PHILOSOPHICAL MONOGRAPHS
(Vol. 2)

Four Essays

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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)
§

PHILOSOPHICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

This essay is an unconventional philosophical presentation. It presents an alternative understanding to the Hellenic philosophical perspective inherited by Western philosophy. It concludes by suggesting that the traditional Hellenistic perspective is not adequate for interpreting personal experience. What is required for Western philosophy today is a ressourcement, not merely an aggiornamento. ¹ Adapting the notion of ressourcement accordingly, I categorize philosophy as a type of prophetic activity which, in its present form and contemporary context, has not continued with the task meeting the challenges of changing times and hence has stagnated. The chart overleaf compares and contrasts the similarities and differences of philosophy and prophetic activity. Throughout the essay much of what I present may seem familiar to some readers but the conclusions I draw may not be as familiar. Such as, I hold that a contemporary understanding of philosophical consciousness is a means to gain more information about humanity’s external and internal environment than can be derived from traditional epistemology.

¹ Ressourcement, in a theological sense, means the return to the authoritative sources of Christian faith in order to meet the critical challenges of our time. Aggiornamento, theologically, is a question of a new and wider contextualization of the Christian faith in order to more effectively communicate the Gospel.
The broadly-read philosopher may recall ideas originating in the work of Leslie Dewart (1922-2009) as being very similar to those I present here. That is because my presentation is directly based on his philosophical perspective as discussed in his major works about which I have written elsewhere.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similarities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Philosophy</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The philosopher is the bearer and interpreter of knowledge.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The philosopher responds to wonder about (or dissatisfaction with) life as “love of wisdom.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philosophers discuss “signs” of knowledge given their personal perspective.</td>
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<td>Human knowledge is expressed through the individual temperament and natural talents of the philosopher.</td>
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<td>The philosopher’s knowledge may be understood in his/her time, our time and a future time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The philosopher’s words are his/her own.</td>
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<td>Philosophers discuss (dispute) among themselves, but respectfully so.</td>
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<td>Philosophers arise within the human condition.</td>
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The Philosophical Question

I begin with a philosophical presumption. Human consciousness, not reason, is the specifying characteristic of the human being. Human consciousness leads to the establishment of the human identity. Thus, traditional understanding of human evolution requires a re-assessment by philosophers. Scholars, in all disciplines, have inherited an understanding of evolution that has to a great extent escaped philosophical criticism in the contemporary period. This understanding of evolution continues to reside as an unrecognized and unacknowledged foundational principle of many contemporary academic disciplines.

Evolution is not a “force,” internal or external to the living organism. I hold that evolution is an inherent action undertaken by the adaptive and reproductive functions of an organism. No independent internal or external cause is needed. Rather, the cause that brings about an evolutionary effect is the relationship between the adaptive and reproductive functions of the organism and its environment. To my mind, only empirically derived concepts can reflect the human conscious experience. Ideal concepts to the contrary reflect a mental (metaphysical) product of human reason. Only an evolutionary theory of human understanding can satisfactorily account for human consciousness. However, biological evolution of itself without appropriate adaptation to the
human organism cannot achieve an awareness of human consciousness.

To understand satisfactorily human evolution requires a revised and present-day conception of the relationship between cause and effect. I hold that the Hellenic idea of cause and effect includes the idea of necessity. While appropriate to its Hellenic origin and to scholastic philosophic thinking, necessity is no longer required for the understanding of cause and effect. That is to say that things could have been other than they were. In short, the future is not determined by any “fateful” philosophical force characteristic of Hellenic thinking. Experience provides no reason for accepting that any cause and effect, scientific or philosophical, can or must be reduced to an original cause (i.e., God, or its equivalent). In short, my experience, and that of many other existential philosophers, is that God no longer accounts for everything that is or is coming to be. While God may be accountable for reality, a notion beyond being, being itself (physical or metaphysical) is caused by other active processes in this world, i.e., evolution.

Can one justify a scientific reductionism through experience in that once we know the “cause” of a phenomenon know what the phenomenon actually is? I doubt it. Being, not reality, as I understand it, is given immediately in experience. Being is not that which our reason has constructed afterward upon interpretation of
our experience. Being (physical or metaphysical) is present to experience prior to human reflection on it according to the Hellenic tradition of thinking. In the chronological and historical order of Western philosophical thought, to determine what a thing really is, is to identify the cause that explains it. In short, how did any particular phenomenon get to be this way? This is the task of contemporary interpretive history and philosophical phenomenology. Thus, a modified theory of evolution should address the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the human organism as well as the non-human organism and not just their respective differences of kind. Consciousness is required to differentiate between human and infrahuman evolution. “Natural selection” alone is not sufficient to account for the human organism in a contemporary context. Biologically and culturally human identity evolves from a previous level of consciousness to a present level of consciousness. That is to say that genetically determined biochemical processes are not the sole cause of consciousness, but only part of the original event. Once established, however, consciousness continues to “cause” its own conscious development.

Human life is not other than what we experience ourselves to be. It is a philosophical error to think that we are not what we experience ourselves to be, that is, unique hylomorphic creatures. Our separated physical presence, i.e., the body is not equivalent to our
identity, nor is our separated mental activity, i.e., spirit is not equivalent to our identity. Humans are doubting creatures and we are uncertain if our experience is credible and thus often seek to reduce it to something that appears credible. Our notions of human consciousness and our experience of human self-identity determine the specificity of the human organism as a distinct kind of organism. In the Western context, the process of (philosophical) thinking must be adequate to the object to be explained. That is, philosophical thinking can be neither folklore nor legend and philosophers must examine, as reflexive thinkers, what human nature reveals empirically about themselves and the culture they create.

Human society and culture are art forms that depend upon a form of evolutionary adjustment particular to the human being that cannot be reduced to mere infrahuman activity. To be human is to have a conscious life and selfhood. The human experience of being conscious is acquired, rather than inborn. A probable cause of consciousness is the acquisition of human speech with human consciousness as an outcome. Consciousness is an effect of speech and continues to evolve in accordance with the properties of speech. One property is to render conscious to oneself the experience that one communicates to others.
Animals do not “speak” because they cannot learn, as humans can, to experience that signs can be used to communicate. In addition to lacking the requisite biological equipment for learning to speak, infrahuman organisms lack any specific cultural causes affecting their experience of meaning. That is to say that culture is the context in which consciousness and meaning are acquired. Individual humans evolve as self-reflective agents, not merely as individual organisms through the experience of the arts, that is, religion, philosophy and also through science. All three disciplines have institutionalized the means to achieve the specifically human form of evolutionary adjustment. Before determining what human beings might become through evolution, one must be determined what humans presently are in themselves.

The Nature of Consciousness
The advantage of a phenomenological philosophy is that its practitioners possess the insight that the observer is part of the observed which changes the interpretation in some manner. One need not omit recognition of his or her presence when observing that something other than oneself also exists. The fear of introducing error into the observation has occasioned the omission of the observer from observation of modern science. This is especially true when the object of study is human nature. It is a philosophical error to think that objective thinking is value-free. Further, error, or having been mistaken, can be known only after
the fact. Since truth lies in the observer’s consciousness, not in the object of consciousness, the observer’s presence in interpreting experience must be taken into account. That is to say the contemporary observer must criticize the inherited classical philosophical presumptions and revise them where necessary to meet the needs of the time. No revision, however, will reveal eternal and immutable objective truths.

An indeterminate content is given in experiencing reality itself which is to say reality is not idealistic. Thus, the experience of reality is subject to conscious determination. The biological theories that traditionally distinguish humanity from animal life are inadequate to define contemporary humanity. The understanding of contemporary humanity has evolved beyond a mere biological understanding of what it means to be human. A contemporary understanding of the human organism must include its self-consciousness, and that such understanding makes the human organism immediately intelligible to itself cannot be ignored.

In contemporary Western philosophy it is generally assumed that a human organism is human before it is conscious. This means seeking, although incorrectly, for the explanation of consciousness in an antecedent condition. However, consciousness is acquired. It is not congenital. I hold that consciousness of the human kind specifies an organism as being human. Human experience may be
conscious or non-conscious. Non-conscious experience is not self-revealing, but conscious experience is self-revealing. The conscious quality of human experience results in the recognition of self-presence.

In human beings, consciousness has certain consequences for life that are not observable in the life of infrahuman. Conscious individuals are capable of determining reality, that is, an awareness of the “me,” and the otherness of the “not-me.” The collective “not-me,” in relation to me determines my environment as real. Further, I also appreciate that my self is real, and that I am a self with a positive identity within my environment. That is, I possess an objectivity in my own right. The determination of self and the identification of others leads to the generation of culture which is the outcome of consciousness, not a pre-condition of human consciousness. Although once recognized culture plays a role in determining self-identity.

Selfhood originally has no antecedent but is the innovative result of the capacity of the human organism to acquire self-identity once the organism is conscious. \(^2\) Selfhood is acquired through a process of differentiation that results in one being self-identified as a unique human being. Only humans have a concept of reality as the indeterminant foundation for their lives. The artificial world of

humanity is a result of conscious human creation. Yet, it is as functionally real as the physical environment inherited by humanoids prior to an Anthropocene world.

Conscious individuals conceive expectations of themselves and others. They initiate a self-directed conduct, i.e., a moral conduct. Such is the environment that human consciousness has established and which infrahuman organisms are not able to establish given their circumstances and mental capabilities. To answer questions of the meaning of life and death, humans establish religious institutions appropriate to their capacity of consciousness. However, the capacity for consciousness is reducible to neither the physical organism, nor to any of its functions. Rather, it is the acquired quality of a function, not an inborn or congenital quality of an organism.

Consciousness is not produced by the brain, but disclosed in the brain by the way in which humans use their brains. Such usage is acquired, not inborn, thus consciousness is the result of human agency. As the quality of an organic function, consciousness is autonomous in that it needs nothing but itself when supported by an appropriate organism, i.e., the brain. Consciousness, however, has no independent reality but is manifested within an organism acting as a self-sufficient agent. That being the case, the conscious
mind must reflect upon itself in order to know itself. However, in doing so it does not mirror any objective idealism of the mind.

Language does not shape or create consciousness, speech does that. Speech creates the conscious quality of human thought expressed in various languages and cultures. Speech is what “raises” or “heightens” or “deepens” human consciousness in either its Hellenistic or phenomenological understanding. Being alive and being capable of expressing experience are prerequisites of human consciousness. One learns to speak before one learns to think and express one’s experience consciously. Further, speaking and thinking are better understood as a mental activity simultaneously undertaken as one activity being either audible or silent.

Since humans define themselves, human consciousness is what humans say it is. In short, human consciousness is self-defining. Humans need to be conscious of the multiplicity of their experiences and make sense out of them to acquire their self-identity. The narrative capability of speech is what allows consciousness to create selfhood within a culture. Thus, the human self is a product of the cultural narrative which incorporates this new type of narrative understanding of the self for further development. Such narrative understanding is responsible for the
transmission of specific human abilities. In short, the cultural narrative determines the existential aspect of humanity.

Society is a system of cultural institutions that consciously define and regulate every aspect of human life from birth to death. Culture is the self-definition of a group within society and it must reckon with the consciousness of its individual members. Conscious self-direction results in human freedom. Human freedom is an awareness by the organism of its own purpose and, human freedom assigns purpose to the objects within its environment. Further, human conscious experience allows for the distinction between the physical object and the imaginative object of attention.

The reality of the real does not reside within an object, but resides between objects, as it were. This view prevents that which is virtual from having any “real” reality. This is so since there is no physical gap between the imaginative object and and one’s consciousness of it within the theatre of the mind which is the location of the virtual experience.

