metropolitan hybridity”⁵¹) toward specific histories of human pain, exploitation, violence, and affliction from colonial hegemonies which postcolonialism precisely envisions to interrupt. The insistence on the ethical interruption of the epistemological through the postcolonial elaborations on hybridity nevertheless remains as a “strong ethical note” and as an “ongoing struggle” to imagine and construct the possibility of hybridity as “a zone where people can meet – themselves or each other – and where ‘our perceptions and our lives are transfused with light’.”⁵²

Without doubt, great care “to avoid a history-less fetishization of the metaphor”⁵³ must underwrite the critical purchase of hybridity. Yet, constructively speaking, certain

⁵⁰ Joel Kuortti and Jopi Nyman, “Introduction: Hybridity Today,” *Reconstructing Hybridity: Post-Colonial Studies in Transition* (Joel Kuortti and Jopi Nyman, eds.; Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007): 2.

⁵¹ Radhakrishnan observes that hybridity in its “the philosophic-bohemian sense” is “underwritten by the stable regime of western secular identity and the authenticity that goes with it, whereas post-colonial hybridity has no such guarantees: neither identity nor authenticity,” in “Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity,” 755.

⁵² Kuortti and Nyman, “Introduction,” *Reconstructing Hybridity*, 15-16.

⁵³ Sabine Broeck emphasizes that “the celebration of hybridity always threatens to get stuck in an intellectual version of bastard chique, as one of the compensations white western intellectuals have, after

versions of hybridity can serve as avenues for discerning a post-binary pattern of relationality complex enough to facilitate – even though not to comprehend or adequately accommodate – the asymmetries of difference reciprocally. In other words, I find the analytical potential of hybridity useful for theologies in search of transformative modulation of relationality away from the habitual either/or entrapment of dualistic Western epistemological imagination. If indeed the presently experienced intense transformations of life toward increased mixing, cross-pollinations, and reconfigurations of identities also produce what Radhakrishnan calls “the transformation of a lived reality into cognitive model,”⁵⁴ such a relational traffic between lived existential engagements and theoretical discourses does not disqualify the imaginary of hybridity as a valid critical tool. It seems to be the case simply because all our patterns and structures of rationality and intelligibility are culturally and historically situated – while they are not necessarily culturally, and thus axiologically, incarcerated. Finally, as already noted in the Introduction, my own location of theological and critical enunciation – among various others – is diasporically hybrid and thus ripe with intersecting cultural and linguistic sensibilities, wherein Radhakrishnan’s idea of “lived reality – cognitive model transformation” is indeed the effectively inescapable watermark of routine living and thinking. Hence the interdisciplinary traffic between theology and postcolonial criticism, or cultural criticism in general, also cannot proceed otherwise than as a two-way street, all the roadwork and congestion notwithstanding. This, however, is exactly where hybridity stands out as an attempt to ponder over such traffic as it is embodied in lived

the nomad, the homeless, the exiled, the stranger, the tourist, the bricoleur, and the margin dweller, paraded as New World paradigms to ‘bemoan the crisis, the fragmentation and loss of the Western subject or to revitalize its standing,’ in Heike Paul’s words,” in “White Fatigue, or, Supplementary Notes on Hybridity,” *Reconstructing Hybridity*, 53.

⁵⁴ R. Radhakrishnan, “Race and Double-Consciousness,” *Works and Days* 45(23):24 (2006): 46.

intercultural and interreligious experience as well as in encounters among diverse theoretical discourses.

Hybridity refers to that unstable and interactive open spatiality in which selves and othernesses become enmeshed, decentered, and recentered. Rita Felski argues that

...metaphors of hybridity and the like not only recognize differences within the subject, fracturing and complicating holistic notions of identity, but also address connections between subjects by recognizing affiliations, cross-pollinations, echoes, and repetitions, thereby unseating difference from a position of absolute privilege. Instead of endorsing a draft toward an ever greater atomization of identity, such metaphors allow us to conceive of multiple, interconnecting axes of affiliation and differentiation.⁵⁵

Hybridity as a notion functions polysemantically across various terrains of reality and theoretical discourse. Hybridity thrives on the challenge of essentialized identities and differences, and both of those locked into habitually antagonistic zero-sum juxtaposition. The anti-essentialist thrust emphasizes mutual imbrications – ambivalence, syncretism – not isolated positionalities. Hybridity describes subversive and interstitial passage, which in postcolonial context disrupts “the production of discriminatory identities that secure the ‘pure’ and original identity of authority” and it “displays the necessary deformation of displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination.”⁵⁶ Hybridity is not a discourse about cancellations, reversals, or saturated reconciliations in seamless fusion. Bhabha has spoken memorably about hybridity not being “the third term that resolves tensions”⁵⁷ but rather hinting at the possibility of the enunciative “third space” which “enables other

⁵⁵ Felski, “The Doxa of Difference,” 12.

⁵⁶ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 159.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 162,

positions to emerge”⁵⁸ beyond the customary antitheses. Hybridity emerges as a “catholic” preference for the ‘both/and’ imaginary of reasoning and acting beyond the rationale of binarity. In Robert Young’s words,

Hybridity ... makes difference into sameness, and sameness into difference, but in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different. In that sense, it operates according to the form of logic that Derrida isolates in the term ‘brisure’, a breaking and joining at the same time, in the same place: difference and sameness in an apparently impossible simultaneity. Hybridity thus consists of a bizarre binate operation, in which each impulse is qualified against the other, forcing momentary forms of dislocation and displacement into complex economies of agonistic reticulation. This double logic, which goes against the convention of rational either/or choices, but which is repeated in science in the split between incompatible coexisting logics of classical and quantum physics, could be said to be as characteristic of the twentieth century as oppositional dialectical thinking was of the nineteenth.⁵⁹

The “third space” may help to elude the “politics of polarity”⁶⁰ by allowing hitherto subjugated knowledges and experiences to enter into the dominant discourses to implement the displacement of unjust domination. Hence hybridity functions a site of agency in the act of living out and beyond the gridlock of hierarchically construed binary couplings of identities, races, cultures, values, ideologies, genders, concepts, and classes. Yet hybridity as the interstitial “third space” is not a single new form of indiscriminate totality wherein all jaggedness of the materiality of life and habits of mind would be resolved in elegiac syncretism. What hybridity facilitates is an ambivalent relationality – an irrevocably porous, non-transparent, and uncertain/unmasterable relationality. This

⁵⁸ Homi K. Bhabha, “The Third Space,” *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (Jonathan Rutherford, ed.; London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990): 211.

⁵⁹ Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995): 26-27.

⁶⁰ Bhabha, *The Loction of Culture*, 56.

hybridity is constituted by variously endowed disparities in everyday life as well in modes of human knowledge and belief.

This brings a critically important aspect of hybridity to the fore. The relational mutuality and complementarity entailed in hybridity is not a simple “breaking and joining at the same time” that takes place among equally empowered differences. This is a model of relationality that seems to prevail in superficial conceptions of multiculturalism as harmonious fusion. Yet postcolonial hybridity as the condition of “in-betweenness” and as concept of relationality allows discordance and conflictuality, and thus

...confronts and problematises boundaries, although it does not erase them. As such, hybridity always implies an unsettling of identities. It is precisely our encounters at the border ... that make us realise how riven with potential miscommunication and intercultural conflict these encounters can be. This tells us that hybridity, the very condition of in-betweenness, can never be a question of simple shaking hands, of happy, harmonious merger and fusion. Hybridity is not the solution, but alerts us to the difficulty of living with differences, their ultimately irreducible resistance to complete dissolution.⁶¹

Ien Ang’s emphasis on the “rivenness” of hybrid relationalities directs attention the modalities of hybridity. The emphasis on the need to interrogate the quiddity of hybrid relationalities is, I believe, underwritten by the concern about ethical dimensions of the discourse on hybridity. As a “sign of challenge and altercation, not of congenial amalgamation or merger,”⁶² hybridity does not gloss over the possibilities and actualities of a dissonant make-up and of asymmetrical reciprocities which hybrid relationality facilitates for good or for ill. On the other hand, the idea of hybridity insists on maintaining the space open for an interlacing of political, cultural, and ethical agencies

⁶¹ Ien Ang, “Together-In-Difference: Beyond Diaspora, Into Hybridity,” *Asian Studies Review*, 27:2 (2003):149-150.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 151.

which may well interact on different planes of authority, different levels of dominance and subalternity, yet these agential interactions – as uneven and as ugly as they can be – are disentangled from the binarisms of pure power versus pure impotence. In this way hybridity as an imaginary of relationality carries the movement of de-absolutization of the rationale of binarity in epistemological imagination but also in terms of human agency socially, culturally, politically, ethically, and religiously. Hybridity as an interface for a relational palimpsest of agencies and rationalities – erratic and imperfect as it is – does contain a certain “paranoid threat” as Bhabha observes. It is a threat to “the symmetry and duality of self/other, inside/outside”⁶³ which are broken down by contesting the boundaries of life and thought. The unidirectional architectonic of power modulates into multidirectional orchestration of authorities, identities, and integrities touching one another and thus being touched by one another in transformative – in commendable or regrettable – ways. Hence the idea of hybridity is one of the “threat” moments where postcolonial optic reshapes the *habitus* of Occidental epistemological imagination and its dualistic regimes of representation.

4. Diasporic Imaginary: A Fugued Homing Desire

Where does diaspora come into the postcolonial discourse? Colonialism was a remarkably diasporic enterprise, involving both the colonizing and the colonized parties to various degrees and with radically different political and economic consequences. Initially the term “diaspora” used to describe dispersion from homelands such as historical Jewish, Greek, and Armenian diasporas. More recently diaspora has come to connote – sometimes rather controversially – a broader spectrum of migrancies including

⁶³ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 165.

exiles, immigrants, refugees, migrant workers, ethnic, religious, racial, and cultural minorities. In postcolonial setting, diaspora points to the most extreme consequences of imperial dominance resulting in large scale displacements of people due to war, colonialism and decolonization, economic and socio-political shifts, as well as famine and ethnic cleansings. Yet these displacements are in the process of producing “profoundly disruptive effect upon the whole edifice of European epistemological and political power because it disrupts modernity, it disrupts the idea of nation and national identity, it disrupts the notion of unity and coherence to rational subjectivity and it becomes a prominent feature of the contemporary post-colonial world.”⁶⁴ Among many descriptions of diaspora, the following stands out as an attempt to represent the intertwined intricacies of negotiation among losses and gains that permeate the diasporic social position. Lingyan Yang suggests that diaspora is

the material conditions and dialectical process of negotiating with the historical conditions, geographical relocations, cultural displacements, emotional alienation, trauma or relief, symbolic representations, artistic imaginations, philosophical conceptions, or political disposessions of leaving homes, homelands, home cultures and mother tongues, by necessity or by choice, due to a variety of reasons in different historical epochs. Simultaneously diaspora is also the forced or chosen making, creating, and articulating of their new cultural existential selves in the NEW adopted homes (such as America), new cultures, new nations, and new m(O)ther tongues.⁶⁵

The notion of hybridity is often rightly suspected of sneaky (mis)identification with depoliticized and ahistorical cultural relativism of picking-and-mixing out of entitlement and leisure rather than out of forced context of survival. The same is true regarding certain theoretical notions of diaspora as a particular constellation of hybridity, proposing

⁶⁴ Ascroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, “Diaspora,” *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, Second edition (Bill Ascroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, eds.; London and New York: Routledge, 2006): 426.

⁶⁵ Lingyan Yang, “Theorizing Asian America,” 153.

it as the ideal postmodern and postcolonial social condition. They lean toward hyper-metaphorization of diaspora into a paradigmatic subjectivity most often pertaining to upwardly-mobile elite intellectuals under the auspices of celebratory multiculturalism.⁶⁶ Diaspora does not merely equal metropolitan deracination.⁶⁷ As Anne Joh poignantly observes, a thoroughly postcolonial version of hybridity comes as “foremost an extreme sense of pain, of loss, of agonizing dislocations and fragmentations.”⁶⁸ Applying Edward W. Said’s sober and enlarged notion of “exile” to various types of contemporary migrancies of forced choice, it is supremely appropriate to say that these variously enforced migrancies “are strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience.”⁶⁹

Yet the discourse about diaspora – the kind of life communities and individuals lead in geo-political and cultural displacement – is not about either pure pain or

⁶⁶ Even though she argues against seductive metaphorization, symbolic empowerment, apolitization, and dematerialization of diaspora, it seems that Lingyan Yang comes very close herself to reinforcing precisely such gestures by lining up indiscriminately the following attributes of diaspora – “dialectical critical consciousness, philosophical reflexivity... serious critical category and method, a style of critical thinking, a commitment to contemporary critical cultural studies, an insistence upon the analytical and creative cartography of geography, and a refusal to accept fixed political dogmas or critical positions,” “Theorizing Asian America,” 154. She goes on to link diaspora with feminist, progressive, socially transformative humanism taking on the “perpetually patriarchal, racist, corporate capitalist, anti-intellectual, and hostile world,” *ibid.* Such a description would no doubt surprise and even disturb many diasporic persons.

⁶⁷ Radhakrishnan, “Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity,” 765.

⁶⁸ Joh, *Heart of the Cross*, 70. Joh’s reflections convey the profound ambiguities of diasporic experience as the context of theological reflection.

⁶⁹ Edward W. Said, “Reflections on Exile,” *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002): 173. Alongside “exile” as one of Said’s pivotal and most complex interpretive categories in literary and cultural criticism within his “contrapuntal” approach, to which I will turn in more detail in Part III, he elsewhere argues most sagaciously that “marginality and homelessness are not, in my opinion, to be gloried in; they are to be brought to an end, so that more, and not fewer, people can enjoy the benefits of what has for centuries been denied the victims of race, class, or gender,” in “The Politics of Knowledge,” *ibid.*, 385. I do not, however, intend here to refer to Said’s “metaphorical” or “metaphysical” conceptualization of exile in which Said equates, for all practical purposes, exile with the vocation and predicament of intellectuals. See, for example, Said’s 1993 essay “Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals.” This sense of exile has certain mandarin connotations and even a postmodern privileging of mobility and restlessness projected onto it. It is beyond the scope of this project to expose the transitions and extensions between various versions of exile in Said’s work.

romanticized “immigrant moment of as a mode of perennial liminality.”⁷⁰ Rather, the versatile diasporic *habitus* inhabits a peculiarly intermingled spectrum of languages, influences, experiences, allegiances, and heritages simultaneously, living all these various gravitational pulls together in a fluid equilibrium. It is very dangerous to generalize due to the immense diversity of diasporic positionalities – so incredibly variously situated across the interfaces of race, gender, class, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, education, language and generation – but one summary observation of diasporic subjectivity appears to be somewhat warranted. Diasporic subjectivity routinely lives what one cannot automatically and effortlessly reconcile in discursive and analytical ways. The implications of displaced/emplaced translocality “cannot be limited to the two locations that have most framed migrants’ identities. The translocality of migrants means that their senses of themselves draw on inflections and emphases of different ethnic communities in other parts of the world.”⁷¹ Diasporic subjectivity and imagination is akin to what Kwok Pui-lan calls the “border subject,” who is not a “hero or villain, but ... a much more complex, three-dimensional subject situated in the enthralling plots or irony, between satire and despair, between rage and empathy, between absurdity and hopefulness.”⁷² The border-passage efforts at uniting and reconciling are often not glamorous – even when lauded and marketed as such by certain intellectual elites – since more often than not

⁷⁰ Radhakrishnan, “Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity,” 765. Radhakrishnan insightfully points out that “the poststructuralist appropriation of the diaspora aestheticizes it as an avant-garde lifestyle based on deterritorialization,” and ultimately creates a “virtual consciousness as a form of blindness to historical realities,” *ibid.*, 764.

⁷¹ Ato Quayson, “Introduction: Area Studies, Diaspora Studies, and Critical Pedagogies,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 27:3 (2007): 587.

⁷² Kwok Pui-lan, “A Theology of Border Passage,” *Border Crossings: Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics* (D.N. Premnath, ed.; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007): 113.

... diasporic consciousness ‘makes best of a bad situation’. Experiences of loss, marginality, and exile (differently cushioned by class) are often reinforced by systematic exploitation and blocked advancement. Thus constitutive suffering coexists with the skills of survival... Diaspora consciousness lives loss and hope as a defining tension.⁷³

Diasporic experience, according to Stuart Hall, is “defined not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity.”⁷⁴ What obtains is a diasporic imaginary of “both” and “neither/nor”— “neither home nor not-home”⁷⁵ as well as that of multiple belongings held together by a “homing desire”⁷⁶ within the delicate equilibrium of an interstitial integrity. Diasporic subjectivity lives in and through hybridity; it is a performed hybridity which facilitates the transformational commerce of “lived reality into a cognitive model.” Thus, as Joh accurately observes, the condition of hybrid identity obtains not as “the combination of right parts, an accumulation or a fusion of various parts, but an energy field of different forces.”⁷⁷ The outcome, always in making, is a diasporic imaginary marked by an amalgam of relationalities, interlaced in mundane embodiments of lived tension. Diasporic subjectivities are Janus-faced, being poised between overlapping and contestatory legacies and imperatives as they inhabit cultural “heterochronicity.”⁷⁸ Diasporic

⁷³ James Clifford, “Diasporas,” originally published in *Cultural Anthropology*, 9:3 (1994), quoted from *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, 454. I must add the categories of race, ethnicity, and generation to Clifford’s ladder of “cushioning.”

⁷⁴ Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, 235.

⁷⁵ Radhakrishnan, “Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity,” 765.

⁷⁶ Avtar Brah makes an important point distinguishing the “homing desire” from a “desire for a ‘homeland’” and an ideology of return which some diasporas and some diasporic subjects sustain, but some do not. There are situations when “home” is more a place of terror than nostalgic longing, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996):16, 192-193.

⁷⁷ Joh, *Heart of the Cross*, 59.

⁷⁸ David Parker, “The Chinese Takeaway and the Diasporic Habitus: Space, Time and Power Geometries,” *Un/Settled Multiculturalisms: Diasporas, Entanglements, Transruptions* (Barnor Hesse, ed.; London and New York: Zed Books, 2000):89.

imaginary is thus more or less fugued: it lives as an ongoing texture of sometimes hardly bearable polyvocality “homing in” toward a harmony without coercive inclusion and most often realizing in the itinerary of this very “homing” how far from such a harmony it finds itself. In the most unhomely instances, the diasporic imaginary resembles the entanglement of both/and in a “confrontation of perhaps ultimately incompatible but equally insuppressible logics, whose intensities are, at every juncture, provokingly instructive.”⁷⁹ I must note, however, that what remains provokingly instructive for a diasporic thinker, also leaves intact what Said called the exilic “resentment” of (non)belonging and being “always out of place.”⁸⁰

As far as theology is concerned, diasporic imaginary concretizes and situates the focus on hybridity as a pivotal constructive concept-metaphor and as a means to transform the conceptual terrain of the disengagement of liturgy and ethics beyond the rationale of binarity. It does so, as I see it, by adding a touch of authentically non-dramatic and non-exceptional character for this kind of conceptual re-envisagement by the virtue of its own routine embeddedness in a routine lived complexity of here and there in which the perennial Western predicament of interacting with alterity has lost at least some of its allergic edge. I must say “some,” since among the vices of diaspora, an inflated and compensatory rhetoric of superiority vis-à-vis other communities in tandem with a jealous – indeed voluntarily ghettoizing – policing of a community’s cultural, religious, and social boundaries, often stand out prominently and even violently. What cannot be passed over without notice is perhaps the greatest irony that the diasporic life

⁷⁹ I borrow this truly intricate conclusion of Rey Chow’s essay on post-idealistic ethics and Slavoj Žižek, admittedly out of context, yet with appreciation of its fittingness for the diasporic imaginary, *Ethics After Idealism: Theory-Culture-Ethnicity-Reading* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998): 54.

⁸⁰ Said, “Reflections of Exile,” 180.

mischievously accommodates even the shrillest rhetoric of nativistic purity together and concurrently with practices of everyday living far more enmeshed in the porous cross-fertilization in the transcultural “diaspora space”⁸¹ than many dare to admit.

Of course, putting the Western conundrum of alterity and relationality in terms of allergy betrays indebtedness to a certain critical lineage, namely, the ethical thought of Emmanuel Levinas. It foreshadows the upcoming – staged, of course – conversation among two diasporic thinkers – Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas and Russian Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann – on liturgy and ethics. Even though strikingly differently, both thinkers register with more or less urgency the modern Western disengagement of liturgy and life as a fundamental philosophical, theological, and ethical problem. For Levinas, the question is about the whole Western habitual economy of relating to otherness, since

Western philosophy coincides with the disclosure of the other where the other, in manifesting itself as a being, loses its alterity. From its infancy philosophy has been struck with a horror of the other that remains other – with an insurmountable allergy. It is for this reason that it is essentially a philosophy of being, that the comprehension of being is its last word, and the fundamental structure of man. It is for this reason that it becomes philosophy of immanence and of autonomy, or atheism.⁸²

⁸¹ I use here Avtar Brah’s complex term “diaspora space” – not diaspora – which describes the contemporary world in its present state as the site of “entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of ‘staying put.’” This concept addresses the “global condition of culture, economics and politics as a site of ‘migrancy’ and ‘travel’” and this condition is “inhabited not only by those who have migrated and their descendants but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous,” *Cartographies of Diaspora*, 181. Even though I find Brah’s concept very pertinent and helpful, I nevertheless question the “equality” of inhabitation of diaspora space as casually utopian at the expense of the lived realities of precisely immense inequalities among diasporas themselves as well as among the “indigenous” and the “diasporic” segments of Western societies.

⁸² Emmanuel Levinas, “Trace of the Other,” *Deconstruction in Context: Literature and Philosophy* (Mark C. Taylor, ed.; Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986): 346.

Levinas' concern about the reduction of the other and the other's non-assimilable otherness to the same is on the one hand a concern about the mode of relationality eerily resembling colonialism: invasive, arrogant, egoistic, reductive, and thus unethical. On the other hand, as it will emerge in Part II, the insurmountable allergy toward alterity appears to remain unalleviated, let alone cured, if the cure comes by reversal alone.

The versatile Eastern Orthodox tradition, represented by Schmemmann, enters the conversation with a notably different epistemological imagination in comparison to the West. The ethos of Eastern theologies feels more at home with the both/and logic of knowledge, relation, and agency than with the either/or orientation so characteristic in the Occidental intellectual and cultural traditions. It is tempting to assume that this tradition provides an easier conversation partner vis-à-vis postcolonial worldviews and their logics of hybridity. Instead, as Part II will highlight, Schmemmann's liturgical theology precisely problematizes the relation between liturgy and ethics no less than Levinas' philosophy. The major difference between Schmemmann and Levinas is not in their resounding critiques of the dominant Occidental cultural and intellectual tradition, but in their diametrically opposite views on the relation between liturgy and ethics. However, the underlying conceptual grid(lock) in both cases remains – curiously – very similar in its practical dependency on the same highly suspected binary logic of boundaries which comprises the major characteristic of the repudiated Occidental modernity.

The upcoming Part II of this project is an asymmetrical double-conversation with Levinas and Schmemmann as two diasporic thinkers wrestling with the binaries swirling within and around the (dis)engagement of liturgy and ethics. As I have argued in the first chapter of Part I, this disengagement presents itself as a symptom of a larger problem of

habitual dualism of the Western regimes of knowledge and epistemological imagination. Both Schmemmann and Levinas speak from the diasporic interstices of Western modernity about an uncommonly enlarged liturgy and an uncommonly enlarged ethics respectively. Both gesture – if profoundly ambivalently – beyond the binary world sustained and structured by competitive dominance. Herein hides their enduring fascination. Herein also resides the opening for constructive challenge from those perspectives more at home in postcolonial hybridity, particularly drawing inspiration from Edward W. Said's notion of hybridity as counterpoint which will enter into this conversation in Part III.

PART II

Chapter 1

From Cult to Liturgy, from Liturgy to Life and Lures of Diaspora: The Liturgical *Tainstvo* of Alexander Schmemmann

So far in this dissertation I have already sporadically conversed with the thought of Russian Orthodox diasporic theologian Alexander Schmemmann while exploring the quandary of disengagement between sacramentality, liturgy, and ethics as a methodological problem for modern Western theological creativity. I now turn to Schmemmann's work in a more sustained fashion to inquire into the possibility of finding a rejuvenating diasporic perspective as well as a constructive potential that would gesture beyond at least some deadlocks of the dualistic disengagement as a methodological habitus. Yet, exciting as they are, neither the critical nor the constructive facets of Schmemmann's thought are ever free of deep cultural ambivalence and theological oblivion toward theology's socio-ethical accountability. These are the aspects of Schmemmann's work that have hitherto merited scarce attention within liturgical scholarship.

A Russian Orthodox priest, Alexander Schmemmann (1923-1983) does not let any opportunity pass without underscoring a peculiar difference of incommensurability and untranslatability between the "Eastern" and the "Western" patterns of theological reflection. For him, the difference explicitly reaches beyond discrete doctrinal divergences into much broader arenas of cultural identity as well as culturally circumscribed styles of rationality and production of knowledge. Schmemmann's unceasing lamentations about the separation and even "divorce" between liturgy, life,

ethics, aesthetics, and various fields of theological creativity permeate his writings over the decades. They signal his underlying preoccupation with the patterns of fragmentation and disengagement within and beyond Christian theology as an intellectual discipline and as a mode of reflection on the existential engagement with God, and – as Schmemmann would not fail to insist – simultaneously with the totality of created life.

The seductive attraction of Schmemmann’s passionate texts in liturgical theology marks him as one of the magisterial liturgical theologians of the 20th century¹ among Eastern Orthodox as well North American Roman Catholic and Protestant scholars of liturgy.² Yet what has remained strangely underinterrogated (and what nevertheless constitutes the most significant tenet of Schmemmann’s work for this study) is not his tendency to liturgical reduction of theology for which he occasionally has been accused not entirely undeservedly.³ It is rather his remarkable reflections on what under the

¹ Paul Meyendorff’s observation that “it is Schmemmann who is credited, or blamed, for many of the liturgical changes that we in America have experienced in recent decades” holds true for many venues of liturgical creativity beyond the ecclesiastical orbits of Orthodoxy. See Meyendorff, “The Liturgical Path of Orthodoxy in America,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, 40 (1996): 49.

² Lutheran theologian Gordon W. Lathrop honors Schmemmann at the beginning of his own *magnum opus* and acknowledges Schmemmann’s influence on his own prolific reflections on liturgical *ordo* as elucidated in Schmemmann’s work; Lathrop’s own contribution was “meant as an homage of thanks for that work.” Lathrop, Preface, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998): x. Aidan Kavanagh, O.S.B. has an appreciative acknowledgement of his influential monograph “in memory of Alexander Schmemmann” in *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo, 1984): v. Also, David W. Fagerberg explicitly acknowledges Schmemmann’s inspiration in his work on liturgical theology in *Theologia Prima: What is Liturgical Theology?* Second edition (Chicago and Mundelein, Ill.: Hillenbrand Books, 2004). It has also brought Schmemmann notoriety among contemporary theologians for allegedly instigating a lineage of historically lax liturgical romanticism. To single out just one recent example of a well-founded, somewhat reductively confessional, trajectory of critique: Michael B. Aune highlights Schmemmann’s foundational role for the highly influential “Schmemmann-Kavanagh-Fagerberg-Lathrop line of liturgical theology”² by challenging the runaway use of such key concepts as *leitourgia* and *legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*. Most importantly, Aune questions the tendency toward “romantic attachment”² to idealistic and ahistorical conceptualizations of liturgy. See Michael B. Aune, “Liturgy and Theology: Rethinking the Relationship,” Part I, *Worship* 81:1 (2007): 48. In my opinion Schmemmann’s work has sadly enabled repetitive fabrications of a rather dualistic *lex orandi, lex credendi* binary at the expense of attentive recognition of the complexities of historical liturgical practices.

³ In his response to W. Jardine Grisbrooke Schmemmann feels obliged to explain his meteorically popular, yet rightly confusing and routinely misinterpreted term by reduction of this definitely not the most helpful term, *lex orandi*, to the spirituality derived and legitimated narrowly and exclusively from rites and ceremonies in juxtaposition with doctrine and other elements of religious tradition and life. The reasons for

auspices of modern and postmodern Western theology is commonly conceptualized as (the problem of) sacramentality or, in more general terms, the modes of relationality between the creator and the creation. What stands out is his theologically countercultural audacity (especially vis-à-vis Occidental Protestantism) of sacramental imagination. But secondly, it is also Schmemmann's insidious oblivion toward the provocative socio-ethical ramifications of his own sacramental-liturgical theology regarding the world as the participating "matter" of the cosmic Eucharist⁴ and the whole human life as liturgy and as participation in the work of Christ⁵. The conundrum of sacramentality and not, I submit, the often unproductively extolled enthronement of a cognitively and doctrinally depotentiated *lex orandi* as a fabricated ritual category over a dispossessed *lex credendi*, constitutes the most invigorating facet of Schmemmann's contribution to theology. Rather, the creative challenge of Schmemmann's work resides in the eccentric originality of a diasporic theological voice, especially as it emerges from within an exoticized periphery of Western Christian theology and its long love affair with the rationale of binarity. Secondly, the challenge also resides in his entanglement with the lures of passively aggressive nostalgia of a certain theological nativism. Neither of these two aspects of Schmemmann's liturgical scholarship typically gets much attention despite the fact that separate, and often acontextualized, constructive elements of his work have been appropriated by liturgical theologians into the non-Orthodox North American theological

such misunderstandings are more complex, as I will show later in the chapter, one of which is Schmemmann's homiletical style and an apparent nonchalance toward discursive precision, and, last but not least, arguably his general programmatic antipathy toward employing philosophical vocabulary according to what is, and was, often a common practice of certain major strands of theology from the patristic era, both in the Christian East and West, until the present time. See "Liturgical Theology, Theology of Liturgy, and Liturgical Reform," in *Liturgy and Tradition: Theological Reflections of Alexander Schmemmann* (Thomas Fisch, ed.; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990): 38-39.

⁴ Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000): 14.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 75-77.

mainstream with some wild success. These concerns being noted, the radicality of Schmemmann's sacramental enlargement of liturgy as embracing the wholeness of human life still comes across as genuinely refreshing insofar as it constitutes a disturbance of the dominant binaristic configurations of modern Occidental rationality.

1. Theology as Minority Discourse: Negotiating Liturgical Exoticism, Mystical Orientalism, and the Lures of Diaspora

Having lived his whole life in one or another diaspora – being born in a diasporic Russian family in Estonia, then living, studying and teaching in France, and finally settling in the United States⁶ – Alexander Schmemmann found the possibility and desirability of cultural inracination and univocal belonging in any of his migratory domiciles complex and ambiguous.⁷ His locus of enunciation bears the marks of two diasporic inscriptions: theologically it is the Russian Orthodox theological tradition in a frequently confrontational encounter with the Western Roman Catholicism and various strands of the Reformation traditions. Culturally and rhetorically, it is the repetitive resistance toward identification with any of the cultures of Euro-American Occident. Schmemmann's thought proceeds with a clear, yet regretful, awareness of the tempting "exoticism" and marginality of his language, spiritual tradition, and theological

⁶ Helpful biographical information in English, among other sources, is offered by John Meyendorff, "A Life Worth Living" published as Postscript to the collection of Schmemmann's essays *Liturgy and Tradition*, 145-154. Also see Mathai Kadavil, "A Journey From East to West: Alexander Schmemmann's Contribution to Orthodoxy in the West," *Exchange* 28:3 (1999): 224-246 and Kadavil's *The World as Sacrament: Sacramentality of Creation From the Perspectives of Leonardo Boff, Alexander Schmemmann and Saint Ephrem* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005): 161-174.

⁷ Schmemmann has commented on his inability to identify completely with any world view and ideology rather poignantly in his posthumously published journals, see *The Journals of Father Alexander Schmemmann, 1973-1983* (Juliana Schmemmann, trans.; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000).

methodology. As Schmemmann sees it, the Orthodox traditions are sought after on the grounds of their exotic attractiveness:

Have not Oriental *wisdom* and Oriental *mysticism* always exercised an almost irresistible attraction for religious people everywhere? It is to be feared that certain ‘mystical’ aspects of Orthodoxy owe their growing popularity in the West precisely to their easy – although wrong – identification with Oriental mysticism.⁸

And since it is difficult to beat the Orthodox on the level of customs and all kinds of exciting ancient ceremonies, Orthodoxy enjoys a certain success and begins to attract more and more those who, disenchanted or even disgusted with the West, seek in things ‘oriental’ the satisfaction of their religious emotions.⁹

Orthodoxy is presented usually as specializing in ‘mysticism’ and ‘spirituality’, as the potential home of all those who thirst and hunger for the ‘spiritual banquet’. The Orthodox Church has been assigned the place and the function of the ‘liturgical’ and ‘sacramental’ Church, *therefore* more or less indifferent to mission. But all this is wrong. The Orthodoxy may have failed much too often to see the real implications of their ‘sacramentalism’, but its fundamental meaning is certainly not that of escaping into a timeless ‘spirituality’ far from the dull world of ‘action’.¹⁰

It is important to note Schmemmann’s consistent differentiation between the Occident-legislated assignment of “mystical/spiritual” (i.e., “exotic” and “Oriental”!) identity to the Orthodox and their self-identification which tenaciously resists the reduction of their “Eastern” difference to some extrinsically predetermined aspects of occidentally styled utility. Since the terms “East”¹¹ and “West” can be found on virtually every page in Schmemmann’s corpus, it is also important to take note of the peculiarly intra-European connotations of both terms. In Schmemmann’s usage, as far as Orthodoxy is concerned, the “East” primarily refers to geo-political regions that in the era of globalization would not

⁸ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 110. See also Schmemmann, “The Liturgical Revival and the Orthodox Church,” *Liturgy and Tradition*, 102.

⁹ Schmemmann, “The Ecumenical Agony,” 207.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹¹ It is important to note that what is presently known as “Eastern Orthodoxy” and its various ethnic traditions is the modern conglomeration of what can be called the religious traditions of “Byzantine East” while the term “Oriental Orthodoxy” typically describes the non-Chalcedonian traditions such as Armenian, Coptic, Syrian, and Ethiopian Orthodox churches.

habitually be associated with it. For him, the “East” as incessantly juxtaposed to the “West” primarily consists of such European regions as Greece, Russia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, alongside the legacies and constituencies of the Middle Eastern Orthodox milieus. It also includes their diasporic enclaves which are now supplemented by the indigenous Western converts. The “West,” obviously, is a code-word for non-Orthodox configuration of Christian cultures and theological traditions worldwide which has its origins and/or present geo-cultural location in those parts of Europe where Roman Catholicism and Protestantism reigned virtually unchallenged until recently. The always feisty and frequently self-aggrandizing rhetoric installing the “West” as the automatically predictable problem not only for itself but for everyone else as well,¹² typically co-installs the “East” as the alternative, the solution.¹³ Such envisagement is surely problematic as it routinely homogenizes the internal diversity of both Western and Eastern Christian traditions. Additionally, it locks up the “East” and the “West” in an idealistic scheme of essentialized and binaristic clash that reifies unrelational difference and ignores the common Christian history as well as the particular historical interactions and cross-fertilizations among various Christian cultures.

However, Schmemmann’s critique of the “West” does appropriately identify a prominent difficulty. Certain Occidental patterns of rationality with their enduring pretenses to universalism often embody not only a disavowal of difference but also a patronizing haste to include. What is hastily passed over is the dark side of such inclusions – reductive domestication. Schmemmann’s protestations about the preconceived

¹² Schmemmann, “The ‘Orthodox World’, Past and Present,” in *Church, World, Mission: Reflections on Orthodoxy in the West*, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1979): 25.

¹³ See, for example, such typically juxtaposed relation of the “East” and “West” in “Worship in a Secular Age,” *For the Life of the World*, 117-118.

exoticism above all lament the reduction of the Orthodox worldview “to Western categories”¹⁴ whereby unacceptable alterations of meaning are produced and proliferated. In a way hardly surprising for a diasporic thinker, he experiences “a certain inner *dedoublement*,” “a certain malaise, a kind of ‘inner distance’ separating me from my non-Orthodox colleagues.”¹⁵ But the real “ecumenical agony” does not take place within the context of some ill-conceived Machiavellian conspiracy of the Western Christianity, but precisely in the context of unselfconscious routine of inclusion. Thus Schmemmann’s ecumenical experience is that of

the Orthodox transplanted as it were into a spiritual and mental world radically different from his own; forced to use a theological language which, although he understands it, is not his language; and who, therefore, while agreeing on one level, experiences and realizes on another level the frustrating discrepancy between that formal agreement and the totality of the Orthodox *vision*.¹⁶

Schmemmann argues that the “rules of engagement” as pre-assigned saying that “the Orthodox were not given a choice,” “from the very beginning they were assigned, not only seats, but a certain place, role and function.”¹⁷ The “assignments” are based on the Western theological and ecclesiological presuppositions and categories, and “they reflect the purely Western origin of the ecumenical idea itself.”¹⁸ Consequently, the “radically different” East – and one must remember that this “East” is predominantly the non-Occidental Europe plus Schmemmann’s ancestral homeland, the perennially Euro-Asian borderland Russia – is seen as being caught “in the essentially Western dichotomies –

¹⁴ Schmemmann, “The ‘Orthodox World’”, 25.

¹⁵ Quoted from Schmemmann, “The Ecumenical Agony,” *Church, World, Mission*, 199. Note the dramatic renaming of this essay which was originally published under the title “That East and West May Yet Meet” in *Against the World for the World: The Hartford Appeal and the Future of American Religion* (Peter L. Berger and Richard John Neuhaus, eds.; New York: The Seabury Press, 1976):126-137.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 200.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Catholic versus Protestant, horizontal versus vertical, authority versus freedom – ... and made into representatives and bearers of attitudes and positions which we hardly recognized as ours and which were deeply alien to our tradition.”¹⁹ Why? It is due “precisely to the main and all-embracing Western presupposition that the Western experience, theological categories and thought forms are universal and therefore constitute the self-evident framework and terms of reference for the entire ecumenical endeavor.”²⁰

On the other hand, the altogether pertinent critique of the West is counterweighted by an equally problematic gesture present all throughout Schmemmann’s works. Pertinently acknowledged by Schmemmann on occasion as problematic,²¹ but nevertheless used liberally in his work, is the idea that the “East” owns the sole trustworthy prerogative to the pure, authentic, and unbroken Christian theological tradition. Thus, the “West” cannot exist otherwise than as a deformity of and deviation from the presumed initial unity and purity. The nostalgically projected original uniformity of the patristic “golden age”²² is envisaged as having been destroyed virtually unilaterally by the ill will and heretical leanings (papacy, *filioque*) of the Western Christianity by 1054. Of course, such a lopsided genealogy of decay is only made more bizarre by the frequently lamented

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 201.

²¹ For example, see Schmemmann, “The ‘Orthodox World’,” 25.

²² Besides postcolonial problematizing attention to the mechanisms of production of self-indulgent mythologies of history, historians of early Christianity have also pointed to the pattern of methodological primitivism that is present in the underlying position of Schmemmann’s views on history and tradition as well. Such primitivist approaches make, as Daniel Williams observes, “the common but erroneous assumption that a particular period of Christian history” can be “appropriated in a pure, unmediated way, free of social, political and economic factors.” Daniel Williams, “Constantine, Nicea and the ‘Fall’ of the Church,” in *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community* (Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones, eds.; London: Routledge, 1998): 120-122.

misfortune of the Western “captivity” of Eastern theology,²³ of which I will speak later. The notorious “captivity” is, beyond doubt, a much more complex matter involving long historical, cultural, and geo-political interactions – colonially asymmetrical as well as reciprocally beneficial – within Europe and beyond, than Schmemmann is willing to appreciate. In addition, despite numerous and fervent critiques of the deviant Western theology, especially during the Middle Ages with Thomas Aquinas as the automatic arch-villain, Schmemmann exhibits a tendency to critique by placid repetition of clichés and by vague generalizations without showing any evidence that the texts in question have been studied, rather than being preemptively dismissed without any serious scholarly effort to understand them.²⁴ Thus, ironically, here is another reminder that reduction is not a uniquely Western “original sin.”

Schmemmann’s conceptualizations of the “East” appear curiously provincial in the present understanding of the global East/West partition. In the postcolonial milieu, however, it is prudent to note that his concern about the projection of the Occidental

²³ Schmemmann expands this trajectory of argument rather interestingly beyond theology in the arena of cultural history and politics by explaining the “catastrophic metamorphosis” of the Orthodox Russia “into the center of atheism and materialism, state totalitarianism and denial of all freedom” by arguing that the Russian renegade intelligentsia and imperial bureaucracy were seduced into a form of self-colonization by Western Marxism. It was the “surrender to alien ideas and ‘visions’” that is responsible for the collapse, yet the West cannot be held directly responsible for it: “This collapse is a Russian sin and Russia bears the responsibility for it. What I am affirming is that it is a sin *against*, and not a natural outcome and fruit of, the ‘Russian Idea’... The sin itself, however, and this must be said, consisted primarily in a non-critical acceptance of a ‘Western’ and not an ‘Eastern’ idea. It was the acceptance of the specifically Western eschatology without the ‘eschaton’, of the Kingdom without the King, which reduced man to matter alone, society alone, history alone, which closed his spiritual and intellectual horizons with ‘this world’ alone.” The crowning summary of the Russian Communist revolution proclaims that “what happened in Russia is one event within the great crisis of Western civilization...” Schmemmann, “The ‘Orthodox World’,” 54-57. On self-colonization, see Bulgarian theorist Alexander Kiossev’s controversial “Notes on the Self-Colonizing Cultures,” available online at http://online.bg/kultura/my_html/biblioteka/bgvntgrd/e_ak.htm, accessed August 23, 2006.

²⁴ Anna N. Williams’ *Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) presents a meticulous analysis of the cultural, historical and philosophical elements of the East/West history of mutual misunderstanding and condemnation, as well as presents attentive theological interpretations of two seminal thinkers from both traditions to suggest ways of non-exclusionary and non-antagonistic interlogue between positions heretofore presumed to be nearly mutually exclusive without neglecting the inescapable differences in theological temperament.

patterns of thought, relation, and action as universally self-evident highlights a problem well beyond yet another petty intra-European skirmish blown out of proportion.

Schemmann's theological endeavors, like those of other thinkers working outside the Western theological tradition, pertain to the category of "minority discourse." Minority discourse is "that which must struggle to speak"²⁵ in the context of dominance. In this case, "that which must struggle to speak" is a tradition of faith and theology produced and presided over – intriguingly for a minority! – by almost exclusively white male theologians. Yet this collectivity originates, ethnically, linguistically, and socio-economically, from the "second-tier" or non-"core" Europe, i.e., those parts of Europe constituting the overlooked interstices and abject margins of the Western modernity such as Russia and the Balkans. The socio-economically endowed "Western self-sufficiency"²⁶ that Schemmann bewailed continues to pose a genuine problem for non-Western and other marginal and/or interstitial Christian cultures, let alone other wisdom traditions in the global public space. Thus his observation that "...the West had long ago lost almost completely any awareness of being just the half of the initial *Christianitas*"²⁷ has not lost its critical edge. Under such a schema of inclusion, the Orthodox "East" is seen as "suppliers of that 'mysticism' and 'spirituality', of those 'rich' liturgical traditions which the West periodically requires as useful spiritual vitamins."²⁸ However, Schemmann is less enthusiastic to recognize the "East's" own coziness (the so-called

²⁵ I am using Rey Chow's succinct description of minority discourse, from chapter insightfully names "Against the Lures of Diaspora," *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993): 111.

²⁶ Schemmann, "The Ecumenical Agony," *Church, World, Mission*, 202.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 201.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 202. Schemmann describes Orthodoxy as seen and used by the Western Christianity as "a marginal supplier of valuable but unessential 'mystical' and 'liturgical' contributions, but which, when it comes to serious matters ... is expected to express itself in a theological 'idiom' whose very adequacy to that task Orthodoxy has always questioned," 204-205.

“symphony” theory of co-inherence of state and the church) with past and present imperial formations. It is not difficult to detect a certain nostalgic and frustrated imperial desire towards the perceived victory of the Roman empire over the Byzantine empire in terms of not merely political, but also spiritual dominance in Schmemmann’s works.²⁹ These features of Schmemmann’s thought caution that the renewal of theological creativity beyond the gridlocks of the Occidental habits of dualistic imagination would do well to pay a particular attention to the “lures of diaspora,” not only its promises. Both are present equally forcefully and instructively throughout Schmemmann’s works.

Regarding the lures: do the lures of a “closed conception of diaspora” – a diaspora resting “on a binary conception of difference” and “founded on the construction of an exclusionary frontier” which “depends on the construction of an ‘Other’ and a fixed opposition between inside and outside,”³⁰ – not mimic in obverse the much-criticized Western penchant for binarisms and dichotomies? Of course, while advocating the “return” to the patristic “golden age,” which is, so goes the claim, preserved unbroken in the Orthodox tradition, Schmemmann nevertheless often expressed grave concerns about the inward and backward oriented “ultra-Orthodox” preoccupations of the many clashing Orthodox diasporas in the West, theologically and culturally.³¹ But it cannot go unnoticed that his fierce critique of the Orthodox fundamentalism, is aimed at ethnocentric and liturgically formalistic fixations understood as precisely unconscious internalizations and reproductions of the Western mentality and its theological and ecclesiastical styles!

²⁹ Essay “The ‘Orthodox World’” is a telling elaboration of this sentiment, see particularly 32-42. It is worth recalling that in the Middle Ages, during the Fourth Crusade, the Western crusaders did in fact invade Constantinople in 1204. They pillaged the *Hagia Sophia* church alongside perpetrating various atrocities, which is definitely seen as an act of desecration by the Orthodox.

³⁰ Stuart Hall, “Thinking the Diaspora: Home-Thoughts from Abroad,” *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism* (Garev Dessai and Supriya Nair, eds.; New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005): 548.

³¹ For example, among many other instances, see “Liturgical Theology, Theology of Liturgy,” 42-44.

