PHILOSOPHICAL MONOGRAPHS
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Three Essays

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MIND GAMES

Phenomenological Philosophy and Video Gaming

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1.

A PHILOSOPHY OF VIDEO GAMING

In the world of video gamers, i.e., human players, (or player-agents) the phenomenon of video gaming is made up of the *activity* of the human agent-player, and the *movement* of the non-human actor-player. The difference between the agent-player and the actor-player is significant and gives a reason for philosophizing about video gaming. Actor-players do not initiate their role, whereas agent-players do. Actor-players react to the actor-agent’s initiative. Further, activity and movement are not equal and interchangeable terms and do not define the same phenomenon philosophically, even though both occur in the game-experience. Human activity is deliberate and has purpose, hence, humans are agents; whereas, the movement within the game is relative to the presence of the player and has no purpose except that which has been programmed into it. Hence, the game is but an actor within the terms of the game-player relationship. From a philosophical point of view intellectual activity, which is reserved to the human agent-player, has a particular conscious quality that non-human beings lack, such as, infrahuman animals, robots and inanimate physical matter. The last possesses chemical movement.

The value of the video game experience is expressed through human speech, thought and preference. The interpretation of the gaming experience can through phenomenological philosophy, disclose new insights into the human existential condition.
Interpreting the gaming experience requires a philosophy of mind that equates to a philosophy of human consciousness. Phenomenological or existential interpretation is not simply a matter of an alternative epistemological philosophy. It is more comprehensive than classical epistemology, yet preserves its merits in attempting to remedy its inadequacies. Further, the distinction between activity and movement, which is foundational to phenomenological existential philosophy, supplies the rationale for these philosophical reflections on video gaming.

2.

GAMING LIFE “IN PROGRESS”

A Phenomenological Interpretation

“The branch of philosophy that is concerned with human beings as minded animals, these days, is called philosophy of mind.”¹ Philosophy of mind made its appearance as a post-Cartesian phenomenon in the English-speaking world in the 20th Century. Given that the interpretation of the video game experience requires a philosophy of mind, I offer some philosophical reflections in light of contemporary human consciousness as an alternative to Western classical epistemological interpretation. In these reflections, I employ phenomenological philosophy because, without realizing it, classical philosophy (Scholasticism) had reached a decadent status by the end of the Middle Ages.² Today,

¹ Gabriel, Markus (2017:1) I am not a Brain Polity Press [author’s italics].
Scholasticism is no longer capable of providing a satisfactory explanation of contemporary experience. I hold that, from a phenomenal perspective, human activity is not identical with a mechanical or chemical movement. However, humans as organic living beings, like infrahuman beings, robots and inanimate matter are capable of movement, that is, human organisms can function without deliberating a purpose or goal. But, humans are capable of adding a conscious end, or purpose, to their movement which specifies it as intentional activity. In short, humans act with forethought in order to achieve or attain an imagined goal outside of themselves. Infrahuman life appears to be incapable of such intentional forethought.

Without doubt we do not know when or how life on earth began. Our ignorance of this fact is easily confirmed by a moment’s reflection on the current variety of opinion, philosophical and scientific, on the genesis of life. As well, we do not know how concrete physical matter came to be in the universe. Its origin remains speculative. However, all known cultures to date have passed down through generations their various myths, legends and theories as to the origin of life and physical matter. For my purposes, in these reflections, I do not speculate about the

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2 My mind is that of Brian Gaybba who wrote: “For the major cause of [scholasticism’s] decadence was that it became a dry philosophical analysis of minute details utterly removed from any perceptible link with experienced reality and without the life-giving vitality of the patristic period. Anything cut off from its roots withers and ultimately dies. Scholasticism withered badly, even if it did not die completely.” Gaybba, Brian (1966:69) God’s Wisdom and Human Reason University of South Africa Press.
origin of the physical universe, or of human life. Rather, an individual’s “gaming experience in progress” as a human activity is my focus for a philosophical interpretation of the gaming phenomenon. It is the dynamic condition of the human experience, not the static facts of science that I consider. Lacking knowledge as to the origins of life, I make one assumption only: that life and non-living physical matter are in some manner related and the mechanism by which this happened remains unknown. On the assumption that life has emerged within non-living matter at a certain level of material complexity, I do not consider its emergence to be equivalent to its initiation. Knowledge of life’s initiation, or of the origin of matter, is not necessary to interpret philosophically the experience of human life in progress.

These philosophical reflections originate within the mind of an individual person. Thus, they are primarily about the personal thoughts of an individual and only secondarily about the status of the environment and culture surrounding the individual. I understand the person in the sense articulated by Leslie Dewart that a “person (as subject) is a center of consciousness: it is that which can objectify itself. It is that which can objectively signify itself to itself by means of its consciousness.” 3 That is to say, a person is not understood to be derived from any cause of the created universe. Persons are self-consciously identified and are the measure of all things which recall the Protagorean

Since speaking, thinking and understanding are activities that only conscious human individuals can undertake they are able to communicate with other conscious human individuals and interpret various philosophical points of view which do *measure* the universe as experienced. Humans self-consciously communicate via speech with other humans, but they interact, rather than communicate, with robotic computers. In these philosophical considerations, I am not restricting my thinking to the facts and statistical information obtained through a biological, scientific or clinical psychological investigation. These are specific disciplines with their own goals and ends which their practitioners intend. Rather, I undertake my philosophical reflection, not through an analytical knowledge characteristic of a Western university discipline, but rather as a personal mental activity *in relation to* the contribution of the formal sciences and social sciences. My approach is similar to that suggested by Moritz Schlick, who concluded a lecture in these words:

I am convinced that our view of the nature of philosophy will be generally adopted in the future; and the consequence will be that it will no longer be attempted to teach philosophy as a system. We shall teach the special sciences and their history in *the true philosophical spirit of searching for clarity* and, by doing this,

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4 Protagoras, a Greek philosopher, (died circa 420 B.C.E) is believed to have made the statement, "Man is the measure of all things," and subsequently interpreted by Plato to mean that there is no absolute truth, but only that which individuals deem to be the truth.
we shall develop the philosophical mind of future generations [my italics].  

Among the contemporary philosophers seeking such clarity, Markus Gabriel has stated that philosophers need to respect natural science and acquire as much knowledge as possible in its manifold fields. However, there is a widespread tendency in our culture (more so in the Anglophone than in the German-speaking world) to outsource philosophical issues from philosophy to natural science, which is a fundamental mistake.

All human beings, act and make decisions in life consciously (although sometimes they do act unconsciously) and interpret their experience in a particular way. That is because, as human beings, individuals have a particular (and probably exclusive) type of biological brain capable of supporting a unique mind. Were all humans “reductionists” who consider their minds as reduced to their brains, they would merely be other great apes, as it were. However, the human mind-brain relationship philosophically places humans in a distinct class of organisms. Since human consciousness, as distinct from animal consciousness, is distinguishable within biological life, humans can interpret their environment through more than sentient perception. Sentient perception simply reacts to the environment; it does not interpret it.

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Human sentient perception involves assigning meaning to the information received. This capacity of the human organism to assign meaning to life’s experiences is a result of a long evolutionary progress of human life disclosing a particular consciousness which has made a somewhat recent appearance in world history. Because of the unique activity of the human mind, i.e., thinking consciously, the status of the human being as a thoughtful organism merits recognition and respect. In fact, humans are obliged to recognize and respect other like-minded organisms as humans. Further, as far as I am aware, the human mind is capable of reflecting upon itself which does not occur within infrahuman life, nor can such self-reflection be programmed into technodigital (i.e., non-living) Artificial Intelligence. Even though it is an awkward expression a more accurate label for AI is “machine knowledge.” I do hold, however, that infra-human living organisms share a type of consciousness proper to their own existence, but it does not assign value to their experience. But I am not considering infrahuman consciousness here.

Humans assign value to all the experiences of life, rather than receive value from life itself. Life, in itself, is valueless. By that I mean that life is only experienced by the infrahuman organism as a movement without any assigned or inherent value, purpose or goals, not even any assigned by God. Infrahuman experience may be purposive, (i.e., the meaning of the organism’s action is assigned by humans) but not purposeful (i.e., the organism assigns
meaning to itself). Which is to say, by living consciously human beings are agents who assign meaning to themselves and to their experience, as well, assign meaning to other non-human organisms. Ultimately, the assignment of meaning to life is a communitarian activity, not solely an individual activity of human beings, and the consequences of conscious human activity effect the individual organism singly and in community, positively or negatively, as long as the organism continues to exist. In short, humans determine a life of meaning or non-meaning in their conscious state.

The Western philosophical tradition has generally accepted that reality and being, are identical, such that one cannot be observed or experienced without the other. Such is the legacy of the Hellenic philosophical tradition. Further, reality and being must possess inherent intelligibility in order to be understood in the Hellenic perspective. A pioneering philosopher, contemplating the necessity of the inherent intelligibility of reality and being, was Leslie Dewart (1922-2009) who has probed into this question most thoroughly, particularly in his Evolution and Consciousness: The Role of Speech in the Origin and Development of Human Nature. He rejects that being must be necessarily intelligible in itself, before it can be understood by human consciousness. The capacity for understanding the intelligibility of being resides in the human mind, not in a reality as the object of thought. Further, he posits

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7 University of Toronto Press 1989.
that reality itself is beyond being and that the two ought not be identified as equal by philosophers as has been the case in classical Western philosophy. Dewart’s suggestion of a non-identical status has been confirmed in a note by Robert Prentice. “Dewart himself, as we already know from *The Future of Belief*, 8 distinguishes *being* from *reality* — though *reality* does not correspond to *nothingness,*” that is, in the sense of Sartre’s non-being of nothingness. 9 Distinguishing being from reality characterizes Dewart’s “dehellenization of philosophy” that pervades all his works. To my mind, all being is real, but not all reality is being. The words of George Tyrrell, written some 117 years ago (as I write this) give us food for thought today.

For nothing can be more real to me than myself. Self is the very test and measure of all reality. If I ascribe reality to things in Nature, it is only because to understand or deal with them at all I must assume that they are like me in some way, that they are to some degree separate, individual, active, if not actually sentient and conscious as I am. 10 That is to say things (beings) in Nature are real for Tyrrell and that their reality is assigned by humans and not inherent in the things themselves.

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8 *Future of Belief: Theism in a World Come of Age* 1966 Herder & Herder.  
10 Tyrrell, George (1903:8) *Lex Orandi or Prayer and Creed.* Longmans, Green (Tyrrell’s understanding of the Self as a test and measure of reality calls to mind Protagoras’ earlier remark.)
It was at this point of realizing the significance of Dewart’s dehellenization of philosophy that I began to truly wonder what life would be like should I accept, contrary to what I had been taught, that reality lacks inherent intelligibility. From experience, I know that I cannot deny that “I am” (sum) but I can doubt that “I think” (cogito). (This view is a clear reversal of the interpretation of the cogito ergo sum of René Descartes.) Being self-conscious I cannot doubt that I am a living being, but I can doubt having knowledge concerning my experiences. I can know of my error or mistake, which is not true knowledge, only in hindsight. Knowledge of error is a function of memory, not a function of present awareness. From his philosophical perspective, Leslie Dewart understood cogito as the manifestation of “the self-observability of the mind.” ¹¹ When the mind observes another, it can possibly be mistaken in attaining knowledge, but it cannot be mistaken in understanding its own activity of being conscious. That is to say, I may be mistaken, or ignorant about what I am thinking, but not mistaken that I am thinking, that is, mistaken about my own conscious being.

Up to this point in this essay, all the above remarks have been by way of introductory preparation for what now follows.

By way of clarification, I remind the reader that I am philosophizing in English. This offers the opportunity to organize

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and express my thoughts employing philosophical vocabulary in a particular manner and in a particular grammatical construction that may not be possible in other languages. As an example, the word, “understand” is a case in point. Commonly used it means to grasp the meaning of something, to have a technical acquaintance or expertise with something, or to accept something as a fact or certainty. In short, it means to obtain knowledge of an object outside oneself through the perspective of standing under the object to be grasped, as it were. As well, the word “grasp” is problematic in my way of philosophical thinking. Thus, I have a reservation about the “new realism” presented by some contemporary philosophers such as Markus Gabriel. 12 In “grasping” this “new realism” such philosophers are still thinking within the Hellenist philosophical legacy. Reality, new or not, is not an object to be “reached for” and grasped, since it is ungraspable and beyond physical being. Philosophers do not “stand under” reality and hence do not understand it in itself. Rather, I hold that reality is best accepted as an unknown in itself until it is experienced by self-conscious sentient organisms. Self-conscious sentient organisms (persons) assign meaning to their experiences since reality, in itself possesses no intelligibility.

Literally, classical philosophical understanding conveys the sense that one “stands under” something to observe it. Standing under something reflects a dichotomous theory of knowledge,

where the object known somehow exists “above,” and outside the knower and remains separate from the knower. The ancient Hellenist philosophers attempted to advance their thinking over myth and folklore by introducing this perspective of standing under reality. Standing under reality is not to be understood spatially, i.e., up or down, but relationally. Direction is not important. In the Hellenic view to attain true knowledge the knower needed to bring the known object somehow into the mind of the knower identify it adequately, and thus “stand under” it. As I see it, in a sense the Hellenist philosophers actually presented a “democratic” theory of knowledge, whereby the object known becomes incorporated ideally into each knower’s mind and thus becomes “understood” in a manner and by a means proper to each knower. Classical philosophers employed the phrase, \textit{adaequatio rei et intellectus} in their philosophy to express this democratic theory.\textsuperscript{13} This theory served the philosophers of medieval times very well, but it has out-lived its usefulness for contemporary interpretation.

We do not live in Medieval times. Living in modern scientific and technodigital times, we are in unchartered philosophical waters and must often interpret experiences without any pre-established philosophical method as a guide. We need to encounter and subsequently describe the phenomena we experience through an adequate philosophy that fits our lived situation, our “experience in

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{English translation: The correspondence of the mind and reality.}
progress,” that is, our life. Reflecting upon the explanations given to me by my university professors schooled within the Western philosophical tradition, I soon realized that the traditional Hellenistic point of view was limited in its capacity to interpret the experience of my “life in progress.” I experienced limitations in: 1) what it means to be, and 2) what reality really means. Subsequently, I abandoned this traditional understanding and I employed my imagination as a means to explore my world of experience, which included the experience of myself as an object of consciousness in that same world. In short, I imagined life differently, as inside the parade of life, as it were, not a spectator outside the parade of life. That is to say, I became a phenomenological philosopher as opposed to an analytical philosopher. In short, I have chosen to abandon the presumed superiority and exclusiveness of ancient Greek philosophy that somehow had come to represent an objective universal structure of human thought, at least within the Western perspective of thinking. I began to consciously formulate my spoken thought to communicate suitably with others in a manner different from Hellenistic understanding. Thus, I communicate with myself and others in a philosophical manner appropriate for me as a thinker engaged in a contemporary philosophy of mind. The Latin phrase, quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur, 14 of scholastic epistemology which established the relationship between the

14 English translation: Whatever is received is received in the manner of the receiver.
The knower and the known at that time might be reconceived today as whatever is assigned is assigned in the manner of the agent.

I present the following reflections of the gaming experience based on a phenomenological understanding originating within the Continental tradition in philosophy. That is to say, I present this interpretation as an alternative to the philosophy of the ancient Greeks, the Hellenists, which in the West has become known as analytical philosophy. From the perspective of the phenomenological philosopher classical idealism does not exist. The phenomenologist replaces objective ideals, products of the classical intellect and rational thought with notions,\(^{15}\) products of the contemporary conscious human mind. Classical idealism is believed by scholastic philosophers to have an independent, objective content in itself. Notions, on the other hand are intuitive and are conceived in the mind, replacing the external content of the substantive ideals of Hellenist philosophy. Notions have no independent content in themselves, nor are they substantive. What I consider in this essay is an experience of the phenomenon of gaming, not merely a philosophy of the game as an object of study in itself.