Speech is a new form of human reproduction that does not require sexual activity for reproduction. That speech gives rise to cultural reproduction and propagation is evident in a variety of different forms. Similar to sexual reproduction, unique variations in the
quality of human consciousness have evolved and continue to evolve culturally.

Speech is a human commentary on experience. It is not the language of experience alone which affords the opportunity for a deeper or heightened understanding of the experience of one’s inner environment. But there is no guarantee that this will continue in the future. Such inner understanding is relative to whatever inner or outer environmental conditions are present at any given time within the human evolutionary process. Within this evolutionary process, either consciousness will evolve to a higher self-definition and greater autonomy than in the past, or consciousness will disappear as an operative value from the evolutionary process for human survival. Humans may disappear from the face of the earth without any specifying consciousness.

**Quotes from Leslie Dewart**


- On consciousness in ancient Greek philosophy:

Another illustration of the difference between ordinary and reflexive consciousness is afforded by a curious historical fact. We have few indications of when consciousness emerged in human
evolution, but doubtless it was in prehistoric times, for even the 
earliest historical records reveal the type of human mind whose 
conscious character we can recognize as such. For instance, our 
classical Greek ancestors were demonstrably conscious: what they 
wrote communicates the kind of experience that, when we have it, 
we call consciousness in in ourselves. But though they were 
conscious, and indeed reflected philosophically upon their 
experience, they did not discover that their experience was 
conscious; they were not reflexively conscious of their 
consciousness. At least, nothing that they wrote shows otherwise. 
… It has been only in recent centuries – since the Middle Ages – as 
a result of a long-sustained collective effort of further 
philosophical reflexion, that we have gradually become conscious 
of consciousness and that we have attempted to understand not 
simply the fact that we experienced but also the fact that our our 
experience had the quality we call consciousness. And it has been 
only yet more recently that we have begun to understand what that 
quality is (pp. 48-49).

- On the acquisition of consciousness:
This investigation will thus be guided by the hypothesis that, 
through speaking, the individual human organism converts its 
inborn ability to experience into the acquired ability to experience 
consciously – though once the latter has been developed it is no 
longer necessary actually to speak in order to experience
consciously. … Speech is not reducible to mere communication, but is definable as communication of the *assertive* kind. Human languages *do* exhibit certain peculiarities, in keeping with the emergent quality of the communicative activity that makes use of them; but the same sort of assertive communication that is the essence of speech can be performed using any other signs – vocal or otherwise, linguistic or not – including the simplest, such as even animals use. Conversely, if animals communicate, but do not speak, it is not simply because they lack the ability to process sufficiently elaborate signs or because they cannot make the right kind – true though this may be. It is above all because they cannot learn to experience that signs – any signs – can be used to communicate. … The theory of human evolution to which the study of consciousness and speech leads … will be presented more fully and supported … by showing how it enables us to reconstruct not only the origin of consciousness, but also the continued evolution of the specifically human characteristics of individuals, societies, and cultures up to that point in prehistory when human nature was essentially the same as it is today [all Dewart’s italics] (pp. 16-18).

- On the basis of human social relations:
The great achievement of the first [evolutionary] stage had been that, at its end, human evolution was no longer regulated by natural selection nor dependent on natural environmental factors – except
of course in the sense, which may be taken for granted, that without the survival of its organism consciousness can neither survive nor evolve. Evolution was governed rather by self-selection, and dependent on the self-adjustment of conscious life. Even in respect of the physical world what counted was adjustment to it as an object of consciousness; the environment in which the individual existed was no longer merely the world of nature, but mostly an utterly intangible, purely mental one of his own making. For all of a human being’s life, even his interactions with his material surroundings, is lived within the experiential field created by (a) the presence of his experience to himself, (b) the presence of other selves’ experience to him, (c) the presence of other selves’ experience to themselves, and (d) the presence of his experience to other selves. This inner environment of consciousness is, by another name, human society, which unlike animal society depends for its existence upon its being interiorized in the mutual experience of its individual members. … If we can say, then, that with the emergence of consciousness the evolutionary mechanism had itself evolved, it is because self-selection operates in the inner environment of consciousness. And since the adjustment that counts towards the evolution of consciousness is to this environment, the variations that human evolution selects for pertain to those characteristics that facilitate or else hinder the adjustment of consciousness to itself. This is true not only of individuals; since the socio-cultural matrix is integrated by
individual conscious organisms, every society must reckon with the consciousness of its individual members. The group must adjust to itself. Indeed, the adjustment of the species as a whole to the inner environment created by the interaction of its member groups is the adjustment on which the evolution of human nature ultimately depends [Dewart’s italics] (pp. 222-223).

- On consciousness as human specificity:

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. Not only thought and understanding, but our behaviour, our feelings, and our immediate sense contact with reality have the quality without which human life would be inconceivable and which we ordinarily call consciousness. Every other specifically human characteristic flows from it. Since conscious experience is the sort that enables the experiencer to become aware of the otherness of the world around him, human beings do not merely perceive things that are real but perceive them as such. This perception in turn makes it possible for them to experience their own otherness to the world; their grasping that things are real empowers them to learn that they themselves are so. It is, therefore, only because their experience is conscious that human beings have selfhood, or that they enjoy conscious identity;
to be a self is to be capable of experiencing one’s reality as a conscious experiencer and as the conscious agent of one’s behaviour. The ability to experience reality as such and oneself as real is the essence of human conscious life. … Since the consciousness quality of human experience is irreducible to an organic function, however, the concept of adjustment cannot be simply and univocally transferred from animal to human organisms, but must be suitably adapted to take account of the human peculiarities. Human adjustment differs from the animal kind in that man’s relations to his environment are mediated by a special kind of experience: the sort, as we have seen, that endows him with a sense of selfhood, and a sense of reality. Unlike an animal, a human adjusts by relating himself (a) to a world that he perceives as real; (b) to himself, whom he perceives as a self; and (c) to other selves, whom he perceives as beings who perceive themselves as selves and him as a self. Human society and culture, therefore, depend upon, and are manifestations of, the specifically human form of adjustable experience [Dewart’s italics] (pp. 914-915).

- On the cause of consciousness:
I have further implied, however, that the act of consciousness is the sole cause of consciousness. … Thus, objects are the sole efficient cause of the informing effect that they work on the experiencer; but they have no role whatever as efficient causes in the elevation
of mere experience to the level of consciousness. What human beings may be said to have “no choice” about is only what to become immediately conscious of; whether they become conscious of it depends solely upon themselves [Dewart’s italics] (328-329).

- On the consequences of consciousness:
The burden … will thus be merely to explain and to adduce some evidence for the propositions (a) that to be human is to have conscious life and selfhood, (b) that the entirety of the typically human mode of life, including human culture and society, is a consequence of consciousness and its adjustive properties, and (c) that consciousness is so related to the human organism that it can be caused by none but organic functions yet be irreducible to them. This examination of the nature of consciousness, however, will alert us to two possibilities we would otherwise not have suspected, since they run directly against the firm convictions of our common sense. In the course of studying the human specificity we shall discover that there is some reason to wonder (a) whether that capacity for experiencing consciously and for becoming a self may not be acquired rather than inborn, and (b) whether the acquisition of consciousness and selfhood by the human individual may not be a consequence of his prior acquisition of the ability to speak. To these possibilities should be contrasted the usual assumptions of most scientists and many philosophers: that the ability to experience consciously develops through the maturation
of the genetically determined structures of the human organism, and that consciousness appears in the individual prior to speech (pp. 15-16).

- On the continuity of consciousness:
  Although human beings are sometimes not conscious, their experience of themselves as selves is not discontinuous as long as the organism retains its ability to become conscious. The continuous exercise of such ability is not essential, because organic continuity of the capacity for conscious functioning is enough to ensure the continuity that conscious life exhibits to itself. For instance, upon awakening in the morning we experience one and the same conscious life, one and the same selfhood, that we had the night before; the continuity of our experience of ourselves has not been interrupted. Thus, as William James remarked long ago, consciousness is experientially or “sensibly continuous” … there are no breaks or cracks … there is a felt, experienced continuity. And this is the continuity that matters to us for its own sake, not that of the organism’s capacity for experiencing consciously [Dewart’s italics] (pp. 34-35).

- On the emergence of consciousness:
  … it was suggested that the ability to experience consciously is not inborn, but acquired; consciousness is a skill, an accomplishment that perfects the inborn experiential functions of the human
organism. It cannot be, of course, a *consciously* developed skill; no one is in a position, before he is conscious, to make a conscious decision whether to acquire consciousness [p. 167]. … A human type of organism is thus the necessary but insufficient condition of the human, conscious life; it must be supplemented by a process of socialization, of a specific kind, before consciousness can appear [p. 168]. … The first and critical step in the genesis of human nature must have been, therefore, the appearance of a reproductive mechanism suitable for the reproduction of the acquired experiential characteristic we call consciousness [p. 174]. … There cannot be however, a simple equivalent between the ontogeny and the phylogeny of consciousness; in this respect the genesis of consciousness is like that of the organism, which is not a point-by-point recapitulation in the individual of the entire course of the evolution of life. The generation of consciousness in the individual presupposes a speaking community and its language; speech and its languages do not have to be reinvented anew by every generation and every human group. And yet, a speaking socio-cultural environment had to be invented – I mean, by evolution – if a species of conscious organisms was to appear [p. 175]. … Thus, a theory of the origin of consciousness in the species must be at the same time a theory of the origin of cultural societies and of speech [p. 176]. … [This first] means that human nature had to be generated in every individual through his developing within himself his own ability to experience consciously – though this
was possible only through the transmission to him, from without, of the ability to speak. Second, in both the individual and the group the possibility had emerged that consciousness might evolve through the exercise of consciousness itself. For, with man, the sort of experiencing organism had evolved whose typical mode of experience had the power of *self-reproduction*, on which would henceforth depend the self-perpetuation and the evolution of the human specificity [Dewart’s italics] (p. 205).

- On the ontic form of consciousness:
  Although to the ontic thinker stable objects may well seem more real than his transient consciousness of them, *nothing* around him can be unqualifiedly real; the world as a whole will be felt to be lacking in the firmness and solidity it ought to have. And since he will find such impermanence and contingency unsatisfactory – because by definition they betoken a radical imperfection, a deficiency in the very reality of the empirical world – he will easily beget within himself what he at times calls a “yearning for the absolute.” The ontic mind is, therefore, sorely tempted to reason that, since no reality could be really real unless it lay altogether beyond experience, an *ultimate reality* must be posited. Besides this world there is another, an order of reality beyond the immediately evident, but conditionally real, “appearances” that pullulate “here below.” Conversely, being absolutely real, the reality beyond all possible experience is absolutely other. One
well-known version of this idea puts it in those very terms: the ultimate reality is *totaliter aliter*. A more familiar vocabulary speaks of it as the “transcendent.” Being whose reality is utterly beyond all we could possibly think of as real in the world and in ourselves. This is, of course, a self-contradiction. Otherness is a relationship: nothing can be *other* unless it be *other-than* [Dewart’s italics] (pp. 310-311).

