

Edited by B. KEITH PUTT

Gazing Through a Prism Darkly
Reflections on Merold Westphal's
Hermeneutical Epistemology

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY PRESS

New York ■ 2009

Copyright © 2009 Fordham University Press

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Fordham University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Gazing through a prism darkly : reflections on Merold Westphal's hermeneutical epistemology / edited by B. Keith Putt.—1st ed.

p. cm.— (Perspectives in continental philosophy)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-8232-3045-7 (cloth : alk. paper)

1. Westphal, Merold. 2. Philosophical theology. 3. Knowledge, Theory of (Religion) 4. Hermeneutics—Religious aspects—Christianity. I. Putt, B. Keith.

BT50.G38 2009

230.01—dc22

2009006196

Printed in the United States of America

11 10 09 5 4 3 2 1

First edition

Between the Prophetic and the Sacramental

RICHARD KEARNEY

Merold Westphal has been one of the most significant voices in Continental philosophy of religion in recent years. He, along with Paul Ricoeur, has contributed what might be called a specifically Protestant inflection to the ongoing "theological turn in phenomenology," a movement that otherwise bears the largely Catholic accent of thinkers such as Marion, Henry, and Chrétien. Yet another contributor to this debate, the theologian David Tracy, has made a useful distinction between what he calls the "sacramental" character of the Catholic vision and the "prophetic" character of the Protestant. He sees both as complementary, the former emphasizing the more immanent and incarnational aspects of Christian revelation and the latter the more transcendent and eschatological.

It is, perhaps, something of a paradox to find Merold and me switching roles in this respect, at least in terms of a recent debate on the relationship between the "God-who-is" (actuality) and the "God who may be" (possibility). As Merold himself wryly puts it in "Hermeneutics and the God of Promise": "I the Protestant [am] more sympathetic to Aquinas than he [Kearney] the Catholic!"¹ But what lies behind this denominational quip is a deeper issue, namely, Westphal's prioritizing of divine actuality over divine possibility. He links this preference back to great Christian metaphysicians like Augustine, Aquinas, and Anselm, as well as to the Hegelian dialectic. He acknowledges that he and I share a common commitment to an eschatology of *promise* that goes beyond an "ontotheology" of static *presence*. "Essences and substances," he agrees, "do not, as such, make

promises" (86). He also endorses our common vision of an ethical, personal, and dynamic deity, in addition to our emphasis on the historical and phenomenological character of divine "everlastingness," as opposed to some purely abstract and atemporal "eternity." But he affirms that it is a mistake to confine the entire metaphysical tradition to the limits and shortcomings of what Heidegger and deconstructionists call "ontotheology." Wishing to rehabilitate a strong ontology of act and actuality against my own hermeneutics of divine *posse*, Westphal clarifies our difference as follows: "It seems clear that there can be no promises without an actual promiser. The possibilities opened up by the promise have their ground, at least in part, in the actuality of the promiser, which of necessity precedes them insofar as they are not reduced to mere logical possibilities. The very logic of promising requires us to 'subordinate the possible to the actual' in this sense." He elaborates: "Only an actual God can make promises. From the fact, affirmed in faith, that the possible exceeds the horizon of the actual, as defined by the natural and social orders as we are familiar with them, it does not follow that it exceeds the horizon of the actuality of the God who promises. It is, rather, the very *act* of promising that opens up those excessive possibilities and thus precedes them" (87).

According to Westphal, my hermeneutics of a possible God is unwarranted by a proper reading of Western metaphysics or the Bible. Neither, he claims, supports my suggestion that "God is as dependent on us as we are on God" (88). The God of the Bible *is* a God of love and promise, no ifs, buts, or maybes. Divine love is not conditional or dependent on us. Consequently, Westphal insists that the correct translation of Exodus 3:14 is the traditional "I am who am" rather than my nontraditional revisionist translation, "I am who may be." Now, I concede much of what Westphal says. I think it is true that, at least in *The God Who May Be*, I somewhat underestimated the need for a proper balance between divine possibility and actuality. To be fair, I did speak of an "onto-eschatology" at crucial points in my argument in order to avoid an unhelpful "either/or" dichotomy between ontology and eschatology (for example, in my critique of Levinas and Derrida); but I admit that I did not lay enough emphasis on this implication of "onto-eschatology" or link it back to the great medieval metaphysicians like Augustine, Aquinas, and Anselm (although I did attempt a number of "hermeneutic retrievals" in my brief concluding readings of Aristotle, Cusa, and Schelling). I was still too much under the sway of the Heideggerean "overcoming" (a term obviously amenable to Westphal!) of metaphysics, in spite of my critique of the lack of an ethical eschatology in Heidegger's ontology. As a result, my reversal of the old metaphysical priority of act over possibility was probably overdetermined