In my approach to studying the gaming experience of the player, I make certain presumptions concerning phenomenological interpretation. In no particular order of importance, they are first, that the game-experience is a private encounter with the

\(^{15}\) Notion is derived from the Greek *nous*. 
programme of the game which acquires significance through a process of meaning assigned by the player. The player is the agent in a “two-actor” game. The player is an agent-actor in the game, whereas, the programme of the game is only an actor in the game, not an agent. The agent-actor initiates the action of the game, to which the game programme (the actor) reacts. The philosophical interpretation of video gaming is unlike the interpretation of reading literary texts where only one agent is involved, the reader. In the activity of the reading experience there is no action taken on the part of the text. However, in the video game experience action or movement has been programmed into the game as an intended reactionary actor, not another agent.

Secondly, there is no independent external reality, or meaning, outside the player’s experience to be imported into the experience of the game. All game experience is subjective. Further, agreement (or disagreement) and discussion among players as to what they have experienced in the game lies in agreed-upon terms of intersubjective meaning which they assigned to their gaming experience. The player’s agreement on assigned meaning is dependent upon a process of variable communication between (or among) players since there is no objective external meaning to be imported into the interpretation of the gaming experience. Thirdly, any self-criticism of the experience, or of the process of philosophical understanding, provides a dual benefit. First, to the player individually and, as well, to the community of other players
who had engaged in the game experience through mutual relationships. This last point has a potentially larger influence than being reserved solely to the gaming-world. Lessons from the gaming experience can be applied within the non-gaming human social world.

The gaming experience affects the player’s relationship in two ways. First, in the dialectical relationship between the living player and the non-living game as agent and actor respectively in the action of the game. Secondly, it affects the player in the dialogue between the non-gaming living society as if it were an actor, and the individual living player as agent in the discussion. (To be noted is that in the living society some constituents may be actors and others may be agents.) In each instance, dialectic or dialogue, statements about the game experience are significant to the player, but not necessarily significant to all those to whom he describes them. The player must then seek to guide the others through the game-process in order to convince those who have not participated or shared in the game experience. The question then arises: Can the game experience truly be shared with other non-players? Given that there are no points of external objective criteria common to all, the issue becomes one of relative accessibility to a player’s experience by other individuals.

Can a player gain positive self-knowledge through the gaming experience? Theoretically, yes; providing a willingness on the player’s part to engage in the game as programmed. That is to say
no positive self-knowledge about the player can be gained through cheating. Knowing oneself as a cheater is a negative concept. That is to say what is actually known is a lack of honesty. As programmed, a game challenges the player’s abilities to succeed. Success requires that the player coherently, consistently and appropriately engage himself or herself in the game at particular levels of challenges. In the experience of playing the game the player is challenged by the game, the game is not challenged by the player. To gain self-knowledge, the player must be challenged. This is so since there are no external ideals to be acquired as knowledge in the gaming experience. It follows that for others to appreciate a player’s experience they must have access to the player’s process of self-discovery. Then they too may possibly be able to understand the gaming experience of the player within the consciousness of their own experience. The process of gaining self-knowledge through the experience of another is a philosophical exercise characteristic of an artist (or a poet) and not to be confused with the analytic methods of gaining knowledge characteristic of a scientist.

A phenomenological interpretation of gaming activity interprets the player’s virtual experience of the game as disclosing a pattern similar to the real time life experience of the player. An individual’s intentions in life are self-initiated. By way of contrast, it may be argued that a video game has a particular “intentionality,” programmed into it by its designer. It is this
intentionality of the game as designed by the designer that the player encounters directly, not the intention of the designer. In some games the player has the option to alter the programme’s intentionality as the game proceeds. This interactive relationship between the game’s intentionality (actually the programmer’s original intention as fixed and now non-living) and the player’s variable living intention defines the game itself as a non-living actor in the dialectical process of self-discovery of the player. But can gaming be a mode of interpreting real reality, not just virtual reality? It seems not every player understands that it is in virtual reality, not real reality, that the game is played. Is there an exchange between real reality and virtual reality that allows the player’s mind an unrestricted interchange of meaning for the benefit of the individual and for the benefit of society? In what follows I attempt to provide a (provisional) answer to this question from a phenomenological philosophical point of view.
3.

INTERPRETATING A GAME’S PROGRAMME

There is no hidden purpose that has been designed, written and assigned a place in a computer programme to be disclosed through a phenomenological interpretation. Rather, the purpose of the programme is an observable variable which has been predetermined by the manufacturer. It is the player who engages the game’s processes and chooses among the game’s many rules and options to assign its meaning for him or her. Thus, the programme’s meaning is truly in the hands of the player since control has passed from the designer to the player whose ability to cope with the game’s challenges determines the meaning of the programme.

In itself, the game’s programme functions as a unit, no matter what degree of complexity there is among the options making up the programme. This is to say that the game’s programme constitutes no “organic constitution” or independent significance (identity) of its own. Rather, the game’s programme is merely a mechanical techno-digital construction reflecting the previous thinking of the designer. The game is a thing, an actor, whose movements are a reaction to those initiated by the player, an agent. The game does not initiate any “play” itself. Further, the game can be activated only in parts, and not as a whole at any given time in the player’s stream of conscious activity. From this perspective playing the game reflects a real-life experience for the player, but
nothing similar for the game itself. To a significant extent the
programme regulates the player in that it determines and limits the
choice of options for the player. These limiting factors of the
programme play a similar role to that of language in the theory of
literary criticism. As a reader’s language limits the capacity to
express his or her consciousness, so the game’s design
circumscribes the range of the player’s mediated interpretive range
within the game.

Earlier generations and editions of video game programmes
have influenced current game programming. And, in turn, current
game programming will influence future generations and editions
of game programming. There is no need for future programmers to
adhere to past conventions of gaming traditions in designing game
strategy to challenge the future player. However, many
programmers do adhere to past conventions. Given a creative
openness to the future, the question might be asked: For whom will
the game be designed? In other words, who is the intended
recipient of the programme? Could it be an advanced individual
player? Or, in light of posthuman theory, could it be an “enhanced”
human being, or even another computerized video-game
constructed to function as an autonomous player-actor? (A
military-minded designer might design programmes to “outwit”
other less sophisticated military programmes.) Thus, theoretically,
in the future robots might fight robots with no loss of human life.
That one game could consciously play another game is currently
only imaginative fiction which in theory is possible should the level of computerized technology ever reach sufficient sophistication and complexity to disclose life and generate consciousness in the game programme.

Currently, only living organisms are capable of consciousness. In a philosophical understanding it must be remembered that a human individual is alive, whereas a computer is not. The threshold that denotes life from non-life has never been crossed by human consciousness. That is, while inanimate objects are capable of mobility, only living human organisms are capable of conscious activity. As a centre of personal experience, the player is circumscribed by the sophistication of the game’s programme. He or she can only be conscious of what the game offers at the time of play. Only afterwards can the player evaluate the past experience of a game as a memory in the present moment, and speculate about its effect in the future.

The measure by which a game experience is judged is always the measure supplied by the player. In this sense the Pre-Socratic Greek philosopher, Protagoras (5th Century B.C.E.) was correct, I believe, when he noted that “man is the measure of all things” which has been interpreted by later generations of philosophers as

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16 Science fictions fans will recall that this is the speculative question with HAL (2001 Space Oddessy by Arthur C. Clarke). The computer is not human, nor alive, (it lacks self-consciousness) a fact which seems to be forgotten in the imaginative fictions of commentators and interpreters of Clarke’s ground-breaking novel. I suggest that Clarke intended the computer as a physical masterwork of human ingenuity constituting of the “brain” and the “nervous sysyem” of the ship. Later interpreters of the novel unwittingly treated the computer “as if” it were alive, making their conclusions, although entertaining, of little use to philosophy.
an expression of the relativity in all perceptions and judgments by
the human individual. The relative perspective of human
perception raises the question of the nature of human self-
understanding. Can the classical understanding of human
perception retain its validity in the contemporary Western
existential situation? That is, does the truth of an experience of
gaming reside within or without of the player’s mind? It resides
within the player’s conscious mind. The programme of the game
cannot establish the truth of the experience or confirm the accuracy
of the player’s interpretation. Only the player can do that. That is
to say, the game experience is a means for interpreting the truth by
the player. The game does not determine the truth. The programme
of the game may be designed to liberate or imprison the player’s
experience. As a liberator it can take the individual beyond his or
her current self-knowledge through an interpretation of virtual
reality. If imprisoned, however, the player cannot be taken beyond
him or herself in expanding or deepening self-knowledge. Not
being taken beyond the previously achieved level of self-
knowledge indicates that there has been no growth in
consciousness. At all times, the game requires the player’s
initiative to start the game in order to provide a truthful and
authentic self-knowledge.

To attain a truthful and authentic self-knowledge the player
must attain mastery over the computer programme. In this process
of mastery, any failure to attain self-knowledge lies with the
player, not with the design of the programme. Any design faults or technical failures with the programme lie within the programme’s design or the manufacture’s construction and may be corrected accordingly by a design artist or computer technician. Only correctly functioning programmes permit the player to interpret the gaming experience and acquire self-knowledge correctly from the player’s Lebenswelt. 17

The programme of the video game does not provide any knowledge to the incompetent or untutored player who is unable to engage the game’s challenges and master them accordingly. The programme has no knowledge in itself or of itself, it is merely a source of data for consciousness. Self-knowledge, only derives from the player’s engagement with the movement of the game. However, it may be argued that the game’s “intentionality,” put there by the designer, has an identifiable purpose. Obviously, lacking consciousness the video game is itself unaware of such programming. Yet, one goal that may be built into the game is to enable interpretive communication between the player’s true existential world and the virtual fictional world of the game. The designer may provide an inducement to persuade the player to accept the game’s virtual reality as sufficiently similar to that of the player’s existential reality to want to play the game. Another,

17 Lebenswelt is the German for “life-world” as employed in phenomenological philosophy. It is immediately or directly experienced in the subjectivity of everyday life and is to be distinguished from the objective “worlds” of the sciences, which employ the methods of the mathematical sciences. Although the mathematical sciences originate in the life-world, they are not those of the subjectivity of everyday life.
inducement to play the game is to displace the player’s “real” world with a desire for an experience in a “virtual world,” that is an “almost” real world, thus providing a unique experience for the player through the action of the game. These inducements may be built into the video game to tempt the player to achieve pre-established goals of some sort. That is to say, an intrasubjective relationship between the player and the game’s designer can be potentially established and capitalized upon by the game’s designer and manufacturer. Intrasubjectivity means that one player will react differently than another player to the options provided by the programme’s designer, who collectively constitute a gaming community.

In all this, it is to be remembered that for the average philosophically-minded interpreter the video game is but a means or tool of interpretation in a journey to self-knowledge undertaken by the player. It also helps to remember that the video game is a game with a built in “flux” or movement that is only actualized when initiated by the player. The video game is not designed to remain static in the player’s experience but to react as an actor to the player’s initiative. In this sense it is not similar to a literary text which of itself remains static in a “one agent” experience of literary interpretation. There is a philosophical lesson to be learned in the video game experience. That is that there is no sense of Fate in determining the outcome of the game. The player is not “fated” to win the game or lose the game. The outcome of the game, no
matter how sophisticated the programme, is ultimately decided solely by the player even when pseudo-decisions and deliberate goals are programmed into the game. The game may be won, or lost, or it may be terminated by the player before it is finished, or not played at all.

4. GAME DESIGNING

The designer/programmer is influenced by his or her own experiences in life when designing the virtual world of the game. Gaming experiences are of the *real* world in that they are experiences that are obtained through the senses. In a game, however, it is the experience of a non-real world or virtual world that the player experiences. That is why the game is designed to yield similar existential experiences to that of the player to which he or she can relate.

Designer, programmer and craftsman are terms that designate the author of the game who is to be distinguished from a physical (commercial) manufacturer who has invested no personal experience in the content of the game. The manufacturer merely makes the game as a product (object) to be used (purchased) by the player. The designer, however, has inserted certain patterns and options in the game for the benefit of the anticipated player. These patterns reflect the particular insights of the author/creator of the
game. In playing the game, the *objective* product will be *subjectively* experienced by the player.

It is the process of creative game designing that I have in mind in this section and not the experience of the player. The game’s design, then, will often contain the biographical background of the author/creator, as well as, reflect the author’s creative insights. The author’s creativity affects the design of the game. The player assigns the significance, importance and value of the game as an outcome of engaging the game. Obviously, less sophisticated players will not appreciate highly creatively designed games. The author’s creative insights must be presented in the player’s conventional language understood. Creating such presentation could be a frustrating task for the author whose creative imagination may exceed the bounds of the conventional language of the intended player. Since the craftsmanship of the author is limited by the level of consciousness of the player and the intended complexity of the game, the designer (craftsman) may not need to exercise his or her full potential at designing each and every game. But what is never lost in crafting the game’s programme is the author’s self-inclusion in the work of game design.

As the author designs the game, it could be argued that the game, in turn, “designs” the author within the process of its fabrication. Thus, creative game designing may involve a type of destruction of the creator, that is, it may bring about a change in the designer who may not be exactly the same at the outset of the
design as at the completion of the design of the game. That is evident especially so if the author has accepted to listen to the “voice” of the game as it is being designed. In the creative process the author may supply only a minimum number of options which are meaningful to the player which serve to excite the player’s imagination and enjoyment of the game. The player, however, may need to expand upon these options and use his or her imaginative faculty to enhance participation at a higher level in the gaming experience. Thus, the author does not control the imaginative world of the player but only supplies options for the player’s creative imagination to choose among the programmed options with reference to the player’s imaginative world and, as well, to the player’s existential world.

5.

THE GAME’S VALUE

The value of the game is to be found in the gaming experience of the player, not in the game itself. When a player engages in a game, he or she becomes the intended player as conceived by the author of the game. The value of the gaming experience is objectified through the agency of the player. In short, if the game is not played, the game is not valuable from an existential philosophical perspective. Only its objective physical components exist. Value accrues to the player’s initiating, communicating, assimilating, and conceptualizing his or her experience within the
Collectively these activities contribute to the enrichment of the player’s experience of the virtual reality of the game as they satisfy the subjective interpretation of the player’s mind.

The gaming experience need not extend over a long period of time for an imaginative experience to take place in which the player values in being in two worlds at once, that is, the virtual world and existential world. However, from an existential philosophical perspective, I prefer to recognize an imaginative experience in gaming of only the one world that the player as expressed in two dimensions. These dimensions are often mistakenly recognized as distinct, when, in fact, they are only distinguishable within the same experience of reality. Cognitively impaired individuals may operate the mechanics of the computer but there is no deliberate actualization of the game’s value from a philosophical perspective. In playing the game the player “sees again,” what was originally seen in his or her existential world though often modified for better or worse. This occurs, of course, in varying degrees depending on the player’s memory of the prior experiences in life. As well, the self-recognition of the player is a common human re-cognition with all the flaws of the cognitive process which, of course, includes memory. In his or her memory the player is, in fact, integrating a personal past, consciously and unconsciously, both public and private, into the interpretation of the present experience of the game.
The player may expand the conscious experience of the game beyond the immediate limitations of his or her immediate self, and the limitations of the game’s programme, by engaging a more sophisticated edition of the game. The play thus may go beyond the ground of isolated individual existence and interpretation onto the ground of a common human experience. The ground of common human experience is disclosed in intersubjectivity, a quality of human consciousness, which, if not respected, results in a lack of communication (i.e. misunderstanding) among human beings. Should the intersubjectivity of human consciousness not be realized in the interpretation of the player’s experience this lack leads ultimately to the cognitive isolation of the player.

How does the intentionality of the game’s programme affect the player? Can one’s experience of a game be somehow stated as better than another person’s experience? To my mind, it is a case of the qualitative and personal fulfilment in the Lebenswelt of the player. Such fulfilment is a player-assigned value, which varies from experience to experience and can be provided only through the player’s satisfaction.

6.

