

The University and “Beaux-Arts” Modernity: John Milbank, Marcel Duchamp, and Poincaré’s Sarcasm

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For it is out of that essence that G_d created everything, without indeed touching it himself, for it was not lawful for the all-wise and all-blessed G_d to touch materials which were all misshapen and confused, but He created them by the agency of his incorporeal powers, of which the proper name is Ideas, which he so exerted that every genus received its proper form (LA 1.329).

Philo-Judaeus of Alexandria, 20 B.C.E.-50 C.E., *Legum Allegoriarum*

When I came across the word “DaDa” I was called upon twice by Dionysius (the Areopagite. D.A. - D.A.. (H[uel senbec]k wrote of this mystical birth; I did too in earlier notes).

Hugo Ball, 1916, Briefe 1911-1927

So while some scientific ‘explanation’ of segments of human behavior remains possible, though precarious, this is never an explanation of the human as such . . . On the contrary, human interaction in all variety can only be narrated, and not explained / understood after the natural science. . . we have come to see just how the terms ‘social’ and ‘society’ have so insinuated themselves that we never question the assumption that while ‘religions’ are problematic, the social is obvious.

John Milbank, 2001, *Theology & Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*

Introduction

This paper critically reviews selected aspects of the historical context for the work of the French artist Marcel Duchamp, in particular his “ready-made” series, and, the theologian John Milbank’s monograph, *Theology & Social Theory*, in order to argue that counter-secular, provisional theologic¹ framework(s) be considered for contemporary art-art

¹ See footnote 4 for a explanation of the term “theologic.”

historical practices. At present, students in most, if not all university fine arts programs in Canada have absolutely no opportunity to consider the possibility of developing an art practice that is committed to a critical, religiously grounded engagement with the contemporary world. In part, this state of affairs reflects an unrecognized, hegemonic² assumption that there are no reasonable grounds why students should have programmatic access to theologic arguments in any disciplinary area other than what is provided for by existing Departments of Region and/or Theology. Notwithstanding the Anglo-Catholic framework of Milbank's work they could, hypothetically, function as one *possible, alternative* curricular readings for the teaching of art history, art theory, and contemporary Beaux Arts and New Media practices. The italicized stress upon the terms "*possible, alternative*" underscores what I am arguing for insofar as Milbank's work does *not* represent the only framework for students to consider.³ Rather, my interest is to show that with the appearance of post-secular critiques of secular dogmatics the possibility emerges that Christian, and non-Christian critical theologies⁴ may, in principle, be formulated to contextualize contemporary art-art historical practices.⁵

"The Royal Commission on the Development of Arts, Letters and Sciences in Canada"

In his 1992 essay, "Protestant Colleges in Canada: Past and Future," (Rawlyk, GA. , 1992:278 - 302) the late George Rawlyk, Professor of History at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario presented a combative, if not embittered account of the rise during the 1840's, and, by the late 1920's, the subsequent betrayal and transformation into secularized Universities of the various eastern Canadian Protestant colleges. The eventual

² "Unrecognized" because, after discussions with Faculty colleagues my experience is that many simply cannot take seriously the espousal of a theologically or faith based critical stance with regards to "secularism." Worse, in some cases we arrive at the truly laughable situation where some Faculty simply refuse to see their position as reflecting a prejudiced viewpoint rather than one that is, for them, *de facto* true.

³ Obviously there are a number of figures working today, either directly or indirectly, in the areas of theological aesthetics, critical studies, and/or post-secular studies. For example, I would include Graham Ward, Catherine Pickstock, Jean-Luc Marion, Edith Wyschogrod, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and David Bentley Hart. I cannot stress it enough that what I am proposing is that 'other' discourses **also** make their entrance into the both the discussion, and, teaching of *contemporary art practices*.

⁴ "critical theologies" is the phrase which I use to differentiate any modes of religiosity that intentionally propose counter arguments against, or, restrict the applicative scope of what I refer to as the TRFP explanatory model (TRFP is discussed in this paper) with respect to a metaphysics of human action. In addition, critical theologies does not preclude the possibility that, in countering the primacy of TRFP, these counter arguments do not necessarily entail any given religious practice not recognizing the pragmatic efficacy of those solutions to specific problems that have emerged over the history of the application of the "model." As Graham Ward notes, in other words, "parag[ing] the self-understanding of those who practice Christian theology, any theology, is some account of their calling to be faithful, and some appeal to the foundation of all theological discourse; a revelation that opens up a radical exteriority, a transcendent horizon. . ." (Ward, Graham, 2005:13)

result being the near total marginalization of "supernatural revelation" by the "New Humanities" of "the historical, social and political sciences . . . and, by the 1980's, the development of a situation where . . .the essential justification for the university is its technological usefulness and crucial hegemonic role in the shaping of the consumer and therapeutic culture." (Rawlyk, GA., 1992:278)

Rawlyk examines the interlocking tensions between a nascent, 19th century Canadian democratic nationalism, an emergent, market driven consumerism, and, a liberalist individualism that formed the historical backdrop for the transformation of the evangelical protestant colleges. One of Rawlyk's central theses argued that it was only during the late 1890's that the institutional relationship between the arts, sciences, and the mandated evangelicalism of the colleges first began to mutate into an open conflict over the nature of the pedagogical, and wider social role of the colleges.

One of the preeminent figures in the rise of the early protestant colleges was the Maritime Baptist minister Dr. J.M. Cramp. He saw no inherent tension between the sciences, arts and evangelical vocation of the schools insofar as the programmatic reformism of "scientific progress" was "intimately 'united with the most powerful energies of Christianity." Notwithstanding Cramp's progressive Christian Modernism, by 1890's an outright "theological civil war" (Rawlyk, GA., 1992:281) had erupted between the liberal and conservative wings of the Protestant, and, in particular, the Baptist Churches.

The founding and subsequent secularization of McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario represents, for Rawlyk, a primary case study that mirrors the eventual fate of all denominational colleges. A product of the driving interests of Senator William McMaster, prominent Baptist and Ontario businessman, McMaster University was the first University that represented not the traditional Baptist evangelicalism of the denominational colleges, but rather, a nascent secular evangelicalism that merged arts and science practices with a triumphant entrepreneurialism. Although nominally still working within Cramp's vision of a Christian modernism, the newly established arts and science departments were, in actuality, well on their way to becoming *de facto*, autonomous educational entities. Thus, the incipient tensions between theological modernism and an emergent, secular modernity appeared full force in the inaugural address of Reverend O.C.S. Wallace, the third Chancellor of McMaster University,

Much of the educational work of the present is a menace to all that is holiest because it is moulded in form and determined in spirit by the contrary principle . . . We are not denying that there is a truth to pursue, but we solemnly affirm that there is a truth to teach. However vast may the domain of the unexplored, it is yet true that something is known and is ours . . . The unequivocal revelation of God. (Rawlyk, GA., 1992:285-286).

Wallace's defense of Christian "revelation" was, however, to immediately draw fire from his friend and colleague T.P. Hall who, in a letter to Wallace, would argue,

When the idea that "a university exists for the teaching rather than the pursuit of truth" - has laid hold of an institution then its zenith has been reached. Like the perfectionists in character no advance is believed possible . . . Every truth that is not brought home to the individual conscience and judgment and there accepted as truth on its own merits is, to a student, a worse than useless incumbrance . . . I believe in the scientific method, the method that is used in good schools at the present day. (Rawlyk, GA., 1992:286).

While the intervening period between the First and Second World Wars saw a consolidation of the modernist model of the university, it was not until after the second war that the full potential of secular modernity within the post-secondary educational system emerge in Canada with the tabling, in 1951, before the Commons of the report of the Royal Commission on the Development of Arts, Letters and Sciences in Canada.⁶ Set up in April 8, 1949 it articulated a comprehensive legal, political, and policy framework with respect to the government's role in the long term development of the "Arts, Letters and Sciences" in Canada. A document of unprecedented scope in Canadian (sociocultural) history, it represented the culmination of the Federal Government's constructionist role in developing an unified, sociopolitical, cultural, and economic identity for Canada, since its achievement of nationhood under the British North America Act of 1867.⁷

⁶ Set up by the Liberal government of Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent, it was also known as "The Massey-Levesque Commission" because it was co-chaired by Reverend Georges-Henri Lévesque, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Laval University and Vincent Massey, Chancellor of the University of Toronto.

⁷ The publication of the 'Commission's' report was actually part of wider set of post-war 'public-private' initiatives that *completely* structured then entire Canadian cultural situation. This includes the National Film Act which expanded on the National Film Board's (NFB) pervuew (1950), the Massey-Levesque Commission (1949-1951), the inception of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (1951), the creation of CBC Television (1952), the opening of the National Library of Canada (1953), the creation of the Canada Council (for the arts) in (1957), and the inauguration of the journal Canadian Literature by George Woodcock (1959).

At the ideological core of this document were three of the canonical components of secular Modernity. First, the Argument from the Creative 1st Person,⁸ or, the principle of creative, recursive individualism. Second, the discourse of an autonomous, cultural constructionism. Of foundational consequence, the concept “culture“ functionally linked recursive individualism with the traditional domains of the “Arts” and “Letters” as they were instantiated within the emergent, post-war, educational format of the modern, research based university.⁹ Three, the instrumentalized harnessing of the universities, cultural production, and recursive individualism to the goal of progressive, national socioeconomic development.