and, as Levinas might say, “hyperbolic,” although not to the point of Ricoeur’s accusation against Levinas of “paroxysms of hyperbole!”² So I stand corrected on this score. And I am grateful to the Protestant Westphal for calling me back to my more Catholic roots, that is, for leading me from an excessive emphasis on the prophetic (messianic, eschatological, ethical, futuristic aspects of religion) to a more considered appreciation of an ontology of being and act.

It is this latter appreciation of a more traditional ontology that I hope to explore in this essay under the liturgical rubric of the “sacramental.” In what follows, I want to heed Westphal’s timely recall by sketching a phenomenology of flesh that restores the centrality of a sacramental ontology. First, a personal word on my past tendency to neglect my Catholic intellectual tradition too readily and rapidly. When I was a student at University College Dublin in the early 1970s, I felt oppressed by the excessively Catholic ethos of the philosophy department, especially as chaired by the Thomist scholar, Professor Desmond Connell, later to become Cardinal of Ireland. It is not an exaggeration to say that my fellow students and I were force-fed Thomism without any accompanying encouragement to read St. Thomas. By this I mean that we imbibed a metaphysical system called “realism” with little direct textual reference to the works of Thomas Aquinas himself (I imagined my contemporaries in Eastern Europe at the time having a similar experience reading Marxism without Marx). Many of us, myself included, reacted to this intellectual hegemony, or hyperorthodoxy, by embracing the Continental philosophies of Heidegger, Levinas, and Derrida, which we felt allowed us to reflect on “ultimate questions” without having to toe a Catholic party line. And the sense of wishing to escape from confessional categories of thought was accentuated by the fact that in Northern Ireland at that time Catholics and Protestants were still killing each other in the name of the “true faith.” I realize now, in retrospect, that this historical situation prejudiced me against many of the riches of my Catholic heritage, which it has taken years to remedy. Indeed, I remember how already during my doctoral studies in Paris in the late 1970s, my professor and thesis director, Paul Ricoeur—like Merold, another Protestant hermeneuticist from the Reformed tradition!—would ask me to clarify textual details from Aquinas or medieval metaphysics that came up in our weekly seminar. He would say, “Kearney, *vous devez avoir étudié tout ça à Dublin, non?*” To which I was wont to reply, wanly, “*J’aurai du.*” Already I was beginning to regret the lacuna caused by my lost opportunity of scholarship, one reflected, as Westphal rightly observes, in my virtual occlusion of the medieval metaphysical tradition from my hermeneutic deliberations on

the God question. In short, from the time of my initial Dublin studies in “realism,” I was determined to think *against* Thomistic metaphysics. So if Aquinas wrote, for example, that “God is pure act without any possibility” (*Deus est actus purus non habens aliquid de potentialitate*), I was tempted to respond by trying to think God in the one way excluded by this maxim, that is, precisely *as possibility*. Call it the anxiety of influence, reaction to authority, suspicion of ecclesiastical power or just normal student revolt, but one of the babies I threw out with the Thomistic bath-water seems to have been the metaphysical concept of actuality.