CRITIQUING THE GAMING EXPERIENCE

The value of the gaming experience is not self-evident and its value must be established before the critic can take an interpretive position vis à vis the player. Critiquing the game experience is a
question of the intersubjective knowledge of the player and of others. A commercial value can be placed upon the gaming experience in that the financial critic evaluates the intersubjective structures that function within a given human group. Criticism of the gaming experience is thus related to its commercial value. From another perspective and as a general rule, to improve the quality of life of an interest group is the aim of professional criticism. This most likely will occur if the criticism is honestly accepted among players and shared with other like-minded players.

Historical criticism is likely not of much use for evaluating the gaming experience. Unlike literature, with its long historical record, the gaming phenomenon is too recent to be of much significance for the historian. However, the player’s personal historicity of the gaming experience may be of value for the critic’s philosophical interpretations. To be noted is that critics of the historical phenomenon of the gaming experience must include their personal experience within the interpretation of the gaming phenomenon.

The critic is in a position to assist the gamer in appreciating his or her own subjective responses within the game. The critic may act as an external coach, as it were, in the gaming experience, thus, establishing principles of awareness within the player about the game’s programme. One principle of awareness is that the virtual reality of the so-called game-world is analogous to the reality of the player’s existential world. Another is that the virtual reality of
the so-called game-world is a reasoned reality within the game-experience which presents a fantasy image patterned on existential reality. In this sense virtual reality is a meta-physical phenomenon, not a physical phenomenon. In the ancient Hellenic philosophical understanding of the cosmos the seen physical world is concretely real and the unseen meta-physical world is also, to all intent and purposes, substantially real. In a posthuman context meta-physical reality is a non-substantive reality beyond physical being. However, the physical and the meta-physical are not to be understood as separate “worlds.” In posthuman philosophy the meta-physical is a reality beyond being such that a physical means cannot detect metaphysical reality. Contemporary philosophical understanding in the West is a product of the evolution of ideas in thinkers who have come to accept reality as physical and virtual reality as in the experience of gaming as a fantasy experience as a substantive reality conceived by the player’s consciousness. It must be noted that the virtual reality of the gaming experience is temporary and lasts as long as the player is engaged with the game’s programme. This is so since the experience of virtual reality has no substantive independent existence in physical reality, as it is an imaginary product of the mind.

Humans are the only creatures that can know philosophically and achieve what they design and what they intend “to be” within the limits of the human consciousness, which is subject to improvement or deterioration. The physical cosmos is understood
to be in flux and humans may become partners in the concrete fashioning of physical being. Or, better, they may become co-fashiners in actualizing reality into being. This process of co-fashioning may take the player, as the human agent, out of the realm of the imagination and into the realm of the existential reality of human life. Such co-fashioning activity is denied to robots as player-actors in a game.

Critiquing the gaming experience is a mental (meta-physical) exercise by the player. It is a “making-mine” experience. Players are engaged in an imaginative activity that they know “is not” but which they accept as being given though their senses. In the act of gaming the player’s reality is made up of choices, some of which correspond to the player’s existential context, (i.e., world) and some to the mental (meta-physical) function taking place only in the player’s mind. This function is not to be considered as occurring in an external independent world since the player exists in this world only, and in no other. Since, the gaming experience challenges the player’s prosaic and common sense understanding of reality, it may become a poetic expression or an artistic expression which is available only vicariously for the non-participating public. The gaming phenomenon generates a type of common forum, one might argue, in that the player, the programmer and the general public can be, in some manner, engaged in it to some degree, directly or indirectly. Acting independently but interpreting in concert, the player, the
programmer and the public make up a social phenomenon, which within a sociological context, is greater than the sum of its constitutive parts, i.e., they constitute a holistic phenomenon.

A philosophy of gaming is one description and formulation of a human intellectual construction. A philosophy of gaming interprets the meaning to the experience. In the case of gaming, it is an interpretation of an unchartered area of experience supplying self-knowledge with the assistance of the player’s imagination. Philosophical reasoning tests the interpretation of the gaming experience for internal coherence which gives the truth of the experience of the game. Such philosophical coherence i.e., the notion of truth, is a product of the mind generated by the experience of the game. Understanding the game requires a minimal knowledge of the design of a computer programme and its effects. Also required is an acceptance of the primacy of the total experience of the game over any particular experience of the game. The cognitive ability of the player generates, through the imagination, the primacy of the total game experience as a satisfactory, or unsatisfactory, personal event.

Gaming is a human activity and its interpretation is a human outcome characteristic of human culture. As a human and cultural activity, the interpretation that exists in the imaginative mind of the player permits the possibility of an intersubjective understanding in the minds of other human beings. Human imaginings, as products of the mind processing data, constitute a virtual reality. In short,
the philosophical interpretation of the gaming experience is an interpretation of one’s imagination. Although gaming can be deemed an entertainment it is about self-knowledge because of the human need to understand the physical and meta-physical complexity that constitutes the holistic environment which contemporary humanity has inherited. Thus, one might argue that a central purpose for gaming, positively assigned, is the self-realization and humane fulfilment of the player.

The gaming experience provides a fictional environment for the player which, in turn, places the player in an imaginative context while playing the game. The primary critic of the gaming experience is the player who must take into account his or her limitations in playing and in understanding the game. The primary critic determines the final value of the game in which the imagination of the gaming experience allows for discovery and invention on his or her part that may be interpreted in terms of individual growth and self-knowledge, and by extension on the society and culture of which the player is a part.
7.  

A Philosophical Meditation on *Beyond the Sea: Navigating Bioshock* \(^{18}\)

The foregoing sections have looked at the gaming experience from the perspective of a player as consumer, from the perspective of the manufacturer of a product, and from a perspective of a philosopher as an observer/assessor of the phenomenon. These sections assessed the phenomenon of video gaming from a critical perspective. These philosophical essays were intended to throw an initial critical light on an activity that has become a trendy pastime for certain individuals regardless of their cultural situation, Western or Eastern. Admittedly, these essays are written subjectively, and not from an analytical perspective. A Western phenomenological philosophy, not classical philosophy, has framed their interpretation. I turn now to the collection of essays published in *Beyond the Sea: Navigating Bioshock* that addresses contemporary gaming culture.

Video games are diverse. They have evolved as a human leisure activity influenced by the creative input of the humans who have invented them. From a philosophical perspective within the contemporary Western world video games may be considered to be a posthuman phenomenon. In this review I comment on the evolution of gaming as an existential activity (a concrete phenomenon) and the games’ invisible affect (a meta-physical

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\(^{18}\) Felan Parker & Jessica Aldred (eds), McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2018.
phenomenon) experienced within the human mind. I undertake this philosophical meditation within a critical consciousness as suggested by Leslie Dewart. 19 Understandably, contemporary video games have “come of age,” as it were, as the generations which played them in their youth have “come of age.” As Brendan Keogh notes: “Video games have learned what it means to actually engage with political and societal themes on a deep level not through the technological marvels of the commercial industry but the small, personal titles developed at the industry’s margins…” [Keogh’s italics]. 20 He writes metaphorically, of course, more like a sociologist than a philosopher. Humans, not games, actually learn to engage life both politically and socially.

An impediment to understanding video gaming from a philosophical point of view is that some critics limit their assessment to consumer logic. They do not consider the larger philosophical or sociological context. Confining assessment to consumer logic prohibits any insightful evolutionary understanding of alternative approaches to evaluating gaming. It also limits the understanding of any humanizing or dehumanizing effects the activity may have upon the person. At present video-gaming is a nebulous academic field which needs a philosophical interpretation to establish its presence as something more than mere trendiness and to prevent a less than adequate journalistic style of

20 Beyond the Sea: p. xi
commentary that is evident in much contemporary academia. In short, video game interpretation needs to avoid “phuzzy filosophy.” An interdisciplinary study of gaming, in which a variety of perspectives complements the various disciplines and supplies new insights, is not necessarily tantamount to a philosophical perspective. New insights may be just variations on a theme. As a phenomenologist, I favour a disciplined (logical and reasoned) philosophical approach leading to an in-depth consciousness of the entire phenomenon of gaming. It should be noted that a phenomenological approach to gaming does not result in an increase in knowledge by adding more data from various perspectives. Rather, an increase in knowledge is achieved through a deeper consciousness of particular experiences whose content adds value to human life from a quality versus quantity perspective.

Unfortunately, gaming’s roots are in science fiction and this seems to have escaped the notice many authors who write about gaming as if science fiction were a fact reflecting reality. Science fiction is not a reality, but a meta-physical notion, i.e., a product of the mind. The virtual reality of the game is generated in the player’s consciousness, not in the player’s sensible experience. One may view this notional activity as if it were taking place in the “theatre of the mind” and, as such, is not a true existential experience. The ancient Hellenic philosophers were correct in making a distinction between the physical (visible) and meta-
physical (non-visible) forms of reality. Although, many contemporary Western philosophers in their thinking fail to appreciate the historical traces of this philosophical distinction made by the Greeks. Such lack of historical appreciation may lead some academics to mistakenly emphasize the production of games as a contemporary art form and, subsequently forget, that they are the mechanical product of a techno-digital scientific mind of their manufacturers.

Another reason that video gaming needs a humanizing philosophical interpretation is that quantity, not quality, has influenced the development of the games. This has not necessarily been helpful in determining a correct set of human values which is a long-held purpose of philosophy. Philosophers can provide a gentle focusing away from the (commercial) motives noted by Felan Parker and Jessica Aldred which I think are not-so-important reasons when it comes to determining human values. Concerning *Bioshock* they write: “This is not just a game with something to say, but a game worth saying something about — a game that justifies the whole enterprise of game criticism and scholarship. … [And] because of its status as a consumer entertainment object produced and promoted in a hypercapitalist industry and played by millions … it has invited such sustained discussion.” 21 To my mind, a game being played by millions should invite discussion on human values in light of a future posthuman context in preference

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21 *Beyond the Sea* p. 12
to mere talk about gaming as entertainment. However, I do admit that as a philosopher who has never played video games, my perspective on the phenomenon lacks the direct experience of gaming. What I offer here, in relation to video games, is some insight into Western philosophical understanding as to what it means to be human, “enhanced human” or non-human since the days in which philosophers evolved from a folklore perspective. In addition to scrutinizing video gaming through the lenses of gender, sexuality, race, class, power and personal identity, (as some of the contributors in this collection of essays have done) I would add the effort of scrutinizing gaming through a positive humanizing philosophy.

The content of video games is often subversive towards traditional human values. In the gaming experience the individual person is often pitted against a collective society and often adapts his or her personal experience from the experiential “world” for use in the “virtual” world. The transfer often makes for a poor fit. Video gaming does not present the “first person shooter” (often an avatar) as a real living person, but represents the player as a sophisticatedly computerized character encoded with the manufacturer’s values. This raises the issue of the “human” player choice on the part of the shooter within the contrived and limited programmed context of the non-living game. Some critics argue that new techno-digital inventions extend the human experience. This is correct, but there is still the need for an interpretation of the
human experience on the part of the human player which differs from the *scoring* determined by the game designers.

From a philosophical perspective, video gaming themes often reflect the process where a utopian context becomes a dystopian context where individuals strive for personal gain to the exclusion of altruistic fulfilment. This is not new. It is the story of humanity from its earliest recorded history. Which means that the authors of games often manufacture a pattern of the game, wittingly or unwittingly, that fits the demographic they themselves fit into. In short, like all fiction, game themes are thus contextualized for entertainment which may account for their popularity with journalists (as opposed to artists) whose opinion documents and dominates contemporary Western culture. But journalists are not philosophers. They are mostly reporters and any attempt by journalists to act as philosophical or cultural interpreters of games to reveal human values across public media will, at best, achieve a superficial, and trendy result.

Some authors write metaphorically about an insight that some players have when beginning a new video game. Beginning a new game begins a “new life” for them as it were, being somewhat similar to physical human birth into an existential life. In this metaphorical understanding it is “as if” real life and metaphorical interpretation both reveal an unknown territory and, there are lessons to be learned from each. The difference in interpreting a gaming experience, when compared to interpreting a literary
experience, is that there are two functionaries involved in gaming. One, the player (the player-agent) and the other, the game’s programme-actor. One is alive and one is not. In reading a piece of literature there is only one active agent in the process of interpretation in which consciousness may be deepened or heightened during the act of reading.  

The printed text plays no active role. The whole drama and any “lesson in life” learned are played out in the reader’s consciousness, or the theatre of the mind. Such is the civilized humanizing experience (an art form to be exact) in learning about human values in life which often stimulates further philosophical contemplation. Thus, the conclusion that “game players, over time, build trust with the game and its designer because they receive the necessary information, feedback, and nudges to succeed,” is an inaccurate observation but it has a narrow focus in the existential world of the player. While an increase in the satisfaction of the player raises the game’s value for him or her, an increase in the sophistication of the game or in the skill of the player does not automatically, nor necessarily have the same affect.

The tension within the gaming experience may be identified as the manufacture’s desire to provide and enhance the game experience for the player and, at the same time, allow the player to participate within the game as a possible co-designer. From a

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22 Human consciousness is one of those rare qualities that may “move” in opposite directions and attain the same result of improving understanding.
23 Karen Schrier, p. 83
commercial point of view the manufacturer wants the player to return to the game. Ultimately, the player may become a hero in the virtual world of the imaginative reality of the game, but not necessarily so in his or her existential world. Thus, one’s experience illustrates once again, as the ancient Hellenic philosophers recognized, the distinction between the physical and the meta-physical.

Philosophically, the activity of gaming has not so much to do with the content of the game as with its phenomenological presence in the existential life of the player. The content of commercial games often includes variations on the existential real-life themes of war, politics, parenting, family bonds, sexuality, slavery, technologization, social engineering, etc. — all issues arising within the one existential life-context of the player and not from any parallel reality. In other words, through a fiction games often purport to critique social conventions of the real world but only through the imagined structures arising from a “two-actor” experience. That is, an agent-player and a programme-actor experience. In contrast, the interpretation of literature offers a “one-agent” experience often with the same intent of critiquing the reality of life. The question may be asked: Is gaming a dynamic posthuman and notional phenomenon to be contrasted with a static Hellenic humanism and meta-physical experience of Western culture? The acceptance of the computer as another actor in one’s life might suggest so.
The notion of the computer as an actor suggests a different kind of knowledge that has been programmed into the computer compared with a player’s intelligent self-consciousness. A player’s intelligent self-consciousness may account, in part, for the perpetual philosophical re-definition of the human being. Since the human player recognizes himself or herself as “not the computer” there is a philosophical need to distinguish between the human player-agent and the non-human actor. But whatever the definition of the human being, as agent, he or she initiates and reacts to the computer’s programme-actor thus the game-world of the player comes into being only as the gamer activates the computerized programme and participates in its computations. In gaming, players mostly do as they are “told” given the game’s options, they do not do as they please. One great lesson to be learned is that players must come to recognize that their participation in the game, in fact, necessarily defines them in both concrete reality and in virtual reality. However, their definition in concrete reality employs some version of the traditional philosophical problem when another real-time person replaces the computer in a competitive or non-competitive relationship. That is to say that the philosophical problem of interpretation reverts to the traditional one of human relating to human as human. To my mind, it is fair to conclude that the whole experience of gaming illustrates a physical and metaphysical needs-fulfilment on the part of the player who no longer
desires to live in a classical age and wants to escape into a posthuman imaginary experience.
§

Is There Room for God in Posthuman Philosophy?

TO THE HESITANT PHILOSOPHER *

If philosophy’s myths to philosophy’s truth,
Pros and cons with right and wrong,
Traditionalism, existentialism and hidden wonder,
If wisdom, Gnosticism and things unknown;
In all their human thought retold,
But not exactly in the ancient way,
Can please, as in my day,
The wiser youngsters of to-day:
    So be it, and read on!

If not; If studious youth no longer craves,
That ancient light recast,
Plato, Aristotle and Thomas of Aquino,
Spinoza, Kant, Hegel and Heidegger.
    So be it. And may we,
In all our ignorance share the grave,
Where these and all their musings lie!

(* With a tip o’ the hat to Robert Louis Stevenson)
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INTRODUCTION

In this essay the place or role of God in posthuman philosophy is the intended object of study. Generally classical philosophers, of the Catholic or the Protestant variety, presume an active role for the agency of God; whereas, posthuman philosophers with their somewhat exclusive focus on the human being need to make room for God, or a divine presence in their formulations. The difference between God as a divine agent and God as a divine actor should become apparent as the reader continues reading these essays.

