The Liturgy of Place: Theophany and Liberal Arts from Eriugena to Deleuze

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INTRODUCTION

In this paper I consider John Scotus Eriugena's account of liberal arts pedagogy, which emerges as Eriugena asks whether the Divine is knowable in the manner "the Greeks are accustomed to call[ing] theophany."[1] Eriugena's question is ours as well: do corporeal, accidental things positively manifest the Divine? My purpose is to conceive a contemporary "Eriugenian" liberal arts pedagogy for which spatio-temporal beings manifest the hidden Divinity.

The liberal arts require pedagogical reinvention today because the modern university conforms to what Martin Heidegger identifies in his essay "The Question Concerning Technology" (1954) as "Enframing [*Gestell*]."[2] According to Enframing, nature exists in order for human beings to use and "put to work." Here Heidegger accords with George Grant, for whom university curricula post-1945 serve "the cultivation of those sciences which issue in the mastery of human and non-human nature."[3] Under such circumstances, the "liberal arts" cannot properly be *liberating* arts.

But Heidegger's diagnosis rests on a fraught "history" of philosophy. In *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger argues that the history of metaphysics consists in a growing failure to investigate the nature of Being-*qua*-Being. We fall into Enframing through increasing dogmatism about ontological

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1 John Scotus Eriugena, *Periphyseon* I, trans. I.P. Sheldon-Williams with Ludwig Bieler (1968; Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1999), 446D27–28 [Hereinafter, *PP*].

2 Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Books, 1977), p. 20.

3 George Grant, *Technology and Empire* (Toronto: Anansi Press, 1969), p. 115.

and epistemological orders, becoming incapable of critiquing technology and its effects on human and non-human nature.

Heidegger wants us to overcome Enframing, but finds scant resources in the history of philosophy for it. Yet his "history," as Professor Wayne J. Hankey has shown,[4] neglects a philosophical tradition that does not "forget" Being. Neoplatonists from Proclus to Cusa, including Eriugena, ground Being-*qua*-Being in spatio-temporal accident. A different relationship to the history of philosophy is possible than the one Heidegger makes possible.

Eriugena shows that resources *do* exist in our philosophical heritage for overcoming Enframing, provided we abandon "histories" like Heidegger's that occlude developments from the ancient and medieval Mediterranean world and beyond. By displacing Heidegger's "history," we can reconnect contemporary and ancient/medieval thinking in ways helpful for creating a liberal arts grounded on the unity of Being and Creation, of οὐσία and γένεσις.

Professor Hankey has shown that contemporary French thought enjoys rich connections to the Neoplatonic tradition.[5] I am interested in two of that tradition's less-obvious inheritors: Michel Foucault (1926–1984) and Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995).

Four things interest me about Foucault and Deleuze here. First, I see rich connections to be drawn between their ontological logics, their concern for pedagogy, and Eriugena's thinking. Second, their engagement with the logic of institutions in technological societies furnishes us with examples of what a contemporary Eriugenian liberal arts curriculum might include. Third, how they both overcome the "forgetting of Being" while remaining determined by Heidegger's historical representations tells us a lot about their connections to, *and alienation from*, Neoplatonic forms of thought which their own thinking strongly resembles

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4   Wayne J. Hankey, "Why Heidegger's 'History' of Metaphysics is Dead," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 78:3 (2004): 425–443.

5   Wayne J. Hankey, *One Hundred Years of Neoplatonism in France: A Brief Philosophical History* (Leuven/Paris/Dudley, MA: Peters, 2006).

in essential ways. By extension, their historical-philosophical situation can inform us about our own. Fourth, the fact that they are both ostensibly non-religious yet have fundamental things in common with pagan and Christian philosophers and theologians suggests the bridges that might be built in a post-secular society, including between us and our indigenous neighbours.

Thus I begin with Heidegger's "history" and Professor Hankey's critique thereof. Then I explicate Eriugena's account of the liberal arts, which a) lays the ground for rethinking pedagogy and b) shows that "the forgetting of Being" is *not* a fundamental historical feature of metaphysics. Finally, I touch on Deleuze's and Foucault's thinking to show the connections which may be possible against a more adequate historical backdrop than Heidegger's.

