Dear Readers,

As my time at the University of Dallas comes to a close, I cannot help but reflect on my past four years here. To be a student at any university is a unique privilege; to be a student at the University of Dallas is even more so. The education we gain here will influence us for the rest of our lives. When we set foot on campus we entered a new cultural world, one we will take with us wherever we go. But what is it that makes our university so unique? What is it that has formed the UD Bubble for better or for worse over the past sixty-odd years?

While one may point to many aspects of our beloved alma mater as what is quintessentially UD, I argue that what shapes the University’s culture most fundamentally is leisure. As I write, I can practically hear my fellow seniors yowling: “Leisure? What leisure? Between my thesis and comprehensive exams and coursework I’ve forgotten what the word ‘leisure’ even means!”

Consider the idea anew, my “overworked” friends. We have the privilege of taking four entire years out of our young lives to dabble in the liberal arts. Many of us have taken our own Grand Tours to Rome and have returned the wiser for it. It is true; we have come to realize that the ability to take time and study the liberal arts is in fact the greatest gift many of us will ever receive.

In my very first philosophy class, the first text we read was Leisure: The Basis of Culture by Josef Pieper. The leisure afforded to us as students of the liberal arts allows us to be great academics, poets, artists, scientists, and, more broadly, thinkers.

In their leisure, the students of the University of Dallas have produced for you an array of essays, poems, and works of art that speak to the rich culture that the leisure of a UD education can produce. I encourage you, in your own leisure, to read and view these works carefully. As Sister Jane Dominic Laurel said in an interview with the University News, “I think that’s what it means to be a member of the UD community — just to waste time together. And it’s not wasting time.” Please, I implore you, “waste” your time by immersing yourself in the academic and artistic endeavors of these students.

I would like to thank the English department, Phi Beta Kappa, and most especially our contributors, editors, and the esteemed Dr. Osborn for dedicating part of their own leisure time to the production of this journal. It has truly been an honor to “waste time” with you.

Emma Chaplin
Editor-in-Chief
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In his *Divine Comedy*, Dante Alighieri presents the journey of his soul as a pilgrim through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven. A secondary narrative, however, reveals that the work is not simply an illustration of personal sanctification but also a hopeful account of political Florentine redemption. Starting in the inferno, Dante familiarizes himself with the historical Florentine political landscape, finding himself face to face with her prominent political figures from the past. Thus, as Dante descends through Hell, he also descends further and further into the bloody and beleaguered history of Florence. Upon reaching paradise, however, Dante, as a soul purged of any Florentine imperfection, is able to receive from his blessed ancestor the fullness of vision as it pertains to his relation to Florence. Cacciaguida portrays Florence as a fallen paradise, and exhorts Dante, a poet, to write down all he has seen, the spiritual realities of this supernatural journey. As a poet, Dante understands the power that his words have to present these spiritual realities, and as a member of the Church, Dante understands the power that these spiritual realities have, through man’s knowledge of them, to convert and sanctify. By journeying through these supernatural realms and glimpsing of his own personal sanctification, Dante, within his *Commedia*, maps the framework for the sanctification and salvation of his own earthly city of Florence.

To begin, Dante makes clear his intent for the poem to assume a salvific character towards the end of his pilgrim’s journey through paradise. At the beginning of *Paradiso*’s twenty-fifth canto, Dante describes his work as “this sacred poem — / this work so shared by heaven and by earth / that it has made me lean through these long years.” With these lines, lines markedly outside of the interior poetic narrative about his pilgrim, Dante begins a reflection on the relationship he hopes he and his poem will have with his city of Florence. He wonders if his poem “can ever overcome the cruelty / that bars me from the fair fold where I slept, / a lamb opposed to the wolves that war on it.” Commenting on these lines, Peter Hawkins notes that in this presentation of his city: “Florence is the beautiful sheepfold where he slept as a lamb. It is the place where he would, as an adult, be a good and faithful shepherd—enemy to ravening wolves—were not the city’s gates barred against him.” Unmistakably, Dante sincerely desires to bring a certain kind of liberation to his beloved city. Speaking here not through any character but instead with his own unmediated words, Dante is not shy to characterize himself as a good shepherd, imagery that until this point has been reserved to describe first Popes, then saints, and then Christ.
himself. Dante’s choice to use himself as the next pastoral reference clearly establishes his intent to present himself, with his sacred poem, as the necessary savior of Florence.

Dante further substantiates his claim that the poem he is composing is indeed sacred by specifically relating his poetic work to his role as a shepherd. He continues, “by then with other voice, with other fleece, / I shall return as poet.” In these lines, Dante relates his newfound prophetic voice, a voice expressed in and through his poem, to his fleece, part of his pastoral presentation as a shepherd. Dante’s ability to function as a good shepherd, and thus as a Florentine savior, depends upon this fleece, his sacred poem. Nowhere else in his Commedia is Dante as explicit and forthcoming about this work’s divine nature and function. Within these lines, “we sense his pride in what he has accomplished through his writing. He openly claims the title poeta that until now has been reserved exclusively for the ‘greats’ of classical antiquity: ‘ritornerò poeta,’ ‘I shall return as poet.’” However arrogant his poetic pride may seem, Dante humbly recognizes it as stemming from the grace of God: “I shall return as poet and put on, / at my baptismal font, the laurel crown.” Unlike the writers of antiquity, Dante, thanks to his baptism, has citizenship of a different Rome: “the Rome in which Christ / is Roman.” Thanks to this baptism, this Roman, unlike his prior Roman guide, finds himself by God’s grace among the blessed people, and thus is able to put to words the spiritual and salvific realities of this new empire, Christ’s empire.

Inclusion among the blessed people indeed brings Dante face to face with the faces of this new empire, which helps the poet realize the importance of both the visible and the invisible in Christ’s Church. To describe his baptism, for example, Dante uses the visible image of his baptismal font to represent his spiritual sacrament. In this vision of his hopeful return to Florence, Dante puts forward this location as the specific location where he wants to claim his poetic crown: “Everything should come together in the place where, spiritually speaking, everything began—the great baptistery of Florence, in whose waters he became a Christian ‘welcome unto God.’” About this Florentine baptistery, Dante writes, “for there I first found entry to that faith / which makes souls welcome unto God, and then, / for that faith, Peter garlanded my brow.” Because of this visible baptistery, this physical location within his city of Florence, Dante’s soul first experiences God’s invisible grace, the grace which brings Dante here to the spiritual realm of the blessed. Through this description, Dante establishes continuity between the visible and the invisible. Another example of this presentation of continuity occurs over the next few lines, through the description of St. James. Beatrice says, “Look, look—and see the baron whom, / below on

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4 See Beatrice’s and Justinian’s descriptions of Popes (Par. 5.77, 6.17), St. Thomas Aquinas’ description of St. Francis (Par. 11.97), and the Roman Eagle’s description of Christ (Par. 20.56).
8 Ibid., Purgatorio 32.102-103.
Choosing to describe St. James thusly shows Dante’s intent to present as significant the worldly and temporal aspects of Christ’s Church. Even in paradise, where souls share in the beatific vision, Beatrice remembers the influence this apostle, one of Christ’s favorites, has on the faithful below, as a Galician baron, a title implying temporal control. Christ’s empire, this new Rome, encompasses the spiritual and the temporal, and Dante’s emphasis on this dual aspect of empire, which significantly occurs within the discourse on his *poema sacro*, legitimizes his poem as a work that indeed “shares heaven and earth.”

