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Transparency and Ontology of Love (Chapter 14 of To Know as I Am Known: The Communion of the Saints and the Ontology of Love)

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Part V

A Theory of the Ontology of Love

Chapter 14

Transparency and Ontology of Love

In his book *The Path of Perfect Love*, Diogenes Allen suggests that it is because of our inability to perceive the reality of other people and things that we don't grasp what brings out the fundamental feature of love, viz. the recognition or perception of things beside one's self. The reader may recall that both Badhwar and Royce made reference, the latter extensively, to the importance of recognizing the reality of the other person if one is to love. Allen focuses deeply on this theme. I will briefly present Allen's position in section I and turn to a sermon given by Meister Eckhart in section II. These reflections allow us to pursue, in section III, the notion of transparency. Section IV summarizes the various things we have learned along the way, putting them into the broader context of transparency. Section V proposes an account of the human individual that links the individual through transparency to the community. Providing an ontology of the heavenly individual in turn provides for the ontology of love for, as it turns out, love is an enduring component of the individual properly understood.

I

Diogenes Allen quotes from Iris Murdock's novel *The Unicorn*, in which the character Effingham Cooper falls into a bog and nearly dies. Allen says in response that "Even though she [Murdock] also says that it is through death, or the immanence of one's own death, that the perception of others as realities sometimes occurs, Effingham still does exist and he is conscious, since he is aware of other things. He is not, however, *self-conscious*. He is so full of the presence

and reality of something else that his own presence is longer part of his awareness. . . .”¹ Allen continues by noting that this is the death of the self as the one reality, the center of everything else. It is a shift from seeing oneself as being only in relationship to one’s self, to entering relationship with others. “One has only to cease to exert one’s power to be a center to accept them fully as independent realities, to live ‘in the light’.”²

As we’ve seen at various places in the text above, self-interest is central to our notion of the individual self. However, self-interest can’t exist without self-consciousness. Without self-consciousness, even if in the fleeting sense that happens for Murdock’s Effingham, we find ourselves aware only of the reality of the things and people around us. In an interesting description that summarizes his view, Allen writes:

We have . . . the power to occupy a position that is a type of solipsism. That is, when we have a unique concern for ourselves, we see things from our own point of view with our selves as the center, and estimate the value and significance of all things in terms of their worth for us. Their value is conditional; our own is not. We are an end, and nothing else is perceived or regarded that way. Ontologically we are primary, since our concern is for ourselves and for other things only as they relate to us, and we are ontologically unique. We have no way of entering into the experience of other people, or animals, or plants, and we have no regard for nonliving things as existing independently of their relation to us and

¹ Diogenes Allen, *The Path of Perfect Love*, revised edition, Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1992, 13.

² Allen, 14.

their value or significance to us. We can truly say that there are other minds, other centers of feeling, and things exist independently of us, yet at the same time be *experiential solipsists*.³

Several observations are in order.

First, not only do we have the power to occupy this position of experiential solipsism but it is our typical, fallen view, rooted in our local self-interest. The question is whether we can occupy the alternate position in which we truly view and understand other people and the rest of the natural order as real in its own right. A second question is whether knowing the reality of the other is enough to provide for love. So far forth, Allen seems to provide us with a step in the right direction, viz. that others are real and of value in their own right and not merely in relationship to me. But it seems that he leaves open the possibility—in fact, the very pragmatic issue—of how knowing others are real enables me to love the other in the strong love provided for in the doctrine of the communion of the saints. There will, it seems, be conflicts between what I value and what the other values. Of course, in the heavenly realm all our needs are met and so those conflicts disappear. Our local self-interests understood in their own way will cease to play the important role that they do now. But then we need an explanation of what the ontology of the individual human is in the communion.

Allen proposes that there are two kinds of selves, the egocentric and the moral. To be an egocentric person “is to have a unique self-regard, and thereby to judge all things only as they

³ Allen, 19.

relate to oneself.”⁴ In this state, “we do not actually experience ourselves as merely one among others, one item among many. We do not experience or possess ontological humility.”⁵ The moral person, in contrast, is “one who is aware of being one reality among other realities. It is not at all clear to me that anyone is able to occupy that position of perceiving the reality of others for very long or very often.”⁶ He continues, “Nonetheless, we can be aware of the idea, at least, of what a moral person is and at times become aware in a small way of what a saintly person [is].”⁷ As we move toward being a moral person, we first lose our sense of value but then gain it back as we truly come to understand our own reality, a reality not filtered through our own narcissistic love but rather the reality as perceived by others. “To become aware of my true worth, I must be occupied fully by them (and they by me), and see myself only in my effect on them.”⁸ We need, in short, ontological humility.

