An Imaginative Theory of Doctrinal Development: An Attempt to Open Western Traditions to Contextual Faith

Caesar Montevecchio

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AN IMAGINATIVE THEORY OF DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENT: AN ATTEMPT TO
OPEN WESTERN TRADITIONS TO CONTEXTUAL FAITH

A Dissertation
Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
Caesar A. Montevecchio

December 2016
AN IMAGINATIVE THEORY OF DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENT: AN ATTEMPT TO
OPEN WESTERN TRADITIONS TO CONTEXTUAL FAITH

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ABSTRACT

AN IMAGINATIVE THEORY OF DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENT: AN ATTEMPT TO
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By

Caesar A. Montevecchio

December 2016

Dissertation supervised by George Worgul, Ph.D.

In the contemporary age of irreducible pluralism, it is a challenge to conceive of the development of doctrine in way that can truly appreciate and be responsive to the diversity that it entails and the postmodern intellectual paradigm that it necessitates. The position of this work is that the imagination provides the space in which a new model of doctrinal development can be formulated in response to such a challenge, one in which fidelity to the theological uniqueness of Christianity can be maintained but in which historicity and pluralism can be given fuller appreciation. Using Paul Ricoeur’s philosophy of the hermeneutical imagination to explain the reception of revelation and the development of doctrine allows that development to be understood in a more truly historical way while still keeping it rooted in a living and normative tradition attached to unique supernatural revelation. The thesis is that this imaginative theory of doctrinal development opens up the doctrinal tradition of Christianity to the contextuality and historicity constitutive of its present and past and accordingly requires the ongoing process of doctrinal development to honor the imaginative nature of how it has processed and defined and continues to process and define knowledge of revelation.
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife, Arlene, and my sons, Andrew and Damian, for their sacrifices and support during my time completing it. Your love has been sustenance and your patience has been a blessing.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstract</th>
<th>iv</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Introduction .................................................................................. 1

- Methodology and Chapter Overview .................................................. 6

## Chapter 1—The Philosophy of Imagination in the Modern Western Tradition: Kant to Ricoeur ................................................. 9

- Immanuel Kant .................................................................................. 10
- G.W.F. Hegel ................................................................................... 17
- Wilhelm Dilthey ............................................................................. 21
- Edmund Husserl ............................................................................... 28
- Martin Heidegger ............................................................................ 34
- Paul Ricoeur ................................................................................. 55
- Conclusion .................................................................................... 71

## Chapter 2—A Critical Analysis of Doctrinal Development Theories Through Jan Hendrik Walgrave ............................................ 73

- The Advent of Doctrinal Development Theory .................................... 73
- Revelation Theory and Development Theory ................................ ...... 81
- Revelation Models and Development Models ...................................... 86
- Limitations of Logical and Transformistic Theories ........................... 92
  - Explanation and Critique of Logical Models of Development ............. 93
  - Explanation and Critique of Transformistic Models of Development ... 106
- The Theological Theory of Development ........................................... 115
  - Walgrave’s Affirmation of the Theological Theory .......................... 115
  - Criticism of the Theological Theory ........................................... 130
  - Trajectories Beyond the Theological Theory ................................. 138
  - Revelation as Symbolic Mediation and the Necessity of Imagination ... 142

## Chapter 3—A Modern Western Use of Imagination and Theological Methods .......................................................... 154

- Theology’s Need to Recognize the Role of Imagination ....................... 157
- Imagination in Theology: Contextual Variations ................................ 160
  - A Euro-American Variation: John Thiel ......................................... 160
  - Feminist, *Mujerista*, and Womanist Variations ............................ 173
  - A Latin American Liberation Variation ......................................... 178
  - An Asian Multicultural Variation ............................................... 183
  - An African Incultration Variation .............................................. 189
- Concluding Observations on Contextual Variations ............................ 195
- Ricoeur and Theology ...................................................................... 198
### Chapter 4—An Imaginative Theory of Doctrinal Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imagination and Revelation</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricoeur’s Hermeneutics of Revelation</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagination and Diversity in the Making of Meaning Out of Revelation</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagination and the <em>Imago Dei</em></td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagination and the <em>Sensus Fidei</em></td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Imaginative Theory of Doctrinal Development</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctrine as Mimesis-Openness to Historicity</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postmodernizing Doctrinal Tradition-Decentering Magisterial Authority</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Doctrine as Simplification-Allowing for Plurality</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter 5—Returning Relevance of Doctrinal Development and Future Possibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pope Francis and the “Hermeneutic of Reform”</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example 1: Marriage and the Requirement of Procreation</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example 2: Infallibility in a World Church</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Closing Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Closing Comments</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Bibliography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

As early as 1966, Karl Rahner described the need for a “logic of invention” that could direct the development of doctrine in such a way that it could be faithful to “historical facts as well as to the consciousness of the Church.” 1 Rahner’s aim here was to suggest transitioning away from the syllogistic model of understanding doctrinal development that had been dominant in the pre-Vatican II era and to engage the irreducible pluralism that he saw becoming a more and more definitive element of the Church’s life. 2 This project rests on a judgment that a development of doctrine that can adequately address these concerns and foster a healthy “logic of invention” has yet to be formulated. It is accordingly an attempt to build on Rahner’s call and locate the elements needed to construct such a theory of development.

In 1972, Jan Hendrik Walgrave articulated what he termed a “theological theory” of doctrinal development that he considered both true to history and faithful to Christian identity. He contrasts this theory with two others. First is a logical theory in which revelation is understood as a propositional deposit and development as the logical extrapolation of implicit meaning. 3 Second is a transformistic theory that Walgrave associates mainly with liberal theology of the nineteenth century and in which all doctrine is historical and nonessential and in which philosophy has epistemological priority, making development a process that admits to absolute and ongoing transformation and change. 4 To Walgrave, the theological theory integrates the uniqueness of Christianity, as originating by an act of revelation external to history,

4 Ibid., 179-277.
with the historicity articulated in the intellectual climate of particular times.\(^5\) It sees development ultimately as a process in which historically fragmented elements of intuitive apprehension of the whole idea of revelation are dialectically reunified in a gradually ongoing process.\(^6\) Walgrave favors the metaphor of the process being organic, one in which spontaneous growth occurs in the system, but growth that is always an unfolding of what is already present rather than incorporation of things from outside.\(^7\) What makes this model “theological” for Walgrave is that it honors the supernatural nature of revelation by understanding it as epistemologically superior to reason and philosophy and more expansive in nature than logical deduction can account for; that is, it authentically maintains God as the \textit{terminus a quo} and the \textit{terminus ad quem} of doctrinal development.\(^8\)

However, the organ by which this orientation is preserved for Walgrave reduces to magisterial pronouncement.\(^9\) What seems to ultimately mark theological models as functionally different than the transformistic models for appropriating historicity is a firm turn to the magisterium for the final say on orthodoxy. It seems that at this functional level then the theological model does not advance very far beyond the logical theory. The starting point becomes real apprehension of a central idea rather than a deposit of propositions\(^10\), but the mode of development remains the unfolding of implicit conclusions from the controlling tradition arbitrated by hierarchical authority. It does not account for a truly hermeneutical understanding

\begin{itemize}
\item \(^5\) Ibid., 329-332.
\item \(^6\) Ibid., 279-281.
\item \(^7\) Ibid., 332.
\item \(^8\) Ibid., 333.
\item \(^9\) Ibid., 333. See also 310, where Walgrave affirms the turn to magisterial arbitration in Newman’s theory of development. See also 359-361; here, Walgrave explains that structural authority, while running the risk of one-sidedness in favor of conservation, is necessary to ensure the theological orientation of the historical dialectic that he thinks explains the true unfolding of doctrine.
\item \(^10\) Ibid., 305-307.
\end{itemize}
of tradition, or more importantly of the diversity of traditions.\footnote{See ibid., 383-389. Walgrave addresses the challenge of hermeneutics, but concludes that hermeneutics is a second order interpretation that is always subservient to the first order apprehension of objective and transcendental truth. To Walgrave, this mitigates the unsettling effects of hermeneutical analysis of tradition, but it neglects to account for pluralistic awareness within tradition and ignores the ways in which the putative first order apprehension of transcendental truth is context bound.} Furthering this problem, and again a shortcoming of appreciating hermeneutics, is the way Walgrave describes organic unfolding. It does not properly interrogate the way that the tradition is itself hermeneutically formed; that is, the way it is not something grown like fruit purely from within its own resources. Walgrave favors explaining organic development with the value of an organism assimilating its environment; he neglects the sense in which healthy adaptation requires not only assimilation but accommodation. He thusly ignores how the tradition has accommodated historical contexts and how development should involve accommodation to new contexts.

Writing in 1972, Walgrave appealed to Rahner as an example of the theological, organic model he had in mind that turned ultimately to magisterial tradition as the arbiter of true development. However, Rahner’s later thought began pointing more and more to the challenges of postmodernity and pluralism and how they required a more temperate assessment of the magisterium’s role in development and a more careful appreciation for hermeneutical analysis, leading to his elaboration of the needed “logic of invention” for understanding the development of doctrine. In 1974, in “Yesterday’s History of Dogma and Theology for Tomorrow,” he argued that theories of doctrinal development remained too retrospective and did not do enough to look forward and foster the active transposition of the core ideas of Christian faith into new contexts of meaning.\footnote{Rahner, “Yesterday’s History of Dogma and Theology for Tomorrow,” in \textit{Theological Investigations} v. 18, trans. Edward Quinn (New York, Crossroad, 1974), 4.} Rahner offered several tenets that he believed derive from a truly historicized understanding of doctrinal development and that thusly had to be made hallmarks of a changed understanding of the development process. The tenets he offered are as follows: 1)
development should include tension; 2) “considerable revision” of authentic magisterial teachings should be expected; 3) dogmatic statements should be understood to be attached to ideas and forms of expression that can become false; 4) each doctrinal statement should be assessed by its own coherence and according to intrinsic arguments for its validity; 5) hermeneutical strategies should be applied to magisterial documents just as they are with the bible; 6) doctrinal meaning should not be too absolutely tied to linguistic usages; 7) theological positions that are defeated should not be disregarded from the historical conversation and ongoing theological discussion; 8) future development should be expected to be unpredictable; and 9) the development of doctrine should no longer be about only censoring error but active re-interpretation of the central mysteries of faith into new contexts of meaning.\textsuperscript{13} In summary, Rahner thought that future consideration of doctrinal development had to de-center magisterial authority and make doctrine more open to historicity and contextuality.

Another way in which these concerns were articulated for Rahner was in how he shifted his thinking on the orientational emphasis that doctrinal development should have. In his earlier work, Rahner held that doctrine develops in two directions: greater specification of concepts and greater simplification through concentration on the ultimate mystery of faith.\textsuperscript{14} As he became more and more convinced of the significance of irreducible pluralism in the contemporary age, he made doctrinal definitions increasingly provisional and made the direction of simplification more primary because pluralism rendered specification increasingly problematic.\textsuperscript{15} According to Mary Hines, this led Rahner to make development of doctrine more reliant on free human conscience and diverse experience within local churches.\textsuperscript{16} It is these directions, toward de-

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 7-34.
\item\textsuperscript{14} Rahner, “Considerations,” 26.
\item\textsuperscript{15} Hines, “Rahner on Development,” 123-124.
\item\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 122.
\end{itemize}
centralization and appreciation for pluralism, that make Rahner a signpost of the ways that theories on the development of doctrine remain in need of revision.

The position of this work is that the imagination provides the space in which a new model of doctrinal development can be formulated in response to such needed revision, one in which fidelity to the theological uniqueness of Christianity can be maintained but in which historicity and pluralism can be given fuller appreciation. In order to develop this model, it will be necessary to investigate theories of imagination itself. Walgrave addresses the topic, using reliance on imagination as grounds for dismissing transformistic theory.\(^\text{17}\) However, Walgrave’s dismissal is rooted in an understanding of imagination that precedes hermeneutical and phenomenological reconstruction of the concept, especially as articulated by Paul Ricoeur. According to Edward L. Murray, Ricoeur is central to the development of imagination understood as a style of thinking and constructing contextual meaning rather than as a psychological faculty.\(^\text{18}\) Using this model of imagination to explain the formation of thought and knowledge behind the development of doctrine allows that development to be understood in a more truly hermeneutical and historical way while still keeping it rooted in a living and normative tradition attached to unique supernatural revelation. The thesis is that this imaginative theory of doctrinal development opens up the doctrinal tradition of Christianity to the contextuality and historicity constitutive of its present and past and accordingly requires the

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 302.

\(^{18}\) Edward L. Murray, “Imagination Theory and Phenomenological Thought,” in The Imagination and Phenomenological Psychology, ed. Edward L. Murray (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1987), 175-220. Murray’s argument is based on critiquing two models of imagination that he labels the perceptual and the hypothetical for the way they reduce imagination to a faculty of imaging. It is these models in which I am asserting Walgrave’s criticism of imagination is rooted. Murray argues that Ricoeur, along with Heidegger, is the source of a “linguistic-semantic-productive” model that combines awareness of the hermeneutical contextuality off all knowledge with the creative capacities of imagination that develop that knowledge in light of historicity. See 199-214 for Murray’s presentation specifically of Ricoeur.
ongoing process of doctrinal development to honor the imaginative nature of how it has processed and defined and continues to process and define knowledge of revelation.

**Methodology and Chapter Overview**

The overall strategy of this work is to examine existing theories on doctrinal development and analyze their insufficiencies. Imagination theory will be used as a corrective to these inadequacies and will be used as the basis for developing an alternative theory for understanding doctrinal development. This alternative theory will function both descriptively and prescriptively; the aim is to show how it meaningfully interprets past instances of doctrinal development and also how it suggests cultivation and measurement of ongoing development in doctrine.

In order to execute this project, I will begin with a study of how the imagination has been philosophically understood in the Western modern era (Chapter 1). This examination will begin with Immanuel Kant and primarily focus on the development of phenomenological and hermeneutic theories that critiqued Kant. Paul Ricoeur’s philosophy will be situated as the synthesis of these critiques and his theory of imagination will be used as the working understanding of imagination for the project.

The next step will be surveying existing theories of doctrinal development (Chapter 2). Walgrave will be the primary lens through which this survey is done. In addition, this chapter will focus on theories of revelation that undergird these theories of development, utilizing the work of Avery Dulles. The reason for this step is that a key element in arguing for the

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19 Avery Dulles’s *The Resilient Church* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977) offers three theories that correspond to Walgrave’s: each describe a logical theory, but what Walgrave calls transformistic Dulles calls historical, and what Walgrave calls theological Dulles calls organic. Dulles offers different criticisms and arguments relative to each theory that augment those given by Walgrave, and in particular he more thoroughly attaches the theories of
importance of imagination in development will be its role in the reception of revelation, a theme that will be developed in Chapter 4. The majority of Chapter 2 will be devoted to discussion of the theological/organic theory that is espoused by Walgrave, as opposed to the logical theory and transformistic theory. Walgrave argues that the latter two are inadequate, but he sees the theological model as the appropriate one for the modern church. It is for this reason it will require the most focused examination, and the position of this work will be that the theological theory is also inadequate.

A focused study of the role of imagination in theological method will be the next step (Chapter 3). This will begin by articulating the shift to hermeneutics as a necessary facet of theological method. Part of the position of this work is that such a hermeneutical approach requires consideration of contextuality and pluralism. This chapter will therefore proceed to lay out an example of a Euro-American understanding of imagination and theological method, but then compare and contrast it with various contextual perspectives and their use of imagination in their different methodologies. This will include feminist, womanist, and mujerista perspectives, Latin American liberation theology, Asian theology and the incorporation of multiculturalism, and African views on inculturation and theology. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a turn to Ricoeur and argue that a theological method based on his theory of imagination can mediate these diverse views and collect them into a theory of doctrinal development.

Building that imaginative theory of doctrinal development will be the next focus (Chapter 4). The process will begin with an examination of revelation according to a model of it as symbolic mediation and the role that a hermeneutic imagination plays in its reception. Appealing again to contextual theologies, this chapter will demonstrate how such an
understanding opens up the understanding of revelation to diversity and multiplicity and how Ricoeur’s hermeneutics enable that diversity and multiplicity to be engaged and directed in a way that fosters the healthy growth of tradition and the healthy development of doctrinal definitions that structure that tradition. With this position on revelation and imagination established, this chapter will conclude by defining the elements of an imaginative theory of development, focusing on how it opens doctrinal tradition more authentically to historicity, calls for a decentering of hierarchical control over the process of development, and engages more fully with pluralism.

The project will conclude with two case studies (Chapter 5). The teaching of Pope Francis has pulled questions of doctrinal development into a spotlight that they have not had in some time. However, through the provided case studies it will be shown how the imaginative theory of development is needed to subject tradition to the sort of engagement with culture and the margins of church of experience for which Pope Francis has called. The first case will be marriage and the way the doctrinal standards of marriage have incorporated regulations about procreation, including ways in which those standards are called into question by contemporary experience and theology. The doctrine of infallibility will also be studied and used to demonstrate how an imaginative theory of doctrinal development could be applied. This section will not attempt to argue for or against infallibility or argue nuances of doctrines related to it. The aim will be to show how the contours of historicity were at work in the formation of the doctrine and to study how ongoing questions about the nature of infallibility can be analyzed and assessed through the lens of an imaginative theory of development.
CHAPTER 1—The Philosophy of Imagination in the Modern Western Tradition: Kant to Ricoeur

In the Greek tradition, imagination was understood primarily as a link between the rational and the sensible. For Plato, the rationalist, imagination is a potentially deceitful power that can make one think ultimate reality resides in the sensible.¹ For Aristotle, the empiricist, imagination is a necessary link between rational activity and the perception through which we gain all knowledge.² Although their evaluations differ, both see imagination connecting rationality to the sensible world by applying concepts of the mind to sense data. Throughout the theological tradition of Christianity, such as in Augustine and Aquinas, the basic Greek understanding of how imagination works remained the same, and the valuation of it remained ambivalent. Augustine³ and Aquinas⁴ both saw it as a needed way of bringing sensory information no longer immediately available to mind for rational activity and both were suspicious of it being used poetically and for creating novelty.

To Richard Kearney, the legacy of the Greek understanding of imagination is mimetic, in contrast to a productive model that came to dominate in the modern era: “No longer viewed as an intermediary agency—at best imitating some truth beyond man—the imagination becomes, in

modern times, the immediate source of its own truth.” Kearney identifies Kant as the inaugurator of this sea change. Since the intent of this work is to use Paul Ricoeur’s theory of imagination, the aim of this chapter is accordingly to trace the trajectory of imagination in modern continental philosophy from Kant to Ricoeur. The project will start with Kant’s transcendental project, move through Hegel and idealism, turn to Husserl and phenomenological theory, and finally arrive at the hermeneutical turn prefigured by Dilthey, advanced by Heidegger, and developed into a more fully linguistic paradigm by Ricoeur. Along this trajectory, imagination will begin as a faculty located in a dualistic subject-object ontology and serving reason in an epistemological privileging of absolute and universal knowledge. It will shift with Ricoeur to a power of thought located in a phenomenological ontology and serving to open knowledge and understanding to equivocity, diversity, and dynamism in line with the pluralism of historical reality.

**Immanuel Kant**

Of Kant’s three major critiques, on pure reason, practical reason, and judgment, the imagination figures prominently in the first and last. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (*CPR*), imagination functions to reproduce composites of sensations in conformity to rational concepts in order to subject the sensations to understanding. In the more technical terms of Kant’s transcendental schematism, imagination is responsible for the ability of synthesis that is the foundation of all knowledge. In the words of Kearney, this move amounted to a “Copernican Revolution” by which a modernist sense of being came to be, one in which ultimate being is a

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6 Ibid., 156.
projection of the subject’s transcendental imagination rather than a transcendent first cause, making imagination its own source of origin rather than a capacity to copy to reproduce.\(^8\) The imagination serving as a reflection of ultimate reality is what Kearney means by the imagination as mimetic, and the shift in Kant is to imagination as a productive, “transcendental model of formation” that serves as the cognitive condition of all knowledge.\(^9\) The synthetic activity that enables the necessary conjoining of intuited sensation and rational understanding is made the province of the transcendental imagination. For Kant, then, sensation is incoherent without the guidance of understanding, and understanding has no touchstone with reality without sensation. Imagination is the active faculty that unites them, both temporally and spatially, to create coherent and meaningful experience.\(^10\)

Bernard Freydberg has developed a thorough analysis of the centrality of imagination in the \textit{CPR}. In Freydberg’s analysis, language for Kant amounts to judgment, which is formed by the synthetic a priori work of the imagination, and which always points to some already existent reality being experienced.\(^11\) The connection of rational concept to intuition is a judgment of language enabled by the imagination’s ability to bring sensed experience in line with pure reason. The imagination is thus what provides “depth” to conceptualization and judgment in language:

> When the most rigorous look is taken at the Kantian text [the \textit{CPR}], it must be conceded that it is imagination-driven, even if imagination is seldom thematized. Both synthesis and the connection of concepts and judgments to sensation are its unique work. With some propriety, concepts may be seen as the surface of which imagination is the depth, with every connection of concepts in a judgment as a surface manifestation of the power of imagination. Thus the discussions of judgment with which the CPR abounds are effects of imagination, even (and perhaps especially) when there is no mention of it.\(^12\)

\(\text{\textsuperscript{8}}\) Kearney, 158.
\(\text{\textsuperscript{9}}\) Ibid., 167-168.
\(\text{\textsuperscript{10}}\) Kant, \textit{CPR}, A124; See Kearney, 169-171.
\(\text{\textsuperscript{11}}\) Bernard Freydberg, \textit{Imagination and Depth in Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason} (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 4-5.
\(\text{\textsuperscript{12}}\) Ibid., 16.
Freydberg’s analysis hinges on the interpretation of Kant’s notion of “pure intuition,” a contradictory label he applies to space and time.\textsuperscript{13} It is contradictory in that being an intuition, it is not able to be “pure” in the sense of rationality. However, Freydberg argues that the term points to the fact that prior to the division between knowing by sensible intuition and knowing by pure understanding there is an imaginative synthesis not accounted for in this synopsis of knowledge and which makes the synopsis itself possible.\textsuperscript{14} The productive imagination is likened by Freydberg to the creation of a “field”; it creates by its synthetic activity the very set of conditions, time and space, that enable meaningful appearance by objects of experience.\textsuperscript{15} Freydberg describes imagination in this sense as a “dark source” of synthesis that is ultimately inaccessible to reason, and which gives pure understanding its touchstone to sensible reality and actual truth.\textsuperscript{16} In the CPR this “dark source” of imagination sets the field for determinative judgments, and in the Critique of Judgment (CJ) it remains active as the source for reflective judgment.\textsuperscript{17}

Explaining the shift in focus from determinative judgment in the CPR to reflective judgment in the CJ, George F. McLean argues that the main result of the CJ in terms of imagination is that it provides human freedom in the midst of the scientific necessity of knowledge through pure reason by scanning across rational determinations to search for

\textsuperscript{13} Kant, CPR, A22. Freydberg’s argument that the term is contradictory, or in tension, is based on A20, B34 where Kant explains the distinction between empirical intuitions and pure concepts, which are conflated in the notion of “pure intuition.”
\textsuperscript{14} Freydberg, 28-29.
\textsuperscript{15} Freydberg, 99-100. See Kant, CPR, A155, B195, A156 for the material which Freydberg is drawing from with this analogy.
\textsuperscript{16} Freydberg, 97, 113. Freydberg bolsters his argument by pointing out that “reason” is itself a product of imagination, an image of a subject relating to objects of experience in a way enabled by imagination’s originary synthesis.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 116.
purposefulness.\textsuperscript{18} Rudolf Makkreel makes a similar observation about the imagination in the \textit{CJ} incorporating teleology and freedom into knowledge. According to Makkreel, imagination is employed by Kant to identify teleological meaning beyond the determinate and empirical record of natural history, allowing the imputation of human ends and purposes into the understanding of history.\textsuperscript{19}

However, as Freydberg argues, even in this teleological and aesthetic sense of the imagination, a more fundamental synthesis of productive imagination is at the root. Freydberg wants the epistemological project of Kant to point through the productive imagination to the ontological “fundament” beneath language.\textsuperscript{20} But by positing such a fundament prior to language, a fundament is being posited that is universal and objective and separate from historicity. The subject-object dichotomy of Kant’s epistemology remains in tact in Freydberg’s ontological aims, leaving the imagination as a conduit of subjective projection onto reality, attendant with the potential marginalizations and expressions of power that may come with such projection. The way Makkreel explains the role of interpretation in Kant’s \textit{CJ} illustrates this problem.

Makkreel describes that interpretation in Kant includes a transcendental orientation rooted in the judgment of purposiveness enabled by imagination.\textsuperscript{21} This orientation allows reflective judgment to remain critical by keeping it anchored in determinant judgments of the


\textsuperscript{19} Rudolf Makkreel, \textit{Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: The Hermeneutic Import of the Critique of Judgment} (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 130-141. In the \textit{CJ}, Makkreel is referring here primarily to §83, wherein Kant explains culture as a judgment of reflective teleology made upon nature.

\textsuperscript{20} Freydberg, 4.

\textsuperscript{21} Makkreel, \textit{Imagination}, 154.
laws of morality, enabling criticism of both the object of interpretation and the tradition or context within which the interpretation takes place. The main point for Makkreel is that while hermeneutics typically emphasizes the conditioning of the subject by its context, Kant demonstrates how such conditioning is separate from how a person is transcendentally oriented prior to experience within the context. Makkreel is concerned that without this Kantian caveat interpretation loses the ability to be truly critical and instead becomes overly particularized:

Current writings which claim that all experience is theory-laden and context-dependent have placed a one-sided emphasis on the fact that every object is oriented by its horizon. But it is also important to recognize that the subject orients itself to both object and horizon. . . . If orientation is derived only from our horizon, then interpretation is liable to become historicized or tradition-bound. The tradition and its authority would become overwhelming if we could not touch base with those transcendental conditions of our sensibility and common humanity that make critical reflection possible.

Makkreel presumes here an ontology by which it is possible to consider a subject constituted prior to a position within the epistemological flux of history. He claims the presence of a “common humanity” to which such a non-historical subjectivity can have access. Imagination is at the service of this “common humanity,” attaching its transcendental truth to the intuitions of experience. This is consistent with Kant’s primary schema in which imagination remains subsumed under the ultimate authority of rational knowing and transcendental subjectivity. Imagination has value only insofar as it facilitates relations between transcendent reason and concrete experience, along contours determined chiefly by the former. Even if, as Freydberg argues, imagination gives access to experiential fundament, that fundament is transcendentally conceptualized without regard for the historical and ontological situation of the subject doing the

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22 Ibid., 166-171.
23 Ibid., 159.
24 Makkreel develops his position from Kant’s idea of a sensus communis described in the CJ, §40. The sensus communis is a common cultural sense shared by human persons that orients reflective judgment and gives these subjective acts of taste a touchstone in objectivity, making universalization of such judgments possible.
25 See Kearney, 174. Kearney argues that for all the positive regard of imagination in the CJ, one of the consequences of the presentation is that productive imagination becomes “effectively circumscribed” and relegated to a realm of feeling apart from the superior power of conceptualization through reason.
conceptualizing. Imagination remains a psychological faculty subservient to reason; thus, the orientation “to” that Makkreel believes helps constitute the act of interpretation becomes a projection of rational categories onto the world, overriding the fundamental ontological consequences of orientation “by” the historical horizon in which one finds oneself during the act of interpretation.

John Sallis levels a similar criticism against Kant, that in the CPR he suppresses the importance of history in philosophy. Sallis appropriates Kant’s own metaphor of a ground overgrown as the untidy situation of metaphysics that his critical method is meant to clean up, but repurposes the image to argue while all the digging back through the overgrowth to find fundamental truth ultimately deformed the ground and made it precarious, Kant’s desire to employ reason to solve a problem created by reason in effect creates just one more deforming tunnel. Sallis claims that Kant sees reason’s integrity compromised by the impingement of sensibility, and he grants that Kant is attempting to create space within his consideration of reason that takes account of this problem. But Sallis thinks that the historicity and tension of diversity that are found in the realm of sensibility need to be more allowed to impact reason’s functioning and constitution in order to truly open up the power of imagination. Sallis suggests accordingly that the search for truth become immersed within a dynamic form of imagination rather than a firm edifice crafted by the critique of reason.

Sallis detects a similar problem with the elevation of reason going on in the CJ. Kant deals in the CJ with reflective judgments about taste, beauty, and sublimity. Sallis analyzes all

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26 John Sallis, *Spacings—of Reason and Imagination in Texts of Kant, Fichte, Hegel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 1-5. In this way, Sallis argues that Kant is in line with the general trajectory of metaphysics going back to Plato, one that privileges reason over history.

27 Sallis, *Spacings*, 5-8. Kant original use of the metaphor can be found in CPR, Axxi.

28 Ibid., 9-10, 19.

29 Ibid., 20-21.

30 Ibid., 22.
three as elevating reason above imagination and the power of the sensible and historical. Beauty and taste represent imagination harmonizing an object with forms of reflective understanding; sublimity represents imagination encountering its limitedness in the face of a totality posited by reason. Sallis describes the experience of the sublime as an experience of difference between nature and the powers of sensibility in which it is “a matter of rendering intuitive the superiority of reason over sensibility, over the greatest faculty of sensibility, which can only be imagination.” In conclusion for Sallis, reason in the CJ serves as a “guardrail” within the judgment of the sublime to prevent the awareness of difference from plunging into an abyss that would negate the supersensible, unlimited self of rationality; but, he questions what might happen when that guardrail is displaced and the experience sets one into an abyss of imagination. What can happen in such a case is that understanding and meaning are fully plunged into the realm of the historical and contextual and the imagination becomes the privileged power of interpretation rather than the maidservant of objectifying reason.

Kant’s transcendental scheme was gradually unsettled by hermeneutical and phenomenological criticism through Dilthey, Husserl, and Heidegger, and Ricoeur synthesized their ideas to give the imagination a meaning-making role that goes beyond this Kantian vision of an epistemological mediating faculty between the transcendent and the concrete. However, Hegel and the developments of German idealism stand as one more important juncture before that unsettling process begins.

31 Ibid., 102-103.
32 Ibid., 114.
33 Ibid., 130-131.
34 See Sallis, Delimitations: Phenomenology and the End of Metaphysics (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1995), 12-16. Sallis here argues that Kant’s synthetic conception of imagination submits to the fundamental drive of metaphysics for a stable ground of presence, repressing imagination and the dynamic relation it ought to have with metaphysical being. Sallis contrastingly claims that imagination ought to produce a situation of indeterminacy and irreducibility in the metaphysical efforts of philosophy.
G.W.F. Hegel

In the estimation of Kearney, German idealism in the form of Fichte and Schelling “inflated the power of transcendental imagination to such a point that the canonical distinctions of traditional epistemology dissolve.” Fichte accepted that Kant’s philosophical system was the pinnacle of philosophical form, but sought to add to it a firm first principle, the I which posits its own conscious being in opposition to a not-I, with imagination as the “interdetermination” between the I and not-I. The strictness with which Fichte divides the conscious I and the not-I requires a difficult synthesis of imagination to reconcile the absolute ideal I with limiting reality, without which the absolute I ceases to hold any substantial significance. For Sallis, this situation provides space for the indeterminacy of imagination, although it remains overly subjectivist and therefore disconnected from history in the same way that it was for Kant.

To Jennifer Ann Bates, Hegel begins the epistemological critique of the subjective ontology prevalent in the Kantianism upheld by Fichte, and he makes the imagination a focal point of the critique. Whereas for Kant imagination remained ultimately in service of reason, Hegel shifted the imagination to be a more fundamental shaper of the conceptual world that precedes the subject’s operations of understanding. Bates argues that Hegel offers a major transition away from the rational subjectivism of Kant and Fichte by grounding ultimate truth and reality in the Absolute. In Hegel’s phenomenology of experience, Bates claims that imagination is central to his concept of sublation toward the Absolute; it is the imagination that

35 Kearney, 177.
38 Ibid., 64.
functions in the moment of indifference through which the distinction between subject and object is dissolved into the Absolute.\textsuperscript{39}

In her book, Bates attempts to excavate views on imagination from the full corpus of Hegel’s writings and lectures in order to better understand the role it plays in his major opus,\textit{Phenomenology of Spirit (PS)}. She differentiates between three German words used by Hegel that intimate the imagination: \textit{Einbildungskraft}, \textit{Phantasie}, and \textit{Vorstellen}.\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Einbildungskraft} is dismissed by Hegel as a naïve form of fancy that predominated in the sensibilities of Romanticism, a sensibility focused on approximately representing the beautiful in nature and pointing to ultimate truth by virtue of the irony created by its inability to do any more than approximate.\textsuperscript{41} For Hegel, this form of imagination is merely reproductive and does not in itself contain the power of effecting sublation because it remains rooted in an abstract sense of ego that stands above the elements of experience that condition the subject.\textsuperscript{42} He rather turns to \textit{Phantasie} as truly creative and poetic imagination in that it draws on history and culture to produce signs and give names, making its imaginings products of subject-object indifference.\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Phantasie} thus is central to the process of representation on which the cognitive mechanics of sublation depend. \textit{Phantasie} gives names, and the final moment of representation for Hegel, memory, transitions further by making the representative name or sign independent of the recollected image, moving it past art and poetry into the realm of philosophy, which operates on

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{39} Bates, xxxvii
\item \textsuperscript{40} Bates’s analysis is based on Hegel’s \textit{Lectures on Aesthetics}, v. 1 and 2, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).
\item \textsuperscript{41} Bates, 111, 124-130.
\item \textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 128.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 104.
\end{itemize}
the level of universals.\textsuperscript{44} In this way, Bates argues, imagination amounts for Hegel to the Absolute dialectically imagining itself into existence.\textsuperscript{45}

It is at this stage that Hegel utilizes the terminology of \textit{Vorstellen}, representation that reflects a culture’s level of development toward the Absolute. Philosophy is the goal of consciousness for Hegel, and it depends upon understanding \textit{Vorstellungen}, the way culture represents itself to itself. Art and religion are the highest forms of culture that best embody for Hegel the ultimate Concept that arises through phenomenological sublation unto the Absolute, but remaining in them amounts to remaining within the Concept itself and its \textit{Vorstellungen} rather than effecting sublation toward the Absolute as philosophy is capable of accomplishing by moving beyond \textit{Vorstellen}.\textsuperscript{46} Bates observes then that while “imagination” as \textit{Einbildungskraft} appears in \textit{PS} only once in the preface\textsuperscript{47}, and dismissively so in reference to the Romantic notion described above, the use of \textit{Vorstellen} throughout \textit{PS} should be understood to involve Hegel’s own stronger sense of imagination, that is, \textit{Phantasie}.\textsuperscript{48}

What this amounts to then for Bates is a conclusion that “Hegel’s notion of imagination is so central to the whole book \textit{[PS]} that it figures implicitly at every moment of the dialectic.”\textsuperscript{49}

Bates further adds:

\begin{quote}
In all \textit{Vorstellungen} prior to Absolute Knowing, the comprehending and disclosing movements of the imagination are central but they only manifest as the experience, as the content of thought, not as the self-realizing Concept. The Concept works dialectically through each new level in the \textit{Phenomenology of Spirit}, but the imagination’s sublating (\textit{aufhebende}) work remains latent. What is revealed at each new level is a new shape of universal experience, a new phenomenological \textit{Vorstellung}. When the Concept is finally realized to have been at work throughout the \textit{Vorstellungen} and their transitions up the phenomenological ladder, the sublating work of the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 104-105, 130. Central to this idea is also Hegel’s conviction that philosophy is the highest expression of Absolute Spirit, making the transition to representation in memory superior to, though ultimately still dependent upon, the imagination of \textit{Phantasie}.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., xxxvii.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 131.
\textsuperscript{48} Bates, 133, 137-138.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 137.
imagination becomes explicit, and we pass beyond merely representing our experience (Vorstellen) to full speculative comprehension of it.\textsuperscript{50}

The privileging of philosophy by Hegel makes reason the privileged faculty for attaining to truth, but the philosophical exercise of reason requires awareness of Phantasie’s simultaneous internalization of public and historical signs and externalization of sublating and subjective creativity in the creation of Vorstellungen.\textsuperscript{51} For Fichte, the fixity of the conscious subject as a first principle made imagination ahistorical, while for Hegel it becomes a temporal and historical effort that yields a phenomenological spiral ascending toward the fixity of the Absolute.\textsuperscript{52} The spiral metaphor is essential for Hegel for it suggests the way that imagination operates with experience in an enclosed circle until it is able to sublate the Vorstellungen with which it works into universal conceptualization that transcends representative thinking.\textsuperscript{53}

This ultimate privileging of reason is where criticism of Hegel’s use of imagination begins. While the productive Phantasie of Hegel expands on the foundation laid by Kant’s transcendental schema, it remains ultimately bound by the same transcendental drive to rational conceptualization. Hegel wants to give Kant’s schema greater contact with history, and he does so. However, he keeps reason ultimately above history. The Hegelian Absolute drives philosophy to make time understood logically rather than historically, insulating reason from any critical impact from historicity and contextuality.\textsuperscript{54} While Hegel’s move to the Absolute as a dialectical product of the movement of Spirit makes the subject-object relation less one-sided than Fichte’s first principle of the absolute I, it ends in the same place. Knowledge of the knower remains the final object of philosophy, upholding the supremacy of the transcendental

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 137.
\item \textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 141.
\item \textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 143-144. See Hegel, \textit{PS}, 15, where he describes the need for the Spirit to become “other to itself” in order to effect sublation.
\item \textsuperscript{53} Bates, 145.
\item \textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 149-150. Bates describes that the dialectic of imagination in the dynamics of sublation, dependent upon historical memory, arrives at an “end of history” where logic and reason become dominant.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
subject-object schema. Also upheld is a sense of imagination as ultimately a mere representative faculty in service of reason, exhibited in Bates’s presentation of imagination’s role in Hegel’s *PS* as a power that serves the epistemology of the Absolute without its contact with history doing anything more than represent the concepts that are driven by Spirit beyond the representation to ultimate being in the Absolute.  

Sallis argues this last point based on the equating of Spirit and reason in Hegel. Reason is responsible for the ultimate sublation of the subjective and objective, and “cognition” is the aggregate of faculties that stand as the actualization of reason in the subjective sense. Imagination is part of this aggregate, which for Sallis makes it subordinate and instrumental to reason. Furthermore, Sallis questions the way that Hegel’s phenomenological system aims at the final arrival of the self-presence of the Absolute, implying an ontology wherein imagination must be suppressed into a role as an epistemological tool in service of the unconditioned being of the Absolute. The ontology at work here remains an assumed ideal that is above history, as much as imagination serves to make the Absolute historically represented. And it is one in which epistemological access is still the privileged domain of a reason unmindful of its own real historicity.

**Wilhelm Dilthey**

Dilthey continued the process of attempting to historicize the epistemology begun by Hegel. Dilthey contended that the speculative and metaphysical nature of the idealist tradition built from Hegel failed to offer a true accounting of life because life could only be understood

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55 See Sallis, *Spacings*, 28-29. Sallis here critiques Hegel’s predecessor in Idealism Fichte on similar grounds, claiming that Fichte’s belief that reason can operate independently of language leaves reason “hovering” too far removed from the ground of historical experience, to which imagination is meant to keep it moored.

56 Ibid., 139-142.

through concrete experience.\textsuperscript{58} In Dilthey’s words: “Behind life itself our thinking cannot go.”\textsuperscript{59}

This made it necessary to develop a general hermeneutics of history in order to account for the contextuality of life in the concrete. This historicity implied two major things for understanding the meaning of human experience: first, understanding derives indirectly from objectifications or expressions of life and not introspection, and second, human nature is not a fixed metaphysical essence but a relativized and in-process creation.\textsuperscript{60}

Imagination for Dilthey is vital because it is central to the historicized expressions of meaning that become the hermeneutical focus of understanding life. Makkreel accordingly focuses on the role of imagination in Dilthey’s views on poetic creativity. Makkreel summarizes Dilthey’s views of three epochs of aesthetics to explain his views of poetic imagination. The first view is one associated with Cartesian rationalism that Dilthey rejects because it narrowly restricts autonomy and imagination to the confines of metaphysics and an absolute rational order, the accurate reflection of which is deterministically the norm of beauty.\textsuperscript{61} The second and third epochs are the ones that Dilthey attempted to synthesize. The second epoch is rooted in eighteenth century British psychology, which was overly atomistic and deterministic in its understanding of the “lawful” effects of a work of art on the spectator, and reduced imagination to reproductive and associative fancy, but introduced consideration of the emotional and personal variables relevant to aesthetic judgment.\textsuperscript{62} The third stage was the historical approach of German idealism that emphasized aesthetics as historically conditioned expressions of genius, or


\textsuperscript{59} Wilhelm Dilthey, Gesammelte Schriften V (Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner, 1957), 5. ("[H]inter das Leben kann das Denken nicht zurückgehen.")

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 116-117.


\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 84-87.
as with Hegel, absolute Spirit.\textsuperscript{63} What Dilthey sought was a view on aesthetics and the imagination that could reflect the importance of historical context coming out of the third view, while maintaining an emphasis on the importance and value of individuality coming out of the second view.\textsuperscript{64}

With a sense of imagination as historically conditioned yet individually nuanced, Dilthey posited three patterns by which the imagination alters information in its creativity. The first two are a law of exclusion, by which components of received images or representations are either eliminated or excluded, and a law of change in intensity, by which components of images or representations increase or decrease in their ability to produce impacts.\textsuperscript{65} According to Makkreel, the third law is of much greater hermeneutical importance.\textsuperscript{66} This law is where imagination becomes genuinely productive and alters images or representations in a structural way that takes account of their broader context.\textsuperscript{67} Makkreel relates this third law to Dilthey’s “acquired psychic nexus,” which is a historically and thus contextually conditioned matrix of received cultural information and individual operation upon that information, a continuum of experience that shapes individual psychic processes and is shaped by them.\textsuperscript{68} For Dilthey, the nexus “encompasses not only our representations, but also evaluations derived from our feelings and ideas of purposes which have arisen from our acts of will—indeed, the habits of our feeling and will.”\textsuperscript{69} This formulation insists that the acquired psychic nexus be understood in contrast to faculty-based views of cognition. Dilthey here incorporates the insights of the second epoch of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., 87-88.
\item Ibid., 88-89.
\item Makkreel, \textit{Dilthey}, 97, 101.
\item Dilthey, \textit{Selected Works} V, 104-106.
\item Dilthey, \textit{Selected Works} V, 72.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
aesthetics and insists that every psychic act is an irreducible interrelation of representation, feeling, and will.\textsuperscript{70} Thus, when the third law proposes that imagination places images and representations into their broader context, it is doing so in terms of articulating their relation to the acquired psychic nexus, subjecting them to the socio-culturally shared accumulations of the nexus as well as the individual psychological factors woven into it, synthesizing in the productive power of imagination the psychological and historical concerns of the second and third epochs of aesthetics respectively.

In the analysis of Makkreel, the acquired psychic nexus comes to greatly resemble the primary synthesis of imagination in Kant that creates the field described by Freydberg on which experience is able to occur.\textsuperscript{71} It yields a \textit{Weltanschauung} in which the subjectively cognitive and the historically objective are synthesized making the imaginative products of the acquired psychic nexus revelatory of an interpretive sense of the world.\textsuperscript{72} The similarity to Kant is in that this \textit{Weltanschauung} of the acquired psychic nexus comes to be for Dilthey the overarching frame within which the first two laws of imagination, which are particular tasks of aesthetic production, are able to occur at all and becomes as well the framework through which all ordinary perceptions of the world occur.\textsuperscript{73} Makkreel points out a crucial difference between Dilthey’s hermeneutical idea and the synthesis prevalent in Kantian and Hegelian theory: the continual interplay of history, sense, and feeling and will make imagination free from any “nuclear starting point” and unbound by a vision of absolute end—the metaphysical necessity of

\textsuperscript{70} Makkreel, \textit{Dilthey}, 100.
\textsuperscript{71} See ibid.,108: “In its evaluation of reality, the acquired psychic nexus is not especially concerned with individual representations, yet it makes possible a total perspective on the world in relation to which individual representations are meaningful.” See also 170-175 where Makkreel more specifically develops the patterns of overlap between Kant and Dilthey.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 108-109.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 115. See also 171 where Makkreel argues for coherence between Kant’s views on imagination and synthesis with Dilthey’s views on the acquired psychic nexus and imagination metamorphisizing representations out of it.
Kant and Hegel that circumscribes the imagination is loosened in Dilthey’s hermeneutical approach.\textsuperscript{74}

Makkreel writes that Dilthey disagreed with philosophical psychology like Kant’s that modeled itself after the epistemology of the sciences because it could not “do justice to the dynamism of psychic processes” and implied a lack of immediate continuity of psychic processes within lived experience, which was a falsity for Dilthey.\textsuperscript{75} Under such psychology, the imagination serves primarily the function of synthesis, bringing together disparate parts of experience, chiefly understanding and intuition, according to transcendent principles.\textsuperscript{76} Because Dilthey assumes a primary unity of the elements of experience in a way Kant does not, imagination is seen not to synthesize experience into intelligibility, but rather to articulate it as an interpretation of the acquired psychic nexus.\textsuperscript{77}

This then is the foundation for Dilthey’s central philosophical focus, to establish a method for grounding the human sciences in the products of life itself. He turns to the imaginative products of the acquired psychic nexus as the expressions of life that should be interpreted as the valid source of knowledge of human experience.\textsuperscript{78} As Richard E. Palmer explains, “The object of the human sciences should not be to understand life in terms of categories extrinsic to it, but from intrinsic categories derived from life.”\textsuperscript{79} While Dilthey’s ideas on imagination were developed mostly in terms of poetics and aesthetics, Palmer notes that expressions of life for Dilthey’s method should include not only poetry but the full range of expression relevant to any human science, including historical actions, communicative gestures,

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 115.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 167, 179. See also Palmer, 102.
\textsuperscript{76} See Makkreel, \textit{Dilthey}, 172-173.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 201. This contrast between imagination as synthesis and imagination as articulation is the focus of Makkreel’s entire fourth chapter (160-202) of \textit{Dilthey}, “From Synthesis to Articulation.”
\textsuperscript{78} This is Dilthey’s concept of “objectifications of life.” See \textit{Selected Works} III, 168-174.
\textsuperscript{79} Palmer, 102.
codified law, and literature.\textsuperscript{80} Focusing on the meaning contained in and hermeneutically extracted from such expressions is the preferred method for Dilthey, in contrast to attempts at transcendent knowing that separate cognition from the full historical and psychic matrix of human experience in favor of abstract metaphysical categories like Hegel’s Absolute.\textsuperscript{81} To expand on the importance of history in the understanding of expressions of life, Palmer summarizes two implications of the historicity of experience: understanding of human experience derives from “objectifications of life” and not introspection or speculation, and the nature of human being is dynamic and ever in-process.\textsuperscript{82} This makes the hermeneutical meaning of life expressions entirely contextual and understood only through reciprocal interaction between the expression and the interpreter within the dynamics of the hermeneutical circle.\textsuperscript{83} Because these expressions are arising from an acquired psychic nexus and being interpreted through an acquired psychic nexus, the imagination is centrally involved, but in a specific way. The hermeneutical understanding at which Dilthey’s method arrives is one in which the imagination empathetically understands the lived experience objectified in the expression\textsuperscript{84}, an empathetic accomplishment possible even despite the indirect way in which the expression expresses life.\textsuperscript{85} The presumption that understanding can be achieved across contexts by one imagination reaching out to another despite this necessary indirectness and distance opens up a view of Dilthey’s shortcomings.

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\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 98, 112-113.
\textsuperscript{82} Palmer, 116-117.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 118-121.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 114-115. See also Harrington, 495.
\textsuperscript{85} See Palmer, 116. In his description of historicity in Dilthey, Palmer specifically notes that the importance of understanding meaning through objectifications of life makes such understanding indirect.
\end{flushright}
Palmer notes that the phenomenological category of “life” defined through history remains ultimately similar to the “objective Spirit” on which Hegel focuses, which he attributes to Dilthey’s continued adherence to the aim of objective data for the human sciences despite his disavowal of modeling human sciences on natural sciences.\(^{86}\) The view of imagination as empathetic means that the hermeneutical process is bound by supposedly objective determinations of reconstruction of the original experience. Objectivity wins out in the end over historicity, in large part because the lingering epistemological focus of Dilthey keeps him rooted in the subject-object ontology the defines Kantian transcendental methodology, as much as he attempts to dissolve its metaphysical predilections. Austin Harrington attempts to defend Dilthey against such criticisms, noting that Dilthey’s insistence that at least some contextual and situational interests and prejudices be set aside for the sake of accurately objective hermeneutical description does not amount to aiming at absolute, normative determinations above the relativity of history.\(^{87}\) He argues that Dilthey’s reasoning involves the belief that “no person or culture could be so radically different from the one interpreting it that all understanding between them were impossible.”\(^{88}\) However, what Harrington’s analysis fails to observe in such a belief is that failure to recognize the legitimately different elements between cultures, and the potential political and ethical dynamics behind them, in favor of objectivism leaves the hermeneutical process vulnerable to the variables of power and privilege. Also of importance in this regard is that cultural differences between expression and interpreter are not the only ones of relevance; variations between different cultures attempting different interpretations of the same sources must also be taken into account. For example theologically, common elements of shared tradition, like scripture, are interpreted by various world perspectives, and adjudicating the

\(^{86}\) Ibid., 123.

\(^{87}\) Harrington, “Objectivism in Hermeneutics?”

\(^{88}\) Ibid., 502.
differences that arise between those interpretations is part of the hermeneutical question. As is the question of determining how to prioritize the elements themselves, how they are subject to criticism in their development and formation, and how different versions of local traditions branch off of shared tradition and relate to one another in terms of priority and privilege. Dilthey admirably attempts to situate the derivation of meaning in history and its concrete expressions instead of metaphysical reason, but his maintenance of subject-object epistemology leaves him unable to fully account for the depth or importance of historical context.

Nonetheless, Dilthey’s emphasis on the historical distinction of inner and outer reality paved the way to historicity as it is understood today and the ensuing importance of imagination as a necessity in the meaning-making process, and later thinkers were primed by his work on historicity to move into the realm of ontology and consider imagination’s role in meaning-making in a more fully historical way.  

**Edmund Husserl**

Edmund Husserl stands as one more important mediator before reaching that point. Husserl is noted for his development of a proper method to phenomenology, the reduction, and his phenomenology moves beyond Dilthey in key ways while also falling behind some of the advances Dilthey had accomplished. By making meaning an act of intentionality, Husserl attempted to dissolve the subject-object dichotomy of Kantianism by making truth a product of correspondence between intended meaning in speech-acts and fulfillment in perception. This allowed Husserl to develop phenomenological methodology that advanced past Dilthey in surpassing the subject-object split of Kantianism, but in turning away from the hermeneutical

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and indirect source of understanding meaning that was advanced by Dilthey, that is, objectification in expression, Husserl remained more entrenched in Kantian rationalism.\footnote{Victor Velarde-Mayol, 	extit{On Husserl} (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 2000), 17-19.}

Victor Velarde-Mayol has emphasized the importance of refuting “psychologism” in Husserl’s formation of his phenomenological method in his 	extit{Logical Investigations (LI)} of 1900-01. Velarde-Mayol summarizes that Husserl sought to avoid conflating the ideal laws of logic with the natural laws of psychological function because the latter are historically relativized and cannot therefore support the absolute objective validity of the former.\footnote{Ibid., 22.} This separation of the nature of psychology from the ideality of logic allows Husserl to engage in a phenomenological psychology focused on the “essential (eidetic) characteristics of what is the act and content of consciousness.”\footnote{Ibid., 23-25.}

The phenomenological analysis of Husserl then attempts to address how subjective intentional acts correlate with objective knowledge. Intentional acts of expression are mental ones that bring together historical and temporal, and thus contingent and relative, reference with objective, ideal, ahistorical, and atemporal meaning.\footnote{Ibid., 22.} Every object exists in consciousness as an intentional object, and the truth of one’s intentional acts regarding that object is determined by correspondence with intuition of the real object.\footnote{Edmund Husserl, \textit{LI} v. II, 694-697.} It is at this stage that imagination in the Kantian sense of synthesis enters the picture. Truth arises as a synthesis between an empty not-yet-fulfilled intentional act and a fulfilling act in the form of intuition. This is similar to Kant’s notion of intuitions being imaginatively synthesized to concepts to create knowledge. Velarde-
Mayol observes this comparison between Kant and Husserl, but notes that Husserl differs in making knowledge rooted in “categorial intuitions” rather than simply the sense intuition dealt with by Kant.\footnote{Velarde-Mayol, 37.} Categorial intuitions are ones that give perceived data logical form, but they are similarly self-given as simple perceptual intuitions would be, allowing them to serve as legitimate evidence for the truth of intentional acts.\footnote{Ibid., 36. For a succinct summary of Husserl’s understanding of categorial intuition see \textit{LI}, v. II, 817-819.} Thus, while Husserl alters the particulars of the basic Kantian schema, imagination is left in the same place that it is with Kant—a tool to objectify realities apart from the subject according to terms of transcendent rationality apart from historicity.

Brian Elliott examines Husserl’s later thought that reflects on his accomplishments in \textit{LI}, culminating in his \textit{Ideas I} in 1913, and assesses the role of imagination to be equivocal. In outlining an explanation like Velarde-Mayol’s on the similarity between Kant and Husserl’s idea of “categorial intuition” from the \textit{LI}, Elliott observes that this similarity brought Husserl to a more direct confrontation with the imagination in his later work.\footnote{Elliott, 57-58.} Imagination becomes central to enabling the free play of possibilities beyond empirical necessity that is necessary to the phenomenological reduction, but Husserl believes that the ideation achieved by this process leads to an intuition of essences directly tied to perception.\footnote{Ibid., 59-60. On the role of imagination in the eidetic reduction unto essence, see Husserl, \textit{Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy}, First Book, trans. F. Kersten (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), 157-160.} It is in this dynamic that Elliott critiques Husserl’s account of imagination as equivocal. He argues that Husserl at once conceives of a phenomenon as the appearance of super-temporal a priori truth, as in the case of mathematics or logic, and also as an originary, pre-objective given that provides content to consciousness.\footnote{Elliott, 61.} Imagination is stuck in this tension between priority for idealism and
rationalism and priority for historicity and experience. Velarde-Mayol noted Husserl’s central concern with avoiding relativism, and it is that concern that largely leaves his reconciliation of the two senses of phenomenon skewed to the rationalist side. Henry Pietersma’s assessment of Husserl’s epistemological stance helps illustrate the point:

Husserl’s account [of knowledge] articulates the subject-object correlation as a search for truth, and the truth seeker he envisages is one who has an implicit ontology and epistemology, which a phenomenological epistemology begins by describing. From the point of view of such an epistemologist, there is no such entity as a truth seeker, if we cannot begin by describing him as endowed with some sort of prephilosophical ontology and epistemology. 101

The intentionality of Husserl’s phenomenological analysis means then that, “What we encounter in a fulfillment, then, is not a new object, but the object we already sought in a new and distinctive mode of givenness, namely self-givenness.” 102 Pietersma’s analysis focuses on the earlier stage of the L1, but Elliott makes clear that the transition to Ideas I retains the same bent, and makes the status of imagination within that transition clear:

In a word, “free fantasy” may be essential in the transition from concrete perception to ideation but erases itself, so to speak, with the actual achievement of essential intuition. Again, Husserl’s anxiety to retain the genuinely intuitive character of ideation leads him to reject any essential affinity between it an imagination: “Apprehension and intuition of essence is a multiform act; in particular, the intuition of essence is an originary act of givenness and as such the analogue of sense perception and not of imagination.” 103

The imagination for Husserl ends up then being a source for validating the rational, non-temporal, universalized concepts of the subject by effecting the reduction of a given perceived object to its essences.

The imagination does not make meaning out of experience, it tailors experience to fit pre-conceived meaning. If the phenomenon does not fulfill the intention, Husserl’s theory does not easily allow for the intention, coming from, as Pietersma puts it, the subject’s “prephilosophical ontology and epistemology,” to be altered in response to an encounter with historicity or

102 Ibid., 43. Cf. Husserl, Ideas, 43-44.
103 Elliott, 60. Quote from Husserl is from Ideas, 44; Elliott’s rendering varies from the Kersten translation.
difference. Intentions are able to be imposed onto experience, with the phenomena of experience being crafted to justify the veracity of the rational intentions. Elliott notes the advance of this schema in Husserl’s later work as he develops the idea of the passive synthesis of imagination being the source of the originary time-consciousness that marks the essence of subjectivity, a schema Elliott describes as parallel to Kant’s transcendental imagination. As the development takes place, it effects a prioritization of intention over intuition in conscious life. This prioritization of the subjective over the historical is the lingering of Kantian ontology in Husserl that prevents his sense of imagination from effectively recognizing plurality.

Further mirroring Kant, Husserl eventually develops a distinction between different modes of imagination. The passive imagination that forms the originary time-consciousness underlying all activity of the mind and paralleling Kant’s productive and transcendental imagination is labeled the “dative imagination” by Elliott, and the active, repetitive imagination responsible for the eidetic variations of phenomenological reduction unto ideation and paralleling Kant’s reproductive imagination is labeled the “genitive imagination” by Elliott.

Elliott goes on to argue that because the passive primary mode, the productive/dative, is aimed at unification via temporal continuity, the active secondary mode, the reproductive/genitive, becomes annexed to the same goal of unification at the expense of disruption and diversity in the experienced world. This preoccupation with unity becomes the focus of Elliott’s final indictment of Husserl’s treatment of imagination:

Husserl’s positive appreciation of imagination rests entirely on a model of it as unifying and integrative and that this model indicates a certain basic decision with respect to what the

104 Ibid., 65-69.
105 Ibid., 68. The contrast here is between the earlier phenomenological position that intuitive fulfillment completes empty intention to a view where originary imaginative synthesis places intention prior to intuition.
106 Ibid., 71.
imagination is. Certainly, this decision on Husserl’s part is far from necessary and serves to indicate the limits of his sense of phenomenology in light of its alignment with a fundamental prejudice at work in western thought from Plato onwards. This prejudice might be formulated in the following way: As a mental power imagination is incapable of any autonomous attainment of truth or knowledge; it is necessary and indeed almost irrepressible within any overall mental economy but it must at all costs be subordinated to truly rational powers of mind. The history of western thought has consistently borne out this prejudice from the warnings of Plato against deceptions of perspective in mimetic art to those of Kant against the dangers of fanaticism due to over-active imagination... Though the imagination has from time to time reasserted its rights (in the modern period most notably in Romanticism from Herder to Nietzsche himself), in general a doctrine of sobriety on guard against imaginative intoxication has been consistently preached and enforced.108

As further evidence, Elliott notes that Husserl’s description of eidetic modifications carried out by active imagination is that such imaginative activity follows predetermined regulations adjudicated by reason.109 Imagination has positive value for Husserl in this vision, but it is in service of purifying the pluralistic clutter of actual experience in order to arrive at objective universality hemmed by the subjective contours of transcendental reason, rooted in the originary passive imagination that creates temporal unity.110 It is for this reason that the “positive potential of imaginative apprehension to grasp plurality and difference without subordination to conceptual unity is never acknowledged by Husserl.”111

John Sallis similarly attaches to Husserl the beginning of a legacy in phenomenology to treat imagination in a “confining” and “reductive” way.112 Sallis outlines three critiques in the form of three connections that result from this tendency rooted in Husserl. First, a connection of imagination with an “essential poverty” whereby the imagined is incapable of revealing any truth beyond that already in the imagining consciousness, or by contrast a non-connection between imagination and disclosure.113 Second, a connection between imagination and the exclusion of perception that makes imagination at best supplementary to the purer power of perception in

108 Elliott, 72-73.
109 Ibid., 73.
110 Ibid., 75-76.
111 Ibid., 80.
113 Ibid., 11.
And third, the necessary and sole connection between imagination’s force and images, preventing imagination from having any meaningful contact with truth. By these three connections, imagination is marginalized and rationality reified to the exclusion of difference and the primacy of universality.

In sum, Husserl acknowledges the value and utility of imagination in his phenomenological methodology. Ultimately, however, he privileges intellectualism and rationality as sources of understanding with imagination serving only a secondary function. One accomplishment he did achieve though was the clarification of imagination’s connection to temporality. Exploiting that accomplishment, Heidegger would break open not only this privileging of rationality in Husserl, but also the epistemological focus that had run from Kant through Husserl and disallowed a true break from the ontological subject-object dichotomization at the root of the Kantian system. Elliott notes, though, that Heidegger ultimately was grasped by the same proclivity as Husserl to highlight the unifying dimensions of imagination to the detriment of its diversifying ones. The next step at present then is a more thorough analysis of Heidegger’s thought.

**Martin Heidegger**

In the words of Paul Ricoeur, Heidegger’s primary accomplishment was his ability to “dig beneath the epistemological enterprise in order to disclose its ontological conditions.” For Heidegger, the existential truth of *Dasein* involves the “thrownness” of the subject into the world. Being a subject in the world means being in relation to other subjects of being. He

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114 Ibid., 13-14.
115 Ibid., 14-15.
116 Elliott, 72.
criticizes that the modern tradition filtered from Kant tended with its emphasis on the spontaneity of the rational will to turn other realities of the world into objects dominated by the will of the thinking subject. He argues that it is by the transcendental power of the imagination that receptivity to the world as subject and spontaneity of the thinking subject find coalescence. When Kant made the imagination a function of understanding instead of a primary power of the soul alongside reason and intuition, he capitulated its transcendent power to reason and its objectifying imposition of itself on the world. But Heidegger’s breaking open of the Kantian paradigm in the way of ontology would pave the way for Ricoeur to finally bring imagination to a place where it could account for diversity and address the imbalances and marginalizations enabled by the ahistorical and rationalist paradigm of the Kantian subject-object ontology that permitted transcendental and universalizing projection onto the pluralism and contextuality of actual historicity.

The preceding critique of Kant and his use of imagination is central to Heidegger’s *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics (KPM)*. Here, Heidegger affirms Kant’s conception of the productive imagination, or as Heidegger describes it the “transcendental power of imagination,” as the very ground of possibility for both stems of knowledge, intuition and reason. He notes that the idea of “mere imagination” as something that creates appearances or representations contrasted with ultimate reality, akin to the role of active imagination in Husserl’s reduction or the *Einbildungskraft* criticized by Hegel, is only possible within the horizon yielded by the pre-cognitional transcendental power of imagination. At this stage, Heidegger is noting what Husserl and Hegel also acknowledged, a fundamental kind of imagination that Kant discovered as the ground of epistemology. However, as described by Ricoeur, Heidegger digs beneath this

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119 Ibid., 96.
epistemological focus to examine the ontology below it. In discussing the pure intuitions of space and time that Kant noted as the originary synthetic fruits of productive imagination, Heidegger notes that such intuitions are representations that denote the very possibility of Dasein existence.120

In another spin on Kantian use of imagination, Heidegger again demonstrates this ontological turn. The Kantian tradition retained through to Husserl treated imagination as an epistemological mediator between sensory intuition and transcendent reason to create knowledge, working essentially as a maidservant to reason. Heidegger attributes this legacy to Kant himself “shrinking” from the ontological implications of the transcendental power of imagination as a mysterious and unknown variable in the transcendental schema that threatened the preferred epistemological privilege of reason.121 As a result, Kant’s project and the project of those following after him remained focused on epistemological questions while maintaining the basic Cartesian ontology of subject and object, with the focus on rationality empowering the subject over against the object. Attempting to retain the mysterious root of the transcendental power of imagination and its ontological implications, Heidegger re-describes the interconnection of intuition and understanding, an interconnection that for Kant is the basis of knowledge and is achieved by imagination under the direction of rationality. For Heidegger this interconnection involves “being-understanding,” referring to the spontaneous engagement of reason with that which is outside of it, encountering “being-dependence,” referring to the receptive necessity of intuited information, with both serving as representation grown from the “pre-presentation” of the transcendental power of imagination, the possibility of “Being-together.”122 The transcendental power of imagination becomes then a transcendental projection growing out of

120 Ibid., 99.
121 Ibid., 110-115.
122 Ibid., 101-105.
itself, but it creates a horizon of knowledge that inescapably weaves one’s own being with the reality of being—the existential condition of Dasein.\textsuperscript{123} Kant’s shrinking away from the ontological implications of productive imagination led him, in Heidegger’s estimation, to cede the control of synthesis between intuition and understanding to rationality, allowing spontaneity to overwhelm receptivity and ignore the basic ontological interconnection with other beings that Heidegger frames within the concept of Dasein.\textsuperscript{124}

Elaborating Heidegger’s appropriation of Kant is the central task of Frank Schalow’s \textit{The Renewal of the Heidegger-Kant Dialogue}. Schalow argues that the imagination is central to this appropriation and situates \textit{KPM} as primary to Heidegger’s recasting of imagination. However, Schalow works through several other of Heidegger’s works in order to better detail the project of \textit{KPM}. Two key concepts that emerge in this endeavor that are central to Heidegger’s sense of imagination are temporality and presence.