The poet clearly understands the spiritual and salvific potential of his poem, and thus structures his *Commedia* around the question of temporal sin and salvation, especially as it relates to Florence. Early in his poetic journey through *Inferno*, in the sixth canto, the poet presents a meeting between his pilgrim and Ciacco in which he asks the condemned Florentine questions not about his damning sin of gluttony but, rather, about their beloved city of Florence. Ciacco begins his introduction to Dante by saying, “Your city—one so full / of envy that its sack has always spilled— / that city held me in the sunlit life.”

Dante responds to Ciacco, asking:

... what end awaits
the citizens of that divided city;
is any just man there? Tell me the reason
why it has been assailed by so much schism.

According to Lloyd Howard, with this exchange begins the infernal poetic narrative on Florence’s political sin, a narrative that continues throughout *Inferno* “which Dante pursues to trace the evil of divisive politics in Florence back to its inception in 1215.” Both the poet and his pilgrim are so concerned about the well-being of their city of Florence that they both devote much of their time in Hell exploring her fall. For this reason, Dante places highest atop the Gate of Hell the words, “Through me the way into the suffering city.” This “city,” to Dante “città,” a word which does not appear again within the poem until Ciacco’s aforementioned description of Florence three cantos later, refers not simply to the nine-circled infernal empire created by the poet, but also and perhaps more significantly to his suffering Florence, as *la città dolente*. Upon entering Hell, Dante enters Florence’s painful history.

Returning to his conversation with Ciacco, Dante asks specifically about the fate of certain Florentines, those Florentines whose political actions Dante deemed constructive rather than destructive:

Tegghiaio, Farinata, men so worthy
Arrigo, Mosca, Jacopo Rusticucci,
and all the rest whose minds bent toward the good,
do tell me where they are and let me meet them.

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12 Ibid., 25.2.
14 Ibid., 6.60-63.
17 Ibid., 6. 79-82.
This concentration of five Florentine men over two lines is poetically strategic: “what binds these sinners together as a group is not a common sin which would have placed them all in the same circle in Hell…. Rather, they are linked together by the part they played in the unfolding conflict between Guelfs and Ghibellines in 13th century Florence.”\(^\text{18}\) Here in the sixth canto, Dante rhetorically groups these Florentines and foreshadows the meetings scattered throughout the rest of the \textit{Inferno} that his pilgrim will have with these men, whom he deemed as “worthy, / … whose minds are bent towards the good.”\(^\text{19}\) To the pilgrim’s claim of worthiness, however, Ciaccio responds, “They are among the blackest souls; / a different sin has dragged them to the bottom; / if you descend so low there you can see them.”\(^\text{20}\) With this revelation, Dante’s pilgrim leaves Ciaccio and, remembering these words and these souls, indeed descends lower into this suffering city.

As Dante descends, “forewarned that the political worthies of 13th century Florence are to be found among the blackest souls,” the pilgrim finds the source of Florentine discord in the penultimate circle of Hell.\(^\text{21}\) Circled by schismatics and sowers of scandal, a damned soul heckles Dante, saying, “You will remember Mosca, too, / who said—alas—‘What’s done is at an end,’ / which was the seed of evil for the Tuscans.”\(^\text{22}\) To this soul, the same Mosca he inquired about in the sixth canto, Dante immediately replies: “—and brought death to your own kinsmen.”\(^\text{23}\) Condemning again the already condemned Mosca, the poet here references Mosca dei Lamberti’s role in the act of murdering Buondelmonte de’ Buondelmonti, a noble Florentine whose marriage to one woman enraged the family of another.\(^\text{24}\) Indeed, in his \textit{History of Florence}, Niccolò Machiavelli chronicles Mosca’s treacherous act using Dante’s same “\textit{Capo ha cosa}”...
fatta,” “What’s done is at an end.” This murder, this damning moment, which, according to Machiavelli, “divided the whole city,” and according to Dante himself “brought death to your own kinsmen,” served as the “mal seme,” the evil seed, of all Florence’s discord since. Interestingly and purposefully, Dante uses the same words, mal seme, to describe in the third Canto all the damned souls entering Hell: “the evil seed of Adam / descended from the shoreline one by one.” Thus “Mosca, ‘mal seme d’Adamo,’ like Adam, issued forth ‘mal seme,’ in this case his words.” Because of this, the other Florentine politicians, whom to the pilgrim’s undiscerning mind seemed so worthy and so bent towards the good, suffer from this political original sin and accordingly find themselves scattered throughout all of Hell. Through this poetic and linguistic reference to man’s first disobedience and the loss of paradise, the pilgrim realizes that Florence, too, has fallen and remains fallen.

By revealing through Hellish encounters this current state of Florence, the pilgrim by the end of his time in Hell sees and understands more clearly the diabolical and disorienting grip of evil. Upon entering Paradiso, however, after being purified of his sins which include his Florentine original sin, Dante finds himself in the realm of those blessed souls who share with God perfect knowledge and the beatific vision. In this realm, Dante meets Cacciaguida, his Florentine ancestor, and receives a paradisiacal vision of Florence. Introducing himself, Cacciaguida claims Dante as “my seed”—notably, “mio seme”—and furthers the prior established linguistic connection between Eden and Florence. In this case, however, rather than being mal, God showed “such favor” to this particular seed. Similarly, just as Eden existed as blessed before the disobedience of Adam, so too did Florence exist as blessed before Mosca’s murderous sin. Cacciaguida presents it thusly: “Florence, within her ancient ring of walls— / that ring from which she still draws tierce and nones— / sober and chaste, lived in tranquility.”

Cacciaguida himself is born into this earthly, peaceful paradise: into so sweet a dwelling place did Mary, invoked in pains of birth, deliver me; and I, within your ancient Baptistery, at once became a Christian and Cacciaguida.