- On the phenomenological form of consciousness:
  … as early thematic speakers established their institutions of self-definition – and in particular their religions and their more or less sophisticated equivalents of philosophy and science – they did so on the basis of alternative preconceptions about reality and efficient and final causality which effectively determined the general orientations that their cultures would take. In short, two forms of thematic speech imply two types of human mentality and two types of culture. I will refer to the form of consciousness and culture mediated by apodictic speech as the *ontic* variant of the self-defining consciousness, and to that generated by depositional speech as the *phenomenal* one (p. 263). … As thematic speech appeared in two variant forms, the ontic and the phenomenal forms of consciousness came into being. The human species had become culturally differentiated into moieties, distinguishable by the divergent cultural orientations generated in them by the presuppositions with which their respective forms of speech
endowed them. The courses were thus set that the two types of human culture would thereafter naturally tend to follow (p. 301). … Since the phenomenal consciousness does not project its assertiveness onto reality, it does not condemn itself to having to conceive reality as “being” or as “what exists;” it automatically escapes the snares of metaphysical thought by failing to set them for itself. And since it does not assume that objects have any priority over conscious experience in what concerns their otherness-to, it will not suppose that there are degrees of reality (pp. 313-314) [Dewart’s italics].
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SO, WHAT’S “POST” ABOUT POSTHUMANITY?
A Philosophical Reflection

Posthumanity is a difficult and refractory subject for philosophical study. Posthuman philosophy amounts to a new ordering of our knowledge with its principles derived from sociology and classical philosophy. Many philosophers find difficulty in orienting themselves within this new phase of contemporary philosophy due to its complex intellectual background. Thus, some philosophers may deem it futile to inquire into that which seems to be a satisfactory philosophical system supporting formal academic disciplines. But for others, particularly avant-garde philosophers, to inquire into posthumanity is a necessary task as posthuman experience seems to be on the threshold of encompassing and re-ordering contemporary human thought. That being the case, the philosopher must always keep in mind the history of the role of faith in human life, of human desires, and the problems and hopes of human beings. That is to say that the philosopher must understand humanism (humanity) before understanding
posthumanism (posthumanity) as a possible and more appropriate philosophical perspective for the 21\textsuperscript{st} century and beyond.

Through its dogmatic character the philosophy of humanism affirms that supernatural powers exist and that a relationship with such powers is possible and even necessary in some cases. Traditionally, this necessity is expressed in humanism’s “sacred history” of religious belief which is not intended to explain phenomena but rather to regulate human actions. Thus, at every stage of evolution, humans have been philosophizing about the organization and the regulation of the powers of body and mind which are, in fact, limited. In order to guard against unintended error, the humanistic philosophers made an attempt at appropriately expressing the limitations of body and mind. The same is true of posthuman philosophers. They are required to make an appropriate attempt at expressing the limitations of body and mind. That is, the answers to humanity’s deeper problems (as will the answers to posthumanity’s deeper problems) have always been discovered through the social character of philosophy. That is to say (drawing from Malinowski) when seen within a posthuman perspective there is a conscious development in philosophical thinking. I suggest that those philosophers who ponder culture and believe in the value of philosophy, though perhaps not in the specific tenets of some traditions, probably realize that the present-day under-utilization of philosophy is not adequate for a proper
development of the philosophical mind. Let us hope that our whole future society will not founder in this lack of philosophical interest but work for the maintenance of living philosophical truths which have guided humanity out of barbarism to culture, the loss of which will threaten us with barbarism again.  

Philosophers who take an emanationist view tend to ignore personal interaction in favour of the inner logic of an ideological or isolated individual value system. The philosophy characteristic of posthumanity abandons this inner logic and isolated value system of understanding and views itself as both actively defining and enriching the individual personality. Posthuman philosophy is essentially a set of notions shared by individuals. By way of contrast, in humanism the major themes of thought have tended to converge on a union of understanding even if only potentially so. Posthuman philosophy, on the other hand, seems to be developing in the opposite direction and any such convergence is not readily apparent. However, there is a unity within posthuman philosophical consciousness where subject relates to object, but that is not to be equated with the union of the human philosophical understanding where subject apprehends object. It would not be accurate to view posthuman philosophy as a “social fact” because posthuman philosophy is understandable only within the minds of individuals as an attitude towards life. In posthuman philosophy it

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is the meaning the individual gives to life that acts upon the personality as opposed to an objective set of inherited social norms that characterize humanistic philosophy. Posthuman philosophy is not a social fact like science whose purpose is to prevent humanity from inventing false ideas about the powers which it experiences in life, and subsequently representing them under a guise that is really foreign to human nature and often erroneously transfigured by folklore. Rather, posthuman philosophy is conscious of a moral harmony (variously understood) yet characteristic of all human thought which is felt to originate from an external source, the location of which cannot be perceived. We thus are tempted to conceive this moral harmony as immanent in us, yet it represents something within us that is not purely of ourselves, i.e., a moral consciousness. (Of this moral consciousness, humanity has never made even a slightly distinct representation except by the aid of religious symbols.)

Within this moral consciousness, humanism as classically understood accepts two distinct and separate mental states and thus gives the impression that we are conscious of two sorts of reality. One impression is of the real world of profane things and the other impression is of the real world of sacred things. The philosophy of posthuman experience rejects this conceived dualism of “reality” in favour of a conceived duality of a subject (a “me”) and an object.

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(a “not-me”) in an existential relationship. Posthuman philosophy does not deny or assert that there is some fundamental set purpose, either intrinsic to nature or extrinsic to nature, that determines humanity’s goals. This has been an activity characteristic of humanistic philosophy. Posthuman philosophy presents an alternative stance in establishing goals through an indeterminant and perpetually evolving human consciousness. Even if it should finally turn out that there is for posthuman philosophical contemplation some principle of ultimate determinateness (presently unknown) we need not assume, or suppose, that it is of any metaphysical “other” that “butts in” to the course of humanity’s goals. Rather, posthuman philosophy would likely consider the advantages of this development in terms of mutual cooperation.

Posthuman philosophy adheres to the view that an individual does not interpret present situations exactly as past situations, but consciously defines every present situation as only similar to past situations, particularly if there is a desire to apply a repeat solution to the present situation. Posthuman philosophy does not interpret, in a classical or instinctive manner, the same existential conditions as humanistic philosophy is wont to do. It elects to reflectively re-

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interpret experience because existential conditions vary.  

Posthuman philosophy suggests that there is a range of possibilities for further development open to the individual even after the stabilization, or “fixity” of the principles of humanistic philosophy. Such a range of possibilities will give birth to a creative personality that tries to consciously realize or enact these possibilities in daily life according to some definitely determined aim. As the individual consciously enacts these possibilities (of definitely determined aims) the process of personal evolution will become increasingly evident and events will not be seen or understood as being determined in advance. While there is reservation by some humanist philosophers concerning the subjective (conscious) and objective (physical) aspects of the person evolving together, there is no such reservation in posthuman philosophy. Mind and matter evolve together. Therefore, the fundamental principles of posthuman philosophical interpretation must be sought in an individual’s own nature as well as in the social context, despite any lack of harmony between the individual and the environment. Posthuman development of the person, then, does not occur as the realization of a “static essence” as in classical humanism, but as the realization of a dynamic human consciousness that continually evolves. Thus, in posthuman society there is likely to be an increasing tendency to appreciate

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philosophical change, as compared with the appreciation of the philosophical stability of the ancient and medieval worlds. Such change, of course, will likely result in a personality type that differs from the classical type and is more at home in the posthuman context.

This change in personality leads to a change in consciousness which in turn leads to a change in the focus of philosophy, from a human organic philosophical focus to a posthuman organic/techno-digital focus. In light of the evolutionary development of human consciousness the direction of posthuman philosophical consciousness can only be forward, that is “beyond” the present humanism to a stage of “post” humanism. (Consciousness cannot develop backwards.) The purpose, philosophers might argue, is that the aim of posthuman philosophy is to understand consciously and subsequently elucidate personal experience, rather than accept the formative principles of philosophical 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 notion of the ideal philosophical truth of humanism is questioned in posthumanism. Posthuman philosophy has no room for an idealism that postulates “a sphere of perfection which does not bear the scars of its origins and, measured by
which, all events and processes are shown to be finite and incomplete.” 7 Posthuman philosophy is an existential philosophy that interprets life-situations and is not dependent upon ideological insight for eternal truth, as is the philosophy of humanism. Rather, posthuman philosophy recognizes truth as that which the living human being is (non-pathologically) conscious of concerning experience interpreted concretely or mentally. That is to say, that posthuman philosophy will continue to be nourished by the philosophy of humanism that relies on classical dependability, but at the same time will help to generate unexpected discoveries. There is historical evidence for expecting the unexpected in posthuman philosophical evolutionary development. It was never possible to universalize the original Platonism of Hellenic philosophy. 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 creation in philosophical essence and ideology.

Humanistic philosophy, one might argue from an historical perspective, is dependent upon Hellenistic philosophical principles which are more self-contained as abstract terms and are in less contact with particular and concrete experience. Posthuman philosophy is the opposite. Posthuman philosophy is a developed

continuance in the contemporary organic/techno-digital world of the classical efforts of the human mind to render an appropriate interpretation concerning humanity’s earthly experience. Posthuman philosophy aspires to go beyond the bounds of historical time since it has no limiting boundaries of its own, but is “limited” only by the cultural context it addresses. Thus, posthuman philosophy would be unfaithful to its task if it were to confine itself solely to the diagnosis of humanity’s temporal situation. In lacking boundaries posthuman philosophy is not “culture-bound” to the laudator temporis acti of classical philosophy, i.e., “the good old days” of classical philosophy.

Humanism has sought to speak to humanity and has succeeded to a great degree in the West. I speculate that its failure to speak globally to contemporary humanity is due more to a narrowness of knowledge, than to a narrowness of intention. Posthuman philosophy is focused on an elaboration and continuation of the permanent and necessary effort of humanity to understand itself and its relationship to other species. It goes beyond classical philosophy by enabling the human agent to consciously direct the evolution of its self-interpretation in an existential context. Thus, it is “post” when compared to the earlier task of humanism’s encouragement of the individual’s passive acceptance of a pre-determined purpose. Posthuman philosophy addresses the collective self-interpretations of humanity at the threshold of
various forms of the organic/techno-digital culture shaping 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 elaboration of the classical philosophical traditions that were not accidents in the intellectual life of the human species. Posthuman understanding continues the philosophical development from classical Western philosophy, through to Renaissance humanism, to secular thinking and beyond. As “post” humanism, philosophy has received stimulus from evolution and history and can expect further stimulus from technology, all the while understanding humanity constituted as organic agents with moral and rational propensities. In short, posthuman philosophy promises to “surpass” the rational animal nature of humankind. Drawing on the sociologist, Edward Shils: The traditional self-interpretation of humanity saw itself as an instance of a category, but not as a knot in a network. To the extent that it saw humanity as members of a collectivity, it saw humanity as a beneficiary of the advantages and a victim of the disadvantages of that membership.  

Posthuman philosophy is more self-consciously positive.

Posthuman philosophy acknowledges humanity’s need for a cognitive order in the cosmos that is more than reflective of biological adaptation. As posthuman philosophy spreads over the

social and mental network of humanity it enhances human intellectual consciousness in a way the literature of travel, (non-fiction and imaginary) the literature of geography and the literature of anthropology and culture seldom can. That is to say, posthuman philosophy is able to determine an appropriate place for that which in the philosophy of humanism is reflective of the divine in human experience — what humanism called “religion.” But not a place similar to that of classical humanism, but in a place of human interpretive consciousness (as opposed to an epistemology) addressing the issues of sacred or charismatic experience.