<div align="center">Heidegger's "history" of metaphysics</div>

Heidegger asserts that, although Being has always been the first principle of "Western" metaphysics, it has been nonetheless neglected:

> On the basis of the Greeks' initial contributions toward an Interpretation of Being, a dogma has been developed which not only declares the question about the meaning of Being to be superfluous, but sanctions its complete neglect. […] Nor does this most universal and hence indefinable concept require any definition, for everyone uses it constantly and already understands what he means by it. In this way, that which the ancient philosophers found continually disturbing as something obscure and hidden has taken on a clarity and self-evidence such that if anyone continues to ask about it he is charged with an error of method.[6]

This passage recalls Hegel's *Science of Logic* (1812) which, beginning from "simple immediacy," discovers that "simple immediacy […] in its true expression is *pure being*. Just as pure knowing is to mean knowing as such, quite abstractly, so too pure being is to mean nothing but *being* in general: being, and nothing else, without any further specification and filling."[7] In

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6   Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (1927; New York: Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 1962), H2 [Hereinafter, *BT*].

7   G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (1812; New York:

construing Being as the most general category, without content, and self-evident, Hegel exemplifies the "forgetting" of Being.

For Heidegger we deploy "Being" as a dogmatic assertion, not a philosophical problem. Historically "certain distinctive domains of Being have come into view and have served as the primary guides for subsequent problematics: the *ego cogito* of Descartes, the subject, the 'I', reason, spirit, person. But all these remain uninterrogated as to their Being and its structure, in accordance with the thoroughgoing way in which the question of Being has been neglected."[8] Descartes embodies our "fall": "With the '*cogito sum*' Descartes had claimed that he was putting philosophy on a new and firm footing. But what he left undetermined when he began in this 'radical' way, was […] the *meaning of the Being of the 'sum'*."[9] We are caught in a vicious circle. We "specify" and "fill out" the meaning of Being *via* the ontic order but mistakenly think that the ontic order instantiates Being-*qua*-Being. Consequently, we remain trapped in our present "domains of Being."

This circumstance underpins ecological problems posed in *The Question Concerning Technology*. As Professor Hankey notes, "The fate of the West within the fate of Western metaphysics is the fate of the earth. The twenty-first century has begun in a conflict about just this."[10] Heidegger is right to diagnose the technological enframing of nature and its grounding in the "forgetting" of Being. Yet in occluding the Neoplatonic itinerary and *its* way(s) of treating the question of Being, his "history" is inadequate. Again, Professor Hankey:

> Primary, both for Heidegger and for those attracted to his thought and to his "history" of metaphysics, is his analysis of the metaphysics of our world as one in which "[t]he earth itself can show itself only as the object of assault, an assault that, in human willing, establishes itself as unconditional objectification. Nature appears everywhere […] as the object of technology." His history of metaphysics both explains how this came to be and gives the alternative, in the way that we feel it,

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Amherst Books, 1969), p. 69.

8   *BT*, H22.

9   *BT*, H24.

10   Hankey, "Heidegger's 'History'," p. 23.

that is, not as present and active in our reality, but as hidden by it. The "history" is told and accepted as the representation of the past which belongs to how we perceive our world. Thus, this "history" belongs to our world and is itself a form of our objectification of the world. Insofar as Heidegger's "history" can be shown to lack theoretical truth and contemplative detachment, we thereby also come to know that there is something more in our world than Heidegger understood.[11]

Against his "history," Heidegger's response to the forgetting of Being consists in a "fundamental ontology," an account of how Being is determined *qua* Being. This fundamental ontology revolves around *Dasein*, the entity "ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that being is an *issue* for it."[12]

Dasein, which Heidegger finds preliminarily formulated in Aristotle's and Thomas Aquinas' conceptions of the soul,[13] is the philosophical-historical inflection point that renews the question of Being and heralds the return of γένεσις. *Dasein*, however, addresses a genuine historical-metaphysical problem posed against an inadequate historical backdrop. The alternative history that has been elaborated at Dalhousie Classics under Professor Hankey's leadership is more adequate to its object than Heidegger's, insofar as "history" refers to the register of things said and done. It is also an "alternative" history metaphysically speaking, restructuring our pathways in thought.