I am grateful to Westphal (along with other recent critics of my work in *After God*) for reminding me of my responsibilities to this neglected intellectual child. And in what follows, I propose—“with firm amendment”—to try to remedy this neglect, somewhat, by exploring resources for a more sacramental approach to being, act, and incarnation in the ontology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Julia Kristeva. That both of these thinkers are “agnostics,” albeit formed in “eucharistic” liturgical traditions, is not irrelevant. For while I am happy to be brought back to the rich ontological resources of my Catholic tradition by a Protestant friend and colleague like Westphal, I must confess that I feel happier still in a postdenominational space of phenomenological inquiry. I hasten to add, however, that the suspension of denominational faiths does not involve the suspension of all faith. I have always believed, as I think Westphal does as well, that phenomenological description invariably unfolds within an horizon of hermeneutic understanding, that is, of seeing and interpreting things *as* this or that. Neutral transcendental consciousness is neither feasible nor desirable. This basic lesson Westphal and I both have learned from Paul Ricoeur’s critique of Husserl’s idealism. My suggestion in what follows is that a specific phenomenology of flesh—adumbrated by Merleau-Ponty and Kristeva, in the wake of Husserl and Heidegger—may help us to foster and appreciate a sacramental account of the sensible universe. My concern here, and elsewhere, is not just to restore an ontology of actual incarnation to an eschatology of possibility, but also to consider the option of restoring a postconfessional sense of the sacred to the profane world of ordinary experience. That is why I speak in *The God Who May Be* (2003) of an onto-eschatology of the everyday.³

Husserl blazed a path towards a phenomenology of the flesh when he broached the crucial theme of embodiment in *Ideas 2*. He proposed to bring Western philosophy back to the flesh of prereflective lived experience; however, for all of his talk of returning us to the “things themselves,” he remained caught in the nets of transcendental idealism and

never quite escaped the limits of theoretical cognition. Heidegger took a step closer to the flesh with his existential analytic of “moods” and “facticity,” but the fact remains that Heideggerian *Dasein* has no real body at all: it does not eat or sleep or have sex. It, too, remains, despite all the talk of “being-in-the-world,” captive to the transcendental snare. While Max Scheler made several sorties into a phenomenology of feeling and Sartre offered acute insights into shame and desire, it was really only with Merleau-Ponty that we witnessed a credible return to the flesh—and not just as cipher, project, or icon, but also as *flesh itself* in all its ontological depth.

With Merleau-Ponty the ghost of Cartesian and Kantian idealism is at last exorcized, as we finally return to the body in all its unfathomable *thisness*. Some might say, indeed, that phenomenology thus reopened the possibility of a kind of incarnational ontology not seen since Thomas wrote of *quidditas* or Duns Scotus of *haecceitas*. It is telling, I think, that Merleau-Ponty chose to describe his own phenomenology of the sensible body in explicitly sacramental language, amounting to what we might call—without the slightest irreverence—a Eucharist of profane perception. In the *Phenomenology of Perception* (1944), we read: “Just as the sacrament not only symbolizes, in sensible species, an operation of Grace, but *is* also the real presence of God, which it causes to occupy a fragment of space and communicates to those who eat of the consecrated bread, provided that they are inwardly prepared, in the same way the sensible has not only a motor and vital significance, but is nothing other than a certain way of being in the world suggested to us from some point in space, and seized and acted upon by our body, provided that it is capable of doing so, so that sensation is literally a form of communion.”⁴

This is a bold analogy for an Existentialist writing in France in the 1940s, a time when close colleagues like Sartre, de Beauvoir, and Camus considered militant atheism as *de rigueur*. Merleau-Ponty goes on to sound this eucharistic power of the sensible as follows: “I am brought into relation with an external being, whether it be in order to open myself to it or to shut myself off from it. If the qualities radiate around them a certain mode of existence, if they have the power to cast a spell and what we called just now a sacramental value, this is because the sentient subject does not posit them as objects, but enters into a sympathetic relation with them, makes them his own and finds in them his momentary law.”⁵

It is, tellingly, when Merleau-Ponty traces the phenomenological return all the way down to the lowest rung of sensible experience that he discovers the most sacramental act of communion, or what he also likes to call “chiasmus.” He uses this trope to signal the crossing over of ostensible

