

Article

After Onto-Theology: What Lies beyond the ‘End of Everything’

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Academic Editor: Peter Iver Kaufman

Received: 14 March 2017; Accepted: 15 May 2017; Published: 19 May 2017

Abstract: This article takes up the onto-theological critique of metaphysics and questions whether onto-theology is not something to evade or overcome, but is inevitable. Consequently, it furthers the exploration of onto-theology by asking, if it is inevitable, then what comes after onto-theology? For the past half-century, onto-theology has been a central concern for philosophy, particularly in phenomenology where one sees a theological turn in order to understand and incorporate what might be beyond, or within, consciousness that does not readily appear to the self. In this turn, one often sees philosophers (and theologians) attempt to craft a post-metaphysical understanding. Resultantly, many of these philosophers herald what I call the ‘end of everything,’ often due to their onto-theological character: from the ‘end’ of philosophy of religion, to the ‘end’ of metaphysics, to the ‘end’ of theology. However, when investigating their findings, one often sees these concepts arise from the grave, perhaps showing that some onto-theological construction is inevitable. This paper proceeds by first giving a brief overview of the philosophers Jean-Luc Nancy, Richard Kearney, John Caputo, and Merold Westphal to propose how onto-theology is still an issue for their philosophies by revealing a necessary link between ontology and empirical reality. It then builds off of this proposal through the work of Joeri Schrijvers to show what might lie ahead of philosophy (and philosophy of religion in particular), arguing that if onto-theology is inevitable then philosophy should turn further into theology to explore how theology deals with this inevitability on an empirical basis. Basically, since theology always already accepts being in default (through concepts like original sin), then how does it help believers cope with this inevitability and how does it focus upon the empirical reality of this ontological gesture. Finally, this paper investigates the work of Colby Dickinson in order to solidify this finding into a programmatic, philosophical framework.

Keywords: onto-theology; phenomenology; philosophy of religion; metaphysics; Jean-Luc Nancy; Richard Kearney; John Caputo; Merold Westphal; Joeri Schrijvers; Colby Dickinson

Martin Heidegger’s critique of the onto-theological constitution of metaphysics has, in a sense, stultified thinkers on how to either present a pathway that evades it altogether or nevertheless overcomes it through reconceptualizing traditional concepts such as transcendence and immanence.¹ After these various attempts, an emerging consensus is that perhaps lapsing into onto-theology is an inevitable result of employing these philosophical concepts within the world itself; lifting these ideas off of the paper, as it were, and attempting to use them in real, day-to-day life. Resultantly, whereas this critique sparked the kindling of philosophy’s renewed engagement with theology’s fundamental conceptions of God and the divine, perhaps philosophy must turn further into theology to see what comes after onto-theology. In this article, I will modestly propose that, once onto-theology is accepted

¹ I use this text as my primary understanding of Heidegger’s formulation of onto-theology, for a strong summary of onto-theology’s pervasiveness and proliferation (Heidegger 1969), see (Schrijvers 2011, pp. 16–24).

as a basic reality, philosophy might find a welcome partner in systematic, pastoral, and liberation theologies when addressing this phenomenon of human reason. This might be so since these theologies accept human fallibility in the process of improving their communities and thus improving their understanding of the human condition in relation to their concept of God and the religious.

In the following, I will explore what this second turn might look like by first giving a brief overview of two approaches that address onto-theology in order to reveal how this inevitability arises when moving from the abstract construction of the world to the lived experience of the world itself by individual selves.² From this assessment, the question of the political component within any intellectual construction (phenomenological, metaphysical, or otherwise) becomes central. In the subsequent section, I will show possibilities of philosophy after onto-theology through the work of Joeri Schrijvers and Colby Dickinson. This fallibility (of being in default, as Schrijvers describes it, attempting to fail better, as I find it) becomes exemplified through the critique of onto-theology. Ultimately, this acceptance, something that the Western Christian tradition has believed through the theologies of original sin, salvation, and the eschatological event, can be a valuable source of inspiration for what comes next for philosophy (while still remaining principally philosophical).

1. Onto-Theology: A Brief Appraisal of Two Different Approaches

The proliferation of the onto-theological critique has had a pervasive effect for Continental philosophy and theology where, as Merold Westphal describes, onto-theology can be “a bit like Baskin-Robbins or Heinz. It comes in thirty-one flavors or fifty-seven varieties or who knows how many different versions . . . But all forms of onto-theology have a common purpose. Each puts its God, whether it be the Unmoved Mover, or Nature, or Spirit, or the Market to work as the keystone of a metaphysical theory designed to render the whole of reality intelligible to philosophical reflection.” (Westphal 2004, p.18) The process of reasoning after this critique often involves a clearing away of prior ideas and concepts that fall into onto-theology’s realm or, in a broader sense, into the realm of metaphysics. It does so in order to reconceive the world without the over-determining subjectivity that lays at the heart of the critique. For example, this over-determining subjectivity, where the self renders (and thus determines) the world as wholly intelligible for its own purposes, is often inverted through a Levinasian phenomenology, where the self is no longer obligated to its own impulses but rather becomes obligated to ethically care for the other.³ This typically leads to shifting the over-determination onto the other, not quite alleviating the onto-theological construction that lies between intersubjectivity.

This process has also resulted in the premature announcement of the so-called end to many established lines of thought within various disciplines. Instigated perhaps by Heidegger’s *ende der philosophie* and Derrida’s *fins de l’homme*, one only has to peruse the library shelves or the journal depository of a good university to see what I call ‘the end of everything:’ from the ‘end’ of the philosophy of religion, the ‘end’ of metaphysics, to the ‘end’ of transcendence and even the ‘end’ of theology.⁴ Though many of these titles are meant to provoke introspection, collectively they reveal an academic trend thoroughly rooted in a postmodern outlook that pronounces the finality of modern (metaphysical, onto-theological) ways but still cannot quite move beyond them. Much like the ‘post’ in postmodernity still implies the modern, the so-called ‘end’ of these concepts still implies the concepts themselves. The rumors of their deaths, to follow Mark Twain’s familiar line, have been greatly exaggerated.

Yet still, there appears to be two different lines of thought that arise from these early graves: either a reconceptualization of immanence and transcendence through a phenomenology that evades

² I wish to move beyond these debates and so I assume a certain amount of prior knowledge from the reader. For commentaries and summaries on these debates, see (Gshwandtner 2013; Simmons and Benson 2013).

³ This is a summation of a typical critique of Levinas, one that often follows Derrida, see (Derrida 1950, pp. 79–153; Derrida 1999; Bernasconi and Critchley 1991).

⁴ See, for example (Trakakis 2011; Cahoon 2002; Milowitz 1998; Mounce 2008; Bloechl 2003; Raschke 2005; Pattison 1998).

metaphysical onto-theology, à la Jean-Luc Nancy, or a rediscovery/retrieval of metaphysically-laden principles that can be employed within a phenomenological framework to overcome onto-theology, à la Caputo, Kearney, and Westphal. Even though both approaches make headway into teasing out the greater consequences of onto-theology and, in doing so, have their advantages in proceeding further after its critique, neither completely wards off its guilty charge. While both see an ‘end’ of metaphysics, metaphysics eventually arises from the grave when one lifts either account off the paper and attempts to empirically evaluate their arguments. As we shall see in the next section, this is not just a rational or philosophical error. Rather, it has great implications for how philosophy and theology address the fundamental issues of daily life going forward. Furthermore, it would be too unwieldy to review all of the literature on onto-theology in order to show its inevitability and, admittedly, my selection of authors mainly follows the French tradition of phenomenology. I chose these authors since I find in their inability to overcome or evade onto-theology a crucial element that reveals the linkages between ontology and its empirical reality.

Before proceeding, it should be noted that my argument is not about whether philosophy should become praxical in nature, as doing so would violate the descriptive element of philosophical inquiry and might move it into the realm of theology. Rather, the argument rests upon the idea that, when describing the ontological or onto-ontological basis of understanding the world around us (when moving from ontology to epistemology, perhaps), these inquiries have to address the empirical, political, and concrete implications of their intellectual structures. When they do, these structures are often affirmed as onto-theological or lacking a crucial component that prevents them from being anything other than an intellectual abstraction to a present and growing empirical problem: for example, onto-theology can be a question of the grounding of truth claims, so what happens when those engaging the critique thoroughly unmoor truth from its ground? What happens when faith becomes belief, an empirical acceptance of certain truth claims defined through one’s faith? What our detours below into Nancy and Caputo, Kearney, and Westphal reveal is that these attempts, however noble and thoughtful, need to find a way to embrace the empirical implications of onto-theology in order to proceed from their foundational frameworks. This is where I think further engagement with systematic and liberation theology might empower philosophy’s understanding of what to do after accepting onto-theology: these theologies, while accepting the fallibility of their efforts to understand an inconceivable God, proceed nonetheless with engaging that God through worshipful reflection grounded in solidarity with those at the margins; the widow, orphan, and stranger. A philosophy that might follow would retrieve from these theologies a description of how to hold onto-theology’s desire to purely ground the subject in tension with a messianic impulse that breaks open this ground; tilling the soil as it were, overturning fallow land for a future harvest.