The discourse of an idealized and ahistoric difference exemplifies a lure of diasporic theological representatives who, having been removed from their native lands and cultural worlds, often become embroiled in “intensification and aesthetization of the values of ‘minority’ positions.”³² But, if indeed the era of claiming difference by isolation is irretrievably gone, as Schmemmann himself admits³³ – except where and when it is intentionally self-produced in the search for a “refuge in the neurotic pseudo-security of the ‘holy remnant’”³⁴ – then the need for a re-envisagement of difference in a mutually dialogic, perhaps even penitential, way among genuinely different currents of Christianity should be especially appreciated. Alas, Schmemmann does not venture too far in this direction.

2. Resisting the Western “Captivity”: Exodus or Return to “the Fathers”?

Schmemmann’s critique of the Occidental rationale of binarity rests on a genealogy of Western Christianity’s degeneration and the subsequent “captivity” of Eastern Christian culture³⁵ in its deviant cross-hairs of cultural and theological contamination. For Schmemmann, “the West” is not merely a geo-cultural location, but also, and even more importantly, a specific and programmatic cultural and intellectual economy. It is

³² Chow, *Writing Diaspora*, 118.

³³ Schmemmann, “The Ecumenical Agony,” 206.

³⁴ Schmemmann, “The Underlying Question,” 11.

³⁵ By “culture” Schmemmann usually denotes the “the entire texture of national and social life.” Another term which occurs rather often is “the Orthodox world/s” which is used as a synonym for culture, denoting “a culture, a way of life, a world-view integrating religion and life and making them, however imperfectly, into ‘symphony’,” “The Underlying Question,” 42.

akin to Édouard Glissant's idea of the West as a "project,"³⁶ or to Stuart Hall's West as "an idea, a concept."³⁷ As Schmemmann sees it, in "the West" the "whole frame of mind is legalistic and syllogistic;" it is made up "of those 'dichotomies' whose introduction into Christian thought is the 'original sin' of the West."³⁸ It impinges most devastatingly on sacramental and liturgical theology. The Western theological mind is attached to "the false dichotomy between Word and sacrament"³⁹ and in specifically sacramental context is obsessed with "the question of the *validity*: i.e., the minimum of conditions required for the Eucharist."⁴⁰ It indulges in abstract theological speculation about technicalities of formulas, consecratory moments, substances and accidents, resulting in the situation when "what disappeared was the Eucharist as one organic, all-embracing and all-transforming act of the whole Church, and what remained were 'essential' and 'nonessential' parts, 'elements', 'consecration', etc."⁴¹ The penchant for ontological and epistemological dichotomies – instead of the antinomical "holding-together of opposites" in sacrament/ μυστήριον⁴² – has actually enabled a regrettable relapse: "... in its historical development, Christianity has returned to the pre-Christian and fundamentally non-Christian dichotomies of the 'sacred' and 'profane', spiritual and material, etc., and

³⁶ Édouard Glissant, *Le Discours antillais* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997):14. Glissant, in a footnote, remarks that "the Occident is not in the west. It is not a place, it is a project, (L'Occident n'est pas à l'ouest. Ce n'est pas un lieu, c'est un projet)."

³⁷ Stuart Hall, "The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power," in *Formations of Modernity* (S. Hall and B. Gieben, eds.; Cambridge: Polity Press and Open University Press, 1992): 277.

³⁸ Schmemmann, "Worship in A Secular Age," 130.

³⁹ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 33.

⁴⁰ Schmemmann, "The Liturgical Revival and Orthodox Church," 104.

⁴¹ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 34.

⁴² Schmemmann defines μυστήριον – the Greek term for both mystery and sacrament which directly merges into the Russian term for sacrament таинство, – as the double-pronged principle of ontology and epistemology. It is "the holding-together, in a mystical and existential, rather than rational, synthesis of both the total *transcendence* of God and His genuine *presence*," in "The 'Orthodox World'," 60.

has thus narrowed and vitiated its own message.”⁴³ Thus, Schmemmann laments as unbiblical that “West” which with its unchecked taste of dichotomizing models of rationality and culture,⁴⁴ has been eventually producing the great “Western heresy” of modernity – secularism.⁴⁵ This happens by disseminating the fundamental opposition of the spiritual to the material as self-evident:

‘Spiritual’ *versus* ‘material’, ‘sacred’ *versus* ‘profane’, ‘supernatural’ *versus* ‘natural’ – such were for centuries the only accepted, the only understandable moulds and categories of religious thought and experience. And Feuerbach, for all his materialism, was in fact a natural heir to Christian ‘idealism’ and ‘spiritualism’.⁴⁶

Secularism for Schmemmann, as already noted in the Overture, does not imply atheism or agnosticism, but rather an emphatic negation of sacramentality.⁴⁷ It is the negation of sacramental ontology and the whole incarnational economy of the world as created and being deified by God. This kind of secularism, Schmemmann laments, has already been sedimented into the common sense of Western culture. The true demonic novelty of Western modern secularism, according to Schmemmann, is the appearance of a secular eschatology. Secularism is first, “a stepchild of Christianity”⁴⁸ or an exaggerated consequence of the understanding of world as created *ex nihilo* by an utterly transcendent God. Subsequently, the antinomical tension between the present dispensation and the

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁵ Schmemmann, “The Underlying Question,” 14.

⁴⁶ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 14. This quote is one of several instances where terms identical to Henri de Lubac’s notion of *supernaturel* are used without a direct reference to de Lubac’s works. Schmemmann had to be at least superficially familiar with de Lubac’s thought at least around 1970, even though this language appears already in his early work *For the Life of the World* and other essays. Incidentally, there are many affinities between the two theologians, but to my knowledge, there is only one explicit reference to de Lubac in Schmemmann’s main, virtually footnote-free works, and that appears in the 1970 essay “Sacrament and Symbol”, in Appendices, *For the Life of the World*, 135-151, see footnote 8, on p. 138, where Schmemmann quotes de Lubac’s *Corpus Mysticum: L’Eucharistie et l’Eglise au Moyen Age*.

⁴⁷ Schmemmann, “Worship in A Secular Age,” 124.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 127.

world to come became rationalized and replaced by “an orderly, stable, and essentially extra-temporal distinction between the ‘natural’ and the ‘supernatural’, between ‘nature’ and ‘grace’; and then, in order to assure God’s total transcendence, it viewed grace itself not as God’s very *presence* but as a created ‘medium’.”⁴⁹ The outcome is a juridical, i.e. extrinsic, model of relationality between the present and the future, nature and grace, God and creation, wherein “those who are connected remain ontologically extrinsic to one another.”⁵⁰ In these circumstances even eschatology becomes merely futuristic.

The “West” as understood above is the source and site of the Western “captivity” of Eastern Orthodox theology and spirituality according to Schmemmann. The “captivity” consists of having succumbed over the centuries, through gestures of internalization, cross-cultural interaction, and even of certain self-colonization to the “legalistic and syllogistic Western mindset” and its inability to function outside the dualistic structures of reflection and imagination. The Western “captivity” is the mimicry or the “‘pseudomorphosis’ of the eastern theological mind.”⁵¹ It functions by adopting Western thought forms, methodologies, and categories, as well as the Western understanding of the problems, tasks, nature, and structure of theology. It is above all a methodological

⁴⁹ Schmemmann, “The ‘Orthodox World’,” 60.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁵¹ Schmemmann, “Liturgy and Theology,” *Liturgy and Tradition*, 53. The expression is borrowed from Georges Florovsky who was as adamant a critic of the Western theological tradition as was Schmemmann. Florovsky’s critique, however, is much more nuanced and historically complex in comparison to Schmemmann’s. Florovsky’s overview of the Russian Orthodox involvement with the Western theological traditions presents a rather hybridical account of irregular and fluctuating encounters and disengagements mostly between the European East and West, which recognizes that history as a multifaceted and uneven cultural-political interface upon which a forced/alien consciousness of knowing was permitted to be installed as the measure of theological adequacy. As church historian, Florovsky’s analyses are appreciative of historical facticities and concerning the Western theological traditions, his observations and conclusions, critical as they are, present not only a better knowledge of the object of criticism but also a theological sensibility of critical engagement instead of wholesale dismissal. See, for example, Georges Florovsky, “Western Influences in Russian Theology” and “The Ways of Russian Theology,” *Aspects of Church History: The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, Vol.4. (Belmont, MA: Norland Publishing Company, 1975):157-181; 183-209.

captivity.⁵² The uncanny fruit of such efforts is a “tragic nominalism,”⁵³ a mimicry that is by no means a menace to its predictable Western arch-rival, but rather an ambivalent medium of keeping up the required unfaltering ecclesiastical appearances of resistance while engaging in a clandestine cooptation on a much more subtle level. Liberation from the “captivity” for Schmemmann demands no less than a “return to the Fathers.” Again, this is an adage expressed decades before by Georges Florovsky,⁵⁴ yet in hands of Schmemmann it undergoes a metamorphosis into an imaginary of return and resistance. Return is to be made not just to the patristic texts as fashionable proof-texts, but to “the mind of the Fathers”⁵⁵ to recover the patristic “spirit”⁵⁶ while resistance toward “the West” should be exercised. Patristic theology, for Schmemmann is “the eternal model of all true theology” precisely because of its soteriological motivation, its “constant preoccupation with Truth as *saving* and *transforming* Truth, with Truth as a matter truly of life and death.”⁵⁷ This for him stands in a stark contrast to the contemporary theology which is seen as failing “to reach anybody but professionals, to provoke anything but

⁵² Florovsky has provided a rather succinct description of similar process in a more specific context of Russian theology in the 17th century Petrine era, but could well apply in a more generalized sense to most other seductive experiences, be they Roman Catholic or Protestant: “The essence of ... pseudo-morphosis lies in the fact that Scholasticism screened and obstructed Patristics for the Russians. It was a psychological and cultural Latinization rather than a matter of creed,” “Western Influences in Russian Theology,” 165-166.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Florovsky, “Western Influences in Russian Theology,” 180-181. This essay was initially presented as a conference paper to the First Congress of Orthodox Theology in Athens, 1936. Florovsky denounces the heterodox West but more importantly the “inorganic ‘Western style’” yet proposes a “return” to patristic sources *together with* and *not retreating from* modernity: “... independence from the West must not degenerate into an alienation which becomes simply opposed to the West. For a complete break with the West does not give a true and authentic liberation.” 181.

⁵⁵ Schmemmann, “Liturgical Theology, Theology of Liturgy,” 42.

⁵⁶ Schmemmann, “Theology and Eucharist,” *Liturgy and Tradition*, 85. Schmemmann explains that “... the Church has never taught that the Fathers answered all questions, that their theology is the whole theology and that the theologian today is merely a commentator of patristic texts. To transform the Fathers into a purely formal and infallible authority, and theology into a patristic scholasticism is, in fact, a betrayal of the very spirit of patristic theology, which remains forever a wonderful example of spiritual freedom and creativity. The ‘return to the Fathers’ means, above all, the recovery of their spirit, of the secret inspiration which made them true witnesses of the Church,” 84-85.

⁵⁷ Schmemmann, “The Underlying Question,” 19.

esoteric controversies in academic periodicals.”⁵⁸ *Pace* Florovsky and despite his own disclaimers against nostalgia, Schmemmann’s advocated liberation as “return” is mired in the assumption that the decolonizing break with the enduring cultural regimes of Western “captivity” can proceed as a pure, isolated and unidirectional recovery mission coupled with simultaneous resistance toward any fruitful engagement with the contemporary or future Western theological traditions. There is seemingly nothing worth considering, engaging with, and learning from the West, let alone Western modernity, for the Orthodox traditions in Schmemmann’s view. But can liberation as an aperture for new and different creativity and relationality, beyond mutual indulgence in legislating others’ identities extrinsically and presumptively, ever be a true exodus from such indulgence if it remains so dedicated to resistance so exclusively and nativistically curved into itself? Moreover, the nativistic trajectory of the “pseudomorphosis” discourse entails a fundamental disavowal of the centuries of Orthodox tradition and most definitely the theological hybridities produced through the long histories of entanglement among various currents of Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and the Protestant traditions.⁵⁹

If the problem of the Western “captivity” indeed consists in a major theological disagreement on the nature of creator-creation relationality, i.e., sacramentality, then the invention of a binary opposition which installs the “East” as the solution for all and any deviations of the “West” seems to be a yet another utterly unproductive instance of inverse Orientalism. Or, perhaps more accurately, wasting the potential of being a fruitful modulation of the Western epistemic hegemony and its proliferated imaginaries of

⁵⁸ Schmemmann, “Theology and Eucharist,” 71.

⁵⁹ See Dorothea Wendebourg’s incisive analysis of the internal diversity of the Orthodox world and the “pseudomorphosis” lineage of identitarian critiques among certain Orthodox circles, “‘Pseudomorphosis’: A Theological Judgment as an Axiom for Research in the History of Church and Theology,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 42:3-4 (1997): 321-342.

binarism, such a gesture ironically mimics the very habits it critiques – equally dualistically, equally reductively, and equally arrogantly. But this is precisely where the Orthodox tradition would seem to be prepared to keep the lures of self-serving dichotomies in check through its “preference” for the ambivalence of “the conjunction ‘and’ rather than ‘or’.”⁶⁰ This preference ought to mean the insistence on the openness and potentiality for salvation through divine transfiguration of all socio-cultural and geopolitical specificities, all historical, cultural, and theological chronotopes. In the summarily apt, if proleptic, words of John Chryssavgis,

the gift of Orthodox thought and practice lies in its ability to embrace the world as a whole, to envisage life as a complete picture, where every dimension is valued and valuable, where every detail is called to be transformed and to transform alike. This holistic synthesis of prayer and fasting, of service and holiness, of time and eternity, of spirit and matter, constitutes a unique offering of Orthodox theology and spirituality to an age in search of meaning that can hold together divers aspects of a fragmented world.⁶¹

Perhaps a transformative resistance – engaged resistance, even biblically figured discerning resistance of testing *everything* and holding fast to what is good (1 Thes.5:22) – could be a way of “returning” not to the fabrications of glorious past but rather to the exigencies of the present age of onerous entanglements? Returning, that is, through a dialogic commerce with one’s own tradition and to that of the others with an attentive allocation of both generosity and suspicion to the past and the present alike. This sort of “return” envisions a performed witness no longer to aggrandized provincial truth games and bucolic nativist theo-mythologies, but to the one who is known to have said “I am the

⁶⁰Milica Bakic-Hayden, “The Aesthetics of Theosis: Uncovering the Beauty of the Image,” *Aesthetics as a Religious Factor in Eastern and Western Christianity* (Wil van den Bercken and Jonathan Sutton, eds.; Leuven, Paris, Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005): 25ff.

⁶¹ John Chryssavgis, Review of Andrew Walker and Costa Carras, eds., *Living Orthodoxy in the Modern World: Orthodox Christianity and Society*, *Theology Today* 58:2 (2001): 268.

truth” and because of whom, in whom and through whom many encounters of faith and violence, of theological temperaments and of cultural sensibilities can still hope to participate in a “solidarity of others.”⁶²

3. Liturgy: Reclaiming Its Sacramental Glories and Uncovering Its Ethical Perils

It is now time to turn to the *Leitmotif* of Alexander Schmemmann’s work – liturgy. By liturgy (in singular) I do not exclusively denote here any particular confessionally circumscribed “ordered way of performing public worship before God and the world.”⁶³ Certainly liturgy is, beyond doubt, this “ordered way of performing” worship, as encompassing a myriad of particular liturgical services, or liturgies (in plural). As I outlined in the Overture without fully acknowledging my rather Schmemmannian presupposition, liturgy is sacramentality enacted and embodied as it keeps appearing in, with, under, and through the sacraments as relational events being performed – in liturgies. Thus my focus in the conversation with Schmemmann on the nature of liturgy will not be on his liturgiological work in elucidation of particular rites and habits of liturgical practices as it has already been for many other productive engagements⁶⁴ with Schmemmann’s thought. The present conversation focuses on his sporadically elaborated arguments that pertain to sacramental-liturgical theology as precisely a component of his

⁶² I am borrowing here from Anselm Min’s *The Solidarity of Others in A Divided World: A Postmodern Theology After Postmodernism* (New York and London: T&T Clark, Continuum, 2004). Min suggests the “solidarity of others” implies that “there is no privileged perspective, that all are others to one another, that we as others to one another are equally responsible, and that all are subjects, not objects.” (82) Hence, solidarity of others “rejects the centrality of one group, requires *decentering* concerns from one’s own group and *recentering* them on solidarity...,”¹⁴².

⁶³ I am using Frank C. Senn’s suitably generalized description from *New Creation: A Liturgical Worldview* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000): 42.

⁶⁴ Those works which are primarily concerned with the liturgical *ordo* (Schmemmann uses Russian word *чун* in what usually gets translated as *ordo*) focus prominently on his *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*. See, for example, Lathrop’s *Holy Things*.

overall theological outlook and doctrinal disposition. In other words, in this section I will converse with Schmemmann as a liturgically embedded theologian – and not a narrowly specializing liturgist as he is occasionally interpreted. I will proceed with the presupposition that his occasionally opaque and lyric iterations on “liturgical theology” cannot simply be reduced to liturgics,⁶⁵ and that this “liturgical theology” does not consist in the reduction of faith and theology to worship as cultic action. I approach Schmemmann’s “liturgical theology” as it punctuates the whole of his writings as a liturgically embedded and ecclesially invested theological (style of) inquiry which engages doctrinal problematic beyond liturgy narrowly studied as a historical assemblage and genealogies of particular ecclesiastical rites and customs. The theological challenge of Schmemmann’s thought is to be found in his soundings of liturgy as the divine-human relationality, i.e., sacramentality, *in actu* – as a passage into, inhabitation of, and witness to the Kingdom of God. Liturgy is the epiphany of sacramentality. Or, perhaps less explicitly, the imaginary of liturgy is the interface for *theosis*, or deification, or engodding, *in actu*.

Schmemmann’s elucidations of liturgy as enacted sacramentality are shaped as both historical and constructive arguments. As such arguments often go, both historical facticity and “useable past” become ambiguously enmeshed with constructive desiderata in a web of provocative undecidability. Therein, of course, resides the attraction of constructive theological creativity, which is attentive to both the fecundity of tradition and the exigencies of the present, as well as the slippery predilection for finding itself and more of itself in the useable, rather than disagreeable, past. Liturgy for Schmemmann is an

⁶⁵ Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (Asheleigh E. Moorehouse, trans.; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1986): 9-10.

avenue for reclaiming, recovering, and reintroducing some crucial features of marginal(ized) and exoticised worldviews of Orthodox Christianity into the late modern theological milieu in the West. The contrapuntal, sometimes openly confrontational, nature of his constructive work cannot be missed. Stylistically, the irenic and uplifting expositions of liturgy are frequently preceded by passages of dualistic (and sometimes crude) juxtapositions of Western and Eastern Orthodox traditions. Schmemmann consistently, to the point of annoyance, puts in quotation marks the terms he deems pertinent only to the Western philosophical, theological, sociological, and cultural discourses and consistently alien to the Eastern Orthodox theological discourse. It appears to remind the reader of his intentional self-distancing from the epistemological imaginary of the West, occasionally with a stylistic sneer. The re-envisagement of liturgy is always offered by Schmemmann as a faithful re-presentation (the “return”!) of the tradition in a way characteristic of innovative theological temperaments which are – ironically – routinely apprehensive of anything resembling innovation. Before one gets captivated by the poignancy and hope of Schmemmann’s (re)visionary ecstatic enlargement of liturgy it ought not to be forgotten that his discourse on liturgy is scored in a multiplicity of keys. It is positioned as “return,” i.e., liberation from the Western “captivity” in a gesture of defiance, and as an act of exceptionally generous construction of a usable past. It is a constructive search for healing of the fragmentation of practiced spirituality as well as theological creativity in their existential engagements with the world. And, last but not least, it is a quest for renewal of the Occidental culture and all those marginally or interstitially Occidental constituencies which live and move within the West or encounter it as a globally projected “project”/“idea.” Having already pointed

out the unacknowledged diasporic lures and fissures of certain sentiments entailed in the orientation of resistance which permeates Schmemmann's thought, I now turn to some of the most fascinating features of Schmemmann's imaginary of liturgy.

At the beginning of theological peregrinations into Schmemmann's lifeworld of liturgy, it is helpful to start by noting what, for him, liturgy is most certainly *not*. Liturgy is not "liturgicalness"⁶⁶ or infatuation with colorful and arcane ceremonies for their own sake. In fact, for Schmemmann "...one of the greatest enemies of the Liturgy is liturgical piety. The Liturgy is not to be treated as an aesthetic experience or a therapeutic exercise. Its unique function is to reveal to us the Kingdom of God."⁶⁷ Liturgy is the locus of divine revelation. Liturgy is also an enacted life of faith as a response to that revelation. It is not merely the cultic worship of the Church;⁶⁸ it is the Church's creed *in actu*, and it is the Church itself *in actu*.⁶⁹ Liturgy is enabled by faith, yet faith is exercised in liturgy and through liturgy. But the most adequate way to see what liturgy *is*, is to detour back to the underlying indispensable order of sacramentality which is the structuring structure of liturgy as its epiphany. For Schmemmann, liturgy is the "epiphany" or "phenomenon,"⁷⁰ i.e., the performative articulation and implementation *par excellence* of the all-embracing sacramental relationality within the divine economy of creation, redemption, and sanctification. Liturgy is performed in and through liturgies – specific and diverse

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁶⁷ Schmemmann, "Liturgy and Eschatology," in *Liturgy and Tradition*, 100. It is precisely the "liturgical understanding of liturgy" that is the real misunderstanding for Schmemmann, since such a (mis)understanding is "the reduction of the liturgy to 'cultic' categories, its definition as a sacred act of worship, different as such from not only from the 'profane' area of life, but even from all other activities of the Church itself," *For the Life of the World*, 25.

⁶⁸ Schmemmann, "Liturgical Theology, Theology of Liturgy," 39.

⁶⁹ Schmemmann, "Renewal," in *Church, World, Mission*, 155.

⁷⁰ Schmemmann, "Worship in A Secular Age," 120. Liturgy is the expression of the primordial intuition "... that the world, be it in its totality as cosmos, or in its life and becoming as time and history, is an epiphany of God, a means of His revelation, presence, and power," 120.

sacramental-liturgical actions, usually called sacraments, yet without being limited to these established actions and rites. The Divine Liturgy – or the Eucharist – is the central act of liturgy as the uniquely Christian divine service (богослужение)⁷¹ and indeed “the unique center of all Christian life and experience.”⁷² The Eucharist makes the Church what it is – the people of God, the royal priesthood and the Body of Christ: “In the Eucharist, the Church transcends the dimensions of ‘institution’ and becomes the Body of Christ.”⁷³ The Eucharist is “the act of passage in which the Church fulfills herself as a new creation.”⁷⁴ The Eucharist grounds, embodies, and discloses superlatively the prototypical template of sacramental relationality since it is

...not merely one possible relationship with God. It is rather the only possible holding together – in one moment, in one act – of the whole truth about God and man. It is the sacrament of the world sinful and suffering, the sky darkened, the tortured Man dying: but it is also the sacrament of the change, His transfiguration, His rising, His Kingdom. In one sense we look back, giving thanks for the simple goodness of God’s original gift to us. In another sense we look forward, eschatologically, to the ultimate repair and transfiguration of that gift, to its last consummation in Christ.⁷⁵

To reiterate what has already been addressed in the Overture, but what is also important to underscore at this juncture as the notions of liturgy and sacrament overlap and interlace ever more closely, is the significance of sacramentality. Sacramentality is the interface of

⁷¹ Schmemmann, “Liturgy and Theology,” in *Liturgy and Tradition*, 28. Also, see “The Missionary Imperative,” in *Church, World, Mission*, 214. As I already indicated in Part I, Ch. 1, the common Russian term for worship service – богослужение or literally “divine service” – resonates more tightly with the German, Swedish, and Latvian terms for the same liturgical action, than it does with the loose English term “worship.”

⁷² Schmemmann, “Theology and Eucharist,” *Liturgy and Tradition*, 72.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Schmemmann, “The World as Sacrament,” in *Church, World, Mission*, 225.

relationality inaugurated by God in creation.⁷⁶ It is inaugurated as *mysterion* to accommodate the encounter and interaction of divine self-revelation and human active receptivity and re-action in response to such revelation through the created materiality. This sacramental relationality is the underlying condition of liturgy⁷⁷ and it is this particular model of relationality – between the Triune God and human person and also, by the same token, between human person and the world in its entirety – that (modern Western) secularism rejects, according to Schmemmann.⁷⁸ Relationality conceived as sacramental – as conducive for the transfiguration of *theosis*, for the redemptive transition, and for the engodding transfiguration without obliteration of the creation and its materiality – does not denote a compartmentalized enclave of “liturgical piety,” but emerges from and reaffirms a pivotal theological attitude which Schmemmann sees as constituting the “essential difference” between the Eastern and Western Christian traditions:

...beneath all divergences and disagreements, theological and nontheological, between the East and West, there always existed the essential difference in the experience and understanding of *transcendence* itself, or rather of the essentially and uniquely Christian affirmation of both the absolute transcendence of God and of His *real presence* – that is, His immanence to the world and to man, to the totality of His creation.⁷⁹

Exaggeration of transcendence at the expense of immanence, or vice versa, amounts to the breakdown of the antinomical equilibrium and the elimination of the ontological and epistemological “hinge” of a sacramental economy – the “hinge” being *mysterion*

⁷⁶ Schmemmann, “The World as Sacrament,” 227. The sacramentality of the creation is seen by Schmemmann as the reason for the goodness of creation, 227.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Schmemmann, “The Ecumenical Agony,” 203.

(тайнство). In other words, the terms sacrament and sacramentality name the quiddity of impossible, yet already accomplished (in the Incarnation as hypostatic union) relation⁸⁰ – “holding together in one moment, in one act” – the most unlike natures without confusion, without division, without separation. Schmemmann argues that “when transposed into an ‘existential key’,” all doctrinal controversies between the “East” and the “West” are underwritten by the impatience of the “West” with *mysterion* and its annoying predilection for the principle of “both” – “the holding-together, in a mystical and existential, rather than rational, synthesis of both the total *transcendence* of God and His genuine *presence*.”⁸¹ Here, I submit, Schmemmann highlights arguably the most profound theological problem for Christian thought in a manner similar to Yngve Brilioth’s (see Overture) and it is here that sacramentality emerges particularly acutely as the ineradicable and authenticating disposition of the incarnational style in Christian thought *tout court*. However, Schmemmann’s own impatience with “the impatience of the West” in relation to the *mysterion* of Christian revelation ought to be questioned again on the same grounds as his master narratives of the genealogy of Western decadence have already been questioned above. Namely, Schmemmann’s arguments are unconvincing as far as the “impatience” with the sacramental imaginary of *mysterion* is supposed to unambiguously encompass the whole of the Western Christianity across various historico-cultural epochs as the homogenized “West.” As inaccurate as this impatiently sweeping gesture is in relation to, for example, Thomas Aquinas, it nevertheless does accurately pinpoint the enabling condition for the emergence of the *modern* Western

⁸⁰ As noted, the Greek *mysterion* is the Russian тайнство, which is rendered in most Western Christian discourses by using the Latin *sacramentum* as basis for translation and meaningful appropriation of the Greek term. In Russian the term тайнственность corresponds to the English term “sacramentality.”

⁸¹ Schmemmann, “The ‘Orthodox World’,” 60. I have put both East and West in quotation marks to draw attention to the problematically constructed nature of these terms in Schmemmann’s work.

quandary of competitive contrastiveness which lies at the root of such stubbornly detrimental disengagements as that between liturgy and ethics as well as between theology and ethics and between theology and anthropology, among others, in the modern Christian epistemological imagination.

Consequently, from the perspective of sacramentality as the interface of “holding-together,” liturgy as divine service for Schmemmann has to be re-envisioned as the enactment of sacramental relationality and therefore re-enlarged beyond the incarceration in the assigned binaries of marginal and nominalistic “liturgical piety” belonging to the adiaphora of both theology and exercised faith. But the liturgy to be re-imaged – and not simply recovered as Schmemmann often seems to advocate without taking proper notice of historical diversity of theological and liturgical practices⁸² – is the liturgy as sacramental in the sense that it embodies and enacts the salvific transfiguration of the whole creation. Liturgy here is the conduit of both christological and pneumatological constituents of the Triune *opus Dei*: the purpose of such liturgy “is truly to take the whole man and in a way the whole world into its rhythm and scope.”⁸³ Most importantly, liturgy “assumes the whole of creation – matter, sound, color – and transfigures all of it in its sacramental *passage* and *ascension* into the glory of God’s presence.”⁸⁴

Sacramentality and sacraments are intrinsically interrelated for Schmemmann: sacraments are intensely specific and particularly focused invested occasions and actions

⁸² Schmemmann’s assumptions about the uniformity and unity of liturgical practice in the early Christianity and their direct indebtedness to a monochromatically viewed Judaism in the 1st century CE, are typical of his generation of liturgical scholarship, and as such must be regarded as constructive rather than strictly historical arguments, especially in the light of more recent scholarship such as exemplified in Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) among others.

⁸³ Schmemmann, “The ‘Orthodox World’,” 49.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* Note the christological term “assume” and also the term “ascension” usually associated with the work and person of the Holy Spirit in Eastern Christian theological traditions.

(with specific intentionalities for each sacrament) within the sacramental economy of God-creation relationality of which liturgy is the inclusive interface of enactment. But what specifically marks an action, an event, or a relation as sacramental? Here Schmemmann's designations of liturgy and sacrament overlap purposefully in a dense reciprocal cross-signification: "... the whole liturgy is sacramental, that is, one transforming act and one ascending movement."⁸⁵ Schmemmann argues that both are a passage, a passover, or transition⁸⁶ into eschaton – the new world of the Kingdom of God. Sacrament here emerges as a category of liminality and hybridity, a sign and act of signifying situated in the borderland of this world and the world to come as a strictly unlocatable and singularly unidentifiable transition and transformation.⁸⁷ Sacrament, Schmemmann proposes,

is always a passage, a transformation. Yet it is not a 'passage' into 'supernature', but into the Kingdom of God, the world to come, into the very reality of this world and its life as redeemed and restored by Christ. It is the transformation not of 'nature' into 'supernature', but of the *old* into the *new*. A sacrament therefore is not a 'miracle' by which God breaks, so to speak, the 'laws of nature', but the manifestation of the ultimate Truth about the world and life, man and nature, the Truth which is Christ.⁸⁸

To sum it up, sacrament is, as it were, a descriptive "verb" for the particular template of divinely inaugurated relationality. Liturgy as far as it is sacramental is also a "verb" denoting the performance and enactment of this sacramental template of relationality by the church as a visible sign of the Kingdom of God. Sacrament is an instantiation of the pattern of relationality where one reality operates within another and is "a manifestation and presence of the *other* reality – but precisely as *other*, which under given

⁸⁵ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 41.

⁸⁶ Schmemmann, "World as Sacrament," 226.

⁸⁷ Schmemmann, "Theology and Liturgical Tradition," 17-18.

⁸⁸ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 102.

circumstances, cannot be manifested and made present in any other way than as a symbol.”⁸⁹ Sacramental revelation and sacramental relation are Schmemmann “epiphanical.” In an “epiphanical” relation one reality manifests and communicates the other, but only to the degree to which the created materiality participates in the signified reality. Thus, in sacrament as in symbol “*everything* manifests the spiritual reality, but *not* everything pertaining to the spiritual reality appears embodied in the symbol. The symbol is always partial, always incomplete” and ultimately, the function of sacrament “is not to quench our thirst but to intensify it.”⁹⁰

In Schmemmann’s view, sacrament is a double-pronged revelatory event. On the one hand, it is a “revelation of the genuine *nature* of creation, of the world” so that “in the Orthodox experience a sacrament is primarily a revelation of the *sacramentality* of creation itself, for the world was created and given to man for conversion of creaturely life into participation in divine life.”⁹¹ On the other hand, sacrament is simultaneously and irreducibly the revelation of God who “makes all creation the sign and means of His presence and wisdom, love and revelation” so that “all that exists is God’s gift to man, and it all exists to make God known to man, to make man’s life communion with God.”⁹²

“Liturgy” and “sacrament” are terms that Schmemmann very often uses interchangeably. Both denote (inter)action – passage and transformation. Recurrent insistence that one cannot be appreciated without simultaneous attention to the other renders Schmemmann’s argument somewhat overwrought, yet it stylistically addresses the theological desideratum of speaking in terms of continuities rather than dichotomies, and

⁸⁹Schmemmann, *The Eucharist: The Sacrament of the Kingdom* (Paul Kachur, trans.; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003): 38.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 39.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 33.

⁹²Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 14.

seeking connections rather than separations. Perhaps a certain density (compounded with Schmemmann's aversion to philosophically precise "Western" terminology and his diasporic attunement to more than one theological tradition) is the price a theologian ought to be willing to pay for resisting the scholarly temptation to discipline the strikingly complex texture of life in its infinitely diverse orchestrations of relation and interdependence.

Regarding the trans-active/inter-active aspect of sacramental relationality and liturgy as its enactment and implementation, Schmemmann does what scholars of liturgy often do, namely, investigates the term "liturgy" itself. Schmemmann's exploration of the origins of the Greek notion of λειτουργία allows conclusion that originally it did not have any cultic connotations but denoted rather a public office and services performed on behalf of a community and for the benefit of the community. Liturgy entailed the idea of service or ministry for Israel as well as for the church, whose "specific *leitourgia* is to fulfill God's design in history."⁹³ According to Schmemmann, the church adopted this notion for her worship, especially the Eucharist. Participation in the divine liturgy is the participation in the sacerdotal eucharistic celebration "of the sacrament of life, of this transformation into life in God."⁹⁴ Through the sacrament of baptism the human person is "made the temple of God" and the whole human life is transformed into a liturgy, passing beyond

the pseudo-Christian opposition of the 'spiritual' and the 'material', the 'sacred' and the 'profane', the 'religious' and the 'secular' is denounced, abolished, and revealed as a monstrous lie about God and man and the world. The only true temple of God is man and through man the world. Each ounce of matter belongs to God and is to find in God its fulfillment.

⁹³ Schmemmann, "Theology and Eucharist," 79. See also *For the Life of the World*, 25-26.

⁹⁴ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 34.

Each instant of time is God's time and is to fulfill itself as God's eternity. Nothing is 'neutral'.⁹⁵

Yet human life as liturgy is not a self-referential enterprise for Schmemmann, neither individually nor institutionally. Participation in liturgy is a transformative participation in the work of Christ wherein the eucharistic life of thanksgiving, service, and sacrifice is “constantly transformed into the *liturgy* – the *work* of Christ.”⁹⁶ Through liturgy human life has the potential and vocation to become “the sacramental sign.”⁹⁷ Liturgy is the *being* of the church as God's holy people and as the visible sacramental sign of God's eschatological reality.⁹⁸ The function of liturgy as a performed sacramental sign is to serve as transformative optics⁹⁹ facilitating “an all-embracing vision of life, a power meant to judge, inform and transform the whole of existence, a ‘philosophy of life’ shaping and challenging all our ideas, attitudes and actions.”¹⁰⁰ Its vocation is to confront those participating in it as “an icon of that new life which is to challenge and renew the ‘old life’ in us and around us.”¹⁰¹ As Schmemmann sees it, liturgy is the conduit or interface of transfigurative sanctification, or *theosis*, precisely as “the slow transformation of the old Adam in us into a new one;” it is “the slow victory over the demonic powers of the cosmos, the ‘joy and peace’ which *hic et nunc* make us partakers of the Kingdom and of life eternal.”¹⁰² The sacramental and liturgical vocation is to “proclaim and communicate the Kingdom” and it is this soteriological “mission that gives

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Schmemmann, “Theology and Liturgical Tradition,” 17.

⁹⁹ Schmemmann also refers to the church as sacrament in terms of optics as the “possibility given... to see in and through this world the ‘world to come’, to see and to ‘live’ it in Christ,” *For the Life of the World*, 113.

¹⁰⁰ Schmemmann, “Liturgy and Theology,” 52.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Schmemmann, “The Missionary Imperative,” 213.

to the human response in the Church its validity, makes us real co-workers in the work of Christ.”¹⁰³ The liturgical or sacramental transformation of a human person renders her human activity joyful due to finding Christ in everything and thus to be “the sacrament of the world’s return to Him who is the life of the world.”¹⁰⁴

To summarize, for Schmemmann liturgy is not merely a sanctuary-confined talk show, as elaborate, symbolic, musical and colorful or as austere as it might be as a procedure of worship, uttered across the abyss of ontological divide between divinity and humanity. The scope and reach of liturgy for Schmemmann is all-embracing cosmically, historically, and anthropologically. Most definitely, liturgy is also eschatologically interruptive in its accommodation of divine enmeshment with materiality of embodied creation in the slow process of salvific transfiguration of the fallen, yet still divinely loved and sustained, world. Schmemmann’s emphasis on the eschatological configuration of liturgy does not, however, follow the same path that certain postmodern imaginaries of eschatology as pure and relentless interruption that can easily slip into being a fetish of withholding. In Schmemmann’s thought as in the Orthodox outlook in general, there is no indulgence in radical separations between the “sacred” and “profane.” Thus even the eschatological interruption is rather perceived as always already entangled with the reality being so interrupted – interrupted by revelation as discovery of what is, in a sense, already there. Eschatological interruption underwrites the “slow victory” of corrective transformation in which “the *feast* is impossible without the *fast*.”¹⁰⁵

Now, what the enactment of transforming passage, i.e., sacramentally conditioned and structured liturgy, would entail in the world of ethical action in response to suffering,

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 214.

¹⁰⁴ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 113.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 79.

injustice, abuse, oppression and indifference, to “proclaim and communicate” the Kingdom of God? If indeed the “temple” of liturgy is human person and through human persons the whole world where “each ounce of matter belongs to God,” what is the transformative liturgical difference as far as the practical exigencies of lived experience of “this world” are concerned? A concise answer, and perhaps not a wholly unjustified one, would be to recognize that, ironically, Schmemmann’s lack of interest in pursuing the connections rather than separations between the “sacred” and the “secular” in a responsible and responsive way is here indicative of his own participation in the zealously denounced Western “captivity” of dichotomized rationality. Even though Richard John Neuhaus is right that “there was for Fr. Alexander no divide between the sacred and the secular, between the subjects of, for instance, unisex fashions and baptismal grace,”¹⁰⁶ the need to make a deliberate re-engagement between liturgy and ethical aspects of life strangely does not obtain as theological desideratum for Schmemmann.

It is often the case that Schmemmann concludes many of his essays and books with a paradigmatic last section or chapter (but let us remember his complaints about the Western exile of eschatology to that typically convoluted last chapter of dogmatics!) on the witnessing return to the world after the participation in the eucharistic rite. Often there appears something as vaguely enchanting as this: “We depart into life, in order to witness and to fulfill our calling. Each has his own, but it is also our common ministry,

¹⁰⁶ Richard John Neuhaus, “Alexander Schmemmann: A Man in Full,” *First Things* January (2001): 57.

common liturgy – ‘in the communion of the Holy Spirit’.”¹⁰⁷ Or, if the assumption that liturgy is expected to perform the transformative translation from contemplative spirituality to spiritual action automatically, seamlessly, and univocally in both individual and social contexts is not immediately obvious, Schmemmann also provides a blunt reminder of his routine option for the scope of theological creativity and vocation: “It is in a way irrelevant to ask what a return to that eschatological world-view and experience may mean in ‘practical’ terms, how it can ‘contribute’ to the solution of the world’s agonizing problems.”¹⁰⁸ Additionally, it is hard to ignore the confrontational juxtaposition between salvation as the redemptive alleviation of human suffering and injustice on the one hand, and salvation as the transfigurative restoration of created life beyond the structurally debilitating grip of sin over the whole of human life. Schmemmann finds the former understanding of salvation to be “perverse and distorted” due to its focus on the “earthly evils and tribulations.”¹⁰⁹ Instead, his preferred understanding of salvation focuses on the purely transcendent and purely eschatological undoing of the workings of the fall and death, namely, “the restoration of ... Life with a capital ‘L’, Life eternal and unfading.”¹¹⁰ But does it need to be a question of an “either/or,” particularly from the perspective of Schmemmann’s sacramental economy of “holding-together” wherein salvation is worked out through “the slow victory over the demonic powers of the

¹⁰⁷ Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 245. See also the conclusion of “The Missionary Imperative,” 216. The last chapter of the original *For the Life of the World* ends with an exhortation to witness and mission but also with an argument that there are “no answers in the form of practical ‘recipes’” (113) to answer the question as to what actions the sacramental-liturgical mission would consist of and what ethical purchase they might have. Schmemmann is careful to draw attention to the immense diversity of local factors and transformative contributions involved in “mission” to merit more than a superficial generalization.

¹⁰⁸ Schmemmann, “The ‘Orthodox World’,” 65.

¹⁰⁹ Alexander Schmemmann, *O Death, Where Is Thy Sting* (Alexis Vinogradov, trans.; Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003): 81. Schmemmann elaborates that “the whole point, of course, is not about salvation from some misfortunes or accidents, from illnesses, from various sufferings, and so forth. (...) If indeed Christianity is supposed to be a religion of salvation from earthly evils and tribulations then it is certainly a total failure,” 80-81.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 81.

cosmos, the ‘joy and peace’ which *hic et nunc* make us partakers of the Kingdom and of life eternal?”¹¹¹ Can there be no sacramental continuity in the redemptive unfolding of *theosis* between the healing of suffering psychosomatic and socio-economic bodies and the grace-filled cosmic transfiguration of the creation into new heaven and new earth? Does such a juxtaposition not reinscribe Schmemmann’s relentlessly denounced divorce between “nature” and “supernature” ever more detrimentally?

Now such an attitude does not come as a surprise against the background of Schmemmann’s extensive, at times indeed reactionary, polemic against the “obsession with relevance” within those theological orientations which prioritize responsible social engagement precisely as means of faithful “proclamation and communication of the Kingdom.” Nor is such an attitude entirely surprising coming as it does from an Eastern Orthodox context where, according to the judgment of Kallistos Ware, it must be frankly acknowledged that

Orthodoxy at its best has always shown a creative compassion towards the deprived and the suffering. But all too often this compassion has taken an exclusively personal form. While relieving the anguish of individuals who are oppressed, Orthodoxy has usually shown little concern about changing the unjust structures of society that bring about this oppression. We give bread to the starving, but we do not ask why they have no bread.¹¹²

What I have found to be virtually ubiquitous in Schmemmann’s otherwise sustained counter-dichotomous theological orientation is his own captivity to what John

¹¹¹ Schmemmann, “The Missionary Imperative,” 213.

¹¹² Kallistos Ware, *How Are We Saved? The Understanding of Salvation in the Orthodox Tradition* (Minneapolis, MN: Light and Life Publishing, 1996): 74-75. Ware emphasizes that “precisely because God is Trinity, my salvation is inextricably bound up with the salvation of my neighbor. The doctrine of the Trinity means, on the anthropological level, that I cannot be saved unless I make myself ‘responsible for everyone and everything’,” 70-71. In addition, Ware incisively explains that “salvation means sharing in the uncreated energies of God, but it also means caring in an active and practical way about what is happening in Bosnia and Rwanda,” 75, note the particular attention to the contemporary historical references of the time of the book’s publishing.

Chryssavgis called the “unholy dissociation between spirituality and social justice.”¹¹³ Curiously, this particular divorce does not seem to bother Schmemmann despite his resistance toward disciplinary divorce. Schmemmann’s judgment rings true in respect to his own theology: “The Orthodoxy may have failed much too often to see the real implications of their ‘sacramentalism’” precisely because its emerging and hard-fought acknowledgment that, indeed, “its fundamental meaning is certainly not that of escaping into a timeless ‘spirituality’ far from the dull world of ‘action’.”¹¹⁴ Chryssavgis’ observation strikes a theology premised on richly embodied sacramental relations, interconnections and interpenetrations of diverse dimensions of reality – such as Schmemmann’s – with particular devastation. It exposes the failure to perform exactly what such theology most ardently envisions and against the absence of which it mounts its most poignant jeremiad – the catholicity of aesthetically perceptive contemplation and praise, wide-ranging theological thought, and embodied interpersonally and even cosmically transformative spiritual practice in a single, yet versatile, incarnational economy of redemptive “slow transformation.” With liturgy so visionary enlarged (liturgy is life being transformed and participating in the redemptive work of Christ), and so sacramentally inscribed in the deepest interstices of material creation (liturgy assumes the whole creation in the transfigurative relationality of the Triune God), there is nonetheless a most disheartening failure to relate this liturgy to those lived experiences, actions, and relationships immersed in what Schmemmann himself called “world’s agonizing problems.” The actual dichotomy of liturgy and lived experience in Schmemmann’s work, often invisible under the presumption of seemingly self-evident,

¹¹³ John Chryssavgis, “Guest Editorial: Open to Mystery and Open to Criticism,” *Theology Today* 61:1 (2004): 4.

¹¹⁴ Schmemmann, “The Ecumenical Agony,” 21.

effortless, and non-contradictory translatability of liturgical rite into life, is a true symptom of the decadence of liturgical nominalism. This decadence engenders the oblivion toward the frustrating intricacies and disruptions of relation between liturgy performed in the Eucharist as rite and liturgy performed as vicarious eucharistic practice of participating in Christ's work of the redemptive healing of this world in relation to the whole of God's creation. In "this world," sacramental action as rite does not self-evidently, smoothly, and necessarily translate into a transformed human subjectivity and agency even though it potentially can. It is precisely the realization of the repetitive breakdowns within the continuum of liturgy – enlarged, as in Schmemmann's thought, starting from the sacrament of the Eucharist to encompass the whole interpersonal and cosmic arena of creation as the appropriate "temple" for its *opus* of sacramental signification and change toward salvation as the grace filled wellbeing of the whole creation – that has given rise to the Orthodox insistence on the inseparable conjunction between liturgy and "liturgy after the liturgy."