Finally, Allen calls attention to Plato’s discussion of the myth about love as a search for our other halves. Once, goes the myth, a person had two heads, four arms, four legs, etc. and then everyone was split down the middle. Thus, each of us spends our time looking for our lost half. Socrates’s response to the myth suggests that although love begins with particulars, ultimately we

⁴ Allen, 20.

⁵ Allen, 20.

⁶ Allen, 20.

⁷ Allen, 21.

⁸ Allen, 23.

seek the forms of love, beauty, and justice. We move from the particulars that are the beginning point of calling us into love via beauty to loving the forms. Allen responds:

In the last resort, Plato's scheme denigrates these particulars. They are valuable only because of the presence of something else; their own particularity is not primary. But to love is to perceive particulars as irreducible realities that are not to be put into orbit around oneself, nor to be made an example of something else, a specimen of a universal. For then it is the universal that is the real thing, and the particular is real only in so far as it participates in it. What we are to love is a particular, a center, full of unrealistic worth but also true worth that is not exhausted or captured by whatever likeness it has to others.⁹

Although I think Allen is correct when he notes that love is about particulars, it is also about the universally valuable realities that we all have interest in. We have an interest in them, however, not as particulars of the local self-interested sort but as newly formed particulars-in-communion.

II

One way to solve the problems of solidarity and motivation considers the theme of knowledge. A clue is found in one of Meister Eckhart's sermons. He writes:

The whole Being of God is contained in God alone. The whole of humanity is not contained in one person, for one person is not all people. But in God the soul knows all humanity, and all things at their highest level of existence, since it knows them in their essence. Suppose any one to be in a beautifully adorned house: that person would know

⁹ Allen, 38.

much more about it than one who had never entered therein, and yet wished to speak much about it.¹⁰

The context for this quotation is a discussion of the nearness of God. Eckhart says: “God is nearer to me than I am to myself; my existence depends on the nearness and presence of God. He is also near things of wood and stone, but they know it not. If a piece of wood became as aware of the nearness of God as an archangel is, the piece of wood would be as happy as an archangel.” He continues on, “Our happiness does not arise from this, that God is near us, and in us, and that he possesses God; but from this, that we know the nearness of God, and love Him, and are aware that “the Kingdom of God is near.” Further, “God is equally near all creatures.”¹¹

Eckhart apparently thinks that true happiness (both on earth and in heaven) is due to our awareness of the nearness of God. But he also thinks that in knowing God, we know all of humanity. If we are in the beautiful house, we know much more about it. So it is with God. If we are in God, we know not only God, but everything in God, including all the saints. However, we cannot know God unless we deny ourselves. Indeed, we cannot know even ourselves unless we deny ourselves. Eckhart writes:

For, if one creature be set over against another, it may appear to be beautiful . . . , but if it be set over against God it is nothing. I say moreover: If the soul is to know God it must forget itself and lose itself, for as long as it contemplates self, it cannot contemplate God.

¹⁰ Meister Eckhart, “The Nearness of the Kingdom,”

<http://www.ccel.org/e/eckhart/sermons/htm/v.htm>

¹¹ Ibid.

When it has lost itself and everything in God, it finds itself again in God when it attains to the knowledge of Him, and it finds also everything which it abandoned complete in God. If I am to know the highest good, and the everlasting Godhead, truly I must know them as they are in themselves apart from creation. If I am to know real existence, I must know it as it is in itself, not as it is parceled out in creatures.¹²

It is natural to suggest that in order to see the beauty that is our (true) selves, we must compare ourselves to God. If we do that, we'll see that we have no true beauty of our own, but we do have God's beauty. Here we should call attention to the fact that Eckert need not be saying that the beauty we have as individuals is not real. Rather he is saying that the beauty is not ours; that is, we did not make it, it derives from another.

Because the truth about ourselves is that our beauty derives from another, what we could not know as creatures interested in ourselves, we can know as creatures who have denied self, thereby arriving in the beatitude of heaven. We then gain ourselves back *as we really, essentially are*, along with a perfect knowledge of everything else, in its own nature. The question is, what is it that we essentially are?

In order to obtain what is ultimately good for oneself—true knowledge of one's self—one must deny oneself. One way to think of this is to suggest that human (local) self-interest is contrary to God's interest. God's interest is in the good, which, presumably, includes the good for us. But because of the fall of humanity away from God's intentions for us, our own self-interest is skewed. Our self-interest is not "on the mark." So we must set our (fallen) self-interest

¹² Ibid.

aside in order to let God bring out our true interest. In order for us to get where we will genuinely and truly be happy, we must let God provide for us what we truly need. We truly need to understand ourselves and to do that we must let God grant us that understanding. In due course then, we must stop trying to figure it out on our own, and let God show us how we truly are and/or were meant to be. So even though the saints in heaven have denied themselves, they also gain their true selves back. Are, then, the saints in heaven self-interested?