1.1. *Transimmanence: Jean-Luc Nancy and the Essence of Life*

The transimmanence approach primarily takes Jean-Luc Nancy as its main inspiration. In this special issue, Anné Verhoef, and Schalk Gerber and Willie Van Der Merwe explore Nancy’s re-configuring of the relation between transcendence and immanence through transimmanence; where one might seek and sense the “outside” of this world from “within” the world itself in a dynamic, intersubjective relationship with others existing within this same world.⁵ Or, as Benjamin Hutchens puts it, an “outside-within-between” that insuperably binds ‘the outside’ with ‘the inside,’ where neither can be separately sensed from the other.⁶ From this perspective, transimmanence arises from the worldhood of the world, in a community whose, in a word, ‘hospitality’ senses that there is more to

⁵ Since Nancy attempts to move beyond transcendence and immanence here, it can be difficult to describe and summarize transimmanence without resorting to the former terms. Hence why I use ‘outside,’ which has a transcendent or ‘beyond’ character, and ‘inside’ holds the character of an immanent, here-and-now character.

⁶ (Hutchens 2005, p. 97). See also (Gerber and van der Merwe 2017).

this world. This something more, or ‘outside,’ arises from within the community’s sense of the world.⁷ Here, the problems of Deleuze’s radical immanence are addressed through the notion that what we sense as beyond or outside this world actually comes from our intersubjective experiences within this world. Thus, the foundation of the world, its intellectual ground or onto-theo-logical construction, is not a foundation in the proper sense: it is a dynamic reality that rises and falls through our sense of what makes our world a world, or the ‘worldhood’ of the world.

This approach, though with caveats and limitations, endeavors not to outright overcome onto-theology but to avoid it all together through its deconstruction. In so doing, the concepts of transcendence and immanence become inadequate binaries that occlude us from truly discovering how our world becomes a reality. In order to rediscover the ‘worlding’ of this world, Nancy employs deconstruction, of Christianity in particular to reveal how these binaries have separated the world into a so-called ‘outside’ and ‘inside’ of the world itself.⁸ Though much can be said about Nancy’s deconstruction of Christianity and the Western tradition, for our exploration what matters is that Nancy is at once apocalyptic and creative. He heralds the ‘end of everything’ undergirded by Western concepts of transcendence and immanence, and hence also of onto-theology. All the while, rather than bifurcating reality, he seeks a new beginning of a more dynamic (perhaps more authentic) experience where intensity and sensitivity open one to a truer sense of reality.

Through reconfiguring and intertwining the concepts of transcendence within immanence, one can see that the transimmanence approach collapses under the weight of the sense of the world: If the ‘outside’ world of transcendence is ‘within’ the worldiness of this world, then how, when, and where does this sense of the transcendent ‘outside’ ascend from within? Moreover, despite its dynamism, does it succeed in dissolving the onto-theological critique of grounding experience in a highest concept (Verhoef 2016)? Does Nancy’s “being with” others (*Mitsein*) within transimmanence overcome the self’s over-determining subjectivity? Or does it, following a familiar critique of Levinas’ phenomenology after Heidegger, merely move the burden onto the other (Gerber and van der Merwe 2017; Critchley 1999)? Is his deconstruction of Christianity pointing us, after metaphysics, to one more primary locus of truth, after ‘*aletheia*,’ within the ‘Other’? Christianity, after all, would point to the ‘transimmanent’ truth of the world.

More pointedly, Joeri Schrijvers articulates that the primary flaw in Nancy’s argument is:

(Nancy’s) tendency to dismantle and dislocate the possibility of concepts and essences of all sorts, seems to reduce philosophical discourse to the singularities of all sorts of empirical events to the point of *eclipsing essence* . . . It is because there are these very different forms of hospitalities [J Sands: as seen within the community from which transimmanence is sensed] that one cannot conclude to the one and single essences of hospitality—there is no such thing as (the) one hospitality (Schrijvers 2016, p. 79).

Without essence and ideality, which traditionally has been the domain of transcendence, there is nothing for others to talk about or experience; intersubjectivity would have no permanent content and would replay this experience over and over again. For example, one experiences a table and therefore one recognizes the essences or concepts of tables so that, when one encounters other tables, one knows them as tables. For Nancy, it would just be newly experiencing a table all over again, every time.

More related to our discussion, the fact that one experiences or interacts in hospitalities within a community follows that there is an intertwining sense of hospitality itself, the concept thereof, and the current experience of hospitality. However, in Nancy’s deconstruction of Christianity and other aspects where he finds hospitality, he closes off the discussion of an essence germane to the concepts in

⁷ (Verhoef 2016). See also (Nancy 1997, pp. 46–49; Nancy 2000, pp. 42–45).

⁸ See, for instance, Nancy’s lengthy deconstruction of depictions of Jesus and Mary Magdalene in *Noli me Tangere* (Nancy 2008b); also, his major work on Christianity’s auto-deconstruction, *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity* (Nancy 2008a, pp. 140–51).

question. Derrida couches the notion of essence in his deconstruction with ‘if there is any,’ or ‘since, whenever there is such a thing,’ which leaves the concept of essence an open question. Nancy, on the other hand, surmises that “there is no ‘the,’” or essential essence.⁹ “What seems to be lacking in Nancy’s account of the world,” Schrijvers concludes, “thus seems to be a phenomenology of language, that is, a phenomenological account of the echo between the (ideal) signification of the word and the world in which these significations and essences are already used, of the fact that language is, at any rate, always the speaking of something to someone.” (Schrijvers 2016, p. 80) Or, one might surmise: Nancy’s transimmanent account of the world as the outside being sensed within the (political) community of individual selves evades onto-theological maneuvers via the traditional formulations of transcendence and immanence. However, by excepting the traditional essences that one finds within transcendence (i.e. ‘the’ hospitality), it hovers above the world it tries to create, having no language to express itself without falling into a reliance upon the concepts of transcendence it seeks to avoid.

Onto-theological categories are still in play when this political-communal account is actually lived and experienced in everyday existence. In Nancy’s account there is no room for repetition, only novelty. Therefore, for example, when faith inevitably acquires content (i.e. beliefs) to sustain itself, it would have to replay its initial acquisition over and over again, never moving forward unless it somehow employs onto-theological conceptions. Essentially, one would constantly be repeating the question, “Is there a God?” before moving onto “What do I love when I love my God?” In a more secular fashion, onto-theology is still in play if one wishes to proceed from thinking about the world to acting within it since these actions require some sort of intent, which is built off of prior experiences.

1.2. Addressing: Westphal, Caputo, Kearney and the Problem with Alterity

Primarily stemming from contemporary French thought, one of the major approaches to onto-theology addresses the critique through deconstructing or appropriating transcendent concepts within a phenomenological framework. One could look to Jacques Derrida, Emmanuel Levinas, Michel Henry, Jean-Luc Marion, Jean-Louis Chrétien, and also Paul Ricoeur and Jean-Yves Lacoste as the progenitors of this style.¹⁰ From North America, one could look to three main authors as an influential vanguard to this method: Richard Kearney, John Caputo, and Merold Westphal. We cannot do justice to all of these authors within the space we have, so for simplicity’s sake I will explore Kearney, Caputo, and Westphal’s attempt at overcoming onto-theology since all three appropriate, in varying ways, from the French tradition and collectively represent three emerging trends: First, they do not wish to get rid of transcendence and immanence altogether but, rather, wish to employ them in various ways through a hermeneutical-phenomenological framework. Second, when addressing the over-determining subject, they reconstitute the experience transcendence as a moment when one encounters the alterity of the other (primarily within a Levinasian ethics as first philosophy). Finally, each thinker addresses theism as a central component of onto-theology, where the critique strikes at the heart of how humanity shapes its world through what may be called God and, subsequently, revelation.

Richard Kearney, following his mentor Paul Ricoeur’s hermeneutics and Levinas’ concept of alterity, crafts a phenomenology that emphasizes how otherness opens a transcendent relationship between the self and the God who may be, a relationship that is dependent upon the self’s encounter with an other.¹¹ In his trilogy, “Philosophy at the Limit,” Kearney crafts this phenomenology by first revealing its hermeneutical element, which is exemplified through personal narrative and its subsequent intersubjective interpretation (*On Stories*), and then how these narratives address alterity in different encounters with the stranger, the divine, or the terrifying (*Strangers, Gods, and Monsters*). Finally, he applies this concept of alterity to describe how the impossible becomes possible through

⁹ (Schrijvers 2016, p. 78). He gathers this from (Derrida 2005, pp. 287–88).

¹⁰ For a review of the these authors, see (Simmons and Benson 2013); see also (Wardley 2014; Kearney 2004).

¹¹ See (Kearney 2001; Caputo et al. 2001, chp. 6).

the revealing and enduring relationship between the self, the other, and what may be called God (*The God Who May Be*). In short, his hermeneutical phenomenology conceptualizes a revealing, a *poetics*, that gathers in the impossible made possible through intersubjective relationships, where God becomes present through a Levinasian sense of revelation.¹² God, here, is not the ground of being in a theistic, metaphysical construction. Rather, Kearney capitalizes upon the promise and command of God, through various religious accounts, which accentuates the presence of God through possibility. When God is conceived of as *posse*, instead of *ontos*, the ethical command of God becomes central to the self's relationship to such a God, where the impossibility of this relationship is manifested in the acts and deeds done on behalf of this relationship. Since this relationship is historical, the moments where the impossibility of this bond is made possible identify a future, eschatological fulfillment of God's promise when, at the end of days, this promise is completely fulfilled (Kearney 2009).

