

Karl Barth, Walter Benjamin, and Historical Mediation: A Metaphysical Aporia in Dialectical Theology and Messianic Politics

Khegan M. Delport

University of the Free state, Bloemfontein, South Africa

khegan.delport@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7502-7676>

Abstract

Following Jacob Taubes, this essay seeks to make a comparison of the work of Karl Barth and Walter Benjamin. I argue, with the assistance of Rowan Williams and Gillian Rose, that Barth and Benjamin, for differing reasons, refuse the mediation of the transcendence *qua* history and the created world. For Barth, this may be traced to his critique of natural theology and his rejection of the *analogia entis*, and his apparently inability to conceptualize how materiality and historicity may constitute a “fitting” mediation for divine self-disclosure, intimating a nascent voluntarism in his theology. For Benjamin, this failure to approximate mediation may be linked to the conceptual diastasis between metaphysics and law, which leads him to adopt the idea of divine violence of law-breaking, as opposed to the mythical violence of law-making, as a way of resolving the disjunction. However, following Rose, I argue that this leads to a pathological conception of the relation of immanence to transcendence and a messianic politics that avoids the labour of mourning and the constraints of the middle.

Keywords

Karl Barth; Walter Benjamin; Gillian Rose; Rowan Williams; Jacob Taubes; metaphysics; historicity; mediation

I

In a lecture series given in early 1987 to the *Forschungsstätte der evangelischen Studiengemeinschaft* (or FEST), the Jewish philosopher Jacob Taubes outlined a political theology of Paul the Apostle, as well as

a historical reception amongst figures within the Weimar intelligentsia. Published in 1993,¹ under the joint-editorship of Aleida and Jan Assmann, and translated into English ten years later, these talks have gathered a place alongside several other continental exposés of Paul, all attempting to re-actualize Pauline categories for contemporary thought.² My desire is to not to enter into the debate surrounding this theme, which is now voluminous, but to extract one of his interventions as a touchstone for my argument: namely, his juxtaposition of Karl Barth and Walter Benjamin. After engaging in a slightly breathless reception-history of Pauline apocalyptic, in which the importance of the theme of divine creation for the New Testament is provocatively denied,³ and after making telling comparisons between Marcion and Harnack, Barth and Schmitt, Benjamin and Adorno, Taubes parallels Benjamin's "Theological-Political Fragment" with Barth's *Römerbrief*. There he called Benjamin's text a "dialectical theology outside the Christian church."⁴ In this literary torso, Benjamin argues that, on the one side, "the Messiah himself completes all history," but on the other "nothing that is historical can relate itself, from its own ground to anything messianic." For Benjamin, the secular order of happiness promotes the coming of the kingdom, but only in a negative sense to the degree that it instigates and repeats "an eternity of downfall," since "nature is messianic by reason of its eternal and total passing away." In a programmatic sense, a messianic *world politics* is equalled to *nihilism*, one that strives for "the passing away of those stages of man [*sic*] that are nature," enduring that "intensity of heart, of the inner man in isolation," the human being who "passes through misfortune, as suffering."⁵ Taubes thinks that Benjamin

1 Jacob Taubes, *Die politische Theologie des Paulus* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1993); *The Political Theology of Paul* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

2 For a more expansive treatment of Jacob Taubes' contribution, see Marin Terpstra and Theo de Wit, "No Spiritual Investment in the World As It Is: Jacob Taubes' Negative Political Theology," in Ilse N. Bulhof and Laurens Ten Kate (eds.), *Flight of the Gods: Philosophical Perspectives on Negative Theology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 320–353.

3 Taubes suggests that "Creation has no role in the New Testament ... There's only one thing there: redemption" (*The Political Theology of Paul*, 60).

4 *The Political Theology of Paul*, 75. It should be said that Taubes' dating of the fragment is not universally accepted by Benjamin scholars.

5 Walter Benjamin, "Theological-Political Fragment," in Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (eds.), *Selected Writings, Volume 3: 1935–1938* (Cambridge, Massachusetts

here echoes Paul's language of redemption, despite departing from him as regards the autonomy of *the order of the profane* from *the order of the messianic* (which Taubes says is an internalization of Luther's two kingdom's doctrine). For Taubes, it is Benjamin's "hardness" which rivals Barth's caustic denunciations of post-Wilhelmitic liberalism. For both, in redemption there is "nothing ... having to do with immanence. From that one gets nowhere" ("Da ist nichts vom Immanenten. Von daher kommt man zu nichts").⁶ Echoing Barth: "If God is God, then he can't be coaxed out of our soul ... Something has to happen from the other side; then we see, when our eyes are pierced open. Otherwise we see nothing. Otherwise we ascend, we strive until the day after tomorrow ..."⁷

Taubes' analogy of Barth and Benjamin is not unique; similar parallels have been drawn by others, inspired some of their affinities in style and thought. But there are more than simply affinities here; for one thing, there are some tangential, personal connections: they shared some associates, like Fritz Lieb, a former student of Barth and close acquaintance of Benjamin.⁸ In a letter to Karl Thieme, Benjamin expressed knowledge of Barth but admitted to not knowing his writings well enough to comment on the stakes of dialectical theology.⁹ Material influence is also probably there: the renowned Benjamin scholar Michael Jennings has traced the intertextual, albeit indirect, influence of Barth's *Römerbrief* and apocalypticism on Benjamin's beleaguered *Habilitationschrift* regarding Baroque Tragedy.¹⁰ One may also see resemblance with texts (already mentioned) like the

and London, England: The Belknap Press, 2002), 305–306.

6 *The Political Theology of Paul*, 75–76; *Die politische Theologie des Paulus*, 105.

7 *The Political Theology of Paul*, 76.

8 In a letter to Kitty Marx-Steinschneider, dated April 15, 1936, from Paris, Benjamin makes reference to Lieb and describes him as "a former student of Karl Barth and by far one of the best people I have gotten to know here"; Walter Benjamin, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin: 1910–1940*, trans. Manfred R. Jacobsen and Evelyn M. Jacobsen (eds. Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Adorno; Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1994), 525. There is a letter addressed to Lieb dated July 9, 1937.

9 Benjamin, Letter 314 (dated June 8, 1939), in *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin*, 606.

10 For these arguments, see respectively Michael W. Jennings, "Towards Eschatology: The Development of Walter Benjamin's Theological Politics in the early 1920s," in Carolin Duttlinger, Ben Morgan, Anthony Phelan (eds.), *Walter Benjamins anthropologischen Denken* (Freiburg, Berlin, Wien: Rombach Verlag, 2012), 54–57.

“Theological-Political Fragment,” which Michael Jennings and Howard Eiland explicitly link to the subterranean influence of dialectical theology.¹¹ To indicate something of an awareness of this influence, Benjamin, in a review of Adorno’s book on Kierkegaard, describes Barth and dialectical theology as constituting, at “their outer limits” something like “waves” that “make contact with the concentric circles set in motion by Heidegger’s existentialist philosophy.”¹² Such “waves” of theological co-influence have also been noted by the historian Rudy Koshar who has also placed Barth and Benjamin together within the “expressionist” movements of early twentieth century Germany,¹³ while Benjamin Lazier has situated Barth and Benjamin within, and over-against, wider intellectual trends characteristic of Europe after World War I.¹⁴ Andreas Pangritz has also analysed the negative reception of “dialectical theology” by Benjamin and Scholem, showing how it is largely predicated on a misunderstanding of Barth’s position vis-à-vis Judaism;¹⁵ and Hent De Vries has sought – under

-
- 11 Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, *Walter Benjamin: A Critical Life* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2014), 129–130. As they also state at 697n14 that even though ‘Benjamin claimed never actually to have read Barth’s epoch-making commentary on Romans ... Barth’s ideas were very much in the air in the 1920s, and the similarities between his way of thinking and Benjamin’s have been noticed’, as is clear in Taubes. Benjamin was also informed of the theological debates via his friend Florens Christian Rang.
 - 12 Benjamin, “Kierkegaard: The End of Philosophical Idealism,” in *Selected Writings, Volume 2, part 2: 1931–1934*, eds. Michael Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press, 1999), 703.
 - 13 Rudy Koshar, “Where is Karl Barth in Modern European History?” *Modern Intellectual History* 5, no. 2 (2008): 333–362. Also see Koshar, “Demythologizing the Secular: Karl Barth and the Politics of the Weimar Republic,” in Leonard V. Kaplan and Rudy Koshar (eds.), *The Weimar Moment: Liberalism, Political Theology, and Law* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012), 313–334. On the influence of expressionism on Barth’s thinking, also see Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909–1936* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 33–35; 139–140.
 - 14 Benjamin Lazier, *God Interrupted: Heresy and the European Imagination Between the World Wars* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008).
 - 15 Andreas Pangritz, “Musste >>die Opposition fast durchgehend<< sein? Zu Walter Benjamins und Gerschom Scholems Wahrnehmung Karl Barths und der >dialektischen Theologie<,” in Daniel Weidner (ed.), *Profanes Leben: Walter Benjamins Dialektik der Säkularisierung* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), 301–324. As Andreas Pangritz has argued, even if there was any influence, that stimulus ran from Barth to Benjamin, and not (as far as we can tell) the other way around. And even if this was informing in any sense, it nonetheless remained distorted through the mediation of Hans-Joachim Schoeps

the inspiration of Taubes – to conceptually relate the projects of Barth and Adorno in an essay in which the presence of Benjamin is never too far away.¹⁶ Daniel Weidner has similarly suggested intertextual affinities between Barth's critique of "religion" and Benjamin's text "Capitalism as Religion."¹⁷

The similarities between Barth and Benjamin's thought registered by the likes of Taubes, I would suggest, should also be more broadly registered within the ferment of crisis, cultural pessimism, and eschatological malaise of the post-Weimar period. As Eric Hobsbawm has written, "[the] decades from the outbreak of the First World War to the aftermath of the Second, was an Age of Catastrophe for this society. For forty years it stumbled from one calamity to another."¹⁸ Within this age of impending cataclysm, a renewed and vertiginous rhetoric of the apocalypse gained ascension, both within political and artistic life,¹⁹ as exemplified in the "crisis theology" of the Weimar period. Peter Gordon has described that time like this: "theological radicalism was grafted onto political pessimism; rebellion against the liberal-historicist teaching of the nineteenth century was transformed into apocalyptic and anti-historical doctrines on both the left and the right; God was expelled from the social-historical matrix only to return with even more irresistible authority as the numinous or the wholly other or – perversely – as *the Volk*."²⁰ It is therefore not a coincidence that Barth's *Römerbrief* is coterminous with the publication of Oswald Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918 and 1922), as well as Benjamin's "Theological-Political Fragment" and later his *Ursprung*

– who is the primary source for Adorno and Benjamin's impressions of 'dialectical theology'.

