

The Intransigent Division

The Illusory Union of Creation and Grace in Contemporary Theology

Whatever one generation learns from another, it can never learn from a predecessor the genuinely human factor. In this respect, every generation begins afresh, has no task other than that of any previous generation, and comes no further, provided the latter didn't shirk its task and deceive itself.

—SØREN KIERKEGAARD, *FEAR AND
TREMBLING*

My goal in this study is to bring into relief the conceptual and historical obstacles to the articulation of the coherence of the theologies of creation and grace. I believe this task is necessary because the dominant treatments of the unity of these doctrines are unwitting participants in the perpetuation of their separation. Because this continued separation is not recognized in contemporary theology and its consequences remain unheeded, an important part of my argument will be to demonstrate this incoherence through an “archaeological” analysis of the theological history that informs contemporary theologies of grace and creation. And with this archaeology, I will be clearing a path for a restatement of that unity. The challenge will be to show that the dominant paradigms we currently use to hold these doctrines together actually preserve and conceal this separation.

This implicit division of grace from creation is no merely theoretical issue. On the contrary, the continued division of these doctrines produces and reinforces division within the church and between the church and the world. As an illustration of these consequences, I have chosen to focus attention on the dominant and currently most intransigent of these divisions, the separation of Catholic and Protestant churches. I will take this division as the paradigmatic expression of our failure to think about the coherence of these theological concepts because in this one instance of ecclesial disunity we can clearly recognize the wider significance of this theological confusion. Almost thirty years ago, George Lindbeck called attention to the fact that ecumenical conversations increased recognition that our previous understandings of divisions were artificial and driven by stereotypes.¹ Since that time, where ecumenical conversations continue to advance, the trend is to seek out and uncover these commonalities in order to minimize conflict. Yet substantial disagreements persist, especially on matters of ecclesial polity and jurisdiction. Even epoch-making statements such as the *Joint Declaration on Justification* both clarify agreements on previous misunderstandings and refocus the continued separation on the matter of human cooperation in justification.²

Though there is much to learn from this understanding of ecumenical conversation, this study will be misunderstood if it is read as an attempt to uncover concealed agreement beneath stereotypes, or even as an attempt to better clarify the nature of continued disagreement. Instead, my quite different task is to provoke awareness and acknowledgment of shared theological mistakes. The sense of commonalty generated by Lindbeck may be due, ironically, not only to misunderstanding but also to our shared theological errors. My goal in this study is to isolate one such error regarding the unity between creation and grace and to analyze that mistake as closely as possible for the sake of moving decisively, clearly, and confidently beyond it.

The analysis in this study is archaeological and will therefore be dealing closely with history, but it is not a conventional social history or a history of ideas. I am concerned with the logical relations between historically conditioned concepts in theology, but this should not be taken to mean that I understand the historical order to be of secondary importance. Quite the contrary, as the study will make clear, I am primarily interested in showing that our current configurations of grace and creation obstruct our recognition of the abstract ways we continue to conceive these doctrines, an obstruction that itself occludes our attending to their worldly, historical, and material significance. Indeed, this is primarily what I have in mind when I talk about the unity of grace with creation.

I have put the concrete division of Protestant and Catholic churches at the forefront of my analysis in order to hold this empirical experience constantly before the reader's mind. The temptation that I will have to combat is the one that I believe will be the most bewitching: that is, the assumption that it is the continued theoretical separation of grace from creation that causes these historical experiences of division. This is not my argument. I maintain, instead, that the theological and historical separations are mutually reinforcing expressions of an actual absence of unity in our material social relations: this social disunity is repeated and conceptually secured by way of a purely abstract unity that conceals and fortifies that social reality.

With this in mind, this chapter will lay the groundwork on which my analysis will be built, closely inspecting the important place that grace and creation occupy in contemporary theology. Recent theology turns increasingly to this question in different forms in order to make sense of the acute divisions—between freedom and necessity, nature and consciousness, phenomena and noumena—that shape our modern consciousness of the world. The significance of our failure to perceive the abstractness of our theologies of grace depends to a significant degree on understanding the intimate connection drawn in contemporary theology between the separation of grace from creation, on the one hand, and modernity's dissociation of any inherent meaning from nature, on the other.

UNION WITH CREATION: MEANING, GRACE, AND REVELATION

CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

Catholic theology discovered that the separation of grace from creation was a crucial concern for all modern theology. The mutual influence of neo-Thomism and modernism is responsible for bringing this insight into relief.³ The works of Maurice Blondel, Alfred Loisy, Friedrich von Hügel, Pierre Rousselot, and Joseph Maréchal, for example, shared a commitment to demonstrating the compatibility of the Catholic philosophical and theological heritage with the modern, post-Kantian philosophical turn to the subject.⁴ And each of these scholars sought to show, from within the immanent method of modernity, that a necessary yet gratuitous excess of transcendence was intrinsic to the constitution of the human subject. They believed that demonstration of this excess could reconnect modern philosophy with metaphysics, now done in a new key, and could reintegrate the transcendental subject with nature by dissolving the dualisms at the heart of the Kantian program. As Blondel put

it, the modern task of Christian philosophy was to show that “a method of immanence” must exclude “a ‘doctrine of immanence,’” that the affirmation of transcendence is both “necessary” to reason and “inaccessible” to it.⁵

Kant wanted to liberate human self-determination from bondage to the arbitrary necessity of the natural causal order and a political system that purported to be the immediate expression of that order.⁶ Neo-Thomism and modernism gambled that the severe and sobering questions this critical philosophy put to traditional Catholic positions would not ultimately prove intolerable to them, though this was, initially, what happened. They were confident not only that incorporation of the dynamic self-determination of the post-Kantian subject could be reunited to the objective natural order but also that doing so would enrich the Catholic tradition with a renewed relevance and apologetics. Their concern was to show that the subject’s active participation in the construction of worldly meaning was not simply imposed on an otherwise meaningless nature but was intrinsic to nature. In doing so, these thinkers were attempting to remain faithful both to Vatican I’s claims about natural reason and to modern, critical philosophy. Yet, as Gerald McCool has extensively shown, a peculiarity in the history of the interpretation of Vatican I would interrupt that attempt.

