Enfleshing Cosmos and Earth: An Ecological Theology of Divine Incarnation

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of St. Michael's College and the Theology Department of the Toronto School of Theology
In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology
awarded by the University of St. Michael's College

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Doctor of Philosophy

University of St. Michael’s College

2017

Abstract

Building and expanding upon contemporary Christologies of deep incarnation, this thesis re-imagines the doctrine of Incarnation and the depth of the ontic unity between God and materiality. While contemporary deep incarnation Christologies have contributed much to contemporary theology, I suggest that there are nevertheless shortcomings within the paradigm as it is predominantly understood today. My aim in this work is to deconstruct the anthropocentric impulse that drives much of today’s deep incarnation theologies, calling this bias into question beyond previous critiques. I set about this task by using a posthumanist reading of Emmanuel Levinas to critique and re-imagine the idea of deep incarnation Christology, arguing that Jesus of Nazareth is a paradigm for an ontic unity between divinity and materiality that extends deeper than the unity between God and humanity. I argue that God, Earth, and the rest of the cosmos mixes and blends, forming an inseparable, albeit non-reductive unity. In this pan-incarnate religious ecology, humans encounter God in all things within a temporal matrix that unfolds prior to the awakening of the subjective horizon, in an affective and sensuous space that exists prior to and in-spires the possibility of theological thought. God, in this thesis, is not understood as simply mediated in the flesh of bodies, nor united to materiality as a distinct, personal agency existing beyond the confines of Earth and the rest of the cosmos. Instead, the incarnate God is inseparable from materiality, expressing as a plurality of material bodies in a way that simultaneously preserves divine infinity. Such divinity, insofar as God is irreducible to
any one expressive form, escapes the singularities which it incarnates in an event of radical kenosis where the divinity of any one is always called into question by the divinity of another. God is thus finally envisioned as the power of an-archy, calling the sovereignty of any singular power into question in an existence that paradoxically embraces and yet transcends all materiality.
Acknowledgments

Pursuing a PhD in theology has proven to be one of the more questionable decisions I have made in life. I would here like to thank a handful of people for standing beside me during the past five years; their support has helped me cope with my choices.

First, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Dennis O’Hara. Dennis’ knowledge of the history of eco-theology, dedication to students, and affable character have made him a pleasure to work with. Throughout my time at St. Michael’s, he has always encouraged creative risks that push the boundaries of the discipline, allowing me to pursue interesting and enjoyable, even if controversial, research trajectories. These qualities have made him an ideal professor, advisor, and mentor.

I would also like to thank Dr. Michael Bourgeois, Dr. Ronald Kuipers, and Dr. Darren Dias for their willingness to serve on my dissertation committee, and for the invaluable feedback they have provided concerning my research. Additionally, I thank Dr. Mark Wallace for serving as my external reader. Having followed his work throughout my program, I am grateful for his enthusiastic willingness to participate in this project. A further word of thanks should be given to Dr. Bourgeois, who worked with me at all stages of my program, and helped shape this dissertation.

Beyond those that contributed directly to the ideas explored in this dissertation, I am also grateful to all of the members of the Faculty of Theology at the University of St. Michael’s College, especially Dr. John McLaughlin, Dr. Colleen Shantz, Dr. Michael Attridge, Emil Iruthayathas, Cicily Tang, and Manda Vrkljan of the Kelly Library. Within the wider St. Michael’s family, a few doctoral candidates also deserve special thanks: Abigail Lofte, Michael Ross, Bishoy Dawood, and Nicholas Olkovich.
Outside of St. Michael’s, I am especially thankful for the opportunities I have had to work with Dr. Timothy Harvie and Dr. Trevor Bechtel. Many of the ideas developed in this work have emerged from conversations with these scholars. I am grateful for their wisdom, as well as their friendship. Furthermore, I acknowledge the encouragement of other senior scholars, especially Dr. Jaroslav Skira, Dr. David Clough, Dr. Heather Eaton, Dr. Gerard Mannion, and Dr. Niels Henrik Gregersen, who graciously provided me with copies of his latest work prior to its publication.

While working on this dissertation, I was also lucky to have a supportive community beyond the academy, ensuring my sanity and providing distractions from my work. I am especially grateful to Jaclene Begley, Nicholas Olkovich, Brian Bajzek, Robert Cirillo, Christopher Zeichman, Geordie Gibbon, Robert Peacock, Grey Dufresne, and Steven Rendulic for helping make Toronto home for five years.

Finally, I thank my parents Jeanne Cullen and Bruce Eaton. I leave aside the details of my gratitude because anything said will only betray the gravity of my debt to them. I owe everything to their unconditional support for all of my questionable decisions.
If cattle or horses or lions had hands and could draw
And could sculpture like humans, then the horses would draw their gods
Like horses, and cattle like cattle, and each would then shape
Bodies of gods in the likeness, each kind, of its own.

— Xenophanes

But in fact, nothing do we know from having seen it;
for the truth is hidden in the deep.

— Democritus
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Introduction

A. Summary of the Thesis

In light of the tenuous relationship between humanity and Earth and the resultant ecological crisis, it is imperative that Christian theologies reimagine and/or rearticulate their traditions in ways that promote the dignity and creativity of cosmogenesis.¹ While there are various fruitful paths within the Christian tradition that could awaken one to an understanding of the inherent value of the material world, theologies regarding the incarnation of divinity within Jesus of Nazareth offer a unique trajectory toward a framework that supports a more viable relationship between humanity and the otherwise-than human.² The unique wisdom found within the doctrine of Incarnation, if expanded and reimagined through dialogue with certain streams in contemporary philosophical analyses of subjectivity, has the potential to profoundly influence a Christian view of materiality, unveiling the intimate connection between divinity and materiality and the command to love our Earth-other neighbours as ourselves. While the work that follows is at times highly abstract, this thesis is written in the hope that its theological re-imagination, along side of other eco-theological re-imaginations, will take root in contemporary religious sensibilities, allowing the Church to embrace the insight expressed by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who insisted a century ago, that “there is a communion with God, and a communion

¹ This statement is not meant to suggest that the Christian tradition is inherently hostile to cosmos and Earth; it simply assumes that the formation of the tradition occurred apart from the concerns of the contemporary era, coping with the threat of increasing ecological devastation. While some of its doctrines may in fact harbour an anthropocentric bias, others may in fact provide the grounds to treat the otherwise-than human with dignity and love. Such must be decided on a case by case, doctrinal basis.

² I examine incarnation not because it is the only path to discuss the dignity of creation, but because incarnational theology suggests a deep intimacy between divinity and materiality that does not emerge within other frameworks. The incarnation has the potential to express the entangled ontic natures of Creator and creation, which has radical implications for increasingly viable relationships between humanity and our planetary community.
with earth, and a communion with God through earth.”

Thus, while it is easy to lose sight of such a goal, what follows aims to play a role, however large or small the impact, in encouraging a viable, loving relationship between the Church and the otherwise-than human, a religious ecology enfleshing the divine in cosmos and Earth.

While incarnation theologies have historically emphasized, if not focused exclusively on, divine/human entanglement, some streams of this theology are inherently open to the possibility of a wider ontic overlap between divinity and materiality, irrespective of form. Such theologies demonstrate the potential for engaging the modern ecological crisis and fulfilling a vision for an ecologically viable doctrine of the incarnation. Recognizing this potential, some contemporary, ecologically minded theologians have begun to reimagine the horizon of the doctrine of Incarnation in order to allow theology to more adequately address a world concerned with planetary well-being and the fulfillment of individual non-human existents. One such trajectory of reimagining the incarnation for ecologically minded theology today is found within Christologies of “deep incarnation.” This framework expands the divine/material embrace of Jesus’ body beyond the human to all bodies, in various degrees of ontic entanglement, claiming that the particularity of the incarnation reveals a divine embrace of the flesh of materiality itself, not just the human form. This is accomplished through an acceptance of modern cosmoologies as

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4 I will explore two streams of incarnation theology in Chapter One, both of which are embraced in contemporary eco-Christologies. Despite the limitations of appealing to ancient theologies, these early Christologies show the possibility and the potential shape of deeper incarnational theologies, open to a Christian embrace of divine immanence within materiality.

5 Not all theologies of “deep incarnation” go by this name. Deep incarnation is a terminological development occurring in 2001 with Niels Henrik Gregersen’s article, “The Cross of Christ in an Evolutionary World,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 40.3 (Fall 2001): 192-207. In Chapter Two I trace the modern development of deep incarnation back to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s wartime essays in the early twentieth century.
well as the epic of evolution, which place human emergence within a materialist, autopoietic cosmology, insisting that the human story is part of a much larger creative narrative. Following this assumption, a theological framework is developed, contending that the unification of divinity and humanity in a traditional understanding of the incarnation of Jesus unites God, through the implications associated with evolutionary continuity, with all materiality. That is, human existence, far from being an isolated event in the universe, is a ripple within a cosmos that forms the human out of its own emergent, creative materiality. As such, human being is inseparable from the being of the materiality that precedes and creates it. As such, in becoming the man, Jesus of Nazareth, God necessarily becomes the very cosmos and Earth that forms the human. The ontic unification of God and the man Jesus of Nazareth represents a deep embrace of all materiality by a divinity perpetually present within the created order to a certain degree, now erupting within creation in a special way within the body of Jesus. Incarnation thus becomes the event in which transcendent divinity and immanent materiality become particularly united through the human.

However, despite the advances of deep incarnational frameworks, I am unconvinced that the models currently dominating eco-Christological theologies are adequate. The failure of many deep incarnation theologies stems, I suggest in the coming chapters, from the presence of a latent metaphysical anthropocentrism harboured by theologians who are nevertheless genuinely

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6 Despite claims that God becomes cosmos and Earth by the implications associated with the evolutionary continuity of the human, the incarnation of Jesus maintains a unique character in many theologies of deep incarnation. Jesus is the one particular instance where God’s self-expression occurs, though the ontic unity extends to all things insofar as the Logos informs the becoming of all things within cosmos and Earth. I explore these theologies fully in Chapter Two, and suggest in Chapter Five that while helpful, deep incarnation in its popular form today is ultimately based in metaphysical anthropocentrism, and theological dualism that ultimately circumscribes the infinity of God and the otherwise-than human. I suggest that the depth of the incarnation does indeed extend to all things, but differently than those theologies that I take to be anthropocentric and dualist. In Chapter Five, I suggest a monist, posthumanist account of creation, i.e., a religious ecology wherein divinity is incarnate and self-expressive within all bodies, rather than simply human bodies, or the body of one singular existent.
concerned with cosmos and Earth. The presence, however minor, of metaphysical anthropocentrism undermines deep incarnational frameworks insofar as this bias uncritically normalizes the human as the ground for all epistemological inquiry aimed at understanding and judging the relationship between divinity and materiality. Such biases reduce divinity to the *alter ego* of the theologian, and refuse to embrace the divine expression present in face-to-face relationships, regardless of the forms they take, since Jesus’ *human* body entirely shapes the understanding of the divine/material embrace and the self-expression of God. As a result, the bias of metaphysical anthropocentrism residing in contemporary theologies of deep incarnation subtly re-inscribes hegemony and hierarchy into the cosmos, limiting the transforming, ethical potential of the doctrine of Incarnation, which has the potential to unite transcendent divinity and all forms of immanent materiality.

I suggest that the solution to this problem lies in deconstructing and eschewing the metaphysical anthropocentrism subtly permeating theologies of deep incarnation, which prevent divinity from expressing in ways that do not conform to the sovereignty of humanist models, which privilege the linguistic, self-aware cognitive structures of certain humans over the deeper expression present in the sensuality of all bodies. Such a bias prevents a radical embrace of non-human particularity as a potential dialogue partner for theology insofar as it normalizes the human as the only epistemic horizon through which divinity might express and be encountered. In deep incarnation, the incarnate presence of divinity is extended to the otherwise-than-human,

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7 Metaphysical anthropocentrism refers to the normalization of certain forms of the human body as the only epistemology necessary for knowing the world. This bias consequently eschews dialogue with non-human bodies, as well as human bodies that transgress hegemonic norms, that might otherwise call into question the idea that a normalized humanity might adequately perceiving the world. As I argue in Chapter Five, the eco-Christologies I am critiquing uncritically normalize the human insofar as they restrict God to the limits of a linguistic, self-aware horizon, and thus restrict the expression of divinity and materiality through an appeal to the capacities of able-minded human beings, which determine who possess the possibility of subjectivity and self-expression.
but through a model wherein Christ’s humanity mediates the form of divine self-expression, rather than allowing God to express God’s self, incarnate in forms that transcend humanity and reveal a divine infinity that overflows the concepts and identity assigned to it. The alternative to an anthropocentric Christology would necessarily express within the limitations of a human horizon, but would refuse to restrict the transcendence of divine infinity to its own finitude. A posthumanist Christology would instead embrace the infinite subjectivity of God as the possibility of divine self-expression beyond anthropocentric humanism, extended potentially to the infinite diversity present within a plurality of otherwise-than human subjects inhabiting cosmos and Earth. In this model, it becomes possible that divinity express beyond the human, incarnate in the faces of subjects who transcend normative humanity. Such expressions, inseparable from the an-archic subjectivity of an infinite plurality of non-human subjects, call into question the human sovereignty that asserts that God only exists in forms that match its own nature. This would allow for theologies to unfold that embrace an infinite divine subjectivity that transcends all concepts, as well as theologies more hospitable to cosmos and Earth due to the manner in which divinity might dwell in the alien faces of our non-human neighbors.

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8 An-archy, as I demonstrate in Chapters Three through Five, is an alternative model to the sovereignty of anthropocentric, human exceptionalism rooted in language and cognition. An-archic subjectivity refers to the relational matrix that unfolds prior to the emergence of thought, in the sensuous tissue of bodies that express by means of affects. Language and thought erupt from these, which provide the ground for my re-imagined Christology wherein divinity expresses within the incarnate bodies of all others.

9 Another way of framing this discussion would be to speak of a type of revelation akin to the notion of the Book of Creation, in which divinity “speaks” to the human through the natural world in addition to the Book of Scripture. In both cases, the books contain the direct, self-expression of divinity, not something mediated, although the reception of the divine voice, once it erupts within an awakened human mind, would necessarily come under the interpretive influence of a cognitive horizon, and thus transcend the direct, representational knowing of language bearing minds. In Chapters Three, Four, and Five, I explore non-linguistic forms of expression that facilitate direct, face-to-face encounters between human and otherwise-than human subjects, which allow relationships to occur as direct encounters, unmediated by cognition. Such relationships unfold within the affects generated in sensuality, emerging prior to the awakening of a human subject as a language bearing, self-aware subject, a cogito, in Cartesian terminology.
Therefore, in contrast to current theologies of deep incarnation, I suggest a reimagining of the doctrine in a way that eschews metaphysical anthropocentrism in favor of an approach that understands the possibility of divine expression within an infinite plurality of forms, a deep, religious ecology that calls human sovereignty into question with an an-archic force, and summons humanity to concern itself with the subjectivities present within cosmos and Earth. To this end, I wish to re-imagine the depth of the incarnation within a paradigm that refuses to normalize Jesus’ human body as the exclusive location or the definitive pattern of divine expression, instead understanding the event of Jesus’ life as one particularly meaningful example of how divinity incarnates all bodies within cosmos and Earth. Thus, I assert that the doctrine of deep incarnation, as it is developing within ecological theology, fails insofar as it reduces the shape of divine/material expression to the form taken in the humanity of Jesus. Alternatively, I suggest that the divinity encountered in Jesus of Nazareth is indicative of an pan-incarnational depth within creation that eschews the limitations of metaphysical anthropocentrism, announcing instead a paradigm for divine expression embracing the infinite plurality of materiality as it emerges within the integrity of its own irreducible singularity. As such, I seek to advance a view of creation as a religious ecology, wherein divinity is pan-incarnate in the self-expression of all bodies, human or otherwise.

The central claim of this thesis, i.e., that the incarnation of Jesus is one instance of a ubiquitous incarnational phenomenon in cosmos and Earth, is subject to the critique that the uniqueness of the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth is lost. In a sense, this critique is appropriate. I am in fact suggesting that the inseparable natures of divinity and humanity present in Jesus is also characteristic of the two-fold nature of all things, which are co-constituted by the divinity that transcends but informs all particularity (i.e., Logos), as well as the irreducible singularity of
the body in question. Jesus, in this theology, is not a unique existent in an ontic sense, as both natures, infinite divinity and finite materiality, apply to all. However, abandoning his ontic uniqueness does not negate other dimensions of uniqueness within the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth related to the particularity of the human person and our shared species-specific concerns. While my thesis aims to embrace the possibility of dialogue with non-human subjects who reveal their own trace of divinity, thus expanding our own understanding of the infinity of God, this does not mean that our fulfillment as humans will be unrelated to our encounter with divinity in forms that are especially meaningful to us. As such, the incarnation of Jesus reveals a particular revelation of God that fulfills the human being qua its humanity. This has implications both for our own self-fulfillment but also what the human role is vis-à-vis creation. In Jesus, we have a glimpse of what is best about the human, i.e., we encounter the vulnerability of liberating love that seeks to let the other be other, apart form the violent sovereignty of those exercising power. This is not to say Jesus is the only instance of this divine expression, nor is it to say that such an understanding of the divine Christ circumscribes the being of God and absolutely defines our understanding of divinity to this one expression. Yet, Jesus does reveal a divine expression befitting human fulfillment as humans, as well as our potential unique role vis-à-vis creation. We encounter in this man an eruption of the human potential for holiness summoned forth by his divine love and vulnerability in peculiar ways that exist throughout the anthroposphere, but which can be lost on a daily basis apart from unique eruptive events of unusual clarity and power. Jesus is uniquely divine in a human way, though the infinity of God demands that we refrain from using Jesus to circumscribe divinity or claim to any totality in divine understanding. The incarnation of God in cosmos and Earth complements this human revelation, aiding us in how we might fulfill our humanity in relation to the vulnerability of creation, and reminds us of
the infinite nature of divinity, which embraces all materiality in the irreducible singularity of its being. This theology does nothing to undermine human uniqueness and would allow us to continue to treasure the ideals of humanity found in Jesus of Nazareth, albeit in a way that eschews an anthropocentric or religious hegemony that re-inscribes value hierarchies into a cosmos of incomparably unique particularities and faiths.

As such, what is needed and accomplished in this thesis is a new definition of incarnation. This new understanding would emerge from traditional understandings, but break through the boundaries that have restrained a past understanding of the doctrine. What I suggest is an understanding different than deep incarnation or traditional understandings of divine immanence that deal with divine expression in human forms, and divine presence within materiality as its informative matrix, while maintaining a clear ontic distinction between the direct expression of God and non-human bodies. As we will see, in such a model, both God and the otherwise-than human are denied a voice insofar as they do not conform to humanist modes of cognitive and linguistic modes of discourse. The new understanding of incarnation proposed in the insights emerging from the coming chapters would blur the line of distinction between divine and material expression and the existent who speak in their own peculiar voices, suggesting that all things are potentially incarnate with divinity in a cosmos and Earth that erupts as a ubiquitous, pan-incarnate, religious ecology. In a religious ecology, each thing exists as a paradoxical entanglement of a divine and material natures, which constitute the particularity of beings even as each side transcends the other. Just as the Son is understood to exist as one person with two inseparable natures, each irreducible to the other but in an inseparable ontic partnership, so are all material existents.

B. Methodology of the Thesis
This project grows out of recent articulations in ecotheology regarding a Christology of “deep incarnation.” These theologies, which understand the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth to embrace the whole of materiality beyond humanity, find inspiration within biblical narratives, as well as certain patristic Christologies that would heavily influence the theological dogmas that would become orthodox in the early ecumenical councils. Yet, deep incarnation is not simply the retrieval of classical doctrinal resources. Current eco-Christologies of deep incarnation attempt to simultaneously stay faithful to the Christologies of the past, while following the insights gained in contemporary conceptual frameworks, grounded, broadly speaking, in a modern understanding of Darwinian evolution and a cosmology of cosmogenesis. Thus, in drawing on the foundational Christological documents of the Church, as well as contemporary evolutionary frameworks in support of a deeper understanding of the implications of divine embodiment, deep incarnation emerges through what we might call *contextual theologies of dialogical retrieval*. This framework, which seeks to re-imagine the wisdom of the past within new matrixes, recognizes that theologies are contextual insofar they are formulated within particular socio-historical experiences and assumptions for how the world operates. Thus, in dialogue with authors of the past, such theologies re-imagine our inherited religious frameworks in a manner meaningful to current sensibilities, while maintaining the spirit of its parent tradition.

While this thesis unfolds in a similar manner, engaging in dialogue with the Christian tradition, as well as the ecologically sensitive present guided by Darwinian evolution and a

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10 The pioneering essay on this topic, though not the first, is the representative model based in evolutionary continuity found in Niels Henrik Gregersen’s “Deep Incarnation: Why Evolutionary Continuity Matters in Christology,” *Toronto Journal of Theology* 26, no. 2 (2010): 173 – 188. I explore the genealogy of deep incarnation Christologies in depth in Chapter Two.

cosmology of cosmogenesis, what I ultimately suggest in the coming pages goes beyond what can be drawn purely from a dialogue between the Christian tradition and a modern concern for cosmos and Earth. Unlike the deep incarnation Christologies that I explore in Chapter Two and Five, I do not take Christ, or even the human, as the sole matrix of divine incarnation and the self-revelation of God. As we will see, while many theologies of deep incarnation suggest that divinity embraces all flesh, it is through the mediation of an ultimate incarnation, restricted in the body of Jesus, who acts as a microcosm for divine incarnation into materiality as such. This move links God to the human form in a necessary, ontic manner that I suggest reduces God to the alter ego of the human, unable to express as the infinite overflow of the thought that thinks diving being. Thus, I am concerned with those deep incarnation theologies that extend the relevance of the incarnation to all things, but finally insist that the self-expression of God in the flesh is restricted to Jesus of Nazareth. I suggest, on the contrary, that divinity is inherently incarnate and self-expressive within every instance of materiality, regardless of embodied form, to the same degree as the incarnation of Christ. This ontic union goes beyond deep incarnation’s insistence that the ontic union of Creator and creation lies simply in the presence of the information imparted to bodies by the creativity of the divine Logos, and insists that cosmos and Earth, as a religious ecology, is pan-incarnate and thus divinity expresses itself in all things to the same degree, albeit in various expressions, as that found in Jesus of Nazareth. As such, I ground my expanded understanding of the possibility of divine incarnation beyond Jesus of Nazareth, and beyond the human in general, by means of a dialogical encounter with sources.

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12 The expressions are, of course, different, although they will unfold by means of similar affective relationships, driven not by language and cognition, but the sensuous manner in which bodies affect and become affected by others. Humans will be affected in particular ways, and as I mentioned above, perhaps strongest in the bodies of other humans, such as Jesus. Yet, the necessary bias of our own affective subjectivities ought not to elevate such above the possibility of other divine expressions, which I argue in the coming chapters necessarily overflows the limitations of a certain interpretation of human normativity.
outside of the Christian tradition. My radical blurring of the line between divinity and materiality is not possible simply from a dialogue within the Christian past; such a notion requires a religious grounding beyond classical Christology. Such an approach does not ignore the Christian tradition, but it also recognizes the presence of religious truth beyond it and useful in aiding the theological development of ideas and traditions.

Consequently, in order for this thesis to be coherent and sensible, we require a second methodological focus within the thesis beyond a contextual theology of dialogical retrieval in order to allow for more radical developments within the Christian tradition itself. As such, I expand the dialogue partners in my theological construction, bringing deep incarnation Christology into conversation with Emmanuel Lévinas.¹³ Lévinas emerges as a unique, though not unproblematic, dialogue partner for this particular project insofar as he offers serious critiques of dogmatic understandings of divinity, restricted by adherence to linguistic and cognitive conceptual horizons, as well as the difficulties surrounding some aspects of incarnation theologies, which run the risk of limiting divine infinity insofar as the enfleshing of God opens God to one’s phenomenological horizon. Yet, beyond deconstruction, Levinas offers us a

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¹³ See esp. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969); *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1998. I explore Levinas’ though in depth in Chapters Three and Four. Pairing Levinas and incarnation theology might be questioned by Levinas scholars, who seem split on the potential of using Levinas as an interlocutor for Christian theology, especially theologies concerning Christology and the doctrine of Incarnation. While I cannot survey the complicating factors involved here, I note that there are scholars in favor and not in favor of the idea that Levinas can be used to engage Christian theology in the first place, let alone within a debate over the incarnation. I agree with those who insist that Levinas’ thought does not allow for incarnation, insofar as this proposes the visibility of God, within the phenomenal horizon of the human. Likewise, I suggest that many theologians drawing on Levinas do not provide technical readings of his work, especially concerning the ideas of infinity and an-archy, which are central to my thesis. In the coming chapters, I hope to outline a position that faithfully embraces Levinas’ “ethics as first philosophy,” as well as “first theology,” as a means of critiquing and reimagining Christology. Thus, I ask those familiar with Levinas to refrain from judgment until having read Chapters Three and Four, as well as the outcome of my reading of Levinas as applied to theology, in Chapter Five.
trajectory to meaningfully expand Christology beyond the confines of a humanist horizon, if read in a posthumanist light, and thus develop the doctrine of deep incarnation in meaningful ways.  \(^{14}\)

This method of proceeding embraces what Stephen Bevans terms “the synthetic model,” which embraces a posture of listening and concern for difference and how alterity can guide one’s theological imagination. \(^{15}\) The synthetic model performs theology by concerning itself with the bodies and traditions of those operating from traditions different from the theologian’s, experienced through contextual relationships. At its core, it is an inter-cultural, and inter-faith model of theologizing. The synthetic model embraces how alterity – the otherness that escapes a subject’s embodied and cognitive horizon – affirms, shapes, or even challenges the theological imagination of a given tradition. Synthetic theology is, in a sense, hybrid theology, seeking to be authentic to the tradition out of which the theologian thinks, writes, and acts, while maintaining an openness to other bodies, experiences, and traditions. The theologian following the synthetic model acknowledges that no theology arises in a vacuum, is influenced by others, and that such

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\(^{14}\) While Lévinas is a problematic interlocutor because he also embraces metaphysical anthropocentrism, I contend that his bias is rendered incoherent by a close reading of his own philosophical framework, characterized by a concern to overcome what he sees as the fundamental flaw within all Western philosophy, namely, the reduction of the other to the same, which he fails to apply to his view of the otherwise-than-human. Once we set aside Lévinas’ metaphysical anthropocentrism, we will see that his framework for face-to-face encounters provides a model by which to understand how infinite, non-human difference expresses divinity and erupting as the trace of God within human horizons, summoning humans to re-imagine their traditions concerning radical alterity, and allowing greater hospitality toward otherwise-than-human bodies. For post-humanist reading of Levinas, or the Levinasian framework that inspires the work of Jacques Derrida, see Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Matthew Calarco, *Zoographies* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2008); Leonard Lawlor, *This is not Sufficient: An Essay on Animality and Human Nature in Derrida* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007); as well as Jacques Derrida and Marie-Louise Mallet, *The Animal that therefore I Am*.

ubiquitous, outside influences ought to be actively considered as possible dialogue partners for theological development.

For Bevans, the synthetic model has three primary characteristics. First, like other models of contextual theology, this approach acknowledges all of the dynamic, experiential complexities contributing to any subjective theological construction. These complexities include the influence of personal experience, cultural traditions, the boundaries of linguistic expression, and the particularity of historical/socio-political events—all of which shape one’s world. Thought, religious or otherwise, is necessarily influenced by this irreducibly complex matrix of influence and information. Second, the synthetic method is concerned not only with the theologian’s experience, perspective, and inherited tradition, but also with the expressions of alterity and the radically different insights of those within other experiential, cultural, and religious frameworks. These exterior expressions question the sovereignty of the theologian and the possibility of any adequate explanation of the world that remains enchained to a singular, dogmatic perspective. The synthetic model thus calls for a culturally, experientially, and religiously pluralistic approach.

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17 In this regard, the synthetic approach overlaps with the concerns of other models of contextual theology, each of which would have something specific to emphasize in the project undertaken here (the anthropological, praxis, and transcendental models). On these models, see ibid., 54-87, 103-116. These other models do not guide this project because of the helpfulness of the second characteristic of the synthetic model, namely, the model’s concern not only with the theologian’s perspective and experience in constructing new frameworks, but also with the radically different insights from those within other cultural and religious frameworks.

18 On such complex information systems, see Mark Taylor, *After God* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007). Bevans’ suggests here that other models—e.g., the anthropological, praxis, and transcendental models—would overlap with this model. See Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 54-87, 103-116; *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective*, 174-179, 182-185.

19 I would not suggest that any singular position is inherently cut off from others as I take syncretism to be the nature of any conceptual framework. What is called into question is sovereignty, or dogmatism. Bevans’ model is thus consonant with my own position, developed throughout Chapters Three through Five, that theology erupts from embracing the an-arthic power of alterity, which calls our systems of thought into question.
to theological construction.\textsuperscript{20} Theology unfolds by embracing difference through face-to-face dialogue with others, where the voice of alterity is taken as offering potential insights for expressing one’s own tradition in a particular context.\textsuperscript{21} Third, the synthetic model is not simply interested in compromise between competing frameworks, leading to unauthentic expressions that agree to disagree, but rather, it aims at “developing, in creative dialectic, something that is acceptable to all standpoints.”\textsuperscript{22}

Thus, by bringing together the insights of ecological Christology and Levinas’ philosophy of religions to re-articulate Christian incarnational theology, I aim to arrive at a position that re-imagines a central doctrine within the Christian tradition in light of the wisdom of another philosophical/religious tradition, thus expanding a Christian paradigm regarding the interconnected relationship among divinity, cosmos, and Earth.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{20} A presupposition of the approach taken here is that our own perspectives are often inadequate for constructing a theology that is mutually beneficial for a larger community where difference must be embraced. This is not to denigrate other theological methods, which accomplish things the synthetic model cannot. It is also not entirely true that other theologies are done apart from difference, but their emphasis on theology constructed by a group without explicitly allowing difference to enter the conversation poses a problem for this thesis. In the context of this thesis, my concern is with theologies of Earth that do not have an adequate means of dealing with the voice of otherwise-than human alterity. It seems that eco-theologies must look to a future wherein the voice of this radical alterity is allowed to speak for itself, rather than simply ascribing meaning to alterity within the confines of conceptualist, religious traditions. While this thesis does not, until the conclusion, deal with the face-to-face voice of any concrete others, it uses Levinas in order to suggest one model for how such a theology might unfold.

\textsuperscript{21} Bevans suggests that this model recognizes a need of the other in order to authentically engage their own faith traditions in a particular cultural setting (Ibid., 181). This would of course translate well to theology done in the context of the modern environmental movement, in which the needs of Earth are necessary in just theological systems. This dynamic is particularly complex within ecotheologies, as the expression of the beyond-human is beyond human language and normativity. Yet, this is, I argue below, precisely what is missing from theologies that seek to eschew humanism and embrace cosmos and Earth. Ecotheology is thus more complex than ecumenical, and interreligious theologies, insofar as they escape humanist appeals to logos as the primary means of knowing the other.

\textsuperscript{22} Bevans, \textit{Models of Contextual Theology}, 90. This aspect of the model becomes complicated in the context of this project. I recognize that it is nearly impossible that the radical combination of frameworks that I offer would be embraced by all. Even with conclusions less radical, the Hegelian ideal Bevans suggests seems unlikely, and I have no real interest in such a unilateral theology. Second, the thesis ultimately aims at greater hospitality toward cosmos and Earth, and yet, not all bodies within this world can be reconciled with one another.

\textsuperscript{23} I should emphasize that this is Lévinas’ Judaism and not Judaism, per se. This work is thus not exactly a multi-faith analysis, and Lévinas as a religious scholar, or even a theologian is a complex matter that I address in subsequent chapters.
C. Outline of the Thesis

Here I provide an outline of the thesis, consisting of a synopsis of each of my five chapters. Chapter One, “Incarnational Approaches in Origen of Alexandria and Gregory of Nazianzus,” provides a historical analysis of two divergent trends in the development of classical incarnation theologies, and how two prominent and influential theologians understand the ontic depths of the divine/material relationship. I here juxtapose Origen of Alexandria and Gregory of Nazianzus as providing two distinct approaches, one non-oppositionally dualist and the other non-reductively monist, for speaking of the relationship between God and materiality and the precise manner in which the two theologians understand the unity of Christ’s two natures. This study situates my understanding of deep incarnation Christologies, which I suggest take on two forms that parallel, albeit not absolutely, the non-oppositional dualist and non-reductive monist approaches to Christological unity as evidenced in Origen and Gregory. The former retains a dualist understanding of unity insofar as Christ has two subjective agencies that do not blend together and embrace the experience of the other in its being, whereas the later is open to a blending of natures that produces a unified subjective agency in Christ’s two natures. These models help situate contemporary ecological Christologies, linking them to the Christian tradition, and modeling how contemporary writers understand the ontic depths of incarnation in contemporary eco-Christologies. Furthermore, while I am not suggesting that my own theology perfectly mirrors any classical Christology, I will use these models as touch points for my own thought.

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24 I am not suggesting that Origen and Gregory are absolutely opposed. On certain issues, such as the necessity of a human mind to unite the divine and human natures, they agree, and the later is likely following the former. However, they diverge precisely in terms of Christological unity, wherein the former has trouble escaping the uniting of two subjective agencies, whereas the later insists that the two have blended together, so as to maintain a unified subject of action, even as neither of Christ’s natures can be reduced to or confused with the other.
within the tradition. As such, it will be shown at the end of the thesis that my re-imagination of the incarnation of Jesus differs from the classical tradition, although it is not a complete aberration the dogmatic inheritance of the Church, but rather intensifies and expands upon certain trajectories already present in the religion from the patristic period. I will borrow ideas from both the dualist and monist approaches outlined here in light of my engagement with the thought of Levinas.

Following this historical survey, I examine how modern ecotheologians attempt to revive ancient approaches to the incarnation, for the sake of articulating ecologically deep understandings of Christology. Chapter Two, “Embracing the Depths of the Incarnation,” surveys the history of ecological theology from the early twentieth century onward regarding the trend towards expanding the relevance of the divine embrace of the flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, a doctrinal position today known predominantly under the rubric of deep incarnation Christology. Deep incarnation argues that when the “Word became flesh,” divinity embraced materiality itself, beyond any restrictive appeal to the taking up of a human body alone. Beginning with Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, I will look at how theologians concerned with Earth have been making use of the incarnation to promote the dignity of the non-human, most

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25 In a sense, this thesis does retrieve something of classical Christology, although my posthumanist approach ends in a perspective that neither Origen nor Gregory would be quick to accept. This thesis should not be read as drawing any posthumanist or ecological implications from these authors themselves, but rather draws on the broad strokes pertaining to Christological unity expresses in these theologians, which situates my own understanding of the ontic unity between divinity and materiality, including the otherwise-than-human.

26 This approach draws on some of the sources invoked in contemporary deep incarnation theologies, though in substantially different ways. I do not place as much emphasis on retrieving ideas from the patristic authors as other authors do, and do not finally ground any hermeneutical authority to such authors. I am more concerned with situating my thought in the historical trajectory of two models for Christological unity, recognizing that deep incarnation theology extends well beyond what any patristic author was interested in.

27 In this chapter I refer to Christologies in the plural as I am convinced that there are at least two forms in which deep incarnation unfolds. I trace the phenomenon back to 1916 and the work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, whose Christology constitutes a form of deep incarnation that calls the more popular understanding of the doctrine into question. Hence, I suggest that there are multiple forms of deep incarnation Christology, although my primary concern is to engage how the doctrine is most popularly understood and explored today.
often linking the incarnation with the theory of evolution, which places the human body in the larger context of a cosmology of comsogenesis, of which it is a representative microcosm. While I survey the history of deep incarnation Christologies, I highlight the work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and that of Niels Henrik Gregersen, those with the most pronounced attempts to embrace cosmos and Earth via the incarnation. These approaches will roughly correlate with the non-oppositional dualistic and non-reductive monistic Christologies outlined in the previous chapter, with Teilhard and Gregersen exploring different articulations of the Christological unity evidenced beyond the incarnation of Jesus, in the depths of material existence.28

Chapter Three, “Emmanuel Lévinas and the Face-to-Face,” is a major shift from the first two chapters.29 Here I begin to explore the ground upon which my critique of dualist forms of deep incarnation Christology is based, and outline the philosophy informing my own Christology. This chapter thus explores the Levinasian notion of face-to-face, dialogical encounters that emphasizes the finitude of human language and cognition and their inability to adequately represent and speak for the alterity of another, which infinitely transcends the words and concepts used to assign meaning to bodies who transcend the thinking subject. While such is only the first point of interest in my wider argument, it is the foundation for my critique of

28 I stress that both models, the dualist model of Gregersen and the monist model of Teilhard, are in fact models of unity and incarnation. Both fit certain classical articulations of the God/world relationship. It is thus useless to suggest that one or another more closely adheres to the classic model of incarnation, as I show in Chapter One that even classical notions of incarnation theology are attempts to placate competing groups with severely distinct concerns and convictions. While my own thought tends toward monism, I appreciate certain elements of the dualist model that make up for the shortcomings of monism. I also recognize that my criticisms do not undermine the genuine articulation of alternative forms of deep incarnation Christology that hold to the ontic unity between the Logos and all flesh. For both camps, dualist and monist, Christ is authenticly unified to materiality, and incarnate within the deepest depths of cosmos and Earth.

29 The first two chapters form a coherent section within the thesis, focused on understanding the state of contemporary ecological Christology. Chapter Three, along with Chapter Four, form a second section aimed at providing a philosophical framework by which to read and engage the theologies explored in Chapters One and Two. While I provide clues throughout Chapters Three and Four as to how the insight of Levinas will speak to deep incarnation Christology, these chapters for a coherent unit that are not immediately a part of the wider theological dialogue of this thesis.
dualist deep incarnation Christologies, which I suggest are dogmatically rooted in the horizon of the human theologian, thus denying divine alterity the possibility of speaking for itself, beyond what is comprehensible within a certain normative, humanist horizon. Chapter Three thus explores the core of Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas’ philosophy, surveying the key ideas in his counter-phenomenal understanding of the expression of alterity. The thought of Levinas is shown to be grounded in the ideas of infinity, an-archy, asymmetry, and affect—ideas that coalesce around what he describes as face-to-face encounters with alterity. The insights of this chapter will be applied in building a dialogical approach to Christology focused on the alterity of the otherwise-than human, divine or otherwise, explored fully in the final chapter. This chapter thus begins the practice of what I have outlined earlier in the method section as the synthetic model for performing theology as it draws on wisdom from outside of the Christian tradition in order to provide insight into how the thought of those outside of the tradition might contribute to the theology of those thinking from within.

Following and complementing Chapter Three, Chapter Four, “Encountering God in the Face,” will assess Lévinas’ philosophy of religion, exploring the entanglement of divinity and corporeal frailty, and the precise bodies who may or may not possess such a divine face. This chapter aims at understanding Lévinas’ approach to the face in its divine expression, rooting his philosophy of religion in a view wherein God is not mediated by materiality, but entangled with

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30 This gets at my major concern with dualist theologies of deep incarnation, i.e., the tendency I see in such theologies to speak divine being without reference to the idea of infinity and transcendence, ideas insisting that anything said concerning divinity is inadequate to the task of describing it. The dogmatic assertions, which restrict divine expression to the forms of the human body are thus called into question, as such an insistence reduces the subjectivity of God to the alter ego of the human theologian. It follows from this that contrary to dualist, deep incarnation Christologies, the divine Logos might express itself in forms that transcend human normativity, which cannot be used as the measure of all things, divine or otherwise. The possibility thus opens up for divinity to express beyond the confines of anthropocentric humanism, in the faces which populate the deep, religious ecology of cosmos and Earth.
the very expression of vulnerable bodies. For Levinas, such divine bodies speak themselves, apart from the reductive horizons of subjects, albeit in counter-phenomenal ways, prior to and beyond human speech rooted in language, cognition, and representation. The divinity of the face is thus incompatible to a certain notion of incarnation, insofar as what is incarnate becomes open to human apprehension within the awakened horizon of a language-making, rational subject. Divinity thus escapes humanist horizons, offering us a philosophy of religion that will be used, along with the insight of Chapter Three, to critique deep incarnation’s dogmatic restriction of divine expression to that which occurs in language-making, rational, human subjects. Levinas is shown to present us with a non-reductive monist cosmology where we do not discern God as an alterity behind the otherness of the other, but as inseparable from the bodies that summon the human to take responsibility for the well-being of a God inseparable from the face of the stranger, widow, and the orphan—faces and expressions irreducible to the forms of language and rationality, contrary to Christologies of deep incarnation.\(^{31}\) Yet, before moving on, I also explore the reasons for Levinas’ limitation of such a counter-phenomenal divinity to the matrix of humanity, providing the reason why Levinas’ anthropocentrism is untenable, without dismissing the broader application of his thought to ecological Christology.\(^{32}\) Such a study is imperative in light of the fact that Lévinas is critical of the very direction I wish to take his thought, namely that the divine face is able to express as incarnate within materiality and that the expression of

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\(^{31}\) In Chapter Two and Five, it is made apparent that deep incarnation restricts the strict sense of incarnation as divine self-expression to human, language-bearing, self-aware, rational bodies—a notion erroneously used to construct what is proper and normative within humanity. Limiting God to expressions that conform to the sovereignty of such themes, I suggest, reduces the infinity of the possibility of divine expression, which must be encountered beyond the boarders of the awakened human mind in order to maintain its transcendent character.

\(^{32}\) This will be done by appealing to the inconsistency of anthropocentrism within the basic tenets of his own philosophy, namely that the horizon of a subject cannot serve as the measure of the world of an other. Thus, Levinas, when speaking of the face of the otherwise-than human, is precisely non-Levinasian. Levinas’ thought is exactly that which should be open to the otherwise-than human.
such an incarnate face might occur in the otherwise-than human.\textsuperscript{33} Chapters Three and Four thus provide the ground for critiquing and expanding the idea of deep incarnation, explored in the next and final chapter.

In Chapter Five, “Enfleshing Cosmos and Earth: An Ecologically Reimagined Christology,” I leave the direct exploration of Levinas and return to Christian theologies of incarnation. Here I apply the insights gathered from Lévinas’ philosophy in order to assess the classical, as well as the ecologically deep forms of the doctrine.\textsuperscript{34} This takes place under the rubric of what I call the cosmological model, a contextual theology drawn from what Bevans describes as synthetic theology. As such, I here apply the insights gained in a study of Levinas, as outlined in Chapters Three and Four in order to engage the theologies explored in Chapters One and Two. While I find elements to embrace in both the dualist and the monist Christologies of the patristic era, and find much commendable in theologies of deep incarnation as they are currently articulated, I ultimately find that these paradigms for unifying Christ and the material world to be lacking. Chapter Five thus calls the doctrine of Incarnation, in both its classic and ecologically deep forms, into question based on its anthropocentric presuppositions that nullify the infinity of God, and the possibility of the self-expression of divinity, apart from a humanist bias that reduces God to the \textit{alter ego} of the theologian. In place of these anthropocentric Christologies, I offer a pan-incarnational Christology, wherein neither Jesus nor the human are the only or even necessarily the highest instances of the self-expressive, incarnate presence of

\textsuperscript{33} Jacques Derrida would perhaps more easily complement what I aim at in this thesis, though anything I would suggest by means of Derrida would ultimately be rooted in Levinas as he initiates the an-archic, affective philosophy that my Christology draws on in dialogue with deep incarnation. Thus, while using Levinas as an interlocutor requires the extra step of dealing with Levinas’ critique of the idea of incarnation and the divinity expressed in non-human faces, the theoretical ground he provides in imperative for a deeper understanding of my critique against the anthropocentrism of deep incarnation Christologies.

\textsuperscript{34} The emphasis in this chapter is on contemporary theologies of deep incarnation, especially as articulated by Gregersen.
God within cosmos and Earth. This theology eschews humanist appeals that privilege a certain human normativity as a means of discerning the encounter with God, and thematizing the bodies incarnate with the divine presence, suggesting instead a way in which the infinite divinity of God might be understood as pan-incarnate, facing humans in the vulnerable bodies of the deep religious ecology of cosmos and Earth beyond. This approach insists that the self-expression of divinity has no *a priori* restrictions, and might erupt within any body. Thus, beyond humanity, cosmos and Earth might erupt as the incarnate self-expression of God, not mediated by any existent in the flesh, but inseparably tied to its very being. Such a pan-incarnational theology calls human exceptionalism into question, along with attempts to reduce divinity to the human image. This demands an expansive re-imagination of the incarnational paradigm manifest in Jesus of Nazareth, embracing but resituating Christ’s divinity within a deeper religious ecology where incarnate divinity potentially speaks in all bodies.

I conclude the thesis by recapping the developments made throughout the project vis-à-vis the thesis statement and move toward the contemplation of an ecological ethic regarding divinity, cosmos, and Earth through questions concerning the concrete implications of this

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35 Human expressions, of course, as mentioned above, may represent the most meaningful expressions of divinity for humans qua their own humanity.

36 While I do not suggest that divinity must take a human shape, or express precisely how a human might, my interest is limited to how divinity might express to human beings. I have no recourse to how divinity might speak to non-human existents, nor am I interested in such a question. Thus, my analysis is concerned with how the human encounters the self-expression of God, and as is shown in the pages to come, this is manifest especially in the vulnerability of bodies, which summon humanity to responsibility for their well being. This is, of course, a peculiar emphasis of human existence, but the limited scope of this thesis is not to suggest that divinity might not express otherwise than through appeals for responsibility, God might in face express in the face of beauty, which may also be transcendent and infinite, beyond the thought that thinks it, giving humanity a soteriological escape from itself. Divine infinity might express in any number of affects, which begin prior to human thought, and thus beyond the reductionism of a humanist horizon. This is also not to say that the affects that affect humans are the only affects that express divinity. Yet, beyond this matrix of pre-linguistic, pre-conceptual meaning, the human is blind to the dynamics of divinity that may not be able to erupt within our religious sensibilities, because divinity infinitely transcends even the affective horizon of our bodies, that is not subject to the finitude of thought, but perhaps closed off to an infinite plurality of expressions that require a fundamentally different body to receive. We must assume then, that the limits of this discussion are by no means the end of the mysterious expression occurring beyond the possibility of being human.
incarnational theology. I address the concrete (perhaps we should say pastoral implications of this work) by means of exploring a personal encounter with an otherwise-than human being that not only fits, but ultimately inspires the incarnational model worked out in what follows. Thus, in the conclusion, I summarize the insights of this thesis in an experimental, autobiographical account of an encounter with the face of divinity, inseparable from the face, or more accurately, the paw, and the curve of the claw, of a cat. This narrative means to re-articulate Chapters One through Five apart from the mind-numbing technical nuances of theology and philosophy, in an encounter that I am confident many people share, but few find the opportunity to articulate. The heart of the matter of this thesis then lies not in remaining in the abstract nuances of the ontic unity of Christ and materiality, but how the vulnerable bodies of the otherwise-than human express themselves to us, and in so doing, express the being of God, who comes to mind in the face of cosmos and Earth, thus mitigating and limiting violence, and maximizing peace within and with our world. Furthermore, as the reader will surely note, this thesis likely raises far more questions than it answers. A re-imagination of deep incarnation assumes that there is potentially no limit to the possibility of divine encounter and I end with a brief summary of the complexities and complications inherent within such a theology of infinite epiphany, suggesting various hypothetical paths that could be explored more fully in the future as we, as a species, travel en route to a more dignified and sacred relationship with cosmos and Earth.

D. Implication and Purpose of the Thesis

This project has significant implications for contemporary ecologically minded theologies as well as Christology’s articulation of the doctrine of the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth. Firstly, this project advances ecotheology’s desire to eschew metaphysical anthropocentrism. Since its inception, ecotheology has done much to overcome a humanist bias, but as I show,
there remain traces of this prejudice whenever the human alone is used as a foundational guide to religious thought. 37 This project does not eliminate the human from theological imagination, but understands humanity as representing one side of a complex dialogue among different bodies, allowing face-to-face encounters with divinity, cosmos, and Earth to have authoritative voices in theological construction. While the human horizon is a necessary dynamic in religious knowledge, I argue that this dynamic is not absolute. 38 Such a framework allows the theologian to construct a meaningful horizon of understanding without insisting that such a horizon judges the being and value of all existents, divine or otherwise.

Secondly, dialogue with cosmos and Earth is not entirely absent from ecotheological discussion, but neither is it fully present in the religious imagination of today’s theologians. 39

37 The remaining prejudice is based in the heavy reliance on scripture and tradition as the principal sources of ecotheology as opposed to a more balanced view that considers Earth and its inhabitants as subjects in their own right. Understanding Earth as subject(s) with the potential to unveil Divinity, summon the human, and guide ethics will lead theology away from metaphysical anthropocentrism.

38 The use of human language and metaphors to describe material and transcendent worlds, neither of which can be reduced to the human horizon, is unavoidable as there is simply no other manner in which we might conceive of the world in a meaningful way. Yet, the meaningfulness of such horizons is poetic rather than ontological, suggesting that the ways in which we speak of the other-than-human world are metaphorical rather than indicative of any direct correspondence to the being of others. This position recognizes that the other ultimately transcends human horizons even as human language is used to describe the world. Such a position is justified if we accept the assumption that all bodies exist as simultaneously differentiated and yet inseparably interconnected. Being, arising within the wider context of cosmogenesis, in which all things emerge through relationship, recognizes that while difference exists, nothing is absolutely separate from the other, indicating the presence of sameness at some level in a world where things co-create one another. As such, there is meaning and truth in human language as applied to the other based in the shared existence of things, even if such language fails to encompass the way the other exists in the world. This critical realist position allows for poetic speech that describes the other in a real, though non-totalizing way that avoids both naïve realism and a purely heuristic, solipsistic approach to describing the world. The language employed throughout this dissertation suggests that my understanding of the world is accurate concerning reality to a degree, but that such an understanding is poetic in the sense that it does not directly describe the being of the other, which is ultimately mysterious and beyond any understanding. For similar positions, see Sallie McFague in her *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1982).

39 It seems that often an encounter with cosmos and Earth does in fact inform theology, but it is treated as an encounter separable from the performance of theology, which happens without the full partnership of the non-human. There are, however, cases where an encounter with cosmos and Earth is more present in theology. See, e.g., Mark Wallace, *Finding God in the Singing River: Christianity, Spirit, Nature* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005). Another example of the voice of Earth being incorporated into theology is the work of scholars such as Michael Northcott, who makes extensive use of contemporary climate science to discuss the needs of Earth and how religious traditions might respond politically to such needs. See: Michael Northcott, *A Moral Climate: The Ethics of Global Warming* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2007); *A Political Theology of Climate Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2013). This thesis, while making little reference to those such as Wallace
The trajectory of ecotheology, I suggest, must begin considering newer models for dialogue that include religious traditions, modern conceptual frameworks, and the world that gives us being. This is a somewhat different approach to ecotheology as it does not simply allow tradition or modern wisdom to dominate the theological conversation, but conceives of non-humans as divine subjects, inseparable from co-creative power, and the possibility of assigning meaning to the world as a community acting together to critique and help re-imagine theology within a dynamic, relational world where all speak to and co-create one another. The model I propose is not an end, but one step in a wider conversation already taking place, in need of further development and dialogue with other frameworks.40

Thirdly, there are implications for the doctrine re-imagined in the dissertation, i.e., the divine incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth. My work aims to deepen the already deepening trend in eco-Christology that embraces the relevance of the incarnation for cosmos and Earth. The work undertaken proposes to expand the relevance of the incarnation for the non-human by suggesting that the human Jesus of Nazareth is not the only instance of divine incarnation and self-expression, and that divinity embraces a plurality of forms not restricted to that which is meaningful to the human. Such instances of incarnation call into question and summon the human to responsibility, leading to new relational horizons among humanity, divinity, and all differentiated instances of materiality emerging within cosmogenesis. My theological perspective suggests the potential for infinite divine encounter within the irreducible singularity of each differentiated subject of cosmos and Earth.

and Northcott, acknowledges them as the academic in-spiration of this work, which aims to rethink the possibility of divine, non-human subjectivity and expression, pan-incarnate throughout cosmos and Earth.

40 Teilhard’s Christological immanence and understanding of the sacramental nature of the cosmos are both ideas that require further discussion. I will draw out parallels and conflict with Teilhard in subsequent chapters. See, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Hymn of the Universe; The Human Phenomenon* (Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 1999).
Finally, these doctrinal implications have further implications for the concrete, political issues facing humans today in our modern ecological crisis. The sacredness of creation suggests a new way of approaching our planet and a rethinking of the daily political and economic choices we make concerning all aspects of life. Thus, the potential of infinite divine encounter sacralises all flesh by positing the transmutation of the Creator into creation, opening up the specter of an infinite ethic embracing materiality without making \textit{a priori} judgements about what is and is not morally considerable. Living in such a relationally driven cosmos inhabited not by mute objects but a plurality of subjects incarnate with a trace of the divine poses a significant challenge for human beings, leading as it does to renewed considerations of ethics and a broader horizon of hospitality toward difference.
Chapter 1

Incarnational Approaches in Origen of Alexandria and Gregory Nazianzen

1.0 Introduction

What would become the classic Christological formulas reflected in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed and Chalcedonian Definition represent the fruit of centuries of continuous and as of yet unsettled debate concerning the nature and identity of Jesus of Nazareth. While the statements of Nicaea and Chalcedon are indeed rooted in the humble soil of Jesus’ self-understanding as a social prophet, teacher of wisdom, and perhaps Messiah, historical scholars understand Christology as a doctrine moving along various developmental trajectories. From the passion of a social prophet of eschatological justice emerges the low, and even adoptionist, Christologies of the earliest Gospel sources (i.e., Mark and Q), the rise of the earliest metaphysical Christologies (e.g., the Logos theology of the Johannine prologue and the re-imagined Wisdom theology of the hymn to Christ in Philippians 2), and the full blown two nature onto-Christologies reflected in Nicaea and Chalcedon.41

The dynamics at play in this development are certainly incalculable. Likewise, the literature surveying the minutia of each phase in Christological development, from studies of the historical Jesus and the Greek Bible, to the development of Christology in the Apostolic Fathers, the Apologists, and the Patristic thinkers of the fourth and fifth centuries, is impossible to fully

41 Rather than trace Christological development in its earliest phases, I am content that, however it developed, the unity of the divinity and humanity of Christ came to be regarded as the key touchstones for Christology. As such, I begin my study when classical Christology began to take concrete shape in the second century, when the relationship between materiality and divinity became important enough to serve as the basis for Christian identity and ecclesial unity. As such, the interest here is on the development of systematic theological categories and their consequences on communities, rather than arguing for the legitimacy of such a theology through appeals to a retrieval of a primordial Christianity that supports modern ecological concerns. Such a project would be commendable, but is simply not my concern.
digest in this study. Nevertheless, a survey of important developments and key ideas is required as a foundation upon which to construct any emergent theology within the Christian tradition. As such, I here provide a broad narrative concerning the development of two trajectories by which various theologians attempted to articulate the identity of Jesus of Nazareth. Such a narrative will necessarily be incomplete, and will assume certain dynamics of Christological identity that some may wish to debate further. Yet, as my concern is particular – i.e., to articulate two streams for understanding the relationship between the divine and human natures of Christ in a way that understands him as a singular person – I am left with the necessity of telling an abridged story whose characters and details are intentionally selected to build a foundation for the ecological theology I construct. While the story could be told in numerous ways, Origen of Alexandria and Gregory of Nazianzus serve here as the main characters. I suggest that these two theologians reveal two variant Christological streams representative of a wider swath of theological thinking that seeks to unify the transcendent divinity and immanent materiality present in the peculiarity of Jesus of Nazareth. The non-oppositional dualistic and non-reductive monistic impulses of these respective thinkers on Christological unity reflect models upon which to understand certain ecological Christologies of deep incarnation, to re-imagine such Christologies, and to place these theologies within the depths of the Christian tradition itself.

1.1 Patristic Incarnation Theologies and Christological Unity: Two Views

Establishing a general understanding of what happens in the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth in light of the formative period of the Christian tradition has two purposes. First, this chapter allows me to succinctly outline how I understand the nature of incarnation as an event. There are various ways to understand what is going on when divinity and materiality meet, and this chapter provides a ground for the two primary ways Incarnation is understood throughout the
work. Second, this chapter points to the historical Christology I partly embrace, and as such, links the constructive work of later chapters within this particular trajectory of the classical Christian tradition. While this constructive work is not restrained by any restriction to categories found in classic theology, it is nevertheless important to locate contemporary theology with broader currents within the tradition.

I here explore the development of two streams of Christology that would eventually coalesce in the ecumenical councils of the fourth and fifth centuries, arguing in different ways that Jesus of Nazareth is both fully divine and fully human, and exists as a unique hypostasis within the Trinitarian Godhead. As such, I bypass controversies related to the variant Christologies of the patristic period, e.g., Arianism, Appolinarianism, Docetism, Monarchism, and Monophysitism, turning instead to the contested Christological issue concerning the precise nature of the relationship between the divinity and materiality upholding the singularity of personhood found within Jesus of Nazareth. The issue at stake, then, is Christological unity—i.e., how divinity and embodiment relate to one another in Jesus’ personhood. Below, I discuss two models of unity, each with strengths and weaknesses, but each genuinely attempting to unify

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42 As will be seen, this is relevant to current discussions of ecological Christology insofar as deep incarnation Christologies are beginning to develop multiple “senses” in which Christ is incarnate in creation. This chapter’s outline of two types of incarnational understanding will help ground the multiple “senses” of contemporary theologies of deep incarnation, and help conceptualize exactly how my thinking diverges from others in the field.

43 While there is a broad similarity in what I term monist Christology and Christology written within the cosmological model, described in Chapter Five, I do not claim that I am recovering a classically understood Christology. I am simply pointing to the manner in which some Christologies hold to a deeper ontic depth to the divine/material overlap than do others.

44 While one may conclude that any theology is so far removed from Christian thinking that it represents an aberration from the tradition, such is not the case here despite the radical conclusions reached. While peculiar, as a result of my own inculturation and the insight gained from my primary interlocutor, Emmanuel Levinas, the theology constructed throughout this work, while taking on a character of its own, is firmly rooted in one of the many Christological trajectories present in the tradition. Thus, while I am not claiming to write a revised theology of Gregory Nazianzen, or any patristic author for that matter, I hope that the conclusions reached here would be given an audience by theologians such as Gregory, Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria, and those who follow them, and hope for a deeper, ecologically minded Christianity.
the paradoxical natures present in Jesus—i.e., the transcendent infinity of God and the immanent finitude of creatures. How such dynamics relate in a singular individual is pertinent to the unfolding of the ecological Christology subsequently developed.45

1.1.1 Dualistic Unity: Origen of Alexandria

I begin with Origen not because he is a superior model on which to base contemporary Christology, or the only option for a dualist understanding of Christological unity.46 Origen’s importance, however, is easily demonstrable in light of his overwhelming influence in the early development of theology as his pioneering works set the stage for the Christological debates that unfolded for centuries after his life.47 He was among the first to explore the ontic nuances of Christology, a focus within my own work. Origen also engages the technical terminology

45 What Origen and Gregory represent are types that could be found in other forms and other theologians. E.g., Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, or Leo of Rome could just as easily provide a variant model for an Origenist, dualist view of Christological unity. Likewise, Apollinarius, Ambrose, Cyril of Alexandria, or perhaps more appropriately, Augustine could be used to support more radical notions of unity that do not separate the unity of Christ into separate spheres of activity existing together but alongside of one another. There is limited space, and the broad currents of a deeper narrative are all I wish to convey, which I suggest are clearly, and perhaps most starkly, represented in Origen and Gregory Nazianzen, although Augustine’s Christology could perhaps be more deeply invoked in the future in support of the Christology advocated in this work. See, e.g., Brian Daley, “Making a Human Will Divine: Augustine and Maxwellus on Christ and Human Salvation,” in Orthodox Readings of Augustine, ed. George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Apanikolou (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2008), 101-126; “The Giant’s Twin Substances: Ambrose and the Christology of Augustine’s Contra sermonem Arianorum,” in Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum, ed. Joseph Lienhard, Earl Muller, and Roland Teske, Collectanea Augustiniana (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1993), 477-496; “A Humble Mediator: The Distinctive Elements in Saint Augustine’s Christology,” Word and Spirit 9 (1987):100-107; Rowan Williams, “Augustine’s Christology: Its Spirituality and Rhetoric,” in In the Shadow of the Incarnation: Essays on Jesus Christ in the Early Church in Honor of Brian E. Daley, SJ, ed. Peter W. Martens (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 176-189.

46 Athanasius would serve such purposes just as well, especially insofar as he is cherished for his role in constructing classic Christology. Gregory of Nyssa would also make for a nice comparison with Gregory Nazianzen and retain a Cappadocian theme. Likewise, the later Latin father Leo of Rome would also demonstrate a dualist Christology quite well, especially in light of the role he played in shaping the Chalcedonian Definition. I survey Origen for the influence he exercises on dualist incarnation theologies in the future, serving as their ground in a sense, even if Origen was never completely adopted, and is not a mirror image of what would later become orthodox Christology. On the controversies surrounding Origen, see Krastu Banev, Theophilus of Alexandria and the First Origenist Controversy: Rhetoric and Power (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015); Elizabeth Clark, The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Mark Edwards, Catholicity and Heresy in the Early Church (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 79-104.

surrounding Christological dualism and monism that is repeatedly re-imagined and qualified en route to a classical Christological orthodoxy settled upon in the Chalcedonian Declaration.

Finally, while upholding the subjective unity of Christ, Origen’s dualist Christology provides a representative framework for the position that is largely, though not entirely, embraced by many theologians subsequent to him in the Patristic era.48

Origen’s dualism is neither in line with the Gnostic theologies with which he took issue, nor with what would become classical Christology in the doctrine of the Hypostatic Union, articulated by Cyril of Alexandria and given final form by Leo of Rome in the Chalcedonian Definition.49 For Origen, matter was in a sense inferior to the spiritual, but this did not rule out the necessity of a divine embrace of materiality for the sake of reaching into the world and pulling the human out of sin toward a telos united with a more divine existence. His Christology, perhaps representing one of the more extreme dualisms of those who understood Christ as a singular subject, understands Christ as two persons (hypostasis) – i.e., the eternal Logos and the human Jesus of Nazareth – who have fully merged into one being without a confusion of the two. Yet, such a unity between the two is relatively weak, and is intensified throughout time among those who retain the dualist tendency of Origen.50 Yet, Origen’s hard dualism serves a heuristic

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49 “Against the Gnostics, Origen tried to refute the idea that the body was a sign of punishment or was at enmity with God. His argument rested on a belief in the justice and goodness of God, who has arranged all creation. Thus, the variety of the material world is not as such a sign of imperfection or a prison, but a reflection of the various means whereby God redeems individual creatures.” Rebecca Lyman, *Christology and Cosmology: Models of Divine Activity in Origen, Eusebius, and Athanasius* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1993), 62. For an exploration of Origen’s cosmology beyond the scope of this chapter, see ibid., 39-81.

50 Origen’s Christology is known primarily through his *First Principles, Against Celsus*, and *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*. See Origen, John Cavadini, and Henri de Lubac. *On First Principles* (Notre Dame,
purpose of clearly explaining the issue at hand in such Christologies, and illustrates well the conceptual concerns of later theologians such as Athanasius, in wanting to maintain a distance between the divinity and materiality of Jesus.

Christ’s incarnation, for Origen, does not undermine the transcendence and perfection of divinity, but neither is it the ultimate form of Christ’s expression of truth to humanity, who must look beyond phenomena in order to apprehend the full truth of God. Human knowledge, according to Origen, begins within, but must ultimately transcend knowledge by means of the phenomenal world. This transcendence takes the human into a spiritual reality, and way of knowing, more closely resembling a purely divine nature. Incarnation, insofar as it mediates this transition, reveals the soteriological transcendence meant for the world. As such, Origen does

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IN: Ave Maria Press, 2013); Origen and Henry Chadwick, Contra Celsum (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1953); Origen and Ronald Heine, Commentary on the Gospel According to John (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1989). Later dualist theologians will eschew Origen’s language of separate person unified in one subject, but maintain a split between the location of Christ’s subjective action. This is clear – e.g., in analysis of scripture – where passages speaking of Christ’s acts that convey divinity are ascribed to his divine nature and the banal activities of humanity are thought to originate from his humanity, with the two never truly participating in the other.

51 The divinity of the Son is beyond the possibility of expression in any material body, including a human one. “We do not say these things…with the intention of disparaging the vast creations of God…but because we perceive the superiority of the divinity of God which is beyond description and also that of his only-begotten Son who is far above all things.” Origen, Contra Celsum 5.11, 272. This transcendence stems from the Son’s divinity, as transcendence as such is what it means to be God: “Origen accepted and used Middle Platonic formulas of transcendence as definitions of divine nature. God as νοῦς or ἁγίωντος was the source of all things, and was wholly comprehensible only to himself, transcending all attributes, perhaps even being itself. God was simple (ἅπλος), one (ἕν), incorporeal (ἀσώματος), unchangeable (ἄτρεπτος), and invisible (ἀόρατος).” Lyman, Christology and Cosmology, 47. However, as I argue in subsequent chapters, thematizing God as such is to precisely disrupt the very idea of transcendent infinity.