- 16 Hent De Vries, "Inverse Versus Dialectical Theology: The Two Faces of Negativity and the Miracle of Faith," in Hent De Vries and Ward Blanton (eds.), *Paul and the Philosophers* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 466–511.
- 17 Daniel Weidner, "Thinking beyond Secularization: Walter Benjamin, the 'Religious Turn,' and the Poetics of Theory," *New German Critique* 37, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 131–148.
- 18 Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century: 1914–1991* (Great Britain: Abacus, 1994), 6–7.
- 19 Anson Rabinbach, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1997).
- 20 Peter E. Gordon, "Weimer Theology: From Historicism to Crisis," in Peter E. Gordon and John M. McCormick (eds.), *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), 172–173).

des deutschen Trauerspiels. It was a time of the aesthetic upheavals of Dadaism, Surrealism, Expression, and Cubism, the “new objectivity” of Max Beckman, the prints of Alfred Kubin, the serialism and atonalism of Arnold Schoenberg; and one may also mention here Saxl and Panofsky’s saturnine explorations of Albrecht Dürer²¹ – a figure of influence on Benjamin.²² In a short text on mourning and melancholia, simply entitled “Vergänglichkeit” (“Transience”) and published in 1916, Sigmund Freud spoke of how when the war broke out it “destroyed not only the beauty of the countryside through which it passed and the works of art which it met with on its path but it also shattered our pride in the achievements of our civilization, our admiration for many philosophers and artists and our hopes of a final triumph over the differences between nations and races.”²³ It was a situation and mood well-summarized by the statement of Siegfried Kracauer – another compatriot of Walter Benjamin – when he writes in 1922, coincidentally the year of the publication of the second edition of the *Römerbrief*, of a people who

when they do pull back from the surface into the centre of their being, they are overcome by a profound sadness which arises from the recognition of their confinement in a particular spiritual/intellectual [*geistige*] situation, a sadness that ultimately overruns all layers of their being. It is this metaphysical suffering from the lack of a higher meaning in the world, a suffering due to an existence in an empty space, which makes these people companions in misfortune.²⁴

21 Fritz Saxl and Erwin Panofsky, *Dürer’s Melancholia I: Eine Quellen- und Typen-Geschichtliche Untersuchung* (Berlin and Leipzig: B. Teubner, 1923).

22 See Jane O.Newman, “>>Hamlet ist auch Saturnkind<<: Citationality, Lutheranism and German Identity in Benjamin’s *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiel*,” in Daniel Weidner and Sigrid Weigel (eds.), *Benjamin-Studien I* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2008), 175–192.

23 Sigmund Freud, “On Transience (1916),” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works Of Sigmund Freud*, Vol 14: “On the History of the Post Psychoanalytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works,” trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), 307.

24 Siegfried Kracauer, “Those Who Wait (1922),” in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 129.

In this essay, I suggest that something of this *Stimmung*, in the Heideggerian sense of the term,²⁵ is present in the writings of both Barth and Benjamin. With this in mind I want to focus on a one metaphysical aporia at work in their oeuvres which I think is linked to this general mood; it relates to the problem of history, and more specifically the question of historical mediation, and how both of them account for immanence as *a mediation of transcendence*. In this text, I will be drawing quite heavily on the interpretative work of Rowan Williams and Gillian Rose, and if my reading and theirs are on to something, then it might suggest that both Barth and Benjamin exhibit a metaphysic that has trouble with accounting for historical mediation, eventuating in a kind of extrinsicism in both of their approaches. Both Barth and Benjamin tend to conceive revelation and divine action along “interventionist” lines, in which creational order and the immanent lawfulness of Being having to be suspended, thus leaving unaccounted how the experience of transcendence may be mediated *historically*.

The larger conceptual and theological stakes of this discussion I believe circulate around the formulation of the goodness of finite being, the fallenness of creation, and the nature-grace complex. What I hope to reiterate is that Barth’s insertion of the doctrine of creation and revelation within a prior dialectical metaphysic tacitly reconstructs the nature-grace distinction; it conceives this relation as a matter of “externalised” action of divinity on the created world. There are several upshots to this theological posture: one outgrowth is an occasionalism of revelation that is disconnected from the temporal dilations of salvific economy; in this scheme, the question of how something like the Christological event is related to the processes of cultural reception is left dogmatically obscured. This complex is further related to the relation between Christology and creation, and how the incarnation itself may be described as a *fitting* mediation of redemption. Barth’s historicised Chalcedonianism,²⁶ in my estimate, does not resolve the fundamental issues that arise from his rejection of ontological analogy (*analogia entis*). God’s eternal election

25 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh and Dennis J. Schmidt (New York: SUNY, 2010), 134–140.

26 This is drawn from Bruce McCormack’s presentation, as found in his *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).

to become the incarnate Son, without articulating the manner in which historical being is a “natural” mediation of divinity and redemption, raises the spectre of voluntarism within Barth’s theology. Why is created being an “appropriate” sacrament of revelation? If there is not a certain fittingness at work here, if created finitude is violently negated within the dialectic, then this raises the problem that history may simply have been “elected” for such purposes, but without a further explanation of how or why this election is ontologically fitting. Another implication of this extrinsicism is that of an *ontological secularity* in which the world may be coherently described without a “natural” orientation to the gracious donation of God. Since the foundations of metaphysical “convenience” (*convenientia*) have been undermined by the Barthian dialectic of the *analogia fidei*, it appears that we are left with a picture in which the created world may be described *without* a “natural” orientation to the divine.

I would then argue that is within this Barthian ambience that we are to understand something of Benjamin’s constructive endeavours also. Benjamin’s messianism is formed via a materialist theology that seeks to ground a theory of redemptive and revolutionary action. This imaginary is characterised by his idiosyncratic account of the interrelation between the mythical violence of law-making-and-preservation as opposed to the divine violence of law-destruction. However, this position creates a diastasis between metaphysics and law, which leads to a pathological configuration of the political, implying a kind of escapism from the labours of negotiation as well as mediation. For Benjamin, the advent of the messianic can only come through the antinomial suspension or destruction of the law, which undermines the work of the political as this takes place within the historical middle, where we all find ourselves. It is this shared aporia within the work of Barth and Benjamin that I am concerned with in this essay.

II

Barth’s account of revelation as a form of eschatological actualism is established within Barthian scholarship.²⁷ According to the much-

²⁷ A seminal and synthetic summary of this motif in Barth’s thought can be found in George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (Oxford: Oxford

recounted story of Barth's intellectual development, in the wake of his break with the liberal Protestantism of his teachers, Barth developed an actualistic account of divine revelation which sought to undermine any creaturely security of grounding theological knowledge within the created order. Beginning particularly with the second edition of his commentary on Romans, Barth accentuated the dialectical account of divine revelation that he had inherited from his teacher Wilhelm Herrmann.²⁸ Since God alone is the subject and object of God's self-revealing act, creation has no inherent capacity to disclose or anticipate the saving action of God in Jesus Christ.

God is known by God, and only by God; because even as an action undertaken and performed by man, knowledge of God is objectively and subjectively both instituted by God Himself and led to its end by Him; because God the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit is its primary and proper subject and object. If it is also a human undertaking and action, if as such it also arrives at its goal, this is in consequence of the fact that God does not wish to know Himself without Himself giving us a part in this event in the grace of His revelation.²⁹

This act is grounded in God's sovereignty and freedom,³⁰ which is always already an expression of God's electing love and saving grace in Jesus Christ.³¹ Hereby, any account that would ascribe to created being revelational qualities *in itself* is radically undercut. Creaturely existence as such cannot give us any saving knowledge of God, and therefore no knowledge which is theologically interesting. Any analogical correspondence between created and uncreated being is grammatically

University Press, 1991), 27–42.

28 Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909–1936* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995); Christophe Chalamet, *Dialectical Theologians: Wilhelm Herrmann, Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann* (Zürich: Theologische Verlag Zürich, 2005).

29 *Church Dogmatics* II.1, 204. I will be using the standard abbreviation of CD for the remainder of the essay.