PLACE, BODY, DEFINITION, TIME AND LIBERAL ARTS IN PERIPHYSEON I

In the *Periphyseon*, Eriugena integrates two Christian theological traditions. Saint Augustine embodies the Western, emphasizing God's knowability through genuinely predicated Names. Dionysius embodies the Eastern, rising to the unknowable God by mystagogy through first steps in symbolic theology and liturgy. Eriugena combines them *via* Aristotle's ten ontological categories as organized by Porphyry. Practising the liberal arts, we discern incorporeal causes in spatio-temporally emplotted corporeal singularities.

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11   Hankey, "Heidegger's 'History'," p. 11.
12   *BT*, H4.
13   *BT*, H12.

Periphyseon I examines whether God's essence is knowable in "what in Greek is called φύσις and in Latin Natura."[14] For Eriugena, nature includes things that are (*ea quae sunt*) *and* things that are not (*ea quae non sunt*). This basic division divides into "four species [...] first into that which creates and is not created, secondly into that which is created and also creates, thirdly into that which is created and does not create, while the fourth neither creates nor is created."[15] Book I articulates the first species of Nature:

> Of the aforementioned divisions of Nature the first difference, as has seemed to us, is that which creates and is not created. And rightly so: for such a species of Nature is correctly predicated only of God, Who [...] is understood to be ἄναρχος, that is, without beginning, because He alone is the principal Cause of all things which are made from Him and through Him, and therefore He is also the End of all things that are from Him, for it is He towards Whom all things strive. [16]

Book I establishes that God's Names are properly predicated of Him. Whether Aristotle's ten ontological categories are properly called Divine Names is central to Eriugena's concern and ours, for their status will determine whether God is every day and everywhere.

Nutritor and Alumnus elucidate the paradoxical circumstance that, despite being creative and uncreated, the first species of Nature is nonetheless created. Having found the uncreated creator's createdness "in the books of the Holy Fathers who have attempted to treat of the Divine Nature,"[17] Nutritor unfolds the notion of theophany:

> I think it can be shown [...] how that Nature, although it creates all things and cannot be created by anything, is in an admirable manner created in all things which take their being from it; so that, as the intelligence of the mind or its purpose or its intention or however this first and innermost motion of ours may be called, having, as we said, entered upon thought and received the forms of certain fantasies, and having then proceeded into the symbols of sounds or the signs of sensible motions, is not inappropriately said to become—for, being in itself without any sensible form, it becomes formed in fantasies—, so

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14   *PP* I, 441A7.
15   *PP* I, 441B22–24.
16   *PP* I, 451C19–452A29.
17   *PP* I, 452A35.

> the Divine Essence which, when it subsists by itself surpasses every
> intellect is correctly said to be created in those things which are made
> by itself and in itself [and for itself], so that in them either by the
> intellect, if they are only intelligible, or by the sense, if they are sensible,
> it comes to be known by those who investigate it in the right spirit.[18]

Eriugena here establishes a Trinitarian paradigm applicable to the Divine as well as to the human: that of "οὐσία and δύναμις and ἐνέργεια, that is, Essence, Power and Operation."[19] For Eriugena, the liberal arts belong to the human's ἐνέργεια. He grounds in the sensible the Divine Essence's createdness, which enables him to discover that theophany is creation, and creation theophany.