That depends on what is meant by self-interest. If the saints are anything, it seems they are people who are so God-centered that they would always set aside their interest for God's interest should there be a conflict between the two. Yet as I've suggested, there would never be such a conflict. Since all the saints' needs have been met, and the saints are so pure so as to have no greed beyond their needs, it seems there would, in fact, never be an actual conflict. Our needs in heaven are met not because God does something there that God doesn't do on earth but rather that our nature as saints becomes truly and finally clear to us. The saints see themselves "in their essence." What is that essence? It is a total reliance on God and, indeed, a complete knowledge of that total reliance. It won't do to *be* totally reliant; one must *know and acknowledge* that total reliance. In addition, since God's interest is only in the good, the true, and the beautiful, and human interest in heaven is aligned with God's interest, both will share the same interest in the good, the true, and the beautiful. We might say that the human will becomes amalgamated with God's will.¹³ Thus, the interest of the saints and the interests of God are identical.

¹³ For an extended analysis of this sort of amalgamation, see my *Repairing Eden*, Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2005.

But is God self-interested? I earlier argued for a negative answer to that question. I proposed that in the Christian tradition, goodness is fundamentally a social issue. There can be no true good unless that good is shared. To desire a good thing is never to desire something only for oneself. Individuals are, in the end, always individuals-in-community. Of course, something good can also be good for oneself but to bring about the good (even for oneself) is to bring about the good for others. Rather than the problem being how is it possible to act solely for the good of another (as the problem of altruism has it) the question is how is it possible to act solely for the good of oneself. This insight unfolds from the doctrine of the Trinity. God, by very nature, is a socially interconnected unity of three persons who share one essence. An act done by one person is done, in effect, by all three and for all three. Eckert brings this insight into focus by arguing that while humans appear not to be connected in this way, in fact, they are. Humans can, in fact, act like God, always in unity with others. But to do so, we must get to the point of knowing what we truly are and this, says Eckert, we can only do by denying out selves and thus recognizing our true nature.

Insofar as the heavenly saints share God's will we might surmise that the saints would have the self-same intention for helping the earthly and purifying saints as God does. The motivation is, thus, out of goodness itself, which would seem to move us out of the realm of self-interest and away from the Golden Rule as it is applied strictly on the basis of need. God has no needs, no weaknesses, and is entirely self-sufficient. So God has no need-based self-interest, no local self-interest. God has only share-interest. What falls within God's range of "self-interest" is really only interest in the good, the true, and the beautiful which are, by their very natures, objects of share-interest.

It is central to see, however, that God's interest, and by extension, human interest, is not in merely abstract goodness, beauty, and truth. It is particulars, as Allen notes, that we love. But particulars in the kingdom are not loved alone. To truly love a beautiful painting, we must love it together in community. What we make in heaven is not made for us alone but as gift to God and the communion. Our desires, aimed as they are at vague particulars, are desires for instantiated universals, the universals of goodness, truth, and beauty.

Insofar then, as the saints in heaven have the mind of God, they will act well toward all, just as God does. That is the true nature of humans. As we've seen from Eckhart, although humans may attain heaven by denying themselves, the saints in heaven "get themselves back." We might surmise, then, that while the saints in heaven have no further needs, they still have self-interest in the good for themselves in the same manner as God. So perhaps the motivation challenge is answered by understanding that the goods desired by the saints in heaven are identical those "desired" by God, viz., goodness itself (that is, God). However, it must be an interest shaped by God's interest in goodness for its own sake.

What, exactly, is the nature of God's interest? Of course, we don't know this experientially (except for perhaps a few mystics/saints). Yet we can make some surmises. First, human self-interest seems problematic in some regards vis-à-vis ethics. That is, the interests of two people with exactly the same self-interest might tend to cancel each other out, should the resources for meeting those two self-interests be limited. If divine interest is only in goodness itself, God's interest will never—in fact cannot—conflict with some other interest. There is never a lack of resource to fulfill the needs and desires of everyone—never a lack of materials to move the universal through some vague particular to an admired-for-its-own-sake specific

particular—when those desires are appropriate. Second, when we think of the virtues, we think of what is good for us as human creatures, that is, what is in our interest as humans. When it comes to God, however, virtue talk may be quite out of place. God may have no virtues because rather than being good in some derivative sense, God simply is goodness itself. If a human is good, she is good comparatively and derivatively. God simply is good. The divine is the standard of goodness and cannot be compared to itself, rather like the standard meter cannot be compared to itself and pronounced a meter in length.

Yet the challenge seems to remain, for humans are not God. God's interest just is interest in the divine being *qua* good and presumably everything that flows out of God's good being, including creation. Humans fall short of God, for even though a human person could take on God's interest in the good, humans themselves do not become goodness itself, even in heaven. But perhaps Eckhart's solution provides a framework for thinking about human relatedness to pure goodness.