That is to say that posthuman philosophy places 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 experience. Or ceases to be useful when one solution is replaced by a better non-classical solution. The case is that in all academic disciplines, classics remain classics because no better solution has been found. A better solution for religious interpretation in the future may be found through a kind of secular revelation, as it were. The notion of progress in posthuman philosophy consists in improving upon the classics by consciously comprehending more deeply the various historical and evolutionary experiences. The task of posthuman philosophy, or what is “post” about humanism, is that humanity must constantly renew what the classics commend
to humanity. Philosophy in the posthuman age must preoccupy itself with the classical legacy of the elementary human facts of [1] the fear of death (annihilation), [2] the need for polity, (managed sustainability), [3] creative authority (human goals), [4] the horror of chaos (purposeful life), and [5] the pressure of scarcity (environmental issues). All such elementary facts are subject to revised interpretations. Enhanced precision of classical thought, nor increased quantity of experience will be able solve these problems. Only a posthuman philosophy of consciousness which has no boundaries of its own will solve humanity’s contemporary problems. That is to say, the lack of boundaries of its own allows posthuman consciousness to enhance or deepen the experience of the human being who then may provide appropriate solutions to contemporary existential problems.
REFLECTIONS ON WESTERN ECOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY

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INTRODUCTION TO THE SUBJECT

The notions I present here for discussion are, in fact, not new. As ideas they have been discussed for a very long time in Western philosophy. They may appear “new to you” as a thinker exploring for the first time, or continuing to explore, the philosophical relationships that give meaning to human life in the cosmos. Whatever “newness” there is in this book arises in the reader's subjective awareness or consciousness of what the mind has come to apprehend in place of its previous understanding. The reader may find much that is familiar in this short essay but at the same time will be presented with a re-casting of the ideas that constitutes a new conception of notions and offers the possibility of a new philosophical perspective.

The purpose of this essay is to view critically the dialectic between two Western disciplines: ecological philosophy and theology. A dialectic is the art of discussion that involves the posing of questions and the giving of answers as first practiced by Socrates (circa 470-399 B.C.E.). I intend this essay as a point of departure for reflection by the reader on his or her experience in interpreting philosophical issues. By reflecting upon human life and experience in the context of an ecological philosophical and theological relationship Western religious individuals and communities have learned something of the divine.
Those readers looking for an exhaustive treatment of the philosophical and theological disciplines characteristic of the Christian tradition will not find it in this book. Those seeking to discount, debunk or replace theology with a secular philosophy will be equally disappointed. As well, those theologians who seek to defend philosophy as a God-given, yet human wisdom, supported through theological revelation will also be disappointed. My aim in this essay is not to debunk, defend or criticize either discipline. Rather, it is to examine the acknowledged relationship, in a particular context, between ecological philosophy and theology and thereby to develop an understanding that assigns meaning to human intellectual activity.

The reflections in this book represent my personal rendering of the dialectical relationship between ecological philosophy and theology that makes life humanly and spiritually enriching. It is my hope that in these reflections, others will discover for themselves, through their own personal experience, that life which is humanly and spiritually enriching. To that end I invite the readers to put aside, for the time being at least, all traditionally inherited opinions about philosophy and theology and ponder the relationships that I present here. I suggest that when our thinking becomes consciously self-reflective, we are on our way to knowledge of that which illuminates our place in the cosmos.
Gathering the ideas from a variety of authors whom I have read over the years I have incorporated their ideas into my own conscious understanding. Readers who are familiar with the writings and philosophical perspectives of Friedrich von Hügel, Albert Schweitzer, David Rasmussen, Ken Wilber, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Karl Marx will recognize their ideas reflected in this essay on ecological philosophy and Christian theology, but not necessarily as originally presented by their authors. That is because I enquire into the unity, not union, of ecological philosophy and Christian theology. In such unity, critically thinking philosophers and theologians may come to see a purpose in the élan vital (vital force) of evolution and that human meaning is expanding the cosmos.
WHAT IS ECOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY?

1.1 THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING ECOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY

The notions discussed here are a part of an emerging ecological philosophy in the West. Ecological philosophy, construed broadly, is a purposely friendly approach to the environment which states the reasons for this approach. Ecological philosophy intends to be friendly towards all forms of creation, living and inert, and states the reasons why. Further, it intends to be friendly with our own minds and bodies and states the reasons why. Ecological philosophy is a rich philosophical system with a particular consciousness of metaphysics, epistemology and theology. Free from a Hellenic cosmological inheritance, ecological philosophy is a philosophy of becoming (therefore, dynamic) and not a philosophy of being (therefore, static) in which evolution is at the center of its development. In short, ecological philosophy is a new philosophy which is holistic (i.e., holding that an entity is greater than the sum of its parts) and environmentally sensitive, being relevant to life and which can be used for healing the planet and humanity.

Where does the key to understanding ecological philosophy lie? If we examine the global ecological situation
from a sustainable perspective should we recognize that the key to understanding ecological philosophy lies in the conscious reconstruction of our relationship with our total environment. A conscious philosophical reconstruction should aim at ending the exploitation of one part of the ecological system by another and at directing the efforts of society towards an intentional and balanced relationship within the total environment, or cosmos.

In these posthuman times (inaugurated at the beginning of the 21st Century) the relationship among philosophy, theology and science continues an inherited estrangement. The sciences have separated themselves from the search for a uniform purpose of the cosmos and no longer insist upon shaping their methodologies in light of the need for a uniform purpose. This view had been inherited from classical Western philosophy prior to the Enlightenment. That is, scientists no longer shape their investigative methodology presuming that a simple, ultimately fixed purpose or goal unites the cosmos. In fact, they are actively embracing an ecological point of view that is characterized by a pluralistic perspective. Ecological philosophy, characterizing contemporary science, does not compartmentalize knowledge but contemplates the entire spectrum of human knowledge that constitutes the environment whose parts are in a holistic relationship. Without an ecological philosophy, no becoming is possible; without becoming, no material and spiritual evolution of the cosmos is possible.
It profits humanity nothing to attempt a return to the uncritical perspective of classical Western philosophy, but it does profit humanity to turn critically to ecological philosophy. Nor, does it profit humanity to follow uncritically and blindly any “new-age” philosophy, but it does profit humanity to embrace a specifically new philosophy with an open attitude concerning the relationships of philosophy, theology and science.

Contemporary science is a perpetual inquiry into the being of the physical universe redefining the facts in light of the discovery of error in order to substitute in human consciousness something nearer to the way the physical universe actually operates. The significance of an ecological philosophical perspective to science is that it ensures that pre-scientific philosophers do not impose their value system on scientific thinking. Ecological philosophers simply demonstrate, or disclose, in a non-invasive hermeneutic fashion, a human consciousness of the relationships among the animate and inanimate constituents of the environment.

Continuing scientific and technical progress has caused an unprecedented growth in the technological interactive relationships with the environment. Humans have built societies that continue to alter, either negatively or positively, their inherited environment. Humans are now literally capable of moving mountains, reversing rivers, creating new seas, and transforming huge deserts into fertile oases. In general, we are in a position to interact with our
environment without limit, radically remaking the ecological context. However, we cannot and must not interact with our environment without self-imposed restrictions, without being prepared to compensate for the possible negative consequences of our activities. The more deeply and widely we interact with our environment managing its components, the more certainly we begin to recognize that we cannot treat the environment as an inexhaustible treasure house without caring how it is altered.

Philosophers of science strive to reach an explanation of all knowledge of the diversity of the finite and contingent in the human context. By way of contrast, many Western ecological philosophers and theologians feel the call to organize all scientific and philosophical insight into one unified worldview. The current approach of Western philosophers and theologians to ecology reflects more and more a synthesis, or integration, of the previously separated areas of scientific knowledge and environmental activity. Ecological philosophers and technodigital scientists are beginning to take more seriously into account human environmental issues. They are becoming increasingly concerned with the sustainability of the environment through all possible philosophical and scientific means.
1.2 THE FOCUS-MATTER OF ECOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY

In 1866, Ernst Haeckel, while studying the evolutionary character of natural selection, proposed the term *oecology* to describe his study. *Oecology*, or ecology, comes from the Greek word, ὠἰκος, meaning house, dwelling or habitat. Ecology has two different senses. The first sense is dynamic. It means the process or activity of interactive relationships within the environment. The second sense is static. It means the theoretical scientific discipline itself. The context of a discussion determines the intended sense. An ecological philosophy is essential in understanding a correct environmental approach to life. This is so since every environmental system is related. In fact, an environmental eco-system is composed of various threads or sub-systems acting in relation to or in concert with all other threads, or sub-systems, that make up the human eco-sphere. Given this understanding, each thread may be conceived as a system and each system may function as a thread in a broader system.  

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9 What is an environmental thread, you may ask? Compare it to a digital code within a computer programme that relates a sequence of events with a beginning, and an end, and at any given moment shows a “trace” of what has been taking place, or how events have been occurring. Keep in mind that a thread is not the whole programme but only a part of the programme. To appreciate a computerized thread in its role in constituting the whole programme, a thread must be examined and followed as to how it is interwoven. That is to say that a thread has a certain independence of its own
As a discipline, ecological philosophy investigates the conditions of existence of living organisms and the mutual relations between organisms and the world they inhabit. Although not an eco-logi-cal philoso-pher, Charles Darwin’s conception of the evolution of species has supplied a focus for ecological philosophers. Within his thinking, natural selection played an important role as the ecological philosophers have acknowledged. The concept of natural selection reveals that the interactive relationship between a species and its habitat is one of the primary factors governing biological evolution.

When a new consciousness of the environment comes to light there often follows a new formulation of an ecological philosophical stance vis à vis the environment. Hardly anything has a more urgent claim on us today than to develop a new philosophical ecological consciousness. Only when we conceive ourselves at home in the universe and not estranged from it can we create a cooperative society reflecting the unity of being philosophically at home in the universe. However, an ecological philosophical stance does not necessarily reflect any universal consciousness and does not necessarily reveal the sources out of which it has been formulated. If we look around us, or if we analyze our own selves, we find many types of human and infra-

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within a programme, yet forming in combination with other threads, part of a particular programme. In this metaphor, the digital code (the sequence of identified events) works as a particular explanation within a particular programme.
human activity. We find an interaction, a tension, a giving and taking, a hostility and a friendship. We also experience a bridging and a breaking between the material (physical) and the mental (metaphysical), between the present and the past, and between the individual and the collective. Individually, we experience claims by our bodies on our minds and claims by our minds upon our bodies. Collectively, we find the claims of other personalities, or of our own personalities, upon our present existence. From an eco-philosophical perspective, these claims affect the family, society, nation, race, or religious tradition to which we belong.

Ecological philosophers recognize themselves not only as social agents but also as intellectual ones. As a result of this recognition, alteration of the environment by their activity is usually brought about consciously. An ecological philosophy that is the basis of a conscious evolution of the environment examines the relationships of all social activity. Ecological philosophers ponder the environment qualitatively. As a result, ecological philosophers suggest changes to the technological and philosophical approach to our existing socio-political relationships. To think sub specie machinae (in light of physical forces) replaces the view of an infallible God as well as the view of fallible humanity. However, the view sub specie machinae, in itself, lacks significant human involvement, hence the need of an appropriate ecological philosophy. In the contemporary Western
context, we cannot escape technology as affecting our corporal being any more than we can escape eating, breathing, and thinking. The important thing is to learn from techno-digital experience an expanded way of living.

However, ecological philosophers who keep contact with reality must look objectively to the cosmos. The cosmos existed long before we came upon it. Concerning the future of humanity, Albert Schweitzer has remarked, “Who knows but that the earth will circle round the sun once more without man upon it?” 10 We must, therefore, not place ourselves at the center of the cosmos, but understand ourselves in relation to it, somewhat as artists experience their place within modern technology; somewhat as participants in an all-embracing relationship to the environment that develops our abilities and responsibilities. We need to remember that all significant pre-Christian philosophers, especially those of ancient Greece, regarded national life within their environment as an art, and regarded Beauty as characterizing art. So notes Dickinson that “philosophers of history have been amply justified in characterizing the whole Greek epoch as pre-eminentely of Beauty.” 11

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10 Albert Schweitzer 1999:4 The Spiritual Life: Selected Writings of Albert Schweitzer Ecco Press.
1.3 METHODOLOGY IN ECOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY

Here, I discuss some of the basic methodological principles of an ecological philosophy. These principles are rooted in scientific knowledge and social action or praxis. Scientific knowledge and social praxis deepen our understanding of an ecological philosophy and help shape a more effective strategy for environmental sustainability. The basic principle of eco-philosophy is that of dialectics. Through dialectics, we can distinguish the evolution of our social relationships, from their simplest to their highest levels. We can also distinguish the self-organized, objective patterns of interaction of a society and of an individual. Dialectics is a most useful philosophical method in disclosing the relationships of the social sciences to the environment.