Posthuman philosophy is not a system to be understood classically, but rather, a conscious and systematic interpretation of one’s experience arising from historical and evolutionary observations. Many modern and posthuman philosophers accept that no philosopher has the right to impose a dogmatic belief on the thinking of another or dictate how others are to direct their thinking. However, the sincere and persuaded philosopher has a right, in conscience, to direct his or her personal thought processes with or without the assistance of an objective and agent-deity. With the supposition that a deity ought to be present to the human thought process the question becomes, in posthuman philosophical contemplation, “is there room for the deity in posthumanity’s philosophy? Within a secular perspective the issue may be stated: In classical humanism technological advances added to the already known variants of human life. In posthumanism techno-digital
advances propel human consciousness into unforeseen and variant patterns of human life.

This essay is not a collection of thoughts on religions, nor on religious beliefs as disciplines within their own right. Rather, it is an assemblage of philosophical thoughts on matters religious. Much of what I present here has been understood and filtered through religious institutions such as the Catholic and Protestant Churches. This religious filtering of philosophical matters has not always been recognized by the faithful of either tradition in their theologizing. To my mind, this lack of recognition of the filtering process may be traced back to the acceptance of the Christian religion into the structure of the Imperial Roman state through the Edict of Milan. This Edict, signed by the Roman emperors Constantine and Licinius, proclaimed religious toleration throughout the Roman Empire. It was issued in 313 AD and ended the persecutions of Christians. The Edict gave Christianity a legal status but did not establish Christianity as the state Church of the Roman Empire. State status was given under the Emperor Theodosius in 380 AD with the Edict of Thessalonica which reaffirmed the Nicene Creed of Christianity. Through the reaffirmation of the Creed, theologians were able to introduce Hellenic interpretive concepts that have, in fact, been the cause of much of Christianity’s internal philosophical problems concerning the place of God in the lives of believers to this day.
In the following philosophical musings, I take the Imperial acceptance of Nicene Christianity to have been primarily a political event according to the rules of Roman state protocol concerning religion. The adaptation of the rules of Roman state protocol ultimately gave historical rise to a variety of denominations within Christianity. However, it is philosophical Christianity that I contemplate here as characterized in the personal conscience of the believer, and not the Christianity characteristic of the objectivism required by a particular political order. I would contend that the subjectivity of the individual believer, (i.e., human conscience) in matters religious transcends all political order whatever its origin — human or divine.

1. A WESTERN POSTHUMAN PHILOSOPHICAL IDENTITY

After World War I, a new Western world was born, as it were. It was really not a new world but the old one clearly seen for the first time. It was a new world for those for whom the lines of its cultural demarcation were understood entirely differently from what they had seemed to be. This new world, at first, seemed cold, alien and hostile. Yet soon afterwards it appeared to have fresh hope as new insights were revealed and new lessons learned from a past and broken world. This is where I am today. That is, I continue to learn new lessons and insights about life from my past humanistic and somewhat broken, philosophical world.
Considering a posthuman faith life, I continue to seek deeper insights into the presence of God. I have come to realize that it is not how accurate I am in my understanding that is important, but rather how truthfully, I interpret my experience. As a philosopher, I am not seeking eternal objective truth within my experience, but I am seeking an authentic (i.e., correct) understanding of my experience in contrast to illusion or fantasy (i.e., error) which are tricks of my imagination. In other words, I seek what is experientially real. And, any authentic interpretation I make must be made in light of the philosophical changes taking place in contemporary Western society. As I contemplate the changes in my life-world, I see that phenomenological philosophy is not readily accepted by many of my contemporaries as a means of achieving authenticity. Not everyone accepts that the phenomenological method is one that satisfies and clarifies. To some, in fact, the phenomenological method obscures their understanding and thus dissatisfies them. Yet, in my case the opposite has occurred. Over time, I came to the conclusion that scholasticism with its dichotomous structure of philosophical understanding hindered my thinking.

I do realize, of course, that the limitations of scholasticism are the limitations traceable to a particular time and culture. They are the limitations of a philosophical language and speech that have not kept pace with modern experience. In my case, not even a revised form of scholasticism satisfactorily overcame these
limitations. The revised form of scholasticism to which I refer is neo-Thomism. Through neo-Thomism I was not able to express satisfactorily my experience. However, given a phenomenological interpretation of my experience of a non-dichotomous relational unity, I was able to interpret satisfactorily my experience and thereby overcome the limitations of scholasticism. Now I am able to compare and contrast my present experience with my past experience and act consciously to fashion a posthuman life-world. This means that while I live within my cultural limitations, I need not be constrained by them. I experienced such cultural limitations in my past life-world governed by a philosophy of classical humanism, but I need not experience these limitations in my posthuman life-world. I continue to attempt to transcend them even if success is only partial.

In my posthuman life-world the interpretive task is contingent and perpetual. As an existential thinker, I know that there is no such thing as a final philosophy or theology. I conceive my work as different from the work of the theologian in the days when the humanistic philosophical systems of the West were being constructed. As I see it, the task of the contemporary religious philosopher and theologian is as follows. It is to clarify and to make known the truthfulness of reasoned belief in and about God to a new generation of (Western) philosophers through a phenomenological philosophy, that is, through a dehellenized philosophy. I find that the principle merit and usefulness of a
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dehellenized philosophy is its capacity for reflecting a contemporary human identity in the interpretation of experience. Philosophers are culturally influenced, but unlike classical philosophers, posthuman philosophers choose not to conform to a given system of knowledge, nor a methodology of established norms. Posthuman philosophers present an alternative conscious understanding and as such they can utilize any methodology of interpretation. To my mind, philosophy, even the untutored sort, can provide some degree of satisfaction in religious interpretation.

Historians record that natural theology, understood as a type of philosophy and as an academic discipline in its own right, originated outside the Western Catholic ecclesiastical tradition. Natural theology, as a philosophy, is the proper way of inquiring into the world as created by God, rather than inquiring into God as revealed in the world. As an ecclesial theologian, I am required to interpret revelation as given to the sensus fidelium, that is, within the understanding of the faithful who constitute the church. But as a philosopher of theology I am not limited to any ecclesial context.

For any serious philosophy and theology to bear fruit in the posthuman age, it must engage the personal (qualitative) and existential (quantitative) creative experience of the faithful. At one point in the process of evaluating my inherited philosophical understanding, I compared and contrasted the thought of George Tyrrell (1861-1909) to that of Leslie Dewart (1922-2009). I then compared their thoughts with my own philosophical
understanding. In this comparison, I found it unfortunate that, at this time in the development of Western philosophy and theology, the place of philosophy in relation to theology has been usurped to a great extent by sociology and psychology.

Posthuman thinking requires a shift away from the old style of theological polemics towards a new approach of ecumenical cooperation among Western theologians. For such ecumenical thinkers, theology, which traditionally has been influenced by classical philosophy, has shifted to a discursive theology often interpreted through phenomenological approach. It was within this context of a discursive theology that I was able to make sense of my personal experience and re-adjust my previous identity accordingly. And in making sense of my experience and re-adjusting my identity, I found that I had to undertake an existential approach to explain my “that was then; this is now” status. Being a theologian, understanding the presence of God is a particular task in my life. My particular theological preoccupation has its roots in the Roman Catholic theological perspective that was in vogue in the early 20th century, particularly that of the Nouvelle Théologie. It was through this model of theologizing that I found the beginnings of innovative notions leading to posthuman thresholds of theological insight.

I draw the reader’s attention to the fact that many creative and insightful contributions from philosophers and theologians are often quoted and discussed by academics and professional
journalists. These reviewers and professional journalists often truly believe they have understood, and correctly expounded the innovative ideas of philosophers and theologians. And in most cases, they probably have done so, but not always. George Tyrrell’s life-story of creative and innovative theologizing is a case in point. The appreciation of his style of creative and innovative thinking is not as well recognized as it could be among professional theologians. Although to the discerning reader of his books, his influence on theology at the time of Vatican II is readily evident. The majority of academics have discussed Tyrrell from an historical perspective, often in relation to the Modernist Crisis in the Roman Catholic Church. But he may be studied with reference to an intellectual evolution towards posthuman thinking.

Two modern developments that offer some rationale for the creative tensions that exist within the contemporary Western philosophical and theological traditions, are significant for posthuman thinking. The first is that medieval Christendom has come to an end and that secularism exists in its wake. The other development is that a psychological understanding of the person has taken the place of a philosophical understanding of the person in the minds of most contemporary academics.

One of the often-heard criticisms of Modernity is that it sets up a false confidence in rationalism and science. Given their capacity in categorizing and explaining human experience, rationalism and science are often accepted as being able to convey the totality of
human experience and personal identity. Once I realized that this could not ultimately be the case; that neither of them could convey the totality of human experience nor identity, I favoured a posthuman approach which directed me away from a dichotomous Hellenic philosophical understanding which is still somewhat evident in the sciences. The phenomenological approach permitted me to recognize a non-dichotomous relationship to others in my life-world and thus re-define my identity accordingly.

The social institution in which I originally framed my theology is the Roman Church. Exploring the various denominations within the church is a specialized theological discipline called ecclesiology. The differing interpretations of the sacred texts by these denominations, plus the political, philosophical and historical reform movements occurring among the denominations contributed to a diverse self-understanding of the church. In a posthuman philosophical context, the church will most likely not be a social arrangement imposed upon the faithful. Rather, the church will be disclosed as a communion of communities constituted by the faithful with each community with its own self-understanding, history, culture and tradition.

There is a variety of theological expression in the Christian church which in turn reflects local cultures. Because of the relationship in the West between philosophy and theology, my contention for many years has been that the theological problems of the churches are preceded by philosophical problems which
need to be first addressed and resolved. Then, one may address the theological problems and their solutions. It was the understanding of “dehellenization,” as a positive philosophical notion, not “unhellenization,” that provided a conscious opportunity for me to begin to evaluate my philosophical inheritance and subsequently my identity on the threshold of posthumanity.

Theologians who theologize formally on behalf of a believing community are required to think as professionals. However, pre-modern society and culture were not oriented to professionalism, but to authoritarianism. Some form of a hierarchical order is required for any authoritarian organization structured to govern absolutely. In contrast, contemporary Western society and modern religious organizations are oriented toward professionalism, democracy and the principle of personal interpretation. Within the churches of the Reformation, the development of democratic governance is clearly evident. For the hierarchical churches, both Catholic and Orthodox, the principle of subsidiarity fulfills the intent of democratic governance.

Contemporary theologians, both Eastern and Western, are beginning to realize that the present structure of church government which reflects classical theism requires change. The present governing structure of the Catholic church is based on a territorial notion and not on the notion of a gift of God’s grace, i.e., divine charism. The notion of territorial jurisdiction is an obstacle to the ecclesial governance of the church today. (Note that I say
“ecclesial governance,” not “ecclesiastical government.”) Such territorial restrictions will not conform advantageously to Christian society in posthumanity, I believe. Further, it would be a theological error to promote any idea of a universal territorial super-church constituted by the faithful based on a philosophical notion of human political expediency.

My philosophical reflection suggests that a posthuman church would reveal a new ecclesiology that is based upon the relationships among the faithful, not on a theory of ecclesiastical territorial government. This shift from territory to relationships brings about a new personal status for the believer. In short, this shift is tantamount to a conversion experience in thinking. Traditional political government becomes governance when based on mutual and mature personal relationships. The current Catholic Church retains a theory of territorial jurisdiction. However, it has the option for future governance through an ecclesiology, one not territorially re-ordered, but one that is reconstituted in light of a posthuman consciousness. Implementing such a future ecclesial possibility would require that I reappraise the development of my Christian identity. This is so because I am living in a culture that has not been envisioned or brought about by only one factor. My culture is determined by many causes. Among them are physical, metaphysical, mental, human, and divine causes. Indeed, my culture seems to be over-determined given the combination of these and other factors. By “over-determined” I mean no one factor
can be held responsible for the direction and development of the culture in which I encounter the presence of God and subsequently determine my identity. Thus, I take this to mean that, in truth, God is not to be held solely responsible for everything that happens to me, or happens within the cosmos for that matter. That is to say that I have a role in regulating God’s participation in my life.

This role allows me to re-conceive of myself as a responsible co-agent in, and as a responsible co-fashioner of my culture and society. Such is a posthuman consciousness through which I am able to work towards fashioning a new earth within the presence of God. But not in a purely spiritual sense. Rather, I understand fashioning a new earth in an existential sense. Allowing my co-participation in the divine creativity is the risk that God takes with me, as it were, which includes possible failure.

The traditional Catholic understanding of the church is as old as the first epistle of St. Clement, (circa 75-110), in which the church is conceived as a divine institution. According to St. Clement, the church is an institution with officers whose duty is determined by an official status within the institution. In this understanding, the officers of the church are analogous to officers of the state. In my perspective, Jesus of Nazareth would never have contemplated endorsing any form of church government patterned on a model whose leaders were analogous to the state. 24 Further, it is clear that the apostles believed that the end of the world would

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occur within their lifetime, and they made no provision for an institutional church in the sense that it exists today. Yet, the spirit that animates the church today is the same spirit that animated Jesus of Nazareth. I argue that this same spirit will be disclosed in the thresholds of Catholicity, not Catholicism, in the posthuman context.

It must be remembered that while individual humans do exist, humanity does not. Humanity is an imaginative concept. Humanity, as an abstracted idea, is imagined and expressed through a variety of philosophical, political and cultural perspectives. Further, God may be conceived as immanently present, or conceived as absent (the via negativa) in Western philosophical thought. The concept of humanity, understood as an existential community of individuals, is too large a concept to be the bearer of a single culture. In this respect, the posthuman world will not be that different from the world of the ancient cultures. It is somewhat urgent that I find creative ways to interpret what I am likely to find unique in my posthuman world. In interpreting my posthuman life-world it is more responsible for me to promote a reasoned philosophy rather than duplicate previous legendary folklore and myth to account for my experience. Psychology, sociology, history, anthropology, etc., assist my interpretation to some degree, but it is only philosophy that is in a privileged position to support my theological reflection. In this philosophical reflection my task is to clarify, to deepen and express the
understanding of my conscious self-development. In understanding my conscious self-development there are two pairs of terms not to be confused. They are “subjectivity” and “objectivity” and, “subjectivism” and “objectivism.” These pairs are not interchangeable. The former pair belongs to phenomenological interpretation and is qualitative. The latter pair belongs to scholastic interpretation and is quantitative.

Platonic, and some neo-platonic philosophers, continue to subscribe to traditional ideal material forms in interpreting human experience. Yet, they do not admit to the reality of the relationships among these ideal forms. However, in a posthuman perspective the space between concrete subject and object, i.e., person and thing, must itself be acknowledged as affecting human identity. This is but another way of distinguishing between “me” and “not-me.” As a phenomenologist, I hold to an existential relationship among entities and see no reason to accept the platonic theory of material forms in the interpretation of my experience. I subscribe to this position because my philosophical contemplation of being (my existential experiences) have not revealed any concrete examples of the idea of material forms. Yet, all entities, be they living or non-living, are in a relational state among themselves.

Being conscious, I differentiate between that which is “me” and that which is “not-me.” I am aware of my conscious self, that is, “me,” as manifested through my body, yet differing from my
body. I am also aware of “me” as distinguishable from other physical and meta-physical entities. In short, “I” am not my body. Neither am “I” my spirit, nor any meta-physical form separate from my body, i.e., my soul. Rather, as a human being, I experience myself as an incarnated entity (a unity of physical and meta-physical components) who is in a relationship with other beings, some incarnated like myself. By incarnated, I mean that I am an “in-the-flesh” living entity possessing a unique specifier, i.e. human consciousness. As a human incarnation, I exist in such a way that I can relate myself to myself as well as to others. As a human incarnation, I do not experience myself as a dichotomized being, united by the joining of a body and a soul previously existing separately. Rather, I experience myself primarily as an individuated being, differentiated from others as an incarnated “me.” Whether the human soul is immortal or not, is another matter that does not concern me here.