contraries: the most in the least, the highest in the lowest, the first in the last, the invisible in the visible. Here we witness, as a reversal of Platonism and Idealism, a return to flesh as our most intimate “element,” namely, that which enfolds and envelops us in the systole and diastole of being, the seeing and being seen of vision. Phenomenology thus marks the surpassing of traditional dualisms (body/mind, real/ideal, inner/outer, subject/object) in the name of a deeper, more primordial chiasmus where opposites traverse each other. This is how Merleau-Ponty describes the enigma of flesh as mutual crossing-over in his posthumously published work, *The Visible and the Invisible* (1964): “The seer is caught up in what he sees . . . the vision he exercises, he also undergoes from the things, such that, as many painters have said, ‘I feel myself looked at by the things, my activity.’ So much so that the seer and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know which sees and which is seen. It is this Visibility, this anonymity innate to Myself that we have called flesh, and one knows there is no name in traditional philosophy to designate it.”⁶ It is here, I suggest, that Merleau-Ponty gets to the heart of this nameless matter and descends—in a final return, a last reduction that suspends all previous reductions—to the incarnate region of the “element”: “The flesh is not matter, in the sense of corpuscles of Being which would add up or continue on one another to form beings. Nor is the visible (the thing as well as my body) some ‘psychic’ material that would be—God knows how—brought into being by the things factually existing and acting on my factual body. In general, it is not a fact or a sum of facts ‘material’ or ‘spiritual.’” “No,” insists Merleau-Ponty, “the flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance. To designate it, we would need the ancient term ‘element,’ in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire, that is, in the sense of a *general thing* midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of Being wherever there is a fragment of Being. The flesh is in this sense an ‘element’ of Being.”⁷ No eschatology worth its “promise” should ignore, I believe, the radical implications of such an ontology of being.

Returning to examples of painting—Cézanne and Klee—in *Eye and Mind* (1964), Merleau-Ponty expounds on his chiasmic model as a mutual transubstantiation of the seer and the seen in a “miracle” of flesh: “There really is inspiration and expiration of Being, action and passion so slightly discernible that it becomes impossible to distinguish between what sees and what is seen, what paints and what is painted. . . . There is no break at all in this circuit; it is impossible to say that nature ends here and that man or expression starts here. It is mute Being which itself comes to show forth its own meaning.”⁸ In *Signs* (1960), a collection of essays

devoted to questions of language and art, Merleau-Ponty repeats his claim that the flesh of art is invariably indebted to the bread of life. There is nothing so insignificant in the life of the artist, he claims, that is not eligible for “consecration” in the painting or poem. But the “style” that the artist creates converts his corporeal situation into a sacramental witness at a higher level of “repetition” and “recreation.” The artwork still refers to the life-world from which it springs, but opens up a second-order reference of creative possibility and freedom. Speaking specifically of Leonardo de Vinci, he writes, “If we take the painter’s point of view in order to be present at that decisive moment when what has been given to him to live as corporeal destiny, personal adventures or historical events, crystallizes into ‘the motive’ (i.e. the style), we will recognize that his work, which is never an effect, is always a response to these data and that the body, the life, the landscapes, the schools, the mistresses, the creditors, the police and the revolutions which might suffocate painting are also *the bread his work consecrates*. To live in painting is still to breathe the air of this world.”⁹ In short, the bread of the world is the very stuff consecrated in the body of the work.

Before leaving Merleau-Ponty, I wish to mention one other intriguing passage in *Signs* where the author, who is no theologian and certainly no Christian apologist, has an interesting interpretation of Christian embodiment as a restoration of the divine within the flesh, a kenotic emptying out of transcendence into the heart of the world’s body, becoming a God beneath us rather than a God beyond. He writes, “The Christian God wants nothing to do with a vertical relation of subordination. He is not simply a principle of which we are the consequence, a will whose instruments we are, or even a model of which human values are the only reflection. There is a sort of impotence of God without us, and Christ attests that God would not be fully God without becoming fully man. Claudel goes so far as to say that God is not above but beneath us—meaning that we do not find Him as a suprasensible idea, but as another ourself which dwells in and authenticates our darkness. Transcendence no longer hangs over man; he becomes, strangely, its privileged bearer.”¹⁰

