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Editorial

Introduction to "In Anticipation: Eschatology and Transcendence in Contemporary Contexts"

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Received: 22 June 2017; Accepted: 23 June 2017; Published: 27 June 2017

Although it is difficult to pinpoint when the so-called theological turn in Continental philosophy began in the 20th century, it is fair to consider as a working origin that Martin Heidegger's critique of metaphysics and his questioning of the forgetfulness of Being touched a nerve within both philosophical and theological discourses. From here, questions arose as to how one might construct a personal understanding of the world after the death of metaphysics and the god that grounds such a framework, how one might find transcendent meaning within that world, and even how one may be linguistically bound to a description of that world. Here, theological concepts such as negative theology, theodicy, revelation, and myth became popular notions for philosophers to explore a world unmoored from a definable and systematic structure. Likewise, theologians took the critiques of onto-theology and metaphysics seriously in order to better understand the nature of human faith and belief, and how humanity could possibly relate to an ineffable divinity.

This ongoing dialogue has yielded exciting and varied developments since its beginning but, broadly, one can locate two emerging advances that will be the focal point of this special issue: On the one hand, thinkers within a hermeneutical-phenomenological context have employed a theological turn to re-evaluate concepts of transcendence after the critique of metaphysics. On the other, political philosophers have explored how eschatology(-ies) undergird societal structures that situate the self into a larger, historical context. Within the former discussion, concepts such as radical transcendence and immanent transcendence—or even a so-called end to transcendence—have become possible re-orientations after onto-theology. Within the latter, the eschatological promise of the impossible becoming possible or an end to history have become motivating principles behind understanding foundational intuitions and concepts within society.

"In Anticipation: Eschatology and Transcendence in Contemporary Contexts" is a special issue that is comprised of articles which question where the dialogues between philosophy and theology might lead contemporary thought. It focuses on the connections between eschatology and transcendence, since these two concepts have been heavily explored within philosophical-theological discourses, but rarely together as related and interconnected notions. As a platform for discovery of what may come next within Continental philosophy and theology, it seeks to look back while also looking forward: various articles seek to retrieve and highlight thinkers and concepts of the recent past that may have been overlooked, while others critique and explore current authors and trends that have come to frame discussions between philosophy and theology.

Following this, "In Anticipation" takes the form of an interdisciplinary conversation between theologians and philosophers from North America, Europe, and South Africa where each voice adds a critical layer that questions where we have been, where we are now, and where we are going. As the guest editor for this issue I have decided to structure this conversation into two parts with two sections each:

Part 1, Time: History and Eschatology

A. *The End and Today: Eschatology in Temporality*—How does eschatology, and the eschatological hope, influence our understanding of history?

- Jason W. Alvis (University of Vienna, Austria), "Transcendence of the Negative: Günter Anders' Apocalyptic Phenomenology" (Alvis 2017).
- Patrick Ryan Cooper (St. Meinrad Seminary, Indiana), "Poor, Wayfaring Stranger: Erik Peterson's Apocalyptic and Public Witness Against Christian Embourgoisement" (Cooper 2017).
- Bradley B. Onishi (Skidmore College, New York), "Transcendence as Indistinction in Eckhart and Heidegger" (Onishi 2017).

B. *The End and Tomorrow: Hope in Eschatology*—In light of the past, how does eschatology speak to a possible future?

- J. Aaron Simmons (Furman University, South Carolina), "Living Joyfully after Losing Social Hope: Kierkegaard and Chrétien on Selfhood and Eschatological Expectation" (Simmons 2017).
- Robert Vosloo (Stellenbosch University, South Africa), "Time Out of Joint and Future-Oriented Memory: Engaging Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the Search for a way to Deal Responsibly with the Ghosts of the Past" (Vosloo 2017).
- Colby Dickinson (Loyola University of Chicago, Illinois), "Fragmented, Messianic, Paradoxical, Antinomian, Revolutionary, Secular: The Hermeneutics of Eschatology" (Dickinson 2017).