30 The *locus classicus* for Barth's account of the divine being-in-act is CD II.1, §28.

31 CD II.2, §§32–35. On Barth's account of election, see Matthias Gockel, *Barth, and Schleiermacher on the Doctrine of Election: A Systematic-Theological Comparison* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), and esp. 158–197.

ordered by a prior dialectical opposition of the finite and the infinite, the dialectic of sin and grace, veiling and unveiling. For only as creatures are made to correspond to God's saving action through the gift of faith, via the objective and subjective knowledge of God in Christ and the Spirit, can there be any analogical relation between God and creatures (*analogia fidei*), and it is only within "the *analogia fidei* [that] there is ... a similarity between God and man."³² For in divine revelation, as he says, "our existence is confronted by something outside and over-against it."³³

For Barth, the correspondence of God and humanity is grounded in the concrete event of God's reconciling act in the God-man Jesus.³⁴ There is no god hidden or revealed that can be known *in se* apart from this actualisation in time of God's eternal Triune Being, the One who is revealed to be always and unreservedly *pro nobis*.³⁵ Famously, Barth believes that this actualistic account centred on the Christ-event destabilises any ontological order or doctrine of participation that would ground the *analogia entis*; for Barth, "the analogy of the *analogatum* and therefore of the creature

32 CD I/2, 523

33 CD I/1, 148

34 "If we are to maintain the *analogia fidei* and not to fall into untheological thinking, we must be guided by the christological consideration of the incarnation of the Word as the *assumptio carnis*. The unity of God and man in Jesus Christ is the unity of a completed event. Similarly the unity of divine revelation and human religion is that of an event – although in this case it has still to be completed. As God is the subject of the one event, so, too. He is of the other. The man Jesus has no prior or abstract existence in the one event but exists only in the unity of that event, whose Subject is the Word of God and therefore God Himself: very God and very man. Similarly in the other, man and his religion is to be considered only as the one who follows God because God has preceded the man who hears Him, because he is addressed by God. Man enters, therefore, only as the counterpart of God" (CD I.2, 297). Again: "The being, life and act of man is always quite simply his history in relation to the being, life, and act of his Creator. We can say the same of all creatures. But it is far more than this. For within and beyond this general activity, God Himself in His being, life and act as Creator wills and works a special act. All His activity has its heart and end in a single act. Within and out of the general history, which with all creatures man can have in common with God in His being, life and act, there arises this act of God and that which corresponds to it in the being, life, and activity of man, as a qualified history, his true history. And if the 'God with us' at the heart of the Christian message speaks of the unifying factor between God and man, it speaks of a specific conjoining of the two, not always and everywhere but in a single and particular event which has a definite importance for all time and space, but which takes place once and for all in a definite *hic et nunc*" (CD IV.1, 8).

35 See Eberhard Jüngel, *God's Being is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth*, trans. John Webster (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001).

is proper to the creature only externally in the existence and form of its relationship to the *analogans*, that is, to God, but internally it is proper only to this *analogans* as such.”³⁶ For Barth, there is no analogy between God and creature that belongs to the creature by virtue of being created. It is only within the gracious event of God’s revelation that the human being is made to correspond to God, so that any analogy between God and creatures can only be “extrinsic” (*analogia attributionis extrinsecae*). There can be no analogy that belongs “inwardly” to the creature, but only externally through grace; to his mind, the analogy of being denies the proper dialectical relation between the divine veiling and unveiling as this occurs within trinitarian disclosure, which for Barth is only given in divine action and the gift of faith. It is not given with “the co-existence of the Creator and the creature” for such truthful knowledge of God can only occur through a kind of additional action whereby our concepts “become true by the special decision of God in His revelation and therefore on the way from His unveiling to His veiling.”³⁷

It is language like this that has led some to ascribe a “decisionism” to Barth’s account of revelation. Michael Menke-Peitzmeyer has argued that that Barth’s theology of divine election is influenced by a philosophy of “decisionism (*Decizionismus*) that struggles to show how God’s self-determination is already an expression of God’s essence, and furthermore that it has difficulties with articulating an orthodox notion of the relation between grace and nature, thereby leading to a “positivism of revelation” (“Offenbarungspositivismus”).³⁸ Rowan Williams, in his critical appreciation of Barth, remarks how Barth’s account makes it difficult to conceive how revelation is actually appropriated and *learned*.³⁹ By this Williams means that revelation cannot be extracted from or simply opposed to those ordinary material and temporal processes in which

36 CD II/1, 238.

37 CD II/1, 241.

38 Michael Menke-Peitzmeyer, *Subjectivität und Selbstinterpretation des dreifaltigen Gottes: Eine Studie zur Genese und Explikation des Paradigmas >>Selbstoffenbarung Gottes<< in der Theologie Karl Barths*. Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie 60 (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2002), 531–581. Also see Jan Rohls, *Philosophie und Theologie in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 535–540.

39 See Rowan Williams, “Trinity and Revelation,” in *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 131.

cognitive objects are discovered and fabricated. Contingency and time-taking – in other words, historicity – are of essence to any religious gnoseology, since there is no knowledge of divinity which can circumvent finitude. We cannot, so to speak, step out of our skin in anticipation of any unmediated access to truth: all knowledge, within varying degrees of intensity, remains partial and perspectival.⁴⁰ For Williams, this is an epistemological correlate of our *createdness*, that we are as human beings limited. But to assert our createdness does not, for Williams, only have the critical function of holding-in-check totalizing claims, but also a positive one to the degree that it postulates an orientation of creation towards the good, since all that exists and persists does so within the infinite act of God. Materiality, as manifest in the embodiments of nature, time, culture, and language, may exhibit a creative participation in and reception of God's self-disclosure, while maintaining that revelation always implies an authorization that exceeds the generative potential of culture.⁴¹ It is here that Williams expresses his disagreements with Barth. According to him, there is in Barth too much of a revelational theology that holds divine disclosure to have little actual connection to the kind of cosmos we inhabit, as if revelation could be territorialized to a mythical "outside" ("a simple model of divine utterance – an otherworldly agent providing otherwise inaccessible information," as Williams puts it).⁴² It is precisely this "simple model of divine utterance" which concerns Williams, forming a part of a critique that goes back at least to the late seventies.

In his most sustained exposition, published in 1979,⁴³ Williams criticised what he saw as Barth's overly "linear" concept of revelation, and the

40 Historical mediation is key for Williams: like Hegel, he thinks that "history is how we do our metaphysics" – not in the sense that history serves as a "record" that "delivers to us a map of the constructions of the universe, or a comprehensive account of natural kinds or a compelling thesis about the nature of reference," but rather concerns an "engagement with history," and how this "lays bare for us the character of thinking as engagement, as converse, conflict, negotiation, judgement and self-judgement"; Williams, "Between Politics and Metaphysics: Reflections in the Wake of Gillian Rose," in Mike Higon (ed.), *Wrestling with Angels: Conversations in Modern Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 67.

41 See "Trinity and Revelation."

42 Rowan Williams, *The Edge of Words: God and the Habits of Language* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 176.

43 Rowan Williams, "Barth on the Triune God," in *Wrestling with Angels*, 106–149.

manner in which it fails to account for the unavoidable accretions of time and the diversity of human responses. For Barth, according to his well-known distinction, the Word becomes manifest within the “unity-in-plurality” of revelation, scripture, and proclamation,⁴⁴ in harmony with God’s freedom to be *for* human beings within “their particular and concrete circumstances,” becoming a Word that enters into their “manifold particularities.”⁴⁵ But despite these conceits, Williams wonders whether Barth is not still too enamoured with an *idea* of divine revelation and not with “the concrete structure of revelation as it has occurred and is in fact occurring.”⁴⁶ He worries about “the awkwardness of a scheme which so divorces the substance of revelation from its historical form, in making the latter’s relation to the former basically external,” in which revelation ultimately “demands ... historical predicates,” even as “there is nothing in these predicates which in any sense makes them ‘appropriate’ to their content.” The way in which creaturely mediation may be *fitting* is not addressed sufficiently. On the Barthian schema, according to Williams, “the revealing Word’s secularity and historicity” becomes merely *accidental*. This means, if one follows the logic, that “History, and the *world* as such, are wholly foreign to God: he can act through, but not in, the historical *qua* historical.”⁴⁷ Furthermore, the particularity of different models of revelation are subjected to an homogenization that is aligned to a singular, predetermined idea of self-disclosure as a dialectic of veiling and unveiling, which, as Williams and others suggest, is a basically Hegelian approach.⁴⁸ Now one could protest against this, suggesting that Barth’s reformulation of the doctrine of election, in which God’s aboriginal self-determination for humanity within Christ, does include in the *revelatory* event “the circumstantial historical event ‘with and under’ which the revelation occurs.” However, even Barth’s emphasis on the Christ event as the site of revelation does not address “the fact that the existence of Jesus of Nazareth

44 Ibid., 108. As per Barth’s account in CD I/1.

45 Ibid., 109.

46 Ibid., 110.

47 Ibid., 111.

48 See Olivier Riaudel, “Some Critiques of a Concept of Revelation as *Selbstoffenbarung*, and Defence of Some Definitions of the Concept of Logci Theologici.” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 92, no.1 (2016): 29–39.

is historically contingent, a point in the interrelated, interdependent system of worldly events, from which it can in no way be abstracted.” In Williams’ gnomic compression, the “election of Jesus logically entails the election of his ‘world.’”⁴⁹

This does not mean that Barth’s concept of revelation is irredeemable for Williams (at least at this stage of his development). Already then, before it was suggested by the likes of Eberhard Jüngel and Bruce McCormack, Williams sensed a shift in Barth’s thinking after *Church Dogmatics* II/2 and especially IV/1.⁵⁰ Consequent upon Barth’s revisions of the doctrine of the Trinity, most notably in the section entitled “The Way of the Son into the Far Country,” Williams argued that Barth’s theology, at least in its implicit structure, expressed a greater openness to the reality of contingency and human responsiveness as being included within the Trinity, and thus within the content of revelation as well: “as soon as the history of Jesus, in a fairly simple sense, the detail of a human life and death, is allowed a place of genuine salvific import, the unity, clarity, and security of a scheme based upon a single and compelling act or event of revelation is put in question.”⁵¹ It places in doubt a model of revelation based on God’s self-interpretation,⁵² in which the Incarnation is introduced primarily to solve the *epistemological* issue of human ignorance.⁵³

And yet, both here and elsewhere,⁵⁴ Williams remains worried about how the Holy Spirit is invoked within this structure, since within the Barthian schema it appears that pneumatic agency becomes reduced to a confirmation

49 “Barth on the Triune God,” 114.