The principle that underwrote the government’s decision to proceed with the reports recommendations was the commission’s “two-approach proposal,” (Clark, Tim, 1996:263-264) which formed the operational premises for the institutionalization of the discourse of modernist humanism. Government would provide the funding for the improvement of existing schools, and universities, in addition to the creation of new institutions. Nonetheless, the most interesting aspect of the proposal was the second ‘approach’ which allowed for a “*general non-academic education* through the funding of books, periodicals, radio, films, museums, libraries, and art galleries.” As the “Report” declares in the preamble,

⁸ The 1st Person argument will be discussed as of page 11 of this paper.

⁹ The first textual use of the term “research” in its experimental, scientific mode appeared in England in William Wotton’s *Reflections Upon Ancient and Modern Learning*, first published in 1694. As a participant in one of the great pitched confrontations over Modernity, Battle of the Moderns and Ancients, Wotton was a member of the preeminent institution of English scientific modernism, The Royal Society. The historian Wolfram Swoboda noted in his seminal essay, *On Disciplines and Interdisciplinarity*, that unlike the universities, which still retained the older pedagogical structure, “the new scientific societies became hierarchies of {scientific} achievement.” It is during the late 17th and middle 18th centuries in Germany and, later in France, that the first modern universities began emerging when the institutional and educational characteristics of the scientific academies and societies began to merge with the university. The most famous representatives of this new institution were the University of Halle, founded in 1694, and the University of Göttingen, which was founded in 1737, and the *École Polytechnique* in France. These institutional developments are a direct consequence of the emergence of distinct “disciplinary communities” in Germany whom, at the same time, had begun to produce their own “specialized journals,” developments that led to the expansion of the scope of application of the new experimental research techniques.

The result of this disciplinary process was the complete alteration of the classical - medieval concept of a *disciplina*. Rooted in Hellenic antiquity, the Latin term *disciplina* referred to “all that is taught in the way of instruction or learning.” By the 18th century an emergent modernist {empiricist} sense of what constitutes a discipline implied that each disciplinary community possessed its own set of intrinsic theoretical and methodological precepts that govern the scope of the criteria for testability with regards to the class of empirical material covered by a given discipline. The historian Stephen Turner argued that with the appearance during the 18th century of modern disciplinary practices each discipline would, by the late 19th century, develop in “accord with the methodologies and assumptions that are neither translatable into those of any another disciplines nor traceable to a more fundamental discipline ... {consequently} each discipline internalized its aim, and each ... became increasingly specialized so that study within it became rigidly compartmentalized in terms of its principles.” (Clark, Tim, 2002:78)

Education is the progressive development of the individual in all his faculties, physical and intellectual, *aesthetic* and moral. As a result of the disciplined growth of the entire personality, the educated man shows a balanced development of all his powers; he has fully realized his human possibilities. (Horseman, Joan, 1975:2-3).

The presence of the term “aesthetic” is of profound significance because it represented an important, discursively constructionist component deployed by the framers of the “Report” for the promulgation of a strengthened Canadian identity. One major reason for the programmatic presence of cultural aesthetics was the document A National Plan for the Arts, one of 421 briefs presented by interest groups from across Canada to the Commission. Submitted by the Conference of Canadian Artists, it emphatically declares,

The cultivation of the arts is not a luxury but an essential prerequisite to the development of a stable national culture; . . . Just as language is necessary to the development of reason, so is the more fundamental language of the arts essential . . . any society that he creates must lack inner integrity, self-reliance, cohesion, and awareness of itself as an entity. (Conference of Canadian Artists 1950:2).

What is of consequence with regards to the Conference of Canadian Artists are the specific forms of media practices, prevailing aesthetics, and pedagogical formation of the women and men who made up its’ membership. In most, though not all cases, their art practices were restricted to late 19th, and early 20th century modernist aesthetics in painting, sculpture, engraving and print making, while their schooling was within traditional European atelier model, or, the academic, Beaux Arts tradition. The ‘Report’ had, by the 1960’s and 70’s, precipitated the eventual demise of these traditional educational institutions when they were either absorbed into the university system, or, in the case of those schools who were not absorbed, these would eventually bring their programs in line with degree granting structure of the universities.¹⁰ Nonetheless, this institutional

¹⁰ The effects of the implementation of the "Report" went far beyond the restructuring of Beaux-Arts training. For all intents and purposes, Federal and Provincial government policies were a major initiating factor in the creation of the entire art production system in Canada. This system included periodicals, galleries, exhibitions, museums, schools, museological and curating practices, virtually all funding to aid both artists and exhibitions to travel in and outside of Canada, and, I would strongly argue, the production of artists to fill the “jobs” made available in these new “cultural industries.” It is also set out important provisions concerning television broadcasting in Canada. As I stated in an earlier essay concerning the sheer scale of government’s investment into the Canadian cultural context,

For instance, their appearance, starting in the late 1970 s and running into the late 1980 s, reflects a much larger transformation of the economic and socio-institutional framework of the Canadian art

transformation did not alter the rational of modernist aesthetics nor the essentially scholastic, Beaux-Arts classification of media practices.

Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture and "Modern System of the Arts"

Derivative of Italian Renaissance models, the institution of “academic,” Beaux-Arts practices and pedagogy were first centralized as a matter of national government policy when, in 1648, under Louis XV’s direction, the history painters Charles LeBrun and Philippe de Champaigne established the *Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture* in Paris. While many classificatory formulations for the arts had, since the emergence of Christendom, been slowly (re)constructed from classical sources, the formulation and detailing of the “Modern System of the Arts” did not reach maturity until the publication, in 1746, of “*Les beaux arts reduit it un meme principe*,” by the Jesuit member of the *L’Academie des Insriptions* and *l’Académie française*, l’abbé Charles Batteux.

Published during the middle of the 18th century, the penultimate, formative context for the growth of modernist aesthetics, Batteux’s treatise was, however, marked by a number of internal, theoretic tensions which, themselves, reflected a much wider history of questions surrounding modernist epistemology, theories of mind, and aesthetics. In Batteux’s case, these “tensions” arose, in large part, as a result of his attempt to formulate arguments that relied both on the seminal, first-person modernism of Cartesian epistemology (see below for discussion of first-person experientiality), and, at the same time, on a mimetic reading of representational experience founded on pre-Cartesian, Renaissance (re)formulations of the Roman poet Horace’s (*Quintus Horatius Flaccus*) famous phrase *ut pictura poesis* (“as is painting, so is poetry,”) found in his epistle, *Ars Poetica* (On the Nature of Poetry, 18BC).

world. Between 1966 and 1990, there is a 1110 per cent increase in the number of serials that provide publication venues for texts on the fine arts. Most important, from 1965 to 1975, a period I consider most significant to the transformation of this art world, there is a 350 per cent increase in the number of publications dealing with the fine arts. Other important venues for the public dissemination of texts are institutions such as museums, galleries, and artist-run spaces. Here again, there was a significant increase in the number of exhibition spaces that could support the publication of catalogues. For example, Diana Nemiroff, in her study on the emergence of artist-run spaces in Canada, notes that the number of these spaces rose from one in 1967 to over ninety in 1985! 8 Max Brice notes in his 1979 study of the postwar growth of museums in Canada, that of the 575 museums Statistics Canada listed as existing as of 1976, 56 per cent appeared between 1967 and 1976. In other words, 322 museums began to operate at this time. 9 It is significant that the budget of the Canada Council—the single most important funding agency for the arts to emerge during this period—rose between 1965 and 1975, from \$3.5 million to \$24 million—an increase of 686 per cent. At the provincial government level, the budgets for the Ministère des Affaires Culturelles in Quebec and the Ontario Arts Council [the largest funding agencies outside of the Canada Council] increased by 391 per cent in Quebec —from \$4.5 million to \$17.6 million—and in Ontario by 190 per cent—from \$5 million to \$9.5 million. (Clark, Tim, 1996:262-263)

Quickly following on the heels of the publication, and subsequent distribution outside of France of Batteux's treatise, a number of critical responses appeared that were directed at the use of the principle of *mimeses* to structurally unite his founding list of "fine arts." Moses Mendelssohn, the great figure of both the Jewish *Haskalah* (Enlightenment) and German *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment) had, following the lead of the early work of the Jesuit L'abbé Jean-Baptiste Dubos in France, proposed that *mimesis* cannot account for the nature of representationality, in particular, painterly depictions of sublime events. Mendelssohn put forward the counterargument that the epistemological status of experiential interactions with depictions of the sublime must be construed not as definably mimetic events, but rather as representationalist depictions that mediate between subjective experientiality and, objective event.

John Milbank, Descartes, and the Critique of the "TRFP"

The progressive decline of what the Polish philosopher, Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz called the "Great Theory of Beauty," (Tatarkiewicz, Wladyslaw, 1972: 165-180) under the weight of attempts to wed *mimesis* with Cartesian and Lockean anthropologies is hardly surprising¹¹. The problematics surrounding the Argument from Theoretic Representation (*TR*) and its correlative premise, the Argument from the Epistemic Primacy of 1st Person Experiences (*FP*)¹², are amongst the core issues circumscribing virtually all modernist anthropologies and the privileging of scientific representationalism. *Per se*, it would be expected that they should be among the penultimate issues that Milbank's Theology and Social Theory takes on in his open challenge to the catechistic dogmatics of secularism and the disciplinary practice of sociology.