It is important for us to realize that our consciousness does not embrace reality fully and cannot alter or abolish the objective patterns of nature, society, or the formation of the human personality. Nor can consciousness determine the process of its coming to an awareness of its own functioning and developing. These patterns operate objectively and independently whether they are recognized or not. The general course of events always contains elements of the conscious and the unconscious, the realized and unrealized, the foreseen and unforeseen, in an historically changing relationship. However, our consciousness
of the facts of experience influence our intentional activity. Thus, humans can create a heightened role within their decision-making processes for consciousness regarding their relationship with the environment. We may account for a consciously creative role of the two disciplines philosophy and theology within ecology. In the Christian tradition each discipline gives to and receives from the other. This is so since human consciousness attends to both philosophy and theology as the history of ideas has shown.

The methodology of eco-philosophy gives rise to the notion of holism in integrating life sustaining values within the human environment. The emergence of a holistic view of life within our present existential experience challenges theologians to face joining with philosophers in raising consciousness through a phenomenological methodology. A phenomenological philosophical methodology discloses the possibility of a co-creative human activity within the environment.

1.4 THE DESIGN OF AN ECOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY

Our life is constantly changing, extending into and perfecting itself within our environment. Overall, I note that our invasive action upon the environment is disclosing a variety of all its life forms. This variety arises from the fact that initially our life is not consciously experienced as a unity but as a multiplicity. We
live within a number of social, theoretical, ethical, and moral purposes whose unity is not our conscious starting point but rather an intended goal which, in fact, harks back to a pre-reflective consciousness. But there is more to eco-philosophy than a nostalgic return to an imagined unified beginning. Ecological philosophers, in order to free themselves from the constraints of the scholasticism of the Middle Ages and to understand modern life, find it necessary to conceive an anthropology that recon structs the human subject in terms that are essentially different from those of the Middle Ages. A Marxist interpretation of the subject is one such example of the design of an ecological philosophy.

In designing an ecological philosophy based on our experience, the question arises: Do we need to return to understanding nature as interpreted in a pre-scientific philosophical perspective? The notion that we need to return to pre-scientific understanding is not new and is, in fact, quite common. The high degree of interest in traditional spiritual interpretation is an example of this. This desire to return to pre-scientific interpretation may be interpreted in various ways. In hindsight, we see that ecological philosophy has passed through various evolutionary phases. Among the first was Darwinism. Darwinism, as a philosophy, gave rise to an evolutionary understanding of the environment. It conceived the focus of philosophy to be the evolving science of relationships of an
organism with its environment. This philosophy eventually involved into ecological philosophy which focuses on the biological sciences to the present day. Darwinism, in its various expressions, understood the human population as a biological and social phenomenon within the environment. Marxism, as a phenomenon is an example from the “social sciences” in understanding the evolutionary patterns of society’s interaction with the environment. Marxist patterns identified the human population as a materialistic, social, and biological phenomenon, a conception derived from that of Darwin's evolutionary perspective.

For ecological phenomenological philosophy to function as a design, one has to understand it in a double sense. First, ecological philosophy discloses the expression of an integrated understanding of the subject’s own experience of the environment. Second, an ecological philosophy is but part of the whole of our collective experiential outlook. Thus, in its design, an ecological phenomenological philosophy takes into account both senses.

1.5 THE NORMATIVE CHARACTER OF ECOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY

Ecological philosophy constitutes a normative, or ethical, character of human activity. As a phenomenological philosophical stance, or way of interpreting experience, it
provides for thresholds that disclose further knowledge and meaning of ethical social activity. In our thinking, humans formalize such thinking that arises from our experience because only then will the intended purpose of our actions be recognized. Much current Western philosophizing is preoccupied with discussions on secondary issues. These discussions have lost touch with the elemental and existential questions regarding life and its environment. They have become theoretical questions finding personal satisfaction when discussing problems of a purely academic nature. Many Western philosophers have been occupied with elucidating philosophy itself, instead of struggling to achieve a cosmic view that would lead to real change in the environment and in human self-understanding. Mostly Western philosophers have not been governed by the notion that the one thing needful is a relational unity of ourselves with the cosmos. Rather, they have continued to emphasize the dichotomy between the cosmos and humanity. Thus, humanity is in danger of being satisfied with lowered ideals and with an inferior conception of the cosmos.

In preventing satisfaction with lowered ideals and an inferior conception of the cosmos ecological philosophers have an important role to play in the development of an advanced society. An ecological philosophy discloses an integrating normative pattern for both the individual and society, such that neither the individual nor society becomes subject to the other.
Each preserves its proper status in a mutual relationship. Within an ecological philosophy the sciences freely admit that their normative disclosures of reality are subject to reconstruction.

Normative development within an ecological philosophy transforms the reality around us quite naturally. An ecological philosophy transcends the constraints of Hellenistic thought, providing new thresholds for further development and philosophical criticism. The transcending Hellenistic constraints represents a stage in the evolution of human thought. The evolution of ecological philosophy is an extremely complicated and many-sided activity requiring a restructuring of the human consciousness of the environment and the social restructuring of the components of the environment. In place of analytical philosophical thinking, phenomenological philosophical thinking may serve a useful purpose in disclosing an intended purpose of social and ethical development.

In designing an ecological philosophy, various personally-focused and ethical questions arise. They are: Shall I relate only to myself and not care for others? Shall I like only my kind of human being and dislike all other kinds of human beings? Shall I attend only to humans and ignore other species? Do I attend only to sentient beings and thereby omit that which is divine? It is becoming apparent to enlightened thinkers that ecological philosophy, along with a spiritual knowledge discloses an opportunity for humans to explore the dimensions of depth,
growth, development and enhancement of such questions arising within the design of our contemporary environment.

1.6 CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING IN ECOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY

Within human history, significant crises have arisen more than once in our relationships within the cosmos. And in recent decades, qualitative shifts occurred in interpreting our relationships to the environment. Today we have reached several critical points in areas affecting the environment such as water and air pollution, greenhouse gases, and sustainability of resources. The present ecological context presents a unique opportunity for a critical philosophical understanding of the environment. A critical philosophical understanding of modern society provides opportunities for improved relationships with our environment. Ecological philosophy, a critical philosophy in its own right, has an influence on the construction of social and existential systems that form these relationships with the environment. Therefore, it is expedient for us to contemplate in more detail the subject–object relationship in eco-philosophy from a phenomenological perspective. It is also very important to understand the processes of our interaction with the environment as phenomena and to develop methods for a comprehensive and fundamentally new approach to future development. One approach is to contemplate the environment as an organism and
the transformation of that organism caused by human intervention. Given that connection, enlightened philosophers will speak of an intellectual and existential revolution aimed at taking into greater account the ecological principles of development beyond the biological sciences.

The need to understand the human connection with the environment phenomenologically is beginning to take hold of the Western mind. Phenomenological philosophers realize that the principles disclosed in an ecological understanding of the environment depend on the social conditions that satisfy the spiritual and ecological needs of the individual. In this context, we can distinguish the collective human mind from the singular human mind. The collective human mind is crafted out of the activity of singular human minds which continue to dialogue among themselves that, in turn, constitutes part of the cosmic environment.

Given the human existential context the only true philosophical object is the subject who experiences. No other forms of life philosophize. Human critical understanding in ecological philosophy takes place within the national and economic culture as well as other features of the human environment. Thus, we are subsequently presented with a considerable variety of philosophical opportunities serving as the basis for a democratic engagement with the environment and, at the same time, deepening our awareness of social consciousness.
The global character of ecological difficulties calls for a re-evaluation of philosophical perspectives on an international scale. Philosophers who remain within the classical metaphysical modes of thinking cannot envision a re-evaluated approach. In not understanding the dialectics of a phenomenological philosophy, classical metaphysical thinkers presume a non-Hellenistic perspective to be an error and the cause of many epistemological problems. Failing to understand that philosophical thinking was evolving before the scientific era, classical philosophers have underestimated the potential for a phenomenological philosophical point of view arising out of the traditional Western point of view. The phenomenological point of view requires a revolution in epistemological thinking, that ranks quantitative philosophical thinking as secondary to qualitative philosophical thinking. In the quantitative philosophical approach humans "conquer" nature and sap the natural foundations of their own life by disrupting the interaction between themselves and the environment in which they live. In short, contemporary Western thinkers must evolve out of a scholastic philosophy into phenomenological philosophy.

The human environment stimulates and evokes an intellectual response from philosophers. A fresh intellectual response becomes effective only when the evolution of ideas is appreciated. Yet, in critically evaluating any new views and subsequently abandoning inadequate ideas philosophers must
not forget that the truth is not exclusively, nor ultimately, apprehended through a Western philosophical consciousness alone. Critical reflection cannot remain as a theory. It must become a praxis incorporating non-Western perspectives. That is why, when trying to solve certain problems, we also have to be extremely cautious of our philosophical understanding, treating it only as an opportunity for further reflection on the human experience. Philosophical understanding develops over the course of time and only then within the minds of individuals who have been reflecting over generations on their experience. However, everyone is not a philosopher. Critical understanding, as such, has not been able to do more than evaluate and clarify convictions and reveal from within its focus on certain limitations and possibilities that tend to converge towards a better future.

1.7 A PHENOMENOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF ECOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY

Since Descartes, Western philosophers have divided the environment into parts and elements in order to understand it more conveniently. They contrast and compare one part with another intending to construct a total understanding for the inquirer. Today, however, it is necessary to study the environment not through compartmentalizing it, but by apprehending it holistically and interpreting the knowledge
gained with the intent to understand the immanent and transcendent relationships of all its constituent parts. In that respect, it is reasonable to ask which philosophical stance or approach may become the most advantageous point of departure for an integrating ecological philosophy. A phenomenological approach is the answer. The methodology of a phenomenological approach leads us to understand our experience from a coaxial perspective. We must interpret our experience with respect to both the vertical and the horizontal perspectives, of the appearance of our environment, as it were. As well, truth is disclosed in the phenomenological knowledge of a coaxial subjective and objective perspective of the world of human existence.

A phenomenological consciousness rejects a metaphysical dichotomy or ontological separation between subject and object. Subject and object are ontologically distinguishable but not separable. Thus, a relational unity of subject and object appears within the environment through a phenomenological consciousness. This unity discloses relational human life to be the highest form of social existence in an ecological system.

The most important principle of a phenomenological ecological philosophy is the interaction between that which is perceived as a subject, i.e., an agent, and that which is conceived as an object, i.e., an actor, in a dialectical relationship. We must understand this dialectic as a developmental activity, rather than
as an ideology. That is, interactivity necessarily constitutes the unity of the social life of the cosmos. However, humans will not resolve the philosophical and environmental problems of existence by blotting out the dualism, not the duality that is experienced within our universe. It is only through conceiving these relationships as a duality, i.e., phenomenologically, not as a dualism, i.e., classically, can humans resolve their philosophical and environmental problems. In other words, from a phenomenological perspective, humans may conceive themselves to be at home in the universe and as co-creating constituents of the universe.