52 “How is it possible to have any knowledge except by sense-perception? It is written…that the invisible things of God are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made. By this we may know that even though men in this life have to begin from the senses and from sensible things when they intend to ascend to the nature of intelligible things, yet they must on no account remain content with sensible things. Nor would they say that it is impossible to have any knowledge of intelligible things except by sense-perception.” Origen, Contra Celsum 7.37, 425. See also, ibid., 5.18-23, 277-282 on the corporeal body as a means of attaining the eventual resurrected body, and thus passing from a corporeal to a spiritual existence. For more, see Gerald Bostock, “Quality and Corporeity in Origen,” in Origeniana Secunda, ed. Henri Crouzel and Antonio Quacquarelli (Rome, IT: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1980), 323-337.

53 Thus, phenomenal knowledge points to something spiritual, residing in its fullness only in a spiritual reality that might be reflected, but finally transcends the material world. “But if there are letters of God, as there are, which the saints read and say they have read what is written in the tablets of heaven, those letters are the thoughts
not have a view in which the material world is evil, but he does understand corporeity as a lesser, even if necessary, stage in the soteriological development and transformation of the human being.\textsuperscript{54}

The world exists as a necessary matrix required by the human to encounter and embrace divinity en route to transcendence. Humanity derives initial knowledge of divinity via the senses and the phenomenal world, and as such, a divine incarnation in the world is necessary for a direct revelation of divinity to human beings. Yet, the phenomenal is not the ultimate source or reflection of the true knowledge of God.\textsuperscript{55} Thus, despite the necessity of Christ’s incarnation and a wider sensible world to communicate initial divine truth to human senses, “Origen urges his readers to move beyond the human Christ and the historical economy of salvation towards a knowledge of the divine Word in its pure, eternal existence.”\textsuperscript{56} For humans then, knowledge of God and the soteriological turn necessarily requires an incarnate, revelatory deity, but human becoming cannot simply remain attached to the phenomenal realm, and like Christ in his baptism, the human, by means of the Spirit, transcends “everything material,” and “everything

\textsuperscript{54}The divine Logos, mediated by the flesh of Christ, is not meant to establish a friendship between divinity and materiality, but to disrupt such a friendship. For Origen, Christ “came not to cast peace on the earth, that is on the things which are corporeal and perceived by the senses, but a sword, and since he cuts through…the harmful friendship of soul and body, that the soul, by devoting herself to the spirit which fights against the flesh, might be made a friend of God.” Ibid., 229, 79.

\textsuperscript{55}This is made know in Origen’s argument against Celsus, who Origen claims erroneously criticizes Christians for believing that they behold God by means of the senses. Origen, \textit{Contra Celsum} 7.39, 426. Origen has no problem with Celsus’ claim that God is known beyond the senses, and suggests that while sense perception is the beginning of the knowledge of God, the baptized Christian becomes closed off to knowledge by means of sense perception, and beholds God through the rationality inspired by the Logos, known in the spiritualty of the soul. “For the Logos blinds the later [the senses], that the soul may see without any distraction that which it ought to see. Therefore, the eyes of the soul of any genuine Christian is awake and that of the senses is closed.” Ibid., 427.

The incarnation reveals materiality as a starting point en route toward an ultimate, divine reality where materiality becomes spiritualized. And so, while he does not reject the physical world as the Gnostics did, seeing it as a necessary epistemological matrix on the journey toward transcendence, Origen holds a value-dualist understanding of the material and the spiritual. While united in a sense, they maintain an unbridgeable gulf between them. For Origen, the material and the spiritual are related, but the two can never be in complete unity and must maintain their own proper natures. Additionally, they exist within a value hierarchy, and while it is true that the later cannot be known without the former, there is a clear preference for and elevation of the spiritual in Origen’s Platonist cosmology.

Concerning the metaphysics of the person of Christ, Origen’s approach follows this dualist pattern as he attempts to explain how the eternal Logos can be united with the human Jesus of Nazareth. Origen’s concern to demonstrate how the duality of Christ exists paradoxically in a singular individual is what concerns Christology through the major ecumenical councils, and is the basic concern of deep incarnation theology today. For Origen,

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57 Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* 6.162, 215-216. Christ’s “baptism is not corporeal, since the Holy Spirit fills the one who repents, and a more divine fire removes everything material, and utterly destroys everything earthly, not only from the one who contains it but also from the one who hears those who possess it.” Ibid.

58 While I advocate for a position different than Origen, it is important to stress that materiality is a necessary part of a transformation to the spiritual, and is not flatly rejected. Neither is it necessarily to be abandoned, but transformed; it is “a means whereby creation may return to God.” Lyman, *Christology and Cosmology*, 61. As such, while his dualism remains problematic, he makes an attempt within his own Alexandrain framework, to dignify materiality, albeit in comparison to its role in spiritual transcendence.

59 Origen’s Christology is systematically explored in Origen, *First Principles* 1.2, 21-38 and 2.6, 135-144. For an overview of his incarnation theology, see Crouzel, *Origen*, 186-198.

60 “But of all the marvelous and splendid things about him there is one that utterly transcends the limits of human wonder and is beyond the capacity of our weak mortal intelligence to think of or understand, namely, how this mighty power of the divine majesty, the very word of the Father, and the very wisdom of God, in which were created ‘all things visible and invisible’ (Col 1:16), can be believed to have existed within the compass of that man who appeared in Judea.” Origen, *First Principles* 2.6.2, 136-137. This section is filled with Origen’s amazement that such a union occurs at all, insisting repeatedly that such is beyond the possibility of human understanding, “even [the understanding] of the holy apostles…beyond the reach of the whole creation of heavenly beings.” Ibid., 137-138.
any model for understanding the unity of Christ must respect the particularity and integrity of each nature, humanity as well as divinity, confident that “his kenosis did not put an end to his divine [or human] character.”⁶¹ “First we must know this, that in Christ there is one nature, his deity, because he is the only begotten Son of the Father, and another human nature, which in very recent times he took upon him to fulfill the divine purpose.”⁶² But, because of the paradoxical dynamics of the natures, they cannot share exactly the same conditions of existence, and so “nothing unworthy or unfitting may be thought to reside in that divine and ineffable existence, nor on the other hand may the events of his life be supposed to be the illusions caused by deceptive fantasies.”⁶³ As such, Origen posits that there must be an element of commonality present in both the human and the eternal Logos able to unite the two in a singular person.⁶⁴ Such a common element exists, for Origen, in the human soul.⁶⁵ The soul, united to the human body while transcending it in its divine-like characteristics, acts as potential glue able to unite humanity with divinity.⁶⁶ A union between humanity and divinity is possible insofar as each

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⁶¹ Crouzel, *Origen*, 186.

⁶² Origen, *First Principles* 1.2.1, 21. The divinity of Christ is never compromised by his humanity, and thus the divine nature remains fully intact, without “admitting that any quality of the godhead was lacking in Christ, nor yet supposing that there took place any separation whatever from the essence of the Father, which exists everywhere.” Ibid., 4.4.3, 420. See also, Ibid., 4.4.4, 421-423. Of course, the divinity of the Son is its own, unique hypostasis, and Origen will not collapse the members on the Trinity in one another as do various forms of modalism. See, e.g., Ibid., 1.2.2, 21-23 and 1.2.9, 30-31.

⁶³ Ibid., 2.6, 137. Thus, nothing human, e.g., passibility, must be divinized, and nothing divine, e.g., impassibility, must enter into the corporeal matrix.

⁶⁴ Origen assumed such a union was perplexing because the human, at least as it corporeally existed, was not itself in the image of God, and did not share the same *ousia* as the godhead. The human form, for Origen, shares nothing of divine expression, and is a body into which the soul has taken residence. “We do not understand, however, this man indeed whom Scripture says was made ‘according to the image of God’ to be corporeal. For the form of the body does not contain the image of God, nor is the corporeal man said to be ‘made,’ but ‘formed,’ as it is written in the words which follow. …But it is our inner man, invisible, incorporeal, incorruptible, and immortal which is made ‘according to the image of God.’” Origen and Ronald Heine, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 1.13, 63. The soul is thus distinct from the body and of far greater importance to Origen than corporeity.

⁶⁵ Origen, *First Principles* 2.6.3, 139.

⁶⁶ It is the soul which is created in the image of God, and this soul does not have any necessary connection with the plastic forms that it incarnates. The human, as a soul, is able to take up a unique connection to the divine
human soul, which is notably distinct from the body, shares a degree of sameness with divinity, allowing a bridge between divinity and material, human phenomena. The possibility of the incorporeal soul thinking rationally and ascending to the love God allows such a union to transpire to the degree to which such love is expressed: “[Christ] granted invisibly to all rational creatures whatsoever a participation in himself, in such a way that each obtained a degree of participation proportionate to the loving affection with which he had clung to him. 67 It is, of course, Jesus of Nazareth whose soul “was united by a supreme participation with the majesty of the Son of God.” 68

Through Jesus of Nazareth’s perfect embrace of God, his human soul and the eternal Logos entered into an inseparable union resulting in “a sort of composite being,” without either nature being infused with the properties of the other. 69 Thus, it is through the human soul, with its divine-like capacity for rationality, love, and righteousness, that the worlds of divinity and materiality could come together, and the means by which the Logos could unite with the body, soul, and spirit of the phenomenal world as expressed in the human being. Furthermore, because the human is a body-soul totality, even though the Logos is never compromised by material finitude, it is nevertheless united with it: “It is therefore right that this soul, either because it was wholly the Son of God, or because it received the Son of God wholly into itself, should be called, 

Logos in the person Jesus of Nazareth insofar as it is rational, just as the Logos is rationality. Ibid., 65-66; Ibid., 1.3.6, 44-46; 4.4.10, 430-431.

67 Ibid., 2.6.3, 138.

68 Ibid., 6.47, 364. See also, Origen, Conta Celsum 1.66. Origen’s insistence that because of this union “we do not make any further distinction between them,” is something that he does not at all follow in his scriptural exegesis. I explore this below.

69 Ibid., 1.66, 61. Such an act is made possible not purely by human obedience, but the power of God. Lyman, Christology and Cosmology, 78-79.
along with that flesh which it has taken, the Son of God and the power of God, Christ and the Wisdom of God.”

From this it follows that prior to the union, the two natures of Christ existed as two separate natures, if not two separate subjects altogether, who come together to form the unified, divine Christ. Such unification occurs as the result of the human Jesus’ absolute embrace of the divine Logos, after which the two become unified in personhood, while retaining distinct subjective possibilities. Thus the unification is not one of unified being, as is the case for the divine Logos and God the Father, wherein the former is eternally generated from the latter as a ray of light is generated from the Sun, but one of joining two formerly separate subjective

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70 Origen, First Principles, 2.6.3, 139. Incarnation then is the unification of divinity and materiality, while retaining the absolute abyss between the two, insofar as the human soul binds divinity and corporeity together. Divinity, however, does not venture into the flesh, nor does humanity ascend into divinity. The “form” of the Logos, i.e., its pure rationality, a mind disincarnate from any body, is expressed to the soul of Christ, mediated to others by mind of Jesus of Nazareth who is of course inseparable from his own body, without, however, any ontic overlap between divinity and materiality. On the Logos as one of the epinoiai (titles), see Crouzel, Origen, 190. The Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, thus retains a unity between divinity and materiality without the either becoming the other. This unity is quite distinct from what we will see in Gregory Nazianzus.

71 Jesus’ soul, like all souls pre-existed his body, according to Origen. See Origen, Contra Celsum 2.9, 73; Commentary on the Gospel According to John 20.162, 240. The uniting of the soul of Jesus and the Logos thus is the uniting of two separate subjects. While this unification is possible because of the overlap in characteristics of the soul and the Logos, the essence of the Logos exists necessarily as divine and disembodied, and thus Christ cannot be otherwise than divine, thus limiting the ontic connection between the Logos and the material form that it incarnates. As such, the ontic connection between the Son and the body of Jesus exists more akin to the gluing together of different substances to create a unified person, rather than a person unified in a shared ousia, manifest in the complete communication of attributes across the dividing line of material and divine substances. Sharing in ousia would be far too materialist for Origen. See Origen, First Principles 1.2, 21-38. This does not mean that the Father and Son are mirrors of the other, as differences in the activity of the two hypostasis exist. “God, therefore, is altogether one and simple. Our Savior, however, because of the many things, since God ‘set’ him ‘forth as a propitiation’ and firstfruits of all creation exist. ‘God, therefore, is altogether one and simple. Our Savior, however, because of the many things, since God ‘set’ him ‘forth as a propitiation’ and firstfruits of all creation, becomes many things, or perhaps even all these things, as the whole creation which can be made free needs him.” Origen, Commentary on the Gospel According to John 1.119, 58. See also, Origen, First Principles 1.2.3, 23, where Christ as Logos and wisdom creates according to the divine mind and expresses divinity to creation. The principle difference in activity appears to be the communicative role of the Son, as opposed to the generative role of the Father, bringing forth the Son as the agent of divine creation and expression of the Father to humanity insofar as this is possible, as there exists “an infinite depth [to God] never full sounded [in Christ’s expression].” Rowan Williams, “The Son’s Knowledge of the Father in Origen,” in Origeniana Quarta, ed. Lothar Lies (Innsbruck, AT: Tyrolina, 1987), 150.

72 How this could have happened from the start of Jesus’ life is explained by the preexistence of souls. It follows that Jesus’ soul had already perfectly clung to God, and so was united with the Logos prior to the moment of incarnation. Origen, Commentary on the Gospel According to John 20.162, 240. On the preexistence of souls, see Origen, First Principles, 1.8.4, 89-91; 2.9.1-8, 161-171. See Crouzel, Origen, 192, 206-209.
The uniting of the two occurs through the capacity inherent in each human being to embrace the divine in whose image the creature exists. “Yet,” as Beeley summarizes Origen’s thinking, “of all created souls, only the soul of Jesus clung to God permanently.” Yet, it is clear that the two natures remain distinct, and do not co-constitute or mix with one another because there is an unbridgeable ontic gulf between human corporeity and divine transcendence. They are unified by the mediation of the soul, which glues otherwise separate subjective natures together. Thus, divinity, while existing as fully human, cannot express its fullness as a body, which might only mediate toward a higher reality.

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73 Origen, *First Principles*, 1.2.4-5, 23-25. This is not the same as the relationship between Creator and creation, or the Logos as the informative matrix of creation, where Christians are made children of God through grace, despite the lack of shared *ousia*. Ibid., 4.4.10, 430-431. “In contrast to the essential and unchanging goodness of divine nature, creatures are only good accidentally; the link between the goodness of divine nature and the goodness of creatures is the derivative or image of divine goodness, which is the Logos.” Lyman, *Christology and Cosmology*, 50. There is thus the emergence of an “eternal generation but also continual generation: the Father is begetting the Son at each instant, just as light is always emitting its radiance.” Crouzel, *Origen*, 186. I avoid the use of the term *ousia* to speak of the shared being, aware of the problems Origen had with using the term *ousia*, insofar as he took it to have materialist and creative connotations that might imply that there was a time when the Son was not. One might, however, use it as a heuristic way of speaking of the shared divinity of the Trinity, in a sense to be developed when the councils apply the term *homoousios* to speak of the Father Son relation. While Richard Hanson’s “Did Origen Apply the Word *homoousios* to the Son?,” in his book *Studies in Christian Antiquity*, (Edinburgh, UK: T. & T. Clark, 1985), 53-70, argues that Origen did not speak of the Father and Son as *homoousios*, others, such as Mark Edwards, argues to the contrary. Mark Edwards, “Did Origen apply the word ‘homoousios’ to the Son?,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 49 no. 2 (Oct. 1998): 658-670. See also Crouzel, *Origen*, 187; Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004), 24. For Ayers, “the Son may not share the *ousia* of the Father, but the Son is constantly in the Father…[and so] this Son, is a constitutive part of being God.” Ibid., 27. Cf. Lyman, *Christology and Cosmology*, 69, which says that “the Father and the Son have a common *ousia*, in the sense of a shared divinity, which does not infringe on the uniqueness of the Father or leave the Son as merely one of the created.” For a detailed exploration of God the Father in the patristic context, see Peter Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1994). Despite the condemnation of Origen at the Second Council of Constantinople, he does not appear to subordinate the Son to the Father, but views him in the language adopted later in the ecumenical councils, as a hypostasis of the Godhead, equal to the Father, fully divine and united, even if subordinated in terms of his eternal origination from the Father. For a brief exploration of the relationship between the Son and the Father in Origen, see Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 20-30.

74 Beeley, *The Unity of Christ*, 34. Further, Beeley explains how Origen’s Christology posits Jesus’ uniting with God as a reward for perfect love. Jesus, according to Beeley’s understanding of Origen, is rewarded for his faith. See Ibid., 31-42. Such a system was, however, in place for all humanity. “Thus, the goodness of Christ’s acts reveals his divine nature, and creatures become closer to God by means of consistently good actions.” Lyman, *Christology and Cosmology*, 50.

75 As will become clear as I explore this idea in Chapter Five, I am not convinced that such a body-soul dualism, which allows Origen’s idea to work the way it does, is coherent. Unity as such, as we see in Gregory Nazianzus, necessitates the mixing of subjective natures, to the point where it is no easy thing to tell what the proper
The union results in a unified person, but cannot precisely create a unified subject of action without the two natures mixing through semi-porous boundaries that do not absolutely prevent divinity and corporeity from transubstantiating into the other.76 Christ appears, in Origen, as a person composed of two subjects present alongside of one another, acting in unison according to the particularity of each with the two never sharing the peculiarities of the other.77 Each subject perfectly follows the rules of its own nature and is expressed in various ways in the integrity of each particularity. As such, when the biblical texts speak of human-like characteristics of Christ, it is the human Jesus of Nazareth acting, whereas when Christ acts in a divine capacity, it is the eternal Logos.78

If we examine the declaration about Jesus who is pointed out by John in the words, “This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world,” from the standpoint of the characteristics of divinity and corporeity are in contradistinction to the other. The transubstantiation of creator into creation is, I suggest, a necessary element of incarnation theologies.

76 This separation of subjectivity, present also in Christologies of deep incarnation, is precisely what this thesis is finally concerned with, and what I aim to overcome in my own re-imagination of the doctrine in Chapter Five. My argument will point to the necessity of opening divine expression to an infinite plurality of forms that does not restrict the being of divinity to any metaphysical essentialism in form, while recognizing that bodies that make up cosmos and Earth play an inseparable role in divine expression. This leads to a pan-incarnational, materialist Christology that does not place God as a mediator behind the world of creation, but integrally entangled within it. The face of the other and the face of God, I argue, are not so easily disentangled. Yet, for Origen, the Son communicates to humans by means of his pluralistic epinoiai (titles, e.g., Lamb, Logos, Wisdom, Bread, Life, Light, Resurrection, Truth, Power, Justice), which mediates divinity through the rationality unified to the soul of Jesus, incarnate in the flesh.

77 This is, as Beeley notes, indicative not in Origen’s abstract statements on the interchangeable subjectivities found in Jesus, but in his actual denial that there is a single subject at work in Jesus of Nazareth. Beeley, The Unity of Christ, 36-37. When Origen interprets scripture, he is “more concerned to note the limitations of such expressions than he is to highlight any deep Christological unity that they might indicate. …Nowhere does he attempt to justify biblical cross-predication on the grounds that such human statements are real and true descriptions of the Son of God, or that divine statements are accurate descriptions of the human Jesus on account on the incarnation.” Ibid., 36.

78 E.g., Origen writes: “Now, we must say in respect to these problems that at one time the Savior is speaking of himself as of a man, but at another time he speaks of himself as of a nature that is divine and united with the uncreated nature of the Father. For whenever he says, ‘But now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth,’ he says this knowing that what they are attempting to destroy is not God but man. But if he says, ‘I and the Father are one,’ or ‘I am the truth and the life,’ or, ‘I am the resurrection,’ and other similar statements, he is not teaching about the man who they are attempting to destroy.” Origen, Commentary on the Gospel of John 19.6, 167. This dualism cannot, finally, end in a unified subject, as Jesus is required to act out of different subjective natures, and the two cannot merge and thus bring about real ontic unity between the different subjects. See further, ibid., 19.7-11, 168-169.
dispensation itself of the bodily sojourn of the Son of God in the life of men, we will assume that the lamb is none other that his humanity. For “he was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and was dumb as a lamb before its shearer,” saying, “I was an innocent lamb being led to sacrifice.” . . . He, however, who led this lamb to the sacrifice was God in man, the great high priest, who reveals this through the saying, “No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again.”

In this schema, non-human capacities are understood to be divine and thus non-material and are predictably elevated to greater value in Origen’s dualist, material/spiritual value hierarchy. As such, while united, the two natures do not experience an ontic communicatio idiomatum, and the attributes of the each nature must be seen as passed to the understanding of the other via the unified soul that unites Jesus of Nazareth and the Logos. Thus, the two subjective natures – i.e., divine and corporeal – do not mingle or mix, but remain distinct even as they are bound together in the uniting of soul and Logos.

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79 Ibid., 6. 273-275, 242-243. As Crouzel notes, this is possible because Origen held that the Son did not possess a subjectivity limited by space and time, but dwelled within the Father even as he dwelt on earth united to the soul of Jesus of Nazareth. Crouzel, Origen, 187.

80 As such, immortality and impassibility are divine traits, whereas mortality and possibility are the possibility of human bodies. “Those who seek to kill him seek to kill a man, since even if they should kill him, God is not killed... the Savior clearly taught that what the Jews sight to destroy was not God, but a man, who indeed was destroyed. For it is not permitted to say that God dies. For this reason the Word in the beginning with God, who also was God the Word, did not die.” Origen, Commentary on the Gospel of John, 20.80; 85, 223-224. See also, Origen, Contra Celsum 2.42, 99; 7.16-17, 407-409, where the idea that God might die is “idiotic,” and “the things that were done to Jesus, insofar as the are understood to apply to the divine element in him, are pious, and not in conflict with the accepted notion of God.” Ibid., 408. Likewise, the human Jesus might die, since death is appropriate for a corporeal subject, but not an activity in which the divine subjective nature could participate. There thus appear to be two subjectivities at work in the unified person, Jesus of Nazareth.

81 There could, however, be a perfect communicatio idiomatum among the soul and Jesus and the Logos, united prior to incarnation. Yet, lacking the body, which completes humanity, this does not overcome the impossibility of divinity to truly share in the flesh, apart from the mediation of the human soul, insofar as Origen refuses to allow divinity to share in the “banal” dynamics of the flesh. Cf. Crouzel and Lyman, who hold to the possibility of a stronger sense on divine/material overlap in Origen’s incarnation theology. Crouzel, Origen, 192-193; Lyman, Christology and Cosmology, 73-74.

82 Thus, Origen’s incarnation theology protects the Logos from the most basic struggles of the human, and as I will argue in Chapter Five, from the struggles of all creation. On the inability of such a theology to adequately reach the human, see Rowan Williams, “Origen on the Soul of Jesus;” in Origeniana Tertia, ed. Richard Hanson and Henri Couse, (Rome, IT: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1985), 131-137.
Thus, while human materiality is embraced, it is distinguished from divine spirituality, which transcends the phenomenal world. The phenomenal is simply a necessary starting point toward a transcendent, ultimate plane of existence. Origen’s Christology, and indeed his entire theological system, is dualist, emphasizing that despite the unity present between God and the world in Jesus, the two do not overlap in terms of a shared *ousia*, and remain necessarily distinct. The two natures of Christ exist in a genuine unity that necessitates a singular personhood, but this unity is distinct from that posited by the more monistic tendencies of others theologians, who suggest a far messier entanglement between divinity and materiality.

Following Origen, debates surrounding Christological metaphysics grow increasingly important to the Church, and become the key issue in ecclesial unity and for many the barometer of soteriological inclusion in the Church. After Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea began to refine Christology in the face of increasingly diverse opinion regarding issues such as the pre-existence of Christ, inter-Trinitarian relationships, and the exact nature of Jesus in relation to his humanity and divinity. Eusebius, taking up but refining an Origenist framework, formed and vigorously defended much of the language and theology that would be adopted at the council of Nicaea, and its later refinements at Constantinople. Nicene orthodoxy, insisting as it does on the full divinity of the Son, remained controversial after its implementation by the council, though such

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83 While an Origenist, Alexander does refine Origen’s Christology, especially in eschewing the eternal generation of the Son by the “will of God,” ensuring no sequential understanding of the Son’s eternal generation, and in using ontic language to describe inter-trinitarian relations. See Beeley, *The Unity of Christ*, 115-117.

84 On the life and works of Eusebius, and his role in the council, see Frances Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and Its Background* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Press, 2010), 1-39. For an account of the history and legacy of the council of Nicaea in general, including the influence of Origen, Eusebius, and other major contributors, see Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*. 
controversy would eventually lessen through the preaching efforts of Alexander of Alexandria, and especially Athanasius, who ensured Nicene Christology’s place in orthodox theology.85

It was in Nicaea, in the early fourth century and in the wake of the Arian crisis that the foundation of classical Christology would be formed but refined in the coming centuries. Questions concerning the relationship of Christ to the Trinity, his pre-existent status, and the nature of the divine/human union were at the forefront of the discussions. While the tension was greatest in the Alexandrian see, such controversies represented wider problems and disagreement throughout the Christian world. The “Arian crisis” articulated by Athanasius, referred specifically to a controversy over the causal relationship between the Father and the Son, and the nature of the Son’s creatureliness. Arius would be (erroneously) accused, and continuously characterized, as advocating a view of Jesus that insisted on his mere creatureliness, lack of divinity, and his creation in time alongside of the rest of the material universe.86 Whatever lies

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85 Nicaea was not originally meant as anything more than a silencing of Arianism, or at least what Athanasius and other perceived as the Arian heresy. On the creation of Arianism, see ibid., 105-130. Following Nicaea, Christological metaphysics across the board were not immediately, unanimously, and unambiguously Nicene. Athanasius’ subsequent conflicts, and the further need to avoid Gnostic and modalist tendencies, would push him to assert the dominance of Nicene Christology throughout Christendom, although this would be refined in the years to come. It would take Athanasius’ lifetime to enforce and ensure Nicene orthodoxy ascended to the status it later achieved. On this development see ibid., 133-269; Beeley, The Unity of Christ, 124-170; Edwards, Catholicity and Heresy in the Early Church, 105-136; Young, From Nicaea to Chalcedon, 40-72.

86 While Arius did hold that the Father so transcended the Son that the latter had no knowledge of the former, he did not advocate a temporal disjuncture between the two members of the Trinity. His concern was to avoid poly or tri-theism by ensuring that Christian theology did not support multiple “first principles.” As such, he was not guilty of Athanasius’ claims that he viewed the Son as a mere creature, or that he was created like the rest of the universe. The Son shares in both divinity and eternity in Arius’ thought. Further complications surround the generation of the Son – e.g., ex nihilo – by the will of God, or the ousia of God. All of these were controversial frameworks for the eternal generation of the Son, though Athanasius’ specific articulation of “Arianism” may or may not have represented actual groups. Arius’ phrasing of the Son’s generation from nothing may put him at odds with other theologies at the time, though this may simply be his own particular communication of the idea that the Son is not a creature but generated by the divine will (as Origen held). Yet, Arius’ understands the Father is so unique and other that even the Son has access to this member of the Trinity and as such the two may not be consubstantial or of the exact same nature and number, as later orthodoxy holds, and the Son certainly cannot reveal the Father, an emphasis in virtually all Christologies. The result would be that the Son is not the perfect image of the Father, and thus rejected by those following the Origenist stream of Christology. For a detailed discussion, see Ayres, Nicaea and Its Legacy, 105-130; Beeley, The Unity of Christ, 106-124.
behind the dynamics of the patristic Christological controversies, the trajectory of the doctrine after Origen moved immediately toward a deepening articulation of the Son’s divinity and membership within the Trinity. While the nature of the unity of the two natures was continually discussed and modified, it largely maintained its Origenist, and therefore, dualist character. Further debate surrounding the nature of the unity of Christ would gain prominence after the rise of Nicene orthodoxy, due to the perceived need to defend Jesus’ divine status.

The Nicene Creed, building on Eusebius’ Caesarean Creed, stressed the divine status of Christ, confessing belief “in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten, begotten from the Father, that is from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, con-substantial with the Father, through whom all things came to be, both those in heaven and on earth.” The polemics here, especially when read along with the anathemas following the creed, are meant to eschew Arian heresy. The creed plainly embraces a Christological metaphysic wherein Jesus of Nazareth exists eternally and con-substantially within the Trinity, shares and reveals the same divine nature as the Father, who eternally generates him without temporal restraint. The Son, as such, utterly transcends creatureliness. Yet, important to the larger discussion at hand, the nature of the divine/human relationship beyond the assertion of full divinity is not fully developed at this point in Christological trajectory. The unitive dynamics of divinity and materiality will take a century or so more to develop, as the relationship at this point, even in thinkers who are typically referenced as embracing the dignity of materiality remain largely dualist. Athanasius’ thought, for example, despite being used as a model for much ecological Christology, does not move beyond an

Origenist dualism. An alternative understanding will await the thought of certain Cappadocian impulses, the thought of Augustine, and to a degree, Cyril of Alexandria.

1.1.2 Non-reductive Monistic Unity: Gregory Nazianzen

The years following Nicaea saw continued Christological debate, and while Athanasius secured the place of Nicene Christianity, the unitive nature of Christ’s divinity and humanity was underdeveloped, or at least it had simply not seen the number of variant proposals earlier issues related to the divinity of Christ had seen. A key debate in the precise nature of Christ’s humanity and its relationship to divinity, and the only one I mention due to the limited scope of this study, took place in the see of Antioch between Apollonarius of Laodicea and Diodore of Tarsus. In this debate Apollonarius espoused a deeper, more radical version of the Christological unity of Athanasius, and Diodore suggested that Jesus of Nazareth and the divine Logos were entirely different subjects altogether, a possible outcome following a close reading of Origen. It is this debate, among others, that helped shape the thought of Gregory of Nazianzus, who would

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88 Athanasius, like Origen, retains a profoundly dualist Christology. His dualism supposes that while the body and the material world are good – i.e., neither Origen or Athanasius are Gnostic in any sense – they do not directly participate in fullest reality of God. Partaking in God requires a rational, human mind that transcends embodiment itself. For Athanasius, as Origen, the body is a lower good than the transcendent spiritual, which is the telos of the human and the human alone. Redemption for Athanasius is to eschew a material idolatry that fails to seek physical transcendence. Insofar as such dualism sets up a value hierarchy between the corporeal and the spiritual, it denigrates materiality and is a poor foundation for ecological theology. Redemption does influence the body, but only insofar as it corrects an idolatrous tendency to focus on the corporeal to the exclusion of the higher realms of transcendent spirituality/rational/incorporeal. Concerning Athanasius’ theology, Beeley asserts that “in this way God captures and reorients our perception away from sensory things and toward the incorporeal Word and Father (Inc. 15, 43).” The Unity of Christ, 135-136. Furthermore, Athanasius still holds that Jesus’ humanity is not really human, but a super-human reality more indicative of Greek notions of impassable, omnipotent divinity apart from any notion of kenosis. This continues throughout his writings as he, like Origen before him, distinguishes between the human and the divine persons separable in Jesus of Nazareth. The two persons in Christ are not in a hypostatic union, but assigned roles according to what action is appropriate for which actor.

89 On the development and details of pro-Nicene theology as it emerged after the council of Nicaea, see Ayers, 133-383.

90 For a helpful exploration of the view of the Christological controversies of the fourth century, see Young, From Nicaea to Chalcedon, 245-261; Christopher Beeley, Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We Shall See Light (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 16-34.
contribute so much to post-Nicene thinking regarding the unity of Christ on the way toward the Chalcedonian Definition.  

As such, in order to outline an example of the variant proposals concerning the nature of Christ’s unity, I turn now to the non-reductive monism of Gregory Nazianzen. Like Origen, Gregory is useful in articulating a monism much stronger than what is found in similar, but more moderate approaches to non-dualist Christologies. While not all of Gregory’s ideas were ultimately accepted, and some even straightforwardly denied in the Chalcedonian Definition, he presents a clear alternative to the dualist impulse of Origenist Christology, and forms the underlying foundation for the second way of conceiving incarnation throughout this thesis.

My interest in Gregory begins after the synod of Antioch, in 379, wherein he was appointed by the archbishop of Constantinople, Meletios, to undertake a preaching campaign within his city, in order to undermine the efforts of Apollonarius and the pro-Arian faction that had dominated the theological scene at the time. Arriving in the fall of 379, Gregory embarked on a campaign that produced roughly half of his orations, and while he was tasked with supporting the Meletian anti-Apollinarist, Diodore, Gregory decided that neither Diodore nor Apollinarius possessed an adequate Christology. Gregory argues that neither of these thinkers

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92 Gregory had been anointed as a priest in 361, and spent his priestly ministry combating the post-Nicene Christological schisms, revolving heavily around the *homoian* debate that threatened the pro-Nicene faction of the Church. McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus*, 101. See Ibid., 85-168 for a detailed account of this post-Nicene controversy. Having proven himself as a defender of Nicene orthodoxy, and uncompromising on the unity of Christ as both divine and human, Gregory would eventually be commissioned at the Antiochian synod of 379 by the pro-Nicene Meletian authorities to oppose the Christology of Apollinarius in support of Meletian Christology and the efforts of Diodore. Ibid., 236-237.

93 See ibid., 236-310 for an in depth discussion of the politics surrounding Gregory’s theological activity in Constantinople. There is some debate on which of the two opponents Gregory primarily wished to engage. McGuckin views both targets as an equal concern for Gregory (ibid., 391-392), whereas Beeley understands Diodore to be of more concern (Christopher Beeley, “The Early Christological Controversy: Apollinarius, Diodore,
adequately unifies the nature of Christ, and both exemplify the “extreme examples of ‘wicked thinking.’”

Apollinarius, presenting an anti-modalist, Monophysite Christology, suggests a Word-plus-flesh model for understanding Christ that all but obliterates the humanity of Jesus, which is swallowed by his divinity. Apollinarius thus pushes Nicene Christianity to its limits – expressing and insisting on the divinity of the Son – and argues that the Son embraces a human body if his own, albeit without a human mind, and is thereby unified with the material humanity of Jesus of Nazareth. As such, the eternal agency and subjectivity of the Logos governs Jesus, without the presence of a human mind. The unity of Christ occurs insofar as the irreducible

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95 For Apollinarius’ *Detailed Confession of Faith*, see Kelley McCarthy Spoerl, “A Study of the Kata Meros Pistis by Apollinarius of Laodicea” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1991), 378-397. For the remaining fragments of his other works, as well as his *On the Union of the Body with the Divinity*, see Richard Norris, *The Christological Controversy* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1980), 103-111. Apollinarius would likely protest that humanity is obliterated, though a human body without a human mind seems to me devoid of humanity altogether. Nevertheless, as Apollinarius states, “the Lord’s flesh is worshipped, inasmuch as together with him it is one person and one living organism.” Ibid., frag. 85, 109. See also Ibid., frag. 10; 108; 126-127, 108, 110-111.

96 Jesus is a unified person in this theology, though the flesh appears to be merely an add on to the Logos, who simply clothes himself in flesh by which to walk around on Earth in order to fulfill his role as the revelatory face of the Godhead. Nevertheless, the singular agency of Jesus’ subjectivity is one way to unite the being of Christ as a divinity incarnate, reconciling the presence of God on Earth. In this sense, Apollinarius’ Christology is a perfectly acceptable anthropological model of how a soul incarnates the flesh of any human being, whose flesh and spirit would be separable, as seen for example above, in Origen’s thinking, although Origen had no issues in uniting two formerly distinct souls into a unified subject that preserved both the divine and the human. “For he would not have been born in the likeness of a human being unless, like a human being, he was in fact an incarnate intellect. If the Lord is not incarnate intellect, he must be Wisdom enlightening the intellect of a human being. But this happens in the case of all human persons, and if this is the way of it, then the coming of Christ is not a visit from God but the birth of a human being. If the Word did not become intellect incarnate but was Wisdom within the intellect, the Lord did not come down to empty himself. And in this way he was human, for a human being, according to Paul, is an intellect in the flesh.” Ibid., frag. 69-72, 109. See also Ibid., frag. 74-76, 109.

97 The subject inhabiting and powering the body Jesus of Nazareth is thus purely the Logos, like an embodied vehicle powered by an exterior power. See Fragment 69-72. Ibid. See also, Ibid., frag. 117, 110; *Detailed Confession of Faith* 30, Spoerl, “A Study of the Kata Meros Pistis by Apollinarius of Laodicea,” 389. This
agency of the divine Logos drives a body within the limitations inherent to the flesh. Diodore, on the other hand, moving away from any notion of mixing the human and the divine, abandons altogether the idea that Christ is a unified person, as if embracing the paradoxical implications of a Christology akin to Origen’s, who had trouble with the idea of either of Christ’s two natures expressing in a way that leads to transubstantiation of one into the other. Diodore insists, contrary to Apollinarius, that the Logos does not swallow up Jesus’ humanity, but exists alongside of the flesh as a separate hypostasis altogether. Thus, Jesus of Nazareth and the divine Logos are two separate, distinct subjects in relationship with one another. Diodore is thus concerned to preserve the integrity of the personhood of Jesus of Nazareth as well as the divine Logos, for lacking the human dynamic in any form resulted in the Monophysite heresy that those in the Antioch school rejected. Yet, in avoiding this heresy, Diodore offers an extreme dualism where each nature in Christ exists as a unique subject, and perfect representation of its subjectivity remains the same for all eternity. See Detailed Confession of Faith 2, 11, 30, 36, Ibid., 379, 382, 389, 391; Norris, The Christological Controversy, frag. 9; 42, 107-109.

98 The Son has one (divine) nature, as opposed to a human and divine nature as will later be confessed in the Chalcedonian definition. “And the one without flesh who appeared in the flesh is true God, whole with respect to the true and divine wholeness, not two persons or two natures. For we do not say that we worship four: God and the Son of God and a man and the Holy Spirit.” Detailed Confession of Faith 31, Spoerl, “A Study of the Kata Meros Pistis by Apollinarius of Laodicea,” 389-391.

99 On Diodore’s Christology see Beeley, “The Early Christological Controversy,” esp. 385-395; Young, From Nicaea to Chalcedon, 254-261. Diodore’s writings are, like Apollinarius, not widely available. I here draw on the fragments from the writings of Servus of Antioch (SD), and the text known as The Blasphemies of Diodore, Theodore, and the Impious Nestorius (BD). English translations of the fragments can be found in John Behr, The Case against Diodore and Theodore: Texts and Their Contexts (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011).

100 Diodore, avoiding the contradictions he sees in positing the idea that “one and the same” subject does “both this and that,” things which are contrary to one or the other’s nature, argues that Christ is “one and another,” two distinct subjects. Ibid., BD 2, 169-170. See also, Ibid., BD 26, 189-191. Furthermore, the one “who was born of Mary, lived humanly: he was weary and he put on clothes, he was hungry and thirsty, he was crucified, his side was pierced and blood and water flowed out…the God Word, on the other hand, who from before the ages was begotten of the Father, is subject neither to change not suffering, nor was he turned into a body, he was neither crucified nor died, neither ate nor drank nor was tired…he remains incorporeal, uncircumscribed, without deviating from the paternal likeness….” Ibid., BD 19, 184-185.
own being, without mixing the two in a unity wherein one nature obliterates the other.\textsuperscript{101} For Diodore, Jesus of Nazareth is “one and another,” each with its unique origins in the world.\textsuperscript{102} While his separation of the two subjects is far more intense than Origenist theologians, he maintains the view of many from Origen, to Athanasius, that the actions of Jesus are attributable to one of the two subjects or natures present, rather than to a unified, singular person.\textsuperscript{103}

These two views, which in a sense can be seen as the radical boundaries of Alexandrian and Antiochian Christologies respectively, served as a catalyst for Gregory of Nazianzus to re-imagine popular articulations concerning the unity of Christ. Gregory’s Christology, known primarily from his debate with the Eunomians in his \textit{Theological Orations} and his \textit{Epistles}, advocates a view of Christ as a single, unified subject.\textsuperscript{104} This one subject is paradoxically fully

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\item \textsuperscript{101} “The Power of God overshadowed Mary, when it formed a temple, although it was not mixed with the body.” Ibid., BD 20, 185. See also Ibid., BD 26, 190-191; SD 4, 237-239. The idea of “mixing” natures is thus tied to the Monophysite, Apollinarian heresy. While this thesis is not a work in patristics, this should be kept in mind as my own Christology is not averse to “mixing” terminology, although I do not use it in the sense Apollinarus used it in his Monophysite Christology, but akin to Gregory Nazianzus’ use of the term, as seen below, where both divinity and materiality are preserved. The rejection of “mixing” language in the Chalcedonian Definition is thus tied to this controversy, and the idea of mixing natures cannot simply be ruled out because of Chalcedon’s particular theological context. On the perfect fulfilment of each of the two natures by their respective subjects, see ibid., SD 5, 8, 239-241.
\item \textsuperscript{102} Ibid., BD 2, 169-170. Many of Diodore’s ideas follow his contemplation of Mary as \textit{anthropotokos} rather than the \textit{theotokos}. “The God Word is not considered to be the son of Mary, for by nature a mortal being bears a mortal body and a body that which is like it. The God Word did not undergo two births, one before the ages, the other at the end, but he was begotten of the Father by nature, while the temple that was born from Mary he fashioned for himself from the womb.” Ibid., BD 22, 187.
\item \textsuperscript{103} “<Even if> it is said that ‘the Lord of glory was crucified’ and dies, and that ‘the Son of Man descended from the heavens’ and that the one from Abraham is ‘before Abraham,’ none of these \textit{<statements> should be taken in this way… .}” Ibid., BD 25, 189. See also Ibid., BD 9-10, 17-18, 24, 175-177, 181-183, 189. Origen and Athanasius, and even more so Apollinarus, would suggest that the acts of Jesus were carried out by a single person, though the former two radically compartmentalize the locus of his subjectivity. Up to this point, Apollinarus conceives of the unity of Christ in the strongest terms, though his insistence that there is no human mind in Jesus of Nazareth is problematic. Diodore thus takes the compartmentalization of Christological subjectivity evident in both Origen and Athanasius to the extreme, and I would argue, to its logical end. All of these authors, however, are concerned with unifying the person of Jesus and preventing the “corruption” of either nature by transforming it into the other, wresting with the problem of Christological unity growing out of Hellenistic philosophical concerns to preserve the essence of \textit{ousia} proper to divinity and humanity.
\item \textsuperscript{104} On Gregory’s Christology, see especially his third and fourth theological orations (Or. 29-30) as well as his two letters to Cledonus (Ep. 101 and 102), in Gregory of Nazianzus, Frederick Williams, and Lionel Wickham, \textit{On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonus} (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 69-116, 155-172. See also his Or. 38, 39 in Daley, \textit{Gregory of Nazianzus}, 117-138; and Or. 40, in Gregory of Nazianzus and Nonna Verna Harrison, \textit{Festal Orations} (Crestwood, NY: St.
divine and fully human in his ontic makeup, but also, contrary to Origen, Athanasius, Appolinarius, and Diodore, is a more completely unified subject. Jesus of Nazareth is envisioned as the matrix of full divine and material participation, a body wherein both natures act together, in the deep unison of a singular person irreducible to separate subjective agencies. As such, Gregory’s view of Christ’s personhood is far more comprehensive and coherent in terms of supporting the ontic unity of Christ’s divine and human natures, present within a single, dynamic subject, though this leads to some radical claims, including the mixing and blending of divine and human natures wherein the other becomes entangled within the other.105 Gregory, in an argument aimed at Eunomius, but addressing issues raised in the conflict between Appolinarius and Diodore, asserts that,

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105 On mixing, see Andrew Hofer, Christ in the Life and Teaching of Gregory of Nazianzus (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 91-121. The language of intermingling (synkrasis), especially mixing (mixeis) and blending (kraseis), are technical terms in Hellenistic thought that have meanings depending on the philosophical context in which they are used. While the terms are used primarily in Aristotelian and Stoic contexts, each with their own nuance, Hoefer suggests that Gregory’s use in not entirely consistent with either approach. For the philosophical context of mixeis and kraseis, and a detailed exploration of the secondary literature surrounding the implications of such for theology, see ibid., 96-106. Some, however, emphasize the Stoic nuances of the idea of ontic entanglement, and thus the permeation of each nature into the other, and others the Aristotelian dynamics, which highlight the idea of predominance of one stronger substance, which all but eradicates the weaker substance. For the former, see e.g., Nonna Verna Harrison, “Some Aspects of Saint Gregory (Nazianzen) the Theologian's Soteriology,” Greek Orthodox Theological Review 34 (1989): 11-18; Festal Orations, 52-56; “Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers,” St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly 35 (1991): 53-65. For the later, see Harry Wolfson, The Philosophy of the Church Fathers, vol. 1, Faith, Trinity, Incarnation, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970). Hoefer seems correct when he insists that neither the Stoic nor the Aristotelian sense can dominate how we understand Gregory’s Christology, where the two natures of Christ permeate one another, but wherein the divine nature is stronger and hence predominant, albeit without obliterating the agency of the rational, human mind of Jesus. While this chapter is not a technical exploration of Hellenistic theology, I will note specific nuances in Gregory’s language as appropriate. Broadly speaking, I follow Hoefer’s assessment that “one feature common to all [philosophies of ontic intermingling] is that a mixture, in broadest terms, makes oneness from multiplicity, but still bears something of the multiplicity.” Hoefer, Christ in the Life and Teaching of Gregory of Nazianzus, 95.
He whom you presently scorn was once transcendent, over even you. He who is now human was incomposite. He remained what he was; what he was not, he assumed. No “because” is required for his existence in the beginning, for what could account for the existence of God. But later he came into being because of something, namely your salvation, yours, who insult him and despise his Godhead for that very reason, because he took on your thick corporeity. Through the medium of the mind he had dealings with the flesh, being made that God on earth, which is Man: Man and God blended. They became a single whole, the stronger side predominating, in order that I might be made God to the same extent that he was made man.  

Gregory’s Christology is one of deep participation between the humanity and divinity, wherein each shares in the communicatio idiomatum, not as two separate things glued together by a common substance united in communion, but as a fully ontic unification of persons and natures that blend into, and transform one another, even as one side of the mixture is stronger than the other. This mixing takes place as the Logos welcomes a kenotic embrace of the flesh, and the human is divinized in its participation in God. “Let us become like Christ,” writes Gregory, “since Christ also became like us; let us becomes gods because of him, since he also because of us became human.” As such, when the Logos embraces the totality of humanity, 

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106 Gregory, On God and Christ, Or. 29.19, 86.
107 See also: “But the Godhead made up for the mind, they say. So what is that to me? Godhead with only flesh, or even with only soul, or with both of them, is not man if lacking mind which is the even better part of man. So keep the human being whole and mix in the Godhead, so that you may benefit me completely. But he does not have room for two complete things [natures], they say, well, no, since you are looking at them from a bodily point of view. … But if you are looking at them as things ideal and incorporeal, notice that I myself have had room for a soul, reason and mind, and Holy Spirit as well, and that before me the cosmos, this structure I mean, of visible and invisibles had room for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is the nature of things ideal to be mixed with one another and with bodies in an indivisible and incorporeal way.” Ibid., Ep. 101.6, 159. Furthermore, the human is inherently composite according to Gregory, a creation blending the transcendent quality of mind with the flesh beyond mere side-by-side presence as in Aristotelian compositions, which are not true mixtures. The human is thus perfectly dual in nature from the start, and thus open to divinization. As Beeley notes, humans “have been created…in a state of dynamic movement toward God, so that the process of divinization is rooted in the structure of existence.” Beeley, Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God, 118. This inherent possibility of blending spirit and flesh is further indicative of the very possibility of uniting the two natures to the point of mutual participation, unlike those theologies insisting that the two natures cannot participate in or be influenced by the ontic nature of the other. See esp. Daley, Gregory of Nazianzus, Or. 38, 117-127. See also ibid., Or. 39, 127-138, which outlines how sin has disrupted this participation of humanity in divinity, ibid., Or. 42, 138-154, which clarifies that divinization is not attaining equality with God.
108 Gregory, Festal Orations, Or. 1.5, 59. Divinization is not an idea new to Gregory, although he was the first to use the term theosis and to make such an idea the cornerstone of Christian soteriology. On divinization, see Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, ed., A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church:
the possibility of unification as one-becoming-the-other emerges as distinct from Apollinarius’ “one and the same,” Monophysite Christology, or Diodire’s “one and another” Christology. Such is likewise distinguished from Origen’s Christology, as Gregory refuses to separate the opposite Christological natures into two sons as unique subjective agencies.\textsuperscript{109}

Thus, by means of kenosis, the infinite God is able to become incarnate as a human in the same manner in which any other human is embodied, albeit free from the constraints of sin.\textsuperscript{110} As the human mind and body participate in one another, so does Christ’s divinity and flesh become blended in a participatory relationship that refuses to parse out the ontic dynamics of the two natures, as if they were unable to mix and blend in entanglement.\textsuperscript{111} Because of the composite


\textsuperscript{109} I am not suggesting Origen supposed a “two sons” hypothesis, as many of these statements are likely aimed at Diodore and other Antiochians. But in the context of this chapter, Gregory is a stark contrast to dualist Christologies, including Origen’s, who despite arguing for Christological unity, refused to allow divinity to directly participate in the flesh, as Gregory does. So, while Gregory has a hermeneutic that interprets scripture wherein the “lowlier expressions used about him,” (Gregory, \textit{On God and Christ}, Or. 29, 18) for example, he slept, was hungry, tired, or in agony, point to his humanity, and the loftier passages to his divinity, such activities are shared, and all “refer to the same Son of God, though in different ways.” Beeley, \textit{Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God}, 132.

\textsuperscript{110} “He who is rich is a beggar—for he goes begging in my flesh. He who is full has emptied himself—for he emptied himself of his own glory for a while, that I might have a share of his fullness.” Ibid., 124. Such blending does not appear to reach the point of confusion, wherein the two natures are so entangled that they could no longer be distinguished or separated, although Gregory sees it as heretical to suggest that Christ has abandoned his flesh since the incarnation. See Gregory, \textit{On God and Christ}, Ep. 101.4, 157.

\textsuperscript{111} Apollinarius spoke of a mixing as well, although as we have seen, this results in the divinity of the Logos completely eradicating the possibility of a human mind. Furthermore, this leads to one nature in Christ, and not two, and hence the idea of “confusion,” and a single, monophysite nature present in Christ, of which the Chalcedonian Definition will speak. Gregory would not support the possibility of confusion, and although Gregory does speak of the predominant force of divinity in the mixing of the divine and human, he does not thereby affirm a monophysiste Christology, wherein the humanity of Christ is obliterated by the overwhelming presence of divinity.
nature of humanity, which is the possibility of the ontic overlap between divinity and the flesh, a
dynamic, dual nature that is inherently open to the intermingling of seemingly opposite ontic
matrixes, the Logos incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth transcends the gulf between divinity and
materiality in the blending together of God and humanity, resulting in a new, composite
existence where humanity is fully divinized as the first fruits of the transmutation
soteriologically occurring in all humans.\textsuperscript{112} Thus, as Gregory writes in Oration 30:

[Christ’s] being called a “slave” rendering good service to “many” his being given the
grand title “Child of God” coheres with this. He was actually subject as a slave to flesh,
to birth, and to our human experiences; for our liberation, held captive as we are by sin,
he was subject to all that he saved. What does the lowliness of Man possess higher than
involvement with God, than being \textit{made} God as a result of this intermingling, than being
so “visited by the day spring from on high” that “the holy thing which is born” has been
called “Son of the most high” and that there has been “bestowed on it the name which is
above every name”? What could that be but “God?” What of the “bowing of every knee”
to one who “was made empty on our account,” who blended the “divine image” with a
“slave’s form?” What of the “acknowledgment by all the house of Israel that God made
him both Lord and Christ?” Yes these things were brought about by the action of the
offspring and the favor of his parent.\textsuperscript{113}

The one subject of Christ remains paradoxically perfect in both humanity and divinity,
acting in unison through a communication of attributes wherein one person is able to transcend
the limitations of either transcendent divinity or finite materiality, blending both in an existence

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\textsuperscript{112} I share Gregory’s conviction that language of mixing or blending in union is helpful and appropriate,
despite being excised by Antiochian concerns in the Council of Chalcedon. Such a mixture points to the inherent
dynamism of materiality and the infinity of the divine. Blending does not eradicate any difference between the two,
nor does the ontic nature of the intermingling say that humanity and divinity are united in a shared \textit{ousia}, as
members of the Trinity are, but allows each nature to transcend itself in relation with the other while maintaining
that each neither can be circumscribed by the other. This is a topic discussed in depth in Chapter Five, where I argue
that blending of divinity does not end with humanity, but is part of a ubiquitous religious ecology comprising
cosmos and Earth.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., \textit{Or.} 30.3, 94-95.
in one person, simultaneously “passible in flesh, impassable in Godhead, bounded in body, boundless in spirit, earthly and heavenly, visible and known spiritually, finite and infinite.” As such, for Gregory, there is not simply a communion between two natures that stay in their own respective realms of particularity, but an ontic union wherein each dynamically reaches into, becomes, and partakes in the other. The key distinction here for Gregory is that the attributes of each nature are not simply communicated through a mediatory substance that unites the two, but that both natures fully participate in the other, something well beyond the dualist Christologies following the Origenist tradition. “What he was he set aside; what he was not he assumed. Not that he became two things, but he deigned to be made one thing out of two. For both are God, that which assumed and that which was assumed, the two natures meeting in one thing.” This does not mean that divinity was reduced to humanity and made less, or that humanity was elevated to the status of the Godhead. Each transcended the other even as it participated with the other. Human and divine potential were both able to extend beyond what was ordinarily proper to itself, but not for that reason beyond the possibility of its becoming. Thus, rejecting all of the dualist thought we have so far seen, Gregory’s position is summed up as follows:

He came to his own proper image and bore flesh for the sake of flesh, and mingled with a rational soul for my soul’s sake, wholly cleansing like by like. In every respect save that

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114 Ibid., Ep. 101.4, 156. This is not a sharing of activity depending on the subject undertaking a particular activity (as in Origen and Diodore), and it is not the experience of a God devoid of a human psyche; it is the paradoxical experience of the Logos as both divine and human. This extends even to the divine embrace of suffering and death, a problematic concept in a world influenced so heavily by Hellenistic philosophy, where God cannot be passible. Yet, possibility is precisely the experience of the incarnate Logos. “God passible for our sake over against sin.” Ibid., Or. 30.1, 93. See also Schaff, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Or. 43, 395-422; and Gregory, Festal Orations, Or. 45, 161-190. Beyond even possibility, however, is Gregory’s acceptance of the death of God in the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. “We needed a God made flesh and made dead, that we might live. …Many indeed are the wonders of that time: God crucified; the sun darkened and again rekindled, for created things also had to suffer with the Creator.” Ibid., Or. 45.28-29, 189. See also, Gregory, On God and Christ, Ep. 101.5, 156, where the Logos is “crucified,” “slaughtered,” and retains his fleshy, human nature into eternity. In the conclusion to the work, based on my re-imagined Christology in Chapter Five, I extend this idea further, to the blending of acocide and deicide.

115 This is Beeley’s adapted translation of Or. 37.2. Beeley, Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and Knowledge of God, 128-129.
of sin, he became human…coming forth as God, along with what he had taken on; one from two opposites, flesh and Spirit – the one of which shared divinity, and the other of which was divinized. O new mixture! O unexpected blending! He who is has come to be, the uncreated one is created, the limitless one is contained, through the mediation of a rational soul standing between divinity and the coarseness of flesh.¹¹⁶

While Gregory’s articulation of Christology was not exactly adopted in the Council of Constantinople or Chalcedon, especially insofar as he spoke of a blending between humanity and divinity, his efforts were instrumental in the Christology of both creeds.¹¹⁷ Other influences, especially those of another Cappadocian, Gregory of Nyssa, would support a more Origenist and Athanasian separation of the two natures in the one person.¹¹⁸ Thus, there is a continuing dualist framework running throughout the history of the Christological debates that understands Christ as a unified subject, without eschewing a soft-dualism resulting from an insistence on the clear-cut separation and lack of interpenetration of the two natures of Christ. As such, by the mid-fifth century, when the Council of Chalcedon would make its declaration affirming the unitive relationship between the divine Logos and Jesus of Nazareth, we would see a unity stronger than that of the dualist Christologies of Origen, Athanasius, Diodore, and Gregory of Nyssa but not as

¹¹⁶ Daley, Gregory of Nazianzus, Or. 38.13, 123-124.

¹¹⁷ While the Creed of Constantinople is an expansion on the Nicene Creed, the unity of Jesus from eternal begetting to crucifixion is stressed, as is the role of Mary in giving birth not to a separate subject but to the eternal Logos. This is a clear sign of Gregory’s theology in contrast with Diodore’s. While the human/divine relationship is stressed more deeply in the Chalcedonian Creed of 451, its refinement has begun, even if subtly, in Constantinople by the late fourth century. Yet, the excising of ousia language from the creed is indicative of the influence of other groups tied to the Eusebians and the homoiousan network.

¹¹⁸ See e.g., Gregory of Nyssa, Contra Eunomius, in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, ed., A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Second Series Vol. 5 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 33-248. The communication of attributes allows us the proper experiences of each to apply to the other, though there is a formal separation of the two, in order to prevent the nature of either to be corrupted by the other. Again, the prime example of this is the possibility of God. See Ibid. In this, Gregory of Nyssa reads more like Origen, Athanasius, and (to a lesser extent) Diodore than Gregory of Nazianzus. Much like Origen, there is a mediatory substance for Gregory, much like the soul in Origen, linking the two natures and transforming the human into the higher divine nature, especially after the resurrection. Additionally, while Gregory speaks of the “mixing” of the natures, he has a decidedly more conservative understanding of the incarnation, using the terms for mixing and blending to connote communion between two things in a way that the Logos fully assumes humanity, albeit a humanity somewhat different than our own, without becoming a new phenomenon. Beeley, The Unity of Christ, 215.
radical as what we find in Apollinarius’ extreme Nicene faith nor Gregory of Nazianzus’ Christology where divinity and humanity transcend their very natures in the deepest bonds of interrelated intimacy.

While the debate over non-oppositional dualist and non-reductive monist Christologies continued well after the careers of the Cappadocian theologians, we cannot tell the whole story here. What is described to this point is a broad narrative of the two types of responses to Christological unity offered in the patristic period. While no two theologians are the same, the two types of responses described here – i.e., monistic and dualistic – came to a head in the fifth century with responses to the radical forms of each – i.e., Eutychian monophysitism on the one hand and Nestorian dyophysitism on the other.\(^\text{119}\) The result of such conflicts lead to the calling of the Council of Chalcedon, organized partially to deal with such problems, and resulted in the Chalcedonian Definition. The text, while a compromise in a sense between the two groups, maintained a slight dualist, Antiochian preference. Yet, the resulting declaration is vague enough to allow committed monists such as Gregory of Nazianzus, Augustine, and Cyril of Alexandrian to remain in the scope of orthodoxy, and ultimately for the debate over Christological unity to continue.\(^\text{120}\) The statement affirms Nicene orthodoxy, and concerning Christ, affirms his likeness

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\(^\text{119}\) The former concerned Eutychius’ doctrine of “mixture” that suggested a reduction of Christ to one divine nature. Present with this is a fear of changes to the divine nature toward something possible, and so radically departing from the Greek, Platonist idea of the impassibility thought to be intrinsic to divinity. Gregory Nazianzen, while preferring to speak of Christ as possessing one nature, and perhaps here conflated notions of \textit{ousia} and \textit{prosopon}, did allow for an orthodox way of speaking of two natures. Though this charitable attitude was not extended in Chalcedon despite those taking this view denying the implications leveled at those such as Eutychius. The latter debate referred to Nestorius’ denial of Mary as \textit{theotokos}, the bearer of God, and his denial, much like Diodore, of the union of the two natures of Christ. This radical Antiochian position never gained much traction in the Church as most dualist theologians insisted on Christological unity.

\(^\text{120}\) The condemnation of Eutychius is curious in light of his theological conformity to Gregory of Nazianzus, Augustine, and Cyril of Alexandria, all of whom defended a monistic understanding of the nature of Christ that did not deny the orthodoxy and value of speaking simultaneously of the presence of two natures. Additionally, fears over the language of mixing the divine and human natures did not imply that either nature is changed or circumscribed by radical ontic unity. Following the logic of a moderate Antiochian bias that shaped the statement, the council should also have condemned Gregory, Augustine, and Cyril. The politics that reached such a
to the human in all things with the exception of the human proclivity toward sin and evil.

Furthermore, the Definition affirms the unity of the person of Christ as follows:

This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son [of God] must be confessed to be in two natures, unconfusedly, immutably, and indivisibly, inseparably [united], and that without the distinction of natures being taken away by such union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature being preserved and being united in one Person and subsistence, not separated or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only–begotten, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ…as the Creed of the Fathers hath delivered to us.\(^{121}\)

The recognition of Christ as a single person, a unified subject, acknowledged only in two natures, while representing the dualist theology of Leo of Rome, a chief architect of the Council, does not disallow the deeper ontic unity argued for by Gregory of Nazianzus, as well as those such as Augustine, and for the most part Cyril of Alexandria.\(^{122}\) At the end of the day, both non-oppositional dualists and non-reductive monists, with enough accompanying theological commentary, could embrace the Declaration. The statement is vague enough to necessitate further explanation and allows for multiple readings and positive affirmation by many parties. We thus end up with a Chalcedonian Definition affirming, albeit ambiguously and with a slight dualist preference, the unified nature of the Son in his perfect humanity and divinity. Yet, without a detailed understanding of the Definition, its political and theological controversies, one could conclude that it says little regarding the dynamics of of such unity.

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\(^{122}\) As noted, Gregory preferred to speak of one nature, but embraced a certain reading of two nature Christology. While monist theologians embraced a theology wherein Christ possessed two natures, the unity of Christ lead them to also acknowledge the orthodoxy of confessing that the singular person of Christ possessed a unified nature that could not be separated, distinguished, or parsed and acted in absolute unity, though without suggesting that the humanity and divinity present in the unified Christ changed or circumscribed the other.
While standing as a major definition of Christology and Christian unity, the text as it is fails to articulate the depth of the issues unfolding from Origen until the mid fifth century, or to solve the centuries long issue of dualistic and monistic subjectivity present within Jesus of Nazareth as the absolute singularity of Christ’s human and divine person, can be expressed in multiple ways. As we have seen, there are competing ideas for the nature of the unity of humanity and divinity, how exactly the two natures mingle, and how the *communicatio idiomatum* functions. For some the unity is monistic, and the attributes of one are shared by the other without distinction or separation, whereas for others the two natures are in full communion and personal unity, though in a dualist fashion insofar as they exist together along-side of one another, are distinguishable, and do not share at all in each other’s distinct mode of being.

1.2  Conclusion

The narrative I have presented is by no means the full historical discussion of all the stops taken on the road to orthodoxy. This chapter, while inadequate in a sense, is crafted to provide a coherent, streamlined picture of one major issue concerning the unity of the two natures present in Jesus of Nazareth. As such, my focus on Origen and Gregory of Nazianzus leaves out many other early theological voices, but serves the particular needs of telling the story this thesis seeks to narrate.

This outline serves two principal ends. First, it establishes the two senses in which the Incarnation has predominately been understood in the formative period of Christology and subsequently throughout history. As such, in subsequent chapters, my concern is with the unique manner in which divinity and materiality relate with one another. The two dominant models of

123 The single subjectivity could be agreed upon by the monistic branch of Christological unity, while the two-nature language, while accepted as a possible articulation by Gregory Nazianzen, could be embraced by dualist theologians.
understanding the Incarnation as a doctrine are outlined as dualist and monist respectively, and I
distinguish variant Christologies throughout the work in reference to these types. The former
regards Incarnation theologies wherein unity is achieved in some uniting substance common
between the divine and the material. Such unity is the result of an intimate bond of communion,
and each nature of unification remains in the boundaries of that which is proper to its nature. The
latter regards incarnation theologies wherein unity derives from the interpenetration and
participation of two different natures able to transcend their boundaries without loosing their
distinction. Such unity is the result of the inherent openness to transcendence and infinity
retained in divinity and materiality, without succumbing to reductionism to the other in the bonds
of relationship.

Second, each model serves as a basis by which to understand the direction of ecological
Christologies today. I discuss ecological Christologies with these dualist and monist models in
mind as a way of organizing the variant directions of different contemporary ecotheologies. At
issue, I contend, is the continued debate, albeit in a radically new form, between dualism and
monism in the God/world relationship. This debate over adequately representing the relationship
between God and the world in the doctrine of the Incarnation was not solved in Chalcedon,
persists until today, and will continue into the future. While I will argue for in favor of a non-
reductionist monism and pan-incarnational theology as the preferable model for the God/world
relationship, I do admit to strengths in the non-oppositional dualist position and that both models
within modern ecotheology are represented in the Christian tradition. As such, despite my
critique of deep incarnation Christologies insofar as they maintain the dualism evidenced in the
classical Christologies of Origen, Athanasius, and even Gregory of Nyssa, I acknowledge that
they are an important voice within a pluralistic Christian tradition. These Christologies remain deep and unitive, and further dialogue is invited as both positions are refined.