Heidegger’s retrieval of Kant builds from his appreciation for Kant’s focused consideration of time as a synthetic a priori precondition for all knowledge. The pure intuitions of time and space are the a priori preconditions that Kant developed in the \textit{CPR}, but Heidegger focuses on time as the more primordial factor: “Whether a now takes an hour or a second, every now has in its immediate and constant neighborhood a no-longer now, a just now, and a not-yet now. Time as this pure flowing of multiplicity of nows is the universal form of representing . . .”\textsuperscript{125} Time for Heidegger was central to what he thought was a prethematic level of understanding that preceded the exercise of apophantic logic and that marked the finite nature

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 106.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 111-112.
of human existence, hemmed as Dasein.\textsuperscript{126} In Heidegger’s estimation, Husserl had an inkling of recognizing the importance of such preconditions of understanding, but his allegiance to logic and his concept of truth being located in fulfilled intention that implies direct access to ontic reality prevented him from fully plumbing those preconditions and the ontological issues associated with them.\textsuperscript{127} Kant, however, did plumb those depths in Heidegger’s judgment, but was just unable to divest himself of the subjective Cartesian ontology inherent to his philosophical paradigm.\textsuperscript{128} Heidegger’s destructive retrieval of Kant thus aimed to exploit Kant’s insights into finitude and time while further breaking open the ontological implications that moved away from Cartesian subjectivism.

To Schalow, this process centers on Heidegger’s appropriation of Kant’s threefold synthesis, whereby the reproductive imagination serves to link the apprehension of intuition with the recognition of conceptual understanding. Heidegger accepts the arrangement but changes its key. For Kant, the synthesis is annexed by subjective reason and the primacy of understanding. Schalow writes of Kant’s view of the synthesis:

\begin{quote}
Kant claims that, when applied to intuition, the categories “legislate” experience. Thereby “prescribing” to objects a certain lawfulness; the very prospect of ascribing order to objects in advance of any encounter with them depends upon assigning the demands for lawfulness on the side of the knowing subject and then restricting its parameters in conformity with human finitude. Yet, in a way that is not always obvious to Kant, the lawfulness is not to be found somehow already embedded in the character of the subject, but instead is defined by the limits of the manifestness of things that are in turn determined by the way beings first enter the “there” of human existence.\textsuperscript{129}
\end{quote}

The second part of this comment indicates the direction in which Heidegger will move with the Kantian synthesis. The first part describes the subjectivism to which Kant cleaves. Imagination, as the middle term of the synthesis, enacts the legislation of subjective reason upon the

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., 62.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 71. Schalow’s comments on Kant are in reference to Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics, trans. Paul Carus (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1950), 34-45.
\end{footnotes}
apprehended object. Heidegger’s appropriation rests with the observation that, “Beings are in no way accessible without an antecedent understanding of being. This is to say that beings which encounter us must already be understood in advance of their ontological constitution.”

Heidegger believes that Kant’s version of the synthesis takes a shortcut around fundamental ontology directly to ontic knowledge. Clearer reckoning with the underlying ontology and the preconditions of cognition critique the rational legislation prescribed by Kant for knowledge of ontic entities. Heidegger’s way of alleviating this problem is to prioritize imagination’s role in the synthesis over that of understanding.

Temporal synthesis is the fundamental precondition that evokes ontological engagement for Heidegger. In relation to the threefold synthesis, Heidegger assigns apprehension (intuition) to the present, reproduction (imagination) to the past, and recognition (understanding) to the future. The past temporal role of imagination is key because of the tendency to assimilate what is less familiar and new to what is more familiar. Thus, imagination sets the stage for the pre-understanding that underlies ontological engagement, and it is an engagement defined in this temporalization by the subject’s finitude that limits it’s ability to grasp ontic beings. Intuition and understanding are both rooted in the temporality formed by imagination, and the cognitive functions of apprehension and conceptual recognition become interdependently linked. The spontaneity of understanding and the receptivity of intuition are thus interwoven for Heidegger through the temporal space created by imagination, making for a “spontaneous receptivity of sensibility” and a “receptive spontaneity of understanding.”

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131 Ibid., 246.
132 Schalow, 72. See also Elliott, 115: “Accordingly, if apprehension denotes the immediate and instantaneous grasping of sense data, and reproduction [by imagination] refers to the mental act whereby such transitory sensible givenness may be re-presented, recognition signifies the act of truly identifying an object as something to which the mind can reliably return.”
133 Schalow, 72-74.
synthesis that yields the ontological conditions for ontic engagement, imagination “solicits the appearance of the object rather than directly defin[ing] its nature in the productive mode of traditional metaphysics.”134 That is, intuitive apprehension of ontic reality is made possible by the projection of imagination, but the roots of imagination in humanity’s ontological condition of finitude preclude that projection from necessarily having determinative power.

Heidegger here is pinching together what Kant separated as productive or transcendental imagination (passive or dative imagination in Husserl) and reproductive imagination (active or genitive imagination in Husserl).135 The past that the imagination taps into during the threefold synthesis is the precognitive grasp of being that every subject is capable of forming. This ontological work of imagination grows from a praxis-based hermeneutics developed out of factical and plural human experience as Dasein.136 Subjectivity itself becomes the result of Dasein’s temporalized and imagination-driven self-projection toward other beings.137 The limitedness and finitude at the heart of this constitution of subjectivity uproot the Cartesian sense of subjectionhood and pure self-presence and correspondingly of objectivity as grasped other presence. Those ontic distinctions become subsumed into the imaginative ontology of Dasein.

To Schalow, this dissolving of the Cartesian subject-object dichotomy is the key to Heidegger’s linking of imagination with disclosive truth.138 Elliott further affirms this point about Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant:

With reference to Kant’s determination of the schematism as an operation whereby the pure concepts of understanding are granted objective relation through ‘sensible restriction”—what Heidegger calls “sensibilization”—Heidegger attempts to counteract the Kantian tendency to view the imagination as an effect of understanding on sensibility by grasping the mediation as a prior action of sensibility on the understanding. Such a reversal in mental economy indicates an idea of the imagination as the pre-cognitive basis of all possible cognition, so allowing Heidegger to

134 Ibid., 72.
135 See Kearney, Wake, 189-190 and Elliott, 110-117.
136 Schalow, 77-78, 101-102.
137 Ibid., 73, 76.
138 Schalow, 79.
affirm time (as the basic form of intuition) as foundational for all intellectual operations. . . . With this interpretation of the epistemological primacy of the *cogito* or reflexive consciousness in the shape of what Kant calls “transcendental unity of apperception” is undermined in favour of a pre-conceptual immediate “givenness” of the space of possible appearance of any object whatever. In this way Heidegger invokes Kant’s doctrine of the schematism of the transcendental imagination to order to liquidate the dominant Cartesian notion of the *cogito* within Kantian thought.139

The way that Heidegger uses imagination to unsettle the metaphysical category of presence is a central avenue by which this goal is reached.

With his prioritization of the ontological over the ontic, Heidegger shows that “the world” into which *Dasein* is thrown can not be conceived of as an aggregate of beings. The world is *Dasein*’s self-projection, rooted in spontaneous receptivity and receptive spontaneity, within a space created by the transcendental imagination and its temporalization that points to finitude, even to a comportment to death as the ultimate limit of finitude.140 In Schalow’s estimation, this result of Heidegger’s appropriation of Kant relieves ontology of the “oscillation between the infinite and the finite which obscures a more inclusive sense of transcendence.”141 The radical finitude of *Dasein*, marked out by the imagination, prevents the possibility of understanding subjectivity to have rational access to the infinite from which it then bestows meaning onto the finite and ontic world. The inclusivity in Heidegger’s mode of transcendence is framed in the relational ontology of *Dasein*, preventing a one-sided dominion of subjective reason against receptivity to factical situatedness because all beings, including the subject, are bracketed into ontological finitude. This finite situatedness points to the network of involvements, to the “being-in-the-world” that is the category of *Dasein*, that grounds a relational sense of meaning.142 And it is this relational quality of being that is the source of upending the Cartesian

139 Elliott, 106.
140 Schalow, 113-114.
141 Ibid., 114-115.
model of subject-object ontology and its presumption that subjectivity involves pure self-presence.\textsuperscript{143}

The drive to pure presence within the rational metaphysics marked by Cartesian dualism allows all reality to be viewed as a reflection of the ideal concepts accessible to reason, divorcing thought from its finite and relational situatedness and making any mode of representational thinking, such as by the imagination, an ontologically insignificant function that must accede to reason’s power of gathering all to presence.\textsuperscript{144} Schalow claims that setting imagination free from this domination by reason sets it free to perform its creative function of mediating the dynamic exchange between presence and the absence that is forgotten by rational metaphysics and instantiated by Heidegger’s relational ontology.\textsuperscript{145}

The correlations that result from Heidegger’s analysis of subjectivist ontology are reason with presence and imagination with absence. Because of the finitude and limitedness that define the existential situation of \textit{Dasein}, subjectivity is constituted by the imagination’s projection of possibilities that fill in for the lack of presence, or absence, that results from limitation. Therefore, imagination provides a more deeply integrated base for knowledge, one that takes account of authentic being and the finitude it entails, and the finitude within which transcendence reaches out to objects in the world. Reason alone with its accent on presence does not allow apprehension of the world, of disclosure, to impact knowledge fully because it disallows the confrontation with absence that naturally results from the encounter between finite subject and finite world. Spontaneity of understanding in the subjectivist paradigm does not open itself to receptivity in the way that finitude necessitates.\textsuperscript{146} Schalow writes:

\textsuperscript{143} Schalow, 89.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 116-118.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 199.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 175-176.
But even more explicitly, Heidegger remains concerned with showing how the “free-space,” from which the precursory comprehension of being issues, can itself be evoked even more profoundly through an increasingly radicalized grasp of imagination. As such, imagination will cease to be merely a synthetic function aiding the understanding, and re-emerge in its full independence as the original suspension in the nothing, the absenting dimension of time which allows something to come forward and to be present. . . To the extent that intuition, as we saw, depends on its prior affinity with the nothing in order to allow objectness to emerge, imagination marks that deeper origin. For imagination “proposes the horizon of presence” precisely by establishing the contrast with its opposite, namely, absence, in such a way as to make possible the immediate givenness of the object in intuition.147

If truth is equated with authentic disclosure, then imagination becomes a source of truth by engaging the world in such a way that its disclosure is authentic.

An important example of the impact of this shift is the way that truth relates to a fuller unity of human possibility as it comes to be rooted in imagination. Schalow argues that imagination as the root of existence makes reason just one capacity of the person alongside others that subjectivist ontology diminishes, such as feeling.148 Heidegger reflects this idea centrally in his naming of care as the primary disposition of Dasein existence. Such non-rational capacities allow the subject’s spontaneity to more robustly defer to receptivity, which in turn more genuinely acknowledges the relational situatedness of Heidegger’s non-subjectivist ontology. By decentering presence from the matrix of truth and engaging the reality of absence that arises in finite transcendence, imagination fosters a more integrated engagement between beings as they disclose their truth to one another.

Imagination, time, and presence, or rather the lack of it, are conjoined in the move to displace the subject of traditional metaphysics. Imagination produces the temporal frame in which Dasein encounters otherness, leading to its encounter with a lack of simple presence or permanence and ultimately the “possibility-structure” that serves as the groundless root beneath all existence.149 Schalow identifies it as a “fundamental offshoot” of Heidegger’s appropriation

147 Ibid., 195.
148 Ibid., 193-194.
149 Ibid., 199-201.
of imagination that it creates a “radical displacement of presence” correlating with a radical hermeneutics that replaces the thinking of “is,” implying presence and permanence, with a hermeneutical “as” that reflects the absence inherent to the disclosure of being and the apprehension of possibility that emerges from that absence.\(^\text{150}\) Richard Palmer notes the significance of Heidegger calling his method of phenomenology hermeneutic phenomenology; he contrasts the approach with Husserl, whose phenomenology aimed to scientifically illuminate “consciousness as transcendental subjectivity,” whereas Heidegger’s take on phenomenology as hermeneutic aimed to describe “man’s historical being-in-the-world,” which was an act of interpretation.\(^\text{151}\) Ricoeur claims that this hermeneutical turn in Heidegger marks a “depsychologized” understanding of hermeneutics, where interpretation becomes ontological instead of an exercise in exchanged understanding between two beings.\(^\text{152}\) Analysis of the elements of a hermeneutical circle reveals more about the conditions of Dasein and the “anticipatory structure of understanding” than it does about the object of interpretation.\(^\text{153}\) To elaborate, the hermeneutic circle for Heidegger begins with a primary form of interpretation wherein Dasein and the world are coterminous, and explanation or knowledge, or thematized or articulated interpretation as in philosophy, only follows after that initially interpreted understanding of existence in the world.\(^\text{154}\) This hermeneutical “anticipatory structure of understanding” for Heidegger is made by the work of imagination and its temporalizing and its mediation between presence and absence; therefore, the next step in measuring Heidegger’s ideas on imagination is to examine his ideas proper to hermeneutics.

\(^{150}\) Ibid., 210-211, 216-217.

\(^{151}\) Palmer, 125-126.

\(^{152}\) Ricoeur, “The Task,” 283-284.

\(^{153}\) Ibid., 286-287. Palmer similarly identifies “preconceptual apprehending” as the main discovery for Heidegger within Husserl’s phenomenology before making the contrast in n. 152 about how Heidegger takes that discovery as disclosing Dasein rather than a Cartesian transcendental subject.

According to Palmer, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger deals with the problem of how hermeneutics can focus on the manifestness of phenomena rather than on subjective impositions onto those phenomena, especially given his concern for ontology and the fact that for him being is not itself a phenomenon. The solution lies in “the fact that one has with his existence, along with it, a certain understanding of what fullness of being is,” so that interpretation of phenomenological appearance is capable of accessing ontological being because the interpretation is rooted in a historically formed understanding of being. 155  Understanding involves integrating the context of relations to the world and one’s own sense of care within that world—one understands existential possibilities as primordial interpretations preceding conceptualization or theorization. 156  This understanding of being, really a preunderstanding, is developed for Heidegger by the imagination. It is thus because of imagination grounding a cognitive dynamic of receptive spontaneity and spontaneous receptivity that hermeneutics can reach a more primordial level of being by interpreting the existence of *Dasein*. Therefore for Heidegger:

> Our investigation itself will show that the meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in *interpretation*. The *logos* of the phenomenology of *Dasein* has the character of a *hermeneuein*, through which the authentic meaning of Being, and also those basic structures of Being which *Dasein* itself possesses, are *made known* to *Dasein’s* understanding of Being. The phenomenology of *Dasein* is a *hermeneutic* in the primordial signification of this word, where it designates this business of interpreting. 157

Hermeneutics then ceases to be an exercise directed firstly at texts, ceases to be interpretation of interpretation. Because of how imagination constitutes understanding and intuition, it becomes an exercise in bringing forth from absence the possibilities concealed in manifested phenomena and in *Dasein* itself. 158  The subject for Heidegger is an entity involved in a context of being and

155 Palmer, 129.
156 Hoy, 178-179.
158 Palmer, 129-130.
one that finds foundations for knowledge and cognition in its interactions with that context rather than in its own transcendent consciousness.\textsuperscript{159} Dilthey had identified meaning in the interrelations at stake in the hermeneutic circle focused on texts as objectifications of life, but with the conceptual tools of Husserl unmoored from subjectivism, Heidegger is able to push Dilthey’s hermeneutical insights into a deeper ontological space, interpreting the appearance of things in their initial emergence into the context of world and possibility couched in the forestructure of understanding constituted by imagination.\textsuperscript{160} Meaning becomes historically holistic in that it is only possible within a contextual matrix of existential relations, with interpretation drawing out the possibilities that inhere in the matrix.\textsuperscript{161} In this way, hermeneutics becomes the process by which the meaning-making of imagination is disclosed and brought to awareness.\textsuperscript{162}

That awareness is inevitably given expression, and this transition from existential interpretation to apophantic interpretation is decisive for Heidegger, as he explains with the example of a hammer:

\begin{quote}
The entity which is held in our forehaving—for instance, the hammer—is proximally ready-t-hand as equipment. If this entity becomes the “object” of an assertion, then as soon as we begin this assertion, there is already a change-over in the forehaving. Something ready-to-hand with which we have to do or perform something, turns into something “about which” the assertion that points it out is made. Our fore-sight is aimed at something present-at-hand in what is ready-to-hand. Both by and for this way of looking at it, the ready-to-hand becomes veiled as ready-to-hand. . . . The as-structure of interpretation has undergone a modification. In its function of appropriating what is understood, the “as” no longer reaches out into a totality of involvements.\textsuperscript{163}
\end{quote}

Objectification in language cuts off the originary relational ontology of \textit{Dasein} and other beings in the world and shifts cognition to a subject-object dichotomy. It returns to the Kantian model of synthesis where judgment acts to apply concepts of understanding onto intuited objects,

\textsuperscript{159} Pietersma, 99-100.
\textsuperscript{160} Palmer, 131-133. See also Ricoeur, “The Task,” 283. Ricoeur contrasts Dilthey’s approach to hermeneutics, where the attempt is to understand the psyche of others through their objectified expressions, and Heidegger’s approach, where an approach like Dilthey’s is taken as a symptom of the focus on epistemology and beings rather than being itself.
\textsuperscript{161} Hoy,183. See Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, 193.
\textsuperscript{162} Palmer, 134.
\textsuperscript{163} Heidegger, \textit{Being and Time}, 200.
reifying the subject-object split and placing beings in the world under the dominion of the spontaneous reason of the subject.164 Instead, Heidegger wants to maintain mindfulness of the “existential-hermeneutical as” that precedes predication, so that, as Palmer writes, “Language as speaking is no longer an objective body of words which one manipulates as objects; it takes its place in the world of what is ready-to-hand. . . . [Language] is a situation coming to explicitness in words.”165

This existential idea of language led Heidegger to be critical of senses of language focused solely on communication because they focused solely on language employed for logical and conceptual manipulation that masks awareness of Dasein’s ontological nature.166 The alternative for Heidegger is to envision language as an event in which being itself is brought forward, and hermeneutics becomes a process of aiding the occurrence of the language event.167 When faced with a particular text to interpret, the questioning that drives the hermeneutic task must go beyond the text itself, or else it would only be focusing on the apophantic and logical dimension of language. The philological hermeneutics or general hermeneutics of the nineteenth century are inadequate to this challenge. Heidegger seeks a questioning interpretation that can tap into the hidden meaning in what the author did not or could not say in addition to what he or she did say, doing violence to the text and going beyond its explicit formulations to uncover the violence in its own formative dynamics.168 The text itself is a logical expression of analysis or explanation, but the in-the-world understanding that stands behind it, rooted in imagination, can only be accessed for Heidegger when hermeneutics can reach beyond the logical language and reveal that language event behind. Part of the importance of this focus is to remove the

164 Ibid., 202.
165 Palmer, 139.
166 Heidegger, Being and Time, 204-210.
167 Ibid, 155.
168 Ibid., 147-148.
expectation of presuppositionless inquiry from phenomenology, as existed in Husserl’s model, and instead emphasize the historical contextuality of all human existence, allowing hermeneutics to produce authentic knowledge by allowing existence to retain a clear view of itself as it proceeds into textual expression.\textsuperscript{169}

Knowledge and truth in Heidegger are subjected to authenticity to concrete existence, but because that concrete existence is embedded in a historical context and finds meaning through destructive or hermeneutical recollection, knowledge and truth do not become relativistic in the sense of individual arbitrariness.\textsuperscript{170} Meaning is rooted in concrete praxis within the world, and knowledge flows from that active involvement in a way that is controlled by the particular situation and its possibilities of meaning. And because those possibilities of meaning result from historicity and temporality, the imagination becomes the arbiter of knowledge and truth by serving as the architect of the meaning system from which knowledge and truth arise. The paradigm of knowledge rooted in Descartes had adopted scientific criteria, making timelessness and universality traits of truthful knowledge, neglecting the ontological situatedness that Heidegger places at the root of knowledge and accordingly the power of imagination that mediates meaning within that situated context.\textsuperscript{171}

Pietersma articulates this view of hermeneutics and knowledge by contrasting the status of knowledge in Heidegger and Husserl, noting that for the latter knowledge precedes all other activities, virtues, or cognitive acts while for the former knowledge derives from the hermeneutics of pre-understanding and the way it illuminates the person’s real situation in the world.\textsuperscript{172} This real situation is one Pietersma describes with a strong accent on unity—the world

\textsuperscript{169} Elliott, 83-86.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., 94-95.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., 96.
\textsuperscript{172} Pietersma, 86, 95.
of being that is the context of *Dasein* is an original whole, a unification, in which differentiation between entities is not reflected.\(^{173}\) This is why Heidegger wants hermeneutics to point mainly to the existential level where the unity of the world remains in tact. Predication is the marker of the move into a cognitive attitude dominated by differentiation that breaks involvement in the world and originary unity. However, in his analysis, Pietersma reminds that being-in-the-world, being in that originary unity, is only possible by temporalization.\(^{174}\) And imagination for Heidegger is responsible for temporalization.\(^{175}\) Imagination, then, comes to serve as the unifying ground of experience instead of the purely self-present *cogito* of the Cartesian tradition.\(^{176}\)

In his analysis of Heidegger’s use of imagination, this drive to unity constitutes one of the chief criticisms of Elliott. He sets up his criticism with a series of inquiries:

Thus Heidegger . . . fails to acknowledge that other side of the imagination in virtue of which it disrupts, disorders and dissolves the connections of “average” experience. Could it be that Heidegger . . . fails to appreciate and conceptually articulate the disruptive potential of the imagination? Is there a freedom of the imagination that Heidegger himself “shrank back” from in favour of an idea of human existence as lawfully determined in advance of all singular difference?\(^{177}\)

Elliott will answer these questions in the affirmative, developing an argument that, although Heidegger posits imagination as the common root of both receptivity and spontaneity, he ultimately privileges spontaneity by making the projective dimension of *Dasein* dominant over the thrown dimension, thusly making imagination primarily a tool for its projective activity toward unified world-construction.\(^{178}\)

Elliott diagnoses that in becoming preoccupied with the finite nature of human existence, Heidegger too fully encapsulated imagination into the limits of *Dasein* and cut short its potential

\(^{173}\) Ibid., 92-93.
\(^{174}\) Ibid., 93. See also 99-103 for a description of knowledge and predication as “unworlding” activities.
\(^{175}\) Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretation*, 231-236.
\(^{176}\) Elliott, 114-117.
\(^{177}\) Ibid., 117.
\(^{178}\) Ibid., 124.
as a receptive power capable of being truly responsive to the world and its ontic diversity and complexity.\textsuperscript{179} The result is that \textit{Dasein's} being-in-the-world becomes a subjectivist construction of free spontaneity, where fundamental ontology is beholden to the cognitive activity of individual \textit{Dasein}.\textsuperscript{180} Heidegger eventually tries to resolve this problem by turning away from the appropriated Kantian sense of productive imagination, and turning instead to a mythopoetic sense of imagination that divines the hidden meaning of collective communal history that embodies his new understanding of truth as related to being itself in an “ante-human” way preceding the encounter between \textit{Dasein} and other beings in the world.\textsuperscript{181} Heidegger identifies the ground of this historical truth with a romanticized vision of the polis.\textsuperscript{182} The problem that Elliott identifies is that this schema replaces the old Romantic autarchic individual with an autarchic community.\textsuperscript{183} He describes that the post-1930 shift that Heidegger underwent entails shifting the epicenter of concrete historical experience to a collective of the polis rather than the individual praxis of the person.\textsuperscript{184} According to Jeanne Evans:

> Heidegger’s work is vulnerable to charges of an implicit and unquestioning assent to tradition and authority, since he does not attend to the problem of how to distinguish between authentic and inauthentic expressions of tradition and the authority of institutions, to which \textit{Dasein} belongs and through which it interprets and projects its horizon of being-in-the-world.\textsuperscript{185}

Because of this tendency to always end up in either the autocracy of the individual or the autocracy of the community by emphasizing the limitedness of \textit{Dasein}, Heidegger wound up

\textsuperscript{179} Elliott, 124–130.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., 134, 138.
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., 138–145. See also John W. M. Krummel, “Representation and \textit{Poiesis}: The Imagination in the Later Heidegger,” \textit{Philosophy Today} 51 (2007): 261–277. Krummel observes a similar shift in Heidegger’s use of imagination, but explains how it coincides with a terminological change as well. He argues that post-1930 the dominant way in which Heidegger uses imagination turns away from his “ontologically broadened” sense of it and instead focuses on it more narrowly as the representative power of cognition. As such, it is made complicit with the modern epoch of thought and is cast as something that objectifies being by turning it into an image according to the spontaneity and will of the subject. However, Krummel observes that Heidegger develops an understanding of \textit{poiesis} that is closer to the “ontologically broadened” sense of pre-1930 and that can draw out the truth of being described by Elliott.
\textsuperscript{182} Elliott, 146.
\textsuperscript{183} Ibid., 152.
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., 144.
\textsuperscript{185} Evans, 62.
unable to forge an ultimately authentic pathway between the imagination and the pluralism of ontic reality, falling short of recapturing the real power of imagination. He failed to offer a way that imagination can validly engage other beings and use the experience to critique one’s context or situation. He placed too much emphasis on the finitude of the subject and its imagination and later by making the community of which one is a part too much of an absolutized given.

Schalow similarly critiques Heidegger. He argues that Heidegger became unmoored from the actual existential and historical roots of meaning that he wanted to preserve because of his focus on being rather than beings. That existential and historical situation is one of diversity, and even more simply one of different and unique ontic entities, and so imagination cannot serve to universalize only. It must also reflect the discontinuities and differences that emerge from this pluralistic setting and the challenges and tensions that can result. John Caputo describes Heidegger as practicing “onto-hermeneutics” to try to uncover a deep first principle of being that was too detached from existential reality and too aimed at privileging a single sense of origin for all human thought. Caputo argues that hermeneutics is simply not capable of achieving such a goal without imposing a particular perspective upon otherness as the universalizing norm.

The key to turning imagination to a fuller appreciation of plurality and diversity is a more careful consideration of language. The point can be demonstrated by examining how Heidegger’s lack of such consideration leads to some of his problems. Hoy observes one such problematic feature in the overarching challenge for Heidegger’s paradigm to explain disconnection:

Heidegger’s strategy is different from the Cartesian strategy, which starts by assuming a basic ontological disconnection (e.g., between mental and physical substance) and then looks for

186 Schalow, 203.
instances of epistemological connection that cannot be doubted (e.g., the knowledge of the existence of a thinking subject). Heidegger’s strategy is to see Dasein as already in the world, which suggests that what needs to be explained is not the connection, which is the basis, but the disconnection. Instances of disconnection happen obviously and frequently, as when humans make mistakes, not only cognitively but practically. The Cartesian strategy runs into difficulty when it fails to explain (e.g., to skeptics) connection. The Heideggerian strategy must show that it does not run into similar problems when it tries to explain how apparent disconnections could arise . . .

The solution that Hoy identifies is that Dasein is both factically situated in a current world, but also ontologically defined by the interpreted possibilities projected by its understanding, which it can fail to fulfill. But as Elliott argued, the projection of those possibilities proves to be an autarchic practice of the subject or, in the later writings, the polis. And as Caputo identified, the onto-hermeneutic nature of such a solution makes it dubious because it assumes a first principle common to all historical experience. The solution Hoy describes in fact exacerbates Caputo’s noted issue, as divergence from the asserted hermeneutical root can be assessed not as ontic diversity and difference but rather as failure. After his subduing of the subject-object dichotomy, Heidegger directs Dasein too easily back to ontic epistemology. His ultimate drive to underlying unity and connection led him to fail to account for the plurality and discontinuity for which his ontology opened the way, and his return from being to beings failed because as he maintained too easily an insistence on ontological connection he imposed a privileged account of being as a blanket over ontic diversity. Language, as the mediator of understanding, accounts for the lingering disconnection and difference that Heidegger could not adequately corral, and his shortcomings in allowing for the disjunctive nature of that mediation prevented him from making genuine space for disconnection and diversity.

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188 Hoy, 176.
189 Ibid., 176-181.
Heidegger claims that, “[L]anguage already hides in itself a developed way of conceiving.”¹⁹⁰ But, Heidegger does not account for the way that that shaped way of seeing is disconnected from experience. He takes language to be embedded in the world of meaning given at-hand in the fundamental ontological situation of Dasein.¹⁹¹ Language constitutes second-order interpretation, but the meaning of language is supplied by the encounter with being itself. Language is a vehicle of manifestation for Heidegger.¹⁹² The epistemological realm of language is subjugated to ontology, but it is stripped of the ability to deal with critical questions about the ontological context or the relation between beings that it governs.¹⁹³ Since the ontological predilections of Heidegger veer toward unified first principles, epistemology and language are subjected to that universalization. Heidegger’s onto-hermeneutics prove incapable of providing a pathway back from the destruction of Cartesian ontology to epistemological analysis than can authentically engage the discontinuities and plurality of the ontic world. Heidegger made imagination ontologically significant. He removed it from the confines of the psychological faculties of Kant’s threefold synthesis where it was relegated to secondary status. However, he was unable to bring its power to make ontological meaning to bear on real relationships in the world and an accounting with how they might involve oppression, suppression, and difference as well as Heidegger’s favored categories of blank possibility, connection, and manifestation.

To conclude this critique of Heidegger on imagination and language, an analysis from John Sallis is demonstrative. Sallis examines a series of lecture courses on logic that Heidegger ran during the decade and a half extending from the time he was working on Being and Time, examining how his treatment of it changed over those years. He notes by the third of these

¹⁹⁰ Heidegger, Being and Time, 199.  
¹⁹¹ Palmer, 134.  
¹⁹² Palmer, 128; Ricoeur, “The Task,” 288.  
lecture series, from 1934, that he had come to equate the issue of logic with the essence of
language. Yet, he identified the essence of language with poetry without explaining how logic
can graft itself to that originary essence. And by the time of the fourth lecture series, in 1938,
Heidegger abandoned the goal of renewing logic altogether, abandoning the task of forging a
link between poiesis and apophantic discourse, and instead setting the new goal of surpassing
logic’s sovereignty over philosophy altogether. Sallis observes that Heidegger had become
convinced that apophantic logic was incapable of respecting the originary existential thinking of
Dasein and could not help privileging beings over being. This analysis encapsulates the
shoals that Heidegger set upon while trying to navigate the power of imagination through his
cleared ontological channels. In presuming too close of a connection between language and
originary experience, and in being unable to chart a clear course back from his ontological
discoveries to critical epistemology, he was unable to bring together language and epistemology.
Imagination was the casualty. Given the necessity of temporality in all understanding and the
lack of pure presence in cognitive awareness, imagination was highlighted as the chief power of
meaning-making. But as Heidegger pushed the imagination further into the obscurity of poetics
and the absolutism of collective communal history out of which those poetics emerge, he was
unable to bring the meaning-making power of imagination to a capacity for epistemological
dialogue, as well as the critical questions that such dialogue invites. With his more direct turn to
the role of imagination in language, while maintaining Heidegger’s insights on ontology and
hermeneutics, Ricoeur was able to create space for such critical questions while maintaining the
centrality of the imagination in the process of meaning-making.

195 Ibid., 92.
196 Ibid., 92.
197 Ibid., 93.
Paul Ricoeur

Ricoeur’s accomplishment with imagination built on Heidegger’s breakdown of the subject-object dichotomy and his removal of the imagination from the confines of psychological faculties, but by turning to the dynamic between imagination and language he maintained room for the critical intentionality of Husserl and the emphasis on meaning in the mediated objectifications of experience from Dilthey. With these elements, Ricoeur crafted a view of imagination that could reflect the phenomenological ontology of Heidegger while carving a path back to questions of epistemology. Just as Heidegger came to focus on the poietic imagination, Ricoeur focused on the expression of meaning in mainly non-logical forms—symbols, metaphors, and narratives. But by emphasizing the creative and imaginative processes at work in the linguistics of these elements and by also emphasizing the unavoidable distance between them and originary experience he made room for analyses of truth and meaning that could account for plurality and the influences of history and power on the process.

According to Richard Kearney, Ricoeur is the best representation of the focus on language that was necessitated as phenomenology shifted from emphasis on description to interpretation, a shift that required a change to understanding imagination in terms of linguistic meaning-making instead of vision. Early phenomenology sought meaning in the immediate appearance of things to consciousness, and made imagination subservient to logic, treating it as a perceptual faculty that always paled in comparison to original and pure experience. Heidegger pointed out that such focus on ontic being was naïve to the more fundamental praxis-based relation between things in shared existence. In the turn to language, Ricoeur, with Heidegger, moves away from presuming immediate appearance of things in consciousness as the root of

198 Evans, 65-66.
200 Murray, 180-190.
meaning, but unlike Heidegger he places a degree of distance ever between things as they relate in the world.\textsuperscript{201} This distance is the space of linguistic imagination, and it makes the formation of meaning polysemous and innovative, creating novelty out of the imagined drawing together of juxtaposed images of the world from at-hand experience along with memory and cultural tradition.\textsuperscript{202}

This position actually represents an amalgamation of varying strains of understanding the imagination, all of which Ricoeur thinks actually work in conjunction. Reproductive views of imagination see it mainly as a power to recall perceived images, while productive see it mainly as a power to allow consciousness to transcend perceived images.\textsuperscript{203} Ricoeur observes that confusion over the theory of imagination results from the way these views lead to contrasting poles where the imagination either ends up as an uncritical faculty that confuses images for reality or one where it is at such a critical distance that it loses touch with reality.\textsuperscript{204} This confusion described by Ricoeur is rooted in preoccupation with the content of imagination instead of careful attention to its function.\textsuperscript{205} This function is identified by Kearney primarily with the task of “semantic innovation,” whereby imagination, by being linguistic, absorbs images from the world as in the reproductive model, emphasizing its conditioned and uncritical facet, while through intentional projections it poetically creates new worlds of possibility by bringing together dissimilar meanings to create new meaning, emphasizing its facet of critical distance.

\textsuperscript{201} See ibid., 193-208.
\textsuperscript{202} Kearney, “Paul Ricoeur,” 116.
\textsuperscript{204} Ibid., 166-167.
\textsuperscript{205} Kearney, “Paul Ricoeur,” 119. See also Murray, 207. Murray argues that Ricoeur presents imagination as a method of thought rather than a faculty subsumed in an alternate model of thought that downplays its value, a logical-cognitional method, where imagination aids cognition when immediate experience is not available. In such a method of thought imagination is inferior to direct experience, while Murray argues that Ricoeur’s imaginative method of thought places imagination at the center of the meaning-making involved in all experience.
from given reality. The turning to language and imagination is what allows Ricoeur to bring these opposing poles into cooperation. Heidegger made language emerge directly from existence, leaving him unable to make room for critical distancing without seeing it as erroneously detaching from fundamental ontology. By making language more of a central focus of hermeneutics, Ricoeur makes originary experience linguistically mediated. This means the fundamental ontological encounter envisioned by Heidegger is already interpreted through signs, making it distanced and meaning that the workings of intentionality through imagination, with critical distance from existential roots, is not a violation of primary relationality. Ricoeur states the argument thusly:

[Heidegger] wanted to retrain our eye and redirect our gaze; he wanted us to subordinate historical knowledge to ontological understanding, as the derived form of a primordial form. But he gives us no way to show in what sense historical understanding, properly speaking, is derived from this primordial understanding. Is it not better, then, to begin with the derived forms of understanding and to show in them the signs of their derivation? This implies that the point of departure be taken on the same level on which understanding operates, that is, on the level of language.

For Heidegger the distanciation of apophantic language interrupted the ontological consciousness of Dasein, and later he seized upon poetical language as revealing that ontology in its communal constitution, avoiding the distanciation. But for Ricoeur, “Distanciation is not the product of our methodology and therefore is not something added and parasitic,” and “it is not only what understanding [via interpretation] must conquer, but also its condition.” Heidegger’s view allowed him a “short way” to ontology around issues of epistemology. Ricoeur instead advocates a “long way” that must traverse the distanciation of symbols and language and

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206 Kearney, “Paul Ricoeur,” 118-119.
207 Evans centers her presentation of Ricoeur’s imagination theory on him equating imagination with language instead of with time as Heidegger does. In this way, the historical understanding of experience is only possible through the derivative mode of expression rather than direct access to ontological being, leaving Ricoeur with a necessarily limited and indirect sense of ontology. Chapter 3 of Evans’s book is devoted to arguing this position; see 63-64 for a concise formulation of the point.
critically pass through epistemology to arrive at ontology—there is no other way that can properly account for the polysemy and plurality of ontic reality.210 As summarized by David N. Power, “It has always been Ricoeur’s contention that the distanciation between life and text means that we are always one stage removed from the immediacy of life. One must learn, therefore, to deal with texts as texts (and similarly for other forms of expression), rather than seeing them as a way to a mediated immediacy to life-forces or to being.”211

The point stated by Power is offered as a contrast with Dilthey. Power notes that Ricoeur takes the great contribution of Dilthey to be his idea that life can only be understood through expressed mediations, although Dilthey himself maintained a notion that a common human nature could be discovered behind those expressions through the use of hermeneutics and empathetic and Romantic imagination.212 Ricoeur interpreted Dilthey through the ontological sensibilities of Heidegger, making the hermeneutic imagination focused on expressions of life a source of “ontological novelty” that discloses being-in-the-world and projects future possibilities for being and action rather than just an ability to empathize with the mind of an author as it was for Dilthey.213 The reason then that one must “deal with texts as texts,” as Power stated, is that expressions in whatever form, as well as the imagined ontological structure they represent, serve as their own measure for the validity of interpretation, as opposed to the psychology behind their creation as measured by the psychology of the interpreter.214 This psychological approach rooted Dilthey in the subjectivist perspective of epistemology, the ontology of which Heidegger

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210 See Kearney, On Paul Ricoeur: The Own of Minerva (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2004), 21-22. See also Evans, 50-51, 72-73.
212 Ibid., 84. See also Ricoeur, “The Task,” 274-275, where Ricoeur succinctly expresses affirmation of Dilthey’s observation that expressed objectifications of life are the medium through which human historical existence can be understood while noting the problem that he still filtered this concept through the subjectivism of Kantian tradition.
dismantled. Ricoeur’s views on imagination parallel his views on hermeneutics drawn through from Dilthey:

It is still true, however, that Dilthey perfectly caught sight of the kernel of the problem, that life only grasps life through the mediation of unities of meaning that are raised beyond the historical flux. Dilthey caught sight of a mode of transcending finitude without complete transcendence, without absolute knowledge—of interpretation. In this way he indicated the direction in which historicism could be conquered by itself, without invoking any triumphant coincidence with some absolute knowledge. But, to continue this work it is necessary to renounce linking hermeneutics to the purely psychological notion of transference into an alien psychic life. It is necessary to unfold the text, no longer backward toward its author, but forward toward its immanent meaning and toward the sort of world which it discovers and opens up.  

One of the keys for Ricoeur of this opening is that it introduces the priority of dynamism and diachrony over a privileging of systematization and synchrony. In Heidegger, a problem limiting imagination was a presumption to ontological unity, and it was a problem that remained from the hermeneutic approach of Dilthey, although Ricoeur sees in Dilthey the beginning of a solution for admitting diversity and plurality into ontology, a solution he was able to develop with his recovery of Dilthey in light of Heidegger’s project and his own emphasis on the centrality of language.

This solution also allowed him to perform a recovery of Husserlian intentionality. Heidegger critiqued Husserl on the grounds that his intentionality-based views on phenomenology amounted to subjectivism and a lack of sensitivity to fundamental being. However, his own “short route” to ontology left him unable to authentically deal with ontic diversity. Whereas Heidegger interpreted the Kantian productive imagination as equivalent with temporality, making understanding produced through imagination a direct and unifying understanding of being, Ricoeur interpreted the productive imagination as language directed by Husserlian intentionality, a move he thought better fit Kant’s own claim that the productive

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215 Ibid., 280.
216 Ibid., 273, 278-279.
imagination is obscure and not directly accessible. But by using Heidegger’s destruction of subject-object ontology, and joining intentionality to Dilthey’s concepts of expressions of life distanced from originary experience, Ricoeur was able to identify intentionality as the subject’s ability to inject novel meaning into expressions without allowing such intentional projection to impose universalizing reason from the subject. Husserl saw a direct and essential correspondence between words and objects that allowed his intentionality theory to work from a universalized idea of pre-philosophical epistemological conditions and prioritize cognition and reason in the subject’s intentional life. With distance created between words and experience, intentionality no longer can effect universalization or ideation in the rational and subjectivist mode of Husserl; the ideal of univocal language that drives Husserl fades. By focusing on the essential role played by equivocal language, that is symbolic and poetical language, and the imagination’s role in directing its meaning retrospectively and prospectively, Ricoeur keeps authentic meaning attached to the pluralism of ontic reality. Jeanne Evans summarizes this amalgamation of Heidegger’s phenomenology, Dilthey’s theory of objectifications of life, and Husserl’s concept of intentionality:

... Ricoeur’s development of a critical hermeneutics is advanced by his grafting of hermeneutics to phenomenology at the level of understanding and its objectification through indirect language. Thus he seeks to wed Dilthey’s definition of texts as the “expressions of life” to Husserl’s

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217 Evans, 72. See also 70-71, where Evans describes more fully Ricoeur’s adaptation of productive imagination to language, and how it makes the Kantian schematism a matter of hermeneutical meaning, wherein intentionality through language brings together the limited perspective of perception with the transcendent perspective of reason, but in an indirect way.


219 See Pietersma, 41-42.


221 Evans, 63. See also Ricoeur, “Existence and Hermeneutics,” 15, where Ricoeur himself articulates this turning of Husserlian intentionality away from univocity and toward equivocality.
phenomenological theory of intentionality and *epoche.* But this grafting is made in view of the horizon of Heidegger’s reformulation of the hermeneutic circle as the anticipatory structure of understanding, which represents the depsychologizing of the imagination and subversion of the subject/object dualism of neo-Kantian epistemology. This Heideggerian breakthrough lays the groundwork for Ricoeur’s return to the advances in the area of mediation of experience and transcendence of subjectivity represented by Dilthey’s “expressions of life” and Husserl’s theory of intentionality and *epoche,* . . . It is Ricoeur’s unifying of the philosophy of imagination with the functioning of symbolic language, as opposed to the psychology of the author, that is pivotal to his development of a critical hermeneutics, which can integrate the Romantic recognition of the creativity of language with the Enlightenment advocacy of critical reflection and method.²²²

It was this recognition of the essential mediating function of language and the symbols that it evokes and employs that led Ricoeur more fully into the realm of hermeneutics and also to a prolonged if occasional study of imagination. Kearney states that this transition began with *The Symbolism of Evil* in 1960: “It signaled a departure from descriptive phenomenology, as a reflection on intentional modes of consciousness, in favor of a larger hermeneutic conviction, i.e., that meaning is never simply the intuitive possession of a subject but is always mediated through signs and symbols of our intersubjective existence.”²²³ After this initial transition, Kearney asserts four distinct stages in Ricoeur’s development of imagination theory, each developing chronologically and corresponding with a particular area of emphasis: the symbolic imagination focused on symbols as significations of meaning and interpretation; the oneiric imagination focused on the depth nature of symbols and language and their ability to conceal as well as reveal; the poetical imagination focused on more complex semantic arrangements of meaning, primarily in metaphor and narrative; and the social imagination focused on the connection between hermeneutic reception and action, especially as constructed toward ideology and utopia. These stages described by Kearney form a composite theory of imagination, and so summarizing each one develops the key facets of that theory.

²²² Evans, 65. See also Million, 53-58, where he focuses his explanation of the same synthesis on Ricoeur’s dissatisfaction with Heidegger’s over-emphasis on ontology at the expense of epistemological dimensions of hermeneutics, necessitating the re-integration of Husserl’s phenomenology and Dilthey’s concern for method into hermeneutic phenomenology.
²²³ Kearney, “Paul Ricoeur,” 120-121.
In his conclusion to The Symbolism of Evil, Ricoeur offered his maxim that “the symbol gives rise to thought.” This maxim is explained by Kearney: “A symbol [for Ricoeur] is a double intentionality, wherein one meaning is transgressed or transcended by another. As such, it is a work of imagination which enables being to emerge as language (signification) and, by extension, as thought (interpretation).” This dynamic is rooted in symbols that emerge as correlates with natural phenomena in cosmic reality, wherein language acquires double meaning through the double intention of words standing in reference to natural phenomena but also a depth dimension beyond the phenomena themselves. By this initial signification, being is drawn out by imagination through the double meaning of linguistic symbols, but only through this distanciated mode of language is being accessible. There is no primordial access to the meaning of being beside or prior to the symbols mediated by imagination. For Ricoeur, this double expressivity of symbols next extends into the individual psyche, where symbols take on a psychic function of expressing oneself in dreams that double manifest and latent meaning through the symbols drawn from the cosmic order. Finally, symbols take on a role in a poetic imagination. It is here that creativity enters and double expressivity is given truly intentional direction. Poetic symbols draw from the previous levels of signification, the cosmic and the psychic, but break them open in order to develop semantic innovation and turn toward future possibility rather than recapitulation of the static symbolic currency preserved in the “hieratic stability” of myths and rituals that capture the cosmic and psychic layers of symbolic meaning.

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225 Kearney, “Paul Ricoeur,” 121.
227 Ricoeur, Freud and Philosophy, 15. See also Symbolism of Evil, 12-13.
228 Ricoeur, Symbolism of Evil, 13-14.
With this last piece in place, it becomes clear why it is that “the symbol gives rise to thought.” Ricoeur explains via a criticism of views of the imagination as simply reproductive or image-forming for things not immediately present:

Too often it has been said that imagination is the power of forming images. This is not true if by image one means the representation of an absent or unreal thing, a process of rendering present—or presentifying—the thing over there, elsewhere, or nowhere. In no way does poetic imagination reduce itself to the power of forming a mental picture of the unreal; the imagery of sensory origin merely serves as a vehicle and as material for the verbal power whose true dimension is given to us by the oneiric [psychic] and cosmic.229

Thought arises from the engagement with reality, but that engagement is necessarily mediated at a distance through language. The sense of imagination as reproductive assumes that there is some pure access to reality before imaginative representation. For Ricoeur, this is a fallacy. Imagination is not productive of a portrait that reproduces a distorted purity, but is the only route available by which being can come to expression at all, and thought then amounts to interpretation of the symbols that imagination provides. Kearney encapsulates the point: “The hermeneutics of symbols must begin from a full language, that is, from the recognition that before reflection and intuition there are already symbols.”230 Similar to Heidegger, this makes the starting point in a context, as a being-in-the-world, paramount and removes the possibility of a presuppositionless, rational philosophy that can impose itself against any contextual diversity; however, by tying imagination to language, and noting the layers of double meaning incorporated into it as well as the space of distanciation highlighted in this linguistic imagination, Ricoeur maintains the possibility of critical analysis that can examine ways in which symbolic discourse is abused or unduly crystallized into static and univocal meaning.231

This point about criticism is enhanced by the next stage of imagination that Kearney sees developed in Ricoeur’s work, that of the oneiric. This aspect of the hermeneutics of imagination

229 Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 15.
231 See ibid., 124.
builds upon the psychic dimension of symbol analysis described above. It emphasizes that language always involves depth, direct and indirect meaning, and interpretation must account for both. “The basic hermeneutic lesson to be learned from dreams, according to Ricoeur, is that images can serve to mask as well as disclose meaning.”232 This leads to Ricoeur’s regard for the “masters of suspicion” who foster a hermeneutics aimed at uncovering the ever-present masked meaning in symbolic language: Marx and his emphasis on false consciousness and class domination, Nietzsche and his emphasis on will and the drive to power, and Freud and his emphasis on desire.233 Hermeneutics in this key of suspicion shows how the imagination is not innocent and critical interpretation must take account of the concealments and distortions that such suspicion can bring to light.

However, Ricoeur sees in this uncovering of latent meaning a double direction. On one hand, latent meaning reveals an archaeology of repression and suppression, as noted by the hermeneutics of suspicion, but it can also reveal eschatological possibility that affirms desires for change and projects them into future horizons:

We could fully understand the problem of hermeneutics if we could grasp the double dependence of the self on the unconscious and on the sacred, since this double dependence is manifested only in a symbolic mode. In order to elucidate this double dependence, reflection must reduce the status of consciousness and interpret it in terms of the symbolic meanings that approach it from behind and ahead, from above and below. In short, reflection must embrace both an archaeology and an eschatology.234

This double direction of latent meaning serves to place reason at the mercy of imagination. The meaning produced by imagination always exceeds what can be delineated by reason and demands multiplicity and diversity rather than univocity and absoluteness.235

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232 Ibid., 125.
233 Ricoeur, Freud and Philosophy, 32-36.
Building on this equivocity and diversity inherent to the symbols that build language, Ricoeur turned to elaborating more fully the poetic imagination and its creative adaptations of meaning. This examination begins with a transition from words as the carrier of meaning to sentences in *The Rule of Metaphor* and later from sentences to narratives in the three-part *Time and Narrative*. In *The Rule of Metaphor*, Ricoeur adapts the language of Kant in light of his own hermeneutics of language. He parallels the Kantian transcendental schematism to the poetical crafting of metaphor: in the way that the schematism brings identity amid difference by gathering perceptions under concepts by way of the reproductive imagination, the metaphor crafts a meeting of identity and difference in bringing together disparate entities of meaning into a confrontation that produces new joint meaning, all rooted in the productive semantics of symbolic imagination in the same way Kant’s productive imagination produced the field of possibility for cognition. But linguistic imagination for Ricoeur holds these productive and reproductive moments that are separate in the Kantian analysis together in a way that unites the intentional psychology of creativity with the hermeneutics of being that produce semantic building blocks for that creativity. The poetic imagination at work in metaphorizing is thus conceived as a power that always overflows reason and forces it to “think more” because imagination and its equivocal semantics, always in dynamic process, no longer serve conceptualization as it ended up doing in Kant. Conceptualization becomes an interpretive seeing-as that defies the absolutization of any one interpretation. Imagination schematizes in this picture, it configures difference under sameness, but in a way that precludes universalization as a destination because the schematization of imagination leads to ongoing innovation in expression, which leads to ongoing innovation in actual possibilities of being-in-the-world. For Kearney,

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237 Ibid., 303. See also Kearney, “Paul Ricoeur,” 129-130.
this means that through metaphor language is constantly creating and recreating meaning by breaking open new dimensions of reality: “Language in the making celebrates reality in the making.”238 Ontological reality is mediated by the creative expression of metaphor and its power to recreate by redescribing, and it is in extended metaphor, in more fully developed narratives that this power is truly developed.239

In *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur uses the concept of “emplotment” to describe the imaginative formation of narratives that effect temporalization, that is the collection of discordant and aporetic experiences into synthesized temporal coherence, in a way that expresses such reality in the making by expressing actual ways of being in the world.240 Kearney explains that Ricoeur transposes the Kantian and Heidegerrian insight about the transcendental imagination being the faculty that makes present experience meaningful by temporalizing it to the imaginative configuration of narrative.241 However, the process through which narrative is formed for Ricoeur helps demonstrate how its temporalization can occur without the projection of absolute rational categories that it involved in Kant and in a way that allows for criticism and innovation in a way that Heidegger failed to accomplish.

This process centers on mimesis (understood mainly as “representation” by Ricoeur) in three movements.242 Mimesis1 involves the interpretation of intentional action in the crafting of a narrative, where action pre-exists with a drive to narrative structure and culturally embedded

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239 Power, 91.
241 Ibid., 131.
242 Ricoeur here is appropriating the terminology of “mimesis” differently than Kearney as referenced in the opening of this chapter (see n. 9). Ricoeur performs an analysis of Aristotle that he thinks opens mimesis to a more active sense than the understanding of it applied by Kearney.
symbolic meaning.\textsuperscript{243} Mimesis\textsubscript{2} is the work of emplotment, that is the work of the creative imagination to reconfigure the interpreted action(s) into a meaningful temporal order that is distanced from the referent action.\textsuperscript{244} Mimesis\textsubscript{3} then occurs when a reader engages the world of the text created by mimesis\textsubscript{2} and reconnects it to the world of action and actually experienced temporality.\textsuperscript{245} The dynamics of mimesis\textsubscript{3} close a hermeneutic circle that gives new raw material to the functioning of mimesis\textsubscript{1}, but Ricoeur asserts that this cycle is better explained as a spiral than a circle because the transformation that occurs when mimesis\textsubscript{3} responds to the imaginative construct of mimesis\textsubscript{2} leads to innovation that alters mimesis\textsubscript{1} and presses it along an eschatological trajectory.\textsuperscript{246}

Kearney notes the centrality of innovation in this creative process; specifically, he highlights the way that innovation balances against tradition in the model Ricoeur envisions, and he places imagination in the role of mediating the reconciliation. Kearney asserts, “Insofar as [imagination] secures the function of recollecting and reiterating types across discontinuous episodes, imagination is plainly on the side of tradition. But insofar as it fulfills its equally essential function of projecting new horizons of possibility, imagination is committed to the role of semantic—and indeed ontological—inovation.”\textsuperscript{247} The area where Ricoeur locates this tension is mimesis\textsubscript{2}, where imagination gathers what is inherited through mimesis\textsubscript{1} but crafts it into a unique emplotment. The opposition stated by Kearney is actually slightly more nuanced in Ricoeur’s terminology—the necessity of innovation in the dynamics of mimesis lead him to suggest tradition itself as a “living transmission” that balances innovation and sedimentation.\textsuperscript{248}

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\textsuperscript{243} Ricoeur, \textit{Time and Narrative} v. 1, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 54-64.
\textsuperscript{244} Ibid., 64-70.
\textsuperscript{245} Ibid., 70-71.
\textsuperscript{246} Ibid., 71-72, 77-82.
\textsuperscript{247} Kearney, “Paul Ricoeur,” 133.
\textsuperscript{248} Ricoeur, \textit{Time and Narrative}, 68.
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Kearney’s use here of tradition equates to Ricoeur’s dimension of tradition that he calls sedimentation, which functions in conjunction with innovation. Ricoeur offers an understanding of tradition akin to Maurice Blondel, one where tradition encompasses accumulated experience that is channeled by the force of the accumulation while still always developing historically. Ricoeur sees narrative paradigms as the accumulations of tradition, which provide rules that hem the creativity of innovation:

Innovation remains a form of behavior governed by rules. The labor of imagination is not born from nothing. It is bound in one way or another to tradition’s paradigms. But the range of solutions is vast. It is deployed between the two poles of servile application and calculated deviation, passing through every degree of “rule-governed deformation.”

This describes the interaction of mimesis\textsubscript{1} and mimesis\textsubscript{2}, and in mimesis\textsubscript{3} the receiver of the text completes the process by synthesizing the play of sedimentation and innovation in historical reality by the act of reading, which leads to a refiguring of the world through the ontological power of interpretation. But because this hermeneutical spiral occurs at the step of distanciation, the innovation of imagination can occur with critical sensitivities about its own in-the-world context in a way Heidegger’s hermeneutics could not allow. And because emplotment involves, as Ricoeur claims, “universals related to practical wisdom, hence to ethics and politics,” rather than rational ideals, what is intentionally projected is not a subjective imposition of reason, as transcendental imagination ended up yielding in Kant, but a projection of possibility emerging from a particular historical context.

These elements segue to Kearney’s fourth stage of the imagination’s development in Ricoeur, the social imagination. With the way reading influences history, there is the formation

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\item Ricoeur, \textit{Time and Narrative}, 69.
\item Ibid., 76-77. See also Kearney, “Paul Ricoeur,” 134.
\item Ricoeur, \textit{Time and Narrative}, 41.
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of a social imagination that adjudicates the structures and modes of action within society. This social imagination fluctuates between ideology, which tends toward preservation and reaffirmation of society’s identity, and utopia, which tends toward disruption and novelty that critique ideology. The space for criticism that Ricoeur leaves within his hermeneutics is thus crucial, as is his view of imagination’s power to project possibility. Without them, imagination simply reproduces ideology. But by the imagination’s power to disrupt and innovate, received ideology can be glanced from a space of distance and critiqued. Ricoeur writes:

[I]magination works in two different ways. On the one hand, imagination may function to preserve an order. In this case the function of the imagination is to stage a process of identification that mirrors that order. Imagination has the appearance here of a picture. On the other hand, though, imagination may have a disruptive function; it may work as a breakthrough. Its image in this case is productive, an imagining of something else, the elsewhere. In each of its three roles, ideology represents the first kind of imagination; it has a function of preservation, of conservation. Utopia, in contrast, represents the second kind of imagination; it is always the glance from nowhere.

The sedimentation of tradition in ideology is useful in orienting society and establishing identity and is unavoidable in how each individual uses imagination only from within a given context, but innovation projected as utopia is necessary for that ideology to not become pernicious. The interplay is also crucial in that if utopian ideals break too drastically from given ideology, that is, from tradition, they can become their own dogmatic ideology that can produce false consciousness and repression, meaning the utopian critique of ideology must also be ever subjected to critique so that it does not arrive at its own presumed absolutism.

The tenets of the oneiric imagination resurface here. The hermeneutics of suspicion serve to unmask the strains of ideology that lead to dissimulation and domination, repressing pluralism

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253 Kearney, “Paul Ricoeur,” 134.
254 Ibid., 135.
257 Ibid., 136. See also Kearney, On Paul Ricoeur, 82-84.
of experience and equivocity of truth.  But with the double directionality of symbols, the social imaginary can adapt what is received as ideology critically in the direction of eschatology that tries to resist that dissimulation and domination: “Differently stated, the social imaginary is liberating to the degree that its utopian forward look critically reappropriates its archaeological backward look, in such a way that history itself may be creatively transformed.” The look in both directions is necessary as cutting either off from the other can lead to what Kearney terms “political pathology,” a situation in which each left to itself would create an inauthentic claim to total knowledge. The balancing of ideology and utopia in a “hermeneutic imagination of non-totalization” is thus required for imagination to functionally leave space for diversity and critique instances of historical oppression.

With this overview of Ricoeur’s ideas on imagination in place, the following points serve as a synopsis of his imagination theory:

1. Imagination is the power of meaning-making, in that meaning emerges from experience through the linguistic imagination as being emerges from the interpretation embodied in that linguistic imagination.

2. Because imagination is linguistic, it’s meaning-making occurs in a space of distanciation from originary experience.

3. With the space of distanciation, imagination produces meaning by incorporating subjective intentionality with contextual situatedness, crafting objectifications of expression that adapt polysemous symbols inherited from cultural tradition through innovative appropriation.

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258 Kearney, On Paul Ricoeur, 76-84.
259 Ibid., 87.
260 Ibid., 88-89.
4. In its creative appropriations, imagination is capable of confirming ideology or challenging it through utopian interpretations; it involves an archaeological dimension in which concealment can occur, as well as an eschatological dimension that can reveal new possibility.

With this theory of imagination, Ricoeur was able to re-incorporate epistemological reflection into phenomenological ontology. Heidegger’s breaking open of Husserl’s Kantian predilections in the way of ontology paved the way for Ricoeur to finally bring imagination to a place where it could account for diversity and address the imbalances and marginalizations permitted by the ahistorical and rationalist paradigm of the Kantian subject-object ontology that permitted transcendental and universalizing projection onto the pluralism and contextuality of actual historicity. But by focusing on the distancing role of language, Ricoeur allowed for critical epistemology to retain a place in the assessment of knowledge derived from the hermeneutical imagination in a way that Heidegger was unable to accomplish.

**Conclusion**

These above points constitute the theory of imagination with which this work will proceed. Through this model, truth becomes rooted in experience, which is only understood through the distance of language. Imagination is the power through which meaning is extracted from experience by the structuring of expression rooted in the cultural ingredients through which that experience is understood. It leaves meaning as a complex, non-absolute, and equivocal reality because of the ever-present distance between expression and experience and the symbolic and dynamic nature of those cultural ingredients. Truth then becomes similarly complex, non-absolute, and equivocal. Rooting in imagination’s meaning-making prevents truth from
becoming the province of a particular conglomeration of experience imposing itself over others. If all cultural truth is a linguistically and imaginatively mediated construction, then as new and different experience is brought into contact with the tradition reconstruction becomes necessitated. The idea of what is true is opened to plurality and multiplicity, as well as confrontation with forces and dynamics that might suppress these elements of difference.

The expressions of experience at stake for Ricoeur were primarily textual. However, his rooting in Dilthey’s idea of objectifications of life open his theory of imagination to application to other forms of expression beyond just texts—laws, social structures, rituals, visual arts, etc. My aim is to apply it to the expression of religious experience in doctrine. It suggests that doctrine is a theological genre formed through these same imaginative channels. It is, then, subjected to innovation and driven to embrace plurality as the tradition from which it comes engages diverse cultures and becomes critically aware of the concealment that historically has stood alongside the revealing that its imaginative construction offered. The truth intended in doctrine would need to be treated with the same hermeneutical nuance as any other text or expression.

This point is stated well by Stanford Schwartz in his description of the reading stage in Ricoeur’s hermeneutic circle in “Hermeneutics and the Productive Imagination: Paul Ricoeur in the 1970s,” The Journal of Religion 63 (1983): 296: “Subjective appropriation of a text ought to involve not the reduction of the text to the reader’s own world, but rather the self-examination made possible by exposing oneself as a reader to a textual world distinct from one’s contingent circumstances.”
CHAPTER 2—A Critical Analysis of Doctrinal Development Theories Through Jan Hendrik Walgrave

This chapter will outline the major theories of doctrinal development as presented by Jan Hendrik Walgrave. Avery Dulles will be introduced as a companion to Walgrave’s thought, one who adds critique and depth by more closely considering the nature of revelation alongside the nature of development. The goal of the chapter will be to analyze Walgrave’s theories and examine how they relate to models of revelation, since the differences in the theories are very closely tied to differences in the understanding of revelation. If doctrine in the most basic sense is the definition and articulation of information received through revelation, then variations in how revelation is conceived naturally will lead to varied ideas about the nature of doctrine and its development.

Walgrave himself dismisses two of his described theories, the logical and transformational, and so the main focus here will be on the third theory that he espouses, the theological theory. After developing a critique of this theory and identifying shortcomings within it, a model of revelation as symbolic disclosure will be used to suggest why a new theory of development rooted in a hermeneutical imagination is necessary.

The Advent of Doctrinal Development Theory

The mystery of God and the ineffability of divine revelation have been constants for Christian tradition. That Christianity defines itself on a core of truth that it claims it can never perfectly articulate makes its doctrinal tradition one that must undergo historical development.
The fact of development was assumed by patristic and medieval theology, but the modern era ushered in a phase in which the exact nature of development was examined.

In the New Testament, pluralism of theology existed and differences were not linearly or systematically thematized. Concern with Jesus is the running thread, but the understanding of Christology itself within the New Testament reflects a development process involving Jewish and Gentile cultural influences on the religious experiences of the early Christian community.¹ On the whole, the books of the canon represent diversity in doctrine and all stand as individually incomplete in terms of a total system of doctrine, making the New Testament itself, in the estimation of Jerry W. McCant, a paradigm for balancing unity and diversity in the historical formation of doctrine.²

Even after the canon closed and became a normative measure for later doctrine, giving way to the notion of revelation being ended or closed, patristic theologians still maintained with various terms the sense of doctrine being in development. For Walgrave, the presumption of doctrinal development was rooted in an understanding of revelation itself as dynamically developing in the sense of revelation being an eschatologically weighted pedagogy of salvation that is centered on the Incarnation but that works through a historical anthropology.³ Walgrave summarizes this view of revelation that anchored patristic thought thusly: “Revelation, then, may involve moments of divine instruction but is essentially an event, an action of divine self-

¹ James D. G. Dunn, “The Making of Christology: Evolution or Unfolding?” in Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology, eds. Joel B. Green and Max Turner, 437-452 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1994). Dunn’s conclusion about the development of Christology in the New Testament is that while developmental patterns are discernable, sufficient evidence is lacking to support the development being either evolving/transformational, as in a transition from Jewish thought forms to Gentile ones, or unfolding/organic, as in the gradual growth of a stable concept that remains through both Jewish and Gentile thought forms.
³ Walgrave, Unfolding Revelation, 51-59. Walgrave makes his argument by presenting this view of revelation and pedagogy as a common note in Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen.
offering for fellowship, and as such it does not begin at a given moment of history nor does it come to a stop in the course of time.\textsuperscript{4}

Walgrave sees this view of revelation as inherited from the apostolic generation, but argues that the expectation of imminent eschatology in the early church prevented that community from having to reconcile it with a future direction. Patristic and classical thinkers represented to Walgrave the first wave of Christianity having to confront this understanding of revelation and its relationship to the future.\textsuperscript{5} He claims that the apostolic church provided a foundation that those early thinkers could emulate in terms of understanding historically situated ecclesiastical doctrine and the “objective revelation” closed with the apostolic witness. And so in that first wave he sees the imprint of a built-in understanding of revelation, doctrine, and history in symbiosis:

What is called “objective revelation” may come to an end with the apostolic generation, but the light of Christ in the bosom of the Church leads the bride from light to light until his final advent. The content of the “idea” of God, impressed on the mind of the Church through the light of illuminating grace, is not exhausted by the human, culture-bound expression of the evangelical message. Meditation and reflection upon its inner mystery through the medium of its human expression may give to the Church a progressive “objective understanding” of the deposit, and such a progress may be normally expected.\textsuperscript{6}

The balancing act that patristic and classical thinkers tried to achieve in light of this understanding was one between the unchangeable objective deposit of faith and the historically changing understanding of that deposit—doctrine had to mediate between these two principles.