McCool shows that Vatican I’s *Dei Filius* (*Dogmatic Constitution on Faith*), promulgated by Pius IX in 1870, was consistently read by Catholic theologians in the last few years of the nineteenth century through the lens of the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879), which was issued by Leo XIII.⁷ The first part of *Dei Filius* was directed against the agnosticism and atheism of critical philosophy and defended the rational demonstration of the existence of God by reason’s natural capacity alone. The second part insisted, against Enlightenment rational religion, that this rational proof required supplementation by the supernatural and gratuitous knowledge of God entrusted to the teaching of the church. *Aeterni Patris*, by contrast, stipulated only that every seminarian’s philosophical training would be in Thomism. Yet, when the latter was read together with the critique of modern philosophy in *Dei Filius*, most theologians took these instructions as mandating Catholic antagonism to modernity and its substitution with Thomism.⁸ Consequently, rich experiments with post-Kantian philosophy that developed in France (by, for example, de Maistre, de Bonald, Lamennais, and Bautin)⁹ and Germany (by, for example, Hermes, von Drey, and Günther),¹⁰ and which neo-Thomist and modernist theologians had continued, were quashed. In their place, neo-scholasticism remained ascendant, with the manualist methodology and the antimodernist oath demanded by the *Syllabus of Errors* eventually consolidating their strength.¹¹

Strikingly, like neo-Thomism and modernism, neo-scholasticism was preoccupied with resisting the modern separation of meaning from nature. But where neo-Thomism and modernism insisted on showing that this critical moment could serve rather than detract from the Catholic tradition, neo-scholasticism wanted to inoculate Catholicism against this critical moment. As a result, modernism was officially suppressed, but the questions it had raised with neo-Thomism continued to influence many theologians. No longer was their view advanced through direct engagement with modern philosophy, but instead, as with Maréchal and Rousselot, these questions were displaced onto historical and hermeneutical studies of Aquinas.¹² Rousselot, Maréchal, and Blondel, for example, were important influences on the erudite work of the Dominicans of Saulchoir (such as that of Yves Congar and Marie-Dominique Chenu) and the Jesuits of Lyon-Fourvière (including Henri de Lubac and Jean Daniélou), who successfully routed neo-scholasticism at Vatican II by raising these critical questions through other means. Nonetheless, despite the modernist influence on these thinkers, Catholic opposition to modernity also made its impact.

Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange was the theologian most representative of that opposition. The dominant neo-scholastic theologian of his day, he defended neo-scholastic doctrine against the modernist residue he detected in the representatives of what he pejoratively called *la nouvelle théologie* (the new theology). This conflict with Garrigou-Lagrange directly linked the concern to preserve nature's intrinsic meaning to the question of the unity of grace with creation.¹³ Garrigou-Lagrange understood this dispute to be a continuation of the battle against the influence of critical philosophy on Catholic theology. But because the dispute was now focused on the interpretation of Aquinas, the point of contention was not the place of modern philosophy in Catholic theology but whether Aquinas taught that humanity has only a single, supernatural destiny in relation to the beatific vision or a natural *and* supernatural goal. Both agreed on the necessity of defending the inherent meaning of nature, but their dispute was about the intrinsic union of grace with nature that was established by a positive account of the subject's dynamic self-determination.

All of the attempts to reintegrate meaning and nature with an intrinsic rather than extrinsic view of grace would depend on a dynamic and constructive view of the self. Yet the magisterial and neo-scholastic anxiety about modernity had made its mark on the conscience of the period. Many Catholic theologians who were invested in defending the intrinsic status of grace were likewise uneasy with modern secularism and the alliance with critical philosophy. As an alternative, they followed Heidegger's lead and

sought to recover a more fundamental ontology than that operative in modernity, and thereby to outstrip the standing of the transcendental subject. The goal was to reduce the dynamic excess of human self-determination to being (*Dasein*) and to correlate the rise of modernity with the final stage in the split of the subject from being, which is understood to be most fundamentally the division of grace from nature. In this light, the dynamism of the subject is properly referred to created being rather than transcendental subjectivity.

Gustav Siewerth appears to be the originator of this approach. His *The Fate of Metaphysics from Thomas to Heidegger* adapted Heidegger's genealogical template and forged the initial connection between the modern forgetfulness of being, the separation of meaning from the world, and the division of grace from nature.¹⁴ Hans Urs von Balthasar later adapted Siewerth's vision explicitly in the first volume of *The Glory of the Lord* and used it in conjunction with his polemical attack against the priority of transcendental subjectivity rather than aesthetic perception in modern theology.¹⁵ Similar genealogies have appeared since, most notably those of Louis Dupré and John Milbank, which explicitly make these same connections. Ultimately, the impulse for this ontological turn lay in large part, as von Balthasar recognized, with the *ressourcement* ("return to the sources") work pioneered by those same thinkers (such as de Lubac, Congar, Daniélou, and Bouillard) who were responsible for succeeding in their defense of the legitimacy of the natural desire for the supernatural in Aquinas.¹⁶ Because of its close association with the work of Henri de Lubac, against whom Garrigou-Lagrange directed the brunt of his indignation, it is appropriate to designate this ontological interpretation of neo-Thomism as "the new theology" while noting that those thinkers who continued to value highly transcendental subjectivity were "transcendental Thomists."¹⁷

Three distinct forms of Thomism, then, emerged from the environment surrounding the Second Vatican Council, each one molded by a particular relationship to modern critical philosophy: neo-scholasticism, transcendental Thomism, and the new theology. For each of these, the preservation of the connection between meaning and nature was essential, and in the aftermath of the modernist controversy the debate about what this meant for Catholic theology's relationship to modern critical philosophy was transposed into a debate about the right interpretation of the teaching of Thomas Aquinas on the natural desire for the supernatural. It will be helpful to look at each one of these schools of thought in turn.

Neo-scholasticism dominated the later decades of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth. It is now remembered, and not unjustly, as a reactionary and conservative force in modern Catholic theology.¹⁸

However, its position was largely consistent with the plain sense of both *Dei Filius* and *Aeterni Patris*, which set forth straightforward opposition to critical philosophy and reasserted the objective rationality of nature and the supernatural authority of the church. It was on these bases that neo-scholasticism mounted its vigorous defense of its reading of Aquinas.