Part 2, World: Subjectivity and Transcendence

A. *The End and the Self: Immanence and Transcendence*—How does the self's experience of (possible) transcendence influence its perceptions of a so-called immanent reality?

a. Anné Hendrik Verhoef (North-West University—Potchefstroom, South Africa), "Transimmanence and the Im/possible Relationship between Eschatology and Transcendence" (Verhoef 2016).
b. Schalk Hendrik Gerber (Stellenbosh University, South Africa) and Willem Lodewikus van der Merwe (VU Amsterdam, The Netherlands), "On the Paradox of the Political/Transcendence and Eschatology: Transimmanence and the Promise of Love in Jean-Luc Nancy" (Gerber and Merwe 2017) .
c. Nathan Eric Dickman (Young Harris College, Georgia), "Transcendence Un-extra-ordinaire: Bringing the Atheistic I Down to Earth" (Dickman 2017).

B. *The End and the World: Transcendence in Temporality*—How does the intellectual concept of transcendence translate to everyday being-in-the-world?

a. B. Keith Putt (Samford University, Alabama), "'The No to Nothing, and the Nothing to Know': Immanent Transcendence as Eschatological Mystery" (Putt 2017).
b. Ulrich Schmiedel (Ludwig-Maximilians University Munich, Germany), "Transcendence, Taxis, Trust: Richard Kearney and Jacques Derrida" (Schmiedel 2017).
c. Justin Sands (North-West University—Potchefstroom, South Africa), "After Onto-Theology: What Lies Beyond 'The End of Everything'" (Sands 2017).

Part 1, "Time: History and Eschatology", takes the nature of temporality and its possible end to be its guiding theme, and all six of the articles explore how the experience of the world through temporality shapes and guides the self's narrative. Its first section, "The End and Today: Eschatology in Temporality," mainly explores the question: how does eschatology, namely the eschatological hope, influence our understanding of history? Here, we find a revival of two influential but often overlooked thinkers through Jason W. Alvis' exploration of Günter Anders and Patrick Ryan Cooper's of Erik Peterson, while Bradley B. Onishi re-examines the work of Martin Heidegger in light of one of his early

and crucial influences, Meister Eckhart. Alvis' paper highlights, among other things, Günter Anders' critique that phenomenology and other supposedly presuppositionless philosophies have the temptation of being too abstract, ignoring the very real consequences of being-in-the-world. Following this, Cooper's exploration of Erik Peterson's 'eschatological provisio' emphasizes the participatory nature of the church in the Eschaton as a mode of Christian witness through (eschatological) praxis. In so doing, Cooper highlights how the Kingdom of God is 'already' but also 'not yet' here. What emerges from Alvis' and Cooper's articles is the idea that apocalyptic and eschatological thinking, as prevailing concerns of our everyday temporality (i.e., that one day our life and world will end), shapes how we think of history and our worldhood. Onishi's article follows up this question of history and worldhood by reminding us that Eckhart's mystical thinking (particularly his henology) had a profound influence on Heidegger's philosophical approach to religion and on his understanding of ontology in general. Although written individually, these three articles complement each other in that they question the relationship between history, its end, and how we construct our worldhood. Additionally, these articles further argue that the theological turn in phenomenology and philosophy of religion does not necessarily begin with Derrida, Levinas, and other French philosophers at the middle part of the 20th Century.