As the poet also does ten cantos later, Cacciaguida defines his identity using the physical baptistery of Florence. Thus here, from his great-great-grandfather Cacciaguida, the pilgrim, who had heard from the damned only the evils of Florence, begins to see her past blessedness. Also for Cacciaguida, Florence plays a very visible role in the establishment of his spiritual identity. At the physical baptistery, Cacciaguida, like Dante, “first found entry to that faith / which makes

26 Niccolò Machiavelli, History of Florence and the Affairs of Italy from the Earliest Times to the Death of Lorenzo the Magnificent (New York: W. Walter Dunne, 1901), 2.1; 108.
29 Alighieri, The Divine Comedy, Paradiso 15.48.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 15.97-99.
32 ibid., 15.132-135.
souls welcome unto God.” Thus also here, from his great-great-grandfather Cacciaguida, the pilgrim begins to realize more fully the importance of the created, physical world in Christ’s empire.

Cacciaguida’s most significant contribution to Dante, however, is the sharing of his prophetic wisdom as it relates to the future of Florence. In this meeting with Cacciaguida, “generational difference is obliterated, and with it all distinction between past and future disappear in a prophetic present: This is the central point, ‘il punto / a cui tutti i tempi son presenti” (the Point to which all times are present).” Speaking from this point, after being asked by the pilgrim to tell “of the sheepfold of St. John,” by which he means the people of Florence, Cacciaguida describes the city as “between the Baptist / and Mars,” using the references to the baptistery of St. John and the statue of Mars atop the old bridge to demarcate city limits. Dante’s presentation of Florence as a sheepfold strengthens Florence’s peaceful and idyllic prelapsarian image as presented in these Cacciaguidan cantos. Cacciaguida then references a specific event: “But Florence, in her final peace, was fated / to offer up—unto that mutilated / stone guardian upon her bridge—a victim.” Again, Mosca’s treachery enters the scene: “as Buondelmonti was passing upon a white horse, thinking it as easy a matter to forget an injury as reject an alliance, he was attacked by them at the foot of the bridge, and slain close by a statue of Mars. This murder divided the whole city.” At this statue of Mars, her stone guardian, the pagan symbol of Florence mentioned opposite the baptistery, Florence falls, her peaceful paradise gone.

The poet presents again this fall, this time in paradise, to reveal the plan for Florence’s final redemption to the pilgrim, a pilgrim purified of imperfection by purgatory. Cacciaguida tells Dante of his future exile from Florence: “so must you depart from Florence: this / is willed already, sought for.” Asserting eternal providence, Cacciaguida then, as a blessed soul who, sharing in the divine vision, can legitimately justify the ways of God to men, informs Dante of his divinely ordained and prophetic role: “all falsehood set aside, / let all that you have seen be manifest, / and let them scratch wherever it may itch.” With these lines, “Cacciaguida instructs his great-great-grandson in no uncertain terms not to let timidity prevent him from speaking out to reveal what he has learnt on his journey.” With regard to his relationship with Florence, Cacciaguida illumines within Dante what was previously dark. The pilgrim begins to understand his role as a Florentine prophet, as with these lines Cacciaguida, who sees from the point where all times converge and thus speaks with divine authority, implicitly commissions and qualifies Dante’s poema sacro: “if, at first taste, your words

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36 Ibid., 16.145-147.
38 Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy, Paradiso* 17.48-49.
molest, / they will, when they have been digested, end / as living nourishment.”

As bad seed entered Florence through one Florentine, one greater Florentine, a Florentine who has seen the depths of Hell and the depravity of his city’s sin, who has traveled through purgatory and lost his Florentine imperfection, and who will ultimately and finally gaze upon God Himself, will restore her and regain her blissful state.

Thus will Florence be saved. At the statue of Mars did she fall, so at the baptistery, the fount of Dante’s own baptism, must she be redeemed. Dante expresses hope that he may one day return, as shepherd, to his sheepfold at the baptistery, though this time with some original grace, manifested in his writings, necessary to free his sheep from their bondage. As Christ, in his redemption of mankind, descended into Hell before rising, so too must Dante descend, both within this poem, to the “valley” of the inferno, and in his own life, to the “valley” of exile. Only after descending comes the glory and vision of blessedness.

Dante, as a citizen of Christ’s empire both eternal and created, comes to possess through his supernatural journey the particular spiritual insights necessary for Florentine salvation and through his life on earth the creative power necessary to write for his city his poema sacro.

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41 Alighieri, The Divine Comedy, Paradiso 17.130-32.
42 Ibid., 17.137; 63
Grey (A Bird)

By Zeina Masri

I laughed - an effervescent grey appeared
(A bird I now suppose), then flew away,
And when my fogs of wonderment had cleared,
My thoughts beheld this leaden feathered fay,
His livery devoid of sunlight brash,
His light diffused in air that gave him lift,
A cinder somber, dusky darkened ash,
But heather happy, silver softened swift.
Still strange his shade was that of dampened air,
Of granite graves and wise Athena’s eyes,
But God will hear the blessed and the bare,
And knows the old desire of the skies,
So loved the bird and loved the color too,
He chose to paint his holy house that hue.
Angels
Travis Phillips
Mixed Media
2016
Is Artificial Intelligence Possible?

by Gregory Frisby

1. Introduction

Ray Kurzweil\(^1\) argues that human intelligence is the result of neural hierarchical pattern recognition: the process is not meaningfully different from the artificial computing achieved by machines such as Deep Blue, or IBM’s Watson. Human thought and behavior are ultimately reducible to material mechanisms, and, consequently, the creation of artificial persons is possible, in principle. Given this, Kurzweil suggests that we must decide as to what counts as artificial intelligence: “[A] great deal of our moral and legal system is based on protecting the existence of and preventing the unnecessary suffering of conscious entities... [therefore,] in order to make responsible judgments[,] we need to answer the question as to who is conscious.”\(^2\) Far from being a matter of arcane metaphysics, the development of a satisfactory philosophy of mind could be a matter of life or death for future androids.

In this essay, I contend that discerning the nature of artificial intelligence will be impossible given the reductive physicalism to which Kurzweil is committed. I argue by demonstrating that the concept of intelligence is meaningless in a truly reductionist system. I draw upon Kurzweil himself, as he is an artificial intelligence expert, and Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker, as he is a world-renowned cognitive scientist, in order to illustrate the reductionist position.