Eckert's approach is to link our happiness to knowledge, and knowledge, of course, links to truth. What is important to see is that the truth about the universe must itself be good if Eckert's approach is to work.¹⁴ The truth about the universe is something that, as we come to know it, supports our happiness. On Eckert's account, the truth about ourselves is known only by denying ourselves so we can know God. In knowing God, however, we come to know not only

¹⁴ Here see my "Relaxed Naturalism and Caring About the Truth," *Forum Philosophicum*, Spring 2012 for a discussion of why naturalism cannot support a link between truth and happiness whereas a Christian or theistic position can.

ourselves again but the truth about others for that truth is contained in God. Typically we know neither ourselves nor others. Arguably, that is because we think of ourselves as rooted in local self-interest where the means of control over our futures is, indeed, ourselves. Once we deny ourselves, however, we can gain access to God—we can be “in God”—and hence we become aware of the other in a deeper, fuller way, as Eckert indicates. Here Paul’s teaching that in heaven we shall know as we are known comes into play. We become, in effect, totally transparent to one another. However, thus far we have only Eckert’s word for the claim that such transparency will lead to happiness. He doesn’t explain what our true natures are, short of announcing that humans are totally dependent on God even for their goodness and beauty. However, Eckert’s pointing toward transparency as a means of teaching us who we really are gives us some further building blocks.

III

Love, St. Paul tells us never ends. When love fully comes into play, I will know even as I am fully known. I mentioned in chapter 2 that to know as I am known is a new sort of knowledge, since Paul tells us knowledge will pass away. What sort of knowledge is this knowledge of the other? It at once expresses a deep human desire and a curiosity. Presumably, I have been fully known by God. But that I will fully know in the same way as I’ve been known is a new, richer, deeper sort of knowledge. It appears that the saints will know each other (and God?) as God fully knows us. The unity and plurality of I Corinthians chapter 12 is apparently retained and a new sort of knowledge added.

It is easy to let this language flourish as metaphor, as an attractive picture of that for which we long. But we need to push beyond the metaphor to get to a fuller philosophical

understanding. One way to think of this knowledge is to consider the notion of transparency from game theory. Game theory is the study of strategic decision making. How do members of a group work or fail to work together to reach some joint goal? Often applied to economic settings, it also has application to biology, philosophy and psychology. The notion of transparency leads to some interesting questions.

Game theory suggests that transparency is a necessary requirement to find the way to the best agreement. All parties must make their interests clear to all stakeholders and, at the same time, understand and calculate the other parties' interests and moves. Such transparency can only be achieved with perfect and symmetric information. In limited contexts, one can quickly see the value of transparency in reaching mutually satisfying agreements. But what if transparency is not merely limited to certain aspects of a situation—say trying to reach agreement about how to divide some property—but to the entirety of a person?

Hilary Putnam writes the following, speaking of individual humans:

Suppose our functional organization became transparent to us. Suppose we had a theory of it, and we could actually *use* this theory in a significant class of cases. What would happen to us? . . . Would it be possible to have friendships or hostilities? Would it be possible to even think of oneself as a person? I don't know the answer to these questions, but it seems clear that the development of that sort of knowledge of ourselves and each other would modify our natures in ways that we cannot predict at all. Every institution we now have: art, politics, religion—even science—would be changed beyond our recognition. But a fact, however 'empirical', which underlies our entire history and which influences the character of every one of our institutions is not 'mere'. The fact that we are

partially opaque to ourselves, in the sense of *not* having the ability to understand one another as we understand hydrogen atoms, is such a fact, a *constitutive* fact.¹⁵

I want to reflect on the question that Putnam's observation raises, viz. is it true that partial opacity about one another is a constitutive fact? That is, would we be what we are if we became transparent?

Putnam observes, first, that our opacity influences the character of every institution we have. Second, he calls non-transparency an "empirical" fact (although he puts the "empirical" in scare quotes). These two observations go hand in hand. Our historical natures are, indeed, rooted in institutions and institutions are rooted in us. We humans are not separable from our institutions and those institutions are historical, as are we. Yet our institutions and our very beings are historical.

What does it mean to say we are historical? Here I return to the developments laid out in Part II. Interpretation one is that we just happen to be contingent, space-time beings. We didn't have to be, yet we are. This is true of every physical, created entity in the universe. To be contingent is to be historical. This is a more or less trivial truth about us, making us in no way unique among the entities in the created universe. It is, in short, an objective feature of every entity in the created order that *has* a history.

Interpretation one says that, as a matter of fact, the world and its furniture is contingent and we humans happen to be some of the furniture. That is, there is nothing distinctively essential to our humanity in our historicity. Saying humans are historical in this sense is rather

¹⁵ Hilary Putnam, *Meaning and the Moral Sciences* London 1978, 63

like saying we are contingent things. That hardly picks us out among the myriad of other contingent things.