Within my dehellenized philosophy, I recognize three unique moments of insight. They are: 1) the realization of my status as a reflexive thinker, 2) the realization of my individuality, that is, I am “this” and not “that,” and 3) the realization of my personal integrity. That is, I am not equivalent to either my body or to my soul understood separately. I continue to become more deeply aware of the significance of these facts as I consciously reflect my posthuman identity.
My relationships are formed when I distinguish between “me” and “not me.” My relationships are not determined through any *a priori* schema imported or imposed from outside of my experience, that is, from any pre-determined idealism, secular or religious. My consciousness reveals that I exist, not only for myself, but also for others. It is through my relationships with others that my identity is formed. Having formed my identity, I become aware of myself as an individual. And as an individual, I am able to place myself in an appropriate relationship with objects and living beings of whom I have become conscious and from whom I am differentiated.

I, as a person, do not have the structure of an inanimate object. Rather, I am a being whose purpose is greater than the sum of its individual parts. That is, as an incarnated individual person I am holistically orientated. The fact is that I am not of any fixed or final organic composition, but rather a being developing perpetually as human as long as I am alive. Developing as a human being necessitates a hylomorphic existence, but not necessarily interpreted in the Aristotelian perspective.

Through the process of differentiation, which is how I think philosophically in preparation for a posthuman context, I become conscious of the temporal and the transcendental (metaphysical) aspects of my existence. That is, as a human being, I am a *unity* of the physical and the metaphysical rather than a *union* of the physical and the metaphysical which constitutes my identity in the presence of God.
As an agent in the world, in light of my posthuman identity, this is the question that I have asked myself: Do I critically undertake to construct my future world, or do I retain my pre-critical status in the future? The real problem is not whether the world will change or whether it will remain the same. The real problem is whether the world will change of its own accord, without my influencing presence, or whether it will be changed deliberately, consciously and by my participation.

While there is no possibility to return to the past, the shaping of my future life-world does require an analysis of the past but without re-living it. In analysing the past, I am conscious of myself, not as a static being, but as an active free agent in the presence of other active free agents within the presence of God. To construct my future, I have not chosen a traditional philosophical pattern of interpretation, nor any foundation provided by an updated classical view of human purpose. Rather, I have chosen to look to the future and actualize myself in the present as an agent consciously bringing about alternatives in constructing my identity.

In my philosophical musings I have made the same discovery as many philosophers before me. That is, my relation to reality is a self-relation. It was only after I had learned to define my life in terms of consciousness that I came to appreciate the significance of the process by which I had become conscious of my self-relation to reality in the first place. To be conscious of reality is to interact with it as if one of many objects. That is to say, all beings manifest
reality, but not all reality manifests being. To assume that every entity is constituted as a self-contained necessity is to reject the possibility of any dynamic activity and remain within a static Hellenist mind-set. In contrast, I am not a self-contained necessity but a being conscious of its own reality by reflecting upon it inwardly and by knowing it hylomorphically, through the unity of the tangible and the intangible.

In my understanding, then, when I fashion a “new” life-world and identity they are tantamount to transcending the “old” life-world and the “old” self. In undertaking a phenomenological approach to interpreting my experience, I have reached a level of self-consciousness and self-creativity that views the Hellenic dichotomy as an option not to be repeated. My consciousness reveals itself by distinguishing between “me” and “not-me.” That is, I am distinguishable within the physical world of beings, and I distinguish myself, and present myself, to myself as part of the dynamic world of my becoming. As my consciousness is heightened, I continually differentiate myself within my life-world and grow as a person with a unique identity. Thus, I am a self whose identity is disclosed when I differentiate myself from others. I am an entity which comes into being, and whose existence emerges through self-differentiation. Such self-differentiation is contingent because I make myself “to be” within my environment, that is, I fashion myself creatively from the contents of my environment. The ultimate result of my consciousness is my
creative self-constitution. In short, I assign myself a categorical identity. When fashioning my becoming, I encounter pre-determined (inherited) categories which provide meaning on my behalf. Whether such categories are pre-determined by the nature of the mind, as Kant thought, or by the nature of being, as pre-Kantian philosophers thought, are of no concern, since neither carries meaning in itself.

The truth or error in my understanding depends on the authenticity of the relationship between me, as subject, and the other as object, and not on the accuracy of an intellectual apprehension of an object by me as a knowing subject. In short, by rejecting unnecessary inherited meaning in light of my experience and assigning meaning to my experience, I have dehellenized my thinking. The term dehellenization is not a negative term. That is, it is not un-hellenization. I experience dehellenization as the conscious fashioning of my life-world and identity without a Hellenic formation. Given my intellectual history I have come to understand that my task as a philosopher is not to dismantle traditional metaphysics and reconstruct a new metaphysics. Rather the task is to transcend any dichotomous metaphysics. That is, to reject traditional Hellenistic metaphysics in favour of a consciousness that does not support independent substantive ideals. Thus, I live intellectually at a non-Hellenistic, posthuman threshold of becoming.
It is understandable that St Thomas thought that the scholastic way of thinking was the only methodological way of thinking given his context. However, I am conscious of the fact that there is no necessary methodology by which to differentiate my becoming within reality and, as well, that no differentiating methodology is natural or privileged. My world is one of increasing personal responsibility and my problem is one of finding an appropriate intellectual and philosophical methodology through which I may evolve from my old (human) experience and into a new (posthuman) experience. As a consequence, I am conscious that my contingent experience cannot be a total or ultimate experience. I may overcome this insufficiency, however, through a holistic understanding which allows for an alternative interpretation. When I incorporate my holistic experience into my life-world my being equates to nothing less than my quest for ultimate meaning. My quest for ultimate meaning discloses that philosophically and theologically I am a being seeking understanding.

2.

On the Psychological Perspective of Philosophy

I cannot help being philosophical about my experiences. However, my philosophical thinking need not be in the formulas and conventional 25 scientific disciplines of the contemporary...
academy or university. Philosophical thinking is legitimate even when less formal and commonly expressed. By that I mean everyone capable of human thought is capable of philosophical thought. From a psychological perspective, philosophical thinking is in fact a universal mental activity, initially undertaken mythologically, that has evolved out of folklore and from common sense into more formal (and professional) disciplines within the universities. In all cases the activity of philosophy occurs within the conscious individual and subsequently affects the individual’s environment and culture.

Unlike religion, philosophy in the West was not usually understood to be politically exploitive in governing the masses of people, even in the era of primitive mythology when individuals believed in particular forces behind every phenomenon. The philosophical imagination of primitive humanity populated the universe with an infinite number of spirits capable of bringing about good and evil in mysterious actions in which they made themselves felt in day to day living. Western philosophy, as undertaken by individual philosophers, stagnated when they became dependent upon religious faith to complete philosophy’s purpose. Stagnation notwithstanding however, philosophers possess the power of perpetual rejuvenation such that their thinking cannot terminate in any external form or set of dogmatic ideals. It follows that if philosophical thinking does not terminate

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e etc. Contemporary conventional scientific methodology retains unacknowledged roots in ancient Greek philosophy.
in religious dogma; it neither terminates in God, at least as classical Western theologians have often understood. Philosophy is a conscious human mental activity undertaken without the aid of a revealed religion. This non-religious philosophical activity of the conscious human mind can take itself as an object of thought allowing us to contemplate and analyse the mind itself. In short, human consciousness “knows” its own mind. Such reflection is not to deny that there is God, but rather indicates that we must find an appropriate place for the notion of God within conscious posthuman experience.

Philosophical Consciousness

What is humanity? Does it differ from the higher animals? Humanity’s appearance on earth has been suggested by some philosophers as closing the evolution of humanity in light of any higher form than at present. Posthuman philosophy contests this view. Organic life implies a double evolutionary movement — one, of the body and the other of the mind. Of the body the movement is passive, that is, the body accepts external influence via the senses as organisms adjust to their environment. In short, the body has no will proper to itself. Of the mind, the movement is an activity, that is, the intellect is active or proactive and exerts its will upon external things. Philosophical consciousness can only

26 I consider philosophical consciousness as an epi-phenomenon with no causal effect on human behaviour. In other words, consciousness, philosophical or otherwise, is not a cause in itself. The cause of human behaviour lies elsewhere.
arise in the will of the thinking individual as a mental activity. In the evolutionary development of philosophical thinking the maturing mind (not the body) comes to recognize the difference between itself and an “other” not of its making. In short, the mind distinguishes between “me” and “not me.” In classical Western philosophical consciousness the “not me,” in fact, delimits “me” in the sense that I individuate myself from the “not me.” However, posthuman philosophers consider the reverse as a true possibility. The “not me” may actually enhance and specify the identification of the “me.”

It is from a feeling of inner distress that philosophical consciousness may arise, although not necessarily so. Philosophical consciousness does not satisfy the human mind by adding to the quantitative knowledge that the human mind possesses, but satisfies it by returning to the very basis of life on which human qualitative moral life depends. One might argue that philosophical consciousness requires a ressourcement, not an aggiornamento in thinking. A posthuman ressourcement by the critical philosopher will reveal that modern science alone cannot engender human society. In short, morality does not originate within modern science. The only active agent is the individual moral person who acts upon scientific knowledge. In this sense, a philosophical consciousness becomes an art arising within a human culture.
Philosophical consciousness, as an art form, engenders the possibility of the notion of God. This notion of God may remain more or less indeterminate and never reach perfect realization, but its presence does not escape acknowledgement by human consciousness. In the West, classical philosophers came to interpret this philosophical notion as an absolute idea, the idea of a perfect God capable of effecting, not merely affecting, the affairs of humanity. As human thinking matures, philosophical consciousness becomes transformed (or transfigured) within the evolution of (Western) human culture. It continues to evolve from mythology, to religious philosophy, to scholasticism, to humanistic secularism, posthuman consciousness, all reflecting human art forms. They are evident in the contemporary world cumulatively, not successively. All human activity originates and ends in philosophical consciousness. Humanity is not fashioned in a void. Humanity has to make itself, and to do so it must arise above the bondage of the cosmos through enlightened minds and attain existential liberty. Posthuman philosophers of consciousness do not grasp inherited or traditional ideologies external to themselves. Rather, they inquire into a movement that distinguishes within reality a “not me,” whose presence is felt before it is given a name. Human philosophical consciousness, as an acquired qualitative art form particular to human beings, is an acquired capacity that when activated does not change the status of the object it understands.
3.

Religious Philosophy and Revelation

A Psychological Unity

In the broadest and non-specific terms, I suggest that religious philosophy is the conscious recognition of the subjective, or felt, presence of God (though undefined) in humanity. Revelation is the objective, or realized presence of God (usually defined in cultural terms) and passively received by humanity. That is to say that the only actor in the act of understanding revelation objectively is the human person. Religious philosophy and revelation are as cause and effect psychologically united in one and the same individual human phenomenon, i.e., the thinking person. In the psychological phenomenon of the thinking person this unity is composed of cause, i.e., humanity (philosophy), and its effect (revelation) i.e., God. The religious philosophical life as a cause is not fixed. It is perpetually in flux. It is a movement of the mind as desire and, for some thinkers, as a need. Revelation is as universal as philosophy in the human condition. Both are excluded from infrahuman life as far as I know. The point I am making is that revelation is not a message or communication given once and for all as defined creedal doctrines which must be unconditionally held. If a definition of revelation is needed, it may be provisionally accepted that revelation is a form of moral knowledge, as purified through the agency of human self-consciousness, and realized within human cultures.
Ever since philosophers invented philosophy, Western philosophy has never been without revelation of the presence of God, more or less obscure and more or less correctly interpreted. The notion of revelation has progressed with the growth of intellectual enlightenment and with the evolution of religious philosophy. Hence, it is necessary for philosophers to criticize that notion and see what significance it has for posthuman thinking. Philosophers who accept that philosophy and revelation have passed through certain phases, i.e., the mythological and the dogmatic, and the critical-humanistic, are about to engage another phase, the posthuman,

Of humanity’s mental faculties among the first to arise was the imagination. Historians investigate legends, theologians interpret myths, and poets imagine reality, without the aid of prosaic writing and its rules of grammar. The enlightened religious philosopher of today will certainly realize that myth is false in appearance only. From an historian’s perspective, the trappings of myth always allowed the truth to shine through in human experience. Humans living in mythological times saw signs everywhere which manifested the will of the gods. Such observation was an underdeveloped form of the art of philosophy as found in many primitive peoples, including the ancient Hebrews, who to them thunder was the voice of God, etc. In the oldest traditions of Hebraism, God speaks to Adam, Noah, Abraham and Moses, as one person speaks to another, through sounds perceived by the ear.
But what are the consequences for contemporary religious philosophical thinking for biblical revelation? The Bible we know was the slow and laborious work of the rabbis of the Jewish synagogue and of the evangelists of the early Christian Church. It is accepted today by the faithful with enlightened minds that the word of God is in the Bible, but all that is in the Bible is not the word of God, i.e., revelation. Further, there are many critical thinkers who would contend that the Bible is but the fruit of human philosophical thinking. And by extension apply their criteria to any sacred writings of humanity, Christian or otherwise. This begs the question: has there been any revelation of the word of God outside the limits of the Hebrew people and primitive Christianity? Philosophically the answer is “yes,” which necessitates philosophers to demonstrate any relationship between biblical revelation and other revelations appropriate to human cultures. One consequence of this “extrabiblical” conclusion is that posthuman philosophers and theologians will have the task of constructing a new theory of revelation. It will need to be a theory that can stand the test of philosophical criticism and retain some of the modified interpretations of the ancient thinkers and also give relief to an existential angst among believers.

Humanistic philosophy has discounted the old understanding that prophets had heard the voice of God from outside themselves when announcing their revelations. Revelation is, in fact, an interiorized event of the conscious human mind, often occasioned
by the distress of the human condition. Wonder is not the only beginning of philosophy as it is traditionally understood in the West. Distress also qualifies as the initiator of philosophy. I maintain that distress, as the suffering of body or mind, as the initiator of philosophy is also the initiator of a salvific revelation.

Distress occurs in an individual person and is a subjective experience. Distress is universally experienced since a moral life, i.e., the acquisition or loss of goods, (including the loss of one’s own life) is common to all humans. Moral goods obviously do not exist apart from the consciousness of the individual person, but considered philosophically, no one consciously acquires them without acquiring them in relation to others. This is not the case, as far as I can determine, the case for the infrahuman and brute life forms. Since humans are divided through external experience, the philosophical (psychological) unity of humans provides an opportunity for individual revelations to be understood intersubjectively and universally. In this sense all humans are potentially philosophical prophets. Philosophical speech is revelatory (religious) speech which follows the psychological and evolutionary pattern of humanity. But it does not follow that all such speech has the same conscious value to the individual human or to the human race. Thus, no external force has the right to unite philosophical and revelatory speech into one universal meaning binding on all. That is to say that no particular philosophy can ever be made absolute. A fact of human experience is that critical
philosophical interpretation takes away the illusion that there is an external divine revelation to humans by an objective agency. In place of that illusion there arises the freedom and interpretation of human consciousness, at least in Western philosophy, whose task is to find a place for God in a posthumanistic future.

4.
A Place for God

It seems that almost everyone believes in the necessity of a personal definition of God. And in discussions afterwards believers and non-believers provide convincing reasons why they do or do not believe in God. However, the real philosophical problem is not in knowing if God exists or not and what God can do in abstracto, but rather what God can do, if anything, in concreto. To know what God can do either in abstracto or in concreto in philosophical terms is, in fact, like every other method of research and investigation concerning God, illusory, or at best, speculative. Whether or not there are phenomena which must be credited to the immediate intervention and will of God, independently of human secondary causes, cannot be philosophically known. In short, the human mind cannot know the divine mind.