The neo-scholastic response to the arguments for grace's intrinsic relation to nature was principally concerned to maintain the immediate, objective union of meaning and nature and to refuse to cede any ground to a critical, modern subjectivity.¹⁹ Grace, like truth, neo-scholastics thought, must be objectively given in the world and not located in the subjective dynamism of the individual consciousness. Furthermore, precisely because it was gratuitous and not necessary, grace could not in any way be conceived of as anticipated by nature without it also being required by that nature.²⁰ Grace would itself be an integral aspect of the inherent meaning of the world.

As a result of this distinction of grace from nature, neo-scholasticism also maintained two distinct goals for human life: a natural and a supernatural. The natural goal was the happy harmony of life acknowledged by pagan philosophy, acquired through the cultivation of the cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, temperance, and courage). Those virtues were understood to embody a rightly ordered relation to the rational law and order of nature. The second, supernatural goal was added to this order and transcended its natural capacities, not in the sense of being opposed to nature but in the sense of its elevation. This superadded gift reoriented human life through the objective grace of the church to the theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity) that are fulfilled in the beatific vision.²¹

The new theology reiterated the arguments of earlier neo-Thomism and modernism but cast them, according to the limitations imposed on Catholic theology after *Dei Filius* and *Aeterni Patris*, as arguments about Aquinas's doctrine of grace. Before the Second Vatican Council, the label "new theology" referred to the theological challenges levied at neo-scholastics' consensus on grace in Aquinas and their interpretation of Aquinas; but after the council, it could be applied to the work of those thinkers who maintained an intrinsic relation of grace to nature but who, out of distaste for secularism, rejected the priority granted to modern subjectivity. For these commitments, these thinkers are rightly distinguished from transcendental Thomists.²² The new theology maintained the transcendent excess that Maréchal, Blondel, and Roussetot uncovered in subjectivity. As Henri de Lubac put it in his early work *The Discovery of God*, repeating Maréchal (and agreeing with Rahner), God is implicitly known—or pre-thematically known—in every act of knowing as

the final, complete goal of every act of understanding. But this dynamism is understood primarily as the disclosure of humanity's ontological status as creatures, which likewise serves as the bond between nature and the supernatural.²³ The focus is not with the dynamic constitution of human subjectivity but with the ontological significance—the meaning—of what it means to be a spiritual creature.

Commonly, neo-scholasticism and the new theology are perceived as enemies. It certainly is true that the new theology embarked on retrieving a positive appraisal of critical philosophy and embraced an intrinsic relation of grace to nature that neo-scholasticism opposed, but the tension between these two points should not obscure their proponents' common anxiety about the modern secularism they attributed to the critical function of transcendental subjectivity. De Lubac's arguments in *The Drama of Atheist Humanism* and his essay "The Internal Causes of the Weakening and the Disappearance of the Sense of the Sacred," for example, offer an utterly bleak diagnosis of the diseased condition of modern culture. In fact, de Lubac's major concern with neo-scholastic objectivity is that it unwittingly repeats the modern separation of subject from nature. His arguments in *Catholicism and Corpus Mysticum*, for example, are polemical attacks against the encroachment of Enlightenment rationalism and bureaucracy into the church's naturally organic coincidence of universal and particular. For de Lubac, the full routing of modernity required an account of graced nature, which alone could reunite the objective and the subjective poles of experience in a single account of creation as God's gratuitous self-expression.

Transcendental Thomism also grew out of the same neo-Thomist and modernist arguments that became the new theology. However, the transcendental Thomists attributed the disorders they found in modernity not to its diseased culture but to the fact that it ceased to locate the meaning and intelligibility of experience in God. Human experience was no longer implicitly an aspect of God's self-communication. The turn to subjectivity was not an obstacle to these goals but an opportunity to retrieve this universal experience. Karl Rahner's *Spirit in the World*, for example, spoke of the subject's "pre-apprehension" (*Vorgriff*) of the Absolute, which constituted the subject as a tensed "hovering" (*Schwebe*) above the world from within it, a "spirit in the world."²⁴ Similarly, Bernard Lonergan insisted in *Verbum* that Aquinas taught that all true knowledge includes an irreducible moment of existential self-appropriation.²⁵

Transcendental Thomism unites grace to nature within this dynamic activity, seeing it as an implicit communication of God that is intrinsically

ordered to God. All experience is graced, but not all experience is directly an experience of grace. For this reason, transcendental Thomism agrees with neo-scholasticism that grace cannot be confused with nature. Transcendental Thomists simply insist that this distinction of grace and nature is transcendental, that it is meaningful in relation to the subject and does not mark the distinction of the subject and the object. As Rahner argued, the idea of a “pure nature,” a graceless experience of the world, has an important role to play as a “remainder concept” (*Restbegriff*) that ensures that God’s self-communication in experience is differentiated from our experience. The transcendental subject is necessary in order to maintain this distinction, according to Rahner, which is lost in ontological reduction.

Each of these influential schools of thought recognized that the question of the unity of God’s bestowal of grace with God’s act of creating is of central importance for responding to the challenge that modern, critical philosophy had posed to theology in its attack on classical metaphysics. The unity of the theologies of grace and creation became the focal point in Catholic theology for coming to terms with the loss of any sense of the intrinsic meaning of the natural world. Sharply divergent as the theologies of grace that developed from these three schools were, they shared this common concern to overcome the disjunctions that characterized the modern experience of the world. Their different emphases on the objective, subjective, or ontological status of grace are divergent ways of attempting to preserve or to reconceive the unity of meaning and nature in the face of modern, critical philosophy. This recognition does not mean, as it could be interpreted, that the focus on the relation of grace to nature in Catholic theology is reducible to this question of nature’s meaning, but that the experience of opposition so characteristic of modernity raises the question of the relation of grace to creation to a particularly acute pitch.