Regarding "liturgy after the liturgy" Ion Bria proposes that the Eucharist inaugurates and manifests the interpenetration of "calling" and "sending." The "sending" engenders "liturgy after the liturgy": it is not a secondary and nonessential addition to liturgy perceived as rite, because the very integrity of liturgy is compromised and its witness (*martyria*) is incomplete if the "calling" is detached from the "sending" – the "sending" being the celebration of the "sacrament of the brother."¹¹⁵ Boris Bobrinskoy argues that the conclusion of the divine service is "only the announcement of the end of the first stage of the eucharist... what follows is not so much an 'exit' from the church as

¹¹⁵ Ion Bria, *The Liturgy After the Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996): 20.

an ‘entrance’ by the church into the world” so that in the power of the Holy Spirit leaving the sanctuary is actually an entrance into discipleship as “another mode of the liturgy which is the ‘liturgy after the liturgy’.”¹¹⁶ From an Orthodox perspective Bria attributes the separation of the two intrinsically related “stages” of the Eucharist – so ironic in the case of Schmemmann’s thought – to the Orthodox negligence toward the social and political consequences of *theosis* and a decade later his observations have not lost their relevance:

Under the guise of avoiding the temptation of ‘horizontalizing’ the Christian message or subjecting it to ‘social’ and ‘political’ concerns, the Orthodox have often proposed a way of life which cannot be translated into action in society. They place the social order and secular issues into the hands of the state and the political parties. Hence they are unable to translate their theological vision into the terms of prevailing intellectual and political culture. They have ignored the social and political consequences of *theosis* (deification) and disregarded the historical concretization of eucharistic spirituality. In so doing they interrupt the flow of liturgical act, breaking off diakonia at the end of worship, at the door of the church.¹¹⁷

The vicarious eucharistic practice or “mission” of enacting a sacramental transformation cannot be described otherwise than ascetic. Here it is important to note that actions taken to change the self are not necessarily contradictory or mutually exclusive to the actions to change the world. The vicarious eucharistic practice is ascetic because it takes place amidst the reality of a fallen world overpopulated by competing and idolatrous liturgies of self-serving political and cultural power, pure economic reason, and unrepentant exploitation of the already disempowered on the basis of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and myriad other affiliations. By these liturgies the human multitude is always already formed before the liturgical life as the sacramental transformation and

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

participation in the redemptive work of Christ can even begin. The split between liturgical life and ascetical life – or the dreadfully heroic work of living eucharistically in a blatantly non-eucharistic reality – ought to be recognized as signaling a narcissistic ecclesio-centrism, seduced by a prematurely realized eschatology.¹¹⁸ Such eschatological imagination can be deployed to legitimate undisturbed cultic existence of hierarchical and ethnic institutional ghettos and to forget the ecclesial vocation to co-participate in the work of Christ on behalf of and for “this world,” so obviously mired in suffering and unjust deprivation. Consequently, instead of being eschatological, liturgy often becomes an actual instrument of cultivating a solipsistic utopia which disgracefully yet cozily cohabits with any existential actualities of suffering and injustice, without having its insulated utopian order disturbed.

In relation to solipsist utopias, another truly problematic and pervasive dichotomy in Schmemmann’s thought, which reigns unchallenged alongside the divorce of liturgy and ethics, needs to be singled out. It is the issue of gender, especially when it comes to the meaning and vocation of human life as being transformed into the sacerdotal liturgy of the sacramental economy of salvation. Schmemmann’s eucharistic anthropology entails the universal sacerdotal vocation for all human persons created in the image of God and called to participation in the likeness of God: “Man was created as a priest: the world was created as the matter of a sacrament.”¹¹⁹ Considering that the Russian language remained the primary theological language for Schmemmann, it is worth remembering that in

¹¹⁸ A case in point is Schmemmann’s emphasis on the seamlessness of ecclesiastical continuity suggesting that “there is no separation, no division, between the Church invisible (*in statu patriae*) and the visible Church (*in statu viae*), the latter being the expression and actualization of the former, the sacramental sign of its reality,” in “The Missionary Imperative,” 212. Liturgy – despite all the historical reductions and distortions as embodied in particular liturgies as rites and rituals – is still “the passage of the Church from the *status viae* to the *status patriae*, and as such the source of all real life of the Church...” in “Renewal,” 157.

¹¹⁹ Schmemmann, “The World as Sacrament,” 223.

Russian the word which in Schmemmann's English texts is typically rendered as "man" is *человек*. The grammatical gender of *человек* is certainly masculine, but it does not have that other clear signification of male human being such as the English word "man" does. So, reading Schmemmann generously, or with the Russian linguistic twist in mind, or perhaps simply guardedly by not expecting from him anything above and beyond the routine linguistic masculine monopoly featuring so prominently in his texts, it seems to be possible to allow an egalitarian modulation to appropriate a potentially transformative vision of human life. Especially considering the present condition of environmental crisis and the conquistador rationality of the Occidental culture throughout modernity in both its colonialist and consumerist expressions, it might be useful to read Schmemmann against Schmemmann precisely "for the life of the world" and indeed, for the life of the *whole* world:

So the only *natural* (and not 'supernatural') reaction of man, to whom God gave this blessed and sanctified world, is to bless God, is to bless God in return, to thank Him, to *see* the world as God sees it and – in this act of gratitude and adoration – to know, name, and possess the world. All rational, spiritual and other qualities of man, distinguishing him from other creatures, have their focus and ultimate fulfillment in this capacity to bless God, to know, so to speak, the meaning of the thirst and hunger that constitutes his life. '*Homo sapiens*', '*homo faber*' ... yes, but, first of all, '*homo adorans*'. The first, the basic definition of man is that he is *the priest*. He stands in the center of the world and unifies it in his act of blessing God, of both receiving the world from God and offering it to God – and by filling the world with this eucharist, he transforms his life, the one that he receives from the world, into life in God, into communion with Him. The world was created as the 'matter', the material of one all-embracing eucharist, and man was created as the priest of this cosmic sacrament.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 15.

But to leave the matter at this point is to tell only half of the story. Schmemmann's elaboration on the "specific vocation" of women¹²¹ reveals another dichotomy gone unnoticed and left undisturbed. As is often the case, his eucharistic anthropology – particularly if the egalitarian modulation and extrapolation alongside an equally necessary modulation of homocentrism is deemed worthy of such effort as I think it is – is juxtaposed to triumphantly sexist amendments underwritten by the dichotomous view of human nature embodied in two hierarchically endowed variations. Except that here, one must note, Schmemmann does not blame the "West" for such enamoration with dualism but instead endorses it himself as indeed always and everywhere already sedimented into timeless truth! Hence, the sacramental vocation and ministry of *homo adorans* is severely amended by the default assumptions of male elitist theology in a universalizing gesture, seemingly permissive of inclusivity on the one hand, but efficiently reverting to its true *modus operandi* on the other. It is a gesture which by ostensibly including "all" nevertheless reinforces – in a sinister romanticism – the gendered binaries of an injurious social ontology, camouflaged as noble resistance to the leveling of the precious discriminatory difference. Juxtaposed to the sacramental inclusivity of the justly enlarged liturgy as human participatory work in the work of Christ is the same old and skewed division of labor along the lines of gender in precise imitation of the sexually determined division of labor within the larger framework of dichotomized public and private spheres. What emerges here is yet another variation on

¹²¹ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 84. In this early work Schmemmann presents a variation on the notorious theme of patriarchal romantic "feminism," imagined as fighting valiantly for the "difference" feminine dignity jeopardized by aspirations for equality in social sphere. As the posthumously published *The Journals of Father Alexander Schmemmann* show, his views in this regard did not vary significantly until the end of his life in early 1980s, gravitating around the strange idea that social equality would necessarily entail denial of distinctions and would lead to totalitarian uniformity.

the *Leitmotif* of ambivalence which permeates the work of Schmemmann throughout his reflections on the genealogy of decadence of the “West” and the “Western captivity” of Eastern Orthodoxy. As in Bria’s observation, Schmemmann’s innovative audacity as an Orthodox does not seem to resonate fruitfully with similarly re-conceptualized socio-cultural imaginaries within the Occidental culture even though the potential of such transformational resonance is present. As I indicated in the Overture and in first chapter of Part 1, the issue of disengagement of liturgy and ethics is only a facet within a much broader web of sacramental problematic involving the Occidental rationality and lifeworlds in all their complexity. In this regard, Schmemmann’s work is instrumental for the milieu of Western theological discourses precisely as a challenge, emerging from the ambiguous diasporic location of “difference within” and directed to their still largely unexamined and undertheorized, in relation to a global panorama of tribulations, epistemological and ontological assumptions. Schmemmann’s voice is still worth serious consideration to not so much swoon over it in exotic ideality of liturgicalness, but mostly to appreciate the complexity of the alternatives being proposed as solutions being equal to the complexities produced, squarely anchored, cherished, and suffered from in the West. In addition, to engage non-Occidental or marginally Occidental perspectives fruitfully and maturely is to neither idealize their otherness in superficial yet entertaining connoisseurship, nor to ignore them preemptively as deficient and irrelevant.

Schmemmann’s specific responses of methodological resistance to the unproductive Western imaginaries (“return to the Fathers”) and constructive re-conceptualization of liturgy also reveal the enmeshment in temptations by which a diasporically and oppositionally situated theological creativity is often scandalized. First, the resistance to

hegemonic discourse and presumptive legislation of identity vis-à-vis a marginal theological lifeworld can always be matched by an equally totalizing counter-imaginary, operating according to its own similarly narcissistic constellation of values even when its critical impetus of the Western discursive hegemony is incisive and timely. In short, the diasporic difference does not automatically mean a qualitative and cathartic difference, no matter how seductive the aroma of its homing desire is. Second, regarding liturgy in particular, Schmemmann's re-conceptualizations of liturgy to renounce and move beyond the discourses and lifeworlds erected and governed by mutually alienating binarisms that stultify life and thought, contemplation and action, succeed and fail simultaneously. Namely, as some unhelpful dichotomies are dismantled, others are produced and as a conceptually intricate radical interrelatedness of the spiritual/sacred and the material/secular is proposed, other disruptions of relation are installed. If liturgy is indeed the whole of sacramentally transformed and transformative life, not singularly constituting but participating in the redemptive *opus Dei* in the whole of created life, then indifference to this very lived breadth and wholeness of dually vectored *religio* – to God and fellow human beings – clandestinely re-authorizes exactly the irrelevance of this crucial relation. The problem is that the ideality of *theologia* is seen as sufficient without precisely the fulfillment (a beloved notion of Schmemmann's) of its sacramentally soteriological momentum, in a truly incarnational directionality within the *oikonomia* of ethical interpersonal relationality. The typically brief doxological closing passages in Schmemmann's texts on "returning to the world" after the Eucharist signal simultaneously first, the exhaustion of interest in the sacramentally transformed life as a lived liturgy appropriately enlarged.

Second, it signals the anxiety of trespassing the political and socio-cultural boundaries of propriety pertaining to theological expertise, reinforcing, of course, the very structures of dichotomous disciplinary divorce that Schmemmann laments elsewhere so extensively. What surfaces repeatedly is a virtually nativist preoccupation with situating the purity of theological enterprise in the privileged and retrospectively imagined lineage of authenticity – “the Fathers.” This preoccupation with solemnized theoretical purity actually veers toward not only the abduction of any actual liturgical action, passage, and transformation of life as lived reality, but already prior to that, toward the abdication of consistent and penetrating interrogation of what such action might mean in the “this world” of systematic and institutionalized injustices and oppressions. Theologically, the notion of ethics as a *discursive* sensibility and configuration of reflective activity implies, in the words of Beverly Wildung Harrison, “critical questioning of our evaluations of the world.”¹²² Ethics as a tactically critical discursive practice, such as Rey Chow suggests, further specifies the critical questioning as willing “to take risks” and willing “to destroy the submission to widely accepted, predictable, and safe conclusions.”¹²³ Schmemmann, alongside many others, does not entertain the possibility of going beyond the predictable and safe cliché recognition of the “fallenness” of “this world,” despite his proposition that nothing is really “neutral” in this world as far as sacramentally invested theology is concerned. The result is a forgetfulness that risks overlooking the danger of liturgy, promisingly enlarged, on the one hand, and persistently unredeemed routine living in need of sacramental transfiguration, on the

¹²² Beverly Wildung Harrison, “Doing Christian Ethics,” in *Justice in the Making: Feminist Social Ethics*. Beverly Wildung Harrison (Elizabeth M. Bounds, et al, eds.; Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004): 31.

¹²³ Rey Chow, *Ethics After Idealism: Theory-Culture-Ethnicity-Reading* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998): xxii.

other, remaining as un-transformatively estranged as ever. This estrangement fully merits the vociferous critique of Emmanuel Levinas to which I will turn in the following chapter. But here the two remain juxtaposed in continuing suspicion of each other, as in the example of the gendered slant of Schmemmann's eucharistic anthropology, precisely when they are brought so tantalizingly close in a diasporic imaginary.

Among the greatest pedagogical merits and challenges of Schmemmann's work is, I submit, the presentation of the difficulty involved in re-envisioning theological discourse (and not just liturgical studies) by privileging marginally Occidental or non-Occidental rationalities and spiritual temperaments presented in critically polemical positionality vis-à-vis the West without repeating, as if by an abject mimicry, the very liabilities correctly identified as in need of unmasking and rectification. If a particularly liberative element of the diasporic perspective (and predicament) is to "to unlearn that submission to one's ethnicity ... as the ultimate signified,"¹²⁴ then Schmemmann's work leaves the desire kindled yet frustrated.

Among the greatest liabilities of Schmemmann's work is the absence of critical attention to sacramental ethics as an intrinsic component of his cosmically enlarged liturgy. For liturgy for Schmemmann seems to denote, so promisingly after all, a eucharistically performed life of transfigurative passage of a truly cosmic scope – by participation in *opus Dei* – well beyond sacramental rites isolated in cultic worship alone. Within the cosmic scope, theology and spiritual life are consumed by and consummated

¹²⁴ Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora*, 241. The case, however, is not clear-cut at all with Schmemmann – a typical diasporic aporia – regarding the ethnic demarcation of the Orthodoxy because he explicitly rejects the self-enclosures of various ethically circumscribed Orthodox communities as impoverishing and even narcissistic. Yet, the problem with "ethnicity" understood as Russian Orthodox-ness is its self-identification as rightness – *ortho-doxia* – of theological existence being *a priori* absolved of any necessity or desire to engage in lateral interaction with differently formed Christian cultures in *reciprocally* productive way.

in liturgy. But, on a closer look, it turns out to be a segregated liturgy for which ethics emerges as a dichotomous afterword, always already “married below” the properly doctrinal and sacramental concerns to the theological *parerga*. Could another diasporic voice – that of Emmanuel Levinas – be helpful for the peregrinations in search for the ethical *basso continuo* of enlarged liturgy or socially responsible and responsive action as doxology alongside Alexander Schmemmann towards the ends that are not necessarily their own?

Chapter 2

From the “Poetry” of Liturgy to the “Prose” of Emmanuel Levinas: On Not Already Being Lost in Wonder, Love and Praise¹

What is it that invites rather irresistibly the late modern Jewish thinker Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) into a conversation on sacramentality, liturgy, and ethics? It seems to be the conspicuous under-determination of, and occasionally even oblivion toward, the ethical as interpersonally enacted in the rightly enlarged liturgical-sacramental imaginary within and beyond the rites of corporate worship that permeate Alexander Schmemmann’s theology. Inviting Levinas’s participation, I submit, is the search for a contrapuntal modulation vis-à-vis the most hopeful aspirations and the most vexing occlusions of the whole discursive and imaginative field of sacramental-liturgical inquiry which Schmemmann’s work represents rather emblematically. Like Schmemmann, Levinas is a diasporic thinker – in more than one sense. Unlike Schmemmann, Levinas is a comfortably Western and manifestly Occident-centered thinker. The Jewish thinker was born in Kaunas (Kovno), Lithuania, during its subjugation by the Russian empire, grew up during the turbulent era of the Russian revolutions, First World War and the establishment of the independent Lithuania, but eventually spent most of his life in France.² Despite having endless reservations about engaging with theology, the line between specifically Jewish religious reflections and presumably non-confessional philosophical inquiries about the idea of God seems at times to be rather blurred in Levinas’ thought. Similarly to the other

¹ I am referring here to concluding line of the last stanza of the hymn by Charles Wesley and Rowland H. Pritchard “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling.”

² Biographical information comes from the interviews of Levinas with François Poiré and Myriam Anissimov in *Is It Righteous To Be? Interviews With Emmanuel Levinas* (Jill Robbins, ed.; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001): 23-92.

two primary interlocutors of this dissertation – Alexander Schmemmann and Edward Said – Levinas was multilingual culturally and intellectually, and had a rather poly-locational sense of (non)belonging, specifically and somewhat predictably shaped by the recurrent imaginary of the Jews being the perennial intra-European “other” or even subaltern.

Levinas conveys his personal exilic disposition in a manner equally radical to the conceptualizations of his ethics as virtually suspended in an incessant exile of non-return and non-fulfillment:

Someone asked me the other day if, as a Jew, I didn't feel like an outsider in France. I replied to him that wherever I am, I feel like I'm in the way, and I quoted a Psalm: 'I am a stranger upon the earth' (Ps.119:19). Strangeness is situated in relation to the earth.³

Certain geo-cultural connections between the interlocutors notwithstanding, what could be the critical purchase of entering in conversation – conversation being neither a comparison nor an exhaustive explication of the peripeties of Levinas' thought – with Levinas specifically on liturgy? To put it bluntly, it is, as I hope to show, Levinas' attitude toward liturgy otherwise than what Schmemmann decried as “liturgicalness.” Levinas' “liturgy” allows the re-configuration and re-situation of liturgy beyond the complacent inertia of self-absorption and self-sufficient interiority of consuming cultic rituality. As I already indicated at the outset of this dissertation (Part I, Ch. 1), it is neither desirable nor justifiable for Christian theological reflection in the West to proceed without being attentive to the global postcoloniality and the European post-totalitarian aftermath. Attention to these pivotal events of the late modernity entails an attuned and even penitential, where applicable, theological hospitality vis-à-vis the existential actualities of life with their globally diverse yet irrevocably interdependent asymmetries,

³ Interview with Myriam Anissimov, *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 92.

especially when it concerns human suffering and injustice. In this context the thought of Levinas is one of these specifically post-Holocaust voices that a Christian theologian ought to never pass by indifferently.

Levinas' indomitable critique of a certain kind of liturgical piety and "the sacramental,"⁴ if engaged conversationally and constructively, offers a particularly useful and provocative counterpoint for the re-envisioning of liturgy as re-engaged with ethics. Such provocations, despite his obvious and profound suspicion of all things liturgical – in the sense of ritual or cultic action – may contribute to the possibility of re-orchestrating the vital enlargement of liturgy not at the expense of ethics but instead through ethics, beyond the unproductive competitiveness of the logic of dislocation. In other words, I engage Levinas' ethically invested thought as a contrapuntal challenge that, I believe, suggests ways to remodulate the detrimental modern Western disengagement of sacramental liturgy and ethics by interlacing them to the point of fruitful "confusion"⁵ (to take the liberty of paraphrasing Levinas somewhat mischievously here) of liturgy as a sacramental action originating within the liturgical convocation with the "stirring" of what some theologians call "liturgy after the liturgy" or the vicarious work of mercy and justice outside the moments of upliftment in "amorous dialogue."⁶ On the other hand, provocation seen as a rightful challenge does not

⁴ See the Overture of this dissertation.

⁵ This is an allusion to "God and Philosophy" where Levinas expounds the idea of illeity: "...God is not simply the 'first other', the 'other par excellence', or the 'absolutely other', but other than the other [*autre qu'autrui*], other otherwise, other with an alterity prior to the alterity of the other, prior to the ethical bond with another and different from every neighbor, transcendent to the point of absence, to the point of confusion with the stirring of the *there is*." In *Emmanuel Levinas: Collected Philosophical Papers* (Alphonso Lingis, trans.; Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998): 165-166. Further abbreviated as *CPP*.

⁶ "Amorous dialogue" represents for Levinas the narcissistic self-insulation in indifference toward human suffering while presuming to be individualistically enveloped in a pious intimacy with God. See Levinas,

determine the constructive fruit of the conversation. The present conversation with Levinas on liturgy is irrevocably mired in the mutual recognition of a noteworthy difference. It is “the mystery of mysteries of [Christian] theology”⁷ – the Incarnation of Christ – which Levinas obviously does not share yet I find absolutely pivotal together with the trinitarian vision of God. Thus I enter into the conversation by offering a partially disagreeable answer to his question “whether the true God can ever discard His incognito.”⁸ Namely, the discarding of the incognito is rather the sacramental transposition of God’s absolute incognito into an opaquely unveiled incognito of sacramental presence located in the continuity, perhaps even the trace, of the Incarnation. So the conversation undertaken here is to some extent akin to a being a “metaphysical” one according to Levinas’ idea of metaphysics as “the relation between the same and the other”⁹ which is primordially enacted as conversation (*discourse*). Conversation as an enactment of the metaphysical relation “maintains the distance between me and the Other, the radical separation asserted in transcendence which prevents the reconstitution of totality, cannot renounce the egoism of its existence...”¹⁰ The “distance” and “egoism” of my locus of engagement shows itself in calling in question Levinas’ insistence –I assume unsurprisingly for both parties – upon the metaphysical relation as approaching “without touching,”¹¹ as disinterested and disengaged from all participation.¹²

Participation for Levinas is a term of trespassing across the ontological abyss of

“The I and the Totality,” *Entre-Nous: Thinking-Of-The-Other* (Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshaw, transl.; New York: Columbia University Press, 1998): 21-22.

⁷ Levinas, “A Man-God?” *Entre-Nous*, 53.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Alphonso Lingis, transl.; Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2002): 39. Further abbreviated as *TI*.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹² *Ibid.*

difference between the uncreated and creation, a term of erotic heresy of the habitual, egoistic self, a term of fusion and totalization.¹³ But in certain classical Christian theological traditions, participation does not signal univocal proximity and unadulterated intimacy of fusion; rather it constitutes the language of the antinomy of ontological and epistemological distance. Yet the enduring distance of the radical ontological difference between God and creation is simultaneously offered into a creaturely uncontrollable and exhaustively incomprehensible, yet irrevocable, proximity and availability in the trinitarian economy of incarnational sacramentality – but always *per gratiam* and under no conceivable circumstances *per naturam*, to use a Thomistic distinction. Hence, the God-creation relationality here is already contaminated, or hybridized, by the incarnational hospitality toward and unapologetically non-patriarchal appreciation of touch¹⁴ even though – *pace* Levinas – without annihilating the ethical and without inescapable “naturalization” of alterity in the “metaphysical relation” of conversation. In sum, this is a conversation between two specific, tradition-based creativities which have already touched and will continue to touch each other even as they remain mutually exterior and grounded in their respective primeval revelations – in the word of God and in the incarnate word of God,¹⁵ and also in the hope that truly “each discourse on contact with each other becomes larger.”¹⁶

¹³ “The comprehension of God taken as a participation in his sacred life, an allegedly direct comprehension, is impossible, because participation is a denial of the divine...” in *TI*, 78.

¹⁴ Here I refer to the interrogation by Luce Irigaray of Levinas’ adherence to a patriarchal and masculine conception of monotheism with its “injunction not to touch.” See Irigaray, “Questions to Emmanuel Levinas: On the Dignity of Love,” *Re-Reading Levinas* (Robert Bernasconi and Simon Critchley, eds.; Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991):114.

¹⁵ One of Levinas’ descriptions of difference between Judaism and Christianity, strained in its homogenizing formalism as a Christian cannot help but notice, is as follows: “... the specific face of Judaism: the link between God and man is not an emotional communion that takes place within the love of a God incarnate, but a spiritual or intellectual (*esprits*) relationship which takes place through an education in the Torah. It is precisely a word, not incarnate, from God that ensures a living God among us.” In

1. Resisting the Captivity of Splendor and Levitation: Religion as Rite and “Liturgy”

It strikes me as rather ironic to engage Emmanuel Levinas on the theme of liturgy, most often associated with the pernicious egocentric pieties of religious “enthusiasm.” Liturgy is a superbly ambiguous notion in the texts of Levinas. First, “liturgy” often serves for Levinas as the point of departure for dismissive critique of certain pointedly Christian versions of lived religion and – by extension – certain compromised or assimilated versions of Jewish religious practices. The “liturgy” which is infinitely suspected on the grounds of egoistic abdication from the ethical responsibility is the codeword for individualistic religion of exclusively cultic and ritual worship as the sole interface for all commerce with God. Religion as “liturgical” relation to God is the exercised religion effectively “reduced to the interiority of the house of prayer.”¹⁷ Such practiced religion as pious interiority is at its best irrelevant and at its worst idolatrous:

The reduction of religion to private worship in anachronistic... it is not that in itself worship seems to us an outmoded formula; but when it is jealously private, it lives and breathes in a hothouse, communicates no vital energy and does not project itself into life. The inner life, reduced to being present at temple, interrupting a man’s daily activities, before he returns to serious things, is perhaps enough in a world free of rifts in which eternal and daily matters each remain peacefully in their proper place. The Christian churches set themselves up within this distinction and inaugurated an academism of the spiritual in which the inner life frees itself of all responsibility.¹⁸

Levinas’ perception, in Judaism, as opposed to Christianity, “spirituality is offered up not through a tangible substance, but through absence. God is real and concrete not through incarnation but through Law, and His greatness is not inspired by His sacred mystery. His greatness does not provoke fear and trembling, but fills us with high thoughts.” Emmanuel Levinas, “Loving the Torah More Than God,” *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism* (Sean Hand, transl.; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997):144-145. Further abbreviated as *DF*.

¹⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, “Exclusive Rights,” *DF*, 239.

¹⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, “How is Judaism Possible?” *DF*, 246.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 247-248.

The site of a true religion for Levinas is not the hothouse of ritualistic worship wherein the “absolute is reduced to this very worship” and attendance of “pretty ceremonies” while “savoring the metaphysical anxiety and the presence of the Sacred in social quietude...”¹⁹ Religion worthy of its name for Levinas has little to do with the privatized sphere of rapture, ecstasy, mythological enchantment, or “that drunkenness of the Sacred”²⁰ – always forgetful of the suffering and non-redemption of the present world, always preoccupied with solitary salvation,²¹ and always dangerously abstract in its *Schwärmerei* of intoxication with the violence of magical actions.²² True religion is rather a counterpractice vis-à-vis “the unctuous, mystical, pious, homiletic, clerical notion of religion.”²³ Hence, true religious practice within Judaism, according to Levinas, is to be reflective of the “expansiveness of a God whom a temple could in no sense contain.”²⁴ Reflecting on the thought of Franz Rosenzweig, Levinas envisions true religion as a distinct configuration of relationality: “Religion, before being a confession, is the very pulsation of life in which God enters into a relationship with Man, and Man with the World.”²⁵ But religion, very soberly, is also “the certainty of the absolute’s hold over

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 248.

²⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, “Being a Westerner,” *DF*, 48.

²¹ Emmanuel Levinas, “Place and Utopia,” *DF*, 101. Also, Levinas is rightfully emphasizing the absence of solidarity locally and globally from the practices of private religiosity, see, for example, “Education and Prayer,” *DF*, 270.

²² Emmanuel Levinas, “Ethics and Spirit,” *DF*, 7. Levinas associates violence with “poetic delirium and enthusiasm” vis-à-vis “the Sacred” – the idolatrous deity of the swooning piety of emotivism as opposed to “the Holy” – with the disposition of fear and trembling “when the Sacred wrenches us out of ourselves.” Such ec-static decentering of human person from his/her voluntary self-possession and rational self-presence is seen as regressive to pre-monotheistic forms of spiritual life and above all, detrimental to the ethical relation with the other/Other/Illeity, *DF*, 7.

²³ Emmanuel Levinas, “Between the Worlds. The Way of Franz Rosenzweig,” *DF*, 187.

²⁴ Levinas, “How is Judaism Possible?,” *DF*, 248.

²⁵ Levinas, “Between the Worlds”, 189.

man” and “burns inwards... as infinite responsibility.”²⁶ Thus religious relation can only be an ethical relation through which God’s presence and revelation are encountered:

Ethics is not a moment of being; it is otherwise and better than being, the very possibility of the beyond. In this ethical reversal, in this reference of the desirable to the non-desirable, in this strange mission that orders the approach of the other, God is drawn out of objectivity, presence and being. He is neither an object nor an interlocutor. His absolute remoteness, his transcendence, turns into my responsibility – non-erotic par excellence – for the other. And this analysis implies that God is not simply the ‘first other’, the ‘other par excellence’, or the ‘absolutely other’, but other than the other [*autre qu’autrui*], other otherwise, other with an alterity prior to the alterity of the other, prior to the ethical bond with another and different from every neighbor, transcendent to the point of absence, to the point of confusion with the stirring of the *there is*.²⁷

Ethics as spiritual optics is an optics of apophatic (negative) distance, theologically circumscribing any ontological speculative knowledge of God, yet contrapuntally consonorous with positive interpersonally enacted knowledge of God²⁸ where the finite creaturely ethical action, in a sense, enacts more than it acts:

...the Other is not a new edition of myself; in its Otherness it is situated in a dimension of height, in the ideal, the Divine, and through my relation to the Other, I am in touch with God.
The moral relation therefore reunites both self-consciousness and consciousness of God. (...) Ethics is not the corollary of the vision of God, it is that very vision. Ethics is an optic, such that everything I know of God and everything I can hear of His word and reasonably say to Him must find an ethical expression.²⁹

The discourse of negative theology – non-presentability of the transcendence, its unavailability for thematization does not result in a vacuum of “positive” ethical relation

²⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, “Religion and Tolerance,” *DF*, 174.

²⁷ Levinas, “God and Philosophy,” *CPP*, 165-166.

²⁸ Levinas states that “to know God is to know what must be done.” See Emmanuel Levinas, “A Religion for Adults,” *DF*, 17.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

and action. Negative theology, as it were, flows into positive ethical performance as one is “ordained” to the service of, indeed, a traumatic hospitality:

In this order which is an ordination the non-presence of the infinite is not only a figure of negative theology. All the negative attributes which state what is beyond the essence become positive in responsibility, a response answering to a non-thematizable provocation and thus a non-vocation, a trauma. This response answers, before any understanding, for a debt contracted before any freedom and before any consciousness and any present, but it does answer, as though the invisible that bypasses the present left a trace by the very fact of bypassing the present. That trace lights up as the face of a neighbor, ambiguously him *before whom* (or to *whom*, without any paternalism) and him *for whom* I answer.³⁰

The positive response to the summons of the Infinite consists in the conversion of strictly religious response into a religio-ethical responsibility: “The positivity of the infinite is the conversion of the response to the infinite into responsibility, into approach of the other. The Infinite is non-thematizable, gloriously exceeds every capacity, and manifests, as it were in reverse, its exorbitance in the approach of a neighbor, obedient to its measure.”³¹ Religious praise is exercised, under the auspices of this conversion, as service. The most lofty apophatic theology is ethically converted into a performance of obediently humble acts of service.

If Levinas would be willing to speak about theology at all, it would be a theology stemming from the primacy of ethics over the doctrinal, let alone liturgical, tenets of religion. As he maintains, “for me theology begins in the face of the neighbor. The

³⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being Or Beyond Essence* (Alphonso Lingis, trans.; Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2004):11-12. Further abbreviated as OTB.

³¹ *Ibid.* 12. Predictably, Levinas qualifies the leap involved in the linkage of the hostage taking neighbor and the illeity of God by stressing that “the infinite then cannot be tracked down like game by a hunter. The trace left by the infinite is not the residue of a presence; its very glow is ambiguous. Otherwise, its positivity would not preserve the infinity of the infinite any more than negativity would.” *Ibid.*, 12.

divinity of God is played out in the human. God descends in the ‘face’ of the other.”³² Ultimately, “the ethical order does not prepare us for the Divinity; it is the very accession to the Divinity. All the rest is a dream.”³³ It seems that for Levinas, in religion as radically ethical and as resolutely non-“liturgical” – sobered up and purified of affectivity and enchantment of rite – “liturgy” often functions as a trope for a rogue relation with God, as the paradigmatic relation to, or submergence in, “the Sacred.”³⁴ As such it is a site of escape from the ethical exigencies of life in “the privileged moments of liturgical, mystical elevation, or in dying...”³⁵

In *Totality and Infinity* “liturgy” is related to the cessation of discourse in “incantation”³⁶ and “elevation.” These terms denote precisely that which distracts one from ethical relationship with the other. Such “liturgy” accommodates a self-designed transcendence of escape from ethical responsibility and therefore precludes the possibility of a genuinely non-allergic and non-indifferent relationship with the other, human and divine. References to liturgy in *Totality and Infinity* are thoroughly negative. The ethical relation “cuts across every relation that one could call mystical” – mystical in that in such a relation “intoxicating equivocations come to enrich the primordial univocity of expression, where discourse becomes incantation as prayer becomes rite and liturgy, where the interlocutors find themselves playing a role in a drama that has begun outside of them.”³⁷ Here “liturgy” becomes the site and the medium of the ontological, psychological, and aesthetic derailing of the ethical. “Liturgy” is akin to the “poetic

³² “On the Usefulness of Insomnia,” *Is It Righteous To Be?*, 236.

³³ Levinas, “Place and Utopia,” 102.

³⁴ Levinas, *TI*, 79.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 52.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 202.

³⁷ *Ibid.*,

activity – where influences arise unbeknown to us out of this nonetheless conscious activity, to envelop it and beguile it as a rhythm” only to be duly disrupted by “discourse” – a conversation, a social relation of responsibility³⁸ toward the other – that breaks the “rhythm which enraptures and transports the interlocutors – prose.”³⁹ Affinity between “liturgy” and “poetry” appears in their ecstatic character, overwhelming rational discourse, their swooning experientialism, irrational thaumaturgy,⁴⁰ and their privileging ludic views of reality. According to Levinas, God’s presence – to be sure, a relation without relation – can be encountered through the spiritual optics of one’s relation to fellow human beings – “the vision of God is a moral act.”⁴¹ Judaism’s proclivity and vocation under such constellation of relationality is to demythologize and refuse the “splendor and levitations of salvation by faith” precisely because of the grave ethical danger involved, since “the cruel acts find themselves conditioned precisely by the residual elements that are uncontrolled and impure in their supposedly pure and simple love of the transcendent God.”⁴² Thus, the participation in and infatuation with “the supernatural” for Levinas cannot possibly be “an obsession for Judaism,” since “its relationship with divinity is determined by the exact range of the ethical.”⁴³

³⁸ Levinas is always wary to emphasize relation (touching!) due to the concerns about habitual naturalization, domestication, assimilation of the alterity, so the social relation is theorized along the lines of non-indifference: “The interhuman, properly speaking, lies in a non-indifference of one to another, in a responsibility of one for another, but before the reciprocity of this responsibility, which will be inscribed in impersonal laws, comes to be superimposed on the pure altruism of this responsibility inscribed in the ethical position of the I qua I,” “Useless Suffering,” *Entre-Nous*, 100.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁴⁰ “Thaumaturgy” for Levinas is yet another sarcastic trope of cultic action and numinous enchantment in its clandestine violence of the Sacred, which by its “sacramental power” “envelops and transports me” and by acting so wounds the dignity of a responsible human being. See Levinas, “A Religion for Adults,” *DF*, 14-15.

⁴¹ Emmanuel Levinas, “For a Jewish Humanism,” *DF*, 275.

⁴² Levinas, “Being a Westerner,” *DF*, 49.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

2. Beyond Dreams and Incantations: Liturgy as Work

It might have already appeared that the idea of liturgy is unsalvageable as an idolatrous site within practiced monotheistic imaginaries, but it is not quite so. Levinas proposes another view on liturgy, surprisingly similar to certain Christian interpretations (see Part I, Ch.1), which also accentuate the Greek semantic connotations of *ἔργον* in *λειτουργία*. But before anything else is said, it has to be noted that Levinas does not advocate a wholesale extirpation of liturgical activity though rites of worship, at least when they operate in the lean manner as his preferred liturgical gestures – “verbal gestures of prayer”⁴⁴ – distanced from “liturgical enthusiasm” and representing “the extreme conscience of justice” being grounded in, accountable to, and sustained by “the difficult and erudite work of justice.”⁴⁵ It is fairly obvious that Levinas is not indifferent to liturgy and worship. Consequently, “no intrinsic power is accorded to the ritual gesture, but without it the soul cannot be raised up to God,”⁴⁶ so “to criticize the thought that sees in worship the supreme expression of religious life is not to be opposed to worship.”⁴⁷ The question here seems to be more about the quiddity of worship and the discernment between the right worship and an alien worship than about the legitimacy or value of worship as such.

So the second perspective on liturgy in the works of Levinas – liturgy otherwise than “liturgical enthusiasm” – locates liturgy in the order of the metaphysical relation with the other where it can be said to be “accomplished as service and as hospitality”⁴⁸ to

⁴⁴ Levinas, “Education and Humanism,” *DF*, 271.

⁴⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, “The State of Israel and the Religion of Israel,” *DF*, 217, 219. Levinas does not abandon the skeptical proviso though: “But if the ritual is valuable, it will be reborn only in the virility of action and thought,” 219.

⁴⁶ Levinas, “A Religion for Adults,” *DF*, 18.

⁴⁷ Levinas, “How is Judaism Possible,” *DF*, 246.

⁴⁸ Levinas, *TI*, 300.

both the human other and God. This liturgy is the enactment of “the ethics of welcome – the first religious service, the first prayer, the first liturgy...”⁴⁹ Above all, liturgy is work. At this juncture it is helpful to note that the stance of Levinas vis-à-vis the predicament of original sin in relation to human ethical capability for responsible action differs from what can be expected from a typical Western Christian, especially Protestant, theological trajectory. Interhuman responsibility for the other – into which the I is always already inscribed or conscripted as a hostage – is “more ancient than any sin.”⁵⁰ The responsibility of the I for the other is a responsibility of a hostage, a hostage to our common, though ethically asymmetrical, createdness. It is the sharing of the created reality by being involved in the “*gnawing away at oneself* in responsibility, which is also incarnation.”⁵¹ This, however, must not be conceived, according to Levinas, as “the state of original sin; it is, on the contrary, the original goodness of creation.”⁵² In other words, human agency taken hostage to the responsibility for the other, is seen by Levinas as empowered to redemptive proportions as it incarnates itself in efficacious self-sacrifice.

In “The Trace of the Other” and “Meaning and Sense”⁵³ liturgy is reconceptualized rather broadly as a metaphysical directionality or an “orientation in being” modeled after the Abrahamic movement without return as if in counterpoint with

⁴⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Of God Who Comes to Mind* (Bettina Bergo, trans.; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998): 151.

⁵⁰ Levinas, “From the Rise of Nihilism to the Carnal Jew,” *DF*, 225.

⁵¹ Levinas, *OTB*, 121.

⁵² *Ibid.* Pointing to the important differences on the account of the conceptions of original sin, Stephen H. Webb helpfully reminds that for Levinas “original sin has a social provenance, and thus it is correlated to the notion of justice, not salvation.” See Webb, “The Rhetoric of Ethics as Excess,” *Modern Theology* 15:1 (1999): 9.

⁵³ Emmanuel Levinas, “The Trace of the Other” was initially published in 1963 but the most relevant portions for the present project were also incorporated in the later essay “Meaning and Sense” (1965). I will make references to both, mostly depending on the accuracy of the translation.

what Levinas sees as the habitual Ulyssean itinerary⁵⁴ of the Occidental rationality. This orientation, which eventually is named liturgy, is a work (*oeuvre*) “conceived radically” – being “a movement of the Same toward the Other which never returns to the Same.”⁵⁵ This work or liturgy “can be posited only as a movement going outside of the identical toward an Other which is absolutely Other” and this orientation which “goes *freely* from the Same to the Other is a Work.”⁵⁶

Now work is neither a game nor a pure expenditure; it is not reciprocal and there is no immediate triumph⁵⁷ involved. This sort of work as “going outside” is situated in the order of eschatology beyond egoistically profitable teleology – in the order of “an eschatology without hope for oneself.”⁵⁸ Hence it is “a work, distinguished from games and from calculation, is being-for-beyond-my-death (*l’etre-pour-l’au-delà-de-ma-mort*).”⁵⁹ But this sort of work as orientation, or the dispositional comportment relative to the others, is a work which “is thus a relationship with the other (*une relation avec l’Autre*) who is reached without showing himself touched (*sans le montrer touché*).”⁶⁰ So the work as liturgy for Levinas turns out to be a dynamic specification of the

⁵⁴ “The itinerary of philosophy remains that of Ulysses, whose adventure in the world was only a return to his native island – a complacency in the Same, an unrecognition of the Other.” In Levinas, “Meaning and Sense,” *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings* (Adriaan T. Peperzak, et al. eds.; Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996):48. Further abbreviated as BPW.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ “As an absolute orientation toward the Other, as sense, a work is possible only in patience, which, pushed to the limit means the Agent to renounce being the contemporary of its outcome, to act without entering into the Promised Land,” “Meaning and Sense,” *BPW*, 49-50.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 50. Eschatology for Levinas – very similarly to Schmemmann – is not a futuristically utopian concept. Eschatology “institutes a relation with being *beyond the totality*, or beyond history, and not with being beyond the past and the present” and thus is “a relationship with a surplus always exterior to the totality,” *TI*, 22.

⁵⁹ Levinas, “The Trace of the Other,” *Deconstruction in Context: Literature and Philosophy* (A. Lingis, trans.; Mark C. Taylor, ed.; Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986):349.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

metaphysical, i.e. ethical, structure of relationality, enacted, as it were, in a trans-cultic and gratuitous (but not playfully gratuitous like a game) action:

I should like to fix the work of the same as a movement without return of the same to the other with a Greek term⁶¹ which in its primary meaning indicates the exercise of an office that is not only completely gratuitous, but that requires, on the part of him that exercises it, a putting out of funds at a loss. I would like to fix it with the term ‘liturgy’. We must for the moment remove from this very term every religious signification, even if a certain idea of God should become visible, as a trace, at the end of our analysis. Liturgy, as an absolutely patient action (*action absolument patiente*), does not take its place as a cult alongside of works and of ethics. It is ethics itself (*elle est l'éthique même.*)⁶²

Liturgy here becomes not an occasion of incantation to appease needs – including the cravings for individual salvation – but more likely a “work without recompense”⁶³ as the interface for the ethical encounter with the face⁶⁴ of the other, proceeding rather from the desire for the O/other. Passage toward this ambivalent encounter with the face of the neighbor situated in the trace of transcendent illeity, puts “me into question, empties me of myself”⁶⁵ – here, if not exactly in the state of hostage, then at least into the position of responsibility or diaconate. In juxtaposition to the need which “opens upon the world that is for-me; it returns to the self (...) even when sublime, as the need for salvation, it is still

⁶¹ The term referenced here is, of course, λειτουργία with its prominent emphasis of the έργον as a gratuitous action.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 349-350.

⁶³ Levinas, “Meaning and Sense,” *BPW*, 57.

⁶⁴ It is perhaps helpful to give a working definition of “face” (*le visage*) at this point since the term has already appeared in this chapter. Face is an apparition of precariousness and mortal vulnerability of created (human) life and especially its suffering which – ambivalently, but divinely or godly – mandates/commands respect and restraint from violence in the form of sacrificial sustenance of its existence and wholeness, in and because of its precariousness as participatory in immemorial human “fraternity” in which every subjectivity is pre-consciously and pre-deliberatively conscripted. In the texts under my attention here Levinas particularly describes the face as “the movement of an encounter” which is not added to face perceived as static; face is “a visitation and transcendence” in “Meaning and Sense,” 64. However, it is “in the trace of the Other that the face shines,” so that “the God who passed is not the model of which the face would be an image. To be in the image of God does not mean to be an icon of God but to find oneself in his trace,” *ibid.*, 63-64.

⁶⁵ Levinas, “The Trace of the Other,” *Deconstruction in Context*, 350.

nostalgia, homesickness,”⁶⁶ diaconate consists in response to the summons of the other’s face – the site of the word of God. Diaconate is a “subjectivity entirely given over to service”⁶⁷ to embody the entering into redemptive work. This is also the entering into the solidarity of responsibility “as though the whole edifice of creation rested on my shoulders,”⁶⁸ thereby emptying the bearer of this responsibility of his/her imperialism and egotism of salvation.

To sum up, Levinas’ reflections on liturgy here suggest the re-trooping of liturgy as the work of enacting the ethical/metaphysical relation to the other in and through absolutely patient and gratuitous action toward – opaquely and ambivalently – both the neighbor and God. The “work conceived radically” as liturgy is an absolutely patient and eschatological movement toward God which can only be suffered in and through the movement toward the others: “To go toward Him is not to follow this trace, which is not a sign; it is to go toward the Others who stand in the trace of illeity.”⁶⁹ Liturgy, purified of the *Schwärmerei* of privatized piety with its needy egotism of salvation can be said to be a relation (non-inertly, but energetically) envisioned as work.

Ultimately, for a theology concerned with liturgy as a doxological response to the self-disclosure of God, Levinas’ provocation consists in recasting liturgy as an interhuman work of justice. Of course, it is not an innocent claim since this particular work of justice is the interface of revelation and relation with God. The work of justice is the “vision”⁷⁰ of God. For Levinas, and here is the crux of his truly theological challenge,

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Jill Robbins, Introduction: “*Après Vous, Monsieur!*” *Is It Righteous To Be*, 16.

⁶⁸ Levinas, “The Trace of the Other,” *Deconstruction in Context*, 353.

⁶⁹ Levinas, “Meaning and Sense,” *BPW*, 64.

⁷⁰ Levinas, *TI*, 78.