Although René Descartes is central to the philosophical formulation of *FP*, his work must be set against the achievement of Galileo Galilei. Galileo's work was one of the major contributing factors that precipitated the eventual break with Aristotelean hylomorphic physics with his formulation of a nascent, physicalistic-atomistic, theoretical physics that was methodologically proto-experimental in its practice, and mathematical in its formalization

¹¹ For over-views of John Locke's role in the collapse of the doctrine of *mimesis* and the rise of modernist anthropologies see (Starobinski, Jean, 1964), (Tuveson, Ernst, 1960) and (Boyd, John D., 1968)

¹² The "Argument from Theoretic Representation" is my phrase, while in the case of the phrase the "Argument from the Epistemic Primacy of First Person Experiences" is a modification of the standard philosophical description of Cartesian anthropic epistemology, the "Argument from the First Person". For the sake of brevity I will refer to the Argument of Theoretic Representation as *TR* and the Argument from the Primacy of First Person Epistemic Experience as *FP*, and, the conjunction of the two as *TRFP*.

of observational experience. Certainly one of the most beautiful, if not conceptually stunning precursors of these doctrines can be found in Galileo's work of 1623, *Il Saggiatore* (The Assayer).

Of whatever color the bodies might be impregnated, do not believe that the elements of their substance are tinged with this color. . . The atoms are all colorless, for if they are endowed with different forms which permit them to produce all the tints and to vary them ad infinitum, by the play of combinations, the respective positions, and the movement that they impress on each other reciprocally, then you will easily explain why black can immediately become a marmoreal whiteness . . . (Galileo, Galilei, 1957:201).

What stands out in *Il Saggiatore* is Galileo's statement "Of whatever color the bodies might be impregnated, do not believe that the elements of their substance are tinged with this color . . . The atoms are all colorless," Thus, against Aristotelean hylomorphic physics, the act of predication of color terms becomes, for Galileo, the possibility that our response is subjective, in (experiential) relation to our casual interaction with the objectively specifiable, emergent event structures that are, in themselves, a function of the casual interaction of atoms. *Ipsa facto*, Galilean physics initiated the severing of Aristotelean, morphic cognition into two distinct, explanatory components _ theoretic explanations of primary, quantitative properties, and subjective, secondary and tertiary qualitative properties.

The doctrine of theoretic representation argues that any potentially true scientific characterization must, in principle, be formulated in terms of its primary [theoretic] properties, not in its secondary, subjective qualities. Therefore, any *explanandum* the 'primary' properties and event structures subject to the application of a given theorem - ontologically references the 'real' physicalistic-casual (deterministic) structure of nature while the *explanan*, the theorem - is, by definition, a machinic-mathematical explanation.

Coextensive with *TR* is the Cartesian doctrine of *FP*. When taken in conjunction with *TR*, *TRFP* represents the primary methodological conditions under which truth claims may be successfully asserted. For Descartes, indefeasible epistemological claims must arise from the methodic, universal application of a hyperbolic, skeptical interrogation of the contents of, and relation between introspective, self-reflective consciousness (*res cognitans*) and

sensate experience of the body and the external world (*res extensa*). Though the application of hyperbolic skepticism can call into question the contents of all introspective and sensate experience, the very activity of the *cognito* is its own guarantee, since to deny the presence of the act of thinking, would be to generate a logically contradictory claim. As Descartes notes, “So that it must, in fine, be maintained, all things being maturely and carefully considered, that this proposition (*pronunciatum*) *I am, I exist*, is necessarily true each time it is expressed by me, or conceived in my mind.” (Descartes, Rene, 1901:3).

Notwithstanding the foundational importance of Descartes' formulation of the 1st Person argument in his attempt to establish an ontology of thinking as a discursive process of argumentative reasoning, it does little to address an equally problematic issue. The difficulty that faced Descartes was that his methodic universalization of hyperbolic doubt represented a negative theodicy of the infinite *possibility* of error. given that at the center of the 1st person experience is the perpetual presence of deconstructibility - of systemic 'doubt' and “error.” This is the case because at this stage of his arguments there are no defensible 3rd person, ontologically autonomous grounds that constrain the process methodic skepticism at the level of the 1st person - the *cognito*. As such, any 1st order knowledge claim(s) and consequent derivations drawn from these primary claim(s) must, themselves, be subject to 2nd order constraint(s) of the *cognito* - the presumably *untranscendable* limiting condition on all 1st order experiential activity.¹³ In short, how we are to establish that for any proposition *x*, *x* is true given the initial limiting conditions. What then is the nature of a 3rd person ground which is now required, given the highly problematic nature of 1st person arguments, to establish, metaphysically, the certainty of *any and all* contentual claims that may emerge as a function of the inter-relationship between the cognitive activity of this “process” and the external world.

It is here that Descartes musters the penultimate core of his project when he initiated the great section of the ‘First Meditation’ where he laid out the sceptical arguments concerning dreaming’ and non-dreaming states, and, of course, the final *unbounded* Argument from

¹³ It is important to reiterate the foundational role that Descartes gives to his reconstructionist program through his pivoting of the project on first person, epistemic experientiality - each individual person's first hand, or 'first person' interaction with the world. Consequently, for anyone who initiates an epistemological investigation of the world they must, by definition, commence from their individuated cognitive activity, and, there must, by definition, exist the philosophical possibility that, in the face of the methodological application of systemic skepticism, that there are object(s) or event structure(s) in the world that are the cause of experiences in the first place., And further, that they, as humans are capable of rationally substantiating their experiences of this 'world.'

the Evil Genius (Newman, Lex, 2005:2), or, the Argument from Theocentric Stability.¹⁴

Founded on the Thesis of Similarity with respect to the traditional Platonic argument from “epistemically distinct worlds,” (Newman, Lex, 2005:2) the “Evil Genius” argument represented one of a series of hyperbolic, skeptical arguments. Descartes concluded that the argument must be false because the world has been so constructed by G_d that it is understandable. Consequently, Descartes asserted that the ‘Evil Genius’ argument leads to the *undoubtable* conclusion “that existence is inseparable from him (G_d), and therefore that he really exists: **not that this is brought about by my thought**, or that it imposes any necessity on things, but on the contrary, . . . *the necessity of the existence of God, determines me to think in this way . . .*” (Descartes, Rene, 1901:5-10) However, the sheer audaciousness, if not highly problematic nature of this argument, has to be underscored for we arrive at a unremittingly narcissistic conclusion - G_d is no longer constitutive of all existence, but, rather functions as a (theocentric) guarantee for the veracity of *our* 1st person experiences¹⁵.

There are three corollaries derivable from the Cartesian position. One, the definitional and ontological substantive distinction between the domains of *res extensa* and *res cognitans*. Two, given “One,” then under no circumstances can any theoretic (machinic-physicalistic) explanations be applicable to the domain of *res cognitans*. As Descartes asserts, “But the will is so free in its nature, that it can never be constrained.” (Descartes, Rene, 1897-1910:230) Three, the question of what is now referred today as the problem of “anthropic bias,” or, the 1st person to 3rd person problem.¹⁶ Although first addressed by Descartes with

¹⁴ The phrase *Argument from Theocentric Stability* represents my (re)description of Descartes’ position.

¹⁵ Michel Hanby notes that “Descartes’ fundamental principle negates the traditional God only to reconstruct him as a causal hypothesis and guarantor of clear and distinct ideas.” (Hanby, Michael, 2003:270)

We also find a similar doctrine in the work of Gottfried Leibniz concerning G_d’s ‘*scientia visionis*’. In particular, its function in sustaining the “unity and reality of bodily phenomena insofar as divine knowledge underwrites *all* relations, including those that ground phenomenal individuals.” (Lodge, Paul, 2001: 394)

¹⁶ The principle of “anthropic bias” is drawn from the work of the Swedish philosopher Nick Bostrum (Bostrum, Nickolas, 2002) The doctrine refers to the problem of conformational and cognitive “Bias” which, I argue, are definitionally derivative from *TRFP*. Anthropic bias may be divided into weak and strong versions. Bostrum’s is a weak version because he argues that bias “Effects” can be managed through the application of Bayesian, probabilistic analysis, while, in the case of the work of, for example, Michel Foucault, “bias” can never be “managed” because the principle is, itself, a function of deeper sets of historical constraints. As Bostrum notes, ‘Observation selection effects are an especially subtle kind of selection effect that are introduced not by limitations in our measurement apparatuses but by the fact that all evidence is preconditioned on the existence of an observer to “have” the evidence and to build the instruments in the first place.’ I would argue that Milbank’s position, like Foucault’s is a variant of the strong principle of anthropic bias. See Clark, Tim, 2007:59-70)

his 3rd person arguments concerning dream states and “Evil“ geniuses, “three” still remains today one of the single most highly contentious issues to plague the *TRFP* model. The analytical philosopher David Chalmers put the case concerning the role of 1st person experientiality very succinctly. For, if one accepts the framework *TRFP* then one must, by definition, take into account the operational relation between the 1st, and 3rd order phenomenal levels of human experientiality in order to make any truth claims about 1st person experiences. This is the case because *if* 1st person, conscious experiences are deemed, as Chalmers asserts, “to be part of the “philosophical argument,” *then* they must, in principle, be part of a “knowable“ world in the first place . . .”