PROTESTANT THEOLOGY

Modern Protestant theology did not propose a compelling alternative to the transcendental subject analogous to Catholic neo-scholasticism. Protestant theology absorbed the turn to the subject almost immediately. The substance of Kant’s critique of metaphysics proved compelling and perhaps unavoidable to the major Protestant thinkers of the period, and they consequently began to look for ways to reconfigure Christian doctrine according to the primacy of practical rather than pure reason. This was so much the case that, by the turn of the twentieth century, Protestant theology was virtually synonymous with the

transcendental analysis of either the content of subjective consciousness or the conditions of possibility for the ethical activity of subjective agents.²⁶

Trouble arose for this transcendental analysis at exactly the point that preoccupied Catholic theology's engagement with critical philosophy. That concern was, at what point did the constructive, self-determining agency of the subject converge with nature? Because Protestant theology was so rooted in subjective experience, it also had to endure a complex set of traumatic critiques levied by erstwhile theologians such as David Strauss, Ludwig Feuerbach, and Franz Overbeck that exploited Kant's division of belief from knowledge (*Wissen*). No substantive alternatives to this dualism were to be found in Protestant theology. Catholic theology was able to reunite the subject with nature in the dynamic self-determination of the subject, but Protestant theology was constitutively invested in the dualism through its dialectical juxtaposition of sin and grace. Consequently, Protestant theology could not clearly correlate the content of faith with reality. It could talk about the unique relation between faith and God, but it could not clearly show how that faith could in any way amount to true knowledge not reducible to the generalized content of subjective consciousness.

The first major disruption of the liberal consensus, forged by Albrecht Ritschl, premised on the fundamental separation of factual knowledge from practical value, came with the emergence of dialectical theology in response to the outbreak of World War I. Its theologians sought not to overcome the divisions but rather to insist resolutely on the opposition of faith to knowledge and on the crisis this incited for all sinful human pretensions to "possess" God like an object. If we follow the standard interpretation of Barth's development, given in different ways by von Balthasar and Frei, we can see that Barth's departure from dialectical theology and embrace of analogy was the result of a clear recognition of the theological consequences of maintaining this sharp opposition.²⁷ After his insight into the actuality of God, gleaned from his meditation on Anselm, Barth's theology was reframed in such a way as to restore this connection between the content of faith and reality.²⁸

Given that Barth saw this problem more clearly than his fellow dialectical theologians, it is no surprise that he, the foremost Protestant theologian of his time, was at the center of a dispute with Erich Przywara over the propriety of embracing an "analogy of being" (*analogia entis*)²⁹ and with Emil Brunner about the possibility of a transcendental point of contact (*Anknüpfungspunkt*) for revelation.³⁰ In both cases, the dispute was focused on the fact that Barth accepts the need for correspondence between human concepts (knowledge) and God's reality but wants also to continue to deny any "natural" or inherent basis

for correspondence between humanity and God. Barth was intent on locating the basis for that correspondence, as he does in *The Humanity of God*, in the freedom of God alone.³¹ This tack makes Barth's theology peculiar in that, in contrast to the ontological reduction of the transcendental subject that becomes characteristic of the new theology, Barth reconceives God by ontologizing transcendental subjectivity. As the absolute Subject of Being, God displaces human subjectivity and transgresses its propriety. And, in the same way that the relationship of grace to nature became the theological nucleus for the Catholic encounter with the modern separation of meaning from nature, Barth made the absolute priority of God's revelation the center of the Protestant discussion of all proper knowledge of God. By extension, this stance also made faith in that revelation the source of all worldly meaning.

The young Dietrich Bonhoeffer clearly saw the importance of Barth's recuperation of the priority of revelation, but he also saw something Barth had not seen. Bonhoeffer recognized that the problem Barth was confronting, which was inseparable from the modern struggle with the meaningful experience of the world, was even within the Catholic theology of their day an attempt to "overcome the difference between a transcendental and ontological starting point of theology."³² Bonhoeffer's two dissertations, *Sanctorum Communio* and *Act and Being*, recognized the metaphysical status of this problem while nonetheless remaining convinced that classical metaphysics must be supplanted by a philosophical personalism. As a result, in contrast to the Catholic affinity for "nature," Bonhoeffer takes Barth's lead and privileges revelation as the event of disclosure through which something new enters the world of experience and determines it. Yet Bonhoeffer also recognizes that such events must exist, must continue with a past and a future, and this leads him to focus on the union of the transcendental subjectivity of the human agent with ontological stability.

Bonhoeffer wants to highlight as the site of that stability the ethical relations that obtain ontologically in the community of the Christian church. The community, he argued, is the continued existence of Jesus in the world as God's revelation.³³ It is not in the institution of the church (*Kirche*) but in their communal relations (*Gemeinde*) that human beings are authentically acting (becoming) in the church in such a way that difference (matter, time, multiplicity, particularity) and being (unity, form, eternity, unity, universality) are united.³⁴ In this way, Bonhoeffer follows his teacher Reinhold Seeberg in locating ethical relations as the site of God's self-communication.³⁵ God's act and being happen in the world in a concretely ethical way that is coextensive with the loving embrace of the neighbor in the Christian assembly. The church

is individuals-together existing as a collective-individual (Jesus), a collective-individual who reveals that Being is fundamentally personal and relational.

It is where this argument most succeeds that its failures are also most clearly apparent. Though Bonhoeffer rightly recognized the need to overcome the separation of the transcendental subject and being, he embraced what André Dumas called an ontology without metaphysics,³⁶ a personalism like that of Martin Buber, Ferdinand Schiller, Gabriel Marcel, and Edith Stein.³⁷ The personalist influence was likely due in part to the tradition of Ritschlian liberalism that Bonhoeffer also learned from Seeberg,³⁸ and his embrace of ontology was indebted to Heidegger's *Being and Time*.³⁹ Bonhoeffer's intent was to avoid the errors he attributed to classical metaphysics, which could not accommodate the necessary priority of the event of revelation. Yet he also needed to respond to the important concerns about change and continuity, difference and identity that are the province of metaphysics. As a result, his ontology also showed a considerable Hegelian hue learned from Seeberg and the philosopher Eberhard Grisebach.⁴⁰ Both of these teachers also directed Bonhoeffer to social theory and sociology.⁴¹

From both Hegel and social theory, Bonhoeffer developed his social vision of the Christian community as the site in which the transcendental dynamism of human subjectivity is transformed from self-preservation into charitable affirmation of the other. This is a vision of the harmony of subject and being, but in such a way that the subject's division from being is retained. Subjective faith can never become knowledge, because the drive to self-preservation that animates personal subjectivity and that is identical with sin must never be allowed to be dominated by the subject.⁴² This sinful drive to self-preservation, which occludes recognition of another individual subject and transforms the other subject as a means to one's personal ends, arises from the originary separation of subject and nature. Only revelation, the grace of God's self-communication, draws these disparate elements together into a meaningful, charitable union for the first time.