“there can be no ‘knowledge’ of God separated from the relationship with men.”⁷¹ It does not suggest, however, that God is subsumed without surplus in the presentation of a face or within social relations. According to Edith Wyschogord’s helpful summary, “neither does God stand apart from the upsurge of the Other, nor is He identical with what transpires in social relations.”⁷² This dynamic imaginary of liturgy as relation-being-“worked”-out or as a relation in motion can be, I submit, useful not only for a loosely analogical conception of ethical/metaphysical/religious relation such as, for example, is offered in Michael Purcell’s “theology with Levinas.” In Purcell’s reading of Levinas, the fundamentally asymmetrical nature of incommensurable ethical relation itself is seen as “liturgical.”⁷³ For Purcell, liturgy as work (*oeuvre*) tends to be situated in the interiority of ethical space of relation without relation between the same and the other: “Liturgy is not so much something initiated by subject, but is a work achieved and accomplished in the subject.”⁷⁴ Without discounting the responsive/passive nature of liturgy or even the admissibility of the philosophical elaboration of the non-allergic relation of the same with the other as liturgy,⁷⁵ the most constructive theological

⁷¹ *Ibid.* Similarly to Martin Buber (see Part I, Ch.1), Levinas aims at prohibiting the thought of genuinely religious relation with God “being accomplished in the ignorance of men and things,” *ibid.* With a characteristic Levinasian accent, this “relation with the Transcendent” must be free “from all captivation by the Transcendent,” i.e., it must be a social relation, *ibid.*

⁷² Edith Wyschogrod, *Emmanuel Levinas: The Problem of Ethical Metaphysics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000): 108.

⁷³ Michael Purcell, *Levinas and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006):137. Purcell’s constructive project of Levinasian theology of grace assigns ethics the place of fundamental theology, constructing an analogy of ethics being the first theology with Levinas’ dictum that ethics is first philosophy, *ibid.*, 2.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 139. *Oeuvre* or liturgy for Purcell is the original structure of (metaphysical, ethical) relationship with the other; the structure itself being “the work of the other in me,” 141. Very interestingly, Purcell’s interpretation links liturgy as *oeuvre* with eucharistic existence – the existence as “for-the-other,” wherein liturgy/*oeuvre* ends in the death of the subject. Thus eucharistic existence is understood as “*kenosis in extremis*.” Ultimately, eucharistic existence is the “excoriation of the self by the other and on behalf of the other...” wherein liturgy is construed, in a Derridean reading of Levinas, as a gift-giving as sheer expenditure, *ibid.*, 142-144. I do not further pursue this trajectory of interpretation of liturgy for the same reasons I find Jean-Yves Lacoste’s re-imaging of liturgy unproductive, see Part I, Ch.1.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

challenge of Levinas' in the context of this project appears to be located in the possibility of navigating or "reincarnating"⁷⁶ Levinas' liturgy as "work conceived radically" into the order of "the Third." The order of the "the Third" would seem to be the reality of interhuman relations and justice as socially configured and socially interactive in all that ever-metamorphosing multiplicity of lived existential actualities in relation to God and the other in the plural. But from a constructive perspective, such a "reincarnation" would seem to inspire the resistance to juxtapose liturgy as a doxological "work" in relation to glorification of God vis-à-vis liturgy as "work conceived radically" in relation to one's fellow human persons. Keeping in mind the ethical provocation of Levinas, I will explore the possibility of a non-competitive imaginary of liturgy in Part III.

3. The Liturgy Which Comes to Mind In Conversation with the Saraband of Innumerable Cultures

The conversation with Levinas so far has passed more in the mode of listening on my side. First, to allow enough space for the critically positioned ethical provocation from outside Christianity to sound the crevices of liturgical sensibilities, particularly those nodal points through which liturgy often devotedly derails into an unrecognized and pathetic self-mockery (one struggles not to say blasphemy) or into what Schmemmann succinctly called "liturgicalness." But second, to probe the measure of Levinasian provocation in terms of its potential fecundity for the enlargement of Christian liturgical-sacramental discourse. At this juncture, I believe, it is pertinent to detour a bit more

⁷⁶ I am using here the term of Zygmunt Baumann's reflections on the unsustainability of the structure of society of love, the intimacy of the same and the Other in the moral party of two "when the 'Other' appears in a plural" and when Levinasian ethics "reincarnates as, or is reprocessed into, social justice," in Baumann, *Does Ethics Have a Chance In a World of Consumers?* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2008):45.

critically and inquisitively into some questions and assumptions which are not shared in the present conversation with equal interest and urgency by both parties. It is not my intention in this project to engage in the “close reading” mode of analysis of the fundamental tenets in Levinas’ thought and to scrutinize all areas of respectful yet complete disagreement. Except that I cannot bypass the interrogation of the consistency of Levinas’ ethical imaginary in relation to the geo-cultural others who enter his ethical imaginary as “the Third” from the underside of modern Occident. Here, I believe, more ought to be said alongside raising certain other issues which so far I have narrated rather gratefully.

First of all, if the liturgical theology and, indeed, the whole imaginary of sacramentality so vigorously represented in Alexander Schmemmann’s work could be somewhat schematically termed as liturgical consumption/consummation of lived religion and theological inquiry, Levinas presents a completely reversed imaginary – that of an ethical consumption/consummation of all religious thought and action. Schmemmann prioritizes theologically the model of all-embracing salvation as *theosis* of all creation. Creation in all its grandeur and minuteness of materiality is the “matter” of the cosmic eucharist offered in adoration and thanksgiving by the *homo adorans*. Levinas, however, succinctly points out the lures of liturgical-sacramental utopia when the sublime sacramental materialism of salvation through incarnated Christ tends to become chronically disengaged from the actual materiality amidst most definitely unredeemed human life. Christianity, Levinas observes painfully acutely

simultaneously overestimates and underestimates the weight of the reality which it wants to improve. It overestimates it because it sees in it a total resistance to human action. The relationships that man entertains with himself and his neighbors seems to him fixed, unalterable, eternal. He

underestimates it, for he hopes that a miraculous intervention on the part of divinity will transfigure this brutal weight.⁷⁷

Schmemmann's reasoning has amply illustrated the hostage situation in which certain Christian theology inscribes itself by attuning and aligning itself to the sacramentally salvific *opus Dei* in which all finite created reality is "assumed to be healed" without anything remaining discarded in superfluous neutrality, while at the same time underperforming notoriously as far as the equitable actualizations of these dignified hopes in the routine daily living among innumerable afflictions of the so-called natural and moral evils are concerned. Schmemmann's wholly pertinent eschatological qualification of the immensity, indeed the qualitative infinity of the deifying *opus Dei*, and of the sacramental liturgy as participating in the *opus*, as the "slow transformation" and "slow victory" resonates sagely with Levinas' skepticism about the effortless of miraculous intervention. Yet, arguably the most pointed and truly ironic Levinasian indictment of theologies consumed/consummated in sublime materiality of enlarged liturgy as bordering on nihilistic, or at least decadent, is this: "To move towards justice while denying, with a global act, the very conditions within which the ethical drama is played out is to embrace nothingness and, under pretext of saving everything, to save nothing."⁷⁸ The neglected ethical drama is precisely where the very sacramental inconsistency of liturgical theologies such as that of Schmemmann – among others – surfaces most painfully and most soberingly through the contrapuntal calling into question their indifference toward the socially incarnated consequences of *theosis*.

⁷⁷ Levinas, "Place and Utopia," *DF*, 99-100.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 101-102.

Returning to liturgy, from a Christian perspective of reading Levinas, the purified liturgy as “work conceived radically” is thankfully no longer a matter of obsolete *parergon*. Even the “liturgy” of “incantation” consistently merits at least the urgency of unrelenting critique. Yet the idea of liturgy as work is nonetheless permeated by the late modern specters of a Kantian vision of lived religion as hegemonically ethical at the expense of the non-rational, the non-discursive, the non-verbal, i.e., the various undetractable aesthetic and affective dimensions of the sacramental order (of life, really!) which are all assumed to be saved within the trinitarian economy of salvation.⁷⁹ These specters leave open also the already noted Luce Irigaray’s old question regarding the unholy fusion of the wisdom of monotheism and patriarchal passion in Levinas’ thought.⁸⁰ In any case, what is valid as a provocatively fruitful correction does not always justify itself as full reversal, especially in conjunction with a particularly allergic reaction to all relations palpably reciprocal, analogical, and hybrid. A certain third way seems to be desirable, I submit, for the re-imaging of liturgy, learning from and allowing oneself to be provoked by both, drastically different yet equally zealous, trajectories of liturgical imaginary – Schmemmann’s and Levinas’. To the interrogation of this possibility I will turn in Part III.

⁷⁹ David Bentley Hart has offered a most acerbic critique of Levinas’ ethics with particular attention to the demonization of aesthetics. Levinasian ethics is so scrupulously purged “of the fruits of being – joy, beauty’s ‘cold splendor’, delight, the affectivity of love, even laughter (in short, life) – that it becomes an almost demonic category” in Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2003): 85-86.

⁸⁰ Irigaray is concerned in her “Questions to Emmanuel Levinas” – as many should be – that the patriarchal passion is likely to be concealed in the supposedly monotheistic injunction not to touch while “monotheistic religions cannot claim to be ethical unless they submit themselves to a radical interrogation relative to the sexual attribution of their paradigms, whether these be of God, the ways in which God is referred to...” and even more pointedly suggests that Levinas “knows nothing of communion in pleasure” and of “the transcendence of the other which becomes im-mediate ecstasy in me and with him – or her,” *Re-Reading Levinas*, 114;110.

But this cannot happen before one ethical question is asked precisely in the context of postcoloniality: if the order or the structure of relationality of justice, i.e., reciprocity and equality, or the realm of “the Third” or social multiplicity, is not identical but nevertheless inspired and held accountable by the order of ethics, i.e., the non-reciprocal relation between the metaphysically intimate ethical party of two, then what is, for Levinas, the place of the geo-cultural other – the stranger, the widow and the orphan of the Occidental colonialism? Regarding the socio-cultural implications of Levinasian ethics, with Slavoj Žižek I contend that Levinas conspicuously passes over the actual simultaneity of orders of “ethics” and “justice.”⁸¹ With Zygmunt Bauman I also underscore that indeed, “the ‘primal scene’ of ethics is thereby also the primal, ancestral scene of social justice.”⁸² As underinterrogated as the order of justice appears in the works of Levinas, how does the cultural and racial stranger fare in the Levinasian intersubjective world which is at least accountable to ethics, if not constituting the very order of ethics? It is here that an inconsistency and a curious diasporic (in)sensibility toward geo-politically conditioned cultural differences cannot go unnoticed. If Levinas could ever be implicated in something like a “warm and almost tangible communion”⁸³

⁸¹ Slavoj Žižek argues convincingly, as part of a spirited wider critical engagement with Levinas, that “the Third is always-already here. Prior to encountering the Other as a face in front of us, the Other is here as a paradoxical background-face; in other words, the first relationship to an Other is that to a faceless Third (...) the limitation of our ethical relation to responsibility toward the Other’s face which necessitates the rise of the Third ... is a positive condition of ethics, not simply its secondary supplement.” Žižek, “Neighbors and Other Monsters: A Plea for Ethical Violence” in Slavoj Žižek, Eric L. Santner, Kenneth Reinhard, *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005): 184.

⁸² Zygmunt Bauman, “The World Inhospitable to Levinas,” *Philosophy Today* 43:2 (1999): 156. Bauman adds insightfully that “Levinas’ writings offer rich inspiration for the analysis of the endemic aporia of moral responsibility. They offer nothing comparable, though, for the scrutiny of the aporetic nature of justice. They do not confront the possibility that... the work of the institutions that Levinas wished to be dedicated to the promotion of justice can fall short of moral ideals or even have consequences detrimental to moral values,” 157.

⁸³ Levinas, “Loving the Torah More Than God,” *DF*, 145. This phrase describes Christianity as differing from both Judaism and atheism.

with anything then it would perhaps be the Western European cultural traditions. Levinas does not seem at all to be interested in the emergent hybridity of cultural encounters across the intersecting asymmetrical terrains of the postcolonial reality. The Holocaust and the Western imaginaries, policies, and actualities of colonialism do not resonate for him as they did, for example, for Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire among others (see Part I, Ch.2). Thus, a variation of “Europe is the Bible and the Greeks,” unquestionably an idealistic and daringly reductive statement as far as Europe is concerned, appears in numerous Levinasian texts.⁸⁴ Besides being reductive – for it is fairly obvious that by “Europe” indeed only the Occidental Europe as a geo-cultural configuration of knowledge, power, and religion is implied – the ubiquity of the “Bible and the Greeks” statement reveals Levinas as a “liturgist” of a certain cultural “amorous dialogue” which does not produce any ethically motivated fissures but precisely leaves the “third party” listening, “wounded, to the amorous dialogue.”⁸⁵ At least in the actual geo-political Europe, let alone beyond it. Except that here one must remember, on Levinas’ cue, that crisis of religion – and presumably of all the “liturgies” of amorous and exclusive intimacies and their dearly presumed identitarian purities – “results from the impossibility of isolating oneself with God and forgetting all those who remain outside the amorous dialogue,” all those outside of “the love of the couple” and its “closed society.”⁸⁶ Now who might be this “third party” and “all those who remain outside?” Might it be an intra-European interstitial other such as the Lithuanians alongside whom and in whose country Levinas was born and lived diasporically, but who seemingly never

⁸⁴ For example, see Emmanuel Levinas, “The Bible and the Greeks,” *In the Time of the Nations* (Michael B. Smith, trans.; London and New York: Continuum, 2007):119-121 among many other occasions. Further abbreviated as ITN.

⁸⁵ Levinas, “The I and the Totality,” *Entre-Nous*, 21. See also footnote 6.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

merited his attention except by being undistinguishably Christian, i.e., fitting presumably smoothly and without a residue within the grand narrative of “the Bible and the Greeks,” and sharing a curiously uninterrogated liturgical non-enthusiasm with the Jewish community in Kaunas?⁸⁷ But the most obvious “Third” vis-à-vis the “Eurocentrism”⁸⁸ of Levinas (“the Bible and the Greeks present the only serious issues in human life; everything else is dancing”⁸⁹) are those “underdeveloped Afro-Asian masses” who are “strangers to the Sacred History that forms the heart of the Judaic-Christian world” and whose “arrival on the historical scene” has produced a “new situation” in the West.⁹⁰ In the aftermath of the Second World War and the Holocaust, Levinas had discerned a new-found authenticity of the dialogue in truth, entailing an irreducible equilibrium of double manifestation of truth in Judaism and Christianity. This dialogue and equilibrium was to be found within a framework of tolerant cohabitation of Judaism and Christianity which is, however, disturbed by “the rise of the countless masses of Asiatic and underdeveloped peoples.”⁹¹ The arrival of the postcolonial condition – or the postcolonial provincializing of Europe – registers for Levinas as a religio-cultural jeopardy based on seemingly spontaneous and solely economically determined aspirations of the non-European peoples:

I do not in any way want to qualify this rise in materialism because we hear in it the cry of a frustrated humanity, and while one certainly has the

⁸⁷ See the Interview with François Poiré, *Is It Righteous to Be*, 26.

⁸⁸ As noted, Levinas’ “Eurocentrism” consists in awarding a superlative position to the Occidental culture, with the presumed reductive identification of Europe with the geo-political and socio-cultural configuration more appropriately called the West or Occident. What Levinas affirms is the presumed universal cultural and religious centrality of the Occident. See, for example, Interview with François Poiré, 64-67, and “Being-Toward-Death and ‘Thou Shalt Not Kill,’” 134,137 in *Is It Righteous to Be*; “Meaning and Sense,” *BPW*, 57-59; “The Bible and the Greeks,” *ITN*, 119-121.

⁸⁹ “Intention, Event, and the Other,” *Is It Righteous to Be*, 149. Levinas adds that he does not think that such a statement is racist.

⁹⁰ Levinas, “Jewish Thought Today,” *DF*, 160.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 165.

right to denounce one's own hunger as materialist, one never has the right to denounce the hunger of others. But under the greedy eyes of these countless hordes who wish to hope and live, we, the Jews and Christians are pushed to the margins of history, and soon no one will bother any more to differentiate between a Catholic and a Protestant or a Jew and a Christian, sects that devour one another because they cannot agree on the interpretation of a few obscure books.⁹²

What is invisible in the lament about the possible postcolonial decentering and creolization of "Europe" is the typically unrecognized correlation (as noted in Part I, Ch.2) between the Western European colonialism and the Holocaust, but also the inability to recognize that

for in some sense, the Third-Worldization and hybridization in the First World merely follow upon the prior flows of population, armies, goods, and capital that in the colonial era mainly moved 'outward' from the center to the periphery, where displacements and disruptions of people's relation to place were felt, endured, or suffered most acutely, and which was therefore the chief site of syncretisms and hybridities.⁹³

What obtains here rather very ironically is a veiled form of bad faith which usually pertains to those amorous dialogues against which, according to the insightful interpretation by Roger Burggraeve, Levinas has himself argued with so much premonition: "... one 'knows' perfectly well that one must not exclude the third person, but nonetheless acts as if one could."⁹⁴ From a perspective of postcoloniality, Levinas demonstrates a typically Occidental (and not simplistically Eurocentric) postmodern blind spot vis-à-vis precisely those *ethical* exigencies surrounding the Orientalized and colonized cultures, knowledges, and histories which finally "write back" or even "pray

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg, Introduction, *Displacement, Diaspora, and Geographies of Identity* (Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg, eds.; Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996):8-9.

⁹⁴ Roger Burggraeve, *The Wisdom of Love in the Service of Love: Emmanuel Levinas on Justice, Peace, and Human Rights* (Jeffrey Bloechl, trans.; Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002):124-125.

back” to the self-proclaimed center of everything, the West. Such occlusions are almost canonically ingrained throughout most of the Western intellectual milieu but are thus sufficient to mandate caution in considering the scope of relevance – precisely on the grounds of justice as hospitality to strangers – of Levinas’ seemingly historically and materially disembodied ethical theory in the context of the emerging polycentric globality and its discursive imaginaries.

On the other hand, Levinas, at least when given a generously proleptic reading which he might not have wanted, hints at the future of the Jewish-Christian “ecumenism” in the presence of the in-flow of the previously colonized cultures being as a “dialogue” which “this time will go beyond the level of the Graeco-Roman ideas common to Jews and Christians in the nations where until now they have lived on.”⁹⁵ Ominously, the work of “dialogue” here can no longer be limited to the “amorous dialogue” of the closed society of a couple in love. This sort of “dialogue” is perhaps more reminiscent of liturgy as an orientation and as a work of “going outside of the identical toward an Other.” Namely, liturgy as “going outside” into the socio-cultural and intersubjective existential engagements with actual others and strangers, widows and orphans of the postcolonial and global late modernity, taking the courage to reason and act doxologically precisely because

the Justice rendered to the Other, my neighbor, gives me an unsurpassable proximity to God. It is as intimate as the prayer and the liturgy which, without justice, are nothing. God can receive nothing from hands which have committed violence. The pious man is the just man. *Justice* is the term Judaism prefers to terms more evocative of sentiment. For love itself demands justice, and my relation with my neighbor cannot remain outside the lines which this neighbor maintains with various third parties. The third party is also my neighbor.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Levinas, “Jewish Thought Today,” *DF*, 165.

⁹⁶ Levinas, “A Religion for Adults,” *DF*, 18.

These soundings of liturgy and prayer as the work of rendering justice to the near and the far are worthwhile, I submit, even when those to whom such ideas come to mind seem not to be able to always sustain the counterpoint of planetarity that disturbs their Occidentally embedded intellectual fecundity in a justice-starved realities of the present dispensation. Finally, there is much in Levinas' ethical thought that mandates a good deal of "insomnia" about its relentless Occidentalist traction. Particularly, about its unperturbed West-centrism regarding the over-metaphorized "Europe," let alone other parts of the world. That being said, the peregrination through the methodological challenges of re-engaging liturgy and ethics is far from having arrived at a constructive breakthrough. Indeed, its gravity of challenges can be fully appreciated only if voices such as Levinas' are part of the conversation. Yet, for a theological endeavor conscious of its age in both the postcolonial and post-Holocaust world a painstaking "de-occidentalization" of Levinas patronizing gaze over the "saraband of innumerable and equivalent cultures, each justifying itself in its own context"⁹⁷ from the heights of his Eurocentric Western spectacle needs to be performed without hesitation. To "de-occidentalize" the saraband of cultures is not to "disorient"⁹⁸ it destructively and unjustly. Rather it is to look into the blind spots of the Occidental gaze that still believes to have understood the supposedly equivalent innumerable cultures of the global saraband better than they have ever understood themselves.

⁹⁷ Levinas, "Meaning and Sense," *BPW*, 58.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

PART III

Chapter 1

Beyond the Rationale of Binaries: Counterpoint

The overarching critical trajectory of the present project has so far been focused on the unproductive methodological disengagement of liturgy and ethics under the auspices of the rationale of binarity, which is a hallmark of the modern Occidental epistemological imaginary. The virtual canonization of a disciplinary fragmentation that isolates sacramental, liturgical, doctrinal, and ethical discourses in the modern Western theological inquiry has invited the observation that the overpitched polarity of the “either/or,” which surfaces again and again in the ongoing tensions between typical conceptualizations of liturgy and ethics, is indeed a symptom of the much broader binaristic habitus of competitive imagination, rationality, and socio-political praxis of the Occidental modernity. At the root of this particular disengagement – along many others – is the problematic Occidental imaginary of relationality. Or more precisely, the adiphoric location of relationality in the ontological makeup of reality where difference and relation routinely cannot be conceived of concurrently and where relational interaction clandestinely signals an interference with the freedom and integrity of the autonomous subjectivity and agency of God and human beings alike. In the modern Western theological setting, the problematic of relationality appears most strikingly as the problematic of sacramentality. Divine and human agencies have been understood to require nothing less than extraordinary unilateral and arbitrary appropriations to co-work sacramentally. These sacramental actions have also been imagined as operating most of

the time by mutually hegemonic dislocation of one agency by the other, one activity and one reality by the other, thus proliferating the same tired binarisms of possessive enclosure. All of that takes place, of course, within the compressed and exoticized sites of liturgy as extreme occasions of ritualized and marginal private choice on the margins of proper theological *loci*. These extreme occasions of institutionalized religious practices are routinely conceived as disjoined from and unaccountable to the other arenas of life, the other human persons sharing that life, and other theological modes of creativity and practice.

In the previous chapters I explored some of the most interesting proposals to interlace liturgy and ethics and to facilitate an exodus of liturgy from the modern Western backwaters of theological *parerga* through the enlargement of liturgy, most notably that of Jean-Yves Lacoste. Fascinating as Lacoste's conception of liturgy-ethics relationality as "circularity" is, it seemed nevertheless to reinscribe the competitive and hegemonic either/or in the liturgical constellation of divine and human agencies. In my quest for the models of alternative relationalities between liturgy and ethics I engaged in conversations, rather asymmetrically, with two very differently situated diasporic and interstitially Western thinkers who originally come from the Baltics – the Russian Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann and the Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas. Their respective attempts to re-orchestrate the modes of re-engagement between liturgy and ethics have proceeded – rather contrapuntally – by the enlargement of liturgy so that ethics (dis)appears to be preemptively consummated in a cosmically comprehensive liturgy (Schmemmann) and by the enlargement of interpersonally circumscribed ethics so that liturgy is consummated/consumed in ethics as the self-

sacrificial work of performing justice in relation to the other (Levinas). With an appreciation of the critical as well as the constructive merits of these envisagements, their itineraries of re-inter-lacement of liturgy and ethics, or the reconstruction of the intrinsic interdependence of the doxological praxis and ethically invested religious life, have nevertheless resonated far too co-sonorously with the binaristic logic of the Occidental modernity. I have approached these dichotomous predicaments through the dually-vectored interrogation of theological and cultural (mostly postcolonial) critiques since it is important to underscore the locality, indeed the parochiality, of this problematic as specifically pertinent to the Occidental modernity. And this modernity, as I have indicated by perhaps overly reiterative usage of the adjectives “Western”/ “Occidental,” is the modernity of Western colonialism,¹ and of the unholy synergy of the three C’s – conquest, commerce, and Christ – which was (is?) being projected and enforced by a variety of means across the planet. On the other hand, I have also suggested, from the crevices of modernity such as my own interstitial and polyvocal diasporic experience and through conversing with postcolonial criticism – itself being a critical conversation with Western modernity from a *chiaroscuro* position of simultaneous inside and outside of it – that what in the posteriority of the Occidental imaginary of dualism is still so hard to theoretically reconnect can be actually lived as always already interrelated. This is the

¹ I am in complete agreement with Walter D. Mignolo that modernity and coloniality are parallel concepts and that “...there is no modernity without coloniality.” Mignolo argues that “the coloniality of power underlines nation building in both local histories of nations that devised and enacted global designs as well as in those local histories that had to accommodate themselves to global designs devised with them in mind but without their direct participation,” in *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000): 43. Thus, “coloniality ... is the hidden face of modernity and its very condition of possibility” even though “that coloniality remains difficult to understand as the darker side of modernity is due to the fact that that most stories of modernity have been told from the perspective of modernity itself, including, of course, those told by its internal critics,” Walter D. Mignolo, “The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism,” *Cosmopolitanism* (Carol A. Breckenridge, Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, eds.; Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002):158, 159.

reality which the discourse of hybridity addresses. It includes but is not limited to existential experience and epistemological disposition intertwined in a contrapuntally harmonic relationality, which can be occasionally conflictual, asymmetrical, even coercive, but also reconciliatory, reciprocal and open to mutual empowerment by negotiation. This imaginary will serve as my constructive point of departure or more precisely, as a performative occasion for the transformation of a lived reality into a cognitive model in search for a post-binaristic and non-hegemonic composition of relationality with a particular focus on liturgy and ethics. But what would a peregrinative inquiry into the possibilities of a post-binaristic imaginary of relationality look like?

Above all, my peregrinative inquiry will proceed as a reflection no longer more analytically but rather constructively. The integrity of this constructive peregrination will be, as already intimated in the Overture, interstitial. The “interstitial integrity” allows, I submit, to think beyond, or perhaps from across and around the borders of² the clashing fabrications of the “West” and “East” without demonizing or glorifying either in a petrified and ahistorical oppositionality.³ Moreover, in theological reflection the interstitial integrity of a diasporic imaginary – akin to what Walter Mignolo calls “border

² I refer to Mignolo’s notion of border gnosis/border thinking as “a critical reflection on knowledge production from both the interior borders of the modern/colonial world system (imperial conflicts, hegemonic languages, directionality of translations, etc.) and its exterior borders (imperial conflicts with cultures being colonized, as well as the subsequent stages of independence or decolonization),” *ibid.*, 11. More specifically, border thinking “is a way of thinking from and beyond disciplines and the geopolitics of knowledge imbedded in Occidentalism, Orientalism, and area studies; from and beyond colonial legacies; from and beyond the gender divide and sexual prescriptions; and from and beyond ethnic identities and racial conflicts. Thus, border gnosis is a longing to overcome subalternity and a building block of postsubaltern ways of thinking. I insist that the post in postcolonial/post-Occidental is significantly different from other posts in contemporary cultural critiques,” Mignolo, “(Post)Occidentalism, (Post)Coloniality, and (Post)Subaltern Rationality”, *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies* (Fawzia Afzal-Khan and Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, eds.; Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000):89.

³ On the pathetic unproductivity and ideological overload of the efforts to deconsecrate West-centrism and “Eurocentrism” by inverse proliferation of Orientalism see Namsoon Kang, “Who/What Is Asian? A Postcolonial Theological Reading of Orientalism and Neo-Orientalism,” in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* (Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner and Mayra Rivera, eds.; St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004):100-117.

thinking” – aspires with equal fascination toward that “last horizon,” which in Mignolo’s insightful articulation is located much deeper than in the adaptive modulation of geo-cultural tensions alone:

The last horizon of border thinking is not only working toward a critique of colonial categories; it is also working toward redressing the subalternization of knowledge and the coloniality of power. It also points toward a new way of thinking in which dichotomies can be replaced by the complementarity of apparently contradictory terms.⁴

The aspiration of an interstitially integrated imaginary consists in pondering trans-discursively a problematic so prominent in the Western modernity/coloniality and its theological creativity, yet without seeking its transcending modulation in retaliatory reversals and revolutions from a supposedly uncontaminated and singularly superior location outside of it. Such solutions, as the experience and discourse of hybridity have convinced me, are neither useful nor feasible any longer for certain constituencies of theological creativity. Thus, it might perhaps appear quite contentious for a project resonating rather generously and supportively with the cultural and discursive milieu of postcoloniality to still suggest a decidedly Western notion of musical counterpoint as its pivotal constructive image for a diasporically scored post-Occidental trajectory of theological thought. However, the counterpoint here has a postcolonial twist to it – in the vision of Edward W. Said, counterpoint emerges as a specification of the postcolonial hybridity and thus as an avenue toward a non-coercive pattern of relationality in living and in knowing. My constructive impetus, I submit, insofar as it is colored by hybridity, takes on a “deconstructive” tonality in the sense of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s “seeing” if “the magisterial texts can now be our servants, as the new magisterium

⁴ Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, 338.

constructs itself in the name of the Other.”⁵ In a certain sense, therefore, what transpires in Part III is, to borrow a curiously liturgical expression from Paul Gilroy, a constructive “litany of pollution and impurity.”⁶ Hence, the “litany” might not escape the appearance of a disciplinary insubordination of which, however, no regrets or retractions will be offered.

1. Edward Said: Counterpoint as a Method of Interpretation

Counterpoint has so far appeared in these pages rather clandestinely as an under-thematized motif and, perhaps most deliberately and discreetly, as a somewhat annoying style of presentation which have to be suffered for a little longer here. But now it is time for counterpoint to start emerging from the motivistic background to be phrased into a theme, indeed, to disclose itself as the dually vectored – methodological and constructive – *basso continuo* of this project. Of course, it is possible to ponder over the musical intricacies of counterpoint and their critical utility for interdisciplinary theoretical discourses in a myriad of fascinating ways. Yet the transdisciplinary fecundity of the present theological elaborations on counterpoint originated from the encounter with the

⁵ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward A History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1999):7.

⁶ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993):2. I am struck here by the extended pertinence of Gilroy’s observations on “double consciousness” in cultural criticism through the methodological models of creolization, hybridity, mestizaje – if they are paraphrased in theological terms. At the beginning of his study Gilroy writes that “where racist, nationalist, or ethnically absolutist discourses orchestrate political relationships so that these identities appear to be mutually exclusive, occupying the space between them or trying to demonstrate their continuity has been viewed as a provocative and even oppositional act of political insubordination,” *ibid.*, 1. “Occupying a space” between neatly compartmentalized and jealous theological disciplines and religious practices, and insisting on interactive continuities between them still appears as a kind of insubordination to the *Zeitgeist* of theological practice.

musical and postcolonial elaborations on counterpoint by one of the “Holy Trinity” of postcolonial critics⁷ – Edward W. Said.

Edward W. Said (1935-2003) was a Palestinian scholar of literature and cultural critic who lived most of his intellectually productive life in the USA and remains indisputably a seminal figure in the English-speaking postcolonial theory. Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) played the most decisive role in inaugurating the discipline of postcolonial studies by “facilitating and exploiting the transition from colonialist to post-colonial studies in the Western academy.”⁸ Now for Said (who also was a Julliard-trained classical pianist and a widely published amateur musical critic) as a postcolonial critic, the musical aesthetics of counterpoint emerged over the years as the methodological *Leitmotif* and his innovative interpretive strategy in his postcolonially colored literary and political critiques.⁹ By his own admission, Said’s relationship to music was exceptional: music is “a particularly rich, and for me, unique branch of aesthetic experience.”¹⁰ Thus it comes as little surprise that one of Said’s major critical concepts has explicit musical connotations. Counterpoint, to offer a short preliminary description, is the unique musical capacity to sound two or more voices comprehensibly and simultaneously. It facilitates “the coherent combination of distinct melodic lines in music, and the quality that best

⁷ As famously suggested by Robert J.C. Young in his *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995): 163. The other two *dramatis personae* of this theoretical “trinity” besides Said include Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

⁸ David Hawkes, “The Secular and the Post-Secular in the Thought of Edward Said,” *Histories of Postmodernism* (Mark Bevir, Jill Hargis, Sara Rushing, eds.; New York and London: Routledge, 2007): 215.

⁹ See, for example, Said’s comments in “Between the Worlds,” *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002): 562. The most sustained application of counterpoint as an interpretive strategy or “reading” is Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* first published in 1993.

¹⁰ Said, *Reflections on Exile*, Introduction, xxxii.

fulfils the aesthetic principle of unity in diversity.”¹¹ Contrapuntal music is structured as a “balance between independence and interdependence, and this is as true of a canon by Webern as of a fugue by Bach.”¹²

As a model of epistemological imagination, Said’s counterpoint engenders a “mobile and eclectic method” which was, according to Bart Moore-Gilbert, “specifically designed to combat the dichotomizing vision” as it “crosses disciplinary boundaries and received divisions of discursive fields.”¹³ Charles Forsdick aptly points to the epistemological thrust of Said’s notion of counterpoint as a (largely unfulfilled in his opinion) quest for “anti-Manichean middle course” produced as a “response to and a *potential* movement beyond restrictive binary versions of the colonial encounter.”¹⁴ Peter Hallward even suggests that the notion of counterpoint is Said’s “most distinctive contribution to the postcolonial lexicon.”¹⁵

Counterpoint as an interpretive strategy and as a model of social cohabitation is for Said an imaginary of “both” wherein the oppositionality or the “contra” element is always relationally interactive, overlapping, and interdependent with the other components of the relational interface. The application of the contrapuntal interpretive strategy is mandated particularly in a post-colonial epoch since “partly because of the empire, all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid,

¹¹ Grove Dictionary of Music, Oxford Music Online, The Oxford Companion of Music, www.oxfordmusiconline.com:80/subscriber/article/oprt114/e1670, accessed November 19, 2008.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London and New York: Verso, 1997):64.

¹⁴ Charles Forsdick, “Edward Said After Theory: The Limits of Counterpoint,” *Post-Theory: New Directions in Criticism* (Martin McQuillan et al., eds.; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999):193, 194.

¹⁵ Peter Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing Between the Singular and the Specific* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001): 58.

heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic.”¹⁶ The most fascinating feature of Said’s idea of contrapuntal interpretation consists, I believe, in his deliberate search for a locus of enunciation that would embody the hybrid *via media* of sorts, which would facilitate a genuinely contrapuntal embeddedness between the Western canonicity and its many dark undersides across the broadest socio-historical and epistemological terrains. The experience of migrancy prompted Said to repeatedly claim his non-belonging to any singular culture,¹⁷ even perceived very sensitively as a contrapuntal ensemble, but rather his multiple belonging in various socio-linguistic settings. Hence it is hardly surprising that the objective of Said’s technique of interpretation is to look at different cultural experiences and expressions contrapuntally, not merely comparatively. Contrapuntal strategy aims at “interpreting together” by privileging for all practical purposes the connectivity and coexistence as reflective of the experiential exigencies of inhabited postcoloniality. Therefore, for Said it is paramount for the contrapuntal method to

... think through and interpret together experiences that are discrepant, each with its particular agenda and pace of development, its own internal formations, its internal coherence and system of external relationships, all of them coexisting and interacting with others.¹⁸

In an explicatory formulation that will later also surface in Said’s rare and sporadic theoretical elaborations on counterpoint, the pivotal tenet of contrapuntal reflection is the abdication of an external, allegedly neutral, ahistorical – a seemingly Archimedean perspective of evaluation. Instead, the contrapuntal strategy – in both literary and political

¹⁶ Edward W. Said *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1994): xxv.

¹⁷ For example in *Ibid.*, xxvi or “Between Worlds,” *Reflections on Exile*, 557.

¹⁸ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 32.

sense – fosters engagement of various experiences among themselves, “letting them play off each other”¹⁹ so that various mutually closed and suppressed ideological and cultural experiences might be made concurrent.²⁰ Of course, it has not escaped the critics that the theoretical weight of Said’s counterpoint bears down on its very aspirations to a certain meta-historical universality of vision which comes suspiciously close to functioning precisely as a methodological Archimedean point that ends up orienting all historical and cultural particularities “toward the same global coordination.”²¹ Counterpoint, as sketchy and sporadic as Said’s theoretical elaborations on it are, indeed emerges as a virtually “metaphysical” imaginary wherein the analytical aesthetics of counterpoint crosses over from music into literature and even further into socio-cultural and political critiques and occasionally functions as a certain “chamber” metaphysics of counterpoint. In this capacity, counterpoint is the “structuring structure” of Said’s unapologetic critical humanism as a worldview, exemplifying his insistence on a rigorous grounding of theoretical creativity in lived experience. Counterpoint represents, for Said, a kind of catholicity of vision, of “thinking through and together” – especially when counterpoint is used to articulate the intricacies of the inhabited complexity of postcolonial migrancy to which Said himself was no stranger. Yet, this catholicity of vision transcends a mere panoramic, or perhaps even voyeuristic, survey of cultural and historical particularities. Rather,

if these ideas of counterpoint, intertwining, and integration have anything more to them than a blandly uplifting suggestion for catholicity of vision, it is that they reaffirm the historical experience of imperialism as a matter first of interdependent

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

²¹ Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial*, 59.

histories, overlapping domains, second of something requiring intellectual and political choices.²²

Consequently, counterpoint as an interpretive strategy, as well as in its denser sense as a chamber metaphysics does not originate “blandly” in the spirit of parochial beauty (in the Kantian sense of *das Schöne*) out of a pristine musicological fancy of the modern Western musical milieu. It is, for Said, as both analytical as well as creative concept, irreparably come of age in the era of colonialism and imperialism. The sonorous topography of this counterpoint – epistemologically and ontologically – is not scored so much comparatively, or symphonically, but rather as an “atonal ensemble.”²³ Atonality signals the appearance of a crucial timbre of Said’s imaginary (or arguably, his “chamber” metaphysics) of counterpoint – the capacity of counterpoint to convey the multilayered nature of overlapping, intertwined, yet independent and sometimes sublunary irreconcilable dialectics of lived reality short of a beatific vision of eschatology. In short, the solvency of counterpoint as a nuanced notion of critical imagination consists precisely in its relational facility for connection without premature or worse, coercively synthetic, resolution by absorption. This facet of the Saidian counterpoint – admittedly with Theodor W. Adorno looming magisterial throughout Said’s random literary orchestrations of it – is, I believe, among the most useful in the quest for an resourceful modulation of the conceptions of relational interface beyond either soporific and reductive fusion of differences or an automatic fixation on some seemingly eternal and antagonistic rationales of binarity. This is where counterpoint obtains as an inventive envisagement for a theological sensibility that finds itself

²² Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 259.

²³ *Ibid.*, 318.

embedded within the hybridities and interstices of postcoloniality. Before inquiring where the itinerary of counterpoint might take us, however, another facet of Said's notion of counterpoint must be noted.

It is pertinent, I believe, to note at this juncture the other crucial component of Said's imaginary of counterpoint besides his obvious indebtedness to and inspiration from the so-called "classical" Western art music – to which I will turn shortly – before sounding the critically inventive depths of the Saidian counterpoint. It is Said's own exilic experience which he unapologetically explored and narrated through the recurrent analytical metaphor of counterpoint. As I already argued in Part I, Ch. 2, the polyvocality of the lived tensions of variously displaced life – through exile, asylum-seeking or e(im)migration – underwrites also Said's poignantly personal articulations of migrancy. The unforgettable and unassimilable existential actuality of Said's life was his exilic displacement. Of course, in *Culture and Imperialism* Said argued that virtually all cultural forms are hybrid and impure so that cultural identities are actually not essentializations but rather "contrapuntal ensembles."²⁴ The exilic and postcolonial counterpoint, experientially and theoretically, however, remains for Said a figure of particularly acute and hyper-self-aware intensification of lived hybridity, surpassing the habitual economy of culture as contrapuntal ensemble. Thus Said often troped displacement and migrancy as the embodiment of quintessential cultural counterpoint starting from his 1984 reflections on exile:

Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

awareness that – to borrow a phrase from music – is *contrapuntal*.²⁵

Said emphasizes the tense simultaneity of the vivid old and new environments that might issue in a special appreciation of “contrapuntal juxtapositions that diminish orthodox judgment and elevate appreciative sympathy.”²⁶ Such a contrapuntal consciousness of exile – which Said occasionally enlarged to denote rather generically the consciousness of an intellectual in a slightly flamboyant “metaphorical” and “metaphysical” sense²⁷ – functions like a “mind of winter” with not only the “negative advantage of refuge in the émigré’s eccentricity” but also “the positive benefit of challenging the system.”²⁸ The imaginary of counterpoint, interlinking the existential actualities of displaced human life particularly in the postcolony and a distinct musical sensibility and compositional technique, specifies for Said the more general postcolonial notion of hybridity as “tying together of multiple voices in a kind of disciplined whole” while underscoring that such a “tying together” is by no means a “simple reconciliation.”²⁹

Said’s transdisciplinary usage of counterpoint – from music into literature, politics, cultural critique, philosophy, art, and back to music – reveal the performed reciprocal translatability of existential actuality into a critical model of theoretical inquiry. The emphasis on “connecting” is noteworthy as far as the relational connotations of counterpoint as analytical paradigm are concerned, especially since for Said the

²⁵ Said, “Reflections on Exile,” *Reflections on Exile*, 186.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ See Said, “Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals,” *The Edward Said Reader* (Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin, eds.; New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 2000): 373-379 with Theodor W. Adorno as his prime example of intellectual as exile. A similar line of reasoning appears in *Culture and Imperialism*, 332-333.

²⁸ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 333.

²⁹ Edward W. Said, “Criticism, Culture and Performance: An Interview with Edward Said,” *Performing Arts Journal* 37 (January 1991): 26.

methodology of (primary cultural) analysis is answerable to the lived reality rather than vice versa. As Said sees it, lived reality is preeminently hybrid, mixed and impure in its interconnectedness and interdependence. Hence, methodologically speaking, his “primary aim is not to separate but to connect.”³⁰ The critical model thus crafted is, above all, an imaginary of relationality aspiring beyond the imaginative and habitual gridlocks of Manichean binarisms with its fetishization of difference, as well as the lures of facile and premature settlement by the logic of displacement which for Said entails “an ultimately uninteresting alternation of presence and absence.”³¹ The analytical and imaginative “beyond” for Said is expressed very daringly,³² indeed quite insubordinately precisely in its often suspected conservatism,³³ through a particular aural regime of modern Western³⁴ art music – counterpoint.

³⁰ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 14.

³¹ Said, “The Politics of Knowledge,” *Reflections on Exile*, 379.

³² Encyclopedia Britannica peculiarly describes counterpoint as “the most characteristic element in Western music and a major distinguishing feature between the music of the West and that of the Orient and of primitive peoples,” see “Counterpoint,” *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Retrieved January 19, 2009, <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9110126>.

³³ Valerie Kennedy provides a helpful concise insight into what usually gets labeled as the “fundamental conservatism of Said’s literary tastes” while also suggesting, accurately I submit, that the very impetus of Said’s contrapuntal hermeneutical strategy is indeed the “search for an alternative to both radical and conservative orthodoxies,” see Kennedy, *Edward Said: A Critical Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000): 97-106. Said’s perfunctory engagement with feminist discourses is usually and rather deservedly mentioned in relation to his “conservatism” and occasionally even his allegedly “mandarin” preferences in music – the art music of Western modernity – are also included in the catalogue of his “conservatism.”

³⁴ It must be noted that Said was profoundly aware of the probable consternations regarding the validity of his postcolonial credentials in relation to his passionate interest in, knowledge of, and usage of the Western European art music of the mostly modern period. Said’s extensive reflections on music disclose his post-Occidental critical sentiments regarding, for example, the dominating modern form of sonata, including of course symphonic forms, in Western music, especially as he juxtaposes this style of composition and aesthetic regime to the technique and the whole sensibility of counterpoint or nonnarrative aesthetic and compositional style of, for example, Olivier Messiaen. For Said, like for his admired Theodor Adorno, music was always more than aesthetic, irreducible and sui generis as it is, experience alone; it crossed over and interacted with the social, philosophical, and cultural actualities so that the musical conjectures of power and coercive development, mastery of time, and administration of relations among different musical subjects constituted Said’s focus on music. See, for example, his 1989 Welleck Library Lectures at the University of California published as *Musical Elaborations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), particularly Ch. 3 “Melody, Solitude, and Affirmation,” 73-105. For a short analysis of the common emphasis in Adorno and Said on music and its socio-historic context see Kiyoko Magome, “Edward Said’s

2. Counterpoint: An Imaginary of Relationality Beyond Coercion

Counterpoint is a trope of dialectical aesthetics, allowed or even encouraged to migrate into the realms of epistemological imagination and ethically invested social vision. Depending on the teleology of argument, the aspects of dissonance or harmony may come to be privileged. But far from being merely “uninteresting” due to a crudity of detractive alternation, counterpoint is perhaps hyper-interesting to the point of exhaustion precisely due to its unrelenting complexity and its occasionally beautiful yet always provisional resolutions which at the end of the day serve as an exciting foretaste of the non-eschatologically impossible. I find that this is where Said’s elaborations on counterpoint become particularly inciting for theological reflection. As I already noted, the intricate imaginary of counterpoint in Said’s work lends itself, hesitantly and implicitly, to the function of a “chamber” metaphysics as an attempt to produce conjectures on the whole of inhabited worldly reality as intrinsically interrelated and interdependent as well as on what is desired in liberating excess of the empirical realities of lived suffering and stifled experience. The “chamber” metaphysics of counterpoint is a more or less consistent incarnation of daring to “think together” the disparate and dissenting realities as one explores the world concurrently theoretically, socially, and through the aesthetic experience. Avoiding any metaphysical allusions in a more minimalistic style – for better or for worse – Rokus de Groot suggests that Said’s ideas on polyphony and counterpoint as a particular configuration of polyphony evolve from an interpretive literary strategy into his foremost model of humanistic emancipation. Counterpoint is the key concept of “the humanism of alternatives, always with room for

Counterpoint,” *Paradoxical Citizenship: Edward Said* (Silvia Nagy-Zekmi, ed.; Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006): 67-73.

dissent” and conducive for the coexistence of “difference without domination within a shared harmonic system” without tyranny.³⁵ I believe that de Groot is right to bring Saidian counterpoint out of the orbit of secluded textual interpretation (as Said probably would insist on given his views on “isolated textuality”³⁶ of rigorously literary theories) and my constructive intentions here reverberate with this approach.