Origen is an apposite example. Origen maintained that doctrinal formulation is a necessity, but recognized that the mystery of God remained ever out of grasp. He acknowledged a core of teaching from the apostolic church to which the later church is beholden, but he distinguished between foundational necessary truths, given as plain teaching, and other more

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., 63.
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 65-66.
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., 64-65.
esoteric truths only available to intellectual investigation. The plain teachings are the ones subject to objective definition, while the more advanced ones are eschatological in nature and ever open to discussion. Origen here followed the same strategy of Tertullian, who similarly posited a distinction between an essential rule of faith and other more elastic elements of discipline, and Walgrave observes that Origen’s list of necessary truths coincided with Tertullian’s rule of faith while excluding those things he considered matters of discipline. Origen’s teaching on the senses of scripture is a good illustration of how his pedagogical thought related to this view of levels of teaching in the apostolic deposit. For the simple of faith, the plain sense of scripture, open to easily definable and objectively necessary truths, provided sufficient edification; however, the spiritual sense available only to more advanced intellects, like the secondary truths open to speculation and discussion, offered the fullest understanding of divine revelation, though it was always beyond human language and definition. And so, for Origen, firm definition of doctrine was a necessary pedagogical element, but further entry into mystical spirituality and the fullness of truth led to less definite doctrinal formulation because the soul was moving closer to the indefinable reality. Revelation for Origen involved a dynamic pedagogy in history, and doctrine was thus similarly historicized even as a core deposit of dogmatic truths was given normative force. But the definition of even those core dogmatic truths had to be developed over time because revelation is known through divine condescension to human ability, which in its historical nature, is always incomplete and imperfect.

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8 Origen, I.6.1.
9 On Tertullian’s views, see Walgrave, 71-75. On the comparison between Tertullian and Origen, see Walgrave, 76-77.
10 Origen, IV.1.7-IV.2.
In 434, Vincent of Lérins put forward the criteria for judging orthodox development that would become the guiding principle of Catholic tradition and how to balance objectivity with historical development. Vincent was spurred by the perception that theologians, particularly Augustine, were practicing too much novelty, and he attempted to enact a corrective. In Walgrave’s analysis, Vincent did not like the idea of doctrinal development, and was “the champion of extreme conservatism,” but simply could not excise it because it was too clearly established in the tradition. His solution was to admit to development, but to invent criteria to greatly proscribe it. He proposed that what was true doctrine was that which was believed always, everywhere, and by all. This Vincentian canon—antiquity, universality, and ubiquity—leaves space for definitions to change, but only in a way that admits no novelty, a principle modeled for Vincent in the organic metaphor of the development from embryo to adult in which the developed result contains nothing new that was not latent within the embryonic origin.

To Walgrave, medieval theology maintained this concept of doctrinal development—primarily conservative yet allowing for organic growth within the doctrinal tradition. Walgrave calls medieval theology both “preservative and continuative,” claiming that doctrinal development was simply a presumed principle as theology endeavored to bring better elucidation and fuller conclusions out of the deposit of faith contained perfectly in scripture. In his view, the medieval era kept in tact a connection of faith and reason, such that revelation was presumed to naturally occur through history.

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12 Walgrave, 86-89.
13 Vincent of Lérins, Commonitorium, NewAdvent.org, accessed 31 December 2012, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3506.htm, §4-6. The statement of the criteria occurs in §6 specifically, but the chapter that these sections constitute presents Vincent’s fuller vision that while Scripture is in itself full and sufficient, interpretation is necessary, leading to development, and sometimes erroneous, leading to the need for safeguarding criteria.
14 Ibid., §54-59.
15 Walgrave, 92-97.
Aquinas, for example, understood revelation to occur historically in the sense of it occurring in figurative language, and so he presumed that formulations of doctrine would have to undergo development to become clarified, contextualized, and better understood.\textsuperscript{16} Furthermore, he argued that development of doctrinal formulation should be expected because the tenets of faith were meant to be made understandable by all the people for whom salvation is intended,\textsuperscript{17} and because theology appropriates philosophy to explain itself and thus subjects itself to the historical nature of philosophical language.\textsuperscript{18} One of Aquinas’s most explicit statements on the development of doctrine echoes Vincent’s principle against novelty, presenting the increase in articles of faith as a change only in number and form that has made explicit what was previously implicit, preserving the substance of the deposit and resisting true novelty while introducing true development.\textsuperscript{19} Walgrave thusly sees in Aquinas a rather robust concept of doctrinal development that tries to organically hold together the full body of articulated doctrine and its fundamental connection to the light of faith that precedes all theological explication and definition.\textsuperscript{20}

Key for Walgrave in this model of development that remained roughly consistent from the time of the patristics through early medieval scholasticism is the maintenance of cooperation between faith and reason that allowed a comfortable balance between the nature of revelation and historical experience. This cooperation, in his view, began to erode with the more acute turn

\textsuperscript{16} Thomas Aquinas, 1-2.Q101.a2; 2-2.Q1.a9.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 1.Q1.a1.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 1.Q1.a5, a8; 1.Q44.a2.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 2-2.Q1.a7.
\textsuperscript{20} Walgrave, 101-102. See also Christopher Kaczor, “Thomas Aquinas on the Development of Doctrine,” *Theological Studies* 62 (2001): 283-302. Kaczor further analyzes the notes of doctrinal development in Aquinas, arguing that he actually demonstrates a hybridity of what would be considered today different approaches to the issue, making him a valuable figure for considering how those different approaches can today interact in mutual ways.
to epistemology in later scholasticism, opening the way to philosophical skepticism.\textsuperscript{21} Walgrave traces a gradual process whereby later scholastics drew distinctions between the act of faith and the act of theology, such that theology became an exercise of natural reason alone and questions began to form about how the fruits of theological speculation relate to the assent of faith. As theology became “disconnected from the existential context of faith,” he argues, theological conclusions became logical ones of natural reason that, under the influence of nominalist categories, could only at best give probability of real truth.\textsuperscript{22} Theological conclusions could be admitted to the substance of faith, but the realms of the two became clearly distinct. Insofar as questions now percolated about how logical conclusions about doctrinal statements and formulas relate to real faith, questions specifically about the authentic development of doctrine began to take shape.

The significance here for Walgrave is twofold. First, the issue of doctrinal development begins to take shape in general as the presumed organic relationship between faith and reason upheld through the early medieval period breaks down. Second, the factors in place lead to this initial stage of doctrinal development theory taking a particular shape, that of what Walgrave identifies as the logical theory of development. He is tracing the theological history to show how both the general question arises and why the initial attempts at answering it proceed as they do. The distinction between faith and reason as separate acts leads in general to questions about how the substance of one relates to the other, and the particular way late medieval theology moved with the distinction emphasized the logical functioning of natural reason. Theology as a notional science treats the raw material with which it operates, the scriptural and creedal deposit, as

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\textsuperscript{21} Walgrave, 105.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 113.
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propositional notions to be expounded upon by inference, making explicit what is implicit.\textsuperscript{23} And with the influence of nominalists like Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, these inferences cannot be automatically taken up as objects of faith since they cannot be taken to attach to real knowledge, which requires immediate experience unavailable to the abstract notions and principles at play; therefore, it becomes the trend to turn to ecclesiastical acts of authoritative pronouncement to transition a theological conclusion to dogmatic certainty requiring faithful assent.\textsuperscript{24}

As the modern era dawned, this separation between faith and reason begun in later scholasticism and nominalism only widened. Because the mystical core of religion started to become lost in this fashion, reason and faith moved in separate directions and faith became more and more the province of apologetics that attempted to legitimize faith in light of modern reason.\textsuperscript{25} This model of faith also separated revelation from history, subjecting the former to the apologetics of faith and the latter to the analysis of rationalism. When revelation comes to be understood apart from history, the historical facts of doctrinal change come to require apologetic theological justification in light of the Christian stance that the substance of revelation is objectively complete and unchanging.\textsuperscript{26} In Catholicism, this led to preoccupation with obedience to authority and ecclesial positivism as immobile safeguards of the priority of faith, and the preservative rather than developmental dimension of the canon of Vincent of Lérins became dominant.\textsuperscript{27} In Protestantism, in Walgrave’s estimation, the focus eventually became to subject

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 107-112.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 111-113.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 126-127.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 128.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 129-130. On the contrasting understanding of Vincent of Lérins that Walgrave is claiming was neglected, see 86-89, as well as Thomas A. Guarino, “Tradition and Doctrinal Development: Can Vincent of Lérins Still Teach the Church?” Theological Studies 67 (2006): 34-72. Guarino claims that in the contemporary age the primary tenets of the Vincentian canon are outmoded, but that his more general sense of true development being marked by
faith to reason and reject the authority structure of post-Tridentine Catholicism, losing a necessary sense of objectivity.\textsuperscript{28} In the unseparated milieu of the patristics and medievals, Walgrave saw revelation being understood as a relational event that required doctrinal definition as a necessary second moment that required historical development as understanding of the relational event developed. And so whereas questions of doctrinal development were not directly dealt with by patristic and medieval theologians because they presumed a unity of reason and faith and revelation and history, the separation of the terms that became definitive of the modern era made explicit questions of doctrinal development come into the spotlight.

**Revelation Theory and Development Theory**

Walgrave asserts the primacy of revelation theory to doctrinal development theory with the very title of his book; the *Nature of Doctrinal Development* is the subtitle to *Unfolding Revelation*, implying the dependence of the former on the latter. As described above, one of the first steps of his argument is to establish as normative the model of patristic and early scholastic theology that presumed doctrinal development as a first principle and maintained a unity between reason and faith. But before articulating these views on development, he begins with a presentation of the nature of revelation that undergirds it: “The idea that the understanding of the revealed deposit itself will in its turn take the form of a gradual unfolding of its riches in the mind of the Church seems to be a natural extension of the Christian consciousness of historicity.”\textsuperscript{29} Using the conceptual framework of John Henry Newman, Walgrave explains this dynamic in terms of revelation being a mystical experience of “real apprehension” that naturally

\textsuperscript{28} Walgrave, 132-133.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 45.
seeks public “notional expression” that reflects developing understanding, in the form of doctrine, of the revealed dispensation. Revelation goes beyond a purely subjective norm, even though it occurs through individual subjectivity, because it by its nature transitions to objectification in expression that points back to the objectivity of its source and becomes a matter of communal discernment within the Church. Walgrave’s operational idea of revelation and doctrinal development then is as follows:

Although nothing new is added to the deposit of faith since the closing of apostolic times, it may be said that the living process of revelation goes on till the end of time. God has completed His self-communication in Christ. But revelation is not only something that proceeds from God. It has to be received in the human mind. The process through which the mind of the Church is penetrated by the Word of God, leading to a progressive understanding of all its implications, can go on as long as history lasts. . . . The idea of a development of doctrine, prolonging the development of revelation, may be presumed to be a natural idea that was never absent from Christian consciousness. It is itself a first principle, as Newman says.30

Walgrave’s criteria for true doctrinal development obviously will flow from the model of revelation that he is adopting. It will be useful then to situate his model of revelation among other possibilities as a way of evaluating it and in turn evaluating his arguments for what model of doctrinal development is authentic. The models of revelation identified by Avery Dulles will be employed now for that task.

For Dulles, the systematic and comprehensive theological treatment of revelation began in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He describes that to scholastics the term revelation came to refer to primarily content, as a divinely-given deposit of truth handed on to the Church.31 As debates were engaged between Protestants and Catholics after the Reformation, the focus vis-à-vis revelation was the aforementioned content and the means of its transmission; questions about the process by which revelation occurred did not arise until that later period

30 Ibid., 46.
when fuller systematic concern with revelation emerged. As these theologies of revelation moved forward, Dulles notes that the simple and naïve sense of revelation as a permanent deposit of truth given in the biblical and apostolic ages and preserved and passed on by the Church became simply untenable in light of other intellectual factors that emerged through the twentieth century. The factors Dulles identifies are as follows: 1) philosophical agnosticism about the capacity of human reason to reliably get beyond phenomenal experience; 2) linguistic analysis and cognitive critiques of God-talk like revelation; 3) views of epistemology that emphasize how knowledge always is acquired and thus filtered through subjective conditions and limitations; 4) empirical psychology and its undermining of supernatural explanations for ecstatic or prophetic experiences that have often been cited as sources of revelation; 5) biblical criticism problematizing scriptural accounts of miracles and prophecies that could be used as proofs of authenticity for revelation; 6) historical analysis of Christian doctrine that reveals real change in teaching and in the classification of teaching as divine truth or human opinion; 7) awareness of tensions formed from comparative religious study; and 8) critical sociology and its commentary on the ideological dimensions of tradition and authority structures.

Before continuing with the overview of Dulles’s ideas, some comments regarding the relevance of these observations to the present study are in order. First, while many of these factors remain relevant ones today, some of them require tweaks in accent, emphasis, or scope to more authentically address contemporary concerns, particularly in light of the perspectives of contextual theologies of various sorts. For example, Dulles only passingly mentions liberation theology as an outgrowth of “secular theology” that emerges in the 1960s and captures some of the concerns described here under the headings of critical sociology and contemporary

32 Ibid., 20-21.
33 Ibid., 6-8.
epistemology. The flowering of contextual and liberation theologies in the decades after Dulles is writing would call for further specification and nuance regarding these factors, as well as more powerful sensibilities of criticism, especially regarding sensitivity to ideology and contextual epistemology. As Werner Jeanrond states it, “All talk of revelation occurs in certain contexts, and we have to reckon with the possibility that such talk be influenced by the specific context’s concern and power structure.”

In Chapter 3’s discussion of theological method I will attempt to elaborate on these concerns about contextuality further. Second, some of these factors are of much more central importance for this present study than others. The most crucial of these would be 3) the acquired nature of knowledge, which emphasizes the need for active hermeneutics in the formation of meaning, 6) the historical analysis of doctrine, which suggests context-bound change understandable through the lens of imaginative hermeneutics, and 8) the critiques of ideology, which call for doctrinal development theory to incorporate a hermeneutic of suspicion as the doctrinal tradition is examined. Each of these factors can be addressed with the imaginative hermeneutics developed by Ricoeur, a topic to which I will return briefly at the close of this chapter and more fully in Chapter 3.

Returning to Dulles’s ideas on revelation, he identifies five different models of the theology of revelation that have attempted to respond to contemporary challenges such as these. He argues that despite these challenges, Christian theology without a substantive sense of revelation cannot proceed. His assessment is that contemporary theology responds to the above challenges to the legitimacy of revelation in chiefly two ways: adhering to the classical positions associated with the permanent deposit view that emerged out of scholasticism and attempting to

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34 See ibid., 24. Despite this limited treatment, Dulles does later acknowledge that liberation theology, from the perspective of his own era, contains the potential to form its own alternative model of revelation separate from the five that Dulles describes.


36 See Dulles, Models, 8-14, where Dulles examines the prospects of “Christianity without revelation.”
dismiss the relevance of the objections, or admitting to the force the challenges have against naïve deposit-based conceptions of revelation and attempting to re-conceive revelation in light of the objections. Those falling into the latter approach base their responses on either a return to stages of tradition that precede the instantiation of the deposit-based view, such as a return to patristic examples, or on reappropriation of the modern outlooks that produce the objections. I will present Dulles’s models here in brief, and then correlate them to models of doctrinal development as presented by Walgrave. Then, in the course of interrogating those development models, these models of revelation will be examined more closely as part of the task.

First, Dulles proposes the model of revelation as doctrine, which takes revelation to be mainly propositional, that is in the form of direct statements and declarations attributable to God. Second is revelation as history, where revelation occurs through God’s historical deeds, especially the great events of the bible. The third model is revelation as inner experience, a mystical model in which revelation comes through a privileged interior experience of grace. Fourth, there is the model of revelation as dialectical presence that emphasizes the otherness and utter transcendence of God and places revelation in the freely addressed divine word that always simultaneously conceals as it reveals. Fifth, Dulles describes revelation as new awareness, where revelation is conceived through the growth of human consciousness in secular history, within which God is present as the transcendent horizon of that consciousness rather than a direct object of experience. After comparing and contrasting these models that he claims capture the dominant themes of debate about revelation theology, Dulles concludes that each has strengths and weaknesses that need to be augmented in the case of the former and mitigated in the case of

37 Ibid., 13.
38 Ibid., 13.
39 See ibid., 27-28 for the summary presentation of these five models from which these introductory descriptions are chiefly drawing.
the latter. He rejects as unfruitful strategies of eclecticism among the models or harmonization of them that would be destined to fail in the face of real contradictions between the models.\(^{40}\) He instead adopts a strategy of constructive innovation, one that he casts as “dialectical retrieval,” an approach he believes is able to hone the strengths of the models while blunting their weaknesses.\(^{41}\) As a nexus for this retrieval, Dulles proposes an additional model for revelation, one that he thinks has at least implicit connection to every one of the models. He terms this alternative revelation as symbolic mediation, where the encounter of revelation is always a mediated one through mysterious and polysemous symbols.\(^{42}\)

I will argue that this symbolic understanding of revelation is indeed a strong one for meeting the needs of contemporary theology, but that Dulles’s own extrapolation of it is limited and his associated understanding of doctrinal development is insufficient. A more thorough hermeneutical approach is required to effectively draw out the implications and potentials of this symbolic model, and it is to this task that Ricoeur’s hermeneutics will be directed. But the next intermediary step will be continuing a closer analysis of the five historical models proposed by Dulles and forming association between them and the models of development articulated by Walgrave.

**Revelation Models and Development Models**

I will begin here with a brief summary of Walgrave’s three theories of doctrinal development. He labels these three theories the logical, the transformational, and the theological, and although the historical timeframes of the models involve some overlap, Walgrave’s treatment is roughly chronological, following the order in which the theories generally arose.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., 125-126.
\(^{41}\) Ibid., 126-128.
\(^{42}\) Ibid., 131-132.
The logical had its beginnings in the late scholastic era; the transformistic took shape during the advance of modernism; and the theological, while rooted for Walgrave in the thinking of John Henry Newman, was primarily a product of twentieth century theology. The treatment of the theories here will be only introductory, and the primary aim will be to attach each to the models of revelation described by Dulles. Fuller analysis of the theories, in conjunction with their associated understandings of revelation, will occur in ensuing sections.

Logical theory adapted the laws of Aristotelian logic to the progression of theological conclusions and doctrinal growth, and was mainly associated with Catholic tradition. The key concept became that of implicitness. If a deductive conclusion could be reached by which the conclusion could be conceptually distinct from the premises yet homogenous with their substance, then it would be a conclusion implicitly contained within those premises. Because followers of this model believed in a perennial theology, in an idea that all of revealed truth is propositionally contained in the tradition of the Church, they believed that two premises with dogmatic certainty could lead to conclusions that are continuous with the substance of the premises but that articulate new formulations of doctrine. The doctrine in this case would be a logical extension, a making explicit what was implicit, and not a new teaching suggesting a new revelation. This theory positivistically saw all of revelation contained in the Church’s deposit of faith and made the authority of the magisterium the final arbiter of which theological conclusions growing out of that deposit could be elevated to dogmatic status. It reduced theology to syllogistic logic and obedience to authority that guarded against any novelty or innovation that could result from errant logic.

43 See Walgrave, 135-178.
Transformistic theory developed mainly from pietistic tradition that arose as a response to modernist rationalism.\textsuperscript{44} Adapting the subjectivist emphasis of modernist thought, this tradition turned to a naturalist anthropology and subjected faith to the rigors of reason and historical conditioning. This principle was one of two types of Protestant response to questions of doctrinal development; the other was Protestant scholasticism that looked much like the logical theory dominant in Catholicism. But this pietistic branch and the liberal theology it spawned became much more of a Protestant hallmark in the modern era. In varying ways, ranging from thinkers such as Hegel, Schleiermacher, and Catholic modernists like George Tyrrell, this theory emphasized that doctrine is always a mutable historical expression, always open to transformation. Whereas logical theory attempted to defend against innovation and transformation in doctrinal definition, this theory attempted to defend against immobility and permanence. And whereas logical theory cast doctrinal growth as a homogenous transition from implicitness to explicitness, this theory allowed for growth that could allow prior positions and teachings to be genuinely transformed into new ones, as required by new historical circumstances or different dimensions of subjective experience or reason.

For Walgrave these theories represent problematic poles: the transformistic model is for him too malleable and relativistic to allow for a sense of real objectivity, while the logical theory is too narrowly rigid to account for the theological mystery underlying all doctrine. Walgrave offers the theological theory as an alternative that can balance the one perspective versus the other.\textsuperscript{45} The beginning of a middle way was begun, in his view, in the work of Newman. In Chapter 1 of his \textit{Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine}, Newman begins with a

\textsuperscript{44} See ibid., 179-277.
\textsuperscript{45} See ibid., 278-347.
description of the nature of an idea—it is the mind’s subjective grasping of a real object.\textsuperscript{46} Because it is objective, there is a guiding truth and reality to the idea, but the subject’s attempt to understand it is never complete or comprehensive and evolves as the mind of the subject evolves through historical circumstances as well as through the accumulation of tradition. No aspect of the subjective grasping can be taken as definitive, but propositional statements that reflect intellectual expression of the idea, such as doctrine, are a natural outcome. In Chapter 2, Newman applies this concept of the idea to Christianity specifically. Christianity constitutes a human grasping of the objective fact of God’s revelation, and so should be expected to undergo development.\textsuperscript{47} This means that doctrine indeed requires development insofar as elaboration is dependent on historical context, but that it remains objectively true insofar as it is referential to a real actuality. Also, he adds that since it is objective and true, part of the revelation itself should be expected to provide a means by which the truth can be safeguarded in the midst of naturally anticipated development, and this is his hypothesis for why a magisterial authority such as in Roman Catholicism should be expected as a natural part of Christianity.\textsuperscript{48}

Walgrave’s theological theory is meant to marry Newman’s framework to contemporary understandings of revelation that were unavailable to Newman himself. The theory is supposed to balance the objective uniqueness of Christianity, as originating by an act of objective revelation external to history, with the historicity articulated in the intellectual climate of contemporary times. It sees development ultimately as a process in which historically fragmented elements of intuitive apprehension of the whole idea of revelation are dialectically reunified in a gradually ongoing process. Walgrave favors the metaphor of the process being

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., §2.1.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., §2.2.
organic, one in which spontaneous growth occurs in the system, but growth that is always an unfolding of what is already present rather than an introduction of novelty. What makes this model “theological” for Walgrave is that it honors the supernatural nature of revelation by understanding it as epistemologically superior to reason and philosophy, contra transformistic theory, and more expansive in nature than syllogistic deduction can account for, contra logical theory. In other words, it authentically maintains God as the *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem* of doctrinal development.

The correspondence between Dulles’s doctrinal or propositional model of revelation and Walgrave’s logical theory of development is clear. Dulles draws the connection explicitly himself. The propositional model produces the concept of revelation as an objective deposit of teachings closed with the apostolic age, and the logical theory situates doctrine as the syllogistic extension of those teachings. Both prioritize dogmatic permanence and immutability, and strongly rely on magisterial authority, which serves as both the primary preserver of the authentically revealed deposit and the final arbiter of which theological conclusions constitute authentic development.

Also clear is a correspondence between Dulles’s model of revelation as inner experience and the transformistic theory. With inner experience, revelation is in the form of ineffable mystical encounter, leaving doctrine as merely a natural yet never absolute attempt to articulate the encounter. With revelation occurring as mystical encounter, the possibility of new revelation is also admitted by the general sense of this model. Both factors feed into the transformistic theory Walgrave describes. When revelation is something that belies objective definition rather than having objective definition as an essential element, then historical transformation in the formulas of doctrine becomes the rule. Also, if revelation is taken to involve potential newness,

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49 Dulles, *The Resilient Church*, 49.
then novelty in doctrine as well as reversal of previous doctrine, two tenets of the transformistic theory, are natural consequences.

Less clear is how Dulles’s historical model of revelation corresponds to development theory. For Dulles the emphasis in this model on concrete historical events makes it inclined to objectivity of a sort, yet the event-nature of the revelation makes its conceptual content an indirect matter.\(^{50}\) The events of concern for this model are chiefly biblical, and so it does bear some resemblance to the sensibilities of the logical theory of development. Both consider doctrine to be an outgrowth of an objective and normative foundation closed with the biblical witness. But as Dulles points out regarding the conceptual meaning of that foundation when understood through this historical model in contrast to the propositional one, “The meaning of the events is capable of being formulated in many ways, according to the perspectives and thought-forms of varying cultures, and is constantly subject to reconceptualization.”\(^{51}\) Dulles, though, immediately claims that this flexibility in meaning does not lead to the sort of relativism that Walgrave would accuse the transformistic model of exhibiting because it is buoyed in public tradition rather than inner experience.\(^{52}\) The stress Walgrave places on the notion of revelation as an idea in the theological theory seems to at least preclude that option, but this historical model seems positioned in between the logical and transformistic models of doctrinal development. However, although Dulles asserts the model is not relativistic in its understanding of revelation, he does acknowledge a rather wide avenue for how historical perspective can alter

\(^{50}\) Dulles, *Models*, 55-61. Dulles ascribes the argument for the indirectness of the revelational nature of biblical events specifically to Pannenberg. He frames Pannenberg as one of varying styles within this model, but Dulles’s summation of it indicates the overarching sense that content in this model rests in deeds and events that do not directly translate to conceptual formulation.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 61.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 61-62.
its conceptualization in doctrine. This wide avenue for substantial change in doctrine would place this model closer to Walgrave’s transformistic understanding.

The theological theory of Walgrave is most closely associated with Dulles’s models of dialectical presence and new awareness. In both models, there is the assertion of an absolute and objective basis of revelation—in the dialectical model, the Word of God gratuitously given and embodied in the scriptures, and in the new awareness model, the fullness of the idea of God’s truth that is dynamically self-communicated down through the ages. Yet for both models, the full and objective root of revelation is only apprehensible through limited human understanding that requires ongoing development in its articulated conceptualization in the form of doctrines. In both revelational models then, the organic process of development that Walgrave attaches to the theological theory prevails. Development is definitely rooted in objective revelation, meaning established dogmas have real contact to real truth and can thus not be undone, yet additional flowering and extension of the full truth must be continued in the work of theology.

With these correlations established, I will next move to a closer examination and critique of these complexes of revelational and developmental models.

**Limitations of Logical and Transformistic Theories**

Because Walgrave himself argues against these two theories, this section is largely a review of his own critiques. However, it will also add commentary and analysis based on the corresponding ideas on revelation from Dulles. Some of this additional material will serve the later critique of the theological model that Walgrave endorses, and it will help build to Dulles’s concept of revelation as symbolic mediation, which will point the way toward the imaginative and hermeneutical theory of development that this work is advocating.
a. Explanation and Critique of Logical Models of Development

It was demonstrated above that Walgrave sees the logical theory of development arising in late scholasticism as the first wave of response to the emerging separation of faith and reason, a separation that accelerated through the Enlightenment. In Walgrave’s view, this stage of theological understanding presumed that conclusions drawn from revealed articles of faith could, given declaration by ecclesiastical authority guided by the Holy Spirit, become themselves objects of faith.\textsuperscript{53} Controversy over this basic concept began in earnest when Luis de Molina, in a 1593 commentary on Thomas Aquinas’s \textit{Summa}, argued that theological conclusions, even if drawn from articles of revelation and defined as dogma by the authority of the Church, can only ever compel theological assent and not assent of faith.\textsuperscript{54} This argument opened the door to disputes about how inferences from premises can retain substantive homogeneity with those premises, thereby sharing in their same level of authority and requiring the same degree of assent. Through the post-Tridentine era, various rival schools emerged and different sets of terminology to describe the relation of conclusions and premises vis-à-vis revelation and authority, but the root principle shared throughout was a propositional understanding of revelation, which led to “logicalism” as a way of describing the development of doctrine and “rationalism” as a way of conceiving of faith.\textsuperscript{55}

Walgrave summarized the situation of these rival logical theories at the close of the eighteenth century with three main points. First was the absorption of the Tridentine principle of scripture and tradition existing as two separate revelatory streams of the one true deposit of faith.\textsuperscript{56} Combined with the prevailing propositional understanding of revelation, the logicalism

\textsuperscript{53} Walgrave, 135-137.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 138.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 151-152.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 152.
of tradition, overseen by ecclesiastical authority, was thus enabled to authentically extend the revelation contained in scripture. The second point was acceptance of a basic division of terms to describe revelation and to enable the conception of how theological conclusions can carry revelatory weight. Indisputable dogmatic truth was thought to be found in revelation, propositionally given as either “formal,” “immediate,” or “explicit,” while potentially dogmatic revelation that theological inquiry might discover was termed alternatively “virtual,” “mediate,” or “implicit.” In Walgrave’s estimation the most preferred terminology set by the end of the eighteenth century was formal/virtual. Rivalry between different schools of thought centered on how to draw the division between formal and virtual, leading to different views about what sort of theological conclusions can be considered homogenous with the deposit of faith and thus potentially be doctrinally authentic. Walgrave’s third point of summary was that the status of these rival viewpoints was extremely confused and messy. The point for him was that each different version of logical theory had critical flaws, indicating the unsuitability of syllogistic logic for describing doctrinal development.

Walgrave makes his criticism clearer as he describes the state of affairs in the nineteenth century, a state he casts as a consequence of continuing insistence on a propositional understanding of revelation. As the Church, working from such a propositional understanding, assumed it was the possessor and caretaker of a “perennial theology” and simultaneously adopted a siege mentality in response to the cultural and philosophical developments of the age, its methods and conception of development became for Walgrave calcified and deformed. His point is that Catholic thought was playing a stacked game; it made its own positions unassailable

57 Ibid., 152-153.
58 Ibid., 153.
59 Ibid., 160.
60 Ibid., 153-155.
by different philosophies or methods, making it unable to grow in a healthy fashion because it
wanted to remain a bulwark against the changing and threatening currents of modernism.

Walgrave writes:

In the midst of the flowing river the Catholic mind considered itself as a rock of immutability
against which the floods of the world could not prevail. . . . But most theologians confused
unchangeableness of faith with theological rigidity. According to their mind, the safety of faith
was dependent upon a radical conservatism in matters of philosophy and theology. 61

The result of such thinking is a false sense of the security and surety of one’s own positions. As
Walgrave describes, “One lives in the illusion of continuing a great tradition, but the organic idea,
the quickening breath of the Spirit, has vanished.” 62 The quickening force that is lost for
Walgrave is the organic ability of assimilation that can integrate external elements in a healthy
fashion, a trait he claims was very much active in the work of Thomas Aquinas but which he
claims gradually eroded after him until the nineteenth century when the trend reached an
apotheosis. 63

As the terms of logical inclusion continued to evolve in this era, Walgrave contends that
the logical approach to development became more and more elegant in its form and more and
more absurd in its content. Of significance was a growing differentiation between logical
conclusions being “implicit” and “virtual,” whereby the former involved substantive
homogeneity with explicit revelation and could be admitted to the articles of faith, while the
latter was excluded from such possibility. “Implicit” conclusions were thought to draw out what
was intended along with the explicit propositions of revelation, while “virtual” ones were
connected but not substantively contiguous with explicit revelation. Walgrave’s problem with
this is that there was no clear standard for determining what God did or did not implicitly intend,

61 Ibid., 156.
62 Ibid., 157.
63 Ibid., 157.
leaving theologians with the ability to manipulate the distinction to suit their conclusions.\textsuperscript{64}

Functionally, the final arbiter of which conclusions genuinely articulated implicit revelation was the magisterium, but Walgrave again observes that no criteria existed to justify the decisions, making the magisterium’s exercise of its final authority arbitrary.\textsuperscript{65}

This argument brings Walgrave around directly to the problem of propositional views of revelation. He argues that it is because the Church of the time insisted on a propositional conception that it divorced infallibility and magisterial authority from the genuinely dynamic guidance of the Holy Spirit, which is a supernatural force for which propositional and logical thought forms alone are inadequate to account.\textsuperscript{66} Walgrave extends this critique to the understanding of apostolic knowledge that is produced by propositional understandings. Those who insisted most stringently on the model, in order to be logically coherent, had to claim the Apostles possessed full, explicit, propositional knowledge of all Christian dogma, and posited that since it is not fully expressed in scripture it must have been passed down also via “esoteric” means through tradition.\textsuperscript{67} The transition from implicit revelation to explicit formulation through syllogistic progression was paralleled conceptually as “change-over from esoteric to exoteric tradition.”\textsuperscript{68} Walgrave takes such a view that the apostolic church possessed full explicit knowledge of all Christian truth to be historically and psychologically untenable. He argues that the propositional understanding of revelation traps theology in such an idea, but that a view of revelation not solely defined by propositional explicitness can more plausibly envision the completeness of knowledge held by the apostolic church to have been experiential, in the “depth

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 158.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 159.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 159.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 160.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 161.
and vividness of real apprehension.”\textsuperscript{69} This allegiance to the Newmanian framework will leave Walgrave’s own solutions open to criticism, but his arguments from that framework are adequate enough to demonstrate real shortcomings in the logical theory.

With Walgrave’s turn to the problem of propositional revelation underlying logical theories of development, Dulles’s expanded analysis of this revelational model becomes a pertinent addition. Dulles attempts to give each model balanced treatment, citing both weaknesses and strengths. However, with the propositional model, even the strengths he accedes to it are questionable. He remarks that the propositional model has the benefit of internal coherence and that its “scientific” appearance works well to bolster faith against scientific rationalism.\textsuperscript{70} However, as Walgrave noted, distinctions between categories like “implicit” and “virtual” in the logical model of development did not always maintain coherence, and were open to manipulation by theologians based on their intended conclusions. So the appearance of science that Dulles compliments is something of a façade. Dulles also claims that a strength of the propositional model is that it fosters unity and growth in the Church and provides clear identity.\textsuperscript{71} If such unity and identity is bought with the imposition of uniformity, however, it raises concerns and problems about contextual situations where such imposition might be experienced as cultural or ideological colonialism. In an age when the Church is confronted by the irreducible nature of pluralism, unity and identity in the Church must be open to diversity in ways that the universalizing rigidity of the logical model of development, grown from propositional revelation, would not allow. Similarly, the merit accorded the model by Dulles for providing a strong sense of mission is problematic in the sense that the vision of mission

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 161.
\textsuperscript{70} Dulles, \textit{Models}, 46-47.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 47.
produced by this model is one that is undermined by the totalizing conception of doctrine and doctrinal development that it produces.\textsuperscript{72}

In Dulles’s criticisms of the model, many of these conceptual notes against his stated merits are incorporated. Dulles’s first criticism is that pre-Reformation tradition and the bible itself do not seem to support a claim of propositional infallibility in the foundations of scriptural revelation, and he observes that modern biblical criticism and contemporary hermeneutics give even greater force to the idea that the bible and early doctrinal tradition cannot be taken at propositional and literal face-value.\textsuperscript{73} The logical model of development depends on the existence of an objective propositional deposit of revelation, and if critical examination of the scriptures and the history of early dogmatic thinking reveal such a view to be untenable, then the model suffers a mortal blow. Dulles also offers several criticisms related to the objectivist epistemology that flows from the propositional model of revelation. He acknowledges that such epistemology has generally become suspect by the time that he is writing, and also notes that it creates an artificially narrow understanding of tradition as simply an accumulation of explicit teaching, and that it neglects the central importance of context and experience in epistemology.\textsuperscript{74} This concern about experience relates to the totalizing and universalizing tendencies that were raised as counterpoints to the unity and identity strengths that Dulles accords the propositional model. This seeming contradiction arises from Dulles not demonstrating a robust enough appreciation for contextual pluralism within the Church itself; his comments about experience focus on the ability of propositions to translate across temporal differences, but does not mention problems of reconciling different cultural or geographical experience with absolutized

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 47-48.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 48-49.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 49-51.
propositional teaching.\textsuperscript{75} Despite this limitation, his acknowledgment of the need for revelation theory to be aware of experience is a valuable critique; even if it needs to be stretched even further to cover a wider range of diversity, his argument at least opens the way to consideration of such a wider range.

Both Walgrave and Dulles cite Francisco Marín-Sola’s work as a paradigmatic zenith of the logical theory of development rooted in propositional understanding of revelation.\textsuperscript{76} To conclude this section, then, I will examine his 1924 treatise on development, \textit{The Homogenous Evolution of Catholic Dogma}, as both a demonstration of the theory itself and in order to show the criticisms raised by Walgrave and Dulles.

Marín-Sola makes it his first task to defend the concept of homogenous evolution in general, that is, the idea that logical conclusions can retain substantive sameness with their premises while reflecting genuine material change. His basic premise is that just as organic growth can involve either growth in material while form remains unchanged, as in maturation, or growth in matter along with change in essential form, as in death, so change in doctrine can involve either growth in formulation with meaning unchanged or growth in formulation with change in essential meaning.\textsuperscript{77} The condition by which a new formula can retain essential meaning is when the new formula is “implicit” in the old formula: “[W]henever the concepts of the succeeding formulae are neither contrary nor even diverse, but mutually implicit (\textit{consona}) there is an evolution in the same sense or meaning, and therefore homogenous.”\textsuperscript{78} In order to specify when a conclusion is indeed homogenously implicit, he continues to examine three

\textsuperscript{75} See ibid., 50: “The model [propositional revelation] is a highly authoritarian one, requiring submission to concepts and statements that have come out of situations radically different from those of the contemporary believer.”
\textsuperscript{76} See Walgrave, 168-178, and Dulles, \textit{Resilient Church}, 49.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 146-147; quote is on 147.
different types of logical implicit conclusions and the nature of the distinction they represent between conclusion and premises. Of the three types of implicitude Marín-Sola identifies, two retain homogeneity with what comes before them: nominal and conceptual conclusions involve substantive continuity, while objectively real conclusions involve substantive change. He frames these types further with the traditional logical theory language of virtuality: nominal conclusions are formally implicit, conceptual ones are virtually implicit, and objectively real ones are simply virtual. Simply virtual conclusions represent heterogeneous growth from the premises and so could not produce dogmatic homogeneity. However, of the other two types, only virtually implicit conclusions would be genuine doctrinal evolution because formally implicit ones, which are merely nominal, do not represent genuine material growth as is the case with virtually implicit conclusions.

The thinking of Marín-Sola is that even if a theological conclusion is logically true, it cannot become dogmatic in the sense of it being revealed truth if it is not substantively homogenous with previous propositions known to be dogmatic. The basic reason is that such a scenario would amount to new revelation, since the conclusion would not be substantively continuous with pre-existing revelation but would be getting granted the authoritative weight of revelation. When formal definition is given by the Church, it is thought to occur with the infallible guidance of God, and so the formulation is considered to involve a transition from implicit or mediate knowledge to explicit or immediate revelation without being new revelation. God is thought to be unfolding his own revelation through the instrument of the Church’s magisterium.

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79 See ibid., 150-154.
80 See Walgrave, 172-173 for a synopsis of this strategy. In Marín-Sola, see 263-286 for his presentation of the role of the hierarchical magisterium in transitioning theological conclusions to doctrinal certainty.
The importance of a conclusion’s ability to pass with logical validity from implicit to explicit status drives Marín-Sola to expend a great amount of energy nuancing the category of virtual implicititude in light if Neo-Scholastic debates. The villain for the conservative Dominican Marín-Sola is one of the early figures of liberal Jesuit theology, Francisco Suárez.

To Marín-Sola, the category of the virtual implicit can be further subdivided between virtuality that is “metaphysico-inclusive” and virtuality that is “physico-connexive.” True dogmatic virtuality, that is virtual implicitness that maintains homogeneity with formal revelation, is found only through the metaphysical type. It is homogenous because it involves explicating the properties metaphysically inclusive in the essence of the premises. Physico-connexive conclusions involve logical progression from essences to accidents or from causes to effects and therefore represent substance that is heterogeneous with the premises. To accept such conclusions as authentically dogmatic would then mean to accept new revelation, which is the only way substantively new formulas could be considered on par with preceding formulas that represent revealed certainty. But such a possibility is excluded by the propositional model that sees all objective revelation as closed with the apostolic age. The acceptance of these connexive types of conclusions is what Marín-Sola thinks is the error that Suárez enabled. By introducing the category of “formally confused” revelation, Suárez corrals all that Marín-Sola considers metaphysically implicit yet virtual to the formal revelation into the formal revelation itself.

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81 This survey in Marín-Sola runs from 175-247. Walgrave summarizes it on 170-172.
82 See Marín-Sola, 232-247.
83 See ibid., 210-232.
84 Marín-Sola considers this an innovation by Suárez in light of the traditional categories established by Thomas Aquinas regarding the formal and the virtual (see 177-189). See also Stephen Menn, “Suárez, Nominalism, and Modes,” in Hispanic Philosophy in the Age of Discovery, ed. Kevin White (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 226-256. Menn explains the Neo-Scholastic divide between liberal Jesuits like Suárez and conservative Dominicans like Marín-Sola in terms of the introduction by Suárez and his school of the intermediate category of “mode” between the traditional metaphysical distinction of essence and accident as a response to nominalism. The parallel to be drawn from Menn’s analysis is that Suárez’s introduction of the intermediary category of “mode” in between the metaphysical categories of essence and accident allowed a substantive link
This leaves theological conclusions to operate according to a different type of virtuality, one that does not involve metaphysical homogeneity with premises, what Marín-Sola identifies as the physico-connexive that would require new revelation to become dogmatic.

Within this “intricate logical scaffolding,” Walgrave identifies a major conceptual difficulty. He claims that for all the importance accorded the precise demarcation point between implicit and explicit meaning, the difference is ultimately a relative and thus logically inconsistent one. His argument is that something being revealed as explicit or immediate versus implicit or mediate depends upon the parties involved in the communication and do not have meaningful status unto themselves:

I see no meaning in the assertion that a truth is immediate in itself but not to man. In particular, to reveal is to unveil something to somebody. That revealed truth could be immediate in itself but not to man does not make any sense. And to say that it becomes immediate as coming from God through a new medium that is not God’s revealing act seems to imply a contradiction.\textsuperscript{85}

Marín-Sola’s problem with Suarez, a problem about which Walgrave agrees, is that new revelation is necessitated when connexive conclusions are allowed to become dogmatic. Walgrave’s additional point, though, is that any time virtual conclusions as such are accepted as dogmatic it amounts to new revelation because the line between immediate and mediate is relative and only by an act of God’s own revelation can a mediate truth become truly immediate.\textsuperscript{86} The other alternative that Walgrave allows is that theological conclusions may flow from material that is immediate or explicit and then carry the same weight, but he notes that this possibility removes the need for ecclesiastical definition to make something an article of faithful assent because the intellectual assent of theology should be sufficient to make the

\textsuperscript{85} Walgrave, 176.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 176-177.
conclusion authoritative for faith, that is, dogmatic. Marín-Sola acknowledges the same problem and thinks that insisting on the infallible role of the magisterium to formally declare something a matter of faith solves it, but Walgrave’s point about the relative nature of immediate versus mediate status and the implication of new revelation that results precludes Marín-Sola’s solution. However, the deeper problem in this second possibility is the way that it narrows faith to logical or intellectual knowing. It is a problem that Walgrave sees attendant to the propositional model of revelation to which Marín-Sola is beholden.

As Marín-Sola concisely puts it: “[T]he starting point of dogmatic progress has to be an explicitly revealed meaning. Without some explicit meaning there can be nothing implicit or virtual, nor can there consequently be any progress or evolution.” This leads Marín-Sola to the additional point critiqued by Walgrave as simply historically and psychologically untenable, that the Apostles knew explicitly the totality of Church dogma that ever could possibly exist: “Hence, all the dogmas already defined by the Church and all those that will be defined in the future existed in the minds of the Apostles, not mediatly or virtually or implicitly, but immediately, formally, and explicitly.”

Seemingly cognizant of the tenuousness of this position, Marín-Sola immediately attempts to justify the historical and psychological exceptionalism that permitted such knowledge in the Apostles, claiming that they were imbued with a “divine or infused light” that allowed a “simple supernatural understanding” beyond the capacity of ordinary human conceptual knowing. He additionally claims that because of this limited nature of ordinary human understanding, that the Apostles gave to the Church in both written and oral formulation the totality of revelation, by combination of the explicit formulas and their implicit content,

87 Ibid., 177.
88 See Marín-Sola, 264-265.
89 Ibid., 171. Italicized emphasis is original to the text.
90 Ibid., 172. For Walgrave’s criticism, see n. 69 above.
91 Ibid., 173. Italicized emphasis is original to the text.
without giving all the explication, leaving such authority to the magisterium of the Church which stands as a direct continuation of the apostolic magisterium.\(^\text{92}\)

The disregard noted by Dulles for experience in the role of knowledge is evident here in Marín-Sola’s system, specifically in how this propositional model of a perpetual deposit of revelation leans on magisterial authority for validation. Marín-Sola draws a clear distinction between the “human labour” of reason and the magisterial act of definition, claiming that while the former is a necessary condition to reach the latter, the divine assistance of infallibility afforded only to definition elevates that act above the epistemological fray of historical argumentation.\(^\text{93}\) However, the general problems for revelation theory noted by Dulles regarding the contemporary issues of subjectivist epistemology and critical sociology and its suspicions about ideology, both of which gather in his criticism about the propositional model’s failure to account for the role of experience and context in the formation of knowledge, undermine Marín-Sola’s attempt to insulate magisterial definition from the epistemological antecedents that he acknowledges must precede it. Recognizing the non-logical currents that impact epistemological pursuits within the context of lived experience highlights the artificially sterile view of logical knowledge and propositional revelation advocated by Marín-Sola. If religious knowledge were straightforwardly propositional and elucidated purely by logic, an unproblematic transition from syllogistic reason to formal definition would seem possible. But if definition rests on epistemological foundations that are invariably colored by experiential factors that hinder a putatively pure logical progression from a pristine and perpetual propositional deposit, then that act of definition loses its unassailability and the logical theory loses its credibility.

\(^{92}\) Ibid., 173-174.

\(^{93}\) See ibid., 282-283.
Walgrave argues that Marín-Sola is part of a trend that attempted to move beyond purely propositional revelation while failing to truly integrate a role for non-propositional knowing in the doctrinal traditional. Marín-Sola demonstrates this tendency by his vague turn to a divine infusion that actualizes knowing in the disciples in a seemingly non-logical way. He describes a mode of revelation that works by “affective or mystical” means, but by limiting such knowing to the Apostles and extending its effects historically only through the public magisterium of the Church and its logical dealings with the propositional remnants of the experience he effectively shuts the door on the possibility of non-logical modes of theological knowing and doctrinal development. By Walgrave’s analysis, strategies such as this that recognized but failed to truly integrate non-propositional revelation were tacitly acknowledging the inadequacy of strict propositional revelation theory and the need for a theory that could envision the unfolding of revelation to continue through affective or connatural means not simply circumscribed by syllogistic reason. Walgrave for example cites the exercise of *phronesis* that was central for Thomas Aquinas and connected to his own understanding of connaturality, an idea Walgrave thinks is captured by Newman’s concept of the illative sense which will serve as a foundation for his understanding of the theological theory as a superior alternative. But until a new theory of revelation could be more thoroughly developed, the contrasting position to propositional revelation was simply non-propositional revelation, which made transformistic theories of development the first type of counter-response to the narrowness and limitedness of logical theories.

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94 Walgrave, 160-162.
95 See ibid., 173. “Affective or mystical” is Walgrave’s label for the non-propositional way recognized here by Marín-Sola, one he likens to the influence of connaturality from the thought of Thomas Aquinas. In the language of Dulles’s models, the model of revelation toward which Marín-Sola is nodding here would be that of inner experience or new awareness.
96 Ibid., 177-178.
b. Explanation and Critique of Transformistic Models of Development

For Walgrave, Protestantism mainly differed from Catholicism regarding dogma in its rejection of ecclesiastical authority as the rule for determining the content of faith.97 While some within Protestant circles would form a Protestant version of scholastic-style orthodoxy, others would follow a pietist path that focused on the inner experience of faith and made all dogma relativized to that experience, leading to the movement of liberal theology.98 Walgrave uses the differing understandings of scriptural authority to further demonstrate the contrast between Catholic ideology that led to logical theories and Protestant-pietist ideology that led to transformistic theory. He notes that while for each the bible is the ultimate rule of faith and the norm for doctrine, and while each read the scriptures within the context of a tradition, the authority of the bible for the former lies in public ecclesial authority’s interpretation, entrenched by the Tridentine idea of the two concurrent streams of revelation that nurtured the logical theory, while for the latter it lies in the individual believer’s interpretation.99 Hearkening to some of the problems with the logical theory and forecasting the problems of the transformistic theory, Walgrave offers this commentary: “As long as man is man, the Catholic rule will involve the danger of oppression and abuse of authority, but the Protestant rule will always involve the danger of dissolution and arbitrary private judgment.”100

Walgrave notes several different species of liberal theology, but the greatest weight of influence is accorded to its origins in idealism. He describes the roots of idealism to be embedded within a “radical philosophical humanism” that views all history as “man in the making” with all religions serving a role in effecting the end goal, leaving “pure reason” as the

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97 Ibid., 180-181.  
98 Ibid., 181-182. Also see 183-189 for Walgrave’s analysis of German Pietism and its influence on the development of liberal theology and a view of doctrine as historically reformable.  
99 Ibid., 189.  
100 Ibid., 189.
one supersedingly true religion and the principle seeking realization throughout the historical evolution of cultures.\textsuperscript{101} Within this model, any historical form of religion is an accident of the spiritual essence, including prominently formulations of doctrine; therefore, just as the form of religion as a whole can transform through the historical realization of reason, so too can doctrine transform in historical evolution. While idealism took off from Kantian philosophy, it was the combination of Kant’s system with Romantic principles of the inner working of spirit that gave genuine birth to the transformistic model of development.\textsuperscript{102}

Friedrich Schleiermacher is particularly emblematic of this movement. As Walgrave presents it, revelation for Schleiermacher moves from an outside source into the feelings and conscience of the person and leads to scientific interpretation in doctrine; the New Testament is the initial interpretation, but as history moves the interpretation remains dynamically shaped by tradition wherein previously established orthodoxy is the starting point while spiritual elites express heterodoxy that gradually reshapes tradition.\textsuperscript{103} The inner experience of revelation only ever can point to “limit concepts” that language can represent but never fully encompass, meaning doctrines must ever transform and in no way are bound to logical consistency with past propositional content.\textsuperscript{104} Schleiermacher himself bases this idea on the inevitable worldliness of the human expression that makes up the dogmas and practices of the church. To him, the Holy Spirit works within individuals in order to give the church common identity, but since the inner experience can only be expressed in historical human forms the expressions are always

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 201-202.
\textsuperscript{102} See ibid., 203-211. Walgrave explains Kant as having developed two separate streams of epistemology, one scientific and natural and one spiritual and moral. The infusion of Romanticism into Kantian thought mainly through, as Walgrave frames it, J.G. Fichte and F.W.J. Schelling, resulted in an emphasis on identity between the natural and the spiritual. Within this identity, inner subjectivity became the guiding force, leaving historical objectivities as mutable manifestations of the activity of inner spirit. Schleiermacher is situated by Walgrave at the confluence of these movements and is presented as an importantly influential synthesizer of them.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 212-213.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 217-220.
mutable.\textsuperscript{105} He uses the metaphor of the invisible and visible church in order to explain further. The invisible church is “the totality of the effects of the Spirit,” but the visible church arises from the “lingering effects of the collective life of universal sinfulness which are never absent from any life that has been taken possession by the divine Spirit.”\textsuperscript{106} The result is that while the invisible church, based on the inner experience of the Spirit, is undivided and infallible, the visible church, based on the worldly interpretations of that inner experience, is multiple and always in error.\textsuperscript{107} The unavoidability of error extends for Schleiermacher even to the apostolic age and the initial expressions of the faith in scripture, although he still accepts scripture as a foundational norm that “constitutes” the visible church rather than “issuing from” it.\textsuperscript{108} Still, if from the very beginning there was defect, Schleiermacher can allow ongoing development to be freely transformative since there is no pristine truth anywhere in the doctrinal tradition of the church that can exercise normative control over the continuing experience of the Spirit.\textsuperscript{109} Schleiermacher claims: “No definition of doctrine, then, even when arrived at with the most perfect community of feeling, can be regarded as irreformable and valid for all time.”\textsuperscript{110}

The traces of idealism show up in Schleiermacher in his insistence that the divisions among the visible church, including the defectable expressions and formulas that separate them, are only a temporary condition and that the Spirit provides an inexorable move forward toward

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 677.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 678-681.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 688-689.
\textsuperscript{109} See B.A. Gerrish, “Schleiermacher and the Reformation: A Question of Doctrinal Development,” \textit{Church History} 49 (1980): 147-159. Gerrish argues that Schleiermacher saw evangelicalism in Christianity as maximizing the values of individuality and freedom, making openness to and even encouragement of doctrinal development the hallmark of the Reformation, leading him to reject any contemporary form of Christianity as final and to also reject the notion of any previous religious leader, like Calvin or Luther, being reified as an untransformable norm.
\textsuperscript{110} Schleiermacher, \textit{The Christian Faith} v. 2, 690.
unity and totality.\textsuperscript{111} The same principle is present in his philosophy of religions, where he argues that all forms of historical religion contain some connection to truth as they represent a particular human expression of the drive toward ultimate unity and totality.\textsuperscript{112} Christianity retains a privileged place for Schleiermacher as the most advanced kind of the most advanced stage of religion\textsuperscript{113}, but it is still subsumed under the universal drive to ultimate truth guided by the Spirit working in the religious experience of all historical kinds and stages giving Christian dogma no absolute validity. Also key in this view for Schleiermacher is what he perceives as validation for the form of revelation being primarily a non-propositional experience of Spirit. If religions without connection to the doctrinal tradition of Christianity can still contain truth, the truth to which Christianity also directs itself must be revealed in ways that are not bound strictly to propositional form, even though doctrine remains for Schleiermacher an essential form of interpretation of the deeper experience that constitutes revelation.\textsuperscript{114}

In Schleiermacher’s ideas, Walgrave sees encapsulated the basic precepts of the liberal theology with which he most closely identifies transformistic theory. He identifies in Schleiermacher the following foundational principles that would underlie later variations of liberal Christianity: 1) the epistemological primacy of reason and science in evaluating church doctrine; 2) the nonessential character of doctrine, since historical continuity in Christianity is a matter of spirit and not propositions; 3) forms of religious expression are not capable of objectively capturing ultimate religious truth; 4) the religious primacy of inner experience; and 5) the universality of religion, even if Christianity is given by some a special place among

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 685-687, 691-692.
\textsuperscript{113} See ibid., 34-44. Schleiermacher asserts that since the aim of religion is totality, monotheism is more advanced than polytheism or “fetishism,” and that among monotheistic religions, Christianity bets exemplifies, compared to Judaism and Islam, the “teleological” drive to subordinate natural behavior to moral truth.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 49-52.
religion in general as a unique form of salvation. Walgrave sees this foundation essentially remain even as dissatisfaction with the speculative and idealistic version of God that it produced led to a positivistic branch that substituted the first principles of empiricism and rational morality for mysticism, as modeled most successfully by Adolph von Harnack. He sees it remain in its flowering through English Romanticism and the philosophy of imagination espoused in the most developed way by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. He argues that the basics of liberalism remain even in Catholic modernists like George Tyrrell, who saw himself as explicitly rejecting the universalism of liberal theology, because they maintained the liberal view of the essence of revelation excluding all elements of doctrinal objectivity while rejecting the Neo-Scholastic propositionalism of Catholic orthodoxy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He sees it remain even into the existential theology of Rudolph Bultmann, whom Walgrave notes rejects Schleiermacher’s radical inwardness, but nonetheless in liberal style removes revelation from essentially being in any necessary connection to objective dogma.

Walgrave, 226-229. Walgrave also ascribes this “essence” to the philosophical influence of Hegel, but my focus is isolating Schleiermacher since he dealt much more directly with the issue of Christian doctrine and development. Hegel’s philosophy of spirit delineates the same central note of universal spirit guiding ever-transforming historical expressions, but Schleiermacher specifically directs this idea to the topic of doctrine.


For Tyrrell’s argument on steering a middle way between liberal theology and Neo-Scholasticism, see Through Scylla and Charybdis (London: Longman, Green, and Co., 1907), 133-154. For Walgrave’s assessment, see 178, 248-253. See also Francis M. O’Connor, “George Tyrrell and Dogma—I,” Downside Review 85 (1967): 160-182. O’Connor similarly argues that despite his intentions for a mediatising position, Tyrrell’s system ultimately left doctrine as wholesale changeable at all times in the mode of transformistic theory.

Walgrave, 255-259.
This final note is the basic criticism of Walgrave against liberal theology and transformistic development models. In his treatment of transformistic theory, he does not collect his criticism into a single presentation, but his occasional critiques of specific moments within the development of liberal thought reveal the problem as he understands it. The problem in sum is too radical of a turn to subjectivity, whether it be in the form of pietistic sentiment or modernist subjective rationalism. In whatever form, this turn to subjective judgment leaves Christian theology and doctrine subject to the standards of historical epistemologies rather than recognizing Christian revelation as originating from outside of history and constituting a necessarily objective body of truth to which faith must fundamentally assent. Walgrave expresses this in his presentation of the general tendency to subjectivity in the sola fide of Protestantism and Newman’s discomfort with it that eventually led him to Catholicism:

[Newman] clearly saw the weak point of the basic proposition of Protestantism: its tendency to interpret the Bible not according to an objective rule, patiently established by centuries of Christian thought and experience, but according to private judgment, with all the possible deviations following from the partiality of the different points of view represented by individuals, particular groups, or generations. Indeed, let the idea—a very sound idea—of historicity take possession of the mind, pressing upon it the necessity of a continuous translation of the Gospel in terms of contemporary thought, and it at once becomes evident that if there is no living authority to challenge them the moods of contemporary thought will easily dispose of the original truth by way of time-serving interpretation.\[120\]

He expresses it again when he notes problems in the thought of seventeenth century German Pietism led by Philip Spener:

But the trait of subjectivism, the tendency to accord to the acceptance of a definite Creed a secondary place in comparison with the disposition of heart and will, carries with it the germs of a certain liberal theology. Indeed, Spener’s subjectivism, extended by the later insight that all dogmatic expression is historical and therefore, in a certain sense, subject to development and correction, is perhaps not so far from Bultmann.\[121\]

He again expresses the idea forcibly in his summation of latitudinarianism and its influence on the advent of Protestant liberalism: “Once reason in whatever form is accepted as the only

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\[120\] Ibid., 183.
\[121\] Ibid., 187.
principle of theological hermeneutics, the way lies open to the negation of Christianity, and theology itself is emptied.”¹²² And Walgrave ends his section on transformistic theory by situating analytic Christianity, in the mold of Paul van Buren, as the logical conclusion of liberalism and the fulfillment of this prophesy about the negation of Christianity in the way that it fully and explicitly subsumes Christian thought under the standards of secularity.¹²³

Dulles’s criticisms of the model of revelation as inner experience, the model most closely associated with the transformistic theory of development, highlight other issues associated with Walgrave’s basic accusation of too much subjectivism. He acknowledges the value of the model to be its ability to have stood as a bulwark for faith against the Kantian skepticism that defined modernism and its influence in reawakening the sense of ascetical theology’s value for systematic theology.¹²⁴ But as negatives he notes first the overly selective use of scripture that can occur as a result of the individualizing of biblical interpretation that occurs when revelation is made into a private experience.¹²⁵ He notes also that this turn to private experience fosters elitism in the way that it affords priority to the religious genius who is able to harness mystical understanding in a way a majority of faithful persons perhaps cannot.¹²⁶ Additionally, Dulles describes as a problem the separation of revelation from doctrine characteristic of the liberal mentality because the focus on interiority fails to address problems at the social level of church life and to offer substantive answers to questions of meaning, tending instead to offer sentimental notions that amount to “vague syncretism or agnosticism.”¹²⁷ But the most central problem on which Dulles focuses is the divorce in this model between inner experience and other forms of

¹²² Ibid., 195.
¹²³ Ibid., 268-277.
¹²⁴ Dulles, Models, 77-78.
¹²⁵ Ibid., 78.
¹²⁶ Ibid., 79.
¹²⁷ Ibid., 79-80.
cognition. By making such an epistemological separation and then placing revelation on the side exclusively of “immediate” and “self-evidencing” experience, the inner experience model artificially detaches the understanding of truth from the historical forms through which all truth is mediated. The mediations, like doctrinal formulas, are thus endlessly malleable according to the subjectivist whims feared by Walgrave. Both Dulles and Walgrave seek to reunify the sense of experience through which revelation is understood, balancing inner mystical sensibilities with social tradition and public forms of mediated expression, though they will diverge on how they think development should accordingly be framed. That divergence will be traced in the closing sections of this chapter, but for now the critique of the transformistic model remains to be finished.

As argued above, the model of revelation as history that Dulles describes similarly leads to transformistic development theory, and so Dulles’s criticisms of that model are also instructive. As merits for the historical event model Dulles explains an appreciation for biblical material, such as prophetic and apocalyptic texts, that are sometimes underappreciated in propositional understandings of revelation, and an affinity with contemporary consciousness in that it connects believers to concrete experiential events rather than abstract concepts and is objective without being overly authoritarian since its objectivity rests in interpretable events rather than guarded doctrinal formulas. Yet the primary weakness also begins for Dulles with scripture, as he claims that this model falsely separates God’s revelation by deed from God’s revelation by word, such as in for example wisdom literature, choosing to subordinate the latter to the former without

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128 Ibid., 81.
129 Ibid., 61-62.
sufficient grounding for doing so.\textsuperscript{130} The way Dulles frames this criticism helps further place this model in line with transformistic development theory. He writes:

\begin{quote}
Even philosophically, a strict dichotomy [between revelation by word and revelation by deed] would have to be ruled out. Whenever a person performs a human act, a meaning is expressed, so that the action takes on the character of word. Whenever a person speaks or writes, the body is involved and an impact is made on the world. Word and deed thus participate in one another. . . . In the case of divine revelation, the word of God is never empty. God’s word is a creative power that calls being into existence. Any act of God, expressing a divine intention, possesses features of word and deed alike.\textsuperscript{131}
\end{quote}

Thus the central problem in the historical model for Dulles is that while being objective in its bases it does not provide sure enough ground to validate interpretations of the events’ meanings. He claims that the public nature of historical events places the interpretation of them similarly within a controlling public discourse of tradition that prevents unfettered relativism\textsuperscript{132}, but nonetheless the specter of potentially indulgent subjectivism is admitted. Dulles builds this criticism on a fundamental presumption that the meaning of events and deeds is inherently more flexible than the meaning of linguistic formulation in doctrines. The emphasis on word alone that was found in the propositional model was artificially syllogistic and intellectualistic for Dulles and out of step with contemporary experiential epistemology, but a one-sided focus instead on deed is found by Dulles to err in the opposite direction, leaving revelation and the doctrine that flows from it too devoid of intellectual content and too open to the vagaries of experiential epistemology. The development theory implied by the historical model of revelation therefore falls into the same errors as the transformistic theory explicitly attached by Walgrave to the inner experience understanding of revelation.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 63.
\item\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 66.
\item\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 61-62.
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The Theological/Organic Theory of Development

As focus turns to the third of Walgrave’s development theories, the approach of examination changes. While Walgrave’s assessment and criticisms of the logical and transformistic theories of development were synergistic with Dulles’s assessment and criticisms of the underlying revelational theories and their implications, the synergy is disrupted when it comes to Walgrave’s third theory, the theological. While Walgrave endorses this theory as the correct one to follow, Dulles retains reservations about it. Accordingly, I will begin with an explanation of Walgrave’s affirmation before turning separately to Dulles’s disagreements, from which I will build a fuller critique of the theological model and indicate directions in which an alternative must move. This alternative will incorporate Dulles’s model of revelation as symbolic mediation and adapt that model through the hermeneutics of imagination developed by Ricoeur.

a. Walgrave’s Affirmation of the Theological Theory

Walgrave presents the theological theory as a confluence of thought coming from various sectors that became increasingly dissatisfied with the dichotomous opposition of transformistic liberalism and propositional conservatism. Newman’s shadow looms largest though. Newman’s basic dynamic of development as an organic unfolding of a complete Idea that represents the totality of faith, presented in his Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, forms the basic matrix of Walgrave’s theological theory. However, to expand his explanation of

Newman’s system Walgrave incorporates prominently Newman’s later reflections in *An Essay in the Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, specifically his distinction between “real” and “notional” apprehension.

Real apprehension involves knowledge based on experience, whether ideally or actually, while notional apprehension involves indirect knowledge inferred or abstracted from other experience. Experience, however, can yield knowledge that goes beyond just what is empirical or rational. In being aware of a real whole, but unable to grasp all its details in totality, there is what Newman terms an illative sense that enables accurate and true judgment, in the model of Aristotelian *phronesis*, that can be a source of broader knowledge than reason, language, or logic might be able to immediately present. As Walgrave summarizes it, “Experience, then, is a process of a gradual clarification and expansion of a comprehensive view of things.”

The direct experience of real apprehension then entails a grasp of a whole known as a whole though in a way not entirely or immediately expressible in notional formulation. Faith is a real apprehension; theology in general and the development of doctrine in particular are notional articulations of reason, in light of the illative sense, that abstract parts of the whole experienced in faith but always remain incapable of encompassing the whole.