In his later work, *Anatheism: Returning to God After God*, Kearney slides closer to Caputo's poetical, 'weak theology' by questioning the conception of God as a being who exists. Both construct similar ideas between an intersubjective possibility that gets revealed in transcendent and eschatological moments (Kearney) or in a God that insists and can be experienced within the spectre of the religious that is often co-opted and sundered by religion (Caputo's 'religion without religion').¹³ Caputo follows Derrida's deconstruction in order to craft such a framework through his "radical hermeneutics," which seeks to upend the "strong theological" interpretations of God that are often employed by humanity to legitimize their own will-to-power.¹⁴ These strong theologies often are onto-theological at their core and bear the responsibility for violence done to God (as a concept) and done in God's name (as an actuality, as too often seen in religion). In response, Caputo champions the 'weakness' of God, where God's presence can be felt as a weak messianic force that upends and reveals the cleavage between the name of God as a humanly employed force and the event of God, the event that shatters our reason and logical structures held within the name and to which we use for our own ends (Caputo 2006, pp. 7–9, 29–31, 32–35, 85–87, 93–97).¹⁵ This weakness portrays the event of God as an anarchic force that always pushes toward what is yet to come, a messianic 'yes' (or "*oui, oui, viens*") that upends the conscripted use of God for humanity's own ends. Going back to Westphal's quip about onto-theology, Caputo's weak theology directly addresses how humanity puts 'God' to work to make the whole world intelligible to itself and thus employed for its own ends.

Caputo's use of deconstruction and radical hermeneutics unveils at once how humanity employs this God and where the weak messianic force emerges in spite of this use. His approach to onto-theology resembles a diagnosis of its cancers, where it has metastasized and where it will eventually spread. Yet his diagnostic, deconstructive approach yields few remedies, as one can see within his religion without religion.

Religion without religion essentially tries to uncover what is not being said or performed in religious praxis and dogma that nonetheless still speaks in these weak messianic moments. It is not a separate religious belief, but rather what must be uncovered for a more authentic faith to reveal

¹² Kearney uses Christian texts that describe a theistic revelation, such as God speaking to Moses through the burning bush or Jesus' Transfiguration, but ultimately these are hermeneutical appropriations that he uses to describe a concept of revelation which follows Levinas' phenomenal account: where, through one's encounter with the other, a possible moment of revelation occurs that vertically rends open one's horizontal gaze upon the other. This rending opens the self to a transcendent experience, thereby revealing a much greater and larger dimension of the world that the self has conceived (hence the metaphor, verticality). See (Kearney 2007, 2002; Lieven 2005; Sands 2016b).

¹³ See especially Caputo's review/critique of *The God Who May Be*, John. Richard Kearney's *Enthusiasm: A Philosophical Exploration on The God Who May Be* (Caputo 2002, 2011). Kearney replies to Caputo in *Eros, Diacritical Hermeneutics, and the Maybe* (Kearney 2011). For Caputo's work, I am mainly relying upon *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event* and *The Insistence of God: A Theology of Perhaps* (Caputo 2006, 2013).

¹⁴ For a brief explanation of how Caputo's radical hermeneutics eventually established his concept of weak theology, see the interview (Leask 2007, p. 217). See also (Caputo 1987).

¹⁵ For the concept of weak messianism, see (Benjamin 2003, vol. 4.; Fritsch 2005, pp. 33–51). Caputo does not give a definitive citation for where he draws from Vattimo, but I find the following a valuable source for Vattimo's thought on the concept (Vattimo 2012).

itself (Schrijvers 2016, p. 13). His concept of religion without religion distinguishes the difference and cleavages between faith and belief: where and when belief provides content to faith it inherently limits what faith can and cannot be. It relies heavily on Derrida's reading of the violence of language, where something that is said about something inherently limits this thing to only what is said about it (Cudney 2002, p. 36). One can also see Levinas' concept of totality here, where my gaze upon the other totalizes this other to what I render him/her to be in relation to myself. Belief, in this way, renders God to be what humanity needs God to be, thereby stripping away this divine relationship's dynamism; God becomes onto-theological precisely because of the beliefs and praxis that this one-sided relationship displays. Religion, just like language's inherent violence, cannot help but do this given the humanity that fashions it.

This is why Caputo, similar to Kearney, abandons the concept of *ontos* in relation to understanding God. For Caputo, it is better to discuss the moments when God *insists*, where God's weak messianic force insists upon breaking open humanity's forceful attempt to render the world unto its grasp (Caputo 2013, pp. 58–64, 85–87). The insistence of God, much like Kearney's God of *posse*, implies a relationship between God and the self that is based upon the self's personal striving to fulfill the obligations the self holds to the other. Both constructions rest upon the idea that God reveals via *poiesis*; in the space opened through this obligation. However, as Westphal (one of their major critics) points out, a God without some form of being (*ontos*) becomes diminished since humanity can never adequately enter into a relationship with this God (Westphal 2014).¹⁶ Kearney's conception of God moves between the atheism-theism binary to reveal the possibility of an experience of God rather than any actuality of the experience itself, and hence brackets out any truth claims about this God and this relationship.¹⁷ Without these truth claims, the 'promise and command' of God to humanity never moves from possibility to experience. For how can this experience of the impossible happen without becoming a historical fact and thus a truth claim as seen throughout nearly all religious accounts and sacred scriptures? Even if those accounts corrupt the event of God itself, following Caputo, a 'religion without religion' still relies upon those accounts in order to move forward in breaking them up. The question of whether religion without religion is parasitic is an ongoing debate within philosophy of religion, and I will not enter into that debate here but only to say Caputo's approach to onto-theology is one that unveils it, but it does not proceed to consider how one might actually overcome this; to actually embrace and have a religion *without* a religion, without some sort of determination forming the foundation of religious belief.¹⁸

Contrariwise to Kearney and Caputo, Merold Westphal tries to overcome onto-theology through accepting its critique while arguing for transcendence nonetheless.¹⁹ Westphal's attempt applies a Kierkegaardian faith that is open and acceptable to the notion that one cannot ever completely understand or comprehend God.²⁰ This acceptance of the irrational thus resists any rational attempt as its justification, and therefore it cannot be perceived as a ground for the self. Rather, it is "unfounding" in the sense that it allows the self a place from which to proceed but, since it has no primary locus from which to start, it is constantly changing and unfolding through acts of faith. In order to overcome onto-theology, Westphal first seeks a way to de-center the self by placing its ground as something that is moveable and shake-able, which he finds in the experience of faith.

¹⁶ This is a video recording of a colloquium for Kearney's *Anatheism* with Westphal being an intervener.

¹⁷ Recall that Kearney's use of biblical revelation is an hermeneutical appropriation, he never states that these experiences actually happened, see (Kearney 2001, pp. 5–6; Sands 2016b, p. 10).

¹⁸ See especially (Simmons and Minister 2013, pp. 4–6, 9–12, 27–38; Schrijvers 2016, pp. 16–26; Kuipers 2002, pp. 20–34). Despite this critique, there have been various attempts at trying to make Caputo's religion without religion a praxical reality, see (Moody 2015).

¹⁹ For a shorter version of his argument, see (Westphal 2001, chp. 1). For an extended account, see (Westphal 2004).

²⁰ This is present in nearly all Westphal's discussions on faith, see (Westphal 2014, chp. 8; Westphal 2001, chp. 8, chp. 10); it is present throughout (Westphal 2008), but especially see pp. 148–49, 177–78; for its early development, see (Westphal 1987, pp. 80–84, 87–90).

In order for faith to obtain any reasonable understanding, Westphal claims that faith must be enacted within a relationship between the other and God (Westphal 1992, pp. 244–46). Employing a phenomenological account of revelation, appropriated from Levinas, Westphal articulates that the self receives a rational understanding of its faith through the encounter with the other which opens a self-transcendence; this is where the self becomes decentered and its ground shaken. This self-transcendence leads toward experiencing and understanding God's transcendence within the world. In this way, the act of faith becomes an ethical transcendence, which leads toward an epistemic transcendence where the self experiences a relationship with God and therefore begins to understand and know more about God (faith gathers its content, here), which then leads toward a cosmic transcendence where this relationship opens the self to understanding the greater whole: ethically gained knowledge opens the self to understanding God's relation to the universe and to the worldhood created by the self and other selves (Westphal 2004, pp. 229–31). Faith thus seeks an understanding, which it gathers in its relation to others, which reciprocally enhances one's faith.²¹

Westphal's approach is one that maintains its theism as a matter of accepting faith, the same theism that Caputo and Kearney reject on the fact that it grounds the self's determination of the world in God and thus lapses into onto-theology. Caputo rightly critiques Westphal's phenomenology as one that, although the self becomes de-centered, the world in which the self lives still maintains a center and thus there is still the opportunity to co-opt this relationship for the self's own interests; no matter if that center is an incomprehensible God, and no matter what enactments of faith the self attempts to better understand that God. (Caputo (2005, pp. 291–92; 2009, pp. 100–16); Sands 2014). After all, how many acts of faith performed on behalf of 'God's love' have turned out to be deceptive acts of subjugating the other? One can glaringly see within the West's tumultuous history how acts of love on behalf of God have yielded so much destruction upon people through ideologies such as 'White Man's Burden,' the religious justifications for slavery, and various missionary encounters that resulted in the domination of non-Western people. Westphal is aware of this and employs a rather scathing hermeneutics of suspicion in order to correct and guide faith when it falls into this self-legitimizing ideology (Westphal 1998, pp. 1–24, 283–90; 2001, pp. 295–301). Nonetheless, Caputo's charge remains an apt reminder of how any particular ground, no matter how shifting and open it might be, can still lead toward either self-deception or self-legitimization.