The insight of “immanent transcendence” is not, of course, original to Merleau-Ponty. Many medieval Christian mystics, including but not limited to John of the Cross, Hildegard of Bingen, and Meister Eckhart, said similar things. So, too, did Jewish sages such as Rabbi Luria and Franz Rosenzweig and Sufi masters such as Rumi and Ibn Arabi. Indeed, I am also reminded here of the bold claim of the Catholic thinker Teilhard de Chardin that God does not direct the universe from above but underlies

it and “prolongs himself” into it. But what Merleau-Ponty provides is a specific philosophical method, namely, a phenomenology of radical embodiment that articulates this “nameless” phenomenon of sacramental flesh. And it is arguable that a number of recent Catholic phenomenologists have followed Merleau-Ponty’s lead (or parallel path) when seeking to inventory the sacred dimensions of the flesh. I am thinking especially of Jean-Luc Marion’s writings on the “flesh” as a saturated phenomenon in *On Excess* or Jean-Louis Chrétien’s phenomenological commentary on the Song of Songs.¹¹ But Merleau-Ponty has the advantage, in my view, of not only being the first phenomenologist to identify explicitly the sacramental valence of the sensible but also of maintaining a certain apophatic distance (which is not the same as neutrality) with regard to the theistic or atheistic implications of this phenomenon. Indeed his philosophy of “ambiguity,” as he liked to call it, is particularly well suited when it comes to interpreting sacramental idioms of embodied existence. Of course, Merleau-Ponty is no crypto-evangelist, as several of those belonging to the “theological turn” in phenomenology have been accused. And this chimes well, it seems to me, with the poetic license enjoyed by artists and writers when it comes to the marvel of transubstantiation in word, sound, or image. For poetic license entails a corollary confessional license from which no reader is excluded. In this respect, we could say that the phenomenological method, which brackets confessional beliefs but not “faith” as such, is analogous to the literary suspension of belief and disbelief for the sake of an all-inclusive entry into the “kingdom of as-if” as the kingdom of the possible. And this suspension, I suggest, allows for a specific “negative capability” regarding questions of doubt, proof, dogma, or doctrine, so as to appreciate better the “thing itself,” the holy *thisness* and *thereness* of our flesh and blood existence.

The attitude of pure vigilance and attention that follows from such exposure to a “free variation of imagination” (the term is Husserl’s) is not far removed, I believe, from what certain mystics have recognized to be a crucial preparatory moment for sacramental vision, calling it by such different names as “the cloud of unknowing” (Julian of Norwich), the “*docta ignorantia*” (Cusa) or, in Eastern mysticism, the “*neti/neti*”—neither this nor that—which paves the way for the highest wisdom of reality. In other words, true belief comes from nonbelief. Or as Dostoyevsky put it, real “faith comes forth from the crucible of doubt.” In the free variation of imagination—indispensable both to the phenomenological method and also to all great works of fiction and art—everything is permissible. Nothing is excluded, except exclusion. All is possible. By allowing us to attend to the sacramental marvel of the everyday without the constraints of any

particular confession (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and so on), Merleau-Ponty offers fresh insights into a eucharistic character of the sensible. Another contemporary philosopher, Julia Kristeva, also has something important to add to an ontology of sacramental embodiment, especially as it relates to what she explicitly calls an aesthetic of “transubstantiation” in Proust and Joyce. As a linguist and psychoanalyst, Kristeva adds new perspectives to the phenomenological vision of Merleau-Ponty. In particular, she ventures rich insights into the workings of unconscious tropes and associations in modernist writing about sense and sensibility.

In *Time and Sense*, Kristeva writes:

A sensation from the past remains within us, and involuntary memory recaptures it when a related perception in the present is stimulated by the same desire as the prior sensation. A spatio-temporal association of sensations is thus established, relying on a link, a structure, and a reminiscence. Sensation takes refuge in this interwoven network and turns into an *impression*, which means that sensation loses its solitary specificity. A similarity emerges out of all these differences, eventually attaining the status of a general law in the manner of an idea or thought. The “general law,” however, is no abstraction, for it is established because the sensation is *immanent in it*. . . . This process keeps the structure from losing its sensorial foundation. Music becomes word, and writing becomes a *transubstantiation* in those for whom it creates “new powers.”¹²