The word “nature” does not exist in ancient languages. The the word came into existence later in the evolutionary process of the philosophy of the ancient Greeks. That the cosmos is ordered, harmonious and fixed, yet displays a dynamic nature is a creation
of Hellenic philosophical reasoning. The problem is how Hellenic philosophers understood and represented the concept of nature over time. Historians of philosophy have shown that the Hebrew worship of one God, invisible, spiritual and as conceived by their prophets cannot be satisfactorily integrated with the poetry and philosophy of the ancient Greeks. This is so since the Hebraic tradition lacks any specific philosophical tradition and reasoned imagination characteristic of the ancient Greeks.

Unlike pre-critical thinking, in which there was a role for God to play, modern science affirms the nature of physical facts while ignoring a role for God in organic evolution. There is no need for a scientifically proven existence of God by modern science. All agency and activity reside with the scientist’s approach to human existence. In fact, God is a non-agent in the scientific conception of reality. God’s non-agency explains why scientists readily modify “laws” they have established and enlarge their hypotheses or make new ones when the facts of observation demonstrate. This leads some Christian philosophers to conclude that scientists – wittingly or unwittingly – know only secondary causes in which they do not recognize the action of the First Cause.

To conceive God and the activity of God within human consciousness is a task for contemporary critical philosophers and theologians. Their critical philosophical conceptions will need to be essentially different from contemporary scientific explanations. Such critical philosophers and theologians will necessarily discuss
the subjective and moral order of life which no more depends on the method of science than science depends on the methods of philosophy. From my perspective, philosophers and scientists must remain independent, but in relation to each other.

I suggest that as scientists make the cosmos more and more intelligible to the human intellect, that philosophers make the cosmos (and its God or gods) more critically acceptable to the human intellect. Historically, cosmic evolution appears to proceed from the simple to the complex, from dead matter to living matter, from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous, from understanding physical life to understanding metaphysical life. The evolution of philosophical thinking displays the same pattern of development. Given the foregoing to be the case, I doubt the posthuman philosopher’s ability to maintain the traditional view of a First Cause.

5.

Philosophical Development Within Humanity

Progress in the Cultural Forms of Philosophy

Philosophy is not merely a phenomenon of the individual intellectual life. It is also a social and historical phenomenon. Morality, literature, art, social economy, religion and, in fact, all cultures of humanity are affected by philosophical development. The secret of humanity is hidden in its philosophy one might argue. It is therein that life and the resistance to death are
examined. The comparative study of the variety of human philosophies is still in its initial stages. To date, comparative philosophical studies have not revealed a necessary successive and sequential line of development, but have disclosed various cumulative movements within the evolution of the human intellect. Within the Hebrew, Christian and Islamic traditions the evolution of an intellectual understanding is readily evident. However, in considering the Asian traditions, the ancient Mexican traditions and those of India, Egypt and ancient Greece there are evolutionary “differences in kind” which, although they arise within humanity, are not as readily evident. Historically, these traditions have never marched abreast.

The conquests of Alexander (336-323 BCE) and the Roman Empire (at its greatest influence in 117 AD) had greatly enlarged the horizon of human thought from a local tribal perspective to a national political perspective. However, it should be noted that Christianity was born not in the schools of ancient Greece, nor in the Rome of the Caesars, but in a small fanatical and intolerant Hebrew race. History records the cultural influences on Christianity by Greece and Rome and nowhere in its appearance is philosophy the product of an unconscious evolution. Rather, philosophy is a deliberate creative intellectual product characteristic of such thinkers as Confucius, Buddha, Socrates, and the prophets of Israel and Islam. They did not inherit the
philosophical process outside of themselves, but fashioned it as a product of their intellectual consciousness.

These various philosophical perspectives are the result of the intellectual resources that humanity has within itself which have varied with the general progress of the interpretation of experience. It is significant in light of a posthuman future, that in this latest phase of philosophy, humanity is coming to know that it actually knows nothing but itself. Philosophy is but the projection of human consciousness as real and, interpretation of this reality is what makes the world intelligible to us. In this respect, scientists, like philosophers, live within a greater cosmos than they currently perceive.

 Philosophy is foundational to religious understanding which is reserved to the human animal. In its primitive and pre-critical forms, (myth and folklore), philosophy had nothing religiously sophisticated about it except a vague trust that it somehow worked. Out of pre-critical philosophy came magic and sorcery intended to control the forces of life. In time, through the evolutionary progress of the intellectual insights of the sages it was realized that true philosophy must encompass a moral relationship of one human being to another. And contrary to “controlling the forces of life,” philosophy must engage in a higher contemplation of the purpose of all life. Thus, philosophy has evolved as an art form in which the experience of the past is only valuable when translated to a higher plane of human creativity. In the evolution of
philosophy, within the Western perspective, there is a cumulation of organization, a progress in thought, which despite disruptions, disclose a higher plane of thought.

*Evolution of philosophical consciousness*

Posthuman philosophers will most likely introduce a new ordering of knowledge into some of the various branches of philosophy, i.e., psychology, anthropology and sociology. Posthuman philosophers will then have consciously joined the network of academic thinkers whose perspectives will possibly become normative. There are historical antecedents to this evolutionary development which indicate the major trends of the divergent academic and philosophical schools. The history of the evolution of philosophical consciousness discloses a complex pattern of events leading up to the present age. In the present age, a most significant event are the techno-digital inventions of the 20th century intended to advance humanity’s collective values. That is to say, the universal presence (via the internet) of a techno-digital system of knowledge generates an interpretive change in the philosophical values of human cultures.
6. Christian Philosophy

Hebraic origins

Every phenomenon (physical or metaphysical) within history has an antecedent which prepares and conditions it. Christian philosophy is no exception. Some of its roots even extend back to the traditions of the ancient Hebrews. The study of the intellectual traditions of Israel provide an introduction to the study of the later Christian intellectual traditions. The intellectual traditions of the Hebrews brought to consciousness a prophetic struggle against idolatry and immorality. This struggle was not a collective concerted act, but rather individual prophetic acts of reform and moral creativity which were continually interrupted and compromised. The struggle of the Hebraic consciousness against the métier of sorcerers and magicians eventually prepared the Hebraic consciousness to receive a new revelation, and by extension to all humanity. However, until the advent of Jesus of Nazareth, Hebraic consciousness remained focused on a national Messianism with the destiny of humanity remaining bound up with the destiny of Jerusalem. The “Kingdom of God” as a national concept had yet to be replaced by the notion of universal humanity.

27 By history I mean the discipline that traces out developments after the fact which could not have been present in the original experience because at the time nobody was conscious of them. The historical process postdates actual events.
The essence of a Christian philosophy

In asking the question “what is the essence of Christian philosophy” philosophers want to know what characterizes the consciousness of Christians allowing them to be universally recognized in spite of different times, places, languages and cultures. Two traditions exist in Christian philosophy. That of the Idealist, i.e., that of Origin of Alexandria (185-254 AD) and his school of thought which put emphasis on a philosophical and speculative metaphysics. Also, there is the school of the Realist, i.e., that of Tertullian (born circa 155–160 AD) which gives an anthropomorphic status to everything and is not inordinately influenced by Greek metaphysics. The Idealist locates truth in reason. The Realist locates truth in history.

What we call Christian philosophy is the understanding of a conscious relationship by which all humanity lives by the teachings of one Jesus of Nazareth. This understanding amounts to a creator/creature relationship which, wittingly or unwittingly, defines Christian philosophy. Classically, in interpreting an overpowering universe early pre-critical Christian philosophers, and even some later critical Christian philosophers, felt it necessary to submit to the power of the universe which concealed knowledge of itself. Ultimately, through the development of philosophical consciousness, humanity became aware of a mortal conflict between the hostile universe and itself.
In response to this conflict, Christian philosophers constructed a theory of an anthropological Christian philosophy which set the specificity of the human being as human consciousness. Life is dynamic in its essence and it is concrete in its manifestation. The former is a meta-physical concept and the latter is a physical concept. Life can only manifest itself in the organisms it inhabits and animates. Yet, by incarnating itself in organisms it does not exhaust itself, nor imprison itself. Such a definition, however, will not be admitted by all philosophers.

Criticism will always be a cause for anxiety for those who accept an historical and contingent idea or notion as an absolute concept. Historical and contingent ideas or notions are always being revised and nuanced and thus can never be deemed absolute or fixed. Constructive criticism is no threat to consciousness which is an undeniable characteristic specifying the human species. 28 Although specific to the human species, philosophy transcends culture, or better, determines culture. Philosophers adhering to a Christian perspective were present in Arabia, in Greece, among the uneducated, in university circles, in Rome, in England, in the feudal Europe of the Middle Ages, and in an era of emancipated reason and democratic government. Yet no variety of Christian philosophy achieves an absolute status but must continue to

28 I owe this insight to Leslie Dewart’s investigations into the matter. “We shall therefore begin to study human evolution by inquiring into the nature of the human specificity. Our first conclusion … will be that the essence of human life lies in its having conscious quality; for being conscious is what we immediately experience ourselves to be.” Evolution and Consciousness: The Role of Speech in the Origin and Development of Human Nature University of Toronto Press (1989:14)
progress for it is at once a process without limitations or exhaustion as an agency urging humanity beyond itself.

**The stagnation of Christian philosophy**

Political or moral revolutions never abolish the traditions of the past. The cause of the present stagnation of Christian philosophy can only be found in its previous traditions. Some have mistakenly attempted to bind Christian philosophy to a scientific methodology tantamount to rendering it a modern idolatry in materialistic form. Ultimately, Christian philosophy is the unity of morality and human consciousness, which when forgotten or ignored reduces philosophy to a secular literary genre which often demoralizes human consciousness. However, Christian philosophers can remain faithful to themselves and at the same time revitalize philosophy. They must struggle against a superstitious and uncritical intellectual history clearly evident in current Western academic thinking. Christian philosophers must seek a conversion to a consciously critical life and not allow indifference to characterize posthuman Christian philosophy. In short, Christian philosophers must disengage themselves from an imagined past that sets up nostalgia as a barrier that impedes the development of a posthuman consciousness. Or, metaphorically put: when waters (i.e. philosophy) cease to flow they stagnate, and corrupt and poison the very land (human consciousness) they were intended to sustain.
Historical ideas and notions of Christian philosophy

Christian philosophers have always conceived their intellectual ideas and notions within their environment. However, they eventually freed themselves from inferior and temporary ideas and notions which fettered their thought as it engaged a higher intellectual plane. This was a slow historical process within Hebraic, Greco-Roman-Germanic (Catholic), and Modern (Protestant) thought. Christian philosophy is now on the threshold of a new plane of intellectual understanding, i.e., the posthuman. Evolving from the less philosophical Hebraic perspective, to the more sophisticated Greco-Roman-Germanic epistemological concepts, Christian philosophy was eventually transformed into its Catholic form which was more Greek in the East and more Roman in the West.

While Christian philosophy took on Hellenic intellectual ideas, Christian government took on Roman political regulation of the government of the Empire. Historians have shown that Protestantism, with its own philosophical characteristics, is derived from Catholicism because Protestantism was virtually contained within Catholicism. Protestant Christian philosophy had not been formed by an importation of foreign or alien intellectual ideas for interpreting experience. Rather the Reformers engaged in a type of ressourcement returning to primitive sources and re-evaluating original documents which they believed had been corrupted in the course of the centuries. They hoped to restore primitive truth to its
rightful place in the consciousness of the believer, not entrench it in the dogmas of an ecclesiastical corporation.

But history does not truly repeat itself without some modification. The re-reading of the Christian scriptures resulted in an evolved understanding and intellectual interpretation of the truth. Thus, expression of the truth became something new and creative in human conscious experience. Exegesis and reasoning replaced dogmatism in the minds of philosophers. Within Protestant philosophy, modern science played a major role in the evolution of human thought in which it set human conscience free from ecclesiastical dependence in the intellectual and political life of critical thinkers. Pre-critical science, i.e., scientia, through its evolutionary development played a similar role within Catholic philosophy.

While the Protestant ideas and notions of Christian philosophy reveal a different approach to thinking, it is not in competition with Catholic philosophy as if it were a rival. (Although this view has often been mistakenly advocated, it is losing support in an ecumenical age.) I suggest that Protestant philosophy has actually evolved beyond the traditional acceptance of dogma. It is a dynamic method of intellectual interpretation that amounts to a new notion of philosophy.  

Further, the contemporary Protestant

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29 A theological philosopher has written that the classical philosophical concept of being to describe God needs to be dismantled. He raises the question: Do philosophers proceed to re-construct, re-fashion, and re-new — and even re-habilitate — the traditional belief in some sort of Supreme Being, or do they not rather proceed to re-develop the traditional
philosophical method of interpretation leads to a plurality of evolutionary ends, whereas Catholic philosophical interpretation continues to favour a universal Christocentric unity. However, nothing in human nature is alien to either method of interpretation. Philosophers would do well to remember this as they explore the agency of the human being, and the place of dogmatic ideas (or of God) in a philosophical posthuman world.

A revised understanding of agency in posthuman philosophy will encourage a new sense of human autonomy conscious of its roots in human experience. The personal self, by self-governance, will characterize posthuman philosophy in either its Protestant or Catholic forms.

7.

Dogma

What I reflect upon concerning dogma in this section is to be understood against the background of traditional Roman Catholic teaching on dogma. That is, dogmas are propositions that, as objects of faith, govern belief and practice in the humanistic philosophy and the theology of the West. This Western perspective is changing as philosophers shift to a posthumanistic perspective. How Christian philosophers (Catholic and Protestant) will find room for the agency of God, and a dogmatic understanding of God, in the posthuman context is a vital question.

Dogmas have two characteristics, one philosophical and the other authoritative. Religious dogma is a teaching that has become an ecclesiastical rule, but secular dogmas also exist in Western philosophy. In the schools of ancient Greece, dogma simply identified the core teachings of various philosophers. Today, however, certain teachings of Aristotle and Plato have evolved into a status of authoritative norms for many contemporary Western philosophers. That is to say, dogmas are variable but any change in them is only accidental. There is no change in their essence. Such immutability is not supported by the history of intellectual evolution. An intellectual dogmatism has evolved determining the rules of grammar which regulate philosophical thought. It must be acknowledged that dogma is traditionally considered to be a Christian phenomenon. Dogma is not self-evident in the Hebraic tradition, nor in Islam, that is, neither tradition has an established creed of belief. However, from the perspective of Christian philosophy dogmatic interpretation may be mistaken from time to time but it is never unnecessary. Given the intellectual stage at which Christian philosophy has arrived, the Christian denominations may make differing authoritative uses of dogma and of the notion of God, but they cannot dispense with either. Dogma is never without its authority, religious or secular, and the issue today is how philosophers and theologians express their authority appropriately in a posthuman context.
Dogmas, classically understood, are immutable. However, they have an evolutionary history which contradicts this understanding in the thinking of many contemporary Christian philosophers. In the past, Christian philosophers have never failed to adapt their understanding to the state of mind of the faithful. In the future, it is likely that Christian philosophers and theologians will need to interpret new experiences and new states of mind of the faithful in the posthuman age. That is to say that Christian dogmatic philosophy in the future will display two characteristics. One will be the contemplation of existential knowledge by a thinking subject. The other will be a theoretical doctrine (not necessarily a dogma) concerning the existential relationship of beings within the universe. In short, posthuman philosophy will introduce a new meta-physical understanding of transcendence, not characteristic of Hellenism.

8.

A Critical Theory of Christian Philosophy

Christian philosophy begins in human consciousness which produces in the mind representative images of the objects that have distinguished “me” from “not-me.” But there is no substance to these representative images, nor is there any physical content. These ideas, or better, notions are meta-physical. There is no serious philosophy today that does not start with some theory of knowledge and Christian philosophy is no exception. What is
rejected today by many Christian philosophers is that notions, i.e., products or creations of the mind, have been supernaturally communicated to us by an external God who has planted them into our minds. Such a theory of revelation has misconceived the nature of the mind making it a passive and inert receiver of other people’s ideas. Rather, the mind itself functions as an active and willing agent producing its own thoughts such that it cannot function without being productive. In the production of notions, as creations of the mind, it must be noted that there is a distinction to be made between a mechanical or techno-digital movement (action) of a physical object and, the conscious movement (activity) of a human subject. The former establishes the physical object as an actor and the latter establishes the human subject as an agent. Both constitute the antecedent conditions for a posthuman critical theory of Christian philosophical interpretation.