But, the rational clarity of notional definitions remains absolutely necessary for the proper nurturing of the real apprehension of faith. “Dogma with its conceptual clarity and critical determination,” writes Walgrave, “sharply focuses the eye of faith on its true object, preventing it from running wild and being distorted by uncontrolled products of the

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135 Ibid., ch. 9, §2-3.
136 Walgrave, 296.
137 Walgrave, 302-304.
imagination.”¹³⁸ The real whole lying behind dogma keeps it buoyed against liberal transformistic thought and the illative sense that grasps it keeps it from becoming simply syllogistic and logical, but Newman continues to privilege the rational definitions of doctrine by public authority as a guard against the lingering possibility of relativism. As Walgrave explains:

The development of dogma is not so much a logical working out of first propositions, as a propositional clarification of knowledge that, through the medium of these propositions, communicates with the real. Thus the point of departure of the development is not merely propositional. It is a comprehensive awareness of the real—and the real is always the whole—through a propositional expression that may be very partial and always remains inadequate. The comprehensive intuitive awareness of the whole and the propositional expression cannot be separated, but the former always exceeds the latter . . . faith could not attain to its real object on the level of supernatural communion without the mediation of dogma.¹³⁹

Real apprehension exceeds notional proposition in theory, but practically and in matters of doctrine propositional expression remains the controlling force so that the real apprehension does not run the risk of being led astray by “uncontrolled products of the imagination.” Development is fundamentally an expansion of real comprehension and so the illative sense of the whole is the starting point, but development necessarily occurs notionally through dogma and the fact that dogma arises in the form of primitive creedal formulation means that dogma is the entry point of authentically real apprehension.¹⁴⁰ Part of the justification for this is the public nature of faith which places one’s real assent always within a community of tradition¹⁴¹, but it is also driven by the concern that expanding the first principle of faith from a propositional deposit to a broader conceptual apprehension can lead to subjectivism and liberal theological positions. Thus the strategy is to make the guarantee of true development “supra-logical,” the infallible guidance of the Spirit at work in the church, but to maintain that infallible guidance it must be expressed by a

¹³⁸ Ibid., 302.
¹³⁹ Ibid., 305.
¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 306.
¹⁴¹ See ibid., 303.
public authority producing binding declarations of what indeed does and does not pertain to the fullness of the objective faith to which real apprehension is directed.\textsuperscript{142}

Newman is caught here between a propositional model of revelation and a dichotomous alternative of non-propositionalism that leads to liberal tendencies. Without an alternative sense of revelation articulated, this balancing of mystical awareness as the foundation of faith and practical oversight to restrain its development leaves Newman in an indeterminate position. Either there is adherence to propositional necessity and the logical conservatism of the Neo-Scholastics, or there is a release of propositional necessity and liberal theology and transformistic development results; thus, Newman tries to retain an indispensible role for propositional dogma as a mediator of real truth while conceiving of that truth itself in non-propositional terms that make ongoing development a natural factor.\textsuperscript{143} His argument for the theological legitimacy of an infallible church authority is his way of justifying this balance. Newman’s assumption is that if development is a natural part of the way an idea would unfold in history, God would have planned for guidance of that development within his revelation in order to prevent the natural fracturing tendencies of human sociability from corrupting the truth; hence, a system of infallible authority should be expected to result from God’s revealed plan.\textsuperscript{144} Magisterial pronouncement becomes then the breakwall that keeps the potentially shattering waves of non-propositional development.

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 308.

\textsuperscript{143} See Francesco Turvasi, “The Development of Doctrine in John Cardinal Newman and Alfred Loisy,” in \textit{John Henry Newman: Theology and Reform}, eds. Michael E. Allsopp and Ronald R. Burke, 145-175 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992). Turvasi makes this point by way of a contrast between Newman and Loisy, positioning each as Catholic thinkers attempting to move away from rigid traditionalism and respond to challenges of modernism. In his analysis, Newman remains faithful to orthodoxy because he retains through his concept of the idea as the content of the deposit of faith, rather than propositions as in Neo-Scholasticism, an objective connection between doctrinal development and apostolic revelation. Loisy on the other hand fell into liberal tendencies because he replaced the content of the deposit with the historical Jesus, the interpretation of whom undergoes real transformation along an unrealized arc of eschatology.

\textsuperscript{144} See Newman, \textit{Development of Christian Doctrine}, §2.2. See also Walgrave, 308-311.
revelation from wrecking the secure shores of carefully and communally crafted dogmatic standards.

For all his adherence to Newman’s language and frameworks, Walgrave nonetheless situates him as one contribution among many in the formation of a theological theory of development that he himself can endorse. Drew Phillip Morgan’s analysis of Newman’s development theory helps demonstrate the ways in which the theory is held back by the pre-occupation with propositionalism that prevailed during Newman’s time despite his efforts to surpass it. Despite him rejecting propositionalism in his concept of what is known through faith by real assent, a predilection to understand revelation as communication of facts kept him moored to the propositional sensibility. This is a problem that Walgrave similarly sees in need of rectification in order for Newman’s ideas to settle into a coherent final theory.

Morgan identifies three chief complaints against Newman’s theory and traces each to the lack of a developed form of revelation that could break away from conceiving of it simply as a communication of previously unknown truths as opposed to God’s self-communication of God’s own self. First, Newman’s emphasis on doctrinal continuity ends up making church pronouncement equivalent to new revelation when genuine historical discontinuity is recognized in doctrinal tradition, making Newman’s theory go against the orthodoxy he sought to defend. Second, Newman’s emphasis on authority by obedience to hierarchy stilted other important sources of religious authority like conscience and scripture. Third, Newman’s theory was too literally organic, meaning that since it presumed revelation to be a communication of information

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146 Ibid., 234-237. See also Stephen Prickett, “Coleridge, Newman, and F.D. Maurice: Development of Doctrine and Growth of the Mind,” Theology 76 (1973): 340-349. Prickett notes the disagreement between Newman and his contemporary Maurice, who thought Newman erred in turning over the authority over development to the hierarchy rather than leaving it to scripture’s own internal norms.
it offered the analogy of biological growth in too direct of a way that cast development in too programmed of a path to account for historical reality. With the first point, Morgan attaches it to propositionalism leading Newman to retain too intellectualistic a sense of revelation, leading to failure to account for the discontinuities that can arise in genuinely ongoing revelation of God’s own self, the model that would later come to surpass the propositional sensibility. For the second point, Morgan recognizes as a cause the need for strong infallibility in Newman’s theory to arbitrate intellectual interpretations of propositional revelatory material. And to the third point, Morgan argues that only because Newman applies the organic metaphor to a propositional understanding does it become artificially mechanistic, and that with a different understanding of revelation as divine self-communication the organic metaphor can remain simply a heuristic tool. The payoff for Morgan in this argument is that Newman’s basic hermeneutical framework can balance dynamic development and a retrieval of continuity when contemporary understandings of revelation are employed, making him a useful figure for moderating current debates about doctrinal fidelity and doctrinal growth. Walgrave similarly embraces Newman through later developments in understanding revelation that began to take shape in the early twentieth century.

A crucial early step in this process for Walgrave was Maurice Blondel and his reimagining of the category of tradition. Blondel began with a rejection of both “extrinsicist” and “historicist” methods of Catholic thought, seeing each as too one-sided in their attempts to reconcile the real and unavoidable discrepancies that arise between historical facts and faith: the extrinsicists subject entirely the former to the latter through syllogistic logic that filters history through dogmatic tradition, and the historicists subject entirely the latter to the former through

\[147\] Morgan, 237-240.
\[148\] Ibid., 240-242.
empirical historical criticism.\textsuperscript{149} For Blondel this establishes the shorthand tension between history and dogma, between prioritizing verifiable facts versus prioritizing speculative faith. Walgrave asserts that the motivation for Blondel in this dual critique is to ground religious truth in an immanence that can address the real existential situation of human volitional freedom.\textsuperscript{150} While this position introduced the necessity of historicity against propositional conservatives, it simultaneously rejected the transformationism of liberal theology by insisting that the history of tradition is more expansive than a collection of mere historical facts, rejecting modernist historical methods that would relocate revelation from discontinuous history to abstract Spirit inwardly experienced or else a positivistically discovered historical Jesus.\textsuperscript{151} The key move through which Blondel makes this argument is his recovery of a robust sense of the idea of tradition, which he asserts as the mediator between history and dogma.

Blondel claims that tradition is often not recognized as an autonomous dynamic because both history and dogma absorb it as a term for the transmission of its own fragmentary version of the truth.\textsuperscript{152} The problem for Blondel in this understanding is that it limits tradition to that which can be verbally transmitted, prioritizing codification and analytical reflection and excluding a fuller lived reality that gives tradition a vital non-intellectual dimension that helps control the verbal expressions of dogmatic teaching and historical factuality.\textsuperscript{153} Blondel describes this view of tradition as a “philosophy of action,” an idea meaning that revelation is received and

\textsuperscript{149} Blondel, 222-224.
\textsuperscript{150} Walgrave, 318.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 319. See also James J. Kelly, “The Modernist Controversy: von Hügel and Blondel,” \textit{Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses} 55 (1979): 297-330. Kelly compares the critique of historicism in liberal modernism in both Blondel and his contemporary Friedrich von Hügel, concluding that von Hügel’s response is superior. Kelly thinks that Blondel is too dismissive of empirical history that would reveal greater degrees of discontinuity in dogmatic understandings of history. Kelly thus advocates for von Hügel’s idea that historical critical methodologies should be used to establish a baseline range of data within which doctrinal development must be located, operating then in a way that does not allow the historical data to exhaustively define its subject matter. However, see Blondel, 282-283, where he does suggest that doctrinal development should proceed as a joint operation of historical criticism and speculative theology, mediated by his understanding of tradition as action.
\textsuperscript{152} Blondel, 265.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 266-268.
expressed primarily through faithful action accumulated and directed by the collective discernment of the whole church applying its faith to current cultural and intellectual trends.\(^{154}\) The faithful action of the full matrix of the church’s accumulated experience gives a surer connection to the supernatural reality of revelation that by its nature cannot be fully encompassed by either historical fact or theological speculation: “A truly supernatural teaching is only viable and conceivable if the initial gift is a seed capable of progressive and continual growth.”\(^{155}\) In Blondel’s thinking, doctrinal development becomes a naturally orthodox consequence, and resistance to it becomes heterodox; doctrine must remain an ever-deepening discovery of the experience of Christian faith, and tradition is the rightful confluence of historical criticism, speculative theology, and faithful action that all contribute interdependently to the process.\(^{156}\)

Walgrave analyzes that in Blondel’s philosophy the deposit of faith becomes an “original, supernatural happening, the appearance of Christ in history, continued by the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.”\(^{157}\) However, doctrine is just the intellectual aspect of that developing process, which in its entirety is composed of a variety of “facts, thoughts, and experiences” that arise from the root of faithful action among the people of the church.\(^{158}\) While experience becomes the foundation of the development of Christian faith, Walgrave notes that the magisterium remains for Blondel the final guarantor of authentic development because it is supernaturally tasked with collecting the individual experiences of Christians and synthesizing them for the whole of the church.\(^{159}\) Blondel argues that making development a process that is rooted in subjective experience does not make it irrational or amorphous, asserting that tradition

\(^{154}\) Ibid., 270-274.  
\(^{155}\) Ibid., 275.  
\(^{156}\) Ibid., 275. See also 282-283 on the interdependence of historical criticism, speculative theology, and faithful action.  
\(^{157}\) Walgrave, 319.  
\(^{158}\) Ibid., 320.  
\(^{159}\) Ibid., 321. See also Blondel, 277-279.
rooted in faithful action proceeds in a reliable and discernable order.\textsuperscript{160} As Walgrave explains it, it is possible in Blondel’s system to demonstrate connections between later developments and earlier doctrines even if such connections are not reducible to deductive logic.\textsuperscript{161} But it is by recourse to divine assistance in the authority of the hierarchical magisterium that such a process is given reliability and the potential relativistic dangers of subjective and experiential conceptions of revelation are mitigated.

Blondel’s view of tradition rooted in a philosophy of action opens the way to a view of revelation that can move beyond the propositionalism that lingered in Newman. It provides a way that the experience at stake in Newman’s phenomenon of real assent can be given real priority as the revelational basis of doctrinal expression. While Newman’s model had difficulty dealing with historical discontinuity, Blondel’s thought provides a means for integrating historical analysis that highlights factual or logical discontinuity in doctrinal tradition because it does not posit continuity to be simply a matter of factuality or logic. But by asserting that a discernable order does exist, guided by supernatural assistance, Blondel prevents this alternative view from veering into the non-propositional liberalism that Newman feared. Later theological developments would more clearly begin articulating ideas about revelation itself that would further allow the organic model of Newman to emerge into the theological theory Walgrave defends.

The revelational model that emerges through Blondel’s work is the one described by Dulles as new awareness.\textsuperscript{162} It is a model that highlights revelation occurring through experience, but it makes God the horizon of that experience drawing it to its fulfillment in faith rather than

\textsuperscript{160} See Blondel, 269-270, 276.
\textsuperscript{161} Walgrave, 321.
\textsuperscript{162} Dulles, \textit{Models}, 99. Dulles here points to Blondel as the entry point in Catholic thinking to the philosophical underpinnings of the new awareness model.
making God an object of direct apprehension as is the case in the inner experience model involved in transformistic developmental thought.\textsuperscript{163} This model allows for a cognitive element to revelation because cognition is a legitimate element of consciousness, but it also does not allow for cognitive or intellectual formulae to exhaust what is given in revelation, since other aspects of consciousness besides cognition are also involved.\textsuperscript{164} Revelation is a communication of God’s own reality in history, making history the space in which God draws people to the fullness of faith, to a new consciousness that constitutes the completion of revelation.\textsuperscript{165}

Two key Catholic figures who helped mold the new awareness model were Pierre Rousselot and Henri de Lubac. Rousselot performed a retrieval of Aquinas through modern Catholic thought, such as that of Newman, reintroducing the Thomistic concept of knowing by connaturality. Rousselot presented the wisdom of faith at the heart of doctrinal tradition to be primarily marked by an infused “light of faith” by which any Christian may possess a clear apprehension of the truth of faith “\textit{per modum connaturalitatis},” even if in a non-discursive way that cannot be readily translated into notional terms.\textsuperscript{166} This knowing by connaturality enables a view of revelation being received and discerned through affective as well as intellectual means, leaving revelation as something supernatural but known through the organic unity of the person of faith’s inner awareness in the midst of his or her historical location.\textsuperscript{167} This allows the

\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 102.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., 103.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., 105, 109.
\textsuperscript{166} See Walgrave, 337.
\textsuperscript{167} Andrew Tallon, “Doctrinal Development and Wisdom: Rousselot on ‘Sympathetic Knowing’ by Connaturality,” \textit{Philosophy and Theology} 15 (2003): 353-383. In particular see 354 where Tallon argues that Rousselot’s psychology of connaturallity is too faculty oriented, dividing up the different modes through which it proceeds in consciousness—emotional, cognitive, volitional. He instead interprets Rousselot through the intentionality framework of Lonergan, arguing that such a model better emphasizes the interrelated unity of the elements of consciousness, yielding a more complete understanding of the dynamics of connaturality. On 374 he concludes that revelation involves primarily a conversion of the receiving subject’s connaturalized consciousness rather than a simple transformation from feelings into concepts, reflecting the sensibility of Dulles’s new awareness model.
apprehension of revealed truth to be meaningful even without conceptualization and makes affective knowing necessary to the conceptual development of doctrinal thought.\textsuperscript{168}

De Lubac was influential in molding the sort of understanding of revelation that emerges out of Rousselot into the idea of revelation by divine self-communication. He accomplished this by using the foundations of Blondel and Rousselot to conceive of history as the medium through which the event of revelation occurs as humankind’s encounter with God’s self-communication.\textsuperscript{169} De Lubac upholds the traditional notion that Jesus is the objective completion of revelation, but he understands that revelation to be not propositional but rather communication of God’s saving will and the ultimate destiny of human nature.\textsuperscript{170} This communication is necessarily historical, and the conditions of history become the necessary prism through which revelatory divine self-communication is interpreted.\textsuperscript{171} Abstractions and conceptualizations in propositional form are legitimate outgrowths of this interpretation, but should never be considered to exhaust it or truncate ongoing historical influence in the development of how it is doctrinally expressed.\textsuperscript{172} In Walgrave’s terms, de Lubac offers a view of revelation as a “global apprehension” that only gradually and historically is translated into language.\textsuperscript{173} The origin of this apprehension is supernatural and theological, but the reception of it is in the awareness of historical consciousness, emerging only as that consciousness is touched by the light of faith working through historical experience.

While Rousselot and de Lubac represent the formation of Dulles’s new awareness model of revelation, the preeminent example of the model of dialectical presence, the other model that

\textsuperscript{168} Ibid., 368-372.  
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., 658-659.  
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., 661.  
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., 662-663.  
\textsuperscript{173} Walgrave, 341.
leads to a theological type of development, is Karl Barth, whom Walgrave also includes as a
contributor to his theory. In the dialectical model, revelation is identified with God’s eternal
Word, but that Word is forever beyond containment by historical expression, even in the words
of scripture. Even as God’s Word is revealed, it is simultaneously and dialectically concealed
because the revelation always involves demonstration that the Word is beyond historical
understanding. But despite the inability of history to fully reveal or contain God’s Word, the
communication of God’s Word occurs as an ongoing historical event because its revelation
comes through God’s free grace, which freely coopts human forms of historical understanding as
God chooses. What is known, then, in this historical experience of the Word is God’s grace,
leaving the knowledge of revelation as more than simply a deposit of propositional
information. What is revealed is God’s freely spoken word which is ever incomprehensible
mystery: “The Word of God is the speech, the act, the mystery of God. It is not a demonstrable
substance immanent in the Church and present within it apart from the event being spoken and
heard.”

In Walgrave’s view, Barth’s dialectical model mirrors the thought of Newman and
Blondel. Just as Newman believed in real apprehension that grasps the totality of an idea which

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174 Dulles, Models, 87-89. See also Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics I/I, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1975), 249. In this opening section on the Word of God and dogmatics, Barth states that his understanding of the Word of God is that it remains always only “provisionally comprehensible.” See also Barth, 261, 268-269, and 274, all locations where he emphasizes that this provisional nature of the understanding of the Word of God makes the grasping of revelation in its fullness an ultimately eschatological reality.

175 Dulles, Models, 86.


177 Dulles, Models, 88. See also Barth, I/I, 265-275. This section in Barth is a critique of what he envisions as Catholic dogmatics, but on 270-272 especially he criticizes the “materialisation and depersonalisation” of the Neo-Scholastic view of revelation as a propositional deposit and the attendant logical sense of development, claiming that such a view leads to a theology of glory that constricts the free nature of God’s grace and remains unmindful of the dialectical concealment that is unavoidable in the historical experience of God’s revelatory Word.

178 Barth, I/I, 261.
notional apprehension then parses, and as Blondel believed that experiential knowing involves a
total understanding that intellection can gradually bring to expression in tradition, for Barth the
revelation of God’s Word through grace yields a total sense of Dogma that is interpreted through
the dogmas of systematic theological reflection. In each case the ultimate norm and source of
knowledge is supernaturally theological, but reflects a theory of knowledge by which an
apprehended but supra-conceptual whole can be conceptually articulated and nuanced over the
course of historical development. The beginning point for Barth by which such articulation can
occur is faith, an opening to the working of God’s grace, and so the process is not reducible to
logic and rationality, nor is it limited by the historical forms through which it operates. This is
what makes Barth’s conception of development truly theological for Walgrave—it adamantly
makes God the source and norm of true development, and does not allow development to be
restricted by either Neo-Scholastic rationalism or liberal historicism.

Walgrave synthesizes these contributions into his theological understanding of
development. What he sees in common between all of these attempts running from Newman to
Barth is a strategy to integrate the uniqueness of Christianity as a faith originating by a
supernatural revelation external to history with the historicity of knowledge articulated by the
intellectual climate of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In all their systems, the
object of faith is expressible in propositional form for the sake of clarification and understanding,
but the inner perception of the whole truth of faith is the true object and one that cannot be

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179 Walgrave, 326. See Barth, I/I, 268.
180 Walgrave, 328-329.
181 On the former, see n. 177 above. On the latter, see Barth, I/I, 251-259, and also Alasdair I.C. Heron, “Barth,
Schleiermacher, and the Task of Dogmatics,” in Theology Beyond Christendom: Essays on the Centenary of the
Heron explains that while Schleiermacher and Barth had similar views about the imperfection and correctibility of
all doctrinal formulation, Barth’s views remained theologically moored by his emphasis on the beginning of
dogmatics in the dialectically in-breaking Word, as opposed to Schleiermacher who rooted dogmatics in
anthropology and relativized the theological uniqueness of Christian revelation.
182 Walgrave, 329.
reduced to the utility of those propositions.\textsuperscript{183} Newman, Blondel, and Barth alike “point to the fact that the original idea of Dogma is not only the primitive datum, the point of departure of the process of clarification, but also that it is present in the process itself as a guiding principle, as the object of reflection, and as an ideal that intellection is always striving after without ever comprehending its inexhaustible fullness.”\textsuperscript{184} For the theological model, God’s self-communication in history, whether perceived as new awareness or dialectical event, makes divine mystery the \textit{terminus a quo} of all development, and allows revelation itself to serve as the guiding norm of that development in history. Because, for Walgrave, it is a natural movement for the intellect to strive after fuller comprehension of that which it grasps imperfectly, development becomes a spontaneous process of growth whereby the aspects of the total idea rooted in divine revelation unfold according to the organic model of a seed coming to bloom.\textsuperscript{185}

Central to the theological model for Walgrave is also the role of authoritative magisterium. His argument is as follows:

If the rule by which to judge the development of doctrine is neither a logical device [as in logical theory] nor the philosophy of the day [as in transformistic theory], it follows that development must have a rule of its own. That rule is accepted by faith: the rule of doctrinal authority. The magisterium expresses and declares the ecclesiastical sense of faith that is itself guided by an inner supernatural rule: the Holy Spirit, working in the Church as a whole and assisting its leaders. These leaders are appointed by Him through the voice of the Church to be the successors of the Apostles to whom Christ once entrusted the government of his community. Because this rule works in a supernatural way that can only be recognized by faith, it follows that its acceptance is a second reason why the theory under discussion may be called theological.\textsuperscript{186}

For Walgrave then, the theological theory is not theological only because it functions with a theological starting point and orientation, but also because the norm that rules it is also theological in the vein of a presumption of supernatural power that guides the magisterial office as the arbiter of the process. Rather than syllogism or philosophical fashion or historical analysis,

\textsuperscript{183} Ibid., 330-331.
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., 331.
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid., 332.
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., 333-334.
the determiner of doctrinal validity becomes by this supernatural organ God’s own divine
guidance. Walgrave acknowledges that the hierarchical magisterium can be limited in its ability
to properly or purely channel that divine guidance, tending sometimes to an over-emphasis on
conservatism, but Walgrave nonetheless believes the working of the Holy Spirit in the hierarchy
to be sure enough to be the safest protection against other biases and one-sidedness that can
result in the historical situations in which the clarification and articulation of God’s received self-
communication occurs.¹⁸⁷ Walgrave in this line of thinking is echoing the argument from
Newman’s *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, the argument that it should be
expected that God would include within revelation itself provision for a guiding social authority
to direct and preserve truth.¹⁸⁸

In closing, it is pertinent to address Walgrave’s closing section of his reflections on the
theological theory in which he addresses potential challenges to his model from hermeneutical
theory. He describes that hermeneutics can deal either with interpretation of the primitive data
from which knowledge derives, or it can deal with the secondary interpretations that are reflected
in historical texts that deal with that primitive data, and he argues that the legitimate role of
hermeneutics is the latter.¹⁸⁹ The decisive point for Walgrave is that hermeneutical interpretation
begins with a supernatural given that is imposed from outside of history and remains always and
universally the same; hermeneutics then addresses the always limited historical attempts to
conceptualize that supernatural given.¹⁹⁰ To allow hermeneutics to critique the primitive datum
would place the system into the transformistic mold for Walgrave by leaving no certain

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 359-361.
¹⁸⁸ See ibid., 363. While the preceding arguments reflect the symmetry with Newman as well, here the arguments
Walgrave makes for the hierarchical magisterium as the final authority of doctrinal development even more clearly
resemble the specific idea of Newman.
¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 384-385.
¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 385-387.
revelation that can supersede historical understanding. The supernatural *terminus a quo* of the theological theory serves then to isolate doctrine for Walgrave from being too profoundly dependent upon historical context, and the theological nature of the normative measure, magisterial tradition, is similarly empowered to overrule hermeneutical critiques that would challenge the legitimacy of the supernatural surety and continuity of dogmatic teaching.

*b. Criticism of the Theological Theory and Trajectories Beyond It*

I will argue that in Walgrave’s theological theory three main shortcomings exist: 1) a lack of true openness to historicity; 2) over-reliance on authority and tradition; and 3) lack of appreciation for pluralistic experience. Dulles has noted in at least anticipatory form each of these three criticisms. In regard to the first and third, he noted that the theological theory, or as he terms it the organic theory, remains in practice very similar to the logical theory—both make dogma, once defined, too invulnerable to historicity and outside the scope of contemporary hermeneutical and linguistic criticism, and both accordingly fail to connect to ordinary experience and pluralism within such experience.\(^{191}\) He claims that the organic model, like the logical theory, makes dogmatic growth “cumulative and irreversible” and too much in terms of “unassimilable formulas” that are a “burden to the spirit” and fail to impact people at the level of their real historical experience. In regard to the second and third, Dulles articulated them as critiques in his review of Walgrave’s book, claiming that Walgrave essentially rests his theory on a strong sense of infallibility without presenting legitimization for it and that doctrinal development in an age of pluralism should include more space for diversity than for which

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\(^{191}\) Dulles, *The Resilient Church*, 50-51.
Walgrave allowed.\textsuperscript{192} Dulles’s criticism of the theological model overall is expressed in the following:

> The developmental concept of reform [in organic models] rests upon a somewhat optimistic estimate of the powers of human nature aided by grace. Protestants have held that the theory neglects the pervasiveness of sin. Recently the organic theory has come under criticism from another quarter. Some object that it relies too much on biological metaphors and is too ecclesiocentric; that it tends to neglect the discontinuous and irregular character of historical change. Furthermore, by canonizing past developments, the theory tends to hamper interest in corrective reforms.\textsuperscript{193}

Because there is a too easy presumption of the way grace can take up human understanding to comprehend the fullness of revelation, there is a neglect of the way history impacts the reception of revelation at the most fundamental level. That too easy presumption also enables an insistence on universality and objectivity, which can lead to either the sophistic maneuvering of the logical theory determining exactly what can count as implicit material within explicit teaching, or to reliance on the authority of a final judge, the magisterium, to decide universal and objective authenticity. In doing so, the impact of pluralism in the experience of faith is muted and disallowed from impacting the authoritative decisions of magisterial leadership in arbitrating doctrinal truth.\textsuperscript{194}

More of Dulles’s ideas against the organic or theological theory can be understood from examining his criticisms of the revelational models behind it. His chief criticism of the dialectical model associated with Barth is that it remains vague about the means of contact between the otherness of God and the limited understanding of humanity, leaving revelation to a fideism that amounts historically to arbitrariness in terms of determining authentic expression.

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\textsuperscript{193} Dulles, \textit{The Resilient Church}, 32.

\textsuperscript{194} See Jeanrond, 190-191. Jeanrond argues for this point by observing that the contemporary valuation of contextual experience for understanding revelation is undone by a retreat to subordination under ecclesiastical power, which tends to continue treating revelation as ahistorical propositions.
and interpretation. For Barth, this arbitrariness is dealt with by a turn to apostolic witness in the scriptures as an overarching authoritative norm, but the move leaves Barth in a conceptual situation similar to the Catholic sense of a propositional deposit ushered by magisterial authority—both are a backward-looking idea of a guiding body of authoritative teaching that preserves a universalist tradition that controls the ongoing understanding of revelation. Like the ecclesiocentrism and neglect of history that Dulles claims arise in Catholic models following the organic theory, Barth’s dialectical theology similarly neglects historicity and leaves the attendant development theory overly reliant on a past-preserving authority structure.

The problems associated by Dulles with the new awareness model of revelation are more complex to apply to Walgrave’s theory. Dulles observes as a central problem that revelation understood as new awareness through God’s self-communication in history causes a sense of revelation as ongoing and contextually interpreted that is difficult to reconcile with Catholic adherence to past dogmatic formulas and universal teaching authority as conceived in the magisterial hierarchy. However, as already demonstrated, Walgrave firmly places magisterial authority and irreversible propositional formulation within his theological theory that builds from the model of revelation as divine self-communication. In order to critique his use of the self-communication model of revelation, then, it is necessary to critique the way he circumvents the problem raised by Dulles. This involves a turn to investigate the theory of imagination present in Newman that is being adopted by Walgrave within his theory.

Newman draws a direct connection between imagination and doctrine in *Grammar of Assent*, stating, “[Religious propositions] are useful in their dogmatic aspect as ascertaining and

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making clear for us the truths on which the religious imagination has to rest.” The reason for this connection is that the real, factual being of God is apprehended by the imagination as it is awoken by the experiential and pre-conceptual sense of conscience. Imagination then is an avenue to something objectively real and, albeit “pre-conceptually,” directly experienced. Doctrine fleshes out the imaginative sense of that reality, serving the objective nature that underlies the experiential phenomenon. This objective reality is the “idea” that Newman asserts as the spirit of doctrinal development, the “type” that is preserved as definitions and formulas organically grow.

The experience of religious imagination for Newman is uniquely individual, but that individual experience is one of the illative sense active in every believer and enabling assent to objective reality. Aiden Nichols explains this dynamic with reference to the influence on Newman of English Romanticism, particularly Coleridge, and Stephen Prickett has similarly highlighted the heritage of Coleridge and Romantic imagination affecting Newman. This Romantic influence leads Newman to see the idea of Christianity as directly grasped, preverbally, by the illative sense and the imagination active within it. The ontology of Romantic thought leaves language as the means to imperfectly articulate the real idea experientially grasped; accordingly, in Newman, doctrinal definition includes the theological attempt to articulate the objective notion experienced as well as the experienced reality itself.

198 Newman, Grammar of Assent, 120.
200 Pramuk, 63-64.
201 Newman, Grammar of Assent, 83.
203 Prickett, 340-349.
204 Nichols, 356-357. See Newman, Grammar of Assent, 98, 120.
Accordingly then, the dogmatic propositions articulate the objective truth to which religious imagination assents.

Because Newman thinks direct, pre-linguistic experience of objective religious truth is possible, linguistic articulation is directed at universal veracity. Definition and doctrine may be rooted in experience and imagination, as they are in the new awareness model described by Dulles, but the subjectivity of imagination versus the objectivity of doctrine makes the latter authoritative over the former because of the way that Newman understands imagination. In Newman’s Romantic model, revelational fundament is experientially accessed through conscience and imagination, but because of the fundament’s objective and universal reality the language and conceptualization that accrete in the tradition take on universal normative authority as intellectual descriptions of the objective fundament’s reality that hem the possibilities of how experience can be authentically interpreted. Thus, in the way Walgrave shapes his development theory that takes off from Newman’s thought, formal propositional teaching guided by church authority serves as a norm for the experiential understanding that arises from the new awareness model of revelation.205

I will return then to attach this view of imagination to the shortcomings I have asserted in the theological or organic theory of development. Regarding the lack of openness to historicity, Newman’s thinking, and Walgrave’s following from it, casts history as simply that which augments or diminishes the universal reality his Romanticism lets him assume is directly

205 Several places in Walgrave’s tenth chapter, his “Theological Reflection” on the theological model (348-392), indicate this dynamic of authoritative teaching trumping the experiential reception of revelation. An apposite example is on 375-376 where he argues that while imagination is central to the reception of revelation, it has the potential for “free association” that sometimes “runs wild,” and thus needs to be “disciplined and channeled” by conceptualization and reason, which are the province of formal definition. While Walgrave claims conceptual thought does not supersede or replace imaginative awareness, the one-sided direction of his argument, where there is no space made for experience or imagination to “discipline and channel” formal teaching, leaves the model in a situation where the magisterial authority that controls formal definition maintains normative control over the authentic interpretation of experience through which divine self-communication is encountered.
encountered in religious experience. Authority and tradition become over-relied upon because they are surer safeguards of the objectivity that is to be preserved through the notions expressed in doctrine; if magisterial authority were loosened and experience granted weight against it, the worry becomes that the imaginative assent to pre-conceptual reality may overstep its bounds and distort the objective notional truth maintained in universalized tradition. In regard to dealing with irreducible pluralism, diversity is permitted in this model but it subsists under the universal validity of particular notional truths upheld by traditional authority. The expressions of imagination, what Newman would consider devotion, can and will contain pluralism, but because they are considered to be expressions of a universal objective truth, the objectivity of formally defined doctrine overrides the plurality of experience. Furthermore, there is an additional problem related to historicity and plurality, that of concealment that can mask the way the historical dynamics behind the formation of a universalized doctrinal tradition have dealt with plural voices and contention sometimes not simply through divine assistance but rather marginalization and suppression.

Despite his opening up of the way that tradition operates, Blondel’s understanding of tradition, which Walgrave places within the framework of the theological theory, demonstrates this problematic understanding of tradition. Blondel succeeds to the extent that he situates tradition as a mediator between the dynamism of historicity as the context in which revelation occurs and the fixity of dogmatic formulation that provides stability and certainty. Tradition in his model allows for real development influenced by history in a way not permitted in logical theory, but subjects it to internal church norms, those of the living tradition, rather than external philosophical ones as in a transformistic theory. However, Blondel and Walgrave following from him leave tradition singularized because they believe it to be rooted in a universal divine

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source that can be encountered and understood in its universal objectivity. Blondel argues that his philosophy of action leads to a scheme in which tradition operates by reasonable and rational methods, safeguarding its singularity and objectivity, even though it makes tradition more than just a build-up of intellectual definitions. He presumes that a reliable order of tradition’s progress is established by some ephemeral power and does not give credence to the way that patterns in tradition can be influenced by more profane forces like power imbalances or cultural elitism that might be revealed by the application of a hermeneutics of suspicion. The turn to authority that results in Blondel and Walgrave can thus be taken as symptomatic of a resistance to a more robust appreciation of historicity that might reveal such worldly dynamics at work in the operations of tradition and a resulting inability to allow for pluralistic experience that would transform the view of tradition and history to one of traditions and histories. For Walgrave, intellectual definitions maintained by magisterial authority and rooted in the putatively real objectivity behind the reception of divine self-communication mitigate against pluralistic and contextual interpretations of Christian experience and in so doing whitewash a deeper and more complex understanding of the role of historical forces in the formation of the universal tradition based on those magisterial definitions.

Kathryn Tanner articulates well a criticism of this sort of understanding of singularized and universalized tradition. She holds together both logical and organic models of doctrinal development and argues that their insistence on “law-like development” that preserves the substance of tradition and emphasizes orderly continuity belies the diversity and complexity that make up the real and “messy” history of Christianity.207 She turns to postmodern criticism to claim that such views of tradition conceal the way that tradition is formed by “contestable

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207 Kathryn Tanner, “Postmodern Challenges to ‘Tradition,’” Louvain Studies 28 (2003): 179-180. Tanner also criticizes transformistic theories of development for their view of tradition in that they assume a continuity of process rather than content, which similarly blunts the reality of diversity within Christian history (181-182).
theological judgments.” As a result, “These appeals to tradition therefore keep the theologian from taking responsibility for the theological judgments that are made. Those judgments do not need, for example, to be defended. Indeed, appeals to tradition immunize such judgments against criticism. From a theological point of view, this means some human judgment is being elevated to an illegitimately privileged position.” The locus of this privileged judgment for Walgrave is the magisterium of the Church, and as Dulles argued above, this strong claim to infallibility does not get clearly justified. Walgrave uses an appeal to continuity of content in tradition to validate the magisterium as the normative judge of continuity within tradition. He does this by using the argument from Newman that the content of revelation itself should be expected to provide guidance to authentically direct the historical development of the objective content that is to be organically preserved. This leads him to cast the public authority of the magisterium as being supernaturally assisted in a privileged way that can override human mechanisms at work in the formation of tradition. Tanner would claim that such human mechanisms cannot be suppressed, though, and that failing to attend to them can create ignorance about dynamics of power and ideology behind the elevation of certain judgments over others, leading to the subdual of real historical diversity.

A general problem for Walgrave’s theological theory is an assumption that God’s revealed self-communication can serve as an objectively accessible fact that can trump any historical relativism or subjective tensions between individuals or cultures. The functional bulwark that preserves this universal objectivity becomes the divinely-instituted authority of the

208 Ibid., 183.
209 See ibid., 183-190. This last point is couched by Tanner in an argument that postmodern culture theory reveals three mechanisms by which appeals to tradition illegitimately hide their dependence on contestable theological judgments and suppress historical diversity and constrain forward-moving theological creativity: ignorance of the invented character of tradition, insistence on the existence of a-historical guarantees of continuity, and occlusion of conflict within traditions.
hierarchy, which provides a supernatural conduit to the objective facticity of God’s revelation. This, however, disregards the issues of contextual historicity and power dynamics within the functioning and formation of that authority as well is in the global community of the church’s people. In the end then, while the theological theory describes a different dynamic of growth than the logical theory, they remain functionally equivalent, as the final arbitration of authentic versus inauthentic ideas about doctrine remains similarly vested in magisterial authority, whose universalizing and objective voice constricts the real impacts of pluralism and historicity.

c. Trajectories Beyond the Theological Theory

Edward Schillebeeckx, Karl Rahner, and Avery Dulles point in directions that go beyond the theological theory. Both Schillebeeckx and Rahner begin with adherence to a theological model as proposed by Walgrave, and are cited by Walgrave as contemporary examples. Yet after 1973, when Walgrave wrote his book, both Schillebeeckx and Rahner extended their earlier work into greater appreciation for the experiential dimension of revelation and proposed ideas that mitigate against the theological model Walgrave fashioned. Dulles suggests his own model meant to advance beyond organic conceptions of development called “historical situationism.” Each of these three visions remain incomplete but demonstrate attempts to go beyond Walgrave’s theory in ways that can be collected into the suggestion of a new alternative.

Schillebeeckx emphasizes the need for intrinsic veracity as the criterion for true development, making the extrinsic authority of the magisterium just one of the constituents in the conversation to determine it. He places the magisterium within a plurality of viewpoints and refuses to grant it privileged status among them.\footnote{Edward Schillebeeckx, \textit{The Understanding of Faith}, trans. N.D. Smith (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), 56.} He proposes three criteria for such intrinsic veracity in development that indicate great reliance on revelation being understood as grounded
in ultimate mystery and known through experience in more than rational ways. He suggested a proportional norm that measures doctrine by its proportion to the “intentionality of faith.” What Schillebeeckx envisions is a balance between the “structurising” elements of theoretical interpretation that arise from the need to express and guide the experience of faith, and the contextual experiences of faith among people in their particular contexts that point to the mystery of Christ that cannot ever be completely theorized.\textsuperscript{211} The inadequacy of theoretical standards alone points Schillebeeckx to other dimensions of the faith experience, and the second criterion is orthopraxis. This means authentic action on behalf of the \textit{humanum}, a sense of common human good, which is proclaimed in Christ and eschatologically required of Christian faith, and which can transcend pluralism via a universal negative definition that can be prior to the diverse positive formulations that might be given to it contextually.\textsuperscript{212} Authentic doctrine must uphold the demands of orthopraxis and stay connected to the lived experience that it expresses. The third criterion is a social norm, that of the assent of the full community of the people of God, which Schillebeeckx warns may play out along very long historical contours and will invite friction and tension.\textsuperscript{213} He insists that it is a task of theology and the hierarchy to leave adequate space for this internal dialectic among the faithful to play out in open debate and not to artificially control it by recourse to inflexible ideology. In developing this hermeneutics of experience, Schillebeeckx introduced greater ambiguity and spontaneity into the process of doctrinal development and removed it from the sole control of magisterial authority.

Rahner’s trajectory beyond Walgrave was outlined in the Introduction to this work. To rehearse the main points, through the 1970s and 1980s he became more convinced that the

\textsuperscript{212} Schillebeeckx, 63-70. See also Thompson, 311.
\textsuperscript{213} Schillebeeckx, 70-76. See also Thompson, 311-313.
church must reckon with irreducible pluralism, including developing a sense of development that could be forward rather than backward looking and attempt to transpose core ideas of Christian faith into new contexts of meaning.\textsuperscript{214} He thought that doctrinal development had to better incorporate historicity and contextuality and become open to tension, newness, critique, and unpredictability and de-center magisterial control.\textsuperscript{215} Another key idea for him was in regard to the orientational emphasis of doctrinal development. In his earlier work, Rahner held that doctrine develops in two directions: greater specification of concepts and greater simplification through concentration on the ultimate mystery of faith.\textsuperscript{216} In the situation of pluralism, Rahner recognized that simplification was becoming the more apt direction, as specification would entail truncating diverse views and experiences.\textsuperscript{217} It is these directions, toward dynamism, de-centralization, and appreciation for pluralism, that make Rahner point beyond the theological theory of Walgrave.

Dulles advocates for a theory of doctrinal development that he calls historical situationism.\textsuperscript{218} He positions this theory as one that is able to respond to the needs of cultural pluralism and the attendant need to shape doctrine in a way that can “express the basic Christian message in the simplest possible terms.”\textsuperscript{219} Like Rahner, he believes that the situation of pluralism demands development in the direction of simplification more so than increased specification.\textsuperscript{220} He claims that such an approach better allows flexibility to express the core truths of the faith in terms understandable in diverse cultural situations. He bolsters this claim by arguing that all dogmatic formulations should be seen as products of particular times and cultures,
opening them to critical assessment in a way that leads Dulles to adjust infallibility more into a mode of indefectibility that does not necessitate the rigid presumptions of irreversibility found in logical and organic models of development.\textsuperscript{221} Dulles allows that there should be an order of primary and secondary doctrines, asserting that the latter are reformable while the former require greater constancy, though he does not settle on any criteria for determining the difference.\textsuperscript{222} It seems Dulles is content leaving the power of this designation to his moderately understood authority of infallibility. The end result for Dulles is an acceptance of the thinking behind transformistic theory for secondary doctrines, while allowing magisterial authority to retain the ability to draw a boundary marking off secondary transformable doctrines from primary ones that cannot be controverted. Thus while Dulles does open doctrinal theology to a greater awareness of historicity and diversity, his own solution is an ill-defined eclecticism of the sort that he himself later denounces in regard to models of revelation.\textsuperscript{223}

Schillebeeckx, Rahner, and Dulles all provide notes that point beyond the theological or organic theory of development without fully developing an adequate alternative. Rahner and Dulles helpfully point to the idea of simplification that can provide flexibility and space for diverse cultural understandings of doctrinal concepts, and they explicitly demand greater sensitivity to irreducible pluralism and its imprint on the global church. Schillebeeckx calls attention to the role of praxis in evaluating doctrinal authenticity, even if he himself does not fully incorporate a robust sense of pluralism in his advocacy for orthopraxis.\textsuperscript{224} Schillebeeckx’s

\textsuperscript{221} Ibid., 52-54.
\textsuperscript{222} Ibid., 55-59.
\textsuperscript{223} See n. 40 above.
\textsuperscript{224} See Annekatrien Depoorter, “Orthopraxis As a Criterion for Orthodoxy? Edward Schillebeeckx’ View on the Development and the Characteristic of Religious Truth,” in \textit{Theology and the Quest for Truth}, eds. Mathijs Lamberigts, Lieven Boeve, and Terrence Merrigan, 165-180 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2006). In Deportee’s estimation, Schillebeeckx was writing at a time when the full implications of pluralism could not be appreciated, and his scope for considering it is thus too confined. She suggests that while the criterion of

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hermeneutic of experience including orthopraxis is still a positive direction of thought, as is the way he uses that hermeneutic of experience to make internal veracity in doctrinal claims more crucial than the external authority of the magisterium, leaving the magisterium as one factor in the arbitration of authenticity rather than the ultimate norm as it functionally remains in the theological theory of Walgrave.

Each thinker contributes to a stronger historical sense of doctrinal tradition, a shift away from reliance on magisterial authority, and better appreciation for pluralism, but none offers a thorough consideration of the actual process that might underlie such a historical and contextual reconsideration of doctrinal development. A theory of doctrinal development rooted in the hermeneutical imagination can provide for such a procedural understanding capable of incorporating historicity and contextuality. Building from Dulles’s description of revelation as symbolic, a theory rooted in the hermeneutical imagination as it was understood by Paul Ricoeur can mediate between revelation and development of doctrine in a way that accounts for the shortcomings of theological theory from Walgrave and can deal adequately with issues of historicity, break from over-reliance on authority and universalized tradition, and appreciate the full complexity of pluralism.

**Revelation As Symbolic Mediation and the Necessity of Imagination**

After his analysis and critique of the models of revelation as doctrine, event, inner awareness, dialectical presence, and new awareness, Dulles proposes what he considers a model

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orthopraxis serves a valuable role in contemporary theology, it needs to be widened to appreciate a more global picture of pluralism as well as increasing secularization and individualization that define contemporary experience. See Jeanron, 195. The central point of Jeanron’s article, summarized here, is that Ricoeur’s hermeneutics can provide a model for reflecting on the full implications of revelation understood through contextual experience. He uses Rahner as an example of a figure who has opened thinking on revelation to greater historical awareness without developing fully a hermeneutical consideration of what that historicization of revelation might look like.
that can capture the strengths of each model into a new synthesis. He calls this alternative revelation as symbolic mediation, and defines it thusly:

According to this approach, revelation never occurs in a purely interior experience or an unmediated encounter with God. It is always mediated through symbol—that is to say, through an externally perceived sign that works mysteriously on the human consciousness so as to suggest more than it can clearly describe or define. Revelatory symbols are those which express and mediate God’s self-communication.226

The symbol for Dulles is “pregnant with a plenitude of meaning” which is “evoked” through the active engagement of interpretation, bringing into the meaning that a symbol has at any given historical moment and location the acquired nature of knowledge of which Dulles claims revelation theory must remain mindful.227 Because symbols are external and because they involve active interpretation, public history and contextual influence invariably play into the way meaning is derived from them.

Furthermore, Dulles observes that “symbol-sentences” in the form of other more complex literary structures like metaphor and myth function to make predicative assertions about historical, natural, or experiential realities based on meaning interpreted from the symbols, pointing to how any conceptualized statements, like doctrine, derived from symbolic revelation remain controlled by those interpretive influences.228 However, the public nature of the symbols prevents this dynamic from leading to the transformistic modes of liberal theology built from the sense of revelation as an interior event. Such interiority, the lack of an authoritative public measure, is what allows the doctrinal interpretation of revelation to become subject to arbitrary and indefinite relativism. As Dulles notes, because the symbols of Christian religion exist within a public tradition, that tradition imposes parameters of interpretation, such that, “The symbols of

226 Dulles, Models, 131.
227 Ibid., 132-133.
228 See ibid., 133. See also144, where Dulles cites Ricoeur’s maxim that “symbols give rise to thought” to explain how revelation as symbolic mediation captures the value in the propositional model of revelation that makes propositional formulae necessary for the sake of guiding interpretation and defining public community. However, in doing so, Dulles is pointing out how such propositional statements remain moored in the polysemy of symbolic mediation that retains priority over the propositional conceptualizations of doctrine.
Christian revelation . . . are not infinitely pliable. Yet they allow a desirable margin of interpretation and application, and are modified and enriched by successive recontextualizations.\textsuperscript{229}

One of Dulles’s main strategies for advocating symbolic mediation as a fitting model of revelation is to point out a series of consonances between the nature of symbolic meaning and the nature of revelation.\textsuperscript{230} For both, Dulles claims that the knowledge they involve is participatory. Symbols break down the subject-object divide engendered by rational thought and invite the observer into a “self-involving” horizon of meaning. Revelation similarly draws one into a community of faith that is a vital foundation for the knowledge that revelation contains, a principle that Dulles attaches to the idea that God is love (1 John 4:8), implying that divine self-communication can only be received in communion where love is present. Second, Dulles observes that that participatory involvement makes the knowledge of both symbols and revelation of a sort that elicits transformation in the individual. In each, knowledge opens awareness and breaks open new possibilities that can lead the person into healing, repentance, or conversion. Next, as knowledge that is transformative and that gets beyond intellection, symbols and revelation both are capable of impacting commitments and behaviors in a more powerful way than discursive or rational knowledge. And finally, Dulles argues that symbols and revelation both open the way for knowledge of mystery that rational conceptualization can never exhaust. This final aspect of commonality points importantly to the eschatological nature of both symbolic thought and revelational meaning—the fullness of revelation’s reception is possible only in the eschaton, meaning though Christ is the fullness of revelation no interpretation made

\textsuperscript{229} Ibid., 153.
\textsuperscript{230} See ibid., 136-139 for Dulles’s delineation of this comparison.
by the Church of revelation’s symbolic mediations can remain absolute in the interim between
the cross and the eschaton, just as symbolic interpretation in general is inexhaustible.231

Dulles returns in his analysis of revelation as symbolic mediation to the points he raised
about intellectual challenges of the twentieth century to naïve concepts of revelation. His aim is
to demonstrate how the symbolic model can respond to these concerns. I argued above that the
most pertinent of these challenges for this present work were these three: modern epistemologies
and emphasis on the acquired nature of knowledge, the history of doctrine that reveals real
change, and critical views of the way that ideology influences institutional authority and tradition.
Returning to these critiques is a helpful way of demonstrating the suitability of the symbolic
mediation model for the contemporary situation of the church and increasing cognizance of its
historicity and plurality.

For the acquired nature of knowledge, Dulles argues that a blurred line between revealed
and acquired knowledge is not necessarily a problem for revelation in general. He writes that,
“Revelation itself never exists in a chemically pure state,” but that nonetheless revelation can be
understood as God’s self-communication through symbolic mediation that elicits a mental
response from the recipient.232 In this way, through symbols, revealed knowledge becomes
acquired knowledge; because the symbolic mediation is a necessary step, revelation is never
received or understood in a way that is not acquired. This makes all developments in that
reception or understanding contextual and historical.

The contours of this acquired nature of revelatory knowledge allow Dulles to also apply
symbolic mediation to the problem of historical change in doctrine. Because originary revelation
is of a symbolic nature, formulas derived from it are never “exempt from human and historical

231 See ibid., 232-242.
232 Ibid., 273.
influences,” even though such formulas are capable of authentically expressing some aspects of the revelation’s meaning.\textsuperscript{233} These formulations thus constitute boundaries within which later reformulations or recontextualizations can occur, but each new reformulation or recontextualization gradually resets the boundaries. Historical change is “thus neither scandalous nor surprising” in the long term, and becomes a result of the constant critical and creative work of reinterpreting the symbols of revelation.\textsuperscript{234}

Lastly, with the problem of critical sociological assessment of ideology, Dulles notes that while the perceived authority behind revelation does make it particularly susceptible to being subsumed into prideful human drives and ambitions, such problems exist even without revealed religion.\textsuperscript{235} Dulles’s solution is to instead point to symbols within Christianity that can be employed to critique such ideological abuses of revelation, for example sin, which highlights such vices like pride that can lead to ideological petrification of tradition and unjust exercise of authority, and the cross and resurrection, which demand a response of humble conversion and provide eschatological hope that can empower people to work against harmful ideological structures.\textsuperscript{236} However, building off of the elements regarding the previous two points, ideology can also be combatted by the historicization that is brought about by the symbolic mediation model. Acknowledging the need for critical and creative reappropriation of doctrinal tradition, as well as the acquired nature of all revealed knowledge that thus requires contextual interpretation, disallows the conceptual domination that is at the heart of ideological structures. This acknowledgment demands that plural and diverse voices be integrated and makes their suppression not only a problem, bad enough in itself to be sure, of violence and oppression, but

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{233} Ibid., 274.
\footnotetext{234} Ibid., 274.
\footnotetext{235} Ibid., 275.
\footnotetext{236} Ibid., 276.
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also of unduly restraining the Holy Spirit’s movement within the full breadth of the faithful and truncating the inexhaustible meaning contained in the symbols that mediate revelation.

A hermeneutic method rooted in imagination is capable of using this model of revelation to more fully develop its possibilities for reconceiving doctrinal development. To make revelation fundamentally a matter of interpretation requires a systematic analysis of how such interpretation might function. I contend that the imaginative hermeneutics of Ricoeur, in conjunction with the model of revelation as symbolic mediation, can best rectify the shortcomings of Walgrave’s theological theory. A contrast of hermeneutical approaches can serve to explain this contention before developing it more fully in the next chapter.

Several authors have attempted to apply hermeneutics to the model of religious knowing in Newman, and Walgrave’s adherence to Newman’s epistemology makes such attempts capable of being attached to his development theory. Examples include Paul G. Crowley, Thomas K. Carr, and Drew Philip Morgan. Crowley argues that Newman’s ideas about the workings of the sensus fidelium open him to hermeneutics as understood today. The crux of this assertion is that Newman described the sensus fidelium in terms of “judgment.” To Crowley, judgment is an active filtering process situated in the concrete experiences of diverse localized communities, and tradition becomes the collected history of these contextual, experience-based judgments. He thus sees hermeneutics, as a process of interpretive judgment, as a natural extension of Newman’s thought. For a specific hermeneutical theory, Crowley turns to Hans Georg Gadamer,

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239 Morgan, “Hermeneutical Aspects”
and Carr similarly saw great consonance between Newman and Gadamer.\textsuperscript{240} In Gadamer, a “fusion of horizons” occurs when different perspectives, or horizons, look differently at and accordingly interpret differently the same “monuments” of the tradition and then fuse into a new common understanding. However, in the sense of a sharper postmodern criticism, the presumption that a “fusion of horizons” ensures continuity of tradition masks the contested and interpretive dynamics by which the initial “monuments” of the tradition were established and how the fusion is accomplished.\textsuperscript{241} In his study of the overlap between Newman and Gadamer, Carr identified a similar problem, questioning the way the desire for objectivity and finality in each led to a too uncritical turn to conservation of tradition.\textsuperscript{242}

The same issue can be ascribed to the organic vision that Walgrave uses to describe the development of doctrine in the theological theory drawn from Newman’s ideas. In the same way that Gadamer’s hermeneutics can be analyzed as taking a too uncritical approach to tradition and authority and the way fusion can conceal dynamics of power and conflict as well as it can lead to openness and progress, so can the organic language of the theological development theory of Walgrave. The organic metaphor indicates a sense that development in doctrinal teaching, guided by the magisterium, is ultimately directed by divine supernatural guidance working in the magisterium to bring the seeds of revelation to their proper and intended flowering. Instances in which magisterial decisions may have not taken account of diverse and plural voices or when they may have failed to recognize the genuine influences of historicity in previous decisions are subsumed under the assumption that the Holy Spirit works in a sure way through the voice of the hierarchy, allowing tradition to be uncritically pristinized and preserved. Walgrave’s assessment

\textsuperscript{240} This is the subject of Carr’s entire book, but see especially 111-131, where Carr explicates the connection in light of development theory, directly describing Newman’s work on development as an effort to foster a proper hermeneutical approach for reading history (116).
\textsuperscript{241} See Tanner, “Postmodern Challenges,” 182-183.
\textsuperscript{242} Carr, 161-167.
of hermeneutics reflects a similar issue. Hermeneutics for him should be limited to the formulas that historically evolve from an original supernatural revelation that is objective and unmediated. This absolute touchstone in objectivity prevents history from transformistically running awry with doctrinal development for Walgrave, but it does so at the expense of casting the church’s tradition as maintaining an unassailable contact with that objective core via the divine guidance of the Holy Spirit that overrides factors of historicity.

A similar sensibility is at work in Dulles even as he critiques the organic development model. In his adoption of symbolic mediation for a model of revelation, he nuances the idea as “symbolic realism.” What this means for him is that symbols are controlled by an antecedent objectivity, by an ontologically real truth that by its own reality excludes certain interpretations of the symbols that give it expression. In this way of thinking God, through God’s self-communication, remains an object to be grasped, even though Dulles insists that the encounter is always mediated by symbols. Since “symbols give rise to true affirmations about what is antecedently real,” some authority must remain in place as a norm for that universalized objectivity. Walgrave envisions this authority as God himself, working through the mechanisms of the magisterium, and Dulles ends up in basic agreement with his turn to moderate infallibility to guide his development theory of historical situationism. His spinning of symbolic mediation as symbolic realism carves space for this moderately infallible authority as the determiner of which symbolic interpretations authentically reflect the “antecedently real” and which do not.

It is by removing the possibility of this antecedent objectivity that Ricoeur can be used to force a more thoroughly historical understanding of hermeneutics into development theory built

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243 See n. 189-190 above.
244 Dulles, Models, 266-267.
245 Ibid., 267.
on the symbolic mediation model. Ricoeur, like Gadamer, built from Heidegger in terms of breaking down subject-object dichotomy. The subject for both must understand him or herself as already constituted within a tradition of meaning, thrown into a condition of Dasein, but by focusing on the mediation of tradition in language, Ricoeur’s hermeneutics allow a space of critical distance within the tradition that Gadamer does not. One is still constituted by this historical situatedness and is not exercising criticism as a transcendent subject, but unlike in Gadamer, tradition is not taken as an authoritative monolith that precludes a critical posture by the subjects that it constitutes.\textsuperscript{246} Without that critical distance, hermeneutics in the mode of Gadamer, when applied to doctrinal development, can become a Romantic interpretation back to originary and objective revelation, such as is envisioned by Walgrave and Dulles.\textsuperscript{247} The distancing of linguistic mediation in Ricoeur problematizes the historical traditioning process, but by also maintaining the dissolved subject-object dichotomy effected by Heidegger he also ultimately makes interpretation directly a part of any foundational experience of revelation, not only the later reflections on it as Walgrave thought. By releasing doctrinal tradition from an objective link to revelational fundament, Ricoeur’s hermeneutics can make the analysis of that tradition more focused on historical contextuality, less dependent on hierarchical authority that is posited as the guardian of that objective link, and open the tradition to plural voices that emerge from the fuller appreciation of history and context.

Ricoeur’s particular ideas on revelation emerge out of his treatment of biblical exegesis. So while he does not have a direct theological consideration of revelation, he does offer ideas for how revelation can be understood through his hermeneutical lens. The central point that emerges is that the content of revelation can never be separated from the genre or form of its conveyance;

\textsuperscript{246} See Kearney, \textit{On Paul Ricoeur}, 64-66.
\textsuperscript{247} See ibid., 64. Kearney here draws out this distinction between a Romantic sense of hermeneutics and Ricoeur’s critical style.
thus, revelation itself must be as polysemic and polyphonic as the symbolic vehicles that express it. This makes the objective core of revelation an encounter of divine manifestation rather than a deposit of knowledge, one that is best described as a “limit-idea” that invites the receiver to be transformed by the encounter with the manifested limit rather than attempting to possess revelation in the form of propositional knowledge. This transformation is meant then to lead to a new form of right relationship with that which is manifested, a relationship that is elicited by divine self-communication mediated by the poetic, narrative, and symbolic forms of revelation. And because that mediation precludes for Ricoeur any direct, primary access to a prior fundament of content or knowledge, the interpretation of the divine manifestation cannot be narrowed into universal and univocal formulas. As observed by Jeanrond:

Rather I do note with approval Ricoeur’s repeated insistence that biblical hermeneutics is dialectically related to general hermeneutics and ought never to claim a special sacred status. As such Ricoeur does insist that no form of theology can claim a sacred status or an extra-hermeneutical prerogative or a direct road to God without accepting the detours through the linguistic condition which all humans nolens volens share.

An additional point that Jeanrond notes in conjunction with this weaving of biblical hermeneutics and general hermeneutics is that Ricoeur’s vision of revelation becomes highly sacramental, granting manifestation-potential to not only biblical literature but also other experiential and secular forms of expression that represent objectifications of encounter with divine self-communication in a world that is permeated by the sacred presence of its creator. This prioritization of general hermeneutics leads to a turn to experience as a source through which revelation itself can occur and also as a hermeneutical resource for the interpretation of biblical texts accepted within the Christian tradition as loci of the mediation of divine self-communication. For Jeanrond the conclusion is that revelation itself is thus dependent on

248 Jeanrond, 192.
249 Ibid., 192-194.
250 Ibid., 194.
251 Ibid., 194.
particularity and contextuality and theological reflection on revelation, such as would lead to doctrine and its development, should be expected to be “messy and pluralistic.”

Carsten Pallesen’s analysis of Ricoeur’s biblical hermeneutics and their meaning for revelation add a greater critical bent to Jeanrond’s insistence on particularity and contextuality. After contrasting Ricoeur’s phenomenology with that of others like Jean-Luc Marion, whom he argues attempt to ultimately provide biblical revelation a foundation of immediacy through aesthetic transcendence, he argues that for Ricoeur the biblical Christ-event represents a divinely initiated “de-distanciation” of the uncrossable abyss between the sacred and the human, but that the necessity of symbolically mediated expression makes it so that “the abyss is not simply abolished.” The byproduct of this is the critical turn to a hermeneutics of suspicion in Ricoeur’s assessment of tradition, because this hermeneutical strategy prevents a turn to a Romantic or “sympathetic” imagination that can trace its way back to immediate revelation, as was possible in the hermeneutics of Gadamer turned to by theologians trying to preserve the Newmanian understanding of revelation and doctrine. Instead, the hermeneutic imagination understood by Ricoeur makes meaning of revelation by appropriating its symbols into possibilities of being, possibilities that invite transformation to a new mode of right relationship with the divine communicating itself in the symbols. And the false consciousness that can emerge from a rigidified sense of univocal tradition needs to be undermined in order to allow such transforming encounter to occur. The plurality and tensions within the tradition, as well as its genuine historical nature, must be uncovered and given space in order to effect such an

252 Ibid., 196.
254 Ibid., 58.
unsettling, and diverse persons must be allowed to appropriate divine self-communication through their own experiences and imaginations.

By explaining a historical process by which meaning is constrained by the given parameters of a tradition yet constantly undergoing semantic innovation, Ricoeur’s hermeneutic imagination can build from this understanding of revelation as symbolic mediation to explain a process of doctrinal development. It is a model of the process that can account for the real historical nature of doctrinal definition, take a critical stance toward the role of authority within that history, and demand a place for plural contextual experiences in the ongoing development of interpreted meaning that underlies the development of the doctrine. The next chapter will turn to this imagination and consider its place in theological methods in order to develop it into a specific theory for conceiving of doctrine and doctrinal development.
CHAPTER 3—A Modern Western Use of Imagination and Theological Methods

Chapter 1 offered an overview and analysis of imagination in modern Western philosophy in order to establish the model of imagination with which this work would operate. Chapter 2 involved a critical analysis of doctrinal development theories, including an examination of the way such theories are intertwined with theologies of revelation. The present chapter will begin to bring these elements together, providing a study of the place of imagination within theological methods. Chapter 4 will then build from that base to analyze how imagination impacts the understanding of revelation and to formulate a model of doctrinal development based on the hermeneutical imagination in Ricoeur.

A running theme in the analyses of each of the previous chapters has been a need to critically appreciate and incorporate historicity and plurality. As such, one focus of this chapter will be how imagination has been involved in various contextual theologies. I will argue that a theory of doctrinal development based on Ricoeur’s hermeneutical imagination can accommodate these contextual perspectives and concerns. This will be accomplished by presenting ways in which Ricoeur’s philosophical project can impact Western theology in a way that makes space for contextual particularity, specifically in how a hermeneutical imagination furthers an understanding of revelation as symbolic mediation and makes the reception of revelation necessarily contextualized. An imaginative theory of doctrinal development will then flow naturally as a way of explaining how that contextualized reception of symbolic revelation proceeds through history, casting doctrine as a genre of expression for such contextualized reception.
It is also pertinent here to explain further about my reliance on Ricoeur in this analysis. Ricoeur is clearly situated within Euro-American philosophical tradition. His is a modern Western version of imagination theory. If the scope of this current project were wider, or if the focus was solely on a critique of Ricoeur or a comprehensive examination of imagination theories, it would be fruitful to compare and contrast Ricoeur’s sense of imagination with a greater breadth of diverse perspectives on the subject. For example, Frantz Fanon and Abiola Irele examine imagination in light of postcolonialism. For Fanon, the imagination in some ways serves a role very similar to Ricoeur. It enable the imagination of a future of possibility that allows individuals to construct identity. However, one way in which this process is radicalized for Fanon’s postcolonial perspective is in how it directly relates to active resistance, including in the form of revolutionary violence.\(^1\) This more radical version of the political dimension of imagination is emblematic of the way that for Fanon the imaginative construction of identity is a far more turbulent process because of the experience of colonialism and the crises of identity caused by that circumstance. Irele refers to that turbulence as a “drama of conflicting normatives,” wherein postcolonial societies like those in Africa are stuck between trying to augment their unique cultural identities that have been damaged by colonialism and trying to also engage modernism and globalism in order to establish economic viability but which keeps them tied to colonizing powers.\(^2\) As with Fanon, Irele has some consonance with Ricoeur, utilizing the concept of imagination’s role in forming identity, and he even cites Ricoeur to support his notion of “conflicting normatives.” But also like Fanon, he uses his postcolonial viewpoint to add a different layer of consideration than Ricoeur accounts for. For instance Irele focuses on the way the imagination in African literature is caught between trying to build on oral traditions

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which are the basis of literary expression in African nations, but do so in European languages, a problem of which the misnomer of “African” literature to cover diverse particular nations is a symptom. ³ So while one of Ricoeur’s major contributions in his theory of the hermeneutical imagination is to center the role of language, Irele focuses on how in postcolonial situations persons trying to use imagination to create a new consciousness can be stuck in ambiguity because of the linguistic forms they are obliged to utilize.⁴

Such views could certainly enrich the aims of this project and introduce new and critical questions. ⁴ Iréle’s analysis would raise important contextual issues regarding the way African theologians face unique challenges in trying to work toward the development of doctrine housed in European forms, the very language of which is emblematic of colonial history. However, while recognizing such avenues for increased complexity in the analysis of this philosophical dimension of this work, that broader engagement would stray too far from the present specific goal of addressing traditions of Christian doctrine. And that aim influences my theological choice to rely on Ricouer. My aim is to critique and attempt to open a position, that of the institutional Church, which is steeped in Euro-American thought structures. I therefore am choosing to try to build a pathway that utilizes a thinker who is consonant with that Euro-American perspective. So while I am including contextual theologians in my work and argue for respecting their integrity and inclusion in the doctrinal process of the Church, I think that my aim and direction being a critique and suggested change in a Euro-American dominated paradigm makes it apt to work from within that paradigm to suggest ways for it to be adjusted and opened.