Kristeva links the aesthetic of transubstantiation that she finds in Joyce and Proust back to the writings of the later Merleau-Ponty, which she calls “mystically significant.”¹³ Indeed, her notion of a “general law” of ideational sensation is surely not unrelated to Merleau-Ponty’s reference to a “momentary law” cited earlier. Most specifically, Kristeva relates the eucharistic aesthetic to the chiasmic relation between the visible and invisible, the inner feeling and outer expression, that Merleau-Ponty describes as a reversible interpenetration of *flesh*. Refusing the dualistic division of spirit and body into two separate substances, both Kristeva and Merleau-Ponty counsel us to rethink flesh more phenomenologically as an “*element*, as the concrete emblem of a general manner of being.”¹⁴ And in this respect, Kristeva keenly endorses Merleau-Ponty’s claim that “no one has gone further than Proust in fixing the relations between the visible and the invisible,” although she would want to add Joyce to the list.¹⁵ Indeed, by identifying Merleau-Ponty’s model of reversibility with the

notion of “transubstantiation” in Proust and Joyce, Kristeva sees the miracle of the flesh as a model both for therapeutic healing and for reading literary texts. In both cases, the reversible transubstantiation of word and flesh expresses itself as a certain catharsis.¹⁶

Kristeva goes on, rather boldly, to suggest that it is their aesthetic of transubstantiation that saves writers like Proust and Joyce from the prison of linguistic idealism into which certain structuralist readings have consigned them. This, mind you, is a linguistic semiotician speaking: “Although Proust never stops ‘deciphering’, his world does not consist of ‘signs.’ At any rate, his world is not made of sign-words or idea-signs and certainly not of signifiers and signifieds.”¹⁷ Proust, Kristeva observes, was disappointed or amused by “empty linguistic signs” and preferred instead the fluidity of “atmospheric changes,” a “rush of blood,” a sudden silence, an “adverb springing from an involuntary connection made between two unformulated ideas.”¹⁸ Kristeva finds support for this aesthetic of “real presence” in the young Proust’s aversion to “signs” and “strict significations” and points to the fact that Jean Santeuil (Marcel *avant la lettre*) conceives of art as a “work of feeling” that focuses on a “sort of obscure instinct of permanent brilliance” or “lava about to overflow,” as well as on “what is not yet ready to come forth.” The paradigmatic Proustian text, she avers, rises up “against the abyss between language and lived experience” and operates as a work which expresses “the vast array of impressions that the hero’s sentence strives to communicate (despite his reservations about language) by associating weather, villages, roads, dust, grass, and raindrops through a mass accumulation of metaphors and metonymies.”¹⁹

Kristeva surmises that the metaphoric and metonymic chiasm between language and lived experience paves the way in Proust “for the *impression* which makes up for the weakness of linguistic signs.” And so words are only useful for Proust when they exert an “evocative power” over our “sensibility” and display a kinship with a sort of “latent music” (the terms are Proust’s).²⁰ Resisting the temptations of semiology and Platonism, Proust’s eucharistic writing aims for a “lively physical expressiveness that resists the passivity of the civilized sign.”²¹ It strives instead toward a language of the lived body, what Proust calls “the vigorous and expressive language of our muscles and our desires, of suffering, of the corruption or the flowering of the flesh.”²²

Whether we are concerned in such literary and phenomenological works with an aesthetic religion or a religious aesthetic—or both—is a crucial

question that I cannot address here. But I do believe that a depth phenomenology of flesh, elaborated respectively by Merleau-Ponty's ontology and Kristeva's semiotics, may guide and illuminate inquirers like Westphal and myself in our ongoing investigations into a hermeneutics of promise and incarnation. I suspect that both Westphal and I could find common ground in an onto-eschatology of the flesh where the "actual" and the "possible" are intertwined. For this would open up a chiasmic space that overcomes both a narrow scholasticism of actuality and a groundless factionalism of possibility.

There are, I realize, several outstanding issues in this reflection on a sacramental ontology. These include the complex relationship between a phenomenology of flesh and a hermeneutics of signs, between confessional "belief" and pre- (or post-) confessional "faith," not to mention the question of hermeneutically retrieving Catholic and Protestant traditions in the light of a postreligious eschatology. It is in terms of this last point—seeking a return to religion after religion—that I am currently seeking to explore the category of "anatheism."²³ But that is work for another day, work that I hope to conduct in continued conversation with challenging and creative thinkers like Merold Westphal.