Thus, before moving from the patristic period to the modern, I recognize that in a deep sense Nicaea and Chalcedon are not the end of what we might say regarding Christology, but the beginning. With the meeting of God and the human we have a radical opening to continue exploring the ramifications of such divine/material intimacy in a world. Such an exploration necessarily takes on a character unique to the worlds in which the theologian dwells. As such, we move now to the twentieth century where theologies are in the process of re-imagining the meaning of the Christian tradition in a post-Darwinian framework and in light of the contemporary ecological crisis and the domination of one species threatens to destroy the creative tension that allows Earth to thrive in its own autopoeitic manner.
2.0 Introduction

This thesis explores a new understanding of Christology and the Christian doctrine of Incarnation, embracing and reimagining the Christ-event in the wake of postmodern cosmologies and the ecological crisis in a manner that eschews metaphysical anthropocentrism. The context created from such a wake has contributed to a widespread trend toward decentering the human within various conceptual frameworks. This move toward decentering the human recognizes the importance of human embodiment and cultural frameworks, while also struggling to eschew anthropocentric reasoning that holds the human alone as the measure of things. Avoiding anthropocentrism in ecotheological literature is necessary if otherwise-than-human worlds are to be properly respected according to the demands of their particularity, and to avoid value judgments on the material world that place homo-sapiens at the top of a hierarchy of worth and importance. The alternative – i.e., to value the difference of

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124 I am not offering a description of the historical trajectory of postmodern cosmology and ecological awareness, but simply acknowledge its presence in shifting contemporary human consciousness. The dynamics contributing to such shifts, from the rise of the scientific method, the industrial revolution, Darwinian biology, and postmodern philosophical frameworks, all of which serve to decenter the human within cosmos and Earth and shed light on the importance of the material world for human flourishing, are far too complex to draw simple conclusions regarding causation in human cultural trends. The cultural movement I am describing is evidenced, for example, in the thought of Thomas Berry, whose work combining history, science, philosophy, and world religions points to a fluid cosmology that embraces a number of voices in dialogue to decenter the human while embracing a pluralistic subjective experience of the world. See e.g., Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York, NY: Bell Tower, 1999); *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books, 1988); Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era—a Celebration of the Unfolding of the Cosmos* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSan Francisco, 1992).

125 Some, such as Niels Gregersen in “Deep Incarnation: Why Evolutionary Continuity Matters in Christology,” *Toronto Journal of Theology* 26, no. 2 (2010): 177 – 178, however, suggest that value hierarchies are not necessarily anthropocentric and ultimately unavoidable since universal moral
particularities without comparison to others – would not dismiss human concerns, nor would it rule out the need for value judgments in every-day scenarios demanding justice. Rather, it would embrace species-specific concerns that might legitimately take ethical priority, without assigning a lesser ethical status to what is otherwise-than-human.\(^\text{126}\) As such, the human would cease to act as the definitive arbiter in assigning meaning to cosmos, Earth, and divinity.

The decentering of the human in theology is a relatively recent endeavor, arising in religious thought after Darwin.\(^\text{127}\) This decentering follows millennia of anthropocentrism and a consequent theological anthropology that views the human as a special creation with a unique relationship to divinity. This divine/human relationship is based on an inherent sameness between God and humanity that is not present elsewhere considerability is not a tenable ethical framework. As I argue throughout this work, while Gregersen is right that absolute peace cannot exist, and decisions concerning justice necessarily prioritize some over other, his position is in fact anthropocentric insofar as it conflates ethics with justice and uses human-like capacities as a metaphysical ground for morality. In subsequent chapters, I argue that Emmanuel Levinas, while problematic in his own right, offers a way beyond this limited view of ethics.

\(^\text{126}\) An ethic, as outlined in subsequent chapters, based not on utilitarian calculation but affective, face-to-face encounters might still favor those humans closest to us. Affects emerging from ethical encounters are likely to be strongest when originating from other humans. In contexts where we must choose between the human and what is otherwise, choosing the human does not point to a value judgment based in the inherent worth of things, but simply relational proximity.

\(^\text{127}\) While there are certainly examples of pre-modern theology that at least partially eschew strong anthropocentrism (e.g., Maximus the Confessor, Irenaeus, Francis of Assisi) the modern period looks to Charles Darwin as a catalyst provoking deeper reflection on human normativity. After Darwin, it is easier to understand the human as a being in the image of Earth, rather than the image of God insofar as all species derive their being from those that came before it. Darwin’s principle works are *On the Origins of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (London, UK: John Murray, 1859); *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London, UK: John Murray, 1871). For early theological reactions to Darwin see e.g., James Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggle to Come to Terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America, 1870-1900* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979); David Kohn, *The Darwinian Heritage: Including Proceedings of the Charles Darwin Centenary Conference, Florence, June 1982* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1985); Ronald Numbers and John Stenhouse, *Disseminating Darwinism: The Role of Place, Race, Religion, and Gender* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Adrian J. Desmond and James Moore, *Darwin's Sacred Cause: How a Hatred of Slavery Shaped Darwin's Views on Human Evolution* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009).
in creation. Such an anthropocentric framework, with its consequent theology and anthropology, creates a value hierarchy in the world with humans at the apex, and contributes to the metaphysical anthropomorphism of divinity, despite claims of the infinity and transcendence of God.\footnote{I am not suggesting that language about God can achieve neutrality and objectivity beyond our species-centered horizon. Theology, as I suggest in Chapter Five, is necessarily a betrayal of divinity insofar as human language itself cannot escape anthropomorphism, and the infinity of God necessarily overflows what the human is able to say concerning it. Such ideas are discussed at length in Chapter Three and Four.}

Yet, theologies of nature since Darwin have been forced to reimagine this species-specific prejudice, acknowledging that we too emerge as an event within the same narrative of creativity shared by the rest of the world. Thus, since the publication of \textit{On the Origin of the Species} in 1859, Christian theology has been drawn into the new task of relating differently to a world with a newly recognized common heritage, where each thing is related to and co-creates its neighbour, i.e., a world where differentiated things are inseparably connected. While I will not trace the history of this new relationship between theology and the world in detail, the trajectory set upon by theologies of nature after Darwin are deeply concerned with rightly relating divinity, humanity, and non-human existents in this newfound world.\footnote{A survey of the development of theology and the natural world after Darwin is not practical here and would simply repeat information that is available elsewhere. For a helpful discussion of the socio-political and intellectual climate in which ecotheology arose, see Anne Marie Dalton and Henry C. Simmons, \textit{Ecotheology and the Practice of Hope} (New York, NY: SUNY Press, 2010).}

Ecotheology, one of the sub-disciplines forming out of a broader post-Darwinian and post-cosmology of cosmogenesis theology of nature, emerged roughly during the 1960s.\footnote{The traditional narrative describing the rise of rethinking the relationship between the human and Earth in the contemporary period, at least as a direct response to the environmental crisis, begins in the 1960s with Joseph A. Sittler, “Called to Unity,” \textit{Ecumenical Review} 14, no. 2 (January 1962): 177-187; see also “Ecological Commitment as Theological Responsibility,” \textit{Zygon} 5, no. 2 (June 1970): 172-181, and...}

From its inception, this branch of theology sought to reimagine the relationship...
between divinity and the world, welcoming frameworks and practices that embrace the creative tension necessary for biotic and planetary systems to thrive by allowing Earth to function on its own terms, apart from the domination of any one species. After the general agenda for ecotheology had been set, it began a maturation process through the 1970s and 1980s, refining its understanding of the problems behind the dysfunctional relationship between humanity and Earth, and exploring the potential paths toward human reconciliation with its world and God. In the 1990s and into the first decade of the 2000s, ecotheology saw tremendous growth as a theological discipline, refining and expanding the contextual approaches begun in past decades, tackling specific ethical dilemmas requiring major changes in socio-political practices, and reimagining doctrine subsequently with the responses to Lynn White, Jr’s essay, “The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis,” Science 155 (1967): 1203-1207. While Ian Barbour also began writing on science and religion in the 1960s, it seems best to place him in a related but separate trajectory from ecotheology, the science and religion sub-discipline. See Issues in Science and Religion (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966). I have intentionally left Pierre Teilhard de Chardin out of this discussion, as he is a contextual anomaly, writing in response to Darwin but not the ecological crisis. I discuss Teilhard in detail below, arguing for a renewed look at Teilhard concerning Christology and incarnation.

and the Christian tradition in radically new ways that began decentering the human from theology. 

Following this trajectory toward ecotheological depth and specialization, this chapter surveys one path taken in the movement to decenter the human. In this chapter I explore the history of contemporary ecotheology insofar as it reimagines the incarnation of divinity in Jesus of Nazareth. Ecotheology’s re-imagination of the incarnation as a means of decentering the human and promoting the dignity of Earth is commonly discussed today through the spatio-temporal metaphor of “deep incarnation,” a term coined in 2001 by Danish theologian Niels Henrik Gregersen. This doctrine holds much promise for Christianity’s re-imagination of the relationship between divinity, cosmos, and Earth. Yet, as I argue in subsequent chapters, the frameworks underlying the contemporary articulations of “deep incarnation” continue to harbour subtle tendencies toward metaphysical anthropocentrism. Thus, while the dominant understanding of deep incarnation is a welcome re-envisioning of the traditional doctrine of Incarnation, its latent humanist bias prevents it from fully decentering the human within cosmos and Earth. As a result, deep incarnation as it is currently understood, ultimately re-inscribes a value hierarchy in the material world that undermines the dignity and hospitality that ecotheologies otherwise extend to the world.

Below, I provide a survey of the history and development of the doctrine of deep incarnation. First, I examine how Niels Gregersen and others articulate a contemporary theology of deep incarnation, outlining the predominant understanding of the doctrine today. Second, I survey the contemporary development of deep incarnational thinking in ecotheology prior to and after Gregersen, providing a historical context to the emergence of this framework. While “deep incarnation” as a specific doctrine is a development of the early 2000s, the concept has roots in the emergence of the eco-theological tradition. This survey establishes that the form of deep incarnation espoused by Gregersen and others is not the only model for a deeper understanding of the incarnation event, and provides a springboard for my own development of the doctrine. This other model of deep incarnation is found in several writers, but can be traced principally to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, whose understanding of the incarnation acts as a foil to contemporary understandings deep incarnation. This chapter thus opens up the need for broader dialogue concerning ecological Christology, which is developed in subsequent chapters through an examination of the ethics and philosophy of religion of Emmanuel Levinas.

2.1 Deep Incarnation

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134 Teilhard, of course, has anthropocentric biases of his own that I will point out and circumvent. Additionally, and strangely, he is not substantially engaged in any of the formative articles on this topic. While ancient sources are crucially cited in support of the doctrine, it is likewise important to note that this idea is present in Teilhard and has been present in ecotheology since the 1960s. Teilhard’s work evidences an alternative “deep incarnational” framework from at least 1916, in his first theological essay. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, “Cosmic Life,” in *Writings in Time of War*, trans. René Hague (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1968), 13-72.
While the incarnation of the divine within Jesus of Nazareth has always been an integral part of ecological theologies, ecological Christology has taken on increased significance since the early 2000s with the development of the doctrine of deep incarnation. In this section, I survey primarily the writings of Niels Henrik Gregersen on the topic, supplementing his thought with insight from others embracing this idea. The purpose here is to provide an overview of the doctrine in order to outline the nuances of how this theology is understood in contemporary theology today. These theologies are indicative of the “unique resources” and “mandate” the Christian tradition has for embracing and articulating “a union of creator and creation.”

Gregersen’s articulation of deep incarnation begins in his article, “The Cross of Christ in an Evolutionary World.” The idea of deep incarnation is introduced late in this article, as the basis for constructing a specifically Lutheran theodicy. As such, while this essay does not explore the idea in its fullness, deep incarnation is initially a way for Gregersen to make sense of the violence, pain, and suffering inherent in a world created through both the complexities of evolution and the love of a benevolent creator. While this focus on suffering is applicable to a wider understanding of violence in cosmogenesis, Gregersen focuses on the pain emergent in the process of natural selection, and how this specifically impacts the lives of animal bodies complex enough to

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135 I look to Gregersen because he is mostly referenced in current discussions concerning the emergence of deep incarnation theology and he has provided the most substantive explorations, to date, of the idea. Gregersen is also the editor of *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015), the first collected volume on deep incarnation. At the time of this writing, this volume was not yet available, although Gregersen graciously shared parts of the work with me prior to publication for inclusion in this thesis.


experience suffering. The problem of animal pain with the accompanying need for an adequate theodicy is thus the initial matrix for Gregersen’s move toward deep incarnation Christology.

After a discussion of Luther’s Heidelberg Disputation, theology of the cross, and a post-Darwinian understanding of natural selection, Gregersen looks to the incarnation of divinity in Jesus of Nazareth, suggesting that this event gives hope to all those who suffer from the violence implicit in the epic of evolution. Gregersen espouses an orthodox Christology wherein humanity and divinity dwell entangled together in Jesus of Nazareth, allowing God to dwell uniquely and phenomenally, among earthlings. Yet, through an incarnation into the flesh, which Gregersen later universalizes and connects to all materiality, God, through the cross, identifies not simply with human pain and suffering, but with all victims who suffer from the violence inherent in evolution. 138 Thus, through the divine endurance of victimization and violence in a human body, which constitutes a shared vulnerability with all things, God suffers alongside all victims of natural selection. 139 Gregersen thus pursues a “thought experiment,” wondering if “Christ die[d]...
not only for sinners, but also for the victims of natural selection and of social
deprecation?”

In a framework wherein God embraces all materiality, the incarnation indicates not just divine care for human bodies that suffer pain and death, but all flesh suffering a similar fate as a result of evolutionary violence. Through the incarnation, life, suffering, and death of the body of Christ, divinity redeems the entirety of the pain and suffering inevitable in our world. Such redemption, according to Gregersen, operates the same for human and non-human alike, not in this world, but in an eschatological “act of resurrection.” Here Gregersen for the first time describes such a theology as indicative of “deep incarnation,” a term becoming increasingly common in ecological Christology. In deep incarnation, the Word made into human flesh soteriologically

act as a moral summons to the human, though the scope of this summons leads us only toward a paradox of morality and the infinity of ethical encounters that demand a creative response of their own.

Gregersen, “The Cross of Christ in an Evolutionary World,” 197. As Gregersen notes, this line of thinking is not new and has been taken up by some of the Patristic writers (e.g., Maximus the Confessor) and Scholastics, who assert that the entire universe is present within the human, and therefore, salvation is vicariously extended to the rest of creation (a macro—micro interrelationship). See also, ibid., 193, where he discusses Maximus’ notions of microcosmic anthropology and theosis. See also see Torstein Theodor Tollefsen, “Saint Maximus the Confessor on Creation and Incarnation,” in Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen, 99-115. Additionally, Duncan Reid, in “Enfleshing the Human: An Earth-Revealing, Earth-Healing Christology,” in Earth Revealing—Earth Healing: Ecology and Christian Theology, ed. Denis Edwards (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 75-77, and Denis Edwards, Partaking of God: Trinity, Evolution, and Ecology (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), 11-17, point to the retrieval of Alexandrian Christology as a way forward in this theological thinking. As I show in the next sections, the idea is also present in ecological theology from the emergence of the discipline in the 1960s, and in the thought of Teilhard de Chardin from at least 1916.

Gregersen, “The Cross of Christ in an Evolutionary World,” 193. This idea ought to come into dialogue with New Testament, liberationist, and/or post-colonial theologies of redemption and resurrection, which insist on the contemporary relevance of soteriological issues. There is a disconnect between future oriented and liberationist eschatologies and soteriologies that should be explored. An example of this is found in Pope Francis’ encyclical, Laudato si’, where the redemption of the poor and Earth are inseparable and not seen as a future reality. Pope Francis, Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2015).

Gregersen, “The Cross of Christ in an Evolutionary World,” 204-205. It should be mentioned that John Haught refers to the potential of a “deeper incarnation” of God in the cosmos in his The Cosmic Adventure, 166-167. This incarnation emerges as a phenomenon within comsogenesis in human communities founded in love. Such a “deep incarnation” is expressed by Haught as an extension, or reach, of the body of Christ into the Church, and may in fact be drawing upon Teilhard’s theology. While such an
connects divinity not only to the human, but to all bodies that suffer, feel pain, and die, offering hope to all victims of natural selection.\textsuperscript{143}

These ideas mature in Gregersen’s 2010 essay, “Deep Incarnation: Why Evolutionary Continuity Matters in Christology,” where we find a more developed description of a theology of deep incarnation based on the stoic influence on the Gospel of John, and a Johannine theology wherein “the Word became flesh.”\textsuperscript{144} As he constructs a theology based in the stoic context of Johannine Christology, Gregersen seems to expand the Christological nuances of his previous essay. Deep incarnation as such appears to move beyond the constraints of his earlier article, in which the Christology becomes relevant for the pain, suffering, and death experienced by animal bodies, toward a more inclusive theology that embraces an infinite plurality of vulnerable forms. Such an expansion would open the incarnation to embrace not just pain, suffering and death, but vulnerability in general, regardless of the form it takes. Yet, as this theology develops, the promise of an infinitely inclusive theology open to the “the depths of material existence,” and “the living bond in and between all that exists” is once more tempered by the constraints of human-like bodies capable of experiencing pain, suffering, and death.\textsuperscript{145}

After examining the possible Stoic influence on John’s Christology, Gregersen discusses the ontic scope of the “flesh” (σὰρξ) that was assumed by the divine understanding of incarnate divinity fits into current deep incarnation models, Haught’s theology is not as developed as current deep incarnation models.

\textsuperscript{143} This focus on suffering would be restricted to animals with the neurological capacities needed to make suffering a possibility. This focus on the ability to suffer is obviously closed off to most of materiality. As I argue in Chapter Five, this argument only extends value to others based their conformity to the human image, a metaphysical anthropocentrism that fails to fully embrace the depths of materiality and the infinite face of divinity.

\textsuperscript{144} Gregersen, “Deep Incarnation,” 173 – 188.

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 174.
Logos/Word in the prologue of the fourth gospel. 146 The “flesh,” according to a Stoic framework, as well as the wider biblical perspective, is not the exclusive possession of humanity alone. For Gergersen, while the flesh of the Johannine declaration – καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14) – could refer to the particular body of Jesus of Nazareth, or in other contexts that which is sinful, he suggests that “flesh” may also simply refer to materiality itself, with no reference to any specificity of form other than connections to frailty and vulnerability. 147 Building on the possible semantic nuances of the “flesh,” Gergersen

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146 “Ibid.,” 181-182. Duncan Reid’s theology of deep incarnation is likewise entirely predicated on Johannine theology and an inclusive interpretation of the flesh. John’s inclusive Christology and understanding of the flesh provides the “insight that opens the possibilities of an ecological Christology. It is the story of Jesus as a human being that, when separated from this insight of the Johannine prologue, endangers this possibility by driving Christology irreversibly in the direction of anthropology.” Reid, “Enfleshing the Human,” 72.

147 While John may have a Stoic reading of Jewish theology and the semantic nuances of σάρξ are rather wide, I would hesitate to suggest that such an intentional cosmic soteriological scope exists in John’s gospel. The immediate context of John’s prologue points toward more specifically human and Jewish theological concerns. Immediately prior to John’s declaration that “the Logos became flesh,” σάρξ is used alongside αἷματον, “blood,” and ἀνδρὸς, “man, humanity” to refer specifically to humanity. Indeed, even the prior uses of κόσμος (“world”), relates only to humanity (cf. John 3:16), which aside from the cosmic, allusion to Genesis in John 1:1-3, is the focus of the prologue. My translation of John 1:14 reads, “He [the Logos] came to his own [people] but they did not embrace him. On the other hand, whoever did embrace him, those believing in his name, he empowered them to become the Children of God, those who were born neither from blood (αἷματον) nor from the will of the flesh (ἐκ θελήματος σαρκός), nor the will of humanity (ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρός), but from God. And the Word became flesh (ὁ λόγος σαρκὶ ἐγένετο) and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory, as only one uniquely born from the Father.” Σαρκός and σάρξ are here used in reference to human beings, as the parallelism with αἷματον and ἀνδρὸς suggests. John’s concern is to show that divinity now dwells as a human born of God among the rest of the humans, paralleling the indwelling of divinity in the tent of meeting that accompanied Israel during the wilderness wanderings and the later Temple of Jerusalem. If John embraced Stoicism, and I do not doubt that he did, he likely assumes a broad connection between the Logos and all materiality as its informational resource, but his theology here is focused on describing a unique event in which the Logos became a human being distinguished from “all flesh.” If anything, John is distinguishing the human from the rest of creation in his assertion that the divine informational resource responsible for all creation took a very special form as a human. Thus, I am not sure how feasible, or even necessary, it is to suggest that John has such a cosmic scope in mind. Despite the linguistic possibilities, John seems unconcerned with the world beyond the human. All of the assumptions—e.g., λόγος as informational resource, σάρξ as materiality itself, the inseparability of divinity and materiality—may very well hold but John’s concern still remains with Jewish theology and the unique concerns of human beings, not the redemption of the cosmos. The idea, however, is meaningful regardless of Johannine theology, as our evolutionary framework gives meaning to this narrative even if John did not have it in mind. Cosmic expansions take place later it seems in Alexandrian Christology and in the Greek Patristics who see the human as a microcosm of the universe, but John is hardly making an ecological point in his Gospel. Virtually all of the evidence pointing to this interpretation
suggests that the fourth Gospel points toward a deeper incarnation of the Word, an incarnation connecting divinity to more than just humanity, or even animal flesh, but to the very matrix of materiality itself and its inherent vulnerability. As such, “God the creator and the world of creation are conjoined in Jesus Christ.”

Furthermore, in the incarnation, according to Gregersen,

God links up with all vulnerable creatures, with the sparrows in their flight as well as in their fall…indeed, with all grass that comes into being one day and ceases to exist the next day. In Christ, God is conjoining all creatures and enters into the biological tissue of creation itself, in order to share the fate of biological existence. God becomes Jesus, and in him God becomes human, and (by implication) foxes and sparrows, grass and soil.

This incarnate connection to all materiality has further soteriological implications for creation through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Building on the soteriology of Gregory of Nazianzus, which asserts that salvation is connected to Christological form, Gregersen posits that the cross of Christ has redemptive implications for all vulnerable creatures who suffer at the hands of natural selection. Because the human, too, exists as a vulnerable being inseparable from the wider epic of evolution, the incarnation of

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of John rests on the acceptable linguistic range of words and one dominant philosophical backdrop with no substantive discussion of Jewish theology or the author’s obvious prioritization of humanity. Additionally, any Stoic reading of John without the incorporation of the Jewish Wisdom tradition is inadequate. See e.g., Thomas Rausch, *Who is Jesus: An Introduction to Christology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 137-145 for an introduction to Wisdom Christology in the New Testament and the well-established scholarship in this area. While I welcome an embrace of such an expanded Johannine theology, it is important to understand it as a contemporary theological re-imagination of John’s Gospel and not biblical theology. An in-depth study into this topic is warranted in the future.

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149 Ibid. In Chapter Five, I discuss how this description of incarnation is best understood by the dualist, but nevertheless unitive, patristic Christologies of Origen and those following him as seen in Chapter One. I contrast this broad sense Christology, as Gregersen later calls it, with the monistic Christology of Gregory Nazianzen, and what Gregersen terms a strict sense Christology. I discuss the “senses” of incarnation theology in Gregersen’s thought below.

Christ into the flesh has implications beyond humanity to all vulnerable being, regardless of the form it takes. As such, Gregersen here connects a Johannine understanding of matter, and a Greek patristic theological anthropology, to a modern evolutionary framework that suggests all things share a common heritage.\textsuperscript{151} The human, as many ecological theologians have maintained, is cosmos and Earth itself, containing within its body the history of cosmogenesis. As such, when divinity incarnates Jesus of Nazareth, God embraces the microcosmic history of materiality present in the human body. As Neil Drargh writes, through the mediation of Jesus’ humanity, “God became an Earth creature…a sentient being…a living being (in common with all other living beings)…a complex Earth unit of minerals and fluids…an item in the carbon and nitrogen cycles.”\textsuperscript{152}

This re-imagined understanding of the doctrine of the incarnation combines traditional theology and a modern evolutionary perspective on human bodies that constitutes a welcome development in Christology. It re-imagines the incarnation of divinity in Jesus of Nazareth as a “completely unique event,” but nevertheless “an event not only for Jesus and not only for the whole of humanity but also for the whole interconnected biological and physical world.”\textsuperscript{153} As Gregersen articulates it “what it means to ‘assume’ the flesh of the whole creation ‘in some way’…means God’s accepting and embracing the cosmic aspects of the world, in order to renew the world


\textsuperscript{153} Edwards, \textit{Partaking of God}, 54.}
from the inside out.\textsuperscript{154} Yet, as Gregersen and others make clear, “Even though the proposal of deep incarnation firmly asserts that Christ as the incarnate One \textit{assumed} all that exists, the proposal does not say that God’s Word is simply speaking \textit{incarnated} in all that exists.”\textsuperscript{155} As such, Gregersen articulates three senses in which Christ is understood to be incarnate within the world.\textsuperscript{156} There is first a “strict sense” incarnation pointing to in the unique ontic anchorage and entanglement between the divine Logos and the human body of Jesus of Nazareth. This is a classical notion of (non-reductive monistic) incarnation and is not shared beyond the body of Jesus of Nazareth.\textsuperscript{157} Gregersen insists that it is only within a human person “that incarnation can have a genuine comprehensive scope.”\textsuperscript{158} Furthermore, “in this sense, there is a distinctiveness

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\item[155] Ibid., 385 and throughout Gregersen’s work. Denis Edwards is also helpful in articulating this point: “This is not to say that God is incarnate in all things in the same way God is incarnate in Christ. Such a view would undermine the newness and the absolute gratuity of the incarnation and ultimately reduce incarnation to creation.” Edwards, \textit{Partaking of God}, 54. See also Gregersen, “Christology,” 38: “The motif of a union between God and the world in Christ does not suggest an identification of God and nature, as in pantheism. Love safeguards the otherness of the beloved.” While the Father “stretches” into the material world, the ontic entanglement suggested here differs from what others, such as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, suggest. Additionally, a suggestion that pantheism necessarily eradicates alterity, and as Gregersen insists in other places (e.g., “\textit{Cur deus caro}: Jesus and the Cosmos Story,” 383-384), that pantheism is the equating of God with all things without condition, is not true in all pantheisms. We may again discuss Teilhard in this capacity as his is a pantheism that always preserves particularity. These are the principle nuances that I develop later in my own theology of deep incarnation.
\item[157] As shown in Chapter One, there are variant understandings of classic Christology. Gregersen’s description of broad sense incarnation suggests that he understands the strict sense incarnation of Jesus on a deeper ontic level where the two natures become inseparable, as opposed to the broad sense where the two natures do not interpenetrate one another, but are unified through the intimacy of communion. A dualist and monist Christology as evidenced in Origen and Gregory are crucial models to begin to understand and refine Gregersen’s description of incarnational senses. Without these, one could argue that a dualist Christological unity would easily render Christ similarly incarnate in all that exists, since in such theologies the properties of each nature do not impinge upon the being of the other, and so Gregersen’s concern with the problems of strict sense incarnation would cease to exist.
\item[158] Niels Henrik Gregersen, “The Twofold Assumption: A Response to Cole-Turner, Moritz, Peters and Peterson,” \textit{Theology and Science}, 11, no. 4 (2013): 458. Gregersen continues: “it seems obvious that the identity of God as Love can’t be revealed in a tomato or in a mussel, nor in the birth and decay of
or setting-apart of Jesus as God’s *self-incarnation* in the strict sense of the term.”

This sense of incarnation includes the self-expression and revelation of divinity, which cannot, according to Gregersen, extend beyond human bodies, and the life of Jesus in particular.

Second, there is a “broad sense” incarnation referring to the human’s microcosmic nature, the shared conditions between Jesus’ and other existent’s bodies, and the Cosmic Christ as the informational matrix of all materiality, leading to a divine presence within all other material forms.

In this dimension of the incarnation, Christ is not merely present “along-side” of existents, but exists “in, with, and for,” all materiality.

As such, there is here not a “strict separation between creation and incarnation.”

Third, there is a “soteriological sense” of the incarnation that combines the first two and suggests that the incarnate presence of Christ in the world seeks to renew some forms of materiality in the image and likeness of Christ.

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160 This is discussed at length in Chapter Five.


162 Being “in, with, and for” others and being “along-side of” are difficult to differentiate, but for now it should be clear that Gregersen’s self-articulation of his own position is that deep incarnation is more than omnipresence and being-along-side-of the other. The principal difference as far as I can tell is that Gregersen’s “broad” understanding of the incarnation is not indicative of a “self-revelation” of divine being. As such, Gregersen differentiates between the self-revelation of God in Jesus and divine presence within all materiality. My own position, a pan-incarnation theology rejected by Gregersen, is dealt with in Chapter Five.


164 These three senses of the incarnation are taken up for detailed discussion in Chapter Five, where I argue that Gregersen’s reduction of God to human love and his fear of meeting God strictly speaking incarnate in natural “evil” are inadequate in light of both classical Christologies and for non-anthropocentric Christianity and that there cannot be such a restriction of divine form for a robust eco-theology today. Incarnation, I argue in Chapter Five, cannot be separated into strict, broad, and soteriological forms without doing violence to divine infinity insofar as this separation restricts divine self-expression to the capacities of some, normalized human beings. As such, I argue that this theology is not
Yet, as we move forward, it is important to note how such a doctrine, even if it does not go by the specific designation “deep incarnation,” has developed through the history of ecological theology. This is important for a robust understanding of the doctrine, as well as for understanding variants of the form of the theology summarized here. Deep incarnation is not a new idea in ecological theologies, nor is it restricted to the boundaries of the form developed by Gregersen and others after him. This later point is crucial as I develop a critique of deep incarnation, as it is popularly understood, suggesting that such a theology presumes a hierarchical ordering of creation based in metaphysical anthropocentrism that I would eschew. The position I develop follows another type of deep incarnation found in the theological literature of the past century, and refuses to restrict a unique divine incarnation to the person of Jesus and the human form he possesses. As I show throughout this work, deep incarnation in the form summarized here continues to normalize certain forms of human embodiment and material vulnerability, both of which are restrained by the particularity of an experience possible for only certain types of bodies. As such, I show that some theologies posit a different type of deep incarnation, and develop such notions further.

2.2 Ecological Christology in the 20th Century

Deep incarnation, while not the only path taken in eco-Christological thinking, has become a dominant framework for discussing the relevance of Jesus of Nazareth for contemporary theologies of nature. The term itself is coined and outlined, as we have seen, in several articles and essays by Niels Henrik Gregersen. Yet, similar thinking can only metaphysically anthropocentric, but metaphysically anthropomorphic, construing God as a human being.
be traced to earlier Christian ecological writings in the twentieth century, allowing us to construct two broad typologies of deep incarnation Christology, similar to the dualist and monist Christologies traced in Chapter One.\textsuperscript{165} Here I survey deep incarnational Christologies from the early twentieth century to the present.

2.2.1 Early 20\textsuperscript{th} Century

We first encounter what could be labeled a deep incarnational framework in the early twentieth century within the cosmic Christology of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. While different from the notion developed by Gregersen, which I suggest later is dualist and anthropocentric, Teilhard develops an alternate form of deep incarnation Christology that is non-reductively monistic and infinitely plural. Though I am not suggesting that this thesis’ conclusions result in a revised Teilhardian theology, he is the paradigmatic example of the type of monistic, infinitely plural deep Christology that I seek to develop.

From his earliest wartime essay “Cosmic Life” (1916), to his magnum opus, *The Human Phenomenon* (1938-1949), Teilhard insists that “there is a communion with God, and a communion with earth, and a communion with God through earth.”\textsuperscript{166} For Teilhard, the cosmos is comprised of a dynamic matrix of differentiated individuals who share an inseparable ontic nature, both materially and spiritually. This interconnectedness includes the totality of existence, including divinity. The world, according to Teilhard, emerges

\textsuperscript{165} I am restricting the genealogy of this idea to the twentieth century, though there are likely traces of it throughout the history of theology. Going beyond this time period is simply unfeasible in this project due to constraints of space and time.

\textsuperscript{166} Teilhard de Chardin, “Cosmic Life,” 14. Teilhard dates this essay to 24 April 1916, completed in Nieuport (Ibid., 18). For the manuscript tradition and development of Teilhard’s *Le Phénomène Humain*, (Paris, FR: Du Seuil, 1955), see Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Human Phenomenon*, xxii-xxiv. This work, like most of his theological writings, would not be published until Teilhard’s death in 1955. As such, though his core ideas were formed by 1916 and would be clarified throughout his life, Teilhard’s thought did not enter the theological scene until the middle of the twentieth century.
from divine creativity not as an absolutely separate entity but as the creative overflow of love from God. As such, while the totality of existents in the world can never be amalgamated into some undifferentiated whole that lacks particularity, neither can existents, whether divine or material, be understood as absolutely separate bodies. All things are corporeally, spiritually, and subjectively entangled. The theologian “must abandon,” according to Teilhard, “all the illusions of narrow individualism and extend himself [sic.], intellectually and emotionally, to the dimensions of the universe: and this even though, his mind reeling at the prospect of his new greatness, he should think that he is already in possession of the divine, is God himself, or is himself the artisan of Godhead.”

Teilhard’s articulation of this divine/world entanglement is based entirely in a cosmic Christology wherein the incarnate presence of divinity within Jesus of Nazareth provides the interpretive framework for understanding the nature of the phenomenal world and its relationship to divinity. References to the incarnate presence of Christ in the phenomenal world abound in Teilhard’s writings, but are especially poignant in his Eucharistic meditation “The Priest,” written in the forest of Compiègne in 1917, and “The Mass on the World,” completed in the dessert of Ordos in 1923. In these poetic

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168 Teilhard’s “The Priest,” in *Writings in Time of War*, trans. René Hague (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1968), 203-224, was written immediately following his profession in the Society of Jesus on 26 May 1918, and was completed by July 8th of the same year. See Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Making of a Mind: Letters from a Soldier-Priest, 1914-1919*, (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1965), 212. A later iteration of this essay would be completed in 1923 while Teilhard was back to his paleontological work after WWI. See Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, “The Mass on the World,” in *Hymn of the Universe*, trans. Gerald Van, O.P. (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1965), 9-38. Such a theology, while developed throughout his life, is fully present in 1916 in “Cosmic Life”: “Through his Incarnation he entered not only into mankind [sic.] but also into the universe that bears mankind—and this he did, not simply in the capacity of an element associated with it, but with the dignity and function of directive principle, of centre upon which every form of love and every affinity converge. Mysterious and vast though the mystical Body already be, it does not, accordingly, exhaust the immense and bountiful integrity of the Word made Flesh.
narratives, Teilhard reveals a paradoxical cosmic matrix in which the world is physically and spiritually entangled with divine being. Such an entanglement occurs inherently within comsogenesis and biological evolution, but for Teilhard, reaches its peak in Christ and the Church. In such a world, the divine/material relationship extends beyond a dualistic unity. The God/world relationship is revealed in Christ not as a communion of things existing side-by-side – i.e., as distinguishable subjects of action, as separable entities present alongside one another – but as ontic hybrids. Each thing, for Teilhard, is an entangled entity existing through the dependent, co-creative power of the totality. Yet, each thing also transcends the totality, and resists any reductionism to the whole. Such is revealed, for Teilhard, and only describable in the context of the incarnation of the divine in Jesus of Nazareth and the transmutation of the elements of the mass. In this deep ontic entanglement, while divinity and materiality transcend one another, the immanent phenomenal world and transcendent divine being ultimately come together in a chimerical, incarnate unity where no singularity can ultimately be separated from another.

For Teilhard, creation and incarnation are inseparable theological categories and occur together in the one divine act of cosmosgenesis. Using incarnation and the Eucharist as a model to describe the nature of the world, Teilhard insists that “when

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169 “The universe is rent asunder; it suffers a painful cleavage at the heart of each of its monads, as the flesh of Christ is born and grows. Like the work of creation which it redeems and surpasses, the Incarnation, so desired of man, is an awe-inspiring operation. It is achieved through blood.” Teilhard de Chardin, “The Priest,” 209. While the “blood” of this passage refers to the violence of evolution, it is likely also a reference to the blood spilt in war. Teilhard’s participation in WW1 fit into a broader schema wherein human progress brought about justice and a consequent deeper unitive relationship between God and the world.
Christ, carrying farther the process of his Incarnation, comes down into the bread in order to dwell there in its place, his action is not confined to the particle of matter that his Presence is at hand, for a moment, to etherealize. The transubstantiation is encircled by a halo of divinization real, even though less intense—that extends to the whole universe.”¹⁷⁰ Through the incarnation event, which cannot be separated from the doctrine of Creation, and incarnation’s special extension in the Eucharist, an inherently divinized cosmos emerges into a deep, subjective entanglement and unity with God.¹⁷¹ “In a very real sense,” the cosmic Christ is for Teilhard, “the plenitudo entium, the full assemblage of all beings who shelter, and meet, and are for ever united, within the mystical bonds of [Christ’s] body.”¹⁷²

As such, while there are clear differences between God and the world in which each transcends the other, Teilhard’s theology everywhere insists that “to present the Christian God as…external to and (even quantitatively) less than, nature, is in itself, to impoverish his being.”¹⁷³ This unification with nature is revealed principally in Christ’s incarnation, which, for Teilhard, is the preeminent and fullest example of the unity between God and materiality, signifying the fate of world as it moves toward greater degrees on unity with divinity. This unity, however, does not fall into what Teilhard considers to be the trappings of classical pantheism. Pantheism, for Teilhard, is problematic because it reduces both God and the phenomenal to an undifferentiated

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¹⁷² Teilhard de Chardin, “The Priest,” 212.

whole with no particularity of its own, and thus, “being is dissolved in the
Homogenous.” As such, there is a need to distinguish between Creator and creation,
though not in a way that supposes an absolute difference between the two or a singularity
that exists apart from an inherent plurality. Instead, there is a universal element, or a
divine milieu, which links all things with the incarnation of God while allowing existents
to take particular shapes of their own. In such a scheme, everything penetrates and makes
up the other while no existent may be reduced to a static, exhaustive understanding or
description with clear-cut boundaries to its dynamic being. As in the incarnation of
God in Jesus of Nazareth, all things are simultaneously divine and material, the
irreducible singularity of an existent in plural. Using the language of the Nicene Creed
and the Chalcedonian Definition, Teilhard asserts that in “the divine milieu, all the
sounds of created being are fused, without being confused, in a single note which
dominiates and sustains them.”

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critique of a certain understanding of pantheism as the flattening of all diversity in creation. Further,
Teilhard insists that particularity is only perfected in deeper ontic unity and vice-a-versa. See, e.g., “The
Mass on the World,” in Hymn to the Universe, 19. “I plunge into the all-inclusive One; but the One is so
perfect that as it receives me and I lose myself in it I can find in it the ultimate perfection of my own
individuality.” Likewise, Teilhard writes, “Christ, it is true, does not destroy nor dissolve us. He does not
modify our nature nor wipe out our human personality—on the contrary, by melting us into himself he
completes our differentiation as individual persons.” Teilhard de Chardin, “Forma Christi,” 266.

175 The point, for Teilhard, in eschewing popular pantheism is so that nothing is ever reduced to
another and so that nothing can be finally pinned down, and known exhaustively: “Incomparably near and
perceptible—for it presses in upon us through all the forces of the universe—it nevertheless eludes our
grasp so constantly that we can never seize it here below except by raising ourselves, uplifted on its waves,
to the extreme limit of our effort: present in, and drawing at the inaccessible depth of, each creature, it
withdraws always further, bearing us along with it towards the common centre of all consummation.”
Teilhard de Chardin, The Divine Milieu, 113. The divine milieu is touched but always retreats toward
infinity. Nothing can be seized or understood in any permanent way; no existent can be circumscribed or
reduced to any static understanding. Yet, Teilhard does not eschew the concept of pantheism, and sees his
own thought as a Christian type of this theism. See, e.g., The Human Phenomenon, 209-215.

176 Teilhard de Chardin, The Divine Milieu, 120.
Thus, the doctrine of Incarnation is central for a Teilhardian understanding of the relationship of cosmos and Earth with God. Jesus of Nazareth is irreducibly singular though plurality, one person with two natures, and is thus phenomenal and particular, but also transcendent in his divinity, irreducible to either divinity or corporeity. “Everything,” then “means both everything and nothing to me; everything is God to me and everything is dust to me: that is what man can say with equal truth, in accord with how the divine ray falls.” All existents are thus not simply unified with each other, but with God. Materiality is “one and the same complex thing with him…the mysterious Pleroma, in which the substantial one and the created many fuse without confusion in a whole which, without adding anything essential to God, will nevertheless be a sort of triumph and generalization of being.” None of this suggests that there is no difference between God and the world, nor between the levels of intensity in the unification of divinity and materiality in some instances. This characterization of the world as the incarnate

177 Ibid. The incarnate presence of God may manifest in an infinite plurality of forms so long as it conforms to the characteristics or is guided towards Omega through being informed by Christ. See esp. Teilhard de Chardin, “Forma Christi,” 266, fn. 14; The Human Phenomenon, 190. A problem with this appeal to characteristics lies in its being grounded in the human form. Thus, while Teilhard desires a God who transcends humanity, the essence of divine is ultimately linked to the human body. While Teilhard does not suggest that only humans are united to God, he nevertheless uses the human as the preeminent example material proximity to God. The problem with this is discussed in subsequent chapters.

178 Ibid., 122.

179 Teilhard displays a degree Christology in which some things are more closely unified to Christ than others, based on the closeness of the character of the existent to Christ. As such, while Christ’s incarnation extends to every corner of the material world, it does so in varying degrees of intensity as divinity draws the world into greater degrees of divinized unity. E.g., “There is only one safe course between Scylla and Charybdis: to admit that Christ is in a very real way the only concrete end awaiting the universe—adding, however, that his Being operates through extensions of his aura in which his divinity is not always equally embodied, and therefore manifests itself to us through a gradual and creative attraction.” “Forma Christi,” 254. Teilhard says elsewhere, “Of the cosmic Christ, we may say both that he is and that he is entering into fuller being. He has already appeared in the world; but a long process of growth awaits him in this world, either in isolated individuals—or still more, perhaps, in a certain human spiritual unity, of which our present society is no more than an adumbration. The whole function, and task, and drama of the universe—the whole economy of human progress, of grace, of the sacraments (the Eucharist) take on their ultimate significance in this individualization of the Universal Element in which the Incarnation consists.” Teilhard de Chardin, “The Universal Element,” 298. This is important not simply because it...
presence of Christ is governed by the degree to which all things conform to the person and being of Christ on the way to the perfect unity of what Teilhard will eventually call the Omega Point.\textsuperscript{180} The God/World relationship, for Teilhard, is not one in which the divine will simply informs or manipulates a creation that exists on the out-side, but one where the life of Christ is inseparable from the phenomenal world itself.\textsuperscript{181} For Teilhard, God’s presence in the world is not the mere juxtaposition of separate beings, but “the cosmic influence [life] of Christ,” wherein the cosmos is not a detached entity comprised of individual subjects, but instead a unified world where the subjectivity of each is entangled with the subjectivity of the whole.\textsuperscript{182} While differentiated particularities exist, all things can only attain subjectivity in light of universal cosmic relationality, and as such the boundaries of the subject are inherently blurred. “Strictly speaking, there is in the universe only one single individuality (one single monad), that of the whole (conceived in its organized plurality). The unity or measure of the world, is the world itself.”\textsuperscript{183} Divine subjectivity is also included within this schema, shaped by the doctrine of the incarnation of Christ: “Once we have understood the nature of this ‘cosmic composition’ of created being, and have appreciated the closeness and universality of the ties it forms with the Multiple, Christ's features take on an extraordinary sharpness and

\textsuperscript{180} For a full consideration of the Omega Point see Teilhard de Chardin, \textit{The Human Phenomenon}, 167-208.

\textsuperscript{181} See Teilhard de Chardin, “The Universal Element,” 294-298 for an explanation of his previous stages of understanding before arriving at his final Christian pantheistic framework.

\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., 296.

\textsuperscript{183} Ibid., 296-297.
immediacy—and the meaning of Scripture is given incomparable clarity and depth.”

Furthermore, in “every creature there exists physically...besides the individual material and spiritual characteristics we recognize in it, a certain relationship that all being has to Christ – a particular adaptation to Christ of created essence – something of Christ, in short, that is born and develops, and gives the whole individual...its ultimate personality and final ontological value.”

2.2.2 1960s and 1970s

While the gap between Teilhard’s writings and the emergence of ecotheology is close to a half-century wide, there is less than a decade between the initial publication of his work in 1955 and the publication of the first ecotheological essay in 1962. In Joseph Sittler’s essay, “Called To Unity,” we find a theology linking the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth to the dignity of the entire material order, revealing an early voice advocating deep incarnational Christology. Building upon the work of Irenaeus, Sittler asserts that the salvific impact of the incarnation of divinity in Jesus extends grace beyond humanity to the entire creation. “For Irenaeus, the Incarnation and saving work of Jesus Christ meant that the promise of grace was held out to the whole of nature, and that henceforth...

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184 Ibid., 297.
185 Ibid. Subjectivity here is chimerical, and as such is different than the predominant form of deep incarnation espoused today, e.g., by Gregersen. Deep incarnation, for Gregersen, “does not lead either to an amalgam (‘unconfused’) nor to a chimera (‘inseparable’).” Gregersen, “Christology,” 41. For Teilhard, there are various manifestations of the one incarnation event present in greater and lesser degrees, versus the “once and for always” incarnational event in Jesus of Nazareth. Gregersen, “Cur deus caro,” 376. While Gregersen does not directly engage Teilhard, we can assume, from his discussion of deep ecology, that he would object to a resacralization of nature, although Teilhard follows through with maintaining a value hierarchy in materiality through his degree Christology. This is discussed in great detail as I move to a Levinasian critique on deep incarnation theologies.
nothing could be called common or unclean.” Following this rationale, Sittler insists that the incarnation of divinity into materiality eschews both human/nature and spirit/body dichotomies as well as the idea that materiality represents a privation of being that humanity must put up with en route to eschatological redemption. The redemptive work of God revealed in the incarnation gives evidence of the potential for Christology and the doctrine of the incarnation to speak to a world in crisis. In the act of taking on flesh, divinity embraces not simply humanity, but the order of materiality in which Homo sapiens participate. While Sittler’s vision remains anthropocentric in some respects, he insists on a Christology that embraces the needs of cosmos and Earth. “The way forward,” Sittler claims, “is from Christology expanded to its cosmic dimensions, made passionate by the pathos of this threatened earth, and made ethical by the love and the wrath of God.”

In Francis Schaeffer’s 1970 publication, Pollution and the Death of Man, his Christology, while problematic on many levels, connects the divine incarnation of Jesus with the call to treat Earth with dignity. Shaeffer’s creation theology emphasizes creation ex nihilo, the rational intelligibility of the phenomenal world, and the personal character of the divine in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, before offering a brief discussion

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187 Ibid., 181.
188 Ibid., 186. This expansion, for Sittler, must take place within contemporary dialogue that likewise embraces cosmos and Earth, and the doctrine must grow, evolve, and become re-imagined through such dialogue. “Doctrines are evoked, clarified, refined, given force and precision within the challenges of exact circumstances. The facts of history are the exciters of insight; the nature of the moment’s need engenders the doctrine to serve and bless it.” Ibid., 185. Sittler’s essay encapsulates so much of what ecotheology would become and continues to be.
189 See Schaeffer, Pollution and the Death of Man, 47-61, for his ecological Christology. Schaeffer’s creation theology is highly problematic because of his religious exclusivism, and anthropocentrism, insofar as he attributes personal subjectivity only to humanity, who alone is in the image of God. His thinking reveals an ecological paternalism even as it welcomes creation.
of the embodiment of Jesus. While his theology mostly concerns the doctrine of Creation, arguing for the divine origin and consequent goodness of the world, Schaeffer briefly discusses the same patristic logic re-imagined and re-appropriated in Sittler’s ecotheology. As such, Schaeffer asserts that the incarnation of the flesh of Jesus reveals a divine concern for the flesh of all creation in a way congruent with contemporary theologies of deep incarnation.190

Following Schaeffer, Thomas Seiger Derr references the incarnation as a doctrine affirming the material world beyond the human. Derr’s work, written largely as a response to Lynne White Jr., references many ways in which the Christian tradition bestows dignity to the wider material world, including its understanding of the doctrine of Incarnation. “The incarnation,” according to Derr, “declares in a dramatic way God’s solidarity with the world, not in redeeming men by plucking them out of this vale of tears, but in taking upon Himself the conditions of material existence.”191 Derr immediately links this understanding of incarnation with a theology of Christian sacramentality, positing that some existents within the material world beyond the human have the potential to incarnate and reveal divinity to the human. Derr pushes this idea further when he posits, “some Christian traditions…extend such theology to the whole of

190 Another eco-theological text from 1970, Paul Santmire’s Brother Earth, devotes a chapter to Christology. Ibid., 162-178. Yet, Santmire’s theology focuses on the cross and resurrection without making a connection to the idea of an expansive incarnation. Similarly, John Cobb’s Is it too Late? A Theology of Ecology (Beverly Hills, CA: Bruce, 1972), contains a brief thought that might be related to deep incarnation, though it is too far removed from a discussion of the doctrine of Incarnation for me to adequately deal with it in this thesis. In a discussion of the usefulness of the term “God,” Cobb outlines other options in terminology before defending the traditional terminology for divinity. “Perhaps we should speak only of Life, or Nature, or of Creative Process. Perhaps we should speak of the Word or of Christ, since the everywhere active, suffering, and persuading, life-giving reality who emerges from Whitehead’s analysis is recognized by him as manifest in a peculiar way in Jesus.” (134). While not discussed within the matrix of Christology, a deeper analysis of Cobb’s work would likely point to similarities between his view and deep incarnation.

191 Derr, Ecology and Human Liberation, 12.
nature, viewing it all as in some sense sacramental of the divine presence.” Incarnation and sacramentality are thus seen to reveal a wide embrace of materiality in the Christian tradition, in much the same way as later deep incarnation theologies.

Yet, Derr’s small, undeveloped paragraph on the nature of incarnation reveals two important distinctions emerging in ecological Christology as we move forward. This distinction begins to illustrate the divide I have discussed concerning the difference between dualist and monist theologies of incarnation. One the one hand, Derr acknowledges that the idea of incarnation, for some traditions, provides a positive view of materiality because divinity takes up flesh in the person of Jesus and in the sacraments. In this view of incarnation, materiality is valued because God becomes material in a limited sense, and by implication, this valuation of materiality is extended to other-than-human creation. Derr does not suggest calling this extension an incarnation by the representative power of Jesus, as Gregersen and others do later in the development of ecological Christology, but there are clear similarities between this position and those developed in the twenty-first century. Yet, Derr contrasts this with another way the idea of incarnation might be interpreted, in his suggestion that divine incarnation may be an event irreducible to the embodiment of Jesus of Nazareth or the sacraments. Rather than this exclusive position, incarnation may be a paradigm by which to understand the sacramental and radically incarnate presence of divinity in all things. This is the position that this thesis seeks to develop, although Derr ultimately rejects such a view.

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192 Ibid. Unfortunately, Derr does not say who extends the sacramental, incarnate presence of God to all things.

193 Ibid., 43.

194 Derr would not, however, associate himself with the latter view of incarnational significance. Derr suggests that while “all things display their Creator,” divinity finally transcends materiality and is not entangled with all bodies. Ibid., 43. The recognition of two deep incarnational paradigms is thus apparent.
Another text dating from the 1970s, and potentially relevant for discussion here, is Rosemary Radford Ruether’s *New Woman, New Earth*. Ruether’s thought is useful not so much for its overt statements but for the emergent logic growing from her evolving work in feminist philosophy and theology.\(^{195}\) Referring to a Christian conception of nature, Ruether acknowledges the role religions have played in dominating non-male and non-human forms of materiality. According to Ruether, much of the Christian tradition embraces a subjective dualism consisting of hierarchies between male and female, as well as human and nature.\(^{196}\) Yet, she insists that the notion of Christian sacramentality potentially overcomes such dualisms insofar as materiality might become incarnate with divine being.\(^{197}\) She notes that frameworks of this type, once common, were largely lost with the onset of the Liberalism following the work of Francis Bacon. Yet, her early work does not attempt to return to such a model in her solutions for the domination of women and Earth.

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\(^{195}\) See especially Ruether *New Woman, New Earth*, 63-83, 186-210; *Sexism and God: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1983).

\(^{196}\) Ruether does not attribute this human/nature split to Judaism, and understands Christianity under a Hellenistic framework. Ruether, *New Woman, New Earth*, 188. This is a questionable assumption at best and is far more complex than can be discussed in the space she devotes to such characterizations.

\(^{197}\) Ruether, however, attributes the sacramental potential of things to a redemptive framework where materiality is sacramental once it has been “conquered” by God and the church. Prior to this conquering, she believes the church understands matter as demonic. This is a serious misrepresentation of patristic thought regarding materiality and it is highly misleading to characterize this as the view of “classical” Christianity “which reigned from the patristic era through seventeenth-century Protestant orthodoxy” (Ibid., 190). Furthermore, she says nothing of the overwhelmingly positive way nature is understood among thinkers such as Irenaeus, Origen, Athanasius, the Cappadocians, Maximus the Confessor, and most non-Gnostic theologians. Ruether’s later statements on Patristic writers and cosmology are somewhat more nuanced. See e.g., Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins, 1992). For a stronger assessment of the Patristic and Medieval tradition and ecology, see Jame Schaefer, *Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics: Reconstructing Patristic and Medieval Concepts* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009).
While this specific text says little concerning deep incarnation, it is interesting to place these sparse comments on incarnation in nature with a later work of hers, *Sexism and God-talk*, when she critiques an understanding of incarnation that reduces its significance to the entanglement of divinity and the maleness of Jesus’ body.¹⁹⁸ For Ruether, Jesus’ gender is unnecessary for understanding the depth of the doctrine’s significance, which connects God not to one dynamic of the human species, but to humanity as a whole. The purpose of Jesus’ incarnation then, for Ruether, is to link God with the species as a whole, rather than any one form of this poly-dynamic creature. It is interesting in light of her concern for anthropocentrism that this critique only extends as far as the species is concerned, and does not lead to an explicit theology of deep incarnation, though her logic certainly points in this direction.¹⁹⁹

The next major work of the 1970s is Paulos Gregorios’ *The Human Presence*, which draws out the evolutionary and soteriological implications of the life of Jesus of Nazareth.²⁰⁰ Here we find a significant development in ecological Christology. Gregorios sees the world as emerging through a cooperative, threefold relationship among nature, human dwelling, and the life of God.²⁰¹ These dynamics cooperate with one another, and

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¹⁹⁹ She approaches this idea in *Gaia and God*, 253, where she asserts that divinity can be found at the heart of all things as that force that empowers comsogenesis itself. Yet, this is not specifically linked with the doctrine of Incarnation in the way she discusses incarnation and gender in other works. Her angle is the cosmic Christ as a hybrid of Platonic and Stoic philosophy that asserts Christ as the creative principle energizing comsogenesis and residing at the heart of all existents. This emphasis on divine creativity as the presence of God in creation is a fruitful idea for discussion, for wider ecological Trinitarianism, and should be explored further.

²⁰⁰ Paulos Gregorios, *The Human Presence: An Orthodox View of Nature* (Geneva, CH: World Council of Churches, 1978). Gregorias, interestingly, also posits a subjectivity of things expressed in their active dynamism to create the world even as they are passively created by others. 82-83. He thus suggests that there are three principle actors in comsogenesis, i.e., nature, the cultural world of the human, and divinity. This vision of universal subjectivity will be developed in a similar way in the work to follow.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 82-89.
need not exist as rivals existing through competition and a perpetual struggle for supremacy. Each dynamic either complements, reveals, or co-creates the other resulting in a world of radical interconnectedness. In fact, the interconnectedness Gregorios suggests moves beyond theologies of radical immanence or those sacramental cosmologies wherein the dynamics of being are merely present-alongside one another. In Gregorios’ thinking, the ontic boundaries of existents in each of the three dynamics of being – i.e., nature, world, God – are not rigid or fixed, but interpenetrate one another.\(^{202}\)

Gregorios’ theology has significant implications for the incarnation of divinity in Jesus of Nazareth. The human body of Jesus, like all bodies, becomes entangled with all of co-creative materiality. “It was,” according to Gregorios, “of the elements of the earth that his body was constituted, the body which was transfigured on Mt. Tabor, crucified on the tree, and came out through the mouth of the tomb, the body in which he appeared to his disciples, in which he ascended to heaven. Matter and nature participate in the redemption.”\(^{203}\) Gregorios’ understanding of creation and incarnation thus affirms the dignity of cosmos and Earth by linking it with Christ’s unified divine and human natures. Gregorios suggests that the totality of the created order both participates in and benefits from the redemptive work of God through the incarnation of divinity in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, who serves as a mediator not just between God and all humans, but between God and the entire created order.\(^{204}\) Incarnation as such

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\(^{202}\) This is equally true even of God: “God is not a reality with precise physical boundaries; man cannot create a space-interval between himself and God. God is the reality which sustains both man and nature, and it is through man himself and through nature that God presents himself to man. In this sense, it is foolish to see God and nature as alternative poles so that if man turns toward one he turns his back on the other.” Ibid., 84.

\(^{203}\) Ibid., 85.

\(^{204}\) These implications are drawn from the cosmology of Gregory of Nyssa, and his unique theology. For Gregory’s cosmology and theology, see ibid., 54-71; Paul Gregorios, *Cosmic Man: The*
embraces the existence of God within the flesh of a particular human, but an existence which cannot be reduced to the boundaries of species specific finitude. Thus God takes up incarnate being in an existent in whom resides the entire created order, and as such, assumes “the whole cosmos.”

While there are reasons to hesitate in straightforwardly labeling some of these as theologies of “deep incarnation,” they all mirror to some degree the logic developed in later ecotheological discourse. As such, while development awaits the doctrine, it is clear that the authors of the 1960s and 1970s paved the way toward the deepening of ecological Christology.

2.2.3 1980s

In the 1980s we see continued development of these ideas, especially in three authors who discuss the world as the Body of God: Grace Jantzen’s *God’s World, God’s Body*; Philip Sherrard’s, *the Eclipse of Man and Nature*; and Sallie McFague’s *Models of Divine Presence* (New York, NY: Paragon House, 1988). Gregorios demonstrates that Gregory of Nyssa founded his ideas on a theistic, but nevertheless evolutionary, theory of materiality common in Hellenistic philosophy. This allows Christ to act as mediator not just between humanity but also between all materiality insofar as the materiality “ascended gradually from plants to animals to humanity, and the human nature incorporates the vegetative, the animal, and the rational.” Gregorios, *The Human Presence*, 63-64. To be human, or any body at all, is to possess an ontic interlink to the totality of bodies. While this allows Gregorios to assert with Gregory that God and humanity, and by implication the cosmos, are not “totally other,” he does indicate that there is a disjunction between infinite divinity and finite materiality. Ibid., 68.

Gregorios quotes the sacramental theology of Paul Evdokimov in articulating the co-corporality of all things as revealed in the Eucharist and the incarnation of the Word made flesh. Ibid., 88. See Paul Evdokimov, “Nature,” in *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 18, no.1, March, 1965, p. 9. The problem with this is that while such incarnation theologies are helpful, reducing incarnation to the body of Jesus of Nazareth as a mediator of the whole cosmos does not take alterity, divine or otherwise, serious enough. Dismissing alterity allows things to loose their particularity, be spoken for by another, and to exist to simply point to another, beyond and separate from its own voice. Both Teilhard and Levinas are concerned with this issue and I develop my theology around their concerns to maintain particularity and avoid the reduction of the other to the intentional horizon of the subject. Gregorios’ anthropocentrism is also expressed in his upholding of the human as the priest of creation, which again maintains the necessity of the human as a mediator among cosmos, Earth, and God, and as such, problematic in a non-anthropocentric theology.
Jantzen’s work, while not a Christology or particularly concerned with incarnation, is an attempt to overcome theological dualism and re-sacralise nature. Building on the assumption that there is no way of knowing a world apart from phenomenology, Jantzen posits that in order for any revelatory knowledge of divinity to be possible, God must not be absolutely other than the material world. While God transcends any model of understanding, Jantzen holds that God and the world must share the same reality or there could be no relationship. These assumptions result in a theology where the world and God do not exist in separate ontic matrixes. The cosmos exists as the body of God, eternally growing from a divine will or agency that is inherently creative. The world as such is the embodiment of the divine will, and while Jantzen accepts that real material freedom is gifted to the cosmos, God nevertheless directs the entirety of the cosmos toward a particular will and purpose. God is understood then on the analogy of human personhood, and is conceived of as a super-personal agent inseparably tied to a cosmic body that develops according to the divine will. God is not incarnate only.


207 This is the precise logic we saw in Chapter One, concerning Origen’s thought. Of course, their mutual understandings of the ontic makeup of the God/world remain distinct.

208 With her insistence on creaturely freedom, Jantzen’s account is vague in how exactly we might know anything about the Creator. On the one hand, the cosmos develops exactly how God desires, but on the other, God desires creaturely freedom. Such a scenario is infinitely expansive in its scope of divine embodiment, which is a positive step for ecotheology, but it is so vague as to render one paralyzed in making any concrete statements about God and the world. See, Jantzen, *God’s World, God’s Body*, 150-154.

209 She readily admits the shortcomings of this analogical approach. One of the ways in which she posits difference is in her belief in the absolute control of the universal body by God, whereas the human does not have control of all parts of the body simply through the will. This level of autonomous, agential control suggests a rigid anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism in Jantzen’s theology.
within certain dynamics of materiality and otherwise transcendent, but is found embodied absolutely within the *creative totality* of the universe.\(^{210}\) Such a re-sacralisation of creation as the body of God, according to Jantzen, “helps to do justice to the beauty and value of nature.”\(^{211}\)

Similarly, around this time Sallie McFague also begins to speak of the cosmos as the body of God.\(^{212}\) McFague’s theology, like all the “body of God” theologies, is metaphorical. They are, however, written from the standpoint of critical realism, which posits that statements made do correspond to reality but without offering an absolute understanding of things and acknowledging the limitation of any model for speaking of God.\(^{213}\) McFague initially experiments with the idea of an earthly resurrection theology. “What if,” she asks, “the ‘resurrection of the body’ were not seen as the resurrection of particular bodies that ascend, beginning with Jesus of Nazareth, into another world, but as

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\(^{210}\) Jantzen does argue for divine transcendence insofar as she understands God as irreducible to any single form of embodiment. Thus, building on Karl Rahner’s understanding of human transcendence, she argues that God’s transcendence lies in the perpetual openness to become something new in the ongoing act of creation. Ibid., 101-130. The totality of God is emphasized in her statements that “nothing on earth is or could be God.” Ibid., 15. This is confusing given her pantheism and the best way to understand what she means is to highlight her understanding of divinity as the totality of an agential, super-personal will embodied in the cosmos. It is also only coherent in a view of subjectivity as irreducibly singular as opposed to a Teilhardian subjective singularity that is inherently plural. The later position will be supported in the doctrine of Incarnation suggested in Chapter Five. As such, it is possible to say that God is and is not Earth, thus arguing for the paradox of radical transcendence and immanence possible when subjectivity is not restricted to static, absolute singularity.

\(^{211}\) Ibid., 156. Despite criticisms, Jantzen’s work as a whole is helpful insofar as she deals with many classical doctrines of God and demonstrates how her theistic framework fits, or makes better sense of issues such as divine omnipotence, omnipresence, infinity, and transcendence.


God’s promise to be with us always, in God’s body, our world.”214 As such, the resurrection promise of eternal presence with God is shifted from an otherworldly eternity to an unending presence of God experienced within and through Earth itself. This does not mean, for McFague, that God is reduced to the world, but that the phenomenal world is contained within God and as such inseparable, even if distinct, from divinity. God exists as inseparable from the world, while simultaneously existing, as for virtually all theologians surveyed here, as a differentiated, agential being who cares for, loves, and wills the cosmos into reality as an extension of divine being. As such, divinity is radically immanent within the world.

Yet, this model of the body of God would be further developed in her later work, and connected with a theology of incarnation, in her 1993 monograph, *The Body of God*. Here McFague begins to write more concretely on the incarnation of Jesus. Here she moves beyond a model of ubiquitous immanence toward an understanding of the ontic entanglement of the God-world relationship, and provides a clear form of the critique developed later in this work concerning both classic and deep incarnation Christologies. “The scandal of uniqueness,” McFague writes, “is absolutized by Christianity into one of its central doctrines, which claims that God is embodied in one place and one place only: in the man Jesus of Nazareth.”215 This critique is directed at virtually all Christologies that establish either this one human, or the human in general, as the exclusive place where divinity becomes a part of the material world. As McFague’s critique states, this

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214 McFague, *Models of God*, 170. The resurrection is the springboard for McFague in its focus on the body. This is seen in other theological models as well—e.g., the sacrament of the Eucharist, and the Church as the body of Christ. McFague is thus extending the body theology of the Christian tradition.

doctrine suggests that the human is a mediator between God and the cosmos, and that
divinity most fully relates to the world in the shape of a human being. Such a doctrine
establishes humanity as a form most closely revealing God, and suggests that being
human and being divine share significant overlap.