Alumnus then poses the essential question: "I should like to hear from you, clearly and succinctly, whether all the categories—for they are ten in number—[can truly and properly be predicated] of the supreme *One* Essence in Three Substances of the Divine Goodness, and of the Three Substances in the same One Essence."[20] Integrating West and East, Nutritor replies:

> On this subject […] either one should keep wholly silent […] or, if
> one has begun to discuss it, one will have to show in many ways
> and by many arguments what is likely to be the truth, making
> use of the two branches of theology, the affirmative, which by the
> Greeks is called καταφατική, and the negative, which is named
> ἀποφατική. The one, that is ἀποφατική, denies that the Divine
> Essence or Substance *is* any one of the things that are, that is, of
> the things which can be discussed or understood; but the other,
> καταφατική, predicates of it all the things that are, and for that
> reason is called affirmative—not that it affirms that it is any of the
> things that are, but (because) it teaches that all things which take
> their being from it can be predicated of it. For that which is the cause
> can reasonably be expressed in terms of the things that are caused.[21]

In a Dionysian exercise Nutritor and Alumnus establish that, if God's names are not predicable of him, it is because God is transcendent-by-excess. "Thus [God] is called Essence," says Nutritor,

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18   *PP* I, 454A9–454D2.
19   *PP* I, 486C15–16.
20   *PP* I, 457D22–458A27.
21   *PP* I, 458A28–458C15.

> but strictly speaking He is not essence: for to being is opposed not-being. Therefore he is ὑπερούσιας, that is, superessential. Again, He is called Goodness, but strictly speaking he is not goodness: for to goodness wickedness is opposed. Therefore (He is) ὑπεράγαθος, that is, more-than-goodness […] We ought to think the same way concerning Truth: for to truth is opposed falsehood, and therefore strictly speaking He is not truth. Therefore he is ὑπεραλήθης and ὑπεραλήθεια, that is, more-than-true and (more-than-)truth. The same reason must be observed in all the Divine Names. [22]

Nutritor and Alumnus then consider the categories. Here I will look briefly at the discussion of οὐσία/*essentia*, and then move to τόπος/*locus*.

Another perplexity confronts the interlocutors: only οὐσία seems, like the Divine, to be at rest. The others appear to be in motion. Yet each also turns out to be self-subsistent. Essence (οὐσία/*essentia*) appears in every other category; but so do Quantity (ποσότης/*quantitas*) and quality (ποιότης/*qualitas*).

> For we say: What quantity of essence? What quantity of quality? What quantity of relation? What quantity of situation? How great a place? How small or how great an extent of time? What quantity of action? What quantity of passion? Do you see how extensively quantity is applied to the other categories? And yet it does not cease to hold its own place. What of quality? Is it not usual for this to be frequently predicated of all the other categories? What quality of relation, situation, condition, place, time, action, passion? For we ask in respect of all these what is their quality. And yet quality does not abandon the reason of its proper genus.[23]

We discover, then, that the categories subsist in corporeal *and* incorporeal things. Each therefore preserves its integrity through its accidental manifestation.

The Divine Essence also remains intact through its manifestation in the "concourse of certain accidents" that generates "corruptible bodies".[24] Here Eriugena produces a Christian Neoplatonic procession. As Jean Trouillard notes, Eriugena's procession exhibits four stages. "The first divine manifestation is a sort

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22   *PP* I, 459D31–460B13.

23   *PP* I, 468A2–10.

24   *PP* I, 479B 19–23.

of internal 'implosion' by which God speaks to himself as the plenitude of wisdom in his Word and Spirit."[25] The categories, as primordial causes, belong to the second. Trouillard remarks that

> [Eriugena] reinvents the Neoplatonic axiom according to which a monad cannot engender the multiple without first posing another monad which will diffuse itself amongst this plurality.
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> This is why the second stage of divine manifestation is enveloped in the first, incommensurable with the first though it may be. The primordial causes are not an exodus from God, any more than the trinitarian processions are independent of creation. The creative reasons are God Himself as realizing and organizing energy. They make concrete the passage from one to multiple and they are a creation of God (as cause) by Himself.[26]

The primordial causes are the second species of Nature, *ea quae et creatur et creat*. The Procession permeates space and time, making γένεσις available within the accidental order. We can think ontological genesis *via* the sensible. The Divine Essence appears in the Procession as Return, or the fourth species of Nature, *quae nec creat nec creatur*.