³ Ibid., 5-7.
⁴ Ibid., 16.
Theology’s Need to Recognize the Role of Imagination

In an essay in 1981, Matthias Neuman observed what he considered to be at the time a spike in interest in the imagination in fundamental theology. Neuman attributed this spike to intellectual challenges to Enlightenment rationality which had come to dominate the way theology presented itself as an articulation of revelation from a transcendent God. As these challenges undermined the notion of supernatural revelation communicated unproblematically in a rationally unfoldable way, the imagination, Neuman suggested, became a way for theologians to step away from exclusively rationalistic and logical methodologies and address the epistemological issues being raised. He described the basic problem as one of how to define a “reality-reference” for religious faith. Building on that basic issue, he suggested that five tasks are placed upon fundamental theology as a result: 1) to ground religious meaning with a total framework of human experience in order to provide a “reality-reference” that can withstand post-Enlightenment critiques of rationalist epistemology; 2) to use that grounding to center on experiences of transcendence and mystery that give rise to conceptions of God; 3) to locate and identify both the essential and the culturally relative dimensions of anthropology that open persons to transcendence and mystery; 4) to find space for possibility within those anthropological dimensions and translate them into a theory of conversion; and 5) to stimulate and encourage such conversion to be channeled into action. By its epistemological role in experiential meaning-making, by its ability to structure and articulate experiences of mystery and transcendence, and by its ability to project possibility Neuman argued that the imagination is central to the forward progress of fundamental theology.

6 Ibid., 310.
7 Ibid., 311-315.
8 Ibid., 315.
However, Neuman lamented that in the various theological works that attempted to deal with these needs, and in some way invoked imagination to do so, a formal theory of imagination had not been developed. For his own version of a theory, Neuman began with phenomenological psychology because of its ability to treat imagination as an autonomous and integrated system, one which affirms the centrality of subjective individuality and history in all human thinking, and especially in ontological thinking.\(^9\) To enhance his picture, Neuman turned as well to phenomenological views of philosophical anthropology, which emphasize descriptive studies of “human consciousness as self-experienced.”\(^{10}\) These descriptive studies were expected to yield a distinction between essential and contingent dimensions of anthropology and an ability to track the essential dimensions through historical development in discernable patterns.\(^{11}\) Within this anthropology, Neuman identified ways in which imagination significantly impacts ontological thought. It equilibrates between subjective consciousness and its surrounding environment, defines teleological meaning within the creative aspect of that equilibrating work, and reconciles and clarifies the various different experiences of transcendence that can spontaneously occur throughout one’s life.\(^{12}\) Neuman claimed that attending to this sense of the imagination can prevent theologians from inauthentically subordinating the ontological weight of subjectivity to more traditional intellectual and volitional sensibilities.\(^{13}\) The imagination in this model provides a new understanding of the “reality-reference” behind theology, one that cannot be neatly corralled by those more rationalistic approaches, but one that can respond to the


\(^{10}\) Neuman, 318.

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 318.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 319-320.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 321.
epistemological critiques of post-Enlightenment thought by recognizing the subjectivity present within the foundational starting point of theological study.

Neuman outlined the way in which fundamental theology would be re-oriented by this theory in four steps. First, it would have to root itself in particular cultural situations of meaning-making through primary symbols, images, and metaphors, which in his estimation would reveal a more generalized current of human meanings that are instantiated in those cultural images. \(^{14}\) Second, it would need to use these cultural and contextual roots to articulate experiences of transcendence and mystery that shape reference to God. \(^{15}\) Third, it would depend upon the imagination to creatively appropriate cultural images in order to create shock and disorientation that can reveal possibility and point toward conversion. \(^{16}\) And fourth, it would use imagination’s power to link inner experience with environmental context to translate the idea of conversion to concrete projects of personal and social conversion, which may include moments of critique of a present order. \(^{17}\) The outcome of Neuman’s analysis then is a claim that to do its job of articulating the experience of God’s self-communication and foster transformation in response to it, personally and socially, theology needs a structured understanding and implementation of imagination. Neuman’s own framing reflects particular biases and presumptions, which will be explored later, but his essay sets the stage well for appreciating the need for attending explicitly to the role of imagination in theological methods.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 322-323.
\(^{15}\) Ibid., 323-324.
\(^{16}\) Ibid., 325-326.
\(^{17}\) Ibid., 326.
Imagination in Theology: Contextual Variations

a. A Euro-American Variation: John Thiel

John E. Thiel has consistently attempted to carry forward an agenda of considering imagination within theological method. Thiel argues that imagination has become a presumed dimension of theology because of the shift through the modern period to emphasize theological authorship and the creativity that such a category entails. He traces the origins of this shift to the early nineteenth century:

In the early nineteenth century, theologians began to assume that their own individual talent contributed to the integrity of theology, even to the most fundamental respects in which theology could be considered meaningful for both the church and society at large. Theologians appealed to theories of the imagination current in intellectual circles of the time to explain the creativity they now claimed on behalf of their own work. In a manner analogous to understandings of the practitioner in artistic and literary endeavor, theologians conceived of themselves as authors and measured the authority of their work, its value for the church, not only in terms of its faithfulness to ecclesial tradition but also in terms of its creativity, its resourcefulness in explicating the contemporary meaning of ancient religious truths. 18

Even more specifically, Thiel attaches this development to the sensibilities of Romanticism that moved away from static understandings of truth and thus relied on the genius of the theological author to construct original and creative understandings of historical religious experience. 19 Thiel claims that a result of the presumption of imaginative creativity within the task of theology one finds a parallel presumption that contemporary theology is fundamentally associated with doctrinal development, even if not always explicitly. 20 Despite later problematizations of Romanticism’s conceptions of imagination and genius, Thiel believes that a lasting bequeathal of Romanticism is an affirmation of “historical experience as a resource for the theological

19 Ibid., 20-21.
enterprise require[ing] that theological talent be conceived largely as the power of imagination” and theologians as “purveyors of meaning.”

This conclusion is made clearer by a closer examination of Thiel’s understanding of the problems with the Romantic paradigm. He centers his argument on a critique of a “form-content” distinction that casts content as the locus of unchanging, objective, revealed truth and form as the locus of changing historical expression, or the definitional container that is periodically refashioned to better display the metaphysical absolutes of theological truth. He offers three specific points against this form-content model.

First, it relies on an epistemology that artificially presumes a “hypostatized” content that is separable from “hypostatized” form. Second, extending from the first point, it is naïve about the ability of language or other forms of cultural expression to ideally and accurately capture or describe supersensible realities. Placing these first two critiques in the frame of imagination, Thiel’s argument is denouncing the Romantic sense of imagination that, reacting to Enlightenment rationalism, takes imagination as a conduit of direct access to metaphysical truth that exceeds rational formulation. This fails to appreciate the productive role imagination plays in the constitution of any understanding that is historically developed, blurring the notion of a direct experience of something supersensible that precedes encapsulation in language and cultural context. The alternative epistemology suggested by Thiel would be one where content is inseparable from form and imagination is the arbiter of the historically shifting matrix of their interrelation.

The third point raised by Thiel against the form-content division is more specific to the doctrinal nature of tradition. He observes that the distinction in effect makes changing historical

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23 Ibid., 364.
form something bearing an unchanging essence in the sense of it carrying unchanging content. Doctrine would thus be understood mainly as a historical form beholden to an objective core of truth prospectively driven forward in time. The form can change, but is always in service of a supernatural truth that is thought to have a point of purity from which tradition proceeds. In Thiel’s judgment, such an arrangement simply cannot account for rupture and newness that appear within the real history of doctrinal tradition.

The form-content critique that Thiel offers is similar to the critique from the previous chapter of Walgrave’s theological theory of development. I argued there that the Romantic orientation of Newman’s imagination theory, one that let him conceive of it as related to direct contact with supernatural truth, made Walgrave’s theological theory, in its reliance on Newman, functionally similar to the classical logical theory that Walgrave wished to surpass. In terms of Thiel’s analysis, the theological theory maintains a form-content division that leaves it in a similar position as classical thinking that presumed the presence of an objective deposit from which doctrine logically flowed. The parallel to Newman, as well as Walgrave, is the notion that an objective “idea” is preserved through the historically developing forms of doctrine. The result is that the theological theory does not allow historicity to have a real influence on the understanding of the faith that precedes doctrine because that understanding is asserted to have connection to an objective content not impacted by history. It thus also does not attend to issues of pluralism or recognize the ways in which historical forms can conceal as well as reveal particular and diverse perspectives on the experience of Christianity. Furthermore, it leaves final arbitration of truth in the hands of magisterial authority as a body thought to be positioned to safeguard the objective content at the heart of doctrinal formulation. Thiel’s epistemological arguments against the Romantically inclined form-content divide raise similar questions about
the impact of historicity and contextuality. I will argue shortly that his solution remains too focused on universality and thus fails to adequately address these problems, but first I will explain the contours of the solution he suggests.

Thiel proposes what he terms “retrospective” tradition as a corrective. He identifies the common view of tradition in the Romantic as well as classical theological paradigms as “prospective,” one that defines continuity in terms of a supersensible truth rooted in the apostolic church and projected forward.24 His retrospective account rather bases continuity on an effort to look back on tradition from present circumstances and imaginatively construe present experiences as consistent with past ones. Thiel writes:

Portraying tradition retrospectively involves a more modest approach to a theology of tradition, one apophatically aware that the activity of the Holy Spirit in tradition remains mysterious, even when that activity is represented as the abiding faith of the Church. A retrospective approach to tradition, then, is cognizant of its own hermeneutical character, and aware too that the present historical moment is the only interpretive point of departure for configuring tradition’s continuity. Any account of God’s revelation in history, however universal in scope it may claim to be, always takes its point of departure from the faith of a particular time and place.25

The yield of this focus on time and place is an affirmation of “regional acts of faith” as the blocks from which continuity is built: “What we call tradition’s continuity is a regional act of faith’s affirmation of relationship to a series of regional acts of faith in the past.”26 Because continuity of tradition in this retrospective model is a hermeneutically created category, Thiel claims that it makes tradition a co-mingling of continuity and development rather than making each a separate and opposed facet of tradition as is the case in prospective models.27 Because tradition begins with the interpretation of present regional faith experience, the new developments represented by such interpretations are essential ingredients in the formation of tradition’s continuity. The universalization of tradition then depends upon regional

24 Ibid., 364-365.
25 Ibid., 366.
26 Ibid., 367.
27 Ibid., 368.
particularizations of what tradition initially hands down. That universalization occurs for Thiel when a “communal act of faith” from the whole Church affirms a particular retrospection, an act that occurs in his thinking through the influence of grace from the Holy Spirit. It is through this model of tradition rooted in regional interpretations of the experience of faith that Thiel makes imagination a central factor in doctrinal theology, answering such concerns as were raised by Neuman.

However, by retaining a proclivity to universalization and totalization, Thiel is limited in his appropriation of imagination and his allowance for its impact in doctrinal tradition. Similar limitations exist as well in the way Neuman framed his prescriptions for the way imagination should impact theology. While Neuman acknowledged briefly a need for critique in his fourth phase of imagination’s needed role in fundamental theology, he based his analysis on a phenomenological anthropology that did not attend to similar senses of critique. He wanted imagination to amplify the importance of subjectivity in ontological understanding, or in the way that the “reality-reference” on which theology is based can be understood. This approach presumed some essential ground that could be discovered behind the historical circumstances that color subjectivity. In other words, it was biased to an unmediated reality behind the mediated models of imaginative expression and meaning. Neuman very usefully pointed to the way imagination opens theology to consideration of particularity and contextuality, but that openness was limited by making the images and symbols that are the currency of imagination mediations of a truth that ontologically exists prior of those mediations. This point is reinforced

28 Ibid., 372.
29 For an example of this sort of critique, see John Murungi, “The African and the Task of Becoming a Phenomenologist,” in *Analecta Husserliana* v. 36, ed. A-T. Tymieniecka, 229-240 (Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic, 1991). Murungi advocates for the ways that particular African existential and political contexts need to be allowed to color the way in which African phenomenology appropriates the sense of a phenomenological anthropological horizon like that described by Neuman.
further by the way that Neuman makes imagination a route to access transcendental subjectivity that putatively escapes historicity’s impact on the conception of the ontological truth being sought. Neuman’s presumption leaves the fruits of imagination’s work susceptible to totalization under privileged modes of defining the essential contours of the underlying reality-reference, which leaves that privileged definition in privileged control of determining the legitimacy of imaginative projects by its own universalized standards.

In Thiel, the singularization of tradition is more pronounced. His ecclesial sense of how retrospective continuity is confirmed leads him to affirm “temporal universality” as a preventative against relativism. He argues that universality is a faith-centered practice of the worldwide Church community, and that it is not something subject to epistemology or geography. By singularizing tradition as well as community, he also singularizes the historical and cultural factors that he wishes to integrate and mutes the impact of irreducible pluralism. The paradigm that he establishes is one where arbitration of authenticity would be left to a singularized authority that can collect and collate various contextual experiences and views. Like Walgrave’s theological theory, this leaves the functional control over the development of doctrine in the hands of magisterial powers. Furthermore, the retrospective process that Thiel describes is devoid of a sense of criticism regarding its looking backward or the process by which a consensus of continuity might be reached at the historical human level, including the variables of geography and epistemology that he dismisses. His assertion of the “graceful activity of the Holy Spirit” reflected in the faith-acts that establish retrospective continuity is the same kind of supernatural supersessionism that Walgrave used to fortify his theological theory against real impacts from historicity and pluralism. Thiel does effectively open doctrinal development to the influence of imagination and its regional hermeneutics of the experience of faith. But, he

muffles the imagination’s epistemological implications by making the final determination of authenticity a universalized mode in which human authority, and all its contextual and historical uncertainties, is cast as a medium of supernatural grace that trumps those contextual and historical questions.

The historical process of traditioning, whether retrospective or prospective, contains the real possibility of concealing the influence or place of contested judgments, occlusion of or blindness to some constituencies, or unjust power relationships. Concern about such dynamics of concealment in the workings of tradition prompted Kathryn Tanner’s postmodern critique of tradition, which was addressed in the previous chapter.31 Thiel agrees in principle with the concerns Tanner raises, but he is less suspicious about the prospects of diversity and pluralism and potentially attendant problems of concealment preventing the establishment of retrospective continuity.32 Thiel agrees with Tanner’s principle that Christian common identity is established by minimal agreement about the bases of meaning for the faith experience, for example canonical texts or ritual praxis, and that the regional meaning constructed from these sources provides neither synchronic nor diachronic continuity that can be presumed uncritically or universally.33 In a similar vein, Thiel believes there exists a “literal sense” of tradition that encompasses uncontroversial yet universal consensus about foundational tenets of faith. To Thiel, such uncontroversial agreement is established by consensus from present judgments and as such represent synchronic continuity that legitimates retrospective claims to diachronic

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31 See chapter 2, n. 207-209.
33 Thiel, “Analogy,” 361.
He argues that this retrospective refashioning of tradition mitigates Tanner’s concerns because it moves away from making continuity a presumption of chronological history and allows correlational judgments from present situations, including presumably their individual contextual concerns, to determine the boundaries of tradition.

Thiel presents this solution as the use of the method of analogy to supplement correlational hermeneutic methods that are the most popular means of reconciling a desire for tradition and continuity with the challenges of historicity. He summarizes that correlational methods proceed by three steps: understanding an established doctrine in its own context, understanding the context into which the doctrine is to be reconstructed, and finally crafting a hermeneutic reconstruction faithful to the past and relevant to the present. In Thiel’s judgment, methodological means for assessing the judgments of this third step have remained foggy, and it is to that purpose that he puts the method of metaphysical analogy. An analogy of faith serves for Thiel to claim that continuity is a linguistic assertion of congruence about the “experience [language] expresses and shapes, and to the being to which language refers.” The experience to which this congruence is bound is the experience of the Spirit’s presence in history:

This analogical likeness is not claimed as mere casual resemblance. Perceived through the eyes of faith, analogical likeness is the deep congruence of a shared faith capable of binding the tradition from present to past. It is an analogical continuity justified by the oneness of the body of Christ, and marking the truthful presence of the Holy Spirit through time, place, circumstance, and culture.

What Thiel envisions is thus a situation where theological judgments are beholden to acts of faith within ecclesial communities, which means that the congruence of theological judgments with authentic tradition is determined by their conformity to the congruence established by such

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34 Ibid., 371. As an example of such a “literal” aspect of tradition with uncontroversial synchronic agreement leading to an assertion of diachronic continuity, Thiel offers the teaching of religious freedom as revealed by God offered in Dignitatis humane from Vatican Council II.
35 Ibid., 363-365, 368-369. Thiel’s criticism of this third step is based on a presumption that the reconstructions it yields should be measured by congruency with universalized senses of tradition.
36 Ibid., 374.
37 Ibid., 374.
ecclesial faith acts and the analogy of tradition that they establish.\textsuperscript{38} This makes theological judgment in the end subservient to the working of grace that Thiel understands to universally underpin the contextual plurality of history: “Traditional or theological congruence is finally achieved by grace, and the analogy of tradition describes how faith gracefully and actually claims divine pattern in history.”\textsuperscript{39}

Thiel himself points toward the problems with his own position. In criticizing the inability of correlational approaches to methodologically account for authenticity in their third constructive step, he specifically points to the tendency to use metaphors of convergence as self-justifying validations of correlational continuity when such metaphors are in fact incapable of providing such grounding. He identifies the Gadamerian idea of a “merging of horizons” as one such example, but identifies as well similar metaphors from Roger Haight, Bernard Lonergan, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, and the very use of the term correlation originally by Paul Tillich.\textsuperscript{40} However, the analogy of faith offered by Thiel is a similarly self-justifying metaphor. Thiel inserts the grace-filled guidance of the Holy Spirit into the ecclesial process by which analogical congruence is confirmed, and relies on the principle of the oneness of Christ’s body to legitimate historical universalization of tradition and Christian community. Thiel acknowledges that the use of analogy is itself a form of rhetoric that establishes similarity in difference without itself being a metaphysical determination.\textsuperscript{41} Indeed, what Thiel presents as retrospective analogical continuity functions as a rhetorical device to reconcile synchronic and diachronic plurality under the metaphor of ecclesial unity.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 377-378.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 380.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 363-364.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 367.
Additionally, while Thiel writes that the appeal to faith as an analogical ground should not be allowed to be an “explanatory panacea” that can justify radically divergent contemporary reconstructions of doctrine,\(^4^2\) his own appeal to a unity of ecclesial faith functions as an epistemological panacea. In the historical realm, that unity is dependent upon human authority calibrating the legitimacy of the particular faith acts that Thiel thinks should be involved in the formation of continuity. The positing of universality in the move to ecclesial faith depends on fideistic trust in the authority that does that calibrating and makes universalization possible by being guided by grace in a way not available to particular experiences that generate potentially novel correlational judgments. That grace is meant to ameliorate potential problems like errors, concealments, and ideological preoccupations that otherwise threaten any operation of human institutional authority. In the case of theological judgments, magisterial authority might not be thrust into so central a role. But in the case of doctrinal development, which explicitly deals with public ecclesial teaching, the role of centralized organizational authority becomes functionally unavoidable. This functional appeal to magisterial authority that is supernaturally empowered to establish universalized tradition combined with a preference for analogical rhetoric that accents similarity in difference in favor of contestation and concealment disallows Thiel’s model from truly reconciling the epistemological impact of synchronic pluralism and diachronic diversity.\(^4^3\)

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\(^4^2\) Ibid., 372.

\(^4^3\) See Mark C. Taylor, “Toward an Ontology of Relativism,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 46 (1978): 41-61. Taylor argues that epistemological relativism and ontological relationality combine to make truth relativistic and dialectical. The context of meaning must be understood as a complex field tension of the diachronic temporal development of semantic systems and the synchronic interrelationship of different semantic systems. Similarly, relationality of being must be understood as a complex field tension of the diachronic process of ever-developing phenomena and the synchronic co-existence of mutually related otherness. Taylor turns to imagination as a means of resolution within theological reflection, but resists the universalization behind Thiel’s appeal to it. For Taylor, symbolic imagination serves as the interface of contextual meaning and relational being and he proposes that it should serve as a focus of theological reflection in the pluralistic age. The polysemy of symbols allows them to mediate the contextuality of meaning and reflect the polymorphism of being. This symbolic imagination thus demands an ever on-going reinterpretation of meaning in diachronic tension with tradition and synchronic tension with diverse situations.
The goal in Thiel’s work is to establish a new understanding of theological foundations that can withstand non-foundational criticisms of post-Enlightenment thought. In the Romantic imagination he sees useful possibilities but lingering modernist foundationalism, such as he criticized when arguing against the form-content model of development. His solution is to instead marshal contextual instances of imaginative interpretation of Christian faith into his framework of retrospective tradition that tries to synthesize such diverse products of imagination under the auspices of ecclesial grace. To Thiel this a uniquely Catholic way of responding to non-foundationalism, one that takes advantage of Catholic theological anthropology that maintains belief in a cooperative relationship between nature and grace that allows for imaginative theological authorship to express the foundational influence of grace. However, Thiel’s own position amounts to presumption of a universal foundation of faith. Even if tradition is defined for Thiel retrospectively through the lens of regional imaginations, it embodies a common sense of shared faith that transcends the regional conditionings of how that faith is understood, conceptually and praxically. His model thus retains behind the form of doctrine a stable and universal content that eclipses contestation, tension, and diversity that may arise in the midst of contextually plural experiences.

In the analysis of Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, the problem of foundationalism arises when one pole of the correlative interrelation between constitutive tradition and contextual experience

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44 This philosophical challenge is articulated well by Francis Schüssler Fiorenza in Foundational Theology: Jesus and the Church (New York: Crossroad, 1985): “The critique of foundationalism questions whether fundamental theology can provide Christian faith and theology with an independent criterion and foundation” (289).

45 Thiel, Imagination, 187-200. Thiel’s support for the place of imagination in Catholic theology rests on the Romantic portrayal of authorship as a talent that can be conceived as a charisma driven by grace for the sake of articulating God’s self-communication in history. Additionally, he points to the affirmation from as far back as Trent that human experience contains spiritual integrity and argues that the modern awareness of historicity builds on that foundation and legitimizes imagination and creative theologizing as ways to mine the meaning of that foundation. He contrasts this with post-liberal methodology that he argues is built upon a similar sola gratia anthropology as classical Reformation theology and thus distrusts cooperative models of grace and nature such as that involved in his view of imagination and theological authorship.
is favored over the other.  To Schüssler Fiorenza, tradition must be critiqued as the products of particular interests and cultures, but experience cannot serve as a foundational ground either, because to do so would require a transcendent understanding of subjectivity that inauthentically escapes the limitations of any particular cultural tradition into which subjectivity is thrown.  His solution is to propose that tradition and experience be considered as inextricably woven together in their production of meaning and that the truth for which foundational theology aims be understood as an ever-spiraling hermeneutic reconstruction correlationally derived out of that interwoven contextual matrix.  The advantage of this approach for him is that it “does not accept a tradition of judgments or practice or some general principles or some items of experience or some background theories as foundational,” but rather “presupposes a diversity of judgments, principles, and theories, each entailing different kinds of justification that come together to support or to criticize, to reinforce or to revise.” It avoids a view that presumes an objective reality or common experience of faith that underlies the diverse contextual factors that make up the hermeneutical efforts that define the meaning of experience.

This final problem is where Thiel’s model ends up. Thiel criticizes Schüssler Fiorenza’s idea of “reflective equilibrium” as one of the correlational metaphors that fails to justify its constructive phase, and his appeal to grace guiding retrospective tradition is meant to be a more thorough methodological counterpart. But as argued above, his analogy of faith is a similarly self-justifying metaphor. The advantage of Schüssler Fiorenza’s metaphor over Thiel’s is that the former’s builds awareness of contestation and the need for criticism into its foundational

46 Schüssler Fiorenza, 301.
47 Ibid., 290, 298-301.
48 Ibid., 301-304. On 303, Schüssler Fiorenza notes that his model of hermeneutic reconstruction is a refashioning of correlational methods that attempts to hold tradition and experience in equilibrium rather than granting one or the other foundational privilege.
49 Ibid., 302.
50 Ibid., 299.
alternative, leaving an expectation of dynamic tension an relativistic understandings, while the latter’s blunts such concerns by trying to arrive at a singularized synthesis of congruence. Thiel argues that Schüssler Fiorenza’s correlational rearrangement does not offer solid enough methodological criteria, but part of Schüssler Fiorenza’s point is that his model tries to incorporate varied and relativistic criteria for authenticity of faith. This leaves space for a critical reception of a minimally-defined tradition of common sources of Christian meaning, such as envisioned by Tanner, but subjects them to varied criteria of interpretation rather than funneling them into a singular analogy of tradition as Thiel suggests. In the language of Schüssler Fiorenza’s argument, Thiel posits a common core of faith experience that generates the possibility of a universalizable tradition serving as a foundation beneath the particularities of traditions that shape contextual experiences of faith. As such, his model does not effectively respond to the non-foundational criticisms of post-Enlightenment thought and their legitimation of relativized and particularized epistemology.

Thiel does point to contextual theological methods as reflective of his sense of imagination within the theological enterprise, favoring the “existential” over the “essential,” but he does so only generically without considering the critical dimensions they contribute and the way they resist and problematize even a retrospective thematization into a universal analogy of faith. To address this blunted sense of imagination’s role in the hermeneutic construction of meaning that underlies the formation and development of doctrinal formulae, I will begin by examining some examples of other contextual variations of imagination’s role in theological reflection. After presenting these views, I will argue that Ricoeur’s hermeneutical imagination provides a methodological framework that can account for these diversified perspectives and point to a model of doctrinal development that remains sensitive to their particular interpretations.

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concerns, and practices and allows for innovative expression and relativized dynamics between traditions.

b. Feminist, Mujerista, and Womanist Variations: Sandra Schneiders, Elizabeth Johnson, Ada María Isasi-Díaz, and Chandra Taylor Smith

Sandra Schneiders points to the central role of imagination in addressing feminist concerns. She argues that patriarchy in Christianity is rooted in the problematic attribution of masculinity to God, but claims that the primary locus of the problem is experiential and spiritual and not rational or theological. She maintains that theological tradition has generally maintained that God is non-gendered and that Jesus’ masculinity is not christologically decisive in a formal sense. As a result, Schneiders places blame for the prevailing inability to conceive of God outside of the masculinity that legitimizes patriarchy on the failure of the imagination that colors experience and spirituality. The basis of this claim for her is the constructive and integrative power of the imagination that creates senses of self, God, and world that make up the “interpretive grids” that define experience. Schneiders lays out her prescription for the injustices and silences that can result from patriarchal imagination in this way:

I would like to suggest that just as the self and world images can be healed, so can the God-image. It cannot be healed, however, by rational intervention alone. Repeating the theological truth that God is Spirit may correct our ideas, but a healthy spirituality requires a healing of the imagination which will allow us not only to think differently about God but to experience God differently. The imagination is accessible not primarily to abstract ideas but to language, images, interpersonal experience, symbolism, art—all the integrated approaches which appeal simultaneously to intellect, will, and feeling.

Schneiders focuses then on imagination as an integral element of the spiritual experience that is a precursor to theology. Her feminist approach looks to the imagination as a way to open

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53 Ibid., 10.
54 Ibid., 16-17.
55 Ibid., 19.
theology to the contextual experience of women that Christian tradition has frequently neglected. For the specific theological area of development of doctrine, it is useful to recall contemporary models of revelation that focus on it being divine self-communication. Doctrine in this model is situated as an outgrowth of a receptive experiential ground that precedes rationalization or conceptualization, but one that does not include direct mystical access to an objective core of information and requires hermeneutic construction. The imaginative engagement with the symbols and other “integrated approaches” through which divine self-communication occurs is thus a vital aspect of consideration for the development of doctrine. Schneiders’s approach reminds that the unique experience of women must be included in the interpretation of such theological sources.

Elizabeth Johnson’s *She Who Is* is a good exemplification of Schneiders’s ideas. She begins by observing that language shapes the imaginatively constructed framework through which one understands the world, and that thusly androcentric language about God yields an androcentric religious culture. Particularly she criticizes classical theism for its detached and abstract notions of a male God and its insistence on male-only imagery, calling such a construct both oppressive and idolatrous. She argues that the mystery of God leaves the labeling of God ever open-ended and she describes that God can be, and has been historically, authentically labeled with innovative terms. In the midst of this, Johnson repeatedly stresses, like Schneiders, the importance of non-rational dimensions for remedying androcentrism, highlighting in particular the factor of imagination. She writes plainly: “To advance the truth of

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56 Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 3-5. See also 22-28 for a more elaborated presentation of this idea that more concretely describes the harm done to women by androcentric preoccupation in theology, as well as 46-47 where she buttresses the idea with appeal to Ricoeur’s maxim that the “symbol gives rise to thought,” stressing the ontological power that resides in the images used to ground theological language.
57 Ibid., 19-22, 39-40.
58 Ibid., 6-8.
God’s mystery and to redress imbalance so that the community of disciples may move toward a more liberating life, this study engages imagination to speak in female symbols for divine mystery, testing their capacity to bear divine presence and power.”

Methodologically, Johnson proceeds to use a correlational approach, drawing together the contemporary experience of women striving for the achievement of full humanity with traditional Christian reflection on the naming of God to imaginatively construct a new way of naming God. Specifically she advocates a reappropriation of the tradition of “being” language from Thomistic thought in connection with feminine predication that emphasizes being in relational and panentheistic contours, settling on the primary terminology of God as “She Who Is.” However, regarding the place of imagination, the correlational approach Johnson adapts to get to this conclusion is of greater interest at present. Rosemary Radford Ruether similarly argues that feminism is an essentially correlational methodology, one that incorporates women into the hermeneutical-critical perspective that was part of the biblical prophetic tradition and has always been part of Christian theological reflection. This perspective is one that Ruether claims measures tradition ever anew in terms of its ability to foster meaningfulness and the development of fullness of personhood in light of contemporary experience, and she argues that feminist theology demands female experience be factored into such correlational measurement. However, the stress on imagination and the construction of meaning out of experience that is present in feminists like Schneiders, Johnson, and Ruether leads to the importance of specific particularity. As a result, the appropriation of imagination in theology from the perspective of women requires contextualization, for example as in mujerista and womanist approaches.

59 Ibid., 47.
60 See ibid., 224-245. The argument for this moniker is built in the course of this entire chapter.
According to Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *mujerista* theology grows at root from the unique experiences of marginalization that Hispanic women face in the United States generally and under the men of their own communities. Exploitation growing from a lack of ability for meaningful economic and political participation is the main concern Isasi-Díaz identifies in this regard, and she attaches it to the erosion of traditional Hispanic community by the concomitant influences of individualism and consumerism. This experience of marginalization and exploitation forms for her the primary correlational point from which *mujerista* theology develops. She calls it an avowedly subjective and contextual approach because its main norm is the every-day experience and struggle for liberation faced by Hispanic women rather than an inherited universal tradition. This experience of the everyday, *lo cotidiano*, contains for Isasi-Díaz significant epistemological weight. It means for her that theological theories cannot be taken as unchanging and universal abstractions, but rather concrete articulations of real life.

This means that theological meaning arises constructively out of the context of experience and requires a constructive hermeneutic that uses imagination. Isasi-Díaz reflects this when she outlines a three-step procedure by which “*Lo cotidiano* makes us face reality.” She claims that it forces reality to be confronted in the concrete rather than as a mere idea, demanding that a theologian know reality by being in its midst, by taking responsibility for it, and by attempting to transform it. Isasi-Díaz does not use the language of imagination here, but her procedure reflects an imaginative hermeneutic that understands religious meaning to derive from experiential construction. This is made even more apparent when she addresses

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63 Ibid., 137-138.
64 Ibid., 138-139.
65 Ibid., 139.
some of the implications that she thinks the mujerista approach demands. One of them is that revelation be understood as taking place in an ongoing fashion in the midst of the experience of lo cotidiano.\textsuperscript{66} With this claim she makes theological reflection, such as would give rise to doctrinal expression, dependent upon an experiential hermeneutic driven by imagination rather than an extrapolation of inherited tradition that has not accounted for particularities of mujerista context specifically and marginalization more generally.

Womanist theology arrives at a similarly hermeneutic place. Chandra Taylor Smith frames womanist method as a resistance to the totalizing and universalizing tendencies of not only classical Euro-American thought, but also mainstream feminist and black theologies as well.\textsuperscript{67} Instead she suggests that womanist theology embraces the individuality and diversity of experience among black women.\textsuperscript{68} One theme that arises for Smith from that focus is the power of self-naming which lets black women describe their own experience and thus create their own matrices of expression and participate thusly in their own self-generated contexts of meaning.\textsuperscript{69} Another theme for Smith is that the natural lived experience of black women should be understood as a locus of revelation and utilized as a hermeneutic resource for reflection on how God’s self-communication of love is concretely revealed.\textsuperscript{70} This hermeneutic means for Smith that womanist theology offers ideological critique of elements of traditional theology that have

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 141. See also María Pilar Aquino, “Theological Method in U.S. Latino/a Theology: Toward an Intercultural Theology for the Third Millennium,” in From the Heart of Our People, eds. Orlando O. Espín and Miguel H. Díaz, 6-48 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999). Aquino identifies lo cotidiano as a locus theological for Latina theology, highlighting it as a source that by its dynamic and complex sense of concrete life forces appreciation for the multicultural context within which contemporary theology must operate.


\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 151-153.

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 150-151

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 155-157.
suppressed the experience of black women. However, it also means that the epistemological resource for a womanist grasp of revelation that offers such critique is the imagination that constructively draws on the unique contexts of black women’s experience to interpret the meaning of God’s revelation.

In the feminism of Schneiders and Johnson, the mujerista approach of Isasi-Díaz, and the womanist methodology of Smith, imagination is vital. The ability to generate meaning out the particular areas of female experience that each approach accentuates is the main reason for its importance, but in each case it is also important that its meaning-making resists universalization that might otherwise answer suppression with other forms of suppression. In all three of these approaches, the hermeneutic work of imagination challenges universal ideological frameworks and resists injustices or blind spots that they may include. In each approach, Christianity is encountered as an existing tradition, but it is imaginatively interpreted in light of correlation with concrete marginal positions. These interpretations represent authentic experiences of revelation in so far as they produce new insights and critiques that amend, augment, or challenge the established contours of inherited tradition. However, each insists that the uniqueness of its own position is not reducible to any general singularity. As an epistemological principle, the hermeneutic imagination active in feminist, mujerista, and womanist approaches demands that the particular experiences, ideas, and practices of their constituent areas of concern retain unique relevance as sources of theological knowledge.

c. Latin American Liberation Variations: Ignacio Ellacuría and Gustavo Gutierrez

Much of the philosophical and epistemological substructure of liberation theology comes from Ignacio Ellacuría. Ellacuría establishes a model by which theological knowledge is all

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71 Ibid., 157-158.
historicized and praxis-based, which opens the way for the epistemological emphasis on the experience of poverty and the aim of liberation. This historicization of knowledge that Ellacuría advocates valorizes the imagination as a power that holds together intelligence and sentience, which is required when knowledge is understood as necessarily rooted in historical context.

According to Antonio González, Ellacuría’s notion of “historical intelligence” is indebted to the philosophy of Xavier Zubiri. Zubiri paved the way for the removal of the separation between intelligence and sentience that had marked the classical paradigm through modernity. This separation resulted in not only a metaphysical dualism between the sensible and intelligible world, but also a social one between those wise and learned enough to access the intelligible world and the common people bound to the lower order of the sensible.72 As Zubiri emphasized the necessary interconnection between sentience and intelligence, he made historical praxis that resists the injustice of the social dualism the root of intelligence, breaking down the metaphysical dualism.73 It is this model from Zubiri that Ellacuría adapts in his understanding of “historical intelligence,” which González summarizes in three parts. First, intelligence has its origin in concrete historical praxis that determines the possibilities of all rational activity; second, intelligence is destined toward social outcomes; and third, historicity is not only the source and aim of rational activity, but is also formally constitutive of it.74 The end result of this

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74 González, 83. González claims that this summary is culled from multiple occasional works from Ellacuría on the subject of “historical intelligence” because he did not elaborate his full sense of its meaning and implication in any one work.
understanding of the relationship between sentience and intelligence is to make philosophy
dependent upon and aimed toward liberating praxis.\footnote{Ibid., 84-85.}

This reveals a particular way in which imagination needs to be understood in the situation
of Latin American liberation theology. In the classical paradigm of sentience and intelligence
broken down by Zubiri, the imagination was a link between the sensible and intelligible, but a
suspect and potentially deceptive faculty that could mar the purity of intelligible truth. The
hermeneutic imagination serves a similar function to the historical praxis highlighted here by
Zubiri and Ellacuría, as an element that cements the sensible and intelligible together rather
working as an intermediary that keeps them dualistically separate. The active construction of the
imagination is what shapes sensible experience into intelligence, and the formulation of
historical intelligence helps emphasize the way praxis can be a piece of that imaginative work.
The experiential encounter that imagination appropriates is colored by not only texts or
rationalizations, but also praxis, and the possibilities produced by imagination’s hermeneutic
operation on experience are not only textual or rational, but also practical and historical.

An example of religious knowledge as historicized knowledge developed by Ellacuría
helps demonstrate the implications of this liberationist philosophy on the realm of doctrine.
Focusing on the historical event of the Exodus, Ellacuría situates as revelation the historical
experience of God’s power, an experience that at once changes history and incites hope for
historical change:

The unpredictability of historical experience is celebrated as a revelation of Yahweh’s
transcendent power, a power which changes history and which shows both human contingency
and human hope in historical change. Yahweh is greater than what might be expected of any
historical conditionality. Thus human history is held up as the privileged arena in which to show
the transcendent irruption of God as an unforeseeable novelty that opens human contingency to
divine hope. Human experience does not close in on itself, but is opened to the hope of divine intervention.\textsuperscript{76}

History for Ellacuría is thusly the space in which there occurs revelation of “permanent values and meanings” that demonstrate God to people.\textsuperscript{77} In the midst of this analysis, Ellacuría describes the Exodus story as an imaginative production rooted in the experience of the community. It is a work of historical poiesis rooted in real experience but imagining possibilities of meaning found in that experience, primarily for Ellacuría’s interest the meaning of God’s preferential option for the poor and suffering and the centrality of liberation for understanding the truth of God’s revelation. As he traces the Exodus story as a story, he notes history as a space of creativity, and positions Moses as experiencing a hermeneutical arc by which his historical theopraxis of liberation allows him to creatively transform what has been given to him as tradition, and by that creativity come to a point of new revelation.\textsuperscript{78} Extending to current history, Ellacuría parallels the dynamic by which Moses receives revelation to the experience of popular religion as the space where God’s self-communication continues to occur and develop through creative expression and praxis. It is within popular religion for Ellacuría that sentience and intelligence remain a unity that allows for an authentic understanding of a God who reveals in history.\textsuperscript{79} And thus he claims, “The church, in turn, must also fulfill its mission by placing itself at the service of human beings and giving its life and institutionality for them, knowing that this is the fulfillment of God’s great history.”\textsuperscript{80} Doctrine, the genre with which the church expresses its understanding of God’s revelation, is also then beholden to the historical creativity of experience and praxis.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 257.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 259-260.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 273-274.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 274.
Ellacuría offers two pieces for consideration when it comes to the development of doctrine. First, he provides a methodological justification for why experience and praxis must be incorporated into the sense of how God’s revelation is authentically received. This makes it necessary for doctrine to be responsive to historicity and the imagination that expresses it. This reinforces the general position this work has been supporting. However, he adds a uniquely Latin American contextual dimension. The history through which authentic revelation is conceived is the experience of poverty and oppression that God has shown a preferential option of liberating throughout biblical history. This position develops for Ellacuría from the real encounter with poverty and oppression among the Christian faithful of Latin America.  

Another example of this Latin American perspective on imagination can be found in Gustavo Gutierrez. In *On Job*, Gutierrez demonstrates a specifically liberationist version of the hermeneutical process that imaginatively interprets the correlational relationship between scriptural tradition and contemporary experience. He reads Job through the lens of suffering and poverty in Latin America, exercising this hermeneutic strategy in general, but also in particular discovering in Job a legitimation of the approach of liberation theology. He discovers in Job that authentic God-talk emerges only through solidarity with the experience of suffering and praxis toward its alleviation. For Gutierrez, theory or reflection builds on praxis or experience, but is a necessary step in order to deepen experience and encourage more fully realized transformation in praxis.  

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81 This examination of the Latin American situation is focused on the emphasis on poverty that has marked the thought of liberation theology that has become so closely identified with that cultural context. It should be noted, though, that it is not meant to be presented as the sole significant variable of that context. For example, religious diversity is an important piece of the way liberation theology must operate in the postcolonial setting of Latin America at large. On this point, see Michael St. A. Miller, *Reshaping the Contextual Vision in Caribbean Theology: Theoretical Foundations for Theology Which is Contextual, Pluralistic, and Dialectical* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2007).

Juan G. Feliciano offers an analysis of Gutierrez’s praxis-theory hermeneutic and its epistemological implications. Feliciano labels Gutierrez’s epistemological model “critical praxis correlation,” a model that makes praxis the goal and foundation of theory, but nonetheless understands reflection and theory to be key to making praxis transformative.\(^3\) Job demonstrates this progression from the experience of solidarity with the poor to right talk about God, making him an exemplar for those who suffer injustice and poverty and an icon of authentic theological epistemology. Feliciano notes Job 29 as an interpretive key. This is where Job’s righteousness attested to before his trials (Job 1:8) is revealed to be rooted in his dedication to justice and care for the poor. Thus Job’s faithful God-talk in the midst of suffering is rooted in correlating his liberating praxis with his current suffering and reflection.\(^4\) Only when the imagination can operate upon the experience of suffering and generate systematic reflections can authentic theory and God-talk develop and lead to liberating action. Feliciano shows then that, as was the case with Ellacuría, the imagination tied to the context of Latin American experience must include solidarity with poverty and liberating praxis if it is to bring about authentic knowledge of God’s revelation that might then be translated to doctrinal expression.

\textit{d. Asian Multicultural Variations: Peter Phan, Aloysius Pieris, and Felix Wilfred}

Assessing the marginal situation of Asian-Americans in a 1999 essay, Peter Phan roots his theological reflections in the unique Asian factors that he thinks flow through that marginal experience. He argues that the identity formation of these socially, culturally, psychologically and geographically betwixt and between people involves a delicate balance of memory of the

\(^4\) Ibid., 158-160.
past with imagination of the future. Methodologically he grounds this idea in the theological theme of eschatology. Eschatology serves for him as a prime hermeneutical key, one that encourages theology to proceed by critically articulating the memory of tradition and then imaginatively projecting it into the future. Each phase is for him mediated through the variables of the marginal situation he thinks defines the context of Asian-Americans, a context that should engender mutually critical cultural exchange between Asian and Western worldviews.

In his later book, *Christianity With an Asian Face*, Phan builds on this idea to advocate for a dynamic “interculturation” between Asian and American cultures, a dynamic in which Asian-Americans are not forced to choose between two cultures but are rather empowered to take advantage of their in-between state to critique and mutually enrich both cultures. In an earlier chapter, Phan analyzes the possibilities for coherence between the philosophical viewpoint of John Paul II’s *Fides et Ratio* and a generalized understanding of Asian philosophical principles. In the course of that analysis, he outlines what he takes to be some of the key factors that differentiate Asian philosophy from the Western philosophical view that informs *Fides et Ratio*. The main philosophical elements he isolates as a major difference between Asian and Western religious thought is Asian comfort with the indeterminacy of truth, an attitude which John Paul II specifically critiques. The indeterminacy of truth in Asian cultural dispositions is connected to the notion that truths are only ever realized in particularities that are always partial and limited, which places emphasis on the social fact of religious diversity.

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86 Ibid., 127-129.
87 Ibid., 131-132.
89 Ibid., 62-64.
and multiculturalism that are major markers of Asian culture. This experiential multiplicity then is one of the main factors that informs the theological imagination from an Asian perspective. As with Latin American liberation theologians, another major factor is the “massa perditionis,” those marginalized by poverty and oppression. However, I am going to narrow my focus in the present survey on the former factor of multiculturalism as a variable in Asian theological hermeneutics.

For Paul S. Chung, this reality of multiculturalism has led Asian theologians to imagine new modes of theological analogy more congenial to their unique concerns. Specifically, he describes an intercultural hermeneutics in which an analogical method focused on the dynamism of the Word of God is configured with diachronic critique as well as synchronic analysis that accounts for multiculturalism in the social location in which the hermeneutical interpretive process is embedded. This amounts for Chung to a suggestion that theology seek analogical understanding in “irregular” and “dissimilar” situations that unsettle primary tradition and encourage genuinely integrative encounters with otherness. That effort can subvert dominant frameworks of theological discourse and reconcile Christian thought with the socio-historical concerns of the Asian context which is indelibly marked by cultural and religious diversity. Chung observes:

This is a counter-proposal to the Western concept of analogy of faith or being, which tends to lose the dimension of the discourse of those who are marginalized and voiceless. Here an analogy of the other emerges in relation to the universality of God speaking. This perspective offers a post-foundational insight that allows irregular theology to transcend the limitations of the Western Enlightenment framework regarding the emergence of world Christianity.

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91 Ibid., 189.
92 Ibid., 191.
Within Chung’s argument is an expectation that God’s self-communication must be regarded as essentially mystery, eliciting humility in the way it is interpreted into discursive form and elevating the importance of analogy with the irregular as a way of preserving that mystery and fostering such humility.93

One theologian examined by Chung is Aloysius Pieris. In his book *An Asian Theology of Liberation*, he offers a systematic analysis for why the multicultural context of Asia challenges Western Christian thinking. He affirms both multiculturalism and poverty as definitive of the Asian theological locus, and in his analysis of religious multiculturalism he offers insight into why concern with multiculturalism needs to actually precede the concern with poverty and marginalization. For Pieris, the division between religion and culture, implied by the very word “inculturation” prized by Western theological thought, is itself foreign to Asian religiosity.94 As a result, the model of liberation that emerged in Christian thinking out of the Latin American situation is not applicable to Asia because it amounts to a colonial imposition of what religion itself is that does not gel with the notion of religion that exists in the multicultural milieu of Asia.95

The unique challenge of that milieu as Pieris presents it is that Asia had several entrenched metacosmic forms of religion, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism, that preceded the arrival of Christianity. In his understanding of the theology of religions, the cosmic is that element of religion concerned with earthly experience and individual styles of spirituality, while the metacosmic is a “transphenomenal” soteriological orientation that gives cosmic religion a transcendent direction. These dimensions complement one another in that indigenous cosmic religious styles become subsumed into metacosmic soteriologies, and once that

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93 Ibid., 193.
95 Ibid., 61.
combination becomes forged new metacosmic religions are typically unable to separate them.\textsuperscript{96} For Pieris, the presence of those preceding metacosmic religions prevented Christianity from having the same kind of missionary success it was able to have in other cultures that did not offer metacosmic rivals. Pieris wants the primarily agapeic orientation of Christian soteriology to aid with the liberation of Asia’s oppressed, but thinks it cannot do so without grafting itself into the dominant gnostic or monastic style of soteriology that predominates in the metacosmic religions of Asia.\textsuperscript{97} Thus, while adhering to the general principles of liberation theology, Pieris makes clear why the imagination driving the theological hermeneutics of Asia must make multiculturalism and religious multiplicity central features. According to Devaka Premawardhana, Pieris offers a superior model for accounting for religious multiplicity because his own religious hybridity seems to operate at a pre-reflective level that better mirrors the complex and eclectic yet functionally integrated religious imagination that exists for most people at the experiential level.\textsuperscript{98}

Felix Wilfred works from a similar appreciation for multiculturalism in Asian context but turns greater attention to doctrinal matters and more clearly incorporates appreciation for the working of imagination. For Wilfred, Christianity has succeeded in breaking into the religious life of Asian people when it has been able to be creatively and organically appropriated into the spiritual journeys of persons rather than anchoring itself in the accurate transmission of propositional information.\textsuperscript{99} This requires theology to be focused on experience and context, the space within which such creative appropriation occurs. Furthermore, Wilfred notes that the context of religion in Asia gives greater weight to orthopraxis than orthodoxy, and that much

\textsuperscript{96} See ibid., 54-55.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 56-57.
\textsuperscript{99} Felix Wilfred, \textit{Margins: Site of Asian Theologies} (Delhi: ISPCK, 2008), 33-35.
greater interest is placed on day-to-day communal interactions and the establishment of social 
harmony and cultural cooperation than distinctions between orthodoxy and heterodoxy.\textsuperscript{100} The 
thelogical ground for this Asian perspective comes for Wilfred from the apophatic tradition of 
Christianity, in which he sees a focus on the fundamental incomprehensibility of the divine that 
is shared between Christianity and Asian religions.\textsuperscript{101} This incomprehensibility devalues purely 
rational language for God and valorizes holistic and experiential modes of processing divine 
revelation that is inexhaustible mystery.\textsuperscript{102} Specifically here Wilfred notes that the experiential 
understanding of revelation is driven by the imagination, placing the creativity of imaginative 
hermeneutics antecedent to rational formulation.

Wilfred models this idea in the case of christology. He argues for the legitimacy of 
pluralistic and contextual christologies by focusing on the apophatic base of all christology.\textsuperscript{103} 
Christology, he claims, can never exhaust the real mystery of Christ and must be developed 
creatively from a literary-critical hermeneutic that engages the world of the text with the world 
of the interpreter.\textsuperscript{104} From this position, he claims that non-Christian christologies or 
christologies developed in popular religion, even if they do not coincide exactly with the 
classical doctrines of Chalcedon, should be accepted as expressions of faith and opportunities to 
deepen understanding of and insight about the ultimate mystery of Christ.\textsuperscript{105} Wilfred’s approach 
demonstrates how a contemporary understanding of God’s revelation as self-communication that 
results in inexhaustible symbols of meaning that require hermeneutic imagination means that,

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 51-54.  
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 44.  
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 43.  
\textsuperscript{103} Wilfred, “Christological Pluralism: Some Reflections,” in \textit{Jesus As Christ}, eds. Andrés Torres Queiruga, Lisa 
Sowle Cahill, Maria Clara Bingemer, and Erik Borgman, 84 (London: SCM Press, 2008).  
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 85.  
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 88-89, 90-92.
from an Asian perspective, that imagination must be informed by the multiculturalism and religious diversity that have defined the Asian experience.

e. African Inculturation Variations: Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, Jean-Marc Éla, and Elochukwu E. Uzukwu

In an essay supporting Pentecostal Christianity as a style especially suited to Africa, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu asserts the existence of a “primal imagination” that defines African religiosity. He describes it as a “culturally innate sense of a world of transcendence [that] impinges upon the human world” and that affirms non-rational and experiential spirituality. He argues that this culturally embedded style of religion has led African reimagination of Christianity, especially in African independent churches, to tend toward the pneumatic and the practical. He analyzes this tendency to be a response to “the intellectualized and over-rationalized forms of Christian expression inherited from Western missions.” While for Asamoah-Gyadu this primal imagination leads to Pentecostalism, a form of Christianity “at home with the supernatural,” he identifies in this religious worldview belief in what he labels generally a sacramental universe. As such, he indicates that this style is not necessarily congenial to only Pentecostalism. It can find resonance with other forms of Christianity, but he indicates importantly that the inculturation of Christianity to an African context must account for this religious proclivity. It may offer challenges to forms steeped in doctrinal traditions, but such traditions would not need to be absolutely precluded so long as they could connect intellectualized doctrine to the sacramental and experiential spirituality that Asamoah-Gyadu describes.

107 Ibid., 35-36
108 Ibid., 41.
Theology Brewed in an African Pot, by Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, demonstrates such engagement between African spiritual sensibilities and doctrinal Christianity. Like Asamoah-Gyadu, Orobator affirms a primal religiosity in Africa defined by belief in the divine pervading everyday life and by adherence to experiential and practical spirituality, and also like Asamoah-Gyadu he points to African independent churches as evidence of this indigenous religious orientation.\textsuperscript{109} To this spirit-centeredness, Orobator also attaches three other defining characteristics of African religiosity: a life-orientation that celebrates life in all its dimensions and implies standing against oppression and injustice; communalism that understands the fundamental nature of reality as relational and the nature of religious experience as necessarily shared; and, a holistic style of religious expression that makes physical expressiveness and exuberance natural elements of praise and worship.\textsuperscript{110} For Orobator, this distinct style of African religion forms one side of a vital and dynamic dialogue with Christianity, a dialogue defined as inculturation.

For Orobator, inculturation should be understood by analogy to the Incarnation. Each involves a coming together of two realities in a dynamically mutual way. Orobator observes that in the Incarnation, word and flesh join in a way that word becomes flesh and does not simply suppress it.\textsuperscript{111} He takes this to mean that theology must advance beyond the old colonial model that presumed Western Christianity represented a superior culture that had nothing to receive from African culture, and instead accept inculturation to be a process that is generative of new realities born of the mutual transformation of both realities coming into relation.\textsuperscript{112} Inculturation then for him calls for “creative fidelity,” but fidelity not only to the tradition of

\textsuperscript{109} Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, Theology Brewed in an African Pot (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008), 140-143.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 144-149.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 130.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 131.
Christianity brought by missionaries, but fidelity as well to African religion.\textsuperscript{113} The power to mediate these two traditions and bring them into mutual appropriation is for Orobator the power of imagination. The imagination is capable of bringing together experiential and practical African religion and dogmatic and codified Western Christianity in a mutual exchange that produces creative development in the understanding and expression of Christianity in the African context.\textsuperscript{114}

Orobator’s book is arranged primarily as a demonstration of this imagination. In his chapters he takes up different themes of Christian theology and attempts inculturated interpretations of them. For example, in reflecting on revelation, he focuses on the idea of God as “communicator,” of God as revealing God’s self in an ongoing dynamic of self-communication.\textsuperscript{115} He focuses then on the importance in African culture of names as carriers of identity and connects the idea to the biblical heritage of God’s self-communication being rooted in the revealing of a name. He then asks by what name or names God has been revealed to Africans, and surveys various linguistic and cultural traditions for different appellations given to divine reality. What he finds is belief in a diversely populated spiritual realm, but one that acknowledges a supreme being who remains always in contact and communication with the human world.\textsuperscript{116} This analysis by Orobator places the very aim of theology into an inculturated context, as he notes that the prime metaphors for that supreme being vary from linguistic tradition to linguistic tradition and control how those people will understand who God is, the originating vector of all revelation. Furthermore, he establishes an African understanding of revelation itself, affirming a belief in revelation not being confined to the Western Christian

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 133.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 133.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 15-16.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 21-22.
tradition and being instead infused throughout different cultural systems that all have their own legitimate forms of expression that grow from the divine self-communication that they receive.

An additional example that hews closer to the matter of doctrine is Orobator’s interpretation of Trinity. He asserts that Trinity is above all a symbol of the Christian understanding of who God is as revealed in Christ and as one who continues to work in the lives of Christians. However, he notes that the abstract and speculative Hellenistic language that underpins the doctrinal formula of Trinity is not applicable to every contemporary circumstance of Christianity. For Africans, he points to the Yoruba image of the Obirin meta, the many-sided woman, as a more relatable image to symbolize what the Trinity symbolizes. Obirin meta literally is a compound of the words for “woman” and “three,” but is rooted in the concrete and earthly experience of a woman who is able to gracefully combine the many attributes demanded of her, the attributes of three different women in one—tenderness, strength, and wisdom. Describing how this metaphor would impact the African understanding of Trinity, Orobator writes:

Theologically, that is, talking about God, it would not be out of place to think of God using the symbol of Obirin meta. What would this kind of God look like? Not a majestic high God enrobed in terrifying inapproachable light. Rather, Obirin meta allows us to form the idea and open up to the experience of a God who combines many sides, many personalities, many realities, many relationships, and many qualities at the same time and as the one and the same God.

Such a turn to a new metaphor for the doctrine of the Trinity represents the imaginative formation of creative fidelity such as that for which Orobator advocated. Implied in his argument is the notion of doctrine describing an experience of divine self-communication, and Orobator makes that experience primary, allowing the doctrinal expression to be flexible to

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117 Ibid., 28.
118 Ibid., 30.
119 Ibid., 31-32.
120 Ibid., 32.
inculturated variations that mutually appropriate both the Western Christian language and the indigenous cultural milieu.

Orobator acknowledges that for some African thinkers the inculturation approach he outlines might seem irrelevant because it focuses on superficial elements of the faith.\textsuperscript{121} The problem Orobator points to is that inculturation may mask the maintenance of social inequity and colonial ideology with changes in names and symbols. Jean-Marc Éla is one theologian who has made a criticism such as this. Using the term indigenization instead of the term inculturation, Éla argues that it amounts to a backward-looking theological methodology that illusorily tries to revalorize a pre-colonial cultural model that has been irrevocably undone by the historical reality of colonialism and continued ideological influence and exploitation from Western culture.\textsuperscript{122}

In Éla’s criticism, something like re-symbolizing the Trinity by recovering a Yoruba concept like \textit{Obirin meta} amounts to such a grabbing into the past while ignoring the concrete problems of the current reality. He starkly claims, “In our world there is not autonomy in the area of culture without autonomy in the area of economy.”\textsuperscript{123} Thus for Éla, a truly creative and inventive theology that can authentically don “the African human face” must include liberating praxis alongside its rhetoric and reflection and indigenized forms of worship and discipline.\textsuperscript{124} Éla derisively puts it this way: “Let us be realistic. It is not enough to replace the gothic chasuble with an indigo loincloth. The essential thing is to take up the gospel in everyday life, reminding ourselves that it should be lived as a message of human liberation.”\textsuperscript{125} Éla does not entirely dismiss the value of inculturating Christian thought and discipline, he rather opposes allowing facile versions of inculturation to override the deeper need to establish real autonomy.

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 127.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 134.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 128-134.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 119.
for local churches to exercise creativity in addressing the specific needs of their people and in expressing their own unique experiences of the Spirit.\textsuperscript{126} He casts each local church as a moment in the ongoing development of understanding the mystery at the heart of Christian faith, and thinks that liberating the oppression of the local faithful in Africa is at the heart of that mystery, meaning doctrinal rigidity cannot be allowed to overwhelm the ability of Church’s to advocate for the concrete material needs of their people amidst damaging economic systems and lingering colonial injustice. The imagination of Orobator is still at stake for Éla with his emphasis on creative invention rooted in local African experience, but he insists that such imagination is deceptively complicit in injustice if it does not explicitly incorporate a social imagination aimed at its alleviation.

Despite the recognition from an inculturationist like Orobator that the African spirituality of life includes liberation considerations and recognition from a liberationist like Éla that inculturated forms of Christian thought and discipline have an important place in African Christianity, African theology is caught in a methodological tension between privileging either liberation or inculturation. This observation is the starting point for Elochukwu E. Uzukwu’s methodological considerations in his book \textit{God, Spirit, and Human Wholeness}. Uzukwu begins by plainly laying out his adherence to a methodological assumption of the West African understanding of reality as multiple and relational, a view that invites a flexible and adaptable understanding of reality as something that must always be actively interpreted.\textsuperscript{127} The methodological advantage in this assumption for Uzukwu is the way that it fosters an interdisciplinary approach for doing African theology and that it stresses no one mode of analysis can fully address all the dimensions of poverty. Liberation and inculturation deal respectively

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 108-113.
with the material and cultural aspects of poverty, and the methodology of multiplicity insists that each be given its due in order to yield a relational complementarity.  

For Uzukwu:

The quest for a creative imagination capable of releasing the African potential . . . can only be mediated by a methodology that is capable of liberating the theologian from being prisoner of a frozen immobile past. On the other hand, it would be perilous to the project of local theology to deny the creative potential embedded in the African memory and in the dynamic aspects of African thought.

The former is the contribution of liberation, the latter the contribution of inculturation. Thus what Uzukwu offers is an idea that the imagination that interprets Christianity through the context of Africa must rely on a comprehensive and robust sense of the African culture into which Christianity is to be correlationally appropriated. It must account for not only narrative and symbolic elements within the cultural history of African peoples, it must balance it with praxis for the sake of liberation from oppression and alleviation of suffering from poverty.

f. Concluding Observations on Contextual Variations

In each of the preceding variations of the role of imagination in theological method, a common focus on correlation emerges. Each view operates with the sense of God’s revelation being ongoing divine self-communication that occurs in history at an experiential level and thus requires hermeneutic appropriation in order for meaning to be constructed from it. That experiential emphasis places the locus of theological knowledge squarely within contextual locations in which such experience of divine self-communication occurs. This means that genres of theological language, such as doctrine, must be built out of the particular hermeneutics of such contextual locations because those genres depend upon the meaning constructed out of those contexts. However, the biblical and historical scope of the enterprise places the hermeneutic

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128 Ibid., 32-34.
129 Ibid., 29-30.
constructions of these contextual locations into dynamic communication with the past of Christianity, and it is here that a correlational approach materializes.

In all five areas examined, a necessary dimension of that correlational dynamic is criticism of the past tradition in light of the concerns of the specific context. But the contours of that criticism were different in the Euro-American model versus the others. Each non-Euro-American context examined was analyzed in light of one emblematic concern. In each context the particularities are more complex and layered, but the narrowed focus was enacted for the sake of a clearer demonstration. For feminist, *mujerista*, and womanist theology, the primary correlational concern was the inclusion of unique female experience within the understanding of full humanity that Christian faith has traditionally purported to endorse, while resisting the simplification of that concept to a single universalized definition. For Latin American liberation theology, the main correlate examined was the experience of poverty and how that poverty awakens sensitivity to a God who has preferential concern for the poor and vulnerable and how that sensitivity should color the way that Christianity thinks and operates. For Asian theologians, a pervasive correlational point was multiculturalism and how the ultimate mystery of God should lead Christian theology to be integrative and flexible and at times accommodating in its engagement with the religious and cultural diversity that defines the Asian context. For African theology, a central correlational variable that was identified was inculturation and the way that for it to be done in a spiritually meaningful way African cultures must be put on more equal ground with Western religious culture and consideration of the social and economic problems created by the colonial past with which that Western religious culture has been attached must be included. Theologians in each context looked to the imagination as a resource that could enact the correlational process by which these concerns could be addressed, or as the case may be,
redressed. In order to do so successfully, the imagination must be capable of creatively and innovatively interpreting that which is handed on, both from the specific contextual situation—its socio-economic challenges, its unique styles of religious thought and practice, and its cultural resources—and from the biblical and theological heritage of the Western-dominated form of Christianity that was initially the carrier of the religion and that continues to dominate the official and institutional form of it today. However, it must also be free to carry out that complex interpretation and re-creation of meaning in a way that is critical of that which is handed on and that is able to controvert it when the correlational measurement may demand it. The dynamism of the imagination that expresses this diversity cannot be channeled into an ultimate universality that might preclude the correlational and critical voices of those different locations. The Euro-American understanding demonstrated in Thiel retains that tradition’s proclivity to universalization, but the demands for innovation and critique that emerge out of other diverse contexts present a challenge to which the tradition embodied by Thiel must respond and for which it must make space. That tradition has tended to shun leanings to relativistic understandings of Christian faith and revelation, but the varied particular and contextual concerns presented in these diverse views suggest that such relativism may be necessary.

In the realm of doctrine, which is specifically a genre that aims at public and shared common definitions, the incorporation of such diverse correlational data is daunting. Such definitions have served in the past as symbols of the oneness and universality of the church by representing the Vincentian canon of that which is believed always, everywhere, and by all. The concern was that equivocity about the matters addressed by doctrine would disrupt the univocity by which a common Christian identity was maintained in truth. However, if experience reveals that what is believed among all people and in all places and at different times in history is indeed
varied and equivocal, then the status of public definitions for the global community that is the church must be conceived along different lines, ones that allow for more relativistic sensibilities. My argument will turn now to Paul Ricoeur for a method of theology founded on a model of the hermeneutic imagination that can make space for contextual diversity and innovation yet still offer a way in which that diversity and innovation can be treated in a genre that aims for public commonality.

**Ricoeur and Theology**

In her historical outline of theological methodology, Jeanne Evans defines correlational methods as a uniquely twentieth century response to emerging cultural and intellectual factors that made traditional methodologies increasingly untenable. She roots the problems in a dominant tendency in the West to prefer univocal and rationalist discourse as the primary model for theology at the expense of attachment to human experience and praxis and sensitivity to the poetic and symbolic nature of Christianity’s primary texts. She sees the rise of hermeneutics in the nineteenth century as a reaction against this tendency, and in Catholicism notes that it was not until Vatican Council II that Catholic tradition began paying attention to criticisms of its deductive and dogmatic methods founded in that classical rationalist proclivity. She writes, “Vatican II, through its openness to the modern world, shifted emphasis of the task of interpreting the Christian faith from contemplation of truths of faith, apart from the world, to the meaning and praxis of faith, in response to the world,” and she notes particularly that engagement with the world means attending to disparities between the developed and developing worlds and the concerns of those outside the magisterium and the academy. It is this task for

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130 Evans, 2-3
131 Ibid., 9.
which she argues correlational methodologies have emerged as a way of creating a more
dynamic and experientially authentic way of interpreting tradition. Evans’s central contention
is that the philosophy of Ricoeur translates to a correlational theological method that is capable
of grounding “creative and critical interpretation of tradition oriented to authentic praxis.”
Indeed Ricoeur himself places his religious thought in line with correlational methods:

Now whatever may be the epistemological status of “concepts” appropriate to our present cultural
and philosophical situation, the problem is to look at religious language itself and explicate its
conceptual potentialities, or, if you prefer, its capacity to be conceptually articulated in the space
of confrontation with our culture. Our regressive method leads us from a mere extrinsic encounter
between religious language and philosophical concepts, through the notion of correlation, toward
a direct inquiry into religious language from the standpoint of its conceptual potentialities.