Yet still, Westphal's approach is the only one of the three that attempts at defining a determinate religion, one that touches upon the empirical reality and implications of living and struggling to overcome onto-theological foundations, and which might present us with a path forward after onto-theology. In order to buttress his claims so that they do not legitimize a self-deceiving God, Westphal at times crosses over from a descriptive phenomenology into a prescriptive theological argumentation, particularly when employing a hermeneutics of suspicion as a form of Christian self-correction (Sands 2016b, pp. 9–11). Westphal accepts that any relation to God, metaphysical, phenomenological or otherwise, must eventually accept this God as real; primarily construed through theism. It is here that the value of Westphal's approach arises: his ontology concedes that it must be flawed due to human reason, and onto-theology is a by-product of this flaw. Whereas Kearney and Caputo both try to reconceive God's nature in order to not lapse into onto-theology, Westphal sees the problem as something to continually overcome through the empirical reality of enacting a faith that meets this challenge; one that is full of doubt about its ambitions but proceeds nonetheless in order to fail better in its future acts; when faith seeks understanding, its future acts of faith become more faithful to their intentions.

However, as prescriptive as Westphal's philosophy (somewhat necessarily) becomes, it often presumes a theological confession that deters a phenomenological description of the self and its world. Our quest, here, is to seek a more philosophical direction after onto-theology, a sort of programmatic

²¹ For more on Westphal's concept of faith and overcoming of onto-theology, see (Sands 2016a; Sands 2014)

account of how philosophy might concede to the grounding of everyday life and thus can proceed into more thoroughly describing how to best understand the relationship between one's ontological understanding of the world and how living within that world helps reflexively shape this world.

1.3. Preliminary Conclusions: *Onto-Theology and Where to Turn*

As we have seen in the two detours above, onto-theology is a pervasive philosophical problem that, despite its variations and interpretations, sours the taste of any considerable attempt to overcome or evade it. Of course, our reading of the field was selective and the fact that many have not yet solved this issue does not imply that it cannot be solved altogether. Yet still, as we have seen, those who have admirably taken on the challenge either have to stand silent when confronting the issue of the essential ideality of one's being-in-the-world (Nancy), or have to remain abstract and unassailable, and hence merely theoretical, when meeting its empirical charge (Caputo, Kearney), or otherwise try to overcome it continually and exhaustively throughout every action in one's life (Westphal). My modest proposal is an acceptance of onto-theology as a component of reasoning's fallibility. I am proposing a humble philosophy that recognizes how its thinking obfuscates and delimits its own exercise; perhaps onto-theology is that obfuscation. If so, then this would open opportunities to look at human fallibility from a phenomenological perspective that also takes into account the metaphysical traditions, particularly Christian metaphysics, and how they deal with fallibility. Phenomenology has long been aware of the hubris of trying to make the world into a complete system, something which many metaphysicians have tried to do throughout the history of philosophy. However, if phenomenologists (or postmodern thinkers writ large) think that they can overcome this hubris by merely eschewing metaphysics, killing off metaphysics or pronouncing its death as it were, then they too fail to see that the metaphysical structure was not the issue. Rather, it was the human fallibility that comprised that structure.

Furthering this point, in *Ontotheological Turnings?* Joeri Schrijvers seeks to discover if removing the self-grounding component to any metaphysical or phenomenological description of the self, its world, and the problem of other selves, evades the charges and implications of onto-theology (Schrijvers 2011). Primarily exploring Jean-Luc Marion and Emmanuel Levinas, Schrijvers finds that neither understanding the self's being as given (and hence self-grounding is impossible) nor understanding the self through its obligation to other selves changes how the self interiorizes its subjectivity.²² Neither removing the self's sense of being-in-itself nor moving the self's determination onto the other evades the notion that something within the self must ground its interiority (Schrijvers 2011, pp. 148–49). Skipping ahead through his argument, Schrijvers discovers that his exploration has revealed something more important than a critique against Marion or Levinas; he discovers that any understanding of the self in relation to its world may likely fall into an onto-theological construction. Perhaps the game is rigged, that the only way to proceed with any formulation (metaphysical, phenomenological or otherwise) is to accept this as an ontological reality which touches upon the empirical reality of the self's being-in-the-world. Commenting on Levinas' notion of God as a "fixed concept" within both theology and ontology, Schrijvers remarks thus:

This stop (i.e., God as a fixed concept), then, is always and already there: there are others besides the others, being is in the neighborhood of otherwise than being, and ontotheology is haunting theology . . . It is thus that Levinas makes room for the ontotheological mode of procedure, assuming that, taken in the sense of an improper appropriation of the divine, ontotheology is inevitable and belongs to the thinking of transcendence. Ontotheology, then, would amount to the unsurpassable idolatry of all conceptions of transcendence, whether it be on the part of an individual or a community. Furthermore, one should not

²² (Schrijvers 2011, pp. 139–41). Here, he specifically uses the terms "the ego" or "nominative I" instead of the more general term, "the self." I have changed it above for simplicity.

pass easily over the fact that in the account of the third party, ontotheology is linked to politics, for is it not in the latter that divine power is all too readily turned into a power over the divine? (Schrijvers 2011, p. 208)

The Judeo-Christian tradition has long been aware of creeping idolatry and the abuse of God for one's own glory. As Schrijvers shows, onto-theology often takes the form of idolatry in that both link to the political nature of religious belief where the expression of faith reflexively is defined by one's conception of God (here the highest ground) whilst simultaneously shaping the definition of God. Westphal is therefore correct to link faith and works.

Marilyn Adams, an analytic philosopher of religion, also discovers this linkage when pondering why onto-theology is such an issue when it has a rather obvious connection to idolatry and perhaps sin in general. For instance she notes that, late in his career, Heidegger accentuated his critique when emphasizing how he found that "metaphysics and philosophical theology are inherently blasphemous because they substitute human conceptual frameworks for reality. Often in the background is some broadly Kantian picture that God is not the kind of thing that could appear as an object of our experience." (Adams 2014, pp. 9–10) Accepting this fallibility, broadly, Adams proposes to "put ontotheology in its place" as a form of prayer or metaphorical-analogous truth statements that reflect upon the relation between the theory and praxis of faith. Here, "ontotheological statements can be at most *mythologically or metaphorically true*, and that only insofar as they make a positive contribution to the wider religious praxis of producing saints. Second, if ontotheology is fine in its place, what is not alright is insisting that one religion (say, Christianity) is superior to others because its ontotheology is literally true while others are literally false." (Adams 2014, p. 10) Though they differ greatly in their argumentation, the essential point that both Schrijvers and Adams reveal is that, if onto-theology is inevitable (or can be employed to critique various intellectual approaches to understanding) then it must have a political or at least empirical component. Furthermore, given its inevitability, it should be treated as a reality of human reason and, hence, it can be situated within a philosophical or theological framework, or put in its place, as Adams succinctly describes it.

If this is the case, then what can be learned from addressing onto-theology? The prior work by Nancy et al was not in vain, but rather gave us the insights into subjectivity and the relationship between the ontic and the empirical in order to undergird our future endeavors. Contemporary phenomenology accepted, albeit begrudgingly in some cases, that the limits of rationality are not the limits of human expression and life. Theology is the arch discipline that endeavors to inquire into this expression, and its attempt at a fundamental theological understanding of God through understanding God's people resembles the philosophical attempt at describing a primordial ontology, or ontico-ontology. Therefore, it is clear to see why such phenomenological attempts turned to theology in order to gather insights into this 'something more' beyond the limits of a (Husserlian) phenomenological description of the self and its world. What follows will help round out our discussion of onto-theology by suggesting why (and how) philosophy might turn further into theological investigations to discover what comes after this fallibility in human reason. It will do so by emphasizing that this next turn into theology should not (and does not) render philosophical investigations theological. Rather theology remains in its place, pace Adams, while still being a valuable resource for phenomenologically understanding life, pace Schrijvers, religious or otherwise.

2. The Turn Thereafter: Joeri Schrijvers and Colby Dickinson in Dialogue

The attentive reader will notice that I have not given 'proof' for onto-theology's inevitability and that my detours into Nancy et al have only proven that they do not overcome onto-theology. They may conclude that my argument falters on its reliance to inference, probability, and deduction. This is why I have merely suggested an *acceptance*, or *concession*, of onto-theology's inevitability rather than outright stating that it cannot be overcome. Perhaps a wise thinker, yet to be born or at least publish, might find the key to unlocking the onto-theological problem and, if so, I wish her well. Yet still, this possible overcoming might benefit from the conditional acceptance of the problem's inevitability: proceeding

forward as if onto-theology is inevitable, it then becomes possible to see one's tracks in this venture and what might have gone differently. In short, perhaps phenomenologists have focused so much on getting past the first obstacle (onto-theology) that they do not foresee how the succeeding obstacles might reveal the clues to this initial problem.

Be that as it may, I will focus on Joeri Schrijvers' new book, *Between Faith and Belief: Toward a Contemporary Phenomenology of Religious Life* to lay the groundwork for proceeding forward.²³ *Between Faith and Belief* takes up Schrijvers' conclusion of the critique's inevitability in *Onto-theological Turnings* and follows a similar path to what I have used in this article: it first establishes the expansiveness and limits of onto-theology and then explores the thought of Nancy and Caputo in order to tease out how onto-theology reveals the necessary link between the ontic and the empirical in phenomenological description. Once this is established, Schrijvers proposes that Ludwig Binswanger (a heretofore overlooked contemporary and commentator of Heidegger) might help us establish this link. Binswanger does so through a concept of love as something that "subverts and lifts [Heideggerian] care from within so as to turn it away from itself and attune it to the loving "togetherness" that rages through being." The upliftment of care through love is what binds Dasein to the world (and thus to others) which allows for not just an ontology, but an "ontology incarnate;" an ontology that links to the empirical. (Schrijvers 2011, p. 6)

I will say more about this below, though for now we should see Schrijvers' attempt as one that tries to establish the links between ontology and empirical (hence, incarnate) life. One could re-subtitle the work, 'A prolegomena to any future work in philosophy of religion and/or phenomenology,' in that Schrijvers seeks to find the secular limits of understanding the acceptance of onto-theology for what comes next in these fields. As such, and whether one finds Schrijvers' reprisal of Binswanger a success or failure, we can at least establish that philosophy needs to make headway beyond onto-theology and Schrijvers offers at least a possible opportunity.