Interpretation two of our historicity, however, suggests that there is something special (although perhaps not unique in the universe or even the planet) about us as humans, viz., that not only do we have an “objective” set of historical facts about us, but also that we are or can be aware of our historicity. To be human is to be historical interpreters. This awareness suggests that we make history both in our actions and in our thinking about our actions. We care, for example, about truth. To care about truth is itself a historical development in our evolution. One of the features of this sort of historicity, however, is that we are opaque to one another. We cannot, in fact, understand one another as we understand hydrogen atoms. Hydrogen atoms are what they are “objectively.” They are not, in the sense in which we are, in history. Hydrogen atoms cannot make choices. They can do nothing to make themselves opaque. We, however, can make choices and we can make ourselves—and have made ourselves—opaque.

It is worth reflecting on why Putnam puts the “empirical” into scare quotes. He is, perhaps, struggling with how far and in what way our historicity causes us to be what we are. An empirical fact, he says, that underlies our entire history and all our institutions is not a “mere” fact. Is the opacity which may seem to be historically contingent truly contingent? Or is it constitutive? If we take “constitutive” to mean “essential,” Putnam is wondering if being human requires opacity something in the way that being human requires rationality or emotional capacity or sociality. Yet unlike those features of humans which, let’s assume, are essential to being human, it appears that opacity could have been different. One could be reasonable, social, and emotional without being opaque. Indeed, being reasonable—suggests game theory—requires

us to be transparent, and one can do that only by being social and understanding one's emotions, in particular how one's emotions may color the expression of the truth.

Yet it is hard, as Putnam rightly notes, to see whether it is even possible to think of oneself as a person if one is not opaque. The mere "empirical" fact seems to be more than empirical in an accidental sense. It seems to be built into the notion of being human, much in the way that rationality, emotional capacity and sociality are. If we as a species lost any of those essential features we would cease to be human. Is the same true with our opacity? Or is the historical, empirical nature of opacity "merely empirical"? Could it be lost without our ceasing to be human?

Is opacity a constitutive fact? The thicket is thick. If we think of opacity as parallel to sin, we can see that we have the same sort of issue. "Being a sinner" is constitutive of humans in the way described in chapters 4-7. Theologically, humanity is fallen. But yet sin is not an essential feature of humans. Humans were made initially without sin and, indeed, our final state is sinless. So far forth, just as sin is itself not a necessary feature of humanity (otherwise Jesus the human, or indeed any of the saints, could not be without sin), neither need opacity be. Both sin and opacity are constitutive for humans, but they are constitutive for humans as fallen. But that is rather like saying having two ears is constitutive for humans but it is constitutive for humans as double-eared humans. It's true, but not that helpful.

I propose that opacity is itself either a significant aspect of sin or perhaps even the root of sin itself. To be fallen is, we might say, to be opaque. Such a claim explains why we both long to be known and yet fear it. Here I'm reminded of the projects of Humanity+ whose general goal is to take humanity (via technology, in part) to the next level; to make humans everything we can

be.¹⁶ The trans-human movement wants to take us beyond our current limitations. Its critics, however, fear that if we lose our ability to fight we will lose our ability to defend ourselves; if we lose our ability to be jealous, we will lose our ability to love. While on the one hand our opacity keeps us “protected” from the enemy and makes us capable of developing friendships (at least in the pattern we are used to), transparency would make us open to our enemies and friendships would be of a totally different kind (e.g., we would not be discovering new things about our “friends.”)

Putnam seems right that the development of transparency about ourselves and each other would modify our natures in ways that we make it difficult to predict. But I think he is wrong when he says we cannot predict at all. Surely we can say something true. Would we be able to have hostilities, friends or even be able to describe ourselves as persons? Hostilities? No, but isn't that part of the point? If winning a permanent cessation of hostilities where possible, and not merely a temporary one, why would that undermine our humanity? Unless one counts engaging in hostilities a good thing, surely overcoming them is something one wants. That is, in part, exactly the picture of the peaceable kingdom.

Friendships? That is perhaps more difficult, for part of friendship seems to include the joy of being able to share one's ideas, disappointments, triumphs, and losses with a friend, someone you totally trust. Here, however, perhaps we'll simply need to think more broadly. There will be, in heaven, no disappointments or losses, although there might be triumphs (over new challenges) or creative ideas. Humans in heaven will not be static. We will be growing and

¹⁶ See their website <http://humanityplus.org/>

creative. So although we will be transparent, there will always be new information to be shared. Perhaps our friendships will be surprising in the sense that others, in their creativity, will contribute significantly to our individuality. Friendship will also be a much wider notion, one presumes, for we will be friends with everyone.