In both Barth and Bonhoeffer, we see that Protestant theology during this time, like Catholic theology, punctuated the experience of the loss of worldly meaning as a concern with the reunion of grace with creation. Rather than being conceived as a problem of the inherence of meaning in the world, however, Protestant theology interpreted this experience in terms of sin and alienation and sought to recuperate the event of God's revelation as the foundation for reconciliation. Protestant theology began with the event of revelation because it is only there that the sinful alienation of our "natural" social condition, our drive to self-preservation, is overcome in existence.⁴³

This way of conceiving the reconciliation of the subject and nature must be distinguished from Catholic theologies that sought to preserve the originary coincidence of subject and nature, of meaning and world, either through an objective distinction between nature and grace or through some account of their correspondence with subjective agency. Protestant theologies recognized that the endemic split of the subject from nature renders aberrant any claim to the natural knowledge of God into a generalization of subjective self-consciousness. Consequently, revelation, not nature, must be the referent for the union of subject and nature. It cannot be in any way a natural, intrinsic capacity of the creature and can only be God's own work.

Bonhoeffer made the real advance within this network of ideas. He clarified that modern theology is in search of a starting point beyond the conflict between being (ontology) and the self (subjectivity). He also saw that this experience of contradiction requires beginning with actually existing social relations. Ultimately, Bonhoeffer's own solution remains incapable of sustaining the concrete reconciliation of subject and nature that he sought. The reasons for this failure can be given, and considerable light shed on the difficulties of both the Catholic and Protestant perspectives on this question, by looking in some detail at Hegel's argument against Kant and Fichte in *System of Ethical Life*. This analysis will be the foundation for the investigations of Catholic and Protestant theologies in subsequent chapters.

ABSTRACT AND NEGATIVE UNITY

In *System of Ethical Life*, Hegel contrasts intuition and concept in a way directly related to the distinct ways that Catholic and Protestant theologies seek to unite grace and creation. Intuition, for Hegel, refers to a subject's apprehension of its immediate identity with nature, whereas concepts arise from the subject's free and constructive activity in relation to nature. In intuition, the subject stands in fundamental distinction from nature but is equal with it in its differentiation. But with the priority of the concept, the subject's activity is primary, the constructive basis for apprehending the field of empirical differentiation. In fact, for the primacy of the concept, nature itself is considered the product of this subjective activity, and it is through this differentiating activity that the subject grasps itself.

When the unity of the subject and nature is conceived according to intuition, then their relation of differentiation is maintained and their parity heeded. Nevertheless, Hegel argues, this union lacks any critical concept. The practical work of construction is subsumed under the immediacy of nature.

Concepts are operative in the perception of nature, but they are not recognized as conceptual constructions. They are known only as immediate apprehensions of nature. As Kant maintained, this merely intuited union of subject and nature is abstract, or “blind.”⁴⁴ Lacking a concept, intuition cannot give knowledge of the union but functions only as a negative and blind presupposition. Because there can be no knowledge of the union, likewise there can be no material or social reality. What is here conceived of as union is merely the transcendental condition of the necessary separation of subject and nature.

The circumstances are reversed when unity is understood to be the effect of the practical imposition of the concept. If one begins with the manifold differentiations of nature, their unity must be derived from the imposition of a conceptual identity. The result is not the subordination of the concept to nature but nature’s domination by the concept. Constructive reason imposes its concepts on natural differentiation, suppressing intuition, rather than rationally deriving its concepts from it. As with intuition, the resulting unity is abstract, a purely formal criterion that is “empty” because it lacks the content provided by intuition.⁴⁵ Here, the union of subject and object is knowable, but it is negative because it results from the suppression, domination, and exclusion of natural difference. And it is abstract because the concepts supplying this union are purely formal.

These two abstract forms of unifying the subject and nature, according to Hegel, have social implications. In the absence of any critical relation to nature, intuition’s subsumption of the concept works merely to authorize existing social relations as natural.⁴⁶ The actually existing social order is simply and uncritically presumed to be natural. But, conversely, the unity achieved through the concept dominates and suppresses the intuitive manifold that deviates from the formal concept. As a result, blind to anything outside its own practical domination, the priority of the concept fails to recognize that the content of the concept is supplied by the actually existing social relations that determine it. The concept can only be an “ought” (*Sollen*) that governs existing social relations but that cannot be realized within them.

Both approaches understand the social mediation of the union of subject and nature only in a way that presupposes and reinforces their separation. Any union of subject and nature thought in these terms can be articulated only as the transcendental condition of possibility for the present state of actually existing social relations, or as the regulative ideal imposed on those relations. In either case, the actual social reality that obtains through this mediation is perpetual division. There is no concrete, social mediation of the subject and nature. Hegel argues that this is due to the failure to affirm the content of

intuition within the critical concept. Because modern philosophy understands the subject's freedom to subsist in its nonobjectival status, which is the basis of its separation from nature, any modern reunion of subject and nature can be thought only as the blind subsumption of the concept under intuition or the absolutely self-determining domination of intuition by the concept. But what is truly required is some way to articulate nature's determination of the free subject. Nature must neither subsume subjective freedom nor be dominated by it. It must be an integral part of the exercise of that freedom, and in a way that allows it to take shape in concrete social relations as the law of the concept. It is only here that the union of subject and nature can cease to be abstract and begin to wrestle concretely with the reality of actually existing social relations.