Hence Trouillard's dictum "[t]oute expression est *inversion*."[27] Following the Procession into matter, which essentially resembles the incomprehensible Divine, we find the Return as superessential Nothing. At first it seems that matter's essence poorly mimics the Divine's, but Nutritor will later conclude that "whether formless matter is a mutability receptive of forms, as Augustine and Plato say, or a formlessness which lacks participation in species and form and adornment, as Dionysius says, you will not deny, I think, that if it can be understood at all, it is perceived only by the intellect."[28] Everything corporeal turns out to be essentially incorporeal and perceivable by the intellect alone. Thus we come to the category of τόπος, place.

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25 Jean Trouillard, *Jean Scot Érigène: Études* (Paris: Hermann, 2014), p. 279. Translation mine.

26 Ibid., p. 280. Translation mine.

27 Ibid., p. 64.

28 *PP,* I 501A27–31.

At 468B23 Nutritor reminds Alumnus that place—as well as time—is predicable of the superessential Divine metaphorically. In respect of spatio-temporal things, however, "place is nothing else but the boundary by which each is enclosed within fixed terms."[29] A thing's place is its definition, which is ultimately constituted by the incorporeal, primordial causes that generate matter.

> But of places there are many kinds: for there are as many places as there are things which can be bounded, whether these be corporeal or incorporeal. For example: body is a compound welded together <of the qualities> of the four elements under a single species: for by this definition all bodies which consist of matter and form are included in one general description. Also: spirit is an incorporeal nature without form or matter in itself: for every spirit that is either rational or intellectual is by itself formless, but if it turns toward its Cause […] then it takes on form. Therefore the one Form of all rational and intellectual spirits is the Word of God. [30]

Recalling Augustine, who praises God for our participation in distinguishing the sensible from the intelligible,[31] Nutritor reveals the liberal arts' spiritual/ethical ground. Both body and spirit, the human is constantly poised between the Word and the "fantasy of corporeal things." We need ways of distinguishing between "light" and "dark," between intelligible and sensible—or sensible and intelligible. Since every corporeal thing is essentially incorporeal, we must generate intellection. The liberal arts allow us to look not at things seen, but at things not seen: the primordial causes, the Trinity, the Divine Essence.

In the liberal arts, Nutritor says,

> very many definitions are found: for there is no art without its definitions, as there are the dialectical definitions from genus, from species, from name, a priori, a posteriori, from contraries, and other definitions of this kind, which there is no time to discuss now. For the dialectical definitions extend over so wide a field that from wherever in the nature of things the dialectical mind finds an argument which establishes a doubtful matter it describes the *esse of the argument* [or the seat of the argument] as a place. You will find the same thing in the other arts [which are bounded by their places, that is, by their proper definitions.[32]

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29   *PP,* I 474B7–8.
30   PP, I 474B8–474C21.
31   Cf. *Confessiones* XIII.xviii.22.
32   *PP* I, 474C23–475A4.

The liberal arts put the moving world in place and move from the corporeal and temporal to the incorporeal and eternal. They show us the human, God, and matter reciprocally creating themselves and each other. Knowing ourselves, we know God—not *what* we essentially are, but *that* we essentially are, and that we are essentially united. We find Divine γένεσις everywhere *via* an intellectual operation grounded in the sensible. We find "the great soul," everywhere "penetrating, permeating, from all sides pouring in its light."[33] Yet, by superessential excess, it is also nowhere and, as Eriugena shows, Nothing. Eriugena is not a pantheist.

The essence of all things "is thus local and temporal and can in no way be known except in place and time and under place and time."[34] Heidegger asks "does *time* manifest itself as the horizon of *Being*?"[35] From a tradition that Heidegger's "history" occludes, we receive a resounding *Yes!* Time is also eternity's horizon, and Being itself resolves into its own ground. Neoplatonism has already prepared for the crisis to which Heidegger summons us.

Neoplatonic διάδοχοι: from Deleuze and Foucault to Us

"This is the meaning of the Cogito *as a beginning*: it expresses the unity of all the faculties in the subject; it thereby expresses the possibility that all the faculties will relate to a form of object which reflects the subjective identity; it provides a philosophical concept for the presupposition of a common sense; it is the common sense become philosophical."[36]

In *Difference and Repetition* (1968) Gilles Deleuze takes up Heidegger's problem of the unexamined "meaning of the *sum*" and construes the forgetting of Being's result as "the dogmatic Image of thought".[37] Michel Foucault thus celebrates his friend

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33 Plotinus, *Enneads*, V.1.2, trans. Stephen MacKenna (New York: Larsen Publications, 1992).