50 Ibid., 130.; cf. Bruce L. McCormack, “Grace and Being: The Role of God’s Gracious Election in Karl Barth’s Theological Ontology,” in *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 183–200; Benjamin Myers, “Election, Trinity, and the History of Jesus: Reading Barth with Rowan Williams,” in Myk Habets and Phillip Tolliday (eds.), *Trinitarian Theology after Barth* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 121–137. However, it should be added that Williams’s mature theology shows disquiet with both McCormack’s and Jüngel’s reading of Barth, as suggesting a prioritization of divine will over trinitarian relations, even as he admits the possible influence of Schelling on Barth; see Rowan Williams, *Christ, the Heart of Creation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 175–182.

51 “Barth on the Triune God,” 129.

52 Ibid., 116.

53 Ibid., 127.

54 See Williams, “Word and Spirit,” in *On Christian Theology*, 107–127, and esp. 116–118.

within us of God's uninhibited self-interpretation.⁵⁵ There is still too much in Barth of an idea of the Spirit as "the seal of epistemological security,"⁵⁶ and a sense overall that the *Dogmatics*, as a purported pure science of Christian doctrine, in turn, remains too methodologically entangled with "the search for certainty."⁵⁷ Connected to this, Williams thinks, is that there is "little of a doctrine of creation" implicit within Barth's theological hermeneutics: rather what we have is a hyper-Protestantism in which the "Fall has, it seems, obliterated any theological significance in the created order," leaving "no room for a conception of free, creative, and distinctive human response"⁵⁸, instead proposing an "infinite gulf between the created and the uncreated" against any metaphysical amelioration within something like the *analogia entis*.⁵⁹

What can be deduced at this point is that while this essay does express moments of juvenilia that would not persist throughout Williams' career –

55 Ibid., 133–134.

56 Williams, "Word and Spirit," 118. Williams is influenced here by Gustav Wingren, who critiqued Barth for over-emphasising epistemology, in the sense that for Barth, revelation is mainly concerned about correct "knowledge" about God. It should be said here that this interpretation of Barth has been subject to criticism. On this, see John Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). However, Webster is aware of Williams's more nuanced critique of Barth in this essay (cf. *ibid.*, 25), and seems to accept (at least partially) the validity of his concerns.

57 "Barth on the Triune God," 138.

58 Ibid., 140. This view is echoed somewhat by Jörg Dierken, *Glaube und Lehre im modernen Protestantismus: Studien zum Verhältnis von religiösem Vollzug und theologischer Bestimmtheit bei Barth und Bultmann sowie Hegel und Schleiermacher*. Beiträge zur Historischen Theologie 92 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 49–76. It should be said that Barth's relation to the importance of "history" for theology is ambiguous since his later reflections on Christology complicate his earlier anti-historicist tendencies during the earlier *Römerbrief* period. Barth was by no means unique in this tendency, since there were many other Weimar theologians and scholars who exhibited comparable proclivities in response the outbreak of the First World War, such that some (like Friedrich-Wilhelm Graf) spoke of an "anti-historical revolution" in Germany. Such a revolution took on many forms and cannot be easily categorized, even as one can speak of a general "conservative revolution" (exemplified by Carl Schmitt) during this period; cf. Georg Pfleiderer, *Karl Barths Praktische Theologie: Zu Genese und Kontext eines paradigmatischen Entwurfs systematischer im 20. Jahrhundert*. Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 115 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 29–47. It should also be mentioned that after the period of *Der Römerbrief*, some have even spoke of Barth's "gnosticism." For more on this, see Lazier, *God Interrupted*, 27–36.

59 "Barth on the Triune God," 143.

as seen in his deference to a Moltmann's doctrine of passibility,⁶⁰ as well as interpretative sleights of hand that are more Balthasarian than Barthian⁶¹ – it appears that the essence of his critique has not abated. This is most clearly seen in his essay “Trinity and Revelation,” originally published in 1986.⁶² For the sake of space and time, we cannot enter the details of his rich argument, except to say that at this juncture he still thought that Barth's concept of revelation continued to think of “the absolute isolation of the revelatory event from any historical condition (it occurs in, but not *as part of* history),” and because of this “the question about ‘learning about learning’ is again circumvented. Revelation interrupts the uncertainties of history with a summons to absolute knowledge, God's knowledge, and interpretation of himself.”⁶³ This in turn is connected to Barth's doctrine of creation and his rejection of the analogy of being. It is this factor, which renders lucid Williams' earlier concerns about how, within Barth's theology, immanence remains purely *accidental* to revelation, and that there is nothing inherently *appropriate* between material form and intellectual content⁶⁴ – a detail, which if true, implies a subtle voluntarism in Barthian thought, since if revelation remains a purely “external” appropriation, with created nature having no created affinity to God's self-disclosure, then the election of the medium remains somewhat arbitrary. Moreover, the deeper risk of this tendency, as seen in a recent essay of Williams,⁶⁵ is that it creates a *univocal dualism* between created and infinite being,⁶⁶ so that there remains “a stark dilemma as to the relation of God to creation,” whose correlate is “a picture of divine and finite action as simply mutually exclusive,” one that eventuates in “a univocal understanding of finite and infinite being,

60 Ibid., 136. For his more mature critique of theopaschite theologies, see Rowan Williams, “God,” in David F. Ford, Ben Quash & Janet Soskice (eds.), *Fields of Faith: Theology and Religious Study for the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 75–89.

61 See the critique of Williams on this point by Benjamin Myers, *Christ the Stranger: The Theology of Rowan Williams* (London-New York: T& T Clark, 2012), 123–124.

62 Williams, “Trinity and Revelation,” in *On Christian Theology*, 131–147.

63 Ibid., 133.

64 “Barth on the Triune God,” 111.

65 Rowan Williams, “Dialectic and Analogy: A Theological Legacy,” in Nicholas Adams (ed.), *The Impact of Idealism: The Legacy of Post-Kantian German Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 274–292.

66 Ibid., 281.

two modes of action that are in competition for one logical space.”⁶⁷ And if this deduction is correct, then it may suggest a metaphysics that implicitly endorses *an ontologised secularity*, since now “Being” can be considered on its own terms, in a manner external to divinity. Here, in conformity with scholastic notions of *concursus* and the *duplex ordo*,⁶⁸ infinite and finite causality are conceived as acting *within* the same metaphysical plane of reality, while remaining radically and non-paradoxically distinct. Even though Barthian accounts of divine sovereignty and Christology would seem to resist any objective “secularity,” this aspect of his metaphysic suggests a spectre of pure nature that exists “outside” of God’s infinite act-of-being, one that is constructed precisely to assert an utterly extraneous intervention of divine grace. Such is done ostensibly to uphold a Reformed demolition of intellectual “works-righteousness” and “natural theology.” But overall, for Williams, this creates significant conceptual problems and suggests that the historical mediation of revelation might be tied to a subtle voluntarism in Barth’s general approach, one that falls short in showing how finitude and history may exhibit a certain fittingness for divine self-disclosure. One of the outgrowths of this basically extrinsicist model, as others like Oliver Keenan have pointed out,⁶⁹ is a tendency to adopt violent metaphorization in his account of God’s revelational and redemptive action, as when Barth says that “in the Word of the grace of God there is attack to the extent that in it there is proclaimed and indicated a decisive, radical and universal alteration”⁷⁰ or his description of the coming of the new man in Christ as “a new reality diametrically opposed to the old man who is now outmoded and removed.”⁷¹ In this light, Keenan wonders whether

Barth can sustain such a powerful emphasis on divine interruption without inscribing a competitive account of created and uncreated

67 Ibid., 280.

68 See Jacob Schmutz, “The Medieval Doctrine of Causality and the Theology of Pure Nature (13th to 17th Century),” in Serge Thomas-Bonino (ed.), *Surnatural: A Controversy at the Heart of Twentieth Century Thomistic Thought* (Florida: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2009), 203–250.

69 Oliver James Keenan, O.P., “What Has Erfurt to Do with Basel? Meister Eckhart and Karl Barth on Preaching,” *Medieval Mystical Theology* 26, no. 1 (2017): 96–110.

70 CD IV/3.1, 241.

71 CD IV/3.1, 246.

agency, in which revelation invokes an ontological “violence” by which the stronger overrides the weaker. The emphasis on the interruptive character of revelation risks a sacralization of violence, with political consequences almost inverse to those that Barth identified with Liberal Protestantism: within an irreducibly dialectical framework there is a tendency to identify the destruction of creaturely structures with the work of the divine “no” that overrides human language, sacralising revolt, but without offering a compensatory positive affirmation.⁷²

It is this “sacralization of violence” and “the destruction of creaturely structures” that I also believe is present in the writings of Walter Benjamin, whose theorizations of divine violence find resonance with Barth’s reflections, as I hope to show in the next section. Once more, it is difficult to assert *direct* influence of Barth on Benjamin, but there is enough subterranean influence (as suggested earlier) to warrant such comparison.

III

Walter Benjamin was influenced through multifarious streams of thought, including Kabbalistic Gnosticism, Jewish Messianism, and Brechtian Marxism; he related theology to critical thought through a *liquidation of theology*, a dissolving of its traditional formulations to recalibrate its potency for historical materialism.⁷³ His theology forms an attempt to think metaphysics together with experience via the category of “transience,”⁷⁴ in which contingency, decay, and the eternal passing-away of nature are emblematic of existence in general, and become “allegorical”⁷⁵

72 James. “What Has Erfurt to Do with Basel,” 108.

73 Agatha Bielik-Robson, “Walter Benjamin (1892–1940),” in Philip Goodchild and Hollis Phelps (eds.), *Religion and European Philosophy: Key Thinkers from Kant to Žižek* (London: Routledge, 2017), 115–126.