As I see it, the science of consciousness is all about relating *third-person data* - about brain processes, behavior, environmental interaction, and the like - to *first-person data* about conscious experience. I take it for granted that there are first-person data. It's a manifest fact about our minds that there is something it is like to be us - that we have subjective experiences - and that these subjective experiences are quite different at different times. Our direct knowledge of subjective experiences stems from our 1st person access to them. And subjective experiences are arguably the central data that we want a science of consciousness to explain. (Chalmers, David, 1999:1).

Immanuel Kant, the Antimony of (Human) History, and the Emergence of Argument from the Creative 1st Person

Some 142 years after the publication of Descartes' Meditations on First Philosophy Immanuel Kant radically revisited the Argument from Theocentric Stability, replacing it with the Argument from (Ideational) Heuristics. Thus, the term *G_d* is a functional articulation by the activity of transcendental reason of the regulative (heuristic) 'idea' of the supreme, *noumenonal* ground of all existence. The late American philosopher Hilary Putman proposed that the pivotal juncture for the modernist project occurs with the publication, in 1781, of Immanuel Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Critique of Pure Reason) which inaugurated the distinction between critical and “noncritical” philosophical arguments. Kantian critical philosophy focused on the inherent finitude of an *TRFP*, while, in contradistinction, pre-Kantian theocentric and cosmocentric philosophies tacitly assumed that human reason, by definition, functioned in an unmeditated, cognitive condition that was not limited by historical, cultural, or sociopolitical constraints.

Kant's critical idealism had attempted to resolve "the ostensible contradiction of reason with itself" for, if not resolved, it would lead to the "euthanasia of pure reason." The problem arises with the demand of reason "for an absolute totality of conditions for" conditional experience. This demand is itself a consequence of the principle that if "the conditioned is a given, the entire sum of conditions, and consequently the absolutely unconditioned {through which alone the conditioned has been possible} is also given." (Kant, Immanuel, 1981:390).

The Argument from Theocentric Stability had already signalled potentially serious epistemological problems with *TRFP*. Worse, Kant's critical project did little to resolve the difficulties because while his articulation of the principle of finitude was important, his solution proved to be very unsatisfactory. Kant had famously stated that his project attempted to resolve what was for him the pivotal, philosophical issue - the "Fourth Antimony Of Pure Reason." In a letter to Christian Garve, a reviewer for The Gottinger Learned Messenger Kant had described the Antimony,

Not the investigation of the existence of God . . .but the antimony of pure reason was the point from which I began one : {for} The world has a beginning - : {against} . it has no beginning, etc., to the fourth : {for} There is freedom in human experience: {against} there is no freedom and everything is natural necessity;" it was this that drove me to the critique of reason itself. (Gillespie, Michael, 1984:30-31) .

In contrast, critical idealism sought to interrogate the necessary conditional limitations under which there arises the possibility of knowledge, not the real contents of knowledge through his methodological distinction between 'critical' and 'noncritical' philosophies. Consequently, Kant's critical idealism construed consciousness as a function of the inter-activity of a two tiered theory of mind, representation and epistemology. On the first hand, the domain of conditioned, *phenomenal* experientiality which he formulated around a Aristotelean logicist-structuralist, representationalist framework. On the second hand, the *noumenonal*, or the unconditional, non-empirical domain of reason and its production of regulative ideas.

Although the partition between the unconditional and conditional domains was one of the center piece's of Kant's project, it also led to intractable conclusions that could not be resolved satisfactorily. Kant had maintained that human actions were determined by both

the inviolable constraints of natural, or real causality {*homo phaenomenon*}, and, at the same time, the ideal causality of *homo noumenon*, each person's self determinate free-will. Difficulties arise though because for Kant, "concepts," which are instantiated in "judgments" produced by the faculty of understanding of *homo phaenomenon*, are propositional in nature. Consequently, any conceptual claims concerning the free-will of *homo noumenon* were moot in light of Kant's additional assertion that terms like "free" and "will," were "ideas" produced by the faculty of reason of *homo noumenon*. As a result, the terms "free" and "will" have no substantive referents since they are outside the inherent, conditional limitations of phenomenological experience.

For all Kant's efforts to resolve the 'Fourth Antimony' he had ended up with the metaphysical bifurcation of the *cognito* into two distinct components. In so doing, critical idealism effectively placed the ground of our practical reason and existential self-identity beyond any substantive articulation. Kant writes, "Through this I [the thing] which thinks, nothing further is represented than a transcendental subject of thought = X." (Kant, Immanuel, 1956b:122) To resolve the seemingly unbridgeable dualism inherent in the Antimony of (Human) History Kant produced the *The Critique of the Power of Judgment* in 1790, and his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* in 1798 where he transformed the 1st Person argument into what must be described as one of the most stunning additions to the history of post-renaissance modernity - the "Argument from the Creative 1st Person." In the section of *The Critique of the Power of Judgment* titled *The Faculties of the Mind which Constitute Genius*, Kant declares,

The imagination {as a productive faculty of cognition} is a powerful agent for creating, as it were, a second nature out of the material supplied to it by actual nature. . . By this means we get a sense of our freedom from the law of association' {which attaches to the empirical employment of the imagination}. . . . Fourthly, and lastly, the unsought and undesigned subjective finality in the free harmonizing of the imagination with the understanding's conformity to law presupposes a proportion and accord between these faculties such as cannot be brought about by any observance of rules, whether of science or mechanical imitation, but can only be produced by the nature of the individual. (Kant, Immanuel, 1956a:169)¹⁷.

¹⁷ One of the most beautiful, pre-Kantian variants of "The Argument" is found in David Hume's *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, published in 1751. "Thus the distinct boundaries and offices of reason and of taste are easily ascertained. The former conveys the knowledge of truth and falsehood: the latter the sentiment of beauty and deformity, vice and virtue. The one discovers objects as they really stand in nature, without addition or diminution: *the other has a productive faculty and gilding or staining all natural ob-*

The Critique . . . details the aesthetic role of human experiential encounters with ‘beauty’ and the “sublime.” However brief, these phenomenological moments permit each person to experience that point when the empirical laws of causality that structure the natural world intersect with the ground Humanity’s ethical precepts - the causality of freedom. Consequently, “all human intervention in the natural order,” was a functional consequence of the teleology of human intentionality grounded in the casualty of our free (creative), ‘unconditional’ self-identity.¹⁸

jects with the colors, borrowed from internal sentiment, raises in a manner a new creation." (Hume, David, 2008:264-294)

¹⁸ " The philosophical core of Kant’s *Critique* is the partition of the work into *BOOK 1. Analytic of the Beautiful* and *BOOK II. Analytic of the Sublime*. The first section, *BOOK 1, SS 1. The judgement of taste is aesthetic*, initiates what could be described as the first chapter of *BOOK 1, FIRST MOMENT. Of the Judgement of Taste: Moment of Quality*. The arguments put forward by Kant to support his claim that the “*judgement of taste is aesthetic*” bring to fruition a set of questions and responses set out in the Spanish Jesuit, Baltasar Gracian’s work of 1647, *El oracolo manual y arte prudencia* (The Art of Worldly Wisdom). As Jeffery Barnouw and David Summers point out, Gracian’s work itself marks both a transformative moment, and, a continuation of a set of philosophical inquiries rooted in the work of Plato and Aristotle – the question of the precise nature and function of human’s *sensate* interaction with the world. As I stated in an earlier paper,

Gracion had reformulated the earlier Italian Renaissance term “*gusto*,” which, up to the publication of Gracion’s work, had applied to situations where one expressed a judgment of *artistic* “taste.” The Latin root of the English/German, and French terms “*tasten/tasten*” and “*taster*” is “*tangere*,” meaning “to touch” or “sensitive mental or aesthetic perception.” Gracion both shifts, and broadens the applicative scope of *gusto* to denote the socio-cognitive ability of an *educated* person to make “intuitive” judgements of taste that are by nature grounded in each person’s ability to “act spontaneously, discreetly, and appropriately” with regards to any social situation where they may wish to impress, to influence, or to enliven through the quality of one’s speech, or one’s rhetorical and literary skills as they engage other individuals or groups. These types of situations represent moments in social time where there are no explicit rules governing how one may, or may not act because of the inherently contingent nature of the experiences involved. As Gracion notes, “contingencies solicit promptitude“. Moreover, the problematics surrounding the contingencies of social life are linked to another Renaissance concept, *ingenio* (from the Latin terms *ingeniosus*, or, inventive skill and imagination, and *ingenium*, or “*in born talent*”), insofar as it pertains to the actual, daily operation of *gusto*. Each person skill at making subtle, perceptual “discriminations” require *ingenio* because there simply are no *a priori*, determinate rules to assist someone to function successfully in the different social situations that they may find themselves in. Thus, *gusto* and *ingenio* refer to cognitive abilities that are idiosyncratic in nature and, individualized to each person. Gracion’s work attempts, for the first time, to establish such a “science of good taste” inasmuch as he formulates a systematic guide for the studied refinement of these skills. Most importantly, through his writing there emerges the understanding that any successful judgement of taste (*gusto*) stands or falls on a person’s capability to either cognate what was unique, or *novel* to each particular situation, or, correspondingly, to respond in a unique manner. As Gracion remarks,

What was admirable yesterday is contemptible today, not because it has lost in perfection but in appreciation, not because it has changed, but because it has not. The wise civility of taste by making new reflections on old excellences, thus renewing taste along with wonder.