The second section of Part 1, "The End and Tomorrow: Hope in Eschatology", mainly explores how eschatological thinking enables us to speak hopefully of a possible future. Here, the conversation turns on personal and social experiences of hope after historical events that seem all but hopeless. J. Aaron Simmons' article explores how his own loss of hope after the 2016 presidential election in the United States compelled him to reflect upon the eschatological nature of hoping for a better future and how this may guide one to better enact and realize that hope in everyday life. Timely and personal in nature, his contribution also explores the influence of historical and personal events on philosophical and theological thinking. Accompanying this, Robert Vosloo's article broadens this question of historical and eschatological influence by looking at South Africa's current context and how it deals with Apartheid's ever looming spectre. Vosloo draws upon the so-called "Hamlet Doctrine" and how it reveals the difficult relationship between thought and action. From there, he shows us how Bonhoeffer situates his ethics within an eschatological horizon that acknowledges that the present is haunted by its past, but nevertheless one can hold on to an anticipatory future hope that can only be realized through one's present ethical actions. From here, questions of how eschatology and transcendence are related to a messianic overcoming or breaking apart of history arise, which Colby Dickinson subsequently addresses in his article. Dickinson presents us with a hermeneutics of eschatology that underscores the importance of the messianic as a weak force which operates within history and society. Using queer theology as an example, Dickinson argues that critique functions mainly within the social structure it wishes to upend as an overturning of norms and concepts of 'decency'. Being placed within the history and narrative it wishes to overturn, queer theology (or messianic forces writ large) functions in the mode of 'already-not-yet', or a mode of making the future a present but unfinished reality. This mode of 'already-not-yet' thus maintains an eschatological hope that rests in between the tensions of social and political orders of the world, where a possible future is at once sought and actively strived for. Taken together, all three articles reveal how eschatology presents us with hopeful possibility while requiring both participation and a sense of the impossible. These authors collectively maintain the futurity of eschatology, that our reach for it always exceeds our grasp. However, they also articulate how eschatology provides a transcendent anticipation for a better future, for an end to history, and how the shape of that future is fashioned by our present and ever hopeful striving.

Part 2, "World: Subjectivity and Transcendence", takes the issue of subjectivity and its possible surpassing via transcendence as its guiding theme, and collectively all six articles explore how this relationship between subjectivity and transcendence may influence our understanding of history and its end. Its first section, "The End and the Self: Immanence and Transcendence", highlights subjectivity through contemporary appraisals concerning the bifurcation between immanence and transcendence. Jean-Luc Nancy's concept of transimmanence, and his critique of transcendence/immanence in

general, is the central concern of Anné Hendrik Verhoef's article as well as Schalk Hendrik Gerber and Willem Lodewikus van der Merwe's co-authored article. As one of the major contemporary figures in philosophy of religion, Nancy's work has become a focal point for debating what becomes of transcendence after the death of metaphysics, and Verhoef's article places Nancy into dialogue with Derrida and Catharine Malabou in order to question whether Nancy's transimmanence is not just a reconceptualization of transcendence, but also a reconceptualization of eschatology. If transcendence happens 'from within', basically, then does this likewise mean that the end of history does not come from an external end to time but from within time itself? Is this even logically possible? Gerber and Van Der Merwe continue this exploration between transimmanence and eschatology by locating the political and social nature of Nancy's work. Through a dialogue between Nancy and Levinas, this article draws out the latent implications concerning how transimmanence re-articulates the promise and anticipation underlying eschatological thinking. Since Nancy's philosophy in general employs the concept of Christianity's auto-deconstruction and the dissolving importance levied upon a transcendent deity, Nathan Eric Dickman's article serves as a worthy conversation partner to Verhoef, Schalk, and Van Der Merwe. Dickman explores lingering disappointment in the failure of so-called traditional images and metaphysical conceptions of a personal, theistic god. Dickman analyses how the yearning for transcendence through such images more likely indicates an aversion to the ordinary rather than something 'beyond' or outside of one's experience. Instead, as suggested in some Asian religions, the everyday becomes exceptional through its own character, not through an outside medium. Thus, Dickman's article likewise challenges the relationship between immanence and transcendence, and the political through critiquing traditional theism's normativity as a barrier to diverse and heretofore silenced experiences of transcendence or the divine, rather than some clear pathway to the transcendent. Taken as a whole, all three articles seek to further understand the implications of contemporary debates surrounding transcendence and immanence, and do so through looking at the socio-political nature of eschatological thinking. Their questioning focuses upon the nature of subjectivity as being-in-the-world, and therefore serves as the necessary link between our previous sections and our final one, "The End and the World: Transcendence in Temporality".