34 *PP*, I 481C1–7.

35 *BT*, H437.

36   Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (1968; New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) p. 133, emphasis mine.

37   Cf. ch. 3, "L'image de la pensée".

Deleuze for re-opening a philosophical world in which "thought has to think through what forms it, and is formed out of what it thinks through."[38] For both Foucault and Deleuze, thinking starts neither with the cognizing subject nor the object cognized. Thinking starts *in medias res*, with everything coming-into-being. For both, the dogmatic image of Being-*qua*-Being is no mere speculative problem. They view it as an ethical problem for technological and institutional societies that deploy classifying discourses in order to master human and non-human nature.

Inspired greatly by Deleuze's philosophical investigations, Foucault generates philosophical histories of thought that reveal subjects and objects emerging together as incorporeal events *via* a series of corporeal transformations and interactions. In his work, we find unusual objects of contemplation: madness, sexuality, the perceptual mode of modern medical doctors, neoliberal conceptions of freedom, prison techniques, nineteenth-century biological concepts of life, even the arrangements of city streets, classrooms and factories.

Similarly, philosophical contemplations of cinema, sports, music, visual art, mathematics and the sciences permeate Deleuze's work. Deleuze and Foucault bypass pre-formed concepts of subject and object by asking: what subject(s), and what object(s), can or may emerge from these emergences? To what might the modern Cogito unexpectedly owe its existence? What might happen to the "philosophical subject" *per se* if we can exhibit the Cogito's historical coming-into-being and conditions of discursive possibility?

In Eriugenian terms, Deleuze and Foucault want to define the Procession as fully as possible. Deleuze invents a language and logic of spatio-temporal rhythm for this kind of thinking, taking seriously the notion that time is the horizon of Being. Like Eriugena, Foucault thinks incorporeal things in terms of their spatio-temporal genesis. With Deleuze, he only admits of transcendences that

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38   Michel Foucault, "Theatrum Philosophicum", trans. Donald F. Brouchard and Sherry Simon in *Michel Foucault: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion (1970; New York: The New Press, 1998), p. 353.

express the spatio-temporal dynamisms which express *them*.
He characterizes his thinking as an "incorporeal materialism":

> The fundamental notions that impose themselves are no longer those
> of consciousness and continuity (with their correlative problems of
> freedom and causality), are not those of sign and structure. They
> are those of event and series, with the game of notions tied to
> them: regularity, contingency, dependence, transformation. But [i]f
> discourses must be treated as sets of discursive events, what status
> must we give to this notion of event which has been so rarely prized by
> philosophers? Of course, the event is neither substance nor accident,
> neither quality nor process; the event is not of the order of the body. Yet
> it is not immaterial; it is always at the level of materiality that it takes
> effect and is an effect; it has its place, and it consists, in the relation,
> coexistence, dispersion, narrowing, accumulation, and selection of
> material events; it is neither the act nor the property of a body; it
> produces itself as effect from and within a material dispersion. Let us
> say that the philosophy of the event must advance in the direction—
> at first glance paradoxical—of a materialism of the incorporeal.[39]

Event and *series* are fundamental ontological concepts for Foucault,
who deploys them to move back and forth between the corporeal
and the incorporeal and to show each implicated in the other.