Gracion’s invocation of the social importance of novelty, newness, and “wonder” almost certainly is sourced in the work of an author that no self respecting Jesuit steeped in the Humanist traditions would have not read, Aristotle. As he notes in his work *Rhetoric*, “We lack wonder generally because we lack novelty, and with it, attention.” Notwithstanding the centrality of the operation of *gusto* within the social domain, at the core of the deployment of socially effective judgements of taste for Gracion was

The Hamann-Herder "Metacritique" of the Antimony of (Human) History

In the same year as the publication of *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Johann Georg Hamann released his *Metakritik über den Purismus der Vernunft* (Metacritique on the Purism of Reason) in reaction against his friend Kant's *Kritik*. Shortly after, the *Metakritik* passed into the hands of Kant's student, and Hamann's friend, the Lutheran pastor Johann Gottfried Herder. Hamann's essay was one of a matrix of primary texts that Herder drew

the long standing Liberal Arts traditions of Rhetoric and Poetics. A central concern of Aristotle was the cognitive and persuasive role of the "metaphor" to the rhetorical, and, the activity of rhetorically *affective*, syllogistic reasoning. In his Rhetoric and Poetics he argues that,

Liveliness is specially conveyed by metaphor, and by the further power of surprising the hearer, because the hearer expected something different, his acquisition of the new idea impresses him all the more. (Rhetoric) But the greatest thing by far is to a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learned from others, and is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of similarity in dissimilarly. (Poetics)

It comes very close to being a ridiculous understatement to note the momentous significance of Aristotle's conjunction of the experience of "difference" (novelty) of metaphoric thinking, with "intuition," and "genius." At the argumentative center was his assertion that the mastery of metaphor "is the one thing that cannot be learned." The significance of the claim can only be understood in light of his position on the nature of the arts and the possibility of the teaching of the making of an art object. The problem can be best approached by first examining the term by examining the etymological of the contemporary phrase "Fine Arts" (Beaux Arts). Derivable from the Latin plural term *artes*, which is, itself, a Roman derivation of the Greek term *technec*. Since Greek antiquity until the early 18th century, *technec/ars* referred to the procedures and skills required for the making of "products of art." Art was not, as it is today, understood as being restricted to a set of objects called "works of {fine} art." Rather, the scope of *technec/ars* referred to any process of production that was subject to the rational codification of teachable precepts. As Aristotle noted, *technec* is the "persistent {human} disposition to produce in accordance with correct reasoning." Thus for Aristotle the learning and production of any art was, by definition, a profoundly rational human activity.

So, why does Aristotle exclude metaphor from the domain of *technec*? There are a number of major reasons for this exclusion. To understand them one has to consider the philosophical context that was established by Plato, specifically his bitter critique of the well established Greek practices of persuasive, or rhetorical speaking and poetry. Plato was instrumental in downgrading any sets of human's human experiences that were functioned at the level of what we might call the socio-materiality of human existence. This was most famously expressed in his attack on Greek theatre and the visual arts of painting and sculpture because of the reliance on our sensory experience as the cognitive root upon which artists ground the methods used for the construction of visual representations. Plato was not wholly dismissive of these practices insofar as they can contribute to the development of our knowledge of the rational infrastructure, the transcendental domain of the *forms* that is the generative source of all that we see.

Most problematically, Plato argued that the only philosophically viable mode available for our understanding of this infrastructure was through the activity rationalized thought that at base, discards any reliance on our sensory experience for the abstract, intellectual activity of the discursive practice of dialectical reasoning and by strong implication, mathematical reasoning that was most famously modeled on geometry. From a positive stance Plato did discuss the heuristics of painterly practice inasmuch as it provided an excellent analogical model of how the activity of reason as it slowly, through trial and error arrives at the finished work. Thus the role of the visualization of experience by artists through the making of painterly representations was valued *only* with regards to these representative visualizations functioning as a cognitively, analogical process of intellectual activity relative to the operations of a philosophically rationalized discourse that is the means whereby we carry out the interrogation of the nature what is "real" – the non-experiential world of the generative infrastructure.

upon in the development of his linguistically grounded “expressivist” anthropology, and, an organicist interrelation of mind and nature. (Taylor, Charles, 1975:17-25).

Looking back on the Hamann-Herder negative response to the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, their reaction is understandable. There is little doubt about the Cartesian provenance of Kant’s anthropology of the *homo noumenon-homo phaenomenon*. From a Kantian perspective, Descartes maintained the unconditioned nature of ‘cognito’ as an entity that was both ontologically distinct from the physics of nature and, at the same time, its own existential source. Kant’s solution was, itself, just as problematic since, as previously stated it “effectively placed the ground of our practical reason and existential self-identity beyond any substantive articulation.” Worse, he had reduced the absolute ground of human self-identity – G_d - to a regulative, heuristic principle.

Kant’s reformulation was a function of what were, for him, those central issues that had to be resolved if the project of enlightenment was to be sustained. He attempted to preserve both the penultimate importance of Galilean-Cartesian-Newtonian (*TRFP*) tradition and, at the same time, the liberalist, Rousseauian belief in the categorical nature of human freedom. The Hamann-Herder ‘metacritique’ of Kant should be viewed against the historical context of the rapid development of a Galilean-Newtonian physics, which, at base, portended a radically reductionist, machinic-atomistic explanatory vision of humanity; an event that presented an extremely unpalatable challenge for theophilosophic anthropologies. To quote Hamann,

Similarly space is what I feel when I gesture; space is what I feel when I make a piece of sculpture; space is something which occurs when I try and mimic the walk of an animal, a form of gait for example. As for this three-dimensional space for which Newton speaks, the box of which Newton and Kant speak, *that is a typical fiction of reason which again somehow imprisons and limits the imagination of*

Aristotle most certainly countered Plato with his own *hylomorphic* model. It reclaims sensory experience inasmuch as form and matter form a unity that must, by definition, be perceptually experienced if the activity of reason is to begin at all. However, the activity of reason plays an equally formidable role for Aristotle. He was the first philosopher to initiate a systematic analysis of a quasi-formal structure of reason through his logic of syllogistic reasoning. Setting aside numerous other problems, one major issue was the metaphysical argument that reason must, if it is rational, discover those deep, structural axioms that once understood, would permit us to derive, through the rules of the syllogistic reasoning, an ontology of all *things and events*. Consequently, specific human practices that seem to elude the scope of this metaphysics of syllogistic reasoning was, as in the case they ability to develop “metaphors,” deemed to operate outside of the bounds of a rational cognition, therefore outside the scope of *learnable* activity. **Also see below footnote 20.**

man. (Berlin, Isaiah, 2005:5).

In direct contradistinction to both the Kantian, and, Galilean-Cartesian-Newtonian (*TRFP*) traditions, the Hamann-Herder metacritical position was grounded on their expressivist linkage of language and thought. More importantly, Hamann-Herder placed the pragmatics of human creative action¹⁹ - what John Milbank refers to as the argument from “aesthetic necessity.” (Milbank, John, 2001:149) - at the very center of their anthropology.

¹⁹ Perhaps the most concise non-theological-philosophical elaboration of the Argument from (Creative) First Person can be found in two papers written by the English mathematician Allen Turing,

What of Turing’s hope that sometime in the near future machine intelligence will match human intelligence. Turing’s response to this question was presented in his 1939 and 1950 papers *Systems of Logic based on Ordinals and Computing Machinery and Intelligence*. In his 1950 paper he addresses a number of what he referred to as ‘Contrary Views on the Main Question’ that had to be answered if any project of developing machine intelligence was to be successful. The first ‘View’ is the ‘Lady Lovelace Objection.’ These are the now famous remarks of the 19th century English mathematician Augusta Ada Byron concerning Charles Babbage’s ‘Analytical Engine.’ She pointed out that the ‘Engine’ has ‘no pretensions to originate anything’ and that ‘It can do whatever we order it to perform’. This ‘objection’ forms the first of a set of what can be named as the six canonical postulates that underwrite the Argument from (Human) Creativity. In the case of the ‘Lovelace Objection’, the Argument from the Generation of New, Original Solutions.

The second view is the ‘Informality of Behavior’ or The Argument from A Posteriori Experience. This postulate states that in the case of the behavior of human beings it is not possible to provide, a priori, a set of rules prescribing our behavior in all possible situations. The third view is The Argument from Phenomenological Experience. In this case, Turing quotes George Jefferson who, in his Lister Oration of 1949, argues that ‘Not until a machine can write a sonnet or compose a concerto that represents thoughts and the emotions felt, and not by the chance fall of symbols, nor could we agree that machine equals brain - that is, not only write a sonnet, but knows that it had written it!’ This is the traditional, canonical formulation of the Argument from (Human) Creativity insofar as it combines the reflectivity of self-consciousness with the definitional modeling of the concept of ‘creativity’ on the act of creating works of art.