This final section of Part 2 accordingly expands the questioning of subjectivity through history and eschatology by looking at the relationship between transcendence, the self, and the world. Here, B. Keith Putt's article begins the section noting how the various 'species' of transcendence that have proliferated after the death of metaphysics fundamentally change the mystery of the divine and how one may experience that divine, particularly through an eschatological hope. His work pivots upon the epistemological implications of re-orienting transcendence through immanence (to choose just one species) and how this changes the eschatological mystery. Essentially, his work links the question of 'what do I love when I love my God?' to 'what can I hope for, at the end of days?' when one's knowledge of, and access to, the divine is re-oriented through an immanent transcendence. Following this epistemological concern is Ulrich Schmiedel's article, which articulates the implications of orienting transcendence through an encounter with the other. Taking Richard Kearney's diacritical hermeneutics as his focus, Schmiedel shows us how Kearney's Levinasian wager of transcendence through the finite other, which may lead to a transcendent encounter with an infinite other, hinges upon the wager of how trustworthy this finite other may be. As a practical example, Schmiedel uses the analogy of a taxi driver to highlight Derrida's questioning of the trust required for such transcendence and how it relates to everyday being-in-the-world. He broadens Derrida's familiar critique to explore how Kearney's wager on trust implies an eschatological conceit, or at least a reconciliation between trusting an other in the here-and-now and the subsequent, ultimate trust that an infinite transcendent encounter might eventually occur. My article (Justin Sands) contributes to both of these sections' discussions, and ties into this issue's overall conversation, by looking at what may come after the so-called end to metaphysics and its subsequent philosophies and theologies. Returning to Heidegger's critique of the onto-theological constitution of metaphysics, this article argues that there is a link between ontology and the self's empirical reality as a product of being-in-the-world, and thus questions whether

onto-theological thinking may be inevitable in some fashion. As such, the article explores what may come after one accepts onto-theology as an inevitability, and how this may fundamentally change what we mean by being 'post-metaphysical'. Resultantly, this article argues for a further turn into theology to explore the eschatological and transcendent nature of accepting this fallibility, or the self's 'being in default', that onto-theological thinking implies. Collectively, this final section looks at the issue's overall conversation from a broader view, emphasizing how the personal and social implications of re-orienting subjectivity, transcendence, and eschatology influence how we conceive of the world and one's responsible being-in-the-world in a post-metaphysical age.

Taken as a whole, "In Anticipation: Eschatology and Transcendence in Contemporary Contexts" is a platform for a robust conversation about the current state of philosophy and theology, and it highlights the relationship between eschatology and transcendence as two crucial concepts that need to be further explored within both disciplines. It tries to recover particular authors and ideas that may have been overlooked while also critiquing and progressing prevailing ideas and trends within current debates. However, though it is a robust and broad special issue, it has its limitations, particularly concerning diversity. One may notice that, though the authors of this issue come from three different continents and from within an extensive spectrum of interests and expertise, all of them are white males who mainly speak from a Western context. This was not an oversight since, as editor, I made all possible efforts to include in this issue more diverse voices and perspectives—soliciting over 35 contributors from various ethnicities, countries, and backgrounds, many of whom were female scholars. The goal of having a diverse range of contributors was to expand the discussion, and in no way a form of tokenism since all scholars invited to participate (including the 11 within this issue) were well respected specialists in their fields. However, mainly due to prior commitments and obligations, many of those solicited had to decline at some stage or another. Although this is regrettable, I find that it does not spoil the efforts and the quality work within this issue.

Additionally, and finally, *Religions* is a journal that welcomes and encourages responses to its articles. We hope that we can continue this conversation with our readers, and if you have a response to any article then please submit a 2000- to 4000-word paper to the journal (please contact me at justin.sands@nwu.ac.za for details). Not only will this continue what we find to be an important discussion, but it may also round out our issue by including as many voices and perspectives as possible.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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