2. Reductionism

In this essay, the following axioms define physical reductionism:

1. In principle, all empirically observable activity can be described using only the mathematical laws of physics.
2. The laws of physics describe the motions of fundamental substance(s),\(^3\) e.g. quarks, strings, quantum fields, etc.
3. The universe is causally closed, such that there are no cases in which the laws of physics are violated.
4. An entity which can be described in terms of the sum of its parts may be eliminated from real ontology, even if it must be treated as irreducible from a practical or methodological perspective.
5. Properties predicated of aggregates should be redefined in terms of the relational properties of the aggregates’ most fundamental parts.

Against Axioms (4) and (5), some non-reductive naturalists\(^4\) might wish to

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\(^{2}\) Ibid. 212.

\(^{3}\) For the purposes of this essay, I presume a realist substance ontology. I also presume (perhaps incorrectly) that findings in fields such as quantum mechanics do not fundamentally contradict such an approach.

posit that structure, emergence, and higher-order description are ontologically relevant. Such thinkers might rightly note that psychologists cannot conduct research without referencing brains or behavior. However, while this is certainly true at a practical level, it does not exculpate one from Ockham’s Razor at an ontological level. If verbal necessity created real entities, rivers could be taken to be “emergent systems” since cartographers treat them as such. Similarly, chairs, organisms, and organisms-seated-in-chairs would become “real,” given the “ontologies” of carpenters, biologists, and waiters. Ontology would no longer be based in objective reality, and would reflect nothing more than the verbal or practical necessities of life; ontology would no longer be “realist” in any meaningful sense. For this reason, I presume Axioms (4) and (5).

Also, for the purposes of this essay, I presume there is a version of reductionism which is prima facie neutral with respect to the “hard problem of consciousness.” Indeed, Kurzweil, while a physicalist, favors panpsychism; he holds that immaterial properties are unproblematic, as long as they do not interfere with the laws of physics.

3. Intelligence

With these axioms in place, one must define intelligence simpliciter in order to determine whether artificial intelligence is possible. Kurzweil takes intelligence to be “the ability to solve problems with limited resources.” Pinker expands upon this notion, asserting that intelligence “is the ability to attain goals in the face of obstacles by means of decisions based on rational (truth-obeying) rules.” Accordingly, intelligence seems to depend upon the notions of teleology (goals) and rationality (obedience to truth), which must now be defined.

(a) Teleology. In this essay, I am presuming a substance metaphysics; goals must be predicated of discrete, irreducible entities which act in specific ways. Historically, candidates for substance have included: (a) the physical universe itself (e.g. the Cartesian res extensa), (b) atoms (e.g. Leucippean or Democritean indivisibles), (c) minds (e.g. of a Cartesian or Platonic variety), and (d) organisms (e.g. real, Aristotelian wholes irreducible to the sum of their composite parts).

The first two options (the universe and atoms) seem to make intelligence meaningless. Do the universe and atoms seek certain ends, and sometimes fail to achieve them? It seems more plausible to speak of intelligence as potentially predicable of organisms or immaterial minds. But organisms cannot exist, given reductionism: Axioms (1) and (2) dictate that organ-systems can be described as aggregates of fundamental physical parts. According to Axiom (4), such entities ought to be eliminated from a scientifically informed ontology. Holistic accounts of organisms provide no explanatory power which could not, in principle, be more parsimoniously described in terms of fundamental physics.

With physical organisms eliminated, immaterial minds are the only

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7 Ibid., 1-2.
plausible subjects of teleological predication. Unless such minds exist, it would seem that the question of artificial intelligence has been resolved: artificial intelligence is not possible because intelligence in general is not possible.

(b) Rationality. Before discussing the plausibility of immaterial minds, there is another difficulty for intelligence. As Pinker defines it, intelligence involves using “rational rules,” which are “truth-obeying.” But what is truth? Pinker, as a reductionist, holds that the mind is an information processing machine, with “[i]nformation being “a correlation between two things that is produced by a lawful process... [and c]orrelation [being] a mathematical and logical concept... [which is] not defined in terms of the stuff that the correlated entities are made of.” Given the correspondence theory of truth, which I presume for the purposes of this essay, it seems that a reductionist must interpret truth as some sort of mathematical correlation between the brain and reality.

But the brain is a part of reality (defined as the total state of affairs of physical things), and is thus always perfectly correlated with it. When a false belief (or railroad spike) enters the brain, the reductionist has no principled reason for treating the resulting brain state as less “true” than any other brain state. The reductionist might attempt to escape this dilemma by asserting that only certain correlations are “truthful.” But the burden of proof is on the reductionist to explain, without circularly appealing to the concept of “truth” itself, why certain brain states may be considered “truthful” over and above others. Given Ockham’s Razor and Axioms (4) and (5), it seems more reasonable to eliminate truth from one’s ontology, since truthfulness adds no explanatory value at the level of fundamental physics.

Moreover, attributing truthfulness to brain-states (or propositions arising from brain-states) presumes that the brain is, in fact, itself an ontological whole. But, while the brain must be treated as such on a practical level, Axioms (1) and (2) force one to conclude that, ultimately, neuroscience describes nothing which could not, in principle, be redescribed in terms of fundamental physics. On Axiom (4), the brain has no explanatory value, and ought to be eliminated from ontology.

At this point, a reductionist might protest that such arguments are sophistry, and that reducible aggregates may be treated as if they are intelligent, whether or not this violates Axiom (4). This paper could be taken to be missing the point: the real issue is whether or not artificially intelligent behavior seems possible, regardless of logical or metaphysical truth. In response, I simply note that the moral status of future androids is at stake. It would be morally irresponsible to rest the potential rights of artificial persons on an unscientific, vague, or emotional basis. We need to know what artificial intelligences are, metaphysically. If we cannot rationally define intelligence, our moral reasoning regarding artificial intelligence will be unscientific, vague, and potentially harmful to vulnerable entities.

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10 Ibid., 66.
11 Ibid., 65.
12 This argument was inspired by Plantinga. See Daniel Dennett and Alvin Plantinga, Science and Religion: Are They Compatible? (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
4. Consciousness and Minds

So far, there seems to be no good reason for treating intelligence as an ontologically meaningful notion. But perhaps a non-reductionist account of consciousness could save intelligence? For this paper, I presume that “consciousness” refers to what Chalmers\(^\text{13}\) dubs “experience.” We have qualitative experience of the world which is irrefutably extant but maddeningly difficult to reduce to neuroscience or physics. Perhaps, as Kurzweil implies,\(^\text{14}\) consciousness could provide grounds for identifying personhood: “conscious entities” could constitute the non-reducible wholes of which truthfulness and teleology might be predicated. And perhaps, given Kurzweil’s version of property-dualism, they would do so without violating Axioms (1) and (2)?