Yet Schrijvers' opportunity stops at describing the conditions of possibility of moving forward, hence why I find it to be a prolegomena. In order to further this movement, I turn to Colby Dickinson who, in *Between the Canon and the Messiah: The Structure of Faith in Contemporary Continental Thought*, explores the concept of the canon and the messianic desire (coming from within the canon itself) to break it open. Dickinson explores the concepts of orthodoxy and its authority in relation to its counterpart, antinomianism and messianicity, in order to better understand the tension between religious faith and its beliefs. As we shall see, his suspension of the messianic within the canonic might reveal how to best 'deal with' onto-theology, or 'put it in its place' within both theology and philosophy. His work will also give us partial insight into how theological texts might be rationally (i.e., secularly) employed in a philosophical 'second turn' into religion. He gives us this insight not through his own usage of these texts, for he operates from within a theological tradition that accepts the confessional approach of these texts. Rather, he gives us a framework for understanding how these 'messianic' texts break open the tradition through that tradition's canonical structure, thereby revealing a type of hermeneutical retrieval or re-appropriation (or re-reading, more broadly) that happens through and within the tradition.

2.1. *The Ontic You, Whom I Love: Schrijvers on the Necessity of Incarnate Love*

Schrijvers begins by elaborating upon the significance behind Nancy's and Caputo's (among others such as Peter Sloterdijk's and Martin Hägglund's) failure to conceive a phenomenology that is at once post-metaphysical (i.e. non-onto-theological) and beyond Christianity or 'religion' proper; since religion more often than not embodies a metaphysical posture. Because this argument is similar

²³ It should be noted, however, that Schrijvers seeks to prove that onto-theology as inevitable *tout court*, whereas I have a softer stance of merely accepting its inevitability to proceed forward in phenomenology.

to what we have already covered, I will begin our discussion by looking at his conclusions to these exercises and how he builds off of them.

As mentioned in the Nancy section, Schrijvers finds that Nancy lacks a phenomenology of language. From this account, Schrijvers begins making his case that ontology must have an empirical component: “if one follows Levinas’s conclusion that Saying or the address of the Other occurs always and already in, and from out of the said or that which is being addressed, then one cannot *not* conclude that Nancy’s thought of ‘the creation of the world’ *forgets* that even this speaking of the world happens from out of a determinate, definite world, culture, or being-with-one-another.” Since Nancy’s attempt to eclipse essence becomes impossible, then one begins to see that his attempt to “deconstruct Christianity, speaking of it as if already outside it, to have surpassed and overcome it, to dwell beyond its essence, seems to lack the means to confront the relics of this culture” (Schrijvers 2011, p. 80). Meaning, in short, that Nancy cannot perform this fundamental maneuver of deconstructing Christianity from ‘the outside;’ his deconstruction of Christianity eventually resembles what he is deconstructing since the essence of Christianity always remains within his efforts.²⁴ Nancy’s deconstruction only brings about more Christianity, albeit a slightly different version; just like the ‘post’ in postmodernism implies the modern, so too do contemporary atheisms, or post-Christian frameworks, often imply a sort of Christianity that they are refuting (Schrijvers 2016, pp. 83–123). As one will see below through Dickinson’s work, this further solidifies the idea that a messianism which breaks open our onto-theological structures is always already located within the canonic, orthodox, and metaphysical tradition.

What this reveals is that one cannot simply ‘go around’ or ‘go beyond’ Christianity or any dominant metaphysics to arrive at the end, the true end, of metaphysics. Nancy partially addresses this in his conception of Christianity being ‘auto-deconstructive.’ Yet still, what comes after Christianity and its metaphysics, if indeed it is a product of Christianity’s auto-deconstruction, will still always and already be imprinted by Christianity and its metaphysics:

If we are to avoid illusions of overcoming at all, the deconstruction of Christianity and metaphysics ‘to come’ has to take into account both the eternal return of a certain metaphysics and that which, *amid* a culture that is marked and stamped by metaphysics and Christianity, might forge positions and postures ‘beyond’ outworn metaphysics. If the adjustments to metaphysics . . . do not suffice to remedy the problem that metaphysics poses . . . to such an extent that metaphysics seems maladapted to and even *unzeitgemäßig* for contemporary times, then the time has come to comport oneself properly to the remains of metaphysics and of a certain strand of Christianity as well. This is what Heidegger had in mind when stating, decades ago, that metaphysics ‘will not remain a choice.’ It is acknowledged, or can be acknowledged, that we still cannot think non-metaphysically, nor do we already live in a non-Christian culture (Schrijvers 2016, p. 126).²⁵

What Schrijvers ultimately finds through this sort of attempt at getting over metaphysics by getting over Christianity is that it is always already a legacy of Christianity and, as such, a certain type of Christianity is bound to it. If this is so, then dismissing the tradition altogether ultimately fails to uncover what might come after, even if it is a sort of Christian tradition (or not, even). Though Christianity is the focus here, one could say the same about transcendence and immanence. Schrijvers finds that a better path is a “long detour *through* the tradition” (metaphysical, and/or Christian) where one might encounter less metaphysical thinking or moments of onto-theological relief, as I call it, that might help evolve what comes next (Schrijvers 2016, p. 128).²⁶ An evolutionary

²⁴ For a different critique, see also (Watkin 2011, pp. 38–47, 73–85, especially p. 44)

²⁵ he quotes Martin Heidegger from *Was ist Metaphysik?* Schrijvers’ own translation. (Heidegger 1998, p. 21).

²⁶ See also Wayne J Hankey’s excellent paper, “Why Heidegger’s ‘History’ of Metaphysics is Dead” (Hankey 2004). Hankey gives a broad outline of the importance of history to understanding onto-theology within metaphysics and criticizes Heidegger’s dismissal of this history.

approach rather than a revolution that replicates what it wished to overturn recognizes that some aspects of a tradition are worth saving but also could be improved upon.²⁷

Employing the tradition in order to seek these reliefs in hopes of overcoming onto-theology was the primary approach in our second detour above, and what Schrijvers is proposing does not follow this path. Rather, it is here that he is building the case that a phenomenology after onto-theology does not forsake what came before. It employs what came before to better understand the *necessity* of having moments that break open onto-theology, the aforementioned ‘relief’, in spite of never quite moving beyond metaphysics and/or onto-theology. Furthermore, since the tradition is laden with attempts at ontologically understanding life in the mode of the everyday, Schrijvers is also laying the foundation for why the empirical realities of life matter to phenomenology. Life cannot be lived in a vacuum and thus it can never be thoroughly understood in one; pastors need the smell of sheep on them and philosophers need to get their hands dirty or at least know that no one’s hands are clean. Or, more technically, if one can’t quite escape onto-theology when one’s description of the world enters the world, meaning, it is employed by a person in understanding the world around them, then one might find the tradition’s grappling with this issue valuable.

Schrijvers solidifies this foundation through his exploration of Caputo’s ‘religion without religion’ and its problem of not quite passing beyond the religion of which it seeks to rid itself. Schrijvers’ main critique of Caputo amounts to the idea that his ‘without’ is more haunted by the ‘with’ of religion than it may wish to be (Schrijvers 2016, p. 135). Furthermore, though Caputo recognizes this, what he does not accept is that perhaps Derrida, his primary influence:

... would cling to the essential contamination or ‘pervertability’ of faith. In this way, the secret that incites and ignites faith would be that there is no secret to this faith and that it at least is never as pure as Caputo surmises: it is not without belief/s. Rather one could contend that there is no such thing as a pure faith and that faith, if there is any such thing, elides the hierarchies of purer and purest faiths ... Caputo forgets the tragic feel of deconstruction. The cut that is deconstruction is directed not only against ‘strong’ theology, against metaphysics and a stabilized destiny, but also against those who claim (hubristically?) to be forever outside of ontotheology and metaphysics and would so attain the purity of destinerrancy (Schrijvers 2016, p. 176).

In search of a more pure faith, a search for the event of faith rather than its name (be it God or whatever else), Caputo’s quest for an anti-metaphysical faith begins to look much like a metaphysics as it erects hierarchies in its becoming a more pure, less ‘religious’ faith. The question of a ‘strong’ or ‘weak’ theology maintains an essential core of *becoming* more or less strong or weak, depending on either how far one either enters into religion or seeks its uncovering, the latter of which still requires religious beliefs to deconstruct to find its purity.²⁸

Schrijvers gives the following example: Derrida’s earliest remembrance of the word God came when his mother thanked God that his fever broke when he was a child. For Schrijvers, this reveals how “nothing is more common or natural than the human being trying to alleviate or otherwise explain away his or her ‘being cut off from the truth.’”²⁹ This prayer, in effect, attempts to bridge the gap between reality and truth, which comes more easily for the ‘onto-theologian.’ Derrida’s mother feels her powerlessness from not knowing the fever’s cause or its remedy. Once it broke, for whatever reason, she sought a concluding answer: thank God it broke, thank God or whatever made it break. What this story shows, and what Caputo misses, is that Derrida’s description of prayer reveals faith’s

²⁷ More theologically minded readers may see within this claim a certain resonance to Lieven Boeve’s open narrative approach to history and theology. See (Boeve 2007, chp. 2, pp. 45–48).