Following the preceding passage, Ricoeur goes on to describe that this correlational
unveiling of possibility within religious language is part of a naturally dynamic interpretive
process invited by the symbolic nature of primary religious language, involving a secondary
conceptualization that is incapable of exhausting the meaning of the originary resource. In
this way, Ricoeur places imagination at the center of the correlational enterprise, and Evans
appropriately then focuses on it as the crux of the way Ricoeur’s philosophy enables the kind of
critical and creative theological method she thinks necessary. The creation of new meanings,
that is of new conceptual potentialities based on correlational engagement, is animated by the
imagination as a rule-governed power of invention that yields dynamic semantic innovation
while being bound and limited by the conventions and traditions of the literary forms out of
which it is operating. This adherence to forms or genres is one major indication of how
Ricoeur’s hermeneutical imagination yields a sense of correlation that goes beyond those of
other Euro-American versions of it.

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132 Ibid., 10-13. Evans focuses on Hans Küng, Edward Schillebeeckx, and David Tracy as examples of Catholic
theologians who have developed correlational approaches for Catholic theology.
133 Ibid., 14.
135 Ibid., 133.
136 See Evans, 123-126.
For example in David Tracy, correlation is accomplished by analogy to “classics,” to actual items that embody paradigmatic understanding of Christian faith. These classics represent “realized experience,” or as Tracy puts it also, “disclosure of a reality we cannot but name truth.” But even though Tracy emphasizes the hermeneutical and imaginative mechanisms necessary to making sense of the meaning in classics, and insists that the interpretation of them must always remain a forward-moving process, he implies a model of universal human experience that can cast classics as things that should be disclosures of truth in the same way to multiple different perspectives. Philosophically this leaves Tracy working in a paradigm of Christian foundationalism, one where classics are reified as conduits to a secure and universal sense of truth. But by making correlation beholden to the contours of genres that have emerged within past traditions rather than just discreet products there is the encouragement of greater space for archaeological criticism of past products of traditional understandings and the historical contexts of their production. However classic their status may be, all texts of the past would be cast as iterations within a genre, produced through a mediating and contextual imagination operating within historical and political parameters that need to be critiqued in order to reveal possible concealments and power dynamics embedded in those productions.

Two key concepts here for Ricoeur are distanciation and mimesis. As the three-fold process of mimesis embraces the rules of genre and innovates with its emplotment and invites new action by opening up possibilities, distanciation necessarily occurs. For Ricoeur, first order reference is destroyed by the creation of narrative, but this destruction is necessary to create a communicable objectification of life and one that is sufficiently distanced from reality in order to

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give space to the creative imagination to forge possibilities.\footnote{Ricoeur, “The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation,” 315-316.} The imagination allows one’s “ownmost possibilities” to be discovered by interpretation in a way that gives distance within which those possibilities can enfold both creativity and criticism.\footnote{See Evans, 135-138.} In terms of correlation, what this model allows is interpretation through the process of \textit{mimesis} that is given distanciation within which it can operate upon religious sources in light of contemporary experience and praxis and critically and creatively suggest new possibilities of meaning and action grown from those sources.

And another way in which this model surpasses other Western models of correlation is demonstrated here. Ricoeur’s hermeneutical imagination insists more strongly upon an eschatological orientation that puts a greater premium on innovation. The forward-moving expansion of innovative meaning is given more weight with the way that any source from the past is understood through the delimiting factors of distanciation and \textit{mimesis}. In addition, Ricoeur insists on that eschatological arc having a political dimension in the final stage of \textit{mimesis}. This gives this model a greater openness to the importance of praxis and the discovery of livable possibility, even making that factor a more important end than textual production or reflective insight. The lived experience of contextual diversity, and concern about issues like power imbalance and social inequity as well as non-textual expressions of meaning, is thus better accounted for in Ricoeur’s versions of correlation and hermeneutical imagination. In Tracy on the other hand, while there is concern expressed to resist reducing truth to any totalizing formulation that resists the unsettling element of the “uncanny” experienced in classics, it is only after systematization by analogical imagination that difference can be engaged in an enriching
way.\textsuperscript{141} To Charles E. Windquist, this amounts to Tracy giving in to the “temptation to canniness.”\textsuperscript{142} Innovation here is subordinated to the establishment of a totalizable system that sets parameters for what sort of meaning can and cannot be gleaned from innovative understandings growing from diverse contexts. The eschatological movement of theological reflection is paused, and to use Tracy’s own term, the uncanniness that it demands is put aside in order to first tend to a canniness that offers a singularized commonality analogously drawn from diverse perspectives. With Ricoeur’s overt attention on political dynamics in the interpretive process, his system is better situated to recognize the ways in which a move like Tracy’s can amount to silencing or marginalizing the force potentially present in diverse experiences and views.

The mode of religious discourse to which Ricoeur himself most directly applies his hermeneutic is preaching. He steadfastly balked at the notion of doing theology himself, but he engaged with religious thought and experience as a listener to preaching. In one such occasional essay, Ricoeur connects his basic understanding of revelation to his understanding of imagination and the meaning-making process that it entails:

\begin{quote}
I believe the fundamental theme of Revelation is this awakening and this call, into the heart of existence, of the imagination of the possible. The possibilities are opened before man which fundamentally constitute what is revealed. The revealed as such is an opening to existence. Consequently, the circle of the atheistic hermeneutic recloses on the necessary, but the circle of the kerygmatic hermeneutic opens on the generation of possibility in the heart of imagination of our language.\textsuperscript{143}
\end{quote}

This claim develops for Ricoeur as a response to what he sees as the central existential problem of the secularization and rationalization that mark contemporary experience, which is the problem of “estrangement from the kerygmatic situation itself.”\textsuperscript{144} The immediate context for

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{141} Tracy, 363.
\item \textsuperscript{142} Windquist, 318.
\item \textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 214-216.
\end{itemize}
Ricoeur’s dealing with the problem is to set out the task of preaching, and he frames this task as a correlational one. He diagnoses a contemporary cultural problem to which the kerygmatic source material must be addressed in order to be meaningful. The prescription is creative reinterpretation in light of the contemporary problem that can prevent the gospel message from calcifying:

And our hermeneutical problem is then the following: what to do so that the New Testament will not be a second Old Testament? What to do so that it will not be a letter? We have thus entered into an age when it is in interpreting, consequently in trying to discern what is announced through what has been said in a certain cultural language, that the faith of modern man is possible. We are therefore today in a situation where it is in re-interpreting that we can believe.  

Ricoeur desires to have preaching “maintain as completely open as possible the fan of our language” in order to open up existential imagination and prevent narrowing religious language and thus faith to rational and technical language.  

He acknowledges that the “ontological imagination” he wants to preserve should lead to attempts eventually to craft accurate conceptualization, but what he describes here is a mode of preunderstanding that embraces a kerygmatic mythos, one that must be nurtured and preserved against a contemporary culture that can be antagonistic toward it.

Ricoeur, however, does see some degree of value in that antagonism. The press toward an “atheistic hermeneutic” that closes upon necessity and rationality is in large part furthered for him by the masters of suspicion, though the demystification of religious language and structure that Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud effect brings with it a demand to recognize and critique false consciousness and power imbalances within religion itself.  

145 Ricoeur, “The Critique of Religion,” trans. R. Bradley DeFord, Union Seminary Quarterly Review 28 (1973): 212. This essay and “The Language of Faith” were published together as companion pieces. For that reason I am treating them here as conceptually simultaneous, following the assertion of the translator DeFord in his editorial introduction that they “comprise an indivisible totality.”


147 See Ricoeur, “The Critique of Religion,” 205-209. See also Dan R. Stiver, Ricoeur and Theology (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 141-142. Stiver summarizes how Ricoeur sees atheistic hermeneutics of suspicion as helpful for criticizing immature and unjust forms of religion: “Atheism can help religion deal with infantile, escapist
place the external critiques of religion from Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud alongside the similar internal critique of Bultmann that calls for demythologization. He agrees in principle with Bultmann’s premise that the kerygma is necessarily couched in cultural vehicles, and that to speak to today’s cultural situation the estrangement between contemporary and biblical culture must be overcome by filtering out the mythological elements of the biblical form. However, Ricoeur also pushes for a second moment in this process akin to a remythologization, a reopening to the existential ground expressed in the affirmation of listening to the kerygma in the first place, one that recognizes in the revelation of the kerygma the opening of one’s ownmost possibility over against the idols of false consciousness or the submission to rationalistic necessity. The way to accomplish this remythologization, or this recovery of the existential rather than explicative meaning of myth, is to excavate the semantics of symbols that underpin mythic narratives and ensure that secondary modes of discourse like preaching retain roots in the equivocal superabundance of symbolic meaning. Ricoeur writes, “I do not think that to break the cultural framework of a myth is the fundamental act of hermeneutics. I think on the contrary the fundamental act of hermeneutics is the liberation of the significant potential held in suspense in the myth and which consequently constitutes its symbolic content.”

In another essay focused ostensibly on the language of preaching, Ricoeur further examines this existential ground beneath the originary Christian kerygma. Specifically, in “Naming God,” he meditates on the existential position behind listening to preaching. He traces and embraces an irreducible circle of believing and understanding in which the presupposition of

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150 Ibid., 223.
faith precedes and enables understanding of the biblical texts that name God, but the texts at the same time instruct, in a way enlivened by preaching, the presupposed faith in a dynamically interpretive way.\textsuperscript{151} Ricoeur wants to avoid prioritizing either texts or dialogue, in the sense of dialogue being an originary articulation of religious experience before consolidation into a text. Ricoeur’s hermeneutic position is that a text is revelatory because it invites interpretation by having a triple independence, that is independence from its author, its original context, and its initial audience. Religious experience arises out of interpretation of these texts and by that interpretation reappropriates the texts in a correlational fashion. The existential status of the religious texts then is faith that finds revelation in the texts by being brought to correlational interpretation of the textual tradition that forms a chain of communication about the experience of God, expressed in God’s naming.\textsuperscript{152}

In this way, Ricoeur distances himself from a traditional understanding of revelation as an implantation of inspired content in the text, whereby the voice of the human author stands in for the voice of God as the ultimate author. In this model, imagination would function in a Romantic model, trying to empathetically recapture the psychology of the author that is presumed touch by inspiration, and by doing so discover the objective kernel of content that is then to be unfolded in later genres of religious expression and praxis. Instead with Ricoeur’s hermeneutic imagination, the imagination actively constructs innovative meaning from the world of the text, making revelation critically derived from the tradition’s chain of expression correlated with present experience. And because the underlying semantics of that kerygmatic message are symbolic and ultimately poetic in their narration\textsuperscript{153}, the imagination’s hermeneutical

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 217.
products should not be assessed according to criteria that expect univocity and logical adequation.

Ricoeur claims:

Revelation, in this sense, designates the emergence of another concept of truth than truth as adequation, regulated by the criteria of verification and falsification: a concept of truth as manifestation, in the sense of letting be what shows itself. What shows itself is each time the proposing of a world, a world wherein I can project my ownmost possibilities. Hence, naming God, before being an act of which I am capable, is what the texts of my predilection do when they escape from their authors, their redactional setting, and their first audience, when they deploy their world, when they poetically manifest and thereby reveal a world we might inhabit.¹⁵⁴

The word “God” itself represents an originary religious experience that is the existential root of textual or philosophical attempts to name God. It precedes any religious or theological discourse that moves to predication, speculation, or formulation, which means for Ricoeur that listening to preaching that attempts to interpret the revelation of that experience found in the world of the text means letting go of all forms of onto-theological knowledge.¹⁵⁵ Simultaneous to this objective suspension there must also be for him a subjective one, one that acknowledges an antecedent ground of meaning before the self that requires the self to give up its subjective grasping for control and mastery.¹⁵⁶ Only in this double release can the revealed manifestation embedded in the symbolic semantics of the tradition be phenomenologically engaged and correlationally interpreted. And this leads for Ricoeur to recognizing that the originary expressions of faith found in the biblical texts are polyphonic and diverse, and that the kerygmatic content is inseparable from these complex forms of expression.¹⁵⁷ These varied genres must then be engaged in a dynamic dialectic that prevents any one of them from

¹⁵⁴ Ricoeur, “Naming God,” 219.
¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 219.
¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 219-220.
¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 220.
becoming hypostasized as the dominant or universal version of God’s reality. However, Ricoeur does see a primary dialectic emerge within this textual diversity. There is one dimension of the ethical, entrenched in the remembrance and preservation of history, and there is also the dimension of the prophetic that challenges history. Ricoeur sees a synthesis of these dimensions in the prophetic ethics of the New Testament kerygma, and an important piece of that synthesis for him is how it translates the “you” of the divine command into the requirement of a “responsible I” that retains praxis for justice as a vital and necessary part of the correlational hermeneutic that for him animates the experience of faith. As Ricoeur puts it, “In this regard, to understand the world and to change it are fundamentally the same thing.” The element of praxis, or as Ricoeur calls it the political, is a necessary outgrowth of the idea that the revelation of the biblical texts involves the revelation of a possible world. This makes a final step of the hermeneutic process one of practice or enactment based on those revealed possibilities, whereby the understanding of the text results in political or praxical changes in the real world.

While the primary focus of this analysis for Ricoeur is preaching as a hermeneutical act, his thought equates the interpretation of preaching with the interpretation of any secondary mode of systematic or philosophical religious discourse that grows out of the originary religious experience that he sees standing behind the world of the biblical text and making it an occasion for revelation. The kerygma for him is a revelation of possibility that is never exhausted because it is rooted in the inexhaustibility of a symbolic substructure that leaves space for ever-new possibility derived from experiential correlation. I contend that as a secondary mode of religious discourse, doctrine must, like preaching, remain rooted in the equivocity of symbolic semantics and seek vitality in dynamic correlational interpretation. Ricoeur indicates this as he examines

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158 Ibid., 221.
159 Ibid., 221.
160 Ibid., 226.
the implications of his claims that a dialectic must be engaged that encompasses the full diversity of how God is named and identified within the biblical tradition. In focusing on the question of christology, he acknowledges the intense difficulty of maintaining religious language that can account for both the power of God focused on in the Old Testament and the kenosis of God focused on in the New Testament. He frames the doctrine of the Trinity as the result of speculative work to strike a balance between these two factors, but specifically calls it relevant to a particular era of thought and calls for a similar effort to be taken up today that can better correlate to present circumstances and speak to new philosophical and cultural milieus. This demonstrates that for Ricoeur any genre of theological language, such as doctrine, should be circumscribed by the same hermeneutical process and limits. It must embrace equivocity and diversity and point forward to possibility both conceptually and practically, and make the understanding of that possibility correlative determined. Theological language becomes inauthentic when it precludes the semantic innovation warranted by the nature of the biblical text and solidifies into a preservation of forms of expression that truncates the dynamic correlational formation of new meaning and new possibility that can spark and culminate in political reality that honors the prophetic call for transformation at the heart of the kerygma.

Dan R. Stiver affirms this placement of theology as secondary discourse in Ricoeur’s thought. Stiver compares the traditional hermeneutical arc—understanding, explanation, and application—to Ricoeur’s three-fold process of *mimesis*, which he explains as prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration. The two sets of movements parallel, in that for each the first stage involves grasping one’s location within a tradition, the second involves critically and constructively operating upon what is received from that tradition with the creative imagination,

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161 Ibid., 225.
162 See Stiver, 47-55.
and the third stage involves active appropriation into some form of transformation in reality. Additionally, Stiver sees a complimentary relationship in which the hermeneutical arc plays out as a full cycle within each individual stage of mimesis, where the application of the hermeneutical arc corresponds to the achievement of the task of the particular phase of mimesis. Within this system, Stiver believes that in the condition of postmodernity it is fruitful to conceive of systematic theology as occurring during the stage of mimesis2. Theological discourse emerges within a tradition that encompasses practice and experience that must be understood as prefiguration, or mimesis1, especially as they are expressed in scripture, and it is surpassed by changes in experience and practice that result from the refiguration stage, or mimesis3, and systematic theology itself is the critical and constructive explanatory stage of mimesis2 that transitions between the first two stages. This prevents theology from ever becoming the prime focus of the religious experience, or an end in itself, since this model preserves experience and practice within history and culture as the source and culmination of the full discursive arc.

However, Stiver also notes that this removal of theology from a place of privilege is balanced by a simultaneous valuation of the explanatory work of theology. He reminds that one of Ricoeur’s most significant accomplishments has been the re-legitimation of explanation within the hermeneutical process. As a result, Stiver concludes:

While [Ricoeur] placed limits on explanation, his conviction was that we understand more by explaining more. The important thing to realize is that such reflection cannot exhaustively

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163 In the introduction of this chapter, it was highlighted that Ricoeur’s theory of imagination, and accordingly this element of mimesis, is situated within a modern Euro-American paradigm. This point is worth highlighting again here, as Stiver advocates for the fittingness of Ricoeur’s model of mimesis to postmodernity. Subaltern or postcolonial understandings of imagination, which would challenge Stiver’s positioning of postmodernity as a sufficient contemporary category for systematic theology to conform to, are not being included in the scope of this present analysis though their critique would contribute a valuable expansion of this analysis.

164 Stiver, 55.
165 Ibid., 56.
166 This draws upon the philosophical hermeneutics of Ricoeur outlined in chapter 1. There it was argued that Ricoeur drew upon the phenomenological ontology of Heidegger, but by turning to the link between imagination and language he made space for the critical epistemology reflected in Husserl’s phenomenology and Dilthey’s hermeneutics. Also see Evans, 65-66.
“translate” primary religious faith nor its primary expressions. Explanation is always subordinate, partial, and incomplete. Systematic theology in this sense does not have pride of place—but it does have a place. It does serve to explain and elucidate.\(^{167}\)

This importance of explanation though is combined with the fact that the primary expressions on which the secondary language of theology is based are symbolic. This leaves theology to always contend with a surplus of meaning that cannot be exhausted by its systematic conceptualization.\(^{168}\) Symbols give rise to predication and conceptualization via metaphors, which are figurative and equivocal, yet not completely chaotic or uncontrolled in their aptness or functionality.\(^{169}\) The meaning that is explained by theology out of the figurative discourse of its primary sources is thus not “precise,” but it is “directed.”\(^{170}\) Theology depends upon the imagination’s flexibility in producing new correlations and innovative possibilities of meaning, but that flexibility does not amount to anarchic free play. The interpretation produced by theological reflection must retain some closeness to what precedes it in prefiguration, or in tradition, or else it loses connection to the experience of its audience and thus loses validity and meaning.\(^{171}\) The interpretation accomplishes this by using its distanciated space to be critical of the tradition yet also to construct new possibilities to affirm based on the raw material of that same tradition.\(^{172}\) The result here is a resistance to both unfettered relativism and neo-modern universalism, or a balancing of continuity and discontinuity. This is what for Stiver makes Ricoeur’s hermeneutics and his use of imagination fitting for theology in a postmodern situation. It accepts the critical posture of modernity while moderating it with a postmodern turn away

\(^{167}\) Stiver, 57.
\(^{168}\) Ibid., 66-68.
\(^{169}\) Ibid., 73.
\(^{170}\) Ibid., 81-82.
\(^{171}\) See ibid., 49. Stiver here explains that the emplotment process of \textit{mimesis}\(^2\) must retain “verisimilitude . . . to human experience” or else it fails. This establishes the way in which interpretation is constrained by the range of possibilities presented in the prefigured tradition out of which the interpretive work emerges.
\(^{172}\) See Ricoeur, “The Language of Faith,” 224. Ricoeur contrasts the affirmation of necessity that marks the existential proposition of atheism with the affirmation of possibility that he thinks marks the existential proposition of faith.
from universalism, but it effects that moderation with an openness to not only deconstructive pessimism but also hope for conviction and affirmation.173

This theological affirmation, though, does not arrive at unequivocal certainty in Ricoeur’s system. It can be at best “compelling,” but not “coercive.” Ricoeur forces theology into a space of unavoidable and irremovable risk. Stiver summarizes:

Ricoeur’s philosophy is open to but is not compatible with any and every theological project. It militates against the earlier tendency to assume one and only one theology for all but rather points to a surplus of theologies that arises out of the surplus of meaning—and also the ongoing hermeneutics of suspicion. It actually undermines not dogmatics per se but a dogmatic theology that purports to rid theology of both risk and mystery. This is true across the board, whether it be a conservative or a liberal theology. It moves away from a “modernist” theology that is foundationalist, propositional, too individualistic, too rationalistic, or too heavily subservient to philosophy, whether conservative or liberal. His emphasis on an eschatological reserve and the hermeneutics of testimony actually points to confessional theology that retains elements of both risk and affirmation.174

The ambiguity of history and the ultimate mystery of God leave theology unable to determine absolute knowledge outside of eschatological hope run through with risk, a hope rendered by the imagination of possibility.175

The need to explain in order to understand more prevents this position from being one that makes theology superfluous to the experience of faith, but it does set it, along with its dogmatic products, within strict limits. This emphasis on possibility can be a source of renewal for the church as an institution, but only insofar as the church can also itself be subjected to a

173 Stiver, 60, 143. See also n. 155. Again, postcolonial or other diverse perspectives would sharpen and expand this aspect of Ricoeur’s hermeneutics. They could help ensure that the affirmation side of the process does not turn back to entrenching structures or thought forms or practices that enable or empower dehumanizing forces like marginalization, disenfranchisement, or injustice, or ones that simply exclude elements of the full richness of pluralistic Christian experience. It is my contention that Ricoeur’s hermeneutical imagination is capable of synergizing with such perspectives, but it would of course be necessary to present them on their own terms in the order to accomplish that synthesis in an authentic way. That expansion, however, is, as noted previously, outside the scope if this current project.

174 Ibid., 152. On the “hermeneutics of testimony,” see 126-135. Ricoeur positions testimony as the claim to have experienced something, a claim which subjects itself to judgment of validity by philosophical measure yet also remains non-absolute and beyond philosophical systematization in its symbolic rendering. This sense of testimony reflects the first order discourse of religious experience that underlies the second order discourse of systematic theology. See also Ricoeur, “The Hermeneutics of Testimony,” trans. David Stewart and Charles E. Reagan, Anglican Theological Review 61 (1979): 435-461.

175 Stiver, 152-154
critical hermeneutics that can unsettle it as a preserve of absolute knowledge and instead frame it as a fallen institution.\textsuperscript{176} There is still however room for doctrine as a body of knowledge claims that give identity to the church as an institution. To repeat, the need for an explanatory step within hermeneutics allows for doctrinal theology and Ricoeur’s recognition of the limits of criticism itself leaves room for affirmation that can be articulated in such doctrinal forms, even if equivocally. Stiver also, though, draws on Ricoeur’s analysis of ideology and utopia to situate the role of systematic theology in the broader life of faith. Ideology and utopia balance one another for Ricoeur, with the former providing legitimate integrative self-understanding and identity for a tradition or community and the latter pressing the community or tradition to grow and adjust to new circumstances so as to retain relevance and avoid oppression or injustice that can result from an over-zealous clinging to ideology. Stiver argues that systematic theology can be enriched by this model of critique as a dialectic between ideology and utopia. Theology operates within a similar dialectic by its own internal forces. It seeks orientation by faithfulness to traditions and sources, but also disorientation by the prophetic call to transformation, which can be enacted by internal theological sources but also aided by external critiques from hermeneutics of suspicion that can help reveal possibilities for imaginative refiguration.\textsuperscript{177}

Stiver points to the idea that a theology built from Ricoeur’s thought leads naturally to contextual theology. He notes that while a pluralization in the field of theology has occurred by its own historical track during the twentieth century, Ricoeur’s hermeneutics and their emphasis on surplus meaning and criticism of ideology are valuable resources for supporting and furthering that pluralization and a concomitant shift away from universalist and propositionalist

\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., 113.
\textsuperscript{177} See ibid., 135-144.
models of theology. Stiver presents this pluralization process as theology a coming to greater self-awareness of its own history, of the pluralism that has always been part of it, but that has been obscured by the desire for universal commonality. Stiver claims:

Ricoeur’s philosophy of limits, especially the limits of rational reflection in light of the surplus of meaning in figurative language, implied more of an allowance for a variety of systematic theologies that draw on different perspectives and traditions—which is actually the reality in the history of the church. Rather than conceiving of a one-size-fits-all theology, every theology can be seen to reflect a perspective, valuable but ultimately partial. This conception of a more limited ambition for theology is itself a major shift from the traditional desire for finding one universal perspective for everyone.

Stiver adds that the fact of the Christian church’s demographics shifting away from Europe and America make such contextual positions that offer diverse creativity and ideological criticism vital to the innovative eschatological development of theological thought.

Some examples of Ricoeur aiding contextual methods help demonstrate Stiver’s point. First, in the correlational theology of God addressed earlier from Elizabeth Johnson in She Who Is, Johnson appeals to Ricoeur’s notion of surplus meaning in symbols to validate her approach. In asking “Why female symbols of God?” and “Why not feminine traits or dimensions of God?” Johnson turns to Ricoeur’s philosophy of the symbol as a fundamental root of meaning. For her, feminine traits added to an image of God that remains primarily masculine retains the social patriarchy that results from the image and marginalizes the actual experience of women seeking their own fullness of personhood. The only way to challenge the “idolatry of maleness” for her is to use the imagination to reconfigure the interpretation of the central mystery of God along correlational lines that can include women’s experience, and Ricoeur’s Symbolism of Evil is one

178 Ibid., 30-33.
179 Ibid., 59.
180 Ibid., 144. Stiver here specifically points to postcolonial theology as an example.
181 Johnson, 47-54.
of her primary supports for this appeal to the power of imagination and surplus symbolic meaning.\textsuperscript{182}

A second example can be found in Juan-Lorenzo Hinojosa and his articulation of the spiritual situation of Hispanic Americans and their \textit{mestizaje} context. Hinojosa diagnoses the spiritual problem to be that Hispanic Americans are challenged to retain the value of their traditional cultural and religious symbols in the face of modernist criticisms that they cannot avoid as they try to engage with dominant Western culture. He situates the symbol as the fundamental medium of religious experience for Hispanic Americans, as the vehicles through which revelation is manifested.\textsuperscript{183} As this symbolic meaning gets undermined by contemporary rationalization and secularization, Hinojosa sees Hispanic Americans left with several undesirable options: accepting scientific reductionism, retreating into fundamentalism, or ghettoizing themselves by avoiding engagement with the American and Western culture that mediates the rationalist and secularist criticisms.\textsuperscript{184} Hinojosa sees in Ricoeur, however, a heuristic guide to an alternative option. He proposes using the concept from Ricoeur of a first and second naïveté.\textsuperscript{185} Transitioning through cultural appropriation of modernity to a state of second naïveté can bring Hispanic Americans to an integrated and deepened postcritical understanding of the symbols of popular religiosity that Hinojosa claims are fundamental to Hispanic cultural experience.\textsuperscript{186} They become capable of not only experiencing the power of manifestation within those symbols, but they also achieve a demystified awareness of the

\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., 44-47.


\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., 156-157, 160-161.

\textsuperscript{185} See Ricoeur, \textit{Symbolism of Evil}, 351-352. Ricoeur proposes that a first naïveté describes the immediate and precritical engagement with the being expressed in fundamental symbols, while the second naïveté refers to the postcritical and hermeneutical access to the meaning manifested in symbols. This second naïveté is accomplished by using the modern tools of interpretation to combat reductionistic tendencies inherent to modernity by developing a postcritical sense of the manifestation found in symbolic expression.

\textsuperscript{186} Hinojosa, 162-163.
religious tradition that can enable them to use criticism to turn those symbols to new theological and ecclesiological insights like those of liberation theology. So while Hinojosa deals most expressly with spirituality, his analysis does point toward ways that that spirituality can become the basis of a correlational theological method by using the ideas of Ricoeur on symbolic meaning and imaginative hermeneutics.

As a third and final example, Peter Phan cites Ricoeur’s hermeneutics as a major influence on his ideas about how to incorporate the marginality of Asian-Americans in a correlational theology. He uses Ricoeur’s hermeneutic process that emphasizes the prefiguration that is always brought to the act of interpretation by the interpreter, making it an active process engaged by the imagination. Also following Ricoeur, Phan emphasizes the independence of the world of the text as a source of the revelation of possibility that the interpreter configures by explanation and that invites refiguration of the world in front of the text as the interpreter completes the arc with active appropriation. For Phan, then, Ricoeur is a valuable resource for allowing the correlational hermeneutic that he thinks is needed to effect the intercultural theology he seeks for the Asian-American contextual experience.

Theology done with Ricoeur as a partner embraces pluralism and diversity. By emphasizing the surplus of meaning in theological sources as well as the epistemological limits that effect the effort to mine them, theology is forced to accept itself as existing only as a dialogue of multiple theologies. Since those epistemological limits are rooted largely in the realities of the cultural context out of which one emerges, correlational methods, structured around Ricoeur’s hermeneutical imagination and its critical and political dimensions, become

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187 Ibid., 163.
188 Phan, “Betwixt and Between,” 129.
189 Ibid., 129-130. After this presentation, Phan cautions that such a hermeneutical arc can become “solipsistic,” and notes that as a result he supplements it with the political emphasis of liberation theology (130-131).
appropriate to the way those varied theologies conduct their interpretive work of explanation, definition, and challenge. Theology builds from originary symbolic expression of religious manifestation encountered in experience, and the explanation, definition, and challenge of theology remain authentic only when they connect back to experience by appropriation and praxis. However, because Ricoeur insists on a legitimate place for explanation as an aid to the understanding of religious manifestation in experience, doctrinal theology remains an important form of secondary religious discourse. Theology is relativized by Ricoeur, but it does work from a definite tradition that delimits the range of relative possibility. In this model then, doctrine must be sensitive to the contextual imagination of various constituencies that claim connection to that tradition, even as it attempts to do what its genre intends, which is provide definitional statements that can ground identity and authenticity within that tradition and arbitrate judgment about true versus false testimony of the faith experience. Therefore, doctrinal theology must attempt to accomplish that goal in a way that can be consonant with the equivocity and polysemy of its symbolic sources, which requires integration of an innovative hermeneutic imagination.
CHAPTER 4—An Imaginative Theory of Doctrinal Development

The preceding chapter demonstrated how a theological method based on Ricoeur can account for contextual particularity and diversity and the critical questions they raise about Christian traditions and the creative reinterpretations they offer of Christian theological sources. Before applying that method specifically to the development of doctrine, the primary aim of this chapter, an additional piece of analysis is required. In Chapter 2, the examination of models of the development of doctrine integrated related models of revelation because the understanding of the nature of doctrine is so closely tied to the understanding of the revealed information that doctrine attempts to articulate. Therefore it is important to consider revelation through the hermeneutical imagination developed by Ricoeur. This will connect the model of revelation as symbolic mediation described in Chapter 2 with the hermeneutical paradigm of Ricoeur. I will then appeal to different contextual perspectives in analyzing how the imagination is involved in receiving and reflecting upon revelation. My analysis will involve consideration of the way Ricoeur’s hermeneutics allow diversity in the process of making meaning out of revelation while also suggesting limits and parameters for that diversity that can be used as criteria for authenticity, mitigating concerns about unfettered relativism. Two specific theological concepts relevant to the reception and expression of revelation will also be considered as lenses through which to more sharply locate the place of imagination in the process of meaning-making from revelation. These are the imago dei, the principle by which human beings share in the ongoing creative impulse of God the creator, and the sensus fidei, the supernatural ability present within the Christian faithful that enables them to interpret religious meaning in their own experience and receive doctrinal teaching through active discernment.
Imagination and Revelation

a. Ricoeur’s Hermeneutics of Revelation

In a 1976 lecture, published in translation in 1977, Ricoeur offers his analysis of a hermeneutic understanding of revelation. He begins by trying to move to what he calls revelation at “its most originary level, the one, which for the sake of brevity, I call the discourse of faith or the confession of faith.”¹ He sets this position against what he terms an “opaque and authoritarian” model of revelation. He couches this comparison in a notion of three levels of religious discourse: the confession of faith, ecclesial dogma, and magisterial doctrines. The opaque and authoritarian model emerges when the three are collapsed together and placed under the auspices of ecclesiastical magisterium. This makes it authoritarian in that exclusive control of the meaning of revelation is given to a hierarchical authority, and it makes it opaque in that revelation becomes cast as an impenetrable mass of propositional truths guarded by that authority.² Ricoeur seeks to undo that collapsed model and set into proper relation the originary confession of faith and the secondary doctrinal and theological discourses that derive from it. That originary level is one where he claims the lex credendi and lex orandi remain conjoined, preventing revelation from becoming overly discursive and keeping it understood as inexhaustible manifestation of a God who remains always hidden even in the midst of revealing.

The locus of Ricoeur’s attempt to execute this decompression of the levels of religious language is scripture. Overall, he attempts to delineate the different modes of biblical discourse, each offering a different sense of revelation, in order to differentiate the multiple forms of revelation and demonstrate it as polymorphous and thus polysemic. He identifies five main modes of biblical discourse: prophetic, narrative, prescriptive, wisdom, and hymnic. As different

² Ibid., 1-2.
expressions of revelation, Ricoeur understands them as irreducible to a single and universal monolith of revelation. A concept of revelation must be nimble and flexible enough to account for each different modality without subsuming them into a master model. However, he argues that there has been a tendency in Christianity to subsume the other modes beneath the prophetic, making it synonymous with revelation in general. With the prophetic mode defined by revelation as divine speech behind the speech of the prophet, revelation in general then becomes understood as inspired dictation, applying the double-authorship sensibility of the prophetic mode to every other mode of biblical discourse.³ This would make the interpretation of revelation a task of empathetic imagination trying to grasp the mind of the biblical author, which is thought to be a stand-in for the divine voice. In the same way that a Romantic hermeneutic tried to empathize with the psychology of the author to know the meaning of the text, this understanding of revelation emphasizes knowing the inspiring Holy Spirit, reducing the truth of that Spirit to a propositionally dictated set of truths.⁴ This in turn enables the opaque and authoritarian model of revelation that Ricoeur wants to combat. He proceeds then to articulate the sense of revelation present in the other modes of biblical discourse to demonstrate how they contrast with this prophetic mode.

Narrative discourse, according to Ricoeur, relays revelation through events, with God manifesting God’s self by acting in history in a way that makes the narrated events distinct from ordinary history. This makes revelation squarely a matter of history rather than speech, making the testimony to the event in narration a symbolic rendering of the experience of manifestation and removing the question of inspiration, as in the prophetic mode, from the consideration of the

³ Ibid., 3-4.
⁴ Ibid., 17.
narrative text. The narrative and prophetic modes are for Ricoeur left in a relationship of dynamic tension that cannot be resolved with any unifying thematization. The narrative mode establishes a testimonial of significant events that have formed a tradition of understanding divine manifestation, while the prophetic mode points forward by challenging and undermining the settled nature of that narrative tradition. Ricoeur argues against a trend that can result from the one-sided perception of revelation according to the model of inspired prophetic discourse, one that inserts a divine teleological design as the inspired content behind the narrated events. The problem with that is that it mutes the manifestation-focused revelation of narrated testimony, which remains equivocal due to its primarily non-verbal nature, with the word-focused revelation of prophecy. This in turn allows revelation to become didactic which enables the authoritarian model that presents itself as a guardian of propositional and objective verbalizations from divine inspiration. Similar to the narrative mode of discourse, Ricoeur argues against a too narrowly verbal understanding of prescriptive discourse in the bible. He argues that the narrative framing of the giving of prescriptive laws qualifies the existential relation to God that stands behind the very claim to follow the symbolic concept of “the will of God” that frames prescriptive orders. This makes biblical law more than simply a set of heteronomous imperatives. It is instead, especially in the way it is treated in the New Testament, an intention of holiness that represents a new relation to divine reality. This intention of holiness makes prescriptive discourse revelatory in the sense that revelation is inscribed in the spiritual and institutional praxis that flows from the existential position of dependence on and relation to God, akin to how narrative discourse is

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5 Ibid., 6. See also n. 166 above on Ricoeur’s sense of testimony.
6 Ibid., 7-8.
7 Ibid., 8.
8 Ibid., 8-9.
9 Ibid., 10.
revelatory in its emplotment of testimony of historical divine manifestation. The final two modes of discourse also have their own sense of revelation for Ricoeur that contribute to the overall polymorphous nature of revelation. Wisdom discourse, by its meditation on the irrationality of suffering, offers revelation as a denial of comprehending a divine plan and thus removing knowledge of God from the limitations of all human rational or teleological understanding. Hymnic discourse reveals by expressing the pathos of being in relation to God, the thanksgiving, supplication, and celebration that conform to the God that is their source and end. By recognizing the unique nature of each of these five modes of discourse, revelation becomes complexified and is prevented from congealing into a propositional monolith.

Ricoeur offers four concluding observations about this examination of the modes of biblical discourse. First, a hermeneutic of revelation must give priority to the most originary forms of discourse wherein a community first interprets their encounter with manifestation. Second, form and content are not divisible regarding revelation. The originary testimony is “directly modulated by the forms of discourse wherein it is expressed,” meaning that it is a false strategy to try neutralizing the varied genres by reducing them to mere containers of common propositional content. Third, biblical revelation is polymorphous and to treat it as a singular and unified concept risks simplifying it to a univocal and propositional model fashioned after the model of inspired authorship in the prophetic mode of discourse. And finally, that revelation stands outside totalizing knowledge and is enacted by a God who reveals and conceals. This

10 Ibid., 11.
11 Ibid., 12-13
12 Ibid., 15.
13 Ibid., 15.
14 Ibid., 15-16. See also Ricoeur, “Naming God,” 220. Ricoeur similarly here notes the importance of the inseparability of form and content, noting how preserving the co-dependence of them prevents the naming of God from separating from its basis in historical manifestation that precedes speech-acts.
16 Ibid., 17-18.
leads Ricoeur to a final salvo against the authoritarian model of revelation: “But to say that the God who reveals himself is a hidden God is to confess that revelation can never constitute a body of truths which an institution may boast of or take pride in possessing.”

To help distinguish Ricoeur’s hermeneutic approach to how revelation so understood can be interpreted and the role of imagination in that process, some points of consonance with Thiel and his use of imagination in transitioning revelation into theological reflection can be noted. Like Ricoeur, Thiel denounces a division of form and content that leaves form as a historical container of an unchanging essence. He rather thinks a correlational methodology ought to make use of imagination to interpret present experience and understanding as retrospectively in continuity with past tradition. He thus like Ricoeur endorses an imaginative hermeneutic and a correlational approach for reflecting theologically on the sources of revelation. Thiel, however, adds the element of an analogy of faith that serves as the criterion for authenticity in those correlational interpretations. Theological judgments are evaluated in that approach by their coherence with ecclesial faith acts presumed to be guided by the grace of the Holy Spirit. But where Thiel’s position ends up is the magisterium as the authority that can determine what is analogous to the Holy Spirit’s grace and what is not. This is because Thiel maintains confidence in a universalizable core to the experience of faith that can serve as a foundation for theological judgment. But by trusting that universalization to a supernatural power contained within ecclesial organization, tradition is not subjected to an effective level of critique and pluralistic diversity can be mitigated by the trumping of ecclesial grace in the form of magisterial authority.

An important distinction between Thiel and Ricoeur is crucial here. For Thiel, the insistence on form and content being conjoined is at the level of doctrine and tradition, while for Ricoeur it is pushed all the way back to revelation itself. This means that for Thiel there can

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17 Ibid., 19.
remain a universal ontology of revelation, upheld by grace, that forms an objective core to which the form and content of theological reflection are epistemologically beholden. But for Ricoeur, the ontology of revelation itself is interpreted from the combination of form and content. The originary experience of faith for Thiel is preserved by the congruence-forming effects of grace, which is arbitrated by ecclesial authority. For Ricoeur, the originary experience of faith is distanced from the very primal expressions of it in the modes of biblical discourse, leaving the ontology of revelation as polysemous and polymorphous, precluding a universalized congruence. This leaves room for a critical posture toward ecclesial tradition in a way that Thiel’s retrospective model of tradition does not, and it also allows greater space for the discordant effects of irreducible pluralism in a way that Thiel’s analogy of faith does not.

Ricoeur’s own outline of his hermeneutic strategy for dealing with the polyphonic nature of revelation further indicates this contrast. Running through his analysis of biblical modes of discourse, Ricoeur builds an understanding of revelation as manifestation rather than inspiration. Inspiration leads in his view to propositionalism that narrowly confines revelation to didactic pronouncement controlled historically and univocally by ecclesial magisterium. Manifestation, on the other hand, leads to a recognition of dependence that is participatory and “nonviolent,” in the sense that it is not presented as a heteronomous obligation but rather the reality of one’s originary rootedness or belonging.18 From this base, Ricoeur attempts to combat what he frames as both the objective and subjective objections to the idea of revelation and in doing so articulate what he takes to be a proper method of interpreting revelation.

On the objective side, Ricoeur wants to free the concept of revelation from scientific senses of truth that understand it through adequation and verification. His primary strategy is to emphasize the poetic nature of the revelatory texts, by which he means a general sense of poetics

18 Ibid., 21-22.
as discourse that reveals manifestation, suggesting truth as something experiential and participatory rather than empirical. Such discourse is symbolic and metaphorical, and opens itself to equivocal interpretation and plenitude of meaning. A poetic text is a work of *mimesis*, a work that redescribes or reinterprets reality in a way that reveals possibility. To explain this he focuses on his hermeneutical concept of the independence of the text, of the world of the text having as its reference an intended world beyond itself as opposed to a Romantic hermeneutic that would highlight the author and/or the author’s intentions or structuralism that would highlight the immanent structures of the text. But being poetic, the reference of the text is a “split reference,” a reference that both reveals a new possibility being crafted through *mimesis* and conceals as that poetic *mimesis* lacks a concrete referent. With split reference, figurative language reveals a new possibility of relating concepts, one thing *is* figuratively something else, but it simultaneously reveals that they are not related in the sense of adequation, meaning that in being figuratively drawn together and not empirically equated the one thing *is not* the other as it would be in ordinary descriptive language. This means that poetic language is able to reveal as well as conceal, letting it preserve one of the most important features that Ricoeur thinks characterizes biblical revelation. As the language of the bible poetically reveals something about God, it also keeps God hidden by reminding that whatever positive predication is indicated a negative one stands with it as a split reference. This is what disallows revelation to become a deposit of propositional truths guarded by an ecclesial body. And for Ricoeur, the hermeneutic concept of the split reference of poetic language allows the biblical text to reveal truth that is polysemous and equivocal and that connects the interpreter to an originary sense of rootedness by revealing the manifestation of a God who is, and a God whose truth is, concealed and so can

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19 Ibid., 25.  
20 Ibid., 25.  
never be an object of manipulation, but on whom the manifestation shows the interpreter to be dependent.\textsuperscript{22} 

On the subjective side, Ricoeur wants to defend revelation against the criticism that it violates the autonomy of self-possessed consciousness by presenting truth as heteronomy. His first step in this argument is to point back to the phenomenological critique of Descartes’s \textit{cogito}, to remind that “all reflection is mediated, there is no immediate self-consciousness.”\textsuperscript{23} However, Ricoeur also believes that the distanciation of language that constitutes the preceding system of relations that defines existence leaves space for critical reflection.\textsuperscript{24} Such reflection would be the equivalent of theological thinking about the manifestation revealed in the sources of faith. That thinking is done without immediate self-consciousness and under the influence of a historical tradition, but is a legitimate step of critical assessment of how one’s understanding of the revelatory manifestation fits with that received rootedness. However, using Ricoeur’s hermeneutic arc that reflection takes on a particular character. As the objective nature of revelation is bound to the autonomous world of the text, the subjective nature of it is bound to the appropriation that occurs in the world in front of the text.\textsuperscript{25} This implies a role for correlation. Theological reflection, as an act of interpretively receiving revelation, involves attempting to correlatively appropriate one’s present world to the possible world revealed in the world of the text. Ricoeur writes:

\begin{quote}
This third preparatory concept [reflection as appropriation] marks the final defeat of the pretension of consciousness to set itself up as the standard of meaning. To understand oneself before the text is not to impose one’s own finite capacity of understanding on it, but to expose oneself to receive from it a larger self which would be the proposed way of existing that most appropriately responds to the proposed world of the text. Understanding then is the complete opposite of a constitution
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 27-28.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 29-30.
for which the subject would have the key. It would be better in this regard to say that the self is constituted by the issue of the text.²⁶

This brings Ricoeur to the hermeneutical model for how the interpretation of revelation should be conceived. It is through the category of testimony, which places the interpreter or theologian in a position of embracing historical contingency and dependency on that which is manifested in revelation.

In the analysis of Stiver, testimony is closely related to the emergence of symbols. The experiential content of testimony is expressed in narrative and symbol, making reflection impossible without the foundation of testimony. Testimony, like symbols, gives rise to thought.²⁷ The theologian then begins his or her work by making an existential commitment to the rootedness of that which is expressed by the testimony behind his or her sources. In this way, the modernist self-possessed consciousness is removed from the act of reflection and thrust squarely into the context of historicity. For Ricoeur, “It is precisely this letting go which bears reflection to the encounter with contingent signs of the absolute which the absolute in its generosity allows to appear.”²⁸ And it is only through testimony’s ability to place the person into the position of historical contingency that symbols can be interpreted in their own historicity, and in order to accomplish this testimony must occur as a “singular” act, one that is in each case unique and contextual.²⁹

Correlational thought is again relevant here. Testimony is the originary act by which the experience of manifestation is expressed symbolically and narratively, but that expression at once distances itself from the experience. It cannot be understood by later generations outside of

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²⁶ Ibid., 30.
²⁷ Stiver, 131.
²⁹ Ibid., 32-33.
the act of interpretation. Those later generations, including those who would engage in theology that attempts to craft doctrinal principles and statements out of revelation, must act from testimony that places them into historicized dialogue with the testimony of the originary manifestation. On the principle of revelation as symbolic mediation of ongoing divine self-communication, this brings testimony to the reception of that communication, understood in contemporary narrative and context, into correlation with the symbolic and narrative expression of the tradition that carries the memory of originary manifestation. But the distancing of mediation is crucial in this process. It makes the act of interpretation a critical act, one that can examine and critique the ideology represented by that historical memory in light of the utopian hope that arises out of the present context. Any judgments that arise out of such interpretation, though, always remain incomplete and fallible, claiming no pretension to sublation toward a Hegelian Absolute or to the rational certainty of a Cartesian cogito. The mediated symbols of revelation are thusly left open to ongoing historical reinterpretation and diversity of meaning.

There is one final piece of the subjective side of revelation with which Ricoeur was concerned, and that is the notion of revelation as heteronomy. Revelation as heteronomous would imply reception as obedience, which would turn the idea of revelatory meaning back to a set of principles that can become an authoritatively guarded deposit. The testimony that Ricoeur uses to describe the hermeneutic response to revelation would ultimately become functionally synonymous with obedience. Ricoeur turns to the imagination to conceive a remedy. He argues

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30 See ibid., 33. See also Stiver, 129. Stiver explains Ricoeur’s philosophy of testimony here as implying that every philosopher is caught in a situation where he or she is working from a personal attestation or testimony to interpret the testimony of others. This philosophical picture is being appealed to here as a parallel to theology, since theology only occurs as an act of reflection that adopts some philosophical enterprise to express itself.

31 See Stiver, 127, where he explains why the central importance of testimony does not equate to fideism that would simply accept the tenets of inherited ideology. See also Ricoeur, “Toward a Hermeneutics of the Idea of Revelation,” 33-35. Ricoeur addresses the critical nature of the interpretation process that emerges from testimony and the need to consider truth from falsity in terms of the interpretation’s rendering of revelation. This again makes testimony more than a mere act of fideistic confirmation.

32 Stiver, 132.
that the sense of revelation as heteronomy pivots from a focus on the will. If the objective side of revelation shows the rootedness and dependence of existence on a divine reality being manifested, it is normal to think of that dependence as a will in abeyance. Ricoeur instead, picking up again from the objective sense of revelation that he develops, but here the element of its expression as poetic and symbolic, casts dependence as an opening of the imagination to the new possibilities for the self. This makes the appeal of the divine communicating itself in revelation “nonviolent,” one that involves active appropriation through the imagination of the person rather than simple allegiance to a collection of propositions. Ricoeur’s hermeneutical imagination thus preserves the mediated nature of the sources through which revelation is interpreted and draws them into active correlational engagement with diverse experience, retaining the polysemous and indefinite character of the symbolic and poetic form of its expression that always remains at a distance from the objective experience of manifestation. Revelation as a result cannot be coopted into any authority-bound congruence that would suggest a universal ontology that stands behind contextual diversity. Revelation only emerges from imaginative interpretations that occur through those diverse contexts.

The contrast with Thiel’s model of imagination and development is again highlighted here. By casting the Holy Spirit as a principle behind retrospective traditioning, Thiel makes interpretation a task of articulating the idea of revelation embedded in the grace of the Spirit, which guides ecclesial acts of faith. Imaginative diversity is accepted as a part of that process, but it is annexed by a singularized sense of tradition analogous to the singular Spirit standing behind the church. Such singularization leads naturally to the manifestation of a singular

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33 Ricoeur, “Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation,” 37. While Ricoeur in this essay focuses on the subjective appropriation of the self in receiving revelation, it should be remembered that for him such appropriation also carries a political dimension that makes this imaginative drawing of possibility social and communal as well as personal.
standard of authority to determine how diverse expression and reflection is to be filtered, undermining the force of those diverse interpretations as interpretations of revelatory experience mediated as ongoing divine self-communication through symbols. Such reliance on authority artificially cuts off the critical and potentially enriching understanding of revelation that can emerge out of plurality and buries the vital influence of historicity on whatever interpretations of mediated revelation develop. This is the opaque and authoritarian sense of revelation that Ricoeur sought to avoid.

In Neuman’s call for the implementation of imagination in fundamental theology, there was a similar problem of positing a universal spiritual experience behind the diverse expressions of it that can occur, a point he defended with phenomenological psychology that proposed essential characteristics of subjectivity behind the diverse historicity of thought and understanding. Interrogating that psychology helps to further draw out the problems of such universalizing proclivities in Thiel and Neuman and point to how Ricoeur better allows for diverse contextual understanding that emerges in an irreducibly pluralistic church. Neuman grounded his phenomenological psychology on the work of Edward Casey. According to Edward L. Murray, Casey’s phenomenology of imagination leaves it grounded in perception, as a power of recalling a phenomenon that could otherwise be sensed in a more pure or direct form.34 The imagination grants the power to enact phenomenological investigation, as it did for Husserl, emphasizing for Neuman the importance of subjectivity in ontological reflection. But to Murray, the problem with this model is that it privileges the pure perception to the product of imagination.35 This leads to an understanding of truth as one of adequation and scientific veracity. Imagination is a tool for making the determination, but it bows to pure empiricism.

34 Murray, 184.
35 Ibid., 186.
Applied to theology, revelation remains in the imagination model adhered to by Neuman something that provides truth as adequation. Imagination is an epistemological tool that can help determine the ontological facticity of true revelation, but it does not open the ontological status of revelation to diverse interpretations enacted through diverse imaginations.

For Ricoeur, as Murray points out, originary experience occurs through the mediation of language, not simply pure perception. Revelation more specifically occurs through the mediation of symbolic and poetic language that defies empirical senses of truth. Ricoeur, then, leaves space for revelation to actually be diverse, not just expressed in diverse ways that are to be later brought to heel in a universalized congruence. Using the space created by linguistic mediation, the imagination is able to produce new meaning which opens up new being, “such that under the shock of imagination reality itself even becomes problematic.” Revelation then only exists as what imaginative interpretation produces it to be, with the polysemous and polymorphic natures of its symbolic mediation leaving that production ever open-ended and pluralistic. And furthermore, Ricoeur gives this way of imagining revelation a theological basis that goes beyond just this epistemological delimitation. God is a God who conceals as well as reveals, making this imaginative hermeneutic that provides meaning while always leaving that meaning open to criticism and reconfiguration very apt. Revelation that is simultaneously concealment cannot be gathered into universal congruence. It can only be imagined into being as a truth that is as equivocal and diverse as the poetic expression that mediates its manifestation.

A closing example demonstrates how Ricoeur’s sense of imagination would treat the theological reflection of a contextual perspective differently than would the imaginative dynamics of Thiel. The historical intelligence theorized by Ignacio Ellacuría posits the

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36 Ibid., 202.
37 Ibid., 206.
imagination as the means by which experience and intelligence are bound together in a way that makes praxis the final aim of intelligent reflection as well as its authentic source. History becomes revelatory in the way that such experientially bound intelligence imaginatively and critically interprets tradition in light of experience, especially for Ellacuria the unique experience of poverty and oppression. For Thiel, the theological judgments that emerge out of such an exercise of imagination are vital and form the starting point for retrospective tradition. However, only by the analogy of faith can such judgments become authentic pieces of tradition, meaning they must pass through the chambers of magisterial authority to enter into the space of the true doctrinal deposit. Regional judgments must serve his category of temporal universality, which he defines as a faith-centered practice of the worldwide church that stands above the ephemerality of geography or epistemological critique. The grace of the Holy Spirit that Thiel positions behind this ecclesial universality becomes a supernatural standard against which regional judgments are analogously judged, but that judgment is enacted by magisterial authority with political and cultural influences of its own. Its version of revealed truth is as imaginatively constructed from the correlation of symbolically mediated source material and experiential rootedness as is that of the poverty-influenced interpretations highlighted by Ellacuría.

With Ricoeur, the interpretation of revelation that occurs in a particular contextual situation, such as that emphasized by Ellacuría, is one that can reveal new possibilities perhaps unknown or even obfuscated by the tradition upheld by magisterial authority or any other regional context. Because revelation is mediated, no version of its interpretation is allowed to crystallize into a hypostasized deposit that can analogously serve as a standard to measure diverse and pluralistic expressions of it. The historical intelligence of Ellacuría produces revelation by its correlational imagination. The limitations that exist due to the historicity of
Ellacuria’s context and the symbolic mediation of the theological sources with which it operates apply just as well to any other contextual situation, including that of the institutional magisterium that attempts to serve as a nexus for the diverse experience of the worldwide church. The tradition maintained by that institutional authority is thus open to criticism by the interpretations that emerge out of the contextual reflections and practices of the poor and oppressed of Latin America. The ultimate hiddenness of God prevents any one version of the understanding of revelation from being taken as immune from the criticism or reconfiguration of another version. The political and cultural situation of the magisterium is held more firmly in the light. As a result, any doctrinal statements that are meant to express points of commonality among the worldwide community must preserve the contextual interpretations like the Latin American emphasis on God’s preferential option for the poor, even if other contexts do not share the same level of concern. Such diversity must be upheld in tension and permitted to engage in mutually critical dialogue, not foreclosed by doctrinal formulation that attempts to pull them into congruence at the risk of mitigating or silencing certain imaginations.

b. Imagination and Diversity in the Making of Meaning Out of Revelation

To refer to the imagination’s ontological power, to its ability to bring possibility into being, George S. Worgul coins the term “imaginizing.” He frames such a power of the imagination to be a divine gift that is connected to the creative and sustaining power of the Holy Spirit. He focuses on the way that the imagination creates meaning in ways that expand beyond the reductive logic of rationality, such as by the semantic impertinence theorized by

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Ricoeur to occur in metaphor.  He appeals as well to the depth of symbols, that is, their polysemy, that allows the imagination to imaginize a more profound depth to human experience, while noting that symbols can exist as practices as well as images or objects. The narration of myth becomes for him then, as it is for Ricoeur, the comprehensive act of imagining synthesized meaning drawn from the depth of symbols and the reconfigurations of metaphor. But it is by attaching this imaginized meaning-making to the Holy Spirit that Worgul touches on it as a process of interpreting revelation. And one of the byproducts of this process that he suggests is an acceptance of the relationality and diversity articulated in postmodern critiques of modernist rationality and individuality. He equates the loss of the power of imaginizing in Western culture as a result of modernist rationalism to the loss of hope and the loss of solidarity and communal being. A corollary of recovering this solidarity and communal being that he suggests is that Western thought needs to open itself to the imaginations of non-Western cultures. As revelation is processed through the imagination, drawing on the equivocal sources of symbol, metaphor, and myth, it should be expected that diversity in interpretation should be a fact. And conceiving of those diverse interpretations as legitimate expressions of revelation among a pluralistic community of solidarity means the church must find space for such diverse meaning.

María Pilar Aquino expresses this idea with a call to historicize the fact of theological diversity in her analysis of Latino and Latina liberation theology. For her this means moving beyond simply recognizing the plurality of voices that offer their own theological interpretations and embedding all such interpretations within “the historicity of knowledge,” subjecting all of

39 Ibid., 110.
40 Ibid., 112.
41 Ibid., 113.
42 Ibid., 118-119.
them to the same epistemological critiques and limitations.\textsuperscript{43} She refers to such contextual voices as constructs of theological understanding, as ones that are actively built through productive acts of imagination. This historicization of diversity involves for her a shift from classical monocultural methodologies to critical ones that embrace the historicization of knowledge and become intercultural.\textsuperscript{44} Attaching this idea specifically to revelation, Aquino points to revelation as a unifying thread that makes liberation theologies particularly Christian in nature, but notes that revelation only occurs and is received within a particular historicized context, which makes it always mediated by the cultural symbols of such contexts.\textsuperscript{45} Expressions of and reflections upon revelation must become multicultural as a response to this historicization of revelation and its mediation.

The observation from Worgul that the symbols that are the currency of imaginative construction can be practices as well objects or images is vital to Aquino’s analysis of revelation and its interpretation. For her, the privileged locus of theological reflection for Latino and Latina theology is the popular religious experience of the people, “because that experience is the context of revelation and of its consequent reception, interpretation, and transmission.”\textsuperscript{46} Part of the value of this focus for Aquino is that it challenges the privileging of texts from the past as primary loci of theological reflection, which would in turn privilege the particular historicity standing behind such texts. The experiential and praxical starting point for Aquino’s methodology is not meant to cancel out such classical texts, but to place them into historicized dialogue with diversity that constructs its own interpretations of the experience of revelation.

\begin{flushleft}\footnotesize\textsuperscript{43} Aquino, 9. \\
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 15. As part of this point, Aquino also explains how liberation theories do not reject classical Western theories, but rather dialogue with them and reappropriate them from their own historical perspective. \\
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid. 23-24. \\
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 33. \end{flushleft}
Aquino’s analysis of popular religion as a theological source invites comparison to Ricoeur’s hermeneutic understanding of revelation. As Ricoeur emphasized revelation as poetic, making it a participatory understanding of divine rootedness and dependence that escapes rationalistic senses of truth, Aquino sees in the participatory nature of popular religion a construction of lived synthesis, a creative product of imagination, that posits truth to be that which works in that synthesis to bring about lived dignity. For both Ricoeur and Aquino, making the meaning of revelation a product of imaginative creativity inextricably ties it to historicity and makes its truth something that defies logical adequation. Also similar to Ricoeur, though, Aquino emphasizes the political ramifications of this understanding. For Ricoeur, interpretation culminates in active appropriation in the world in front of the text, while developing that appropriation from a correlational engagement with the tradition expressed through the world of the text. For Aquino, part of the value of theological reflection situated in the experience of popular religion is that it is especially well-situated to offer ethical-political critique of social oppression and offer new patterns of relation because it is itself rooted in the experience of community. But it does so while fostering connection to the rest of Christian tradition by reconfiguring the practices and symbols of that tradition to form its reflections.

This final point is akin to the use of Ricoeur in the analysis of Juan-Lorenzo Hinojosa. As noted in the previous chapter, Hinojosa sees Ricoeur’s hermeneutics as a way to preserve the immediacy of popular religion for U.S. Hispanics as it enters into unavoidable contact with the discourse of modern rationalism and criticism. Similarly in Aquino, though she does not appeal to him directly as Hinojosa does, Ricoeur’s hermeneutics can offer a framework for how the historicity of revelation that is accessed and expressed through the integrative logic of popular

47 Ibid., 34.
48 Ibid., 35.
religion on which Aquino claims liberation theology bases itself can dialogue with other streams of theological discourse in a way that preserves the unique historicity of those popular expressions by placing those other streams onto equally historicized foundations that are open to criticism as ideological conglomerations in need of the utopian vision diverse imaginations can produce.

With truth so closely associated with interpretation as it is in Ricoeur and in methodologies such as Aquino’s, relativism and controlling parameters of truth become unavoidable. It was a focal concern of Dulles in positing the model of revelation as symbolic mediation. He offered the concept of symbolic realism as a solution, an idea that behind symbolic expression is a real and objective existential encounter with the source of those symbols that grounds interpretation and keeps the symbols from becoming indefinitely pliable. The problem for Dulles was that this assertion left him in a position of needing an external authority to determine such authenticity, cancelling the historicity of any such authority via a claim to divine inspiration. However, he is correct in his observation that “certain interpretations of the symbols [that mediate revelation] that might be speculatively possible appear as practically untenable.” Because the correlational process of contextual interpretation does engage with an established tradition, the tradition itself does set boundaries to the interpretations by way of feasibility. Christian liberation theology, for example, would lose its validity if it strayed too far from the symbols and practices that inform the popular religion from which it

49 See for example, Raymond Moloney, “Stages in Ricoeur’s Hermeneutics,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 58 (1992): 119-128. Moloney largely lauds the contributions of Ricoeur’s hermeneutics to theological thought, but his main criticism is that Ricoeur does not sufficiently provide grounds for determining true from false interpretation, relying too much instead on the power of the world of the text itself to prevent illusory or flawed interpretation. He suggests instead supplementing Ricoeur with a psychological account such as that of Lonergan that can posit an objective basis to the way the mind of the interpreter works, giving in turn an objective foundation to the hermeneutical process itself that can better support judgments of truth and falsity.

50 Dulles, *Models*, 144, 266-267. See also the analysis of this concept in chapter 2, n. 245-246.

51 Ibid., 144.
grows and would no longer offer the vital synthesis that Aquino points to as the participatory standard of truth. Dulles is also correct in pointing to dogmatic tradition as an important expression of such boundaries within tradition itself. However, his separation of an immediately accessible existential fundament behind the symbols that mediate its meaning leaves the form of doctrinal formulation at the service of an unchanging content that leads to the formation of a guarding authority. Ricoeur’s hermeneutic imagination can offer a different solution to the problem of unbound relativism that does not require the turn to an unhistoricized authority that can ultimately coalesce into a diversity-trumping ideology.

This solution was outlined in general in Chapter 1. There it was analyzed how in Ricoeur’s model of mimesis and narrative, tradition provides paradigms within which innovation must work or else it breaks too far from the given context of understanding and cannot be appropriated meaningfully. In Ricoeur’s stages, the crafting of a new work within a genre, where innovation has to balance with the paradigms given in tradition, occurs in mimesis 2 while the meaningful appropriation occurs in mimesis 3. For a semantic innovation to work, whether in the emplotment of a narrative or the reconfiguration of a metaphor, familiarity rooted in the parameters of tradition must remain even as those parameters are broadened by the innovation. This makes the interpretation that occurs in such imaginative crafting of meaning controlled and directed, whether it occurs in narration and metaphorizing in general or in the reflection of theology based on symbols and practices. The control and direction may not be precise, but neither is it simply anarchic and unfettered. Figurative language is thus a source of innovative possibility and limitation on that possibility, and systematic theology which is based on the figurative and poetic mediation of revelation proceeds within that space of limitation and

52 Ibid., 153.
53 See Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 69-77.
54 See Stiver, 81-82.
There is indeed relativism, but it is an unavoidable byproduct of the historicization of knowledge that Aquino argues must be factualized in theological methodology. It is a variety of relativism that claims not that any interpretation is authentic, but rather bases authenticity on feasibility and functionality within the space of specific contextual reality. In this structure, a better term than relativism may then actually be relationalism. According to Michael G. Lawler, the abandonment of truth that is typically associated with the terminology of relativism results from recognizing the social dependency of knowledge while maintaining classical, static view of truth based on the simple dichotomy of ontological being and non-being. Recognizing the relational ontology of postmodernism allows the relinquishment of such a static view of knowledge and instead allows a sense of truth as a relationally built construct of multiple different limited perspectives. The result for Lawler is that any producer of statements of knowledge must recognize his, her, or its limited social position and accept that any statements he, she or it produces must be open to “at least, complementation and expansion or, at most, correction by other perspectives.” Lawler’s view that removes assertions of knowledge from attachment to ontological being resembles that of Ricoeur that precludes unmediated access to ontological reality. But in the same way that that understanding means for Ricoeur that critique remains possible and thus so too does affirmation, for Lawler the situation of relationalism does not preclude assessment of truth and falsity, it just requires changing the contours of the assessment from rootedness in absolute ontology to a

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55 See ibid., 71.
56 See Evans, 129. Evans explains that for Ricoeur authenticity is framed in terms of validity rather than verity. The latter suggests a model of truth as adequation that would enable authoritative systems to emerge as extrinsic arbiters of authenticity. Validity rather suggests probability within a range of possibilities, such as would exist in the polysemous system of symbols from which interpretations emerge.
58 Ibid., 54-55.
59 Ibid., 56.
stance that embraces plurality and multiplicity and the varied partial perspectives they place into mutual relation. True assertions no longer stand as ones evaluated to fit a socially constructed mythology of objectivity reflecting an absolute ontology. And Lawler argues that truth statements about human experience, such as those out of which the understanding of revelation arises, cannot ever be expressed through objective statements of adequation. The goal becomes instead plausibility of perspectival truth and validity as authentic to a complex system of symbolically rendered meaning.