The fourth view does not appear in his 1950 paper but rather in Turing’s letters where describes his work on randomization protocols to produce non-predicable outputs. Turing states concerning his designing of ‘a small program . . . that I defy anyone . . . to be able to predict any replies to untried values.’ This postulate is the The Argument from Unpredictability. The fifth view is a function of Turing’s formulation of the “imitation game” or what has now come to be known as the ‘Turing Test’ for the successful, or, unsuccessful differentiation of machine, from human intelligence. This, the postulate of The Argument from a Socio-Linguistic Interaction, represents “third person” criteria for deciding whether a machine is as intelligent as a human being. Turing’s position was that the appeal to the internal operational structure of mind _i.e. the problem of ‘other minds’_ was a non-starter when it came to establishing acceptable criteria for just how we are to decide whether a human level of intelligence has been achieved by a machine or not.

His sixth view is derivative of his proposal of the ‘Oracle machine’. Prior to the 1950’s paper Turing had, while working on his Ph.D. under Alonzo Church at Princeton, begun to think about the issue of creativity when he began to consider the theoretical possibility of ‘uncomputables’. There is a brief discussion in his 1939 paper concerning an entity that he rather dramatically named the “Oracle Machine.” This train of thought occurred when he asked what would it involve for the human mind to operationally move from a following a rule, to a human mind not following a rule. In particular, what constitutes the ‘activity of the intuition or, as M. H. A. Newman noted, what is meant by a mathematician ‘having an idea. ‘This concern represents the root source of the question about solving non-computable problems using non-algorithmic procedures. Turing remarked, in re Godel’s ‘Incompleteness Theorem’, that there are ‘formulae, seen intuitively to be correct, but which the Gödelian theorem shows are unprovable in the original system.’

Hamann writes in his essay “Aesthetica in nuce,” “Poetry is the mother tongue of the human race . . . The Book of Creation contains examples of general concepts which . . . GOD wished to reveal to man through man. The unity of the great Author is mirrored even in the dialect of His works . . . A proof of the most splendid majesty and total self-divesting! “each man is a counterpart of God in Miniature.” ²⁰(Hamann, J.G 2003:2-3,10).

As Milbank notes, ‘aesthetic necessity’ emerges full force in both the Hamann-Herder

This train of thought occurred when Turing responded to David Hilbert’s question concerning the axiomatization of all of mathematics with his formulation of the machinic computability of effective procedures (Turing’s ‘T-Machine’). His work had, along with Kurt Godel, Church and Emil Post, demonstrated that all existing, and possibly all future, discrete state computational systems are subject to the Universal T-Machine (UTM) constraints (Turing-Completeness, or a machinic-mathematical demonstration of the limits of recursive computation). Conversely, UTM demonstrated that every possible computational design can be emulated by a T-Machine. {This thesis is also known as the Church-Turing Conjecture, which, it is important to note, has been subject to near constant controversy since its initial formulation by Alzone Church, Turing’s thesis advisor at Princeton.} This argument may be the closest we have come, as yet, to providing mathematically informal, albeit negative, definition of ‘creativity’ inasmuch as it is not possible to formalize human intellectual activity above and beyond the human mind’s own development and operational use of recursive procedures. As Turing remarked in his paper Computing Machinery and Intelligence, “The short answer to this argument is that although it is established that there are limitations to the powers of any particular machine, it has only been stated, without any sort of proof, that no such limitations apply to the human intellect. I do not think this view can be dismissed quite so lightly.” (Clark, Tim, 2005:11)

²⁰ The theological doctrine of *creatio (ex-nihlio)*, and its subsequent merging with classical models of artistic production is of foundational importance for the development of the concept of “creativity.” There are two absolutely central classical figures that background the doctrine, Plato and Philo-Judaeus of Alexandria. The pivotal classical text’s being Plato’s *Timaeus* in which he analogically models the anthropomorphic, constructor role of the *Demiurge* (“craftsman” of the *Kosmos*) on the productive activity of painters and sculptors and Philo’s *Legum Allegoriarum*. Philo’s work is of greater import because in drawing from Plato’s *Timaeus* he allegorically links Judaic understandings of the fabrication of the world to Plato’s position. However, there is one marked difference since Philo links the act of creation not to G_d but to the Logos, “the shadow of G_d.” Certainly amongst of the most influential classical texts since the early medieval period, they were exploited by Renaissance theorists in their development of a Humanistic anthropology of human cultural production. Gerhard May notes, with respect to the concept of *creatio*, “The doctrine of ‘*creatio ex nihilo*’ proclaims in the most pointed manner the absolutely unconditioned nature of creation and specifies G_d’s omnipotence as its sole ground.”(May, Gerhard, 2004: 320) Two of the earliest known examples of this “merging” occurs in the English writer, George Puttenham’s, *The Arte of English Poesie*, Contrived into three Bookes: The first of Poets and Poesie, the second of Proportion, the third of Ornament (1559,) and, in 1626 when the Polish poet and theoretician, Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski, in his work *De perfecta poesi*, declared that the poet “creates anew (*de novo creat*)... in the manner of God“. Notwithstanding these early usages, the verb “to be creative“ only begins to appear in general usage by the late 18th century and, as the Polish philosopher and historian, Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz noted, the terms “creative,” “creativity,” and, “creator” were used only *consistently* as of the 19th century to denote “the exclusive property of art: creator became a synonym for artist.” (Tatarkiewicz, Wladyslaw, 1980:214)

The more fundamental question though is for what reasons, and, how did the transfer to poets and, at a to painters of the doctrine of *ex-nihlio* occur. One outstanding reason was the role of Medieval canon lawyers, and, during the early Renaissance of “learned jurists,” in laying textual and interpretative ground for what Ernst Kantorowicz noted, in his seminal essay, of the principle of “The Sovereignty of the Artist.” Many of these ‘jurists’ were themselves Orators who moved easily between the study of Roman “civic law”, poetry, and, an almost evangelical interest in the revival and reconstruction of the rhetorical and literary corpus of antiquity. It is from within this matrix of cultural production that a set of foundational concepts for the emergence of artistic modernity was bound together around a small set of problems - “*ars, ingenium,*

tradition, and, in a very restricted form, in Kant's Critique of the Power of Judgment.

Hamann and Herder were concerned with the external, visible and audible modifications to matter made by human beings in 'art' (meaning all processes of 'making') and in language. *They both understood that there can be no conceivable 'thought', and so no subjective identity, outside these processes. . . . On the contrary, linguistic expression, like art, brings into being its own specific, new content; before language, humanity is simply contentless . . . One can properly speak of a kind of 'aesthetic necessity' (which applies also for Herder to God, who in creating things makes them simultaneously a rational possibility). . . . Although this perspective is "modern" and constructivist it is really quite different from . . . Transcendental Idealism . . . (which is) a philosophy of the subject in the Cartesian tradition which thinks of the known object as both 'beneath' the subject and so under the subject's control . . . This tradition is profoundly conservative it seeks to conceal the abyss opened up by the post-Renaissance discovery that language creates meaning rather than reflects meaning . . . In Hamann's and Herder's 'expressivism' . . . one can locate something like a critique of secular modernity, which is itself modern because it recognizes the creative power of language and tries to deal with this by reinterpreting revelation as our participation in the divine creative power of expression."* (Milbank, John, 2001:149-154).

I certainly agree with Milbank when he argues that a distinction must be drawn between Kant's and the Hamann-Herder when it comes to the nature of their respective 'constructivist' modernism. Kant would have never acceded to the principle of aesthetic necessity because the claim, "creating things makes them simultaneously a rational possibility" uncritically breaches the *noumenon / phaenomenon* partition.

Milbank, 'aesthetic necessity,' and, the Critique Galilean-Cartesian-Newtonian

imitatio, inventio, fictio, veritas, and, perhaps importantly the doctrine of "divine inspiration" As Kantorowicz notes,

There was . . . a cluster of of interrelated problems which vexed Renaissance poets and artists. . . What art supposed to imitate nature or should it surpass nature and proceed beyond nature to new invention? Was there fiction involved, and did fiction refer to truth? What the relationship between art and inspiration, *ars* and *ingenium*- *a problem nonexistent so long as art was a craft.* (Kantorowicz, Ernst H., 1960:267-268)

This process of transfer to divine sovereignty to poets _ the first occurring in 1341 with crowning of Francesco Petrarca as poet laureate on the capitoline hill in Rome in 1341 _ was virtually concurrent with its transfer to the painting. As the Venetian theoretician of art Paolo Pino would say of painting in his *Dialogo di pittura* (1548) that it is "inventing what was not . . ." (Clark, Tim, 2005b:12)

Tradition.

The Kantian, Hamann-Herder, and Milbank positions share a number of overlapping assumptions. One, the explanatory scope of Galilean-Cartesian-Newtonian tradition (*TRFP*) is weakly *non*-extendable to Kant's *noumenonal* domain of "history," while, in the case of the Hamann-Herder position and Milbank's nomination of "absolute history," (Milbank, John, 2001:150) it has a strong *non* - extendability. This is the case because, metacritically, all *TRFP* assertions are ruled out as metaphysically empty claims in light of the argument from 'aesthetic necessity,' Two, with regards to the Hamann-Herder-Milbank position, the Argument from 'aesthetic necessity' grounds the Argument from the (Creative) 1st Person which provides the only satisfactory account for the nature of human sociolinguistic and cultural practices *in the world*.