²⁸ Schrijvers gathers this from his reading of Derrida, he quotes: Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond* (Derrida 2000, p. 79; Bennington and Derrida 1999, pp. 188, 311–14; Derrida 1989, pp. 3–70, 25–26).

²⁹ (Schrijvers 2011, p. 176). He is quoting Caputo “Shedding Tears Beyond Being: Derrida’s Confession of Prayer,” in *Augustine and Postmodernism: Confessions and Circumfession*. (Schrijvers 2005, p. 110)

empirical reality. Yes, this wishful-thankful prayer might corrupt a purer faith but it also reveals that the effects of faith matter just as much as seeking a more originary faith; perhaps even more so. Schrijvers concludes:

Nothing in Derrida prevents us from focusing on, exactly, ‘the end of prayer,’ where a certain ontotheological instrumentalization of the divine comes naturally to us. Derrida would then not be describing the origin of faith, but rather the experience of one who is always and already losing his faith, who suffers from always and already having lost his faith or only has faith ‘in a very unfaithful way.’ (Schrijvers 2011, p. 177)

An ‘impure faith,’ then, seems to be the place where onto-theology becomes lodged within one’s understanding of being-in-the-world; perhaps between one’s faith and the beliefs gathered in the name of that faith. Schrijvers will go on to develop this concept through a lengthy discussion of Derrida’s concept of bad consciousness (Schrijvers 2011, pp. 178–81, 209–15), but what matters for us is that Schrijvers’ unveiling of an ‘impure faith’ as the consequence of onto-theology convinces him that “the human being, I suggest, *is* in default, like one can be in default when one fails to pay back a loan” (Schrijvers 2011, p. 303).

Schrijvers’ concept of being in default is crucial. Our failed attempts at evading or overcoming onto-theology, either through proceeding beyond metaphysical structures and without essences, or through a search for a faith that is not stained with the corruption of belief, reveals a lack within the human condition; a lack so well exemplified by the onto-theological problem. For some, particularly theological readers, this may hint at something like original sin. However, in a philosophical position, one that cannot presuppose The Fall but nonetheless recognizes the frailty and fallibility of human nature, this becomes an important position: onto-theology becomes not a problem that is to be overcome, *it is the problem that helps us locate the frailty and fallibility of human nature within human reasoning itself*. If the onto-theological condition can be seen as the between of faith and belief, where faith becomes corrupted by its contents, the naming of the event of faith in Caputo’s terms, and this inevitability uncovers our ‘default’ position, then there might be a way of addressing it. We can only move forward from our default position by humbly accepting that it is always and forever our condition: we will always have a lack within our reasoning and this is exemplified in our actions. This latter part is likewise crucial since, as we have seen through both Nancy and Caputo, we need to accept the empirical implications of ontology (ontology’s empirical nature?) if we are ever going to craft a phenomenology after onto-theology.

Schrijvers finds within Binswanger’s reading of Heidegger a blueprint to craft such a phenomenology. We do not have space to completely detail Schrijvers’ lengthy account of Binswanger since it is a reprisal of sorts of his work and doing so would mean having to enter into the prolonged debates between Heidegger and Binswanger themselves. Moreover, one may not need to find Binswanger convincing to see what Schrijvers is getting at in his argument. Therefore, what I will focus upon is Schrijvers’ attempt to progress after onto-theology and how this requires him finding a phenomenological link between an ontological understanding of the world and the self, and an empirical account of the world. Binswanger provides this link through his account of love.

Binswanger does so through his emphasis on a love which ends “‘where care begins,’ namely in the thinking of (my) singular being, of an ego, which, despite love, knows of a *Sehnsucht* and longing that remain even ‘after’ being-with-this very ontic you in love.” (Schrijvers 2016, p. 276.)³⁰ This emphasis on love after Heideggerian care has an ontological aim since it reveals, not just that one can love another which can be seen in care, but that there is more going on between two lovers than just appreciation: “Love is erected as the fundamental condition of possibility of knowledge, stemming from the recognition that love itself *aspires* to the idea (in its Platonic sense) and transcends the very ontic

³⁰ He is quoting and translating Ludwig Binswanger, “Grundformen und Erkenntnis des menschlichen Daseins” (Binswanger 1993, p. 258).

figures and way with which we love (and sometimes love badly)” (Schrijvers 2016, p. 276). Thus, the ontological claim within Binswanger’s analysis wagers that to understand the human being requires one to “love the human being. However, to love the human being, one must *be* with the human being within the world, know of the ‘nullity’ of care and put its negativity to work” (Schrijvers 2016, p. 277). Or, to understand the primordial relation between Dasein, one has to account for the “conversation that humanity has with itself throughout the various epochs of thought. Binswanger’s epistemological claim thus unfolds as love itself unfolds: first the world, then love, and finally ‘a return to the world.’” (Schrijvers 2016, p. 277) Here, one can see that Binswanger’s phenomenology brings to the fore the importance of embodiment to ontology, and thus how that embodiment acquires meaning to itself, for others, and for the world and spaces in which it occupies. Love, then, becomes an essential characteristic in which this embodiment can be known and can be understood; Binswanger links ontology to its empirical reality through the self’s embodiment and, through that embodiment, that which it loves (Schrijvers 2016, pp. 278–79).

Moreover, love’s temporality is finite and holds a transcendent character since it can last beyond our companionship; beyond death even. Aside from loving another who has passed, Binswanger also emphasizes this in his account of art and literature (specifically the work of Henrik Ibsen) which adds a layer of “compassion” to the concept of love; love is not just for lovers but for those whose expression of passion finds a welcoming or appreciation in others. That we find beauty in the works of others binds us to them, where the artist “in and out of love want[s] to show (to others) what *is* and *exists*, but in and through the beauty of their artwork, they simultaneously show the beauty of what so is and exists.” The artist does so through the “event of the world,” meaning in a historical manner, but it is here where that history points to something much more: in the fact that ‘there is’ meaning and that the ‘there is’ of this meaning extends infinitely, though even only historically.” Thus, the conversion happens here, “for Binswanger [it] seems to be that the artist so extends the (spiritual) wandering, the feeling around for the ‘there is meaning’ (of being) into a love for the beauty of what, *überhaupt*, ‘is there’ (of beings)” (Schrijvers 2016, p. 286).

We can see here Schrijvers’ claim that a phenomenology of love holds something like an “ontology incarnate” since it emphasizes that for one to understand the being of the self and other selves, it must turn into the world, and then to what one loves in the world, and then back to the question of being itself (Schrijvers 2016, p. 291). Through the very ontic you, whom I love, and then back to my being, who I am. Importantly, however, this ontology incarnate is a thoroughly secular description. Even though it can be used in a theological manner or, a “secular phenomenology of religious life” even, its emphasis on love provides a framework to express various accounts of the ‘something more’ one experiences in life. “The ‘essence’ of love,” Schrijvers concludes, “lies in its ‘existence’” (Schrijvers 2016, p. 292). Through this acceptance, this phenomenology is fundamentally open to all forms of love but, in and of itself, it does not proclaim what love is nor can be. This phenomenology focuses on what the experience and expression of love shows itself to be and thus it becomes a type of deconstruction of these forms in order to seek a better understanding of love. It is here that Binswanger gives us a way to proceed after onto-theology: through its description of an ontology incarnate that loves what it loves, it links the ‘what is’ through ‘what it does’ or better still, ‘what it does for what it loves.’³¹ Henceforward, phenomenology can deconstruct and describe these acts of love and what they reveal, which takes into account their empirical and onto-theological character of being in default/fallible, and it also can describe pathways to better expressions of love. Onto-theology finds its place here. Being in default does not mean that one cannot love another, but it does mean that one

³¹ Regarding what are the limits of this phenomenological gaze, see (Schrijvers 2016, pp. 292–95). Regarding the necessity of embodiment and incarnation, Schrijvers elaborates “... the idea of such togetherness cannot do without a bodily incarnation in the union of the two lovers either: its ideality only ever presences in and through this very materiality. It is nowhere else than in this incarnation of love within the world. This ontology cannot do without the ontic, just as much the ontic craves a concomitant ontology.” (Schrijvers 2016, p. 297).

knows there are other ways to love and thus there might be a better way to love. As Samuel Beckett has oft been quoted, “Ever tried. Ever Failed. No matter. Try again. Fail Again. Fail better.” Or, if I may: Try Again. Love again. Love better.