For McFague, however, such exclusivity is not the heart of the doctrine of
Incarnation. Instead, the doctrine demonstrates the importance of the “concrete, physical
availability of God’s presence (‘became flesh’) and the likeness to ourselves, a human
being (‘lived among us’) that matter.”216 The point of the incarnation of Jesus, for
McFague, is not that it represents the exclusive instance of God’s incarnation in a world,
but that divinity is able to be concretely present in the flesh. Through our encounter with
the divine presence in the human Jesus of Nazareth, we discover a paradigm for
interpreting the cosmos itself as a matrix in which we might meet any number of
embodied forms that reveal the face of an incarnate God. McFague suggests “a different
picture, one that agrees with the tradition that transcendence is available to us only
immanently, only through the mundane, the physical, the bodily—but a body that is not
limited to Jesus of Nazareth.”217 This is not sufficiently developed by McFague, though
she does suggest that we encounter God’s Spirit embodied in the love of vulnerable
bodies, but this is not the path I take throughout this work.218

216 Ibid., 160.
217 Ibid., 161.
218 McFague’s appeal to meeting the face of the incarnate God through love is problematic insofar
as love is a characteristic of the human, and some other “higher mammals.” Claiming to find God in love
undercuts her assertion that a divine incarnation is not restricted to both the person of Jesus of Nazareth and
the human in general. Love may not be a decisively human characteristic, though deifying it does elevate a
particular humanist ideal beyond other expressions utterly behind human existence. A non-anthropocentric
Christology needs to look beyond love, or moral agency, though this need not mean neglecting the category
as a part of an infinite divine expression. Love may reflect a legitimate incarnation of divinity insofar as it
expresses part of the face-to-face encounter with infinity.
Finally, Philip Sherrard’s theology focuses on the desacralisation of nature and the renewal of sacramental cosmology. Sherrard’s theology is set in the context of the development and domination of the empirical, scientific method as a hegemonic view of reality that rejects the legitimacy of spirituality and appeals to divinity in understanding the world. The loss of a sacramental cosmology, he suggests, is a Western phenomenon begun with the early Church’s dualistic view of the world that intensified and abandoned transcendence altogether in the contemporary period. The desacralization of nature, which Sherrard, along with Jantzen and McFague, suggests is crucial in understanding human domination of Earth, is eschewed through a re-imagined theology of incarnation. Such an incarnational theology moves beyond understanding creation as revealing God by simply pointing to the creator beyond the creation. Sherrard posits that the world itself is a sacrament, revealing a God embodied within and throughout all materiality. “A sacrament,” for Sherrard, “demands a material expression. In fact, the archetype of all sacramental activity is the Incarnation of Christ Himself.”

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219 Sherrard only adopts body of God language in his later work, though it is conceptually present in his early writings. “This is to say that there is the cosmic Sonship of the divine Logos as appearing in the world of creation, and there is Sonship revealed in the individual and historical Jesus. The historical appearance of Christ is only one form of embodiment; the universe of matter is another form, and in this form the cosmic Christ is from the beginning and always showing forth images of God in nature, for nature is the Body of God.” Phillip Sherrard, *Human Image: World Image: The Death and Resurrection of Sacred Cosmology* (Ipswich, UK: Golgonooza Press, 1992), 149.

220 While his critique of the sciences is appropriate insofar as he rejects empiricism as an objective and salvific narrative superior to others and shows how contemporary techno-scientific frameworks contribute to the devastation of nature, his absolute rejection of modern science and an evolutionary paradigm is wildly problematic. As Michael Northcott demonstrates, ecotheology thrives when science and religion develop in dialogue with one another, each fulfilling their role through an openness to critique and re-imagination in light of the other. See, Michael Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, 132. See also, Michael Northcott, *A Moral Climate: The Ethics of Global Warming* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2007), for an excellent blending of science, theology, and ethics.


This incarnational, sacramental logic is, for Sherrard, the epistemological lens through which cosmos and Earth must be understood as the ontic entanglement of divinity and materiality. While divinity, cosmos, and Earth remain differentiated, their ontic entanglement shows that Sherrard is talking about more than divine immanence, favouring a relationship where creature is a manifestation of divine being, which informs a world that, in a sense, both is and is not God. The Christian tradition alone, for Sherrard, thus guides thinking about the world; the incarnate presence of Christ entangled in the phenomenal world reveals an eternal, divine subject able to create and unite with all flesh as an extension of divine becoming.

Ecological theologies through the 1980s continue to provide us with two general types of environmental Christologies that expand the meaning and significance of the incarnation of divinity within the person of Jesus of Nazareth. We see Christologies asserting that the incarnation of Jesus is not an event wherein God begrudgingly enters the world of matter in order to save humanity, but an event indicative of God’s love of matter and a desire to redeem all vulnerable bodies. The divine embrace of matter in

223 “If God is God, and if God is manifest in Christ, then creation must be capable of becoming one with the uncreated and it must be possible to transcend the apparent ontological gap between them.” Sherrard, *The Eclipse of Man and Nature*, 92. Sherrard bases this entanglement on orthodox Nicene and Chalcedonian Christological formulations as well as the incarnation and sacramental theology of the Greek fathers, who “insist that there is a total integration of the material and the spiritual” (Ibid., 92). This historical re-construction may not be indicative of all Greek Fathers, especially Gregory of Nyssa.

224 Sherrard rejects a mutual “co-creative” relationship where each emerges from the particularities of the other. The directionality of creation is clearly one way, from creator to creation. Sherrard instead sees all creation as embodying eternal, divine concepts, akin to Platonic archetypal forms. It is this framework in which creation is understood as the material incarnation of God, which he describes in his later work, *Human Image* as the body of God. Creation is the divine mind manifest. Thus, the material world is not absolutely synonymous with the divine, but does exist as the “icon of the celestial world.” Sherrard, *Human Image*, 153. “Each sensible thing has its own personal logos and Sophia by which it is constituted, and it is this logos and Sophia whose perfection is individuated in each object of the sense or the intellect.” Ibid., 152. These metaphysical, Platonic archetypes by which creation is built makes little sense in an autopoetic, evolutionary context driven by relationship, and strips existents of their unique co-creative power to create themselves, reducing them to icons of a divine Being and logic. These are the precise concerns I explore in subsequent chapters.
Christ demonstrates that God loves and is deeply present along-side of all flesh as its creator, while maintaining an ontic distinction with cosmos and Earth. We also see Christologies asserting that the life of Christ indicates a deep, ontic connection between divinity and all corporeity. Here, the significance of Jesus’ divinity extends beyond a divine love of matter, toward a pan-incarnational theology of things, where divine self-expression and incarnation is found ubiquitously throughout the universe. As we will see, the focus of deep incarnation Christology shifts after the 1980s in favour of the former framework, though examples of the latter remain, becoming the focus of my own theology, explored in Chapter Five.

2.2.4 1990s

The next instances of deep incarnational theologies arise in two works from the early 1990s. James Nash’s *Loving Nature* and Stephen Clark’s *How to Think about the Earth* expand the theology implicit behind the Johanine declaration that in Jesus of Nazareth, the divine Logos became flesh. Building on the Gospel of John, both of these texts understand incarnation as a divine embrace of all flesh insofar as the humanity of Christ represents a microcosmic recapitulation of the cosmos. Nash asserts that “the Incarnation confers dignity not only on humankind, but on everything and everyone, past and present, within which humankind is united in interdependence. …It sanctifies the biophysical world, making all things and kinds meaningful and valuable in the divine scheme.” Nash draws on the depth of the Christological tradition in saying that Jesus’

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incarnation reveals divine solidarity with all humanity and by extension all materiality. The human exists as a microcosm of the universe, an idea that exists throughout Church history, but now takes on new meaning in a post-Darwinian framework: “we are embodiments of biotic history on this planet, incorporating all simple systems in evolution.”227 A similar idea is expressed in Clark’s work, which concludes, “any single being can, in a way, be thought of as a cosmos after one particular mode. If the Word is incarnate as one being among many its embodiment is as a universe.”228 Furthermore, as Christ takes up human flesh and consequently embraces all materiality, he exercises his salvific power not only for humanity but also for all creation. Jesus’ humanity represents the divine embodiment and soteriological embrace of all things through the mediating power of his particular body.229

Similarly, in 1996 Norman Habel and Michael Northcott incorporate a deepening Christology into their work.230 Habel, like Nash, suggests an expansion of the classic Christological notion that Jesus of Nazareth represents all humans and accepts the evolutionary argument that the “organic unity” existing between humans and the cosmos warrants such a Christological expansion.231 Northcott, recognizing the Johannine and

227 Ibid. The only qualification we must make is to ensure we are careful not to suggest that the human is the pinnacle of comsogenesis. Speaking of the human as a microcosm can, though does not necessarily, suggest this. All things emerge from the relational creativity of comsogenesis, and each thing could be said to represent the cosmos as a microcosm by virtue of being-itself.

228 Clark, How to Think About the Earth, 117.

229 Nash asserts that creation’s dignity is intrinsic and does not originate from the necessary mediatory role of Christ’ humanity in conferring fulfillment to creation. Yet, the necessity of a human mediation of the divine is questionable if one seeks a non-anthropocentric theology. The necessity of Christ as mediator for material fulfillment is dealt with in subsequent chapters. See Nash, Loving Nature, 110,


Irenaean depths of the cosmic significance of the incarnation of Jesus, follows Irenaeus in his theology of cosmos and Earth. Irenaeus, Northcott reminds us, wrote within a context where Gnostic theology not only downplayed the significance of the material world, but understood it as something from which transcendence was needed. Contrary to Gnosticism, the doctrine of Incarnation, in which the invisible God becomes visible and takes on flesh, not only restores the human to proper relationship with divinity, but all of creation. Incarnation, for Northcott, follows Irenaean belief in the goodness of all matter and the love of God for all things.

2.2.5 2000s

As we move into the new millennium, and encounter an increasing number of ecologically minded Christologies, we see subtle developments in the doctrine along with clear continuity with the two deep incarnational models developed throughout the twentieth century. In 2000, Jacoba Kuikman outlines an incanational panentheism based on the Jewish concept of the “All Tree,” in order to “help Christians to develop a panenetheistic christology, where not just trees but all aspects of the created order are regarded as exuding Spirit—a revelation of the Divine Life within nature.” Nature, in this framework, is infused with subjectivity rooted in Christ’s expanded incarnation within the cosmos. While Kuikman argues that God is not limited to the phenomenal world, the divine is nevertheless omnipresent within created bodies as this incarnate presence begins to blur the ontic line between God and Earth.

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234 Ibid., 149. It is unclear in this article, as it is in many, how exactly non-human subjectivity is understood apart from its revelation of divinity. Furthermore, the form divine subjectivity takes is unclear.
Also in 2000, Mark Wallace’s essay, “The Wounded Spirit as the Basis for Hope in an Age of Radical Ecology,” while principally a foray into ecological pneumatology, makes use of incarnational language to describe a world infused with divine subjectivity.235 “The incarnation of God in Jesus,” according to Wallace, “is recapitulated in the here and now embodiment of the Spirit in the world which hearkens back to the originary Mother God’s birthing of order out of chaos.”236 Thus, his understanding of the divine presence within Earth represents a non-reductive monistic Christological theology of creation.237 Embracing an ontic entanglement between God and matter, Wallace, like Teilhard, argues that divinity is not simply a being present within or along-side of materiality, guiding it as it emerges into existence. Rather, divinity “enfleshes itself in the creation and maintenance of the natural order.”238 The result of Wallace’s work is a radically biocentric vision of divine incarnation within the phenomenal world itself, where divinity is incarnate not simply as a supreme, omnipresent being, but as vulnerable life itself.239 God and matter thus exist as an

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236 Wallace, “The Wounded Spirit as the Basis for Hope in an Age of Radical Ecology,” 58.

237 This is another strength of Wallace, and something explored by Gregersen as well. In subsequent chapters, I too suggest and develop the idea that the doctrines of Creation and Christology are inseparable.

238 Ibid.

239 Wallace adds a dynamic of vulnerability to the equation of divine encounter in a way not done by others. He writes, “The theological problem is that if Spirit and Earth mutually indwell one another, then
“internal and abiding union of the two in common life together” where the two are inseparable but distinguishable.\textsuperscript{240}

Finally in 2000, continuing to develop evolutionary minded Christologies, Neil Darragh suggests that in the incarnation of Jesus, “God became human, but…also that God became an Earth creature, that God became a sentient being, that God became a living being (in common with all other living beings), that God became a complex Earth unit of minerals and fluids, that God became an item in the carbon and nitrogen cycles.”\textsuperscript{241} Divinity, through Christ, thus enters the arc of the evolutionary narrative of Earth on a biological level and beyond. Dragh’s theology thus highlights the fluidity with which the ancient Christian tradition of God’s becoming flesh and embracing the whole material order fits into our relatively new framework of evolution and

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\textit{it appears that God as Spirit is vulnerable to serious loss and trauma insofar as the earth is abused and despoiled.”} Ibid., 60. See also, Mark Wallace, “The Green Face of God: Christianity in an Age of Ecocide,” \textit{Cross Currents} 50 (Fall 2000): 310-31. At issue here is the issue surrounding divine possibility and the crucial difference between monistic and dualistic incarnation theologies. Wallace, like Teilhard, suggests a radically monistic existence wherein God and matter mingle, without reductionism, whereas Gregersen, Denis Edwards, Elizabeth Johnson and others suggest that the Christological unity between God and things is dualist, insofar as things are glued together in intimate communion, but do not penetrate, and mix with the other. This continues the recapitulation of the classic Christological debates dating to at least the second century C.E.
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\textsuperscript{240} Ibid., 59-60. Wallace’s biocentrism does what other theologies do not do, i.e., he locates divine subjectivity not simply in traditional notions of divine character and attributes, but understands God through the inherent subjectivity of things themselves. As such, he does far less to reduce the world to an \textit{a priori} understanding of divinity. However, there are moments in this essay where he does speak of God as a being, and in fact the Being of beings, contradicting his statements to the contrary. Additionally, his emphasis on biocentrism is problematic. A focus on life prioritizes some forms of being over others, a prioritization growing essentially from a human way of being on Earth. The result re-inges hierarchy in the cosmos, and while it expands the circle of human concern for a world, concern grows by letting those into the circle insofar as they share traits that humanity values. Yet, Wallace gives us hints that his understanding of biocentrism may be more inclusive than a simple reading of the literal semantics of his terminology. He refers to “inanimate life-forms” (Ibid., 59), acknowledging that Spirit enfleshes these too. What exactly an inanimate life-form is, and if this an appropriate description to begin with, is not discussed by Wallace. If he understands “life” as transcending the boundaries of of biological being, more of a vibrant, dynamic materialism present in all things, the idea of biocentrism gains viability, though this is not discussed and as a result his work requires further consideration and dialogue.
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\textsuperscript{241} Neil Darragh, \textit{At Home in the Earth}, 124.
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comsogenesis. For Drargh, the Christ event occurs in a particular human body, but this body, like all bodies, is inseparably tied to all flesh. As such, through the epic of evolution in which all things are inseparably tied, the body of Jesus of Nazareth is an appropriate mediator of God present to material bodies. All that God does in the incarnation impacts the rest of the world because of this connection.

In 2001, the same year Niels Gregersen’s article coins the term deep incarnation, Duncan Reid’s “Enfleshing the Human: An Earth-Revealing, Earth-Healing Christology,” outlines a theology explicitly concerned with fleshing out the ecological implications of deepening incarnational theologies. Reid’s theology is virtually identical to deep incarnation theology as it has come to be defined today, though he expands the basis of his construction on insights from the Athanasius of Alexandria and a re-appropriation of Alexandrian Christology, as well as the tradition of orthodox Christology as outlined in the Nicene Creed. Reid argues, as many in the twentieth century had, that we cannot reduce the divine incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth to his particular body, nor even his embodiment within the human species, as the flesh embraced by God is understood more broadly in the Christian tradition as a concept inclusive of all materiality. The humanity of Jesus as such is thus not absolutely distinct from other forms of flesh within the wider creative matrix of the world. Consequently, Jesus’ divinity and humanity, theologically speaking, are irreducible to the human form, and inseparably linked to cosmos and Earth as all arise through the relational creativity of comsogenesis.

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242 Reid, “Enfleshing the Human,” 69-84.

Reid argues that such an expansive theology was a part of classic Christology from the beginning and justifies linking the divinity embodied in Jesus to the divine embrace of the entire material order insofar as Jesus’ humanity represents a microcosm of the world. God dignifies the human Jesus in their union, and because the human fits into the wider cosmogenetic narrative, God thereby embraces all materiality. A refusal to connect Christ to the entire material order is, for Reid a reduction of Christology to anthropology, and leads to devastating consequences for the other-than human world. The role of theology, then, in overcoming the modern ecological crisis is to reinvent the human around an incarnational Christology that dignifies all matter through God’s embodiment as the human Jesus of Nazareth.

After 2001, theologians begin to employ deep incarnational terminology in reference to the ideas outlined simultaneously by Reid and Gregersen, which as we have seen are rooted in many ecologically minded theologies throughout the twentieth century. Christologies during the past decade are keen to reference deep incarnation as a useful theology or suggest minor modifications to the established framework. One of the more significant developments seen thus far comes from Elizabeth Johnson, who suggests a methodological shift in the dominant top-down approaches typically seen in theologies of deep incarnation. She proposes that a bottom-up approach, as used in liberation and contextual theologies, would complement and strengthen the otherwise helpful ecological Christologies as their goal is to free Earth from the destructive impact of human domination of the planet. Beyond this, references to deep incarnation are found in

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Denis Edwards’ discussion of the ecological trinitarianism, Christopher Southgate’s theodicy and eschatology, Celia Deane-Drummond’s theological aesthetics via Hans Urs von Balthasar’s concept of “theodrama,” Martha Kirkpatrick’s Anglican ecotheology, Normal Habel, David Rhoads, and Paul Santmire’s liturgical theology, and David Clough’s animal theology. Additionally, Gregersen’s work has begun to enter into dialogue with other thinkers, an early example of this occurring in 2013, in volume four of the journal *Theology and Science*. Here Gregersen presents two articles, discussed above, which are the subject of brief discussions by Joshua Moritz, Ronald Cole-Turner, Ted Peters, and Daniel Peterson. Moritz’ work acts essentially as a complement to Gregersen’s work, demonstrating how deep incarnational theology possibly has roots in the political and priestly overtones of Genesis’ *imago dei*, certain strands of Second implications of theologies of deep incarnation, but does not suggest any shift in understanding of the doctrine itself. Concerning ethics, however, Johnson’s suggestion overcomes a significant weakness in many theologies of deep incarnation, namely, their refusal to take the voice of the other into consideration for their own fulfillment. The treatment of the topic in her most recent work, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2014), 192-199, however is mostly descriptive and does not develop this idea further.


Temple Messianic soteriology, and broader Christian thinking regarding the salvation of
the non-human world. Cole-Turner’s work emphasizes a more precise relationship
between deep incarnation and the Christian tradition, and, rightly I think, problematizes
Gregersen’s use of σὰρξ in the Gospel of John, suggesting that Gregersen’s theology is
not biblical but rather in line with the developments of fourth century Christology,
especially as seen in Gregory of Nazianzus. The later two essays by Peters and Peterson
address divine action in the world as well as the doctrine of kenosis, both of which are
interesting aspects included in deep incarnation theology, but dynamics that I cannot fully
take up here.247

2.3 Conclusion

As we have seen, the modern roots of deep incarnation Christology extend back to
the early twentieth century in Teilhard. Furthermore, because of the complex relationship
of Teilhard to ecological theology, it is important to note that deep incarnational logic is
present in the first ecological theologies of the 1960s and 1970s.

In this survey, we have seen two typologies of deep incarnation emerge. The first
understands Jesus of Nazareth as the mediator of a divine embrace of materiality as a
whole insofar as the human body exists as a microcosm within the broader epic of
evolution. In this model divinity takes up a particular human body as a way of dignifying,
redeeming, and uniting with all bodies that share the conditions of materiality. This
model, akin to the dualistic Christologies of the patristic period, posits evolutionary
continuity as a sort of glue between God and the world. The ontic entanglement

247 For Gregersen’s response to all of these essays see Gregersen, “The Twofold Assumption,”
455-468.
suggested here does not confuse or mix two otherwise incompatible natures, i.e., divinity and materiality. Yet, it does unite the two in a deep intimacy of communion, similar to how many throughout history have understood the unification of the two natures of Christ.

The second framework likewise understands the incarnation of Jesus as a unique, and particular historical event. Yet, for these authors, incarnation is not strictly limited to Christ, but fits within a ubiquitous paradigm for understanding the God/world relationship as such. In this model, there is an ontic entanglement between God and all materiality, i.e., an entanglement of multiple existents parallel to that which takes place with the two natures of Jesus. This model, akin to the non-reductive monistic Christologies of the patristic period, posits the incarnation of Jesus as a particular example of a potentially infinite ontic entanglement between God and the world, wherein the two overlap but are not reduced to the other in such a mixture. As such, the posited unity between God and the world is of a fundamentally different sort than in the other Christologies. Here, there is no gluing together of different existences, but each mingles within, and constitutes the other, without a reductionism that circumscribes all difference and eschews transcendence.

In a way, this work constitutes a recapitulation of the classic Christological debates between dualists and monists dating to at least the second century C.E. Yet, the matrix of materiality has shifted from the body of Jesus of Nazareth, to cosmos and Earth as the place where God becomes incarnate. Each view posits its own unity, and each has precedent in the history of the tradition and can be supported by authors deemed orthodox within the classical Christological tradition. Each view is deep, embracing the entirety of
the material matrix, and each is genuinely incarnational. Yet, for reasons that will become clear, different frameworks are suggested to understand the mystery of incarnation. As we move forward, I develop my preference for a non-reductive monistic form of deep incarnation and critique the non-oppositional dualism, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of both positions. I suggest a model for the relationship between divinity and materiality that eschews the metaphysical anthropocentrism and anthropomorophism that I fear ultimately resides even in non-oppositional dualist approaches.

Yet, in order to articulate my critique of a dualist model of deep incarnation Christology, a philosophical framework must be established by which the critique emerges, and upon which a new deep incarnation Christology may be built. As such, before returning to these theologies with a detailed critique a subsequent re-imagination of the doctrine, I outline the framework for subsequent construction, i.e., the ethics and philosophy of religion of Emmanuel Levinas, albeit a re-imagined version of his thinking based on the un-thought-of dynamics of his philosophy that eschews the metaphysical anthropocentrism implicit in his writing.
Chapter 3
Emmanuel Levinas and the Face-to-Face

3.0 Introduction

Prior to offering a critique and re-imagination of deep incarnation Christology, I survey the ground upon which my own doctrinal development is built. Below I explore the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, noting specifically the relationship among ethics, phenomenology, and temporality, opening to the idea of infinity, wherein God comes to mind. The expression of infinity grounds my subsequent deconstruction of deep incarnation Christology. While Levinas stops short of the path I take in re-imagining the infinite and the divine, a topic explored in the next chapter, his thought nevertheless grounds everything that follows.

3.1 Escaping My Self

Before outlining Levinas’ mature philosophy, I briefly describe the original philosophical context that drives his work. In his earliest texts, Levinas works within the boundaries of the wider matrix of European phenomenology, existentialism, and

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248 Levinas often times places special emphasis particular phrases and words by use of italics. As such, all of the emphasis in quotes from Levinas preserve the original texts.

249 The logic of building theology on such a philosophy follows Levinas’ expression of being a Jewish philosopher: “A philosophical truth cannot be based in the authority of verse. The verse must be phenomenologically justified. But the verse can allow for the search for a reason. This is the sense in which the words ‘you are a Jewish philosopher’ are acceptable to me.” Emmanuel Lévinas, and Jill Robbins, Is it Righteous to Be?: Interviews with Emmanuel Lévinas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 62. Likewise, I suggest that incarnation theology can only be made coherent in light of a more basic framework, able to account for the intelligibility of divine expression within the bodies of cosmos and Earth. I thus seek to make incarnation meaningful within embodied experience, a framework serving not as a metaphysical foundation, but as the ground of subsequent thought. See e.g., Catherine Keller, “Talking Dirty: Ground is not Foundation,” in Ecospirit: Religions and Philosophies for the Earth, ed. Laurel Kearns and Catherine Keller (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2007), 63-76.
ontology, in search of an escape from this system.\textsuperscript{250} While some of the ideas found in the early Levinas differ from his mature work, they reveal the impetus for his intellectual curiosity and outline the philosophical problems that provoke his development as a philosopher. Below I outline Levinas’ thought primarily as it develops in On Escape and Existence and Existents, as a backdrop for Levinas mature philosophy.\textsuperscript{251}

3.1.1 Escaping Phenomenology and Ontology

The philosophical context in which Levinas begins his work is the existential turn in twentieth century phenomenology that seeks to “renew the ancient problem of being qua being.”\textsuperscript{252} This existential starting point concerns the exploration of being itself – i.e., ontology – within the particularity of ontic, embodied existence.\textsuperscript{253} The being of beings, rather than the forms manifest in particular bodies, is barely describable, apprehended primarily through metaphors. Being itself is pure action; it is the brute fact of existence,

\textsuperscript{250} Levinas’ primary interlocutor here is Martin Heidegger, whose Sein und Zeit was given the highest praise by Levinas, but was also regarded with increasing suspicion following Heidegger’s declaration of allegiance to the National Socialist party. Martin Heidegger, Sein und Zeit (Halle, DEU: M. Niemeyer, 1927); Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996). For a brief study of Levinas’ and Heidegger, see Adrian Peperzak, “Phenomenology—Ontology—Metaphysics: Levinas’ Perspective on Husserl and Heidegger,” Man and World 16 (1983): 113-127.


\textsuperscript{252} Levinas, Existence and Existents, 56.

\textsuperscript{253} The distinction between being itself as the being of beings, and the specific forms that govern concrete embodiment of an individual being, is Heidegger’s concept of the “ontological difference.” “Heidegger initially distinguishes between that which is ‘a be-ing’ [l’étant] (das Seiende) and ‘the being of a be-ing’ [l’être] (das Sein des Seienden). … The science that studies a be-ing is, for Heidegger, ontic [ontique], and it is necessary to distinguish it from the science of the being of a be-ing which alone is ontological [ontologique].” Emmanuel Levinas, “Martin Heidegger and Ontology,” Diacritics 26, no. 1 (1996), 15. I use the terms ontic and ontological in this thesis according to this differentiation.
referring not to any body, but to the presence of existence itself: “Being is: there is nothing to add to this assertion as long as we envision in a being only its existence.”

Existence is thus the facticity of being, the fact that there is (il y a). “There is, in general, without it mattering what there is, without our being able to fix a substantive to this term. There is is an impersonal form, like in it rains, or it is warm.” Being itself then is existence without regard for the concrete form of existents; it represents the sheer facticity, or the possibility of the emergence of beings. Existence as such is impersonal, lacks properties, and identifying attributes. From this anonymous, faceless presence possibility, existents emerge in the phenomenal plane.

The there is is not open to any precise linguistic concept, insofar as it is not accessible within the intentional horizon of a human mind. Being itself thus confronts humanity in an an-archic time, a matrix of existence that precedes the origin, or awakening of the subject as myself, within a subjective horizon. In this matrix, where a body dwells in relation to things before it is able to intellectually process its world, the subject who eventually awakens is confronted with an existence utterly beyond its horizon. This matrix, which precedes and makes differentiated beings possible, reveals that there is an impersonal matrix irreducible to concrete forms, unable to be experienced

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254 Levinas, On Escape, 51.


256 Levinas, Existence and Existents, 53

257 I will explore the idea of an-archy in detail below. While confusing, Levinas’ understanding of temporality, and the reality that bodies relate to their world prior to and beyond the realm of language and thought, is of central importance to the idea of infinity and the theology that I develop in Chapter Five. See Matthew Eaton, “Theology and An-Archy: Deep Incarnation Christology Following Emmanuel Levinas and the New Materialism,” Toronto Journal of Theology 32 no. 1 (Fall, 2016, forthcoming) for a condensed articulation of this thesis.
within an awakened consciousness. In the relations that unfold prior to the possibility of cognitive experience, where language and freedom do not yet exist, the human is confronted by a matrix of being that is fundamentally beyond its grasp. In this an-arthic time that disrupts the conscious horizon there is a something that is no-thing, something unable to be seen, described, or experienced—something that has not yet come to the illumination of the day, when things becomes visible and open to experience. In the metaphorical night of being itself, no-thing expresses itself; identities and attributes become senseless and indeterminate as bodies escape the possibility of perception. Thus, rather than “serving as our means of access to being, nocturnal space delivers us over to being.”

The feelings erupting from the recognition of the matrix of the there is, is horror in one’s inability to come to terms with our relationship with such face-less, anonymity, an utterly obscure, indeterminacy that cannot be named. Such reveals an existence beyond existents, an inescapable matrix that cannot be experienced in the humanist powers of language and thought.

It is from this horror, manifest in feelings of anonymity, senselessness, and isolation in the facelessness of being itself that Levinas seeks an escape. While his particular escape path is not clearly defined at the outset, “getting out of being by a new

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258 In his early work, Levinas works with existential metaphors that are not as clear as his later works. Common in these early writings is to speak of unspeakable moods (e.g., nausea) that are described poetically. The night, e.g., and the fear of what stirs in the dark becomes a common metaphor for the realization that there is a matrix of being beyond the light of day, when things are visible and experience of the world is possible.

259 Levinas, Existence and Existents, 54. The epiphany of the night is not a mode of intellectual assent to the there is. The night is an affective state occurring prior to conceptualization, though it is not revealed apart from phenomena. As such, it is not an a priori human understanding of Being, as in Heidegger’s Dasein, nor is it an a posteriori deduction from phenomenal evidence, as in contemporary science. The epiphany, as we will see in more detail below, is counter-phenomenal, emerging not in thought but in the bodily feelings that make thought possible.

260 “The rustling of the there is…is horror.” Ibid., 53.
path,” remains the underlying theme of all of Levinas’ writings.\textsuperscript{261} Yet, escaping ontology is a difficult, if not impossible task because of the inherent role being itself plays in the possibility of the awakening of existents. As such, in the horror and enchainment to existence, “the mind does not find itself faced with an apprehended exterior”; it is confronted with a reality bound to our deepest, subjective self. Thus, the horror of the inescapable there is, which gives a subject its own being, leads a subject to the depths of its own interiority. As such, “there exists a weariness which is a weariness of everything and everyone, and above all a weariness of oneself.”\textsuperscript{262} All subjects thus necessarily cling to the seemingly insurmountable, “revolting presence of ourselves to ourselves.”\textsuperscript{263}

Levinas thus seeks a path out of being and beyond the isolation with one’s self. One such path, outlined in Existence and Existents and based in the fear of being swallowed into anonymity and isolation, is the positioning of one’s self as a hypostasis. A hypostasis is “a situation in being where there is not only being in general, but there is a being, a subject.”\textsuperscript{264} Here one recognizes one’s self as a differentiated subject among a world of others, each characterized by a finite identity, and concrete attributes. The human hypostasis may thus control and master the horror of the there is, preventing being from overwhelming one’s existential dread. Such sovereignty is paradoxical, the assertion of being exterior to existence, through an inward, cognitive retreat, where one limits

\textsuperscript{261} Levinas, On Escape, 73.
\textsuperscript{262} Levinas, Existence and Existents, 11.
\textsuperscript{263} Levinas, On Escape, 66.
\textsuperscript{264} Levinas, Existence and Existents, 71. For more on this idea, see Ibid., 61-86; Time and the Other, 51-54; Ethics and Infinity, 51-52.
oneself to a singularity characterized by forms that are recognizable and differentiated from others who become likewise recognizable things. A hypostasis thus becomes a subject, an ego conscious of a world, my-self in control of its moods, able to represent the exterior world by reference to its interiority. A subject, according to Levinas, is able to “take refuge in oneself so as to withdraw from being,” taking on and assigning identity to itself and others and thus escaping the isolation and anonymity of being.

Yet we do not get far down this path before panic once again ensues, as the way that appeared to get us beyond ourselves, bends back and collapses on itself. The path offered in the hypostasis is inevitably circular insofar as the chains of being are inextricably anchored within interiority itself. The hypostasized subject is no freer from itself than it was, as its awakening as an ego is still enchained within its own horizon. The I as a myself thus recognizes that it is still isolated, not within the anonymity of being where nothing is differentiated, but isolated within its own intentional horizon. As such there is always “the weight of existence on the existent.” The issue at hand in the problem of grasping being qua being is the idea of interiority. “In the identity of the I, the identity of being reveals its nature as enchainment, for it appears in the form of suffering

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265 This is characterized through the metaphor of insomnia and sleep, dominant themes in the later half of Existence and Existents. Insomnia, as a chaotic, uncontrollable, uncanny mode of being is indicative of the there is. “Wakefulness is anonymous. It is not my vigilance in the night; in insomnia it is the night itself that watches” (EE, 63). The achievement of the insomniac, whose “vigilance…has no subject,” is to sleep, and thus control one’s self by becoming a localized subject. Levinas, Existence and Existents, 62.

266 Ibid.

267 An ontic solitude remains in the mastery of ontology due to the inability to be any other. “I am not the other. I am all alone. It is thus the being in me, the fact that I exist, my existing, that constitutes the absolutely intransitive element, something without intentionality or relationship.” Levinas, Time and the Other, 42.

268 Ibid., 76.
and invites us to escape. Thus, escape is the need to get out of oneself, that is, to break the most radical and binding of chains, the fact that the I is oneself."\(^{269}\)

Ensuing from being and the enchainment to oneself are feelings of shame and solitude.\(^{270}\) These become the primary analytic for subjective, human existence and the obstacles to be overcome in the escape from the self-centeredness of being. The others identified by the hypostasized subject exist beyond an infinite abyss that cannot be crossed by a shared existence, or the experiential horizon of phenomenology or empiricism.\(^{271}\) As such, others exist only as one’s alter ego. Differentiated subjective worlds are thus enchained within their own interiority: “I am forever stuck with myself. And this definitive element is my solitude.”\(^{272}\) The result, then, of Levinas’ early studies, is the uncovering of a “need,” animated by the horror and solitude of being, that “turns us toward something other than ourselves,” toward the “tutelage of what is outside of us.”\(^{273}\) The shame of being present only to one’s self, is the affective state of a subject trapped

\(^{269}\) Levinas, *On Escape*, 55.

\(^{270}\) Shame is here understood existentially, shorn of its theological and moral ramifications. The shame present in the inability to escape oneself simply reveals the nudity of a subject exposed only to itself beyond the possibility of hiding: “What shame uncovers [découvre] is the being who uncovers himself [se découvre]” (*E*, 64). See also *EE*, 84-100, where the analytic turns from shame to solitude, and Levinas introduces the other as a possibility of escape from being, or enchainment to the self. Solitude as an outcome of ontology is also developed further in Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 42-44.

\(^{271}\) “Phenomenological description, which by definition cannot leave the sphere of light—that is, man alone shut up in his solitude, anxiety and death as an end, whatever analysis of the relationship with the other it may contribute, will not suffice. Qua phenomenology it remains within the world of light, the world of the solitary ego which has no relationship with the other qua other, for whom the other is another me, an alter ego known by sympathy, that is, by a return to oneself.” Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, 86.

\(^{272}\) Ibid., 85.

\(^{273}\) Levinas, *On Escape*, 58-59. While Levinas initially suggests pleasure as an exterior possibility of escape from the brutality of ontology and the horror of isolation, it proves to be merely a “deceptive escape.” Ibid., 62. Pleasure fails because it has a terminus that ends not in an escape from being but in the re-inscribing of isolation as the human is ultimately left alone in its being. While one might appease itself through pleasure for a brief time, the inherent orgasmic quality of pleasure always reaches its goal, and ends in the human being “entirely disappointed to find himself again existing.” Ibid., 61.
within being and overwhelmed by two impossibilities: that of “getting rid of oneself” and of “saving oneself by oneself.”

While the escape from being clearly lay in exteriority, these topics are not substantially developed in Levinas’ early work. The solution to solitude, however, is suggested in the relationship with the other. Through such a “fearful face-to-face situation…the Other as other is not only an alter ego. He is what I am not: he is the weak one whereas I am the strong one; he is the poor one, ‘the widow, and the orphan.’” Alterity, epitomized in the altogether queer temporality of the other’s death, is a “mode of the beyond being” and thus the only sure path out of being.

3.1.2 The Face of the Other

Three essays published in the 1950s, “Is Ontology Fundamental” (1951), “The Ego and the Totality” (1954), and “Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity” (1957), set the tone for Levinas’ mature writing. While the path had been cleared in the works discussed above, Levinas’ escape from the isolation of being now enters a phase of refinement as he develops the idea of alterity through the ethics of face-to-face encounters. Here the other, as the one who solicits a subject to ethics, grounds

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274 Levinas, Existence and Existents, 88, 95.
275 Ibid., 98.
276 Levinas, Time and the Other, 30. The vulnerability of alterity, especially in the temporal structure that I explain below, is extraordinarily important not only to Levinas’ ethics as first philosophy, but to my interpretation of a theology of incarnation. Alterity and temporality form the core of my critique of classic and deep incarnation Christologies, and my re-imagination of the doctrine in Chapter Five.
philosophical thought beyond self-centeredness, providing an existential escape from enchainment to one’s self.\textsuperscript{278} These ideas, wherein “the other is not an object of comprehension first and an interlocutor second,” are fully explored in Levinas’ \textit{Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority, and Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence.}\textsuperscript{279}

\textit{Totality and Infinity} concerns the ethics arising when a subjective ego is disrupted by the face of alterity—i.e., an otherness irreducible to the language and concepts generated within a cognitive horizon.\textsuperscript{280} This asymmetrical dynamic between the other and the same – i.e., Levinas’ term to describe the subjective ego – insists that alterity cannot be synthesized within the thoughts of the subject, nor encountered through the light of phenomena, whose perceivable forms can never exhaust the identity of another. This resistance of the other, the refusal to be identified, becomes the basis for what we will call its infinity, and the ground of its ethical disruption of the same. Alterity thus exists infinitely beyond what one is able to think, irreducible to the horizon of a subjective ego, which often concludes that its knowledge grasps the totality of another. Levinas thus seeks a relationship between the other and the same wherein the former is not a passive object, whose identity is determined by the latter as a thinking subject able to assign meaning to alterity.

\textsuperscript{278} Until 1951 alterity and the escape from being were not explicitly framed as ethics.


\textsuperscript{280} Those wanting a more detailed guide as they read \textit{Totality and Infinity} may follow Adriaan Peperzak’s helpful commentary in his \textit{To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas} (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1993), 120-208.
The peculiarity of the ethical relation, as we will see, eschews subject-object relationships, preceding and making the subjective ego possible. Ethics as such is the result of something otherwise than calculated thought; the ethical relation is embodied and visceral, an affliction of the same by the other brought about through affects generated prior to thought, erupting within and disrupting the sovereignty of the same. Ethics then is not a position one arrives at after apprehending being itself nor beings within the light of phenomena that present themselves to conscious senses; it is the origin of thought grounded in the infinite sensuality of bodies.  

“The ethical, beyond vision and certitude, delineates the structure of exteriority as such. Morality is not a branch of philosophy, but first philosophy.”  

This asymmetrical and an-archic structure of ethics, ideas explored below, allows ethics to originate outside of one’s self, and the irreducible infinity of alterity relating to subjects before they become awakened within a cognitive horizon, is the escape from the sovereignty and isolation of the self that Levinas seeks.  

The search for an adequate description of the ethical relation between the same and the other begins with the idea of desire, differentiated from need.  

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281 “The idea of infinity…sustains activity itself. Theoretical thought, knowledge, and critique, to which activity has been opposed, have the same foundation. The idea of infinity, which is not in its turn a representation of infinity, is the common source of activity and theory.” Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 27. I will say more about the precise idea of infinity below.  

282 Ibid., 304. Ethics is not presented as simply a particular perspective within a philosophical sub-discipline, based upon some deeper ontological, phenomenological, or epistemological foundation. The ethical relation allows one to escape enthainment to one’s self, mired in the isolation of ontology, phenomenology, and epistemology as these ways of knowing all unfold in a cognitive horizon that cannot help but reduce alterity to its own experience. Ethics as first philosophy, and as I argue later, first theology, grounds what one thinks and says in face-to-face encounters that have always already happened by the time a subject thinks its thoughts. Morality is an optic beyond consciousness, providing the possibility of a cognitive horizon.  

283 Ethics is an epiphany given to the subject before it has the chance to think and thus comes from outside of itself. Insofar as it is “the possibility of a *signification without a context,*” it is an event not governed by the subject alone, who is passive in the act of being made responsible. Ibid., 23.  

284 Ibid., 33-35; 50-52; 63.
is on the one hand egocentric, its also desires to escape its own sovereignty through communion with difference. As such, the other, whose alterity cannot be comprehended by the same, is desirable by virtue of its strangeness, difference, and resistance to the totality of the same. Such desire is not the synonymous with need, and thus is not an attempt to satisfy a simple lack in one’s being by consuming something.

Desire for alterity is thus not like hunger, i.e., a need to satiate one’s self through feeding on, consuming, and absorbing exteriority into one’s self. Desire for alterity insists on preserving difference; it insists that the other remain absolutely exterior to the subject, “an absolute, unanticipatable alterity” that lives for and identifies itself, irreducible to how it might be consumed. The desirable then is not to be “reabsorbed into my own identity as a thinker or a possessor. The metaphysical desire tends toward something else entirely, toward the absolutely other.”

Altery is always exterior to one’s conceptual horizon. It is thus invisible to the perceptions and sensations of a conscious subject. This is not to say that alterity is an incorporeal spectre, but that the fullness of its embodied identity expresses counter-
Phenomenally, overflowing the ideas that think it. “Invisibility,” writes Levinas, “does not denote an absence of relation; it implies relations with what is not given, of which there is no idea. Vision is an adequation of the idea with the thing, a comprehension that encompasses.”

Desire is thus desire for the other to be other, and as such transcendent—i.e., an alterity expressing infinitely as a body overflowing any idea a subject might have concerning it. Following the third Meditation of Descartes, Levinas insists that the idea of infinity is put into a subject by means of an exteriority that is incapable of originating within a finite, subjective horizon.

“The idea of infinity is exceptional in that its ideatum surpasses its idea…we could conceivably have accounted for all the ideas, other than that of Infinity, by ourselves.” Thus, an inaccessible exterior is necessary for the idea of infinity to emerge insofar as the idea refers to a reality without the possibility of content accessible within a finitude horizon. It must be encountered in the plurality of separate existents exterior to one another in order to emerge as an idea within a limited horizon. Infinity thus presupposes difference that cannot be penetrated, arising as an idea wherein the inconceivable is encountered through mystery. The idea of infinity then is that of an absolute overflow; it is an idea whose ideatum is always already beyond what anyone is able to think. The inaccessibility of the

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289 Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 34. This is Levinas’ argument against Husserl, whose phenomenology denies infinity in its assertion that knowledge is “a noesis [i.e., thought, idea] correlative of a noema [i.e., object of thought, idea].” Ibid., 90. See also Ibid., 122-127. On Levinas’ phenomenological development of Husserl, see John Drabinski, *Sensibility and Singularity: The Problem of Phenomenology in Levinas* (Albany, NY: State Univeristy of New York Press, 2001), 13-42.


291 Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 49. The ideatum is the object to which an idea refers. It is often seen as a copy of a divine idea, phenomenally manifest. The contestation here is simply that ideas and the ideatum to which they refer are synonymous or coterminous.
ideatum – its hiddenness – expresses its way of being in relation to the subject; it is what the subject is not, and as such what the subjective ego is unable to grasp. Such is the idea of infinity – i.e., the unbridgeable epistemological difference among bodies, unable to be integrated into the totality of a horizon – the primary marker of alterity.

Desire for an absolute exteriority leads to his precise understanding of the same and the other, characterized as a totality – i.e., that which exists within the horizon of the subject – and infinity – i.e., a transcendence eluding perception and resisting absolute comprehension. The history of Western philosophy, according to Levinas, as expressed in ontology, phenomenology, or empiricism, has not followed this path, eschewing the infinite essence of transcendence in favour of the unlimited epistemic power of the same. “Western philosophy has most often been an ontology: a reduction of the other to the same by interposition of a middle and neutral term that ensures the comprehension of being.”

Eschewing this reductionism, Levinas forgoes totality as the ground of thought and the relation with alterity, affirming the infinite distance between the same and the other. As such, Levinas emphasises a relation between the two wherein alterity is not consumed by the same, but resists totality by means of infinity. Thus, since the same cannot grasp the infinity of the other, knowledge by means of comparison and analogy with one’s experiences is no longer definitive. Identifying another “‘as this,’ or ‘as that,’” does nothing but reduce alterity to an epistemological schema, where one’s ideas

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292 Ibid., 43. The result of such comprehension is a neutral, and supposedly objective language, by which the same is able to define and limit the other by identifying its essence apart form discourse. “This mode of depriving the known being of its alterity can be accomplished only if it is aimed at through a third term, a neutral term, which itself is not a being; in it the shock of the encounter of the same with the other is deadened. This third term may appear as a concept thought…in which objective quality and subjective affection are merged.” Ibid., 42.
encompasses the ideatum. Thus, when “faced with this alterity, the I…expresses the universality of the same identifying itself in the alterity of objects thought and despite the opposition to the self.” In the epistemology of a totality, the other ceases to be other, and is constructed as an alter ego of the same.

This way of the same in relation to the world unfolds as power-over another. It is the power of an ego in which it is able to identify, consume, and thereby possess others without deference to their infinite resistance—“everything belongs to me.” Possession is the essence of the same, and while unavoidable, it is not for that reason neutral. In such possession, there is an inherent epistemological violence that grounds all violence. As such, “possession affirms the other, but within a negation of its independence. ‘I think’ comes down to ‘I can’—to an appropriation of what is, to an exploitation of reality. Ontology as first philosophy is a philosophy of power…a philosophy of injustice.” The problem with the knowledge is not simply its identification of others by means of comparison, but the ego’s refusal to allow alterity to overflow its perspective, thereby affecting “the disappearance of what could shock.” The precise issue then is a lack of discourse, a refusal to address the other in the vocative, allowing it to express itself.

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293 Emmanuel Levinas, “Language and Proximity,” in Collected Philosophical Papers, 112. This does not mean that positive knowledge by means of various epistemologies is without value, but that ethics proceeds along a different path than language and cognition.
294 Levinas, Totality and Infinity, 36
295 In Chapter Five, I suggest that Christologies that reduce the possibility of incarnation to human form perpetuates this violence against infinite, divine alterity. God becomes the alter ego of the theologian.
296 Ibid., 37-38.
297 Ibid., 46.
298 Ibid., 124.
299 Christologies that limit divinity to human forms reduce God to the alter ego of the theologian, thereby preventing the possibility of divine self-expression; unless, of course, God is nothing but a superhuman—an implication many theologies cannot avoid in my estimation.
Thus, it is not that alterity is beyond all expression and relation. Infinity resists the epistemic capacities of the subject through self-concealment, which breaks epistemic power by means of affective epiphany, of which I will say more below. Thus, in contrast to knowledge in the classical sense, wherein the subjective ego is sovereign over objects, Levinas suggests that knowledge, philosophical, theological, or otherwise, erupts when the infinity of alterity calls the sovereignty of the thinking, speaking subject into question. Knowledge then “cannot be reduced to object-cognition; it leads [back] to the Other. To welcome the Other is to put in question my freedom.” Absolute epistemic freedom, the freedom to comprehend and thus limit the other within conceptual boundary markers, eschews the ability of the other to speak itself beyond, and thus disrupt the “imperialism of the same” that tells another what its essence is apart from its own infinite self-expression.

Knowledge of alterity then is drawn not from object-cognition, but a calling into question of the subjective power that seeks to circumscribe the infinite expression of “a being that stands beyond every attribute,” in the light of one’s self. The positive relational structure replacing object-cognition has yet to be explored, but for now it is important to stress that alterity expresses by disrupting the subjective horizon of the subject. Yet, rather than isolating the subject by such a disruption, alterity becomes the ground for an authentic relationship with the other that respects the idea of infinity, which

300 Ibid., 85.
301 Ibid., 87.
302 Ibid., 74.
is the “way of existing of the exterior being.” The other is authentically related to when it is embraced as it expresses itself—καθ’ αὑτό (by itself, as such). Knowledge of the other as other thus amounts to embracing what one precisely cannot embrace—i.e., the infinity of an alterity that overflows language and thought, existing across an unbridgeable epistemic distance. On this point, Levinas is worth quoting at length:

The manifestation of the καθ’ αὑτό in which a being concerns us without slipping away and without betraying itself does not consist in its being disclosed, its being exposed to the gaze that would take it as a theme for interpretation, and would command an absolute position dominating the object. Manifestation καθ’ αὑτό consists in a being telling itself to us independently of every position we would have taken in its regard, expressing itself. Here, contrary to all the conditions for the visibility of objects, a being is not placed in the light of another but presents itself in the manifestation that should only announce it; it is present as directing this very manifestation—present before the manifestation, which only manifests it. The absolute experience is not disclosure but revelation: a coinciding of the expressed with him who expresses, which is the privileged manifestation of the Other, the manifestation of a face over and beyond form. Form – incessantly betraying its own manifestation, congealing into a plastic form, for it is adequate to the same – alienates the exteriority of the face. The face is living presence; it is expression. The life of expression consists in undoing the form in which the existent, exposed as a theme, is thereby dissimulated.

This revealing explication of knowing alterity beyond appeals to ontology, phenomenology, and empiricism – the limitations of a horizon enclosed on itself – does not suggest that the subject cognitively apprehends the alterity of the other in the fullness of its own self-expression. The other as such is not disclosed. What precisely is grasped is the idea of alterity as infinity, beyond the possibility of absolutely apprehending the content of otherness residing beyond the veil difference. The infinity of the other is

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303 Ibid., 35. Furthermore, “transcendence designates a relation with a reality infinitely distant from my own reality, yet without this distance destroying this relation and without this relation destroying this distance, as would happen with relationships within the same.” Ibid., 41.

304 Self-expression καθ’ αὑτό, by itself, refers to the inherent self-expressive power within alterity, irreducible to the meaning a subject ascribes to the expression.

305 Ibid., 65-66.
revealed as an epiphany insofar as the subject cannot incorporate it finally into any system of thought by appealing simply to the forms and attributes manifest in phenomena. The content of the other’s essence always overflows the possibility of a subject’s comprehension of alterity. What is known is precisely that the other, καθ’ αὐτό, is otherwise than the subject—i.e., the subject knows that alterity is infinite, a reality beyond what it is capable of thinking. This is the principal characteristic of the other. In this way the other is revealed as beyond any horizon, καθ’ αὐτό, through the epiphany of an exteriority which exceeds what anyone can think. Welcoming infinity thus represents a different type of understanding, an understanding that the other is beyond appeals to an interpretive horizon; it is infinite, the embrace of an idea whose ideatum always overflows thought. It is thus utterly distinct from perception insofar as it is not presented within the light of phenomena that can be absorbed into language and cognition, and thus open to representational identification as like this, or like that. Alterity as such is a counter-phenomenon that resists being identified within the horizon of the same, disrupting the sovereign power of the subjective ego.

Here we come to the heart of Levinas’ philosophy: “the way in which the other presents himself, exceeding the idea of the other in me, we here name face.” The face is the unfolding of the idea of infinity. It expresses as a counter-phenomenal reality, which conceals itself as soon as it reveals, overflows positive description, and takes shape, we will see, as an ethical, asymmetrical, an-archic event that disrupts all horizons.

306 Continuing to follow Descartes, the calling into question of the same, is not something that the self or any epistemological theory discovers on its own. Such can only arise in the infinity greater than the subject and overflowing its very idea. Non-power, as such, becomes the way of being for a subject in an ethical relation with the other. Non-power is discussed further below, and becomes a crucial element in re-imagining a theology of incarnation.

307 Ibid., 50. See also Levinas, “The Ego and the Totality,” 41-42.
To fill out a discussion of the face, two of its dynamics already alluded to must be explored further: its relation to phenomena and its ethical power.\footnote{This division follows Levinas third section within Totality and Infinity, unfolding in three parts: A. “Sensibility and the Face” (187-193), B. “Ethics and the Face” (194-219), and C. “The Ethical Relation and Time” (220-247). My discussion of temporality is separate as it draws mostly on the later Levinas, especially Otherwise than Being.}

3.1.2.1 The Face and Phenomena

The peculiar self-expression of the face presents itself as a counter-phenomenal event confronting and disrupting the horizon of the same. The expression of the face is irreducible to what appears, beyond the horizon, despite the corporeal matrix of its expression. As such, the face of the other person exceeds the sensibility of the same, and begins to take on uncanny characteristics insofar as it expresses as a corporeal reality that always overflows what the subject can perceive in the world. The alterity of the face ultimately resists even the plastic forms integral to its expression, exceeding the possibility of being identified within ontology, phenomenology, and empiricism.\footnote{TI, 50-51.}

Insofar as the face does erupt within the matrix of a subjective horizon, it continues to maintain such a ghostly presence, residing in and expressing from beyond the present time of the subjective horizon. In order to adequately understand the face as a counter-phenomena, we must first offer a basic appraisal of Levinasian phenomenology.

Prior to cognition, wherein a subject represents others by comparing them with pre-conceived concepts based in their own reflection, experience, and inherited socio-historical traditions, a body dwells sensually within a world.\footnote{As this summary shows, Levinas is not against phenomenology, rather ethics originate within this mode of understanding. For more on phenomenology, see John Drabinski, Sensibility and Singularity; Levinas, Totality and Infinity, 109-183; La théorie de l'intuition dans la phénoménologie de Husserl (Paris,}
the affective dimension of life lived prior to cognition, a space where bodies inhabit a world prior to separating from the totality of existence and existents, positioning itself in a subjective world as a differentiated, singular existent. This occurs in the mundane dynamics of daily life, where one enjoys, and feels and consumes others in order to meet their needs. 

“We enjoy the world…we breathe, walk, see, stroll.” Such enjoyment occurs not as “a care for Being, nor a relation with existents, not even a negation of the world,” but as “the very narrowness of life, the naïveté of the unreflected I, beyond instinct, beneath reason.” Through this enjoyment, bodies bath in the elements, soaking in a totality of information radiated from other bodies that allows existents to take shape and awaken as subjects on Earth. Such an creative economy exists within all existents, but for the human occurs within a primordial time prior to the eruption of an I as a myself, a subjective ego aware of the world. Primordial time, explored further below, exists prior to a subjective present wherein the subject is conscious of and reflective upon the sensuousness of dwelling alongside of others who comprise the world. These pre-


311 Levinas, Totality and Infinity, 53-81. This time is reductively, insofar as there are far more affects that could be pointed to, described as enjoyment. Enjoyment is a manner in which a subject consumes what it needs to position itself in a world as an awakened, differentiated ego. Dwelling as such is self-centeredness, albeit without reference to the pejorative connotations of selfishness.

312 Ibid., 139.

313 Ibid., 138.

314 “To be a body is on the one hand to stand, to be master of oneself, and, on the other hand, to stand on the earth, to be in the other, and thus to be encumbered by one’s body. Ibid., 164. Existents emerge from relationship grounded in Earth, possessing freedom and dependence simultaneously.

315 See e.g., Ibid., 137, 153. Such dwelling does not occur in the sweeping moments of temporal duration, or any past temporality that was once the present. It is an absolute past, and “always already” whose a priori temporality exists as an inability to be conceptualized. The moment we have begun to represent the world, we represent a sensuousness occurring prior to the present. A subject thus has always already dwelled within the world by the time they contemplate their existence as a specific myself. Perception is the assigning of identity to the world through grasping it in comprehension and remembrance:
cognitive affects occur “without my troubling myself about knowing what upholds the earth,” not grounded in any cognitive, conceptual system. On the contrary, “it is they [i.e., other existents and elements] that ground me. I welcome them without thinking them. I enjoy this world of things as pure elements, as qualities without support, without substance.” Thus, the pre-cognitive dwelling of an existent enjoys the things and elements of the world by consuming what it needs to survive in its singular existence, but goes no further than this. Dwelling then occurs prior to cognition as intentional representation.

Cognition is a different mode of dwelling within a world than sensuality. “Standing there,” where one dwells, “is precisely different from ‘thinking.’ The bit of earth that supports me is not only my object; it supports my experience of objects.” Thinking – i.e., the cognition, conceptualization, representation, and intentionality processed in the language of the same – flows out of sensuousness, after one’s needs have been met by consuming things and dwelling affectively in a matrix of bodies that have

“the world of perception is thus a world where things have identity. The substance of this world is visibly possible only through memory.” Ibid., 139.

316 Ibid., 137.

317 Ibid. It is important to note again that such a need is fundamentally distinct from the desire discussed above. Needs are possessed and consumed by the subject; desire exceeds necessity and aims at a relationship with the other that maintains the integrity of an alterity outside of itself. “Enjoyment does not refer to an infinity beyond what nourishes it,” while desire seeks the other as other. Ibid., 141.

318 This is a major point of contention in Levinas’ phenomenology as compared with Husserl’s. Husserl made no room for the pre-cognitive and the pre-representational in his phenomenology. For Husserl, the truth of things is revealed in experience, but only in recollection, after the sensible relationship has passed through intentionality, i.e., cognition, representation, conceptualization, and remembrance. These ideas correspond to their ideatum. Phenomenology, for Levinas, must extend deeper than the appeal to intentionality. On Levinas’ understanding of Husserl’s theory of intentionality see The Theory of Intuition in Husserl’s Phenomenology, 37-51.

319 Ibid., 138.
not yet become differentiated egos.\(^{320}\) After the sensible relationship, humanity enters a space of cognitive power, wherein the world is comprehended through cultural horizons and by comparing the objects perceived in the senses with conceptual parallels that make sense of the world. This making sense of things happens insofar as a subject assigns identity to others who make up their perceptual world. The event of cognition amounts to identifying others, as if the ideas arising in experience directly corresponded to their ideatum.\(^{321}\)

Sensual dwelling and intentional cognition, while different modes of relationality, end in a similar result: alterity is consumed. Such consuming incorporates exteriority into the interiority of the subject eradicating difference: “the distinction between me and the object, between interior and exterior, is effaced.”\(^{322}\) The other, literally consumed and absorbed into the body of a subject, or reductively identified by means of a intentionality, gains an identity by means of a transmutation in which “it already renounces alterity” and takes the shape of the same.\(^{323}\) As such there is the disappearance of the possibility of

\(\text{---}^{320}\) But the dwelling cannot be forgotten among the conditions for representation, even if representation is a privileged conditioned, absorbing its condition. For it absorbs it only after the event, \textit{a posteriori}. Hence the subject contemplating a world presupposes the event of dwelling, the withdrawal from the elements (that is, from immediate enjoyment, already uneasy about the morrow), recollection in the intimacy of the home.” Ibid., 153.

\(\text{---}^{321}\) This is different than empiricism, where the subject knows an object outside of experience. Levinas is here aiming at the phenomenology of Husserl. In language that clearly addresses the philosophy and nomenclature of Husserlian phenomenology, Levinas writes: “in clarity an object which is first exterior \textit{is given} that is, is delivered over to him who encounters it as though it had been entirely determined by him. In clarity the exterior being presents itself as the work of thought that receives it. Intelligibility, characterized by clarity, is a total adequation of the thinker with what is thought, in the precise sense of a mastery exercised by the thinker upon what is thought in which the object’s resistance as an exterior being vanishes. The mastery is total as though creative; it is accomplished as a giving of meaning: to object of representation is reducible to noemata.” Ibid., 123-124.

\(\text{---}^{322}\) Ibid., 124

disruption, insofar as the freedom of the subject to determine the other’s identity ignores the possibility that another might speak for itself, καθ ἀὑτό. Insofar as alterity is consumed in sensuous dwelling and subjective representation, the only thing a subject discovers is oneself. The world, the other person, and even God are subordinated to the all-consuming subject who dwells and thinks in the world.\footnote{In a general sense, this describes the movement toward individualist subjectivity underway from the sixteenth century to modernity. This is not necessarily the direct reference to Levinas’ critique, which may be more of a dialogue with post-structuralism and anti-humanism, though it certainly would apply to the self-sufficiency of modernist theories of subjectivity. For more see Simon Critchley, \textit{Ethics, Politics, Subjectivity: Essays on Derrida, Levinas and Contemporary French Thought} (London: Verso, 1999).}

Such violence is, to a degree, simply the way existence naturally unfolds. The limitations of life demand that to exist in the first place one must position oneself in the world and separate from the totality through dwelling amidst and enjoying others. Likewise, for a species such as the human, cognitive life naturally unfolds from the sensuous; there is no option for denying one’s peculiar nature. Such egoism is violence, albeit violence shorn of the pejorative connotations of the word. Yet, the human is capable of another form of violence once the summons of the other, discussed below, enters into the social relationship. Thus, while the subject might choose to maintain an egoism in the face of the other, egoism as such is not simply and unequivocally evil. “In enjoyment,” as well as in representation, “I am absolutely for myself. Egoist without reference to the Other, I am alone without solitude, innocently egoist and alone. Not against the Others…but entirely deaf to the Other, outside all communication and all refusal to communicate—without ears, like a hungry stomach.”\footnote{Ibid., 134.}
The face of the other, however, resists being consumed. Yet, such resistance is not strictly the violence of a power struggle; it is capable of a passive resistance that does not struggle because it is by nature, inconsumable due to its infinity. As we have already discussed, the face is characterized primarily by this transcendence, the perpetual overflow of what any subject could experience or think concerning it. Thus, though the face expresses, and expression must be received either in sensuousness or cognition, the infinity of the face is not equivocal to either of these, and is irreducible to both dwelling and representation. The face exists in a matrix beyond phenomena and is not precisely accessible in classical epistemological ways of knowing. Thus, as Levinas says in an interview late in his career, “I do not know if one can speak of a ‘phenomenology’ of the face, since phenomenology describes what appears. … The best way to encounter the Other is not even to notice the color of his eyes.” Furthermore, “the relation with the face can surely be dominated by perception, but what is specifically the face is what cannot be reduced to that.”

So, if the face is a counter-phenomenon, irreducible to the thought that thinks it, what exactly is its expression and its relationship with the subject? The counter-phenomenal nature of the face is not the outcome of an independent existence outside of corporeity as such. The face is not a disembodied specter, or a disincarnate god floating in the void. For, Levinas, the face has its definitive source and expression in another person, another embodied existent able to touch the subject in the matrix prior to thought,

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327 Ibid., 86.
328 The “disincarnate” essence of the face refers to the counter-phenomenal relationship it has with the same, which rends the egoistic horizon. I discuss the technical understanding of incarnation and disincarnation in reference to Levinas in Chapter Four.
before it awakens as a differentiated ego. In the act of ontic separation, wherein existents become differentiated by means of dwelling, the idea of infinity opens up to the world of subjectivity. Differentiation, what Levinas calls separation from a totality, opens up an absolute space between things, an unbridgeable gulf that grounds infinity. Yet, it is precisely the nature of infinity as the principle characteristic of the face that here expresses beyond the abyss created in separation. Such an expression is the work of “language” that communicates to the subject through apophesis, a via negativa, revealing as epiphany without context and apart from phenomena. Expression without context equates to the expression of the other καθ’ αὐτό, which does not refer to the content of its being, but that it is known precisely as other without comparison or in comparison with other things or experiences. Such is the strangeness of the “language” of the face, which, for Levinas entails:

entering into relationship with a nudity disengaged from every form, but having meaning by itself, καθ’ αὐτό, signifying before we have projected light upon it, appearing not as a privation on the ground of an ambivalence of values…but as an always positive value. Such a nudity is the face. The nakedness of the face is not what is presented to me because I disclose it, what would therefore be presented to me, to my powers, to my eyes, to my perceptions, in a light exterior to it. The face has turned to me—and this is its very nudity. It is by itself and not by reference to a system.

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329 “Egoism, enjoyment, sensibility, and the whole dimension of interiority – the articulations of separation – are necessary for the idea of Infinity, the relation with the Other which opens forth from the separated and finite being.” TI, 148. See also EE, 61-100.

330 Levinas’s philosophy is not utterly apophatic, as we will see, though this is the primary characteristic of the face of the other and what he will call divine, the trace, and the holy. My concern with such a philosophy is for its relevance for modern ecological Christologies, and since the literature here is complex enough, I am unable to explore the contrast between apophatic and cataphatic theology in the Christian tradition. Such a discussion would take us too far afield, but would be a fruitful project in the future. A study of apophatic theology in the context of Hesiod, Plato, and Plontius, as well as Pseudo-Dionysus, Maximus the Confessor, and a host of other ancient and modern theologians that aimed at a dialogue with Levinas would be fruitful.