Three, as a consequence creativity is free only insofar as it is subject to *a priori* constraints since mind and action are constituted by a functional inter-relation between the inherently finite, conditional constraints of sociolinguistic experience *relative* to the infinite "background" of potential meaning and performative action. This inter-relation is outlined in Milbank's discussion of the theologian, Maurice Blondel's 'phenomenology of human action'. "The human will is 'never equal to itself', . . . Every action is entirely our own yet, it entirely transcends us. . . To act . . . to think at all, may be to create, to assert oneself, but it is equally to lose oneself . . .by acting-thinking we grope towards a synthesis which seems 'right' . . . (but was) . . . not originally intended by us, but only "occurs" to us out the future plenitude of being.' (Milbank, John, 2001:L210-211) Four, the Hamann-Herder-Milbank articulation of aesthetic necessity, or, that the doctrine of the theoretic-methodological distinction between the *explanandum* and *explanans* can no longer be viewed as ontologically specifiable domains. *Ipsa facto*, the metaphysical prioritization of the Galilean-Cartesian-Newtonian tradition collapses because it is, itself, constrained by the 'Aesthetic' continuum.²¹ *Eo ipso*, the Modernist, ontological partition between the empirically real and nominal domains is also nullified to be replaced by what Milbank refers to as "post-nominalist realism." (Milbank, John, 2001:157) Five, the modernist claim that *if* locutions enunciating "faith" based assertions are non-propositional in nature, then religious, locutionary assertions of 'faith' are, *de facto*, a mere "societal" construct is rendered void because scientific modernity is, in itself, subject to the same conditional constraints as religion. Hence, sociological claims with regards to 'societal' constructs are

²¹ The Hamann-Herder-Milbank positions actually represents a third, contiguous form of Modernity that emerges in response to the Galilean-Cartesian-Newtonian traditions.

also rendered void.

Finally, the last assumption, which draws upon the work of the great French Catholic philosopher and theologian Maurice Blondel. Milbank makes a decisive, critical move in his arguments against the inherent nihilism of both scientific modernity and post-modernity. In particular, against the absolutely disastrous, structural linkage of the teleology of infinite difference, or, what he refers to as the “heterogeneity of ends,” with critical nominalism. An typical example was noted by Michel Foucault with regards to the ethical-political nature of his own critical historiography - it is “a nominalist critique“ of all foundational attempts to reference a real exteriority insofar as the objective of his work is the “undefined work of freedom.” (Foucault, Michel, 1984:46)

Yet we still have not faced the central crux. According to Blondel, the logic of action, every action, demands the supernatural. What does this really mean? Basically two things: first, that every action there is present an implicit faith that a new and ‘correct’ synthesis will be discovered and the self-grounded norm is somehow more than arbitrary. Its force of compulsion upon our will, its partial satisfaction of our will, shows that a power beyond a finite series is in profound agreement with us, and alone is able to bring our wills to self-agreement. . . . Inversely, the inner heterogeneity of every action, or its self-surpassing character, disclosed by phenomenological analysis, provides Blondel with anew way of understanding the *concursum* of divine grace with human will. Every action is entirely its own, yet entirely transcends us. (Milbank, John, 2001:215).

As such, ‘faith’ returns full force, for ‘faithfulness’ is the *unprovable* acknowledgement, or, ‘faith in’ the infinite continuum of socio-narratological experience. Thus, humankind’s finitude is both a function of, and, is constrained by the continuum of creativity which is, in turn, performatively linked to the *ungroundable possibility* of (G_d’s) infinite creativity. Accordingly, for Milbank, human performative creativity *may* presuppose ‘a transcendent meaningfulness which conditions our linguistic performance such as to render it ‘true’ although it can *never* itself be fully grasped in finite terms.” (Milbank, John, 2001:214).

“DaDa,” and the Conditionality of *Unpredictable (Free) Creative Action*:

Reaching their initial, developmental formulation in the works of the Kant, Hamann, Herder, and Nietzsche the two primary, argumentative premises of the conditional finitude

of human experience and the Argument from the Creative 1st Person will play foundational roles in 20th century avant-gardism, and, most emblematically, in the work of Marcel Duchamp. In the Paris of 1913, and Munich of 1915, two events occur in the life of that movement in the history of avant-garde art practices and aesthetics known as DaDa. The fabrication, in the Paris studio of Marcel Duchamp, of the object “Bicycle Wheel“ (*Roue de bicyclette*) that will come to be known as the “ready-made.” Two years later in Munich, Hugo Ball, the young German poet and co-initiator with his creative partner and wife Emmy Hennings of the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich, described in his diary that moment of the “mystical birth” of DaDa, “When I came across the word ‘DaDa’ I was called upon twice by Dionysius (the) Areopagite. D.A. - D.A..” (Elderfield, John, 1977:321).

While Zurich DaDa embodied a ferocious hatred of traditional Beaux-Arts traditions with a mixture of absurdist humour, anger, and revulsion at the events of the 1st World War, it also held onto an utopian, reformist belief in the redemptive experience of the poetics of performative creativity. When we turn to the case of Duchamp and his role, in the formation of the *Société Anonyme* (New York DaDa), with Man Ray and Katherine Dreier in New York, the social situation could not have been more different. Although Duchamp and his fellow Dada artists certainly were committed to a belief in an emancipatory experience creativity, this commitment was more in the mold of an quasi aristocratic, anti-bourgeois dandyism that was focused on ideational constructions. As Duchamp proclaims,

In France there is an old saying, “stupid like a painter.” The painter was considered stupid, but the poet and the writer very intelligent. I wanted to be intelligent, I had to have the idea of inventing. . . It was my intention not to make painting for the eyes but a painting in which the tubes of color were means and not in themselves. The fact that this kind of painting is called literary doesn’t bother me . . . This was the case with the religious painters of the Renaissance. (Judovitz, Dalia, 1995:78).

Unlike the reformist dreams of Hugo Ball's neo-Christian utopianism, Duchamp’s work focused his work on a set of hermetically playful, transgressive works which, most importantly for the history of 20th century modernity, centered on the conceptual production of the ready-made(s). Dandyism aside, the ready-made(s) are, without question, supremely important because they represent the inaugural post-modernist challenge to the doctrine of *TRFP* and, at that same time, the secular culmination of the theological doctrine of *creatio (ex-nihlio)*. Central to the role of the ready-made experience

was Duchamp's attack on *TRFP* and his desire to be performatively creative through a process of constant self-invention. In one of the rare interviews given by Duchamp in 1973 he points out that,

What I want very much to establish *that the choice of these "ready-mades" was never dictated by aesthetic intentions . . .* it was rather a matter of timing, this snapshot effect, like a speech delivered on no matter what occasion but at such and such an hour. *It was a kind of rendezvous. . .* inscribe that date, hour, minute, on the ready-made as information. *The creative act takes place when the spectator experiences the phenomenon of transmutation through the change of inert matter into a work of art. . . I had to have the idea of inventing . . . My intention was to get away from myself, though I knew perfectly well that I was using myself. Call it a little game between 'I' and 'me'"* (Tomkins. Calvin, 1998:160).

Three of the six postulates Allan Turing outlined with regards to the Argument from the Creative 1st Person play out a foundational roles in Duchamp's " kind of rendez-vous. . .". As Turing observed concerning his proposal for a "small program . . . that I defy anyone ... to be able to predict any replies to untried values." This postulate , the 'Argument from Unpredictability', forms a counterpoint to the 2nd and 3rd postulates; the 'Argument from *A Posteriori* Experience' and 'The Argument from Phenomenological Experience.' Duchamp's Ready-made(s) were invented in the same spirit of antibourgeois defiance, albeit in the form of randomized, phenomenologically hermeneutic encounters with the 'things' of this world. Conversely, any spectator who happened to have their own 'rendez-vous', would, in turn, have a similar randomized, phenomenologically hermeneutic interaction with Duchamp's 'object.'

These same three postulates underwrite, in part, both Milbank's and Duchamp's appeal to the performative contingency of aesthetic creativity. In Milbank's case, to demonstrate the severely limited explanatory scope of the mathematico-physico sciences – "while *some* scientific 'explanation' of segments of human behavior remains possible, though precarious, *this is never explanation oh humans as such.*" (Milbank, John, 2001:259) In Duchamp's case, the 'Ready-made' event represents a critique of a dominant, if not completely laughable theoretic-first-person formulation of 'aesthetics' - "What I want very much to establish that *the choice of these "ready-mades" was never dictated by aesthetic intentions.*" Thus in his evisceration of *TRFP*, the empiricist illusion that are psychological

events referenced by the terms cognitive experiences of 'real objects' is playfully ridiculed by Duchamp.²² As Milbank observes concerning the machinic nature of theoretic modeling, and its role in the Argument from the Creative 1st Person.