What kind of relationality does the counterpoint enable and accommodate? It is definitely a relation of independence and interdependence, which sounds forth in an ineradicable and unceasing simultaneity without any detraction or diminishment of any of the participating voices. Counterpoint is not a generic polyphony which allows for any type of combination of equal or unequal voices. Counterpoint usually only occurs in a partnership of sounds wherein the voices live and move in relief against each other and enter into complex relations depending on their relative importance. The focus is on the interaction, overlapping, intertwining, interpenetration, hide and seek, fleeing and chasing, and all of that happening simultaneously – in other words, in concurrent “playing off each other” as Said would put it. Thus, according to Said,

in the counterpoint of Western classical music, various themes play off one another, with only a provisional privilege being given to any particular one; yet in the resulting polyphony there is concert and order, an organized interplay that derives from the themes, not from a rigorous melodic or formal principle outside the work.³⁷

³⁵ Rokus de Groot, “Perspectives of Polyphony in Edward Said’s Writings,” *Edward Said: Critical Decolonization* (Ferial J. Ghazoul, ed.; Cairo and New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2007):231-232.

³⁶ Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983): 4. Said consistently disparaged certain tendencies of “philosophy of pure textuality” in the poststructuralist literary theories which isolate “textuality from the circumstances, the events, the physical senses that made it possible and render it intelligible as the result of human work, *ibid.*

³⁷ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 51.

The fascination of counterpoint resides in its complexity and orientation to non-reductive integration amidst diversity: "... the essence of counterpoint is simultaneity of voices, preternatural control of resources" and in this simultaneity the voices always continue "to sound against, as well as with, all the others."³⁸ The value of counterpoint can be seen as the concurrence of two orientationally distinctive, yet complementary, themes. On the one hand, there is the "contrapuntal mania for inclusiveness" or "the total ordering of sound, the complete management of time"³⁹ which Said insightfully ponders in connection with Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* and which suggests the aspiration – perhaps prematurely eschatological⁴⁰ – toward the totality of "concert or order." In less ominous contexts, contrapuntal imaginary and aesthetics is oriented toward the relational whole, the whole consisting of "various themes playing off one another" – never separately, never altogether absolutely sovereignly and never incarcerated in their singularity of difference. On the other hand, the contrapuntal "mania for inclusiveness" exists only in the equilibrium of opulent and amalgamated horizontality. Contrapuntal music, for Said, is horizontal, rather than vertical.⁴¹ The compounded voices of counterpoint remain independent in its "flowing, constantly transformed texture."⁴² The aspiration to wholeness, which may border on something more resembling a totalizing – and even totalitarian – tendency, within counterpoint as a musically configured

³⁸ Edward W. Said, "The Music Itself: Glenn Gould's Contrapuntal Vision," *Music at the Limits* (Foreword by Daniel Barenboim; New York: Columbia University Press, 2008):5. Said's reflections on counterpoint mainly invoke the music of Johann Sebastian Bach – preeminently as performed by Glenn Gould – as the actual point of departure for the elaborations on the supra-audible meanings of contrapuntal music without, however, being limited to J.S. Bach.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Said actually muses that contrapuntal music is "connected to eschatology," every detail being seemingly "divinely ordained" as to come tantalizingly close to totalitarian ordering of sound space as a corollary of totalitarian politics and social vision, *ibid.*, 6.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴² Edward W. Said, "Bach for the Masses," *Music at the Limits*, 251.

worldview is modulated by counterpoint's texture of provisional privilege and irreducible total nonalignment despite more or less harmonious co-sonorities that may incessantly emerge. In this regard, counterpoint is precisely the embodiment of musical imaginary that challenges the impetus, often ascribed to the Western art music of modernity in particular, of "working toward domination and sovereignty."⁴³ In counterpoint, the orientation is towards thinking and treating

...one musical line in conjunction with several others that derive from and relate to it, and you do so through imitation, repetition, or ornamentation – as an antidote to the more overtly administrative and executive authority contained in, say, a Mozart or Beethoven classical sonata form.⁴⁴

What attracts Said – and, in turn, my theological imagination – to counterpoint is the interplay of independent, unassimilable yet not entirely post-hierarchic in the final analysis, voices in an interdependently echoic configuration of relationality. It is a relationality of both and many, of an asymmetrical reciprocity, to borrow a well-known expression from Iris Marion Young, vis-à-vis either/or, and yet without simplification – by synthesis or by sheer domination – into a mock utopianism of presumptuous or, perhaps, to put it in a more Adornian way, a false reconciliation under duress. As Said underscores in a rather opaque passage on Richard Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*,⁴⁵ contrapuntally configured action and texture of music reveals counterpoint – contradictorily to some ideas affirmed textually and dramatically in the same opera – as a structure of structural instability and resistance to reductive ideological recapitulation where the contrapuntal nature of the music undermines its final triumphalist cadenza. Yet

⁴³ Said, *Musical Elaborations*, xxi.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 61.

as a model of relationality, counterpoint is posited as a planetary figure of at least “chamber”-metaphysical scope. That alone seems to mandate a certain suspicion in these post-grand-narrative times. R.Radhakrishnan perceptively observed that Said’s counterpoint as interpretive strategy is deployed as an intricate universal hermeneutical figurality with the result of counterpoint representing “an overarching structural synchronicity.”⁴⁶ Counterpoint acknowledges relational antagonism and resistance, yet nevertheless seems to issue into what Radhakrishnan calls “the aesthetic pre-containment of antagonism.”⁴⁷ While counterpoint definitely is, for Said, an overarching structural synchronicity, or to put it simply, the *breviatum verbum* of his worldview, there is also the vigilance about the tendency for universalizing upliftment regarding the uncanny transformation of “complexities of a many-stranded history into one large figure, or of elevating particular moments or monuments into universals.”⁴⁸ Hence counterpoint as undoubtedly the “large figure” of Said’s thought, falls under the omnipresent “possibility to transgress.”⁴⁹ Viewed from these proportions, counterpoint fulfils the role of pivotal epistemological and ethical envisagement in Said’s persistent quest for such social and cultural models of human cohabitation that would accommodate “the human distinction and concreteness dialectically preserved” through and by “non-dominative and non-

⁴⁶ R.Radhakrishnan, “Derivative Discourses and the Problem of Signification,” *The European Legacy*, 7:6 (2002): 784.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Said, *Musical Elaborations*, 55.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* Said remarks that “no social system, no historical vision, no theoretical totalization, no matter how powerful, can exhaust all the alternatives or practices exists within its domain. There is always the possibility to transgress.” Transgression, for Said, is devoid of particularly countercultural insurgency-related or blasphemous connotations so it “does not imply some irrevocable action against law or divinity. Secular transgression chiefly involves moving from one form to another, the testing and challenging of limits, the mixing and intermingling of heterogeneities, cutting across expectations, providing unforeseen pleasures, discoveries, experiences. Once the totalizing tendency is refused an unquestioning assent, a whole series of transgressions both by and involving Western classical music proposes itself...,” *ibid.*

coercive modes of life and knowledge as essential components of the desired future.”⁵⁰ But the “negative” or auto-critical component of Said’s reasoning in general and in relation to counterpoint in particular does not stop here with what can appear to be a fairly standard “apophatic” axiom of a late modern critical sensibility. In Said’s “late style” in particular, an emphasis on “the irreconcilabilities” which transgress the apparitions of pre-containment of conflictuality, or perhaps simply a radically consistent polyphony, present the most interesting aspect of the imaginary of counterpoint. Here, however, a reference to a magisterial figure so far lurking in the motivic background of these reflections, must be mentioned explicitly, namely, Theodor W. Adorno.

From reflections on music of various eras and cultures to the existential actualities of exile, and onto the ethics of literary and political criticism, the constancy of Said’s references to, conversations with, and admiration of Theodor Adorno is remarkable. It is beyond the scope of my reflections to address this supremely fascinating intellectual conversation so uniquely rooted in a shared passion for the philosophy of music as a form of “transgressive” critical theory in proper detail as it deserves to be done. Here, however, I would like to point out that what Said found most attractive in Adorno “is this notion of tension, of highlighting and dramatizing what I call irreconcilabilities.”⁵¹ In both his reflections on “late style” in music and literature – an obviously Adornian motif in relation to Adorno’s explorations of the third-period Beethoven in *Spätstil Beethovens* – and in his own late style of writing under the shadow of terminal illness, Said gravitates to the contrapuntal “irreconcilabilities” with the recurring reminders of “nonharmonious,

⁵⁰ Edward W. Said, “The Future of Criticism,” *Reflections on Exile*, 172. See also Said, “Orientalism Reconsidered,” *Reflections on Exile*, 214. In “The Future of Criticism” Said notably refers to Theodor W. Adorno’s essay “Subject and Object” and its notion of “eternal peace” as distinctness without domination.

⁵¹ “An Interview with Edward W. Said,” *The Edward Said Reader*, 437.

nonserene tension”⁵² and insisting on the prerogative of late style as “the power to render disenchantment and pleasure without resolving the contradiction between them.”⁵³ Said’s imaginary of counterpoint enabled him to advance the struggle for non-dominative and noncoercive thought and life, whose aspiration “is to construct fields of coexistence rather than fields of battle as the outcome of intellectual labor,”⁵⁴ as aspiration I have always found to be worthy of special treasuring. Yet, even this contrapuntal coexistence, short of being a charade of distorted eschatology of beatific vision, demands the recognition of the “overlapping, yet irreconcilable experiences” and the courage “to say that *that* is what is before us.”⁵⁵ What is here conveyed with an explicitly robust apophatic reserve, is the need for a transcendence of synthetic idealism since for Said,

...just as history is never over or complete, it is also the case that some dialectical oppositions are not reconcilable, not transcendable, not really capable of being folded into a sort of higher, undoubtedly nobler synthesis.⁵⁶

The “irreconcilabilities” of counterpoint sound forth, rather stubbornly, the motivic ghost chords of Adornian terror of false reconciliation, musically as well as socially, intellectually, and politically.⁵⁷ Said never refers directly in his texts, to the best of my knowledge, to Adorno’s “The Function of Counterpoint in New Music.” Yet “late style” Said’s cryptic emphases on “irreconcilabilities” prompt me to explore Adorno’s

⁵² Edward W. Said, “Timeliness and Lateness,” *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 2006):7.

⁵³ Edward W. Said, “Glimpses of Late Style,” *On Late Style*, 148.

⁵⁴ Edward W. Said, “The Public Role of Writers and Intellectuals,” *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004):141.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 143. Said adds, unsurprisingly, that an exemplar of such a courage is Adorno and refers to his work on modern music.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*,

⁵⁷ See, for example, Theodor W. Adorno’s essays “Some Ideas on the Sociology of Music,” “Classicism, Romanticism, New Music,” and “The Function of Counterpoint in New Music,” all available in English translation in Adorno, *Sound Figures* (Rodney Livingstone, trans.; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), among other more specifically philosophical works such as *Negative Dialectics*.

interrogations of counterpoint to illuminate Said's suggestive gestures. For Adorno, in a manner similar to Said, counterpoint is about relationality, and even more precisely, about reciprocal and interactive relationality. Adorno underscores counterpoint – admittedly the counterpoint as performed in the compositional techniques of the Second or Young Viennese School – as the aesthetics of struggle or friction, wherein the unity, or even a kind of *Aufhebung*, is achieved through indescribable tension.⁵⁸ The independence of every contrapuntal voice is genuine and unassimilable while interpenetration is no less genuine. Unity in diversity emerges, and it is important to stress that it is not imposed by manipulation or coercion, since for Adorno by “taxing the ear” the emergent unity is a “not an immediate unity, but a unity of opposites.”⁵⁹ Adorno's insistence on “non-imposition”⁶⁰ of the organizing principle outside the reciprocal interplay of the musical (counter)subjects and even occasionally *basso continuo* resonates with Said's “playing off one another” posits prominently the crucial significance of all subject(ivity)s involved in the contrapuntal collaboration. In other words, the counterpoint of voices is not a “mere transitory episode”⁶¹ in an exclusionary structure of hegemonic homophony. Each and every voice is entitled to a serious articulation as an individual part in its “autonomy” as it is rather idealistically and “unavoidably nominalistically”⁶² defined within the parameters of the modern utopia of sovereign and atomistic subjectivity.⁶³ In

⁵⁸ Adorno, “The Function of Counterpoint in New Music,” *Sound Figures*, 128-129.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 129. Immediate unity would most likely amount to pseudopolyphony for Adorno.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 129, 133, 134.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 144.

⁶³ Adorno muses about the ideal of autonomy that “adheres to nothing that is alien to its own impulse, its own coherence, and that has been merely imposed upon it. It desires to become objective out of its own subjectivity, through the unreserved immersion in its unique self, without external supports and borrowings,” *ibid.*, 134. I suspect Said would question such a premise, but I have to refrain from further elaboration here due to the constraints of space and limit myself by simply flagging this rather ironic and non-contrapuntal conception of human subjectivity.

any case, for Adorno (and for Said as I showed) the authority of contrapuntal synergy emerges from within, not from without. His concern for the unviolated/unviolable integrity of all participating voices or (counter)subjects remains supremely important, especially in the times of waning postmodernist infatuation with dissolving subjectivities and agencies, even those that did not enjoy the luxury of finding themselves on the upper-or-bright Occidental side of the colonial modernity with its avenues of modern subjecthood before it was pronounced dead. From this perspective, Adorno invests the late modern imaginary of counterpoint (modeled mainly upon Arnold Schoenberg's music but with a serious consideration of J.S. Bach as well) with a unexpectedly utopian supra-audible value as the form of relationality that interactively "results from the relations of the voices to one another" and in which the mutual independence of voices nevertheless resounds simultaneously and facilitates a non-fraudulent⁶⁴ integrity. This counterpoint is a "synthesis of contrasts"⁶⁵ – a synthesis with the already mentioned universalizing, if not totalizing, proclivities, which are not lost on Adorno. For a "total counterpoint" would also mean the evaporation of the difference without resort to nonidentical exteriority, where distinctions collapse into sameness and precisely the inclusivity of counterpoint as distinguishing principle ends up singularizing the contrapuntal interface. What is thus fabricated is for Adorno a nightmarish relationality in which "differences are eroded into complementarities" and hence the irreducible contrapuntal differentiation is "submerged in synthesis without retaining its identity."⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Adorno insists that "if one [voice] is the mere shadow of the other, or even just too similar, the counterpoint in which each voice claims to be independent becomes a fraud. It loses the oppositional power on which the integration of the contrapuntal structure depends," *ibid.*, 138.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 139-140. I find it important to note that Adorno's vigilance against enthusiasm for synthesis in art is founded in his emphasis on holding the aesthetic and the social in mutually interactive, yet mutually non-reductive, tension. Thus, "the idea of synthesis has its repugnant side, namely the hope that unity and peace

Of course, the same critical concerns have plagued Said's rather similar, yet less theoretically elaborate, ruminations on counterpoint as noted above. Adorno's answer to this predicament of a Hegelian (here, a dead-end) resolution of the non-identical into the identical is to offer a resignation that the independence of the voices has always been illusory. Yet, the legitimacy of counterpoint as an aesthetic social economy depends on the worthwhile effort, indeed the laboring, toward the extremely loyal bringing of independent voices together in interactively. But the labor of bringing the independent voices together emerges finally as a total constructivity under the auspices of a totality (the relationality of counterpoint) which then retains a (seemingly lamentable for Adorno) primacy over the individual components.⁶⁷

On the other hand, if the emergence of a common melody, out of the interplay itself, and even sporadic harmony is a priori dismissed as necessarily reductive, to say the least, then is not such a counterpoint an equally fraudulent idol, condensing the refusal to ever entertain the possibility of agreement and collaboration as a non-reductive and non-assimilative complementarity precisely in terms of a synthesis of contrasts? This pitfall of counterpoint, when envisioned as an exemplification of Adorno's dictum that "what is wanted is not a peacefulness above all conflicts, but the pure, uncompromising representation of absolute conflict,"⁶⁸ I find curiously under-elaborated in Adorno's otherwise ruthless auto-critique without restraint. It is as if the potentialities of the Adornian counterpoint are necessarily limited by the need for counterpoint to purely and

can be achieved in art, even though they missed their moment in reality. Music that aims at reconciliation is at its most sensitive when confronted by the illusion of reconciliation," see "Classicism, Romanticism, New Music," *Sound Figures*, 122.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁶⁸ Adorno, "Classicism, Romanticism, New Music," *Sound Figures*, 122.

inflexibly embody what Slavoj Žižek calls the “downward-synthesis”⁶⁹ or really curiously, “the Christian sublime” wherein there is never a possibility of harmony of the oppositionalities but instead an endlessly self-perpetuating and irreducibly conflictual deadlock. It is at this juncture that a theological conversation about counterpoint would seem to offer a constructively dissenting possibility from both the illusory of subjects’ integrity (which Adorno is more inclined to admit⁷⁰) and submersive synthesis – to which I will duly turn in the next chapter. Before starting that conversation, however, it is useful to notice briefly that the frustration vis-à-vis what Adorno refers to as the inescapable contradiction of counterpoint or what Said called the Adorno-inspired irreconcilabilities, nevertheless allows non-illusory usage of counterpoint as a strictly “anticipatory image” to gesture toward the dangerously impossible teleology – the “reconciling the irreconcilable in an anticipatory image.”⁷¹ Music, I have to point out here with a particular delectation, for Adorno and also for Said is uniquely fitting to transcend the empirical materiality of history precisely by rendering audible its contradictions and by being “the medium of positive negation.”⁷² At the end of the day, “without making concessions to a bad utopia, it is not wholly illegitimate to imagine that music may hope through spontaneous receptivity, through immersion in the unique, to become more than a mere existent thing”⁷³ for Adorno.

Now what is left after the vigilant recognition of the pre-eschatological and fraud-prone connotations of counterpoint is its usefulness as a somber and dauntingly labor-

⁶⁹ Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993):50-51.

⁷⁰ See Adorno, “The Function of Counterpoint in New Music,” *Sound Figures*, 144, where he states that “absolute individuality is a delusion, just as much as absolute universality.”

⁷¹ Adorno, “Some Ideas on the Sociology of Music,” *Sound Figures*, 10.

⁷² Adorno, “The Function of Counterpoint in New Music,” *Sound Figures*, 143.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

intensive utopian vision. Despite so many reservations, counterpoint retains its utopian potential precisely as a metaphysically⁷⁴ proportioned imaginary for Adorno to “uphold the concrete image of a nonconformist, meaningful possibility.”⁷⁵ As a “positive negation” – and this is the most eschatological sense of counterpoint that Adorno can allow – counterpoint is the performance of the effortful, laborious, process of simultaneous “negation and affirmation of the voice to which it is added.”⁷⁶ Adorno’s counterpoint is not a figurality of stasis and accomplishment; it is rather, as Keith Chapin puts it, “a sounding image of effort.”⁷⁷ Music and musical counterpoint above all can body forth an anticipatory image of a certain kind of reconciliatory relationality, fractional and perplexing as it may be, that is answerable to the antinomical predicament of relationality beyond both fraud and force. Adorno’s question “how can subjectivity become objective without force or fraud”⁷⁸ can be fruitfully read, I submit, as a quest for non-coercive relationality or “reconciliation” of the fiercely conflictual dialectics of human histories – of the attainable possibility of which Adorno remained exceptionally circumspect in comparison with the slightly more moderate, more *via media* (or more “conservative”?) Said. That said, counterpoint as an anticipatory image of reconciliation

⁷⁴ I find Keith Chapin’s thesis about Adorno’s “metaphysics of counterpoint” convincing, see Chapin, “Labor and Metaphysics in Hindemith’s and Adorno’s Statements on Counterpoint,” *Apparitions: New Perspectives on Adorno and Twentieth-Century Music* (Berthold Hoeckner, ed.; New York and London: Routledge, 2006):19-40.

⁷⁵ Adorno, “The Function of Counterpoint in New Music,” *Sound Figures*, 142.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁷⁷ Chapin, “Labor and Metaphysics,” *Apparitions*, 39. Chapin’s critique of Adorno here interestingly focuses on his generalization and overextension, almost emptying out, of the notion of counterpoint to make it into a metaphysically oriented concept which tries to image a musical and philosophical interrelationship wherein individual moments retain their high degree of potentiality for autonomy within an integrated whole. This is not convincing, according to Chapin, since for Adorno’s modern (Schoenbergian) counterpoint the harmonic conventions or simultaneities are dismissed, but then there is no longer any regulatory norm for the relationship among the musical lines and this may seriously deprive the concept of any specific analytical purchase, see p.38.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 142.

is validated as a utopian aesthetic challenge “precisely because the real situation today refuses reconciliation” and so consequently, “we must retain the idea of it in an image.”⁷⁹

Even though interrelated, the soundings of counterpoint in both Edward Said’s and Theodor Adorno’s are precisely contrapuntal in certain aspects. Even though it might be a slight simplification, the emphasis for Adorno falls, unsurprisingly, on the particularities of individual voices in the whole economy of counterpoint, musically and philosophically. The paramount ethical concern here is the oppressive *Verwaltung* of human individualities politically, economically, and socially to which the totally democratizing and symmetrically oriented counterpoint responds by rejection of self-abnegation of any and all voices. Counterpoint as an imaginary of relentless social and ethical critique is worthy of consideration if it fulfills the condition of truth: “The need to lend a voice to suffering is the condition of all truth.”⁸⁰ Said, on the other hand, underscores the interrelated whole and does not dismiss the possibility of congruent interaction, no matter how motivically complex and uneven, within the counterpoint of the totality of lived reality. For Said, the genuine ethical integrity of voices in playing “off one another” does not foreclose the potentialities of “concert and order” in the same way that Adorno’s positively negative tension or, for all practical purposes, indeed the grinding conflict, that Adorno deems necessary for the counterpoint to justly accommodate not only proper interrelation but also reconciliation, does. Said leans toward privileging – without absolutization, I submit – the laborious and negotiated consonance of the whole rather than the dissonant or even forced intertwining of disparate themes. Said’s immersion in the hybridity of lived complexities of migrancy

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁸⁰ Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectic* (E.B. Ashton, trans.; New York: The Seabury Press, Continuum Book: 1973): 17-18.

seems to issue forth in an imaginary of counterpoint that is less dramatized and might be even somewhat pleasurable vis-à-vis Adorno's Schoenbergian counterpoint, to which, as a critique of the societies and cultures of its own origins it is not really possible to listen to – even according to Adorno. Said opts hybridically, perhaps for some critical tastes too leniently and conservatively, for a contrapuntal alliance of “contrapuntal necessity and inventive freedom” which illuminate each other with nothing less than “magisterial beauty” – at least, he hears such a performed effort and effect in the music of J.S. Bach.⁸¹ Said's *Leitmotif* – the “irreconcilabilities” never being occluded! – emerges as the critical preference for coexistence and fruitful interaction (hence his unrelenting odium for the late Samuel Huntington's “clash of civilizations” idea), rather than agonizing and ultimately unlivable tension, canonized into a necessity for all dialectically configured life experiences and critical sensibilities. Said's counterpoint is notably less dramatic as compared to Adorno's – all similarities and influences notwithstanding. It is not so much struggle, even though mutually incongruous elements are never simply brushed aside, but rather mutual enhancement of expressive power of all voices,⁸² that is the objective of counterpoint here. Without neglecting Adorno's care for the integrity of all contrapuntally related voices, this is the element of Said's perception of counterpoint that is, I submit, most conducive for theological reimagining of convoluted patterns of relationality. The fugue-like patterns of fleeing, chasing, tensing up and relaxing, and the interminable, sometimes inescapably painful and tortuous search for a livable, fruitful, non-violent equilibrium reflect the habits of encountering contradictory realities of the contrapuntal life of migrancy. Said's counterpoint appears to be an aesthetically

⁸¹ Said, “Bach for the Masses,” *Music at the Limits*, 255.

⁸² Edmund Rubra, *Counterpoint. A Survey* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1960):14.

configured sign of hybridity as it flows from the order of existential actualities into the order of epistemological and critical positionality, and back, thus forming a “transgressive” (in Said’s sense) imaginary of living, thinking, and acting toward creating non-coercive relations across all these interdependent terrains of life. The experience of postcolonial displacement resonates into Said’s resilient preference for an unpretentious hope for a contrapuntal harmony of togetherness in difference which allows a reciprocity that may well be nonconsensual and asymmetrical as much as it can be interactively liberating, emancipatory, and just. Said’s imaginary of counterpoint admits moments of incommensurability and in this sense it is a musically inspired elaboration of hybridity precisely as a confrontation and problematization of boundaries without erasure or dissolution. Hence, this contrapuntal harmony is in no sense preordained, and comes across as a reservedly non-apocalyptic and secular, or humanistic, “concert and order.” Said’s counterpoint is also, ironically, more ambivalent and less romantic than Adorno’s, and thus again, more at home in the hybridities of postcoloniality rather than univocally in the hotbed of Western modernity. Rowan Williams has observed that modern Western cultural sensibilities “are a bit inclined to romanticize struggle and tension”⁸³ and, as incredible as it may sound, Adorno’s consistent preference for extreme dialectical figuralities sounds the theme of revolting, yet therein somehow precisely sublime, tension of romanticism. Be that as it may, what could the theological application of counterpoint as a figuration of epistemological and ethical imagination be? In particular, what difference would it make to reflect on the theological notion of synergy from the perspective of counterpoint? To this question I will turn in the next chapter before

⁸³ Rowan Williams, *Where God Happens: Discovering Christ in One Another* (Boston: New Seeds, 2005): 63.

offering a suggestion about the desirability of contrapuntal imaginary of relationality between liturgy and ethics in the last chapter of Part III.

Chapter 2

Sacrament and Ethics: From Synergy to Counterpoint and Back

Synergy (συνεργεία) denotes the notion of the uncreated triune God and the created human persons co-laboring or co-operating together asymmetrically yet reciprocally and with a radical loyalty toward the sustaining of both astonishingly different, divine and human, integral natures in the process of working out salvation. It is not a new idea in the Christian history. Even though in some Protestant circles the idea of synergy rarely fails to invoke specters of heresy, it rather tranquilly permeates the soteriological imagination of the various Eastern Christian theological sensibilities with Roman Catholic tradition looking on with little grounds for disagreement.

The notion of synergy is most intimately related to the perception of salvation as *theosis*¹ (θεωσις) – salvation by becoming God-like or becoming deified through a perichoretic interpenetration of God and humanity. In this perichoretic interlacing and mutual indwelling human persons may come to gradually participate, by grace, into

¹ Θεωσις has become a rather attractive object of inquiry as a half-forgotten magisterial model of soteriological reflection within the Western theological orbit as of late. Several recent studies engage the issue of deification, occasionally putting Western and Eastern traditions in conversation with their common patristic past. See Anna N. Williams, *Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), Daniel A. Keating, *Deification and Grace* (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2007), James R. Payton Jr, *Light from the Christian East: An Introduction to the Orthodox Tradition* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2007), Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *One With God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004) and *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions* (Michael J. Christiansen and Jeffrey A. Wittung, eds.; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007) among others. Among the best-known Orthodox introductions to the idea of theosis remain Vladimir Lossky's *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976) and *In the Image and Likeness of God* (John H. Erickson and Thomas E. Bird, eds.; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974) and Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, Revised edition (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995) to mention just a few.

divine life through the progressive order of salvation. The salvation of all created reality is truly *opus Dei*. But it is a participatory *opus*, the *leitourgia* performed by the triune God through Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit with the people of God for the life of the world. Of course, salvation within such a trinitarian imaginary is perceived as a processual and progressive *theosis*² – a transfigurative deification/divinization or engodding of the human person as they grow as precisely *imago Dei* (κατ' εἰκόνα θεοῦ) into the likeness (*similitudo*, ομοίωσις θεῶ) of Christ. An early definition of *theosis* by Pseudo-Dionysius in the 6th century states that “divinization consists of being as much as possible like and in union with God.”³ Salvation conceived as *theosis* includes, yet is not limited to, the liberation from sin and death as well as justification in a more juridical view of atonement. Among many conceptions of salvation in Christianity, *theosis* most importantly alludes to the transfigurative and participatory indwelling of the created life through its bodily, voluntary, affective, and intellectual aspects into the trinitarian life of God. To put it in Western terms, this soteriological vision highlights sanctification rather than merely justification.⁴ As far as the progressive and processual nature of salvation perceived as *theosis* is concerned, it is probably worth noting – to minimize misunderstanding – that the idea of progress here does not involve self-determining, totalizing, and inescapable necessity akin to fate or a manifest natural law. Deification is an interruptible and derailable itinerary of human life. It is initiated

² The language of salvation as *theosis* is not limited to this particular term alone; there is a number of terms that were used from the fourth century CE onwards to describe the deification including *theopoiesis*, see Stephen Finlan and Vladimir Kharlamov’s Introduction, *Theōsis: Deification in Christian Theology*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series (Stephen Finlan and Vladimir Kharlamov, eds.; Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications: 2006):5-8.

³ Pseudo-Dionysius, “Ecclesiastical Hierarchy,” *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*. The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1987):1:3, 198.

⁴ See Andrew Louth, “The Place of *Theosis* in Orthodox Theology,” *Partakers of the Divine Nature*, 34-35.

and nurtured throughout by grace or the “energies” (ἐνέργειαι)⁵ of the triune God – or simply, by God in the act of interactive relating to the created life as God works out the salvation of the whole created reality. It may be entered by human persons as always called yet only occasionally enthusiastic sojourners of God.

Given the loaded connotations of the notion of “progress” when pondering *theosis* at this late stage of the Western (post)modernity, perhaps it is salient to invoke Theodor Adorno’s reflections on progress as a category of thought that has been exposed to the dangers of becoming a conclusive category but which may signal precisely an opposite thrust. For Adorno, progress “is not a conclusive category. It wants to cut short the triumph of radical evil, not to triumph as such itself.”⁶ *Theosis* as progressive growth into the likeness of God across the terrain of human life at full stretch does not equal an inexorable and predictable emancipation of supposedly totally autonomous human reality. Progress, in the strangely applicable words of Adorno, is the “resistance at all stages” to such unrelenting and hegemonic necessity and “not the surrender” to the lures of “their steady ascent.”⁷ Now *theosis* resists, in the first place, a predictable and inexorable “steady ascent” of entirely profane creatures toward the uncreated entirely holy God through a profitable yet presumptuous and violent gesture of divine

⁵ I am referring here to the well-known apophatically colored distinction between 1) God’s nature/essence, which remains unparticipable and incomprehensible even for a transfigured creation, and 2) God’s “energies,” or God *in actu*, or the operations of divine grace (or uncreated light) which encounter humanity and constitute the participatory interface of divine-human relationality. Energy here is the intrinsic, essential, and efficient activity of nature, so the distinction is serves as a tool of apophatic theological sensibility rather than as a highly organized ontological cartography of divine anatomy. Energies designate the relational revealedness of God. *Theosis* refers to the engodding participation in God’s energies, not God’s essence, yet nevertheless such the participation in the divine life is never merely figurative. This apophatic theological gesture preserves the logic of “both” – the quality of reality for human deification through Christ in the Spirit while also preserving the infinite ontological difference between the uncreated and the created.

⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, “Progress,” *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998): 160.

⁷ *Ibid.*

condescension through an imputed forensic atonement as the sole crucial act of salvation. Yet it also resists an equally presumptuous “steady ascent” of a monadic and supposedly self-sufficient human subjectivity intoxicated by its own power to achieve and to conquer – which is then nothing else than a steady ascent in auto-celebration toward auto-idolatry. *Theosis*, rather, is salvation performed synergistically. That is, the “how” of *theosis* – or the quiddity of the divine-human relationality, or the ethics of *theosis* – is weaved into the score of the still decidedly unfinished divine “symphony of salvation” (*consonantia salutis*)⁸ as an asymmetrically reciprocal co-working between God and human persons. Such an asymmetrically reciprocal synergy seen as the ethical “how” of *theosis*, I will argue below, suggests the constellation of relations that I have already denoted in the Overture as intrinsically sacramental. But first things first.

1. Synergy and Ethics

What kind of relationality is implied in the idea of synergy? As the Greek term suggests, *συνεργεία* engenders a composite action of communication, collaboration, or cooperation, carried forth as an amalgam of intentionality and activity. Synergy is situated in the whole imaginary of *theosis* that is grounded in an asymmetrical reciprocity. This reciprocity is one of participation wherein God participates in the human condition, always preveniently and very particularly and intensely through the incarnation of Christ and subsequently through the modulation of Christ’s presence in the

⁸ I am referring to Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses*, Book IV, 14.2. I am indebted to this musical conceptualization to Ysabel de Andia’s *Homo Vivens: Incorruptibilité et divinization de l’homme selon Irénée de Lyon* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1986): 54-55. According to de Andia, for Irenaeus not only the *symphonie de salut* is placed in an explicitly eschatological context with direct reference to the multiplicity of voices in Rev. 1:15, but also signals the present incongruity and non-transparency of such vision to human reality: “L’économie comme ‘symphonie de salut’ est considérée, cette fois-ci, non plus du point de vue de l’homme, mais du point de vue de Dieu,” *ibid.*

sacraments as liturgical events. It also opens up the prospect for salvific human participation in the triune life of God through which human persons may progressively and infinitely grow into an ever greater likeness to God without becoming divine by nature. Indeed, the *telos* of redeemed human existence is salvation as union with God through participation in the divine life. What is crucial for the redemptive process from the perspective of *theosis* is the audacious idea of “working together” – συνεργεία – or co-operation, co-acting, co-laboring across the ontological divide without digressing into coercion and violation of the integrity of either co-worker of this salvific partnership.⁹

What must be said immediately is that, in the words of John Breck,

synergy implies a fundamental (and non-Pelagian) paradox: the initiative is wholly divine, originating and coming to completion within Trinitarian divine life; yet an appropriate human response is necessary for the appropriation of saving grace.¹⁰

Synergy denotes the “mystery of the coincidence of grace and human freedom” and the “simultaneity in the synergy of divine grace and human freedom.”¹¹ In fact, the stubborn apophatic emphasis on the incomprehensibility and impenetrability of God’s essence alongside the equally relentless insistence on real participation of human life in the triune life of God does not merely – and necessarily – safeguard the integrity of God alone as it may appear from the essence/energies distinction. It similarly safeguards the integrity of created human life in the wholeness of its gracefully endowed created freedom so that increasing likeness does not issue in hegemonic annihilation and so that deification does

⁹ The emphasis on the non-coercive divine action in self-disclosure of revelation and redemption is an especially important theme in major patristic sources such as, for example, John Damascene’s *De Fide Orthodoxa*, and Gregory Nazianzen’s, *Theological Orations*, Gregory of Nyssa’s, *Catechetical Orations*, among others.

¹⁰ John Breck, “Divine Initiative: Salvation in Orthodox Theology,” *Salvation in Christ: A Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue* (John Meyendorff and Robert Tobias, eds.; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1992):112.

¹¹ Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 198, 199.

not, at the end of the day, issue in nothing else but conquering assimilation. With these concerns in mind, synergy is rather a working paradox of dissimilar agencies wherein the *ergon* and the *energeia* of God and human persons interact, intertwine, interlace as they body forth salvation as the graced wellbeing of the creation at peace among itself and in love with its creator. At least in some, predominantly non-Western and non-modern, currents of Christian worldview, according to John Meyendorff,

... there is no opposition between freedom and grace... the presence in man of divine qualities, of a 'grace' which is part of his nature and which makes him fully man, neither destroys his freedom, nor limits the necessity for him to become fully himself by his own effort; rather, it secures that cooperation, or synergy, between the divine will and human choice which makes possible the progress 'from glory to glory' and the assimilation of man to the divine dignity for which he was created.¹²

The whole imaginary of *theosis* is a counterpart of the incarnation of Christ in the sense that it "expresses the full extent of the consequences of the Incarnation."¹³ To be sure, the divinizing union with God in *theosis* is not the union according to essence (ουσία) such as that of the persons of Trinity. Nor is it the hypostatic union of the incarnation. Certainly, all these crucial patterns of relationality in the Christian lore of God – God as Trinity, the hypostatic union of incarnation, salvation as synergistic *theosis*, and sacrament as exemplified in the Eucharist – are related vitally, yet analogically. Analogy here denotes resemblance and resonance across distance: neither absolute difference nor absolute identity is implied. Precisely through their enduring yet variously distanced and variously attuned resonances to the Trinity as the climactic and paradigmatic divine

¹² Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 139. The emphasis in Meyendorff's text falls on Byzantine theology even though I would argue that "no opposition" is definitely not limited to it alone. Meyendorff's choice of word "assimilation" is probably not the most fortunate yet it by no means suggests a trespassing of the essence/energies distinction in deification or human integrity – mercifully for all parties involved.

¹³ Louth, "The Place of *Theosis* in Orthodox Theology," *Partakers of the Divine Nature*, 34.

pattern of relationality of union in difference, the incarnation, synergistic *theosis*, and sacraments are all embodied and effective disclosures of the Trinity as a particular quiddity of relation. The markers of the trinitarian quiddity are communion and communication in mutuality and reciprocity by being together and acting together as truly different without detracting from, imposing on, competing with, or subjugating one another. This particular relationality is, after all, what God is: God “refers to the mutual action of the identities’ divine ‘energies’, to the perichoretic triune life.”¹⁴ Thus God is nothing other than this pattern of relationality which, I suggest, is marked as ethical precisely by being both the prefiguration and consummation of “right relation” or “just relation” according to which all relations are to be discerned, nurtured, formed, transformed, and ultimately judged.

The synergy of *theosis*, in this context, is modeled upon the pattern of the divine-human relation of incarnation, of course, without achieving the specific and unique intensity of its hypostatic constellation. Synergy denotes the relational interface of cooperation in which “divine action is not imposing itself on humanity, but offering itself for acceptance by human freedom.”¹⁵ As the interface of divine-human relationality, synergy facilitates a transposed analogical “continuation” of the incarnation within the terrain of existential actualities of salvation, i.e., sanctification in the reality most profoundly shaped as interpersonal. From a Chalcedonian perspective,¹⁶ at this level,

¹⁴ Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology 1: The Triune God* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997): 214. Jenson draws on Gregory of Nyssa trinitarian thought to suggest that God is “a triunely personal perichoresis” and “not a something, however rarefied or immaterial, but a *going-on*, a sequentially palpable event, like a kiss or a train wreck,” *ibid*.

¹⁵ Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 207.

¹⁶ Meyendorff carefully notes with respect to the ever-lingering shadows of Pelagianism that “it is not through his own activity or ‘energy’ that man can be deified – this would be Pelagianism – but by divine ‘energy’, to which his human activity is ‘obedient’; between the two there is a ‘synergy’, of which the relation of the two energies in Christ is the ontological basis,” *ibid*, 164.

similarly to the incarnation, the distinctions are in no way annulled by the union in which there is neither confusion nor separation. As Kallistos Ware emphasizes, to participate in *theosis* is to participate in the life and power of God while living as a distinct human subject so that “the I remains an I and Thou remains a Thou regardless how close the two get.”¹⁷ Synergy, ultimately then, is an envisagement of a non-coercive simultaneity of asymmetrical agencies cooperating reciprocally (or with a certain analogical interval in mind one could perhaps say, perichoretically) within the progression toward a non-hegemonic union of God and created life without dualistic detraction and without contrastive competition. The triune God and the redemptive *opus Dei* is open to participation as a relational interface, inviting human persons to take part in nothing less than the re-creation of the world as we know it since “creation is not an event in the past, but a relationship in the present.”¹⁸ The relationship in the present, however, is always a concurrent double movement: toward and with God as well as toward and with the neighbor. Across the analogical interval, the relationality of synergy stands under the irrevocable imperative of vicarious, if persistently inadequate, imitation of Christ’s person and life through translation of these patterns of relation into the politics of routine human living. In Christ, as a hymn puts it “there is no east or west, in him no south or north, but one community of love throughout the whole wide earth.”¹⁹ The range and spectrum of vicarious imitation of Christ, or ultimately the Trinity, as a configuration of

¹⁷ Kallistos Ware, “God Immanent Yet Transcendent: The Divine Energies According to Saint Gregory Palamas,” *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God’s Presence in a Scientific World* (Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke, eds.; Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2004): 164.

¹⁸ Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 45.

¹⁹ I am referring to John Oxenham’s hymn “In Christ There Is No East or West.”

relationality has no absolving limitation to justify Christian complacency on this side of eschaton.

All throughout this project I have maintained that the ethical dimension of relation resides in its quiddity, or in its “how”-ness. To ask what kind of relationality is imagined as the effective interface of salvation – or perdition – is to ask about the ethical make-up of that relationality. Ethical relationality is like the trinitarian and hypostatic relations – right and just because they do not devour the other by either conquest or by consumptive love, and because they relate benevolently, empower reciprocally, act cooperatively, love fiercely yet non-possessively, transform delicately, and judge equitably. From an ethical point of view, synergy is an imaginary of asymmetrical reciprocity and non-coercion. Synergy entails an ethical vindication of the integrity of divine as well as human natures and agencies in their *commercium* on the way to the final beatitude – herein resides its ethical admirability. As the quiddity or the “how” of the whole imaginary of *theosis*, synergy is an affirmation of the goodness of human agency and human creativity. Far from propagating liturgical Pelagianism, synergy is an envisagement of human participation in the redemptive *opus Dei* even from within the fallen dispensation where we all find ourselves and from where all itineraries of salvation must necessarily take off. This *status viatorum* is irreducible apart from eschatological fulfillment as is the finitude and corruption pertaining to this status, being present in every millisecond of the present planetary actuality. Yet, the imaginary of *theosis* and its “how” – synergy – comes across as an audacious aspiration to envisage contrapuntal reconciliation or even peace without revoking the apophatic principle of *dissimilitudo semper maior* on the ontological level.

Immediately, however, the double movement of relationality vectored simultaneously toward God and toward fellow human beings ought to be remembered as an imperative for analogical and vicarious imitation. First, regarding liturgy, synergy as the envisagement of right relationality allows human liturgies as the work and sacrifice of praise by God's people to participate in the divine liturgy of salvific *opus Dei* without mutual cancellation. Synergy invokes the delicacy and simultaneity reminiscent of the Chalcedonian insistence on assumption rather than absorption of human nature in the incarnation. As human subjectivities and agencies remain "suspended in grace"²⁰ as far as their primary causality is concerned under the circumstances of having been sourced *ex nihilo*, they nevertheless are sustained through the synergy of *theosis* in their genuine and unviolated otherness and agency. It is in this regard that synergy embodies the quiddity of divine-human relationality as a certain peace or reconciliation – and thus ethically, I submit.

Within the salvific economy of *theosis*, the uncreated grace does not rape and coerce²¹ the created beneficiary of God's kenotic love but rather enables and nurtures the reciprocity of unpredictable and precarious responsivity in assent as well as in refusal. So synergy, ethically speaking, is an attempt to orchestrate the simultaneity of peace and freedom across the most tremendous span of difference. Within this simultaneity, freedom is not degraded into voluntary submission and peace here sounds indeed contrapuntal "as the state of differentiation without domination, with the differentiated

²⁰ I am using here Eugene F. Rogers' term from his delightful study of the relations between grace and nature in Thomas Aquinas, "Faith and Reason Follow Glory," *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow, eds.; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005):443-444.

²¹ I am echoing Nikolai Berdyaev's way of conceptualizing the operations of divine grace within the synergistic framework of *theosis* with his evocative linguistic allusions – at least in the Russian original text – regarding the non-violent/ non-violating/non-raping conception of the nature of grace vis-à-vis creaturely freedom, see Н. Бердяев, *О назначении человека* (Москва: Республика, 1993).

participating in each other.”²² But of course, as Emmanuel Levinas would be quick to remind, “of peace there can only be an eschatology.”²³ It is nowhere more obvious than in the realm of the political – the sphere of interpersonal and intercultural relations. To be an ethically fruitful imaginary and to have any performative efficacy apart from theological speculation synergy must be re-orchestrated into the analogical interval from *theologia* to *oikonomia*, from the lofty heights of the Trinity and incarnation (a relationality!) into the depths of excruciating moral conundrums of the present global postcoloniality so prone to seductions of the civilization of clashes despite all its complex cultural hybridities. To rush ahead somewhat, it is important to sound here again the motif of relationality as always already simultaneously vectored toward God and toward fellow humans. I previously suggested that, as the “how” of divine-human relationality, synergy facilitates analogical “continuation” of the incarnation within the terrain of existential actualities of salvation. But the terrain of salvation is most profoundly shaped as interpersonal, as ineradicably relational, as thoroughly political. Thus, by another analogical transposition, from the Trinity and incarnation and *theosis* as precisely mutually resonant constellations of “right” or ethical relation, synergy as the quiddity of these relational patterns emerges as an incarnational template for vicarious imitation amidst the inexhaustible messiness, let alone tragedies, of our common life on this planet. I will elaborate on this in Chapter 3. In order to do so there, the remaining pivotal and analogically resonant element of the ethical trajectory of relationality – Trinity, incarnation, *theosis* – must be attended to here: namely, sacramentality and the liturgies best known as sacraments.

²² Theodor W. Adorno, “On Subject and Object,” *Critical Models*, 247.

²³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Alphonso Lingis, trans.; Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2002): 24.