74 Annika Thiem, “Benjamin’s Messianic Metaphysics of Transience,” in Colby Dickinson and Stéphane Symons (eds.), *Walter Benjamin and Theology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 21–55.

75 See his reflections on allegory in Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London & New York: Verso Books, 1998), 159ff.

or “messianic”⁷⁶ insofar as these rhythms of profane transience are redemptively integrated with “happiness” (*Glück*). Transience is redemptive for Benjamin when the eternal rhythm of undoing or *Untergang* (downfall) is joined to the experience of happiness and fulfilment.⁷⁷ His metaphysical understanding of history is thus opposed to transcendental accounts of “history” and “progress” which absorb the history of contingency, suffering, and marginalisation into its immanent justification. Following his famous parable, Benjamin’s materialist theology is “hunchbacked”; it is one which is “small and ugly and has to keep out of sight,” a dwarf that animates the puppet of historical materialism and acts from the underside of history.⁷⁸ It is a weak theology, or as Werner Hamacher puts it, it is “an anatheology of the weak possibility of theology.”⁷⁹ Benjamin’s thought is indeed pervaded by theological themes, as clearly admitted in an often-cited fragment of the *Passagenwerk*.⁸⁰ His concept of the messianic is placed within his broader materialist theology that animates his account of revolutionary action, in which the historical memory of suffering comes together within the dialectical image of the present as this “flashes up at the moment of its recognizability, and is never seen again,” here in deference once more to his metaphysics of transience.⁸¹ Hereby the prophetic agent, in his words, “perceives the contours of the future in the fading light of the past as it sinks before him into the night of times.”⁸² The dialectical imaging of the past and the present opens the possibility of *Jetztzeit* (“Now-Time”), or “a secret

76 “For nature is messianic by reason of its eternal and total passing away” (“Theological-Political Fragment,” 306).

77 “Theological-Political Fragment,” 305–306

78 Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” in Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (eds.), *Selected Writings, Volume 4: 1938–1940* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press, 2003), 389.

79 Werner Hamacher, “Now: Benjamin and Historical Time,” in Andrew Benjamin (ed.), *Walter Benjamin and History* (London and New York: Continuum, 2005), 43.

80 “My thinking is related to theology as blotting pad is related to ink. It is saturated with it. Were one to go by the blotter, however, nothing of what is written would remain”; Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1999), 471.

81 Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” 390.

82 Benjamin, “Paralipomena to ‘On the Concept of History’,” in *Selected Writings, Volume 4: 1938–1940*, 407.

index,”⁸³ whereby the messianic moment (*Augenblick*) renders the present malleable to revolutionary intervention, creating a redemptive rupture within the “progress” of history.⁸⁴ For him, the Messiah does not come at the end of a historical development, but rather breaks “history” off (“Der Messias bricht die Geschichte ab; der Messias tritt nicht am Ende einer Entwicklung auf”).⁸⁵ Against a historicism which projects a world of facts and causal necessity, it is precisely those moments of redemptive potential, of contingent possibilities that may be missed, that grounds historicity for Benjamin. History is not established in *what really happened*, but rather via “appropriating a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.”⁸⁶ As long as history continues, the awareness of the unactualized possibilities of “happiness,” as this occurs through a reflection on *what might have been*, will energise our “envy” in the present and open every moment to the possibility of messianic action. Through a materialisation of Lurianic ideas of the *tikkûn*, Benjamin imagines this messianic action as being recollected within a redemptive “constellation” of historical moments as these form part of a knowledge of the single moment, a dialectical image whereby the past becomes a part of “the involuntary memory of redeemed humanity.”⁸⁷

83 “On the Concept of History,” 390

84 “Social Democratic theory and to an even greater extent its practice were shaped by a conception of progress which bore little relation to reality but made dogmatic claims. Progress as pictured in the minds of the Social Democrats was, first of all, progress of humankind itself (and not just advances in human ability and knowledge). Second, it was something boundless (in keeping with an infinite perfectibility of humanity). Third, it was considered inevitable—something that automatically pursued a straight or spiral course. Each of these assumptions is controversial and open to criticism. But when the chips are down, criticism must penetrate beyond these assumptions and focus on what they have in common. The concept of man kind’s historical progress cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through a homogeneous, empty time. A critique of the concept of such a progression must underlie any criticism of the concept of progress itself” (“On the Concept of History,” 394–395).

85 “Benjamin-Archiv, Ms 477,” in Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften I.3*, eds. Rolf Tiedemann und Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 1243.

86 “On the Concept of History,” 391.

87 “Paralipomena to ‘On the Concept of History,’” 403; cf. Giacomo Marramao, “Messianism without Delay: On the ‘Post-Religious’ Political Theology of Walter Benjamin.” *Constellations* 15, no. 3 (2008): 397–405. “Involuntary memory” is of course an allusion to Marcel Proust, and his *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

One of the tenors of Benjamin's materialist theology is its radically *antinomian* edge, whereby redemption occurs through a release from the mythical law of being. The divine cannot appear in the world precisely because of its fallenness and transience and can only manifest itself through those moments of messianic singularity and disruption. For Benjamin, in the words of Bielik-Robson, "the divine incompatibility with the laws of this world" implies that there is no connection or intimation within the fallen world of anything like the divine. It is a "world without revelation" in which "transcendence ... does not communicate with immanence."⁸⁸ It is completely devoid of traces of divinity, except for those apertures of possibility which are only grasped within a fleeting moment of *Jetztzeit*, the Now of Messianic Time. Such is grasped within a *weak messianic power*⁸⁹ as a recognition of the historical potential of what might have been, as these moments are arranged in a Lurianic constellation of redemptive scintilla, creating an "image of the past which threatens to disappear in every present that does not recognize itself as intended in that image."⁹⁰ However, the laws of this world dictate, for Benjamin, a "messianic vision of extreme *irreconciliation*" in which "*To be transcendent is to be against the law.*"⁹¹ The only possibility of salvation is to hasten transience, which Benjamin diversely exemplifies through imagery such as pulling the emergency brake of history,⁹² "playing along with the 'rhythms of transience,'"⁹³ or through enacting a bloodless divine violence that overcomes the mythical violence of law, a violence whose modern paradigm is "the proletarian general strike [that] sets itself the sole task of destroying state power."⁹⁴ The paradigm of

88 Bielik-Robson, "Walter Benjamin (1892–1940)," 116.

89 "On the Concept of History," 390.

90 "On the Concept of History," 391.

91 Bielik-Robson, "Walter Benjamin (1892–1940)," 117.

92 "Marx says that revolutions are the locomotive of world history. But perhaps it is quite otherwise. Perhaps revolutions are an attempt by the passengers on this train—namely, the human race to activate the emergency brake," in Benjamin, "Paralipomena to 'On the Concept of History,'" 402.

93 Bielik-Robson, "Walter Benjamin (1892–1940)," 119; Benjamin, "Theological-Political Fragment," in *Selected Writings, Volume 3: 1935–1938*, 305–306.

94 Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," in Michael Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (eds.), *Selected Writings, Volume 1: 1913–1926* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press, 1996), 246.

divine violence contra mythical violence is described by Benjamin in the following way:

Just as in all spheres God opposes myth, mythic violence is confronted by the divine. And the latter constitutes its antithesis in all respects. If mythic violence is law-making, divine violence is law-destroying; if the former sets boundaries, the latter boundlessly destroys them; if mythic violence brings at once guilt and retribution, divine power only expiates; if the former threatens, the latter strikes; if the former is bloody, the latter is lethal without spilling blood.⁹⁵

It is these images of bipolar extremity that will be subjected to Gillian Rose's critique. Rose was not a theologian by profession or confession: she was a Jewish philosopher, who while having deep interest in theological debate, nonetheless maintained a commitment to the Judaic and rabbinic traditions – despite her last-minute conversion to the Church of England. But even in her late period, the philosophical approach she espoused remained formally “secular” in its assumptions and did not express a thoroughgoing adherence to either Judaism or Christianity. Rather, at her core, she remained a negative Hegelian, concerned with the aporias of mediation rather than their resolution. She was a theorist of *the middle*, of the always-already entangled beginnings in which we find ourselves, “middles” which is expressed within those interlaced relations of theoretical and practical reason, reflective and determining judgements, the interplay between transcendence and immanence, and religion and secularity. If one could summarise her contribution, it would be her Hegelian proposal of a “speculative identity of form and history,”⁹⁶ of the “speculative identity and non-identity of law and metaphysics.”⁹⁷ For Rose, “speculative” philosophy, as opposed to “dialectical” thought, does not attempt to resolve tensions within a more eminent synthesis – a spurious reading of Hegel, she argues –

95 Walter Benjamin, “Critique of Violence,” 249–250.

96 Gillian Rose, *Dialectic of Nihilism: Post-Structuralism and Law* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 5.

97 Ibid., 7.

but rather holds them together within the idea of an Absolute.⁹⁸ It does not try to escape or remove these polarities, but precisely tries to *think* and reflect upon their compossibility in the here and now. And it is the refusal to engage this mutual implicatedness that constitutes Rose’s biggest gripe with continental theory. Against this trend, her guiding project, as expressed in the “Preface” to *The Broken Middle*, is to usher a return to the *logos* rather than *the pathos of the concept*.⁹⁹ Much like the Freudian return of the repressed, she argues that postmodern theory rejects “metaphysics” only to have it return within pathological configurations.¹⁰⁰ It constitutes a failure to think through the co-implication of metaphysics and law, the universal and particular, identity and difference, and how these aporias – as already intimated by Aristotle – are never quite resolved.¹⁰¹ For her, metaphysics, concerned the experience of perplexity and the aporetic, that is “the path from the law of the concept to the peculiarity of each instance,” which for her is connected to ethics and the way we discover ourselves “being at a loss yet exploring different routes, different ways towards good enough justice, which recognises the intrinsic and contingent limitations in its exercise.”¹⁰²

In her most expansive statement,¹⁰³ Rose places Benjamin within his own genealogy of modernity in the *Ursprung der deutschen Trauerspiel*: here, “the unintended psychological and political consequences of Protestant *Innerlichkeit*” culminate in a “hypertrophy of inner life” and an “atrophy of political participation,” a “combination of anxiety and ruthlessness” that “amounts to a ‘combination of inner and outer violence’.” Benjamin is concerned here with tracing the transition from the Protestant to Baroque imaginary, that is, from a “worldly asceticism to worldly aestheticism, from

98 See Gillian Rose, “From Speculative to Dialectical Thinking – Hegel and Adorno,” in *Judaism and Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 53–64. For a commentary on this aspect of her thinking, see Howard Caygill, “The Broken Hegel: Gillian Rose’s Retrieval of Speculative Philosophy,” *Women: A Cultural Review* 9, no. 1 (1998): 19–27.