Having described what he calls a ‘phenomenology of contemporary religious life,’ Schrijvers stops short at directly stating how or what might unfold through this phenomenology. Thinking that he has now made the case that one needs to go through the Christian and metaphysical tradition to discover and describe how the ontic you whom I love shares that love, he never states what might come next. Instead, his conclusion assimilates the various parts of his arguments through a critique of Heidegger and the limits of the phenomenological gaze after being in default (Schrijvers 2016, pp. 305–16). This is why I find his work to be a prolegomena but, having read his prior work on Jean-Yves Lacoste and his appreciation for a theological phenomenology, it is my opinion that *Between Faith and Belief* could be read as a secular foundation for what Lacoste articulates through the liturgy.³²

Be that as it may, through a phenomenology of love I see a way to return to the Christian and metaphysical tradition for a better understanding of what comes after onto-theology. Going back to the notion that one cannot stand outside the tradition, nor is there any graspable possibility of a ‘pure faith,’ one can proceed through the tradition to find these moments of onto-theological relief, where the love, religious or otherwise, was expressed in a way that breaks open these metaphysical structures. Here, Schrijvers sounds very similar to Kearney in that these hermeneutical retrievals might tell us something about how to proceed and how to understand/relate to a possible God. Yet there is a primary difference since, for Schrijvers, this love is seen not as a possibility but as an incarnate and historical event; the two or more lovers (gathered in whomever’s name) had an actual expression of love that is always already hermeneutically crossed in its historical facticity. Binswanger convinces Schrijvers that a “phenomenology of love no longer takes ‘the detour through God’ but remains with ‘the detour through world,’ where human beings dwell, meet, and actually love one another.” (Schrijvers 2016, p. 9) Hence, it is thoroughly secular, which enables it to better understand the religious life of the self, rather than how the divine might enter into the self’s life. This is an imperative pivot within the philosophy of religion since it can now embrace the ‘lack’ or default nature within the self and how what “we share is not so much our capacity for love, but rather our lack of love.” (Schrijvers 2016, p. 303) Going through the metaphysical tradition, then, is a process that accepts this lack and sees that when one speaks of God, of being in default, one shares this default and yearning for a better love with others who are a part of that tradition. The moments when we find a better love within that tradition, either as onto-theological relief or as ‘revelation’ (or the Holy Spirit, perhaps), one also finds moments where this lack seems more fulfilled, more open; a shattering of love’s expectations.

This search requires a deeper turn into theology, then. It is a turn that does not stop at the fundamental-theological questionings of the divine but seeks to understand how a community who knows that it is in default (i.e., original sin—perhaps) tries nonetheless to love an inconceivable love and to express and share that within and outside its community. (Schrijvers 2016, pp. 314–15) Furthermore, one can also see the importance of the messianic, and especially the eschatological, to these communities: if they always already accept their default nature, and that they never completely know what they love, then their hope for a breaking open of this lack and an eventual end to this lack can be seen as an anticipation for the ultimate onto-theological relief and reconciliation. Love, here, shows itself as both a present moment and an ultimate end that proceeds with all prior, present, and even the future communities which share in these moments by witnessing them, celebrating them through liturgy and commemorations, and handing down the tradition to others. The Christian and

³² See, for example, (Schrijvers 2012, chp. 8 and Conclusion)—these two chapters deal with his reading of Lacoste’s “phenomenology of (spiritual) life”.

metaphysical tradition becomes a lived history of trying to love, recognizing the failure of that love, but loving nonetheless.

2.2. *Loving through Orthodoxy and the Messianic: Dickinson and a Further Theological Turn*

The final issue within my proposal of a further turn into theology after onto-theology deals with how one might follow this turn while remaining phenomenological and philosophical in orientation. This is where Colby Dickinson's *Between the Canon and the Messiah* enters the discussion and will round out my argument.³³ The work follows a similar line of argumentation that we have seen throughout Schrijvers' work in that Dickinson explores the debate between Giorgio Agamben and Jacques Derrida regarding the violent nature of canons and the messianic forces that break them open. Dickinson, as a theologian, is essentially seeking a better understanding of the nature of canons and orthodoxy in relation to antinomianism and the messianic events that overturn these canons. On the one hand, orthodoxy is necessary in order to keep a community intact and its canon helps solidify what they believe and, for our interests, what they love. On the other hand, messianic forces break open these canons, providing a reawakening of belief through its shattering. This messianic force can bring new forms or understandings of love to the forefront of the community.³⁴ If we are going to turn further into theology then we must have a strong sense of how we can find these moments of onto-theological relief without negating the metaphysical structures from which they spring. Dickinson's final conclusion, that the messianic force can be in hermeneutical tension with the necessary and inevitable formation of the canon, mirrors our understanding gathered by Schrijvers while also showing us a way to approach and appropriate from the Christian and metaphysical tradition (Dickinson 2013).

Drawing upon Walter Benjamin's "weak messianism," or desire to change societal structures without complete upheaval, the canon, for Dickinson, "signifies a cultural, symbolic reality" whereas the messianic represents a quasi-heretical impulse to break open orthodoxy (Dickinson 2013, p. 47). The canon's political force stems from its dialectical sifting of what is deemed legitimate for a culture and what is not. Dickinson seeks a possible reconciliation between the canon and the messianic through putting the canon's dialectical structure into direct tension with its messianic opposition, thereby exposing it to new and plurivocal ideas. The revolution gets teleologically suspended into the dialectic it wishes to topple, if you will.

Dickinson's work echoes our argument that there is a link between ontology and empirical reality in that he explores the political nature of the canon within belief systems. This nature, he argues, is seen where the "religious desire to transcend all representations (its 'messianic' force) is . . . understood in relation to our formulations of shared sovereign power (its 'canonical' manifestation)" (Dickinson 2013, p. 45). Our privately held beliefs have a public dimension and representation since they are shared and/or mediated throughout culture, and thus play a part in the sovereignty given to society, or the political. The establishment of political sovereignty for any society is its approval of certain beliefs that are legitimized as authoritative through the establishment of canons. Hence, "a canon is only a force which determines how certain norms will become legible to the subjects who are in turn subjected to them" (Dickinson 2013, p. 47). This is where canonicity's inherent violence arises: it necessarily rejects some ideas, and often those who hold them, while legitimating others. Therefore, any permanent interruption of these dynamics follows the same trajectory as the canon: the elimination of all canons excludes those who adhere to the canon, thus merely replacing one dialectical set for another. Here, one can also see where the attempts at discarding the Christian and metaphysical tradition more often than not replicates that tradition in some form, often coalescing around the essential ideas that motivated people to discard that tradition in the first place.

³³ I will use portions of my summary of Dickinson's work in a forthcoming text (Sands 2017).

³⁴ In Dickinson's article for this special issue, he furthers this exploration by inquiring into queer theology's messianic gesture to orthodoxy and the canon. See (Dickinson 2017).

Contrariwise to Caputo's weak messianism, Dickinson follows Schrijvers in seeing that one cannot have the messianic without its canonical counterpart. This question of whether one can get rid of canons without forming another anti-canon becomes the centerpiece of the debates between Derrida and Agamben. Skipping ahead in his argument, Dickinson eventually finds the tension between Derrida and Agamben irresolvable and the debate unwinnable for either (Dickinson 2013, pp. 84–91).³⁵ Yet what is important for our investigation is how this tension is used to accept the inevitability of the canon and to understand that the messianic opening of the canon needs to come from within the canon itself, not from the outside. Thus, overturning the violent and hegemonic nature of the canon from within itself maintains the best of the canon and helps keep the community alive and together. It becomes an evolution of the canon, not a revolution that replicates what it tries to topple. This is critical for our exploration because it shows two things: first, how one might pass through the tradition while acknowledging onto-theology's place within that tradition as one between the faith of a community and their professed beliefs; second, how one can better understand that these messianic moments inevitably pass through a tradition and thus subsequently further shape and form that tradition.

Dickinson capitalizes upon Derrida's argument that the canon is a social inevitability. Just as there is nothing that is not textual or subjective, so too do canons function as a binding of a community's sense of justice.³⁶ Not only do these canons authorize what we see as culturally important but, going back to their political force, they also symbolize what we see as 'right' or just, further increasing their violent and silencing nature (Dickinson 2013, pp. 48–49). The canon, in the course of meting out justice, tends to absolutize its findings, enhancing its sovereignty and authority. Yet, this absolutization can only hold for so long and, as it tightens its grip upon sovereignty, it eventually breaks itself apart. This is where the messianic arises but, similar to the impossibility of a pure faith and the messianic moments that break open faith, Derrida's deconstruction of the canon comes from within the canon itself while recognizing that it can never actually destroy the canon: "The (spectral) messianic forces that run throughout any canonical form will always disturb, though the canonical form will yet always persist" (Dickinson 2013, p. 53).³⁷ One task of deconstruction is to breakdown canons and texts in order to reveal and explore these messianic forces, thereby opening canonical justice to heretofore uncovered, and perhaps 'indecent,' justices that have been silenced.³⁸

From Agamben, Dickinson sees the necessity of recognizing the sovereign structures that legitimize the canon while they are in turn legitimized by the canon (Dickinson 2013, p. 109). Here, Agamben's archeological attempt at breaking down these structures in order to find a primordial moment before the canon's construction closely resembles Nancy's attempt at finding a sense of the world without any essences, especially concerning Agamben's 'coming community,' which no longer needs justice codified through the canon. Recalling our discussion above, this follows a similar line in Nancy's formulation of transimmanence and the auto-deconstruction of Christianity where we no longer need these signifiers of transcendence or immanence and thus we no longer need Christianity or the metaphysical tradition to make sense of the world.

Agamben attempts to seek what is behind all canons and texts in order to find the pre-linguistic origin before all inscription. Focusing on the signification within our textual nature as our "Original Sin" (as he calls it), Agamben seeks a path to undo the political force that undergirds our entire system; canons, texts, and contextualities (Dickinson 2013, p. 66). Deconstruction works within

³⁵ See also one of his concluding subsections for more on this creative tension, entitled "The Guises of Violence, or on the Difficulties of Constructing an Ontotheological Bridge between Metaphor and Politics," (Dickinson 2013, pp. 172–89).