Will we be able to describe ourselves as persons? Well, certainly not as fallen persons. We will be redeemed persons. I call attention to two points. The first is that God, being three persons, is a model here. The three persons of the Trinity are no less persons for being totally transparent to one another. If the three members of the Trinity can be persons (might we describe them as friends too?), then surely transparent humans could be as well. That point, at least, goes to the possibility of transparent personhood (and friendship). Second, I return to a point already hinted at, viz., that we human persons are complex and somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, we withdraw from the idea that someone else would know our every thought, motivation, emotion and so forth. We don't want others to know what we think of them. At least sometimes—when we are angry, sometimes that is exactly what we do want, but that becomes a way of controlling others. We don't want others to know our motivations, for sometimes they are quite sordid. Our emotions too, should sometimes be hidden, we think, for good reason. No point in letting those around us know how depressed we truly are, as they will only try to cheer us up or, worse yet, try to save us.

Yet we long to be known. We want someone to understand our point of view, to understand that that other person hurt us, we want help with our sordid motivations, and we want to feel loved by someone who understands how dark it can be in our depressive hours. Being known, indeed, is a way of redemption. This reflects at least one image of what a

psychologically and emotionally healthy person is. She is one who knows herself, is able to talk about her own weaknesses and strengths without undue embarrassment or shame, one who has solid, stable and safe personal relationships with others, at least some of which are deeply intimate, and one who sees others as equally valuable even with their faults.

Yet we are afraid. We are afraid of judgment, of condemnation, or lack of compassion. We often don't trust others around us and, indeed, often those others are not trustworthy. People can be judgmental, condemning, and lacking in compassion. Over against our human peers, for the Christian, God fulfills this desire to be known. God may judge, yet with grace; God may condemn, yet with mercy; and God never lacks compassion, the sort of compassion that brings healing and wholeness to our needy lives. That, it seems, is what our longing for transparency is all about.

Yet the fear of transparency is alive as well. It is parallel to what some critics of the trans-humanity movement say, viz., that the movement to human longevity and improvement makes too many assumptions about the human capacity to truly care and love others and that the movement's assumptions are naïve. Humans have a deep propensity toward evil, harm, violence, and control. But that is precisely what the role of God is in the Christian story. God, not being a fallen human, is not prone to evil, harm, violence, or control. God is love and so can humans become once freed from the shackles of sin. To be free of sin, however, is not merely a negative position—we lack sin. Rather, it is a positive position—to be made love. In a world where everyone truly loved, the fears of transparency would disappear. To love is to be trustworthy.

IV

The problems of heavenly motivation and solidarity hinge on the notion of the human individual. Human individuality, as I've thought of it here, depends deeply on the history of one's self-in-the-world, that is, on one's local experience full of needs, desires, and shortages of goods to meet those needs and desires. What appears to be in my self-interest may conflict with your self-interest because there simply aren't enough goods to go around. Furthermore, who I am as an individual seems nearly completely wrapped up in viewing myself as responsible for getting myself through life. Of course, I can also take responsibility for someone else as well, as we do for our children and larger families—children because they can't do for themselves and others when they can't. Taking responsibility for others, however, is something that is good, we would typically say, only when the other person isn't able to take responsibility for herself. We come back around to the notion that the individual is, somehow, a self-contained, autonomous individual.

I suggested earlier that morality is quite distinct from love, the latter being an alternative way of life quite different from one based on the requirements of duty. Mavrodes suggests that gift giving and sharing are the building blocks of the economy of love. Morality is a shadow of the real world of love, a fact reflected in the struggles we have in sorting out the pragmatic from the moral. Our world is arranged around the notion that people are individual selves, autonomous beings who are responsible for themselves first and others second, at least when we take ourselves from a pragmatic point of view. That conflicts, of course, with the fact that morally we see conflicts between our duties to others and our own self-interest. Self-interest is “locally owned and operated.” It finds it difficult to recognize that the very same grounds I have for acting well to myself are found in each of us. My suggestion that we view the conflict of

obligations to others and self-interest as a moral conflict and not a pragmatic/moral conflict pushes us to face the conflicting obligations we have between ourselves and others. Hence arises the question of altruism in which we leave the realm of duty behind. Having seen no good reason (morally) to choose myself over the other, the only question is, will I be altruistic or not. Morally, it simply doesn't matter.

That returns us to self-interest vs. share-interest. One can be share-interested in something (such as beauty, truth or goodness). Share-interests are a marker of what it means to be human. Share-interest does not involve self-interest at least of the sort that desires something only for oneself. Indeed, I think the notion of acting for oneself cannot, ultimately, be made sense of, for all actions are actions for others if we acknowledge our true nature as human persons. In considering beauty, I suggested that there is nothing about the interest in beauty that is unique to me; there is no *merely* local self-interest in beauty. If we generalize from beauty to the other things in heaven—the good and the true—then insofar as one's individual identity depends on local self-interest, the economy of love seems not to require the individual *qua* individual, at least as we typically think of the individual, viz., individuals who are what they are because of their local self-interest. One seems not particularly concerned about one's own reception of goods other than to taste and see that they are good before passing them on. The desire to "taste and see that it is good" is, in reality, not distinguishable from the desire for one's neighbor's good. To see that, however, one needs an account of the individual that is not based entirely on local self-interest.