99 Gillian Rose, *The Broken Middle: Out of Our Ancient Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 308–310.

100 See, Rose, *Dialectic of Nihilism*.

101 For more on this, see Rowan Williams, “Between Politics and Metaphysics: Reflections in the Wake of Gillian Rose,” in *Wrestling with Angels*, 53–76.

102 Gillian Rose, *Love’s Work* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1995), 115–116.

103 Gillian Rose, “Walter Benjamin – Out of the Sources of Modern Judaism,” in *Judaism and Modernity*, 175–210.

worldly renunciation to worldly ornamentation,”¹⁰⁴ a migration which is correlated by Benjamin with “the transition from the end of politics in the spirit of capitalism to aestheticized politics in the spirit of Fascism”: “While the Protestant ethic leads to *the withering of the interest in salvation without loss of the anxiety of salvation*, the Baroque ethic evinces *a created and creaturely world with the aspiration but without the promise of redemption*.” The “Baroque Ethic” signifies the “mournfulness of creaturely being, set in language and deserted by God, experiences the world as *excess of signification without salvation*, which is world aestheticization, not truth as beauty but ornamentation without truth.”¹⁰⁵ In short, “Melancholy is the logical outcome of Protestantism,” and Benjamin argues that “the antinomic relation to the everyday of Lutheranism” in which – due to the doctrine of justification by faith alone and the disavowal of meritorious works – produces a world “deprived of all value,” since human actions do not contribute to transcendent significance.¹⁰⁶ This explains the Baroque aesthetic of allegory in which the destruction and lassitude of nature become “emblematic,” projecting a voided universe whose ornamentation is the “torso, rune, ruin, fragment, monument, piled up with no goal, significance without realization, sacrament or salvation.”¹⁰⁷ Translated into Judaism, this anxiety is concentrated within “the Messianic fixation,” “*a disgrace or disorder in the relation to revelation*” – not a “Christian mournfulness or melancholy” but “the Judaic state of desertion,” the *agunah*.¹⁰⁸ Such disgrace of revelation is literally a *dis-grace*, “a revelation which stamps the creature and the creaturely world of nature as forever lacking grace, that is, with no hope of redemption.”¹⁰⁹ For Rose, Benjamin is that “taxonomist of sadness” *par excellence*, whose proclivities are for those thinkers and poets whose “mourning is not completed” but “remains *aberrated* not *inaugurated*.”¹¹⁰ In Rose’s lexicon, the distinction between “aberrated” and “inaugurated”

104 Ibid., 180.

105 Ibid., 189.

106 Ibid., 194.

107 Ibid., 195.

108 As Rose says, the *agunah* is “the deserted wife, who has not been sent a bill of divorce and who does not know if her husband is still alive” (ibid., 182).

109 Ibid., 184.

110 Ibid., 181.

is that the former “mourning *cannot work*: it remains melancholia; it remains *aberrated* not *inaugurated*; pathos of the concept in the place of its logos. Instead of producing a work, this self-inhibited mourning produces a play, the *Trauerspiel*, the interminable mourning play and lament, of post-modernity.”¹¹¹ Such aberrated mourning, like the *Trauerspiel* and Paul Klee’s *Angelus Novus*, imagines a grief that has become “rigid and petrified,” a melancholia that will not “soften and weep” in its refusal of the work of the mourning (*Durcharbeitung*).¹¹² However, this constitutes only one side of the binary since melancholia is “counterposed ... to the Divine, which is characterized by pure violence and pure language,” an agency who “eschews law or mediation or representation.”¹¹³ It is a model, in short, that refuses “the middle” of historical mediation and immanence.

For Benjamin, all law is irredeemably fallen – “the birthing of law is absolute loss”¹¹⁴ – and the “only complete response to the violence of law-making and law-preserving, the violence in law, would be divine, the law in violence, which is only conceivable as God’s anarchy,”¹¹⁵ or differently stated, a “subjective, fallen, melancholy judgement [that] can only be overthrown by the expiation of bloodless violence of a new, divine immediacy.”¹¹⁶ Benjamin’s God is not a God of *love* but rather of law-abolishing *violence*; such a Baroque and sublime rupture is opposed to “any notion of the rule of law, the law of constitution or representative institutions.”¹¹⁷ In laconic phraseology, Rose argues that “Benjamin knew no day of atonement, no Yom Kippur” but rather “the hard heart of judgement” that “does not melt into grief, into forgiveness, or into atonement.”¹¹⁸ And if there is no atonement or no grace, then according to Rose what we are left with is a “baroque melancholia immersed in the world of soulless and unredeemed bodies.”

111 Gillian Rose, *Mourning Becomes Law: Philosophy and Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 63.

112 “Walter Benjamin – Out of the Sources of Modern Judaism,” 195.

113 *Ibid.*, 182.

114 *Ibid.*, 186.

115 *Ibid.*, 187.

116 *Ibid.*, 182.

117 *Ibid.*, 188.

118 *Ibid.*, 209.

For if all human law is sheer violence, if there is no positive or symbolic law to be acknowledged – the law that decrees the absence of the other, the necessity of relinquishing the dead one, returning from devastating inner grief to the law of the everyday and of relationships, old and new, with those who live – then there can be no *work*, no exploring of the legacy of ambivalence, working through the contradictory emotions aroused by bereavement.

Instead, the remains of the dead one will be incorporated into the soul of the one who cannot mourn and will manifest themselves in some all too physical symptom, the allegory of incomplete mourning in its desolate hyper-reality.¹¹⁹

Assuming this reading is reliable overall, what is extractable from this is that Benjamin, like Barth, favours the supremacy of transcendence *without the middle*, leading to a violent suspension of historical mediation. Whereas Barth, according to Williams, seemed to avoid mediation via an overly-linear account of revelation that fails to sufficiently include our material practices of learning, Benjamin, according to Rose, similarly refuses those mediating institutions of law in a name of apocalyptic, law-abolishing violence. Its topology of being denies any affinity between historical mediation and lawfulness from the speculative intuition of transcendence. This is not to say that Barth and Benjamin are by-any-means exchangeable, nor does it imply that Williams and Rose are united at every point. Williams, for instance, is more willing to encompass representation and mediation within an ever-deepening and aggrandizing ontology, as can be seen in his Clark¹²⁰ and Gifford Lectures.¹²¹ Rose, however, at least in her mature work still remains suspicious of Christian notions of revelation, as far as this suggested the appearance and remainder of truth outside of the aporias of the middle.¹²² She held to a more agnostic, post-ontological approach, since “ontology” symbolized for her the Heideggerian “being-towards-death,” the unrepresentable event of Being within its trajectory towards death. It

119 Rose, *Mourning Becomes Law*, 69–70.

120 Rowan Williams, *Grace and Necessity: Reflections on Art and Love* (London-New York: Continuum 2005).

121 Rowan Williams, *The Edge of Words: God and the Habits of Language* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

122 Cf. *The Broken Middle*, 18.

is this kind of bad infinity which she ascribes to post-structuralist thought and is also why she is wary of any ontology exceeding representation. If true, this means that Rose's position is not finally compatible with an analogical metaphysics, at least of the kind that Williams espouses.¹²³ However, one should also nuance Rose's Judaic emphasis on law with her ruminations on the agon of charity, which she signifies for her that work or "conditionality" that is "the only unconditionality of human love," since for her, "there is no love without power."¹²⁴ Consequently, one senses for Rose that Benjamin's materialist theology evinces a violence-without-love, while for Rose political theology concerns the violence-within-love. For Rose, Benjamin's messianism ultimately implies a severing of justice from the workings and time-taking of love. Moreover, an inaugurated mourning – in distinction from a melancholic fixation on the happiness that might-have-been – gestures towards the futural comic and euphoric outcomes of "the ineluctable discrepancy between our worthy intentions and the ever-surprising outcomes of our actions."¹²⁵ In other words, one might say that for Benjamin the guiding genre is a Baroque deployment of *Trauerspiel*, while for Rose it is the Hegelian analogue of *La divina commedia*.

IV

The extremities of Barth and Benjamin are not fully exchangeable: clearly Benjamin, in some ways, was more stringent and dualistic than Barth. Nevertheless, I still think it is beneficial to make some gestures as to why Barth and Benjamin may have evidenced mirrored striations in their thinking. As hinted at earlier, the extremity of Barth and Benjamin's prose regarding the immanent abjectivity the world was informed by an ambience of quasi-apocalyptic rupture. The post-War developments and carnivalesque horrors that were to follow had a part to play in this tendency. However, what I have been calling *an ontologised secularity*, hinted at in Barth, and more explicitly espoused by Benjamin, needs to be placed within a broader context of a Protestant disenchantment of the cosmos,

123 Cf. John Milbank, "On the Para-ethical: Gillian Rose and Political Nihilism." *Telos* 173 (Winter 2015): 69–86.

124 *Love's Work*, 98.