331 Levinas, Totality and Infinity, 74.
The precise nature of the alterity of the other, the manner in which it expresses καθ’ αὐτό, is as an infinity transcending subjective grasp. The “content” revealed as epiphany beyond a horizon is the very nature of the other as irreducible to what a subject is able to think concerning it. It is a corporeal reality to be sure; it does have peculiar form, attributes, and vulnerability as its content, but the dimension of such content given to the subject cannot exhaust the meaning of alterity. The face is an ideatum, but one that always overflows the idea of a sensing, thinking subject. When information from the other enters the sensible and cognitive horizons of the subject, they become prey and are only understood in comparison with what has already been conceptualized by the subject. The subject’s inability to experience what the other experiences, this separation, is the ground of the infinity, and thus the epiphany of the other, and the rise, as we will see, of ethics. This is the nudity, invisibleness, and counter-phenomenal nature of the face, “present in its refusal to be contained. In this sense, it cannot be comprehended, that is, encompassed. It is neither seen nor touched—for in visible or tactile sensation the identity of the I envelops the alterity of an object, which becomes precisely a content.”

Thus, while the other possesses a particular embodiment, and as such can be perceived, this is not precisely the identity of the other as other.

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332 Perception, characterized in the prized human capacities to see and the temptation to grasp are sensory modes that must be interpreted within a horizon. Interpretation is carried out by means of comparison, and conceptualization in reference to some system: “Vision opens upon a perspective, upon a horizon, and describes a traversable distance, invites the hand to movement and to contact, and ensures them. …The forms of objects call for the hand and the grasp. By the hand the object is in the end comprehended, touched, taken, borne and referred to other objects, clothed with a signification, by reference to other objects.” Ibid., 191.

333 Ibid., 194

334 The point of Levinas’ work is that the face cannot be restricted to appearance as if transcendence expressed as negation gave access to what is behind the veil of infinity. And so, “the face, still a thing among things, breaks through the form that nevertheless delimits it. This means concretely: the face speaks to me and thereby invites me to a relation incommensurate with a power exercised, be it
 contrary, from the perceptive view of any subject, the content of the other is always infinite. The other, thus, cannot be told what it is by anyone other than itself, because to the epistemic powers of a subject, alterity always overflows the identity assigned to it.

The encounter with the other is thus recognized within a horizon by means of negation, i.e., in the recognition that one’s conceptual power is disrupted by transcendence. But, there must be a more positive encounter as well, but one that likewise is not subject to a horizon. This positive face-to-face encounter, which is recognized in negation, must precede this subjective awareness of one’s inability to perceive the other. This is the content of the ethical relation, wherein the infinity of the other expresses not simply the identity of alterity but the vulnerability and mortality of the other. Thus, before moving to ethics, it is important to note how the idea of infinity as resistance to being identified parallels the resistance that opens up to the the necessity of ethics.

The face-to-face occurs in a space and, as I discuss below, a time that mirrors in some degree the event of dwelling within the world, albeit with a major difference. Dwelling, as we have seen, takes place within the pre-conceptual sensibility of enjoying a word. It is an affective space that feels before it represents and conceptualizes through comparison. Likewise, it takes place in the temporality of the always already occurring from the perspective of rational thought. Yet, there are instances, according to Levinas, when the subject runs up against the proximity of a force in this affective spatio-temporality where resistance is encountered beyond the resistance to being identified within a horizon. The other, for Levinas, is not only what resists being known fully, but

enjoyment or knowledge.” Ibid., 198. Thus, while beyond the subjective horizon, the body of the other is capable of rending the world of the subject through an expression that nevertheless cannot exhaust it.
what resists being absorbed into the same insofar as it demands fulfilling its own self-determined existence in a world. This resistance denies the subjective reduction of other bodies to what can simply be enjoyed, and as a result consumed and incorporated into the existence of the same. In the matrix of sensibility then, prior to representation, the face expresses outside of a horizon through its resistance to being consumed through dogmatic identification and through the interruption of its own life. It is this transcendence that refuses to be consumed that opens up the ethical dimension of the face-to-face encounter. The expression of alterity, opening up in the sensuality, leads to a proximity with the other that thus demands responsibility that would prevent its being absorbed into the life of the subject.335

Resistance expresses as a shock that disrupts subjective enjoyment of the world, causing reflection on the encounter after it has already taken place. Yet, just as the other resisted the consuming power of the subject dwelling in the world and establishing its being, so too does it resist being totalized within a cognitive horizon. In both instances, in the past and the present, the other escapes the consuming grasp of the same, and positions itself as transcendent infinity that cannot be contained in any horizon, affective, cognitive, or otherwise. In both senses, the other καθ’ αὐτό resists being consumed, and exists beyond what any horizon is able to possess absolutely. Such a counter-phenomenal event rends the subjective horizon from a corporeal reality that is ultimately beyond the subject. The other itself is inseparable from the world, but its relationship to the perception of the same is ephemeral, overflowing the phenomenal matrix in the infinity

335 See also “Language and Proximity,” in Collected Philosophical Papers, 116. Expression is a pre-linguistic, sensuous language; it is an expression of relationship independent of any system of intentional signs and symbols used by interlocutors. Such expression unfolds “like a battering-ram…the power to break through the limits of culture, body, and race.” Ibid., 122.
of its essence. Thus, the counter-phenomenal essence of the face refers not to its form or attributes, but to the way it disrupts the subjective ego.

3.1.2.2 The Face and Ethics

The expression of the face occurs within a counter-phenomenal matrix, but the expression is not one of apophasis. The other overflows a subjective horizon but there is a positive structure in the expression opening up in the *via negative*, toward an ethics of face-to-face encounters. Levinas does not lead us to solipsism, but a paradoxical way of encountering and embracing the expression of another who is ultimately “not reabsorbed in his status as a theme” within an ego’s horizon. The infinity of the other refers to the inevitable “surplus of the social relation” not to the absence of positive content or truth. But no matter how much can be authentically known, such a surplus “at each moment destroys and overflows the plastic image it leaves me.” The truth of these encounters unfolds as ethics insofar as it expresses a summons to the perceiving subject to welcome the other in the integrity of its own self-revelation, i.e., an infinity that is its own language, resisting the totality of the same. The ethical content of the face then is definitively grounded in its infinity from the perspective of the perceiving subject.

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337 Ibid., 221.

338 Ibid., 51. This is a theme explored fully in *Otherwise than Being*, but its roots are in *Totality and Infinity*, where what is said about the other in language appears as a betrayal insofar as the other “has quit the theme that encompassed him, and upsurges inevitably behind the said.” Ibid., 195.

339 Language is a complex topic in Levinas, and he is not entirely consistent in how he speaks of it. “The beginning of language is in the face. In a certain way, in its silence, it calls you.” Emmanuel Levinas, Tamra Wright, Peter Hughes, and Alison Ainley, “The Paradox of Morality,” in *The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other*, ed. Robert Bernasconi, and David Wood (London: Routledge, 1988), 174. Yet, the face is not a simply linguistic phenomenon and its an-archic structure insists that it is prior to
Through infinity, the essence of the face unfolds as ethical insofar as it “resists possession, resists my powers.” Such resistance is indicative of the other’s self-assertion to have an identity and place in the world. Resistance is ethical insofar as it expresses a demand that one desires to stand on its own, grounded in its own piece of Earth, in the light of the Sun. By resisting being consumed, the other expresses a plea to exist on its own terms, irreducible to the plans and life of the subject who has the power to hear and affect such a plea. The expression of these demands is made in face-to-face relationships, and its ethical nature follows from the idea that the expression represents the voice of the other, expressing its needs, confronting the power of the same. “The facing position, opposition par excellence, can only be as a moral summons.” The power that is resisted in the opposition of the face is the tendency of the same as a subject with power-over others to absorb the outside into a totality through consuming it in enjoyment or in identifying it through representation, rather than allowing it to stand on its own and live its own life. The other, as such, is not simply a stranger beyond the possibility of positive expression, but the one who also positions itself in a world, pleading by means of resistance to thrive in its own existence and on its own terms. The structure of such resistance expresses as defiance and disruption alterity’s definitive “no” to the possibility of a subject exercising its power over it. Ethics thus unfolds as an

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language. The face is rooted in the misery of the body, whose expression is beneath linguistic constructions with signs, symbols, and sounds. For Levinas, “the whole body—the hand or a curve of the shoulder—can express as the face.” Totality and Infinity, 262. “Language thus conditions the functioning of rational thought: it gives it a commencement in being, a primary identity of signification in the face of him who speaks, that is who presents himself ceaselessly by undoing the equivocation of his own image, his verbal signs.” Ibid., 204.

340 Ibid., 197.

341 Ibid., 196.
exterior disruption on the subject’s egoism. The subject is thus called to abandon its power-over others, in exchange for hospitality, the welcoming of alterity, καθ’ αὐτό.

Resistance does not deny the possibility that a subject may still consume another, reducing it to an object of enjoyment, a tool for use, or even by killing it outright. The summons simply “puts the I in question,” imposing on the subject who is asked to divest itself of power, and re-imagine how its freedom might unfold: as welcome, hospitality, and responsibility for alterity.342 Even in the most radical occasion, when an ego chooses to murder the other, its alterity is inherently recognized and escapes the horizon of the same. Upon the recognition that one has the power to kill, one simultaneously recognizes that the violence unfolding takes place against the will of another, who proclaims, “you shall not murder.” Such resistance indicates the separation of the other from the same, and thus reveals that former has already escaped the latter by virtue of its self-positioning in the world. To murder is to intentionally interrupt what one recognizes as possessing resistance as its content, and so “the other is the sole being I can wish to kill.”343

[The other] thus opposes to me not a greater force, an energy assessable and consequently presenting itself as though it were part of a whole but the very transcendence of his being by relation to that whole; not some superlative of power, but precisely the infinity of his transcendence. This infinity, stronger than murder, already resists us in his face, is his face, is the primordial expression, is the first word: ‘you shall not commit murder.’ The infinite paralyses power by its infinite resistance to murder, which, firm and insurmountable, gleams in the face of the Other, in to total nudity of his defenseless eyes, in the nudity of the absolute openness of the Transcendent. There is here a relation not with a very great

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342 Ibid., 195.
343 Ibid., 198. Additionally, while the other may be murdered, their resistance is absolute and never ending. Even when killed, the other always transcends the subject in its self-positioning and resistance, which prevents it being absolutely consumed, used, or eradicated from the world. As such, in the plastic forms of its impact on the world, it continues to haunt Earth and the subject who committed the violation. The other, in its frailty and death, is carried by the world even when its world has gone away. Such are the uncanny dynamics of the face, which exists within, but rends the sensible, including the very temporality of the present, from beyond.
resistance, but with something absolutely other: the resistance of what has no resistance—the ethical resistance.\(^{344}\)

The face disrupts and even paralyzes subjective power-over another. Such goes beyond the disruptive power of an infinite identity; it is not simply that ego cannot identify the other. In resistance, another reveals itself as its own body, its own existence that strives to dwell in its own world, on its own terms. Ethics is the moment wherein the other calls the subject’s power-over into question, resisting the violent possibilities of the same, denying that it is or ever could be reduced to an object to be consumed, or identified simply as a subjective alter ego. The structure of the primordial relation definitively questions social relationships dominated by the sovereign abilities, capacities, and powers of a subject. Ethics as such is the plea for peace between the other and the same. The other’s resistance refuses to reinscribe violence into relationality by maintaining hostility. As such, it is not an oppositional, counter-violence, but a “pacific opposition…one where peace is not a suspended war or a violence simply contained.”\(^{345}\)

The pacific opposition does not force, but does demand that subjective freedom embrace a responsibility for another’s vulnerability. The resistance of the face then is structured positively as ethics, “maintained without violence, in peace with this absolute alterity.”\(^{346}\)

The structure of ethics as the other’s infinity, expressing a non-violent resistance soliciting responsibility from the subject, disrupts power-over others in two concrete ways. First, the alterity of the face resists any absolute identity. The other exists and expresses itself as infinite, and so the content of its identity from the perspective of the

\(^{344}\) Ibid., 199.


\(^{346}\) Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 197.
subject is precisely transcendence. While the other certainly has traits, abilities, and characteristics, the horizon of the same can never exhaust the other through the apprehension of these phenomenal qualities, nor precisely identify alterity as such. Thus, the identity of the other is not open to the schematization of a subject who knows by means of ontology, phenomenology, or empiricism. The subject cannot exhaust the identity of the other. Within the social relationship, there is always room for a surplus of meaning in the face of alterity. Anything known concerning alterity is known in part. Consequently, the I must make room for the other to extend beyond anything it could imagine, because alterity qua alterity is to inherently over flow a horizon: “expression does not consist in giving us the Other’s interiority.”

Second, the infinity of the face resists its own mortality. Resistance is directed toward the threat of being consumed, whether through enjoyment, objectification, subjective representation, or beyond this, the absolute violence of murder. Thus, self-expression and death belong solely to alterity. Human subjects are thereby responsible for the sacrifice of sacrifice. In these ways alterity resists being consumed, whether through being told what its being consists in, or when, how, and why it should die. The

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347 Ibid., 202. As such, Levinas does not suggest that with enough discourse, the other might be thoroughly identified, through the back and forth of clarifying discourse. The identity of the other always overflows the meaning assigned to it. This is what it means to be other—i.e., irreducible to subjective thought.

348 The face, as nudity “is an exposure unto death: nudity, destitution, passivity, and pure vulnerability,” expressing “as the very mortality of the other person.” Emmanuel Levinas, “Diachrony and Representation,” in Time and the Other, 107.

349 In the next chapter, I deal with applying this logic beyond the human. Such an ethic becomes more difficult in this setting, but is not for that reason irrelevant. The final refusal to sacrifice sacrifice, Jacques Derrida’s critique against Levinas’ humanism, is applied against deep incarnation advocates in Chapter Five. Jacques Derrida, “‘Eating Well,’ or the Calculation of the Subject: An interview with Jacques Derrida,” in Who Comes After the Subject? ed. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991), 113.
other seeks its own life, on its own terms, to dwell in its own place in the Sun, and thus
resists its own death at the hands of subjective violence. \(^{350}\) The retreat from mortality
opens up as alterity’s dynamic self-positioning in the world against the possibility, or
inevitability, of bodily interruption leading to death. The confrontation by the other of the
egoist power to consume, use, represent, and kill is a plea to thrive and flourish in the
world apart from the interruption of another subject.

All of these, while differing in the degree of violence committed, effectively strip
alterity of its self-assertive power to exist καθ’ αὐτό. \(^{351}\) Through resistance, the other
insists on a separation that demands to be otherwise than an object of the same, while
maintaining the social relationship. This is concretely manifested in the other’s suffering,
a plea for life expressed within embodied fragility, weakness, and vulnerability, a
“destitution which cries out for justice.” \(^{352}\) Bodily suffering exceeds the possibility of
being understood by a subject; it infinitely overflows any meaning one is able to assign to
it. Such sensuous expression cannot be reabsorbed into the totality of same, as the pain of
the other is its own. Suffering, like identity, transcends the power of a horizon. It may be
ignored, but it cannot be directly experienced nor consumed; mortality always resists the
consuming power of a subject.

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\(^{350}\) Resistance to death need not be absolute, but refers instead to violent deaths at the hands of a
murderous subject.

\(^{351}\) Consuming the other, regardless of the form it takes, is violence. Such is not a deduction, but
told to us by the other’s resistance. Yet, there must be gradations of violence to account for the difference
in consuming. Subjective needs required in order to position oneself in the world, the very act of claiming a
place in the Sun is the foundation of violence. In a sense then, the world unfolds through violence and to
exist is necessarily to usurp existence from another. From the human standpoint, this must be distinguished
from certain, more insidious forms of violence that are altogether beyond necessary for life, e.g., murder.
Yet, there remains a structural overlap such that within this understanding of ethics, there is a moral
ambiguity in existence itself. We might then simultaneously lament and enjoy existence as inherently good,
despite its violence.

\(^{352}\) Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 215.
It is finally here that the difficulty of Levinas’ technical style of writing resides, as his thought leads inevitably to the most basic affective experiences that give rise to empathy and compassion.\textsuperscript{353} The face is ultimately an unidentifiable, corporeal vulnerability, an expression of nudity or exposure. This embodied language, on the one hand, describes alterity as apart from the interpretive horizon of the same. The other is other without being clothed in the subject’s language. On the other hand, the nudity of the other is its literal nakedness, stripped from protection, vulnerable before the elements. This vulnerability is what is finally able to express to a subject beyond the violence of its horizon, disrupting its power-over others by soliciting responsibility by afflicting its feelings, which are not absolutely subject to language and cognition.

The face expresses κοθ’ αϊτό “in one’s destitution and hunger.”\textsuperscript{354} It is the literal hunger of the other person, being exposed to the elements, or his or her inability to fulfill any embodied need that confronts the power of the same. The face, while counter-phenomenal, is not a disincarnate spectre in Levinas’ thought.\textsuperscript{355} The bodily expression of vulnerability is the face of alterity. Such an expression, as we will see, solicits beyond the power of linguistic and cognitive representation, and so is not that which is processed within a horizon, but what afflicts a subject through the feelings that exist prior to the awakening of the I. As such, the face expresses in the flesh and blood of suffering bodies

\textsuperscript{353} While these emotions are carried into the consciousness of human thought, I am referring here to pre-conceptual affects, what I describe below as an-arич as opposed to awakened affects. I explore the idea of affect more in Chapter Four.

\textsuperscript{354} Ibid., 200.

\textsuperscript{355} I am using “disincarnate” provocatively here, as will become clear in Chapter Four. Levinas calls the face “disincarnate” to speak of its counter-phenomenal expression, not in relation to its disembodied nature. Thus, I retain the term in order to move beyond Levinas’ reductionist use of the term, while embracing his concern that the face remain counter-phenomenal. See Ibid., 78-79.
expressing frailty, vulnerability, and need: “the whole body – the hand or a curve of the shoulder – can express as the face.” These expressions erupt in every-day life when subjects feel for the brokenness of bodies: bodies who starve, who freeze in the cold, bodies who bleed, are tormented, persecuted, and abandoned. Disrupted by its own exposure to countless forms of violence perpetrated against other persons, the subject communes with what is beyond itself, and what rends its world, providing a path out of enchainment to the myself.

Out of a plea for peace, ethics unfolds within the social relationship. The other summons the subject to a freedom of responsibility that would manifest in hospitality. Responsibility is to extend one’s hand to the other’s; it is an agreement to share the world so that the two might each have a place to stand on Earth. There are no indirect angles in ethics, as if one might determine goodness apart from the epiphany of another’s expression. Ethics opens up in the positioning of two, face-to-face, insofar as the subject is called to divest itself of power in light of the infinity of another whose identity and mortality confront one from beyond. This plea never asks to be left alone absolutely. The plea is a summons to co-exist in peace, and when necessary, attend to another’s mortality.

356 Ibid., 262. The “curve of the shoulder” here alludes to Vasily Grossman’s Life and Fate, which is impossible to summarize here. In a moving passage describing the destitution of those seeking news of loved ones arrested for political crimes in Stalin’s Russia, Grossman writes: “Yevgenia had never realized that the human back could be so expressive, could so vividly reflect a person’s state of mind. People had a particular way of craning their necks as they came up to the windows; their backs, with their raised, tensed shoulders, seemed to be crying, to be sobbing and screaming.” Vasily Grossman, Life and Fate, trans. Robert Chandler (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 683. Levinas discusses this passage in an interview entitled “The Other, Utopia, and Justice,” in Emmanuel Lévinas, Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1998), 223-233. In viewing the nape of the one in front of them, discourse with the face is opened. Levinas points to Grossman as revealing expression of the face beyond its literalness: “all the weakness, all the mortality, all the naked and disarmed mortality of the other can be read from [the nape]. [Grossman] doesn’t say it that way, but the face can assume meaning on what is the ‘opposite’ of the face. The face, then, is not the color of the eyes, the shape of the nose, the ruddiness of the cheeks, etc.” Ibid., 232. The nape, or any part of the body, is not precisely the person in all its dynamic complexity, but it expresses the vulnerability of such. This is the relationship of the face and the body.
“to not remain indifferent to this death. To not let the Other die alone.” It is a plea against indifference in favour of hospitality, that both may have their own place under the Sun, grounded together on the same Earth.

3.2 An-archy and Alterity

Thus far, the face-to-face relationship has unfolded in terms of its relationship to phenomenology and ethics. These dynamics of the face converge in Levinas’ mature articulation of the face of alterity as the power of an-archy over the sovereignty of the same. While the relation of the face to time is referenced above, this uncanny dynamic of the temporality of the face requires a more detailed description for a complete understanding of the social relationship in Levinas’ thinking, which unfolds as epiphany beyond cognition, in a matrix wholly other than the present time of the subject. It also provides a mature summary of how the earlier developments of Levinas’ work, the counter-phenomenal and ethical qualities of alterity, converge and take final shape.

Despite overlap in this section with the previous sections, the implications of Levinas’ ethics are here drawn out in ways not seen in his earlier thought, and we arrive at a better sense of the matrix in which the face-to-face unfolds. This framework is used in Chapter

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358 This imagery is draw from Blaise Pascal: “Mine-Thine. ‘This dog is mine,’ said those poor children; ‘that is my place in the sun.’ Here is the beginning and the image of the usurpation of all the earth.” Blaise Pascal, Pensées, trans. W. F. Trotter (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2003), 85.
359 What this section stresses is that the epiphany of alterity is revealed fully beyond the human horizon, not as the recognition of something emerging in thought as an apohatic revelation, but something that happens within the body of the subject, before they come to be grounded as a thinking being. While this was the case in Totality and Infinity, critiques such as Jacque Derrida’s “Violence and Metaphysics,” accused Levinas’ thought of remaining in the discourse of phenomenology. To highlight that this is not the case, Levinas develops the idea of an-archy as indicative of a philosophy that is otherwise-than being, or beyond an intentional construction. See Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference, trans. Alan Bass (London, UK: Routledge, 1978), 97-192.
Five to outline my critique of deep incarnation Christologies, which amounts to a theology of an-archy that calls into question the sovereignty of humanist theologies.\textsuperscript{360}

The face of another expresses itself, and afflicts the subject by means of sensuality, prior to and beyond the ἀρχή (archē: beginning/origin/principle) of an awakened, subjective consciousness, what we might name in Cartesian terminology, the cogito—the thinking self.\textsuperscript{361} The ἀρχή, thus represents the beginning of the subjective present, time unfolding historically, as a sequential series of perceived events, organized, interpreted, and processed, within a self-aware, conscious horizon.\textsuperscript{362} The present time experienced by a conscious subject is the matrix wherein a subject is enchained to itself. This awareness of a world, populated by existents whose identity is assigned by the intentional horizon of a subject, is, according to Levinas, the basic temporal framework

\textsuperscript{360} Temporality is found in early works such as Levinas, Existence and Existents, 86-100; Time and the Other, 67-94, as well as Totality and Infinity, 220-247; 281-285. It is most developed, however, in Levinas, Otherwise than Being, 99-129, originally published as “La Substitution,” Revue Philosophique de Louvain, 66, no. 91 (1968): 487 – 508. See esp. “Language and Proximity,” “Humanism and An-archy,” and “No Identity,” in Collected Philosophical Papers, 109-126; 127-139; 141-152; “Diachrony and Representation,” and “The Old and the New,” in Time and the Other, 97-120; 121-138.

\textsuperscript{361} The term ἀρχή is one of the first, if not the first, technical philosophical terms, used as far back as Thales of Miletus. Thales, and other pre-Socratic philosophers spoke of the ἀρχή in their natural philosophies concerning the the beginning, source, or sovereign power from which the world of matter emerged. For the pre-Socratic philosophers, the ἀρχή was a common element (e.g., water for Thales, air for Anaximenes, and fire for Heraclitus), or an infinite element (e.g., apeiron or infinity for Anaximander and Xenophanes), generating cosmos and Earth. Levinas is thus playing on this Hellenistic terminology, albeit refocusing the world as the horizon of the I, rather than the totality of matter. The awakening of an I is thus the source, or the sovereign power, that gives birth to the world of language, cognition, and Cartesian subjectivity, as opposed to the world of matter. Alterior could have been structured as the ἀρχή of the subjective horizon, but since Levinas views the subject as sovereign in terms of world formation, and since his goal is to disrupt this power, it makes more sense for him to structure alterity as an-archy. For a survey of pre-Socratic philosophers and the ἀρχή of these thinkers, see Karl Popper, The World of Parmenides: Essays on the Presocratic Enlightenment (London, UK: Routledge, 1998); James Warren, Presocratics (Stocksfield, UK: Acumen, 2007).

\textsuperscript{362} The ἀρχή of the subject, however, is not a once and for all beginning, but is a moment-to-moment hypostasising of subjectivity, unfolding at each instant of the subject’s self-positioning and separation from the totality. This is a rather early idea, which Levinas had worked out as early as Existence and Existents, 61-100. In this sense, the ἀρχή of the subject is what is perpetually present to the I; it is an emergent consciousness that begins at each moment in which it apprehends a world.
for Western subjectivity, wherein the world always exists within the present of the subject’s horizon. While subjective time, where the past is a present that once was, and the future is conceived as what will soon be present, is meaningful within the space of science and history, such an understanding of time is not the temporal matrix of ethics, the encounter with infinity.\textsuperscript{363} The infinite, as we have seen, is that which is beyond the horizon, that which always overflows what can be thought concerning it. As such, the infinite is incommensurable with subjective time as the matrix of the subject’s presence to a world through consciousness, and the linguistic concepts that are used to process and represent this world. The counter-phenomenal dynamics of alterity, that which is beyond perception and thought, constitute a temporal matrix otherwise than time as the eternal present of a conscious subject. Insofar as the alterity of another is beyond what a subject is able to think, it must necessarily transcend the temporal structure of the subjective present. The relation with alterity unfolds within a matrix beyond consciousness.\textsuperscript{364}

And so, as a subject discovers itself immersed in thought, where it has inherited a responsible feeling for the other irreducible to its freedom to choose to be responsible, an awareness emerges of a time prior to conscious awakening. It becomes clear that the \(\dot{\alpha}ρχη\) of the subject itself, its own consciousness, is rooted in and created by some

\textsuperscript{363} Levinas never denies classic, “historic” time, as the synchronizing of a series of past events that were once present is obviously a dimension of the world. See e.g., “Language and Proximity,” in \textit{Collected Philosophical Papers}, 109; “The Old and the New,” in \textit{Time and the Other}, 129. The temporal structure of ethics is simply “otherwise” than the synchrony of scientific and historic present time, “incommensurable with the present, unassemblable in it, it is always ‘already in the past’ behind which the present delays, over and beyond the ‘now’ which this exteriority disturbs or obsesses.” Levinas, \textit{Otherwise than Being}, 100.

\textsuperscript{364} As soon as the I originates and thinks of the pre-original encounter, the face-to-face is over, as is a relation with alterity qua alterity. Infinity cannot exist absolutely within the present horizon of a thinking subject, as by definition it is what overflows thought. The idea of infinity remains, as a trace, like a ghost from some past encounter, but its fullness is not apprehended. Anarchy, is thus “older” than an a priori; it is an absolute past, always already before conscious subjectivity. Levinas, \textit{Otherwise than Being}, 101.
relationship that has already occurred, prior to his or her awakening as a self-consciousness subject. The origin of a subject is thus not a creation ex-nihilo, but an eruption from something pre-originary and transcending subjective consciousness—i.e., corporeal relationships unfold prior to and thus ground the possibility of any subject before it becomes a being able to think. The archaeology of consciousness thus discovers that something has happened in its own body prior to its being awakened within a world. That which transcends the subjective horizon and from which subjectivity erupts, the infinite, corporeal relation with the alterity of another, Levinas argues takes place prior to the ἀρχή of consciousness, in the an-archy of face-to-face relationships.

An-archic temporality is thus the matrix of those relations that exist prior to the beginning of consciousness, or the formulation of any principle that identifies another by means of cognitive representation.

Before the subjective present, bodies express sensitively, in pre-cognitive affects in which infinite alterity shapes the eruption of the subject. While there is a plurality of co-creative affects, the an-archy of the face’s vulnerable expression is felt by the subject emotionally, before the same has the chance to actively process the impact another body has on its own being. In the face-to-face encounter, the subject is thus passively

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365 For Levinas, the incarnation of a human subject, fully conscious, occurs precisely as a result of and after the embodied, face-to-face encounter. Corporeal relations are co-creative, in-spirational events and human consciousness awakens from these pre-original, embodied encounters. See Otherwise than Being, 109-118. See also “Language and Proximity,” as well as “Humanism and An-archy,” in Collected Philosophical Papers, esp. 113-115, 133.

366 Levinas, Otherwise than Being, 99-102; See also “Humanism and An-archy,” in Collected Philosophical Papers, 127-139

367 For a complete study on the neurobiology and evolution of such affects in the human, see Jaak Panksepp and Lucy Biven The Archaeology of Mind: Neuroevolutionary Origins of Human Emotions (New York, NY: W.W Norton, 2012), esp. 1-46. Following Levinas, I distinguish between 1) an-archic or anoetic affects (i.e., the feelings and emotions which occur prior to the origin of self-reflective consciousness), and 2) awakened or autonoetic affect (i.e., cognitive reflection on and response to the feelings and emotions as they travel from pre-cognitive experiences to a self-aware subjective consciousness). On Levinas and
susceptible to the other, feeling before assigning conceptual meaning to the bodies and affects imprinted upon oneself. The expression of the vulnerability of another is not comprehended intellectually, but felt in the visceral emotions and moods that afflict a subject and become the object of contemplation only after the sensuous event itself. As such, one feels before one thinks, the former rendering the later possible and supplying the information processed in thought. This is the ethical matrix of a face-to-face relation.

This proximity with the other in sensuous, face-to-face relationships where the vulnerability of the other is foremost to human feelings, solicits care for the self-determined being of the other. This is for Levinas a “way of signifying quite different from that which connects exposition to sight.” It is an expression of alterity καθ’ αὑτό because the subject is here passive, feeling the weight and height of the other asymmetrically, apart from its own judgment. In this infinite matrix, the other remains transcendent because it is not fit into a conceptual schema; it affects the subject as a power that is not yet thought, and the overflow of the idea of a cognitive horizon. The structure of this expression, which is carried into the present from the immemorial past, is that of an anarchic “saying,” i.e., an act of communication expressed through embodied sensuality, later represented within a fixed linguistic system, when the saying becomes

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affect, see Bettina Bergo, “The Face in Levinas: Toward a Phenomenology of Substitution,” Angelaki 16.1 (March 2011): 17-39; Adriaan Peperzak, “Affective Theology, Theological Affectivity,” in Religious Experience and the End of Metaphysics, ed. Jeffrey Bloechl (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 94-105. Levinas deals with both an-arachic and awakened affects consistently throughout his writings, and, as summarized in his essay, “Have You Read Baruk?,” “objects of faith, precepts are commanded and must be obeyed, but the motives for obedience are not of a rational order. They are motives of an affective order, such as fear, hope, fidelity, respect, veneration and love.” Emmanuel Levinas, “Have You Read Baruk?” in Difficult Liberty: Essays on Judaism (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 114. See also Levinas, Otherwise than Being, 121-129; “God and Philosophy,” in Collected Philosophical Papers, 158.

368 Levinas, Otherwise than Being, 100.
said in rigid linguistic forms that necessarily betray the infinite. The expression of the other thus lies in a time when thinking is suspended, leaving the same speechless; alterity speaks via the sensuous exposure of the face-to-face, “an event of proximity and not of knowledge,” where feelings communicate before words or concepts.

Yet, despite leaving the subject speechless, the pre-original expression of alterity is not absolutely gone once the subject originates in conscious existence. The awakening of a subject occurs as the memory of the an-archic saying, albeit the memory of an event to which the subject was bodily, but not cognitively present. The trace of alterity carried into the present may be reflected upon in what is said of one’s inherited feelings, albeit at the cost of a betrayal of the infinity of alterity that overflows all speech and thought.

Yet, while the non-representable transcendence of alterity is betrayed in what is said concerning it, it is not absolutely disfigured, “for the saying is both an affirmation and a retraction of the said.” As such, despite the betrayal, reflecting upon the an-archic event of the face-to-face is what Levinas calls, “a good violence,” as it allows for the contemplation of justice. Such reflection on the face-to-face never exhausts the other, but remains necessary to act on the responsibility for justice imposed upon the subject,

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369 On the relation of the saying to the said, see ibid., 23-60. The said, structured as the reflection on the trace carried into the present of a sensuous encounter with another, necessarily represents the other in light of concepts already established in the ego’s horizon. The translation of the pre-original event into linguistic signs and systems retains something of the other, but the “the saying and the said cannot equal one another.” Levinas, “Language and Proximity,” in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, 126. The said, as cognition and knowledge, reflects a structure of what is present to a subjective horizon, opening up as a comparing of the other to this or that. The saying becomes absorbed into the said, “synchronized into a time that is recallable, and becomes a theme.” Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 37. The thematization of the other, who is not representable by signs or symbols, is a betrayal of its infinity.

370 Ibid., 116.

371 I say more on the idea of the trace in Chapter Four.

372 Ibid., 44.

373 Ibid., 43.
who is wounded by the other in the face-to-face.

The an-archy of the face-to-face thus refers to the affective power of the other to afflict the same by disrupting its sovereign power-over alterity; it is a sensuous feeling for another, felt passively beyond freedom of cognitive choice of whether or not one will be responsible for the other. The an-archic carries within it the structure of double exposure, “one is exposed to the other as a skin is exposed to what wounds it, as a cheek is offered to the smiter.” As we have seen, the other is one who is also exposed, and therefore vulnerable to hunger, cold, persecution, or any number of afflictions that prevent its needs being fulfilled. The exposure of alterity thus affects the subject, exposed and pained at the other’s vulnerability. The face-to-face is thus the expression and passive, sensuous reception of pain. Ethics has less to do with calculating who the other is and why they may or may not be worthy of consideration as it does with suffering; ethics originates in the pain of the other which afflicts the same. The face-to-face is thus a sensual form of communication, without signs and symbols, wherein another affects a passive subject. Before the other, a subject is powerless, and like the other, nude, in this case, without the cover of language and cognition to protect oneself from the power of the other’s pain to disrupt one’s being. The same faced with the an-archy of other is “without clothing, without a shell to protect oneself, stripped to the core as in an inspiration of air, an ab-solution to the one, the one without complexion…a denuding beyond the skin to the wounds one dies from, denuding to death, being as a vulnerability.” The an-archic encounter is thus the pre-conceptual affectation imposed

\[\text{374 Ibid., 49.}\]
\[\text{375 Ibid.}\]
upon a subject by another. It is the feeling for the other that determines a subject’s subjec-
tivity when it awakens into the cognitive space-time of the present, where it is now able to think of the other, and betray it by references and comparisons to signs and symbols that are nevertheless necessary to do any justice to the event and the frailty revealed by the other. An-archic signification, the proximity of the face-to-face relationship, is not simply what is communicated by the other, but how the subject is affected in the communication as a passive, non-powerful subject who receives the other before it has a chance to think. The structure of the ethical encounter, is what Levinas calls otherwise than being, beyond essence and ontology, i.e., beyond the power of a subject’s being-able to think and represent the other and their relationship perfectly within a theme dominated by signs and symbols. The subject is thus no longer understood in terms of the cognitive power to name, nor in terms of the one who judges who is worthy of moral consideration, but as a hostage to the other, exposed to the possibility of being wounded by another’s destitution.376

Thus, if the phenomenal is what appears within a horizon, an ontological order open to vision and conceptual grasp, the face-to-face as an an-archic, affective event occurs as “a non-phenomenon…before the intervention of a cause, before the appearing of the other.”377 An-archy is a disruptive power that calls into question the sovereignty of an ego, by the “trauma suffered prior to any auto-identification” in which a subject is

376 “To say that in sensibility this structure [i.e., knowing through ontology] is secondary, and that sensibility qua vulnerability nonetheless signifies, is to recognize a sense somewhere else than in ontology.” Ibid., 64. “Subjectivity is being hostage,” implies a dramatic shift in the power dynamic traditionally assigned to subject and the other, with the later now being empowered to call the subject to concern for its destitution. Ibid., 116. Thus, the subject as cogito, a pure ego sovereign over others insofar as it is able to know alterity, has its power disrupted, suspended, and pacified in the face of the destitute face of another.

377 Ibid., 75.
awakened to a world.\textsuperscript{378} Upon awakening in thought, a now thinking-being who has inherited a pre-original event may choose how to exercise their newfound freedom, allying with or denying the an-archy that “orders [the subject] before being recognized.”\textsuperscript{379} Such, for Levinas, is the subjectivity of the subject prior to cognition: “the subjectivity of a subject is vulnerability, exposure to affection, sensibility, a passivity more passive still than any passivity, an irrecuperable time, an unassemblable diachrony of patience, an exposedness always to be exposed the more, an exposure to expressing, and this to saying, thus to giving.”\textsuperscript{380} Rather than being a power-over others through knowledge, a subject is, for Levinas, a primarily passive, feeling-being rather than a primarily active, thinking-being, as the later only emerges in light of the former. The face-to-face is visceral, an expression of embodied feelings irreducible and prior to the possibility of the subjective assembly of ideas concerning what has already been felt in the solicitation of the other.

Yet, this calling from a time with no beginning, “older than any present,” does not lend itself to the trappings of nostalgia; its structure is ethical.\textsuperscript{381} As I have highlighted above, Levinas is concerned with an an-archic event that unfolds in the absolute past as this is the only matrix in which a subject might embrace responsibility for another’s death without imposing their power-over the other. Insofar as the other expresses itself to the passivity of a subject, its feeling for the other rather than its contemplation of alterity, it might express itself infinitely. The result is a subject who is responsible for another’s

\textsuperscript{378} Ibid., 123.  
\textsuperscript{379} Ibid., 87.  
\textsuperscript{380} Ibid., 50. See also Ibid., 78.  
\textsuperscript{381} Ibid., 75.
death prior to being able to choose whether or not to be responsible.\textsuperscript{382} One thus awakens as a thinking-subject after passively feeling for the other, and it is thus “as though I were responsible for [the other’s] mortality, and guilty for surviving.”\textsuperscript{383} Mortality fits into the diachronic structure of ethics as the expression of an absolute past for the responsibility of a pure future, always on the horizon, that likewise escapes the possibility of experience within a horizon. One’s own death, and consequently the other’s death, lay permanently outside of subjective intentionality; it is infinite, always overflowing the ideas that think about the experience of mortality.\textsuperscript{384} Mortality always overflows that which thinks it, another ideatum beyond the idea representing it. The face-to-face thus eschews all synchrony, expressing as infinity, utterly beyond any horizon; it comes to the subject from an absolute past and a pure future. From this diachronic structure, in which the past and the future converge on the thinking subject, the subject as a \textit{cogito}, has always already been called to responsibility and justice, which must be worked out in the concrete reality of the world apprehended in the present.

From such a summons comes “the passivity of being-for-another,” working itself out corporeally as responsibility, giving one’s self up for another to the point of giving up the bread of one’s own mouth, and refusing to allow the other to die alone.\textsuperscript{385} This responsibility, wherein the other calls the subject’s ego into question, is described as

\textsuperscript{382} Ibid., 121-130.

\textsuperscript{383} Ibid., 91. See also Levinas, “Diachrony and Representation,” 114-116. The always already nature of responsibility is a summons of the same in the accusative case, and yet, such responsibility is “guilt without fault, ‘indebtedness’ without loan.” Levinas, \textit{Is it Righteous to Be}, 229. Much of Levinas’ language, drawing on the existential tradition, employs idioms of embodiment that cannot be associated with all of their cultural baggage, to describe human experiences.

\textsuperscript{384} Death is fundamentally a limit of experience, whether my own or the other’s. See also Levinas, \textit{Time and the Other}, 71-73.

\textsuperscript{385} Levinas, \textit{Otherwise than Being}, 72.
substitution. Responsibility uncoils toward the other from the subject who substitutes oneself for the alterity with whom they are faced; the subject is compelled to meet the needs of alterity, to feel the pain inflicted upon the other, and to demand justice on behalf of the widow, the orphan, and the stranger. In substitution a subject divests itself of itself, escapes the sovereignty of egoism, “emptying itself of its being, turning itself inside out,” albeit passively and not as an act of freedom. Responsibility is otherwise than an ability because there is no choice for the subject to make—the human is the very possibility of being-for-another. When confronted by the exposure of alterity, the subject exposed to such pain awakens as already responsible for the frailty of other, for ethics is not calculation, but a sensual feeling for another erupting within bodies exposed to the pain of existence. To be a subject substituted for another is thus a “having-the-other-in-one’s-skin,” i.e., to bear responsibility for the pain, hunger, thirst and destitution of bodies in need. Such substitution leading to responsibility is an-archic, disruptive of one’s sovereignty, and thus not by choice or an a priori commitment to the law, but through a passion that “takes hold without any a priori.”

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386 On “substitution,” see Ibid., 99-129, esp. 113-118. Levinas summarizes substitution as responsibility in the “Responsibility and Substitution,” in Levinas, Is it Righteous to Be, 228-233.

387 “Substitution is not an act; it is a passivity inconvertible into an act, the hither side of the act-passivity alternative, the exception that cannot be fitted into the grammatical categories of noun or verb, save in the said that thematizes them. This recurrence can be stated only as an in-itself, as the underside of being or as otherwise than being.” Ibid. 117

388 For, Levinas, to be human is to substitute oneself for the other, “to bear the wretchedness and bankruptcy of the other, and even the responsibility that the other can have for me.” Ibid., 115.

389 Ibid., 115. This does not amount to becoming a sort of subjective hybrid. Levinas is careful to maintain differentiation at all times. Likewise, this does not mean that one’s experience synchronizes to that of others, the subject does not feel what the other feels. To have the other in one’s skin “entails bringing comfort by associating ourselves with the essential weakness and finitude of the other; it is to bear his weight while sacrificing one’s interestedness and complacency-in-being, which then turn into responsibility for the other.” Levinas, Is it Righteous to Be, 228. The other in the same is a responsibility of solidarity, and the attempt to ease the burden of another, sharing a place in the Sun.

390 Levinas, Otherwise than Being, 102.
For Levinas, the “structure of this anarchy takes form” in ethics, and “the [subjective] consciousness is affected, then, before forming an image of what is coming to it, affected in spite of itself. In these traits we recognize a persecution; being called into question prior to questioning, responsibility over and beyond the logos of response. It is as though persecution by another were at the bottom of solidarity with another.” 391 The expression of alterity qua alterity, exposure, and frailty is temporally an-archic as it addresses subjects in a time prior to their own cognitive origin, by soliciting feelings in the body of the subject prior to thought. Such an expression is also ethically an-archic insofar as it positions the other as the one who disrupts the sovereignty of the same, whose authority to identify and sacrifice the other is called into question. An-archy is thus the model under which the dynamics of Levinas’ thinking of infinite alterity converge. Alterity as an-archy is the power of disruption over the sovereignty of the same. Such disruption calls subjective sovereignty into question whenever the I assumes the final right to identify alterity by proclaiming what its being consists in, and when the I usurps the power to decide who lives and who dies, or to say who might be sacrificed. The infinite alterity of the other resists such violent power-over others, insisting on determining its own being, and having the final say on how it lives and dies.

3.3 Conclusion

While work needs to be done to fit this model into an understanding of divinity and the otherwise-than human, this is the basic structure of Levinas’ thought, and serves as a ground for my constructive theological work in subsequent chapters. The themes

391 Ibid.
developed here, once merged with an understanding of ethics not only as first philosophy but as first theology, form the basis of my critique of deep incarnation Christology and my own re-imagination of the doctrine. In the next chapter, I take up the idea of an-archic infinity as first theology, exploring what Levinas says of the God who comes to mind in the transcendence of alterity. Yet, since my concern lies beyond the human horizon, in a God who comes to mind within the otherwise than human, I also explore what Levinas says concerning the face-to-face with the other animal and beyond. Thus, the following chapter will explore Levinas beyond the human, journeying into the realms of theology, animality, and beyond.
Chapter 4

Encountering God in the Face

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter I explore Levinas on the question of God and the question of the otherwise-than-human. For Levinas, as we will see, the face-to-face relationship is the matrix in which God is directly encountered by human beings. God, for Levinas, is thus inseparable from a subject’s an-archic relationship with its neighbor and present only in the counter-phenomenon of the trace returning from this absolute past. Yet, beyond the divinity of the face, is the question of who exactly is able to express as a face, and enter into an ethical relationship. After examining the question of God, I explore Levinas’ view of what lies beyond the human body and how ethics and divinity fit into the other-than-human world. Thus, a second part of this chapter discusses Levinas and the question of the other animal and beyond, taking a critical stance toward Levinas’ confused, but ultimately anthropocentric, position. When this discussion is complete, I will be in a position to bring Levinas and Incarnation theology into dialogue in the final chapter of this work.

4.1 Levinas: The Question of God

For Levinas, God is encountered in face-to-face relations with human beings. While his argument ultimately rests upon the trajectory built up in his philosophical works, his so-called “Jewish writings” are instructive for outlining his basic stance toward the inseparable matrix of the divine face and the alterity of one’s neighbour. In his essay, “A Religion for Adults,”

392 See, Emmanuel Levinas, Quatre leçons talmudiques (Paris, FR: Minuit, 1968); Du sacré au saint: cinq nouvelles lectures talmudiques (Paris, FR: Minuit, 1977); Nine Talmudic Readings, trans. Annette Aronowicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990); Difficile liberté; essais sur le judaïsme (Paris, FR: A. Michel,
Levinas outlines a peculiar, Jewish anthropology unfolding as the mysterious interweaving of divinity and the other human. “How does Judaism conceive of humanity?” he asks. “By experiencing the presence of God through one’s relation to man.” Levinas thus eschews the any idea of encountering God as Being, or a being who utterly transcends social relationships. “As Jews,” Levinas writes, “we are always a threesome: I and you and the Third who is in our midst. And only as a Third does [God] reveal himself.” This “Third,” is not another person mediated within the social relation, but is inextricably tied to the face of the other. The face belongs to one’s neighbour, but is not precisely understood as unfolding in the second person, the “you” who is open to a subject’s world by means of cognitive perception. The face is the other as such, beyond the you who presents itself within the subject’s horizon. The face expresses in the third person, described as the illeity of the other, the il or the elle, the he, she, or otherwise beyond the you, who expresses an-archically through affect within the face-to-face relationship. The other, in its illeity, is an irreducible singularity enmeshed with divinity; it is not the mediation of some divinity independent of the other. Yet, even such illeity, as we will

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394 Emmanuel Levinas, “Ideology and Idealism,” in The Levinas Reader, ed. Seán Hand (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 247. As we will see, this is a queer threesome that cannot precisely be reduced to three absolutely distinct beings. While the other person is not simply speaking God, divinity is likewise not merely a greater alterity mediated in the body of the other person. Thus, while God will be seen to transcend the illeity of the other person, Levinas, as early as 1954, suggests this entanglement, and that “God could not be God without first having been this interlocutor.” Emmanuel Levinas, “The Ego and the Totality,” in Collected Philosophical Papers, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht, NL: Nijhoff, 1987), 33.

395 “Desire, or the response to an enigma, or morality, is a plot with three personages: the I approaches the infinite by going generously toward the you, who is still my contemporary, but, in the trace of illeity, presents himself out of a depth of the past, faces, and approaches me.” Emmanuel Lévias, “Phenomenon and Enigma,” in Collected Philosophical Papers, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht, NL: Nijhoff, 1987), 72. The illeity of the other is its unrepresentable infinity, though not in an abstract, phantasmal sense. The other is always a he, she, or otherwise, though the immediate relation with this other occurs only in the unmediated proximity of the face-to-face.
see, does not exhaust what we might call the broader field of divinity, and thus does not enchain God to any one material body. The social relationship is this tripartite matrix where I, you, and il/elle commune, and where divinity is affectively and corporeally encountered. It is from such an encounter that the idea of infinity and God come to mind, once the subject awakens as being-responsible-for-another.

The social relation in which divinity unfolds is ethics. Thus, once the I awakens into the present as a fully conscious I, the an-archic relation with the divine face continues in the present insofar as the subject becomes a being who now assumes responsible behavior leading to justice for others. “Ethics is not,” therefore, “the corollary of the vision of God, it is that very vision. Ethics is an optic, such that everything I know of God and everything I can hear of His word and reasonably say to Him must find an ethical expression,” and consequently, “to know God is to know what must be done.”396 Here then, in the matrix of the ethical relation, God becomes accessible. Responsibility, unfolding from relations between vulnerable, sensuous bodies, is, for Levinas, the only sure path out of enchainment to one’s self and the violence of being, and this way beyond the self leads inevitably to God.

It is here that we note a possible overlap between Levinas’ Judaism and the Christian tradition. The notion of divine humiliation, or a kenosis that eschews infinity in order to express corporeally within humanity, is of course an idea present within the Christian tradition. Levinas notes this in his essay “Judaism and Christianity.”

I happened upon Matthew 25, where people are quite astonished to learn that they have abandoned or persecuted God, and are told that when they turned away the poor who knocked on their doors, it was really God in person they were shutting out. Having learned later the theological concepts of transubstantiation and the eucharist, I would tell myself that the true communion was in the meeting with the other, rather than in the bread and the wine, and that it was in that encounter that the personal presence of God

396 Levinas, “A Religion for Adults,” 17.
resided; and that I had already read that, in the Old Testament, in chapter 58 of *Isaiah*. It had the same meaning: men already “spiritually refined” who want to see the face of God and enjoy his proximity will only see his face once they have freed their slaves and fed the hungry. That was the antithesis. And, if I may be so bold, it was also the understanding of the person of Christ.  

Levinas sees here a fundamental symmetry between Judaism and Christianity, understanding the early attitude toward Christ as following *Isaiah* 58 and understanding the other person as the divine matrix where God would be encountered in the fullness of social justice. Furthermore, Levinas’ comparison of the other person to the divine encounter in the Eucharistic elements points to the depths of the divine/human entanglement that he held: the other is not the mediation of God, a sign of a greater alterity, but an irreducible divine singularity in itself. The God of the Bible, according to Levinas, not only bends down to view human misery, but *inhabits* that misery without compromising infinity. There is thus a positive relationship, or common ground between the traditions, “without compromise or betrayal, in two forms – the Jewish and the Christian, . . . [the] possibility of dialogue and symbiosis.”

Here, in the inter-religious agreement that God expresses by means of the human face, that we might be tempted to read into Levinas a sort of incarnation theology akin to, even if diverging from, the classical Christian tradition. Levinas goes so far as to claim: “I say of the

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398 I am not out to make Levinas a Christian theologian here. Levinas flatly denies any reduction of divine embodiment to Jesus of Nazareth, and refuses a doctrine of Incarnation where God’s fullness is visible to human beings. This is incomprehensible to him.

399 The language of “bending down” and “inhabitation” is found in Emmanuel Levinas, “Judaism and Kenosis,” in *In the Time of the Nations*, trans. Michael Smith (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 114. See also Levinas, “A Religion for Adults,” 18, where Levinas describes the Talmudic assertion that divinity finds itself “on earth without having even left heaven.” Consequently, “there is here a desacralization of the Sacred.” Ibid.

400 Levinas, “Judaism and Christianity,” 163.
face of the neighbor what the Christian says of the face of Christ. Yet, while Levinas shows respect for the spirit of incarnation theologies, as well as sacramentality and a kenosis, there are serious differences between what Levinas intends and what the classical Christian tradition asserts in such doctrines. "There is probably no need,” he says in “Judaism and Kenosis,” “to remind ourselves that the idea of divine incarnation is foreign to Jewish spirituality.” Such differences extend well beyond issues of exclusivity and plurality, as if Levinas simply held to a radically plural incarnation theology expanding beyond Christian exclusivity. Encountering God in the human face is, for Levinas, structurally different than classical notions of incarnation, which posit that God becomes accessible to human perception understood within horizons of object-cognition. While there are overlaps between Levinas’ philosophy and classic incarnation theologies, we must first understand the nuances of his thought when incarnation is described. For Levinas, the corporeality of the divine face is always mitigated by infinity in a way that exceeds Christian notions of transcendence.

There is thus something strange, and possibly paradoxical, about the divine/human

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402 See esp. Levinas, “Judaism and Kenosis,” 114-132, for similarities and differences. Michael Purcell, in his Levinas and Theology (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), esp. 110-134, uses the term incarnation with minimal discrimination, which is problematic. He speaks positively of the Christian doctrine of Incarnation in terms of the locus of revelation and salvation without a critical discussion of Levinas’ concern with the concept. Purcell’s insistence on Levinas’ focus on the flesh is not misplaced, nor his discussion of the possible overlaps between Levinas and (Irenaeian) Christianity, but the critical nuances of the God-other relationship are not drawn out in depth. Likewise, Nigel Zimmermann claims that Levinas’ philosophy “does not contradict the Christian notion of Incarnation in its dogmatic content.” Nigel Zimmermann, Levinas and Theology (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2013), 40. Zimmerman’s analysis likewise lacks of technical nuance, and such a statement greatly overstates any similarity between Levinas and Christianity.

403 Levinas, “Judaism and Kenosis,” 114.
relation. Each possess a puzzling relationship with the other, partaking somehow in both transcendence and immanence, not absolutely separate, and yet irreducible to the identity of the other. As such, when discussing the other human, Levinas speaks of the “proximity of God to human suffering.” Proximity, is a denuding of subjects who exist prior to and beyond cognition in a matrix of sensuality and affect, relating corporeally, and yet in a counter-phenomenal manner. The divine face is thus corporeal, but not incarnate. With this puzzle in place, I turn to a critical reading of *Totality and Infinity*, Section I.B.6. This provides a ground for discussing the God/human relationship that, when supplemented with his later writings, gives us a clearer picture of how Levinas’ thought might complement and challenge Christian incarnation theologies.

4.1.1 Mediating and Incarnating God – A Commentary on *Totality and Infinity*, Section I, Part B.6

While Levinas continues to develop his ideas on divine/material entanglement throughout his works, *Totality and Infinity* displays the core of his philosophy on this issue. *Totality and Infinity*, Section I, Part B.6 contains one of the clearest articulations of the mysterious relationship between God and the other human. Below, I use substantial portions of my own translations of this text in order to ground an understanding of Levinas and the idea of

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404 Ibid., 115.

incarnation. Following the model of Robert Gibbs, I quote from this section at length with commentary following.

Yet, faith purged of myths, monotheistic faith, itself assumes metaphysical atheism. Revelation is discourse. A separate being is necessary in order to welcome the revelation of a being suitable for the role of an interlocutor. Atheism conditions a genuine relation with the true God, as such [καθ' αὐτό]. But this relation is also distinctive from the objectification of participation. To hear the divine word does not revert to knowing an object, but to being in relation to a substance overflowing its idea in me, an overflowing that which Descartes calls its “objective existence.” Simply known, thematized, the substance is no longer “according to itself.” Discourse, which at the same time is strange and present, suspends participation, and establishes, beyond a cognition of an object, the pure experience of a social relation, where a being does not draw its existence from its contact with the other.

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We begin with the strange assertion that monotheism opens up from metaphysical atheism. It is clear, however, that when Levinas speaks of atheism, his aim is to preserve the idea of divine infinity. Thus, atheism is best read as a-theism, i.e., the refusal to positively and dogmatically identify God by reference to essential attributes that necessarily characterize divinity. Thus, a-theism turns out to be monotheism without recourse to metaphysical myths that dogmatically identify divinity. The view of the positive religions and the dogmatic myths they construct, according to Levinas, draws on the human horizon to establish the boundaries of the divine identity. A-theism, on the other hand, recognizes that there is another, utterly beyond the

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408 Mais, la foi épurée des mythes, la foi monothéiste, suppose elle-même l'athéisme métaphysique. La révélation est discours. Il faut pour accueillir la révélation un être apte à ce rôle d'interlocuteur, un être séparé. L'athéisme conditionne une relation véritable avec un vrai Dieu καθ’ αὐτό. Mais cette relation est aussi distincte de l’objectivation que de la participation. Entendre la parole divine, ne revient pas à connaître un objet, mais à être en rapport avec une substance débordant son idée en moi, débordant ce que Descartes appelle son « existence objective ». Simplement connue, thématisée, la substance n'est plus « selon elle-même ». Le discours où, à la fois, elle est étrangère et présente, suspend la participation et instaure, par-delà une connaissance d'objet, l'expérience pure du rapport social où un être ne tire pas son existence de son contact avec l'autre. Levinas, Totalité et Infini, 75-76.
scope of the human cogito, who transcends the boundaries of any idealistic structure, overflowing conceptualist identification.  

As such, a-theistic revelation, as discourse with what is beyond the subject, opens the subject to relation with divine infinity. The context of the discussion of divinity and incarnation is thus, like most of Levinas’ work, the violence of object-cognition as an epistemology. The relation with God by means of the other human, like the face, occurs outside of the structures of knowledge, in the an-archic, asymmetrical matrix of affect. Like the face, divinity is counter-phenomenal, and resistant to any universal language able to describe, or represent the alterity καθ’ αὐτό. Knowledge of another καθ’ αὐτό, divine or otherwise, does not begin in the awakening of a subject grasping exteriority, but in the passivity implicit in relational affectivity, grounding the other in a matrix beyond and overflowing thought. This relational matrix is necessary in order to preserve the infinity of others who speak their own being, and exist on their own terms, beyond the cognitive powers and abilities of the subject. This is the basic context of Totality and Infinity, Section I, Part B.6 as we move forward.

To pose the transcendent as a stranger and poor, this is to prohibit the metaphysical relationship with God from being accomplished in ignorance of humanity and things. The dimension of the divine opens up from the human face. A relation with the Transcendent, however free from every influence by the Transcendent, is a social relation. It is there that the Transcendent, infinitely Other, solicits and appeals to us. The proximity of the Other, the proximity of the neighbor, is an inescapable moment of revelation in being, of an absolute presence (that is to say, free of every relation) that expresses itself. Its very epiphany consists in soliciting by its misery in the face of the Stranger, in the widow and the orphan.

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409 Earlier in this section, Levinas writes: “The metaphysical relationship, the idea of infinity, connects with a noumenon, which is not a numen. This noumenon distinguishes itself from the concept of God possessed by believers within the positive religions” Ibid., 75. It is at least questionable whether such an assertion can be so easily applied to the believers in the “positive religions.” There are obviously many theistic positions that would strongly argue for divine transcendence, even while making dogmatic statements. This is an example of Levinas’ unfair identification of theological interlocutors.

410 This is a theme found throughout Totality and Infinity, Section I. “The relation with the face is not an object-cognition. The transcendence of the face is at the same time its absence from this world into which it enters, the exiling of a being, his condition of being a stranger, destitute, or proletarian.” Ibid.

411 Poser le transcendant comme étranger et pauvre, c'est interdire à la relation métaphysique avec Dieu de s'accomplir dans l'ignorance des hommes et des choses. La dimension du divin s'ouvre à partir du visage humain. Une relation avec le Transcendant cependant libre de toute emprise du Transcendant est une relation sociale. C'est là
Beyond the structure of constructs and myths, God is encountered in the human face, which resists the totalizing grasp of the subject. Here, the uncanny relationship between transcendence and immanence emerges along with the paradox of divinity as simultaneously strange and yet deeply personal. This route to divinity carries a subject into proximity and direct expression with another human. Such expression solicits a subject who has yet to awaken, passive and not-yet conscious, who nevertheless exists corporeally and socially and as being-for-another. Thus, while beyond the intentional horizon, God cannot be encountered “in ignorance of humanity and things.”

Divinity is transcendent but its being-beyond-the-horizon unfolds in the transcendent face of the stranger, the widow, the orphan. Together these present a trope revealing the heart of the Hebrew Bible, as well as the Levinas’ ethics, announcing the divinity of those the Torah counts as the most vulnerable people in Israel. God is thus unapproachable apart from the felt, corporeal misery of those lacking power over their own bodily needs and existence. Thus, what Levinas had earlier said of the nature and definition of religion, “the bond that is established between the same and the other without constituting a totality,” takes a clearer shape. It is here, however, that the concern arises of how to articulate the precise nature of the relationship between God and the other.

The atheism of the metaphysician positively signifies that our relation with the Metaphysical is an ethical behavior, and not theology, not a thematization, knowledge by

Ibid. The mention of humanity and things (“des hommes et des choses”), is puzzling given Levinas’ anthropocentrism. While it would be wise to not make too much out of the connection between God and things here, this odd inclusion should be mentioned along-side of other puzzling passages, such as those where we see Levinas express a philosophical anthropology where humanity exists as “fraternally solidary with creation” called to “responsibility for anything and everything.” Levinas, “Transcendence and Evil,” in Collected Philosophical Papers, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht, NL: Nijhoff, 1987), 184.

Levinas, Totality and Infinity, 40.
means of analogy of the attributes of God. God is elevated to God's supreme and ultimate presence as a correlative of the justice rendered to people. The direct cognition of God is impossible, a look directed at God, not because our intelligence is limited, but because the relation with the infinite respects the total Transcendence of the Other without being bewitched, and because of our ability to welcome God in the human, going beyond comprehension which thematizes and encompasses its object. It goes beyond, precisely because it goes thus toward Infinity. The cognition of God as participation in God’s sacred life, an allegedly direct cognition, is impossible because participation is a denial imposed upon the divine and there is nothing more direct than the face to face, which is righteousness itself. A God invisible, that does not merely signify a God unimaginable, but a God accessible in justice.414

The social relation is not one of knowledge but of proximity. The proximity to the other will eventually be described as an-arthic, prior to and disruptive of the origin of any characterization of the other within subjective cognition. The divine face of the stranger, the widow, and the orphan solicits the subject within an affective matrix. Here the authoritative height of the other solicits a subject, intentionally or otherwise, to responsibility. The an-arthic structure of affect, already present in Totality and Infinity even if not named as such, puts the subject and the other into proximity by means of feeling and moods that have yet to consume and betray alterity in the present time, when the form of others becomes a phenomenological given. This is the structure of “ethical behavior, and not theology, not a thematization, knowledge by means of analogy of the attributes of God.”415 The face-to-face in which God is met is a matrix

414 L’athéisme du métaphysicien signifie positivement que notre rapport avec le Métaphysique est un comportement éthique et non pas la théologie, non pas une thématisation, fut-elle connaissance par analogie des attributs de Dieu. Dieu s'élève à sa suprême et ultime présence comme corrélatif de la justice rendue aux hommes. L'intelligence directe de Dieu est impossible à un regard sur lui dirigé, non pas parce que notre intelligence est limitée, mais parce que la relation avec l'infini, respecte la Transcendance totale de l'Autre sans en être ensorcelée et que notre possibilité de l'accueillir dans l'homme, va plus loin que la compréhension qui thématise et englobe son objet. Plus loin, car, précisément, elle va ainsi vers l'Infini. L'intelligence de Dieu comme participation à sa vie sacrée, intelligence prétendument directe, est impossible parce que la participation est un démenti infligé au divin et que rien n'est plus direct que le face à face, lequel est la droiture même. Dieu invisible, cela ne signifie pas seulement un Dieu inimaginable, mais un Dieu accessible dans la justice. Levinas, Totalité et Infini, 76.

415 Ibid. Theology is often, though not always, understood as a system of concepts used to set boundaries on the identifiable character of both the other human and the God who exists within the social relationship. For a more nuanced description of how Levinas uses this term, see Richard Cohen, “Against Theology: The Devotion of a Theology without Theodicy,” in Levinasian Meditations: Ethics, Philosophy, and Religion (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2010), 296-313.
of an-archy, asymmetry, and responsibility, “correlative of the justice rendered to people.”

The counter-phenomenal being of the divine face is not beyond cognition because of a privation in human perceptual power, but because this is the precise nature of what it means to be infinite. Infinity, or transcendence, is not to be a phantasm or specter devoid of corporeity, but to overflow any idea that thinks it. This is a necessary correlate to the differentiation of irreducibly singular beings. Thus, phenomenology, as the entanglement of the presentation of objects and their representation within a horizon cannot access the alterity καθ’ αὐτό, because existents cannot be reduced to the plastic forms that present themselves to vision. Thus, any existent is always more than what appears. This is a problem for cognition as it necessarily thinks within impossibly complex representational schemas that force alterity into themes and characterizations that compare the other to concepts that cannot exhaust otherness. Cognition cannot be proximity; the other is neither presented nor received “as such,” but rather conditioned by the limits of historically conditioned epistemologies. Proximity, however, is the matrix in which ethics unfolds insofar as the human is, for Levinas, being-for-another. Immanence, in the an-archic-affective matrix of proximity, is the immediacy of another as it is καθ’ αὐτό. Prior to thought, the subject in proximity to another is not a myself, but a self structured as absolutely passive and open to the other person by means of feeling, affect that creates a relationship prior to subjective awakening. As a result, the subject non-cognitively and a-linguistically substitutes

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416 Levinas, *Totalité et Infini*, 76.

417 The obvious problem with this anthropology is that responsibility is not the only outcome of affect. There are clearly other affects such as joy, rage, and horror which have various relations to ethics. While responsibility may overcome self-indulgent affects, this is never a guarantee once the subject awakens. The human is thus far more pluralist than any reductionist anthropology that posits being-for-another as what is proper to the human, or finally indicative of its essence. Is there any reason to uphold the primacy of responsibility, other than pointing to its being held up almost universally by a plurality of cultures as the telos of human existence? Or ought we view the human telos as inherently plural, without valorizing any one anthropological dynamic? A further analysis is needed.
itself for the other, entering into its suffering. Once awakened, the subject is always already
responsible for another before the possibility of freedom to choose and identify the other within a
theme. Ethics is a matrix in which the divine face is not consumed, but embraced
unconditionally, corporeally, and personally, as independent, authoritative, transcendent, and
irreducible. Insofar as the other it is embraced beyond concepts, it is accepted as it is καθ’ αὐτό;
the as such of the other’s existence is infinite expression.