I suggested as well that gift-giving and sacrifice to meet the *needs* of others is not required in heaven for there are no unmet needs. Hence sacrificing and gift-giving (insofar as the

latter leans on the former) seem to be, as Mavrodes uses them, metaphors for the kingdom rather than literal truths. However, when it comes to *desire*, sacrifice and gift-giving may not be so metaphorical. Sacrifice, in particular the self-sacrifice required by Christian holiness, appears necessary in order to make it to the kingdom. One must die to one's self, that is, to one's self as we see ourselves in the local self-interest account. But dead people are dead; they are no longer people, at least in any way we might consider usual. I think that if we unpack the metaphor of dying to one's self, we get the following. First, dying to one's self is something I must choose to do. That is, I must strive to overcome the sense of myself as more important than other selves. That is Royce's moral insight. But as Royce notes, it's one thing to have the cool, clear rational insight and another to sustain it. To do that, dying to one's self requires an effort of the self to come to see itself as not self-reliant. Here the point isn't merely that we are weak and in need, at least sometimes, of aid. Rather it is that we must see ourselves as not made or created by ourselves.

In the first order, our reliance is, of course, on God. God made us in the divine image, as free, creative beings. But in our creative freedom, we denied our reliance. Theologically, this is the source of the fall. We have been living as if we make ourselves. Here we need to distinguish between two things, the merely factual nature of our beings and the creative freedom that comes with the package. While of course we know we didn't cause ourselves to be (even the most ardent atheist will admit that), once in existence, we can choose in large measure our future paths. That is, we are contingent and didn't have to be but we are brought about by forces beyond our control. Our physical, chemical, and biological structures are given us. But what we do with those structures is up to us (barring outside forces again—the rain falls on the just and

the unjust). The problem, from the point of view of this work, is not that we don't recognize our contingency. It is, rather, that we believe we ought to pursue our own futures from the point of view of self-interest.

Our choices, of course, do create our futures in significant ways. That is that nature of freedom. What we fail to realize, however, is that we were meant to "live and move and have our being" in God. The self was never meant to be autonomous in the way we think of it. Our sense of autonomy derives, I suggest, from our opacity. We are opaque to one another. We can't read minds, at least in any detail. How then can we know the other? How can we act for the other? Or how can the other act for me?

The sharing in heaven appears to be participatory sharing. Mavrodes mentions the making of things in heaven. Perhaps, indeed, the making itself is *always* participatory so that one doesn't *first* taste and see but rather in the making we all taste and see without any priority. The point of a painting is its beauty, not its being owned or even experienced by a specific person. In our earthly mode, someone might want to own a painting. Insofar as the owning is rooted in a self-interested desire to view the painting with convenience, let's say, or a selfish desire to keep the beauty to oneself, such an owning is, we might say, unloving. Share-interest and participatory making/sharing go hand in hand, providing the support for the notion of solidarity proposed in the catechism. And all of this seems to move us toward the conclusion that the nature of the individual persons in heaven is quite different than the nature of individual persons on earth. As I put it earlier, love, in a paradoxical way, assumes that only the object of love, the person with whom the sharing occurs, is important. The loving self—the lover insofar as the lover has local self-interest—seems to drop out of the picture.

I've also argued that there is a distinction between local self- and generic self-interest. The former is rooted in the particular history any given human has lived (and hence leads one to act in the particular ways one does for one's own ends) and the latter is rooted in general human needs (the fact that everyone is interested in her own well-being). Local self-interest is tied to my local history; it is my particularized self-interest that is tied to my individual identity. Insofar as loving another requires acting solely in the interest of another, truly loving another conflicts with both one's local self-interest and individuality. Loving another with heavenly love requires extreme self-denial. Thus, insofar as my local self-interest *cum* local history makes me the individual I am, it is hard to see either *why* I would love another (it conflicts with my local self-interest) or *how* to love another (it undermines my own individuality). Since my own self would be destroyed in the very act of becoming a totally loving person, the idea of loving my neighbor in this total way seems to be a demotivating factor. The only sort of solution to the motivation issue seems to be to show how one's self-interest is the same as the interest of the other. To do that, however, undermines the notion of the individual altogether. How is my individuality still unique if it is merged or melded entirely with that of the other?