Unfortunately, immaterial minds of any sort violate the causal closure of physics (Axiom 3). As Kurzweil notes, property dualism “does not permit the mind (that is to say, the conscious properties associated with the brain) to causally affect the brain.”\(^\text{15}\) But, as Dennett points out,\(^\text{16}\) immaterial properties must influence the brain (if they exist), since they are written about by property dualists. Writing is a physical action, and it is difficult to see how it contains references to immaterial properties which never actually interact with matter. Moreover, according to Kurzweil\(^\text{17}\) and Pinker,\(^\text{18}\) beliefs about consciousness are the basis for moral reasoning itself: we only pay respect to creatures which are capable of conscious suffering, and do not care about rocks, for instance. But given this, it follows that immaterial properties must be physical, since moral behavior and cognition are empirically observable and therefore describable in terms of fundamental physics (Axiom 1). A reductive physicalist must reject the irreducibility of consciousness, or else violate causal closure (Axiom 3).

a. An Objection. A property dualist could respond that there is a physical pattern in the brain which represents consciousness, serving as the brain’s “Consciousness Computation Module” (CCM). According to this hypothesis, when a philosopher of mind sits down to write a defense of property dualism, his or her brain utilizes a node or pattern which is physically instantiated, but somehow stands for immaterial consciousness. Thus, while immaterial properties do not directly influence the brain, they may be computed about anyway.

The argument does not seem to work, since we have little reason to believe that a material component of the brain could cause valid reasoning about the existence of immaterial properties. Beliefs arising from the causal influence of the CCM would be only accidentally connected with the existence of any real immaterial properties, and would turn philosophy of mind into a debate about

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 203.
one’s preferences regarding an appendix to one’s neural anatomy. Furthermore, it is not clear why the brain would evolve a CCM in the first place: do humans really need innate beliefs about immaterial properties to behave empathetically?

Surely, ants do not believe in immaterial properties, yet manage to sustain large and thriving colonies. Moreover, even if empathy were the basis of morality, which many deontologists and virtue ethicists would deny (pace Kurzweil and Pinker), it does not follow that belief in immaterial properties is the only mechanism which could have produced empathy.

In short, consciousness cannot save artificial intelligence from reductive physicalism. Either the concept of intelligence is incoherent, or reductive physicalism is not a good philosophical position.

5. Conclusion

According to Kurzweil, artificial intelligence is not an academic question. If it is possible to build artificial intelligences, we must discuss how to identify and treat them. I have suggested that it is impossible to do so, given reductive physicalism. The notion of intelligence requires concepts such as teleology and truth, which are not amenable to the reductionist program. Nor can the putative existence of immaterial consciousness save intelligence, since this would violate the causal closure of physics.

I have not argued that reductive physicalism is false. Indeed, it requires us to jettison the concept of “falsity.” If reductionism is true, the ethics of artificial intelligence cannot be given a rational account and ought to be passed over in silence.

Bibliography


Lake Louise

by Molly Wierman

The lake was born where glaciers looked back, receded, carved the landscape with their heart-held regrets.

She, full of feminine strength, wove from nature’s wounds kindness, recreated her emptiness into plentitude.

Where I stand now on the shore, the snow shows Lot’s wife unsubstantiated, her sorrow transfigured into the wind,

whose chill warps my bones but now curls into my soul, and chains me to my own withoutness,

which consecrates its own form of being—towering, the mountains do not reflect my stance before the rippling world sorrowful.

I will find the lake’s female phoenix-strength. I will find freedom—my own shored-up presence, from my depths to my fragile body’s surface, self-healing, self-creating from these wounds.
Senioritis
Hélène Bergez
Charcoal on Paper
2016
Nationalism and the Natural Origins of the Nation-State

by Rachel Parkey

During the “Age of Enlightenment,” historians, philosophers, theologians, and politicians strove to develop solutions to new questions concerning the role of man in the world. The violence of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had given rise to new questions of how peoples of different cultures and religions ought to interact with one another, and the anthropologies that emerged from this search for understanding were as varied as the thinkers that pursued greater understanding of man’s role in shaping history. In Scotland, William Robertson praised the transition from barbarity to civil society, a transition that had, in his assessment, been made possible by the expansion of commerce. In France, Jean Jacques Rousseau searched for a new understanding of society centered on the idea of popular sovereignty, in which the people are the guiding force in the life of the nation.¹ Thinkers in Germany, however, approached these questions from a different perspective. Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), a contemporary of thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, Moses Mendelsohn, and Gotthold Lessing, found his solution to these questions in the distinct identity and culture of the German Volk. In his Materials for the Philosophy of the History of Mankind (1784), Herder discusses his theory of nationalism.² His theory, which has been manipulated by some to ‘justify’ racism and cultural discrimination, in reality praised and emphasized the diversity of cultures, languages, and peoples. For Herder, the natural diversity of peoples has played a substantial role in the development of the modern nation-state and each Volk has contributed to the development of the more universal idea of ‘mankind’; to mince his words to justify assertions of cultural superiority is to deny this central tenet of his theory of nationalism, which has been instrumental in the development of the modern nation-state.

While the sovereign “proto-nations” of Scotland, England, France, and Spain were more easily understood as contiguous states with defined geographical boundaries by the late eighteenth century, the German territories were less easily identified. The territory understood as “Germany” today was composed of dozens of “empires, kingdoms, dukedoms, and independent cities,” and there was no formal state like the one associated with the modern German nation.³ Nationalism in the context of Herder’s thought is founded on his concept of the Volk, or the people, and the traditions and culture encompassed in the identity of a unique people.

He argues that the community united in the Volk ought to be the foundation of the nation-state because it is the most natural way in which people relate to and are connected with one another.

The manners, culture, and identity of a people are united in their

¹ Rousseau presents his theory of popular sovereignty in his Social Contract.
common language and help define the lines that distinguish different nations. There are two central claims upon which nationalism is built. The first is that the “‘people’ in politics are best understood as a defined and bounded group with a common history, language and tradition.” It is this facet of nationalism that Herder’s insights have affected the most. The more political element of the theory of nationalism, discussed by Herder, but also influenced especially by Rousseau, is that a “nation” has a unique claim to be considered a legitimate political basis for sovereignty than other traditional centers of power because its legitimacy is derived from the organic body of the people, or Volk. The way in which Rousseau’s theory of popular sovereignty and Herder’s theory of cultural nationalism influence each other is contested; for example, some scholars assert that a distinct national identity must exist before the people can recognize and assert their sovereignty and vice versa. This analysis, however, will focus on Herder’s discussion of cultural nationalism in his Materials for the Philosophy of the History of Mankind by examining the importance of his assertion that the state founded on common culture, language, and history is “the most natural state” and the way in which this assertion affects Herder’s understanding of the “basic historical and natural laws which could serve as a foundation for a philosophy of history.”