Ethics is the spiritual optics. The subject-object relation does not reflect it; in the
impersonal relation that leads there, the invisible but personal God is not approached
outside of all human presence. The ideal is not merely a being preeminently being, a
sublimation of the objective, or, in an amorous solitude, a sublimation of a Thou. It
requires a work of justice, the righteousness of the face to face for that produces the
opening that leads to God – and the “vision” here coincides with that work of justice.
From that moment, metaphysics plays out there, where the social relation plays out in our
relations with humans. There cannot be any “knowledge” of God apart from the relation
with people. The other person is the actual scene of metaphysical truth and indispensable
for my relation with God. The other person does not play the role of a mediator. The
other person is not the incarnation of God, but precisely by means of its face, wherein the
other one is disincarnate, lies the manifestation of the height wherein God reveals God’s
self. It is our relations with humans that describe a field of research barely glimpsed
(wherein most of the time we stick to a few formal categories of which the content would
only be “psychology”), and that give to theological concepts the unique signification of
which they consist. The establishment of this primacy of the ethical, that is to say, of the
relation between one human and another, signification, education, and justice, a primacy
of an irreducible structure, on which all others rely (and in particular all of those that in
an original way, we seem to put in contact with an impersonal sublimity, aesthetic or
ontological), is one of the goals of this present work.418

418 L'éthique est l'optique spirituelle. La relation sujet-objet ne la reflète pas; dans la relation impersonnelle
qui y mène, le Dieu invisible, mais personnel, n'est pas abordé en dehors de toute présence humaine. L'idéal n'est pas
seulement un être superlativement être, sublimation de l'objectif ou, dans une solitude amoureuse, sublimation d'un
Toi. Il faut œuvre de justice la droiture du face à face pour que se produise la trouée qui mène à Dieu - et la «vision»
coïncide ici avec cette œuvre de justice. Dès lors, la métaphysique se joue là où se joue la relation sociale dans nos
rapports avec les hommes. Il ne peut y avoir, séparée de la relation avec les hommes, aucune « connaissance » de
Dieu. Atrui est le lieu même de la vérité métaphysique et indispensable à mon rapport avec Dieu. Il ne joue point le
rôle de médiateur. Autrui n'est pas l'incarnation de Dieu, mais précisément par son visage, où il est désincarné, la
manifestation de la hauteur où Dieu se révèle. Ce sont nos relations avec les hommes, qui décrivent un champ de
recherches à peine entrevu (où la plupart du temps on s'en tient à quelques catégories formelles dont le contenu ne
serait que «psychologie»), et qui donnent aux concepts théologiques l'unique signification qu'ils comportent.
L'établissement de ce primat de l'éthique, c'est-à-dire de la relation d'homme à homme signification, enseignement et
justice, primat d'une structure irréductible à laquelle s'appuient toutes les autres (et en particulier toutes celles qui,
d'une façon originelle, nous semblent mettre au contact d'un sublime impersonnel, esthétique ou ontologique), est
l'un des buts du présent ouvrage. Ibid., 76-77.
As the infinity of the divine face eschews any representational image that might be produced by way of identifying it, the boundaries of divinity resist reductionism and open up purely in the ethical moment that generates responsibility among human beings. This is not some divine command experienced from beyond human presence; divinity is encountered in the social relation itself. Thus we arrive at the complicated matter of the entanglement of God and humanity. Is the other human, strictly speaking, God? Does the human serve as a sort of bridge leading to an alterity greater than its own? Or does Levinas have something fundamentally otherwise in mind? Two ideas found in the preceding passage are crucial in understanding Levinas’ philosophy of religion as we move forward: mediation and incarnation.

Levinas insists that the other “does not play the role of a mediator.” Mediation is an inappropriate role because human alterity is an irreducible singularity, the end of the path to metaphysics, alterity, and the beyond. Thus, there is nothing “deeper” than the other, and there is no greater alterity that lurks behind the “the actual scene of metaphysical truth,” the divine face of the neighbor. The problem with the idea of the human mediating God is that is creates an abyss between God as one who solicits an ethical relation, and the exposed misery of the other’s corporeal life. That is, by locating ethics in a divine lawgiver, rather than the direct solicitation of the one actually suffering, the face of the other human is denigrated insofar as it is no longer the actual scene of the ethical event. In the mediatory model, the voice of the other person, while meaningful, according to Levinas, is not meaningful καθ’ αὐτό, and so is not precisely the

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419 Ibid., 77.

420 Ibid. Such an insight was developed previously, in the essay “Is Ontology Fundamental” where Levinas insists that “nothing theological, nothing mystical lies hidden behind the analysis that we have just given of the encounter with the Other.” Emmanuel Levinas, “Is Ontology Fundamental?,,” trans. Peter Atterton, Philosophy Today 33, no. 2 (1989), 126.
authoritative voice in the ethical relationship. The misery of the other would concern God, but ethics would unfold from the command of a greater alterity, one who legitimated the misery of the other. If the other mediates God, his or her misery holds a lesser dignity insofar as it must be legitimated from a higher source, which tells the being how its dignity is structured, apart from its own being-affected in a world. Levinas, however, insists that the face of the other is the authoritative voice of ethics. The other is not meaningful because God says they are so; the other is meaningful as such, insofar as he or she directly solicits the subject by means of his or her own frailty and misery. Thus, the human does not mediate a divinity beyond itself. As such, the other reveals itself as an ethical authority classically reserved for God as lawgiver, and so the other emerges as an uncanny entanglement with divinity itself.421

The other human then, in the exposure of his or her corporeal misery, is irreducibly singular, with no greater alterity or authority beyond his or her own cry. This cry, a negative imperative, directly soliciting a subject placed in the accusative, is the pre-original, an-archic saying, “you shall not kill.” Levinas then insists that concern for God apart from the face of one’s neighbor is misplaced: “everything I can hear coming from God or going to God, who is invisible, must have come to me via the one, unique voice.”422 The ethical relation is not a one-on-one, but a threesome—I, you, and the divine illeity of the other. If the other is not a mediation of God, but the very scene where truth unfolds, then the transcendence of the other and the transcendence of God begin to blur, confusing subjects used to singularities existing within rigid boundaries, as opposed to the mind-numbing plurality of Levinas’ divine face. Thus, the divine

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421 This idea draws on one of the most ancient debates in the philosophy of religion. In Plato’s *Euthyphro*, Socrates asks Euthrypho, “is the pious being loved by God because it is pious, or is it pious because it is being loved by the gods?” *Euthyphro*, 10a. Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John Cooper, and D. S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub, 1997), 9.

face, the an-archic, asymmetrical matrix of the social relation, is the precise scene wherein God is encountered, and from which God comes to mind.\footnote{See also Emmanuel Levinas, “The Rights of Man and Good Will,” in \textit{Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other}, trans. Michael Smith and Barbara Harshav (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1998), 155-158. “What I have called an interruption or rupture of the perseverance of beings in their being, of the \textit{conatus essendi} in the dis-inter-estedness of goodness does not indicate that the right of man gives up its absolute status to revert to the level of decisions made by I know not what compassionate subjectivities. It indicates the absolute of the social, the \textit{for-the-other} which is probably the very delineation of the human. It indicates that ‘nothing greater’ of which Descartes spoke. No doubt it is important in good philosophy not to think the rights of man in terms of an unknown God; it is permissible to approach the idea of God setting out from the absolute that manifests itself in the relation to the other.” Ibid., 158.} Mediation is eschewed out of a concern for corporeal misery, precisely because mediation renders God utterly incorporeal, a spectre beyond the direct, ethical solicitation of the face. Such a God is too distant and impersonal, unable to disrupt the sovereignty of the subject by means of ethical an-archy. The ethical event then is the direct encounter with transcendence; the face-to-face is being-faced-by-God.

The denial of mediation is met with a second rejoinder concerning possible misconstruing the God/human relationship. The second concern unfolds from the assertion that the divine face is the precise scene of ethics and the encounter with God, which Levinas fears will lead to an interpretation that the other might become an incarnation of God. The divine face, as we have seen, is a counter-phenomenon, and as the broader context of this passage suggests, the face is transcendent and not open to human intentionality. Thus, despite being indispensable for one’s relation with God, “the other person is not the incarnation of God.”\footnote{Levinas, \textit{Totalité et Infini}, 77.} Rather, the divine face is a corporeal solicitation that, from the perspective of the perceiving subject, can only be called “disincarnate.” It is precisely the disincarnate reality of the face-to-face that reveals “the manifestation of the height wherein God reveals God’s self.”\footnote{Ibid.} The problem with the idea of incarnation relates entirely to Levinas’ overarching concern to prevent the reduction of the other
to the same. Incarnation, according to Levinas, is a technical term that relates to the positioning of a self within a world en route to being awakened within the present, subjective time of the subject as a myself. As such, to speak of another person as incarnate, would reference the other as a “you,” that which is open to the vision, representational knowledge, and phenomenological intentionality. The face καθ’ αὑτό, however, as Levinas carefully expresses throughout his writings, is a counter-phenomenon due to its transcendence, which overflows anything the subject might think concerning it.

It is not that the other does not give itself to vision, but that the other as such, καθ’ αὑτό, always resists any totalizing grasp, and thus cannot be given over in vision. The other is always more than the body that gives itself to perception, and “every phenomenon,” Levinas says, “masks, mystifies ad infinitum, making actuality impossible.” As I have shown, the social relationship unfolds an-archically, by means of affect prior to the origin of the subject in thought. Thus, the divine face of another is necessarily transcendent and cannot become incarnate due to the infinity that characterizes alterity. Incarnation, as the presentation of materiality within a

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426 See esp. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duqusene University Press, 1998), 99-129. Incarnation is typically used positively by Levinas to describe the awakening of the subject in the present by means of the proximity with the other in the absolute past. It is thus the event of becoming a cogito, a thinking being in a world governed by a cognitive horizon. It is not simply a reference to the position of a fully formed biological body, but a reference to a creative event, an an-archic inspiration that leads to the ex-piration, i.e., the breathing of life into the subject from the face-to-face of the other, which is the foundation for the awakening of the I and the thinking a subject whose thought is made possible by a primordial, affective relation. See esp. ibid., 109. Recurrence and incarnation is a dead time in the passing of the other and the separation of the singularities who co-create the world in relationship. This is partly why incarnation is not the term Levinas embraces to describe the corporeal presence of God in the face of the other. It is not that the divine face is incorporeal, dis-embodied; it is that for Levinas incarnation is a profoundly technical term for creation, the way a subject is created in the world by means of the social relation, the proximity to the other, and the substitution of the one for the other that results in responsibility. Such an account seems too reductionist to simply apply for a philosophy of creation, as many other affects seem crucial in the creative event. Nevertheless, creation would remain an affective, relational event where the separate singularities of the world carry a trace of others concealed within themselves. See Ibid., 114-115.

427 Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 92.

428 The other cannot appear within a horizon because the precise quality of transcendence is to overflow cognition. The perception of the infinite would nullify the very idea of infinity as that which overflows perception.
phenomenal horizon, is impossible for something that is fundamentally counter-phenomenal. Incarnation places corporeity within the matrix of subjective, present time and so opens a body to being represented, being consumed, being totalized. As such, neither the face of the other human, nor divinity, both of which manifest in the an-archic relationship of the face-to-face, can ever be given as incarnate phenomena, because of the infinity and transcendence necessary in a world that differentiates existents from one another as well as the primordial il y a. Rather, the divine face is disincarnate insofar as it exceeds an identification by means of any appeal to attributes and form grasped by means of phenomenology.

Concerning this section of *Totality and Infinity*, Robert Gibbs writes “God is both personal and invisible. …What is visible is like an object of my intentionality. Here already is a critique of a theology of incarnation—God is visible neither in the stone statue in the Temple nor in the visible face of a human being.”429 Thus, in this critical stance toward the idea of incarnation, “Levinas takes his distance from one of the central doctrines of Christianity. …Levinas does not view the other person, particularly his face, as an incarnation of God or of the infinite. His account of the face portrays how it disrupts the reification that our judgments impose both on the other person and on God.”430 On first glance then, this is a seemingly strange passage to hold as a key idea in a work principally concerned with a Christian theology embracing Christology and the idea of deep incarnation. Yet, as I argue in the next chapter, Gibbs’ and Levinas’ views are hardly representative of incarnation theology in its fullness.431

The only sure quiddity of the infinite is transcendence.

430 Ibid., 33.
431 To be fair, while Gibbs is certainly right, Levinas is in no way concerned to engage in a sustained, detailed engagement with the doctrine of Incarnation. The doctrine nowhere receives the kind of treatment necessary if one wishes to do justice to the thought and tradition of the other person. Levinas, and Gibbs for that matter, engage the idea of incarnation based on generalized assumptions and only certain assumed aspects of the doctrine.
Nevertheless, even a more robust reading of incarnation theology is open to the critique found here, and thus while underdeveloped, Gibbs’ reading of Levinas and incarnation is applicable, and necessary in any discussion on incarnation theology. Thus, while I am critical of Gibbs and Levinas insofar as they both offer shallow descriptions of the Christian tradition, I ultimately agree that “one does not ascend to God through the orders of being.”432

Such a position, however, does not discount or nullify the corporeity of the face, nor the corporeity of God, who is inseparable from the affective ethics resulting from one’s proximity with a neighbor. The problematic issue of incarnation is not at all a problem with the interrelation of God and materiality, but rather a concern over the representation of the divine face within human horizons. The infinite transcendence of the divine face prohibits its being given within phenomenological horizons of knowing. Thus the ethical relationship a subject has with the other precedes the relation with the “you” apprehended in vision. Ethics unfolds in meeting the illeity of another, the “il” or the “elle,” the as such that remains counter-phenomenal and solicits the human to be responsible for another’s corporeal misery. This matrix, in which the illeity of the other expresses in proximity to the self who is not yet a myself, remains utterly corporeal, never dis-embodied, even though the positive embodiment possessed is absolutely resistant to being reduced to cognitive representation. “The nakedness of his face,” its infinity,

See esp. “Judaism and Kenosis,” and “Judaism and Christianity,” in In the Time of the Nations, 114-132, 161-166; “Judeo-Christian Friendship,” in Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism, trans. Seán Hand (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 202, and “A Man-God?” in Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other, Michael Smith and Barbara Harshav (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1998), 53-60. A more nuanced view of incarnation, or one at least that recognizes that a discussion of incarnation as a doctrine is far more complex than Levinas or Gibbs acknowledges, is found in Jeffrey Bloechl, “Excess and Desire: A Commentary on Totality and Infinity, Section I, Part D,” in The Exorbitant, 198-200. Thus, while I maintain and aim to demonstrate the serious difference between Levinas’ thought and the Christian tradition concerning the idea of incarnation, Levinas is not concerned to engage this discussion in depth, possesses no technical discussion of a Christian idea of incarnation, and fails to nuance the various trajectories and models of particular incarnation theologies in the Christian tradition.

“extends into the nakedness of the body that is cold and that is ashamed of its nakedness. Existence as such [καθ’ αὐτό] is, in the world, a destitution.” The issue then is not corporeity but phenomenology. The face of the other is not a disembodied, immaterial, phantom; the face burns and shivers, albeit as a counter-phenomenon whose an-archic power disrupts the sovereignty of subjects who reduce alterity to their conceptual, linguistic horizons.

Thus, Levinas’ view insists that God is not mediated by any human, who would thus simply grant access to a greater alterity. Likewise, God cannot become incarnate, due to the transcendence of the divine face of the other. As such, God would not become a human, as this would imply the physical mediation of a pure spectral alterity exterior to corporeity, taking up residence within immanence. This view implies a distance between God and embodiment that Levinas will not abide. God is always already inseparable from corporeal misery; an entrance into the world from the outside would amount to an aggression against the irreducible singularity of the face that will not stand in Levinas’ thinking. God would also never be incarnate, at least in the phenomenal sense in which Levinas understands the term though divinity is always already corporeal. The as such, of one’s neighbor, i.e., infinity, cannot enter the structure of

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433 Levinas, Totality and Infinity, 75.

434 Levinas speaks often of God not being present in the world. The matrix he is referring to in reference to a world is the subjective world of cognition, not the world as a material matrix. See e.g., “Meaning and Sense,” in in Collected Philosophical Papers, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht, NL: Nijhoff, 1987), 102; “Useless Suffering,” in Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other, Michael Smith and Barbara Harshav (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1998), 91-101. Here suffering, while a datum of consciousness, is said to transcend its datum, retreating to an unassumable infinite. “The just suffering in me for the unjustifiable suffering of the other, opens suffering to the ethical perspectives of the inter-human.” Ibid., 94. The suffering of the other “solicits and calls me,” and while this produces suffering in me, the suffering of the other is the precise embodiment of the divine face. Ethics unfolds here, in this embodied nexus where suffering in the other affects a subject. See also, Robert Gibbs, “The Disincarnation of the Word: The Trace of God in Reading Scripture,” in The Exorbitant, 36.

435 In mediation, there is an absolute separation between the other human and God. The other is reduced to a lesser alterity, merely pointing toward the greater alterity who dignifies human suffering apart from the misery of the other itself. The other is reduced to a bridge, bringing the subject to its own one-on-one relation to God. While the idea of incarnation fuses the same and the other, mediation absolutely separates God, the other, and the subject who cannot enter into the three-way relation.
object cognition. It remains corporeal but also counter-phenomenal.\textsuperscript{436} The social relation, however, does give rise to thought, giving “to theological concepts the unique signification of which they consist.”\textsuperscript{437} Hence, from ethics the idea of infinity and God come to mind.

4.1.2 Is the Other Person God?

The blurring of the line between God and human, arising from eschewing the ideas of mediation and incarnation, could lead to an assertion that the divine face of the other is simply speaking, God. While tempting, such a flat equivocation between God and the neighbor would be a “wooden and uncharitable reading” of Levinas.\textsuperscript{438} Levinas is not saying that the other \textit{is} and thereby \textit{exhausts} the idea of God, nor is he asserting paganism or polytheism. An analysis of the essay “God and Philosophy” shows that the God of monotheism is otherwise than Being and otherwise than an irreducibly singular being manifest in an infinite plurality of forms. Divine singularity is instead, radically plural.\textsuperscript{439} I thus read Levinas as a radical monotheist, wherein God is one, but plural—a unified, divine field of corporeal infinity.

\textsuperscript{436} In incarnation, there is no separation between the same and the divine other. The other is reduced to the thematization of the subject, and thus known only by means of analogy and representational cognition. The other risks becoming the subject’s \textit{alter ego}, a fusion of the other and the same. Incarnation cannot present the divine face \textit{as such}. While the idea of mediation absolutely separates those involved in the social relationship, incarnation obliterates the distance between the same and the divine other, which is necessary to maintain the infinity of the other, and the integrity of the other \textit{as such}. Incarnation consumes divine face of the other person.

\textsuperscript{437} Levinas, \textit{Totalité et Infini}, 77


\textsuperscript{439} Emmanuel Levinas, “God and Philosophy,” in \textit{Collected Philosophical Papers}, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht, NL: Nijhoff, 1987), 153-173. It should be mentioned that Gibbs, in his analysis of Levinas’ view of divine expression via the Torah and all great pieces of literature, follows a similar line of thought. The Torah, and other great texts, do not express merely one interpretation, but several. “There is never only one interpretation but a plurality of interpreters, and that plurality is constitutive of the work of exegesis.” Robert Gibbs, “The Disincarnation of the Word,” 43. The plurality of interpreters drawing on a plurality of readings suggests that the text itself is open in light of its unique dialogical relation with each reader. Thus, the singular, divine text would be simultaneously plural as each reading could be an authentic expression of its words emerging upon meeting a multitude of readers. See Ibid., 39-43.
Is one’s neighbor God? The answer appears to be otherwise than yes or no.\textsuperscript{440} The other expresses a divine face, and there is no greater alterity behind and mediated by this singularity, and yet God is irreducible to this other person. In his essay “God and Philosophy,” God is absolutely other, more other than the other, and yet, as in Totality and Infinity, accessible only through the misery of another’s vulnerability. As such, along with the infinity of the other human, the reality of God exists beyond the horizon of cognition, although it is able to penetrate this horizon. And yet, Levinas writes, “as soon as he is conceived, this God is situated within ‘being’s move.’ He is situated there as the entity par excellence.”\textsuperscript{441} While not condemning thinking of God in this manner, as there is no recourse otherwise, Levinas refuses to accept the onto-theological implications of dogmatically limiting divinity to something able to be represented or thought. Such theology would enchain divinity to a finite matrix, and thus God cannot be understood precisely as an exterior existent nor as a construct created in the mind. God is embodied in the dimension of the other human deeper than the “you” whom the thinking subject meets in the present. God is met in the an-archy of affectivity affectively—the expression

\textsuperscript{440} While not well developed in Levinas or the secondary literature, there is in Levinas the idea that the differentiation occurring in the incarnation of irreducibly singular existents retains co-creative, entangled dynamic. Thus, the human subject conceals the other within its existence; being is co-creative. This is a dynamic of the “substitution” that lies at the heart of Levinas’ thought. “I exist through the other and for the other, but without this being alienation: I am inspired. This inspiration is the psyche. The psyche can signify this alterity in the same without alienation in the concealment of incarnation [en guise d’incarnation], as being-in-one’s-skin, having-the-other-in-ones-skin.” Levinas, \textit{Otherwise than Being}, 114-115. It is not as if the other is the same, losing its irreducible singularity, but separation is not absolute, and the trace of the other retains a sense of an-archic proximity, a dynamic of immediacy, concealed and inaccessible within the same. The structure of responsibility, a co-creative force in Levinas’ philosophy, demands a peculiar subjectivity, as the act of substitution obliterates the Western ideal of absolutely individual subjectivity. As the epigraph from the poet Paul Celan at the beginning of the essay “Substitution” reads, “\textit{Ich bin du, wenn ich ich bin},” (I am you, once I am I). Cf. Celan’s French translation of his own work, “\textit{Je suis, étant moi-même, toi},” (I am, being myself, you). John Felstiner, “On Paul Celan,” \textit{Crossroads: The Poetry Society of America Newsletter} (Fall, 2000): 30-31. Such an epigraph illustrates Levinas’ idea of substitution, the idea that the other is concealed in one’s “myself,” which passively puts itself in place of the other by means of the affect of responsibility. See Paul Celan, “Lob der Ferne,” in \textit{Paul Celan: Selected Poems and Prose}, trans. John Felstiner (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2001).

\textsuperscript{441} Levinas, “God and Philosophy,” 154.
of the *illeity* of alterity, the he-ness, she-ness, or otherwise, found “in the depth of the you.”

Such an expression “is but a word. But the word is God.”

As a result of God being inseparable from the human face and the ethical summons to responsibility, not the mediation from a greater alterity, Levinas articulates his strongest, and perhaps strangest statement on God, which I here translate.

The analysis that has been conducted implies that God is not simply the “first other,” or “other par excellence,” or the “absolute other,” but other than other, other otherwise, other by means of an alterity prior to the alterity of another, the ethical bond to the neighbor, and different from every neighbor, transcendent to the point of absence, to the point of a possible confusion with the rumbling of the *il y a*.

This text is, at first glance, rather peculiar. Immediately prior to this passage, Levinas discussed the expression of God in the *illeity* of the other person, and the ethical matrix of divine expression. Likewise, as we have seen, the essay begins with a warning against onto-theology and situating God as an object of cognition that reduces divinity to “the *entity* par excellence.”

God is thus located in the an-archic matrix of affect, wherein the embodiment of the other solicits the subject to being-for-another. Thus, since we have seen that divine expression in the face is the “very scene” of truth. Levinas here reiterates that God is not mediated by the other by asserting that divinity “is not simply the ‘first other,’ the ‘other par excellence,’ or the ‘absolutely other’” who exists as an existent on another plane of reality that transcends the

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442 Ibid., 165.
444 Et c’est à partir de l'analyse qui vient d’être menée que Dieu n'est pas simplement le “premier autrui,” ou “autrui par excellence” ou l”absolument autrui,” mais autre qu'autrui, autre autrement, autre d'altérité préalable à l'altérité d'autrui, à l'astreinte éthique au prochain, et différent de tout prochain, transcendant jusqu'à l'absence, jusqu'à sa confusion possible avec le remue-ménage de *l'il y a*. Emmanuel Levinas, “Dieu et la Philosophie,” Le Nouveau Commerce 30/31 (Spring 1975): 117.
446 Levinas, *Totalité et Infini*, 77.
corporeality of the face. God is thus other than the “you” whom the subject apprehends, but is also not a being behind the *illeity* of the other human, existing as a phantasmal entity mediated by the corporeity plane. Yet, speaking as precisely as possible of God who comes to mind, it becomes clear in the later half of this passage that *illeity*, i.e., divinity, despite being inseparable from the other human, also transcends the irreducible singularity of the face without the suggestion that what transcends the human is the greater alterity of a mediated, spectral being. Because God expresses in the face of all human beings, Levinas implies that divinity is simultaneously entangled with, and transcendent from all humans. Thus, the God of monotheism is plural; divinity is the face in its infinite expressions, embedded within human plurality. If God’s transcendence is met within, but still “different from every neighbor,” and “transcendent to the point of absence, to the point of a possible confusion with the stirring of the *there is,*” it is difficult to imagine monotheism apart from radical plurality. Divine infinity as such, while inseparable from another’s *illeity*, cannot be restricted to the alterity of one particular other; all others exist as the possibility of divine expression, inseparable from particular corporeal vulnerability.\(^{447}\) The God of monotheism thus exists in a state of paradox; divinity is the irreducible singularity within the appeal of the other person’s face, but expressed within the radical plurality of God, i.e., all of the embodied appeals expressing in unique instances of corporeal vulnerability, irreducible to any one body.\(^{448}\) Insofar as *illeity* is expressed within while

\(^{447}\) This is not to say God is only God in the totality of faces. This would again diminish each face as a lesser alterity. God is fully God in the face of one’s irreducibly singular neighbor. Levinas does not outline a polytheism wherein we find a greater God manifest in or accompanied by lesser demigods. This is also not pantheism nor paganism, if by that we mean that things in their totality or individually are unequivocally divine. The divinity of each face might call the divinity of others into question, allowing God to transcend the face itself. God is plural, Janus-like, though not a dyad but an un-representable, infinitely facing field.

\(^{448}\) The Transcendence of the other human remains infinite in the sense that it cannot be understood as an *ideatum* contained within an idea. However, infinity and *illeity* cannot be bound only to a single neighbor. If such divine infinity is not the mediation of an entity behind the other person, who is the very scene of truth, then divinity must be plural in its monotheist unfolding.
overflowing singularities, God cannot be restricted precisely to any one neighbor, and yet remains inseparable from the appeal of each one. God, in Levinasian monotheism, is strangely plural.\textsuperscript{449} It is as if there is a divinity field entangled within corporeal vulnerability; God is not Being itself, nor a being mediated by the face, is not simply the totality of faces, nor reduced to any material singularity.

Talk of God in Levinas must proceed along carefully nuanced lines. God is inseparable from the other’s face, but transcends any one vulnerable body without finding fullness in the totality of bodies. Is the neighbor God? The answer appears to be otherwise than a simple yes or no. The God of monotheism must be otherwise than Being; a mediated being; a construct derived from being; the totality of beings; a singular being. The God of monotheism must be infinitely plural and entangled with the faces of all. This God is uncanny and unknown, but not for that reason otherwise than corporeal and personal.\textsuperscript{450} Still, despite the personal quality of this

\textsuperscript{449} One might be tempted to employ Trinitarian language or analogies to explain what is happening here. One might suggest, or at least suggest that such a logic is not impossible within a Christian schema, that a singular \textit{physis} might adequately describe the structure of divinity and the other human from the perspective of the finite, perceiving subject, and that \textit{hypostasis} express the divine peculiar to each irreducibly singular face. One might then draw from Levinas a new Christian “heresy,” an “infinitarian” position suggesting that a Trinitarian framework poetically describes one God in infinite personhood. While Levinas’ use of \textit{hypostasis}, as the positioning of a subject within the phenomenal world, would prevent suggesting this as his idea, one might nevertheless extrapolate this by means of a non-dogmatic, non-representational appeal to \textit{physis} and \textit{hypostasis}.

\textsuperscript{450} Merold Westphal is critical of the presence of the personhood of God in Levinas. He suggests, contrary to Levinas, that whoever this Deity is, it is not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but simply the individual and collective \textit{illeity} of the human. Merold Westphal, “Thinking about God and God-Talk in Levinas,” in \textit{The Exorbitant}, 216-229. While God may not be a person, Levinas’ philosophy of divinity is inseparable from the personhood of the human face, and cannot for that reason be impersonal. Some, on the other hand, suggest that Levinas is in fact referencing a distinct being, based on a reading of Levinas’ essay “The Trace of the Other,” in \textit{Deconstruction in Context: Literature and Philosophy}, ed. Mark Taylor (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 345-359. While Robyn Horner sees this as a possible reading (Robyn Horner, “On Levinas’ Gifts to Christian Theology,” in \textit{The Exorbitant: Emmanuel Levinas between Jews and Christians}, ed. Kevin Hart, and Michael Alan Signer (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2010), 275, n. 50) other such as Jeffrey Kosky, \textit{Levinas and the Philosophy of Religion} (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001) and Michael Fagenblat, \textit{A Covenant of Creatures Levinas’s Philosophy of Judaism}. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010) suggest that Levinas in fact has an onto-theological framework. Such a reading of Levinas, especially the essay “The Trace of the Other,” are highly unlikely. Levinas, seems to clearly have the other human in mind, not a personal God who exists as an entity par excellence behind corporeal existence. Referencing the beyond being that transcends the world is an appeal to the horizon of perception, not the plane of corporeity as such. See also Emmanuel Levinas, “Une Dieu Homme?,” in Semaine des intellectuels catholiques, \textit{Qui est Jésus-Christ?}, Semaine des intellectuels catholiques, 6-
philosophy, such an invisible God always escapes the grasp of cognition and always stays at arms length from the human fully awakened in the world. “For God,” according to Adriaan Peperzak, “not much more than ‘Il’ or ‘ille’ is left over, but the abyss that separates God’s ‘glory’ from all powers of Anonymity is immense. The Name is never pronounced, but always remembered. As inspired by the Good we are in the trace of its passage. To live this inspiration is spirituality.”

4.1.3 The Face and the Subjective Present

Finally, it remains to discuss the relation of the face to the present, cognitive horizon of the subject. “There is a putting of the Infinite into thought,” says Levinas, “but this is wholly different from what is structured as a comprehension of a cogitatum by a cogitation.” As in the an-archic structure of the face-to-face, the other expresses itself and is received passively by the subject through the generation of affect. The impact of such affects, from which comes responsibility, is experienced by the subject as a “trace,” i.e., the reverberation of the social relation into the subjective present as a ghostly presence, in the form of moods and feelings toward responsibility. This experience, while cognitive, is beyond quantification, calculation, and observation. The trace, like the divine face, is not the datum of an object-cognition; it maintains a counter-phenomenal structure. The result is a temporal distance that separates the subject and the proximal immediacy of the other as such, and a relation in the present with

13 (Paris, FR: Centre Catholique des intellectuels français, 1968), 186; “A Man-God?” in Entre Nous, 53. This essay portrays the idea of God as “l’Etre supreme” (the supreme Being), and of Jesus as the Homme-Dieu (God-Man), a Christian incarnational theology that Levinas does not embrace.


something that has always already taken place. The trace is the impact of the other from the absolute past in which the subject and the other were face-to-face. The trace is what is left over from a fully material encounter, but overflows what any subject is able to think concerning it; it is a disincarnate echo whose fullness lies in another time. Yet, in the awakening of the I, the subject assumes the power to contemplate the social relationship, even as the resistance of the other person ensures that the ideatum of the idea does not fall into synchrony with the structure of thought.

The trace, then, is not open to dogmatic thematization, nor reducible to any linguistic sign or representational analogy. Yet, it retains a positive communicative feature insofar as it makes the infinity and mortality of the other apparent through the affects carried into the body of the awakened subject. The emotional states, moods, and feelings of the subject, while the open to cognition and analysis through comparison, find their source in the an-archic past wherein affect precedes thought. The subject’s an-archic passivity and susceptibility to the other thus transcends the immemorial past and the pure future, piercing the present. The divine face becomes an idea in thought; the idea of infinity and God come to mind by means of the pre-original, corporeal encounters, without enfolding God or the other human to the boundaries of

454 “The trace is significant for behavior, and one would be wrong to forget its anarchic insinuation by confusing it with an indication, with the monstration of the signified in the signifier. For that is the itinerary by which theological and edifying thought too quickly deduces the truths of faith. The obsession is subordinated to a principle that is stated in a theme, which annuls the very anarchy of its movement. The trace in which a face is ordered is not reducible to a sign: a sign and its relationship with the signified are synchronic in a theme.” Levinas, Otherwise than Being, 121.

455 For Levinas, the enigmatic structure of the divine is otherwise than apophasis or cataphasis. The resistance and retreat of infinity contains positivity by means of the negative. What is known as a result of this structure “is precisely man’s obligation towards all other men. According to the words of the prophet (Jeremiah 22:16), to judge the cause of the poor and needy, ‘Is not this to know me? says the Lord.’ Knowledge of the unknowable: transcendence becomes ethics.” Emmanuel Levinas, “The name of God according to a Few Talmudic Texts,” in Beyond the Verse: Talmudic Readings and Lectures, trans. Gary Mole (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 123.

456 See e.g., Levinas, Otherwise than Being, 122-123; “God and Philosophy,” 158. Affect is diachronic, grounded in the an-archic, but piercing the present.
thought. The trace resists thematization in the present. Its “appearance” is tied to its original saying, but what is said after the fact of vision is unable to reduce the other to a theme. The other “always flees…leaves void, a night, a trace, in which its visible invisibility is the face of the neighbor.” For this reason, “a trace is not a sign like any other,” even though it plays the role of a sign in the ontological adventure. Thus, the trace is not like the prints and scents of an animal left behind in the world for a perceptive subject to discover. The illeity of the other “has passed absolutely,” disturbing the present by means of affect already inscribed on the passive subject, “inscribed in the very order of the world.”

Insofar as the trace retains the counter-phenomenal structure of illeity, it rends the world of the awakened subject as “an incision made in time…a visitation and a coming.” The face is present, i.e., open to the cognitive horizon, only in the trace of its illeity; it is invisible but nevertheless open to contemplation by the affects that remain in human feelings after the face-to-face event. The trace “disturbs immanence without settling into the horizons of the world. …It goes toward those beings, but does not compromise itself with them, withdraws from them, ab-solves itself.”

What the subject is able to process of the face-to-face relation then is not like the cognition of an object presented before the senses; the trace returns to the subject as the

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457 Levinas, “Language and Proximity,” 120.
458 Levinas, “The Trace of the Other,” 356.
459 Ibid., 357. The world arises from the social relation, and as such, the trace is always already inscribed in the world, as if “someone who wanted to wipe away his traces and commit a perfect crime” Ibid., 357. There is no question whether the world has been disturbed, and yet no evidence remains that is able to point to the crime or the criminal.
460 Ibid., 354.
461 E.g., the compassion for another that creates responsibility occurs in feelings before it can be contemplated, yet, such feelings carry over into the present time of the awakened subject. Compassion thus begins before the I is able to contemplate it, but such feelings continue in the present time of cognition as a trace of the event that sparked the affect.
462 Ibid., 354-355.
disruptive echo of something that has always already happened within the embodied relationship between the other and the same. The trace thus calls the power of the I into question through its uncompromising resistance to being restrained under the boundaries of the identity the subject assigns to it. It is not an object disclosed, but an affect felt. The trace reveals what has already interrupted a subject’s life, and is encountered in the emotion, mood, and feeling-for-another that become open to subjective consideration. Such a trace is not synonymous with the “you” seen and touched; it remains “abstract or naked. It is denuded of its own image.” Like infinity, it overflows what can be thought concerning it, but this is not to say that what is thought is unconnected with the face-to-face encounter. Thought and action carry out the affective responsibility to which the subject is called, and the compassion and justice rendered to the other, while imperfect, is the goal of the face-to-face. The purpose of such a rigid relational structure is to preserve the transcendence of the other’s altenity, while embracing the corporeal needs that solicit the subject and call it to responsibility. As such, a disincarnate face is by no means disembodied.

Thus, traversing time by means of sensuous affects, the idea of infinity and God come to mind. The divinity of the other person remains transcendent, but there is here in the awakening of the I a positive relation with the other person as a Dieu-Homme. While the other, the “you”

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463 “The putting into question is not reducible to becoming aware of this being put into question” Ibid., 352. Thus, the ethical moment does not occur when a subject becomes aware of the vulnerability of the other. To call the I into question precisely says that consciousness is not the moment of ethics, which is deeper than thought, phenomenon, and the present time. Ethics arrives on the scene before the I is itself; it is a passivity wherein the other solicits from an authoritative, divine height rather than the authority and construction of an ego. See also Levinas, Otherwise than Being, esp. 122-123.


465 Levinas, “Une Dieu Homme?,” 186-192. The Dieu-Homme (Man-God) is discussed in the context of Christology and in distinction from Jesus as the Homme-Dieu (God-Man). Levinas here directly engages the idea of incarnation, though takes his own unique trajectory in discussing the God/human relationship. The notion of the Homme-Dieu, which is rejected, seems to imply mediation and incarnation, whereas the Dieu-Homme, retains Levinas’ emphasis on the other as the precise location of divinity, not a greater alterity behind the face. This point
encountered by the subject, is not an incarnation of God in the precise sense that Jesus of Nazareth is, the idea of a Human-God finds a particular resonance with Levinas’ philosophy. Without affirming incarnation, Levinas situates God within the other person, albeit within the illeity that lies in the depth of the “you.” This illeity then, which pierces the immanence of the subjective horizon by means of its affective trace, takes up an uncanny, haunting presence in the world from an invisible beyond.

This is Levinas’ philosophy of divine kenosis – the humiliation of a God dwelling not in the world of thought, but within vulnerable human bodies. Such a God rends the subjective horizon, but does not dwell there as a datum of consciousness. God erupts in awakened consciousness “through this solicitation of the beggar, and of the homeless without a place to lay his head… the humiliated person disturbs absolutely; he is not of the world.”466 The face, through sensuousness and vulnerability, is able “to pierce immanence without thereby taking one's place within it.”467 Since God does not dwell in the horizon of the subject, but rather disturbs it through a haunting visitation, the matrix of divinity is the vulnerability of other humans who compose a field of divinity. Each face is divine, though divinity escapes the singularity of the individual face.468 Levinas thus suggests that the kenotic entanglement between God and the other human takes place “in this transubstantiation of the Creator into the creature,” and as such, “the notion

does not come out in the translation of “Une Dieu Homme?,” as the phrases Homme-Dieu and Dieu-Homme are both translated as “Man-God.” See Levinas, “A Man God?,” 53, 58.

466 Ibid., 55.
467 Ibid.
468 Levinas here makes a parallel with Christianity only insofar as God and humanity might be joined. For Levinas, however, God might be entangled with any other human (Dieu-Homme). He is not embracing the Christian doctrine of Incarnation (Homme-Dieu), which insofar as this implies incarnation, mediation, and exclusive revelation, is too restrictive and too phenomenal for Levinas’ philosophy. Yet, the idea that God expresses by means of a human body is affirmed in Levinas, although the differences between Christianity and Levinas’ philosophy must be carefully nuanced. The difference lies in Levinas’ counter-phenomenal understanding of the face.
of Man-God affirms the idea of substitution,” i.e., the idea that the subject is passively called to responsibility from the divine height of the other person. This idea insists that the divine face can never be made incarnate in the present, and resists any restriction to form or enchainment to a single entity, but that the face is nevertheless creaturely, and that even its trace is grounded in corporeity. Thus the God of Levinas’ philosophy is inseparable from the human face.

4.2 Levinas: The Question of the Other Animal and Beyond

Up to this point in our analysis of Levinas, I have made little reference to the otherwise-than human. I end this chapter by addressing the extension of Levinas’ thought beyond humanity, preparing for the analysis of the final chapter. While Levinas’ thought is complicated by some peculiar statements throughout his writings, he views the human alone as the possibility of expressing a face. Nothing but a human is able to “question the naïve right of my powers.” Thus, while Levinas sought to overcome the dominant strand of Western philosophy that reduces the other to the same, he evinces a clear anthropocentrism that is inconsistent with the spirit of his work. As such, I briefly outline what Levinas says about the otherwise-than

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469 Ibid., 50.

470 As demonstrated below, Levinas is not consistent on the issue of the otherwise than human. One of his more peculiar statements is found in “Transcendence and Evil,” where he suggests that humanity “is fraternally solidary with creation, that is, is responsible for what was neither one's self nor one's work, . . . responsibility for everything and for all.” Levinas, “Transcendence and Evil,” 184. This is ethical language that fits his thought on humanity, and is much stronger than the texts typically used to speak of Levinas and the non-human. Richard Cohen sees this as “the path to the ethical theory of ‘animal rights’ that certain commentators have found lacking in Levinas’ thought.” Richard Cohen, “Against Theology or ‘The Devotion of a Theology without Theodicy’: Levinas and Religion,” 356, n.17.

471 Levinas, Totality and Infinity, 84.

472 See esp. ibid., 73, where the human is the only creature that overflows the thought that thinks it; all else can be totally known within representational thought. This is a rather uncritical assertion, and one might point to several modern works demonstrating that no life-world can be grasped in this manner. See e.g., Jakob von Uexküll, A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans with A Theory of Meaning (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Thomas Nagel, “What is it Like to be a Bat?” The Philosophical Review 93.4 (October 1974): 435-50. On this shortcoming in Levinas, see Barbara Jane Davy, “An Other Face of Ethics,” Ethics and the Environment 12.1 (2007): 51-52; Silvia Benso, The Face of Things: A Different Side of Ethics (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), 174-175.
human and explore the inconsistencies of his view in light of the deeper structure of his philosophy.

Levinas references the question of the face beyond the human throughout his works, but the question never receives substantive, critical consideration. The most detailed insights concerning this issue come from an interview given by Levinas in 1986 to a group of graduate students from the University of Warwick. In the interview, Levinas’ interlocutors ask him about the possibility of encountering the expression of the face beyond the human. Levinas’ answer, while ambiguous to a degree, ultimately suggests the human exclusivity of the face. “I cannot say at what moment you have the right to be called ‘face.’ The human face is completely different and only afterwards do we discover the face of an animal. I don’t know if a snake has a face. I can’t answer that question. A more specific analysis is needed.” With this assertion, Levinas betrays his own thinking concerning the face. While the precise reasons for the absolute difference between the face of a human and an animal face are given in response to a subsequent question, we here see Levinas begin to move away from ideas that are at the core of his philosophy, namely an-archy and asymmetry. The act of comparison proposed here necessitates the presence of conceptual characteristics that determine the structure of the beings under


475 Ibid., 171-172. “According to your analysis, the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ is revealed by the human face; but is the commandment not also expressed in the face of an animal? Can an animal be considered as the other that must be welcomed? Or is it necessary to possess the possibility of speech to be a ‘face’ in the ethical sense?” Ibid., 171.

476 Ibid., 170-171.
consideration. If the human face is to be set apart from what lies beyond its corporeal expression, Levinas will have to establish thematic criteria by which to compare different bodies, and thereby name the characteristics of a face within the boundaries of a phenomenological schema—precisely what an an-archic, asymmetrical philosophy would eschew. The face, Levinas has vehemently insisted, however, is beyond such analysis, fixed form, and the representational capacities of the human cogito. Yet, when faced with the question of the otherwise-than human, this is the precise appeal Levinas begins to make. What Levinas does not acknowledge is that constructing a positive set of criteria for what does not count as a face is synonymous with constructing positive, a priori criteria for what does count as a face. If a being is unable to express because it lacks some capacity – e.g., a brain able to universalize maxims – it follows that beings who are able to express a face, express precisely because they possess certain capacities lacking in what is otherwise. The other would thus be identified prior to expression by the horizon of a subject. Nothing could be less Levinasian, as one cannot know ahead of time who the other is nor define the face by appealing to certain capacities. As Peter Atterton says, “I cannot know prior to experience that the Other will be a member of the genus Homo…unless I have already made it a stipulation that all potential encounters with the Other will consist of encounters with human beings.”

Levinas reveals the exact characteristics he appeals to when his interlocutors follow up on their first question concerning the otherwise-than human, and ask what, if any, moral obligations humans have to faceless creatures and where such obligations come from. After

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478 “If animals do not have faces in an ethical sense, do we have obligations towards them? And if so, where do they come from?” Wright, “The Paradox of Morality,” 172.
insisting that there is a manner in which ethics extends to the non-human—i.e., by means of transferring the idea of human suffering and care to another, not a direct solicitation of the otherwise-than human—Levinas appeals to the idea of the human as a “new phenomenon” as a basis for comparing species, and for asserting the ethical priority of humanity.\textsuperscript{479} Levinas’ philosophical anthropology is grounded in the idea “that the human breaks with pure being, which is always a persistence in being.”\textsuperscript{480} To be human, and thus to have a face, is to transcend an obsession with the self, to be otherwise-than selfish, and to struggle for the life of others.\textsuperscript{481}

“The being of animals,” on the contrary, “is a struggle for life. A struggle for life without ethics. It is a question of might.”\textsuperscript{482} Thus, Levinas associates non-human life with a Hobbesian enchainment to the self, similar to how he interprets Heidegger’s notion of \textit{Dasein}, insisting that “with the appearance of the human…there is something more important than my life, and that is

\textsuperscript{479} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{480} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{481} The equation of the face and humanity here is another inconsistency in Levinas’ response. As Matthew Calarco acknowledges, “for the Other to be a genuine and absolute Other – something that Levinas maintains is essential to the ethicality of the encounter – the Other cannot belong to any genus whatsoever, not even one as broad a “humanity.” Matthew Calarco, \textit{Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida} (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2008), 65. This anthropology is further complicated by its ableist sentiment. Thus, as Peter Atterton points out in “Facing Animals,” 277-279, such a view, if consistently applied, would strip many severely mentally disabled humans of the dignity of a face.

\textsuperscript{482} Wright, “The Paradox of Morality,” 172. “That is Darwin’s idea,” Levinas contends. Ibid. It is also, he contends, Heidegger’s idea as expressed in the concept of \textit{Dasein}, which Levinas understands as “a being who in his being is concerned for this being itself.” Ibid. Levinas here suggests that unless there is a transcendence from being according to the laws of nature, there can be no ethics. If the human is merely the final stage in an evolutionary process, there is no getting out of enchainment to one’s self. While I leave it to others to contend whether this is an accurate reading of Heidegger, this is decidedly not so easily expressed as “Darwin’s idea,” and would be better attributed to pre-Darwinian thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes. Darwin, especially in \textit{The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex} (London, UK: Penguin, 2004), understands sociality and ethics as well within the scope of biology. Levinas here argues from a fear based in a poor understanding of biology. A more precise view of biology and ethics can be found in works such as Jaak Panksepp and Lucy Biven, \textit{The Archaeology of Mind: Neuroevolutionary Origins of Human Emotions} (New York, NY: W.W Norton, 2012); De Waal, Frans. \textit{Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996). As such, with Calarco, \textit{Zoographies}, 59-64, I would posit that ethics is not a break with being at all, but fits comfortably within the epic of evolution. On this reading of Heidegger, see Robert Bernasconi, “Levinas and the Struggle for Existence,” in \textit{Addressing Levinas}, ed. Eric Sean Nelson, Anjke Kapust, and Kent Still (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 170-184.
the life of the other.” As such, to be the kind of being who has a face – i.e., who directly solicits others to take responsibility for their well-being – one must also be the kind of being who is able to respond to the solicitation of another. Thus, to be an ethical patient, one must also be an ethical agent. While Levinas does not make an appeal here to a more technical understanding of what precisely makes one a moral patient/agent, elsewhere he strongly suggests that a certain neurobiology is required allowing a being to both suffer and speak its sufferings in the form of self-aware, universalized maxims—a subjectivity firmly rooted in the Western philosophical tradition.

The problem with Levinas’ work on the question of the otherwise-than human is beyond “bad biology,” according to Matthew Calarco; “it is also bad philosophy,” and it is inconsistent with his broader approach to ethics. As we have seen, the ideas of anarchy and asymmetry are central in Levinasian ethics. Anarchy and asymmetry call the sovereignty of the subject into question, allowing ethical authority to emerge from the vulnerable other rather than the


485 Calarco, Zoographies, 62.
intentional horizon of the human cogito. The other expresses itself prior to the origination of any subjective horizon, and disrupts the power of the subject to name and consume the other according to its own thinking. This infinity then precludes all attempts to reduce alterity to necessary attributes, essential characteristics, and dogmatic identity markers. “The Other in question,” argues Silvia Benso, “is always a particular, determinate, individualized other who can never be subsumed in the universality, abstractness, or generality of a concept, genus, or species. The Other is never a generic human being but always this specific and determinate human being hic et nunc, the one who is facing me here and now.”

Yet, such an approach to ethics is abandoned when Levinas considers what lies beyond the human. Consequently, by excluding certain bodies from the possibility of ethical expression based on a rubric of positive attributes needed in order to be morally considerable, Levinas undercuts the heart of his own ethic. Contrary to what he otherwise insists, to be considered a face here one must suddenly possess ethics and logos. A face here is a moral agent, able to say “Here I am,” when the other calls. Taking on responsibility further requires a particular neurology, a brain sufficiently complex to become self-aware, recognize the other’s suffering, and also be able to speak one’s resistance to murder. This is, however, what Levinas’ an-

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487 While Levinas always described his work as a humanism, and he views the otherwise than human as faceless in a few passages throughout his writings, this rubric was never applied to the idea of a face until the non-human came into view. Ethics and logos are not demands placed on bodies to express their vulnerability. Thus, while one might say that such prejudice was always there in his writings, Levinas also refused such a structure throughout his works. His view of the otherwise-than human is incoherent in light of the trajectory of his own thought.

488 See also Jacques Derrida, The Animal that therefore I am, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2008), 105-118. Derrida suggests that Levinas’ generic view of the animal as that which cannot say “Here I am,” cannot present itself as responsible, means that it does not have the possibility of resisting its own murder.
archic, asymmetrical philosophy rejects absolutely insofar as the expression of the other refuses any dogmatic structure imposed upon it by a subject. There are no a priori characteristics, cognitive, corporeal, or otherwise, demanded of the face that legitimize its expression. Reversing his stance on such a demand violates the an-archic, asymmetrical character of Levinas’ ethics. This unfolds by requiring something of the other before allowing it to express καθ’ αὐτό.

Levinas throughout his work “makes no assumptions about the competence of the Other, moral or otherwise, but rather entails that I am nonreciprocally obligated to the Other in the sense that I have no right to demand from the other what the Other demands from me.” Such a demand can only be made after the fact of the affective encounter, thus requiring a temporal structure absolutely different than what he has already established for ethics. An-archy and asymmetry insist that responsibility emerges prior to the possibility of intentional cognition, and so there is no time for the possibility of applying such a judgment before the counter-phenomenal event of ethics takes place. If there is no time to consider such a structure, there is no reason, other than sheer humanist prejudice, for suggesting that the otherwise-than human might not solicit and call the human to responsibility.

As noted by Jacques Derrida, such an incoherent response to the otherwise-than human calls into question “the whole legitimacy of [Levinas’] discourse and ethics of the ‘face’ of the other.” Yet, Derrida does not go this far, and with others he suggests that the otherwise-than human is precisely the alterity whom Levinas’ ethic is uniquely equipped to welcome. Such a

489 Atterton, “Facing Animals,” 32.
490 Matthew Calarco makes a similar point in reference to Levinas’ assertion that a deeper analysis would be needed to determine if the otherwise-than human possessed a face. See “Deconstruction is not Vegetarianism: Humanism, Subjectivity, and Animal Ethics,” Continental Philosophy Review 37 (2004): 183.
491 Derrida, The Animal that therefore I am, 109.
492 Ibid., 107. While some deny such a reading, e.g., Diane Perpich, The Ethics of Emmanuel Levinas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), this approach to Levinas is quite prominent. See e.g., Peter
position is summarized by Barbara Jane Davy, who insists that “Levinasian ethics have the potential to add the idea that the capacities of the Other are completely irrelevant to my obligation to meet them as persons and extend them ethical consideration.” Based on what we have seen, thus far, Levinas’ desire to overcome the reductive approach of Western philosophy is in fact equipped precisely to deal with the alterity of the otherwise-than human, beyond any appeal to boundary markers that would definitively determine who is within and who is outside of the dignity of moral consideration. The face is nude; it perpetually overflows the plastic forms that give it shape, along with the ideas that restrict its expression. It follows then that it need not possess ethics nor logos; its capacity to be responsible is meaningless as is the possibility of its intentional expression. Expression derives from pure vulnerability, and reaches the subject by means of the affect in-spired by its need to survive and thrive within a world that is always beyond the subject.

“The face,” Levinas writes “is a hand in search of recompense, an open hand. That is, it needs something. It is going to ask you for something.” If such neediness, growing from fragility and vulnerability, is beyond reduction to any capacity, “there are thus no conceptual


494 Wright, “The Paradox of Morality,” 160
grounds to support the idea that the Other and humanity are synonymous. To be ethically considerable, one must have needs that are necessary for dwelling within a world, not a sufficiently complex neurology allowing one to articulate universalized maxims and exercise responsibility. Frailty, the openness to being interrupted, might occur in an infinite plurality of forms that are radiated out into subjective worlds as bodies resist their own demise and demand to retain their place in the Sun. Why must such instances of resistance and demand be understood only by means of comparison with the affect generated from other humans? Is there no an-archic, asymmetrical affect generated within the subject beyond human relationships?

Does the yelp of pain of a kicked dog say ‘I am hurt?’ or is it merely an involuntary instinctual vocalization? If we compare this to a human who yelps in pain, is it still an involuntary instinctual vocalization rather than speech? Why would this expression in either a dog or a human not be a call to ethical action? If we cannot hear the signification of needs by plants, insects, or the ground, air, and water, is that not a marker of our limitations as much as theirs? For those who have the ears to hear, a clear-cut forest is an accusation of greed.

It would seem that the sheer unintelligibility of the experience of other things would require us to acknowledge their infinity, and the affective, emotive responses of humans to the suffering of the other animal and beyond would call Levinas’ position into question. Such instances of infinity and frailty point to worlds beyond the human, where the needs of others solicit affectively as the needs of human beings. Such needs might disrupt the sovereignty of human lives and in-spire responsibility for the fate of creatures, things, and the systems that comprise cosmos and Earth. Thus, we can once more agree with Davy who asserts that “what

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497 Benso, The Face of Things, 149 suggests a similar position toward infinity. Furthermore, concerning my own appeal here to emotion, or affect, Levinas’ claim that emotion is an event within the subjective horizon is questionable (see e.g., Panksepp and Biven, The Archaeology of Mind), though he does acknowledge that there are affects prior to and after the awakening of the I. See esp. DP. I will examine this in more depth in the subsequent chapter. A similar view is found in Guenther, “Le flair animal, esp. 224.
matters in ethics is who or what can interrupt oneself and provoke a sense of obligation, not what criteria can be applied to the Other. …What is significant about the nakedness of the Others is their need of something from oneself, their solicitation of oneself. The eyes of the hungry ask one to feed them.⁴⁹⁸ Such needs are expressed in corporeal frailty and misery itself, the interruption of existents who consume other words so that they might position themselves within their own. This occurs beyond an intentional horizon, in the affective space shared by all bodies, deeper than existence as an awakened, cognitive, language-bearing subject. Ethics is not about transcending animality and corporeity, it is about embracing it, becoming more fully animal, corporeal, and part of one’s world as well as contributing to that of one’s neighbour. Ethics is a response to the divine frailty of the face beyond a priori, dogmatic judgments of who this other can be. As such, following Matthew Calarco, I suggest it is best to remain agnostic when it comes to speaking of who might express by means of a face.⁴⁹⁹ Such an ethic, a Levinasian

⁴⁹⁸ Barbara Jane Davy, “An Other Face of Ethics,” 59. Note that Levinas would not insist that the face expresses intentionally, as e.g., “the curve of the shoulder” expresses a body and moves a subject beyond such requirements, nor would he require expression through spoken language. Levinas, Totality and Infinity, 262. See also Emmanuel Levinas, “Peace and Proximity,” Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings, ed. Adriaan Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), 167. Thus, as Benso argues, “the denial to things of a structured language need not work to the detriment of things. Rather, it might work toward their liberation from the context of a logocentric ethics, and toward the recognition of their difference and alterity.” Silvia Benso, The Face of Things, 152. See also, Christian Diehm, “Facing Nature,” 53; Plant “Welcoming Dogs,” 53-54.

⁴⁹⁹ Matthew Calarco, Zoographies, 69-77. Some, however, such as Peter Atterton, prefer to retain some limits to facial expression, although I am unclear what criteria he might use after arguing against Levinasian humanism along the same lines as I outline in this chapter. Atterton writes, e.g., “I think that few people would go so far as to say Musca domestica [the house fly] has the power to express anything, if indeed it has anything to express.” “Facing Animals,” 28. The fly seems to require a cognitive horizon, or the capacity to suffer, attributes that would seem to fall outside of Atterton’s re-imagination of Levinas. I find this reading problematic as it undercut the a priori openness of to the other necessitated by Levinas’ thought. I have attempted to kill many flies in my life, and none offered themselves on the altar of my swatter. Resisting death, regardless of its corporeal or cognitive horizon, seems to be a means of self-assertion that calls my intention to kill into question. See also Christian Diehm, “Facing Nature,” Who asserts that “an ethic of the body is concerned with the very real possibility of disregarding the structural weakness of a body that can be ignored or destroyed. Hence, if we locate obligation in the claim of an incarnate other, then we would have to say that every body is the face, every body is the other.” 57. Bob Plant, “Welcoming Dogs,” 58-59, notes the difficulty of feeling for others who are so different, without dismissing the possibility.
ethics modified by a posthumanist horizon, insists that one cannot say beforehand who exactly might call the subject into question, and render them responsible based on any *a priori* concepts. As such, the divine face might express from an infinite plurality of forms.

### 4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the linking together of divinity and corporeal frailty, as well as the limits of precisely who expresses a divine face. While the anthropocentric limits Levinas places on divine expression cannot ultimately be supported, his thought, if we eschew what Derrida calls his “profound humanism,” does provide a robust, and critical framework with which to engage ecological Christology. The next chapter will assess and re-imagine the doctrine of Incarnation, especially as it unfolds today in its deep, ecological forms. We will see that despite the benefit of such theologies, they refuse to “sacrifice sacrifice,” maintaining an anthropocentrism wherein “sacrifice is possible and where it is not forbidden to make an attempt on life in general, but only on the life of a humanity.”

The refusal to sacrifice sacrifice, even if this idealism is not absolutely possible, grounds and re-inscribes hierarchy in the cosmos, as well as the tenuous relationship between humanity and Earth.

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501 Ibid.
Chapter 5

Enfleshing Cosmos and Earth: An Ecologically Reimagined Christology

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I return to Christian theologies of incarnation, assessing the classical, as well as the ecologically deep forms of the doctrine. I do this under the rubric of what I call the cosmological model, a contextual theology drawn from what Stephen Bevans describes as “synthetic” theology.502 Theology following the expanded dialogical possibilities of these models aims to eschew the metaphysical anthropocentrism that drives much religious thinking today. Such theologies, seeking to draw cosmos and Earth into dialogue, necessarily eschew humanist appeals to anthropocentrism that privilege a certain human normativity over other ways of dwelling in a world.503 In what follows, I use this framework to call the doctrine of Incarnation, in both its classic and ecologically deep forms, into question. The incarnation


503 Humanist in this context refers to anthropocentrism, and should not be seen as conflicting with a general belief in the goodness and value of humanity. It references a way of approaching the world that sets up a certain view of the human, as language-bearing, self-reflexive, rational beings, as normative for judging the essence and value of others. The –ist suffix carries the same connotations as other such words, e.g., racist, sexist, speciesist, which create value hierarchies between opposing subjects. My use of the term humanist in this chapter is synonymous with an anthropocentric bias. I use the term because the attempt to eschew anthropocentrism is often described as “posthumanist” in many philosophical works. Posthumanism attempts to move beyond human exclusivity and normativity as the sole means of contemplating alterity (i.e., humanist anthropocentrism). By referencing posthumanism, I do not here mean the idea described as transhumanism, which seeks the transcendence of humanity by means of rationality and enhancement technologies. As explored in Chapter Four, I am interested in a way of judging alterity that allows another to express qua alterity, rather than through overlapping qualities of genetic sameness with the human. While I do not have space to explore contemporary posthumanist authors, I note the influence of authors such as Cary Wolfe, What is Posthumanism? (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003), and, especially relevant in the context of Levinas, Jacques Derrida, “Geschlecht II: Heidegger’s Hand,” in Deconstruction and Philosophy, ed. John Sallis (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 161-196; Of Spirit, trans. Geoff Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Aporias (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993); “Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority,” in Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice, ed. Drucilla Cornell, Michael Rosenfeld, and David Gray Carlson (New York, NY: Routledge, 1998), 230-299; Jacques Derrida and Marie-Louise Mallet, The Animal that therefore I Am, trans. David Wills (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2008).
theologies under discussion re-inscribe hierarchy in the cosmos, and restrict the infinity of God, thus risking the reduction of divinity to the alter ego of normative humanity. Such theologies provide a religious ground to the tenuous relationship between humanity and a more-than-human world. In place of Christologies that privilege the human and restrict divinity to Jesus of Nazareth, I suggest a pan-incarnationalist approach to the doctrine of Incarnation. This approach insists that the self-expression of divinity has no a priori restrictions, and might erupt within any affective encounter between differentiated bodies. Thus, beyond humanity, cosmos and Earth might erupt as the incarnate voice of divine expression, calling human exceptionalism into question, along with attempts to reduce God to the human image. This demands an expansive re-imagination of the incarnational paradigm manifest in Jesus of Nazareth that embraces and resitutes Christ’s divinity within a deeper religious ecology where incarnate divinity constitutes and transcends all material bodies, expressing in an infinite plurality of embodiments.

5.1 Theology in the Context of Cosmos and Earth

As described in detail in the Introduction, this work proceeds within the rubric of contextual theology, under the heading of what Stephen Bevans calls “the synthetic model.” Briefly, as I have explained above, this model is one in which the constructive theologian looks

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504 The term “pan-incarnation” is used by those developing deep incarnation theologies to refer to positions such as I develop below where what Gregersen calls a “strict sense” incarnation is extended to all things. See Niels Henrik Gregersen, Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015), 2.

505 Divine expression in this model is always incarnate, and necessarily enfleshed as there are no means of expression apart from bodies. Ultimately, I am developing a materialist Christology.

506 In the Conclusion, I express how this idea might apply to Trinitarian theology. While I am writing a Christology, and thus concerned with the self-expression of God in the flesh, the creative role of the Logos, and the redemptive role of ethics, I would include the Father and Spirit in this paradigm, in full ontic unity where the idea of homoousian is expanded to include cosmos and Earth.

507 Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology, 88-102; An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective, 179-182.
outside of one’s tradition in order to re-imagining one’s own. It is a model in which alterity plays a major role in critiquing and informing one’s own theological point of view. This is not to say that exterior positions are uncritically embraced and appropriated, but rather that there is honest dialogue wherein another tradition or perspective might offer insight that transforms the tradition under examination.

For Bevans, the synthetic model acknowledges the role human particularity plays in the construction of any worldview, theological or otherwise; the experience, perspective, and traditions of others beyond one’s own tradition; and the possibility of creative, perspectival synthesis that lead to new frameworks acceptable from the standpoints of all involved. While acknowledging the merit of the first characteristic of this approach, and the value of the idealist goal of the third characteristic, my primary interest in this model lies in the second characteristic. This chapter proceeds under the assumption of the synthetic model that each tradition, in this case the Christian tradition, might learn from different expressions of religious thought, generated by those outside of Christianity. As such, this chapter unfolds as an essay on Christian theology that attempts to re-imagine Christology in light of the insights offered by a posthumanist, or non-anthropocentric, appraisal of Emmanuel Levinas’ thinking. Thus, the goal of this chapter is to re-imagine the doctrine of Incarnation, especially its ecologically deep articulations, in light of posthumanist, Levinasian developments in phenomenology and ethics.

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508 I simply accept that ideas are conditioned by a vast matrix of information. As for the third characteristic of Bevans’ description of the synthetic model, I see such a goal as ultimately unrealistic and unnecessary. If such a goal were to be followed through it seems that traditions would blend into a generic sameness that would obliterate, or at least denigrate real differences. Other may influence a subjective horizon, without all horizons becoming the same, differentiated by a veneer of pluralist vocabulary that do not describe any qualitative difference. My own position explored in this chapter surely will not be acceptable to all Christians, and clearly contradicts certain ideals set forth in Levinas’ thought.
This dialogue is primarily between Christianity and posthumanist philosophy and ethics, though many of Levinas’ concerns are simultaneously rooted in his understanding of Judaism.