2. From Incarnation to Sacramentality: Synergy, Sacrament, and Ethics

Sacrament is above all about those tangled things that (the English) language (among several others) usually expresses by using prefix “inter” – inter-relating, inter-twining, inter-penetrating, inter-lacing, inter-mingling, inter-weaving – of different identities, elements, and orientations. To put it bluntly, sacrament is the codeword for the mystery of embodied, material, and aesthetical mediations of divine revelation and salvific grace, that is, of the triune God *in actu*. Sacrament is also the codeword of the preferential option toward union: for connecting rather than putting asunder, for uniting rather than dividing, for integrating rather than fragmenting. All of that, however, does not mean that sacrament is a codeword for transparent fusion without surplus or uniformity without residual opacity. By no means is sacrament a camouflaged “mystery” of standardization and sameness! Ultimately, sacrament is the mystery of union and the paradigmatically fecund sign of life-giving and life-affirming impurity of “both” and “and” rather than “either/or.” Sacrament is also the mystery of simultaneously perceiving, living, thinking, feeling, tasting, and envisioning the divine transcendence and immanence alike as *a priori* related. Above all, it is the unique and pivotal role of the incarnation – hypostatic union! – that grounds and prefigures the divine itineraries of redemptive self-disclosure and salvific presence through sacraments. In the words of Leo the Great, “that which till then [Christ’s ascension] was visible of our Redeemer was changed into a sacramental presence.”²⁴ The *opus Dei* of salvation is worked out as the

²⁴ Leo the Great, Sermon 74, “On the Lord’s Ascension.” Note that here I use the loosely translated text of *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Series II*, vol. 12, ed. Philip Schaff, available at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/360374.htm>. Accessed February 12, 2009. Literally, Christ’s incarnated and visible presence has after Ascension “transitioned into the sacraments” (*Quod itaque redemptoris nostri conspicuum fuit, in sacramenta transivit*). Leo’s sermon joins the post-ascension sacramental presence of Christ with faith by repositioning the focus from “sight” to “faith,” which in this situation

power of justifying and perfecting grace flows as derived from the incarnation, from the divinity of Christ through the humanity of Christ, into the sacraments.²⁵ Already in the Overture I mentioned in passing that, in the incarnational economy of salvation, sacramentality paradoxically denotes the possibility or locus of the incarnation of Christ. But the sacraments, in turn, come to fruition as consequences of the incarnation. The incarnate Word is the prototype and the apogee of sacramentality. Thus the preferential option of divine disclosure unfolds through transfigurative entanglement with the materiality of creation from the womb of Mary through the last supper and ascension all the way into the signs that can be heard, touched, tasted, seen, smelled, written, read, translated, sung, baked, fashioned, painted, sculpted, sewn, endlessly worked on and pondered over and, of course, distorted and misunderstood willingly or unwillingly in more ways than there are grains of sand. Not only that, the distortions are often enthusiastically and profitably imposed on everybody within reach to actually ridicule what appears to be worshipped into idolatry and to routinely scandalize “the least of Christ’s brothers and sisters” with obscene relentlessness. The latter aspect is, in a sense, a presently irremediable ingredient of Christ’s kenotic sacrifice and crucifixion for the life of the world through leaving his insignificant presence at the cruel mercy of the finite and easily corruptible sign-making and sign-using hands and minds of humanity.

If sacramentality is the preferential interface of God-world relationality, then a sacramental style of practicing theology is, as I indicated in the Overture, a style of

expresses the mutually interdependent activities of Christ in sacraments and faith as the gift of the Holy Spirit, enabling human persons to discern and relate to Christ across the interface of sacramentality.

²⁵ Here I take my cue from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol.56 (David Bourke, trans.; Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006): III, q. 62, a. 5, *corpus*, p.66-67, where the linkage between the incarnation and sacraments is expressed: “Principalis autem causa efficiens gratiae est ipse Deus, ad quem comparatur humanitas Christi sicut instrumentum conjunctum, sacramentum autem sicut instrumentum separatum. Et ideo oportet quod virtus salutifera derivetur a divinitate Christi per ejus humanitatem in ipsa sacramenta.”

theological inquiry and contemplation extremely loyal to the whole sacramental economy of incarnation as the pivotal postulation of Christian theological rationality. Sacraments are not the accidental and extrinsic *parerga*²⁶ of the economy of salvation as modernity was so prone to (mis)understand it. To underscore it, Gordon Lathrop refers to the eucharistic axiom of Irenaeus of Lyons' from his *Adversus haereses* 4:18:5 as the methodological summary of liturgical theology and the eucharistic economy: "But our judgment is consonant with the Eucharist, and, in turn, the Eucharist establishes our judgment."²⁷ I cannot abstain from expanding Lathrop's vision of the eucharistic economy and liturgical *ordo* further – and I believe in consonance with Irenaeus' much broader methodological viewfinder in *Adversus haereses* 4:18:5. So I see the Irenaean eucharistic consonance as mirroring the union of incarnation as the methodological imaginary of all theology, most specifically, of what is usually called the systematic, dogmatic, and fundamental modes of theology. Here I again refer back to Yngve Brilioth's conviction that

... the central secret of genuinely Christian theology is the holding in combination of the two contrasted opposites of God's Transcendence and Immanence; and precisely at this point the eucharist is the surest safeguard of a sound theology (...) a meeting point on which all the issues of theology converge.²⁸

For Brilioth, then, as well as for an ancient tradition of theologians with which I align myself too, "the eucharist sums up the Christian faith and the Christian religion with a

²⁶ Karl Rahner succinctly points out a sort of an incarnational imperative for the sacramental configuration of Christian lifeworld since the sacraments are not "mere supplementary statements expressing a reality which exists and comes to the fullness of its being just as well without such expressions. Grace is the incarnational grace of Christ, which by its nature aims at being flesh and history," *Meditations on the Sacraments* (New York: Seabury Press, 1977): xvii.

²⁷ Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999): 14.

²⁸ Yngve Brilioth, *Eucharistic Faith and Practice: Evangelical and Catholic* (A.G. Herbert, trans.; London: SPCK, 1965): 274,1.

fullness which verbal definitions can never adequately express.”²⁹ It is in this particular context that I envisage the whole interface of sacramentality which I characterized, through the optic of the Eucharist, as the paradox of non-allergic and non-colonizing cohabitation of relational differences.

Ethically speaking, what can be said about the incarnation can be analogically said about the sacraments as well as far as the quiddity of those relations is concerned. Sacrament is a configuration of relationality wherein different realities, identities, materialities, and agencies coexist together, “consubstantially,” interpenetrating one another intricately and intimately without confusion, without losing its integrity, without division, without separation in a union in which distinctions are not annulled and the irreducible characteristics of each participant are preserved. Such a quiddity or “how” of relations I have proposed as ethical. This, to dare a mind-boggling simplification, is also, in a nutshell, the perception of the relational ecology of sacrament present in both Eastern Orthodox and Lutheran traditions as they envision the Eucharist. John Meyendorff, for example, points to the linkage of the incarnation, *theosis*, synergy and the Eucharist as exhibiting the same enduring pattern of non-binaristic and non-hegemonic relationality. According to Meyendorff, in the Eucharist the dilemmas of nature and grace and of the divine as opposed to the human are overcome since the Eucharist itself is a synergy or a non-coercive and non-absorptive divine-human communion.³⁰ The incarnation enables and inaugurates the eucharistic liturgy in which the created, the earthly and the worldly, enters the process of becoming transfigured toward its divinely gifted perfection by engodding and superbly enriching ascent through the agency of the Holy Spirit rather

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 54.

³⁰ Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 207.

than by miraculously swift “upgrade” by annihilation of the irreconcilable and inferior alterity of the earthly sacramental elements.

The sacramental analogy between the incarnation and Eucharist as corresponding patterns of relation was acutely noticed by Martin Luther. So, in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, Luther proposes that

... what is true in regard to Christ is also true in regard to the sacrament. In order for the divine nature to dwell in him bodily [Col.2:9], it is not necessary for the human nature to be transubstantiated and the divine nature contained under the accidents of the human nature. Both natures are simply there in their entirety... In the like manner, it is not necessary in the sacrament that the bread and wine be transubstantiated and that Christ be contained under the accidents in order that the real body and real blood may be present. But both remain there at the same time, and it is truly said, ‘This bread is my body; this wine is my blood’, and vice versa.³¹

To sum up, in sacrament one reality indwells another while neither is forced to cease to be what it is yet both are reciprocally enriched without dualistic competition. The rationale of binarity is undermined in hypostatic union as well as in sacrament by the mystery of the greatest possible differences becoming uniquely and intimately interlaced while preserving the integrity of both the strongest and the weakest partner of this *admirabile commercium* across the greatest range of asymmetry ever thinkable. Sacrament, in this sense, is an eschatological configuration of ethical relationality as peace, or at least reconciliation. Of these truly amazing things indeed there is only an eschatology so mysteriously at work in the present dispensation that it can almost be confused with invisibility and inaction...

Sacraments round up the interlaced lineup of mysteries that I earlier called the ethical trajectory of relationality. All these mysteries of relationality are permeated by a

³¹ Martin Luther, “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church,” *Luther’s Works* 36, Word and Sacrament II, (Helmut T. Lehmann, ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959): 35.

particular quiddity of relation that is both sacramental and ethical. Now a configuration of relationality, divine or human, is ethical precisely because of its infinitely complex consonance with the sacramental which, in turn, itself stands in relation of a resonant consonance with the Trinity and the incarnation. Theologically speaking, the sacramental prefigures the ethical and the ethical safeguards the sacramental if both are viewed as a parallax. Namely, the same relationality can appear as sacramental without ceasing to be ethical and vice versa depending on the parallactic viewpoints. But perhaps this line of thought can be put much better, much more flexibly at least, in aural rather than visual terms. So theologically, a particular configuration relationality is neither sacramental nor ethical if one of the these two indispensable melodic lines in this synergistic or fugal relation is not heard, no matter how dissonant often their harmony may be in the decidedly unfinished “symphony of salvation.” But without doubt, as fugue is never a mere unison, sacramentality and ethics also remain mutually irreducible. Their reciprocity is asymmetrical insofar as faith and liturgy as performances of sacramental relationality cannot be seamlessly reduced to a particular configuration of human relations even when this configuration is ethical, i.e., consonant with that particular quiddity of relationship that permeates the greatest mysteries of the Christian ethical trajectory – the Trinity, the incarnation, *theosis*, and sacraments. What the fugal, and more statically also the parallax, view of sacramentality as ethical alludes to is that sacramentality as God’s preferred interface of relationality with creation is always dually vectored. As I already noted in Part I, Ch.1, this is most acutely affirmed in Martin Buber’s and Emmanuel Levinas’ explicit insistence on the inerasable similitude between the quiddity of the human relation to God and other human lives. So the dually vectored

relationality – sacramentality – encompasses the whole of created life and the division and separation between the supposed “real relation to God” in a “sacramental” or “liturgical” way and an allegedly “unreal relation of the I-It attitude toward the world”³² can only be an idolatrous fabrication. Of course, the Eucharist as both the relational locus and the fruit of the incarnation and the whole economy of salvation, as I will elaborate in the final chapter of this project, can be interpreted as no less explicit insistence on the same relational similitude, even if the glaring explicitness has managed to remain implicit for way to long. What that means is that ethics now seen here as the “right relation” among individual human persons and whole cultural and political collectivities, and liturgy as the “right relation” of sacramentality in action, are eucharistically scored as intrinsically concurrent, non-competitive, non-hegemonic, asymmetrically reciprocal – on other words, contrapuntal. But pondering over this question also means engaging in another, very specific, conversation with Alexander Schmemmann and Emmanuel Levinas. Before that can happen, some contrapuntal modulations of the notions of synergy and sacrament, as proposed here so far, seem to be in place.

3. From Synergy to Sacrament: Toward a Sacramental Counterpoint

What does counterpoint have to do with the sacraments? Most pertinently, I submit, counterpoint provides a further specification of synergy as the ethical “how” of both *theosis* and sacraments as relational mysteries. Perhaps, it also clarifies by nuancing, to a certain extent, the working ecology of sacramentality as a relational interface. Now

³² Martin Buber, *Ich und Du* (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1977). “Man kan sein Leben nicht zwischen eine wirkliche Beziehung zur Gott und ein unwirkliches Ich-Es-Verhältnis zur Welt aufteilen, – zur Gott wahrhaft beten und die Welt benützen. Wer die Welt als das zu Benützende kennt, kennt auch Gott nicht anders,” 127.

counterpoint, as I conjured it from the thought of Edward Said in conversation with Theodor Adorno in the previous chapter, is a sounding and an explicitly vivacious image of complex cohabitation, especially as far as the quiddity or the ethical make-up of reciprocal and interactive relations are concerned. The resonance between counterpoint, synergy, and sacraments first of all abides, I submit, in the shared particular quiddity of relation they all facilitate. It is the relation of an asymmetrical, free, often divergent, inconsistent, yet not always necessarily disagreeable, reciprocity without obliteration of integral difference in the synergistic relationality of God and the world. Contrapuntal harmony is, then, a synergy in sound or the very sounding effort toward that harmony, equally shaped by both interdependence and independence. To reiterate, counterpoint is the process of several voices sounding concurrently, conjunctively and reciprocally without detracting from any participant of relational events and realities. Counterpoint also, to remember the old musings of Jean-Philippe Rameau, is the musical imaginary of a multi-voiced plenitude wherein beauties mutually enhance one another rather than competitively detract from one another to achieve their autonomous apogee. Counterpoint really “works” when not only the contrapuntal subject that is expressed in a maximally rich way but precisely when the countersubjects approach the complexity of the subject as closely as possible. Thus Rameau contends that,

...although we ordinarily start with one part, which we try to infuse with all the melodic beauty we can imagine (called the ‘subject’), if the other parts are proportionately robbed of beauty, then this diminishes the beauty of the subject... the melodies of two or three parts should be almost equal...³³

³³ Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Traité de l’harmonie réduite à ses principes naturels*, quoted from Peter Schubert and Christoph Neidhöfer, *Baroque Counterpoint* (Upper Saddle River, NJ : Pearson, Prentice Hall, 2005): 8.

Now it would be tempting to move from beauty to theology at once, but there is more to be said about counterpoint as a most apt and fruitful figure of the ecology of sacramental relationality. It is after all music, “the most magical/enchanting of all arts,” which also “learns to break the magic which it itself lays upon all its representations”³⁴ as Adorno observes in his reflections on Richard Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*. Thus, the musical imaginary of counterpoint accommodates what Said called “irreconcilabilities.” Counterpoint may be so scored as to result in patently dissonant harmonies yet still remaining counterpoint while it accommodates the “nonharmonious and nonserene tensions.” More about that later. Most importantly, however, counterpoint as a postcolonially shaped imaginary is about the problematization of reified boundaries and nonrelational identities. Particularly, as I already noted in the previous chapter, counterpoint as exposed by Said is an aesthetically configured representation of hybridity reflecting the contradictory realities of migrancy, exile, displacement, and diaspora. Said’s imaginary of counterpoint admits moments of incommensurability. In this sense it is a musically inspired elaboration of hybridity precisely as a problematization and reconnecting of boundaries without erasure or dissolution. Hybridity mocks the desire for transparent gridlocks of purity to be conjured up for thoughts, bodies, actions, moralities and politics. Furthermore, postcolonial counterpoint as a specification of hybridity, following Said, is an imaginary of reciprocal and interactive relationality, equal or unequal, allowing both – irreconcilabilities as well as “concert and order.” Above all, it envisages an irrevocable connection and never submersive synthesis.

³⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, “Versuch über Wagner,” *Adorno: Gesammelte Schriften 13: Die musikalische Monographien* (Rolf Tiedemann, ed., Frankfurt a.M: Suhrkamp, 1997):145.

Turning from music and postcolonial theory to some more explicit sacramental theology, the understanding of sacrament could be envisaged as a pattern of relationality that is curiously akin to contrapuntal hybridity. What takes place in the eucharistic liturgy, by grace and in the power of the Holy Spirit, is that the body and blood of Christ emerges as really present in contrapuntal consonance with bread and wine also being there truly, sustainably, and effectively as Christ himself is when the human convocations of discipleship become the Body of Christ in communion with Christ and one another in Christ. In sacrament a certain relational hybridity obtains and it obtains contrapuntally: the boundaries endure but remain porous; the boundaries do not disappear but are “problematized” through cross-pollinations, echoes, analogies, resonances, dissonances, and even harmonies; agencies and powers are incommensurate yet always affiliated and reciprocal; difference is not totally privileged even though it could be; identity and difference cohabit “in an apparently impossible simultaneity;”³⁵ harmony is not unison; harmony among differences is not fixed irreversibly but is being worked out ever anew as they play off one another within impressively asymmetrical grids of power and love. To sum up, the relationship between the created and the uncreated in the Eucharist is synergistic or contrapuntal in the sense that their cohabitation and their performative efficacy for the human participants – grace, sanctification, salvation, deification, healing union with Christ and in Christ with other human persons – is constantly being worked out as two interpenetrating realities together signify and cause the passage toward union of God and humanity. Through sacraments the prototypical mysteries of ethical relationality – the Trinity and the incarnation – indwell the historical materiality of human life. These mysteries indwell human histories in a rather messy way: through

³⁵ Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire* (London: Routledge, 1995): 26.

entanglement, opaque transparencies, fluid interactions, asymmetrical give-and-takes, and very uncomfortable wholeness of hybridity as it so often adds an “and” to the closures of thought, imagination and practice. Thus the whole enterprise of sacramental theology, or, even better yet, of theology being practiced sacramentally, turns out to be a discourse of “impurity and pollution” before it adheres to any other methodology. Certainly, this perception of sacramental theology will not be universally consoling for hybridity, after all, is the acknowledgment of palimpsestic congruity and incongruity within signs and their recipients and creators.

Sacraments are the climaxing instantiations of sacramentality as the ethically configured interface of divine-human relationality amidst the existential actualities of so pervasively distorted relationships in the world. Considering ethics as a theological locus, the Eucharist then is the crucial constellation of right and just relationality in the broadest way. To make my argument explicit, it is time to finally say that the sacrament of Eucharist, in precisely this synergistic and contrapuntal sense, is the methodological and substantial proto-envisagement of an interface of an ethical relationality among the triune God and the created life³⁶ at full stretch, without coercion, hegemony, and exclusionary competitiveness among persons, powers, and agencies. By performative analogy, the Eucharist can body forth into fruition within interpersonal relations among the crossings and couplings of routine human cohabitation. Further, by a similar performative analogy, such a right relationality can and indeed ought to body forth in the arena of disciplinary turf wars within theology and other discourses of religion, all fabricated after the image and likeness of the Western idol of either/or rationalist dualism. At this point it is crucial

³⁶ Here I gratefully acknowledge my early indebtedness particularly to the thought of Vasily Zenkovsky, see В.Зеньковский, *Основы христианской философии* (Москва: Издательство Свято-Владимирского Братства, 1992).

to emphasize again that Alexander Schmemmann's lamentations about the habitual disciplinary divorces among various segments of theology as a particularly nasty symptom of Western binarism (see Part II, Ch. 1) are particularly resonant with resistant voices from the Two-Thirds World or marginally Occidental theologians despite all the differences that these critiques involve. In the case of these non-Occidental, marginally Occidental or hybrid theological sensibilities, the most dire consequence of the habit of disciplinary divorce is not so much expressed in sacramental terms as in ethical terms. Namely, the primary concerns of various liberation and postcolonial theologies are the issues of orthopraxis rather than doctrinal and disciplinary orthodoxy. The *ortho*-component of any theological discourse is ethical insofar as it is clear that any theological endeavor, intellectual, social, political, artistic, or economical, is always embedded in an inescapably politicized historical materiality and in the response of theology to the exigencies of life. So the *ortho*-component of the sacramental discourses resides in the explicitly contextualized sacramental ethics rather than disciplinary purity or observable and demonstrable adherence to the (Occidental) normative traditions, methods, and styles in theology. If the orthodoxy of any theological discipline is not socio-culturally transformative, or at least, if it does not hold itself accountable to the good news of salvation for all humanity at its fullest stretch before God, then it forfeits its truth. The theological, thus, is the ethical as in the pertinent insistence of Adorno on attention to human suffering as the condition of all truth.

Here another important connection has to be highlighted. As I already noted in Part I the concern about the quiddity of relation pertains equally acutely to both postcolonial discourse as well as feminist discourse. The hegemonic unilateralism of

colonial power and the habitual masculine monopoly in patterns and practices of religious knowing are being challenged in these discourses precisely as “wrong” – unjust, violent, humiliating – kind of relationality. What I called the quiddity of relationality is one of the most fundamental and enduring dimensions of feminist thought. Particularly, the issue of reciprocity of power and agency should be mentioned as the pivotal ingredients of human relationality. As Beverly Wildung Harrison already and clearly observed some decades ago from within the Christian context,

for feminists, the core dynamic of evil is located in the uses and abuses of power we share with God. Power that is not reciprocal is *always* violent power, abusive power. It destroys our capacity for, and cuts us off from, embodied, sensuous relationships with one another.³⁷

The concern for the quiddity of how-ness of relation is crucial to feminist sacramental theology as well. Moreover, as Susan Ross argues, the emphasis on relationality as connectivity and integrity is precisely what links feminist discourse and sacramental theology, or at least it should, if sacramental theology could be taken beyond its distorting (co-)inscription within the Occidental dualist worldview.³⁸ The enduring disavowal of women in the sacramental and liturgical practices, especially in those “high sacramental” Christian traditions which continue to exclude women from ordained ministry or priesthood, most definitely jeopardizes³⁹ the credibility of the very idea of Eucharistic justice let alone the fruitfulness of the whole sacramental discourse as a

³⁷ Beverly Wildung Harrison, “Restoring the Tapestry of Life: The Vocation of Feminist Theology,” *Justice in the Making: Feminist Social Ethics* (Elizabeth M. Bounds et al, eds.: Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004): 108.

³⁸ Susan A. Ross, “Women, Body, and Sacraments: Toward and Renewed Sacramental Theology,” *Miriam’s Song II Patriarchy: A Feminist Critique* (West Hyattsville: Priests for Equality, n.d.): 19-21.

³⁹ Siobhan Garrigan rightly notes that the liberation and feminist theologies have often recognized that “the doctrinal category ‘sacrament’ as it is presently constructed is actually incompatible with the doctrinal desire that it serve an ethic of justice,” *Beyond Ritual: Sacramental Theology after Habermas* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004): 26.

theological avenue of ethical deliberation and orthopraxis. With these concerns in mind, feminist liturgical theology in Janet Walton's view, privileges "connections between everyday human experience and the presence of God" and explicitly "connect[s] worship of God with justice."⁴⁰ Feminist liturgical and sacramental ethos insists on the practice of shared power since it "require[s] participation that is reciprocal, accountable, and relational."⁴¹ Feminist critiques of the pervasive dualism of predominantly malestream Western liturgical and sacramental theologies underwrite the need for a comprehensive interrogation of the doctrinal, ontological, and epistemological presuppositions of sacramental and liturgical discourses that often go unnoticed despite the most inspiring liturgical creativity. In response to such need, many "women-identified liturgical way[s] of doing theology" are emerging to advance "theology not dependent on binarist constructions of the ordinary and the sacred but one able to claim sacred space in all of life, especially in the ordinary of women's lives so often subject to trivialization and marginalization."⁴² It is fairly obvious that the concerns of this project resonate with these major preoccupations and thrusts in feminist discourse even though they do not exhaust the critical and constructive trajectory of the project. What these feminist critical preoccupations accomplish – synergistically with postcolonial critiques – is the addition of yet another facet of depth to the multivocal diasporic imaginary of constructive sacramental theology as a method of theological inquiry aspiring to be seriously loyal to the "radical implications of the Incarnation."⁴³

⁴⁰ Janet R. Walton, *Feminist Liturgy: A Matter of Justice* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000): 12.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁴² Teresa Berger, "Postscript," *Dissident Daughters: Feminist Liturgies in Global Context* (Teresa Berger, ed.; Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001): 228.

⁴³ Ross, "Women, Body, and Sacraments: Toward and Renewed Sacramental Theology," 22.

4. The Slow Victory: Sacramentality in Counterpoint

Now *theosis* is not a matter of predestination of a colonial sort with the associated arrogant invincibility of superiority and patronizing condescension. Neither is synergy a matter of some clandestine *die List der Vernunft* which is bound to find actualization at all costs. The subjectivities and agencies pertaining to human life in all its existential engagements particularly with other human beings are part of a fallen dispensation. This world is palpably unredeemed and to claim otherwise would merit at least the infamy of bad faith. In addition, as the Orthodox and certain other Christian traditions maintain with particular attentiveness, there exists what Karl Rahner called the inextricable ambivalence necessitated by human freedom regarding salvation and the protestations against it.⁴⁴ Even though human persons are invited to the peregrination of *theosis* through the slow and gradual synergy, invitation is not predestination. Consequently, human persons are “given the *opportunity to grow* into full fellowship with God”⁴⁵ without coercion to do so. Indeed, as Vladimir Lossky puts it, “union with God is not the result of an organic or unconscious process: it is accomplished in persons by the co-operation of the Holy Spirit and our freedom.”⁴⁶ If there is any triumph in the victorious fulfillment of *theosis*, it is (will be) only eschatological. According to Alexander Schmemmann, there are only the “slow transformation” and “slow victory”⁴⁷ under the auspices of *theosis* – and not, I must emphasize, an always steadily ascending victory.

It is at this juncture that the figure of counterpoint again offers a fruitful avenue for fine-tuning the theme of synergy. First of all, synergy as a non-detractive cooperation

⁴⁴ Rahner, *Meditations on the Sacraments*, xv.

⁴⁵ Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 52.

⁴⁶ Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 216.

⁴⁷ Alexander Schmemmann, “The Missionary Imperative,” *Church, World, Mission: Reflections on Orthodoxy in the West* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1979): 213.

of the divine with the human toward the salvation of the world is like a contrapuntal consonance to be striven for yet not always and not automatically accomplished. Neither the whole imaginary of *theosis* nor the notion of synergy presupposes an automatic dismissal of mutual antagonism among the divine and human co-workers. The economy of incarnation enables both the possibility of an ascetically shaped emergence of consonance as well as the emergence of dissonance with the odds being equal for both itineraries of relationship. Synergy privileges neither an *a priori* militant antagonism nor an *a priori* seamless intertwining. Difference is affirmed in a relationally collaborative way and not fetishized under the mutually allergic figures of non-incarnational sovereignty of God's aseity or the post-lapsarian state of absolute human depravity. As a non-binaristic imaginary of "both/and" rather than "either/or" synergy is hostage to neither "always" nor "never." As noted before, counterpoint is a sounding image of effort toward reconciliatory union amidst the differences of contrapuntal subjects. Counterpoint can here be seen as the "how" of synergy on this side of the beatific vision. Synergy is the "how" of the incarnationally inaugurated divine-human relationality of *theosis* through which God and human persons interact contrapuntally through their respective prevenient and responsive efforts toward the fulfillment of *opus Dei* – salvation. Certainly, contrapuntal synergy allows for, in Edward Said's words, the locations and occasions of sounding like "atonal ensemble." In fact, synergy is more often than not an effortful sounding together of different themes in an occasionally harmonious but most often disharmonious counterpoint. Within the counterpoint of synergy, harmony, or the "concert and order," is not fate. Rather, it is more akin to the most profound and an extraordinarily multi-faceted trajectory of desire on its infinite stretch toward an ever

more perfect participation in the divine life. On the other hand, taking the cue from Said's idea of counterpoint more than from Adorno's, the notion of synergy fits into a pattern of epistemological imagination steeped in a certain generosity towards the goodness of divine and human agencies in their mutual, incarnationally intimate, entanglement rather than agonizing and unlivable tension as the point of departure for the theo-logic of Christian lifeworld. Dissonance is not the universal and preemptive condition for truth and for reassurance of unviolated human integrity from the perspective of synergy. Musically speaking, the reservations about dissonant counterpoint as escalating into *bellum contrapuncticum omnium contra omnes* in its drive to resist the trespass into fusion, are addressed by synergy's preferential focus on the "synthetic" polyphonic elaboration of coexistence toward non-reductive harmony. Impossible to say in the same breath, it is nevertheless crucial to say this does not mean that the "analytic" movement of accentuating the conflicting particularities is dismissed. In this regard, sonorously envisioned ecology of contrapuntal synergy comes across as an interface also akin to hybridity in its disagreeable aspects. Hybridity, as Ien Ang had so suggestively put it, "can never be a question of simple shaking hands, of happy, harmonious merger and fusion. Hybridity is not the solution, but alerts us to the difficulty of living with differences, their ultimately irreducible resistance to complete dissolution."⁴⁸

A theologically appropriated hybridity here suggests a relation in which identities and boundaries do not disappear yet are worked into a laborious stretch of overlapping and intertwining in search of a curative and then also a thriving consonance – without being absorbed in hegemonic monophony of the strongest. In the present dispensation,

⁴⁸ Ien Ang, "Together-In-Difference: Beyond Diaspora, Into Hybridity," *Asian Studies Review*, 27:2 (2003):149-150.

“irreconcilabilities” remain even as they are sounded together in counterpoint. The fruits of such laborious stretch again frustrate the desire for purity and offer instead the same copious entanglements as sacraments do: identities are unsettled but not dissolved; the motion of transformation proceeds by unceasing *crescendo/diminuendo* without the jerky extremism of controlling *fff* vis-à-vis a totally depleted *ppp*. As far as non-reductive and non-coercive reconciliation of disparate and even antagonistic subjectivities and agencies is concerned, I submit that it is the theological orientation of “apophatic attitude” that may here allow a relatively temperate preference for the Saidian contrapuntal harmony of togetherness in difference rather than the Adornian crescendo of oppositional individuation. With an apophatic reserve it can be said that a total fusion – or a superciliously fabricated oneness of essence between God and created human life or of bread and wine and Christ’s body and blood in the Eucharist – can only be an idol, sinister and ruthless at that, but still only an idol both theologically and anthropologically. But the economy of creation and redemption is a roomy economy – similarly as the triune God is a “roomy God” as Robert Jenson amusingly suggests.⁴⁹ There is enough space for illimitable progression in reconciliatory similitude of salvific *theosis* that neither detracts from God being divine nor from human person being human. To paraphrase slightly the famous line by Aimé Césaire from his *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*,⁵⁰ there is a non-competitive space for all not only in “the *rendezvous* of victory” – salvation of the world, in this case – but also in the contrapuntal peregrinations toward it within the imaginary of synergy. As contrapuntal, the notion of divine-human synergy entails neither a necessary

⁴⁹ Jenson, *Systematic Theology 1: The Triune God*, 226.

⁵⁰ I am referring to Aimé Césaire’s words “and no race possesses the monopoly of beauty, of intelligence, of force, and there is a place for all in the *rendezvous* of victory” as quoted in Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1994): 280.

harmony nor necessary dissonance. The contrapuntal harmony emerges out of interdependence and the divinizing synergistic entanglement does not aspire to embody a binaristic and exclusionary – and thus reductive and hegemonic – reconciliation and communion. The imaginary of synergy in the overall broader context of non-coercive and non-hegemonic *theosis* resonates with concerns crystallized in Achille Mbembe’s postcolonial reflections about the situations of powerlessness being the situations of violence *par excellence*.⁵¹ When the redemptive *opus Dei* requires the passivity of absolute powerlessness on the part of the human agency to appropriately receive the imputed grace, the “situation of violence *par excellence*” most often obtains. When human agency is unidirectionally solidified as “the works” to somehow “earn” salvation, the fundamental and necessary attentiveness to the *ex nihilo* grounding of all primary relationality and causality between the uncreated and created is exaggerated, in many influential modern Western theological views, far beyond the fruitfulness and modesty of a healthy apophatic reserve on its guard against idolatry. The theological undermining of the integrity of human persons by allocating their agency to the role of absolutely passive receptacle of the “civilizing (divinizing?!) mission” of supposedly benevolent divine grace has been sufficiently disastrous, as the feminist and postcolonial critiques have shown over the past several decades. The unholy colonial synergies of the “crown and cross” as well as the slow-burning violence of theologically inspired and proliferated sexism on the top of the various colonial configurations of power(lessness) are challenged by the imaginary of *theosis* and synergy as precisely counterpointing the imagination of hegemonic unilateralism theologically – and then perhaps also politically, aesthetically and socially as well. The sinister synergy of Christ and conquest –

⁵¹ Achille Mbembe, “Provisional Notes on the Postcolony,” *Africa* 62:1 (1992): 29.

metaphysically, politically, economically, culturally, socially – is challenged by the synergy of redemptive *theosis* and its preference for unviolated mutuality of responsive cooperation and empowerment. In short, if the goodness and integrity of the variously gendered and cultured human subjectivity and agency is a worthy concern in relation to God, then the imaginary of synergy offers an avenue for a truly ethical divine-human relationality of reciprocity in the process of an unreservedly and rigorously contrapuntal transfiguration toward salvation.

To conclude: as I have espoused it, sacramentally configured relationality is the relationality of a sound incarnational theology. It is most fruitfully conceived, I submit, under the figurality of laborious contrapuntal togetherness-in-difference and thus of privileging the unassimilable and often indeed dissonant consonance of “both” or “many” over the mastery, simplification, and transparency of “either/or.” So on the one hand, within the horizon of eschatological substantivity of synergistic *theosis*, the Eucharist is a prefiguration of the salvific “*rendezvous* of victory,” ravishingly expressed by Sergius Bulgakov:

This transfiguration of creation ... is accomplished in the Divine Eucharist mysteriously or sacramentally, that is, visibly only for the eyes of faith, upon the Eucharistic matter. That which is accomplished in the sacrament will be accomplished, at the end of the time, in the whole world, which is the body of humankind. And the latter is the Body of Christ.⁵²

On the other hand, within the horizon of constructive methodological inquiry, the Eucharist conceived as an envisagement of contrapuntal relationality allows, I suggest, a reflective peregrination into sounding out the possibilities of envisioning liturgy and ethics in a sacramental counterpoint. To that itinerary of inquiry I will turn in the next –

⁵² Sergius Bulgakov, “The Eucharistic Dogma,” *The Holy Grail and the Eucharist* (Boris Jakim, ed., New York: Lindisfarne Books, 1997):137-138.

and the last – chapter of this project of thinking and peregrinating through the litany of methodological pollution from within a diasporic imaginary.

Chapter 3

The Counterpoint of Liturgy and Ethics: Rewriting the Paradigmatic Last Chapter Diasporically

Where does liturgy meet ethics? Where does the ritualized and contemplative space of holy things and holy words meet the grind of routine living amidst geopolitical interests, cultural differentiation, and economic maneuverings? One of the clearest, if visceral, answers to these questions struck me in the form of an embodied, as it were, line out of Dante's *La divina commedia*, Inferno, Canto 1: *Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita...* Indeed, in the middle of the path of our life! And where did it strike me so unforgettably as it suddenly surfaced from the depths of my memory? It happened in the Caribbean and it happened twice in almost similar situations and locations when some years ago together with my husband we visited St. Michael's Anglican Cathedral in Bridgetown, Barbados, and then some days later again found ourselves in the Cathedral of St. John in St. John's, Antigua. The fleeting reminiscences of Dante's words shot through my mind while I realized that there was yet another theological reason for my enduring attraction to Paolo Veronese's *Feast in the House of Levi*, originally known as *The Last Supper*. What I saw in both cathedrals was a liturgical space – altar, chancel, vestment, candles, – literally in the middle of the daily paths of people in both cities, who appeared to use the isles of the sanctuaries as walking shortcuts through the city. We were in Bridgetown and St. John's on workdays. No organized liturgical action was taking place in either cathedral. It was almost as hot inside the cavernous buildings of the colonial era as it was outside. It did not feel like one had entirely left one world and entered an altogether different one as most doors and all windows were open. It was

warm and muggy under the old arches. The familiar ecclesiastical smell of beeswax and that omnipresent mixture of spilled wine, mothballs and simply old age of practically everything except the sound system captivatingly mingled with unidentifiable wafts of flowery aromas from the outside. The sounds of human voices, cars, and birds penetrated the hushed church environment from the outside. Oh, the birds! In fact, it was not just their chirping and screeching that poured into the hallowed walls of some old cathedrals in the Caribbean through doors and windows. Another year, we again found ourselves in the Caribbean, this time in the completely deserted – by humans, that is – old Catholic Church in Marigot, St. Martin, at the high noon of an exhaustively hot and cloudless day. There were no local people, no tourists, no staff, just dozens and dozens of pigeons perched all over the church, enveloping the whole sanctuary in a dense and loud concerto of cooing. New pigeons kept flying in through the open windows and doors while others left the same way. Some flew in circles around the altar and back and forth across the nave, the flutter of their wings erupting unpredictably as a cracking coloratura above the incessant *obbligato* of the enthusiastically cooing assemblage of birds. In the muggy air of the sanctuary, amidst the sacred paintings, altar cloths, pews, fluttering pigeon wings, and soft breezes of hot air coming through the open windows, there was something bizarrely pentecostal about the church virtually turned into an aviary. The wind and the birds came and went, and moved around without constraint, without boundaries, palpably there yet not to be captured and pinned down. So did memories, too. This was the most massive and overwhelming pigeon cooing that I had ever heard (outdoors or indoors!) since my childhood in Rīga, Latvia, where pigeons pretty much meant *the* birds for an urban girl and, like it or lump it, were always around. But within the walls of the old

Marigot church I did not experience a shade of annoyance at the boisterous flock – there was just the savoring of liturgical space so empty and yet so full of life, so recklessly open to whatever and whoever cared to come or fly in, so much on the threshold of temporalities, histories, and varieties of created life.¹

In Bridgetown, however, it was far from listening to a bird symphony since occasional virtuoso stretches of live organ music filled the muggy high-vaulted spaces as an organist practiced at St. Michael's. The sounds and activities commingled in a lusciously contrapuntal way with no clear distinction between outside and inside. People respectfully came in through a side door, passed right in front of the altar, some bowed their heads while walking, some genuflected slightly, some paused for a short moment, some gazed intently toward the altar as if in swift prayer, some seemed to strike up a quiet conversation with others, only to continue their commute moments later by leaving through the other side door or through the main entrance.

Now these Caribbean cathedrals “in action” on an ordinary workday did not exactly resemble the sumptuous proceedings of Veronese's *Last Supper*, or any festive Eucharist for that matter, yet the spaces and itineraries of mundane human life and liturgy intersected there so palpably and so unpretentiously, and most importantly, without competition. And this was what again brought Veronese's painting to my mind with its seemingly “inappropriate” assemblage of parrots, dogs, cultural pariahs and ordinary people with bleeding noses, all mixed in among the inner circle of Jesus at the Last Supper. The liturgical space was large enough to accommodate the crisscrossing paths,

¹ When I last visited the church in Marigot on February 11, 2010 the pigeons had presumably annoyed enough pious souls to mandate their extradition. The day before visiting Marigot I also happened to observe how special fearsome-looking spikes were being installed in the Catholic Cathedral in Basseterre, St. Kitts to prevent birds from landing near the altar.

the comings and goings of the locals, as well as the intermittent presence of tourists. If ordinary life walked in the liturgical space with the locals and tourists and wafted in with aromas, insects and an occasional fluttering bird, then liturgy perhaps also walked out of the cathedrals after those brief pauses and prayers in front of the altar with unassumingly bowed heads and knees. And all of that without much ado and without a feeling that something was being artificially and presumptively set up! With this kind of palpable relation between liturgy and life making relentless apparitions in my memory and mind, I suggest that the relation of liturgy and ethics can be fruitfully heard and then played off each other together as sacramental in that particularly contrapuntal way that unites without division, distinguishes without separation, and relates without hegemony or detraction. When I pondered over this aural, visual, motional, and olfactory counterpoint of the curiously porous liturgical space, I was struck by the realization that my lingering within the experientially fluid walls of the old Caribbean cathedrals, anchored so painfully ambivalently amidst the paradigmatic postcolonial archipelago, had stirred up a spontaneous resonance, rather poignantly and perhaps even somewhat uncannily, with what I previously espoused as a diasporic subjectivity and imaginary. And what else is that, indeed, if not a penetrating and enduring sensibility (including a theoretical sensuality!) of living together what one cannot abstractly reconcile with precision and transparency under the barren hegemony of that aging Occidental demigod of rationality and imagination alike – the idea of dualistic non-contradiction?

1. Theological Method: A Relationally and Ethically Accountable Mindscape

But what, indeed, do old Mannerist paintings once in trouble with the Holy Inquisition and some bird-friendly colonial era cathedrals reactivating old childhood memories in the postcolonial Caribbean archipelago have to do with theological method? After all, and with good dose of irony precisely in a postcolonial context, this project is a discourse on method! Is not the preoccupation with method, let alone the “right” method as “Eurocentric” (“the one big fat Greek method”²) and as “modern”³ as it gets? Is not concern for theological method as abstract and as removed from concrete ways of moral life as one can imagine? Even though it may not seem obvious, the answer that can reach beyond the chronic binary opposition of thought (“method!”) and practice (performance), as well as of worship and socially responsible action, is precisely to interrogate theological method as a mindscape of perceiving and conceiving God, the world, and human life. For what is theological method if not the *practiced* habits of reflection, as it ebbs and flows in a deep consanguinity with affections and imagination, on all things in relation to God? In other words, theological method is something that is actually practiced as a habitual style of comportment toward reality as it bodies forth particular theologies of salvation, sin, power, knowledge, relationality, and values. “Method” then is the crystallization of cultural imaginary, the mindscape of the patterns and practices of

² Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “One Rule to Rule Them All? Theological Method in an Era of World Christianity,” *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity* (Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland, eds.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006): 90. Vanhoozer points out that the obsession with theological method is particularly Western proclivity in theological inquiry and hints at the need to move beyond such a fixation, or indeed, that “touch of madness in the West’s fascination with method”; however, he does not abstain from offering his own constructive methodological proposal of “diasporadic systematics” in the “era of World Christianity,” *ibid.*, 86-97.

³ Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 164-165. Sokolowski argues that the confidence in the “right” method as the surest safeguard for following the “right” reasoning procedures in order to master the truth is an intrinsic part of the problematic rationalism of Western modernity.

religious knowing, and finally the axiological structure of culturally and historically embedded organization of knowledge.

The recent emphasis on the “primacy of practice” throughout humanities and social sciences highlights the importance of the deep attitudinal and axiological habits of social conviviality and cross-cultural communication. The spotlight in this context is aimed at the culturally embodied and embedded habits of social interaction rather than some highbrow principles about the good and the true in relation to variously raced, gendered, and classed human persons. In the context of ethics, as Kwame Anthony Appiah contends, the primacy of practice mandates the recognition that “as Faust said, in the beginning is the deed: practices and not principles are what enable us to live together in peace.”⁴ However, Appiah also insists that transformative engagements with the experiences and identities of others start with “conversations” – imaginative engagements that may inaugurate perspectival shifts and most importantly, a change in our habits.⁵ Most certainly, our habits of imagination and reflection – particularly ethical imagination – do not always seamlessly and necessarily coincide with the lived narratives and experiences of human life. Mercifully, there are times when unjust and oppressive axiologies of virtue and value do not automatically translate into oppressive social relationships. Regretfully, there are also times when admirable moral imaginaries are so devoid of performative efficacy that they indeed remain abstract and “theoretical” in the most sterile and lifeless way. Moreover, such moral imaginaries are most often than not unable or unwilling to acknowledge their internal disavowals and abjections. Ethical imagination alone is not automatically redemptive. Similarly, an ethically inflected

⁴ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company: 2006): 85.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 77-83.

theological method does not guarantee an ethically responsible and fruitful discipleship intellectually or socio-politically. Without doubt, it is not the same to imagine and to contemplate justice and liberation and to do justice and liberation – philosophically, politically, economically, or theologically.

Yet the difference between the ethical practices of contemplation and action is not an unbridgeable chasm. For thinking, imagining, and doing justice are *all* practices of justice – versatile, interlaced, and mutually answerable. Hence an ethically inflected interrogation of theological methodology as culturally and historically embedded mindscape, with all the countless personal variations within it, calls into question the habits of imagination and thought precisely as indispensable components of the totality of human life. Contemplation and imagination ought not to be juxtaposed to some “real life” as if the alleged “real” and “practical life” with all its moral dimensions would entail neither reflection nor imagination. Thus the relation between method as a historic-culturally embedded mindscape and imaginary on the one hand, and lived interpersonal conviviality on the other, is neither a perfect harmony nor a necessary and unavoidable discord. What is unavoidable is the very interrelation between the habits of thought and deed. Both are relational practices and both are ethical practices since the field of ethics is the whole of human life throughout its reciprocal intertwinement of reflective and praxial aspects. According to Kathleen Higgins,

Ethics ... is concerned with thought-mediated human behavior. The range of behavior involved extends from action chosen as a result of detailed deliberation to habitual, even ‘mechanical’ behavior, but in all human behavior, thought or attitude plays some causal role. Ethics uses reflective consciousness to influence our

behavior. Ethics is also the practice of self-consciously cultivating attitudes and habits, *including habits of thought*.⁶

Theological method as the habitual mindscape of reflection on and imagination of all things in relation to God and as ordered toward God is ethically accountable precisely as the crystallization of sustained, enduring, and recurring practice. It is at this juncture that I emphasize again that a postcolonially colored theoretical sensibility can add a fruitful nuance to the perceptions, critiques, and re-envisagements of modern theological methodology and its whole epistemological imagination. Theological imagination is embedded and embodied in historical beliefs as well as cultural practices. Theological imagination feeds on the mutual intertwinement of beliefs, doctrines, liturgies, cultural, and economic practices. The intertwinement can be harmonious or discordant, but it is intertwinement nevertheless. Recognizing this pivotal intertwinement, among the most widespread perceptions of theological imagination in modernity is the envisagement of the divine transcendence as competitively juxtaposed to the immanence of human freedom as if in an irresolvable oppositionality of the “either/or” logic. To be almighty, the Almighty has to be, as it were, an enemy of the natural, the finite, the fallen, the not-yet-redeemed. It is as if the divine grace cannot redeem unless it rapes the nature into justification and salvation through displacement, dislocation, and detraction. It is as if the relationship of the divine and the human, or more precisely, the uncreated and the created, is gridlocked in an adversarial dialectic of Manichean intensity. The habit of dualistic imagination is not limited to but is particularly thriving during colonial modernity. It continues to influence theological inquiry into the present day. Be it gender

⁶ Kathleen Marie Higgins, *The Music of Our Lives* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991): 8. Italics added.

dualism or the competitive and hierarchical oppositionality of body and soul, spirit and flesh, private and public, rational and emotional, visual and aural, written and spoken word, worship and socio-economic life, – the dualistic rationalities and imaginaries privilege the logic of “either/or” in all of these contexts.