With this analysis, Hegel points not just to the social mediation of this unity but also to the unrecognized abstractness of a critical freedom grounded in a separation of the subject from nature. Hegel's point is not only that this merely abstract union of the subject and nature perpetuates their division but also that the very configuration of the subject's freedom in contrast to the world's determination of the subject is entirely constituted by the social relations of bourgeois property right.⁴⁷ The modern subject's conception of itself as free and self-determining is an illusion caused entirely by its assent to bourgeois notions of property. Bourgeois property right is the attempt to universalize, either transcendently or ontologically, the Roman jurisprudential distinction between a person (*persona*), who as a subject of the empire (*civis*) is invested with the legal right (*juris*) to ownership (*dominium*), and a thing (*res*), which is an objective property under a person's dominium.⁴⁸ Western subjectivity is nothing more than the social determination of selfhood according to this distinction.⁴⁹ A nonobjective "personal" knower and an objectively known "thing" are nothing less than an epistemological inflection of this Roman legal definition.⁵⁰ The freedom of subjective self-determining freedom is the generalized application of the Roman equation of personhood, freedom, and ownership. Knowledge, like the ownership of property, is possible only for free "persons," not "things." This is the content of bourgeois selfhood, the universalization of the relative.

Hegel is much less concerned with the abstractness of Kant's and Fichte's ethical positions than he is to show that the contradictions that derive from this abstractness are unwitting effects of an unconscious repetition of social forms of bourgeois property. Hegel demonstrates this by pointing to Kant's defense of private property.⁵¹ Kant considers whether it is moral for a loaner to appropriate a borrower's deposit to increase the loaner's wealth. Applying the maxim of universalizability, Kant concludes that it is not moral, because if every loaner

did so, there would be no deposits. This conclusion would be irrational because it would result in the elimination of private property. Hegel insists that there is no logical fallacy in the elimination of private property, but the consideration of its elimination cuts to the heart of the fundamental separation upon which Kant's system is built. Contrary to Kant's assumptions, what is actually irrational and therefore immoral, Hegel claims, is the attempt to universalize the right to private property.⁵² Private property is defined as the right to exclusion and domination. It is a socially guaranteed privilege for the objects under one's power to be exceptions from universal social life. One's status as an owner and one's property are specifically identified as indemnities from the universal, which means they are necessarily individual. But this is to attempt to treat a relative point of reference as the absolute point of reference, which is not the reconciliation of the subject with nature but the perfection of their split, an incoherent attempt to make what is conditioned to be unconditioned. Such incoherence, according to Hegel, must be judged immoral because it produces a universal concept of social unity that mediates only discord in actually existing social relations.

Critical as Kant's philosophy allows him to be about traditional metaphysics and natural law, he still remains uncritical with regard to the assumptions that inform the construction of his notion of transcendental subjectivity. He can submit a particular action to critique within the domain of practical reason, but he has no resources to bring the basis of critique itself into question. In this case, Kant's position is like classical natural law in subsuming the concept by which he grasps social reality beneath the intuition of the subject's original equality-in-differentiation from nature. Yet the converse is also true in the case of Fichte, who attempts to impose mutual respect of absolute self-determination as the law of social unity.⁵³ This position, too, is an unrecognized imposition of bourgeois social relations as the regulative ideal of political and economic life. Appearing as a critical position, it can only impose a normative "ought" (*Sollen*) on the current construction of social reality.⁵⁴

Hegel's analysis helps to shed light on the current configurations of the unity of grace and creation in contemporary theology. The prominence of nature's inherent meaning as a theological problem, which arises directly from the modern critical division of the subject from nature, becomes more clearly understandable from this perspective. But it also sheds light on why the problem of the union of creation and grace has been such a distinctively fraught, snarled muddle. The modern split between the subject and nature, founded as it is on bourgeois selfhood, has determined the parameters within which the doctrines of creation and grace are thought. Those parameters have produced the division

that has fueled preoccupation with restoring the union of creation and grace, and that also preempts its success. Among both Catholic and Protestant theologies, only Bonhoeffer has come closest to identifying the issues, and yet even his resolution can be seen from Hegel's analysis to repeat the contradictions that emerge from domination of the concept.⁵⁵ A closer look at both Catholic and Protestant theologies of grace and creation can make this clear.

All three schools of Catholic theology attempt to think the unity of creation and grace through the natural union of subject and nature that marks the priority given to intuition. Though neo-scholasticism wants to eliminate the critical role of transcendental subjectivity, it does so by appealing to the knower's immediate and objective relation to nature.⁵⁶ And the new theology and transcendental Thomism appeal explicitly to the preconceptual, intuitive coincidence of the subject with nature. For all three schools, "nature" occupies the place of intuition, whereas grace does the work of the concept. As in Hegel's analysis, all three cases result in the subsumption of grace to the immediacy of nature. This content is intrinsically and subjectively linked to nature for the new theology and transcendental Thomism, whereas it is extrinsically and objectively correlated with nature in neo-scholasticism. Nevertheless, whether it is conceived in terms of dynamic subjectivity or invariable objectivity, grace is understood to be the content of a direct, preconceptual apprehension of the natural world.

Protestant theology recognizes that this account of grace is insufficiently critical. Grace cannot merely authorize natural experience and established institutional mediations. It must in some sense creatively supplement experience in order to transform what is immediately given in it. Because of this, Protestant theology, like neo-scholasticism, will insist on an extrinsic understanding of grace. However, it is a subjective rather than an objective example of the extrinsic, which preserves the critical dimension of grace that it takes as crucial. Protestant theology insists that grace (in the mode of revelation) be thought in terms of the imposition of the concept, which alone gives unity to the subject's originary experience of division and alienation from the world. Grace is not the meaning distilled from an inherently meaningful experience of nature but the event that imposes meaning on the otherwise empty strife and division of natural, sinful experience.

Hegel's analysis also reveals that, because of their dependence on the original separation, neither of these accounts can attain a concrete, social mediation of grace's union with creation. And it is this point that is most salient for my study, given that the problem of the unity of these doctrines

does not readily appear to us to be a social problem. We conceive of it only as a theoretical, as opposed to a practical, issue for academic theologians. Yet, if this diagnosis is correct, then the fact that contemporary theology cannot think the unity of creation and grace except negatively and abstractly means that the historical and material significance of God's self-communication in grace lies derelict. We have either an immediate and uncritical presumption that the natural and social determination of experience is grace or the perpetual disruption of natural experience by the imposition of grace as the regulative ideal of social life. Both accounts fail to grasp the historical and material significance of a genuinely social mediation of grace's transformation of nature. The remainder of this study will explore in detail, and with the insights gleaned from Hegel's analysis, the nature of this continued failure to think the union of grace with creation. The concern will be to identify the essentially social form of this union, but in such a way that simultaneously identifies the key concepts in both Catholic and Protestant theologies of grace and creation that are necessary to recover for a true union.