What precisely then does a posthumanist reading of Levinas, as explored in Chapter Four, offer the Christian tradition as it seeks to expand the idea of incarnation, especially into the realm of eco-theology? I suggest that the face-to-face relationship, grounded in an-archy and asymmetry, departs from the logocentric, anthropocentric framework used in classic and ecologically deep Christologies, thus offering an alternative model for thinking theologically. A posthumanist reading of Levinas calls into question the metaphysical anthropocentrism that, I argue below, grounds both classical and ecological Christologies. This alternative, what I call a *cosmological model*, eschews appeals to human exceptionalism and normativity as the only ways of knowing divinity. A cosmological model calls human sovereignty into question, and grounds theological responses in the an-archy and asymmetry of face-to-face encounters, wherein divinity solicits humanity within a religious ecology that unfolds in an infinite plurality of forms. Such forms contain the possibility of erupting with divine self-expression in ways that cannot be dogmatically identified or characterized by reference to human normativity prior to concrete, face-to-face encounters themselves. I thus offer a way of thinking though the idea and doctrine of Incarnation that does not rely on a model that reduces God to the *alter ego* of the human, which restricts divine expression by means of human normativity, obliterates divine infinity, and re-inscribes a corporeal hierarchy in the world that exalts the human form and denigrates what is otherwise.

This model grows from understanding the way face-to-face relationships unfold in Levinas’ thinking. The matrix of such relationships hinges on what I have described in the past
two chapters as an-archy and asymmetry.\footnote{I deal with the relation of theology, deep incarnation, and an-archy in Matthew Eaton, “Theology and An-Archy: Deep Incarnation Christology Following Emmanuel Levinas and the New Materialism,” \textit{Toronto Journal of Theology} (forthcoming, 2016).} To summarize, an-archic encounters occur within counter-phenomenal, corporeal relations beyond, and prior to cognitive representation. They bestow responsibility on a subject through the asymmetrical, authoritative height of the other’s resistance to being identified or consumed within a conceptualist horizon. The other seeks to fulfill its own being, and to thrive on its terms, in its own place in the Sun. This event comprises the dynamism of an active other, soliciting a passive subject, who feels for another prior to being awakened within the space of a cognitive horizon, dominated by the signs, sounds, and symbols designating language and opening up to representational thought. To feel for another prior to thought is to be sensuous, to be exposed “as a skin is exposed to what wounds it,” prior to being able to represent the encounter and disclosing it by theory, thereby objectifying alterity and reducing it to a theme.\footnote{Emmanuel Levinas, \textit{Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence}, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 49. An-archy becomes the disruptive force that calls subjective and systemic power into question insofar as it violently controls and consumes the existence of irreducibly singular others. It is not to say that the non-cognitive structure of the face-to-face unfolds apart from culture and systems of power, but the affective nature of the encounter calls these into question and provides the ground for concrete liberation from the reduction of the other to the same.} Such a double exposure, that of the nudity of another as fragile before its own demise, and the exposure of a subject, afflicted by the other before clothing itself in language and cognition, structures the face-to-face encounter. Through such an-archy and asymmetry, the face-to-face matrix reveals an infinity beyond thought and calculation, which returns to a subjective consciousness as the counter-phenomenal trace of an immemorial past, an idea that never synchs up to its \textit{ideatum}.\footnote{Affective encounters are immemorial insofar as the subject as an awakened, conscious “I” was never present in the encounter. This does not mean they were corporeally absent, but the subject as a \textit{cogito} cannot be said to be present or proximate within the face-to-face. The temporality of the present is reserved for the incarnation of a thinking subject. The present mind reflects on events that have always already happened in the affective, an-archic matrix.} While what can be said regarding the pre-original
saying might be truthful to a degree, the saying always overflows the truth of what is betrayed in the said, preventing any dogmatic identification of the other into a universal theme.  

The idea of infinity, opening from the particularity of the non-representable, is the matrix out of which God comes to mind; “it is as if God spoke through the face.” Tied to such a matrix, the God who comes to mind exists beyond human intentionality. As such, divinity resists the identifying powers of the ego, summoning the human to responsibility for the mortality of another. God, irreducible to dogmatic identification, would come to mind in our exposure to the vulnerability of particular, un-calculable expressions of identity and mortality, who resist the sovereignty of violence. Divinity would then come to mind as a counter-phenomenal presence, haunting the subject as the trace of a past that was never present in order to call forth a responsibility for the future mortality of another—an uncanny diachronic presence, infinitely beyond any horizon. Such a God is inseparable from corporeity, though not mediated by a greater alterity nor incarnate in the sense of being open to subjective perceptions in the infinite

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512 The pre-original saying refers to the affective encounter in which the passivity of the subject is exposed to the other, and made responsible prior to freedom. The said is the second order reflection, a memory of the an-archic encounter that occurs prior to the time of the face-to-face. The said, while betraying the saying, nevertheless can affirm truth corresponding to the life of the other, “for the saying is both an affirmation and a retraction of the said.” Ibid., 44. As such, following Levinas leads to neither cataphatic nor apophatic theology. On the saying and the said, see especially, ibid., 31-59.


514 I understand vulnerability as a universal condition of the inability to be otherwise than finite. All bodies face the threat of mortality, decay, and being consumed, and thus transformed into energy by other beings. In the face of such finitude, beings resist that which frustrates their fulfillment. Such vulnerability points to an underlying quality of the cosmos, namely, that to be in relationship within a universe, means to be open to the inevitability that your embodiment will not last. Such instances of vulnerability cannot be compared across the boundary of different bodies, as each exists in the specificity of its differentiation. It is because of this that vulnerability cannot be normalized to occur only within specific modes of being, but is instead radically and infinitely plural. Such finitude solicits the human in affects such as sadness, empathy, and compassion that are irreducible to thought, and thus afflict the subject an-archically, asymmetrically, and infinitely, beyond the horizon of consciousness. The frailty of “not-being-able,” as it erupts within human affects that lead to hospitality and care for the other, paradoxically becomes a dynamic, active resistance, what Lévinas calls “the resistance of what has no resistance—the ethical resistance.” Emmanuel Levinas, Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 199.
alterity of its being—infinity necessarily overflows the thought that thinks it, and as such is never precisely present within any horizon. The infinite corporeity of divinity co-creates and permeates all worlds, refusing to be enchained to any singular form.

From this reading of Levinas, I draw out four implications that characterize a cosmological model for thinking theologically, which impact my re-imagination of the doctrine of Incarnation. Such implications grow from the conclusion that we must continue to re-imagine the nature of subject/object or subject/other relations as it has been inherited from the Western philosophical tradition. Briefly, this inheritance holds that the subject, a rational, language-making, male human, stands over and above objects and/or the others who do not fully meet the anthro-phallogocentric standards required to be considered subjects.515 In this schema, subjects identify objects and others, telling them what their being is based on a finite horizon, thereby reducing them to a subjective alter ego. Subjects in a cosmological model, on the other hand, are prevented from dogmatically identifying others independent of their own expression. Subjectivity and self-expression is given back to things regardless of the plastic forms that alterity takes. Thus, no-thing in a cosmological model is mute; no-thing is simply passive, a

515 Cf. Jacques Derrida’s, “carno-phallogocentrism,” in “‘Eating Well,’ or the Calculation of the Subject: An interview with Jacques Derrida,” in Who Comes After the Subject? ed. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991), 113. Derrida’s focus on sacrifice leads to his affixing of the “carno” prefix onto “phallogocentrism.” Silvia Benso, however, takes a more generic approach to species exaltation described as “anthropologocentric partiality” (Silvia Benso, The Face of Things: A Different Side of Ethics (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), 136. In seeing human exceptionalism as both beyond the politics of meat eating, but involving a classical androcentric framework, I prefer to speak of “anthro-phallogocentric” exceptionalism. Furthermore, while I have said nothing of issues concerning sex and gender in Levinas’ work, there are problems with his generic use of the feminine to identify the “other,” and thus I briefly highlight the fact that in normalizing the human as a rational, language-bearing subject as opposed to a sensuous, feeling subject, there is engendered dichotomies at work in the very idea of humanism. Regardless of the ontic reality of a binary with rational men on one side and feeling women on the other, the way this dichotomy has historically been used suggests that the classic view of normative humanity is best articulated within masculinist prejudice. While the dynamic of subject and other is radically different in Levinas than what is inherited from Western philosophy, the generic use of feminine is nevertheless problematic in the same way as his identification of the human/animal divide. See Tina Chanter, Time, Death, and the Feminine: Levinas with Heidegger (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001); Feminist Interpretations of Emmanuel Levinas, ed. Tina Chanter (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001).
static body without a perceptual world and horizon. There are no pure objects, but differentiated
others who are subjects in their own right, on their own terms, beyond comparison with the
normative standards of an exceptional species. Consequently, no subject is able to identify the
other absolutely based on a reductive horizon that cannot penetrate and inhabit other worlds.
Furthermore, the power of other bodies to speak themselves, thus in-spiring or co-creating
differentiated subjects by shaping and influencing the way subjects operate, even to the point of
soliciting humans to ethical becoming, unfolds in a manner typically reserved for divinity. This
calls into question not only the sovereignty of the Western subject, and the nature of the
subject/object relation, but the dichotomous relation between divinity and corporeity inherited in
the Western philosophical tradition. The powers of creation, infinity, and ethical authority thus
lie squarely in corporeal bodies themselves, not a greater alterity merely mediated by bodies, and

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516 Subjectivity in this model is both active and passive, co-creative, and in a sense, constitutive of the
being of others. There is the question of the necessity and wisdom of retaining the term at all. I retain it at this point
in order to preserve the way bodies are differentiated and despite overlap and entanglement with others, do consume
alterity to some degree and transform the exterior into a new, chimerical interiority. Some, such as Jane Bennet,
eschew the idea of a subject in favor of the idea of actants, that which “makes the difference, makes things happen,
becomes the decisive force catalyzing an event.” Jane Bennett, Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things
(Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 9. On new materialisms and religion see Clayton Crockett and Jeffrey
Joerg Rieger and Edward Waggoner, Religious Experience and New Materialism: Movement Matters (Basingstoke,
UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). Other examples include, Material Feminisms, ed. Stacy Alaimo and Susan
Hekman (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008); New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics ed.
Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Bjornar Olsen, In Defense of Things
Archaeology and the Ontology of Objects (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2010); Tim Ingold, Being Alive: Essays on
Movement, Knowledge and Description (London, UK: Routledge, 2011); Ian Hodder, Entangled: An Archaeology of
the Relationships between Humans and Things (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012);

517 I develop the ontic entanglement of things with divinity in more depth in dialogue with Maurice
Merleau-Ponty in Matthew Eaton, “Beyond Human Exceptionalism: Christology in the Anthropocene,” in Religion
and the Anthropocene: Challenges, Idolatries, Transformations, ed. Celia Deane-Drummond and Sigurd Bergmann
(Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, forthcoming). The argument here presumes this, but focuses more on the
epistemological abyss between subjects and others, and the resultant inadequacy of the idea of a subject absolutely
identifying another.
thus the God who comes to mind in face-to-face relations is not finally separable from things themselves.\(^{518}\)

The cosmological model would thus first insist that the expression of alterity, divine or otherwise, is *irreducible to any horizon and thus beyond dogmatic identification or representation by appeals to humanist language and cognition*. The human horizon arises out of an-arthic relations where sensuous bodies relate and transmit information across porous, bodily membranes prior to any awakening as a *cogito*, or a subject who has become a “myself.”\(^{519}\) Information is exchanged by means of an-arthic affects, which, carried into the present, erupt as awakened affects open to reflection after face-to-face encounters have already taken place. Thus, affects such as rage, fear, lust, care, panic, grief, or joy emerge from corporeal relations prior to the awakening of the subject, and exercise relational power beyond language and cognition.\(^{520}\) Affect thus unfolds from “the trauma suffered prior to any auto-identification, in an unrepresentable before” where a subject is affected passively, and in-spired by another.\(^{521}\)

While there are many affects that unfold in unpredictable ways, my focus on ethics in this work leads to

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\(^{518}\) While God does indeed transcend individual bodies, as I explain below, divine expression would not. This leads us to a paradoxical view wherein God is irreducible to any singular body and thus transcendent, while divinity is also inseparable from sensuous, expressive bodies. I explore this paradox further below, as well as in the Conclusion.

\(^{519}\) While my interest is in the human created as responsible here, this pattern represents a deeper, creative paradigm where all things express and receive information in a creative manner. Thus, the affective exchange of information creates all that exists, though my interest is in one particular dynamic in this larger drama.

\(^{520}\) For a complete study on the neurobiology and evolution of such affects in the human, see Jaak Panksepp and Lucy Biven, *The Archaeology of Mind: Neuroevolutionary Origins of Human Emotions* (New York, NY: W.W Norton, 2012). My separation of affect into 1) anarchic or anoetic affect (i.e., the feelings and emotions which occur prior to the origin of self-reflective consciousness), and 2) awakened or autonoetic affect (i.e., cognitive reflection on and response to the feelings and emotions as they travel from pre-cognitive experiences to a self-aware subjective consciousness) emerge from reading Levinas in light of Panksepp (esp. Ibid., 1-46). I do not attempt, because of the complexity of the task, to sort out any causation in affect, which emerges from pluralistic interior as well as exterior events, from the limits of embodied forms in an evolutionary schema, to the ongoing interconnectedness of material co-creation in the event of cosmogenesis.

\(^{521}\) Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 123.
an emphasis on affects that generate responsibility. Thus, the implications of this study, linking affect to corporeal, divine expression, open up well beyond the scope of this work, which focuses on the care generated in the expression of the material frailty of alterity to empathetic subjects.\textsuperscript{522} The expression of divinity thus unfolds infinitely, beyond language, in the feelings inflicted on subjects.

As such, the cosmological model insists, secondly, that the expression of alterity \textit{afflicts subjects in their passivity by drawing out feelings and moods that only enter into the active realm of language and cognition after the fact of an encounter}.\textsuperscript{523} The dynamic “voice” of the other, who as a subject in its own right, solicits other subjective worlds to take responsibility for the violence committed against it, revealing itself by co-creating feelings-for-another within a subject who exists as being-for-another. Thus, human subjects awaken as a “myself” having already been confronted by another subject, and humanist language and cognition are a response to a “pre-originary susceptiveness” that generates responsibility prior to subjective freedom.\textsuperscript{524}

\textsuperscript{522} Contemporary affect theories do not recognize the possible influence Levinas might have, or have had, on the emergence of the theory. For a study in affect theory and religion, focusing on the power of embodiment prior to and beyond language and cognition, see Donovan Schaefer, \textit{Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power} (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015). A more detailed treatment of theology and affect is warranted in the future, and some have already begun to explore Levinasian affect further. See Bettina Bergo, “The Face in Levinas: Toward a Phenomenology of Substitution,” \textit{Angelaki} 16.1 (March 2011): 17-39; Adriaan Peperzak, “Affective Theology, Theological Affectivity,” in \textit{Religious Experience and the End of Metaphysics}, ed. Jeffrey Bloechl (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 94-105. Levinas deals with both an-arthic and awakened affects consistently throughout his writings, and, as summarized in his essay, “Have You Read Baruk,” “objects of faith, precepts are commanded and must be obeyed, but the motives for obedience are not of a rational order. They are motives of an affective order, such as fear, hope, fidelity, respect, veneration and love.” Emmanuel Levinas, “Have You Read Baruk?” in \textit{Difficult Liberty: Essays on Judaism}, trans. Sean Hand (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 114. See also Levinas, \textit{Otherwise than Being}, 121-129; “God and Philosophy,” in \textit{Collected Philosophical Papers}, trans, Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht, NL: Nijhoff, 1987), 158.

\textsuperscript{523} Subjective passivity refers simply to corporeal life before linguistic and cognitive capacities unfold. Thus, subjects bring certain informational structures to relational encounters that make certain affective responses possible. It follows that only some subjects can be responsible, and that passivity does not mean that a subject is absolutely plastic and shapeable. Bodies bring limited possibilities to any relationship as a contribution to rationality, which of course can be embraced as human subjects see fit after the encounter itself.

\textsuperscript{524} Levinas, \textit{Otherwise than Being}, 122.
Others speak themselves to passive recipients who cannot encompass the fullness of alterity that expresses καθ’ αὐτό in a matrix of an-arthic temporality and asymmetrical authority. The temporal and authoritative distance between the subjectivities of differentiated bodies forbids a subject/object or subject/other relation where the former tells the later what its identity and being consist in, preventing dogmatic assertions about the expression of alterity. Alterity remains infinite, and beyond what a subject might say or think concerning it, and subjectivity becomes pluralized insofar as all things possess voices by which to speak καθ’ αὐτό.  

Thus, thirdly, in a cosmological model, the subject cannot say ahead of time who the other subject is, nor restrict the corporeal, agential assemblages in which divinity might erupt. The divine other in this model might thereby express in an infinite plurality of subjectivities, decided by the human only after one is co-created as responsible by worlds irreducible to its own. Likewise, since such expressions occur within the unique, corporeal needs of bodies themselves, and not as the expression of a greater alterity mediated from beyond the particular life of an existent, the ontic line between divinity and materiality becomes deeply blurred. In such a blurring divinity remains counter-phenomenal, expressing from the infinite, agential depths of irreducibly complex bodies that affect subjects, but cannot be reduced within any horizon. This expression of a subject beyond any horizon becomes the very site of divine truth,  

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525 The subject/object or subject/other relation is not simply reversed here so that the subject becomes absolutely passive, as the object/other is in other philosophical systems. The disruption of the sovereignty of the same occurs before the subject’s freedom, but informs rather than obliterates that freedom once it awakens. This is a dynamic system where all existents are active and passive, acting within their own autopoietic powers, but able to be disrupted and shaped by others. The power dynamics of a classic subject/object dichotomy is obliterated while still allowing differentiation, particularity, and freedom.  

526 By agential assemblage I mean the irreducibly complex totality of the energy, matter, and information that allows a body to express and relate with its world. I want to make a distinction from the form that bodies take, which could imply a rigid appeal to appearance or a part of the body which make up the dynamic assemblage, irreducible to any manifest form. Likewise, I fear that referring to the form of other bodies would point to the manner in which it presents itself to perception. I am referencing here the body as an assemblage including the agential powers not open to perception.
and thus the entangled nature of divinity and corporeity would permeate cosmos and Earth infinitely, beyond any reductionism based on a human exceptionalism grounded in appeals to normative, embodied forms. It thus becomes impossible to disentangle divinity and materiality. Religion, in such a matrix, would be more than belief, ritual, and liturgical formulas, beyond a human phenomenon that limits faith to the linguistic formulas and cognitive systems constructed by the rational minds of men.\textsuperscript{527} Divinity would extend into the deepest, relational tissue of materiality, enfleshing cosmos, including Earth. Such a universe would exist as a “religious ecology,” or a relational “divinityscape” permeating and co-creating all that exists in unique, open, and unpredictable ways.\textsuperscript{528} Such an ecology would creatively flow into being as an affective, relational phenomenon open to things themselves rather than posturing as the \textit{sui generis} of human bodies. Within this ecology, humanity is a participant within the ubiquitous, divine eruption of cosmogenesis itself, creating and taking on an infinite plurality of relational subjectivities, embracing human becoming, but never favoring it above others.

Finally, in light of these implications, theology in a cosmological model would unfold as a response to the affective, asymmetrical anarchy that disrupts the sovereignty of the same, be it a sovereignty of the myself, or any one, species specific group. Theology thus responds to the

\textsuperscript{527} This position is consistent with the “materialist turn” evolving in the area of religious studies. “See e.g., Manuel Vásquez, \textit{More Than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion} (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011). For Vasquez, “the task of the scholar of religion is to study how embodiment and embeddedness in time and place enable and constrain diverse, flexible, yet patterned subjective experiences that come to be understood as religious” (Ibid., 7). as well as more particular works in religious studies that open up to the otherwise-than human, e.g., Aaron Gross, \textit{The Question of the Animal and Religion: Theoretical Stakes, Practical Implications} (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2014); Donovan Schaefer, \textit{Religious Affects}.

\textsuperscript{528} I borrow the terms “religious ecology” and “divinityscape” from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick who uses such to describe the world of Marcel Proust’s \textit{À la Recherche du Temps Perdu}. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, \textit{The Weather in Proust}, ed. Jonathan Goldberg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 44-45. This world, for Sedgwick, is inhabited by countless “queer little gods” (Ibid., 16, 42), a metaphor that despite its polytheistic overtone, fits the paradigm I develop here. Sedgwick, recognizing the affective power of things to shape worlds, illustrates the shift in the matrix of divine encounter to relations with things themselves. This also strongly overlaps with what Mark Wallace calls, “Christian animism.” See Wallace, Mark I. “Christian Animism, Green Spirit Theology, and the Global Crisis Today.” \textit{Journal of Reformed Theology} 6 (2012): 216-233.
trace of asymmetrical an-archy carried into the awakening of the “I.” Such an-archy co-creates worlds, disrupting and summoning some of those worlds to concern themselves for the frailty of other bodies. Such a response, remembering a past to which one was never present, and calling attention to the future beyond what one is able to think, opens up for humans in the frailty of the other, out of which the idea of infinity and God comes to mind. Theology then is a reflection within a horizon, manifest in speech, but what is said in theology, always betrays the pre-original saying put forth by the face of the other to whom we were once exposed. As a response to the absolute past and the pure future, theology reflects on the trace of an affective, counter-phenomenal event that we were never present to, an encounter with a God who has already passed by and is not open to vision, but an event that nevertheless returns to erupt within the present time to disrupt the power and sovereignty of the same. Theology in the cosmological model embraces such an-archy for the purpose of imagining and enacting right relations with creatures, human or otherwise, in the pursuit of justice that takes perpetually re-imagined political shapes.

Like the synthetic model from which such an idea arises, the cosmological model expands the boundaries concerning who precisely has a voice in theology. It does so by refusing to dogmatically identify God within the sovereignty of any humanist horizon. The theologians operating out of both models look to contexts and bodies outside of themselves for divine expression. In this framework, no-thing and no-body is mute; alterity erupts as divine expression in an infinite plurality of corporeal forms. This model calls into question the traditional manner in which subject/object relations unfold, eschewing the idea that theology is constructed by a speaking, human subject who tells mute, otherwise-than human objects what their being is. Such a religious ecology results in a radically re-imagined, pan-incarnational theology that blurs the
line between divinity and materiality, expanding the divine enfleshing of Christ beyond the body of Jesus of Nazareth, to the divine enfleshing of cosmos and Earth itself.

5.2 Incarnation and the Cosmological Model

The concerns of the cosmological model share both continuities and discontinuities with classical, as well as contemporary, Christologies. In this section, I briefly comment on the dualist and monist Christologies explored in Chapter One in light of the cosmological model. After this, I turn my attention to the primary focus of this work, the contemporary ecologically deep incarnation Christologies surveyed in Chapter Two. Here I offer an assessment of the works of Niels Henrik Gregersen, as his theology is the most developed of all modern ecologically deep Christologies.

5.2.1 Dualist and Monist Incarnation Models

The dualist and monist Christological models outlined in Chapter One both converge and diverge with certain concerns expressed in the cosmological model. As such, each model possesses strengths and weaknesses that offset the other based on the manner in which it handles the dynamics of the infinite, divine transcendence and corporeal, human immanence of Jesus. Thus, while my own Christology, discussed below, cannot perfectly synchronize with any classical model, there are elements within each that I embrace.

As we have seen, the former, dualist model, evinced, for example, in the work of Origen, holds to a unity of Christ’s divinity and humanity without positing an ontic entanglement or confusion between these differentiated matrixes of being. In the dualist model, matter is inferior to spirit, although divinity sees fit to embrace materiality to an extent in order to express itself to humanity and draw the species beyond its sin and corporeal restrictions. Thus, despite a unification between transcendence and immanence, there remains a distance that preserves the
ontic integrity of each manner of being. Such distance, despite the insistence on the unification of Christ as a single person with two natures, maintains two separate centers of agency and subjectivity. To this end, the divinity of Christ rarely participates in his humanity and vice versa. The exception, of course, lies in the human soul. The rationality, love, and capacity for righteousness present within the soul glues the divine and human together, insofar as its essence overlaps with both human and divine natures. Yet, beyond this, as I have outlined in Chapter One, deeper into the sensuous tissue of human corporeity, divinity and humanity do not mix, as banal materiality must be overcome to be fully unified with God.  

While the assumptions of a cosmological model ultimately eschew any strict adherence to such a dualist model, it does offer a certain strength that monistic models may not. Dualist Christologies, with their deep concern to preserve divinity from the limitations of materiality, attempt to establish support for a strong sense of divine transcendence, insisting that God exists beyond the human horizon. Divinity in this model, as in the cosmological model, would presumably be irreducible to any horizon, although the dogmatic insistence that divinity might only be represented in a rational, loving being, thus overlapping with a view of human normativity, ultimately undercuts the strength of divine irreducibility. Nevertheless, dualist Christologies are deeply concerned that divinity overflow the limitations of humanity. Thus, insofar as God does not participate in the mundane dynamics of corporeal existence, such as suffering and dying, divinity would not be open to phenomenological perception by means of the senses. The spiritual truth of divinity communicated from Jesus’ rationality and love to human minds would not overcome this transcendence, as the language and concepts used to represent an

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un-representable infinity would overflow the words and thoughts of finite being en route to its own transcendence. Knowledge by means of the senses and phenomena, while beginning a relation with divinity, cannot contain God and thus theologians grasp of God would always fall short of divine infinity.

Yet, this insistence on divine infinity, while compelling at first, collapses in on itself due to its extreme separation of divinity and corporeity. That is, divine infinity in a dualist model is not merely transcendent from cognitive, linguistic horizons, but transcendent from materiality itself, existing as a greater alterity behind the worlds of corporeal subjects. Because of the implicit demands of such radical transcendence, infinity itself is eventually obliterated because there is no matrix for direct, face-to-face encounters between humans and divinity to unfold non-linguistically and non-cognitively. From the perspective of the cosmological model, there is no alterity behind that of the peculiar embodied assemblages inhabiting the material plane, and thus no other matrix for a face-to-face encounter with divine infinity. Furthermore, the cosmological model insists that language and cognition emerge from an-archic, asymmetrical, and affective

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530 This transcendence despite dogmatic affirmations of divine character is not acknowledged by Levinas in his works. As I have argued, nowhere does he attempt to deal with the nuances of Christian ideas concerning incarnation. Nevertheless, Levinas’ point that infinity is fundamentally resistant to reductionist identification based on one’s own horizon would call such theologies into question. Infinity would not preclude saying positive things about divinity, but by virtue of infinity as overflowing the idea that thinks it, it would preclude turning positive statements into boundary markers for identity that cannot be crossed. To say that God is incarnate in a rational, loving body is one thing, but insisting that God cannot be incarnate in a body that fails to live up to these humanist characteristics violates the idea of infinity insofar as it constructs an unbending, dogmatic identity boundary that is static and fixed. God here is rational and loving, but not more than rational and loving, cannot overflow the concepts that restrict identity.

531 As I explain in detail in Chapter One, Origen writes that the superiority of spirit over matter is not asserted “with the intention of disparaging the vast creations of God... but because we perceive the superiority of the divinity of God which is beyond description and also that of his only-begotten Son who is far above all things.” Origen and Henry Chadwick, _Contra Celsum_ (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 5.11, 272.

532 The obliteration of transcendence comes from the inability to encounter expression beyond a horizon. If there is no embodied matrix for encounters, the encounter must be constructed within a rational, and thus finite, mind. Unlike those following such a model, I do not assume the possibility of a disembodied rationality able to objectively apprehend a world.
relationships making possible language and thought, including the idea of infinity wherein God comes to mind. Apart from the grounding of expression within the body, it remains unclear how divinity as pure spirit might possibly communicate within a dualist model.533 The inability of divinity to become deeply entangled within the sensuous tissue of things, human or otherwise, present only as the one person, Jesus of Nazareth, thus reduces divine infinity and the relation with God to what is constructed within the human horizon after the linguistic and cognitive representations of divinity are exchanged between Jesus of Nazareth and the human beings who perceived his earthly life. In a dualist Christology, God cannot enter into a face-to-face relation with humanity. As such, what was understood initially as a transcendent Being, is reduced to the constrictive rational and representational powers of subjective theologians. In this model, God cannot speak for God’s self, as expression is enchained to linguistic worlds, which elevate the rational over the material. God cannot be encountered directly, beyond a horizon, in the proximity of an an-archic matrix where the human is passively summoned by the alterity of another. Unless God permeates the very field of materiality, expressing from the ground up, all knowledge of divinity begins and ends within the human horizon. Dualism, arguing for such a radical transcendence, finally collapses on itself and loses its grip on infinity, because in this model God is beyond materiality itself, the necessary matrix for expression, encounter with difference, and as such, the possibility of the idea of infinity out of which God comes to mind.534

Extended to ecotheology, the dualist model certainly rules out face-to-face encounters with divinity beyond human relationships. Even if we were to move beyond the exclusivity of

533 I am here dismissing the idea that incorporeal souls, or minds, exist apart from ontic unity with a body. I am thus working with a materialist assumption here wherein intentionality emerges from bodies.

534 The idea of infinity requires differentiated bodies unable to succumb to the powers of an awakened self. In this model, there is no ideatum that gives rise to the idea of the infinite, since God does not express via corporeity, but only through pure ideas and the linguistic, cognitive finitude that these entail. Only a differentiated, corporeal subject could express infinitely as transcendent expression overflows the power of horizons.
the incarnation taking place in Jesus alone, by restricting divine expression to the exchange of linguistic representations and concepts that construct divinity within the finitude of cognitive horizons, the otherwise-than human is ruled out as a possible embodiment of divinity. Yet, ecological Christology and theology would not be impossible as a result, though it would be restricted to constructed ideas concerning the otherwise-than human world in dialogue with the Christian tradition. It would not take account of, nor think possible, the voice of divinity within cosmos and Earth.

In the monist model of incarnation, there is a far deeper ontic entanglement between divinity and corporeity. In the body of Christ, the incarnation of divinity extends throughout the sensuous tissue of his body to the point of mixing the divine and material matrixes of being. This is a model that, like the dualist model, posits the unity of Christ as a single person, but further unifies the subjective agency of his being. As such, the divine and material dynamics of Jesus of Nazareth are mixed in an entanglement where it is difficult to say precisely where divinity and humanity separate from one another, if they separate at all. Akin to the unification of persons within the Trinity, Jesus of Nazareth represents the ontic overlap between divinity and humanity wherein the possibility of one becoming the other is opened. Monism is thus open to the possibility of a radical entanglement between divinity and the depths of material particularity that is not confined to language, cognition, and righteousness. This model goes beyond the

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535 Again, this idea is summarized in Chapter One. For a detailed study of the unity of Christ in Gregory, see Andrew Hofer, Christ in the Life and Teaching of Gregory of Nazianzus (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013).

536 See esp. Gregory’s third and fourth theological orations (Or. 29-30) as well as his two letters to Cledonius (Ep. 101 and 102), in Gregory of Nazianzus, Frederick Williams, and Lionel Wickham, On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 69-116, 155-172.
communion of two natures that remain separated, toward one where each nature partakes in the other.

The assumptions of the cosmological model are more amenable to a monist rather than a dualist incarnation model. While not a perfect synchronization, the openness to divine entanglement within the depths of materiality, beyond the linguistic and cognitive capacities of the human allow the possibility of an-arthic, face-to-face encounters with divinity as expressed in Jesus of Nazareth, other humans, and possibly with relations beyond the human. Monist Christologies would inherently be irreducible to the human horizon, beyond language and cognition, allowing divinity to express in the sensuous, affective tissue of embodied life. Such affective dynamics exist beyond identification within the finite appeals of humanist perspectives, and would be capable of soliciting humans in their passivity, prior to being awakened to thought, thus preserving the structure of infinity. Furthermore, freed from the restraints of humanism, insofar as the human shares embodied dynamics with many other species, there would be no *a priori* reason why, if appropriate, such radical entanglement could not extend beyond the human body. Such models do not pin the possibility of incarnation on the overlap of divine and human capacities, which transpires despite the radical difference in the matrixes of being evinced by God and humanity.

Yet, while this model is open to certain concerns of the cosmological model, there are potential drawbacks. It might be questioned whether such a radical immanence of divinity within corporeity does irreparable harm to the idea of infinity in a way different than dualist models. The cosmological model asserts a divine irreducibility to horizons, and the passivity of subjects in an encounter with alterity. While monist models appear to support these points, they risk undercutting such ideas in the undiscriminating radicality of its position on immanence. Monism,
open as it is to asserting an ontic entanglement between divinity and the totality of the human, potentially extends divinity into the matrix of phenomenal appearance, making God visible, and thus eschewing the counter-phenomenal invisibility of divinity in the cosmological model. If monism extends divinity into every dynamic of a body, to the point where incarnation is manifest in the parts of bodies and the extension of their powers, in addition to the totality of their agential assemblages, the model risks opening God to vision and thus compromising the idea of infinity. Divinity in the cosmological model, like the idea of the face explored in Chapter Three, preserves infinity and transcendence, and hence reduction to a horizon, remaining counter-phenomenal and out of the range of human sight. As such, the cosmological model would insist that divinity’s infinite being καθ’ αὐτό would not be open to appearance though the plastic forms that flow from the matter, energy, and information that combines to allow a body to dwell in the world as an agential assemblage of power. Divinity would be precisely this infinite expression, the irreducibly complex agential assemblage that expresses itself, not the visible forms that give themselves in appearance. God is infinite, and so arguing for divine immanence even in the isolated forms visible in corporeal becoming would fail to embrace the manner in which divinity transcends horizons. Divinity, like the face, would always overflow the forms manifest to the perceptual senses of subject, and thus, divinity καθ’ αὐτό, could never be, strictly speaking, visible. What is seen is not the divine face; is not the agential expression of alterity as such; is not the infinite relational complexity of the matter, energy, and information that blends together to form a body able to solicit subjects to responsibility. For God to remain infinite, divinity would necessarily sink deeper than the forms presented, incarnate only in the matrix of corporeal, agential expression. Embodied forms would play a role in expression, but parts are not a revelation of alterity καθ’ αὐτό, which necessarily remains infinite. An immanence as radical
as monist incarnation theologies, open to conflating divinity with all that exists rather than seeing incarnation as the irreducible, corporeal expression of bodies as such, risks the idea that God might become partly visible, as opposed to the disruptive, counter-phenomenal trace of alterity, rooted in an-archic temporality. It is not that the divine face is a disembodied spectre – it is absolutely corporeal – but it is counter-phenomenal.

Extended to ecotheology, the monist model, like the dualist, risks transcendence in its otherwise commendable assertion that divinity and materiality mix to the point of blurring the ontic lines that describe the being of beings. It provides a more stable framework for extending the idea of incarnation to bodies beyond the human than the dualist model does, but on its own, lacks the safeguards to infinity that are necessary in incarnation theologies following the cosmological model. If we were once more to move beyond the exclusivity of divine incarnation taking place in Jesus alone, something monist accounts uphold along with dualist ones, we would still lack a sufficient model of transcendence to account for the assumptions inherent in a posthumanist Christology.

Both the dualist and monist Christological models present strengths and weakness regarding the precise nature of the divine/material relationship. From the perspective of the cosmological model, we might embrace the emphasis on dualist transcendence and the entanglement of the monist, without following either of them to the end of their trajectories. Assessing these Christologies along the lines of the cosmological model, at its heart, recognizes the problem of infinity in both models. The idea of infinity calls into question Christologies that

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537 If anyone were to claim that God might transcend horizons and still be partly visible, they would miss the incoherence of such a claim. If God, as monist as well as dualist Christologies suggest, transcends appearance in the human form of Jesus, God καθ’ αὑτό, would remain invisible. God manifest partially could not amount to any perception of divinity, who always overflows representations. Such a position would betray a misunderstanding of the idea of infinity. God necessarily remains invisible, infinite, and transcendent.
are both too strict in suggesting which bodies might express a divine face, as well as those that embrace materiality to the point where divinity becomes open to phenomenological analysis within a horizon. The problem of infinity is, however, not restricted to classical Christologies. We move now to ecologically deep Christologies, where the idea of infinity, following the cosmological model, is once more at the heart of my analysis.

5.2.2 Ecologically Deep Incarnation Models

In this section, I explore the structure and theological grounding of deep incarnation Christology in light of the cosmological model. I suggest that despite its intention to expand the ontic scope and significance of the doctrine of Incarnation beyond humanity to cosmos and Earth, today’s ecologically deep Christologies remain grounded in metaphysical anthropocentrism, despite making great strides in contemporary ecological theology. Such anthropocentrism is, as I describe below, manifest in the normalization of certain characteristics of the human body as the ground of theology, and the construction of a divine identity restricted by humanist intentionality. As it is most commonly articulated today, deep incarnation risks denying the dignity of the otherwise-than-human world by circumscribing the idea of infinity and reducing divine identity to what amounts to the *alter ego* of the human. I suggest, on the contrary, that despite unfolding within human horizons, the ground of theology lays definitively outside of humanist conceptualism and the normalization of certain dynamics belonging to the human body. Following a brief recounting of deep incarnation and a critique of this theology in light of the cosmological model, I posit an alternative formulation of ecologically deep Christology, drawing on but exceeding what has been developed in the past century. While
affirming the doctrine of Incarnation, I suggest re-imagining it to better embrace the idea of
infinity in which God comes to mind.\textsuperscript{538}

As described in detail in Chapter Two, the idea of deep incarnation can be traced at least
to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s 1916 essay “Cosmic Life.”\textsuperscript{539} While I engage Teilhard below to
some extent in my own re-imagination of incarnation theology, my critique is here aimed at the
work of Niels Henrik Gregersen who has pioneered and developed the idea of ecologically deep
Christology more thoroughly than any other theologian to date. Gregersen’s theology builds
upon the “unique resources” of the Christian tradition and the insights of modern evolutionary
thought in order to highlight the “union of creator and creation,” re-imagining and expanding the
ontic scope of the “flesh” embraced by the divine Logos.\textsuperscript{540} For Gregersen, and other proponents
of deep incarnation, Logos and flesh are entangled in Jesus of Nazareth, beyond a mere side-by-
side presence, and the “flesh” assumed by the divine Logos extends beyond Jesus’ humanity
through the continuity of biological co-evolution. The humanity of Jesus, emerging from the
deeper relational structure of cosmic and biological evolution, carries within it all that precedes
it. Jesus, as all humans, exists as a microcosm of the wider universe, embodying the physical,
chemical, and biological history and information that gave rise to the cosmos and Earth. Building
on such a post-Darwinian trajectory, Gregersen explores the relevance of the doctrine of
Incarnation in an evolutionary world, concluding that since the human species carries within it an
evolutionary past, such a past would be embraced by a deity enfleshed within a particular

\textsuperscript{538} I am not suggesting this re-imagination replaces current articulations of deep incarnation, but that it
exists as a variation of a common theme. There are dynamic similarities between myself and the other, not simply
difference.

\textsuperscript{539} Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, “Cosmic Life,” in \textit{Writings in Time of War}, trans. René Hague (New York,

\textsuperscript{540} Niels Henrik Gregersen, “Christology,” in \textit{Climate Change and Systematic Theology: Ecumenical
member of this species. In the incarnation, the divine Jesus of Nazareth embraces the evolutionary trajectory of materiality present within and informing his human body. Thus, in the incarnation, “the Word became flesh,” not simply so that Jesus might suffer alongside of and for humanity, but “in order to share the fate of biological existence” in its totality.541 “God becomes Jesus, and in him God becomes human, and (by implication) foxes and sparrows, grass and soil.”542 The “flesh” of the Logos then embraces not simply one instance of human frailty, the vulnerability manifest in Jesus of Nazareth, but the frail vulnerability of materiality itself.

This basic schema of deep incarnation Christology is further specified as Gregersen develops three particular senses in which the idea of incarnation can be understood within this broader incarnational framework. Gregersen and others do not think that incarnation has a single meaning. The presumed need for differentiated incarnational senses arises out of a desire to protect the uniqueness of the incarnation of Jesus, the identity of God, and the peculiarity of humanity as a species. Thus, deep incarnation as it is widely articulated today “does not say that God’s Word is simply speaking incarnated in all that exists.”543 As I have explored earlier in this work, there is first a “strict sense” in which incarnation takes place. Here, there is an ontic overlap in Jesus of Nazareth between the Logos and the human body, and it is here that we encounter the manifestation of divine self-revelation. This sense is not extended beyond Jesus, as it is only within a human person characterized by self-reflectivity and love “that incarnation can

542 Ibid.
have a genuine comprehensive scope.” Second, Gregersen posits a “broad sense” incarnation referring to the history and information shared among all bodies, emerging in the natural selection of cosmogenesis and biological evolution. Jesus’ human body, here, carries cosmos and Earth within itself, insofar as all bodies share the creative matter, energy, and information supplied by the Logos, here understood as the matrix and possibility of creativity itself, consequently eschewing any absolute distinction between creation and incarnation, apart from the unique notion of divine self-revelation restricted to Jesus. Third, there is a “soteriological sense” of the incarnation, suggesting that the incarnate presence of Christ within cosmos and Earth desires to redeem certain bodies, by drawing them into communion and renewed life with Christ.

It is here, in the differentiation of incarnation into three distinct senses, especially the distinction between a strict and a broad sense of incarnation, that the ground and articulation of deep incarnation theology comes into question. According to the cosmological model growing from a posthumanist reading of Emmanuel Levinas’ ethics and philosophy of religion, theology unfolds from a face-to-face encounter with divinity, erupting from corporeity irreducible to the human horizon or any appeal to characteristics of normative human embodiment. Theology is a response to the affective an-archy of all bodies that disrupts the sovereignty of the same, calling all forms of egoist exceptionalism into question through a summons to responsibility for another’s frailty. Deep incarnation, however, eschews such a model, and thus the idea of divine infinity in its privileging of normative human capacities and abilities – i.e., self-reflectivity and love – as alone revealing and representing a supposedly infinite deity. Deep incarnation models

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risk reducing the infinity of God to the *alter ego* of the human species. Furthermore, they also implicitly limit the worth of cosmos and Earth insofar as non-human – and thus non-divine – forms are placed within a value hierarchy on a lower rung of inherent, ethical value.

The difference between the strict and broad sense of incarnation concerns divine self-revelation. This idea, that of alterity speaking itself, is congruent with my references throughout this work to divine self-expression, καθ’ οὐτό, emerging in anarchic, face-to-face encounters with an infinite divinity. Deep incarnation models assert that divine self-revelation is the primary meaning of a strict-sense of incarnation theology, differentiated from a broad-sense of incarnation, wherein Jesus, as the embodiment of the creative Logos, embraces the flesh of cosmos and Earth as an artisan who takes credit for fashioning an artifact.\(^545\) The strict-sense of incarnation is incarnation as classically conceived. It is the event occurring in Jesus of Nazareth alone, wherein the divine Logos is embodied, and reveals God the Father through the power of the Spirit. Jesus alone perfectly represents God, makes divinity apparent and even visible. This is not to say that Jesus replaces God the Father, as if to simply assert that “*this* person is God.”\(^546\) Rather, “just as Jesus was, in the unfolding of his spatiotemporal life story, so God is—in the past, now, and forever. Jesus was fully transparent to God: ‘Whoever has seen me has seen the Father’ (John 14:9).”\(^547\) This exclusive representation of divinity by Jesus requires further

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\(^{545}\) The information present in things, derived from the Logos, is understood as the basis for an expanded ontic unity between Christ and all things. Things carry the signature of their Creator, although they are not precisely the self-expression of this Creator, but representations. Thus, a body is comprised of not only the matter and energy that take specific form, but is, in a sense, the information that organizes its form.

\(^{546}\) Gregersen, “The Extended Body of Christ,” 239.

\(^{547}\) Ibid., 235.
commentary. Precisely what is it about Jesus that makes him “transparent to God,” bringing divinity to light, open to phenomenological apprehension?\textsuperscript{548}

Gregersen makes several statements concerning the possibility of divine self-expression, or self-revelation. These clarify that there are certain, normative characteristics required for a body to be an appropriate mediatory form for divinity to reveal itself. “It seems” Gregersen writes, “that only a human person who exists in full resonance with God, and in a constant attunement to the will of God, could possibly reveal who God is.”\textsuperscript{549} This is further specified elsewhere, where Gregersen asserts that, “it seems obvious that the identity of God as Love can’t be revealed in a tomato or in a mussel, nor in the birth and decay of stars and galaxies in the macro-scopic realm of the cosmos. The incarnation must take place in a self-reflective religious human person…whose life is fully attuned to God’s.”\textsuperscript{550} Deep incarnational theology is thus grounded in a species-centered exceptionalism that exalts the human above all other species insofar as it alone is able to represent the reality of God’s essence. The possibility of representing a transcendent deity is linked to certain abilities that overlap divinity and humanity, allowing God to express God’s self in this one material form. As asserted in the statements quoted above, \textsuperscript{548} This is what Gregersen refers to as “the scandal of particularity.” Ibid. Such a scandal calls into question the idea that one spatio-temporally particular human, embodied in a specific gender, race, class, sexuality, and range of abilities could be transparent to God. Gregersen’s response deals with the human proclivity toward sin and righteousness, suggesting that Jesus was fully resonate with God, whereas all others, human or otherwise, fail to be as open to divinity. This does not seem to actually deal with the scandal of particularity, however, and clings to the traditional assertion in the perfect piety of Christ. Yet, there is an assumption that this embodied matrix of Jesus’ life, his “world” and “community,” transcends its particularity and allows for a perfect resonance with the divine (Ibid., 236). We are left then without a clear answer to the question of how and why a Palestinian born, Jewish male, living within a Roman socio-political context is able to act as the ideal model of all materiality. The scandal of particularity thus remains unanswered, as well as questions concerning religious exclusivity and plurality that arise in this context. While I am not particularly concerned with the question of the normativity of religion, race, gender, and sex in this work, my critique of the humanism implicit in Gregersen’s work could be extended to the scandal of particularity and the apparent assumption that all of these somehow factored into the possibility of perfect resonance with the divine in the peculiar body of Jesus.

\textsuperscript{549} Ibid. The emphasis here is in the original text.

\textsuperscript{550} Gregersen, “The Twofold Assumption,” 458.
a set of normative, human traits, most notably self-reflexivity or awareness, along with the possibility of acting as a moral agent, identify the precise manner in which humans overlap with divinity being, thus making divine self-revelation possible. It is thus not simply the human in its totality that might express divinity; it is a certain normative human presence, indicated by the possession of a neurological structure sufficiently complex enough for linguistic, conceptual, and self-reflexive rationality. From such a neurological structure, human moral agency, presumably manifest in adherence to particular socio-cultural norms, and in affects such as empathy, compassion, and responsibility for others, makes divine self-expression further possible. Thus, while incarnation extends its relevance beyond the human and beyond Jesus, “the self-embodiment of God’s Word or Wisdom must have its anchorages in a particular member of the human species,” as “only human beings can be mindful of the universe at large…[and] are capable of cultivating an ethical concern…[and] evidence a self-reflective relation to God, as the source of all that is.”

Thus, in order for divine expression and self-revelation to unfold in history, the Logos became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, who expressed, and could not have done otherwise, by means of a particular human body with a neurological complexity sufficient to prompt moral agency manifest in affect and adherence to the various structures of first century Judaism.

This description has profound ontic implications for understanding divinity. As Jesus was, so God is. The being of Jesus, especially in these cognitive and moral structures, is transparent to God; they express the manner of divine expression, and identify the necessary, ontic structure of God. Since divinity is only able to express as it is in itself, God must possess a parallel structure to the forms necessary for self-expression. God is self-reflexive love and cannot

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be otherwise. If God were otherwise, presumably divinity could express in any number of other subjects who share a similar overlap in ontic characteristics. Religion, and knowledge of God, are thus reduced to the realm of self-reflective, conceptualist expression, and moral agency. Divine self-revelation is possible among humanity alone because divinity and humanity share an overlapping ontic structure, grounded in conceptualist thought and ethical agency.

While Gregersen would assert that divinity is greater than the forms manifest in a certain, normative humanity, existing as the generative matrix of cosmos and Earth, a humanist structure nevertheless dominates and restricts this divine, creative power.\textsuperscript{552} The relationally driven matter, energy, and information that erupts in a universe is the overflow of divinity itself, but such divinity is fundamentally still an intentional, self-reflexive, loving person independent of cosmos and Earth. Divinity, through the wisdom and word of the Logos, is entangled in materiality as the informational source of all that is manifest in the universe, a creative “face” imprinted within all creatures as a divine signature, akin to the mark of an artisan who intentionally constructs an artifact. Thus, a divine entanglement with other bodies is structured as the creative, intentional overflow of a greater alterity beyond and independent of the universe itself. This alterity is a human-like agent intentionally shaping matter and energy with information inherent to its being. The Logos is thus the first Form, or a “Form of forms” containing the possibility of all created bodies that exist as copies of parts of itself, mediating the Logos as their creator.\textsuperscript{553} So, while “there is no gulf between Christ and creation” in deep incarnation, and God expresses God’s


\textsuperscript{553} Even granting that there is such an exhaustive structure to the creative matrix of cosmogenesis, the totality of information and energy that assigns form to things, a “Form of forms,” this still expresses a reductionist vision. The Form of forms does not exhaust the idea that thinks it. God here is still identified and known absolutely without overflowing the idea that thinks it. Gregersen, “God, Information, and Complexity,” 406-407.
creativity in a plurality of forms, the structure of expression assumes a primordial divine identity from which the divine creativity flows. God thus exists within, but independently of creation, as an intentional, self-reflexive moral agent that gives shape to things. Deep incarnation thus posits a strong sense of entanglement between creator and creation, a broad sense incarnation that unfolds in the dualist unification of divinity and materiality that insists that there are divine attributes that can be identified and used to restrict the identity of God and the possibility of divine self-revelation. This identity erupts in creativity driven by the information, matter, and energy that shapes creation, though these forms are not thereby indicative of God’s self-expressive identity.

This position, while helpful in many ways insofar as it argues for a deeper, divine embrace of materiality, is nevertheless problematic. The claim that this divine structure, where God is a self-reflexive moral agent, is the origination, or archē, of the possibility of parallel, human structures occurring within cosmos and Earth, must be received with skepticism in the cosmological model. Such a deep incarnational structure, insofar as it unfolds by means of language and concepts restricted by the boundaries of an anthropocentric, humanist dwelling within a world, necessarily reduces alterity to its own experiences and inherited concepts. This bias, according to the cosmological model, obliterates the possibility of divine alterity, and identifies God as the alter ego of human theologians. Thus, any incarnational theology that privileges normative, human characteristics determined ahead of time within intentional thought as the sole matrix of the possibility of “strict sense” incarnation, betrays the presence of

554 Ibid., 407.

555 For deep incarnation, the Logos, as the informative principal guiding the evolution of matter and energy in the universe, infuses cosmos and Earth with such cognitive/ethical possibilities that have unfolded in the human species.
metaphysical anthropocentrism. God would not express God’s own being in deep incarnation, but would be assigned a dogmatically restrictive identity by human theologians. Furthermore, it does little to move beyond the human exceptionalism that has played a major role in the tenuous relationship between humanity and Earth. I suggest, contrary to deep incarnation Christologies, that theologians cannot simultaneously restrict divine expression and self-revelation within a framework of human exceptionalism and embrace of divine infinity.

The idea that “as Jesus was, so God is” is not itself a problem. The problem is not that divinity might be embodied as a human and express truth as such, but rather the problem resides in the restriction of the alterity of an infinite deity who is otherwise-than human, overflowing all linguistic and conceptualist representations, to self-expression unable to transcend certain attributes manifest within a single, finite species. If God is only representable by a self-reflective moral agent, this implies a reductionist, ontic overlap between divine identity and the assumed identity of human beings. Divinity as such is knowable within a restrictive horizon of thought, reduced to certain themes determined by the subjects identifying divine alterity. The assumptions of the cosmological model do not rule out expression in such a body, but deep incarnation’s denial of the possibility of self-revelation beyond a normative human experience and existence determined within the boundaries of thought, reduces divine alterity to a finite horizon, thereby enochaining God to humanist language and cognition. In this deep incarnational model, God would not express καθ’ αὐτό, but would be assigned an identity modeled on a metaphysically anthropocentric horizon. The being of God in such a theology does not escape the experience and existence of humanity, and thus becomes a mirror of the human image, an alter ego of certain members of our own species. Divinity here cannot be otherwise-than human.556

556 I note here the problematic nature of the assumption that self-reflexivity and moral agency are “proper” to the human, and this the exclusive possession of this species. Deep incarnation appears here to see the human as
To identify God as such, and only as such, is to assign a thematic identity to divinity from the representational horizon of a human subject. Even if God is more than what is said in deep incarnation models, to refuse the possibility of divine self-identification, self-revelation, and self-expression beyond a self-reflexive moral agent is to obliterate the possibility the idea of infinity. God may be more than what is thought, but to restrict divine identification, to say God cannot be otherwise, is to preclude the possibility of an ideatum overflowing the idea that thinks it. If God were infinite, one could not place a priori restrictions on the identity of divine alterity. If infinity transcends a finite horizon, reductionist dogmatic statements, positive or negative, become incoherent. Divinity is finally mysterious, preventing dogmatism through the impossibility of absolutely apprehending alterity. Dogmatic identification of divine alterity reduces divinity to a set of themes that could only be discerned within the light of a finite human horizon. Such a Levinas did, as a miracle or rupture from materiality, or at least something so novel that it transcends all other bodies in its inherited traits. This assumption is, of course, ethologically and biologically untenable today, as such traits are no longer thought to be the exclusive possession of the human. The work, for example, of Franz de Waal firmly demonstrates the continuity between humans and other apes, and many other studies show that the idea of self-reflexivity and morality, which on my Levinasian reading is not restricted to the possibility a Kantian universalization of maxims, extends not only beyond the human, but beyond the lives of apes. See for example, F. B. M. de Waal, Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); F. B. M. de Waal, Stephen Macedo, Josiah Ober, and Robert Wright, Primates and Philosophers: How Morality Evolved (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Jonathan Balcombe, Second Nature: The Inner Lives of Animals (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). For philosophical work in theory of mind and ethics relevant for other-than-humans, see especially, Mark Rowlands, The Nature of Consciousness (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Animals Like Us (London, UK: Verso, 2002); Animal Rights: Moral Theory and Practice (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); The New Science of the Mind From Extended Mind to Embodied Phenomenology (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010); Can Animals Be Moral? (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012). While this is an important area of inquiry, I am not particularly concerned with it in the context of this thesis. I am not concerned with merely expanding the circle of what species might possess the “right” type of body for divine incarnation and expression. Self-reflexivity and moral agency, while not exclusively human attributes, are also not what is proper to divinity. To simply suggest that there are some other-than-human bodies that are similarly self-reflective and moral would do nothing but expand the circle of bodies who might express divinity based on the same humanist prejudice for bodies conforming to certain, species-specific attributes, enchain divinity to a certain form rather than embracing its infinity. To do this would extend a certain dignity “to previously marginalized groups, but without in the least destabilizing or throwing into radical question the schema of the human who undertakes such pluralisation.” Wolfe, What is Posthumanism?, 99.

I do not mean to say that nothing can be said positively about God. Rather I am concerned with statements that reduce the being of God by disallowing divine expression to overflow our ideas. I can say with confidence that God expresses in the human – though I may, of course, be wrong – yet this cannot be made into reductionist dogma, as if God could not express otherwise.
horizon is inherently betrayed by an inescapable appeal to language and cognition, fixed within a
representational, comparative epistemology in which a subject constructs an identity for others
apart from the unmediated expression of alterity καθ’ αὐτό. In such a logic of “this taken qua
that,” as Levinas describes it, “meaning is not a modification that affects a content existing
outside of all language. Everything remains in a language or in a world, for the structure of the
world resembles the order of language, with possibilities no dictionary can arrest. In the this qua
that, neither the this nor the that are first given outside of discourse.”558 Alterity cannot be
safeguarded when a humanist horizon is taken as the authority for assigning identity. Divine
alterity does not speak itself in deep incarnation, and thus theology risks being reduced to
anthropology and the idea of God risks a transfiguration into the alter ego of a certain, normative
humanism.559 An infinite God would not be bound to such self-expressive restrictions, regardless
of humanity’s capacity to engage such self-revelation. Infinite divine self-expression, as I argue
below, would be open to the possibility of an infinite plurality of strict-sense incarnations beyond
the a priori restrictions of linguistic and cognitive horizons.

558 Emmanuel Levinas, “Meaning and Sense,” Collected Philosophical Papers, trans, Alphonso Lingis
(Dordrecht, NL: Nijhoff, 1987), 79.

559 While my concern is humanism – i.e., a human exceptionalism that privileges the human species as the
epistemological authority of all worlds – this should not gloss over the fact that humanism as I understand it is an
intersectional concept. In appealing to rationality and language, humanism rests on a normative human subject that
is gendered as male, and presumes a certain cognitive complexity. Deep incarnation thus risks a profound gender
and ability bias that privileges physically able, male humans insofar as it insists that rationality and moral agency are
revelatory of God. The deep incarnation theology thus risks not only positing God as the alter ego of humanity, but
the alter ego of able-bodied men. My re-imagination of incarnation theology below is indebted to certain materialist
and posthumanist feminisms that cannot be fully explored here. I plan on exploring this in the future in dialogue
especially with the work of Luce Irigaray. See Luce Irigaray, The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger, trans.
Mary Beth Mader (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1999); Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche, trans.
Gillian Gill (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1991); This sex which is not One, trans. Catherine Porter
with Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985); Speculum of the Other Woman, trans. Gillian Gill
131.
God, in deep incarnation theologies, is thus not the archē of God’s own being; humanist intentionality, bound to a normative view of the species as a self-reflexive, moral agent, is the origin of divine identity. As such, contra the cosmological model, God is not met face-to-face in the matrix of an-archy, where divine infinity is encountered beyond all language and cognition, in the irreducible singularity of other bodies. The cosmological model insists that relationships with God erupt prior to thought, in the active saying of an infinite alterity, afflicting the subject who is co-created by such relational encounters. The subject, prior to awakening, is passive, affected by another beyond the mediation of finite cognition. God is encountered prior to such an awakening, because only such a relational matrix preserves alterity in the infinite transcendence implicit within difference. God in deep incarnation, on the contrary, is recognized in the matrix of materiality by an awakened subject who thinks alterity as this qua that. Yet, awakened recognition is the recognition of the same, as if the universe were a mirror, reflecting only the theologian. Such an archē emerges not from divine alterity, but from the reduction of the other to the same. The cosmological model assumes that the idea of infinity, and the God who comes to mind, emerges only from a matrix of an-archy, the primordial encounter with transcendent alterity, disrupting the sovereignty of the same.

Thus alterity never precisely appears, nor is it contained within dogmatic boundaries; it carries itself from its own self-expression, from an absolute past into the present where it gives itself to contemplation only as the trace of an invisible, but corporeal illéity. The theologian thus reflects on this trace only after it has passed. What might be said concerning the pre-original saying is spoken of in language and concepts only after divine alterity has affected the subject, and hidden itself from dogmatic identification by means of an infinity that resists being consumed by the framework of the same. As such, the theologian has no access to a priori
attributes or forms that might finally and absolutely express as divine, to the exclusion of other forms. In resisting being consumed, God cannot be named, and no subject can say ahead of time which corporeal forms might erupt in incarnation, divine self-expression. Only a nameless God, one free from dogmatic identification, is free to express καθ’ αὐτό. Such a God is beyond control, the face of anarchy disrupting the sovereignty of theology in the self-expression of a ubiquitous religious ecology, the divinity of cosmos and Earth.

Deep incarnation consequently enchains divinity within a humanist horizon of conceptualist intentionality, rather than being open to corporeal expression within an infinite plurality of forms. Self-reflexive consciousness and moral agency may in fact be revelatory of a particular divine dynamic. Yet, since such a restrictive attempt to assign divine identity is grounded in representational thought, mirroring human experience as a species specific alter ego, it is thus insufficient to express an infinite divine other, who would always overflow any idea one might have concerning it. The idea of infinity, then, is that of an absolute overflow; it is an idea whose ideatum is always already beyond what anyone is able to think. It would not conclude that anything and everything that takes place in the world would incarnate divinity, but would require an openness to a divine self-expression beyond the human horizon. Thus, there are severe limitations in insisting that only a reductive human normativity is able to embody an authentic, strict sense of divine revelation.

5.3 Re-imagining Incarnation

In light of the above, I now turn toward a re-imagination of the God/material relationship as expressed in the idea of incarnation, brought to mind in the Christian tradition by the life of Jesus of Nazareth, but expanded to the depths of cosmos and Earth. Following the cosmological model, I approach a re-imagined Christology by eschewing the humanist bias of deep incarnation
that separates incarnation into three senses, while accepting its idea that God and the world overlap in ontic entanglement. Thus, abandoning a manner of theologizing that operates solely in the light of phenomena, I embrace a diachronic approach to incarnate but counter-phenomenal divine self-expression. While acknowledging that theological writing such as this betrays divine alterity, insofar as what is said of God cannot restate the fullness of divine expression, it is nevertheless a legitimate response to direct, face-to-face encounters with the unified, monistic divinity of vulnerable bodies constituting the religious ecology that co-creates cosmos and Earth. The following account may thus be read as an act of religious performativity—i.e., a concrete response to the feelings solicited by the disruptive an-archy of a deep, religious ecology wherein divinity expresses καθ’ αὐτό in an infinite plurality of forms, soliciting, intentionally or otherwise, a human response. Such divine expression “manifests” itself in the presence of an awakened subject only by the trace it leaves behind. The face-to-face relation within a religious ecology, while absolutely corporeal, remains utterly counter-phenomenal. Thus, theology here unfolds initially from the passive affectivities emerging in the absolute past, erupting after the encounter in the awakening of the subject in the present.

The incarnation of divinity in the cosmological model is otherwise than dogmatic. If face-to-face encounters are taken as the optics for theological reflection, the idea of God will cease to be absolutely tied to any linguistic or cognitive horizon, allowing divinity to speak itself in an-

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560 I recognize other ways of doing theology beyond academic writings such as this. Theology as a response to divinity, and thus a performance of religion, might unfold in a number of forms, from the liturgical and ritual, to concrete activism and politics.

561 This response may, of course, be solicited in what is otherwise than human, but my interests in this work, as a specifically intellectual and theological performance, aims at a human audience as a human act, meant to disrupt human life. As such, I am primarily concerned with theology as a particular human response to God. The response of the otherwise-than human is not simply beyond the scope of this work, it is beyond the scope of thought. While I accept that all things respond to divinity, such responses reside in an absolute mystery that I have no desire to explore.
archic affects that later awaken within the *cogito*. Divinity here is infused with the faces of a plurality of bodies, human or otherwise, who in-spire humans as being-responsible. The bodily expression of divinity need not conform to a humanist mode of subjectivity that views the exchange of ideas between self-reflective agents as the primary means of communication. The face-to-face erupts within human horizons, but it unfolds in sensuous affectivity, prior to any cognitive-linguistic matrix. Bodies as such, beyond dogmatic regulation, would become the self-expression of divinity through their resistance to subjective sovereignty. This resistance – i.e., the refusal to be absolutely identified as this or that, and the striving against mortality to position one’s self in a world – might open the human to the idea of infinity, and the demands of responsibility—i.e., asymmetrical, an-arhic events wherein God comes to mind. The resistance of transcendent, vulnerable bodies, hungry for food and exposed to the elements, thus co-creates human subjectivity as finite in comparison with the infinity of alterity, and responsible with respect to the material frailty of another who pleads to dwell in its own world without violent interruption. Our encounter with the divine face, inseparable from the life, suffering, and death of Jesus of Nazareth, whose suffering in the face of injustice solicits us as God, discovers not the

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562 While the encounter I focus on here is a face-to-face summons to responsibility between two, the world is never simply “you” and “I.” There is always a third, a fourth, a fifth, etc., as our communities can never be reduced to the pre-original ethical pair. Every other potentially summons every subject to responsibility. For simplicity sake in rooting theology in the an-arhic, ethical encounter, I leave aside for now the complexity of extending ethics to justice for larger communities of faces. Politics – i.e., responding to the divinity expressed in a plurality of faces, and issuing justice to worlds after the fundamental event of ethics – is the goal of this work, though this is work for the future, once this ground has been established.

563 I am careful to distinguish vulnerability and material frailty from animal suffering, a focus common in deep incarnation theologies that bifurcate matter into categories of “life” over against “non-life,” and narrows its focus further by assigning greater value to those animal bodies that suffer in ways similar to humans. While this animal suffering is not self-expressive of divinity, it is elevated in ethical value, rather than valued differently, according to the needs of each as in this thesis. The manner in which a body pursues its own fulfillment, and how it resists the interruption of this fulfillment, cannot be judged based on humanist ideas of pain and suffering without re-inscribing animal, and finally human bodies as “having the final say” in judging others, and inherently more valuable than other ways of dwelling within a world. Duncan Reid, “Enfleshing the Human: An Earth-Revealing, Earth-Healing Christology,” in *Earth Revealing—Earth Healing: Ecology and Christian Theology*, ed. Denis Edwards (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 80. See also Gregersen, “Deep Incarnation,” 173-188.
exclusive revelation of a one-time divine incursion into the world of matter, but uncovers a particularly meaningful moment within a deep, religious ecology. In such an ecology, divinity erupts ubiquitously, incarnate inherently in the face of cosmos and Earth. This eruption is not the corporeal mediation of a God beyond the universe, but a God who is the creative, infinite, vulnerable face of materiality. Jesus, to follow McFague’s terminology, becomes for us a paradigm for understanding divine incarnation as the inseparable relationship between divinity and the matrix of materiality, infused in the self-expression of all that is, insofar as all materiality is creative, infinite, and ethically valuable.