Now to ascribe such an inherently competitive stance to the whole of the modern Western theological imaginary would be, of course, an exaggeration and misrepresentation. There are internal dissensions and critiques of the dualism, to be sure. Yet, widespread modern envisagements of the relationality between a transcendent God and the created world as a dualistic zero-sum competitive construct⁷ signal a tremendously unproductive perception of relationality. What dualistic and competitive perception of relationality entails is a notion of divine identity and agency that operates out of its absolute sovereignty through arbitrary (presumably benevolent and salvific) fiat of displacement, clearing off space, and absorption without residue. The divine agency emerges as competitive and, in order to establish an allegedly sustainable and harmonious conviviality, subsumes human otherness, freedom, agency, and empowerment to purify the deficiencies ingrained in the human condition. What obtains here is a monochromatic dialectic of the presence and absence, plenitude and deficiency, holiness and depravity. How difference is perceived and tackled has never been an easy question. How relation is perceived and struggled with has never been an easy question for the Western cultural milieu since the ancient Greeks. As the African theologian Anthony Balcomb has observed, the paradigmatic Western preference for disengagement, which then predictably problematizes and marginalizes relationality, spans across the

⁷ Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity: A Brief Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001): 2-23.

broadest terrains of life as “disengagement of time from space, individual from society, the spiritual from the material, and the personal from the cosmic.”⁸ When disengagement and disenchantment are installed as epistemological necessities – as they were during Western modernity according to Balcomb⁹ – then the apogee of Western proclivity to a non-participating epistemology is effectively reached. But it is also important to notice the particular *modern* twist to this trajectory of alienation and disengagement. As Kathryn Tanner argues, in the broader context of Western modernity and its theological creativity, the modern epistemological and ontological imagination is distinguished by “the degree to which difference takes on the character of mutual exclusivity.”¹⁰

Theological imagination that feels at home among dualistic juxtapositions resonates rather forcefully with the dialectics of displacement. In order to safeguard the purity and autonomy of (modern) sovereign subjectivity – divine or human, individual or corporate – difference is perceived as being in need of such intensification which requires the depotentiation of any presumable human competitor. In such circumstances, difference is perceived via gestures of dualistic, even Manichean, detraction. It is nurtured by an “either/or” kind of logic of displacement, which routinely reifies difference competitively and issues in proliferation of unrelational and hierarchically tilted binaries such as spirit/body, black/white, male/female, ethic/aesthetic,

⁸ Anthony O. Balcomb, “Re-enchanting a Disenchanted Universe – Post Modern Projects in Theologies of Space,” *Religion and Theology* 16 (2009): 80.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁰ Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005): 4. Tanner emphasizes that there is a culturally specific “Greek problematic” in conceiving transcendence-immanence conundrum in Western theological traditions but that the modern period represents a peculiar exacerbation of dualistic juxtaposition of difference. She also notes that the collapse of non-competitive and relational imaginary of transcendence and immanence into a competitive univocity of being, jealously divided between the divine and the human, had sporadically occurred before in the Christian theological tradition in the West, for example in the 4th century outlook of Pelagianism. However, “what is new to a modern circumstance is... the pervasiveness of that mis-step. It becomes commonplace of modern theology,” 122.

private/public, civilized/barbaric, West/non-West, vision/sound, autonomy/subjection, activity/passivity, and also liturgy/ethics and so forth.

Theological imagination cannot be detached from philosophical, social, and political imagination. Ethical responsibility goes together hand in hand with embodied actions and sincerely held convictions in philosophical and political space, but so do religious beliefs and habits of theological imagination as well. It is from this perspective that the interrogation of the dualistic and competitive relation between the divine and the worldly obtains a particular axiological significance in the postcolonial context. In this context the ethical accountability of even the loftiest cognitive and affective envisagements cannot escape being evaluated particularly doggedly in terms of their impact upon the historical materialities of suffering and injustice. Theologically (in)formed conceptions, sentiments, and habits are not incarcerated in segregated “sacred” or scholarly spaces, as the modern fiction of neatly separated spheres of “the sacred” and “the secular” aspired to inculcate. Rather, they naturally can, should, and do leak into a multitude of terrains of human life. Therein reside their transformative as well as their harmful potentialities.

The problematic consonance between theological envisagements and colonial cosmologies of power and meaning is not limited to the unholy “synergy of Christ, commerce and conquest” on a purely economic or socio-historical plane. It reaches deeper than that. William Placher judiciously observes (while also typically for a mainstream Western theologian failing to mention the colonial and imperialistic underpinnings involved) that modernity

... was a world of terrible injustice and violence, and some aspects of its theology both reflected and even contributed to those horrors.

Christian theologians supported oppressive social structures and all sorts of bigotry; the male bias of the tradition is only one of its most obvious faults.¹¹

As accurate as such an acknowledgment is, what is in need of emphasizing is the role of binaristic epistemological imagination, so prominent during the colonial modernity, in the enmeshment of those allegedly “abstract” or “theoretical” mindscapes with the popular ideologies and policies of colonialism and imperialism. The historic-cultural configuration of rationality and imagination that routinely prefers dichotomous allocations that rapidly spiral into reciprocal exclusivity, is underwritten by a whole sensibility of detraction that perceives difference through the dialectic of competitive displacement throughout modern theological imagination. Is it then a mere coincidence that modern colonial imaginaries and ideologies often conceive of cultural, racial, religious and ethnic difference in similarly allergic terms, reminiscent of preemptive animosity as the habitual order of relationality? As Placher’s theological analysis accurately suggested, the impact of these seismic cultural shifts facilitated the emerging perception of theology as the enemy of science, of the divine grace as the enemy of human freedom, and finally, of God as the enemy of transformative justice.¹²

Here, then, is the crux of the whole issue of the unholy “synergy of Christ, commerce, and conquest” in relation to theological method: namely, theological imagination cannot be detached from moral, philosophical, social, and political

¹¹ William C. Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence: How Modern Thinking about God Went Wrong* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996): 2.

¹² *Ibid.*, 181-182. Placher remarks that “theologians who think of God as one thing in the world alongside others often then try to preserve some sense of divine transcendence by emphasizing that God is the most distant, most powerful thing in the world, at the peak of all the world’s hierarchies of being and value. This often makes God the *enemy of transformative justice*, since God’s place at the peak of hierarchies gives divine sanction to those hierarchies, and a God defined in terms of distance, power, and unaffability gives such qualities the imprimatur of divinity,” 182.

imagination. The dominant modern theological imaginary of relational interface between God and world, or the whole relational ontology as dualistic and competitive uncannily resonates with the practices of the modern colonial “Western spectacle.”¹³ The greatest concern is about the influential amalgam of cultural, philosophical, and theological imagination that is implicated in the formation and justification of arrogant hegemony, competitiveness and coercion as allegedly workable models of relation – between God and the world as well as among human persons, societies, races, genders, classes, and cultures. Juan Louis Segundo’s old liberationist adage still expresses the problem in a nutshell as uncomfortably as it sounded decades ago: “Our falsified and inauthentic ways of dealing with our fellow men are allied to our falsification of the idea of God. Our unjust society and our perverted idea of God are in close and terrible alliance.”¹⁴

But what is really at stake here is not just academic nomenclature and its turf wars, but the role of theological discourse as the enabler and sanctifier of a detrimental view of socio-political reality. If theological imagination – textual, visual, aural, verbal, olfactory, tactile and degustatory – is instrumental for the formation of affective and intellectual dispositions exercised in the socio-political arena far beyond breviaries and catechisms then it does matter what kind of relation is envisaged to convey the fundamental God-world relationality. When jealous competition and animosity is already inscribed in the most fundamental perceptions of relation between God and the world in

¹³ Barnor Hesse defines the “Western spectacle” as “a discursive organization of an imaginary social representativeness that rests on a cultivated social exclusiveness,” which functions by globalizing “the ‘non-European’ (‘non-white’) other, outside the chosen people, as irredeemably deficient, deviant and disorderly. Invariably narrowly cast as an outsider, an inferior, a threat, a margin, an amusement, an exoticism, an after-thought; the ‘non-European’ as ‘non-white’, and vice-versa, is situated within the imperial vision and governmental landscape of an idealized Western panorama and paranoia,” in “Reviewing the Western Spectacle: Reflexive Globalization through the Black Diaspora,” *Global Futures: Migration, Environment and Globalization* (Avtar Brah, Mary J. Hickman, Martin MacGhail, eds.; New York: Palgrave, 1999):130-131.

¹⁴ Juan Louis Segundo, *Our Idea of God* (John Drury, trans.; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1974): 8.

the modern colonial theological imaginary, it enables the proliferation of such models of relation across the multitude of social and political relations within our common planetary life. The integrity, freedom and full self-realization of one party is envisioned as jeopardized by the integrity, freedom and full self-realization of another as they carve out space for themselves in the arena of ceaseless competition. The power of one presupposes the powerlessness of the other as if to be oneself means to perceive the other as a potential enemy, or competitor to say the least. But powerlessness, as Achille Mbembe notes, is a conduit of violence, at least in this palpably unredeemed dispensation that we presently inhabit: “For it is precisely the situations of powerlessness that are the situations of violence *par excellence*.”¹⁵

Where do we go from here? The epoch of postcoloniality – being so many different things to so many different people – is not the milieu of pure resolutions, simple syntheses, and returns to fabricated “golden ages” of uncomplicated reconciliation. In the long posteriority of colonialism, the conundrum of relational difference endures.¹⁶ Yet, to indict the enmeshment of the Western modern Christian theological imaginary – itself an amalgam of the Greek, Jewish and certain indigenous European religious, intellectual, and socio-linguistic traditions – with the colonial “Western spectacle” is not to demand a complete *damnatio memoriae* of the Western Christian theological creativity. The answer here cannot be not so naïve. Moreover, no historical era and no culture are totally and preemptively beyond redemption. The intricacies of non-hegemonic and non-coercive

¹⁵ Achille Mbembe, “Provisional Notes on the Postcolony,” *Africa* 62:1 (1992): 29.

¹⁶ In the long posteriority of colonialism, as Achille Mbembe suggests, the conundrum of relational difference endures: “...as a general rule, the experience of the Other, or the *problem of the ‘I’ of others and of human beings we perceive as foreign to us*, has always posed virtually insurmountable difficulty to the Western philosophical and political tradition,” *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2001): 2.

living with otherness are not uniquely Western or exclusively modern problems. Nevertheless, what is somberly captivating for theological inquiry is the degree of uncannily intimate entanglement of epistemological imagination, socio-political action, and theological tradition throughout modernity that has been producing countless real victims and immense real suffering across the globe. And all of that happened because, theologically speaking, the problem of the “I” of others includes, or may have even originated with, the problem of the “I” of the Almighty Other – in a most tragic way.

Theological method as reflective and imaginative mindscape and habit *in actu* – as a practice – no longer can be perceived as ethically anything less than intrinsically intertwined with and inexcusably accountable before the existential actualities of human life and, above all, human suffering. Precisely as an intellectual and imaginative practice, despite the illusions of professional detachment, theological method matters since for “intellectuals ... morality starts with their activity in this secular world of ours.”¹⁷ Pondering over how we reason, intuit, enact, and imagine all things in relation to God is that very intellectual practice which at this moment in history cannot do otherwise but submit itself to the ethical authority of what Edward Said called the “main issue for the intellectual today, which is human suffering.”¹⁸ Hence, “indeed the intellectual vocation essentially is somehow to alleviate human suffering...”¹⁹ So the way forward methodologically seems to lead through the modulation of the rationale of binarity into a peregrination toward an imaginary of relationality where there is a “place for all in the *rendezvous* of victory” (Aimé Césaire).

¹⁷ Edward W. Said, “Gods That Always Fail,” *Representations of the Intellectual* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996): 120.

¹⁸ Edward W. Said, “On Defiance and Taking Positions,” *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002): 503.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

2. Sacrament as a Template of Relationality: Hybrid, Contrapuntal, Ethical

The more I looked into the Western modern theological history the more it fascinated me how liturgical theology offers a particularly striking example of how the rationale of binarity functions in both formal and material sense. The routine disengagement between liturgy and ethics has lead to the situation where the emphasis on one almost by default is perceived as detracting from the significance, autonomy and integrity of the other. Precisely as an issue of theological method, this disengagement reflects the impoverishing Occidental dualistic logic of “either/or” in a glaringly notorious brevity.

The Occidental cultural imaginary has consistently gravitated toward dualisms in its theories and practices despite sporadic internal critiques and contestations of such inclinations. Among these critiques, sacramental discourse has been pivotal in calling into question and subverting the rationale of binarity, especially during the modern period. Additionally, sacramental discourse has been no less pivotal in modulating certain prominent strands of the Greek cultural imaginary of late antiquity into what is today known as the “Eastern/Greek/Slavic Christianity/Orthodoxy,” resulting in Eastern Orthodoxy’s striking divergence from the Occidental dualistic proclivities. In this context, I share the ambivalence expressed by Kevin Vanhoozer in his reflections on the “one big fat Greek method” in the present era of global and postcolonial Christianity regarding the accuracy of identification of the Occidental theological thought as “Greek.”²⁰ “Greek” thought is not simply geo-culturally “Western,” despite its dominant

²⁰ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “One Rule to Rule Them All? Theological Method in an Era of World Christianity,” *Globalizing Theology*, 90. See footnote 8 where Vanhoozer astutely notes that “Eastern Orthodoxy did not go on to become the *scientia* that it did in the Latin West, nor did it adopt the Cartesian subject/object dichotomy or the various hermeneutical theories that derive from it.”

influence in the Euro-Atlantic cultural orbit. On the other hand, ancient Greek cultural imaginary has also not been seamlessly blended with the all the minute aspects of the internally versatile Eastern Christianity. All the geo-cultural and historical intricacies notwithstanding, as my engagement with the thought of Alexander Schmemmann and others in this project has shown, Eastern Orthodox epistemological imagination profoundly upsets the central methodological certainties and inertias of the Occidental theological discourse, especially in their modern inscriptions and through their dependence on precisely those elements of the ancient Greek thought that are most dualistic. In the Eastern Christian tradition, the Greek legacy has been transmuted into a theological imaginary that privileges the principle of “both/and” in Christology, soteriology, and eschatology, thus effectively vectoring all of these branches of theology toward the mode of sacramental reasoning. Arguably, therein resides Eastern Orthodoxy’s most creative promise – which has not yet come to fruition in either the “East” or the “West” – constructive Christian theology at the present moment. On the other hand, while the Occidental sacramental theology has indeed preserved the most subversive potential vis-à-vis dualism it also undoubtedly has a rather ambivalent relation to the Greek legacy as far as dualism is concerned. Thus, Susan Ross rightly points out that even “sacramental theology has inherited and absorbed the classical dualisms of western thought (our legacy from the Greeks) by seeing them as based in nature and, by extension, in the will of God.”²¹

What could sacramentality as an imaginary of relationality bring to the methodological modulation of the contemporary Occident theological inquiry away from

²¹ Susan A. Ross, “Women, Body, and Sacraments: Toward and Renewed Sacramental Theology,” *Miriam’s Song II Patriarchy: A Feminist Critique* (West Hyattsville: Priests for Equality, n.d.): 20.

the rationale of binarity in the present era of the convoluted postcolonial globality? The Eucharist, to underscore once again, is the mystery of a non-hegemonic and non-coercive union. It is the paradigmatically fecund sign of life-giving and life-affirming impurity of “both” and “and” rather than “either/or.” The sacrament denotes the mystery of simultaneously perceiving, living, thinking, feeling, tasting, and acting out the divine transcendence and worldly immanence alike as irrevocably related across the interface of sacramentality which itself is the locus and fruit of the incarnation. The Eucharist transforms this world through a contrapuntal or palimpsestic plenitude rather than from an austere and transparent simplicity. Sacrament as liturgy and liturgy as sacrament is always more than purely one thing in their “many-sided glories.”²² Thus it is merely fitting that the Eucharist has many names, many agencies, many effects, and many temporal inscriptions simultaneously. This multiplicity of relations, agencies, and identities might appear messy and frustrating, as all sacramental discourse usually does. But the world as we know it is messy and frustrating in its density of relations, and precisely as such is found fitting by God to be the natural habitat of sacramentality. Most importantly, as the paradigmatic theological dictum on the simultaneous multiplicity of sacramental relations by John of Damascus in *De Fide Orthodoxa* suggests, the union of human person with Christ in the Eucharist is concurrently and non-competitively also a union with all other human beings partaking of the Eucharist.

Communion, too, is spoken of, and it is an actual communion, because through it we have communion with Christ and share in His flesh and His divinity: yea, we have communion and are united with one another through it. For since we partake of one bread, we all become one body of Christ and one blood, and members one of another, being of one body with Christ. (...) For if union is in truth with Christ and with one another,

²² Yngve Brilioth, *Eucharistic Faith and Practice: Evangelical and Catholic* (A.G. Herbert, trans.; London: SPCK, 1965): 288.

we are assuredly voluntarily united also with all those who partake with us. For this union is effected voluntarily and not against our inclination. *For we are one body because we partake of the one bread*, as the divine Apostle says (1.Cor. 10:17).²³

Damascene's words may well be the most famous on the subject. Yet they hold together a whole tradition of eucharistic imagination wherein multiple unions overlap and intertwine in a dazzling hybridity: the union of bread and wine with Christ's glorified body, the union of individual participant of the Eucharist with Christ's body, the union of Christ's sacramental body with ecclesial body, the union of all participants of the Eucharist with one another in and through Christ and all of that through the work and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. If this is not a problematization of the rationale of enclosed boundaries and dualism as this problematization typically obtains in sacrament – a certain hybridity! – it is hard to imagine what then could be! The Eucharist as the prototypical mystery of relationality underwrites the template of ethical relationality in which identity and difference cohabit in an apparently impossible simultaneity. This pattern of ethical relationality – without detraction, coercion, annihilation – is disseminated through entanglement, opaque transparencies, fluid interactions, asymmetrical give-and-takes, with beauty and utility intermingled – as in the lived tensions of routine living, at least for those of us who are “not purely one thing.”

²³ John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa*, Book 4, Ch. 13. Quoted from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Reprint Edition, vol. 9 (Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997): 84. Notably, Thomas Aquinas quotes Damascene in ST 3.73.4 to elaborate on the multiple significations, causalities and temporalities involved in the Eucharist as the sacrament of unity. A much looser and far more implicit reverberations of this lineage of sacramental thought appear also in Martin Luther's sacramental texts (for example, in *The Freedom of the Christian*, *The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ and the Brotherhoods*, *The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ Against the Fanatics* and sporadically in John Calvin's reflections on the eucharistic ethics such as in *Institutes* IV, 17, 38. Clearly, ecclesiological presuppositions and consequences regarding the relation of the Eucharist and the bodies of believers are very different from Damascene and Aquinas, particularly in the case of Calvin.

With regard the modern Western theological ethos of disengagement, the template of sacramental relationality provides a fruitful avenue to modulate its dualistic habits “in consonance with the Eucharist” (Irenaeus of Lyons) and thus, I submit, without competition, without hegemony, without coercion. Pivotal here is the linkage of divine-human and inter-human relationality. *Theologia* (sacramentality) prefigures *oikonomia* (ethics) in the sense that the eucharistic relationality can maintain its performative efficacy and integrity only if it is ecstatically and synergistically transferred into the terrain of human relationships. The sacramental prefigures the ethical yet the ethical safeguards the sacramental. The methodological *raison d’être* of the Eucharist is to be a way of life, a way of relation, a way of signification, a way of rationality, a way of imagination – a way of *imitatio Christi*, i.e., a humanly conditioned participatory performance of *opus Dei* potentially across all the terrains of human life. Hence, the sacramental relationality can be fruitfully perceived as the template of all ethical relationality.

Above all, the sacramental is the ethical as the distinct pattern, or the quiddity, or the *how-ness*, of relationality from the Trinity all the way into the existential actualities of the liturgies of praise, lament, service, and justice as their many-sided glories are lived out in this world of the cultures, politics, and economics. Sacramentality is a multipolar and polyvocal constellation of relationality wherein identities, relations, agencies, empowerments cohabit and interact asymmetrically and symmetrically, yet always reciprocally. Reciprocity is the key to the relational intertwinement of the sacramental and the ethical. A certain tension here is possible, indeed inescapable, yet tension is not the sole *desideratum* of this relationality and neither is it the sole reliable assurance

against idolatry and against the negligence toward human suffering as the condition of all truth. All that said, sacramentality as a configuration of relationality is consummately ethical only in an eschatological sense, only as “already” divinely inaugurated through the sacraments as embodied relational events, “but not yet” realized in all the existential actualities of this world. Nevertheless, with due eschatological reserve, a sacramentally scored methodological imagination bears the potential of rekindling a re-engagement of liturgy and social ethics as reciprocally responsive and responsible. Re-engaged, they can sound together, “in consonance with the Eucharist,” to nudge theological imagination to peregrinate beyond reductive disengagements, dualistic gridlocks, and the perennially seductive pull of simple reversals. From such a perspective, how, to choose the seemingly most contrastive comparison, would a Schmemanian larger than life liturgy sound together with a Levinasian larger than life ethics without mutually allergic suspicion?

3. Liturgy and Ethics in Sacramental Counterpoint: Beyond Aestheticized Oblivion and Liturgical Pelagianism

The relation between liturgy and ethics as a methodological question concerns itself with what Don Saliers so aptly has called the “internal, conceptual link between liturgy and ethics.”²⁴ Saliers clearly indicates what is at stake here: the linkage “is not causal and extrinsic, but conceptual and intrinsic. Our problem is how to articulate this without doing injustice to the complexity of other relationships between liturgy and

²⁴ Don E. Saliers, “Liturgy and Ethics: Some New Beginnings,” (1979) quoted from *Liturgy and the Moral Self: Humanity in Full Stretch Before God; Essays in Honor of Don E. Saliers* (E. Byron Anderson, Bruce T. Morrill, eds.; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998): 16.

ethics...”²⁵ Of course, the dominant solution to the habitual disengagement between liturgy and ethics has been precisely to attempt re-engaging them as two distinct and mutually extrinsic discourses with all the accompanying perils of dualistic and competitive juxtaposition. As Western modernity marched on, the competitive juxtaposition (Part 1, Ch. 1) between liturgy (worship) and ethics (life) reflected the paramount tendency toward binarism and fragmentation of reality, of which colonialism with its racial and religious policies is the most sinister expression. In their dealings with this gridlock, some theologians have found peace by conceiving liturgy as an individualistic retreat-like province of the “aesthetic” order that can resist or at least navigate within (post)modern fragmentation, alienation, instrumentalization, disenchantment and reductive techno-science, and still offer an alternative for a certain wholeness of life and thought. The greatest merit of this approach is the rehabilitation of the “aesthetic” – but often painfully narrowly understood – as an order of knowledge and action hitherto adiaphorized in Western modernity. The other avenue of (post)modern tackling of the gridlock is to dialectically – romantically? – insist on the necessity of unrelenting and uncomfortable tension (Louis-Marie Chauvet and others) between liturgy and ethics to dramatize the constant oscillation (Geoffrey Wainwright) between them. Others have suggested (while steering clear of ontological language in this allegedly post-metaphysical era) that liturgy is an *ordo* signifying and revealing a whole eucharistic economy, conceived in terms of tension-sustaining juxtapositions of liturgical actions and symbols (Gordon Lathrop). The goal of these theological visions is to remedy the modern adiaphorization of both liturgy and ethics in theology and to respond at once penitently

²⁵ *Ibid.*

and creatively to the ethical conundrums of North Euro-Atlantic postmodernity with its terrifying memories of the Holocaust.

The rightly unacceptable reduction of liturgy to ethics (or vice versa) remains the perennial obstacle only when ethics and aesthetics, as well as contemplation and praxis, among many other things, remain gridlocked in the outlook of competitive fragmentation of reality and the economy of salvation. For example, in his recent elaborations on the ecumenical significance of the Eucharist and, specifically, on the possibility of a Niebuhrian eucharistic transformation of culture, George Hunsinger advocates for the importance of eucharistic ethics as the foundation of peace and justice. Yet he nevertheless feels compelled to distance himself from the “instrumentalist” pitfall. This pitfall, as Hunsinger succinctly states the concern shared by so many theologians, consists in liturgy, as it is idolatrously

...being portrayed as the means to an end. The eucharist is depicted as a ‘source’ or ‘influence’ that has (or ought to have) beneficial social consequences. Social ethics becomes the overriding goal to which the eucharist is subordinate. Human agency and social influences end up dominating the discussion, with Christ being relegated to the shadows. Though Christ’s eucharistic “presence” is never denied, his unique saving work gets short shrift, and the eucharist is not valued as an end in itself.²⁶

Beyond doubt, reductive instrumentalism of any kind is the last thing that Christian theological creativity at this time in history needs. Yet the problem of “instrumentalism” or “liturgical Pelagianism” as stated here again only succeeds in restating the habitual dualism of Western modernity. The binaristic disengagement between liturgy and ethics cannot be modulated into something theologically, epistemologically, and ethically fruitful by engaging in a mutually exclusive fight for either liturgy or ethics to occupy the

²⁶ George Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and Ecumenism: Let Us Keep the Feast* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 253.

first chapter of liturgical theology with the loser inevitably relegated to the last. Such a fight is ultimately uninteresting and practically useless for the life of faith. Now the (artificial) boundary between an allegedly purely non-utilitarian conception of sacramental liturgy and allegedly utilitarian/instrumentalist liturgy can be re-envisioned as rather porous if liturgy is seen in a Schmemmannian way as the epiphany of sacramentality.

To to put it bluntly, a Schmemmannian liturgy can not only coexist peacefully with a Levinasian ethics, but, indeed, it requires nothing less than a Levinasian ethics to be faithful to itself and to its own *theological* integrity. Why and how?

Schmemmann insists on the sacramental relationality as a dually vectored relationality. Sacramentality – which is performed and embodied in liturgy – is “the only possible holding together – in one moment, in one act – of the whole truth about God and man.”²⁷ Liturgy as enacted sacramental relationality is the mediating interface of God’s salvific transfiguration of the whole creation. Liturgy is concurrently the glorification of God in praise and thanksgiving as it also is the transfiguration of the created reality toward salvation and deification. There is no contradiction, conflict, or competition between these objectives. Sacrament and liturgy are a passage, transformation, transition toward eschatological transformation for Schmemmann.²⁸ At the beginning of this transformation, through the sacrament of baptism, the whole human life is transformed into liturgy, passing beyond

the pseudo-Christian opposition of the ‘spiritual’ and the ‘material’, the ‘sacred’ and the ‘profane’, the ‘religious’ and the ‘secular’ is denounced, abolished, and revealed as a monstrous lie about God and man and the world. The only true temple of God is man and through man the world.

²⁷ Alexander Schmemmann, “The World as Sacrament,” *Church, World, Mission: Reflections on Orthodoxy in the West*, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1979): 225.

²⁸ Schmemmann, “World as Sacrament,” 226; also Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2000): 102.

Each ounce of matter belongs to God and is to find in God its fulfillment.
 Each instant of time is God's time and is to fulfill itself as God's eternity.
 Nothing is 'neutral'.²⁹

Participation in liturgy is a transformative participation in the work of Christ wherein the eucharistic life of thanksgiving, service, and sacrifice is “constantly transformed into the *liturgy* – the *work* of Christ.”³⁰ Through liturgy human life has the potential and vocation to become “the sacramental sign.”³¹ As Schmemmann sees it, liturgy is the conduit or interface of transfigurative sanctification, or *theosis*, precisely as “the slow transformation of the old Adam in us into a new one;” it is “the slow victory over the demonic powers of the cosmos, the ‘joy and peace’ which *hic et nunc* make us partakers of the Kingdom and of life eternal.”³²

Even though Schmemmann does not (very regrettably) venture in this direction, relying on his cosmic liturgical imaginary both liturgy and ethics can be conceived of as playing off one another with only a provisional shadow or privilege similarly to how musical voices can play off one another independently and yet interdependently. Especially from a diasporic point of view, there is no high drama or heresy involved in experiencing liturgy as Janus-faced: namely, as rites of praise, prayer, proclamation, and thanksgiving, but also as a participatory performance of *opus Dei* through human *opera* as far as these *opera* participate consonantly in the cosmic sacrament of redemption. Obviously, this imaginary of liturgy goes far beyond confining liturgy to the textually canonized rituals of public worship as I already suggested in Part I, Ch.1. It refers to liturgy as the effective and celebratory way of performing sacramental relationality among God, Christian convocations of discipleship, all human persons, and the whole

²⁹ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 76.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Schmemmann, “The Missionary Imperative,” *Church, World, Mission*, 213.

creation. Of course, the Eucharist remains the source and summit of all liturgy and all rites of individual and collective worship. But liturgy is, above all, what God does in and for the salvation. As such it is *opus Dei* yet it is a participatory *opus*, or as Robert Taft has put it, “liturgy is the saving deeds of God in the actions of those men and women who would live in him.”³³

Liturgy writ large – as the performance of sacramental relationality – from a Schmemmannian perspective describes the process whereby the whole human life is transformed into liturgy, passing beyond, as Schmemmann so stubbornly maintained, “the pseudo-Christian opposition of the ‘spiritual’ and the ‘material’, the ‘sacred’ and the ‘profane’, the ‘religious’ and the ‘secular’.”³⁴ Such a dualism amounts to a “monstrous lie about God and man and the world” because in this worldly reality “nothing is ‘neutral’.”³⁵ If liturgy indeed conceives and reveals all material creation as the sign and means of the divine presence and love, and if the purpose of this liturgy is to sweep the wholeness of human and planetary life into the rhythm and scope of the triune *opus Dei*, then to remain true to its self-acknowledged vocation such a liturgy cannot avoid entanglement in the whole work of Christ. The work of Christ in which, according to a Schmemmannian view, Christians are called to be God’s co-workers undoubtedly stretches beyond ritual gestures and chronotopes into the world of routine suffering perpetuated by systemic injustice, poverty, imperialism, racism, sexism, obsessive violence and all the other myriad ways of evil that humans are mightily capable of bestowing upon each other. The incarnation and sacramentality as its locus and accomplishment reveals most

³³ Robert F. Taft, “What Does Liturgy Do? Toward a Soteriology of Liturgical Celebration: Some Theses,” *Beyond East and West: Problems in Liturgical Understanding*, Second Revised and Enlarged Edition (Rome: Pontifical Oriental Institute, 1997): 247.

³⁴ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 76.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

fundamentally the disposition of “trust in the power of the divine to work through failing flesh.”³⁶ The work of Christ as sacramental transfiguration is not exhausted by strictly ritual or textual gestures of eucharistic signification. The work of Christ, precisely if it entails our human participation in it as in “one all-embracing eucharist” in which we are called to perform the priestly function within the economy of “this cosmic sacrament,”³⁷ obviously demands the commitment to participate in the redemptive transformation of the deepest and most minute interstices of the material creation. Eucharistic worship of the convocations of discipleship takes place in the mutually liminal spaces of liturgy and “liturgy after liturgy” if and when they intertwine to the point of fecund and delightful confusion. Both perform, in different yet contrapuntally consonant keys, the same *Leitmotif* of sacramental relationality. The “higher,” theologically speaking, the understanding of liturgy as cosmic and transformational, the heavier and more audacious is its burden of ethical responsibility to embody the sacramental relationality in as many minute acts, thoughts, relationships, and decisions of routine living as possible for a fallen human nature nevertheless suspended in grace. The “higher” the liturgical imaginary in which nothing is “neutral” or theologically irrelevant, the more explicit is the obligation to admit being suspended in the sacramental analogy of relating to human others and the whole creation similarly to the way of relating to Christ. Precisely because, as the matter endowed to be a sign and a medium of sacramental relationality, the whole creation down to its most worldly and minute social and political relationships matters and matters more imperatively for this kind of theological imaginary than many others.

³⁶ Mark D. Jordan, *Rewritten Theology: Aquinas After His Readers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006): 15.

³⁷ Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, 15.

In this sense and in this context, Emmanuel Levinas' dictum that "the vision of God is a moral act"³⁸ not only does not clash with the perception of liturgy as participation in the salvific *opus Dei* and as participation in the one, all-embracing cosmic sacrament, but rather resonates with it in a most innate way. The liturgy for which nothing in the realm of the created world is "neutral" cannot, if it aspires to remain at least reasonably faithful to its own theological height, function as a "liturgy" that accommodates a self-designed transcendence of escape from ethical responsibility into aestheticism or rigid doctrinal purity as protocols of choice against idolatry. In a sacramental theological imaginary of "both/and," Levinas' insistence that "the ethical order does not prepare us for the Divinity; it is the very accession to the Divinity"³⁹ only highlights, from a perspective of a relative outsider, the inherent social and political consequences of liturgy. It does not detract from liturgy, but rather elaborates the sacramental relationality between praise and service within liturgy. For what is service under the auspices of *opus Dei* if not praise viewed from a parallax position? The ethical conversion or translation of praise and thanksgiving from the "academism of the spiritual"⁴⁰ within the "amorous dialogue"⁴¹ beyond the reduced interiority of ritual into the healing work of the whole sacramental economy of salvation is precisely what happens in liturgy as one, all-embracing sacrament – if indeed, nothing is sacramentally "neutral." Ethics as the vision of God, not its mere corollary, does not need to, theologically speaking – *pace* Levinas – enforce the binaristic gridlock vis-à-vis liturgy if

³⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, "For a Jewish Humanism," *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism* (Sean Hand, trans.; Johns Hopkins Paperbacks Edition, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997): 275.

³⁹ Levinas, "Place and Utopia," *Difficult Freedom*, 102.

⁴⁰ Levinas, "How is Judaism Possible?" *Difficult Freedom*, 248.

⁴¹ Emmanuel Levinas, "The I and the Totality," *Entre-Nous: Thinking-Of-The-Other* (Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshaw, trans.; New York: Columbia University Press, 1998): 21.

liturgy is understood as the performance or enactment of the sacramental relationality between God, humanity, and the whole creation. Sacramental relationality, as I argued above, is an ethical relationality. Liturgy as sacramental relationality *in actu* – and this is most definitely not Levinas’ deservedly blasted “liturgical enthusiasm” of amorous ritual hothouse – is what Levinas’ “religion” is all about – the multipolar interface of relations. Levinas wrote about religion “before being a confession” as “the very pulsation of life in which God enters into a relationship with Man, and Man with the World.”⁴² Now liturgy as exposed here and Levinas’ intrinsically relational ontology of religion as “determined by the exact range of the ethical”⁴³ resonate more harmoniously than it might appear from the first rhetorical glance. The range of praise is the range of service if both are conceived of as interlaced in a sacramental counterpoint – without detraction, coercion, or competition. They play off each other and sound together to perform in contrapuntal synergy the eschatologically vectored concert and order of the only non-idolatrous doxology that is soundly incarnationally possible: the doxology of right relationality in which every relation in this interdependent world counts as eligible for non-neutrality, from high altars to detention centers, and from suburban bedrooms to nuclear submarine fleets. The doxology of right relationality cannot be otherwise than synergistically contrapuntal in its quiddity. Namely, the triune God is faithfully praised only when the spiritual reciprocity and circularity obtains of both adoration and service. Thus the range of the ethical is the range of the socially and politically incarnated components of *theosis* and thus, of liturgy as its vehicle.

⁴² Levinas, “Between the Worlds. The Way of Franz Rosenzweig,” *Difficult Freedom*, 189.

⁴³ Levinas, “Being a Westerner,” *Difficult Freedom*, 49.

Most certainly, this kind of liturgy is a work. It is the work of God *par excellence* in the asymmetrical reciprocity with the synergistic work of God's people. It is indeed a work conceived radically, as Levinas would put. But more needs to be said here. Levinas' inexhaustible suspicion toward what he called the "aesthetic" or "poetic" depravity of egoistic inwardness of Christian liturgy, deserved as it is, only exacerbates the rationale of binarity as it empties liturgy of the aesthetical, the ritual, the tactile, and the interpersonally reciprocal in his idea of human subjectivity as an ethical hostage. Levinas' drama of ethical reversals and Kantian ideas of self-denying disinterestedness do not preclude his notion of liturgy to be useful in less de-aestheticized milieu, however. Thus, the concerns about aesthetically anorexic liturgy notwithstanding, the core notion of liturgy as the gratuitous movement of radically conceived work toward the O/other within the order of an eschatology that is not an egoistically profitable teleology suggests the hybridity of agencies and objectives of liturgy.⁴⁴ Levinas suggests that "liturgy, as an absolutely patient action (*action absolument patiente*), does not take its place as a cult alongside of works and of ethics. It is ethics itself (*elle est l'éthique même.*)"⁴⁵ What is fascinating here is the idea that liturgy can coincide and overlap with ethics to the point of productive confusion or indiscretion that does not require extrinsic and accidental re-linking of two previously disjointed orders of agency and motivation. This liturgy, a

⁴⁴ Michael Purcell's interpretation of Levinas suggests a similar proposition in what he terms the "cruciform structure" of liturgy. For Purcell, Levinas' liturgy denotes something similar to my emphasis on the dually vectored and noncompetitively contrapuntal *dievkalpojums/Gottesdienst* since "at the heart of liturgy is responsible service" which is "at one and the same time, divine service and human service." The agential ecology of this liturgy is not dialectical in the sense of progressive displacement because "it is not that we first worship and then are called unto service in a movement out of self towards the Otherness of God and thereafter towards the Otherness of the other person. The movement out of self – liturgy – is at one and the same time worship and ethics, and ethical worship, in which justice is rendered both to God and to the other person," in "Liturgy: Divine and Human Service," *Heythrop Journal* 38 (1997):164.

⁴⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, "The Trace of the Other," *Deconstruction in Context: Literature and Philosophy* (Alphonso Lingis, trans., Mark C. Taylor, ed.; Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986): 350.

hybrid of agencies and objectives, specifies the broader theological axiom that “there can be no ‘knowledge’ of God separated from the relationship with men.”⁴⁶ The eschatological hope of this liturgy, it seems, escapes the Christian – according to Levinas’ judgment – simultaneous predicament of overestimating or underestimating

...the weight of the reality which it wants to improve. It overestimates it because it sees in it a total resistance to human action. The relationships that man entertains with himself and his neighbors seem to him fixed, unalterable, eternal. He underestimates it, for he hopes that a miraculous intervention on the part of divinity will transfigure this brutal weight.⁴⁷

The methodological question about the “conceptual” relation between liturgy and ethics, especially within the contrapuntal synergy of Schmemmanian and Levinasian visions, grapples with a greater reality than tension alone. Indeed, must unrelenting tension always be the paradigmatic envisagement of ethically fruitful relationality? Could tension, seen as the premier dialectic figurality with all its modern and romantic allusions of drama and struggle, be a transformatively constructive – not just descriptive – envisagement of relationality that yields performative efficacy within precisely those overwhelming lived tensions of existential actualities among which so many people are already forced to live? Is tension not too “sublime”⁴⁸ a value in the present planetary lifeworld of already exhausting tensions across the intersections of postcoloniality, imperialism, economic inequities, religio-cultural fundamentalisms, global migrancy, and environmental dangers to name just a few? Is the surest way to avoid idolatry or at least

⁴⁶ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Alphonso Lingis, trans.; Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2002): 78.

⁴⁷ Levinas, “Place and Utopia,” *Difficult Freedom*, 99-100.

⁴⁸ Jean-François Lyotard’s idea of the postmodern sublime as “intrinsically a combination of pleasure and pain” comes to mind here, see Lyotard, “What is the Postmodern?” *The Postmodern Explained* (Julian Pefanis and Morgan Thomas, eds., Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1992): 15.

decadence⁴⁹ – in this case, the particular idolatry through absorbing worship of the triune God in ethics or through absorbing ethics in worship and thus perverting both by promoting one while the other falls into oblivion – by installing tension as the methodological *desideratum*?

There are other avenues for theological creativity that gesture beyond mere reversals and beyond uninteresting competitive juxtapositions. A theologically appropriated hybridity here suggests a “conceptual” relation in which identities and boundaries do not disappear yet are worked into a laborious stretch of overlapping and intertwining in search of a curative and then also a thriving consonance – without being absorbed in a hegemonic monophony of the strongest. The fruits of such laborious stretch again frustrate the desire for purity and offer instead the same copious entanglements as sacraments do: identities are unsettled but not dissolved; the motion of transformation proceeds by unceasing *crescendo/diminuendo* without the jerky extremism of controlling *fff* vis-à-vis a totally depleted *ppp*. Sacramentality as ethical relationality *in actu*, i.e., liturgy, can be mobilized as the most powerful imaginary and practice of faith which simultaneously sustains the communion with God and fellow human persons for reconceptions of theological method as well as particular applied theological narratives. Sacramental relationality with God can obtain only if and when it is fully materialized, namely, if and when it enables and nurtures a contrapuntal reconciliation and cohabitation among human others in all areas of life together – in the ever present dimension of social relations or politics. Ethics, as far as it is a particular quiddity of relationality, does not merely indwell an isolated realm of cultivating private pious

⁴⁹ Catherine Pickstock notes that “it is when the Eucharist is hypostasized as either a thing or a sign in separation from ecclesial and ecstatic action, that it becomes truly decadent,” *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998): 255.

interiority; it is always and already social and political. It makes all spheres of life, the human life in its entirety, into a borderzone of the private and the public and of the sacred and the secular. This borderzone entails the most intricate intersections of the public and the personal, and the life of faith intersects all of them. But what is the public if not the very ontological terrain of social relationality which “signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it” and “where people are with others and neither for nor against them – that is, in sheer human togetherness?”⁵⁰ The political arena itself, following Hannah Arendt, is then nothing more or less than “the sphere where I am always together with others.”⁵¹ Theologically speaking, the pragmatics of everyday social life participate in the same sacramental interface of relationality that liturgy does – or at least it could and should. Otherwise the Eucharist remains a fetishized dogmatic principle and the pinnacle of ritualistic aestheticism begging, as it were, its own adiaphorization. Theologically speaking, to relate to God in one way and to relate to God’s creation in a way that does not analogically and vicariously perform the very sacramental relationality with God is to undermine the whole economy of salvation. It is to pervert the pivotal sacramental relationality by alienating compartmentalization of the relational interdependence in the economy of incarnation and salvation. Of course, it is a chronic temptation as old as Christianity itself as Paul’s indignation about the eucharistic liturgical practice in Corinth testifies (1. Cor.11). Without doubt, such a compartmentalization accommodates particularly well the modern Western proclivity toward rampantly individualistic piety

⁵⁰ Hannah Arendt, *Human Condition*, Second Edition (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998): 52, 180.

⁵¹ Hannah Arendt, “Collective Responsibility,” *Responsibility and Judgment* (Jerome Kohn, ed., New York: Schocken Books, 2003): 157.

within the larger context of its embodied and politically enacted confrontational dualism between the public and the private as well as the sacred and the secular. Some see in this the core deficiency of the Western Christianity, still very much gravitating in the orbit of its modernity. Katharine Jefferts Schori recently called it “the great Western heresy” – the habitual assumption

that we can be saved as individuals, that any of us alone can be in right relationship with God. It’s caricatured in some quarters by insisting that salvation depends on reciting a specific verbal formula about Jesus. That individualist focus is a form of idolatry, for it puts me and my words in the place that only God can occupy, at the center of existence, as the ground of being.⁵²

While not entirely limited to the Western modernity and its imaginative habits of enclosure and passion for boundaries, the compartmentalization of the human reality has been a fertile ground for what Nikolai Berdyaev called the “minimalist religious ethics of transcendent egoism” and “the aristocracy of salvation.” This concern explicitly resonates with Emmanuel Levinas’ (see Part II, Ch.2) indignation about the oblivious *Schwärmerei* of privatized liturgical piety and, of course, with Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s way too belatedly recognized insights about theological and liturgical imperatives of ethics. For Berdyaev, the minimalist ethics of transcendent egoism

...calls human person to comfortably find their place alongside the misfortune of others in the world, it rejects the universal responsibility of all concerning all, it rejects the unity of the created world, the unity of the cosmos. In the spiritual world there is no such thing as an enclosed and separated personality. The ethics of personal salvation leads to the distortion and perversion of the idea of paradise and the Kingdom of God.⁵³

⁵² Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop’s Opening Address at ECUSA General Convention 2009, July 7, 2009, accessed at http://ecusa.anglican.org/78703_112035_ENG_HTML.htm, July 11, 2009.

⁵³ Николай Бердяев, *О назначении человека* (Москва: Республика, 1993): 249. Indeed, for Berdyaev “the most inadmissible form of aristocracy is the aristocracy of salvation,” *ibid.* Berdyaev also argues rather somberly that “the greatest religious and ethical truth up to which human being must grow up is that one

This line of argument unmistakably resonates with Damascene’s famous adage. To highlight the intrinsic and irrevocable intertwinement of these two simultaneous relationalities, divine and human, as sacramental first of all amounts to recognizing the theological deficiency of all liturgical discourses that produce the illusion of adequacy and even staunch doctrinal orthodoxy by keeping themselves insulated in a voyeuristic praise and thus detached from what really matters amidst the lived tensions of life. Namely, what matters is the salvation of *this* world and all the politically, socially, economically and culturally inscribed material dimensions of created life. And the salvation of this world in its totality is the *opus Dei* of the triune God. It is the work of transformative *theosis* in synergy with all those human persons whose creaturely agency is suspended in grace yet empowered without detracting to “work out your own salvation” since it is “God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure (εὐδοκία)” (Phil. 2:12-13). Theology “in consonance with the Eucharist” ought to be less fearful about moving beyond exaggerated disciplinary purity as a skewed attempt to combat idolatry but be more concerned about what the context of the crucial *theosis* text in the New Testament underscores instead – namely, being “ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2. Pet. 1:8).

Theology “in consonance with the Eucharist” conceives liturgy as both doxology and as embodied prolongation of redemptive revelation through mercy and justice rendered in Christ’s name and through Spirit’s power to the fellow creatures of God.

ought not to be seek salvation individually. My salvation also presupposes the salvation of others, of my neighbors, of the whole world, [it presupposes] the transfiguration of the world,” in Николай Бердяев, “Экзистенциальная диалектика божественного и человеческого,” *О назначении человека* (Москва: Республика, 1993): 357.