1.8 HUMANITARIANISM AND ECOLOGICAL PHILOSOPHY

The necessity of a humanitarian view of the world emerges from human experience of the environment as the place in which the needs and the aspirations of humanity, both individually and collectively, enter human consciousness. Because of technical advancement, the material world that constitutes the environment has already shown the product of humanity’s activity. This transformation of the environment by means of modern technique demonstrates the necessity of balancing humanity’s physical, social, inner, and transcendental experiences. This is not to say that there is more than one world, there is only the lebenswelt, or the life-world of experience of the individual. This
balancing or harmonization of relationships is one of the most important aspects of modern humanitarianism. Human relationships within the environment are a major focus for contemporary research among the philosophers. However, no matter how significant the material environment is, philosophers must not underestimate the importance of the transcendental aspect of the environment. The disclosure of the transcendental aspect of the environment is truly of global significance.

The transcendental aspect of the environment not only concerns the individual intellectual and emotional outlook; it also embraces all the collective forms of relationships beginning with the family, through to all types of communities, all gradations of social levels, classes, nations, states, and countries that regulate human activity. Humanitarian philosophers pay much attention to what Western thinkers sometimes call the “identity crisis,” that is, the loss of a sense of one’s place in a modern, constantly changing world and a loss of human self-esteem and of intrinsic value. We are faced with the danger of forgetting something that is ultimately a most important point from a Western perspective. When philosophizing about global problems affecting a broad population and even humanity as a whole, it is the single person, the unique personality that is considered as primary.

The focus of ecological philosophy is often directed to the external environment, with a concern for the preservation of the
environment. Nevertheless, life calls our attention to the human personality and to the deeper relationships within community life in order to discover how to avoid the disasters that often threaten our environment. In the search for the most effective forms of philosophical consciousness, our attention is naturally concentrated on problems affecting the mass of people. The attention given by philosophers to epistemology has a long history. Their attention to epistemology is complex and varied and takes into account many factors closely interwoven with the issue of human knowledge. Thus, we need to think about the individual as he or she relates to the transcendental (metaphysical) dimension within the cosmos.

What is meant by saying that human reason makes life physically better and transcendentally richer? It may be said that it is a matter of understanding one’s own identity in relationship to the physical and metaphysical environment. A proper understanding of human identity, which is an illuminative purpose of all philosophies attempts to resolve the root conflicts within all human interactions and the conflicts within the environment. In other words, it is in understanding humanity’s place in the cosmos that reason makes life, up to this point in history, at least, physically better and transcendentally richer. Humans resemble, but differ from, other things in the cosmos. Human identity is the understanding of one’s significance in the context of the cosmos. Identity issues arise between individuals
and the group within the human environment of the cosmos. Identity, as disclosed within ecological philosophy, is not an ultimate, nor a self-subsisting idea. Rather, it is a notion of the individual as an evolving, organic subject; a becoming, not a being. Identity, for humans, arises from the self-reflexive activity of the individual within the environment, or in transcendental activity, or both.

A phenomenological consciousness of human identity leaves no possibility for a transcendental void. Human identity serves as the basis of physical and metaphysical life and discloses a unique personality of true worth. Thus, the task of a phenomenological ecological philosophy is to make a deep unprejudiced evaluation and to seek ways of overcoming any cause that may result in de-personalization and de-identification resulting in a socially and transcendentally impoverished existence. Failing to undertake this humanitarian evaluation leads to an identity crisis, to despair and self-annihilation.

1.9 THE PHILOSOPHICAL EVOLUTION OF ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

In the thinking of some critics, philosophers have merely interpreted the world in various ways; however, according to Marx in his 11th thesis on Feuerbach, the point is to change the world. This is a new posing of the ecological problem. The Marxist perspective has been significant in developing new
insights concerning society and the environment. The notion of an ecological philosophy that changes the world has evolved comparatively recently. Global ecology and social ecology have become contemporary expressions of our concern for the environment and are among the most recognized global issues of modern times. We have become aware of the significance of ecological issues as the planet has ceased to be an unlimited absorber of the wastes of industry. Signs of irreversible degeneration in the environment began to appear as the scale and intensity of abuse of the environment increased. For many philosophers this has turned their attention to the dialectical process uniting the social life and the environment, and to engage in an effort to revise and improve humanity’s social relationship with the environment.

A phenomenological philosophical understanding of the evolution of relations between society and the environment discloses a new pattern of ecological interactions of subject and object in the cosmos. Thus, humans engage in the highest form of existential activity known, that is, in reasoned social activity.

In a cosmos that reveals an inter-subjective transcendence to its inhabitants, the physical environment is at a lower level in the hierarchy of the forms of being. With this realization in mind, the French palaeontologist and Christian evolutionist, Teilhard de Chardin, has remarked that if humanity had had unlimited opportunities to spread and settle from the very
beginning, its development would have been something quite unimaginable. The thresholds of interaction of humanity within the environment must include a transcendent consciousness. Thresholds of interaction that include a transcendent consciousness present the possibility of establishing goals and creating the means to promote the evolution of human activity.

1.10 THE SOCIO-CULTURAL ORIGIN OF ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Philosophers trained in a socio-cultural philosophical system reflect upon the relations between humanity and the environment. The development of practical philosophical systems based on the thinking of René Descartes and, the use of philosophical principles of understanding introduced by Francis Bacon, furthered modern science’s dominant position in the environmental system. The French materialistic thinkers, when analyzing the relationship between humanity and the environment, often based their thinking on the anthropological and ontological ideas of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), and Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), and Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872). Their contributions did not expel the various forms of the idea that an abiding universal divinity accompanies humanity within the environment.

The attempt at integrating scientific knowledge and art forms in order to satisfy the individual’s social and spiritual
needs pre-dates contemporary philosophy. Today, integrating modern scientific knowledge and art forms in order to satisfy the individual’s social and spiritual needs continues within an ecological philosophy. Ecological philosophy, enriched by a dialectical approach, discloses the vertical and horizontal perspectives of the structure of knowledge. This dialectical approach makes it possible to make a conscious and critical valuation of the environment in a manner appropriate to any given culture. Through a coaxial consciousness of a vertical and a horizontal perspective, humans may engage in a global programme to create integrating principles within modern cultures and their environment.

Historically, by the 1980’s a reciprocal relationship between ecology and culture was becoming more and more understood and accepted by philosophers. Through a consciousness of their reciprocal relationship, humans have come to understand the totality of spiritual and social values constituting their environment. Through a holistic understanding of the environment, that is, an understanding that an entity is greater and other than the sum of its individual parts, environmental systems act as complex sets of socio-cultural processes being greater that their individual processes.
1.11 SUMMARY

Modern (and postmodern) experience confirms that a re-evaluation of philosophical and scientific methodologies is needed. The point of a philosophical re-evaluation of ecological problems is that philosophers not impose their individual value systems upon the environment. A re-evaluated philosophical approach to ecology increasingly reflects a synthesis, or integration, of the previously separated areas of modern scientific knowledge and social practice. A profound evolutionary development may be distinguished between an ecological philosophy that helps theoretical philosophers comprehend the environment and an ecological philosophy that helps practical philosophers transform the environment.

Ecological philosophers ponder the conditions of existence of living organisms and the mutual relations between organisms and the world they inhabit. Ecological philosophers take the stance that no single interpretation of reality can compel a rational consensus of all minds, and that philosophy cannot convincingly support a single value system. From an ecological philosophical perspective, philosophers help humanity organize itself not only as a social creature but also as an intellectual one. An ecological philosophy, in contact with reality, must look objectively to the cosmos. We do need to experience ourselves somewhat subjectively as artisans within a modern techno-digital
world in an all-embracing activity that develops our human capabilities.

Theologians have need of the phenomenological methodology. A phenomenological methodology discloses the central notion of co-creation within the environment. Ecological phenomenological philosophy, as a methodology, discloses the integration of life sustaining values within the human consciousness. Ecological philosophers find it necessary both to understand life itself and to conceive an anthropology that reconstructs the contemporary human subject in terms essentially different from those of the Middle Ages. Given contemporary consciousness, an understanding of depth and mystery, of drama and pathos, of spirituality, of the whole experience of life, of the world and of God, all will be at variance with the Middle Ages.

Philosophers realize that the principles of an ecological phenomenological understanding of the environment depend on social conditions that satisfy both the spiritual and temporal needs of the individual. The global character of ecological difficulties calls for an intentional re-evaluation of philosophical perspectives on an international scale. The philosophical enterprise revolves around how humans relate to experiential facts and subsequently design an appropriate intellectual and practical interpretation.

A relational unity of the human subject with the physical environment is the most important principle of a
phenomenological ecological philosophy. In other words, through this dialectical relationship humans conceive themselves to be at home in the universe, and as co-creating constituents in the cosmos.
PHENOMENOLOGICAL ECO-PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS

2.1 A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ECO-PHILOSOPHICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

One intended purpose of an ecological philosophy, or eco-philosophy, as I speak of it in this chapter, is to construct methods of thinking that will assist us in our understanding of the activity of life in the world. That is to say that an eco-philosophy attends to the transcendental, the spiritual, as well as to the material aspects of our environment. In the West, the scholastic philosophical method, or some variation of it, has been used to evaluate transcendental or spiritual experience. In modern times, however, other interpretive options have become available, such as phenomenological philosophy. Scholastic philosophy is no longer the privileged supporter of theology in the interpretation of the universe. The modern sciences have become partners in the interpretive dialogue with theology and their particular methods have had to be considered in the interpretation of the environment.

A phenomenological eco-philosophical approach is increasingly preferred by many philosophers in interpreting their experiences. A phenomenological interpretation is qualitatively different from the scholastic method of interpretation in that a
phenomenological interpretation discloses notions of a personal subjective consciousness in contrast to objective and external ideals. A phenomenological philosophy does not disclose an idealistic theoretical pre-understanding. When supported by scholastic philosophy, theologians are required to conceptualize their mental notions as epistemological ideals susceptible to an a priori understanding. But when supported by a phenomenological eco-philosophy, on the other hand, theologians are required to inquire into the subjective meaning of religious experience in the world. Such inquiry into subjective meaning is not limited to the social description of religious experience, but includes that which is transcendent and spiritual in one’s experience. Phenomenological disclosure is relative to the interpretive agent and thus, not bound to the objective intellectual constructs of any single philosophy but is characterized by the cultural context of the agent, which has provided a threshold for phenomenological philosophical interpretation in lieu of the scholastic formulations. In their respective approaches, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) sought ways of philosophical understanding that would be more authentic in giving meaning to human experience than traditional Western metaphysics. In the theological inquiry that follows, I follow a phenomenological eco-philosophical understanding that engages the subject’s immediate, total and holistic perception of the environment.
2. 2 AN ECO-PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGICAL INQUIRY

Theologians, supported by phenomenological and eco-philosophical perspectives concern themselves with the notion of becoming, an evolutionary concept, more than with the idea of being, a scholastic concept, in the interpretation of religious experience. However, their inquiry into being and becoming is not a philosophical metaphysics of the type that has been elsewhere described as the “Queen of the Sciences.” ¹² Rather, the intention of phenomenological theological inquiry, according to Laycock, is to reach “God without God,” a phrase coined by Husserl. ¹³

Phenomenological theological inquiry interprets a present human experience in a manner similar to the way in which poets and artists interpret experience. The style of theological interpretation adopted by the phenomenological method of disclosure reflects an existential, not an idealistic, consciousness of life. Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) was among the first to initiate this style of inquiry into life’s experiences. Other philosophers have had similar thoughts. J. G. Fichte, W. J.

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Schelling, Martin Heidegger, G. W. F. Hegel, L. Feuerbach, K. Marx, and F. Nietzsche also adopted an existential approach in their philosophical inquiries.