For Ricoeur this authenticity would mean the ability of an interpretation to be appropriated in a way that translates to the historical advancement of peace and the possibility of utopian hope, but that also builds from authentic testimony as confirmed by tradition. If it detaches too far from the symbols and practices within a given tradition, feasibility breaks down and if there is not space for real innovation the critical and utopian function fails and interpretation collapses into the preservation of ideology. But since that utopian innovation must be culture specific in order to provide real political possibility and hope, there must be allowed a degree of relativism, even as it must be hemmed by the parameters of tradition. But since truth for Ricoeur is bound to the poetic union of form and content, the parameters of tradition themselves change as the historical process of interpretation and reinterpretation continues. As new forms of authentic theological expression emerge, the content of tradition is simultaneously changed. There is a similarity here to the philosophy of tradition espoused by Blondel. For both, tradition encompasses a larger scope of content than can be translated simply by apodictic

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60 Ibid., 57.
61 See ibid., 57. Lawler argues that the concept of pure objective knowledge is one sociologically objectivated structure of meaning, rooted in a particular historical perspective.
62 Ibid., 53-54.
propositions, but the critical distance that Ricoeur provides in the interpretive expression of tradition’s symbols, narratives, and practices necessitates guided relativism in a way that differs from the vision of Blondel that keeps tradition driven to singularity and universality. Whereas for Blondel there is an objective content lying behind the dynamism of tradition’s dogmatic expressions, for Ricoeur the content of tradition is simultaneous with the forms of expression and so the way that tradition limits interpretation dynamically grows as innovation occurs within contextual theological reflection.

In an essay examining contextual African theological imagination, Emmanuel M. Katongole provides an example of this type of theological reflection. Katongole compares and contrasts the methodologies of three African theologians, Kwame Bediako, Jesse Mugambi, and Jean-Marc Éla, arguing for Éla as the superior option. He begins with the assertion that the greatest criterion for theological legitimacy in Africa is the ability to reflect the everyday concerns and frustrations of concrete communities of peoples beset by sinful institutional and ideological structures. Katongole claims that theological imagination must incorporate a social imagination that can critique such situations and offer credible alternatives rooted in their own faith resources and suggests adoption of the symbol of church, as a local and concrete community, as a central theological lens for such reflection. In Bediako, he sees a strain of triumphalism that relishes in the success of Christian indigenization in Africa and moves to a new stage of focus on solidifying African Christian identity through intellectual reflection and spiritual focus. Katongole’s criticism is that this approach dehistoricizes the Christian church and thus disembodies it, rendering it unable to meaningfully respond to on-the-ground, concrete

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65 Emmanuel M. Katongole, “‘A Different World Right Here, a World Being Gestated in the Deeds of the Everyday’: The Church Within African Theological Imagination,” *Missionalia* 30 (2002): 208-232. The focus for Katongole is not doctrine per se such as is my present focus, but the liberationist ecclesiology still provides a helpful contextual demonstration of the balancing of given tradition with imaginative innovation.
material and social concerns or develop social imagination, failing to offer a sufficient space for critical innovation and resulting political appropriation. Katongole posits Mugambi as an advance in that he reflects a definite social imagination, but he criticizes Mugambi for submitting theological imagination to secular ideology when it comes to the social and material realm. This submission fails to recognize the postmodern, individualist, and consumerist ideologies that predominate and require critique, but it also breaks too far from the guiding force of Christianity’s own theological sources and their prophetic elements. In Éla, Katongole sees an emphasis on a prophetic church that grows from reflection on the experience of concrete communities and thus develops a social imagination suited to the social and material needs of ordinary Christians. Éla then demonstrates critical innovation that segues to social and political appropriation that can result in real transformation, but does so within the parameters of Christian theological tradition. In supporting Éla’s methodology, Katongole supports an approach that imaginatively reconfigures the contours of tradition in light of the relative situation of a particular concrete context.

c. Imagination and the Imago Dei

In analyzing how a Catholic theology of God can proceed in the context of postmodernity, Anthony J. Godzieba concludes that one outcome needs to be the historicization of revelation, that is, making the understanding of God more closely bound to the historical understanding and praxis of the lived witness of Christian tradition.66 This in turn accents the fact that revelation is always received through worldly mediation requiring a “double hermeneutic,” one in which both

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revelation itself and theological reflection require contingent and contextual interpretation. For Godzieba, this contingency easily calls forth the apophatic tradition of theology, but should also leave space for kataphatic reflection. There is an element of mystery that remains unknown, but there is indeed space for affirmative language to reflect upon God and God’s will. He points to the Kingdom of God as a central lens through which to balance these apophatic and kataphatic elements. It reveals that God wills the world to be otherwise, a transformation that begins in the present age and draws on kataphatic reflection to articulate the demands of that transformation, but it also leaves that transformation to the apophatic mystery of eschatological fulfillment.

Using this concept of the Kingdom of God as a lens for theology requires recognition of an “otherwise” as a real possibility for the world and makes theology responsible for articulating and bringing about that different possibility. The ability to think of the world as “otherwise” and use such thought as a catalyst for action that is “otherwise” is an act of creative imagination for Godzieba. He claims that, “This response of imagination to the revealed mystery of divine love is the first step toward hoping in and participating in its ongoing actualization.”

The creative hermeneutical imagination is brought together here with the theological anthropology of the *imago dei*. The use of imagination as a creative capacity for participating in the actualization of the possible “otherwise” that makes up revelation joins with the anthropological mandate of being in the image and likeness of God, a mandate to be co-creators. Therefore, being made in the image and likeness of God entails using the imagination to draw revelation into further reality and toward its mysterious completion in the eschaton. The creative imagination culminates for Ricoeur as it does here for Godzieba in the actual appropriation of possibility. The imagination is responsible for making the world otherwise, as humans are meant

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67 Ibid., 294.
68 Ibid., 295.
69 Ibid., 296.
to do as beings of the *imago dei*, and the interpretation and appropriation of revelation is vital to that responsibility.

Thiel draws a similar conclusion regarding the imagination and the *imago dei* in his analysis of theological authorship. He roots the Catholic theological tradition in the anthropology of the Council of Trent, which emphasized the *imago dei* and the capacity of human works to function in concert with the divine. That cooperative capacity is what makes the interpretive and imaginative work of theological reflection, including the formulation and development of doctrine, become for Thiel “the responsible delineation of God’s revelation in history.”

Worgul makes a similar connection via a focus on the scriptural basis of the *imago dei*. For him, Genesis portrays God enacting Worgul’s terminology of the ontologically potent power of imaginizing, equating the creation by speaking in Genesis 1 with the act of imaginative semantic creation that leads to changed reality. This makes the self-reflective act of making human beings in the divine likeness the creation of beings with the capacity for creative imagination: “The result is an imaginative reality called the human, which will have the capacity to symbolize the imaginative God, speak narratives and create myths. . . . These human activities continue God’s imaginative creative actions.” Both Thiel and Worgul acknowledge the occluding taint of sin, but continue to affirm that fallen human nature is not completely depraved and retains the capacity to collaboratively co-imagine with God.

Two woman-centered examples demonstrate a similar sense of the conjoining of the imaginative reception of revelation with the creative capacity of the *imago dei*. Elizabeth Johnson makes it a major feature of her feminist hermeneutic in *She Who Is*. In laying out the grounding of feminism, she points to the criterion of authentic theology promoting the fullness of

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71 Worgul, 114.
humanity. She highlights the classical justification of such a criterion by the *imago dei*, that being in the image and likeness of God makes the promotion of human dignity essential. Feminism, she argues, affirms the equal place of female experience alongside male experience as the grounding of what full humanity means. However, she adds an additional dimension in noting that while such an egalitarian situation has never been fully realized in history, it can be glimpsed when women are able to tap into their potential from being *imago dei* by acts of constructive imagination.\(^73\) She recognizes that using the *imago dei* to valorize female context and experience requires some critical retrieval due to the way the theoretical equality of the *imago dei* was grafted to Hellenistic dualism that subordinated and even in some ways demonized the feminine.\(^74\) Within her retrieval she acknowledges the general sense of the *imago dei* being marred by sin, but notes the many ways in which its trace is explained to remain in human experience, such as the medieval tendency to locate it in the power of rationality, the Reformation vision of it as a recovered state resulting from the submission of the will to God’s will, and contemporary explanations of it as identified with human creativity.\(^75\) For Johnson’s argument, the specific model of its meaning is not as important as the way women’s experience breaks into the historically male-dominated definition of each. Women coming to their own sense of self-worth in the *imago dei* is the key for her. However, the sense of the *imago dei* as creativity, in the sense of the creative imagination, seems to loom over her argument. While she accedes to any model of the *imago dei* serving well enough to frame her principle of women’s self-inclusion in the meaning of the fullness of humanity embodied in the anthropological image of the *imago dei*, the result for her is a theological model. That model is one where the hermeneutic imagination of women is given space to interpret tradition in its own creative ways.

\(^{73}\) Johnson, 31.
\(^{74}\) Ibid., 70.
\(^{75}\) Ibid., 71.
Just as womanist theology incorporates a more critical sense of diversity into feminism, Chandra Taylor Smith offers a more diverse interpretation of this role of the *imago dei* in the theological voice of women. She draws on an argument from Delores Williams using the *imago dei* to support the multiplicity and contextuality demanded by womanist methodology. Simply, if all people share in the *imago dei*, then the humanity of African American women, like all other people, is an image of God, and the devaluation or suppression of African American women’s self-expression is a devaluation or suppression of the image of God.\(^{76}\) This implies that the *imago dei* involves an irreducible pluralism, and that the creative expressions that grow from it will similarly be irreducibly plural. And if such expressions are understood as interpretations of God’s revelatory self-communication through the unique experience of particular contexts, then it means that the imaginative creativity of the *imago dei* leaves the understanding of revelation as necessarily contextual and pluralistic as well as only ever expressible in ways that are partial and relational.

*d. Imagination and the Sensus Fidei*

Ormond Rush offers a systematic explanation of the functioning of the *sensus fidei*. In his analysis, he begins with the position that revelation is God’s self-communication and is not completed until received. Since this self-communication occurs in a poetic fashion it must be received in a poetic fashion through the imagination. This imaginative experience of faith is what Rush envisions as the central process of the *sensus fidei*, a power to interpret revelation in concrete context and enable an ecclesial hermeneutical cycle whereby tradition is applied to new

situations as well as refashioned by the process. To serve this hermeneutical function, the sensus fidei comes in two phases. On one hand is the individual sensus fidei fidelis, regarding the individual person, and on the other is the sensus fidei fidelium, regarding the collective body. As a power enabled by the Holy Spirit, the sensus fidei has a corporate element that checks individual interpretations against the measure of tradition for authenticity. Looking to the description of the sensus fidei in Lumen Gentium 12, Rush describes the corporate element as something that establishes universal consensus. This introduces a vital question of authority regarding the interpretive freedom of the sensus fidei.

Thiel acknowledges this same issue regarding the sensus fidei, observing that the magisterium has tended to afford greater priority to the corporate dimension of the sensus fidei by which it can check unruly products arising in the individual dimension. He describes one of the byproducts of this prioritization to be diminishing the legitimacy of local experiences of the faith that cannot be immediately or easily fit into the sense of universality that the magisterium wants to preserve. However, resonant with Rush’s description of the sensus fidei forming a hermeneutical cycle that applies as well as reshapes tradition, Thiel argues that a more dynamic sense of the creative imagination at work in the sensus fidei remains outside the realm of acceptability for the magisterium because it conceptualizes its own teaching as a product of deductive natural law reasoning rather than the work of a historical imagination. If the magisterium’s own authority can be accepted as a product of imaginative and creative interpretation, then the ongoing imaginative creativity of theological reflection that drives

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79 Ibid., 39.
80 Thiel, Imagination, 208.
81 See ibid., 210.
doctrinal development can be framed as the result of the *sensus fidei*, as God’s Spirit directing the expanding understanding of God’s own self-communication in history, even if such reflection produces diversity and seems challenging to the magisterium. Thiel writes:

> A pneumatology of the imagination true to its task would sketch the often surprising, coincidental, and even mysterious ways that consciousness builds creative associations and the unanticipated ways that these proliferate far beyond the experiential circumstances from which they first emerged. . . . In such a framework the imaginative insights of the theological author can legitimately be understood as the yield of divine grace and the theological author’s intellectual inspiration as a charismatic gift of the Holy Spirit. Although the exercise of theological authorship may appear in certain cases to be ecclesially undisciplined, the church needs to be open to the possibility that the unpredictable and apparently undisciplined character of theological talent may have its basis in, and actually be an expression of, the creative freedom of God’s grace.\(^82\)

As seen the previous chapter, however, Thiel does still direct this sometimes undisciplined *sensus fidei fidelis* to universality. What is required is a different way to understand what the consensus of the *sensus fidei fidelium* may entail. Understood through the principles of historicized tradition that must accept the reality of irreducible diversity, consensus can cease having to mean univocal agreement in all respects. In a vision of tradition that must accept a degree of relativism, or rather relationalism as described above, consensus can become agreement about authenticity for multiple and diverse interpretations that can exist simultaneously without having to be reduced to a singularity. Such a consensus would require persons of particular contexts to make an effort to understand the faith experience that leads to different doctrinal ideas and as a result look critically at their own context and its accepted and settled doctrinal positions. The traditioning process of the corporate phase of the *sensus fidei* becomes then an equivocal judgment about acceptability rather than a univocal pronouncement of definition. Doctrinal definition can still exist as a way of tracing the lines by which judgments of authenticity are made, but they must remain flexibly responsive to the hermeneutical dynamics of the *sensus fidei*’s creativity. Additionally, the consensus that exists in this

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\(^82\) Ibid., 213-214.
historicized model of tradition cannot be one that forever eliminates the voices of contention. The critical element of imaginative hermeneutics demands that such voices are preserved so that consensus does not end up in a crystallized state of ideology. This means that consensus must be an ongoing dialogue. Tradition may resist innovation for a time, but if that innovation retains force for a significant portion of the faithful, it’s reconfiguration of or challenge to the tradition must be continually engaged. And, interpretations from the past that were deemed to not fit the doctrinal deposit of earlier historical periods should be able to be exhumed and re-examined for critical value. Even if innovation from a particular contextual interpretation does not attain to impacting the formulas of existing doctrine, maintaining its place in theological dialogue can constitute a judgment of consensus about the authenticity of that interpretation.

In a study of the role of the *sensus fidei* in dogmatic development, Zoltán Alszeghy develops a position that supports such a view of the *sensus fidei*’s ability to challenge doctrinal formulations. The conceptual definitions of doctrine make up one mode of the understanding of revelation, which is an “integrated” process of grasping the total dynamic of salvation.83 This makes the development of dogma something that occurs for him not only in formal declarative or theological ways, but in the everyday faith experience where salvation history unfolds both macroscopically for the church and microscopically for individuals.84 The *sensus fidei* is instrumental for tapping into this experience as a source for dogmatic development.85 The *sensus fidei* stands for Alszeghy as the “capacity to recognize the intimate experience of adherence to Christ and to judge everything on the basis of this knowledge.”86

84 Ibid., 142.
85 See ibid., 138, 143-148.
86 Ibid., 147
It is by this judgment that other modes of conceptual discourse are measured against the living mystery of salvation that forms the heart of God’s self-communication in history. In this way, the technical language of dogma is kept beholden to the existential truth that embodies the integrated totality that Alszeghy points to as authentic revelation. Ricoeur similarly identifies existential truth as a check against overly technical language that can artificially narrow ontological possibility and identifies the imagination as the power that provides such existential language.\(^{87}\) Alszeghy indeed claims that the *sensus fidei* functions in a way like the mimetic hermeneutics of Ricoeur. For Ricoeur, the creative imagination in mimesis\(_1\) reconfigures what is received in the preunderstanding of mimesis\(_2\). For Alszeghy, this process is described as “transconceptualization,” whereby the *sensus fidei* configures old and new interpretations of and reflections on symbols and formulas of the faith through its grasp of contextual experiential truth.\(^{88}\) And for Ricoeur, the reconfiguration of the hermeneutical imagination results in an emplotment that organizes the interpretations into a systematic relationship. For Alszeghy, this is the second process by which the *sensus fidei* works, “objective comprehension,” by which new interpretations are judged for their adequacy for the integrated picture one holds of the truth of salvation history.\(^{89}\) And so the power of the *sensus fidei* to interpret revelation and on that basis judge and critique doctrine, pressing it to develop, is a power of the imagination that prioritizes contextuality and plurality and challenges claims to univocal expressions of what revelation means.

Turning to that contextual sensibility, Orlando Espín situates the *sensus fidei*, or as he prefers in his essay *sensus fidelium*, in much the same way Alszeghy does. He begins by affirming the idea of revelation as God’s self-communication in history rather than a

\(^{88}\) Alszeghy, 148.
\(^{89}\) Ibid., 148-149.
communication of a deposit of truths, and takes the intuition of the *sensus fidei* as key to the creative expression of the experience of that historical self-communication. That expression is poetic and culture-bound, and so it requires hermeneutic interpretation and critique by theologians and magisterial leadership, including consideration of positions of privilege and oppression that inevitably mark the expressions, but at the same time theology and the magisterium are lacking a vital piece of the understanding of revelation if they do not honor those expressions at all. 90 What is at stake for Espín in this analysis of the *sensus fidei* is championing the popular religion that he thinks profoundly marks the specifically Hispanic experience of Christianity and demonstrating that a failure to consider the ideas that emerge from that popular religion amounts to a continuation of oppression against Hispanic peoples. He concludes:

> Obviously, to claim that only the theologians or the bishops really understand revelation and, as a consequence, that only they should speak and express the faith in order to avoid deviations and error is to dismiss the *sensus fidelium* outright, to ignore too many facts in the actual history of the development of doctrine, and especially to come uncomfortably close to disregarding the incarnation of the one who is at the heart of the Christian gospel. 91

The reason he thinks that to disregard the *sensus fidei* is to disregard the incarnation is that he equates the incarnation to inculturation, which is captured by the expression of popular experience developed by the *sensus fidei*. 92 But as Espín acknowledges, to broach such expressions is to open to the challenges and risks of error that are unavoidable in the possibility of innovation. But if the imaginative interpretations of the *sensus fidei* are a necessary element for the understanding of revelation, such a risk must be engendered. And furthermore, the possibility of pluralistic and equivocal expressions as true must be engendered as well. For Espín, the truth of revelation that is tapped into by the *sensus fidei* can be expressed in culturally

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91 Ibid., 79.
92 See ibid., 76.
plural ways, ways that fit to the model of relationalism.\textsuperscript{93} He acknowledges that more formal voices of the faith, specifically theologians and the magisterium, must discern the degrees of truth in the products of the \textit{sensus fidei} in order to safeguard against contextual limitations and biases, meaning there is space for authoritative discourse like doctrine. However, doctrine must be responsive to the experiential interpretations of revelation that come from the imagination of the \textit{sensus fidei} and its relational contextuality.

\textbf{An Imaginative Theory of Doctrinal Development}

A model of the development of doctrine based on imagination begins by asserting that doctrine is one genre for expressing an understanding of revelation, not a discourse that is itself synonymous with revelation or even a summit of other modes of understanding. It is not able to transcend the equivocal nature of the poetical and symbolic discourses that make up the most originary expressions of the experience of revelatory manifestation. Like liturgics, morality, or creative arts, however, it is a uniquely legitimate genre of expression in the life of Christianity. As different genres, each serves the ongoing interpretation of Christianity’s originary encounter with Jesus, and each does so in a unique way. For doctrine, its role is to articulate public common identity across the diverse community of the church and provide guidance for how that community lives as church. But since it is a genre, the importance of genre for producing interpretations and different modes of expression is where this model begins.

According to Ricoeur, “To master a genre is to master a ‘competence’ that offers practical guidelines for ‘performing’ an individual work.”\textsuperscript{94} Because of the public nature of discourse, genres provide rules that can give a common ground of understanding for both the

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 66.
\textsuperscript{94} Ricoeur, “The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation,” 308.
production of expression and the reception of expression. To break radically from the
conventions of an understood genre is to remove one’s expression from comprehensibility by a
receiving audience. The parallel I am positing here is that doctrine similarly is constrained by
the past conventions of its genre, which provides controlling guidance for the authenticity of
future interpretations. An interpretation that breaks too far from established boundaries of
authenticity will dissolve into incomprehensibility and will not be received by the intended
audience. However, just as literary genres provide space for the intentional reformulation of
what pre-exists in the genres themselves, doctrinal theology moves forward by reinterpreting and
not simply recapitulating what the doctrinal genre contains from the past. The internal control of
the genre, and the accumulated experience of the community that it represents, prevents this
reinterpretation from becoming chaotic.

However, because any theological genre is operating from a space of hermeneutical
distanciation, the form of expression is synonymous with content. As Ricoeur puts it, “Content
and form . . . are generated together.”95 That means content expressed in past forms cannot
become an unbreakable bulwark against innovation as forms evolve into new contents. The past
expressions provide controlled guidance, but the need for it to be critically engaged because of
the limitations of its own unavoidable distanciation as well as the new input from new contextual
experiences demand that that guidance be flexible and open to reconfiguration. The living
reception of the community may prove that some elements of the past tradition are more or less
malleable than others; in other words, some elements or rules of the genre may have to be
followed more strictly in order to maintain comprehensibility for the audience. But the
imagination that quickens the process of productive and receptive interpretation within the
doctrinal genre serves as a dynamic authority for determining the tradition’s elasticity.

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95 Ibid., 309.
a. Doctrine as Mimesis—Openness to Historicity

The distanciation at play in the creative imagination working within a genre segues to the next element of this model, framing doctrinal theology as Ricoeur’s hermeneutical process of mimesis. In this sense, mimesis₁ would be represented by the preexisting doctrinal formulae of Christianity, as well as the narrative context of their production and the experiential situation from which the theologian operates. This would be the world behind the text, with the text in this case being that which is produced by the reflective and critical work of the theologian who authors by his or her imagination an interpretation of that given material. This is the emplotment of mimesis₂, a creative reconfiguration that reveals new possibilities. This yields the world of the text, a new formulation within the genre that simultaneously provides new content. If mimesis₁ entails a past interpretation of the experience of revelation, giving poetic form and content to that primary experience that is at a distance from any attempt to express it, this phase of mimesis₂ is providing a new understanding of revelation. It stands at a distance from the experience of revelation as do the formulas and experiences contained in mimesis₁, and in presenting new possibilities it is presenting new content of revelation by reinterpreting the primary symbols that make up the originary expressions of revelatory manifestation. This reinterpretation is controlled by the parameters of content and form in mimesis₁, but it breaks open the shared symbolic base of meaning in ways that can critique and advance beyond that guiding content. Doctrine in this way balances the drives of ideology and utopia, becoming meaningless if it to violently shatters the shared identity preserved by the maintenance of ideology while challenging ideology with utopian vision that can critique the past and articulate eschatological hope. And it is in mimesis₃ where the reinterpretation of mimesis₂ is tested. At this stage the audience, the community of Christians in their particular contexts, attempts to
appropriate the text into its own world in front of the text through the filter of its own imagination. If the text produced in mimesis cannot be meaningfully appropriated, then that text’s interpretation will fade. But if it provides grounding for a practical enhancement of the experience of divine self-communication and the sense of the imago dei within individual persons, then it should be accepted as an alteration to the tradition and spiral along the hermeneutical process to give new source material in the phase of mimesis for future reflection and critique.96

This model forces doctrine to become firmly entrenched in historicity. As a process that proceeds through the historically and contextually formed imagination of persons interpreting and reinterpreting the symbols that form the basis of meaning in Christian understanding, all expressions of doctrine must be understood as unique products of unique historical circumstance. Thus the identity of Christianity that doctrine attempts to define must be an in via concept that can be impacted by historicity, with past versions subjected to critique and new versions continually reimagined.97 The doctrines of the church must remain reformable and no historical moment can be elevated or privileged above another.98 Each interpretation of revelation expressed in the genre of doctrine is limited by its historicized epistemology and no pure formula of revelational content exists by which such limited historicized expressions can be judged.99

96 Regarding the importance of the appropriation in mimesis as the measure of validity for an interpretation, see Evans, 128. Evans explains that for Ricoeur the task of interpretation is to point forward to a possible world in contradistinction from a Romantic hermeneutic that would try to get behind the text to the mind of the author. Regarding doctrine, the latter position would amount to an idea that behind doctrine is a deposit of truths authored by God, and that development involves adjusting the form of doctrine to better elucidate that body of truths. This leaves the measure of validity to be the putative deposit from which theological and logical theories envision themselves to grow. In Ricoeur’s hermeneutics, however, such unmediated knowledge is not possible and so development of doctrine would be measured by a forward-looking standard of enhancing the religious experience of persons in their particular contexts.

97 See Stiver, 103. Stiver explains here the historicity of identity for Ricoeur, and I am here paralleling that dynamic to the idea of communal identity that doctrine attempts to provide for the church.

98 See Alszeghy, 140.

99 See Dulles, The Resilient Church, 52-53. Dulles affirms that all dogmas must be understood as culturally-conditioned human formulations that require critical evaluation.
The sense of an ontological truth to measure doctrinal expression is bound to the very forms of that expression because no expression can escape the limitations of its own historicity. Thus the mimetic imagination must be allowed to operate freely to ensure that no particular formula becomes unduly preserved from criticism or examination and to make sure the eschatological nature of God’s self-communication is honored by continually allowing new possibilities to emerge from the productive imagination and yield new renderings of the ontological understanding of revelation.

Failing to recognize this historicity in the development of doctrine is akin to allowing certain formulas of doctrine to become idols. The symbols on which the understanding of revelation is based are inexhaustible and require continual semantic innovation in order to function as media of knowledge of a God who always remains concealed even in the act of revealing. Ricoeur traces this idea in terms of the symbol of the very name God. He asserts that religious discourse must remain poetic so as to remain equivocal and avoid solidifying the understanding of God into any singular model, which would in turn become an idol no longer capable of conveying the ultimate mystery of God.\footnote{Ricoeur, “Naming God,” 226.} He in fact legitimates the religious function of judgment through reflective discourse, such as in the language of doctrine, as helpful in guarding against the calcifying of idols.\footnote{Ricoeur, “Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation,” 33.} He considers it an error to disassociate religious language from the rational structures of philosophy as a way of preserving mystery against ontotheological thought because it removes the reflective and judgmental potential of philosophical language and marginalizes religious language from public relevance.\footnote{See Stiver, 150-151.} Thus discourse like doctrine that attempts to systematize religious understanding with philosophical frameworks is important, but it must remain flexible enough to treat its fundamental symbols as
icons rather than idols in the way described by Jean-Luc Marion. The icon remains a conduit to an encounter with ultimate mystery while at the same time allowing the iconic symbol to serve as a simulacrum of that divine mystery. It does so by resisting rational co-optation by the observer, which would reduce it to an idol closed off from the dynamic mystery of the divine that is free to choose to reveal itself in myriad icons. Applied to doctrine this way of thinking would mean that a doctrinal formula that refuses to subject itself to mimetic reinterpretation and the historicity that it preserves would become a verbal idol closed off from the living mystery of God that communicates itself through symbolic icons. For Ricoeur, reflection on those symbols can and should be structured and arranged with philosophy to help deepen and assess the interpretation of them, but the conceptualizations and formulas that emerge cannot be allowed to transcend the limitations of historicity and become dead idols impervious to reformulation and criticism.

b. Postmodernizing Doctrinal Tradition—Decentering Magisterial Authority

A chief argument against the theological theory described by Walgrave was that it grants to the magisterium of the church a supernatural exceptionalism that allows it to harness the will of the Holy Spirit in a way that can trump the historicity of its own epistemological standing. A necessary byproduct of the historicization of doctrine itself is then a peeling away of this exceptionalism for the hierarchical magisterium, decentering the magisterium’s role in arbitrating the development of doctrine. This is not to say that the magisterium cannot serve an integral role. It is rather to support the notion from Schillebeeckx that the magisterium is one constituent among others in the church community’s ongoing dialogue about what is authentic to

the faith, disallowing it from claiming an extrinsic control over the content of doctrinal
teaching. 104 Alszeghy formulated a similar idea with more categorization. For him, any case of
discourse, such as doctrine, involves three aspects, one observational, one exhortative, and one
experiential. The magisterium emphasizes the exhortative element that calls for specific acts and
conformities on the part of the hearer, while the sensus fidei articulates the aspect that attempts to
appropriate a doctrinal statement into real experience, and theology attempts to engage the
scientific observation of the statement. 105 The authenticity of the discourse relies on the
contributions of all three.

Tanner’s postmodernized understanding of tradition is also helpful here. She reminds
that tradition needs to be understood as a history of contested theological judgments. When this
nature of tradition is concealed, the historicity and potential criticism of past declarations or
formulations from the tradition are also obfuscated. If doctrine is unavoidably couched in
historicity, that is, it is the product of contested theological interpretations and judgments
impacted by contextual variables and not the result of divine fiat, then the authority structures
that seek to preserve the contours of existing tradition cannot be left in a position to univocally
judge the worthiness of criticisms against those doctrines or suggested innovations of them.

This model of doctrinal development follows Ricoeur’s own warning about the
conflation of doctrine and magisterium clouding the historical nature of the interpretations and
judgments that make up doctrinal concepts, leading to his idea of opaque or authoritarian
revelation where the propositional formulae of doctrines are taken as constitutive of a revealed
propositional deposit. He argues that placing doctrine under the primary control of magisterial
authority obscures the historicity of that magisterial tradition’s formation, protecting it as Tanner

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105 Alszeghy, 143-145.
argued from theological criticism. The appeal to supernatural guidance centered in the magisterium’s exercise of authority solidifies this dynamic. But in an imaginative model of doctrine’s development, there is no deposit of content that stands independent of historical forms, which are always the interpretations of historical perspective, for the magisterium as well as others. So the magisterium’s teaching is historicized and its authority decentered. The supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit has to be extended to work through diverse channels and multiple constituencies within the full community of faith. This dispersal of the Spirit’s guidance would prevent any one constituency from unjustifiably claiming privilege over another, leaving tradition in a postmodern state where any consensus can only be valid if it honors the breadth of diversity in Christian religion.

What emerges is an ecclesiology similar to that drawn by Elochukwu E. Uzukwu in his book *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*. Uzukwu uses the ecclesiological sensibility of Cyprian of Carthage to defend a model of the church as unified but autonomous at the local level, decentering the primacy of the Roman church. However, basing his argument on the experience of local African communities, he extends his idea of collegiality in the church to the experience of all the people, from whom the fullest understanding of the African religious experience emerges. Collegiality is thus cooperation not just between bishops but between all segments of the community. In order to foster such broad collaborativity, Uzukwu adapts an image from the Manja people of central Africa who make the totem of their chief a rabbit because it has large ears. For Uzukwu, the hierarchy, which legitimately has a role

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106 Ricoeur, “Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation,” 2. A similar observation is made by Karl Rahner, who argues that the human and historicized factors of decision-making within the church are concealed to protect the perception of supernatural guidance moving magisterial teaching in a way that can trump criticism and preclude open dialogue and discussion on matters of doctrine. See Rahner, “The Teaching Office of the Church in the Present-Day Crisis of Authority,” in *Theological Investigations* v. 12, trans. David Bourke, 12 (New York: Seabury Press, 1974).

as overseer of the universal church community, must exercise that role “with large ears,” so as to hear the needs and ideas of all and be able to serve from a position of ministry rather than power. Functionally, this model of leadership means for Uzukwu that all levels of the community, including laity, are actively involved in consultation and deliberation, because only with such full collaboration can the Spirit’s fullness be accounted for. One of his final conclusions is that in order to then fully attend to the all the movements of the Spirit the church must undergo decentralization. For Uzukwu the aim of this decentralization is to allow the full bloom of the church in African sociocultural context, and within the overall argument here about doctrine such a model of decentralization would similarly allow the sociocultural context of all localized Christian experience to play a role in the determination of doctrinal standards that are meant to delineate the unity those multiple local communities wish to share between themselves as members of the Christian church.

c. Development of Doctrine as Simplification—Allowing for Plurality

If the genre of doctrine involves singularized formulae, then the inclusion of plurality in the determination of such formulae is a sharp challenge. As a solution, I point to an idea affirmed by Karl Rahner and Avery Dulles and examined in Chapter 2, that of doctrinal development as simplification. Simplification implies concentrating and condensing doctrinal statements onto the basic mystery of faith, as opposed to specification or expansion that aims to continue the elaboration of details and extensions of existing doctrinal formulae.

108 Ibid., 131-132.
109 Ibid., 137-138.
110 Ibid., 148.
For Dulles, the cumulative expansion of doctrinal development, necessitated by the emphasis on irreversibility in both the logical and organic\textsuperscript{111} models of development, simply reached a saturation point by the time of Vatican Council II. Accordingly, he analyzes Vatican II to have begun a move away from development as expansion by emphasizing instead a kind of simplification. This simplification was marked by a concerted effort to more holistically draw together separate doctrines and dogmas, such as ones involving episcopal collegiality and papal primacy, rather than expounding new ones.\textsuperscript{112} Behind such an effort is the idea that some teachings deal with aspects of the core mystery of the faith while others are more peripheral and thus more malleable.\textsuperscript{113} Concentrating or simplifying to the central mystery would involve a closer adherence to the polysemous and equivocal meaning built into the symbols that convey the central message. That equivocity would be more capable of containing diverse positions and experiences than would the unequivocal definitions of expanding doctrinal detail. According to Dulles, however, accord about what would constitute central mystery versus peripheral importance has not been easy to establish. He identifies several attempts at delineating primary from secondary teachings without settling on a definite version, though none of the suggestions or Dulles’s assessment of them consider praxis in any way.\textsuperscript{114} The real-life appropriation of the gospel like Ricoeur emphasized is not included, making questionable the ability of such standards to really be inclusive of the praxical and experiential concerns of contextually lived faith. The difference between central and peripheral would be left as an imposed conceptualization from some particular contextual sensibility. Thus while simplification is a useful concept to apply to the development of doctrine in a situation of irreducible pluralism, the

\textsuperscript{111} It should be recalled that this is Dulles’s terminology for the type of theory espoused by Walgrave as theological.
\textsuperscript{112} Dulles, \textit{The Resilient Church}, 55.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 55.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 56.
enactment of it as a strategy via the separating of central and peripheral doctrines respectively less open to and more open to alteration retains an authoritative bent that can undo the genuine influence of contextual reality.

Dulles developed the idea of simplification of doctrine from a 1966 essay from Rahner, but some of Rahner’s later writings, ones in which irreducible pluralism had become for him a more pressing fact, demonstrate a different way of thinking about the way to evaluate the validity of simplification besides the separation of central and peripheral teachings.\textsuperscript{115} In an essay published in English in 1974, Rahner examines the increasing crisis of authority being experienced by the church.\textsuperscript{116} He argues that the church could no longer rely on its formal authority as a given datum to extrinsically justify its teaching and accordingly had to justify doctrine by demonstrating its intrinsic consistency with the whole of the Christian faith. But importantly, he emphasizes that such demonstration has to take into consideration the way in which that whole is interpreted through experience.\textsuperscript{117} Even later, in his twenty-second volume of \textit{Theological Investigations}, published in English in 1991, Rahner goes further into the importance of this experiential dimension in an essay continuing this examination of the authority of the church in relation to the contemporary experience of faith. He frames experience as a legitimate space in which ordinary Christians interpret God’s self-communication, constituting revelation, and he asserts that such interpretation should be in a mutually normative relationship with the hierarchical magisterium.\textsuperscript{118} He endorses intentional means of gathering

\textsuperscript{115} See chapter 2, n. 217-218. Mary Hines argues that this later work from Rahner reflected greater appreciation for pluralism and the need to grant greater weight to experience emerging out of local church communities, leading to even greater emphasis on the developmental orientation of simplification.


\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 9-11.

perspectives and opinions from ordinary Christians via modern means like surveys and affirms that such information should be used to impact the development of doctrine in a vein of simplification, even if not in a majority-rules sense of liberal democracy. He writes:

But it is certain that there can be no question in Catholic theology of withdrawing a defined doctrine because a considerable part of the faithful have refused to accept it. However, this does not answer a further question: Should this widespread non-reception not induce the magisterium to give more thought to its doctrine (even if defined), to formulate it in a wider and newer context, and to remove the accretions that do not really belong to the faith and that may unconsciously adhere to a defined doctrine? Time and again, in the Church’s awareness of the faith the accent has shifted. The history of dogma shows this very clearly. Would it not be possible today, prudently and discreetly, and with an eye on the actual faith of the people in the Church, to make such shifts consciously?

Rahner invites the alteration and development of doctrine to occur in active consultation with the voices of pluralistic experience, and does not distinguish between central or peripheral doctrines. He rejects the outright overturning of established doctrines and suggests that change must be gradual and prudent, but such gradualness fits well with the parameters of genre limitations that resist radical breaks while encouraging and enabling reconfiguration. But that openness to change is not subjected as it was in Dulles to a delineation of what is central and what is not, a standard achievable only by the privileging of one particular mode of judgment over others. Such a model would allow more openly for the mimetic process of imaginative hermeneutics being argued for here. Paring and reconfiguring existing doctrine would be akin to the mimetic spiral that occurs within a given genre, allowing for critical assessment of the given tradition and the projection of new possibility growing uniquely out of particular contextual experiences. Maintaining the accent of simplification would allow for the consensus sensibilities of doctrine to leave space for the expansion and criticism that can occur in the theological reflection and praxis of particular contexts. And the possibility of real-life appropriation determines the degree to which doctrines can be challenged or changed. A teaching that cannot

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be changed becomes simply one that appropriative reception will not accept changing. As particular spaces require their own pluralistic solutions to problems and their own models of praxis, such appropriation plays out on its own field of experiential possibility. Doctrine developing in the direction of simplification can allow these diverse ways of appropriating God’s salvific self-communication to have their individual legitimacy, and the ability of the doctrine to allow for such context-specific appropriation of the faith would serve as the measure of its authenticity.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the constructive project of developing a model of doctrinal development using the hermeneutical imagination. Beginning with the concept of revelation as God’s ongoing self-communication in history through the mediation of symbols, it demonstrated how the hermeneutical imagination becomes central to making meaning out of the experience of revelation. Because of the unavoidable distanciation created by the symbolic mediation through which revelation always occurs, the imagination must be engaged to interpret the ongoing experience of Christian faith in light of prior tradition, and it only is able to do so from the space of particularity and contextuality. And because of that distanciation, no ontological fundament of revelation is accessible and therefore there is no ontological fundament by which diverse imaginative constructs can be measured or toward which they can be subsumed into universal statements reflecting the logic of adequation. Theology, and reflection on doctrine in particular, must risk this diversity if it is to be authentic to the mediated nature of revelation and the diverse imaginations that are responsible for interpreting it. This leaves the truth at which doctrine aims as a relational issue, one where truth cannot be absolutized into unassailable universal formulas.
and must instead attempt to balance the varied partial truths that relational contextual perspectives produce.

Given this understanding of revelation and its interpretation, doctrine should be framed as one genre for expressing interpretations of the experience of God’s self-communication in history. Like any genre, doctrine then functions in a way constrained by the preceding contours of its genre, but with space to innovate and reshape it. Because of the distanciation effect of symbolic mediation, the form and content of expressed understanding of revelation are inseparable—since no unmediated fundament of revelation can be accessed, the content of revelation is always part and parcel of its form. Therefore, as innovation in the genre of doctrine occurs, there is the production of not just new form but also new content. The content of the meaning of revelation changes and grows as imaginations operate to develop new variations on the genre. And just as the innovation within a genre is limited by the existing material of the genre, doctrinal theology is constrained in how much it can innovate. Development that breaks too much with past tradition will become unreceiveable by the audience of the faithful. But the ability of the faithful to meaningfully appropriate alterations in the genre in ways that further their experience of the faith and progress toward greater peace and human dignity are signs of the validity of that new interpretation or expression. Such valid interpretations or expressions should be allowed to impact the life of the church at the level of doctrine if they are to have the significance that they should.

As a genre, this chapter suggests that doctrinal development should be conceived in comparison to the stages of mimesis used by Paul Ricoeur to describe the hermeneutical process of development of narratives within a genre. Doctrinal development begins by apprehending pre-existing doctrinal formulas, their contextual history, and the local context from which the
individual interpreter is operating. That individual then crafts a novel interpretation, and that variation is then presented to a receiving audience, the Christian faithful, in order to test its validity for enhancing their experience of the faith. The dependence this model has on the full scope of the faithful, as well as its integration of a contextual hermeneutic imagination, forces doctrinal development to reckon in a comprehensive way with the historicity of all Christian thought and to open the authority over the process to the entirety of the church’s faithful and not leave the hierarchical magisterium with a final monopoly over the movements of the Holy Spirit. It also encourages doctrine to develop in the direction of simplification rather than specification, allowing the process to better allow for diversity and plurality. This model then is better able to operate within a global and pluralistic church than the theological or organic model of development that has predominated in recent decades. It allows that diversity to genuinely penetrate the life of the church by impacting its doctrinal framework, the framework that outlines the church’s public identity and directs the faith life of its members.
CHAPTER 5—Returning Relevance of Doctrinal Development and Future Possibilities

The papacy of Pope Francis has brought the issue of doctrinal development into a spotlight. While Francis has sometimes been exaggeratedly cast as moving to alter doctrine in substantive ways, such as occurred with his now infamous 2013 interview comment of “Who am I to judge?” when asked about the inclination of homosexuality, he has also been careful to head off attempts to interpret his pastoral aims for the application of doctrine as more comprehensive criticism of doctrine itself. However, Francis has made the idea of reform in the doctrinal tradition of the church an idea of renewed importance. In a 2015 address to the Convention of the Italian Church, Francis describes “Pelagianism” as a temptation that disrupts the new humanism he wants to take root in the church, and he clearly lays out his stance that reform is a necessary part of a healthy church:

Pelagianism leads us to trust in structures, in organizations, in planning that is perfect because it is abstract. Often it also leads us to assume a controlling, harsh and normative manner. Norms give Pelagianism the security of feeling superior, of having a precise bearing. This is where it finds its strength, not in the lightness of the Spirit’s breath. Before the evils or problems of the Church it is useless to seek solutions in conservatism and fundamentalism, in the restoration of obsolete practices and forms that even culturally lack the capacity to be meaningful. Christian doctrine is not a closed system, incapable of raising questions, doubts, inquiries, but is living, is able to unsettle, is able to enliven. It has a face that is supple, a body that moves and develops, flesh that is tender: Christian doctrine is Jesus Christ. The reform of the Church then—and the Church is semper reformanda—is foreign to Pelagianism.³


To conclude the above thought, Francis turns to the value of “creativity” to guide this church that is ever reforming, suggesting a developmental and forward-looking view of tradition rather than one preoccupied with preservation and resistance to change. Francis again distinguishes that this concern is for him a pastoral one, stating, “I ask bishops to be pastors. Nothing more: pastors. . . . As pastors do not be preachers of complex doctrines, but proclaimers of Christ, who died and rose for use. Concentrating on the essential, on the kerygma.”4 But, a developmental approach to doctrine seems an inescapable byproduct. And in more authoritative fashion, Francis’s 2013 Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Gaudium, drew a similar map. A map guiding church leaders to focus on the essential heart of the church’s dogmatic tradition, a heart expressing love and mercy, rather than technically formulated and less authoritative doctrines, the rigidity of which can inhibit pastoral sensitivity and effectiveness.5 So again, while couching his position in pastoral pragmatics, Francis clearly points to an idea that some doctrines possess flexibility and are therefore subject to developmental understanding.

Yet the question remains about exactly what model of development is suited to Francis’s reoriented platform for church teaching. I will argue in this chapter that while Francis’s vision remains firmly entrenched in a model that fits the theological theory as described by Walgrave, the imaginative theory that I have constructed in this work is more befitting the actual contextual and historical circumstances that Francis wants to address. I will make this argument at the theoretical level, but will also make it by way of demonstration by examining two doctrinal topics, marriage and infallibility, and how the imaginative theory has an advantage in making them pastorally applicable in the contemporary life of the world church.

4 Ibid.
**Pope Francis and the “Hermeneutic of Reform”**

In a letter written in 2013, Pope Francis gave his endorsement to the model of Vatican Council II interpretation laid out by Pope Benedict XVI in 2005. Benedict, in his 2005 Christmas address, critiqued what he termed a “hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture” as the correct way to understand Vatican II and instead argued for a “hermeneutic of reform” that functions cooperatively with a “hermeneutic of continuity.” The main issue at stake for Benedict was whether Vatican II should be seen as a radical break with the forms of church life and doctrine that preceded it, or if it should rather be seen as a reforming moment that re-interpreted prior church teaching in a way that retained continuity with the past. In his 2013 statement, Francis aligned himself with the same view espoused by Benedict. Such a position makes sense given Francis’s established desire to bring church renewal that is achieved primarily through creative pastoral appropriation of doctrine more so than alterations to doctrinal formulae.

However, the terms of this position, “reform” and “continuity,” have become much abused in the rhetoric of church leadership. For example, as recently as 2015, the language of a “hermeneutic of continuity” was used by American Cardinal Daniel DiNardo to chide one of his fellow bishops who wanted what DiNardo saw as too much change within established USCCB teaching. In the interpretation of journalist Tom Roberts, the disagreement at the November 2015 meeting of the USCCB over updates to the bishops’ voting guide for American Catholics, “Faithful Citizenship,” revealed division among the bishops in terms of how much they are

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willing to embrace the reform agenda of Pope Francis. In the discussion over the document, Bishop Robert McElroy commented that the document did not reflect Francis’s concern for incorporating greater concern for poverty and ecology, and DiNardo’s response was a resort to the document representing a “hermeneutic of continuity.” It seems that the reception of Benedict’s concept has tended to undo the conjoined pairing of “reform” and “continuity” that both Benedict and Francis have tried to put forth. In order to situate this issue accurately, I will turn to an analysis of Benedict’s original argument as a way of plotting the renewal vision of the current pontiff.

Martin Rhonheimer has undertaken a thorough exegesis of the original address by Benedict XVI in which he laid out his argument for the hermeneutic of reform and continuity. His essay is a response to what Rhonheimer has perceived to be misinterpretations of Benedict similar to that revealed in the comment by Cardinal DiNardo, views that have fixated on the continuity element and used Benedict’s speech as a rallying justification for “the existence of an uninterrupted continuity between pre- and post-conciliar doctrine.” Rhonheimer instead explains Benedict’s position to be that essential reform requires an interplay of continuity and discontinuity, and that error lies in misunderstanding the levels at which continuity and discontinuity should operate. Rhonheimer’s focus in his essay is Benedict’s focus on the Vatican II teaching on religious freedom as a case study. And through this case, the question of the interplay between continuity and discontinuity is given a rather simple and traditional answer.

The situation, as Rhonheimer analyzes it, is that the church, beginning with its ascent to being the religion of Rome and running through its contested relationship with liberal political

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reform movements, had gotten too intermingled in the structures of state power and became unable to see the state as having any more central obligation than defending the “right to truth” of the one true religion. And furthermore, it left church leaders with an inescapable perception that the failure to fulfill that obligation amounted to the instantiation of an intolerable religious indifferentism that tacitly denied the existence of any ultimate religious truth. In that sense, Benedict indeed affirms that Vatican II’s teaching on religious freedom represents a discontinuity with pre-conciliar doctrine, with Rhonheimer adding that the religious freedom doctrine in *Dignitatis Humanae* is precisely what was condemned under the pontificate of Pius IX in his 1864 encyclical *Quanta Cura*.10 However, this discontinuity exists with a matrix of authority levels for Benedict, and in this case it enabled for him a return to continuity with an authentic dogmatic position that was present in the pre-Constantinian church. This position professed limits on the power and competency of the state such that the freedom of public exercise of religion ought to be a human right, a position in the interests of that early church that faced suppression without such freedom. In other words, Vatican II’s acceptance of discontinuity with what came to be identified as an outmoded doctrine on the state brought the church into a purer continuity with its infallible deposit of doctrine on faith and morals. As Rhonheimer summarizes it:

In short: the teaching of Vatican II on religious freedom does not imply a new dogmatic orientation, but it does take on a new orientation for the Church’s social doctrine—specifically its teaching on the mission and function of the state. The Council gave the same immutable principles a new application in a new historical setting. There is no timeless dogmatic Catholic doctrine on the state—nor can there be—with the exception of those principles that are rooted in the apostolic Tradition and in Sacred Scripture. The idea of a “Catholic state” as the secular arm of the Church falls outside these principles, which in fact suggest a separation between the political and religious spheres.11

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10 Ibid., 1031-1032.
11 Ibid., 1032.
The key element of Benedict’s position on doctrine, according to Rhonheimer, becomes the clear distinction of levels of authority. There exists in this position a core deposit of unchangeable theological dogma, the status of which must be grounded in apostolic Tradition or scripture, and also changeable historical forms that try to give expression to and apply these core principles in varying socio-political circumstances. In the first case, continuity must be preserved. In the latter case, discontinuity can be a pathway to genuine reform and must be expected over time.

As Rhonheimer describes, the criticism within Benedict’s position is not aimed just at progressives stereotyped as supporting Vatican II as a rupture with past tradition and wanting sweeping doctrinal changes to occur based on the council’s “spirit.” The criticism is aimed also at conservatives who would reject any apparent idea of discontinuity and on that basis reject the genuine reforms of Vatican II or else seek to justify them by a regressive harmonization theology that cleanses the discontinuity perception. 12 Again, the central theme for Rhonheimer in Benedict’s position must remain the need to balance continuity with discontinuity in order to enable authentic reform in the life and teaching of the church. 13 Of the reformed teaching on religious freedom that derives from that dynamic at Vatican II, he writes, “This transition should be embraced, not watered down by the search for a false continuity that would ultimately distort a genuine continuity and, with it, the nature of the one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church.” 14 In the language of earlier portions of this study, Rhonheimer aligns Benedict’s views with the theological theory described by Walgrave and rooted in the principles of Newman. What is espoused is the same notion of inviolable principles that are supernaturally known and preserved

12 See ibid., 1033-1034.
13 See also John W. O’Malley, “‘The Hermeneutic of Reform’: A Historical Analysis,” Theological Studies 73 (2012): 517-546. O’Malley similarly argues that Pope Benedict XVI, in his terminology of a hermeneutic of reform, “explicitly recognizes that reform, a self-aware effort to effect change, partakes of both realities [continuity and discontinuity]” (543). O’Malley buttresses this analysis by surveying historical conceptions of reform in the church and demonstrating that Benedict’s balancing of continuity and discontinuity is genuine to the actual historical record.
14 Rhonheimer, 1036.
in the living tradition of the church and then interpreted and applied by the magisterium in varying ways over the course of varying historical circumstances. In addition, the rejection of discontinuity as a primary lens similarly sets this position against what Walgrave termed the transformistic theory that represents changeability at the core level of dogmatic truth as new revelatory insight is gained over time. And the rejection of “false continuity” sets this position against the logical theory that represents overwrought attempts to preserve a seamless progression of ideas throughout the church’s doctrinal history.

A question remains, though, about how fair it is to also set this frame around Pope Francis simply because of his reference to Benedict’s address in a correspondence that does not have a very high level of magisterial authority. A fuller examination of Francis’s thought does, I believe, justify this connection.

In his address to conclude the 2014 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, Francis followed Benedict’s paradigm quite precisely. There he specifically warns against the dangerous temptation to neglect the authority of the depositum fidei and attempts to deal with it as “masters” rather than “guardians,” but he also warns against a temptation to ignore the demands of reality and lock the depositum fidei within “meticulous language” and “byzantinisms.”\(^\text{15}\) Francis expresses here a view where doctrine must be flexible, yet must also remain rooted in an objective core of revealed truth. And in 2015, at the close of the Synod on the Family, he returned to this model again. Phrasing the idea in terms of pluralism and inculturation, Francis states, “Cultures are in fact quite diverse, and every general principle—as I said, dogmatic questions clearly defined by the Church’s magisterium—every general principle needs to be inculturated, if it is to be respected and applied. . . . Inculturation does not weaken true values,

but demonstrates their true strength and authenticity since they adapt without changing.”¹⁶

Francis here lays out the exact system that Benedict did, appealing to core dogmatic principles that are unchanging and unchangeable, but allowing that they undergo contextual interpretation and application that opens doctrines at a distance from that basic core to development that is necessary for pastoral effectiveness. He made this position even more clear when he praised the synodal bishops for avoiding “the danger of relativism” in their deliberations on how to find the balance between these dogmatic principles and their historical application, an affirmation of the true gravity that he affords those unchangeable truths. Yet, he also concluded by noting that while doctrinal definitions and formulas are necessities for reflecting the objectivity of divine truth, “the true defenders of doctrine are not those who uphold its letter, but its spirit; not ideas but people; not formulae but the gratuitousness of God’s love and forgiveness.”¹⁷

Both Benedict and Francis are building from the teaching of Vatican II that there exists a hierarchy of truths in Catholic doctrine, but are extrapolating the consequences of that idea in terms of doctrinal development.¹⁸ Both are trying to establish a moderate position, one that prevents an unfettered view of development that does not recognize an objective dogmatic foundation, but that also prevents an overly rigid view that would unduly isolate doctrine from reasonable considerations of historicity. Both want to allow for discontinuity at the non-essential historical level that can foster a developmental progression in doctrine, but to anchor that progression in continuity at the level of essential truth. But while the theoretical method of both

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¹⁷ Ibid.
is the same, and Francis indeed follows Benedict, Francis does introduce a heightened emphasis on reform in his approach.

In a recent analysis of Pope Francis’s relationship to Vatican II, Richard Gaillardetz asserts that no post-conciliar pope has seized upon the “reformist impulse” of Vatican II as strongly as Francis has. Gaillardetz attributes this to Francis’s commitment to a “pastoral orientation of doctrine,” which he sees as consonant with the agenda that Pope John XXIII established for the council. Gathering together several elements of conciliar teaching, Gaillardetz highlights several ways in which this pastoral inclination led to a doctrinal development position like that of Benedict and Francis. The central gist of this material as Gaillardetz presents it is a formal move away from a propositional model of revelation to one where revelation is symbolically mediated, making doctrinal development a firmly historicized practice wherein the church must ever seek new doctrinal formulations to better reflect the foundational substance of revelation. As seen above, Benedict XVI did not neglect this idea. He defended the reform aspects of Vatican II against those who would try to curtail it. However, Francis’s renewed focus on it does create a stronger mandate for theologians and bishops to directly consider the formulae of doctrine in a critical way.

Francis maintains the basic model of doctrinal formulation held by the council and maintained by Benedict, but his pushing of the church to the margins of society with the way his pastoral orientation has given weight to poverty and injustice simultaneously pushes doctrine into the living laboratory where developmental potentials can come under scrutiny. And for

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20 Ibid., 131. See also 36-37, where Gaillardetz describes the pastoral interests of John XXIII.
21 Ibid., 52-53.
Gaillardetz, this shift signals possibilities that have not been opened under previous pontificates.

He writes:

Bishops and church leaders contribute to the development of doctrine when they do what Pope Francis has been insisting on: move from the center to the periphery and see, in pastoral contexts, how doctrine actually “works,” that is, how it contributes to bringing people into a saving encounter with God’s abundant love and mercy.  

And for Gaillardetz, this orientation is indeed a significant step toward meaningful consideration of the development of doctrine. He notes that questions about the degree to which Francis will himself reform doctrine by papal fiat are misguided because magisterial action regarding doctrinal development historically comes only after a gradual and organic process that takes place within the lived tradition of the church, rooted in pastoral experience and reflected upon in theology. And in Gaillardetz’s perspective, Francis’s pastoral thrust encourages such lived examination that can lead to actual developments in doctrine.

Francis’s pastoral thrust invites theologians and bishops to subject doctrine to the real challenges and concerns of those living on the margins of society and to make their contexts a hermeneutical key for interpreting the truth of the gospel that those doctrines are meant to reflect. This is a tremendously valuable initiative in that it forces the church to confront the irreducible pluralism and multiculturalism that define its present existence. Yet, as I have argued in this project, the theological model of development that Francis upholds is not sufficient for this task. Francis attempts to cast the central, unchangeable deposit of dogma, the level of the truth hierarchy where continuity must be preserved, as a non-propositional content, focusing on the core value being the mercy and love of God. However, this approach fails because as Francis himself asserts formulas are necessary, and the specification of such formulas remains under the privileged control of magisterial authority. This places a firm barrier around the field of

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22 Ibid., 135.
23 Ibid., 134-135.
possibility for how doctrine can be reformed in response to what is discovered in the pastoral
laboratory or expressed from the margins of pluralistic experience. And if the development
model in place cannot historicize the full hierarchy of truths and treat each level as a
hermeneutically derived entity based on specific contextual and historical circumstances, then
even the less authoritative levels, the ones that would be permitted to include historical
discontinuity, remain unduly fettered and unable to adequately respond to the genuinely diverse
faith understandings of the pluralism that constitutes the worldwide church.

A rehearsal of my criticisms of the theological theory is pertinent here. As I have argued
in Chapters 2 and 4, the theological theory has three main weaknesses: it fails to acknowledge
the true historicity active at every level of the dogmatic tradition leaving some aspects of
doctrine too immune to revision; it remains overly reliant on authority and tradition as the final
arbiters of validity; and, it does not allow adequate space for the real impact of irreducible
pluralism in the life of the church. Applying these problems specifically to the model of
Benedict XVI and Francis, which suggests a balance of continuity in essentials and discontinuity
in historical expression, reveals an interwoven pattern of issues. In insisting on an unchangeable
source for all doctrine that must remain continuous, this model implies some point of objectively
clear and unproblematically discernable revelation. It ignores that even at the most basic level
there is contestation and interpretation and that all revelation is always filtered through the
inexhaustible ambiguity of symbolic mediation. This means that magisterial authority is
permitted an arbitrary power to retroactively christen certain aspects of doctrinal history as
unchangeable and irreversible as it suits present preoccupations. And so when Francis refers to
the central core of evangelical love and mercy, the system of what is understood as attendant
dogmatic necessity is subject to the central authoritative magisterium and its interpretation of
which established elements of tradition are the ones that must absolutely remain in propositional continuity. And the power to make such determinations gives magisterial authority ultimate trumping power over ideas that might emerge out of pluralistic contexts that could otherwise be suggestive of genuine possibilities of reform. Thus, while the optimism reflected by Gaillardetz in response to Francis’s pastoral reorientation might be founded as far as the investigations of theology, it seems there would be small chance of such investigations producing fruit when it comes to impacting the actual doctrinal tradition of the church under the current model.

Rhonheimer’s apologia for Benedict’s model demonstrates this interweaving of shortcomings. Rhonheimer ascribes to the *depositum fidei*, the unchangeable core of apostolic and scriptural foundations that Francis essentializes as God’s love and mercy, the element of natural law. This introduces a tremendous degree of interpretation in what can count as content in that deposit. And Rhonheimer demonstrates the arbitrary retroactivity enabled with this model. In defending Benedict’s defense of the discontinuity represented by the Vatican II teaching on religious freedom, he recognizes that the previous contradictory doctrines were based on elements of apostolic and scriptural grounding as well as related natural law. However, he asserts, without justification beyond the self-apparentness of the magisterial authority of Vatican II and Benedict, that to assert that those elements include a dogmatic position on the relationship between Church and state is “excessive.” Rhonheimer is assenting to the fact that prior magisterial teaching would have recognized its resistance to religious freedom as dogmatically grounded in the *depositum fidei*, but he simply dismisses the idea that it actually was and places the formal doctrine of religious freedom on a level of historical changeability that justifies discontinuity. He concludes:

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24 Rhonheimer, 1040.
Natural law as such is therefore not at all affected by the discontinuity that is in question here. The contradiction arises only at the level of the assertion of the civil right, and is therefore only of the political order. The doctrine of Vatican II and the teaching of Quanta Cura with its "Syllabus errorum" are therefore not in contradiction at the level of the natural law, but at the level of natural law’s legal-political application in situations and in the face of concrete problems.  

And in an attempt to further justify this retroactive rearrangement of authority levels, Rhonheimer adds, "So once again, what is at stake here is not the infallibility of the ordinary magisterium in its interpretation of the natural law, because saying ‘application’ is not the same thing as saying ‘interpretation.’" To claim that Pius IX’s condemnations reflect a continuous interpretation of church-state relations with Vatican II’s Dignitatis Humanae and differ only at the level of application is specious at best and disingenuous at worst. And if new magisterial teaching is capable of arbitrarily repositioning doctrinal statements at different levels of the hierarchy of truths to suit its own current circumstances, it remains ever in control over what sort of reforms or developments in doctrine are permissible. And that control remains based on its false consciousness about its own historicity and hermeneutical rendering and precludes a genuine engagement with plurality and contextuality. This ignoring of the constructed nature of any content that would be positioned as the depositum fidei allows great latitude in asserting certain doctrines as unchangeable in order to head off reform currents deemed impermissible by magisterial opinion, while simultaneously defending its own freedom in doctrinal change even when such change might otherwise be considered to be discontinuous not only at the level of historical application but also at the level of fundamental interpretation.

In an imaginative theory of development, the levels of authority in a hierarchy of truths would not mean that there is some line beyond which teaching becomes completely

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25 Ibid., 1042.
26 Ibid.
irreformable and irreversible. Rather, it would mean that some teachings are simply more resistant to a change in lived appropriation. All doctrines at all levels would be considered particular historicized forms that should be open to ongoing imaginative interpretation, but it is reasonable to accept that some of them will be taken as more essentially constitutive of the living tradition of the church. Interpretive breaks from such teachings, the ones that would possess the greatest authority in the hierarchy of truths, would require less deviation to become too different for the living community to accept. But they would not be immune to reconfiguration entirely, requiring only a more gradual and incremental process if development were to occur.

A final aspect of the imaginative model applies to Francis’s vision more clearly. Francis’s desire that preoccupation with rigid preservation of formulae not get in the way of pastoral application that brings people the experience of God’s love and mercy points to a developmental orientation of simplification. Rather than expanding specification of formulae, Francis’s thrust has been to attend to the way doctrine is meant to bring people in touch with the central mysteries of the gospel. However, without allowing for the true historicization of the full hierarchy of truths and a decentralization of magisterial control over what sort of critiques and challenges to doctrinal tradition are licit, the sensitivity to pluralistic experience that is necessary to bring about the developmental simplification suggested by Francis’s pastoral aims becomes functionally curtailed. Magisterial authority remains capable of drawing lines to set off certain formulae as ones that cannot be subjected to discontinuity and the cultural diversity that Francis describes as the context for the pastoral application of gospel principles is left hemmed by that privileged magisterial context. Instead of allowing the experience of those in pluralistic situations
or on the margins of Western society to challenge the full scope of doctrinal teaching, pastoral application remains akin to a cultural imposition of the hypostatized and de-historicized doctrinal preoccupations of the magisterium. The imaginative theory of development would turn Francis’s hermeneutic of reform away from affirmation of a conglomeration of unchangeable dogma and allow for genuine interrogation of doctrine by diverse and pluralistic contexts, such as would be necessary for the simplification to the basic evangelical principles of divine love and mercy to occur and prevent them from being turned into idols.

I will turn now to two examples to model this difference between the imaginative theory of development and the version of the theological theory maintained in the thought of Benedict and Francis. First, an examination of the way doctrines on marriage have evolved, and second an examination of the doctrine of infallibility and its contested historical development.

**Example 1: Marriage and the Requirement of Procreation**

In the late 1800s, science first began to offer an understanding of mammalian fertilization occurring through the joining of egg and sperm. As this scientific understanding developed, awareness grew that sexual acts, by their very nature, could not be at all times potentially procreative. When church father’s like Augustine prohibited sex during known circumstances of infertility, it was a prohibition that assumed pregnancy and known female sterility as the only such circumstances. But when the church became aware that all men’s and women’s sexual activity outside of a narrow monthly window was essentially non-procreative, a sea change was forced in how the church assessed sexuality and marriage. For centuries, the prime definition of
marriage had been a contract exchanging sexual rights between the partners, and the moral justification for sex had been procreation. With sexuality placed so centrally in marriage law, the new knowledge about sexuality’s inability to be constantly procreative forced the church to find new ways to understand how procreation could fit into its doctrine on marriage.

Through the twentieth century, the tradition developed in an attempt to reconcile with these new biological facts. There is now very little dissent that conjugal love is the centerpiece of marriage and that it need not be narrowly confined to biological procreation—marriage is an intimate community of love in which procreation and union are equal and inseparable goals. The passages in Gaudium et Spes dealing with marriage and the 1983 revision of the Code of Canon Law are the two most foundational expressions of this change. However, opinions still range widely about how to apply the principle and exactly how the revised teaching is to be interpreted. In one view, the procreative dimension of marriage remains a strictly biological mandate embedded in God’s divine plan and sexuality must always honor this reproductive biology. In another, procreation becomes understood expansively; in other words, procreation in marriage is reimagined to not be an exclusively biological reality and licit sexuality is not bound to biological laws of reproduction. Each side represents reception of the development of marriage doctrine and they differ on how the lived appropriation of it should look. To assess them, I will begin with a brief survey of classical teaching on marriage in an effort to demonstrate its historicity, which helps explain the legitimate need for the twentieth century’s attempts at development in this doctrine. Next, I will examine the course of the church’s change in understanding marriage, beginning with the pre-Vatican II era, moving into the new teaching of Vatican II in Gaudium et Spes, and then into the reformulation of Canon Law in 1983. Finally, I
will turn to the diverging camps of scholars who have tried to understand and appropriate these changes.