This ontological logic leads us into an historical "cloud of
unknowing." Commenting on Pierre and Huguette Chaunu's
economic history *Séville et l'Atlantique 1504–1650*[40], Foucault
illustrates the point. Although the inhabitants of Seville
might easily keep track of ships entering and leaving port,

> beneath this layer of events, there exists another type of events that
> are a little more diffuse—events that are not perceived exactly in the
> same way […] for example, a lowering or an increase in prices which
> will change their economic behaviour. And then, beneath these events
> as well, you have others […] that are often barely perceptible […]
> but that nonetheless constitute decisive breaks. Thus the reversal
> of a trend […] is a very important event in the history of a town,
> or a country, or possibly a civilization, but the people who are its
> contemporaries are not aware of it […] The economists themselves
> don't know whether a stop in an economic curve signals a great
> general economic reversal of the trend or simply a stop, or a little
> intercycle within a more general cycle. It is history's task to uncover
> this hidden layer of diffuse, 'atmospheric,' polycephalic events
> that determine, finally and profoundly, the history of the world.[41]

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39   Michel Foucault, *L'Ordre du discours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p. 59–60.
Translation mine.

40   Pierre and Huguette Chaunu, *Séville et l'Atlantique (1504–1650)* (5 vols.,
Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1955–1960).

41   Michel Foucault, "Revenir à l'histoire" in *Dits et Écrits I*: 1954–1975, eds.

Like Eriugena, Foucault discovers a world incomprehensible by *excess*. Event-*qua*-Event discloses a non-privative Nothing. Foucault's logic of historical time elicits a quasi-Augustinian bedazzlement. The coming-into-being of the human mind is itself incomprehensible, invertedly expressing the hyperessential, immanent Nothing through corporeal things.

For Deleuze, Being-*qua*-Being "occurs [...] as a unique event for everything that happens to the most diverse things, the ultimate form for all the forms which remain disjointed in it, but which bring about the resonance and ramification of their disjunction."[42] Being-as-Event corresponds to Eriugena's fourth species of Nature and the theological notion of Return as the hyperessential Nothing's manifestation in space-and-time. In Eriugenian terms, Foucault and Deleuze talk endlessly about theophany and theophanies.

Yet barriers remain between these contemporary thinkers and the Neoplatonic tradition we wish to revive at present. For one, Deleuze remains suspicious of Neoplatonism despite his brilliant account of it in *Spinoza: Expressionism in Philosophy* (1968). He praises Neoplatonism for its doctrine of *expressive immanence* which he favours because it is "opposed to any eminence of the cause, any negative theology, any method of analogy, any hierarchical conception of the world."[43]

Here Deleuze sees Neoplatonism as ancillary to Spinoza, Deleuze's favourite philosopher. Yet because Neoplatonism retains a doctrine of *transcendent emanation*, "the principle of a universe rendered hierarchical,"[44] Deleuze deems it complicit in a history that culminates in modes of Enframing that he and Foucault confront in twentieth-century France. This helps explain the general absence of Neoplatonism's

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Daniel Defert and François Ewald, with Jacques Lagrange (1972; Paris: Quarto Gallimard, 1994/2001), pp. 1145–46

42   Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester, ed. Constantin V. Boundas (1969; New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 179.

43   Deleuze, *Spinoza: Expressionism in Philosophy*, trans. Martin Joughin (1968; New York: Zone Books, 1990/2005), p. 173.

44   Deleuze, *Expressionism*, p. 173.

classical Trinitarian paradigm in Deleuze's thinking, and the tension that Trouillard notes in *L'Un et l'âme selon Proclos* between his Proclean Neoplatonism and Deleuze's Spinozism.[45]

Heidegger's "history" cannot be ignored here. The alienation it has created over the last century in European and North American thinking, however, can be overcome. We can learn from contemporary thought how to extend ancient-medieval Neoplatonic liberal arts into the contemporary, and *vice versa*. By "defining" Heidegger's "history" as Professor Hankey has, we are *already* practicing an Eriugena-inspired contemporary liberal arts. We also practice such a pedagogy by defining what can be philosophically held in common by religious and non-religious thinkers, thus displacing a conflict often taken to be insurmountable.

Hence my hope for a post-secular "liturgy of place" in which all can share and through which all can celebrate a κόσμος that is eternally new, eternal coming-into-being. Such things are possible in a contemporary world where Deleuze, an atheist, insists that Being-*qua*-Being is positive creation and Trouillard, a priest, venerates God as Nothing.

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45   Jean Trouillard, *L'Un et l'âme selon Proclos* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1972), p. 162–63; 166–67.