125 *Love's Work*, 116.

its extraneous accounts of grace, and the canonical divisions that come into play: reason and revelation, nature and grace, and so on. Benjamin's division of transcendence and transience, as well as Barth's dialectical theology of "extrinsic" revelation I believe form a part of this legacy. What I think is lacking in both of these visions is a theological metaphysic that is able to correlate the domains of historicity and transcendence analogically or speculatively; both Barth and Benjamin work within a largely "interventionist" framework where in order for the divine to act in history the creaturely predicates of limitation, particularity, and history are "suspended." The supernatural addition of divine grace (in the case of Barth) or violence (in the case of Benjamin) suggests a negation of *the middle* of history and the creaturely.

A shared history of metaphysical assumptions possibly lies at the root of these respective visions. This may be linked to the general point, made by the likes of Bruno Latour, that one of the conceits of modernity is the construction of a dualism between nature and culture, and an obfuscation of the real persistence of mediation and hybridity – including concepts like transcendence and immanence.¹²⁶ One might also speculate on the influence of developments within Baroque metaphysics regarding independent and neutral science of ontology,¹²⁷ and how this in turn

126 Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

127 On Kant, see Costantino Esposito, "L'impensé de l'existence: Kant et la scolastique." *Quaestio: Journal of the History of Metaphysics* 17 (2017): 259–276. For a general history, see Olivier Boulnois, *Être et représentation: Une généalogie de la métaphysique moderne à l'époque de Duns Scot* (XIIIe–XIVe siècle). Épipiméthée (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999); Boulnois, *Métaphysique rebelles: genèse et structures d'une science au Moyen Âge*. Épipiméthée (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2013) ; Jean-François Courtine, *Suarez et le système de la métaphysique*. Épipiméthée (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990); Costantino Esposito, "The Hidden Influence of Suárez on Kant's Transcendental Conception of 'Being', 'Essence' and 'Existence'," in Lukás Novák (ed.), *Suárez's Metaphysics in its Historical and Systematic Context* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 117–134; Esposito, "Suárez and the Baroque Matrix of Modern Thought," in Victor M. Salas and Robert L. Fastiggi (eds.), *A Companion to Francisco Suárez* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 124–147; Ludger Honnefelder, "Der zweite Anfang der Metaphysik. Voraussetzungen, Ansätze und Folgen der Wiederbegründung der Metaphysik im 13./14. Jahrhundert," in J. P. Beckmann, L. Honnefelder, G. Schrimpf, G. Wieland (eds.), *Philosophie im Mittelalter. Entwicklungslinien und Paradigmen* (Meiner: Hamburg 1987), 165–186; Honnefelder, *Scientia transcendens. Die formale Bestimmung der Seiendheit und Realität in der Metaphysik des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit* (Duns Scotus – Suarez – Wolff – Kant – Peirce). «Paradeigmata 9» (Hamburg: Meiner, 1990);

impacted both Benjamin and Barth, especially in the way that the medieval philosophies of John Duns Scotus and Francisco Suárez had influenced Protestant Scholasticism, and how this in turn affected Benjamin and Barth, via Gottfried Leibniz (as regards Benjamin¹²⁸) and possibly Immanuel Kant as well (as regards Barth¹²⁹). This tradition laid the groundwork for a formal separation of general and special metaphysics, rather than their “paradoxical” interpenetration within the High Medieval period.¹³⁰ Consequently, I believe this ontological dialectic between nature and supernature in Barth and Benjamin creates an invidious, hardened aporia between transcendence and immanence, even as it has differing receptions in their work.

For Barth, it is arranged as a divine transcendentalism in which the natural order is interrupted from “outside” through God’s self-revelation and election, thus suggesting an oppositional dialectic between creation and grace. The metaphors then adopted for this relation, as a consequence, often take on somewhat violent imagery; moreover, this prior dialectical relation of nature and grace struggles to account for the way that historical form relates to revelatory content. Nature has no revelatory capacity as such, and only has so through an intervening grace. This picture overall is refracted, I believe, through a post-Scotist construal of the relation

Honnefelder, “Metaphysics as a Discipline: From the ‘Transcendental Philosophy of the Ancients’ to Kant’s Notion of Transcendental Philosophy,” in R. L. Friedman and L. O. Nielsen (eds.), *The Medieval Heritage in Early Modern Metaphysics and Modal Theory 1400–1700*. The New Synthese Historical Library 53 (Kluwer, Dordrecht-Boston-London 2003), 53–74; John Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order: The Representation of Being and the Representation of the People* (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 1–114.

128 Paula L. Schwebel, “Intensive Infinity: Walter Benjamin’s Reception of Leibniz and its Sources.” *MLN* 127.3 (April 2012), 598–610. For more on the influence of Suárez on Leibniz, see Courtine, *Suarez et le système de la métaphysique*, 496–519.

129 McCormack, *Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 43–49; 207; 216–217; 245–246; 465–466. More Kant’s influence in general, see George S. Hendry, “The Transcendental Method in the Theology of Karl Barth.” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 37.2 (May 1984): 213–227. For the impact of Suárez on modern accounts of revelation, see John Montag, S. J., “Revelation: The false legacy of Suárez,” in *Radical Orthodoxy*, 38–63. On how this model influenced Barth, amongst many other modern theologians, see Johannes Hoff, “The Rise and Fall of the Kantian Paradigm of Modern Theology,” in Conor Cunningham and Peter M. Candler (eds.), *The Grandeur of Reason: Religion, Tradition and Universalism* (London: SCM Press, 2010), 167–196.

130 Andreas Speer, “The Hidden Heritage: Boethian Metaphysics and Its Medieval Tradition.” *Quaestio: Journal of the History of Metaphysics* 5 (2005): 163–181.

between theology and metaphysics and is the intellectual foundation of “natural theology”¹³¹ – which of course Barth rejects, while maintaining several of its prior assumptions. Such a vision fails to sufficiently account for more orthodox beliefs concerning divine revelation, namely that, in the words of Johannes Hoff, “God’s supernatural revelation is nothing other than to recover the natural destination of his creation,”¹³² in which to be transformed by the supernatural is the most natural orientation possible. In Benjamin, somewhat differently, this aporetic reception becomes an “*inverted metaphysics*,”¹³³ a procedure that “turns to metaphysics precisely at the point where metaphysics has lost its home in theology,” leading to “the secularization of metaphysics within an imminent, self-enclosed world.” Under the inspiration of a Leibnizian infinite calculus and monadology, this takes on “the rapacious character of an infinite method” which is “brought to bear on the smallest, most peripheral traces of experience, with no guarantee of their ultimate grounding in God.”¹³⁴ Putting things differently, while Barth’s revelational theology is characterised by a divine *breaking-into history*, Benjamin’s materialist theology concerns a *breaking-through history*, the rupture of the mythical law of being through a divine violence of law-breaking. Consequently, Barth’s dialectical theology of revelation has difficulty conceptually relating transcendence *to* immanence, thus conjecturing a variety of secularised immanence, while Benjamin’s relating of immanence *to* transcendence ultimately secularises transcendence, only to have it return under the modality of a violent suspension of profane order. Overall, it implies certain conceptual problems that form part of a shared heritage between these two thinkers that I believe needs to be supplemented, more generally by an analogical and “paradoxical” metaphysic that supplements any dialectical correlation of created and uncreated being. Hereby, the interplay of negation and affirmation, difference and identity, is embraced by an ever-greater difference-in-identity, whose ultimate premise, according to Christian doctrine, is the being of the Trinity. In this regard, one may need to return and “resource” earlier Christian thinkers who sought to correlate the concept of dialectic (difference, contrariety,

131 Boulnois, *Métaphysique rebelles*, 313–341.

132 Hoff, “The Rise and Fall of the Kantian Paradigm of Modern Theology,” 174.

133 Schwebel, “Intensive Infinity,” 592.

134 Schwebel, “Intensive Infinity,” 609–610.

negation) with analogy (proportionality, attribution, participation) within their trinitarian metaphysic; here I am thinking of Pseudo-Dionysius, John Scotus Eriugena, Thomas Aquinas, Meister Eckhart, and Nicholas of Cusa, in which the “aporia” of “being” and “existents” is grounded in the prior, eternal self-differentiation of the Holy Trinity, in contrast to the hardened aporias of secular modernity – a larger project which can only be gestured towards here.

Bibliography

- Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics* (14 Vols.). Edited and Translated by G. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance et al. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936–1969.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Gesammelte Schriften I.3*, eds. Rolf Tiedemann und Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974).
- *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin: 1910–1940*, trans. Manfred R. Jacobsen and Evelyn M. Jacobsen. eds. Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Adorno; Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1994.
- *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne. London & New York: Verso Books, 1998.
- *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1999).
- *Selected Writings, Volume 1: 1913–1926*, edited by Michael Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press, 1996).
- *Selected Writings, Volume 2, part 2: 1931–1934*, edited by Michael Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press, 1999).
- *Selected Writings, Volume 3: 1935–1938*, edited by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press, 2002).
- *Selected Writings, Volume 4: 1938–1940*, edited by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press, 2003).