The scholastic method of philosophy was common to both Roman Catholic and Anglican theology. D. Liderbach tells us that Modernists insisted upon the importance of phenomena as the starting point to describe and interpret the givenness of experience. 14 Although not phenomenological philosophers, George Tyrrell (1861-1909) and Alfred Loisy (1857-1940) are significant representatives of Modernist theological thinking and their work consists of an existential evaluation of the expressions of religious understanding appropriate to their day. Within the Anglican tradition, the Modernist theologians were known as “modern churchmen” and the most influential among them were H. D. A. Major and W. R. Inge. Cyril Garbett has noted that large numbers of the churchmen of the day regarded the claims of Christianity as inconsistent with modern ways of thought. Phrases like the Fatherhood of God, Salvation through Christ, and Life after Death seemed to them to have been meaningless platitudes. 15 Thus, new theological understandings based on a new philosophy need to be constructed to prepare the way for the future of religious belief. In the future, and for some of us today, religious belief must take on the new form of an existential

phenomenological eco-philosophy such as supported by Leslie Dewart’s notion of de-Hellenization.\(^\text{16}\)

In scholastic thinking, theoretical questions and answers are formulated and governed by a Hellenized and fixed idea of nature and being. Theological de-Hellenization reflects a phenomenological consciousness of experience that has replaced the scholastic understanding of experience. As such, de-Hellenization presents a new threshold of activity in theological interpretation. Unfortunately, philosophical de-Hellenization has been discounted and subsequently abandoned by many thinkers within Western philosophy. As a result, many of them have missed the opportunity to encounter a new threshold of theological inquiry initiated by the Modernist movement.

Various schools of philosophical thought are culturally and historically identifiable. That is, schools of philosophical thought have evolved. They are a product of their times and environment. Terms have changed to reflect a new consciousness within the historical development in philosophy. By way of example, in phenomenological thought, \textit{existence}, which is a classical idea contrasted with \textit{essence}, is re-conceived in terms of \textit{becoming}. And \textit{union}, a classical idea, is re-conceived as \textit{unity}, a relational notion, just as \textit{necessity}, a classical idea contrasted with \textit{contingency}, is replaced by the phenomenological notion of \textit{freedom}.

Theologians continually search for new and meaningful ways to understand religious experience. No hidden or ideal meanings are disclosed in phenomenological theological language in the interpretation of experience. Notions come into form only in light of the subject’s mindful intent. J. Morreall concludes that appealing to hidden meaning in theological language is a negative undertaking since no hidden meanings exist. Human words are based on intentions formed in the mind and if theological language is possible then theological intentions must also be possible. We should not spend our time trying to appeal to hidden meanings that do not exist in theological language. Rather than attempt to identify hidden meanings, phenomenological theological thinking assigns religious meaning to phenomena. Phenomenological theology is thus freed from all allegorical limitations of human language. That the phenomenological method presents new thresholds for theological inquiry can be demonstrated by philosophers and theologians, but whether phenomenologists of religion have accurately grasped what is demanded by these methods is doubtful.

Within contemporary philosophical thinking in the West, a renaissance is in the making as phenomenological disclosure reveals new thresholds of consciousness within Western culture.

T. Ryba notes that many observers, both inside and outside the Roman Catholic Church, make the inference that the church’s theology may be on the verge of another grand synthesis that might supplant Thomism. 19 This grand synthesis would be contingent upon the abandonment of traditional theoretical thinking, according to A. T. Tymieniecka. 20 A way forward for contemporary religious philosophy in interpreting environmental issues, I suggest, is through a phenomenological eco-philosophy. In what follows I present three phenomenological thresholds for eco-philosophical reflection.

2. 3 AN ECO-PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION: SCHOLASTIC APPREHENSION SHIFTS TO PHENOMENOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION

According to L. Gilkey, 21 in Western theological understanding, debate has moved from the question of the structure of religious language (an issue of scholastic apprehension) to the more radical question of a mode of meaningful discourse (an issue of phenomenological interpretation) in which the interpreter is part of the experience. Scholastic theological understanding does not falsify the interpretive task. Rather, scholastic understanding is inadequate

19 Ryba The Essence of Phenomenology p. ix.
20 Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka Phenomenology and Science in Contemporary European Thought Noonday 1962.
for the contemporary interpretive task. Phenomenological theologians continue to look to new disclosures to replace scholastic ideology. Theological interpretation is undergoing an aggiornamento, an up-dating, or better, a ressourcement, a return to the sources, and becoming disengaged from a culture that no longer exists as it encounters new thresholds for interpretation.

The environment to be interpreted is changing. A co-responsible and co-creative relationship is disclosed through a phenomenological consciousness of this environment. This is significant because humanity may now present itself as co-responsible and co-creative agent with the divine life. In a scholastic ideology, this understanding of co-creatorship is not tenable. M. Merleau-Ponty offers a criticism of the scholastic ideology in that Catholic critics wish for things to reveal a God-directed orientation of the world and wish that humanity, like things, be nothing but a nature heading toward its perfection. 22

In theology, no hermeneutic, no clear method, no set of rules secures certainty of interpretation and understanding of religious experience. However, a relational approach suggests participatory activity within phenomenological philosophical interpretation. This participatory activity is the difference between scholastic apprehension and phenomenological interpretation. In phenomenological understanding, the Christian interprets his or her life-world through a theologia crucis of

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22 Maurice Merleau-Ponty Sense and Non-Sense Northwestern University Press 1964.
relational experience. The *theologia crucis* interpretation is an existential threshold for phenomenological experience. For most Western Christians, modernity, or postmodernity, is the current context of the *theologia crucis*, and neither can, nor will, any longer borrow the criteria for interpretation from models supplied by an earlier epoch. The *theologia crucis* creates normativity out of itself.  

\[\text{23}\] I suggest that the next stage of philosophical creation by the *theologia crucis* will be within posthumanism. According to G. Kaufman, in the phenomenological existential interpretation of the *theologia crucis*, theology becomes fundamentally an activity of construction and reconstruction, not one of theoretical ideology or exposition, as it has ordinarily been understood in scholastic theology.  

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\[\text{2.4 ECO-PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION: DICHOTOMOUS KNOWLEDGE SHIFTS TO UNITARY KNOWLEDGE}\]

Another threshold of interpretation is the philosophical shift in thinking from a scholastic to a phenomenological form of knowledge. F. Sontag suggests that when philosophy regains its proper role, that is, asking questions that no science can determine for it, it becomes less certain, but also more flexible.
so that theology can once again utilize its support. In the shift from static, scholastic knowledge to active, participatory knowledge certain terms are not to be confused. Subjectivism and objectivism are terms that denote specific doctrines or systems of knowledge, whereas subjectivity and objectivity are terms that connote a phenomenological and relational interpretation of the life-world or environment. In Western ideology, characteristics modeled after anthropomorphic concepts are predicated of that which is divine. Further, when applied to deity, these predicates are often interpreted as real and as constituting deity in se. That divinity is believed to exist or to be Other, or is understood as Other, does not reveal anything of the divine constitution or whether God, or gods, exist. In contrast to classical ideology, phenomenological interpretation does not present a particular, yet common, or, separate but universal, objective external reality. Scholastic philosophy/ideology posits that a true, absolute being, one who is all-powerful, all-knowing, and transcendent, personally exists over and above the temporal world, imparting knowledge to the knower. As a result, in scholastic philosophy such absolute being lacks the potential for any development or evolution. This contrasts with phenomenological philosophy in which an evolutionary understanding of relative becoming, as opposed to absolute being, is disclosed and relationships are socially intended and

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constructed rather than imposed and determined through external theoretical categories.

A relational knowledge is a knowledge that discloses a phenomenological existential interpretation of those social and cultural symbols that have not lost their power to convince us, according to Paul Tillich. 26 Since phenomenological interpretation is socially constructed, Kaufman notes that we must see human existence in terms of these symbolical constructions that form a phenomenological unity, not dichotomous union of subject and object. 27

2. 5 AN ECO-PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION: IDEALISTIC LANGUAGE SHIFTS TO PARTICIPATORY LANGUAGE

I follow W. F. Zuurdeeg’s interpretation that theological language is convictional language of a special type. 28 However, for C. Botha, theological language is not necessarily confessional language. 29 I suggest that theological convictional language is unique due to its participatory, not merely descriptive, character. Further, theological language defies conventional semantics,

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29 Chris Botha The Cave of Adullam or Achor, a Door of Hope? A History of the Faculty of Theology of the University of South Africa University of South Africa Press 1990.
according to Raschke, and is self-consciously revelatory. In identifying the field of participatory language, Hans Küng tells us that it includes daily common, human and ambiguous experiences. Further, Gregory Baum observes that many Christians desire to speak about reality in continuity with ordinary experiences of their lives. All this presents an opportunity for humans to encounter in their daily lives new thresholds for theological interpretation from an eco-philosophical and phenomenological perspective, not a classical idealistic one. C. E. Winquist suggests that interpreting existence through the word of God shifts our idealistic language to a participatory language. L. Dewart suggests that the Berkeleyan view *esse est percipi* (being is perception) may be rendered *esse est referri* (being is relational) within our contemporary threshold of experience. *Esse est referri*, as participatory (phenomenological) language, is preferred to *esse est percipi*, which is idealistic (classical) language.

2.6 SUMMARY

Scholastic philosophy is no longer the primary supporter of theology in the interpretation of the cosmos. A phenomenological eco-philosophical language is preferred by many to interpret their experiences. A phenomenological eco-philosophical inquiry addresses the notion of *becoming* in the interpretation of personal experience. Theological de-Hellenization reflects an interpretation of experience through a phenomenological consciousness that has replaced the scholastic method of interpretation. As such, de-Hellenization presents a new threshold of activity in theological interpretation. Unfortunately, the activity of de-Hellenization has been discounted and subsequently abandoned by many current thinkers within Western philosophy. As a result, much of humanity has missed the opportunity to encounter a new threshold of theological inquiry. Scholastic theological understanding does not falsify the interpretive task. Rather, scholastic understanding is inadequate for the contemporary interpretive task. Phenomenological theologians continue to look to new understandings to replace scholastic ideology. Many Western-educated individuals understand themselves as faithful, co-responsible agents and seek new thresholds for theological inquiry that will express their participatory role in the religious interpretation of the life-world. In theology, no hermeneutic, no
clear method, no set of rules secures a certainty of apprehension and understanding of religious experience. However, a relational approach suggests a participatory consciousness within phenomenological philosophical understanding.

Scholastic philosophy/ideology posits that a true, absolute being, one who is all-powerful, all-knowing, and transcendent, personally exists over and above the temporal world, imparting knowledge to the knower. Thus, in scholastic philosophy, absolute being lacks the potential for any development or evolution. This contrasts with phenomenological philosophy, in which an evolutionary understanding of becoming, as opposed to absolute being, is disclosed and relationships are consciously intended and constructed rather than determined by external theoretical categories.
ALFRED ADLER’S SOCIAL INTEREST
A Holistic Pastoral Psychology


I write as a theologian who encourages, with appropriate adaptation, the Individual Psychology (IP) of Alfred Adler as a pastoral tool for Christian practice. Although never formally trained in Adlerian psychology, I recognize through hindsight that I have employed the “common sense” approach to living reflected in Adlerian psychology in my pastoral practice over the last twenty years or so. Adler’s common sense approach to living is set out in his theory of Social Interest (SI). The German term for SI is Gemeinschaftsgefühl. SI refers to a feeling of belonging, of being accepted within a community. Further, I argue that SI constitutes and distinguishes our human nature such that SI is more than mere civil association. SI reveals a transcendental understanding in its more developed stages. This transcendental understanding invites an individual to future spiritual development. On the web

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35 I understand this term within an exclusively Christian context, in that a pastor “…is one of the gifts to the church (Eph. 4:11).” (Douglas, Elwell & Toon, The concise dictionary of the Christian tradition, s.v pastor, 1989).
site of the Alfred Adler Institute of San Francisco, Stein and Edwards write: 37 “Adler believed that the ultimate purpose of psychotherapy was to help people contribute to the social evolution of mankind. Müller added a spiritual element to this idea. He suggested that a human being's mission in life was to work in partnership with God to complete an unfinished world (Müller 1992).” 38 Adler's understanding of SI, appropriately adapted, is a highly effective tool at the “...level of preventive rather than corrective intervention” 39

From my experience, the classical approach to understanding meaning and purpose in human life (i.e., philosophy) as a tool to address life’s tasks in western society is often pastorally ineffective. To my mind, the classical understanding is inadequate and renders our life in western society somewhat anxiety-ridden. Classical philosophy fails to work in the contemporary western pastoral approach. A contemporary psychology is needed to replace classical philosophy in pastoral counselling. In my pastoral counselling, I abandon classical understanding in favour of a holistic understanding. Holistic understanding, as a non-classical theory, claims that a living organism “... has a reality other and greater than the sum of its

38 Müller, A 1992. You shall be a blessing: Main traits of a religious humanism. Alfred Adler Institute of San Francisco.
constituent parts.” ⁴⁰ Ellison and Smith state that “holistic conceptions of healthy personality and functioning are an integral part of the personality theories of Adler, Allport, Maslow, and Rogers ....” ⁴¹ Adler’s holistic theory is “... intimately connected to humanistic philosophy of living.” ⁴² It is this connection to philosophy that makes Adlerian IP a desirable pastoral tool.