Both vectors of the whole liturgy, i.e., the “whole ‘work of the people’,”⁵⁴ are fittingly joined in a contrapuntal hybridity of purpose – to praise God and to serve neighbor “through reference to God.”⁵⁵ Liturgy’s equipmental status is therefore celebrated as God’s redemptive and deifying service to us and as our service to God in both a humble doxology of adoration and a vicarious doxology of service. If the beauty of liturgy is purposive, this purposiveness does not detract from the only proper objective of praise and worship – the triune God. Freedom from liturgical idolatry is not achieved by an action being simply useless for and unrelated to anything else under the sun. The salvific and transformational utility of the eucharistic liturgy, that is, the divinely initiated sacramentality *in actu* or the whole eucharistic economy in motion, is rather the celebration of its “many-sided glories.”⁵⁶ All of these mutually overlapping “glories” of sacramentally configured (ethical!) relationality together form the Body of Christ – the bread and wine, the convocations of discipleship, and ultimately the whole transfigured creation. If liturgy is equipmental in facilitating the salvific transfiguration then it is such in the same peculiarly “instrumental”⁵⁷ way as Christ’s humanity has been in the hypostatic union, and as bread and wine are in the eucharistic union. This relationship, however, is as far from a reductive *Zwekrationalität* as the synergy of *theosis* is from a colonizing disempowerment of hegemonic unilateralism. Even more, I suggest that precisely as sacramental, as bodying forth sacramentality as the pivotal constellation of right and just relationality, liturgy underscores the reciprocal, interdependent, and

⁵⁴ Don E. Saliers, “Afterword: Liturgy and Ethics Revisited,” *Liturgy and the Moral Self*, 215.

⁵⁵ Augustine remarks that “true sacrifices are works of mercy shown to ourselves or to our neighbors, and done with reference to God (*quae referuntur ad Deum*),” *The City of God against the Pagans* (R.W. Dyson trans. and ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 400.

⁵⁶ Brilioth, *Eucharistic Faith and Practice*, 288.

⁵⁷ I refer to the sense of the sacramental “instrumentality” of the human nature of Christ that is found in the Christological imagination of, for example, John of Damascus’s *De Fide Orthodoxa* and Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*, 3.62.

irreducible union of worship and life in a counterpoint of relational hybridity. The sacramental prefigures the ethical and the ethical safeguards the sacramental. Together, contrapuntally, they compose both the first and the last chapters of liturgical theology.

If viewed primarily as sacramentality *in actu*, then liturgy can be envisioned as a hybrid enactment of the many-sided doxologies – through adoration, supplication, lament, and equally so through the ministry of service and justice. None of them detract from or compete with the others – unless they are made to do so. Their boundaries endure but remain porous; the boundaries do not disappear but are “problematized” through cross-pollinations, echoes, analogies, resonances, dissonances, and harmonies; agencies and powers are incommensurate yet always affiliated and reciprocal; harmony among differences is not fixed or fated but is being worked out ever anew as they play off one another amidst shifting historical materialities. There is no theological necessity to juxtapose liturgy and ethics in a dualistic gridlock of “either/or” according to the pattern of competitively juxtaposing God and creation, divine agency and human agency, soul and body, male and female, white and non-white, Western and non-western – and so *ad nauseam*. Hence, neither liturgy belongs in the last chapter of a systematic theology nor ethics belongs in the last chapter of liturgical theology in a truly incarnational, i.e. sacramental, imaginary. Both, together and simultaneously, with reciprocally contested boundaries, in synergistic interaction without fated results and without patronizing benevolence play off each other to advance a contrapuntal concert and order of the triune *opus Dei* where beauty does not preclude utility and where power does not eliminate freedom. To envision the sacramental counterpoint of liturgy and ethics is not to claim that it does and will automatically obtain as soon as one thinks or writes about it. Yet

what such envisioning surely does is this: liturgy as work, as *opus operantis* – as a sacramental counterpoint of relationality in action – puts both the eucharistically constituted ecclesiastical and the individual “me into question.”⁵⁸ Hence it is a certain way of thinking, feeling and being, “distinguished from games and from calculation, [it] is being-for-beyond-my-death”⁵⁹ – collectively and individually, in life and in theological writing.

Liturgy and ethics can sound together in a sacramental counterpoint wherein both liturgy and ethics are interwoven in one single score of synergistic *dievkalpojums/Gottesdienst/богослужение* – the divine service. But, diverging from the competitive dualism and the paranoia of liturgical Pelagianism accompanying the dominant Protestant liturgical and sacramental imaginaries⁶⁰ throughout modernity, a contrapuntal envisagement of the divine service insists on synergistic reciprocity – asymmetrical as it always is. The divine service is above all, a work, an effort, a vicarious action. It is both God’s work and the work of the people sounding together, permeating one another, and playing off one another in the incarnationally grounded sacramental counterpoint. In other words, as the Anglican Norman Pittenger suggested, “Christian is himself a liturgy – that is, as the Greek word *leitourgia* would show, a publicly manifest expression of God in Christ to the world.”⁶¹ Liturgy obtains as performed sacramental relationality precisely as “the Divine Action in human action.”⁶²

⁵⁸ Levinas, “The Trace of the Other,” *Deconstruction in Context*, 350.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 349.

⁶⁰ See Lee Palmer Wandel’s observations on the tendencies of Martin Luther, for example, toward the emphasis on the eucharist/mass as an *opus operatum* from *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520). From such a perspective, “human beings were not to add layers of meaning, nor to add dimensions of human agency. Indeed, the Mass was not to serve as a site of human agency at all,” *The Eucharist in the Reformation: Incarnation and Liturgy* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 99.

⁶¹ Norman Pittenger, *Life as Eucharist* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973): 48. Pittenger suggests that liturgy is supremely formative toward an “en-Christed” life since a Christian’s “outward life, like his innermost

Divine service is that theological space whose spiritual cartography re-charts not only the present ecclesial body but, proleptically, the body of the whole world and the whole humanity as the Body of Christ in the final salvific *rendezvous* of victory. The Eucharist is an eschatological anticipation of the resurrection and the full “face to face” union with Christ in the Spirit, so “that which is accomplished in the sacrament will be accomplished, at the end of the time, in the whole world, which is the body of humankind. And the latter is the Body of Christ.”⁶³ If theology can be reconciled to the idea that things that are assumed to be theoretically irreconcilable in a sleekly modern manner can still be lived together at least in a messy sacramental manner, such a sacramental counterpoint of liturgy and ethics, as well as of many other things in the heaven and earth of theological imagination, at least can be dreamt of. The sooner the scramble for dominance among *lex orandi*, *lex credendi*, and *lex agendi (vivendi)* transfers into the intellectual ruins of Occidental modernity, the better for an emergence of a “*rendezvous* of victory” as a methodological victory over the resilient inertia of

thought, comes to be a reflection of this central principle. Inevitably and inescapably, once he permits himself to be molded by and built up in the liturgical life of the Church, his whole being becomes ‘liturgical’,” 55.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 62, 33-35, 42-43. A similar kind of asymmetrical coincidence of divine and human action has been proposed also by two other Anglicans Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward. Neither of them refers to the notion of synergy yet the trajectories of their constructive envisagements implicitly suggest a resonance. For Pickstock, liturgy is the mediating interface between politics and art, ethics and aesthetics, wherein “all activities are to a degree brought within the scope of liturgical enactment,” “nothing is merely instrumental” and “every act exceeds itself, since every act becomes an ecstatic celebratory offering,” in “Liturgy, Art and Politics,” *Modern Theology* 16:2 (2000): 163. For Ward, divine agency continuously fulfills human agency from the space of ritual worship to an act of vicarious service such as moving a neighbor’s lawn whereby any ordinary objects that are the instruments of service become means of grace and their sacramental nature is thus revealed. All true Christian action is liturgical insofar as it participates in the economy of divine love. In liturgy an act becomes an offering as it “inhabits the logic of sacrifice” and liturgy situates all things and all acts in the economy and politics of redemption, Ward argues, so that the Christian acting is “a *praxis* that participates in a divine *poiēsis* that has soteriological and eschatological import. It is a *technē*, a crafting, a production – of redemption,” in Graham Ward, “A Christian Act: Politics and Liturgical Practice,” *Liturgy, Time, and the Politics of Redemption* (Randi Rashkover and C.C. Pecknold, eds.; Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2006): 46-49.

⁶³ Sergius Bulgakov, “The Eucharistic Dogma,” *The Holy Grail and the Eucharist* (Boris Jakim, ed., New York: Lindisfarne Books, 1997):137-138.

fruitless imaginative habits of dualism and enclosure. But this polluted itinerary of hybrid and simultaneous *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento*, nevertheless presents at least one fruitful avenue to uphold the imaginary of sacramental counterpoint as a meaningful possibility for reinvigoration of the current Western theological inquiry. Such reinvigoration would certainly resist its being curved into itself alone as if in a detached ivory tower of purely speculative decadence. That being said, it is also worth keeping in mind that, particularly in the postcolonial context, it is prudent to acknowledge the rightful limits of theological creativity even in its most politically conscientious state: “Ethical, epistemological, aesthetic, metaphysical, spiritual, and allegorical resolutions of political problems can at best function as sublimations; but they cannot take the place of real solutions.”⁶⁴ All of the above aspirations, of course, cannot directly inaugurate the final goal of the diasporic peregrination through the inner sanctum of modern Occidental theological method. Aware of the limits, the final aspiration of theological creativity, in Edward Said’s words, nevertheless remains to ultimately “search for knowledge and justice, and then perhaps also for liberation”⁶⁵ through sacramental reflection on and re-imagination of all things in relation to God.

4. The Sacramental Counterpoint as Theological Method in a Diasporic Imaginary: A Postcolonial Nuance

When almost all is said, what then, finally, constitutes the diasporic twist of this project, let alone its elusive postcolonial nuance? What about the hazardous non-Western

⁶⁴ R. Radhakrishnan, “Grievable Life, Accountable Theory,” *Boundary 2*, 35:1 (2008): 76.

⁶⁵ Edward W. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004): 83.

“sense of specialness”⁶⁶ that a diasporic “voyage in”⁶⁷ the inner sanctum of theological method inescapably invokes in the present Northwest Euro-North Atlantic cultural orbit? What is the desired (and loathed) “difference” of such postcolonially colored diasporic “voyages in”?

Above all, a diasporic imaginary will utterly disappoint if what one desires is something akin to the planned authenticity of an absolute, agonistic, and automatically antagonistic difference. First of all, postcoloniality that surrounds my location of enunciation is “a form of double consciousness, not as an act of secession from the metropolitan regime.”⁶⁸ On top of that, diasporic imaginary, to reiterate, is an imaginary of hybridity, of “both” and “neither/nor” rather than “either/or.” It facilitates multiple belongings and allegiances held together by a certain homing desire within an intricate equilibrium of interstitial integrity. Diasporic experience is a performed cultural, material, historical, and intellectual hybridity. It is not a sphere of being simply “outside” or “over-against” the dominant culture of its present domicile. The experiential amalgam of cultures, languages, politics, racial and economical legacies translates into similarly configured intellectual and critical affinities. Diasporic subjectivities and imaginaries are then Janus-faced, being poised between overlapping and sometimes contestatory cultural legacies and moral as well as political imperatives. In this sense, diasporic imaginary is “fuged,” as I have noted before. It abides as an ongoing texture of sometimes hardly bearable polyvocality that is “homing in” toward a wholesome harmony without coercive

⁶⁶ Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989): 87-90. Note that the chapter discussing the problematic issue of exoticized otherness is titled “Difference: ‘A Special Third World Women Issue’.”

⁶⁷ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1994): 239-261.

⁶⁸ R. Radhakrishnan, “Postmodernism and the Rest of the World,” *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies* (Fawzia Afzal-Khan and Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, eds.; Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000): 37.

inclusion and without the hegemonies of “either/or.” But the diasporic fugue is not the triumphantly elective polyphony of the beloved Occidental postmodernist *bricolage* although certain secondary similarities are undeniable. The diasporic “pollution,” as exposed in this project, is not exactly a matter of calculated choice out of an abundance of equally appealing and feasible options but rather the lonely “looser temporality”⁶⁹ of nifty survival, embellished with a rather awkward set of “the pleasures of exile” as Edward Said called them.

For diasporic experience and imaginary the conundrum of difference resides in the borderzone of authenticity/originality and inauthenticity/mimicry. As far as the tricky axiology of difference is concerned, Trinh Min-ha’s observation still holds true for those who do not organically and univocally belong in the Occidental metropolitan cultures:

My audience expects and demands [difference]; otherwise people would feel as if they have been cheated: We did not come to hear a Third World member speak about the First (?) World, We came to listen to that voice of difference likely to bring us *what we can't have* and to divert us from the monotony of sameness. They, like their anthropologists whose specialty is to detect all the layers of my falseness and truthfulness, are in a position to decide what/who is ‘authentic’ and what/who is not.⁷⁰

Interestingly, the Occidental inertia of conceiving difference according to the image and likeness of competitive binarity perseveres in the treasure hunt for authenticity – be it the “Third World,” the Native American, or the postcolonial, or the diasporic authenticity. What is reflected in such a problematic demand for “authentic,” immediately obvious,

⁶⁹ David Parker suggests that the difference between merely cosmopolitan and diasporic subjectivities consists in their different experiences vis-à-vis loneliness arguing that “a cosmopolitan would never be lonely, or would see potentially anywhere, anyone, anything as capable of assuaging such sentiments... diasporic identities in contrast carry the weight of embodied, racialised histories and a more collective orientation,” in “Diaspora, Dissidence and the Dangers of Cosmopolitanism,” *Asian Studies Review* 27:2 (2003): 166-167.

⁷⁰ Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, 88.

and blunt difference is the same dualistic rationale that postcolonial hybridity challenges since “differences made *between* entities comprehended as absolute presences – hence the notions of *pure origin* and *true self* – are an outgrowth of a dualistic system of thought peculiar to the Occident (the ‘onto-theology’ which characterizes Western metaphysics).”⁷¹ In this context, diasporic imaginary cannot fail but to disappoint the longing for *pure* difference since the “spirit of diasporic thought” reflects resistance to “absolutist demarcation between authentic and inauthentic, pure and impure, real or fake.”⁷²

In what (pleasurable?) predicament does a diasporic imaginary embroil a theologian who cannot write herself out of the ineradicable history of linguistic, cultural, political but crucially importantly, also ecclesiastical and confessional code-switching? The exposure to various theological traditions, theologically and culturally syncretistic environments of religious practice from the postcolonial and post-soviet Baltic all the way into the economical and intellectual metropolises of the late modern Occident, has resulted in a certain attunement to all of these experiences, legacies, traces, and itineraries at once. This, somewhat chaoplexic, attunement I find impossible to discard in favor of a singular and ensconced allegiance – culturally, politically, or theologically. “Pollution” and “impurity” then is not a studied posture, but rather an instinctual habit that customarily neither hears nor speaks in one language solely or even predominantly. It is, however, an acquired instinctual habit, or to risk an even stronger word, it is a forced habit, not chosen among other equally thrilling options. It decenters identity regimes, including ecclesiastical, without, however, discarding them or without declaring them

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 90.

⁷² Ien Ang, “Can One Say No to Chineseness? Pushing the Limits of the Diasporic Paradigm,” *Boundary 2* 25:3 (1998): 225-227.

entirely obsolete. Consequently, this diasporic imaginary is translocal⁷³ and polycentric not only as a way of life but also as a way of theological creativity. That means letting all of the experiential “footprints” play off one another in the method as well as the substance of theological arguments. That also means answering the question “which liturgy/doctrinal tradition are you exactly speaking about?” with a hesitant pause while trying to desperately surmise how to say several things in one breath and in one utterance with at least some grammatical integrity. It means presiding and participating in any particular Eucharist or any other liturgical act with all of the various legacies, knowledges, and experiences shaping every thought, action, word, and gesture. The same happens in every scholarly endeavor – such as the present project. Is that hybridity in action? Probably. The contextual integrity involved here can only be, in Rita Nakashima Brock’s phrase, an “interstitial integrity.” Now integrity indeed “has to do with moments of entirety;” but in a diasporic life it comprises “the monumental task of making meaning out of multiple worlds by refusing to disconnect any of them, while not pledging allegiance to a singular one.”⁷⁴ The crux of the theoretical sensuality that is grounded in an interstitial integrity of life abides in recognition that “interstitiality is not an integrity of yes or no despite the context, [it is] not a sense of honor that guards the self from relational influence that might corrupt its purity.”⁷⁵ What is usually called “context” or

⁷³ Ato Quayson helpfully indicates that “the implications of translocality cannot be limited to the two locations that have most framed migrants’ identities. The translocality of migrants means that their senses of themselves draw on inflections and emphases of different ethnic communities in other parts of the world. As [Khachig] Tölölyan points out in his definition of diasporas (...) ‘diasporas are resolutely multilocal and polycentric, in that what happens to kin communities in other areas of dispersion as well as in the homeland insistently matters to them’,” in “Introduction: Area Studies, Diaspora Studies, and Critical Pedagogies,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 27:3 (2007): 588.

⁷⁴ Rita Nakashima Brock, “Interstitial Integrity: Reflections Toward an Asian American Woman’s Theology,” in *Introduction to Christian Theology: Contemporary North American Perspectives* (Roger A. Bradham, ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997):190.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 190-191.

simply, lived experience, with its myriad of existential engagements from theological aesthetics to global politics, transmigrates into the realm of cognitive models and habits of epistemological imagination to be held together within that looser temporality by interstitial integrity. Thus this project is a “litany of pollution” (Paul Gilroy) as it traverses the varied worlds of theological, philosophical, historical and literary sources, norms, methodologies. Obviously, no less polluted is its jagged linguistic incarnation in a language which happens to be my current step-mother-tongue with constant slippages into other linguistic systems and styles without pride but rather with a good dose of resignation. In short, this project is an attempt to write down an itinerary of one of such transmigrations.

Like the infamous Latvian Lutheran “Temporary Agenda” (or “*Pagaidu Agenda*,” see the Overture) with its awkward medley of cultural and ecclesiastical genealogies of cultural memory as well as teleologies of current liturgical desires, postcolonial migrancy is a condition of “betwixt- and-between” lived out across the thresholds of other cultures, languages, and homelands.⁷⁶ A diasporic imaginary – of which I offer here only one stanza out of a host of existential actualities and imaginative possibilities – is a whirlpool of legacies, sensibilities, and allegiances vis-à-vis which a jumbled mess of syntax represents just the tip of the iceberg. But the postcolonial nuance of this diasporic

⁷⁶ The contemporary complexities involved in diasporic situations, going far beyond the stereotypical home/not home dichotomy, are accurately summarized by Kwok Pui-lan: diaspora “shares a broader semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, migrant worker, exile community, and ethnic and racial minorities. Diasporic discourse is currently appropriated by peoples who may not have experienced forced dispersion, who do not share the longing for a return to the homeland, or who may shuttle between the homeland and the host land in continuous commute. It connotes at once the experience of decentered and yet multiple-centered, displaced and yet constantly relocated, peoples who criss-cross many borders,” *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005): 45.

imaginary is the clear recognition that hybridity is its *forced* natural habitat, its *poétique forcée* (Édouard Glissant).

Consequently, the objective of this project has been to interrogate arguably the most detrimental conundrum of the modern Occidental theological rationality – the rationale of competitive relational binarity as it manifests through the disengagement of liturgy/worship and ethics/life as a question of theological method – from within a diasporic imaginary. Besides critique, a certain constructive modulation of the dualistic epistemological imagination according to the model of synergistic relationality conceived as sacramental counterpoint was offered drawing from theological history of Western and Eastern Christianity, postcolonial theory, diaspora discourses as well as musicology. But – regardless of its theological merits and pitfalls, is such a model anything “new,” meaning, anything original, anything postcolonially and diasporically authentic and unprecedented? In other words, is the voice of this itinerary “natively informative” enough, exotic enough, different enough?

Here another possible disappointment may beckon. For no diasporic imaginary today can be either completely inside or completely outside the Occidental cultural and intellectual milieu. Furthermore, to explicitly locate it within the postcolonial chronotope is to remember that “the general mode of the postcolonial is citation, reinscription, rerouting the historical.”⁷⁷ Hence, diasporic critiques and constructive envisagements offer a methodological borderscape of “newness” that Salman Rushdie memorably characterized emerging through “hybridity, impurity, intermingling”⁷⁸ rather than through antagonistically pure and geo-culturally incarcerated gestures of reversal. Indeed,

⁷⁷ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009): 244.

⁷⁸ Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* (London: Granta Books, 1990): 394.

already Edward Said asked with a great apprehension – is the “*voyage in retributive*” and how can it avoid “fall[ing] into the trap of being mainly reactive?”⁷⁹ Without doubt, for some, the hybrid “newness” of postcolonially colored diasporic imaginary appears to be *a priori* “fated to unoriginality,”⁸⁰ in Derek Walcott’s memorable phrase. Indeed, the presumed unoriginality has been acknowledged in postcolonial theory as stigmatizing and as the “curse of ‘derivativeness’.”⁸¹ What is at stake here is the issue of legitimacy in relation to non-Occidental and marginally Occidental people to merit respect for their creative and scholarly endeavors if they trespass beyond the confines of their supposedly “pure” and “authentic” cultures and knowledges. Thus, if one is a Nigerian, only Nigerian sources and references will do similarly as for a Latvian only Latvian sources and references will make the cut to satisfy Trinh Minh-ha’s lamented Western demand for the diversion from the monotony of sameness. And so it goes with the rest of us in the category of “not quite” this or that. Even more, is this still powerful (while more skillfully camouflaged) desire for diversion not precisely “a fulfillment of anthropological fantasy to condemn the native to some indigenous or autchtonous content and in the process den[ial to] her the formal or fictive freedom to invent her own realities,

⁷⁹ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 256.

⁸⁰ Derek Walcott, “The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?” in *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism* (Gaurav Desai and Supriya Nair, eds.; New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University press, 2005): 261.

⁸¹ R. Radhakrishnan, “Derivative Discourses and the Problem of Signification,” *The European Legacy*, 7:6 (2002):790. Elsewhere Radhakrishnan has exposed Partha Chaterjee’s notion of “derivative discourse” as resonating with Ranajit Guha’s “small voice of history” both of which are caught in the profoundest ambiguity as “incapable of achieving systematicity on their own behalf. The best they can do to authorize their own sense of agency is to chip away, to ‘signify’ their intentions on a pre-existing and often alien text,” in “Globalization, Desire, and the Politics of Representation,” *Comparative Literature*, 53:4 (2001): 320.

affiliations and narrative trajectories”⁸² to emerge from the ghetto of exoticized authenticity?

To move beyond adversarial, indeed binaristic, constructs of authenticity and originality is to hear and to sound all of them contrapuntally, since the “great imperial experience... is global and universal; it has implicated every corner of the globe, the colonizer and the colonized together.”⁸³ The contrapuntal approach, according to Said should be anything but “a blandly uplifting suggestion for catholicity of vision” since what it highlights is precisely the need to “reaffirm the historical experience of imperialism as a matter first of interdependent histories, overlapping domains, second of something requiring intellectual and political choices.”⁸⁴ As theories and knowledges “travel” through diverse geo-historical arenas, and as variously colored diasporic experiences “voyage in” the Occidental cultural edifice, the interdependence and the hybridity crescendos rather than diminishes. What emerges here is “the wobble of assimilation or alterity”⁸⁵ on the the part of those who “voyage in” as well as, to a certain degree, of those fully Occidental theoretical and ethical axiologies that “travel” into locations and mindscapes previously seen as primitive, marginal, exotic, and at best derivative. However derivative and unoriginal such a hybrid commerce may be, in the postcolonial milieu it may well be the surest way home as it was, for example, for the mid-twentieth century Afro-Caribbean poets in an ironic yet transformational conversation with Euromodernism. As the investigations of Jahan Ramazani suggest, it is

⁸² *Ibid.*, 792.

⁸³ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 259.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* Said adds that contrapuntal approach emphasizes precisely the contrapuntal quality of “together” or the aspect of intrinsic relationality since histories of colonializing and being colonized re intertwined and, if studied separately, “then the experiences of domination and being dominated remain artificially, and falsely, separated,” *ibid.*

⁸⁵ Jahan Ramazani, “Modernist Bricolage, Postcolonial Hybridity,” *Modernism/Modernity*, 13:3 (2006): 459.

not a story about Euromodernist wannabes. What happened there is rather emblematic for many forced colonial contexts, reaching far beyond the Caribbean archipelago. Namely, an uncanny appropriation and a subtly complex process of selective and critical reinvention through non-identical repetition “has helped the postcolonial poets encode aesthetically the intersections among multiple cultural vectors,” and by redeploying modernism, they also refashioned it in order to resist “local and imperial monisms.”⁸⁶

The fruit of such strategic redeployment is a vintage postcolonial hybridity which

‘confirms yet alters’, reworks yet revalues... Only by breaking out of exclusionary models of tradition as either Eliot’s ‘mind of Europe’ or its postcolonial obverse (‘an autonomous entity separate and apart from all other literatures’) can we begin to grasp the continuous remaking of ‘traditions’ by one another across the twentieth century and beyond, the mutually transformative relations between the poetics of metropole and margin.⁸⁷

The subtle ambiguity of nuances as well as meticulously timed quotations may suggest that postcolonially scored diasporic imaginaries are inauthentic, dull, and weak. That they can be and are often perceived so cannot be denied. However, such a perception also completely misses, in particular and on top of everything that has been said above, the female diasporic subject’s ethical right to narrate and her enunciative agency as

...multiply located, always doubly displaced, and having to negotiate an ambivalent past, while holding on to fragments of memories, cultures, and histories in order to dream of a different future. Such a female subject may not easily find a language with which to speak [...] A diasporic consciousness finds similarities and differences in both familiar territories and unexpected corners; one catches glimpses of oneself in a fleeting moment or in a fragment in someone else’s story.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 448-449.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 460.

⁸⁸ Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 46, 50.

In addition, diasporic “newness” can be also rejected as useless in the still reigning modern drive for precise, literal, transparent and almost mathematically simple representations in creative thought. Yet, it is hard to resist here the apologetic diasporic temptation to invoke the postcolonial “right to opacity.”⁸⁹ Particularly, the hybrid diasporic proclivity for probing the quiddity of relations as a matter of survival, emerges as a sort of visceral antagonist against the modern shift of signification in the direction of “flattening”⁹⁰ toward literalism, univocity, competitive non-contradiction, and the anatomized panoptical vision of reality of anything or anyone. On the flipside, can it emerge as a sort of visceral friend of the sacramental imaginary which has suffered invasively during the prime of Occidental modernity and continues to do so in its imperial ruins? As far as sacramental imaginary is a discursive and imaginative space of mediation, relation, interpenetration, interdependence, and of polyvocal “pollution” across the boundaries of the uncreated, the created, the spiritual, the bodily, the individual, the communitarian, the cerebral, the affective, the visual, the aural, the tactile and the degustatory, an affinity with a polyvocal and polycentric diasporic experience seems possible and probable, even though not necessary.

⁸⁹ Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Betsy Wing, trans.; Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006): 189-194.

⁹⁰ Thomas J. Davis, *This is My Body: The Presence of Christ in Reformation Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008): 192. Davis explores the paradigm shift in signification from the early modernity onwards to conclude that signification became linear, literal, emphasizing one exact meaning with the loss of metaphoric fluidity. The literal and linear trajectory of signification privileges one-to-one correspondence between the sign and thing for visual as well as verbal signs. Chasing after certainty, the modern textual age endorsed that “the meaning that seemed surest was simplest” and the ensuing “unnecessary rationalism” in sacramental discourses developed as “an attempt to address the culture in ways it valued through a medium it valued” since “a precise, logical, literal-type language represented, if you will, the only way of advocating its positions that would pass muster in a linguistic environment that required an almost mathematical approach in terms of signification,” 192-194. Similar critiques of modern Occidental modes of signification are found in the already mentioned works by Regina Mara Schwartz, Catherine Pickstock, Alexander Schmemmann, Graham Ward and others.

Of course, this project is an interrogation of such a possibility. The result is a peregrination in writing through some of the critical and constructive methodologies in search for fruitful theological envisagements of ethically “right relationality.” The search for mutually consonant and resonant models of relationality among the divine and the human, and among the multitudes of humanity, from discursive thought to ethical action, continues to be the great challenge for theological integrity in this era of late modern postcoloniality. To participate in this quest, I have scored – or mired? – my project in two resilient compositional keys.

First, it is the loyalty to what I called the incarnational style (Overture) in theological inquiry. The incarnational style expresses an enduring loyalty toward the paradigmatic lineup of relational mysteries at the core of the Christian lifeworld. For it is always a relational *μυστήριον* that shapes the identity of the Christian revelation and salvation: God as Trinity, the incarnation as hypostatic union, and the sacraments, as all of these together engender the redemptive ecology of *theosis*. For a theology of the incarnational style, the Eucharist remains as that distinctive locus of encounter in which all vectors and themes of sound Christian theology converge.

Second, the inescapability of my diasporic location as a burden of never being able to see or hear one thing only and say it without the concurrent presence of other, sometimes rather dissonant, experiences and traditions of thought and faith. For my diasporic experience and subjectivity I have not found a better theoretical elaboration than the figurality of postcolonial counterpoint as intimated by Edward W. Said in his postcolonial investigations but also (implicitly) through his critical engagement with Theodor Adorno’s philosophy of music. The analytical or critical thrust of this project

has been to interrogate the convoluted methodological habits of disengagement between liturgy and ethics as a pivotal issue of modern Occidental theology. That has led me, from the context of a marginally European but then also a Euro-Atlantic diasporic experience, and in the fascinating companionship of postcolonial theory, to the interrogation of the foundational rationale of binarity, with which the dominant mainstream of modern Occident theology has been infatuated. The constructive thrust of this project has been to hover, betwixt-and-between, among disciplinary domains, methods, homes, and languages and to suggest that the notion of postcolonial counterpoint can serve as a fruitful contemporary elaboration of what constitutes the ethical nature of sacramentality as the divinely inaugurated interface of divine-human relationality; and by extension and in the same breath – it has to be written in one sentence no matter how long it is – as the analogical interface of interpersonal human relations without detraction and competition between both, not even in a misguided fight against idolatry. It is not an accident, therefore, that counterpoint as precisely sufficiently complex and, indeed, sufficiently opaque sonic terrain has attracted the attention of postcolonially colored sensibilities. To stretch it even further, postcolonial counterpoint can also serve, analogically, to re-envision a transformation of relations between fragmented theological disciplines, such as liturgical theology and ethics.

All of these explorations have proceeded in conversation with the Eastern Orthodox notions of sacramentality, *theosis*, and synergy since postcolonial counterpoint has the breadth to address and to benefit from theologies that remain generous toward the potential goodness of human agency even amidst its fallenness. Evermore, all these peregrinations have also proceeded through brusque conversations with post-Holocaust

Jewish religious thought on ethics and liturgy through the work of Emmanuel Levinas and even more implicitly, again, Theodor Adorno. Theirs are the indirect voices speaking out of the long shadow of the paradigmatic experience of forced Jewish dispersion, which through the Greek translation of the Torah has facilitated the very emergence of *diaspora* as the word for uprooting and displacement.

But this is not yet the whole story. Now the transmigration of lived reality into the realm of epistemological imagination is without doubt a key marker of theoretical agency which acknowledges its own contextual embodiment. But to propose such a transmigration in theology entails, I believe, something more than mere description of the relational traffic between inhabited experience and theoretical discourse. To endorse and elaborate upon this transmigration between life's existential actualities and models of epistemological imagination is to recognize these actualities as a site of revelation. The implicit claim involved here is that musically interpreted diasporic experience from within a postcolonial milieu can serve as a useful source and resource for the elaboration, arguably even for a curative re-envisioning, of certain binaristic Occidental theological trajectories. On this point, I have sketched a markedly different route from the time-honored methodological conviction that Gordon Lathrop, among others, described as pertinent for liturgical theology. Namely, Lathrop observes that "public questions," i.e., the realm of sensible and historical embodiment with its moral exigencies of suffering and injustice, provide a "context" for liturgical theologizing but does "not provide its sources and its method."⁹¹ Context, if by that is meant the non-ritual everyday life outside the places of worship, can no longer be imagined as theologically adiaphoric in the postcolonial milieu. Doxological and reflective practices of theological nature are

⁹¹ Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999): 14.

necessarily intercontextual with the sensible realities of our routine living. Hence these realities are surely among the sources of theological inquiry. Moreover, they modulate the axiologies of theological authority as the revelatory sites of relentless apparitions of the triune God without, however, slipping into the dangerous hegemony of context alone as the sole arbiter of theological normativity.

Thus, without claiming an exclusive privilege to render a conclusive contemporary interpretation of the Eucharist as the definitive methodological principle of sound Christian theology, a fruitful hermeneutical consonance can nevertheless be discernible between the diasporic hybridity and the whole discourse of sacramentality. This – and no more – is the constructive claim of this project. Reading and writing from within a life – in my case out of a diasporically jumbled snarl of existential, intellectual, and linguistic experience – is simultaneously a reading and writing for life whose survival and thriving at present depends on inaugurating and nurturing ethical connections rather than proliferating clashing juxtapositions. The interstitial integrity of the diasporic imaginary, whose take on theological inquiry is written out here as the itinerary of a listening tour to some of my theological roots, theoretical love affairs, and cultural melodies while pondering on theological method, does not reside in abdication from its provisional home in Western Christianity, no matter how ambivalent and porous it is. Instead, it is precisely the interstitial integrity of diasporic theoretical agency that enthusiastically salutes Kevin Vanhoozer’s concise observation that “the way forward is not non-Western but *more-than-Western* theology.”⁹² The way forward is through the sacramental counterpoint of *lex orandi*, *lex credendi* and *lex vivendi*, not their competitive juxtaposition in scholarly turf wars and, even worse, in the life of faith. For sacramental

⁹² Vanhoozer, “One Rule to Rule Them All?” *Globalizing Theology*, 119.

counterpoint is porous like the liturgical spaces of the old cathedrals in the Caribbean. They endure in the Caribbean as strikingly postcolonial in the hybridity of their coercive origins, their colonial histories enmeshed in the unholy synergy of the cross and crown. Yet they are equally striking through their truly contrapuntal present as both reminders of the coloniality of power as well as of eschatological hope for the “*rendezvous* of victory” (Césaire). Theologically speaking, the *rendezvous* of victory is an image of a non-hegemonic place for all; and no one race, culture, theological temperament, language, class, gender or tradition possesses the monopoly of orthodoxy to be coerced upon the others. Sacramental counterpoint of liturgy and ethics enacts the synergistic ontology of grace, rendering the *rendezvous* of victory present, slowly, exhaustingly, often dissonantly, frequently almost to the point of confusion with total invisibility and inefficiency. Remaining embroiled in the continuing actualities of hegemonic injustices and devastating afflictions of the present dispensation, the sacramental counterpoint of liturgy and ethics, or the participatory *opus Dei* of divine service properly speaking, nevertheless “wills to arrive at its victory” – yes, where? – “in the grey and bitter everydayness of life.”⁹³

The world as we know it is relational for good and for ill. To state it as a fact does not mean to invest relationality with naïve and undisputed goodness. To prioritize relationality does not mean to romanticize it. However, the *quiddity* of all relations, inside and outside of liturgical sanctuaries as well as in all those liminal spaces in which the inside and outside intermingles as the paths, smells, and sounds intermingle in the deep

⁹³ Karl Rahner, *Die Siebenfältige Gabe: Über die Sakramente der Kirche* (München: Verlag ARS Sacra, 1974): 18. Rahner writes “... wenn wir die Eucharistie wirklich verstehen wollen, wir sie als die Erscheinung jener geheimnisvollen Gnade sehen dürfen, die unauffällig unser ganzes Leben durchwaltet, als festliches Inerscheinungbringen in der Gemeinschaft der Kirche dessen, was im grauen und bitteren Alltag des Lebens zum Sieg kommen will.”

ambivalence of the old Caribbean cathedrals, ultimately is a matter of consonance with the Eucharist – or lack thereof. To recognize the gravity of relational ontology is, perhaps, to praise – or lament? – the pivotal relational mystery of the Trinity. The gravity of the challenge to act, to imagine, to feel, and to think in consonance with this relational mystery is permeated by the apophatically reserved acknowledgment that “the Trinity is a cross for human ways of thought”⁹⁴ on this side of the beatific vision. Regardless of how painfully utopian and ethically indicting such an embodied doxology may seem, is it also not right and not our duty and our joy, at all times and in all places, to praise the relational mystery of Trinity as precisely the “guide of Christians in the wisdom of heaven?”⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1976): 66.

⁹⁵ Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Mystical Theology,” *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*. The Classics of Western Spirituality (Colm Luibheid, trans., Foreword, Notes and Translation Collaboration by Paul Rorem, Preface by Rene Roques, Introductions by Jaroslav Pelikan, Jean Leclercq and Karlfried Froelich; New York, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987): 997A, 135.

Coda

We worship things as naturally as we breathe and speak.
But that is the problem – untutored, we set our hearts on *things*:
on forces, elements, ideas; on people, dreams and institutions;
on the world or on some item of its furnishing.

We are spontaneously idolatrous.¹

Nicholas Lash

But the refrain of idolatry endures forever ... at least as long as anything akin to the thought or image or melody about divinity comes to human mind. Idolatry: unspeakable sin, chief crime of the humankind, summit and summary of all sins, the model sin, or the great metaphysical error? Is it not the perennial temptation of monotheism, ever new and lively in as many forms as human mind can name it? And is it not the most chronic disease of human religious consciousness which, precisely as chronic, can be managed, can be lived with, yet not cured by any shock and awe therapy once and for all on this side of the eschaton?

Idolatry as a critical category is supposed to serve as the chief sentinel of orthodoxy for monotheistic worship, life, and belief. Classically, idolatry is a “verb” in the Christian context. Idolatry is a “verb” in the sense of engendering acting and thinking, imagining and believing, feeling and willing in a dissonant key. It is a derailed and misplaced doing, thinking, believing, feeling, willing, and imagining with reference to God. Idolatry obtains through “the trust and faith of the heart alone make[s] both God and an idol” so that “anything on which your heart relies and depends ... is really your God.”² It lives and moves under the aegis of “a skewed passion for the eternal” and “an

¹ Nicholas Lash, *The Beginning and the End of 'Religion'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 50.

² Martin Luther, “The Large Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther,” *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000): 386.

absolutized attachment to the sacred as something at hand in the world (a nation, for instance) that is at work in such things as cruelty, hard-heartedness, and oppression.”³ Idolatry thrives on substitution⁴: pious deference, veneration, desire, attachment, dependency, obedience, and allegiance are misguidedly vectored toward creations and creatures not the Creator. In this regard, idolatry is defined by the worship – in the broadest possible sense of the word – of a wrong object, a wrong god. Idolatry is about wrong relationality; it is about being related wrongly to wrong objects and objectives. Similarly to ethics being the quiddity of right relations, idolatry can be said to engender the quiddity of wrong relations.

But there is another, rather unnoticed, dimension to idolatry in mainstream theological discourse. To alleviate this deficiency, it is prudent to converse with Judaism. In rabbinic Judaism, the opposite of the divinely ordered worship, its idolatrous and forbidden counterpart is *avodah zarah* or an “alien,” “strange,” or “unprescribed” worship.⁵ *Avodah zarah* is the rabbinic definition of idolatry. But worship and divine service as *avodah zarah* can be strange, or alien, in terms of its object as well as in terms of its how-ness, its quiddity, its mode of performance. It matters equally what or who is worshiped and how. Hence, idolatry is truly an “adverb.” Theologically, the critical function of the whole discourse on idolatry is to interrogate the qualitative configuration of God-world relationality, its doxological *and* ethical ecology. As a lived “adverb” of religious practices, idolatry is a codeword for a profoundly distorted and distorting

³ Edward Farley, *Good and Evil: Interpreting a Human Condition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990): 126.

⁴ Lash in *The Beginning and the End of 'Religion'* states that idolatry “is the matter of getting the reference wrong: of taking that to be God which is not God, of mistaking some fact or thing or nation or person or dream or possession or ideal for our heart’s need and the mystery ‘that moves the sun and other stars’,” 134.

⁵ José Faur, “The Biblical Idea of Idolatry,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 69 (1978): 2.

constellation of relationality and religiously disordered desire. Moreover, idolatry is not something that exclusively happens when the “right” believers suddenly find themselves in “wrong” temples. Nor is it a perverted relation that can be set right once and for all, swiftly and neatly without fears of relapse. Rather, it is like a chronic disease to be kept under a discerning eye with a profound appreciation of its twists and turns.

Certain rabbinic traditions, as well as certain Christian voices – starting from Tertullian’s *De Idololatria* – have insisted on the “verb” aspect of idolatry. Thus, idolatry is done, performed, and embodied and not merely thought of. Idolatry is embedded in the most common, most mundane interpersonal contexts and social situations as a chronically disordered relationality that indwells all these contexts and situations. Cultic rituals and its shrines are not the only locus of worship and service to God – or of its derailment. It may well be that the whole discourse on idolatry is yet another discerning indication that there is no such realm or context to be designated as “secular” or “neutral,” as Alexander Schmemmann would put it.

Idolatry as an “adverb” constitutes a challenge to recognize the significance of “how” for all things religious and theological, especially if theological imaginary remains loyal to the arduous relational ontology of incarnation sacramentality. This theological imaginary finds an interesting ally in Martin Buber who passionately insisted on crucial marker of the “right” worship and service being the “how” of relation to God vis-à-vis a relation to an idol. The very identity of the fitting or “right” relation to God is at stake here and not merely a substituted object or objective of some cultic rituals. In other words, if the quiddity of the God-world relationality is “wrong” then it ultimately does not matter which God is being worshiped. Idolatry as the question of “wrong quiddity”

concerns the “how” of this relationality as it is enacted in worship and life of stewardship and service. The “right quiddity” consists in “first learn[ing] to serve *differently*”⁶ – not just serving a *different* God. For Buber, similarly to Emmanuel Levinas, the religious worship and ethical service across the interface of divine-human relationality coincide since “he who knows the world as useable does not know God otherwise.”⁷ Idolatry – as well as ethics and sacramentality – is about relations, about non-accidental and non-adiaphoric relations at the very source, shape, and *telos* of reality. And idolatry must be managed like a chronic debilitating disease primarily “not on account of its errors, but on account of the moral degeneracy that accompanies it.”⁸

Would it be pertinent to wrap up the final cadenza of this project with a final harmonic resolution, mercurial as it is, by positing ethical relationality – such as exemplified in an incarnationally scored sacramental counterpoint – in a curious opposition to idolatry as skewed relationality? Even if I could argue, from the perspective of contrapuntal diasporic imaginary, that such an opposition would not smuggle in yet another unproductive dichotomy, something more important deserves to be mentioned instead. Namely, as critically useful against contemporary imperialism, sexism, racism, neocolonialism, ethnocentrism, and as liturgically embedded in the nexus of worship and service as the category of idolatry may be, it also warrants a particularly postcolonial caution. Idolatry has indeed been the chief sentinel of orthodoxy for monotheistic worship, life, and belief – but not without its “dark universalism that turns other gods into

⁶ Martin Buber, *Ich und Du* (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1977): 126. Buber’s italics.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, “Religion and Tolerance,” *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism* (Sean Hand, trans.; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990): 174.

idols.”⁹ The rhetoric of “the extirpation of idols” has accompanied and even fuelled the brutal and unjustifiable colonial escapades of Christianity, even though Judaism (rather foundationally) and Islam as monotheistic religions are by no means strangers to similar “dark universalisms” of their own. Be it the notion of exclusive worship and allegiance with its tragic principle of managed scarcity cast as the idea of Oneness,¹⁰ or the “logic of the One, which has governed the era of European expansion... only very lately dubbed monotheism,”¹¹ the monotheistic discourse of idolatry has influenced the unrelenting ideologies of cultural and political separation and superiority, racial and sexual possession and violence. It has been instrumental in the self-justification of colonial conquest and cruelty as well as in the development of the epistemological imaginary of competitive dualism in Western Christian theology. Of course, the notion of idolatry has also inspired prophetic critiques of all the above despite “monotheism’s totalitarian limitations.”¹² Thus the idea of an uncreated uniqueness of God vis-à-vis everything and everyone sourced *ex nihilo* does not necessarily prefigure monotheistic violence. However, amidst the ongoing loaded tenure of idolatry as the sentinel of monotheistic orthodoxy still looms its subtle and subversive appeal for binaristic habits of epistemological imagination so innate within Western modernity. Therefore, in a postcolonial milieu, to move beyond the divisive and abusive hierarchies of dualistic relationalities of “either/or” in thought and action into the terrain of hybrid relationalities

⁹ Regina M. Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997): 37.

¹⁰ Schwartz’s *The Curse of Cain* offers incisive critique of the Hebrew Scriptures’ imaginary of monotheistically inscribed violence as a “nexus of exodus, conquest, monotheism, and possession” (60) that is profoundly preoccupied with purity and separation as a hallmark of holiness. “Monotheism, then, is not simply a myth of one-ness, but a doctrine of possession, of a people by God, of a land by a people, of women by men,” 71.

¹¹ Laurel S. Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007):1.

¹² *Ibid.*, 5.

and “polluted” imaginations and allegiances is to pose the question about the nature of codependent relation of monotheism with the Western, particularly modern, logic of “either/or.” As Rita Nakashima Brock underscores, this Western dualistic logic so attached to the Western monotheism, or the “logic of the One,” has already issued in the immensely convoluted intertwinement of “polarization in Christianity between good and evil, true and false, black and white, insider and outsider, and margin and center.”¹³ The issue is about the possibility of modulating the codependency of monotheistic religion and the modern Western apotheosis of oppressive and agonistic dualism into a peregrination toward where there is “place for all in the *rendezvous* of victory” (Aimé Césaire). What kind of monotheism without “dark universalism” could emerge without the perilously beloved Western rationale of binarity? Namely, without conquest, competitive exclusion, displacement, oppression, marginalization, subjection, deprivation, detraction, all of them coercive and hegemonic, all of them cutting right through the religious imagination of race, gender, class, ethnicity, language, sexuality, immigration status, and ultimately, faith? It is beyond the scope of this project to add my voice to those fellow *peregrinantes* who have already looked far and wide for inspiration. Suffice it to say that a non-idolatrous way of orchestrating a theological imaginary beyond the dualistic rationality of displacement, enclosure and brutality would seem to benefit from a renewed attunement to pivotal relational mystery of which sacramentality is perhaps a most fitting analogy under the sun – in other words, with an attunement to the counterpoint of Trinity.

¹³ Rita Nakashima Brock, “Interstitial Integrity: Reflections Toward an Asian American Woman’s Theology,” in *Introduction to Christian Theology: Contemporary North American Perspectives* (Roger A. Bradham, ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997):187.

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