- Bielik-Robson, Agatha. "Walter Benjamin (1892–1940)." In Philip Goodchild and Hollis Phelps (eds.), *Religion and European Philosophy: Key Thinkers from Kant to Žižek* (London: Routledge, 2017), 115–126.
- Boulnois, Olivier. *Être et représentation: Une généalogie de la métaphysique moderne à l'époque de Duns Scot* (XIIIe–XIVe siècle). Épiméthée (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999).
- Caygill, Howard. "The Broken Hegel: Gillian Rose's Retrieval of Speculative Philosophy." *Women: A Cultural Review* 9.1 (1998): 19–27.
- Chalamet, Christophe. *Dialectical Theologians: Wilhelm Hermann, Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann*. Zürich: Theologische Verlag Zürich, 2005.
- Courtine, Jean-François. *Suarez et le système de la métaphysique*. Épiméthée (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990).
- De Vries, Hent. "Inverse Versus Dialectical Theology: The Two Faces of Negativity and the Miracle of Faith," in Hent De Vries and Ward Blanton (eds.), *Paul and the Philosophers* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 466–511.
- Dierken, Jörg. *Glaube und Lehre im modernen Protestantismus: Studien zum Verhältnis von religiösem Vollzug und theologischer Bestimmtheit bei Barth und Bultmann sowie Hegel und Schleiermacher*. Beiträge zur Historischen Theologie 92 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996)
- Eiland, Howard and Jennings, Michael W. *Walter Benjamin: A Critical Life*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2014.
- Esposito, Costantino. "L'impensé de l'existence: Kant et la scolastique." *Quaestio: Journal of the History of Metaphysics* 17 (2017): 259–276.
- "The Hidden Influence of Suárez on Kant's Transcendental Conception of 'Being', 'Essence' and 'Existence'." In Lukás Novák (ed.), *Suárez's Metaphysics in its Historical and Systematic Context* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 117–134.
- "Suárez and the Baroque Matrix of Modern Thought," in Victor M. Salas and Robert L. Fastiggi (eds.), *A Companion to Francisco Suárez* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 124–147.

- Freud, Sigmund. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works Of Sigmund Freud*, Vol 14: “On the History of the Post Psychoanalytic Movement,” Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works,” trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957).
- Gockel, Matthias. *Barth and Schleiermacher on the Doctrine of Election: A Systematic-Theological Comparison*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Gordon, Peter E. “Weimer Theology: From Historicism to Crisis.” In Peter E. Gordon and John M. McCormick (eds.), *Weimar Thought: A Contested Legacy* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), 150–178.
- Hamacher, Werner. “Now: Benjamin and Historical Time.” In Andrew Benjamin (ed.), *Walter Benjamin and History* (London and New York: Continuum, 2005), 38–68.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh and Dennis J. Schmidt. New York: SUNY, 2010.
- Hendry, George S. “The Transcendental Method in the Theology of Karl Barth.” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 37, no. 2 (May 1984): 213–227.
- Hunsinger, George. *How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
- Hobsbawm, Eric. *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century: 1914–1991* (Great Britain: Abacus, 1994).
- Hoff, Johannes. “The Rise and Fall of the Kantian Paradigm of Modern Theology.” In Conor Cunningham and Peter M. Candler (eds.), *The Grandeur of Reason: Religion, Tradition and Universalism* (London: SCM Press, 2010), 167–196.
- Honnfelder, Ludger. “Der zweite Anfang der Metaphysik. Voraussetzungen, Ansätze und Folgen der Wiederbegründung der Metaphysik im 13./14. Jahrhundert,” in J. P. Beckmann, L. Honnfelder, G. Schrimpf, G. Wieland (eds.), *Philosophie im Mittelalter. Entwicklungslinien und Paradigmen* (Meiner: Hamburg 1987), 165–186.

- *Scientia transcendens. Die formale Bestimmung der Seiendheit und Realität in der Metaphysik des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit (Duns Scotus – Suarez – Wolff – Kant – Peirce)*. «Paradeigmata 9» (Hamburg: Meiner, 1990)
- “Metaphysics as a Discipline: From the ‘Transcendental Philosophy of the Ancients’ to Kant’s Notion of Transcendental Philosophy.” In R. L. Friedman and L. O. Nielsen (eds.), *The Medieval Heritage in Early Modern Metaphysics and Modal Theory 1400–1700*. The New Synthese Historical Library 53 (Kluwer, Dordrecht-Boston-London 2003), 53–74.
- Jennings, Michael W. “Towards Eschatology: The Development of Walter Benjamin’s Theological Politics in the early 1920s.” In Carolin Duttlinger, Ben Morgan, Anthony Phelan (eds.), *Walter Benjamins anthropologischen Denken* (Freiburg, Berlin, Wien: Rombach Verlag, 2012), 41–57.
- Jüngel, Eberhard. *God’s Being is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth*, trans. John Webster (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001).
- Keenan, O.P., Oliver James. “What Has Erfurt to Do with Basel? Meister Eckhart and Karl Barth on Preaching.” *Medieval Mystical Theology*, 26, no. 1 (2017): 96–110.
- Kracauer, Siegfried. *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995).
- Koshar, Rudy. “Where is Karl Barth in Modern European History?” *Modern Intellectual History* 5, no. 2 (2008): 333–362.
- “Demythologizing the Secular: Karl Barth and the Politics of the Weimar Republic.” In Leonard V. Kaplan and Rudy Koshar (eds.), *The Weimar Moment: Liberalism, Political Theology, and Law* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012), 313–334.
- Latour, Bruno. *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

- Lazier, Benjamin. *God Interrupted: Heresy and the European Imagination Between the World Wars* (Princeton-Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008).
- Marramao, Giacomo. “Messianism without Delay: On the ‘Post-Religious’ Political Theology of Walter Benjamin.” *Constellations* 15, no. 3 (2008): 397–405.
- McCormack, Bruce L. *Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909–1936* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995).
- *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.
- Milbank, John. *Beyond Secular Order: The Representation of Being and the Representation of the People* (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2013).
- “On the Paraethical: Gillian Rose and Political Nihilism.” *Telos* 173 (Winter 2015): 69–86.
- Menke-Peitzmeyer, Michael. *Subjectivität und Selbsterinterpretation des dreifaltigen Gottes: Eine Studie zur Genese und Explikation des Paradigmas >>Selbstoffenbarung Gottes<< in der Theologie Karl Barths*. Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie 60 (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2002).
- Montag, S. J., John. “Revelation: The False Legacy of Suárez.” In John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward (eds.), *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (London: Routledge, 1999), 38–63.
- Myers, Benjamin. “Election, Trinity, and the History of Jesus: Reading Barth with Rowan Williams.” In Myk Habets and Phillip Tolliday (eds.), *Trinitarian Theology after Barth* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 121–137.
- *Christ the Stranger: The Theology of Rowan Williams* (London-New York: T& T Clark, 2012).

- Newman, Jane O. ">>Hamlet ist auch Saturnkind<<: Citationality, Lutheranism and German Identity in Benjamin's *Ursprung des deutschen Trauenspiels*," in Daniel Weidner and Sigrid Weigel (eds.), *Benjamin-Studien I* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2008), 175–192.
- Pangritz, Andreas. "Musste >>die Opposition fast durchgehend<< sein? Zu Walter Benjamins and Gerschom Scholems Wahrnehmung Karl Barths und der >dialektischen Theologie<." In Daniel Weidner (ed.), *Profanes Leben: Walter Benjamins Dialektik der Säkularisierung* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), 301–324.
- Rabinbach, Anson. *In the Shadow of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment* (Berkley: The University of California Press, 1997).
- Rohls, Jan. *Philosophie und Theologie in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002).
- Rose, Gillian. *Dialectic of Nihilism: Post-Structuralism and Law* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984).
- *The Broken Middle: Out of Our Ancient Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).
- *Judaism and Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).
- *Love's Work* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1995).
- *Mourning Becomes Law: Philosophy and Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- Pfleiderer, Georg. *Karl Barths Praktische Theologie: Zu Genese und Kontext eines paradigmatischen Entwurfs systematischer im 20. Jahrhunderts. Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 115* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).
- Riaudel, Olivier. "Some Critiques of a Concept of Revelation as *Selbstoffenbarung*, and Defence of Some Definitions of the Concept of *Logci Theologici*." *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 92, no. 1 (2016): 29–39.

- Saxl, Fritz and Panofsky, Erwin. *Dürer's Melancholia I: Eine Quellenn- und Typen-Geschichtliche Untersuchung* (Berlin and Leipzig: B. Teubner, 1923).
- Schmutz, Jacob. "The Medieval Doctrine of Causality and the Theology of Pure Nature (13th to 17th Century)." In Serge Thomas-Bonino (ed.), *Surnatural: A Controversy at the Heart of Twentieth Century Thomistic Thought* (Florida: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2009), 203–250.
- Schwebel, Paula L. 'Intensive Infinity: Walter Benjamin's Reception of Leibniz and its Sources'. *MLN* 127, no. 3 (April 2012), 598–610.
- Speer, Andreas. 'The Hidden Heritage: Boethian Metaphysics and Its Medieval Tradition', *Quaestio: Journal of the History of Metaphysics* 5 (2005): 163–181.
- Taubes, Jacob. *Die politische Theologie des Paulus* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1993).
- *The Political Theology of Paul* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).
- Terpstra, Martin and de Wit, Theo. "No Spiritual Investment in the World As It Is': Jacob Taubes' Negative Political Theology." In Ilse N. Bulhof and Laurens Ten Kate (eds.), *Flight of the Gods: Philosophical Perspectives on Negative Theology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 320–353.
- Thiem, Annika. "Benjamin's Messianic Metaphysics of Transience." In Colby Dickinson and Stéphane Symons (eds.), *Walter Benjamin and Theology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 21–55.
- Webster, John. *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
- Weidner, Daniel. 'Thinking beyond Secularization: Walter Benjamin, the 'Religious Turn,' and the Poetics of Theory.' *New German Critique* 111 37, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 131–148.
- Williams, Rowan. *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

- ‘God.’ In David F. Ford, Ben Quash & Janet Soskice (eds.), *Fields of Faith: Theology and Religious Study for the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 75–89.
- *Wrestling with Angels: Conversations in Modern Theology*, edited by Mike Higton (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007)
- *Grace and Necessity: Reflections on Art and Love* (London-New York: Continuum 2005).
- ‘Dialectic and Analogy: A Theological Legacy.’ In Nicholas Adams (ed.), *The Impact of Idealism: The Legacy of Post-Kantian German Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 274–292.
- *The Edge of Words: God and the Habits of Language* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).