It cannot be denied that since Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) Western philosophy is no longer restricted to its classical roots. Today, philosophers assess both their knowledge and their means of knowing it, i.e., the mind. Philosophers determine the conditions of knowledge, the forms it assumes, and the limits it cannot exceed. Many conclude that the Hellenistic concepts of idea and reality no longer coincide. It had been generally accepted in the West that the physical is real, but since Kant it is no longer certain that all which is real is physical. There is that which is beyond physical being which is real, but in terms of existence, is
indeterminate. That is to say, there is reality that is beyond being which is not meta-physical in the classical sense. Thus, the analytical method of philosophy concerning the unfolding of an eternal substance of the universe needs to be replaced by a phenomenological philosophy of observation rooted in human experience.

In Christian philosophy there are two aspects that characterize knowledge. One, the *a posteriori* which arises from the past experience of a thinking subject, and the other, the *a priori*, which arises beforehand and in anticipation within the thinking subject. In Christian philosophy it is now understood by many philosophers that the principle of agency is not in things, but in the human being. The function of the human mind is to connect all phenomena and act on them by virtue of its own will. The mind acts morally, or immorally, not mechanically or techno-digitally and must choose to act or not to act. In short, the person as agent is conscious of being under obligation to others or to him or herself. Scientific determinism, by way of contrast, is a point of view that renders the activity of moral obligation unnecessary. The two attitudes of self-determination and determinism continue to be in conflict and will probably continue so into the posthuman philosophical future.
The conscious human self is a unity in relation to its environment. It is constituted by the elements of objectivity and subjectivity, by body and mind, by the self or “me” and the non-self or “not-me,” and by the activity of thought and by the object of thought. From an objective perspective it is possible to refer to the object of thought alone and independently. In a subjective perspective one must consider the relationship between the observing subject and the observed object of thought. Given posthumanity as the next stage of Christian philosophical evolution, the relationship of the moral aspect of an agent-will (i.e., a person) and the scientific facts of experience (i.e., objects) will need to be re-viewed at this new stage of human consciousness.

But what have the Christian philosophers to say about the conscious physical being, known as the self? As soon as the self knows itself, it has a clear sense of being the author of its acts. From a religious perspective, it knows that the reality of God (not the existence of God) is the final reason for everything, but the reality of God is not the scientific explanation of God. In future Christian thinking, it is not the essence of things, but their

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The conscious human self requires a self-conscious recognition of its separation from other objects in the environment. Once recognized, the self is subject to creative evolution enhancing it according to a future goal. Personal evolution continues but the form in which it progresses is not pre-determined. The subjective (conscious) and objective (organic) constituents of the personality evolve together. The cause of such personal evolution is the individual’s own adaptive nature to its cultural context. There is no pre-existing harmony to be uncovered between an individual self and the cultural content in personal evolution. Thus, a struggle ensues in which dynamic activity, not a static state of affairs, manifests one’s personality.
relationship to each other that will be of greater concern to Western philosophers.

**Christian Philosophy as an intellectual art form**

Christian philosophy, like all human narration, is symbolic. All the ideas and notions it fabricates and organizes are inadequate in expressing its object. The idea, or notion, is never equivalent to its object and never has physical content since it is transcendent and not a physical phenomenon, an epi-phenomenon. Christian philosophers are obliged to demonstrate the invisible by the visible and the eternal by the temporary. As one defines art as the human effort to fashion a creator’s ideas and notions of reality in physical matter to express the inexpressible, the same is true in philosophy, but with meta-physical matter, as it were. In the case of philosophy, the matter is speech and thought which captures and fashions the philosopher’s ideas. Hence, it is possible to conceive Christian philosophy legitimately as an intellectual art form. It is that form of inquiry into reality by which the Christian philosopher seeks to make sense of the physical and the meta-physical of human experience. Philosophy is symbolic thinking of which the philosopher is capable and which is not equivalent to accommodating external ideals to the mind as understood in the epistemology of classical Hellenism. Philosophy arises in a felt
need, or active desire, on the part of the thinker to assign new meaning to the interpretations of experience.  

This new meaning is created by the philosopher formulating alternative expressions of experience. But such meaning is not the isolated interpretation of a scientific sort, but is meaning capable of reflecting the collective interpretation of the Christian *humanum* of individuals as their experience evolves. This is to say that this new meaning reflects the life of an individual, as a continuity, in a community and, the life of a community, as a continuity, within its evolving cultural history.

By way of conclusion to these reflections, one is able to conclude, I believe, that in one’s consciousness there is a functional (but limited) relationship of a particular cause (the “me”) to a collection of universal causes (the “not-me’s”). The “not-me” causes, however, are reserved to physical “others,” but can be a perfected mirror image of humanity itself (the *humanum*) produced psychologically (i.e., mentally) and experienced within objective reality. I conclude with this summation by the French Protestant theologian Auguste Sabatier (1839-1901). Christian philosophical language lends itself to all and permits all. The mischief of it is that it would be useless to desire to prevent these

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31 Meaning is a category that identifies knowledge (epistemology) and demonstrates a conscious orientation in the life of the thinking organism. Humans assign meaning to ultimate reality (the limit of human intelligibility) which is the highest human philosophical undertaking. Ultimate reality, however, cannot be the end point of human cognition. Rather, the opposite appears to be the case. Human existential consciousness “di-stances” itself from ultimate reality.
philosophical and scientific quarrels. New explanations only give rise to new misunderstandings and simply serve to perpetuate disputes without interest to some and without bearing fruit. 32 But this is truly art since it does not satisfy all. Thus, to my mind, Christian philosophy may be conceived as an art form of minimal interest to some who are so inclined. But to those philosophers interested in being architects of the future rather than custodians of the past, the humanistic inadequacies of the intellectual past need not be repeated by the posthumanistic philosophy of the future.

9.

So, What is Post in Posthumanity?

Posthumanity is a difficult topic for philosophical study. Posthuman philosophy amounts to a new ordering of our knowledge employing principles derived from classical philosophy and sociology. Many philosophers find difficulty in orienting themselves within this new phase of contemporary philosophy due to its complex intellectual history. Thus, some philosophers may consider it futile to inquire into what presently seems to be an adequate philosophical system for academia. But for others, particularly avant-garde philosophers, to inquire into posthumanity is a necessary task as experience appears to be at the threshold of re-ordering contemporary thought. That being the case, the theological philosopher must always keep in mind the historical

32 Sabatier, Auguste (1897) Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion: Based on Psychology and History George H. Doran.
role of faith in human experience and, the history of the problems and hopes of human beings. That is to say that the theological philosopher must first understand humanism (humanity) before he or she can accurately understand posthumanism (posthumanity) as a suitable and more adequate philosophical perspective for the 21st century and beyond.

Through their dogmatic formulations the philosophers of humanism affirmed that supernatural powers exist and that a relationship with such powers is possible and even necessary. Classically, this necessity is expressed in humanism’s “sacred history” of religious belief which is not intended to explain religious phenomena in any scientific sense but rather to regulate religious phenomena as experienced. The same will turn out to be true of posthuman philosophers, I suspect. They will be required to undertake attempts at determining the answers to posthumanity’s deeper problems. That is to say, understood from a posthuman perspective, there is an evolutionary development in philosophical thinking that has brought philosophers to the point of contemporary consciousness. I suggest that those philosophers who study culture and believe in the value of philosophy, though perhaps not as set out in the specific doctrines of some philosophical traditions, will probably realize that the present under-utilization of philosophy hamper the development of the philosopher’s mind. I trust that posthuman society will not founder because of this lack of philosophical interest, but rather work with
philosophers for continual insight into the life-giving perspective which has guided humanity in its culture to date.

Philosophers who take an emanationist view in interpreting experience tend to ignore personal interaction when determining human culture. They favour the logic of an ideological and unwilled value system. The philosophers, characteristic of posthumanity, will most likely abandon an emanationist system of understanding and view themselves as both actively defining and enriching the individual personality and human culture. Posthuman philosophy will most likely consist of sets of notions, as opposed to particular ideas, shared within a common context. In humanism the major themes of thought have tended to converge in a union of understanding. By way of contrast, posthuman philosophy appears to be developing in the opposite direction and any such unifying convergence is not readily apparent. However, convergence or non-convergence notwithstanding, there is a unity within posthuman philosophical consciousness where the knowing subject relates to the known object. But such relational unity is not to be equated with the union of the human subject duplicating intellectually a known object within itself. It would not be accurate to view posthuman philosophy as a “social fact” because posthuman philosophy is understandable only as an attitude towards life. In posthuman philosophy it is the meaning that an individual gives to life that, in turn, influences his or her personality as opposed to an objective set of idealistic norms that
characterize humanistic philosophy. Posthuman philosophy is not a social fact like science whose purpose is to prevent humanity from conceiving false ideas about itself and, about the powers which individuals experience in life, often representing them in a manner foreign to human nature and frequently conceived erroneously as folklore. Rather, posthuman philosophy is a personal activity of conscious moral integrity (variously understood) yet characteristic of all human thought felt to originate from an internal source. Humans tend to conceive this moral integrity as immanent within themselves, yet it represents something within them that is not only proper to themselves, but also transcendent. Of this “transcendent something,” humanity has never made a distinct representation except via religious symbols. Only with the advent of atheism, ironically from within the Christian tradition, did humanist philosophers acquire a secular moral consciousness due to the Enlightenment of 17th Century Europe.

Within religious and secular moral consciousness, humanism as classically understood, distinguished two distinct and separate mental states giving the impression that humans are conscious of two types of reality. One impression is of the real world of secular things and the other impression is of the real world of sacred things. The philosophical interpretation of posthuman experience rejects this conceived dualism of reality in favour of a conceived duality within reality of a subject (“me”) and an object (“not-me”).

united in an existential relationship. Posthuman philosophers do not deny or affirm that there is some fundamental set purpose, either intrinsic to nature or extrinsic to nature, that determines humanity’s goals. Rather, posthuman philosophers present an alternative stance in establishing goals, i.e., through an indeterminant and perpetually evolving human consciousness. Even if it should ultimately turn out that there is, for posthuman philosophical contemplation, some principle of ultimate determinateness (presently unknown) we need not assume that it is a metaphysical “other” that intrudes into the course of humanity’s goals. 34 Rather, posthuman philosophers would do well to consider the advantages of this “intrusive” development in terms of mutual cooperation.

Posthuman philosophers adhere to the view that an individual does not interpret present situations exactly as he or she had interpreted past situations. Consciousness determines the present situation as similar only to past situations, particularly if one attempts to apply previous solution to a present problem. Posthuman philosophers do not interpret, in a classical or instinctive manner, existential conditions as humanistic philosophers are wont to do. They elect to reflectively re-interpret experience because existential conditions vary. Posthuman philosophers suggest that there is a range of possibilities for further interpretation open to the individual even after the stabilization, or

“fixation” of the principles of classical philosophy. Such a range of interpretive possibilities gives rise to a creative personal consciousness or personality that tries to realize or enact these possibilities in daily life according to some definitely determined aim or goal. As an individual consciously strives for these possibilities (of aims or goals) the process of personal evolution becomes increasingly evident and events will not be seen or understood as determined in advance. While there is reservation by some humanist philosophers of subjective (conscious) and objective (physical) events evolving simultaneously, there is no such reservation in the minds of many posthuman philosophers. The fundamental principles of posthuman philosophical interpretation must be sought in an individual’s own self-conscious nature as well as in his or her social context, despite the lack of integration between the individual and the environment. Posthuman development of the person, then, does not appear as the concretization of a “static essence” as in classical humanism, but as a phenomenal development of human consciousness that continually evolves. Thus, in posthuman society there is likely to be an increasing tendency to appreciate philosophical evolutionary change, as compared with the appreciation of the philosophical stability of the ancient and medieval thinkers. Such change will
likely result in a personality type that differs from the classical type and is more at home in a posthuman world.  

This evolutionary change in personality leads to a change in consciousness which in turn leads to a change in the purpose of philosophical thinking. Seeking wisdom alone no longer exhausts the purpose of philosophers who have evolved in their thinking to recognize the need to seek clarity and assign meaning to a posthuman organic/techno-digital organism. In short, the question is: what does it mean to be human for posthumanity? In light of the evolutionary development of human consciousness the direction of posthuman philosophical consciousness can only be forward, that is to go “beyond” present humanism to a stage of “post” humanism. (Consciousness cannot develop backwards.) The posthuman purpose, philosophers argue, is that the aim of philosophy is to understand consciously and subsequently clarify and make sense of personal experience, rather than accept the interpretive principles of theory as inherited from classical humanism.

When philosophers ask: Is posthuman “truth” the same as human “truth?” this inquiry begs the question concerning the “post” in posthumanity. The ideal of philosophical truth in humanism is questioned in posthumanism. Posthuman

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35 The fusion of culture (Western and non-Western) with the contemporary scientific and techno-digital perspectives has fashioned a posthuman world and a personality whose consciousness differs from the feudal or medieval personality of the humanistic world.
philosophers have no room in their thinking for an idealism that postulates “a sphere of perfection which does not bear the scars of its origins” and is measured by events and processes that are shown to be finite and incomplete. 36 Posthuman philosophers are existential philosophers interpreting life-situations and are not dependent upon capturing intellectually an ideological eternal truth, as are the philosophers of humanism. Rather, posthuman philosophers recognize truth as non-pathological consciousness of experience. That is to say, that posthuman philosophers will continue to draw on the philosophers of humanism who rely on classical principles, but at the same time will generate new and unexpected interpretations. There is historical precedent for expecting the unexpected in posthuman philosophical development. It was never possible to universalize the original Platonism of Hellenic philosophy, though many thinkers have tried to do so. The original Platonism of Hellenic thought has undergone numerous revisions and formulations in the forms of Neo-Platonism, Renaissance Platonism, and German Idealism each of which represented a new and unexpected perspective of evolutionary philosophical development.

Humanistic philosophy, one might argue from an historical perspective, is dependent upon Hellenistic philosophical principles which are self-contained in abstract understanding which has become dissociated from present concrete experience. Posthuman

philosophy is the opposite. Posthuman philosophy is the evolutionary continuance into an organic/techno-digital world of human interpretation that render meaningful humanity’s earthly existence. Posthuman philosophers are conscious of thinking beyond the bounds of historical time since historical time is limited only by the cultural context out of which it arises. Thus, posthuman philosophers would be unfaithful to their task if they were to confine themselves solely to the contemplation of humanity’s temporal situation. They must take into account transcendental aspects of their experiences. Transcending the cultural boundaries of their thought processes is an advantage for posthuman philosophers in that they are not bound to the laudator temporis acti of classical philosophy.

The ideas of the humanistic philosophers have resonated with humanity and have succeeded in influencing Western thinking to a profound degree. I speculate that the failure of humanistic philosophers to resonate globally with posthumanity will be due more to a narrowness of knowledge, than to a narrowness of intention. Posthuman philosophers are focused on a continuation and enhancement of humanity as it understands itself and its relationship to other species. Posthuman philosophers think beyond classical philosophy by consciously enabling human agents to direct the evolution of their self-interpretation from an existential perspective. Thus, philosophers are “posthuman” in rejecting a

37 “the praising of times past”
passive acceptance of a pre-determined purpose to life. Posthuman philosophers address the collective self-interpretations of humanity at the threshold of an organic/techno-digital culture that shapes the future. Posthuman philosophers accept that their philosophy is an unrestricted collective effort of the human mind to understand itself as a collectivity. Posthuman philosophical understanding is an altered continuation of the classical philosophical traditions, characteristic of the intellectual life of Western philosophers. In short, posthuman philosophers continue the activity of the philosophical evolution of the human species from Renaissance humanism to secular thinking and beyond. In “post” humanism, philosophers have received stimulation from evolution and history and can expect further *stimuli* from the understanding of a techno-digital culture. In short, posthuman philosophers intend to “surpass” the understanding of the “rational animal nature” of humankind. This purpose reflects the thinking of the sociologist Edward Shils, who held that the traditional self-interpretation of humanity is an instance of an interpretive category, (a humanist point of view) rather than an instance of an existential knot in a network of relationships (a posthuman point of view). To the extent that humanity saw itself as members of a collectivity in a category, it saw itself as a beneficiary of the advantages, as well as a victim of the disadvantages, of that membership.  