In pursuit of this aim, in subsequent chapters I will focus on the unity of the doctrines of creation and grace specifically, in order better to differentiate the theological problems of this unity from the delimiting parameters established by the modern split of subjectivity from nature and its attendant uncritical dependence on bourgeois social relations. Framed in strictly doctrinal terms, this question of unity is less overtly tethered to the modern preoccupation with the contrast of metaphysical (nature and the supernatural) and nonmetaphysical (revelation, justification, and election) categories, and is allowed to emerge more fully as a concern about the character of God's acts of creating, redeeming, and sanctifying and of humanity's specific place in that work. It is just here, on this matter of the coincidence of divine and human agency, that the unity of creation and grace can appear once again in a fresh way, outside of (even if coincident with) the established and debilitating parameters.

Notes

1. George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 15–19.

2. The Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000). See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2004), 102–8.

3. The reader should consult Gerald A. McCool, *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century: The Quest for a Unitary Method* (New York: Seabury, 1977), 216–40; McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism: The Internal Evolution of Thomism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989), 5–38;

and McCool, *The Neo-Thomists*, Marquette Studies in Philosophy (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1994), 25–42. For a summary of the intellectual background and aftermath of these developments, see *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, 1–36 and 241–67. I am using the term *neo-Thomist* in a way consistent with McCool’s use, which is as a broader category than its use by some scholars. In his use, it refers to the rereadings of Aquinas in conversation with modern philosophy that developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He applies the term to thinkers from Maritain and Gilson to Rahner and Lonergan. I am explicitly distinguishing it from neo-scholasticism, which was the regnant Catholic theology at the turn of the twentieth century, and the *nouvelle théologie* and transcendental Thomism that derive from it.

4. McCool, *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, 1–36 and 241–67.

5. Maurice Blondel, *The Letter on Apologetics: and History and Dogma*, trans. Alexander Dru and Illyrd Trethowan (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 178, 160–61.

6. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), Bxxx and A822/B850.

7. McCool, *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, 216–40.

8. *Ibid.*, 228–36.

9. See *ibid.*, 37–58.

10. *Ibid.*, 59–88.

11. *Ibid.*, 228–36.

12. See Nicholas Lash, “Modernism, Aggiornamento, and the Night Battle,” in *Bishops and Writers: Aspects of the Evolution of Modern English Catholicism*, ed. Adrian Hastings (Wheatthampstead, UK: Clark, 1977), 51–79.

13. Here is a good place to call attention to my use of “creation and grace,” “nature and grace,” and “subject and nature” in this chapter. The dominant terminology in Catholic theology used to refer to this problem is “nature and grace.” For reasons that will be clearer in the next chapter, I reject this way of talking, which combines the metaphysical category “nature” with the doctrinal category “grace,” in favor of pairing the adjectival “natural” with “supernatural.” Both “nature/grace” and “natural/supernatural” are wrestling with the relationship between these two doctrines. For this reason, I emphasize that my concern in this study is with the union of creation and grace, and I will look in detail at the Catholic way of uniting these doctrines by distinguishing the natural from the supernatural. When I refer to “nature and grace” throughout this section, it is for continuity with the thinkers I am discussing.

14. See Gustav Siewerth, *Das Schicksal der Metaphysik von Thomas zu Heidegger*, *Gesammelte Werke* (Düsseldorf, Ger.: Patmos, 1987).

15. See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Seeing the Form*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, vol. 1 of *The Glory of the Lord* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1983), 393–407.

16. The approach always harbored the possibility of moving in exactly the opposite direction from that intended by *ressourcement* thinkers, as it actually did in the case of Michel de Certeau’s work (*The Mystic Fable: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. Michael B. Smith, vol. 1 [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996]), which married the method to both Lacan and Foucault. Certeau refers to *The Mystic Fable* as essentially a sequel to *Corpus Mysticum*.

17. See Gerald McCool, *Nineteenth Century Scholasticism: The Search for a Unitary Method* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989), especially his discussion of “ontology” at 113–28. McCool’s overarching thesis regarding doctrinal pluralism (1–16, 241–67) has shaped my focus on subjectivity and ontology in my interpretation of this material. I also gratefully acknowledge Sean Hayden’s influence, whose tenacious interjection of the question of subjectivity into theological conversation has proved invaluable. Despite our disagreements, that tenacity has aided my interpretation of what is at stake between these three schools.

18. Neo-scholasticism is now receiving something of a revival in the work of Reinhard Hütter, *Dust Bound for Heaven: Explorations in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012); Steven A. Long, *Natura Pura: On the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010); and Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See*

God according to St. Thomas and His Interpreters (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2010).

19. Bernard Lonergan called this “naive realism.” See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988). He distinguishes between a naive realism (72), a dogmatic realism (192–93), and his own critical realism, which is expounded as Aquinas’s own and is the thesis of the work.

20. On the objectivity of truth in opposition to (largely Kantian) subjectivity, see McCool, *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, 1–36.

21. Representatives of this view would be French Dominicans Gardeil, Garrigou-Lagrange, and Maritain, who followed in the footsteps of the Dominican commentators Cajetan, John of St. Thomas, and Bañez. See McCool, *Neo-Thomists*, 16–95. One can also see this same emphasis on objectivity, as I have been able to ascertain, in Reinhard Hütter’s understanding of the Spirit’s incarnation in the practices of the church. See Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).

22. On this heritage, the reader should consult McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism*.

23. It is important to note that this association of the new theology with the dynamism of subjectivity is actually more prominent in Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: Études historiques* (Paris: Aubier, 1946), despite the common assumption to the contrary. Here his reliance on an analysis of subjectivity as the basis for the understanding of the image of God is the key to understanding his ideas. It is later, in de Lubac’s *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Herder & Herder, 1998), that the ontological register comes most fully into view, because his disagreement with Rahner’s “transcendental” approach appeared to force this on him. A more detailed argument is made for this reading in chapter 2.

24. See, for example, Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, 59. On the significance of *Schwebe* for Rahner’s transcendental analysis, see Patrick Burke, *Reinterpreting Rahner: A Critical Study of His Major Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002).

25. Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

26. Here is a good place to acknowledge, in anticipation of some claims in chapter 3, that the association of Protestant liberal theology solely with the content of subjective consciousness, and the association of this way of reconstructing theology with Friedrich Schleiermacher, is a much more complex matter than is widely recognized. Though Schleiermacher does claim that we know God only through how we are affected by God, and though he does reconfigure that notion in terms of consciousness, it is not quite right to say that theology is simply the archetypal contents of consciousness.

27. See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992), and Hans Wilhelm Frei, “The Doctrine of Revelation in the Thought of Karl Barth, 1909–1922” (PhD diss., Yale University, 1956). For an alternative view, see Bruce McCormack, *Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909–1936* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), and his “Beyond Nonfoundational and Postmodern Readings of Barth: Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology,” in *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 109–66.

28. This point will be developed in more detail in chapter 3. On the somewhat idiosyncratic use of the term *actualist* in relationship to Barth’s work, which stands in contrast with the use of the same term in relationship to Aquinas, see George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

29. The definitive text is Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysik* (Einsiedeln, Switz.: Johannes, 1962). The reader should also consult Przywara, *Logos: Logos, Abendland, Reich*,

Commercium (Düsseldorf, Ger.: Patmos, 1964); Przywara, *In und gegen: Stellungnahmen zur Zeit* (Nuremberg, Ger.: Glock und Lutz, 1955); and Przywara, *Gott: Fünf Vorträge über das religionsphilosophische Problem*, Der Katholische Gedanke (Munich, Ger.: Oratoriums, 1926). The standard English translation of an admittedly early, and therefore limited, work is Przywara, *Polarity: A German Catholic's Interpretation of Religion*, trans. Alan Coates Bouquet (London: Oxford University Press, 1935).

30. See Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace"* (London: Centenary, 1946).

31. Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, trans. John Newton Thomas and Thomas Wieser (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1960), 44.

32. Ernst Feil, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, trans. Martin Rumscheidt (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 10. The reader should note Bonhoeffer's early appreciation of and engagement with Przywara in *Act and Being: Transcendental Philosophy and Ontology in Systematic Theology*, trans. Hans-Richard Reuter, Wayne W. Floyd, and Martin Rumscheidt (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 59–80.

33. Feil, *Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 10.

34. *Ibid.*

35. Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*; Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, trans. Clifford J. Green (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998).

36. André Dumas, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian of Reality*, trans. Robert McAfee Brown (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 97–117. It is in this way, despite his proximity to Levinas, that Bonhoeffer is to be distinguished from him. Bonhoeffer remains almost strictly Heideggerian in this regard, and his reference to ethics remains personalist in orientation, in the manner of Edith Stein, and does not achieve the strong critique of ontology developed later in Levinas.

37. James C. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1997), 2:114.

38. On this point, specifically in regard to Seeberg as an interpretation of Luther, the reader should consult the fine discussion of Seeberg in Sammeli Juntunen, *Der Begriff des Nichts bei Luther in den Jahren von 1510 bis 1523*, Schriften der Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft A36 (Helsinki, Fin.: Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft, 1996). The reader should also consult the discussion of the interpretation of Luther in Antti Raunio, *Summe des christlichen Lebens: Die "Goldene Regel" als Gesetz der Liebe in der Theologie Martin Luthers von 1510–1527* (Mainz, Ger.: von Zabern, 2001), 13–52.

39. Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 31, esp. n20.

40. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, 114. See also Wayne Whitson Floyd, "Encounter with the Other: Immanuel Kant and G. W. F. Hegel in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer," in *Bonhoeffer's Intellectual Formation*, ed. Peter Frick (Tübingen, Ger.: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 83–120.

41. See Floyd, "Encounter with the Other," 93–120.

42. See Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 26n20.

43. See the discussion in *ibid.*, 7, 16, 41–46, 58, 80, 89.

44. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A51/B76. Throughout this section, I am particularly indebted to Gillian Rose's reading, which places abstract bourgeois property right at the center of Hegel's philosophy in *System of Ethical Life, Natural Law, and Philosophy of Right*. See Gillian Rose, *Hegel contra Sociology* (New York: Verso, 2009), 51–97.

45. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A51/B76.

46. See Rose, *Hegel contra Sociology*, 94–95.

47. See the discussion of abstract right, which opens with a discussion of property right, in G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. Alan White (Newburyport, MA: Focus, 2002), 40–66.

48. See Rose, *Hegel contra Sociology*, 55–97 (especially 71), but for her most in-depth discussion see Gillian Rose, *Dialectic of Nihilism: Post-Structuralism and Law* (New York: Blackwell, 1984), 11–48.

49. See J. G. Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right*, ed. Frederick Neuhouser, trans. Michael Baur (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 113–22 and 165–82.

50. See Rose, *Dialectic of Nihilism*, 11–48.

51. See the discussion in Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 60–63.

52. *Ibid.*, 61.

53. See Rose, *Hegel contra Sociology*, 51–97.

54. Rose is particularly fond of calling attention to the function of the “ought” (*Sollen*) in abstract, liberal morality. See particularly *Hegel contra Sociology*, 55–63 and 83–84.

55. From the vantage of Hegel’s analysis, we can see that the unity Bonhoeffer attains through this social relation remains an abstract, conceptual preservation of the originary separation of subject from nature. His community of the individual-collective does not actually attain a genuine social mediation of union. He understands the Christian community only as a social site committed to living together in a way that acknowledges the subjectivity of another and that returns to this affirmation through forgiveness and reconciliation, a community of the “ought” (*Sollen*) in which every individual subjectivity is recognized as the limit of one’s own. In other words, Bonhoeffer’s Christian community is still strictly a community of bourgeois property relations. The dialectic of sin and grace, the *simul justus et peccator*, that dynamically drives Bonhoeffer’s social vision for this community can thereby be seen as the internal contradiction of the attempt to understand a social community founded on demand to universalize the bourgeois right to exclude every other individual. What binds that community together will be their common adherence to the abstract and regulative ideal, which by necessity cannot be naturally realized by any human effort. It can only be received as an extrinsic, abstract determination of Christian life together.

56. See n20.