Herder begins by discussing the most basic way in which divisions between peoples naturally arise: geography. The divisions between mountains and plains, rivers and seas, in that they are natural divisions of peoples and places, justify and help explain the natural, historical differences between various cultures. The diversity of “peoples, customs, languages and empires” have been shaped over hundreds of thousands of years as some peoples became “nations of hunters,” others “shepherd peoples,” and still others agriculturalists and seafarers. Without these differences, “how very different would mankind have scattered over this tilting place of nations” and how different would the histories of these peoples have unfolded. The circumstances of history which may for some appear to be of little consequence, for Herder play a crucial role in the development of the cultural identities that shape man’s interactions with and understanding of the world. The dwelling places, languages, and cultural differences between various peoples are results of natural social interaction in the particular society into which individuals are born. Man, “like plants and animals, a part of nature,” is not “wholly a product of the ‘blind determination of nature’” and is able to shape the way in which he interacts with the world,

5 Ibid., 2.
7 Herder, 7; Royal J. Schmidt, “Cultural Nationalism in Herder,” Journal of the History of Ideas 17, no. 3 (1956), 408.
8 Herder, 6.
9 Ibid.
possessing the real potential to effect change and strive for progress. The ways in which man does this is affected by his people’s understanding of the world, and each culture develops different methods based on the historical ‘accidents’ of place and time. Having traveled extensively, Herder was able to experience firsthand the riches different cultures and societies could offer to the more universal idea of mankind. His experience with diverse cultures, languages, and peoples undoubtedly helped him develop his understanding of the influence of geography on the development of peoples and nations.

Beyond the influence of geography, the idea of a people as a natural, organic entity is best understood in the context of a family. “Nature brings forth families; the most natural state therefore is also one people, with a national character of its own.” This image of the people – or Volk – as being derived from the family is crucial for understanding Herder’s concept of the nation. The natural character of a unique nation of peoples, much like the traditions of a unique family, are preserved in the unique histories, traditions, and language of the given people. Further, “it can be cultivated in the most natural way: for a people is as much a plant of nature as is a family, except that it has more branches.” Related to this idea of the family is also the problem of discovering “a manner in which men can associate and co-operate without sacrificing their distinct individualities.” In a family unit, each member of the family is able to contribute to the overall health and wellbeing of the family by fulfilling a unique role; that is, the role of the father in a family is distinct from that of the son, and the role of the mother distinct from that of the daughter. By understanding a ‘people’ as an expansion of the family unit, in which each individual family and member of the family contributes to the wellbeing of the whole in a distinct way, the individual emerges in “a social setting arising out of human integration... [or] interdependence.” Further, the natural organizational structure offered by the family unit, when expanded to the level of societal interaction, facilitates the development of man as a social and political animal, “for his life in society necessitates some form of organization, some regulative device for the ordering of his relations.”

Contrary to many other Enlightenment thinkers who focused more on the development of ‘humanity’ or ‘mankind’ in general, Herder emphasized the importance of maintaining national identities. A strong, independent nation derived from a single people was, for Herder, much preferred to “the empire of a hundred peoples and [one hundred and twenty] provinces which have been forced together” without regard for unique origins and distinct cultural differences. Such a nation, rather, “is a monstrosity, not a state-body.”

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13 Herder, 7.
14 Ibid.
15 Barnard, Enlightenment, 54.
16 Ibid., 54.
17 Barnard, Enlightenment, 55.
18 Herder, 7.
19 Ibid.
uniqueness of peoples is key to his argument against the arbitrary and “endless expansion of states.”

Because it is through nature that a diversity of peoples has arisen, determined “in part by the position and necessities of the locality, in part by circumstances and the opportunities of the age, and in part by the inborn and self-nourishing character of the peoples,” to force a homogenization of these peoples is unnatural and should not be attempted. The individuality of these peoples, “like all productions of nature, are decreed solely by time, locality, and national character, in short by the coordination of all the forces of life in their most positive individuality.” The “striking natural character” displayed by various peoples is not, for Herder, a merely internal facet of man. Rather, individual cultures have displayed themselves “in all their operations on the earth” in influencing the development of events throughout history. The distinctions between these various peoples have been made manifest most uniquely in “the manners of the fathers” which compose the social norms and customs of the Volk.

“The spirit of the Volk manifested itself in all aspects of life: language, myth and customary law and institutions.” Herder continues, “It was an understandable enthusiasm among a people increasingly conscious of national identity but without a nation state to stand as the protagonist of its history.” Germany was not a single, contiguous state that unified the German-speaking peoples like other states, but rather a loose collection of many different kingdoms and principalities. This idea of uniting all those who were culturally German and those who spoke the German language in one state was a new concept, and one that would first inspire positive German Nationalist movements and later more malevolent movements that use the theory of nationalism as justification for discrimination and suppression of other national identities. His consistent emphasis on the naturalness of the diversity of peoples and his comments on the absurdity of nations that force diverse peoples together in monstrous configurations demonstrate his comfort with, and not aversion to, many diverse cultures within the greater idea of mankind. It is important for Herder that man qua man learn to interact on even ground and establish peace. To ignore or even discredit the value that a diversity of cultures, languages, and peoples have played in shaping the world is to ignore a central element of the very nature of man and the development of history.

John Burrow observes a crucial difference between Herder’s theory of nationalism and Volk and the ideologies derived from his concept that focused on the supremacy of races and cultures – ideologies which were made all too familiar in the actions of the Nazi party during the 1930s and 1940s. The purpose of this theory for Herder was “to awaken in the Germans a sense of their then undervalued identity, through a cultivated awareness of the anonymous creation and transmission to the present of a common national culture.” Paul Halsall observes that Herder had been interested in the “problems of [local

20 Herder, 7.
21 Ibid., 8.
22 Ibid, 8.
23 Ibid, 9.
24 Herder, 9.
26 Burrow, 472.
cultures’] suppression by international cosmopolitan culture” in his own time.27 Herder’s emphasis on maintaining the native customs of the Volks contests assertions that his vision of cultural nationalism allows for racist movements. He encouraged Germans to “look about…for the character of the nation, for their own particular cast of thought, for their own peculiar vein of speech.”28 In doing so, he also encouraged a preservation of this national character by discouraging “the tribes of Germany” from “mingling with others.” It is on this point that he provides advocates of racial supremacy movements with some vague justification for their subversive agendas – but he does not assert an innate supremacy of cultures.