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Posthuman philosophers acknowledge humanity’s need for a cognitive order in the cosmos that is more than reflective of biological adaptation. From the Christian theological perspective, the cosmos exists to serve the glorification of God as revealed in the scriptures and is further designed to serve the human race in the sense of Christian stewardship. As posthuman philosophy continues to be adopted by thinkers via the social and mental network of humanity, it will enhance the human intellectual consciousness in a way that the variety of travel literature and documentaries (concrete and imaginary), of geography, of anthropology and of culture will likely not do. That is to say, posthuman philosophers will likely determine an appropriate place for that which in the philosophy of humanism is reflective of the divine in human experience, i.e., what humanism identifies “religion.” But it will not be place similar to that in classical humanism, but a place determined by human interpretive consciousness (as opposed to an ideological epistemology) in assigning sacred or charismatic meaning to experience.

That is to say that posthuman philosophers place classical philosophy in a somewhat secondary position. The classical approach ceases to be useful as a solution to philosophical problems once a problem ceases to be relevant to contemporary human experience. As an academic discipline, the classics remain classics because no better solution has been found at present. For some posthuman philosophers, no doubt, a better solution for
religious interpretation in the future will be found through a kind of secular revelation, as it were. The notion of an evolutionary development to posthuman philosophy suggests a possible improvement upon the classics by interpreting them more deeply from the point of view of human consciousness. The task of posthuman philosophy, or what is “post” about posthumanism, is that humanity must constantly go beyond what the classics commend to humanity. Philosophers of posthuman culture must preoccupy themselves with the the existential facts of [1] the fear of death (annihilation), [2] of the need for a polity, (managed sustainability), [3] of creative authority (human goals), [4] of the fear of chaos (purposeless life), and [5] of the scarcity of resources (environmental issues). All these existential facts are subject to revised philosophical interpretations. No enhanced precision of thought, nor increased quantity of experience, will be able solve these problems. Only self-consciousness of one’s place in the world, as well as that of the divine, will solve humanity’s existential problems through a posthuman philosophy.
§

A DISSERTATION ON PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT

An Innovative and Critical Reflection on Human Thinking

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Introduction

The sub-title of this essay, “An Innovative and Critical Reflection on Human Thinking” identifies my approach to philosophizing in this essay. Innovative, when applied to a product or idea, means introducing advanced and original design. When applied to philosophy it describes an activity that is original, but more significantly creative, of a philosopher’s thinking. In light of the history of Western philosophical ideas originality may be only metaphorically possible since each idea has its antecedent. Creativity is the more useful concept. By critical, I simply mean thinking that contrasts with common sense. Critical thinking is not superficial and examines consciously or unconsciously held presuppositions. Critical thinking may be either positive or negative but it is always goal directed. Philosophical critical thinking is not to be viewed as mere entertainment but reflective of one’s convictions.

Thus, I invite the reader to reflect upon these pages in light of his or her current stage of consciousness. Further, I intend these pages for the individual who is dissatisfied with the status quo of current philosophical thinking overly influenced by the Hellenic tradition. Thus, the philosophically satisfied reader need not bother to continue.
1. A Critical Philosophical Recollection

Given my experience the need for a critical philosophical recollection begins with an historical appreciation of Western human culture as it has been conceived and fashioned from its inception to the present day. I specify Western because I was raised in the Western academic tradition and, of necessity, began my thinking in this context. However, I do admit that while Western culture is not, nor may ever be universal, Western philosophical critique can be revelatory when applied \textit{inter alia} to contemporary non-Western cultures.

I identify three historical stages within the development of human philosophical thought, i.e., the cognitive stage, the agricultural stage and the scientific stage. However, these do not exhaust the list of possible stages, nor are they characteristic of all human philosophical development. But they are sufficient as reliable signposts for this reflection.

“There were humans long before there was history.” \textsuperscript{39} This is a debatable point from within a philosophical perspective. “Humanoid” might have been the better choice on Harari’s part. This is so since non-human organisms have no consciousness of their history as far as we can determine at present. In fact, knowing its own history or being conscious of its own history is what specifies the human organism according to many anthropological

\textsuperscript{39} Harari, Yuval (2014:3) \textit{Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind}. Signal, McClelland & Stewart.
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philosophers. Common sense should confirm this without too much difficulty since the Latin term *homo sapiens* makes this philosophically clear.

In this reflection I am concerned with the thought of those unique organisms who are members of a *wise* humanity. Should there be other members of the genus *homo*, as classified by contemporary scientists, their consciousness or thought processes (which are likely to be un-philosophical) do not concern me in this essay. In short, I am concerned with a being (a living organism) that is specifically and uniquely conscious of itself and is capable of philosophizing about itself and its environment.

Theories abound today as to how *homo sapiens* came to differ in their cognitive and social abilities from others hominoid species in the *homo* genus. None is conclusive, nor most likely will any theory ever be able to prove how this differentiation came about. But the experiential fact is that a differentiation has come about and leads to the observation that “*homo sapiens* has grown so accustomed to being the only human species that it’s hard for us to conceive of any other possibility.” 40 But re-conceive our contemporary *sapiens* status we must, and we must do it philosophically. This philosophical re-conception is not to deny that other established cognitive disciplines are free to undertake their own re-conception of this fact of life. In re-conceiving our contemporary *sapiens* status philosophically, we cannot omit the

consideration of the unique function of human language as generated with various cultures. To my mind such a consideration of the unique function of language in the history of philosophy is a necessity, not an option, if we are to understand human evolution in any other way than merely an up-dated biological Darwinism.  

No one knows how the formation of our unique human language abilities came about. Certainly not as simply biological mutation as some scientific determinists would suggest. For philosophers it is more significant to understand the consequences, rather than the cause of this ability for humans to speak to each other, as opposed to merely communicate, which is simply a capacity that some infrahuman organisms, as well as computers, possess. A defining feature of human language is the ability to speak about abstractions and self-consciously assign meaning to abstractions which are often recognized as products of the collective human imagination. It is worth remembering that in human speech meaning is assigned by the human being, meaning does not reside a priori in any physical or meta-physical object.

To clarify for the reader, I am discussing philosophical epistemology. However, I am not doing so in the tradition of the ancient Greeks where knowledge is to be found in the adequation of the knower and the known. In the Hellenistic perspective, knowledge or meaning is considered to be the overcoming of a gap

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41 A pioneering philosopher inquiring into the relationship between human evolution and human consciousness was Leslie Dewart author of Evolution and Consciousness: The Role of Speech in the Origin and Development of Human Nature (University of Toronto Press, 1989).
between the two by the transmission of data as some sort of information. That understanding, while appropriate for a Hellenic culture, does not serve adequately in our contemporary society. Not epistemology, but consciousness, provides an adequate, yet often temporary, explanation of human understanding and self-understanding at the current stage in its evolutionary development of philosophy. 42

Harari states that “evolutionary psychologists argue [that] we need to delve into the hunter-gatherer world that shaped us, the world that we subconsciously still inhabit.” 43 Similarly, I suggest that philosophers in the Western tradition need to delve into the Hellenic cultural world that has shaped our epistemology and consciousness, the world that we subconsciously, or unconsciously, still intellectually inhabit.

42 Harari identifies the conscious ability to transmit information as a “cognitive revolution” within the thinking of *homo sapiens*. Harari, Op. cit. p. 37.
2. A Self-Conscious Revolution

Human self-consciousness evolved with time. Recall that evolution moves in one direction only, that is, forward. It does not move backwards. Human consciousness has evolved to a stage of self-consciousness. This has not occurred with infrahuman organic life. Lions are conscious but not self-conscious of themselves as being conscious lions. Such self-awareness is reserved to _homo sapiens_.

Self-consciousness results in the human organism being able to direct its evolution as an agent, not merely to accommodate itself biologically to its environment. This ability as agent is the added feature, at this stage of the evolution of human beings, which they have acquired to change their future positively or negatively. No one plotted the self-conscious revolution. It was, from a philosophical point of view, the result of a cumulative effect of the biological and intellectual evolution. The direct or indirect causes of this evolution remain unknown to philosophers.

The self-conscious revolution enabled the _homo sapiens_ to conceive of themselves and others in a “me” and “not me” schema. (Humans were always conscious. However, the distinction between consciousness and self-consciousness was recognized only later.) This distinction is between being conscious of physical things and other beings, including the concept of God or the gods, and being conscious of one’s self as an object of consciousness. An
early example of the gods intervening in the intentions of *homo sapiens* is the Code of Hammurabi which was designed to regulate relationships among human beings. 44 To demonstrate the lack of universality in the formulation of human dignity, Harari compares Hammurabi’s Code to the American Declaration of Independence (4 July, 1776). He concludes that “both the Code of Hammurabi and the American Declaration of Independence claim to outline universal and eternal principles of justice, but according to the Americans all people are equal, whereas according to the Babylonians people are decidedly unequal.” 45 Of interest to contemporary philosophers is that both documents claim to be correct in light of their cultural context and experience, yet they arrive at opposite conclusions. These documents are functional fictions, but not universal fictions. Each has influenced the conscious behaviour of human beings, as well as raising questions concerning the presence and role of a universal deity within a Western cultural perspective.

Evolution, biological and intellectual, tends to diversity, not uniformity. Every self-consciousness is therefore uniquely distinct. Order is established and maintained among self-conscious persons by the collective, but not universal, concrete experience of living together. In the English language, nouns intended to indicate a concrete or material reality usually end in “-ism;” individualism, tribalism, nationalism, communism, Marxism, etc. They reflect an

44 Hammurabi was the king of Babylon who ruled from 1792 to 1750 B.C.E.
architectural reality of some sort. The opposite are nouns that end in “-ity;” individuality, nationality, Catholicity, community, etc. They reflect an abstract reality of some sort, usually an idea or notion derived from experience. Consciousness and self-consciousness, when considered philosophically in an appropriately qualified organism, is subjective. When the same phenomenon is considered philosophically from a collective point of view, it is inter-subjective and culturally expressed. In short, the contemporary evolutionary process in humans shows signs of being self-directed by humans themselves as agents within the process, not as simply as actors.

I do not wish to enter into a discussion of the relationship between self-consciousness and what is called, erroneously, artificial Intelligent or AI. To my mind “machine knowledge” is a more accurate concept. However, I will offer a brief comment on the following paragraph from Harari’s book *Sapiens*.

The field of artificial intelligence is seeking to create a new kind of intelligence based solely on the binary script of computers. Science-fiction movies such as The Matrix and The Terminator tell of a day when the binary script throws off the yoke of humanity. When humans try to regain control of the rebellious script, it responds by attempting to wipe out the human race. 46

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First, Harari is writing metaphorically, not as a critical philosopher, which must be understood by the reader. Secondly, “artificial intelligence” undertakes nothing as an agent. The fact is that living computer programmers write binary scripts for non-living computers. A non-living binary script can throw off nothing of the “yoke of humanity” on its own volition. To my mind the paragraph is a product of a fertile non-philosophical imagination. Further, imaginary fictions, when considered by the Western philosopher, often reveal a temptation to be accepted as reality and, if one is inspired by Hellenism, this reality is ultimately determined by Fate.

The capacity for self-consciousness on the part of homo sapiens allows us to change who we are. Being aware of who we are at present, who we were in the past, and who we want to become in the future is a goal-setting activity that only self-conscious human organisms can undertake for themselves. Humans can stop enslaving other humans simply of their own volition, and yet seem to need to invent religious and other myths designed to determine and achieve this goal. As well, of their own volition contemporary philosophers can revise the Western human perspective of cause and effect and the role of Fate, as inherited from the ancient Hellenist philosophers. Were this to take place, social structures would evolve and change accordingly. As is presently the case, Western social structures evolve, but the philosophy supporting them appears not to evolve.
Harari is correct stating that “evolution has no purpose.” There is nothing natural or unnatural, no predetermined purpose in the process of evolution. For “naturalness,” or for something to be natural, is a conscious intellectual construct advocated by particular Western philosophers at a certain stage in their conscious development of philosophy and theology.

3. Consciously Cultivating Diversity

Cultures are diverse and will most likely continue as diverse in the future. Many contemporary philosophers retain the legacy of their Hellenic predecessors in seeking unity of human affairs. They expect confirmation philosophically as they inquire into this supposed unity of the affairs of *homo sapiens*. Cognitive dissonance, as some philosophers refer to the phenomenon of contrary beliefs simultaneously supported within various cultures, is often considered to be a failure of human consciousness. Although, to the contrary one historian, Harari, believes that in perceiving the direction of history “from such a vantage point it becomes crystal clear that history is moving relentlessly towards unity.” To my mind this conclusion is questionable since the variety of human cultures suggests diverse human experience. Academics schooled in the Western classical approach seem to be

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trying to establish a goal of universal (secular) unity, or some type of religious unity, that is founded on belief in a universal supernatural being. Secular institutions can function in a religiously styled manner as sociologists of religion will attest.

But religion is ultimately a matter of the consciousness (and conscience) of patterns of experience interpreted by the human mind. Philosophically, infrahumans are not conscious of, and do not engage in, religious activity. Harari notes that “theistic religions focus on the worship of gods. Humanistic religions worship humanity, or more correctly, Homo sapiens.” 49 There is much philosophical accuracy in this statement. A critical philosophical examination of the progress of human consciousness reveals to the insightful thinker that the “worship” of God, or gods, or humanity ultimately accounts for the same evolutionary mental activity. In all cases, however, the only agents are humans with the conscious capacity to direct evolution to their own goals and advantage.

EXAMINERS’ REPORT
Date: 1 July 2010
Reference: ASOl/07/201O
Student: Allan Maurice Savage
Degree: Doctor of Letters

The candidate presented a portfolio of publications for assessment accompanied by a critical commentary in line for the regulations for the degree entitled “Interdisciplinary Insights Applied within a Theological Context”. The portfolio was extremely wide-ranging and included work principally in the area of theology and secondarily in the areas of philosophy and psychology.

[The list of previously granted credentials at the degree level has been omitted.]

In addition to previous degree awards and ministerial appointments, the portfolio contained two testimonials from the Bishop of Algoma attesting to his appreciation and high regard for the candidate’s work in ministry.

[The list of publications books, booklets and articles for evaluation has been omitted.]

The evidence of achievement in line with the Regulations for the granting of the degree of Doctor of Letters by published work was amply displayed. The high level and scope of the work undertaken was clearly evidenced and offered a contribution to scholarship that was both original and unusually broadly-based. It was clear that the candidate had thoroughly absorbed the corpus of existing thought in his chosen areas, and had shown himself to be both a cogent expositor of the scholarship of others and an original thinker in his own right.

The candidate supplied a detailed exegesis in his critical commentary that considered each submitted work in turn. The examiners greatly
appreciated the role of this approach in clarifying the intentions, methodology and context of the works concerned. The candidate also included a list of the libraries which have acquired at least one of his books. He concludes that “their acceptance tells me they determined that my books ‘have something to say’ of academic value to the university community and perhaps to the civic community at large.” The examiners endorse this conclusion and commend the work involved accordingly.

It is invidious and necessarily subjective to single out examples of particular work in a submission that was uniformly impressive, but the three books “A Phenomenological Understanding of Certain Liturgical Texts: The Anglican Collects for Advent and the Roman Catholic Collects for Lent”, “Faith, Hope and Charity as Character Traits in Adler’s Individual Psychology with Related Essays in Spirituality and Phenomenology” and “The Ecology: A ‘New to You’ View (An Orthodox Theological Ecology)” were held by the examiners to be of particular merit.

The examiners felt in summary that the submission was of an exemplary quality and reflected exceptional achievement over a sustained period of time. The award of a higher doctorate does not permit the conferral of marks of distinction, but in this case it was felt that the submission was such as to have merited this accolade were it to have been available.

Andrew Linley, D.D. (Convenor)  
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Percy Dearmer Professor of Liturgical Studies

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