The earliest phase of the church fathers’ thinking on sexuality is markedly Stoic. John Cavadini describes the view of sexuality in Clement of Alexandria and John Chrysostom to be “ascetic”; that is, they envisioned sexuality as a biological necessity that should be conducted with philosophical constraint and modest decorum so as to not upset the spiritual and rational respect that undergirded the partnership of husband and wife.27 The impetus of this compromise view in the patristic period was a reconciling of the real-world need for marriage and procreation and what they understood as the scriptural ideal of celibacy. Regarding this latter point, patristic thinkers were uneasy when they recognized that their celibate ideal of the new gospel age, an ideal that saw marriage as an inferior state instituted as a corrective measure for the sinfulness dominant in the old covenant, very closely mirrored the view of Gnostics.28 In order to rescue the idea of marriage, the thinking generally turned to a Hebrew conception of marriage as an office in which people could effectively carry out the societal duty of reproduction, and a similar notion in classical philosophy that located the purpose of marriage in the good of propagating civic society.29 In itself marriage was indeed a lesser form of social life than celibacy, but in a world where the expectation of an imminent eschaton was debunked, the Hebrew framework of social duty could give the inherently less moral form of life a moral purpose beyond itself. With the theoretical legitimacy of marriage secured by procreative purpose, figures like Clement and Chrysostom could wax positively about the pseudo-Stoic goods of hearth and kin, accompanied

29 Ibid., 98.
by sexual moderation and continence. The sinful nature of sexual passion could be wrangled into a suitable form that could sacramentally mirror the love between Christ and the church.

Augustine did not undo this sacramental imaging, but he did seriously challenge the blitheness with which his predecessors thought the sinfulness of sexual desire could be washed away by directing it to marriage and procreation. Augustine’s emphasis on original sin led him to doubt that sexual desire could ever be effectively redirected from orienting the will toward pride. The Stoic moderation that Chrysostom and Clement held up was something Augustine thought not possible in humanity’s fallen state. Thus, when the Manicheans renewed criticism of marriage, Augustine, the former Manichean himself, was sympathetic to their criticisms and offered a defense that some of his co-religionists thought ceded too much to the Manichean view of marriage’s unavoidable sinfulness. The result of Augustine’s attempt at correction was his classical formulation of the three goods of marriage that would dominate Catholic thought for centuries: “This [good of marriage] is threefold: fidelity, offspring, sacrament” (Commentary on the Literal Meaning of Genesis 9.7.12). For Augustine, this definition made marriage fundamentally good, but it also recognized the always imperfect nature of fallen humanity. It leaves no place for sexual desire or conjugal relations to be good in themselves. Rather, the goods direct marriage to conformity with nature and attempts at continence. At the end of the

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30 This ideal of the moderate and continent marriage also developed as a corrective against the other strain of Gnostic thought, the antinomians, who engaged in hedonistic sexuality rather than renunciation, thinking that it was a way of giving a foretaste of heavenly perfection and actually completing the pleroma. Procreation was again central because it gave the footing from which to critique the antinomians’ sexuality aimed primarily at pleasure. See Mackin, 116-121.
31 Cavadini, 448.
32 Ibid., 448-449.
33 Mackin, 128.
34 On Augustine’s use of sacramentum here, see Mackin, 139. Mackin goes to pains to stipulate that the word here should not be understood in the sense of a grace-giving sacrament instituted as part of the new covenant. It is instead meant to describe marriage as a bond of permanence reflective of the bond between Christ and the church.
above passage declaring the goods, Augustine summarizes: “This is a kind of rule set for marriage, by which nature’s fruitfulness is honored and vicious sexual vagrancy is restrained.”

Procreation, and the other goods, excuse marriage’s existence, but it remains always tainted for Augustine. The value of interpersonal relationship within the marriage is given very little space, and what legitimacy marriage can acquire is only through its opening to procreation. In *The Good of Marriage* 9, he offers a strange diminishment of friendship in marriage, noting that marriage and sexuality are instrumental goods serving the inherent good of friendship, but only in that they beget children who enter society in order to form friendships. Thus within marriage, procreation remains the primary good and sole justifier of the conjugal relationship. In *On Adulterous Marriages*, “Therefore the propagation of children is the first, the natural and the principal purpose of marriage” (2.12); in *Contra Faustus*, “The word ‘matrimony’ shows that a man takes a wife in order that she may become a mother” (19.26). Theodore Mackin acknowledges that fidelity and sacrament, as safeguards against fornication, can be constituted as a kind of mutual help that is a relational good, and notes Augustine did lay the foundation for the flowering of the good of friendship in marriage in later Catholic teaching. But he claims that Augustine’s theological lead mainly resulted in the juridical instantiation of procreative rights and intentions as the defining characteristic of the marriage bond.

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35 According to Mackin’s interpretation (138), Augustine’s ultimate hope seems to be that marriage can eventually be purified by the spouses, through gradual discipline, coming to eventually renounce sex altogether. See also Cavadini, 458-461; Cavadini has a more positive read on Augustine’s idea that the form of marriage can excuse married intercourse because he notes that beyond this excusing dynamic marriage is elevated to “sacrament” by Augustine. He takes Augustine to be seeing in marriage a sacramental sign of the purifying love of Christ for the church—as marital love can purify the vice of lust. However, this reading requires taking *sacramentum* in the stronger sense that Mackin resists (see n. 34 above).

36 This point is disputed by Cormac Burke, who argues that Augustine’s views on marriage represent the “conjugal personalism” that would come to ground modern developments of marriage doctrine, and that preoccupation with juridical issues has skewed the perception of Augustine as too pessimistic regarding this personalist element of marriage (“St. Augustine and Conjugal Sexuality,” *Communio* 17 (1990): 545-565). Burke’s is a highly selective reading, though, one that ignores commentary from Augustine that is indeed more clearly negative about the relational elements of marriage.

37 Mackin, 138-141.
The juridical view of marriage became the dominant one in the church during the medieval period because the church increasingly took responsibility for civic record keeping and became the nexus for resolving different cultural idioms of marriage. The overriding concern was how to define what made a marriage a marriage. The legal focus wound up turning to the establishment of consent. The primary question then became to what is it necessary to consent in order for a marriage to be valid. If it is declaration of consent to communal and mutual life, then siblings could be considered to marry if they wished. If consent to sexual rights enacted in consummation was the necessity, then Joseph and Mary would not be considered spouses. In the final resolution reflected in the *Decretals* of Gregory IX in 1234, it was consent that made marriage valid, and the consent required was consent to the three goods as defined by Augustine.

The focus of valid marriage, though still controlled by Augustine’s formulation, was shifted to the consent at stake in the relationship itself, and thus began the church’s tradition of marriage as a contract.

The theological reflections of Thomas Aquinas on this state would become decisive by the modern era and would loom powerfully in the formulation of the 1917 Code of Canon Law, even if during his own time it did not have significant impact. Aquinas’s theology of marriage is straightforward enough, modeled on Augustine’s three goods, but commentators vary on how exactly his re-formulation of those goods should be assessed. The central idea of Aquinas is that marriage has three ends, a primary one of procreation, and secondary one of community between the couple, and a tertiary one of sacrament. Augustine’s goods are here being translated into an Aristotelian frame: the good of procreation applies as the end for the generic animal level of humanity; the good of fidelity applies to the end of the social level of humanity, what would

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38 On this overview of the medieval period, see Mackin, 145-174.
39 Thomas Aquinas, Sup. 65.1.
come to be known in church thought as the end of the consortium vitae; and the good of sacrament is the end of imaging the bond between Christ and church as is possible for baptized persons of faith.

The Code of Canon Law issued in 1917, in canon 1013 §1, was abundantly clear about the purpose of marriage and was founded on Aquinas: “The primary end of marriage is the procreation and education of children; its secondary end is mutual help and the allaying of concupiscence.” Church teaching up to this point had tended to appropriate Aquinas’s framework as a hierarchical statement of marriage purposes for the sake of juridical definition and marital morality. The “primary” and most important being procreation, the “secondary” and less important being consortium vitae. In canon 1081 §2, the 1917 code also upheld the medieval emphasis on contractual consent as the definitive starting point of marriage, and placed that consent in light of Aquinas’s framework of primary ends: “Matrimonial consent is an act of the will by which each party gives and accepts a perpetual and exclusive right over the body for acts which are of themselves suitable for the procreation of children.” Jurisprudence dominated concern for pastoral application here, with Joseph Koury later assessing the 1917 canon thusly: “There is practically no recognition that marriage is a relationship of affection and mutual care.”

Koury’s succinct comment points to what became perhaps the root division for the next century regarding perspectives on marriage. Canon law and much of church teaching has tended to regard marriage in fieri, that is as an event, as an act of creating a licit marriage. Dissenting and revisionist voices have tended to look at marriage in facto esse, that is as an existing and ongoing state. For understandable reasons, canon law is more concerned with the former

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because it is necessary to have sharp distinctions for deciding legal matters like nullity. However, moral and pastoral theology of marriage is severely deficient if it focuses on marriage in fieri. A marriage in facto esse is a dynamic reality in which the norms of sexual morality and procreation are quite complex, whereas an in fieri view creates a deception that marriage is simple and static. The abstract ideal of the in fieri canon speaks little to the phenomenological reality of the in facto esse.

Edward Schillebeeckx’s assessment of Aquinas on marriage reflects a corrective course. He elaborates that Aquinas’s idiom should be understood to work from the sacramental to the procreative rather than the other way around, because the sacramental reflected the most uniquely human elements and the procreative the least, making the value relation the reverse of what the 1917 code reflected. He argues that the practical concern for juridical precision led the church away from a fuller understanding of the heart of marriage, such that neo-scholastics and the modern churchmen who worked from their foundation studied a legal abstraction rather than a sacramental reality. For Schillebeeckx, it is the bond of loving community between spouses in and of itself that forms the basis for marriage’s sacramental character, which requires formal recognition of the consent to commit to the consortium vitae, “the soul of the sexual relationship in marriage.” Then, according to Schillebeeckx, the natural law presupposition that God connected procreation uniquely to the marriage community makes the generic level of sexual procreation a necessary obligation. Within the explanation of this scheme, Schillebeeckx notes that the drive for juridical exactitude made this narrower facet of marriage the most centrally operative category for church teaching. He is sympathetic to the motivation,

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41 See also ibid., 132-133.  
43 Ibid., 390-394.  
44 Ibid., 392.
but is critical of the loss of focus on the *consortium vitæ* that he considers more important. For him, the situation is that procreation is proper to the community of love that is formed in marriage, not that marriage is proper to the natural process of procreation. Procreation is an effect of the community of marriage, not a cause of it.

The text of *Gaudium et Spes* thoroughly instantiated this new vision of marriage. What Schillebeeckx and Koury saw as a misunderstanding of Thomistic “ends” language was corrected: “The sexual characteristics of humankind and the human faculty of reproduction wonderfully exceed the dispositions of lower forms of life.” Sexuality without the express purpose of procreation was sanctioned: “Love is uniquely expressed and perfected and chastely are noble and worthy ones.” And further, “To be sure, marriage is instituted not solely for procreation. Rather, its very nature as an unbreakable covenant between persons and the good of the children both demand that the mutual love of the spouses be expressed and grow and mature in a rightly ordered way.” But perhaps the most important passage on marriage is the following, crucial enough to be quoted at length:

> The intimate partnership of married life and love has been established by the Creator and qualified by His laws, and is rooted in the conjugal covenant of irrevocable personal consent. Hence by that human act whereby spouses mutually bestow and accept each other a relationship arises which by divine will and in the eyes of society too is a lasting one. For the good of the spouses and their offspring as well as of society, the existence of the sacred bond no longer depends on human decisions alone. For, God Himself is the author of matrimony, endowed as it is with various benefits and purposes. All of these have a very decisive bearing on the continuation of the human race, on the personal development and eternal destiny of the individual members of a family, and on the dignity, stability, peace and prosperity of the family itself and of human society as a whole. By their very nature, the institution of matrimony itself and conjugal love are ordained for the procreation and education of children, and find in them their ultimate crown.

The elevation of the *consortium vitæ* is apparent here, as well as the relegation of procreation to one of the necessary ends rather than the primary one. Conjugal love is the primary good and

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46 Ibid., §49.
47 Ibid., §50.
48 Ibid., §48.
end unto itself, and procreation and the development of the married persons and their relationship instrumentally flow from it. To be sure, procreation is still indispensible in understanding the total reality of marriage, but in Gaudium et Spes it is no longer the primary element defining it. An additional observation of this passage from Todd Salzman and Michael Lawler is also instructive: “The Second Vatican Council also teaches [in Gaudium et Spes §48] that . . . marriage, not each and every marriage act as Paul VI taught, is to be open to the procreation of children.”

Mackin offers a similar opinion, writing that Gaudium et Spes made conjugal love its own developmental (in facto esse) essence, wherein procreation was a possible part of the development, not a necessary instrumental result nor a primary end.

The disputed reception of Gaudium et Spes’s teaching is reflected in the ambivalence of the 1983 revision of Canon Law regarding marriage. For Koury, the model of marriage as a consortium vitae that is in facto esse did not fully penetrate the revised Canon Law, demonstrated to him by the fact that despite the 1983 code four times using Gaudium et Spes’ “covenant” terminology, it returned to the standard “contract” language twenty-five times.

Nonetheless, the 1983 Canon defines a significant change in the understanding of how procreation fits into marriage. For example, the consenting act that juridically makes marriage is an “exchange of persons” in 1983’s Canon 1057 §2 rather than an exchange of procreative rights, as it was in 1917’s Canon 1081 §2. So the new Code of Canon Law did reflect the sensibilities of Vatican II, but it tempered that with maintenance of a legalistic in fieri understanding of marriage.

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50 Mackin, 269.
51 Koury, 138-142.
Humanae Vitae gave a novel and distinctive spin to the teaching of Gaudium et Spes in line with this latter approach. Gaudium et Spes described marriage as centered on the meaning of the conjugal communion with two ensuing ends that were part of its development, but not necessary to its legitimacy. Paul VI referred to the “meaning” of sexuality, but made it a dual reality comprised, ostensibly, of a non-hierarchical combination of the two traditional ends, the procreative and as he now termed it the unitive.”  The genius of this maneuver is that Paul VI speaks in this passage not about marriage, but about sex. He is thus able to ensure that procreation, though no longer primary to the definition of marriage according to the council, is indispensible since it is “willed by God” that the unitive and procreative dimensions of intercourse, which is the defining act of marriage, can never be separated. Whereas Gaudium et Spes oriented marriage as a whole to be open to procreation, Paul VI insured that that stipulation would not lead to a relaxing of sexual morality, such that artificial contraception could be interpreted to be licit, by making it required for every sexual act in the marriage to be open to procreation. According to Mackin, Paul VI never is able to offer logical ground for why the inseparable connection of the meanings is so absolute, but notes that the dual definition allows him to make an argument by equivalency for the necessity of every marital act to be procreative.

In his Marriage: the Rock on Which the Family is Built, William E. May is effusive in his praise for Humane Vitae, even including a chapter entitled “Pope Paul VI: A True Prophet.” A major reason for this agreement seems to be that May approves of the encyclical’s turn away from the move in Gaudium et Spes to make marriage itself open to procreation rather than each

marital act. May reverses the idea of Schillebeeckx that procreation is merely proper to marriage; he asserts that procreation is a more fundamental reality and that the purpose of marriage is to make one fit for it. His idea of marriage is thusly a very in fieri one: “The marital act is not an act of ‘making,’ either babies or love. Love is not a product that one makes; it is a gift that one gives—the gift of self.” Marriage is an event that occurs, not an in facto esse development of community. As such, it initiates obligation to certain norms and laws that May understands to be encoded in the very nature of sexuality and humanity. And fertile sexuality is the meeting point between the unitive and procreative norms that the nature includes. This leads to May’s affirmation of Paul VI’s teaching, but his extrapolation demonstrates why forcing the two meanings into a model of every marital act having to be open to life amounts to a sublimation of the unitive to the procreative, resulting in practice in a return to the traditional hierarchy of ends.

On the contrary, Salzman and Lawler argue that the intent of Gaudium et Spes is unequivocally to make procreation an end of marriage in facto esse, and not of every marital act. What this means is that the lived experience of marriage and marital sexuality must be factored into the definition of what it means for the couple to honor their procreative duty. Salzman and Lawler appeal to a statement of Pius XI in the 1930 Acta Apostolicae Sedis: “Every marriage in which conjugal love is thus realized [signifying and causing interpersonal union] bears spiritual fruit, becomes fruitful—even though there are no children.” Additionally, Salzman and Lawler note that a juridical focus highlights the presence or lack of children

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56 Ibid., 18-19.
57 Ibid., 95.
58 Ibid., 43, 176. The implication for them is that Paul VI’s application of procreative responsibility to every marital act is a deviation from tradition.
59 Ibid., 180.
regarding procreation, whereas an experiential focus understands that the effective nurturing of children, an essential component of procreation, depends upon the relational well-being of the parents.\textsuperscript{60} Marriage can thus be justly considered “interpersonally procreative” when couples responsibly judge that for reasons rooted in the internal good of conjugal love itself that biological procreation should be avoided.

Salzman and Lawler observe that marriage needs to be modeled on a foundation that accounts for the non-ideal and messy historical reality of married life.\textsuperscript{61} When sexuality is overly defined according to biological rhythms, it is a natural correlate that the unitive aspects will be unduly restricted to spiritual idealism. A key step then in recovering a model of marriage doctrine that can respond to the experience of people is to liberate sexuality from an overly physical definition so that the interpersonal relations of marriage can be understood in a realistic way. I will focus here on two strains of thought that attempt to effect this shift. One that tries to build upon the more expansive definition of fruitfulness and procreation, and a second that tries to more fully incorporate an understanding of the relational value and goodness of sex, showing that sex separated from procreative function is not automatically exploitative or distorted as was argued by May.

For Lisa Sowle Cahill, the moral norm for all Christian life is meant to be participation in the communal life of the body of Christ. She argues that this is measured by norms of virtue that override the absolute nature of objective natural norms. She cautions that, “Although the moral universe of the ideally ‘natural’ or of the mind of God may be orderly, human moral existence as we know it, live it, and often suffer it, can be

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 181.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 186.
impregnable to human efforts to render it coherent.” Accordingly, she suggests that marital and sexual norms must be crafted with flexibility within which individuals can be encouraged to make what they determine to be the best decision for eliciting proper Christian virtue. Responsibility to the Christian community may or may not entail biological procreation, and so procreation must be understood in a way that requires responsibility for any children that may result in a marriage, but that does not require children to be an essential part of the marriage.

A close ideological parallel is found in the marriage theology of Richard Gaillardetz. Building from Eastern Orthodox Trinitarian theology, Gaillardetz suggests shifting from a model of procreativity to one of “generativity” that is defined as joining the marital relationship to the mission of the church in the world. Gaillardetz begins the model by noting that it is more sensitive to the experience of infertile couples and couples who outlive their child-bearing and child-rearing years. It makes the obligation to be procreative a principle by which the love of the marriage is made public and “impels [the couple] outward in service of the world.”

A more exacting synthesis of Gaillardetz’s generativity model and Cahill’s communalizing is found in David Matzko McCarthy. To McCarthy, the two meanings of unitive and procreative correspond to the two tendencies that must be in sexuality for it to be fully human—the unitive describes the turn inward to relational intimacy, while the

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63 Ibid., 143-144, 148.
64 Ibid., 149.
66 Ibid., 183.
procreative describes the turn outward to social engagement. Procreation to him is about “social reproduction” that transcends the individual responsibility to biologically procreate. McCarthy’s main argument for this is that before a sex act can be defined in itself it must be understood as located within a network of social arrangements that make up the dynamic of the marital household. This makes contextual experience a necessary consideration for how marriage doctrine concerning procreation ought to be interpreted and developed. And in McCarthy’s arrangement, honoring social responsibility, as it may be variably defined in different social contexts, is sufficient for the couple to be fully procreative and conscientiously fruitful. This seizing of one’s rightful role in the societal community via the fostering of relational identity in the household community is tantamount for McCarthy to “producing people” in a way that is genuinely procreative, because being a genuine person means being situated in community. For this reason, McCarthy deviates from Paul VI and insists that procreation be cast as an element not of each sexual act but of marriage as a whole.

Christine Gudorf makes an observation similar to that made by Salzman and Lawler that, sociologically, a healthy interpersonal relationship between parents is essential to the responsible parenthood required by the procreative meaning of sex. However, she uses this premise to go a step further than Salzman and Lawler did, suggesting outright that the teaching of the inseparability of unitive and procreative should be abandoned. For Gudorf, maintaining centrality for procreation in marriage

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68 Ibid., 210.  
69 Ibid., 207.  
70 Ibid., 209.  
retains too much of the Augustinian pessimism about the pleasure in and of itself that she feels is necessary for marital sex to be as relationally unitive as it can be.\textsuperscript{72} She argues that from an incarnational perspective, the pleasure of sex should be a good in its own right and an integral aspect of its sacramentality, calling pleasurable sex the central symbol of marriage’s love bond just as water is the central symbol of the washing of baptism.\textsuperscript{73} A sacrament effects that which it symbolizes, and Gudorf points out that “sex creates the love it signifies.”\textsuperscript{74} This argument about sacramentality and sex symbolizing the marital bond and creating what it signifies could just as easily be applied to procreative meaning. Two operative assumptions, however, mark Gudorf’s interpretation as distinct. First, that sex needs to be pleasurable to effect the deep and intimate bonding that is envisioned as the core of conjugal love. And second, that the intimate bond of the spouses is indeed the core of conjugal love. For all the controversy otherwise around \textit{Humane Vitae}, this latter idea appears to have become a valid assumption after the vision of marital love in the encyclical. Whatever else it did or did not do, \textit{Humanae Vitae} does seem to have firmly enfranchised in church thought the idea that marriage’s essence is a love bond, and that whatever else happens in the marriage is meant to be a reflection of that bond.

Cristina L. H. Traina offers an autobiographical testimony for the value of pleasure that Gudorf describes for why the marriage as love bond model does not require sex to be open to biological procreation in every instance. Her primary target of criticism

\textsuperscript{72} Gudorf, “Graceful Pleasures: Why Sex Is Good for Your Marriage,” in \textit{Human Sexuality and the Catholic Tradition}, eds. Kieran Scott and Harold Daly Horell, 124 (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007). She is also careful here to stipulate that “marital” sexuality is the only kind she thinks capable of conveying the deep meaning she has in mind.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 126-127.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 130.
is the concept that separation from procreation turns sex into a selfish and exploitative pursuit of pleasure. This idea was rehearsed in May, but Traina examines it particularly in the thought of John Paul II. She offers three main reasons for why that premise does not hold up in her experience:

First, I do not have the energy to erect a buffer wide enough to protect a focus on mutual self-gift in intercourse open-to-but-not-desiring conception from the many other real and good emotional, economic, and social demands on me. Second, although these other demands can be harmful distractions from selfless sexual intimacy, they are also integral to the selves my husband and I bring to lovemaking in our best moments. . . . Finally (assuming “intercourse is necessary to love”), generous, unprotected intercourse does not seem to me to be an absolute good, able to trump all my other obligations.75

Given these experiential factors, Traina observes that mutual pleasure in itself is capable of symbolizing and effecting self-gift that enhances marital community even without being biologically procreative, especially when such experience arises, as it often does, from procreative responsibility, not out of denial of it.76

Traina unveils crucial elements of married experience that inform on sexual understanding. The social and economic and other demands, including the stress of raising existing children, often are healed in grace-filled ways by the mutual pleasure of sex, and subservience to the biological norms of procreative rhythms makes such sexual sharing significantly more challenging, especially when church norms on sexuality also prohibit genital sexual activity apart from intercourse. None of the post-Vatican II thinkers surveyed here would disagree that in such circumstances couples are free to choose to avoid conception. The disagreement about means remains, but that is not the present focus. What is is that the model of marriage that currently exists does not do enough to make space for what this segment of experience says about sexuality. It leaves pastoral theology disconnected if it cannot

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76 Ibid., 278.
meaningfully take account of marital sex independent of responsibility for biological procreation. For instance, Gudorf observes that a major lack in church life is extensive sex education as part of marriage preparation, and she also suggests that the church should support more thorough sex education in private and public schooling. Whether through sex education or marriage prep or some other vehicle, openness within church norms, culture, and sacramental thought to non-biologically procreative sexual experience in marriage would greatly enhance the church’s pastoral effort to support married life.

As this survey demonstrates, marriage doctrine, including its inclusion of teaching on the place of procreation, is deeply embedded in historicity and has undergone thorough and substantive change over centuries of interpretation rooted in practical engagement with real world experience and authoritative concern for the preservation of what are considered fundamental values. But as the scene of post-Vatican II thought demonstrates, experience is still calling for more responsive development in the church’s teaching on how to understand procreation. Views like McCarthy’s and Gudorf’s and Traina’s represent an imaginative hermeneutic resulting in such a call. They preserve the symbolic concept of procreation as a viable element of marriage experience, which keeps them recognizably anchored in tradition as they shape their new mimetic variations of marriage doctrine. Additionally, their conclusions signal a shift of simplification toward the non-propositional principle of conjugal love and its meaning that remains a mystery in lived reality. And lastly, the place of procreation in marriage as well as the status of marriage itself has been variable in the church’s tradition, and so the

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77 Gudorf, “Graceful Pleasures,” 132.
78 See Terrance W. Tilley, Inventing Catholic Tradition (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2000) 66-75. What I am suggesting here by referring to procreation as a symbolic concept parallels Tilley’s examination of the term transubstantiation in Eucharist theology and how its evolution illustrates the way the popular semantics of terms can change and require changes in doctrine in order to continue to allow such key concepts to mark the identity of church tradition. For Tilley, such shifts in popular meaning show that “the significance of a doctrine in a tradition can undergo a major semantic shift while the verbal token expressing it has remained unchanged” (75).
magisterial position would have great difficulty legitimately establishing an unchangeable core of propositional doctrines to curtail the kind of creative and innovative interpretations of what procreation means for conjugal love that these theologians offer. For the pastoral orientation that Pope Francis wants to bear fruit, it must open the doctrinal tradition to this experiential challenge in a more complete way. The basic meaning of conjugal love that emerges is one of enabling a cooperative *consortium vitae* that draws people into personal spiritual development and responsible engagement with their society. Successful pastoral ministry by the church would thus depend on allowing its teaching to develop in light of real praxis. That is, it would have to be responsive to what those in the process of living that conjugal love in their varied and plural situations understand what it means for them to be procreative, even if it threatens centuries old traditions that define it as an *in fieri* sexual-biological necessity.  

**Example 2: Infallibility in a World Church**

In Brian Tierney’s historical study of infallibility, he argues that infallibility was invented as a doctrine through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries without any prior public teaching suggesting it. As a result, Tierney observes that the doctrine was and always has since been influenced by particular needs and concerns of particular church groups in particular historical circumstances. In this example, I will trace the contour of the formation of the doctrine of infallibility during the crucial medieval period Tierney highlights, and then examine the way it has been considered since its solemn definition at Vatican I. To conclude, I will present ways in

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79 See Tilley, 75. Tilley asserts that such semantic innovations borne out of evolving cultural experiences are simple facts of the living tradition that must be recognized in formal ways. He writes, “The negative conclusion is that doctrinal formulas alone cannot carry the identity of a tradition; the positive conclusion is that living faith traditions may thrive and maintain an identity even as doctrinal formulas change, even radically.”

which contextual theology, specifically here from Africa and the Caribbean, present ecclesiological challenges that call for an examination of infallibility’s place in a global and pluralistic church.

The primary lens of Tierney’s analysis is the logically negative correlation between infallibility and sovereignty, how increasing infallible power makes current leaders subject to the decrees of past ones, thereby limiting the sovereignty of the present leader. To Tierney, Vatican Council I used infallibility in an attempt to increase papal sovereignty at a time when papal authority was under threat from outside forces.81 However, since the concept in its Middle Ages origins originally was meant to appeal to that negative correlation with sovereignty and curtail papal authority, this change in strategy in the modern era has led to theological prevarications in the defenders of the Vatican I doctrine.82

Tierney’s account of infallibility’s origins centers on the establishment of the Franciscan Order. Prior, in the twelfth century, canonists thought it self-evident that popes could err and clearly separated that fallibility from the general indefectibility of the church as a whole. According to Tierney, at this point in canonical thought none of the tenets of the later Vatican I teaching on infallibility were present. There was no sense of Tradition as a source of revelation in addition to scripture, no idea that the power of the Petrine keys extended beyond juridical authority to magisterial authority, no concept that an individual pope could supersede the authority of a general council, and no support for labeling even solemn papal pronouncements as irreformable ex sese.83 That began to change as debates emerged between mendicant and secular theologians about the special ecclesiastical privileges possessed by the mendicants that allowed them to bypass consent from local clerical leadership as they conducted pastoral work. This

81 Ibid., 1.
82 Ibid., 2-6.
83 Ibid., 57.
argument was exacerbated by Franciscan Joachimism that introduced suspicions of heresy with its radical apocalyptic understanding of the role of Francis and the insistence by some Franciscans that their way of poverty represented a dogmatic model of perfection and not just a new disciplinary expression of Christ’s teaching. For Tierney, Bonaventure became a key figure in this debate that laid foundations for the formation of an infallibility doctrine. Bonaventure embraced the idea of Franciscan poverty being a new teaching and advocated for the development of such doctrines even when there was no warrant in ancient sources, but he relied on the intervention of papal authority as justification. Specifically, the argument of Bonaventure and later defenders that Franciscan poverty is supposed to pertain to single individuals and the community common depended upon the 1279 bull Exiit qui seminat by Nicholas III, which gave dogmatic status to the perfection of poverty so defined. Tierney analyzes that Bonaventure’s position actually would stand against the later doctrine of infallibility because his developmental theory made current popes not restricted by previous papal teaching, allowing them the sovereignty to authoritatively make new pronouncements. But later complexities in the poverty issue would press the idea beyond Bonaventure and closer to the Vatican I model of infallibility.

In the later half of the thirteenth century, it was Peter Olivi who helped force that transition. Olivi agreed with Bonaventure’s principles of progressive revelation with Francis as a key bearer of new revelation, but he more heavily leaned on papal teaching specifically as the magisterial validation of such new revelation. One important strategy he employed that was absent from Bonaventure was to attach papal infallibility to Luke 22:32, the locus classicus for

84 On these debates see ibid., 58-67.
85 Ibid., 73.
86 Ibid., 89-90.
87 Ibid., 112.
scriptural justification of indefectibility. He made the former a naturally logical outgrowth of the latter. A hermeneutical key for Olivi in taking this step was a greater adherence to Franciscan Joachimite apocalypticism that expected the coming of a heretical pope who would try to undo the influence of Francis. To Tierney, that is precisely the reason why Olivi differed from Bonaventure when each had the same basic aim, to defend the defense of Franciscan poverty—Olivi feared the sovereignty of a future heretic whom he believed was in fact coming and so developed infallibility as a bulwark against that danger.

The situation came to a boil when John XXII attempted to revoke Nicholas III’s *Exiit* in 1323. John came to see the dogmatic status of Franciscan poverty and the renunciation of all dominion and right to use of material wealth as threatening to the very office of the papacy, motivated in part by the mounting radicalism of Spiritual Franciscans who, like Olivi, adhered to a strong Joachimite apocalypticism. In response, in 1324 in a document known as the Sachsenhausen Appeal, a dissident group of Franciscans created a novel argument based on Matthew 16, interpreting the power of the keys to include magisterial power that led to the concept of infallibility. In observation of this situation Tierney writes: “Here, for the first time, a doctrine of infallibility based on the Petrine power of the keys was overtly propounded. But the doctrine was fathered by anti-papal rebels not by curial theologians. And, far from embracing the doctrine, the pope indignantly denounced it as a pernicious novelty.” To Tierney, John seems to have been simply unable to conceptualize the principle held by his opponents that church magisterium could add definitively to the articles of faith founded in

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88 Ibid., 118-119.
89 Ibid., 125.
90 Ibid., 175.
91 Ibid., 187-188.
scripture, leaving no room for him to even consider the possibility of infallibility.² Yet, as the ideas of his opponents became mainstreamed, infallibility became an increasingly unavoidable issue.

An ecclesiological Pandora’s Box was thus opened and infallibility would become ever-after an insistent question in the theology of the church. Tierney outlines ways in which it was directed in both anti-papal and pro-papal ways. William of Ockham is his exemplar of the anti-papal form, which Tierney suggests results from his attempts to continue the Franciscan fight against papal sovereignty and the threat to the status of Exodus.³ Ockham maintained that the pope could err, but he distinguished between doctrine and discipline and applied the elements of infallibility only to doctrine while leaving no middle ground between irreformability and heresy regarding papal pronouncements on doctrine.⁴ However, for Tierney, this left Ockham in a position of having to establish criteria by which authentic or heretical teaching could be differentiated. His ultimate standard was scripture and Tradition, invoking an early version of the two-source theory of revelation, but he was unable to provide an objective guide for how scripture and Tradition are to be accurately interpreted.⁵ And in Tierney’s analysis, this led Ockham to a position of subjectivity regarding the interpretation of scripture and Tradition, but not in a way that opened church teaching to diversity of any kind. Rather Ockham insisted on his own interpretation as the correct one by which to judge authenticity and wanted to use the doctrine of infallibility as grounds to judge all his opponents, including sitting popes who would disagree with his positions, as heretics.⁶

³² Ibid., 193.
³³ Ibid., 209.
³⁴ Ibid., 214-217.
³⁵ Ibid., 228.
³⁶ Ibid., 234-235.
On the pro-papal side, Tierney focuses on Guido Terreni as the main figure who allowed infallibility to be utilized in a way that could cooperate with papal sovereignty. One of his key moves was to pick up an idea that had been developed by Olivi, that the indefectibility theory justified by Luke 22 necessitates papal infallibility, applying the passage to Peter and his successors specifically instead of the whole church in general as earlier canonists had preferred. He combined this idea with the distinction between public teaching and private opinion, applying the authority granted in Luke 22 to the former and leaving the latter open as a place where error could occur. And for Terreni, even if error did occur leading a pope into heresy, the safeguard of infallibility regarding that pope’s public teaching would remain in place by the power of the Holy Spirit. This foundation allowed him to defend papal sovereignty against both of its main opponents, conciliarists and Franciscans. He argued against conciliarists by observing that the scriptural commissioning of apostolic leadership is collective, but also simultaneous with a singling out of Peter, allowing Terreni to interpret the authority of general councils as flowing through the infallibility of the pope. But in order to preserve the sovereignty of current popes who might still be limited by this application of infallibility to past conciliar decrees, Terreni minimized the range of applicability of infallibility to only truths of faith, which meant derivation from scripture, greatly reducing the number of infallible teachings by which a standing pope would have to be restricted. Tierney also notes here that Terreni went as far as to reinterpret past decrees in order to justify his thesis. With these revisionist tools in place, Terreni was able to also reply to attacks from Franciscans by claiming that John XXII was not

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97 Ibid., 245-246.
98 Ibid., 248-249.
99 Ibid., 263-265. Biblically here Terreni noted Matthew 16, 18 and John 20 as places where there is collective commissioning, and pointed to sections of Matthew 16 and John 21 as places where Peter is singled out.
100 Ibid., 267.
being heretical by revoking *Exiit*, he was simply clarifying what Nicholas II actually meant in the text. Tierney summarizes:

[Terreni] wanted to prove that these pontiffs [of his own day] were infallible in order to defend them against the attacks of their adversaries. He was perceptive enough to see that this committed him to accepting the infallibility of earlier papal decrees also. But for Guido, past decrees were infallible in a very malleable sort of way. Here he was a true prophet of the modern theory of papal infallibility or, at least, of one form of that theory.

For Tierney then, Terreni did not anticipate all the pieces of the Vatican I formula of infallibility, such as the distinctions about its application to extraordinary and ordinary magisterium, but he did provide much of the basis for how later theologians could by Vatican I develop a theory that could reconcile both papal infallibility and papal sovereignty.

In his examination of papal primacy, Klaus Schatz claims that Tierney’s thesis affords too much credit to Peter Olivi in driving the development of infallibility and argues that prior to him the elements of infallibility were more ubiquitous than Tierney acknowledges. Schatz instead grants a greater role to the attempts to countermand conciliarism in the era following the Spiritual Franciscan controversy. In his presentation, the idea of infallibility prior to the fifteenth century consistently placed the infallibility of the pope in subservience to the “*universitas fidelium*” of the entire church and not vice versa, but that the rising debates of conciliarism led to the elevation of the pope as an infallible head of the church’s indefectibility. However, Schatz and Tierney both agree that the final formulation of infallibility at Vatican I, which was conjoined to a vision of monarchical sovereignty, betrayed a striking degree of historical forgetfulness. For Schatz, this forgetfulness is evident in the sixteenth century theologians who

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101 Ibid., 267-268. See also 261. Terreni claimed that Franciscan poverty did not represent a doctrinally certified perfection, but was rather a matter of discipline not originally mandated by scripture. This allowed him to make John’s shift away from *Exiit* something that did not violate the principles of infallibility.
102 Ibid., 268.
104 Ibid., 120-121.
firmly reversed the earlier conceptualization of the church’s indefectibility being prior to the pope’s infallibility. He observes that it is startling how quickly these thinkers had been able to repress the scandals of the Renaissance papacy and the Avignon schism, buffeted only by a naïve reliance on divine providence to navigate the potential for such breakdowns and failures.  

Tierney is even sterner in his criticism. While Schatz questions the exact mechanics and timeline Tierney offers, his criticisms would seem to align in general with Tierney, who writes:

>[I]t is very hard for a historian to see the emergence of the doctrine of papal infallibility as the slow unfolding of a truth that the church has always held. He sees instead the rather sudden creation—for reasons that are complex but historically intelligible—of a novel doctrine at the end of the thirteenth century.  

He continues that to attach infallibility to indefectibility as necessary correlates is to “strain human credulity too far” given the way real contradictions in teaching have occurred historically, meaning too strong of an insistence on infallibility undermines the defense of indefectibility.  

As an example here Tierney notes the condoning of religious persecution at Lateran Council IV versus the teaching on religious liberty at Vatican Council II. As noted earlier in this chapter, this was an example used by Benedict XVI to support his model of reform in continuity. Such a position is one that Tierney, though writing several years before Benedict, would say strains credulity in such a fashion. He does affirm that he thinks development of doctrine should proceed in such a way as to identify a core of faith and to then correct past errors regarding its expression and find ways of re-expressing it in new fashions. This sounds similar to the view defended by Benedict, but Tierney sees infallibility as a hindrance to his understanding of development, saying it traps theologians into having to be preoccupied with harmonizing past

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105 Ibid., 122-123.
106 Tierney, 273.
107 Ibid., 277.
magisterial pronouncements, sometimes disingenuously, rather than looking forward creatively and trying to untangle indefectible truth from error.\footnote{Ibid., 279.}

In his criticism of William of Ockham’s use of infallibility, Tierney demonstrates more clearly how he thinks the kind of retro-fitting harmonization involved with the maintenance of continuity for the sake of infallibility is problematic. He asserts that such a process as was necessitated by Ockham reveals that it is not possible to establish sure objective foundations for which elaborations of doctrine are validly infallible, leaving the determination up to subjective polemics.\footnote{Ibid., 228.} This gels with my own criticism that a development theory consistent with the theological model of Walgrave and the hermeneutic outline given by Pope Benedict XVI and maintained by Pope Francis leaves too much ultimate power in the hands of the magisterium, whose own historically conditioned preoccupations and partisanship can have undue influence on retroactively defining which parts of which teachings reflect a historical and changeable shell versus unchangeable truth. The decision-making of hierarchical authority is subject to particularized interests that can muddy the idealized and facile presumption of inspired guidance trumping such limitations.

Relatedly, Tierney also gives credence to another of my three main criticisms of the theological model of development in his analysis of the case of the doctrine of infallibility: a lack of genuine historicity. He demonstrates how historical awareness is vital to an honest reckoning of the formation of infallibility as a doctrine, presenting how uneasy is the assertion that infallibility in some way endured as a concept from the original stages of Christianity only to develop in articulation when historical factors allowed it. A useful contrast to draw here is with Francis A. Sullivan’s \textit{apologia} for infallibility. Sullivan affirms the historicity of the definition \footnote{Ibid., 279.}
of infallibility, and in fact utilizes Tierney’s historical scholarship in the process. However, he also incorporates an assertion that such historical development reflects interplay between “propositions” and “statements,” wherein the former refers to the intended meaning that the latter intends to express. Propositions for Sullivan can be irreformable, and infallibility applies to the competent and legitimate authority that is empowered to affirm that irreformable proposition, not the proposition itself.110 This is because propositions are always housed within statements that reflect historical limitations to which irreformability can never be applied. Sullivan thus presents the infallible authority of the magisterium as a guarantee that true propositions are delivered within reformable statements.

Sullivan’s argument depends upon a separation of form and content that Tierney’s historical analysis delegitimizes. To Tierney, the lack of expressed understanding of infallibility before the thirteenth century indicates that it did not exist, as proposition or otherwise, until the historicized factors of that era brought it to birth. An imaginative theory of development insists that the form/content divide Tierney implicitly rejects be explicitly removed. The hermeneutic approach presented by Ricoeur frames all knowledge as mediated. There is no mystical or illative awareness of ultimate truth that can be asserted in propositional meaning independent of the historical statement that houses it. The gradual development of statements is simultaneously a development of meaning, each proceeding as a hermeneutic of symbolic mediation. In an imaginative theory, this means that any ultimate truth is an eschatological or utopian goal to be approached but never reached, making doctrinal development a creative forward-looking process.

Infallibility becomes, then, intelligible and reasonable as a creative product of certain historical hermeneutics. But, it remains subject to continuous development that tries to interpret

and reinterpret the symbolic and doctrinal history of spiritual confidence in the Holy Spirit’s
guidance of the church. That confidence is what infallibility captures, and not recognizing the
historical setting of its expression or leaving it simply within the hands of hierarchical
determination can undermine the ability of the doctrine to maintain it. Ignoring the historicity of
the doctrine strains the credulity of historical analysis, while leaving the control over the doctrine
functionally in the hands of the hierarchy alone prevents other significant portions of the church
community from being able to be meaningfully included in the ongoing hermeneutical process.
As argued by Schatz, the origins of infallibility kept it rooted as a byproduct of confidence in the
universitas fidelium, that which is given voice by the sensus fidelium that relies on the
hermeneutical imagination of individual Christians living their faith in various situations. Losing
touch with that foundation, as can happen when infallibility as a doctrine is too far removed from
the historical contexts in which that universitas fidelium breathes or when it is given over to
hierarchical teaching alone, makes it risk losing connection to that which animates it in the first
place.
Tierney’s position also presents a sensibility of simplification rather than specification
regarding infallibility and development. In his historical examination, infallibility itself is a
specified extension of the more basic and general idea of indefectibility, and the accretions
granted to it up through the Vatican I definition represent even more specification and
complexity. In addition, Tierney presents how specification is also a byproduct of infallibility
because it engenders elaborate efforts to harmonize past teachings as the main task of
development. That is a process that requires complex specifications and expansions of past
doctrinal teaching rather than allowing development to work toward simplification that, to use
Tierney’s imagery, disentangles basic indefectible truth from historical buildup that can suffocate it.

In his final assessment, Tierney writes that the purpose of his historical analysis of the infallibility doctrine defined at Vatican Council I is not to undermine doctrinal tradition by proving its historicity. Rather, he suggests that such realization should lead theologians to more earnestly “seek out and cherish all that is true and life-giving in the teachings of the church.”

The disentangling simplification that he proposes as the aim of doctrinal development is directed by him toward this criterion: moving doctrinal teaching more into line with that which is “life-giving” in the actual belief and practice of actual churches in actual contexts. This idea echoes the mandate from Pope Francis for doctrine to be pastorally applied to best bring people to an experience of the mercy and love of God. But determining what is indeed life-giving, what in actuality brings people to an experience of love and mercy, means that the pluralism of the church must be accounted for so that diverse experiences of faith can define what fulfills the criteria. This comes to my third criticism of the theological model of development, that it does not properly open church teaching to the pluralism that is a powerful and shaping fact of the contemporary church. For the definers of infallibility at Vatican I, such an issue was not a factor. But in order to maintain the doctrine as one that is life-giving to the faith of the church, it must be subjected to contextual perspectives. And furthermore, if infallibility is ultimately rooted in the hermeneutic imagination of the sensus fidelium, then contextual perspectives must be included to ensure that the doctrine is heeding a true universitas fidelium.

The imaginative theory of development would better allow this perspective. It would treat infallibility as a particular historical interpretation of confidence in God’s guidance of the church’s indefectibility. It would recognize that interpretation as one defined clearly by

111 Tierney, 280.
hierarchical authority in a given historical context, but would not leave the ongoing hermeneutic treatment of confidence in God’s guidance of the church to hierarchical authority alone. It would recognize that the interpretation of faith lived and experienced flows from the full communion of the faithful, and accordingly investigate contextual theological reflections to determine how they might impact the developmental direction of the doctrine of infallibility. This would allow the development to occur in a fashion that best honors the contextual praxis and faith of diverse peoples and allow development to be responsive to what those diverse situations define as life-giving and how they determine what the experience of God’s love and mercy looks like.

For example, in the ecclesiological study from African perspective offered by Elochukwu E. Uzukwu in *A Listening Church*, he begins with the observation that for the earliest version of the church oneness or unity was defined by common cause to demonstrate gospel witness in concrete circumstances, not individual conformity to a single model or authority.\(^{112}\) To him, the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit is the foundation of such a model and that sovereignty calls for a constantly ongoing evolution of localized expressions of faith rather than subduing the Spirit’s sovereignty to the reified model of one particular community.\(^{113}\) To validate his view, Uzukwu looks to the ecclesiology of Cyprian, noting that for Cyprian the Christian church was to preserve communion, or *concordia*, by tolerating diversity rather than demanding uniformity across different cultures and groups.\(^{114}\) However, Uzukwu argues that this arrangement lost sway as the Church gradually assumed the shape of the state after the time of its alliance with Constantine, leading it to prioritize conformity, singularity, and centralization as the marks of unity.\(^{115}\) This model of church power was the one that was brought by Christian missionaries to Sub-Saharan

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112 Uzukwu, *A Listening Church*, 48-49.
113 Ibid., 49-51.
114 Ibid., 53-55.
115 Ibid., 57-59.
Africa, and it has organically cooperated with the colonial program of the European powers sponsoring those missionaries. Therefore, for African churches to be able to adequately have their needs and experiences articulated, they need to regain the liberty of their *sensus fidelium* empowered by the liberty of the Holy Spirit, rather than having their needs defined for them by Roman authority.

For the church to witness to the gospel in Africa authentically, it must be able to be open and responsive to the concrete circumstances of the people of Africa. As Uzukwu more powerfully states it, “The Word must become flesh in Africa! In other words, there must be in Africa a contextual interpretation of the experience of Jesus, with the risks of errors and heresies.”

With the legitimation of his arguments regarding Cyprian and the apostolic church and their acceptance of diversity and multiplicity, Uzukwu dismisses attempts to prevent such dynamic contextual perspective in the name of preventing schism as masks for the fear of the loss of power gradually accumulated over the centuries of centralized church authority. One of the most realized examples of this sort of dynamic is the formation of the Zairian liturgy, but in the comments from Uzukwu, issues closer to matters of doctrine and infallible authority are noted. Uzukwu points to the sacrament of marriage as one area that needs to be considered more carefully in light of African cultural experience, as well as the interpretation and development of canon law. He does not specifically address infallibility, but his argument for decentralization has unavoidable implications for it.

For instance, Francis A. Sullivan notes that while Vatican Council I did not expressly attach infallibility to ordinary universal magisterium, Vatican Council II did, defining the ordinary universal magisterium to be infallible when it reflects unanimity of all bishops in

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116 Ibid., 62.
117 Ibid., 60.
communion with the pope. However, despite being a strong supporter of the doctrine of infallibility, as seen previously, Sullivan circumspectly notes that one of the greatest developments in magisterium since Vatican II has been a transition in how that criterion of unanimity can be fulfilled in the exercise of ordinary universal magisterium. While the criterion of universal agreement has proven practically difficult to verify or utilize, Sullivan observes that a new, simpler, more centralized version of it has arisen. In a 1995 document, “Reply to the dubium concerning the teaching contained in the apostolic letter Ordinatio sacerdotalis,” the CDF validated either an exercise of ordinary papal magisterium or a statement of confirmation from the CDF as sufficient for marking unanimity that can give ordinary universal magisterial teaching infallible status. Sullivan concludes that it is striking, and in need of more careful study, that such new developments have been simply created by direct intervention of Petrine privilege, either by the pope himself for by the CDF on his behalf. The takeaway here is that in the past several decades there has been a creeping increase of infallibility in the ordinary teaching authority of the papacy. Matters such as those raised by Uzukwu, like regulations around marriage or greater divergence for African’s from the central Roman liturgical rite, could easily run afoul of irreformable teaching resulting from ordinary teaching authority and not just extraordinary magisterium or solemnly defined dogmas.

In the ecclesiological view of Uzukwu, such strongly centralized authority would not seem to be one that could effectively elicit confidence in the guidance of the Spirit in keeping the church in African indefectibility on track with its mission to witness to the life-affirming value of the gospel in local African context. Such confidence, in Uzukwu’s argument, can only be

118 See Francis A. Sullivan, “Developments in Teaching Authority Since Vatican II,” Theological Studies 73 (2012): 584-585. Sullivan notes that the first time such authority was invoked was with Pope John Paul II’s Evangelium Vitae in 1995.
119 Ibid., 586-588.
120 Ibid., 588-589.
achieved by allowing African churches to have a degree of liberty in how they define their needs and interpret their experience of Christian faith and accordingly determine their own applications and appropriations of tradition and canon law. In an imaginative model of development, this contextual interpretation of authority in the church would be integrated into the development of the doctrine of infallibility. With infallibility treated as a symbol of ecclesial confidence, a scenario like that in the church in Africa articulated by Uzukwu should be part of the hermeneutic process by which that symbol is reappropriated and reinterpreted in the contemporary, global, pluralistic church. If the doctrine is maintained in a traditional form/content model, it may well attend to such concerns but would ultimately remain impervious to them as irreformable content in the doctrine can be maintained by the hierarchy as that which has been defined by the hierarchy in the way described by Sullivan. Pastoral accommodation may be possible in regard to how the doctrine is interpreted, but that would allow only moderate adaptation of irreformable standards maintained as such by centralized authority and would not allow for the fuller liberty called for by Uzukwu that would allow the church in African to come into maturity and substantively interpret and reinterpret church teaching to best give its communities a life-giving experience of the gospel.

Such views are not unique to African alone. Gerald Boodoo has expressed similar ideas within the context of the Caribbean. Boodoo observes that stagnation exists in the Caribbean church because of not only the church retaining the legacy of colonialism but also because of hesitation to recognize the cultural discontinuity and heterogeneity that has marked Caribbean history.121 And for him, the church must incorporate this reality into its very sense of being if it is to be an institution that fosters the well-being of the local people and is not just one that

instead exists for its own sake. Boodoo asserts here about theology something similar to what Tierney asserts about doctrine, that it must sustain and foster human flourishing if it is to serve its purpose. However, Boodoo adds a point similar to Uzukwu regarding the situation in Africa. That is that in order to serve human flourishing theology must begin with historical praxis so as to be authentically responsive to that which is inhibiting flourishing in the particular context of the people. This means for Boodoo that theological reflection in the Caribbean context must take on a “forced option,” that is, it must bend to an imperative to be responsive and merciful and life-sustaining in the face of the real suffering and pain faced by people in post-colonial Caribbean nations.

While the main thrust of Boodoo’s argument is in the realm of method, he does offer insights about ecclesiology that have implications for the doctrine of infallibility and its place in the power dynamics of the church. He contrasts the “forced” character that he thinks theology in the Caribbean must adopt with the way the colonial legacy of the Caribbean has forced people there to think in contexts and terms other than their own. A church that demands unity by conformity to centralized definitions and mandates would continue such a pattern. And since the current doctrine of infallibility represents an interpretation that such centralization and conformity are necessary to maintaining the oneness of the church and confidence in its guidance by the Holy Spirit, it becomes an organ of the colonial dynamics that force peoples such as those in the Caribbean to deny their own cultural identity and leaves them unable to genuinely address their causes of historical suffering so as to increase their flourishing. And in his own specific statement about the “ecclesiological implications” of his ideas, Boodoo focuses on unsettling

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122 Ibid., 123.
123 Ibid., 124.
124 Ibid., 128.
125 Ibid., 128.
traditional power arrangements in the church. Tierney describes how infallibility originated as a preventative against unchecked papal power, but eventually was shaped into a doctrine that propped up papal sovereignty instead. And so when Boodoo suggests that the church must abandon the old colonial relations of power that have oppressed people in the Caribbean, and instead more fully adopt a model of authority that is based on kenosis, the impact such an idea would have in infallibility seems clear. As a tool of hierarchical power, it too would have to be reconsidered.

And in conjunction, when Boodoo questions church power further by commenting that the church must accept its status as being simultaneously holy yet sinful, infallibility can again be considered. If the church exists in a historical reality marred by sin, it becomes quite difficult from a post-colonial understanding developed in a contextual location like the Caribbean to think that the breakwall against historical sinfulness is an infallible hierarchical structure that has been complicit in it by its cooperation with colonial powers. Confidence in the church to deal with sinfulness would require widening the range from which the sensus fidelium of diverse and plural peoples can impact ecclesial decision-making and the interpretation of doctrinal tradition. Continuing to insist on a centralized model of infallibility would directly contradict this need, and begin to erode the very confidence in the divine guidance of the church that it is meant to represent. An imaginative theory of development that historicizes hierarchical authority and subjects doctrine more fully to a hermeneutical process open to the plural experience of the world church would offer a better model for how a doctrine like infallibility can be altered. The theological model that maintains a form/content divide and leaves the magisterial hierarchy with the final say on what falls on which side of that divide would be far less flexible and far more

126 See ibid., 133.
unlikely to allow contextual experience and reflection coming out of locations like the Caribbean to have real impact on future developments of infallibility or indeed any other doctrine.

**Conclusion**

As demonstrated at the outset of this final chapter, Pope Francis has called for the contemporary church to move away from dogmatic rigidity and engage in a more pastoral effort to bring the experience of the gospel’s compassion and mercy to people living in real world contexts with real world challenges and problems. His attempts to re-orient the pastoral efforts of Catholic leadership have been welcomed as a fresh and energizing attempt to engage with the world and open the church to the experience and suffering of its people.

However, in the midst of this effort, standing models for how existing church doctrine can be appropriated have been maintained. Francis has maintained a distinction between unchanging content at the heart of doctrinal definitions, while those definitions themselves are historical and changeable forms that are never perfect correlates of that unchanging truth. This places the teaching of the church on two planes—one that is historicized and open to transformation and flexibility in response to changing contexts, and another that is rooted in putatively privileged access to divine revelation and that remains beyond history and substantive development. Such an approach neglects the epistemological reality that all knowledge is mediated and is the product of the productive imagination that engages in a hermeneutic process that is unavoidably historicized. Attempts to delineate when historical understanding stops and providential awareness begins are illusory. And it leads to a scenario where the arbiter of the difference is a hierarchical tradition that denies its own historicity and claims privileged guidance that the theological tradition of Christianity places not in the hierarchy alone but
ultimately in the hearts and minds of the full communion of the faithful. Thus, the move to privilege hierarchical decision-making also truncates the voice and experience of the plural peoples who make up the church in its fullness. An attempt to be more pastorally sensitive to these peoples while remaining rooted in a model of doctrine that precludes that sensitivity is doomed to remain an incomplete endeavor.

With the example of marriage, a model of doctrinal development such as that maintained in Francis’s vision is not able to genuinely attend to the experience of married persons for defining the true meaning of the consortium vitae that marriage represents and the defined place that procreation has in that relationship. Continuing to specify doctrinally what real union means and specifying that being procreative must be narrowly defined as biological neglects the faithful experience of people to the contrary. Pastoral sensitivity may provide greater space for persons outside those doctrinal definitions to participate in their local churches, but it will not alter the message that they are living lesser faith lives or grant them the same possibilities as others for full communion in the church. Such restrictions will prevent those pastoral efforts from being able to truly respond to people in their real lives and bring them genuine mercy and compassion, instead leaving a separating wall in place. And with infallibility, a model of centralized power dynamics remains in place when the doctrine itself remains untouchable by contextual ecclesiology that would challenge such power dynamics. Those contextual critiques can be voiced theologically, and sometimes even expressed in moderate adaptations of church practice and tradition. But the fundamental matrix of power remains entrenched. In a new situation where those power dynamics are uncovered as a source of suffering and dehumanization, it becomes necessary for the church itself to shift away from them and join in their critique. But failing to allow that infallibility is a historicized interpretation of fundamental confidence in the
Holy Spirit’s guidance of the church, and instead maintaining that it is an unchangeable content of dogma that has persisted in the church for its entirety altering only in historical form, means that the centralized power dynamics of which it is a manifestation stay in place. And this prevents the doctrine from being able to develop in a way that is responsive to irreducible pluralism and that is self-aware of its own comprehensive historicity.

Alternatively, an imaginative theory of doctrinal development would allow these situations to be approached in a way that seeks not only pastoral or kinder ways of delivering the same doctrines that represent or are part of underlying forces of exclusion or exploitation, and would encourage the reinterpretation and reformulation of those doctrines as part of the effort to make the church more life-giving and compassionate to all people in its communion. It would presume that doctrines of marriage that define procreation only as a biological matter or of infallibility that define it as a hierarchical privilege that ensures indefectibility are historicized expressions that grow out of particular historical hermeneutics of the mediated sources of Christian tradition. It would thus welcome plural traditions and their varying hermeneutics of those same sources and incorporate their different and diverse results in how the doctrine’s trajectory of development is plotted. It would do this in conjunction with a view that the indefectibility of the church requires a conspiracy of the full communion of the faithful and cannot be left to magisterial pronouncement and authority alone. In doing so, it would not just invite new pastoral applications of doctrine with old walls remaining in place, it would allow the contexts in which those new applications take place to disassemble those walls and work to establish new structures that better foster the flourishing of all peoples who make up the People of God.
CLOSING COMMENTS

A major impetus to this project was the perception that in the last several decades the teaching and thinking of the institutional Catholic Church has become more and more estranged from the work of theologians and academicians, as well as the lived experience of large numbers of people of faith. Doctrine, as a genre, possesses an element of normativity and attempts to declare points of identity for the church. But, with the divide between church authority and academic theology, systematic theology may conceive of itself as dealing with doctrinal development but it is rarely given the opportunity to actually impact doctrine and thusly impact the actual life of the church that is circumscribed by that doctrinal normativity and definition of identity. If the work of theologians attempts to innovate Catholic traditions and capture the voice and experience of diverse peoples, it needs to be able to bring those reflections to bear on these matters of normativity and identity or else those diverse perspectives remain unduly or even unjustly marginalized. It is my judgment that the crisis of the teaching office of the church, outlined by Rahner in 1974, is only exacerbated and the breach between official church teaching and theological reflection on lived experience is only widened if doctrine remains unassailably guarded within the purported supernatural exceptionalism of the ordained hierarchy.¹ Accordingly, this project has tried to suggest a way in which church teaching on doctrinal development can and should be changed. Or in other words, it has been an effort to effect a degree of metanoia regarding the understanding of how doctrine functions and innovates, bringing the entrenched regressive methodology common to magisterial teaching to reckoning

¹ See Rahner, “Teaching Office of the Church.” Rahner in this essay criticized the church for continuing to cultivate a perception of exclusive supernatural guidance that can override open dialogue and criticism on matters of official teaching.
with the hermeneutical and contextual methods of theology that have become dominant in the academy.

The hermeneutical imagination of Paul Ricoeur is being presented as a means of effecting such a change. This choice is due to the belief that Ricoeur’s model of the imagination has consonance with the Euro-American thought forms that predominate in the institutional church and can speak to the desire for continuity that drives regressive theological approaches while highlighting the necessity of discontinuity that unavoidably arises in the contextual hermeneutical task. And more specifically to the positions in this work, it can alleviate the shortcomings I have noted in the most pervasive model of doctrinal development currently directing church thought. That model, named the theological theory by Jan Hendrik Walgrave, was presented as having three major problems, the first of which was a lack of true openness to historicity. Because the theological theory operates with a form-content divide, where doctrine develops only in its historical form while preserving an objectively true content. This implies that change only occurs in an organic way, where development unfolds according to what is inherent to the ahistorically objective idea behind the doctrine. This position cannot account for real breaks in doctrinal teaching, and it makes once-defined teachings too invulnerable to changing historical circumstances. This leaves the theological theory within the regressive paradigm, always negotiating ways in which real changes in teaching do not actually represent change at the level of dogmatic content, preserving the idea of an irreformable deposit of revelation that stands outside the influence of history. However, Ricoeur’s insistence on all knowledge being mediated and all expressions occurring with distanciation from originary experience disallows any particular expression from being elevated to ahistorical and untouchable status. It allows for significant breaks in teaching and situates all instances of
expression as *mimetic* products inescapably tied to historicity. And Ricoeur also makes innovation a constant need due to the inexhaustible plenitude present in symbols used to mediate meaning and the fact that because no expression is ever unassailable to the interpretation of meaning must always remain an eschatologically forward-moving process.

A second criticism was that the theological theory is overly reliant on magisterial authority and past tradition. Because the model presumes a core deposit of objective truth accessible to Christian faith, it posits a sure safeguard for that deposit. However, because of its denial of true historicity it ends up creating an undue exceptionalism for church authority that circumvents its own historical nature and the historicity of its accumulated tradition of teachings. But the introduction of historicity more fully in Ricoeur’s model and the importance given to the critique of ideology disallows the hierarchy of the church from having a monopoly on doctrinal authority. An appeal to the Holy Spirit is frequently used to justify the ultimate authority of the institutional church and give grounding to its exceptional authority, but the idea of the *sensus fidelium* means that the guidance of the Holy Spirit is present in the whole of the church and not just the authority of the hierarchy. The magisterial hierarchy is not dismissed, but it is made an actor among many in reflecting upon and interpreting the meaning of the sources of Christian faith and it is not granted supernatural exceptionalism by which it can solely decide which innovations in meaning are considered acceptable and which are not.

Lastly, the theological theory, with its model of organic unfolding, is not capable of being truly open to plurality and the diverse voices and contexts that have been excluded from prior mainstream tradition. As pointed out by Stiver, theology done with a method built from Ricoeur leads naturally to contextuality because it insists on the situatedness of all interpretation and makes thought from diverse locations necessary to the critical archaeology of in-place ideologies.
and to the utopian eschatology of innovative interpretations. While Ricoeur is himself a Euro-American situated thinker, it was shown how his thought has been a useful tool for contextual theologians trying to represent the concerns of different experiential locations. A way to allow for such diverse ideas in a genre like doctrine that aims for singularization and exact formulation is to direct development in the direction of simplification rather than specification. That is, to make doctrine increasingly focused on core principles of faith rather than expanded specification of particular points growing out of pre-existing formulas and teachings.

An unavoidable challenge in this model for Western Christian tradition embodied in the institutional church is the presence of relativism. Ricoeur’s hermeneutics invite theology to accept risk. It creates a model of tradition whereby past aspects of tradition provide guidelines within which innovation must work in order to remain intelligible, but the innovation is necessary. And risk occurs in making space for multiple different contextual and perspectival interpretations as genuine to shared elements of tradition. Tradition itself is pluralized in this way, and the church is challenged to embrace the relativistic paradigm this allows. It is not an unfettered relativism, one that is anarchic and disregarding of past versions of traditions. But it makes authenticity depend upon relational understandings of the life of faith; that is, authenticity is determined not by structured authority alone but by authority in dialogue with diversity while attending relationally to what brings persons from diverse contexts to a more life-giving experience of Christian faith.

The consequence of the institutional church failing to find a way to allow this diversity to impact its identity at a deep level by allowing it to impact the standards of doctrine is exclusion of those to whom it fails to grant that chance for impact. If people are unable to correlate their cultural identity to the central identity of the church, then the church will not represent life-
giving welcome but rather alienation. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis spoke to this problem and recommended the pastors of the church to recognize and welcome cultural diversity. He commented:

> We cannot demand that peoples of every continent, in expressing their Christian faith, imitate modes of expression which European nations developed at a particular moment of their history, because the faith cannot be constricted to the limits of understanding and expression of any one culture. It is an indisputable fact that no single culture can exhaust the mystery of our redemption in Christ.²

This call represents what has become Francis’s call for the church to cultivate a “culture of encounter.” However, if after that encounter the European culture that has controlled doctrine and its development is treated as if it can indeed exhaust the dogmatic content of the faith expressed in doctrine, then the encounter will not be able to ultimately prevent alienation. It will amount to little more than a pastoral gesture. If it is indeed the case that no one culture can exhaust the mystery of Christian faith, then the discourse of doctrine that is used to publicly define ecclesial identity must be able to be broken open to diverse interpretations even if they present challenges of discontinuity and broach the possibility of relativism. A model of development that utilizes the hermeneutic imagination of Ricoeur, and embraces its insistence on critical interpretation of past traditions and on eschatologically oriented innovation, is capable of laying a pathway for ecclesial doctrine to become truly responsive to a global church and curtail the alienation that can result from instead maintaining a regressive and inflexible approach that disallows the voices of diverse peoples and contexts from truly impacting the identity of the church.

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² Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, §118.
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