His very theory, which is founded upon the idea that each culture develops as ordained by its circumstances and environment and that peoples “plant seeds of well-being for the far future and in the way that is dearest and most appropriate” for their specific culture, is not supportive of assertions of racial supremacy.29 Rather, “Herder’s philosophy of history” asserts that “each nationality contributes the expressions of its national type to the development of humanity in general,” and in doing so has contributed to the progress of mankind.30 Since every culture is “as much a plant of nature as is a family,” the earth, “according to Herder, might be regarded ‘as a garden.”31 As such, “each national plant contributes to the general beauty and fragrance of the garden” that is the earth and his idea of the “development of humanity at large rests upon the development of the peculiarities and characteristics of each national group.”32 Just as his theory allowed for the maintenance of the individual’s distinct contribution to society, so does his conception of nationalism allow for a multitude of national cultures. As in a family where the mother and father play distinct but necessary roles in shaping the household, so too do various nationalities contribute in unique and necessary ways to the development of the larger international community.

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27 Halsall, 5.
28 Herder, 12.
29 Ibid, 10.
31 Herder, 7; Ergang, 99.
32 Ergang, 99-100.
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Fragments of Vision in Early March

by Joseph Flynn

I.
This afternoon’s tree perceived by me in time
Grows gracefully out of the ground.
Long before me it was, long after me it will.
For even as it dies, it lives, in the mind of me
And the mind of her, and his, and you.

II.
And as time drives forward like the
Man aching to behold his beloved,
So I see it driving in this tree, through its changes
From dry brown twigs
To small green buds, as it
Appears from here
Blown back and forth by this March wind.

III.
This afternoon’s tree contoured by
Light, alters,
Darkened by the tint of the window,
From here,
The way one sees it.

The light, from this view, falls on its
Branches, brightening, darkening.

IV.
Am I making it whole? Uniting the
Fragmentary views of this afternoon’s tree?
For it may be different today than yesterday
Or tomorrow.
For it may be different in the mind of me, and
The mind of her and his and you.
Surely some Other and his words may say it better
And see it more true.
"Black Ryder's Heart"
Bradley Cleaver
Mixed Media
2016
Poetic Purpose in “The Dream of the Rood”

by Jacqueline Condon

“The Dream of the Rood” recounts the central story of Christianity, the Paschal Mystery, through the lens of pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon culture. The poem presents Christ as a conventional Germanic hero, with the Rood as His loyal retainer. At the same time, the text grapples with the mystery of Christ’s divine and human natures, and human union with God after death and the Last Judgment. The synthesis of pagan and Christian elements in the poem seems to reflect these thematic concerns. Such a reading becomes more compelling in light of the Augustinian philosophical tradition within which the poet was working. According to Augustine, although paganism does not have the benefit of divine revelation, it can nonetheless contain human wisdom that Christians may use blamelessly. This paper will argue that the author of “The Dream of the Rood” deliberately incorporated the pagan elements into his Christian narrative in order to signify how the merely human can be united with the divine, as it is in the person of Jesus Christ and will be in Heaven.

Throughout the poem, Christ is portrayed in an active, heroic role. Rather than being the passive victim of injustice, He “hasten[s] with such courage to climb upon [the Rood].” When the Rood describes how Christ stripped Himself, “the poet employs the contextually appropriate verb ongirwan [divest; strip] that echoes, semantically and phonologically, the verb gegyrwan [to arm, to gird oneself with weapons], a verb that often appears in martial contexts,” Mark Amodio writes in The Anglo-Saxon Handbook. Even in this moment of vulnerability and humiliation, the poet’s diction calls to mind strength and heroism.

Christ’s death itself is likewise presented heroically. While it is certainly tragic—the Rood “was oppressed with sorrow” and “all creation wept”—it is clearly only temporary. He is laid in the tomb “limb-weary” and “rested for a while, worn-out after battle.” Not only does this description portray His death as a temporary respite, it again emphasizes His heroism by comparing the Crucifixion to a battle. In the words of Mark Amodio, the poet “[creates] a Christ who models the sort of heroic self-sacrifice we see in a secular hero such as Beowulf,” making “Christ’s sacrifice more culturally understandable and acceptable.” The poet’s portrayal of Christ clearly reflects the values and conventions of the pagan culture.

If Christ is a heroic lord, the Rood is His faithful retainer. This relationship was of paramount importance in the Anglo-Saxon world. Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe calls it “the touchstone of [the heroic] life,” and that its

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“binding virtue is loyalty.” However, the relationship between Christ and the Rood differs from the pagan code of loyalty in one of its most critical aspects: vengeance. The issue of revenge is one of the most dramatic points of departure between Christian and pagan ethics. For a pagan retainer, avenging one’s king after his death was as much a duty as defending him in life. However, Christianity forbade it. The poet seems to avoid tackling this irreconcilable difference directly. The Rood says, “I could have felled / all my foes, yet I stood firm.” But this seems to be an act of obedience rather than forgiveness, as in lines 36–37, “I dared not bow or break against my Lord’s wish.” Significantly, the poem does not mention Christ forgiving His enemies. However, the poem emphasizes Christ’s suffering “for the many sins committed by mankind, / and for Adam’s wickedness long ago,” rather than His persecution by human enemies. In a Christian context, the Rood is unable to fulfill the chief obligations of a pagan retainer, but is still clearly loyal and obedient.

Treasure was another crucial aspect of the relationship between lord and thane in the pagan heroic culture. Gift giving was a means for a lord both to honor a valued subordinate and to “[enhance] . . . his own reputation.” Furthermore, “The object given . . . becomes the material reminder of the retainer’s reciprocal obligation.” This cultural context lends greater significance to the Rood’s rich adornment. The narrator describes how he “saw this glorious tree / joyfully gleaming, adorned with garments, / decked in gold; the tree of the Ruler / was rightly adorned with rich stones.” In the cultural context O’Keeffe describes, it is clear that these riches are not merely decorative but symbolic of the Rood’s relationship with Christ. The Rood, in keeping with Anglo-Saxon tradition, is “girded . . . with gold and shimmering silver” to honor its extraordinary service and to manifest its Lord’s glory.

There is strong reason to read the Cross as not merely a revered, personified object but as a figure of Christ Himself. Synecdoche, the poetic device of using a part or aspect of something to stand for the whole, is a standard feature of Anglo-Saxon verse, and it would be perfectly natural for the Cross to represent Jesus. However, Christ is already present in the poem as a separate character. By having two Christ-figures, Christ Himself and His symbol the Rood, the poet is able to explore the hypostatic union, or the mystery of Christ’s divine and human natures. The poem’s portrayal of Christ, besides being in keeping with the heroic tradition, is also clearly divine. His most common epithets include “the Lord” and “Almighty God.”