³⁶ (Dickinson 2013, p. 53), "There are only *canons*, for Derrida, just as there are only *texts* (or *histories* or *subjectivities*), and nothing lies outside of their corresponding grids."

³⁷ My own example: Postmodern critique comes from within modernity but it never rids itself of modernity, it is still latched onto the latter's epistemologies, histories, and so forth.

³⁸ I include "indecent" here because Dickinson's reading of messianic force can also be aligned with Marcella Althaus-Reid's concept of "indecent theology," see (Althaus-Reid 2000, pp. 1–10, 19–23, 57–60).

the system it wishes to reconstruct and Agamben thus finds Derrida complicit in continuing its violence (Dickinson 2013, pp. 70, 77). In its place, Agamben seeks an archeological uncovering of the significations before the canon and, once those are revealed, a coming community would no longer need its texts codified or authorized for any teleological aim toward justice. Furthermore, this community, not having an aim towards justice represented in canons, would not need political representation to support their narrative inscriptions. Justice is found in uncovering the forces behind canons and by removing the transcendental barriers that stitch them together. Derrida critiques this as superficial and, one could say, as lacking in spiritual depth: removing canons and seeking the archeological origins behind them makes one fall into a sort of “archive fever” where the archeologist who chooses which and what texts to uncover becomes the sovereign (Dickinson 2013, pp. 69, 73, 80–86).³⁹ Derrida finds that Agamben’s approach merely replaces one sovereign for another but in a much more violent way since the archeologist is solely in control of what gets uncovered. This is similar to Schrijvers’ argument against trying to go around the tradition: one cannot do so in the first place (Nancy) and, if one nonetheless tries, their findings merely replicate that tradition (Häggglund, Sloterdijk, et al.). Moreover, in my view, privileging a silenced text over another text, even if it were dominant at some point, replaces one sort of epistemology over another; the revolution becomes what it sought to eliminate.

Through Dickinson, we see that what both great thinkers are getting at is similar to the question of where onto-theology emerges and how one might overcome it. Hence, their debates over the canon reveal the necessity of hermeneutics in that “the answers we give to this question (of onto-theology’s inevitability) . . . say as much about our philosophical views as they do about our political ones, a connection not always clear in our basic political formulations.” (Dickinson 2013, p. 151) Thus the approach we take to onto-theology, a problem which we have seen links the ontological to the empirical, is already hermeneutically crossed by our own political situation and context. Accepting that the messianic emerges from within the canon recognizes this: if the messianic is to break open the canon then it must be contextually related to that canon in some fashion. Moreover, following Derrida, creating a less violent canon can only come from a deconstructive critique of the canon itself. Yet still, exploring onto-theology, and perhaps trying to overcome it nevertheless, trying to think a thought that one cannot think, adds a creative measure to understanding the primordial constitution of canons. Therefore, all those who have sought an end to onto-theology, to metaphysics, to canons, to an ‘end of everything,’ were not foolish nor were their efforts wasted. These efforts help overturn the canon itself, tilling over its soil to break it open, in order to at once allow future crops to grow and to allow us to better see what lays beneath.

Dickinson and Schrijvers reveal how one might proceed after onto-theology in that the onto-theological question itself is always already empirical, political even, and thus one must go through metaphysics; one cannot reconfigure a better understanding of the world without the history of that world. This recognition, remarkably, allows philosophy to accept the political and empirical nature of its investigations while also giving it an important reason to further explore the political and empirical nature of theology. The Christian tradition readily accepts that one is in default while nonetheless living in hope for a moment of revelation or an eschatological event of reconciliation. Here, philosophy can explore how this plays out in systematic, pastoral, and liberation theologies to better understand what one does when accepting being in default and trying nonetheless to fail better. Just like with the canonic and the messianic, the desire to overcome onto-theology gets teleologically suspended in accepting that one needs onto-theology to move forward in life and in understanding the worldhood of that life.

³⁹ For more on Agamben’s response, (Dickinson 2013, pp. 92–96).

3. Conclusions: What Comes Next for Philosophy of Religion?

My primary quest through this article was to propose that onto-theology is inevitable and then to look at how this acceptance benefits philosophy. I have done so through selectively surveying the philosophical tradition built up after the theological turn in phenomenology, the tradition around the Christian and metaphysical tradition, if you will, that sometimes passes through that tradition. I have argued that it must press further, to turn further, into theology. It needs to do so because the ontological insights phenomenologists have gleaned from this turn are linked empirically to the expression of faith through belief within this tradition. Schrijvers gives us headway into why this is so, and Dickinson shows us how to proceed to find any onto-theological relief within this tradition.

I find that this sets up a worthy platform for investigation into various theologies and branches of theology that might heretofore be seen as too confessional for philosophical investigation. On the contrary, it is because they are confessional that they are philosophically valuable. These believers accept their default nature but try to fail better nonetheless in light of an eschatological event, which can reveal how one might live with (i.e., accept) onto-theology. In a postmodern culture where the critique of critique proliferates within any academic investigation, there is something valuable to be learned from those who recognize the ‘impossibility’ of righteously speaking and doing, of speaking about an ineffable God or enacting justice, when one already knows that one’s actions will always fall short of their intended aim but one does so nonetheless. Often one does so with the conviction that these performative acts will lead to better understandings and more ethical actions. Philosophy does not have to ‘speak’ like theology, but from theological inscriptions it can better understand/describe the self, its inevitable failure (onto-theology), and how the self deals with this failure in the mode of the everyday.

Liberation theology, with its imperative thrust to always care after those on the margins of society before oneself, is an initial and influential example of a theological discipline that would benefit especially the philosophy of religion. Indeed, Merold Westphal has already made this case throughout his work, even stating that “all theology should be liberation theology, a guide to overcoming oppression in all its forms” (Westphal 1992, p. 246).⁴⁰ Though his work often moves to the prescriptive and hence confessional,⁴¹ his headway into exploring liberation theology’s thrust toward helping others as a self-transcendence is exceedingly valuable for detecting what comes after onto-theology. Westphal aside, liberation theology recognizes that it cannot bring about a complete liberation of the widow, orphan, and stranger but tries to do so nonetheless. Importantly, it does so through its solidarity with the marginalized in an attempt to broaden and uplift the whole community. One can see here that the issues of alterity and otherness, intersubjectivity, as well as the relation between ethics, ontology, and politics, intersect within liberation theology. This, is why I think it would make a welcoming dialogue partner with phenomenology. Queer theology, as a subfield within liberation theology, employs a similar, weak messianic force as described above by Caputo and Derrida, as well as Schrijvers and Dickinson. Queer theology works through the tradition in order to break open how that tradition understands love. It does so not to discard old loves, but to express new forms of love alongside the old. It is an attempt to find better expressions of love through what loves we already know, and hence it may be valuable for future philosophical reflection.

Ultimately, this further turn into theology need not be solely Christian but may also explore other metaphysical and onto-theological traditions, or other critiques of that tradition. An example of this comes from African philosophy, particularly those whose work explores the concepts of black consciousness and decolonization, such as Steve Biko, Frantz Fanon, Achille Mbembe, and D.A.

⁴⁰ See also (Westphal 2008, pp. 16–26, 41–50, 54–56, 79–84, 145–49).

⁴¹ See especially (Westphal 1998), which explores Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche’s suspicion against Christian praxis. Here, one finds him at his most theological, expressing a certain kind of liberation theology, even.

Masolo.⁴² The benefit from such an exploration is that one finds within African philosophy, especially in texts from the decolonization tradition, a critique that parallels the phenomenological critique of onto-theology; these texts query the impact of the Western, Christian metaphysical tradition that pervades throughout colonialism. In this vein, they might also provide moments of onto-theological relief that exist throughout the tradition and perhaps ones that were silenced by the tradition. Theirs is an attempt to conceive of a reasonable understanding of the world, phenomenological, metaphysical, or otherwise, through their empirical and historical reality of that world. Therefore, their work must be included in the further turn within theology, perhaps as a hermeneutics of suspicion that further critiques theology.

In conclusion, I would like to implore the secular nature of this turn. It is not to turn philosophy into theology, nor to make it praxical. Rather, it is to better understand the historical reality of a phenomenological understanding of the world and the self's worldhood of the world. This better understanding benefits this world not through its prescription, but through its description of that world. To know better is to love better, to fail better. Though this further turn might benefit theology, a philosophy that knows its limits when pursuing a better understanding at its limits provides the basis for this intellectual bounty. Perhaps it is inevitable that such a turn yields prescriptive results, as another process of being in default is the imperative to speak out when one sees injustice. Dickinson's recognition that our address to the question of onto-theology always already is a political address informs us of this possibility. If that is the case, then even accepting onto-theology as an inevitability allows philosophy to be more suspicious of itself and thus to step back when it needs to do so.

A philosophy after onto-theology, then, becomes more humble in its endeavor. It accepts its fallibility through accepting the fallibility of reasoning about the world as one accepts the fallible nature of living in the world. Our reach always exceeds our grasp, our dreams are never quite fulfilled, our speech never quite gets around to saying exactly what we want to say. We can admit this but nonetheless try to overcome it, flailing and failing to be someone or something that we cannot be. In the process we may lose what we love most about our world. Or we can admit this and nonetheless try to do better, to be better than we once were. Here we may find a better way to love what we cherish most about ourselves and our world. It is my humble hope that we proceed through the latter. Through this, we may find a better way to accept the things that we cannot change while striving to better enact what we can change in spite of our failings.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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⁴² See (Biko 1978; Fanon 1967; Mbembe 2001; Masolo 2010). This, of course, is just an introductory selection of texts.

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