Here the *isolation of repeatable patterns*, which are the hallmark of science, more obviously relates to the merely particular - to *certain closed formal systems*, and not to the general and universal . . . *The road to transcendence is here not through an inward retreat, but rather stands both outside and before us, in the works and words which issue from us, determine what we are, and act back on us beyond the reach of our conscious intentions.* The sum of these words and works comprises culture itself, and therefore the social order is in no way 'beneath' human subjects, and so fully within their control; neither can they step back from this social order to recover their identity. (Milbank, John, 2001:259).

Inasmuch as the process of *creatio* is an inherently time based, contingent act for Duchamp, then human creative action is, as Milbank notes, predictively "content-less" because content must, by definition, be emergent from, or immanent within the performative activity of artistic creation. Duchamp refused traditional 19th century formulations of aesthetics given their near universal reliance on *TRFP*; a refusal that was premised on five presuppositions. One, the Ready-made experience attacked the assumption that there existed, *a priori*, invariant sets of observational, sensible properties that ontologically define sets of (art) objects, (art) media. Two, that there were ontologically stable cognitive entities referred to by the terms "artist" and "viewer." Three, that the viewer's social role was *not* one of the reduction aesthetic experience to a physicalist-materialist model of pleasure in the product of the artist. Four, conversely, that the aesthetic experience was not reducible to a psychological - physicalist event centered experientially around an individual. Rather, it was an inter-subjective, conceptually driven, performative event occurring between viewer(s), object(s), and site specific location(s). Five, by its very nature the creative process was extrinsically equivalent to a conditional experience of freedom in time, or, as Milbank remarks, 'neither can they (first person experientiality) step back from this social order to recover their identity.' Conversely, being theoretically undefinable *creatio* is intrinsically *unconditional*. As a consequence, the Ready-made event was both the site of production, and the location of the experience of freedom in time. Forty-eight years later in New York the late American artist Robert Morris argued,

²² The scientific claims of the disciplines of Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science and Psychology to having a cognitively distinct, experiential subject matter are equally illusionary.

So long as the form [in the broadest sense: situation] is not reduced beyond perception, so long as it perpetuates and upholds itself as being an object in the subject's field of perception, the subject reacts to it in many particular ways when I call it art. Art is primarily a situation in which one assumes an attitude of reacting to some of one's awareness as art. What is being attacked. . . is the rationalistic idea that art is form of work that results in a finished product. . . What art now has in its hand is a mutable stuff which need not arrive at a point of being finalized with respect to either time or space. . . art is an activity of change, of disorientation and shift, of discontinuity and mutability. (Morris, Robert, 1966:43).

Poincaré's Sarcasm and Milbank's Contribution to the Reconstruction of Theological Aesthetics

However important Duchamp's DaDa work was in comparison with Hugo Ball's utopian, Areopagitan vision of a redeemed secular world, Duchamp's own utopianism was perfectly in keeping with secularist modernity. More than any other work of produced in the 20th century the ready-made has come to be *the* emblematic object for a *politic* of "Creative 1st" personhood. As Duchamp reminds us, "My intention was to get away from myself, I knew perfectly well that I was using myself. Call it a little game between 'I' and 'me'". At the core of the ready-made experience resides what Milbank very aptly describes as the post-modernist advocacy of "absolute difference . . . (for) . . . In the public theatre, differences arise only to fall; each new difference has a limitless ambition to obliterate all others and therefore cancel out difference itself." (Milbank, John, 2001:278) Duchamp's critical quest for the emancipatory pleasures of free innovation was sustained through a successive series of performative acts of negation of what is perpetually anterior to the emergence of the next work, the (always) previous art object. As the late 19th century French mathematician Jules Henri Poincaré sarcastically observed, "Actual infinity does not exist. What we call infinite is only the endless possibility of creating *new objects no matter how many exist already.*" (Kline, Morris, 1972:176).

The DaDa activities of Duchamp had enormous consequences for the post-war period of art production. Nevertheless, whatever the emblematic value that his work represented for 20th century neo-liberalist, Beaux-Arts/media practices, by the 1980's, it had been completely evacuated of any of its initial, emancipatory force. Worse, by the 21st century avant-garde utopianism has been reduced to a globalized grotesquerie of the instrumentalized pleasures of 'therapeutic' creative individualism, an ever increasing series

trade shows named “biennials,” and whatever economic benefits that nations and corporations can be derive from the instrumentalizing of “the idea of inventing.” As Milbank observes, “The goal of the capitalistic market, formally considered, is . . .the stimulation of inventiveness and effort . . . Combined with the guaranteed subordination of all this endeavor to a quantifiable measurement of its worth.” (Milbank, John, 2001:289).

Contra the modernity of Duchamp’s ready-made(s) Milbank’s, *Theology and Social Theory*, however problematic²³, represents a radical, politically transformative critique of neo-liberalist modernity. The term "critique" actually belies what Milbank attempts to achieve in writing what may be best described as Contemporary Theology of the Politic. As Milbank notes in the *Preface to the Second Edition: Between Liberalism and Positivism*, “*Theology and Social Theory* was written in the middle of the Thatcherite era, out of the conviction that a theological vision *alone* could challenge the emerging hegemony of neo-liberalism.” His response to neo-liberalist has little of the up-front anger of George Rawlyk’s Gramscian analysis of the disgraceful state of post-war Canadian universities. However, the reference to Thatcherism in a sentence containing the adverbial phrase ‘theological vision *alone*’ does announce a defiant response to the specific ‘*contemporary political*’ context of 1980’s Britain.

We must, though, broaden the applicative scope of the term ‘context’ because, in using the adverb ‘alone,’ Milbank’s ‘challenge’ is directed at not only at the *hegemonía* of a neo-liberalist, capitalist context, but, more profoundly, at an absolutely primary socio-discursive component of secular modernity - the privatization of faith. By “privatization“ I am referring to four fundamental issues. One, the epistemological relegation of faith to the interiority of ‘First Person’, ‘subjective’ experientiality. Two, the socio-political regulation of faith through the institutional implementation of the political-juridical doctrine of the separation of Church and State. Three, the reduction of *all* forms of religious experience to the socio-psychological pragmatics of the therapeutic, personal and cultural enhancement of people’s lived experience. Four, the reduction of *all* forms of spirituality to the descriptive category of the non-rational, and, as Milbank argues, the total alienation of the ground of spirituality to the transcendentality of the sublime.

²³ I have reservations about Milbank’s arguments concerning the non-extendability of the mathematico-physicalist explanatory model to cover human socio-narrative experience. As Milbank declares, “On the contrary, human interaction in all its variety can only be narrated, and not explained in the manner of natural science.” I would respectfully suggest that anyone holding the same opinion look closely at the work of Selmer Bringsjord, Director of the Rensselaer AI & Reasoning (RAIR) Lab, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) or MIT’s Rensselaer AI & Reasoning (RAIR) Lab Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), or (Metzinger, T., 2004)

While the ambitions of Milbank's genealogical critique of the history of modern secularism and the disciplinary practices of sociology are both wide ranging, and critically complex, there is, as I have argued, little doubt that his reading of the Hamann-Herder 'metacritical' scepticism was also directed, full force, against the Argument from Theoretic Representation and its correlative premise, the Argument from the Epistemic Primacy of First Person Experience. Milbank writes,

. . .instead of a partial 'suspicion,' one should develop a meta-suspicion which casts doubt on the possibility of suspicion itself ... I mean rather 'a foundational suspicion' which seeks to show that, universally something 'questionable' is reducible to something 'unquestionable.' Hence in retracing the genesis of sociology I have opened the way, not to denying 'reduction to the social,' but rather to casting doubt on the very idea of there being something 'social' (in a specific, technical sense) to which religious behavior could be in any sense referred. . .*the terms 'social' and 'society' have so insinuated themselves that we never question the assumption that while 'religions' are problematic, the 'social' is obvious.* (Milbank, John, 2001:259).

(Hamann was concerned) . . .with the external, visible and audible modifications to matter made by human beings in 'art' (meaning all processes of 'making') and in language. They both understood that there can be no conceivable 'thought', and so no subjective identity, outside these processes.. . . On the contrary, linguistic expression, like art, brings into being its own specific, new content; before language, humanity is simply contentless . . .One can properly speak of a kind of 'aesthetic necessity'. *All thought is participation in Divine creative action, and, at the same time, that all creation is kenosis, a self-emptying meditation.* (Milbank, John, 2001:149-52).

Thus a "post-nominalist realism" returns in the form of our 'faith(s)' which are no longer subject to the "policing" (Milbank, John, 2001:267) by the doctrines of Theoretic Representation(s) and First Person Experience(s). This 'realism' can never be the realism of modernity, for it is impossible to reference any transcendent ground given the conditionality of human experience. Faithfulness becomes faith in a transcendent "darkness."

We pray that we may come unto this Darkness which is beyond light, and, without seeing and without knowing, to see and to know that which is above vision and knowledge through the realization that by not-seeing and by unknowing we attain to true vision and knowledge; and thus praise, superessentially, it that is superessential, by the transcendence of all things; *even as those who, carving a statue out of marble, abstract or remove all the surrounding material that hinders the vision which the marble conceals and, by that abstraction, bring to light the hidden beauty.*

(Pseudo)-Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite. *The Mystical Theology*, Chapter 11, 5.. (5th Century AD).

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