In contrast to Christ’s majesty and free, heroic action, the Rood is

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7 Ibid., 108.
9 Ibid., 36–37.
10 Ibid., 110–111.
12 Ibid., 108.
14 Ibid., 88.
15 Ibid., 87, 111, 114, 122, 130, 148, 155; Ibid., 65, 103, 115, 187.
fearful and vulnerable. Unlike Christ, it is a passive victim, “seized” by “strong enemies.” As Amodio observes, “Christ’s physical suffering . . . is curiously absent” from the Rood’s narrative. Rather than describing Christ’s suffering, the poem goes so far as the transfer Christ’s wounds to the Rood, which says, “They drove dark nails into me; dire wounds are there to see, the gaping gashes of malice.” It is not in Christ’s divine nature to suffer injury and death; He experiences these in His humanity, represented by the Rood.

The Rood compares itself to Mary, saying that it has been “honoured . . . over any tree” just as she was “honoured . . . before all other women in the world.” There are several parallels between the Rood and Mary; like her, it bears Christ, suffers with Him, and is ultimately glorified with Him. The Rood’s connection to Mary is further evidence to read it as symbolic of Christ’s human nature, as God became man through her.

However, the two natures of Christ represented in the poem are not rigidly separated from each other but intimately connected. Christ, although usually referred to in language that emphasizes His heroism and divinity, is once simply called “the Man.” In a similar way, the Rood is glorified. David Johnson conjectures that the Rood’s shifting aspects, bloody and bejeweled, symbolize the natures of Christ: “Thus, the golden, shining Cross represents Christ’s Divine aspect, while the bleeding one signifies His humanity.” Like humanity itself, the Rood itself has humble, earthly origins but has been united to Christ’s divinity. Likewise, God has taken on human nature in the person of Jesus Christ.

The vision described in the poem has clear eschatological implications. Johnson asserts that, “Practically every line in this opening scene contains an allusion to conventions of Christian speculative eschatology.” The poet first describes the Rood as “a wondrous tree / soaring in the air.” As Johnson notes, the image “has Biblical origins, (Matthew 24:30), and the shining Cross as a sign of the Second Coming of Christ and impending Judgment was developed by early Christian exegetes.” Eschatological references are present even in more minor details. “There is ample evidence to demonstrate that Insular Christians believed that the day of Judgment would begin at midnight” and the dreamer experienced this vision “in the middle of the night.” The narrator informs us that “All the angels of God . . . guarded [the Rood] . . . . Holy spirits and men on earth watched over it.” The presence of angels and holy souls is another clear mark of Heaven. Johnson concludes, “The main elements of

19 Ibid., 102, 104–105.
20 Ibid., 51.
26 Ibid., 9–11.

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the conventional Judgment tableau are present: the unmistakable sign . . . of Doomsday appears in the sky, and . . . [it] appears in glory, just as Christ will do at the real last Judgment.”

The Rood’s own speech to the dreamer makes the poem’s eschatological significance explicit:

“The Lord Himself, Almighty God, with His host of angels, Will come to the middle-world again On Domesday to reckon with each man.”

The narrator in turn comments that he now awaits “the home of joy and happiness / where I may live in glory unending and share / in the joy of the saints.” Beyond the dread of Domesday and individual death, the soul can hope for eternal, joyful union with God in Heaven.

This paper proposes that this theme of human union with the divine is reflected in the poet’s choice to incorporate pagan elements into a Christian story. There is no way to know with certainty that this is the case, and some would argue that in the absence of concrete evidence we should assume a more straightforward explanation: the poem was a product of the surrounding culture, and the poet was merely using themes and images that he and his audience were already familiar with. While it is admittedly impossible to know anything definitive about the author or his intentions, there is ample knowledge about the literary and philosophical tradition he was working within. In particular, Augustine’s thought greatly influenced the Old English understanding of the purpose of literature and the acceptable use of the pagan heritage. In his book *Doctrine and Poetry*, Huppé writes, “Since the English Church inherited Augustine’s program of Christian culture, we may study the poetry of Aldhelm and Bede in the light of Augustinian theory.” As the author of “The Dream of the Rood” was a member of the English Church and thus an heir to Augustine, it is reasonable to study his work in the same light.

Augustine famously compared Christian appropriation of the pagan past to how the Israelites plundered the Egyptians, “[taking] with them a small treasure . . . but [leaving] behind pagan idols.” Although the Christian must “reject the figments of superstition” symbolized by the idols, he may adopt the true and useful human learning present in the pagan tradition, symbolized by the treasure. Pagan culture developed without the benefit of divine revelation and must always be subordinated to it, but can be elevated and “turn[ed] to a Christian use.” It is therefore an appropriate symbol for fallen human nature, containing both error and wisdom, and with the potential for redemption and glorification.

“The Dream of the Rood” clearly reflects the pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon culture, particularly in the heroism of Christ and the loyalty of the Rood.

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28 Ibid., 151–155.
31 Ibid., 54.
32 Ibid., 75.
These elements have been unexpectedly enlisted to tell Christianity’s most sacred story. The poem was presumably intended both to glorify God and to evangelize, aiding the salvation of souls. Read symbolically, this synthesis of pagan and Christian elements reflects the poem’s themes of the salvific union of humanity with God. Just as the conventions of pagan culture are used to convey the Gospel, within the narrative, the Rood has humble origins but becomes instrumental in God’s plan of salvation. That plan requires humanity to be united to the very nature of God in the person of Jesus Christ through the Incarnation, and its entire purpose is the union of God and humanity in Heaven. As the poet’s incorporation of pagan elements into the most essential story so perfectly reflects the poem’s concerns, I conclude that it was a deliberate choice intended to communicate his theme of human union with the divine.

Bibliography


Summer Prescription

by Kathleen Cammack

Three teaspoons lemon juice; add sugar; mix.
Allow some time for freezing, then devour
On shadow-dappled ground the fruit to fix
Spring fever, summer grown, in just one hour.
Anchor your back to grass, clutch at the earth,
And fight the gravity pulling you out
Into the atmosphere. Bottle your mirth
In jars (you’ll learn to live without
For summer what you once called happiness),
And let it steep, to guzzle come fall glow
When leaves outshine the sun, though burning less.
Abandon reason for a twig, and know
No cure exists for wretched spring’s disease
But warmth, light, and adventure as you please.
Flower Bowl
Mary Kate Elfelt
Mixed Media
2016