I suggest that incarnation theology unfolds as the recognition of the divine anarchy of other bodies – i.e., the power of alterity to disrupt subjective sovereignty in the affects produced in face-to-face relationships. Such affects co-create the human subject, whose horizon recognizes the infinity of alterity, and the responsibility one has to live at peace with other worlds. Thus, creativity, transcendence, and moral authority – powers classically reserved for God in the Christian tradition – are inseparable from the powers of bodies inhabiting cosmos and Earth. The ideas of God as Creativity, Infinity, and Love are thus expressed in the face of any body that

564 Given more space, I would outline my interpretation of the life and death of Jesus within this model more fully. The vulnerability encountered in Jesus’ body as an innocent man executed for seeking socio-political liberation along with a wider community of oppressed people is, in my view, the eruption of divinity in the historical Jesus. In this reading of the life and death of Jesus, the incarnate divine presence is met not only in his concern for others, but in his vulnerability, the apex of which we witness in his inability to avoid death by crucifixion for resisting the violence of Roman sovereignty. Such a death moves us by its an-archic power, revealing the self-expression of God in the face of alterity, a face exposed to violence and cruelty. As such, I read Jesus’ divinity as of the same nature as the divinity of the wider religious ecology. This is the divine power at the heart of the incarnation, ubiquitous throughout cosmos and Earth, that makes God available to humans. Such a reading is inspired by feminist liberation theologies and work into the historical Jesus. See especially Rita Nakashima Brock’s Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power, (New York, NY: Crossroad 1988) and Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker’s Proverbs of Ashes Violence, Redemptive Suffering, and the Search for What Saves Us (Boston, MA: Beacon Press 2002).

overflows the possibility of thought, and thus co-creates and solicits the human subject to being-responsible. Insofar as such expression is inseparable from the actual, concrete materiality of specific bodies, expressing in the peculiar semi-permanent assemblages that differentiate each body from another, the divinity encountered is the self-expression of a divinity inseparable from the particularity of the body itself. It becomes impossible then, as in a classic understanding of the two natures of Christ, to separate divinity and materiality in bodies dwelling within cosmos and Earth. Bodies do not express divinity by pointing to some deeper alterity beyond their own, and as such do not act as mediators to a greater alterity. The corporeal assemblage encountered is itself creative in its own peculiarity, is transcendent in its own infinity, and is ethically authoritative in its own frailty. The body of another is creative, transcendent, and authoritative not because an agential God separable from all worlds says that they possess such powers; they possess such power καθ’ αὐτό. Thus, I understand divine incarnation as God not simply enfleshing Jesus or the human in an act of kenosis, but as enfleshing cosmos and Earth, a religious ecology that does not merely mediate Being itself or a Being beyond materiality, but an ecology that is itself divine.

Unlike many of the deep incarnation models explored in this work, rooted within a finite matrix that disallows the expression of God’s self apart from human language and cognition, the incarnation model I suggest refuses to make any exclusive determinations concerning the shape of incarnate, divine expression.\textsuperscript{566} Incarnation in a cosmological model is rooted in the corporeal affects that erupt in face-to-face relationships. As such, this theology speaks of an incarnate God

\textsuperscript{566} There are, of course, similarities between my own thought and the work of those expressing a more pan-incarnationalist approach to theology and/or Christology. The theologies of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Grace Janzen, Sallie McFague, Phillip Sherrard, and Mark Wallace, as seen in Chapter Two, all significantly overlap with the idea I am suggesting. Although a detailed comparison with these authors is not possible here, it should be noted that they represent a pan-incarnationalist approach not widely recognized today among those writing under the heading of deep incarnation Christology.
within the limitations of a horizon, but recognizes that what is said in theology is grounded in the an-archy of a saying that does not originate in thought. Incarnation in the cosmological model insists that theology can say what it says because the theologian has always already encountered divinity beyond the finitude of a horizon, an encounter that has already passed once it is able to be thought. As such, divine incarnation and expression within the material world, beyond dogmatic restrictions to form, allows God to speak καθ’ αὐτό insofar as divine self-expression is grounded beyond human intentionality, in the affects generated in the an-archy of an absolute past, where the theologian is passive before a deep, religious ecology, wherein divinity is incarnate in the faces of all bodies. It is only in this matrix, where divine bodies are active and the theologian is passive, that God might express καθ’ αὐτό.

This raises the issue of how precisely the idea of incarnation is understood in this model, as the expression of God καθ’ αὐτό, is inherently a counter-phenomenal expression. In this one instance, my own incarnation theology partly overlaps with the dualist model described earlier. Divine expression, occurring as it does in the an-archy of primordial temporality, present only in the trace of the illeity carried from the pre-original time of the face-to-face into the awakening of the subject, would not be open to apprehension by means of empirical senses. Thus, if incarnation means, as Levinas takes it, that God would be open to the vision of an awakened subject, I would avoid the term in the theology developed here. If, however, incarnation is simply a more general reference to the self-expression of divinity in a corporeal matrix, encountered affectively as an an-archic counter-phenomena, then I see no problem in embracing the term. As asserted in the dualist Christologies explored above and in previous chapters, the Christian tradition has historically held that God does in fact transcend the scope of humanity and materiality. Thus, without giving in to the radical nature of transcendence in this model, it
seems that the Christian tradition’s refusal to reduce God to a human body allows us to consider an idea of incarnation that unfolds beyond a horizon, within a counter-phenomenal matrix that nevertheless remains fully material. The infinity of the other, according to Levinas, is not precisely incorporeal, but rather counter-phenomenal, overflowing all thought and language. Maintaining such a counter-phenomenal nuance is more important than the terminology used, and so against Levinas, it seems that the cosmological model might retain the idea of incarnation as embodied expression irreducible to any horizon. The face of divinity, while corporeal, enfleshed, and incarnate, would thus retain its infinity by overflowing insofar as expression καθ’ αὐτό would always exceed the horizon of the same. Incarnation as such would not in any way suggest that the infinity of alterity would be apprehended directly or totally within a horizon.

An incarnational framework in which divinity expresses by means of an infinite religious ecology consisting of a plurality of counter-phenomenal forms, breaks with the exclusivity of classical interpretations of the Christ event. This thinking suggests that divine incarnation breaks through enchainment to the boundaries of any singular earthy body, as divine self-expression cannot be limited to the human, nor to the specific person, Jesus of Nazareth. Divinity expresses and resides not in Jesus alone, nor broadly within the divine signature imprinted on things, but within all infinite, vulnerable bodies, expressing within an immemorial past that was never present, creating human responsibility in the light of a pure future that shines from beyond the horizon. Returning as a trace from beyond any intentional structure of cognition and the temporality of the constructed present, incarnate divinity need not be restricted to Jesus, nor even the human, imposing anarchy into the classical Christian doctrine. As such, the model of incarnation theology unfolding here upholds the idea of deep incarnation insofar as it is concerned with divine entanglement with corporeity, though not within the dominant, dualist,
and metaphysically humanist structure that it takes today, wherein divinity cannot express καθ’ αὐτό beyond the human face of Jesus. Instead, I suggest something more akin to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s monistic, incarnational cosmology, wherein divinity erupts within the very fabric of cosmogenesis itself. For Teilhard, as we have seen, divine expression – i.e., the event occurring in the incarnation of Christ and the transubstantiation of the Eucharist – is akin to the incarnation event transpiring at the deepest levels of cosmic and biological evolution.\textsuperscript{567} Creation, for Teilhard, is an eruption of divine self-expression, congruent with the Christ event, and the Eucharistic sacrament. Incarnation, Eucharist, and creation are thus a unified, even if plural, event, expressed within a body, “but a body,” to quote Sallie McFague, “not limited to Jesus of Nazareth.”\textsuperscript{568}

Yet, Teilhard does diverge from the cosmological model here developed, insofar as his Christology is one based on various degrees of intensity. As such, creation is an a transubstantive, incarnate event extending to the totality of cosmos and Earth, though the intensity of incarnation differentiates depending on how closely materiality images God’s perfect love.\textsuperscript{569} Teilhard thus does locate the height of divine identity in a humanist conceptualization of love, although he refuses to dogmatically restrict God to such an identity. While God is most clearly


\textsuperscript{568} McFague, \textit{The Body of God}, 161. As I show in Chapter Two, divine enfleshment is not limited to any single plastic form. The point of the incarnation for McFague, like Teilhard, is not simply that God became a human, but that God is inseparable from materiality, drawing all to a salvific end in perfect, relational love.

\textsuperscript{569} Teilhard de Chardin, “The Priest,” 207. A similar critique could be applied to McFague, who claims the possibility of meeting God’s Spirit, incarnate in the love of vulnerable bodies. McFague, \textit{The Body of God}, 159-195. The same problematic lies here, as it does for Teilhard’s thought—i.e., divine self-expression, while a possibility extended to other-than-human bodies, still takes a humanist form shaped as moral agency. My own perspective is that the self-expression of God as love embraces the divinity of God not only as Lover, but as the Beloved. As such, there is no limit to how love might be expressed, and such need not require any special corporeal form. The expression “God is love” would address the human in any body whose infinity summons the human to responsibility. Here, incarnation would be equally possible within the self-expression of the human as it would be in the body of a tomato or a mussel. Non-anthropocentric Christology must extend well beyond the divinization of moral agency, even though this too would express as divinity.
known as a self-reflexive lover, a humanist alter ego, Teilhard does not insist that such is the only manner in which God might express καθ’ αὑτό, and thus does not limit God to human normativity, nor reduce God to a Being behind the world itself. Cosmos and Earth exist as a “Divine Milieu,” or a “Universal Element,” akin to what I have named a religious ecology, unified in divinity while irreducibly plural. As such, while there are discrepancies with Teilhard’s Christology and my own, I am able to affirm with him that “to present the Christian God as…external to and (even quantitatively) less than, nature, is in itself, to impoverish [God’s] being.”570

Thus, following a cosmological model, and in solidarity with certain features of Teilhard’s monistic incarnation theology, the incarnation theology developed here insists that no human subject is able to make a priori declarations concerning who is a subject, nor what corporeal forms might erupt in face-to-face encounters with divine self-expression. The encounter with God is only known in its trace, after the encounter has passed, and thus, the theologian must remain agnostic concerning the corporeal forms in which divinity might erupt. Any body, human or otherwise, might potentially disrupt the sovereignty of the human subject, expressing the divine transcendence and ethical authority that co-creates the human as a differentiated, finite, and responsible being. Such an idea draws on the work of Matthew Calarco, concerning who might solicit human subjects to ethical responsibility in a posthumanist Levinasian framework. Calarco advocates what he calls “agnostic ethics,” which, based on Levinas’ notion of asymmetry in face-to-face encounters, says that no one can say beforehand which existents might call our egoism into question and render us responsible.571 Thus, Calarco

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570 Teilhard de Chardin, “Forma Christi,” 250.
571 Matthew Calarco, Zoographies The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2008), 69-77. Something that I cannot focus on to a great extent in this work is the further expansion Calarco advocates beyond the role vulnerability plays in soliciting the subject to responsibility. A
expands Levinas’ insistence that other subjective assemblages cannot be reduced to any set of defining concepts prior to the encounter, opening ethics beyond the human subject because dogmatic boundaries concerning who might or might not summon the subject “proceeds as if the question of moral consideration is one that permits of a final answer.”

Following Calarco, but concerning ourselves not simply with ethical solicitation, but also the divine character of such solicitations, incarnation theology must advocate not only an ethical, but a theological agnosticism. If theology in a cosmological model is a response to the divinity that disrupts the sovereignty of the same, theological agnosticism would refuse to restrict divine self-expression to normative, humanist forms. It would instead be open to the possibility of divinity expressing within any differentiated body within the wider religious ecology of cosmos and Earth, erupting within and disrupting the sovereignty of the human horizon. Those bodies

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572 Ibid., 71. Emphasis in the original. Theological agnosticism curbs the tendency toward metaphysical anthropocentrism, and is the surest way to prevent the a priori exclusion of any body from the sphere of moral considerability, and the tragedy of discovering after the face of exclusion that bodies who fail to meet a normative, humanist framework are worthy of ethical consideration. Calarco suggests that the utter failure of past attempts to place criteria on who is in and who is out of the sphere of ethics has a rather dismal history. In other words, the human track record on taking care of its own species is so questionable, the species is bound to continue to commit horrors and holocausts if we do not embrace an utterly inclusive ethical framework. “Unless we proceed from this kind of generous agnosticism, not only are we bound to make mistakes…but we also set up the conditions for possibly the worst kinds of abuses toward those beings who are left outside the scope of moral concern.” Ibid., 72.

573 Restricting or prioritizing concern for divine expression to some (human or human-like) bodies over others makes sense in some respects. As humans, it is much easier to empathize and connect to those with bodies that, like our own, demonstrate similar concerns for dwelling within a world, experiencing pain and suffering as we do, and striving to be free of such frustration. This is not to say that prioritization ought not to take place in order to cope with our own finitude, albeit without the common assertion that such prioritizations are based on the inherent worth of the other. Yet, denial that the other-wise than human might solicit as divine runs the risk of ignoring the mystery of bodies vastly different from our own, missing the possibility of a surprise summons from others radically alien to being as the human experiences it. Such humanist prejudice re-inscribes hierarchy into the cosmos and humanist within theology, asserting that some bodies are inherently more god-like and valuable than others, paving the way for the discrimination or a simple ignoring of those who escape our limited horizon of concern. For more on such a posthumanist trajectory, see Cary Wolfe, “In the Shadow of Wittgenstein’s Lion: Language, Ethics, and the Question of the Animal,” chap. in Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 44-94.

574 I speak of the possibility of divine expression not because divinity lies beyond materiality and erupts in some instances from outside of cosmos and Earth, but due to the face that subjects might never recognize the
that co-create subjectivity through the creation of affects carried from the absolute past into the present of an awakened “I,” those who reveal human finitude by resisting absolute identification, and those who solicit humanity’s feeling-for-another, leading subjects to being-responsible, would express with a divine voice and face. As such, “if it is the case,” Calarco writes, “that we do not know where the face begins and ends, where moral considerability begins and ends, then we are obliged to proceed from the possibility that anything might take on a face. And we are further obligated to hold this possibility permanently open.”

Incarnation theologies, according to the cosmological model, must therefore be open to divine expression beyond that of a self-reflexive Lover. God is and expresses God’s self as the Beloved who solicits us, as the Creativity that awakens us as being-responsible, and as the infinite Beyond who disrupts our claims to be sovereign. Such expressions are not mediated by the bodies of cosmos and Earth, pointing to a divinity of a religious ecology. I speak of the faces that disrupt the sovereignty of the self, and lead humanity to exercise their awakened freedom to embrace or refuse the recognition of and responsibility for the other. While I would claim a divine character of cosmos and Earth as a religious ecology, I speak of the eruption of divinity insofar as it disrupts subjects, human or otherwise. As the volcanic imagery suggests, an eruption is a disruption of order by elements that are already present in a matrix.

575 Ibid, 71. Calarco qualifies his statement somewhat: “It is important to stress that this notion of universal consideration does not make the positive claim that all things or all life forms do count as the ethical Other; nor does it supply any positive claim concerning how various beings or relational structures might count.” Ibid, 74. The later point I accept without hesitation. It would be impossible to say exactly how another might affect a subject. The ethical encounter is irreducible and non-substitutable; it is absolutely unique to the other. Yet, the finitude of cosmos and Earth, the striving of each existent to position itself in a world, and the fragility of things lead me to adopt a slightly more positive expectation toward the possibility of the ethical claims others might make on humans. I suggest that the vulnerability of an infinite plurality of things does express as face, even if these appeals are left unheard and unheeded. The divine face would erupt within the world of the subject only when it disrupts the sovereignty of the subject, though it would not cease to exist apart from this eruption.

576 The problem with universal moral considerability is that it quickly reaches near absurd levels if there is the expectation that moral considerability is synonymous with moral obligations. If anything might indeed summon the subject, there is the possibility of ethical paralysis at the sheer impossibility of responding to all faces. Yet, it is not as if the inability to address the moral concerns of all beings is any more of a problem than the inability to address all human concerns. Moral paralysis in the face of human destitution is still an issue, and virtually all political decisions related to justice end in ignoring some members of society. I cannot here develop a political theology of things that extends a mode of enacting concrete forms of justice, as this is a project in itself that would build on the work done here, but expand it into the political matrix of a world that is never simply “you” and “I,” but a world full of subjects who solicit human subjects. On attempts to render justice to a world where moral considerability overflows the human, see Charles Brown, and Ted Toadvine, Eco-Phenomenology Back to the Earth Itself (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003; Mary Anne Warren, Moral Status Obligations to Persons and Other Living Things (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1997). See Thomas Birch, “Moral Considerability
greater alterity; they are inseparable from such bodies that constitute the universe as a ubiquitous religious ecology.

Yet, there is risk involved in such an expansive incarnation theology. Such a risk lies in a deep-seated fear, expressed by Gregersen, that if a “strict” sense of incarnation is accepted as ubiquitous, the self-revelation of God will occur literally in everything that happens and that there will be unchecked power without limits in the divinity of each thing. The primary concern here is that such a theology would baptize everything, including existential horrors, radical acts of violence and natural disasters, as divine. Such a fear, however, ignores classical Christological formulas that allow divinity and humanity to exist within a single subject, while insisting that creaturely finitude does not circumscribe divinity. Incarnation theologies have never meant that everything about the incarnate body is indicative of divinity as such. This fear understands certain manifestations of embodied power – e.g., earthquakes, tsunamis, and famine – as subjectivities on their own rather than manifestations of particular subjective, corporeal assemblages. Incarnation is linked to bodies as subjective assemblages of information, matter, and energy, coalesced into semi-stable unity of a differentiated body. The incarnation of God


See e.g., ibid., 235.

It makes little sense to speak of the incarnate, self-expression of God in hunger without addressing the body of a hungry subject. Similarly, it makes little sense to speak of self-revelation in an earthquake apart from the body of Earth, or a tsunami apart from an ocean flowing within a volatile planet. The unified, subjective assemblages need to be considered in the idea of incarnation, not simply the isolation of power manifest in such assemblages that have no existence apart from a wider reality. Speaking of incarnation in these “natural evils” is unfair insofar as it constructs subjects that do not exist as corporeal existents, but simply as linguistic concepts separate from bodies. None of these examples are expressive subjects that we could place within an incarnational matrix; they are all manifestations of bodies deeper than these phenomena. As such, it is unclear precisely why hunger, an event possibly drawing subjects into relationships of responsibility, or natural disasters, as the creative expression of Earth, might not appear as the trace of an infinite divinity who has expressed in bodies manifesting
does not unfold simply in the powers manifest in phenomena by such subjective assemblages, 
thus allowing the paradoxical unity of natures that transcend one another. Just as Christ was the 
unification of two natures, pan-incarnationalism need not be taken to suggest that everything that 
could conceptually occur is unequivocally divine. If such were the case, the maleness of Jesus, 
manifest in his particular subjective assemblage, could be considered an identity marker for 
divinity. This fear falls into the trap that divine self-expression is something manifest in 
phenomena, appearing to vision, and open to empirical analysis. There is an assumption that 
what is given to vision and thought corresponds to the infinite transcendence of a body, a subject 
as such. Yet, subjects cannot be so easily reduced to their manifestations, as their complete 
assemblages overflow what any perceiving subject might apprehend. In the cosmological model, 
it is in the subjectivity of the other as such, in what overflows perception, that divinity dwells. In 
this matrix, the creative power, the infinite transcendence, and the needs necessary for any body 
to thrive are the counter-phenomenal self-expression of divinity. Thus, appearance and 
manifestation need not become synonymous with divinity any more than the gender or Jesus of 
Nazareth. Despite their entanglement, divinity and materiality transcend one another and do not 
abide in an absolutely correlative relation. Bodies are free to develop and manifest in ways that 
transcend precisely what is meant by divinity. Earth, for example, expresses divinity in its 
creativity, its mystery, and its vulnerability, without such divinity being apprehended in the 
totality of its particular manifestations of phenomena. I am not suggesting that whatever is 
manifest is, simply speaking, God. Divinity is incarnate in the infinite transcendence of things, 
the creative, an-archic power beyond good and evil that assemblages possess and in which 

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such powers. Thus, hunger is inseparable from the body, who possibly solicits a subject to provide it with food. In 
this case, that hunger would exist precisely as the expression of an incarnate, divine face.
worlds are co-created, and the frailty of vulnerable bodies who resist the violence that interrupts
the fulfillment of their needs for dwelling within a world.\footnote{To suggest that every concept or occurrence is an incarnation of divinity is to precisely miss what is expressed in the idea of infinity, which is at the heart of incarnation theology in a cosmological model. Suggesting, as Gregersen and others do, that God would be present in literally every manifest occurrence, rather than the infinite subjectivity of every body, would be to once more enchain God to the totality of a conceptualist horizon, a reduction of what is otherwise than being to a theme. Infinity here does not simply point to any and every possibility, but to possibilities that extend beyond the human horizon, which tend to function as a totality, i.e., the possibility of reducing an object to the representational and conceptual schemas that think it. Insisting that divinity fit any conceptual theme would be to reduce infinity to the boundaries of a finite horizon. Infinity perpetually transcends the idea that thinks it.}

Yet, despite the impossibility of absolute correlation, the trace of such manifestations are
not always unconnected to the bodies from which they flow. It could be said that while divinity
remains transcendent from things, expressing in creativity, infinity, and ethics as such rather than
what is given in phenomena, the traces of divine, corporeal power manifest would still emerge
from particular bodies infused with divinity. While we could not say ahead of time where
divinity could be encountered, the temptation could present itself to reduce divinity to the
particular bodies whose self-expression erupts within human horizons in the trace of particular
solicitations. That is, while divine self-expression cannot be predicted, when it is encountered it
is encountered in ways that take particular shapes in the awakening of the I, and such shapes
could turn into reductionist, theological themes. In such cases, the divinity of another might be
assigned a sovereign power that denies the solicitation of others. Thus, I suggest that despite the
possibility of all things erupting as incarnate, self-expressions of divinity, there is a further
limitation of divine self-expression in the cosmological model that ensures that no one thing
becomes unequivocally divine. Rooted in the idea of kenosis, the idea that in the incarnation
event God divests God’s self of sovereign power, I suggest that the infinite plurality of incarnate
divinity in a ubiquitous religious ecology likewise prevents the limitless power and sovereignty of any one thing.

The cosmological model follows Levinas’ insistence that the other is not, strictly speaking, God, because God cannot be reduced to a single incarnation in any differentiated, singular body. The self-expression of the divine face escapes the limitations of enchainment to any one existent, and precisely because of this radical plurality, a kenotic divesting of power would occur in the divine, religious ecology infused within cosmos and Earth. Divinity would eschew its own rights and power in each body insofar as the sovereignty of the same is always confronted by the face of the other. In a religious ecology governed by acts of radical kenosis, divinity calls its own sovereignty into question, ensuring that no one body, no one expression, and thus no manifestation of the invisible subjectivity of differentiated, corporeal assemblages may be unequivocally God over all. No creative power, no inscrutable mystery, and no corporeal needs can thus claim sovereignty. Each self-expressive body is divine, by not unequivocally so. There is an eruption of divinity incarnate in each thing that seeks to thrive, but such is called into question whenever such thriving would do violence against another, who exists within the unified religious ecology that comprises cosmos and Earth. Divinity in such a religious ecology calls all subjective sovereignty into question, and since no one voice exercises absolute power, no singular expression is unequivocally God. Divinity, in the cosmological model, thus paradoxically incarnates and escapes all bodies. Since God in this model is neither Being itself, nor a being behind the world, divinity might express in a unified religious ecology that embraces the paradox of corporeal faces that are divine, but not absolutely so.

The theologian, to follow once more the thought of Teilhard, “must abandon all the illusions of narrow individualism,” recognizing the plurality of a unified divinity, who,
embracing the reality of kenosis, is paradoxically incarnate in the faces of an infinite plurality of differentiated subjects.\textsuperscript{581} This allows transcendence between God as such, and the individual bodies incarnate with divinity, without understanding God as the anonymity of Being itself, or as a Being who dwells separately from the corporeal matrix of cosmos and Earth. In this model, anything might potentially erupt as divine self-expression, while refusing the sovereign, unequivocal power of a god above all others. Divine power in this model confronts the sovereignty of the same, while refusing to take up such imperialist power for itself. The power of God is precisely not sovereignty, but anarchy.\textsuperscript{582} Eschewing hierarchies of sovereignty and imperialisms of bio-power as such would distance divinity from the violence that interrupts any dwelling in a world, while paradoxically recognizing the ways in which violence makes a world possible. The predator calls its prey into question for running, for its escape is violence against its need to survive. And yet, the prey questions the sovereignty of such a need, and refuses to offer itself as a willing sacrifice. Divinity, manifest in the mutual needs necessary to dwell in a world, expresses itself in plurality and paradox, calling itself into question by disrupting the violence necessary for worlds to unfold. The anarchy of the encounter disrupts the sovereignty of any singular existent – i.e., predator and prey are both called into question – as divinity is entangled in a plurality of bodies, transcending enchainment to any one corporeal form in an act

\textsuperscript{581} Teilhard de Chardin, “Cosmic Life,” 16.

\textsuperscript{582} This allows divinity to call the same into question, exercising authority over the subject, without assuming that this particular summons is absolute. An-archy thus becomes the power to protect others from abuse and violence. Violence is called into question not by a single, absolute authority over all but in the questioning of the idea of sovereignty itself. Sovereignty in absolutely identifying what is and is not divine is not required to prevent violence by appeal to some final authority, nor is it necessary to prevent ethical paralysis by providing an authority in which to rest as deep incarnation theologies assume. Such a sovereign paradigm asserts the need for a single divine lawgiver that has the final say in value and behavior. An-archy does not end in flat relativism where anything goes; it demands that we act in accordance to the particular bodies that confront us, recognizing that in doing so we might miss the needs of other bodies, without insisting that our decision-making prioritizes those with a higher intrinsic value.
of radical kenosis. The divinity within, interior to each thing is called into question by the divinity outside, and exterior to itself, thus eschewing the sovereign imperialism of the same by calling violence into question and moving theology beyond the possibility of theodicy.\footnote{I say that theodicy is impossible because in this model there is no justifying violence insofar as it is always called into question by victims and their resistance. Violence unfolding in the world would be inevitable in various forms, but this model would not baptize violence as good so much as recognize the inherent tension necessary to have a world at all. Divinity here expresses as the victim of violence, which would include the violence of prey in causing predator hunger, as well as the violence of predators killing those who cannot escape. Yet, such animal pain and suffering, is to be sure, only a type of vulnerability resisted by bodies. Incarnation theologies ought to recognize pain and suffering as a sub-category of something more foundational to the matrix of materiality—i.e., vulnerability and frailty, resisted in all its forms. If the divinity is expressed as incarnate in all flesh, vulnerability is perhaps a better framework for concern than pain and suffering, which is calculable according to the possession of capacities and attributes not shared by all.} God in the cosmological model expresses by the incarnate power of anarchy, disrupting the sovereign violence of the same. This an-archy is the power of creation, the power of unresolved mystery, and the power of ethics irreducible to manifestation in any predetermined form.

5.4 Conclusion

To summarize, what does a re-imagined incarnation theology, molded by the cosmological model, mean for the human?\footnote{I am not interested here in what this might mean for the divine relationship beyond theology as a human discipline, reflecting on the face-to-face encounter.} Concisely, it means that God is incarnate and potentially faced in the asymmetrical, an-archic matrix of counter-phenomenal, face-to-face encounters with bodies. Such bodies, human or otherwise, emerge from the co-creative relationships that unfold within the religious ecology of cosmos and Earth. The expression of the divine face need not match any predetermined form, expressing καθ’ οὐτό in the corporeal depths of cosmos and Earth, prior to and beyond the intentionality of the subjective horizon. In these incarnate, albeit counter-phenomenal divine self-expressions, the creative, transcendent, and ethical power of alterity disrupts the human subject who, prior to being awakened as a self-reflexive “I,” is passive before the infinity of the other. Such an other, a subject in its own right
and on its own terms, creates the passive, receptive human subject by disrupting the sovereignty of the same, waking and creating this particular subject as being-responsible. The awakening of the I does not change the counter-phenomenal nature of the face-to-face encounter, insofar as the divine alterity of the other escapes the totalizing grasp of the same. The face continues to disrupt the sovereignty of the human subject in the presence of the counter-phenomenal trace, a body fully corporeal, but with an essence that is nevertheless invisible. The incarnation of God dwells here, as the corporeal power of an anarchy hidden in the infinite plurality of the face of cosmos and Earth, creating subjective worlds, and soliciting humanity to responsibility and peace.

Thus, the face of God might be met anywhere in the enfleshed expression of the creativity, infinity, and vulnerability of cosmos and Earth. While much of this thesis has dealt with abstract ideas, rooted in our own affective experiences of vulnerable bodies, the takeaway is as simple as addressing how the infinite, vulnerable bodies that we meet on a daily basis impact us, and suggest ways in which we might be more responsible creatures, overcoming the often tenuous relations between our species and our Earth-other neighbors. The expression of the divine face of God is thus encountered ubiquitously, in our sadness flowing from the expression of a polluted river, or our anger boiling over from when the blood of a sacrificed broiler-hen cries out. These emotions become the objects of thought, but they first erupt in pure affect, feelings soliciting responsibility not because of utilitarian calculation or submission to the law, but because we have corporeally felt the eruption of divinity within vulnerable bodies of cosmos and Earth. These bodies create us as responsible beings, rather than sitting passively as the objects of thought; they are active, dynamic, self-expressions of a vulnerable alterity that transcends our horizon and in-spires the idea of God. When we think of God, our ideas contemplate the divine bodies that face us, the infinite ideatum of a religious ecology that
overflows any idea we could possibly construct. The exposure of a mountaintop, the nudity of a clear-cut forest, the emaciated flesh of a starving cat, the yelp of a kicked dog—these are the expressions of divinity incarnate in the face of cosmos and Earth, the kenotic eruption of God, transubstantiated into creation.

Incarnation theology thus re-imagines its task as the anarchic deconstruction of human exceptionalism, interrupting anthropocentric sovereignty. Such a re-imagination perhaps leads to some uncomfortable doctrinal conversations within the Christian tradition, despite points where such thought overlaps with the certain formulations of the Christological tradition. Yet, in our current context, dominated as it is by anthropogenic planetary devastation and the suffocation of Earth’s creativity, such conversations are necessary as we seek to both thrive and live in peace with our world. Thus, an ecological theology adequate to the task of confronting the reality of the modern world would, I suggest, caution against any simple bifurcation of reality that alienates the ineffable transcendence of infinity and the gritty reality of an existence in the mud and the muck of the corporeal. Re-imagining a Christology wherein the divinity of Jesus is indicative of a pan-incarnational, co-creative reality within all vulnerable subjects might act as a spiritual force, complementing techno-scientific and political responses to the ecological crisis, in mitigating the tenuous relationship between humanity and Earth.
Conclusion

A. Introduction

This thesis sought a re-imagined theology of incarnation, aiming to eschew the anthropocentric impulse driving many contemporary theologies of deep incarnation. While deep incarnation Christologies are a welcome development in eco-theology as a whole, a development that I find much to agree with despite the critical thrust of this thesis, the humanist mindset shaping the emergence of many forms of the doctrine has not been adequately called into question today. While my approach is not the only path one might take in approaching theologies of deep incarnation, the posthumanist, Levinasian framework employed in the preceding chapters confronts the sovereignty of deep incarnation’s anthropocentrism with an an-archic defiance, emphasizing divine infinity and the possibility of divine self-expression in a deep, religious ecology extending ubiquitously throughout cosmos and Earth. I ended this thesis by constructing a pan-incarnational Christology, wherein Jesus of Nazareth is the paradigm for a much deeper ontic unity between divinity and materiality. As such, I argue that the religious ecology in which all things are enmeshed results in a theological monism, wherein the ontic unity of God, cosmos, and Earth mixes and blends within all that exists. God, as such, is not understood as mediated in the flesh of bodies or united to materiality as a distinct, personal agency that exists beyond the confines of the religious ecology of differentiated subjects. Thus, unlike other deep incarnation Christologies, I suggest that God is not a human-like alterity behind the alterity encountered in bodies, nor merely evidenced in others in the signature of a creative power imprinted on all that exists. God is not, in this thesis, a Being nor being itself, but the counter-phenomenal infinity incarnate within the bodies of the differentiated subjects inhabiting cosmos and Earth. The creative, self-expressive divinity that incarnates Jesus of
Nazareth, is thus present within all that is, to the same degree, albeit in each with its own unique, self-expressive voice. Such divinity, however, insofar as God is irreducible to any one form, escapes the singularities which it incarnates in an event of radical kenosis where the divinity of any one is always called into question by the divinity of another. Thus, the one God, incarnate within the differentiated bodies comprising the divine, religious ecology of cosmos and Earth, finally escapes all reductionism, not only to what might be thought within a subjective, human horizon, but even the alterity of the other.\footnote{There is this a subtle distinction between my understanding of God and divinity. Divinity, like the Logos or the Son in classical Christology, is the expressive face of God, who is finally absolutely simple—“different from every neighbor,” as Levinas asserts, and “transcendent to the point of absence, to the point of a possible confusion with the stirring of the there is.” Emmanuel Levinas, “Dieu et la Philosophie,” Le Nouveau Commerce 30/31 (Spring 1975): 117. Divinity is thus the infinity of God that expresses and creates the world, summoning humans to responsibility on behalf of the vulnerability of the other, pointing the way that we, as humans, ought to lovingly respond to corporeal frailty. Thus, while it would be inaccurate to say that God is only present as the totality of faces, I would argue that God is \textit{homoousian} with divinity; there is a clear sense in which the face of divinity encountered in alterity is not God absolutely, as even the infinity of the other is particular and does not consider the particularity of the divine unity expressed simultaneously in all faces. As such, to speak of God as a subject, we must eschew the idea of a subject as a singular being, in favor of the possibility of subjectivity as a plurality. God, paradoxically, is and is not alterity.}

This thesis may, with other radical ecological theologies, be charged with pantheism and perhaps even paganism.\footnote{See especially the work of Mark Wallace whose radical, ecological theology is open to such characterizations. Mark Wallace, “Christian Animism, Green Spirit Theology, and the Global Crisis Today.” \textit{Journal of Reformed Theology} 6 (2012): 216-233. While my Christology overlaps substantially with Wallace’s pneumatology, it was necessary to restrict my comments in Chapters 1-5 to Christology. As I suggest below, however, my theology of the Son complements Wallace’s on the Spirit. More than this, however, the limitations of my Christology require an eventual theology of the Spirit in order to engage the concrete realities of the ethics of the face. Carrying my Levinasian ecological theology into the future will thus bring the Christological framework presented above into dialogue with Wallace’s insightful theology of the Spirit.} The possibility of divinity and materiality sharing substance, \textit{homoousian} in a real sense in the ubiquitous and eternal transmutation of Creator into creation, despite the transcendence of each nature from the other, certainly runs this risk. So be it. While I explore these charges briefly below, I am willing to embrace these risks, perhaps even the terms themselves, insofar as they add insight into the finitude and imperfection of the Christian
tradition, and compensate for its past theological sins.\textsuperscript{587} Earth currently faces the human through the possibility of ecocide—i.e., a violence suffered beyond the necessary creative tension implicit in all emergent, evolving material systems.\textsuperscript{588} The urgency of our era necessitates such risks in order to explore theologies willing to call ecological violence into question, even at the cost of partnering with frameworks heretofore viewed as heterodox. Furthermore, if in fact there is an element of truth in the framework I have described above, the role humans play in the violence of ecocide necessarily correlates, beyond the death of Earth, an ecocide opening the possibility of deicide, the death of God.\textsuperscript{589} If such is the case, the anthropogenic death of God would not lead to life, as in the theology of Gregory Nazianzen, but rather to an eternal trauma within the religious ecology in which all things live, and move, have their being.\textsuperscript{590} As such, quite apart from the creative tension and violence that necessarily occur in an evolving cosmos, the specter of ecocide and deicide threaten to eternally traumatize and impoverish being. Ecocide

\textsuperscript{587} If possible, I mean sin apart from the ethical connotations linked to the term. These sins refer to the reduction of God to a humanist horizon, and reducing divine infinity by constructing divinity as a dispassionate, ethereal, god-of-the-sky, who does little to embrace and dignify material bodies. I do not suggest that past theologies intentionally meant to harm any body, and simply operated out of their inherited conceptual frameworks, as I am doing. The urgency of the modern era, faced with the possibility of ecocide, necessitates strong language tied to sin and repentance in order to frame the gravity of change needed in theological systems to cope with the violence of the human species, and the role Christianity plays in supporting such violence.

\textsuperscript{588} By ecocide, I do not mean that Earth will be obliterated by anthropogenic violence. Earth will be carried into a future regardless of the worst human violence, and might eventually erase absolutely the trace of human violence. Rather, I speak of the interruption of Earth’s creative tension, which admittedly creates through violence as well as cooperation, but does so according to the creativity of a wider embodied community. Ecocide thus refers to the domination of planetary creativity, on its own terms, as a result of the sovereignty of one species over all others. This is why I insist that eco-theology must unfold as anarchy.

\textsuperscript{589} The idea of deicide emerging in ecocide lays at the heart of Mark Wallace’s theology. “God,” Wallace writes, “is so internally related to the universe that the specter of ecocide raises the risk of deicide: to wreak environmental havoc on the earth is to run the risk that we will do irreparable harm to the Love and Mystery we call God.” Mark Wallace, “The Green Face of God: Christianity in an Age of Ecocide,” \textit{Cross Currents} 50 (Fall 2000): 320. I follow Wallace’s insistence that the idea that trauma, regardless of the healing power undergone after violence, risks being carried in bodies beyond the hope of erasure. The body of God, as well as the bodies of cosmos and Earth, is thus open to eternal trauma.

\textsuperscript{590} Gregory, as we saw in Chapter One (Or. 45.28–29), was unafraid to speak of the death of God. “We needed a God made flesh and made dead, that we might live. … Many indeed are the wonders of that time: God crucified; the sun darkened and again rekindled, for created things also had to suffer with the Creator.” Gregory of Nazianzus and Nonna Verna Harrison, \textit{Festal Orations} (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2008), 189.
and deicide may or may not occur, or may have already occurred; it is the purpose of this thesis’s
theological re-imagination to offer an alternative way of thinking that might mitigate the specter
of ecological deicide. Thus, insofar as the prophets and priests have chased divinity from its
sacred groves and gardens, demonizing animal familiars, and enchaining God to an orthodox,
spectral abode, the risk of such anarchic heterodoxy is necessary to call the sovereignty of the
Christian tradition into question. The re-sacrilization of creation found in these pages, and the
works of others, will hopefully fuel, in a limited way, a spirituality that will allow humans the
will to live in greater peace with cosmos and Earth.

In the remainder of the Conclusion, I undertake two tasks. First, I would like to offer a
crude concrete example of the expression of divine incarnation that I have described in this thesis. This
section is a dramatic change of pace and tone from the rest of the thesis, and explores my own
personal encounter with an instance of divinity within the religious ecology in which we all live,
and move, and have our being. The intent of such is to offer a less abstract, perhaps even
pastoral, narrative concerning the meaning and implications of the work carried out in the
academic dialogue I have explored in the preceding chapters. Furthermore, such a narrative adds
a concrete dimension to what I have tried to describe above, which often resorted to technical
language and terminology that can be difficult to follow, and represents the kinds of encounters
that may in fact speak to many people, thus adding clarity to my work. Thus, in this
experimental, auto-biographical theology, I enter into the heart of the matter of this thesis—i.e.,
that the expression of divinity in the face of cosmos and Earth is meant to fundamentally change
human relationships with what is otherwise-than human. Change occurring from such eruptions
of divine power within the alterity of other bodies will hopefully act as an in-spiration for other
humans, who are created as responsible for Earth as a result of their own personal encounters
within the divine, religious ecology. Second, there are numerous questions raised in this thesis that I did not have the time, nor the space to explore. In the final section I will list areas that require further work in order to expand upon the meaning and implications of this thesis. While many of the issues brought up concern the political and moral implications of the vision outlined here, issues perhaps more meaningful to humans living amidst an ecological crisis, such issues cannot be fully discussed apart from the groundwork laid by the more abstract, philosophical theology constricted in Chapters One through Five. Thus, this thesis is not an end in itself, but the necessary groundwork to eventually write a political theology of Earth, aimed at mitigating the tenuous relationship between humans (especially those within the Church), and Earth.

B. Face-to-Face with Feline Alterity

The novelist J. M. Coetzee, who is often encountered in philosophical discussions concerning non-human animals, expresses the sentiment I have sought to capture in this thesis. Speaking amidst a dialogue emerging from the the coming together of continental and analytic philosophers over the question of the otherwise-than human animal, Coetzee writes:

We (participants in this dialogue) are where we are today not because once upon a time we read a book that convinced us that there was a flaw in the thinking underlying the way we, collectively, treat nonhuman animals, but because in each of us there took place something like a conversion experience, which, being educated people who place a premium on rationality, we then proceeded to seek backing for in the writings of thinkers and philosophers. Our conversion experience as often as not centered on some other mute appeal of the kind that Lévinas calls the look, in which the existential autonomy of the Other became irrefutable—irrefutable by any means, including rational argument.591

This thesis expresses this idea of the “mute appeal,” which calls into question the sovereignty of human language, cognition, and rationality. Such an appeal, irreducible to the

horizon of the subject who “hears” the expression of alterity, is, I have argued, transcendent, creative, and ethically authoritative—i.e., divine. With Coetzee, I affirm that the idea of the “mute appeal” is not something that occurs through study, and though Levinas provides a language to speak of this type of encounter, I recognize that this appeal erupts beyond the space of the cogito, and instead within the matrix of affective encounters that create the possibility of an ego in the first place. What I have described in this thesis can thus be best summarized by returning, as best as my awakened self is able, to the pre-original scene of such an appeal, the inspiration of this thesis, which for me erupts one day, as I am caught face-to-face, in the gaze of a cat. Remembering this expression, the an-archy disrupting my own sovereignty, serves to recapitulate what I have argued for in the preceding chapters in an autobiographical narrative that is likely meaningful to others who have shared experiences of similar encounters. The following remembrance explores what I mean when I insist that the divine face of alterity extends beyond Jesus of Nazareth, into the depths of the religious ecology of cosmos and Earth.

I remember here the irreducible and irreplaceable alterity of a certain feline companion that, at the time of this writing, has shared his life with mine for the past ten years. This animal lurks in the background of this thesis insofar as he sounds the mute appeal a decade ago that converts me to the divine, otherwise-than human. As such, he incarnates this thesis as its inspirational trace, its invisible co-creator, whom I have followed throughout. As Coetzee suggests, I conclude my thesis in this way not because years of research leads me to remember this cat, as if I recognize an uncanny similarity between what I discover in books and my own pre-original encounter. Instead, this thesis concludes by betraying the event that erupted in an

\[592\] Much of my language here is indebted not only to Levinas, but to Jacques Derrida, the author who, before any others, followed Levinas’ thought to its logical conclusion, i.e., that the otherwise-than human expresses an-archically, as a face. See esp. Jacques Derrida, The Animal that therefore I am, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2008).
affective encounter, out of which the idea of infinity, creation, ethics, and therefore, God, comes to mind. Deep incarnation theology, and Levinas’ philosophy give me the language to describe what took place when I was exposed to this little cat, Fargo, who expressed concern for his own being, appealing to me from an impoverished world by means of resistance and (non)power.

As I walk past his cage, and the cages of many other cats, I am under no particular compulsion to adopt a cat; I am out only to buy food for my other feline companion, whose story does not factor into this one. Fargo’s expression, however, has no respect for my freedom and intention. As I walk past these cats, most of whom nap lazily behind bars, he stalks me invisibly, noting, I would soon learn, the skin of my nude arm, exposed, without anywhere to hide, and within his reach. Unsatisfied with the poverty of his world, as it was cramped and barren, a paw darts at my flesh. He catches me out in the open as I walk by, and as prey faced by its predator, I am wounded where I am exposed; my flesh is powerless to the curve of his claw. I am a hostage, if only for a brief moment, by this little cat who calls me into question for walking by, refusing to attend to his cry. With a paw, and a claw, he marks me, leaving behind a trace of himself that transcends time as a text written in blood red for me to read when I awaken to a world.

With his paw, and a claw he expresses in a language prior to and beyond language, as

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593 Nudity, of course, is a technical term as it is used here, though it also reveals the vulnerability of my arm, literally exposed to the skin, from the elbow to my finger tips. To be nude, here is to be in an affective matrix, without the clothing and protection of language, thought, and my inherited narratives for species difference, which at the time placed humanity on a higher level of a value hierarchy. Prior to the clothing myself in thought, I am nude before the other animal, caught up in a space and a time where the power of language is neutralized, and unable to protect me from the mute appeal of alterity. “Nudity,” Derrida, following Levinas, writes, “is nothing other than that passivity, the involuntary exhibition of the self. Nudity gets stripped to bare necessity only in that frontal exhibition, in that face-to-face.” Ibid., 11. While Derrida will go where Levinas will not, risking an exposure to wounding by the other animal, his thought points to an an-archic ethical moment that Levinas recounts more fully. Thus, my subjectivity in this matrix, prior to awakening, is like my exposed arm, nude, “an exposure to being affected, a pure susceptiveness” to the other’s corporeal expression. Levinas, Otherwise than Being, 138. Standing before the other, I am fully nude, “without clothing, without a shell to protect oneself, stripped to the core as in an inspiration of air, an ab-solution to the one, the one without complexion. It is a denuding beyond the skin to the wounds one dies from, denuding to death, being as a vulnerability.” Ibid., 49.

only a little cat in a cage is able. Like Kafka’s jackals, he is a poor animal, having only a claw for everything he wishes to express and everything he wants to do; the only thing available to him is his claw.\textsuperscript{595} The claw is not a hand; he is unable to grab me, hold me down, or utilize me for his freedom. And yet the paw and the curve of the claw, as poor as it is, is still expression.\textsuperscript{596} The only thing available to him is the power to wound exposed skin and rend time; the claw is the power of anarchy, disrupting my sovereignty, and creating me as responsible for his needs.

When I awaken and read this red text written on my nude arm, I am confronted with the need to respond to a narrative of resistance, a message from another time, whose meaning is immediately apparent, insofar as its meaning is already known by the time I awaken as a self-conscious, rational, language bearing subject. My interpretation of the text results from an affective exegesis; I do not assess whether this animal has the neurological complexity needed to suffer as I do, nor determine whether he might be able to express anything like resistance in language. I do not calculate anything concerning the meaning of the encounter because there is no time for calculation; the meaning has been put inside of me prior to my freedom to interpret. Because I am a feeling subject, open to concern for others, I awaken to a conversation our bodies have already had. His need and resistance awaken my humanity, which erupts as the possibility of being-responsible by virtue of a demand. Before I awaken, able to consider the meaning of the

\textsuperscript{595}“Wir sind arme Tiere, wir haben nur das Gebiß; ür alles, was wir tun wollen, das Gute und das Schlechte, bleibt uns einzig das Gebiß.” (We are poor animals— all we have is our teeth. For everything we want to do—good and bad— the only thing available to us is our teeth). Franz Kafka, “Schakale und Araber,” \textit{Der Jude} 2.7 (1917–1918): 488–90.

event, I am already responsible for this cat by virtue of the feelings he has elicited within me, feelings that begin in the an-archy prior to the sovereignty of my thought, carried through time into my waking consciousness. Through the an-archy of love, I am responsible before I have the freedom to choose whether or not I will make good on his demand and my responsibility. His authority has converted me to him by an irrefutable, affective summons, and my own freedom is powerless in the face of this non-power, expressing as the frailty that calls my sovereign self into question.\(^{597}\) The animal that faces me now looks me in the eyes, shrieking in the high pitched screech of resistance, appealing directly to me as all is not well. He pleads to neither live, nor die alone. I am responsible, passively, without choosing to be so, by virtue of his demand and my affective response—a solicitation to love in-spired by alterity, embraced by my body, and carried out by my self in response to his trace.

Today, my arms are scarred from over a decade of encountering the curve of his claw. The claw has expressed hunger, and fear, and more often than not joy—appeals in a plurality of form to respect the other qua its alterity. The claw is the expression of this animal other, who overflows my thought, and escapes my grasp. Such an expression, incarnate in the face of this little cat, is beyond my ability for apprehension. It is beyond, and counter-phenomenal, disincarnate in its refusal to present itself καθ’ αὐτό within my waking consciousness, and yet incarnate insofar as it is rooted in his embodied peculiarity, emerging from this alterity, and not any deeper, separate authority. In this counter-phenomenal face that co-creates, and in-spires me as responsible, the idea of infinity, creation, and ethics opens up, and thus God comes to mind. This God who comes to mind is no longer, for me, enchained to the human face. Such a

\(^{597}\) I, of course, had the freedom to leave without this cat. It was, after all, the sensible thing to do, considering I had already adopted a feral cat who had no real interest in outsiders. Yet, the sovereignty of my freedom to choose was irrelevant; I was responsible by virtue of his demand and my affective response, regardless of whether or not I responded to my responsibility.
reductionism I now recognize is an eschewing of infinity, an identifying the transcendent as this or that, and the ignorance of the resistance staring us in the face. Thus, despite my Christian inheritance concerning the subjective structure of divinity, humanity, animality, and beyond, a door has been opened for me as a result of this encounter. The idea of God is thus no longer tenable insofar as it lies in some spectral, heavenly abode where divinity is a Being behind beings, or the utter no-thingness of being itself. Divinity is the face of alterity in all of its concrete, particular forms, invisible, but always corporeal, an ontic unity entangled within all things in the religious ecology of cosmos and Earth. “So long as there is recognizability and fellow,” writes Derrida, “ethics is dormant.”598 Insofar as ethics is prior to thought, theology too remains dormant; when the idea of God is reduced to the recognizability of humanity, “it is sleeping in dogmatic slumber… narcissistic, and not yet thinking.”599

Theology, I suggest, arises out of the infinitely complex matrix of affective human relationships with the world, integrating humanity, animality, and otherwise. It unfolds as anarchic memory, which opens up the idea of creation, ethics, and infinity as the ground out of which God comes to mind. Theology then is a reflection within a horizon, manifest in speech, but what is said in theology, always betrays the pre-original saying put forth by the face of the other to whom we were once exposed—in my case, a cat named Fargo. As anarchic remembrance, theology recalls an affective event to which we, as perceiving beings able to apprehend a world, were never present though we were exposed in passivity, as skin is exposed to that which wounds. Ethics then, structured as the anarchic, face-to-face encounter with alterity, is first theology.


599 Ibid.
C. The Future of Incarnation

Even if the above account of ethics as first theology were embraced, there are many questions this thesis leaves unanswered. Below, I close with a few suggestions for further study based on ideas that arose, but were not sufficiently answered in the thesis.

First, a reader of this thesis likely wonders what, if any, special significance is retained in the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth. In such an expansive Christology, wherein the Christ event is a paradigm for the ubiquitous incarnation of God in a divine, religious ecology, do we draw insight specifically from Jesus that we might not draw from other instances of incarnation? While my concern has been to speak to how divinity is incarnate in the otherwise-than human, this of course does not neglect the idea that the human is an integral part of the religious ecology of Earth. As such, my thesis affirms not only the incarnation of divinity in humanity, but the possibility of unique eruptions of divinity in bodies that become particularly meaningful and influential on society and individual lives. This possibility arises insofar as the peculiar nature of individual species dictates the limits of what can be meaningfully communicated, and what counts toward meeting the needs and fulfilling the existence of certain species. The needs and fulfillment – e.g., of cats and humans – overlap in some instances, but each is unique and irreducible to the other. As such, we should anticipate that despite the possibility of inter-species relationships, and the possibility of radical alterity contributing to species-specific fulfillment, there are bound to be needs and fulfillments that are utterly unique to the type of existent in question, and in many cases, the irreplaceable individual existent of a particular species.\footnote{We are able then to speak not only of feline fulfillment, or human fulfillment, but fulfillment for this feline, and that human. The cat whom I did not mention in the above narrative, Julio, had radically different needs than did Fargo. Julio needs to roam, and kill, and spend weeks at a time alone, which is why he now lives on the farm of a veterinarian instead of with me in the city. Fargo, however, is content to hunt stuffed mice, and take short trips to the park with the safety of a harness and leash, where he is able to observe dogs and stalk birds. He much prefers the softness of my pillow at night, as opposed to the freedom of barns and the open country. I am unclear if}
Jesus, in my theology, is not a unique existent in an ontic sense, as both of his natures, infinite divinity and finite materiality, are equally, albeit differently, present in all. Abandoning such ontic uniqueness does not, however, negate the idea of uniqueness within the incarnation of the human, nor that of Jesus of Nazareth, for the fulfillment of humanity. The particularity of the human person, our shared species-specific concerns, and individual existential fulfillment does, I insist, find unique expression in the human face. As such, the divinity we meet in the human face of Jesus would express a divine dynamic needed for a specifically human fulfillment, that would be more or less meaningful for other species, depending on their being. This would not mean that the divinity expressed in the human Jesus would be indicative of divinity to a degree greater, or truer, than what is expressed in other species, beyond even what is communicated to our own embodiment.

Yet, our fulfillment as humans will be related to our encounter with divinity in expressions that are especially meaningful to us. While such expressions often escape species-specific boundaries, this is not to say that the potency of such expressions is not stronger in some, if not most cases, when coming from voices that in-spire our human bodies more directly. Thus, while the vulnerable, divine expression of a clear cut forest summons us in the an-archic matrix of affect, our bodies, prior to thought, are still positioned to receive some expressions more directly than others. The barrenness of a forest, the yelp of a kicked dog, and the quivering lip of a crying human all solicit in the same manner – i.e., an-archically – though to greater or lesser degrees based on the receptive dynamics of human passivity, which feels for others within the limitations of species-specific evolutionary patterns.\(^{601}\) The difference in how we passively receive such fulfillment takes on such specific nuance in all things, but this would, of course, be something otherwise than a privation of being that re-inscribes any value hierarchy.

\(^{601}\) This should be further clarified in a deeper analysis. I am not suggesting that the form of alterity plays a role in expression insofar as the human horizon is concerned. We still would not notice the attributes of alterity
appeals is likely to influence the existential eruption of such expressions in our awakened selves. This does not demote certain expressions to lesser values, but says something about what speaks most clearly to us as humans. Furthermore, there are surely divine expressions that so utterly transcend our humanity, that we fail to hear them at all. Thus, despite my expansion of the idea of incarnation, I have restricted my analysis of expression beyond the human to that which is nevertheless meaningful to some humans. This does not, however, exhaust divinity. There are, I suggest, divine reverberations that we, in our irreducible particularity, will never feel or think. Yet, we have no recourse but to embrace the goodness of our peculiarity, and must find ways of embracing our selves, without re-inscribing hierarchy in the cosmos.

In Jesus, we have a glimpse of unusual clarity concerning what is best about the human, i.e., we encounter the vulnerability of liberating love that seeks to let the other be other, apart form the violent sovereignty of those exercising power. This is not to say Jesus is the only, nor the best human instance of this divine expression, nor is it to say that such an understanding of the divine Christ circumscribes the being of God and absolutely defines our understanding of divinity to this one expression. Yet, Jesus does reveal a divine expression befitting human fulfillment as humans, as well as our potential unique role vis-à-vis creation. This theology does nothing to undermine human uniqueness and would allow us to continue to treasure the ideals of humanity found in Jesus of Nazareth, albeit in a way that eschews an anthropocentric or religious hegemony that re-inscribes value hierarchies into a cosmos of incomparably unique particularities and faiths. As such, the incarnation of Jesus reveals a particular revelation of God

within conceptual thought. Yet, the human body, passive as it is, is still a particular receptive body, and even beyond the horizon, in the an-archy of ethical time, not all divinities could necessarily appeal to humanity. This is why I have insisted that while all things have a divine nature, there is at best the possibility of our being solicited by alterity. The alterity which does summon us, despite the particularity of our passive reception, would still be infinite, insofar as the expression overflows the restrictions of language and concepts.
that fulfills the human being qua its humanity, albeit in a manner similar to how other things
express and appeal to our humanity. The concrete, political ramifications of Jesus’ human appeal
will take forms unique to the human, and our responsibility will need to be fulfilled toward our
own species in specific ways toward our own self-fulfillment qua our humanity. Thus, the
uniqueness of Christ lies not in his ontic uniqueness, but in the clarity of his expression and the
clarity of the political ramifications of his an-archic summons.

Second, and to continue the flow of thought from the uniqueness of Christ, there is the
deeper issue of how divine expression in a deep, religious ecology contributes to political
theology. This is an issue within any Levinasian perspective, insofar as he recognizes that while
ethics erupts in face-to-face encounters, the practice of justice always involves more than two
subjects. Politics, justice, and concrete morality involves a community of subjective faces. As
such,

the simplicity of this primary obedience [to alterity] is upset by the third person emerging
next to the other; the third person is himself also a neighbor, and also falls within the
purview of the I’s responsibility. Here, beginning with this third person, is the proximity
of a human plurality. Who, in this plurality, comes first? This is the time and place of the
birth of the question: of a demand for justice! Here is the obligation to compare unique
and incomparable others; here is the hour of knowledge and, then, of the objectivity
beyond or on the hither side of the nudity of the face; here is the hour of consciousness
and intentionality.602

Thus, while ethics consists in the expression of an irreplaceable, incomparable, irreducible
singularity, the justice, morality, and politics necessitated by ethics force us to calculate. Here, a
religious ecology, wherein we cannot say ahead of time who might solicit us and express
divinity, presents a potentially overwhelming matrix for eco-theological political discourse.

“Who, in this plurality, comes first?” How do we go about making choices when all things are

602 Emmanuel Levinas, “Diachrony and Representation,” in Time and the Other and Additional Essays,
valuable and hierarchies differentiating degrees of dignity are meaningless? As I mentioned in Chapter Five, the problem presented here is not different from that presented when we restrict ethics to a human community. Taking responsibility for the divine appeal of all is simply not possible, regardless of the boundaries we place on who is and is not morally considerable. Absolute peace is out of the question; violence will accompany all political decisions, which may represent the goodness of ethics, insofar as justice responds to the needs of some, but politics will never achieve the Good. In all likelihood, justice to one will ignore others, unfolding as we compare the incomparable, and calculate where the energy of our collective responsibilities will be directed. Furthermore, the basic fact of existence in a finite, evolutionary cosmos is that everything must derive the energy for its own existence from consuming others as resources. In the best world imaginable within the cosmic matrix that we inhabit, fulfillment is necessarily withheld from others who are interrupted from self-expression by those who require their body for their own life.

We require, then, a further analysis on the ramifications of face-to-face expressions within a ubiquitous, religious ecology when we are beset on all sides by vulnerable faces. We require a political theology that grows from the above analysis, in which ethics is first theology. While such is the task for a monograph dedicated to the topic, I would initially suggest that an ecological political theology would emphasize the analysis and deconstruction of national policies that impact environmental and animal welfare concerns, as well as trans-national economic practices that often times exercise sovereignty over singular nations. Such policies are

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603 Levinas, quoting Vassily Grossman’s Life and Fate, writes, “There is neither God nor the Good, but there is goodness” — which is also my thesis.” Emmanuel Lévinas and Jill Robbins, Is it Righteous to Be?: Interviews with Emmanuel Lévinas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 89. I explore this idea in Levinas in more depth in Michael Buttry, Matthew Eaton, and Nickolas Olkovich, “Politics and Religion: Cavanaugh, Lonergan, and Lévinas in Dialogue,” Didaskalia 25 (Fall, 2015): 103-127.
to be explored in light of their impact on the most vulnerable members of our global community, human or otherwise, and re-calculated in a way to minimize the exploitation of frail bodies who resist unnecessary anthropogenic violence, despite lacking the power to coercive power needed to dominate policy decisions. This approach, while admittedly vague, would prioritize not simply the promotion of healthy planetary practices that maintain the creative tension inherent within Earth apart from the domination of the human species, but would seek to extend justice to those communities most severely dominated by anthropogenic planetary violence. Although I would like to offer more for the future of such a project, the task is, at this point, overwhelming. I have little to offer as far as how we might compare the incomparable faces inhabiting our religious ecology for a robust, and satisfying political eco-theology. While such a question may ultimately be more important than questions of ontic unity, I am confident the an-archic approach to theology offered in this thesis would be useful as a starting point for political theology.

Finally, this work leaves unanswered questions related to Trinitarian theology. First, there are certain aspects that could be further developed concerning Christology; e.g., there could be further nuances on the creativity of the Logos, and the redemption offered by cruciform alterity and the escape from the self that it allows by a grace-like appeal to responsibility, and the homoousian implications uniting Creator and creation. Yet, I would suggest that the most

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604 E.g., while all humans would benefit from the reduction of carbon emissions, many living, in the coastal regions of Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Vietnam, to name a few regions, are facing climate change in ways those in North America are not. Likewise, while there is something to say for the resistance of animals hunted for meat, most are not, to my knowledge, systematically bred by the billions, and held captive their entire lives. As such, industrially farmed animals present a particular vulnerability among animal vulnerability in general. The purpose of a political eco-theology then would not simply be to ensure the creative tension of Earth, but to do justice to those most severely impacted by human violence.

interesting direction for further study is the overlap between the eco-Christology that I have
developed here, and an eco-Pneumatology, which would develop the political ramifications of
pan-incarnationalist Christology.

Briefly, this dynamic of eco-Pneumatology is already substantially developed by Mark
Wallace. While there is an overlap between Wallace’s pneumatology and my Christology,
Wallace’s work on the Spirit offers a trajectory to significantly expand on this thesis. The green
Spirit of God, as I read Wallace, offers precisely what is needed after an ecological Christology
has been established, i.e., a theology focused not on the face-to-face relationship between
creatures and their incarnate Creator, but the possibility of a politically nuanced theology
centered with the concrete relationship between differentiated bodies inhabiting our communal,
religious ecology. The concern of the Spirit thus extends well beyond the self-expression of
divinity in the face-to-face, the creation of subjects as responsible, and a relationship between
myself and the illeity of the other. Pneumatology is concerned with the communion of subjects,
and thus the political ramifications of inhabiting world. “The Spirit,” Wallace writes, “is not only
the power of relation between the other members of the Trinity but also between God and the
whole creation as well.”606 This unifying power extends to all faces within the web of the
religious ecology, “in order to promote the well-being and fecundity of creation.”607 As such,
after the work of Christology, revealing God and redeeming creaturely life through ethics, the
work of the Spirit might begin anew, in the search for goodness and justice within various
political ecologies on Earth, as well as the political ecology of the planetary community as a

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607 Ibid.
The divinity of Christ thus erupts into the awakening of an infinite plurality of worlds as the Spirit of an absolute past, still infinite and invisible, flowing over and within Earth as a counter-phenomenal trace of divinity inseparable from the alterity of other bodies. In this way, the cruciform Spirit of God works for a sustainable peace within Earth, as the an-archy of alterity erupts in the present, awakening of history, calling sovereignty and violence into question. “This ecological theme is consistent with the scriptural portrayal of the Spirit as a revolutionary force who labors to invert the established social order.” The Spirit thus, is the eruption and awakening of anarchy.

Yet, insofar as the role of the Son and the Spirit betray the final transcendence of divinity beyond all concrete, particular forms, what we call the Father, the source of all that is, the utterly simple matrix of existence, retains its ultimate ineffability. Such mystery and simplicity is absolute infinity, to the possibility of confusion with being itself; divinity as a verb beyond the capacity to be named—existence, relationship, the fact that there is.

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608 Here is a possible difference between Wallace and myself. Wallace links Christology to the person of Jesus, although he does understand the Spirit as existing in ontic unity with all of creation. He thus seems to posit a historical temporality differentiating the matrixes of the Son and the Spirit. Ibid., 318. I, however, would differentiate the matrixes of the Son and Spirit in terms of an ethical temporality that separates the an-archy of the past with the awakening of the present. While a deeper analysis of his writings is required to confirm this reading, I suggest that the ubiquitous, divine incarnation of materiality continues throughout history as an expanded Christology, expressing in the an-archy of the absolute past. The Spirit, in this model, maintaining the ontic unity of Christology and Trinitarian thought, would erupt after the Christological expression of things, as the trace of all alterities, working together in the awakening of a collection of subjects for a just political ecology. This would link the Son and the Spirit, as well as all things, in ontic unity—a perichoresis that is the religious ecology in which we live and move draw forth being. Furthermore, the Son would continue to fulfill its role in Christian mythology, as the expressive voice of God who redeems humanity through calling the species outside of itself, creating it as being-responsible for others. Likewise, the Spirit would continue to exercise its role in the Trinitarian economics by guiding the creative tension of cosmogeneses as the sustainer of all things, not as a Being outside of the matrix of materiality, but as the very trace of alterity, a trace of the voice of things erupting in historical time and guiding a deep, political ecology.

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