Gladson and Lucas suggest that since Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung seem overworked with respect to psychological and religious themes, new ground might be explored in the psychologies of Viktor Frankl and Alfred Adler. ⁴³ I write to explore Adler’s notions and to encourage his way of thinking in pastoral practice. My conclusions are tentative and subject to refinement. In my approach, I hope to be faithful to Adler's pioneering intention and break new ground (O'Connell 1997: 114).

Adlerian SI reflects a holistic psychology.\(^{45}\)

Adler’s SI is friendly towards a religious thinking and through a holistic approach provides the Christian pastor with a new way of pastoral understanding. Alfred Adler, Jewish born, converted to Protestantism in later life but not out of religious conviction. \(^{46}\) Even so, Hoffman notes that Adler collaborated with the Lutheran pastor, Ernest Jahn, in a religious work entitled, *Religion and Individual Psychology*. However, Adler himself remained independent and neutral “... as towards the efforts of Catholic or Protestant psychologists to combine [his] views with religious doctrine” \(^{47}\) Many of Adler’s ideas are useful to a Christian pastoral understanding but psychologists are loath to discuss them. \(^{48}\)

Roman Catholicism offers a particular pastoral context to practice this new way of pastoral understanding. Adler’s SI is shaped through participation in life and not merely by the observation of life. Therefore, it is an existential psychology. Roman Catholic philosophical thought has tended to officially oppose existential psychological thinking (Leo XIII, *Aeterni


This papal teaching has continued the tension in pastoral practice between some forms of psychological understanding and classical theology. *Aeterni Patris* is not intended for our time. Thus, applying its principles in the contemporary western context fails because the encyclical was the Roman Church’s inverted response to “... a culture that needed to deal not with the startling discovery of the works of Aristotle, but with the rise of empirical science.”

According to Bishop: “The church's attitude toward and treatment of psychological issues has waxed and waned from acceptance to rejection since the time of Augustine.”

Officially, Roman Catholic pastors are to follow ways of pastoral counselling (i.e., resolving psychological issues) with principles which are based on classical understanding. This is problematic since classical understanding is often not attuned to contemporary psychological experience. The solution is to seek new ways of pastoral understanding. Adler’s existential psychology is among those non-scholastic holistic interpretive systems acceptable within the contemporary Roman Catholic pastoral context. Some reasons for this I discuss below.

1st Reason:

The first reason for pastors to accept SI as a counselling
tool is Adler’s novel understanding of individuality. His understanding fits with contemporary western understanding. In IP, “individuality” is not to be confused with “individualism.” The latter is concerned with a distinct theory or doctrinal system which suggests a classical way of thinking; whereas the former is concerned with one’s state, condition or quality of life which suggests a phenomenological and holistic way of thinking. O’Connell suggests a variant understanding and speaks of Adler’s psychology as promoting the “individuated” person rather than the “individual” person. He states that “individuated psychology is in need of a deep eternal Self as well as broad social concerns.”

This deep eternal Self and its broad social concerns suggest a holistic approach to the Christian pastor.

2nd Reason:

Classical understanding is not an all effective pastoral tool since it does not correspond to contemporary experience. Its principles are rooted in a world that no longer exists experientially. Adlerian understanding does correspond to contemporary experience and this is the second reason why I accept Adlerian thinking. Contemporary western Christians do not live in a classical world. Classical philosophy is often of little value to individuals in coping with their day to day life tasks. I am not the first. nor indeed the last, to recognize that classical

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philosophy is no longer adequate for the contemporary context. I offer the following example.

In an attempt to show that classical understanding was indeed adequate for contemporary understanding William James wrote *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. What resulted however, was the realization on his part that psychology was better suited than philosophy to religious understanding in modern times. James concludes: “Philosophy in this sphere [ of religious understanding] is thus a secondary function, unable to warrant faith’s veracity…. In all sad sincerity, I think we must conclude that the attempt to demonstrate by purely intellectual processes the truth of the deliverances of direct religious experience is absolutely hopeless.” 52

James and Adler overlap in certain aspects in their holistic understanding. Religious belief for James results in demonstrable characteristics which constitute the life style of an individual. He describes each characteristic as a “state of assurance.” He lists them as: 1) “the loss of all the worry, the sense that all is ultimately well,” 2) “the sense of perceiving truths not known before,” and 3) “the objective change which the world often appears to undergo.” 53 He admits that these states, arising from experience, are difficult to understand by one lacking the experience. Adler recognizes these same states in a healthy individual as given to increasing SI.

Both thinkers accept a holistic understanding in which the individual is greater than the immediate conscious experience of the self. In the “state of assurance” James finds that we can achieve union with something greater than ourselves. Within this union, we find great peace. Adler understands this to be a purpose of religion. It is one of the things religion does best for the individual from Adler’s point of view.

Adler explicates his holistic understanding in Social Interest: A Challenge to Mankind. “The best conception hitherto gained for the elevation of humanity is the idea of God.... The primal energy which was so effective in establishing regulative religious goals was none other than that of social feeling” [my italics]. 54 Regulative religious goals are but an early Adlerian understanding of a holistic pastoral psychology. By way of understanding regulative religious goals the pastor guides parishioners to a new and healthy understanding in life. This is a preventative approach to life’s tasks.

Within contemporary western theological understanding we may say that “psychology respects grace” meaning that pastoral psychology can reveal a graced understanding, an understanding greater than mere humanistic psychology can reveal. Thus, theologians speak of “graced understanding.” Müller’s work, You shall be a blessing: Main traits of a religious humanism, sheds some light on graced understanding. In this

54 Adler, Alfred (1943:272-72) Social interest: A challenge to mankind Faber & Faber.
work, Müller opens Adler’s IP to a transcendental interpretation.

3rd Reason:

In secular (humanist) psychologies religious understanding of life is seen to require corrective intervention. This is not so in Adlerian understanding. This is my third reason for accepting his thinking. The pastors’ struggle is to account in contemporary psychological terms for religious understanding. All too often, in the dominant secular culture of the West, to account for a religious understanding of life in psychological terms is seen as something negative, as a crisis to be overcome or solved in one’s life.

To a great degree this understanding of corrective intervention is a legacy of Freud’s influence in The Future of the Illusion. An alternative understanding, given by Sorenson, counters Freud’s negative position. In Sorenson’s view the struggle to express a religious understanding of life in psychological terms is understood as a positive experience, that is

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55 A historian of American political thought, Gregory S. Butler, notes a shift in this understanding. He writes: “Over the past several decades, our understanding of modernity has been profoundly changed. This change has occurred as a result of a body of critical scholarship that challenges the widely-held notion that the modern world is characterized primarily by the triumph of secular rationalism and the steadily declining influence of religion and spirituality” Butler, G (1997:37) Visions of a nation transformed: Modernity and ideology in Wilson’s political thought Journal of Church and State 39 (1), 37-51. Further, Michael McAteer, writing in the newspaper of the Anglican Church of Canada, quotes Gregory Baum: “We are witnessing a worldwide return of religion to the public sphere, both on the right and on the left” (McAteer, M 1997:10) Don't write religion’s obit yet say panelists. Anglican Journal December.

to say, as preventive intervention, not corrective intervention. Preventive intervention comprises part of the normal stages of growth and development of each individual. Preventive intervention, based on an Adlerian understanding constitutes a holistic understanding.

Adlerian SI reflects holistic pastoral psychology

The purpose of pastoral psychology is to address important life tasks for the betterment of the individual. In attempting to achieve this purpose, SI and pastoral psychology overlap and are complementary. What needs to be distinguished is the way in which each assists the individual to a healthy and fulfilling life. Or, as Adler phrases it: “We approach the problem from a different angle but the goal is the same-to increase interest in others.”

Alfred Adler’s system of psychological understanding stressing the importance of an individual is positive nurturing within the environment. A purpose of pastoral psychology is positive nurturing. Initially, Adler’s thinking was intended to enable those who were emotionally disabled. Stein and Edwards explain: “The goal of therapy is to increase the feeling of

community, promote a feeling of equality, and replace egocentric self-protection, self-enhancement, and self-indulgence with self-transcending, courageous, social contribution.” 60 For personal (individual) well-being, emotions which in Adlerian thinking fuel behaviour are to be properly understood and regulated. In this way, an individual attains health and becomes useful within a society (community).

SI consists of basic orientations which are pastorally sympathetic to a Christian perspective on life. Two of these orientations may briefly be summarized as follows: 1) all important life problems are social, that is, they beset the individual in a social context; 2) health is attained by the individual in a set of harmonious social relationships. These notions set a psychological context for a Christian pastoral understanding in the modern world. Since Adler’s SI is easily understood religiously and theologically, it is readily recognizable as an appropriate pastoral tool for the benefit of the Christian community. As such SI opens the way to preventive intervention rather than corrective intervention within pastoral counselling.

Health and well-being are fundamental to the Christian life and can be, to a great extent, attained through harmonious social relationships. The Christian life style, an attitude seeking health and preventing illness (physical and spiritual), must be lived out in

community. This explains why Christians often understand their churches and fellowship groups as communities of health and well-being.

In the past, the pastoral way of thinking has tended to view health and well-being within a classical perspective. The classical understanding is no doubt due to the persistent reliance on classical Greek thinking typified by Plato and Aristotle. In this realm of thought reality is considered fixed and unchanging, and lived experience is somehow a shadow of reality. Adler criticises this static way of thinking: “The human spirit is only too well accustomed to reduce everything that is in flux to a form, to consider it not as movement but as frozen movement–movement that has become form” 61 (Adler 1943:269). While this is an acceptable interpretation in a classical school of thought, it is not an acceptable interpretation within Christian theology or Christian psychology rooted in contemporary experience. A static interpretation does not reflect contemporary experience. What reflects contemporary experience is a holistic pastoral psychology which incorporates Alfred Adler’s SI.

By way of conclusion

From a pastoral point of view, Alfred Adler’s SI as preventive intervention may be effectively incorporated into

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61 Adler, Alfred (1943:269) Social interest: A challenge to mankind Faber & Faber.
Christian praxis. Adler’s contribution to pastoral theology is through his SI which enables an individual to achieve a fulfilled and integrated life within a social context (community). For Christians, the social context is the church, the believing community.
EXAMINERS’ REPORT
Date: 1 July 2010
Reference: ASOI/07/2010
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)
Vice-President and Director of Administrative Affairs
Percy Dearmer Professor of Liturgical Studies

John Kersey, Hon.LL.D., Hon.D.Mus., D.D., Ed.D., Ph.D.
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