Here solidarity might be introduced, but the notion of solidarity underlying the communion of the saints seems quite odd, suggesting that, in fact, everyone is one, organic entity—virtually one person. The focus would be entirely on share-interest and not anything to do directly with me. Yet Christian theology teaches that humans retain their own individuality in heaven. But insofar as they do, solidarity of the sort described by Paul (your suffering, joy, glory, etc. is identical to my suffering, joy, glory, etc.) seems impossible. Attempts such as those found in Brink to extend the self into the lives of others via influence on other people (with fission the

extreme case) don't seem to work. Even in cases of fission, shortly after the person divides into "two," the two take on local self-interest and we seem back to square one.

In heaven, however, all individual needs are met. So perhaps what we are left with is share-interests; interest in beauty, for example, where the interest in the beautiful object is something that cannot truly be rooted in my own interest but is something that is by nature to be shared. We "taste and see" that something is good in order to pass the good around. This all touches on what we learned from Badhwar. What does it mean "to feel a sense of common humanity?" On the one hand, it could be a sort of strategic approach to the plight of others: let me think of myself *as if* I were the other person. On the other hand, feeling a common sense of humanity could be just that, a feeling. As such, it could be a motivator, but is one then acting on self-interest or other interest? We might say that one is acting *in the interest* of others (as a lawyer might for her client) but not that one is acting *on their interests*, interests that are *identical* to mine. Am I one with the rest of humanity or not?

But more importantly, there appears to be a deep unclarity about the nature of self-interest in Badhwar's account. Badhwar claims that it is a fundamental interest to shape the world according to one's values, leaving the affirmation of one's identity to one side. But is the interest in shaping the world according to one's values a local self-interest or share-interest? If such a fundamental desire is rooted in local self-interest then the peculiarities of my value-structure seem to be forced upon others. If the desire is rooted in share-interest, then it is no longer clear what it has to do with individuals. Further, one's identity does not, in virtue of being human, necessitate an altruistic identity. How does one ever become the sort of person whose focus is finally and totally on the other without losing one's own individual identity? To do so

seems to require that one drop one's local interest and become entirely share-interest oriented.

But then we need not merely to act *as if* we are all the same but we need *to be* all the same. That is a metaphysical issue and not merely a psychological or emotional-affective concern.

Perhaps there is something right, then, about Brink's suggestions. Perhaps when one adds the claims about total transparency into the mix, psychological continuity would be enough to explain why acting in one's own interest is also acting in the other's interest. Is it possible that the fission case is what should have happened in the Garden of Eden, each new child being given the exact same goals/interests as the original human? As such, no one (given that no sin ever enters the world) ever develops an ego of one's own. Sin messes up the permanent fission by not allowing us to always fission with the children but instead allowing us to divide into our own individual persons. As such, we missed God's best for us.

That works, perhaps, on the traditional Western model of the Garden where humans chose to become sinners from a state of grace. Closer is the Eastern model where humans were initially innocent as children are. But the evolutionary model suggests that with the development of freewill consciousness came the capacity to love. So perhaps we are moving toward the sort of fission where we all contribute to the general goodness of everyone. So a person remains an individual because she makes choices and lives in history but the choices are for others, for their good. Local self-interest continues on in a version in which each of us is a fissioned version of the goodness residing in us as we move more fully into the image of God. Instead of seeing our friends as versions of ourselves, we see ourselves as versions of our friends, friends who have become entirely trustworthy and other-centered. But in becoming other-centered, our friends

have found themselves tended to, doted over, cared for, and celebrated by us and their other friends. We individuals truly are “the other.” Our neighbors are us.

When we explored Royce’s view on living two lives as one, we gleaned the distinction between vague and specific particulars as the object of our desires. But that doesn’t take us far enough either, for we are still left with the issues of solidarity. We still need an account of those vague particulars that allows for us all to desire and enjoy them without conflicts developing on the specific-particular level. The various particulars, on the model suggested here, have to do with the making of things. Since we humans make particular things when we do make them, there is no reason to think the after-life will be different in that regard. However, it may be that one’s making particulars will have a fundamental eye on making only things of beauty, goodness, and truth, features all will value fully and completely and not clamor for individually.

Eckert raises the question about how we come to know our true selves. To do so, we must compare ourselves with God. The ability to do that, he indicates, is total self-denial. His focus on the beauty of God is telling, for we, he says, have no beauty of our own. When we deny ourselves, we come to realize that the beauty (in effect that we thought was ours) is really God’s beauty. The essence of the human person is total reliance not on self but on God. In knowing God via our own self-denial, we come to know both ourselves and everyone.

One question to ask, however, is what “reliance on God” comes to. It is typical for us to think in terms of our own egos suppressing the urge to tend to our own needs in order to trust God. But Eckert seems to be saying something stronger, viz., that what we actually are, what our essence is, is reliance. That is, it is not just our choosing to trust *but that our very nature is trust*. What it is to be human is not to be a center of self-consciousness whose main feature is

awareness of our self-power but rather a center of self-consciousness aware of the fact—the metaphysical fact—that our power is not our own. There is, in short, no such thing as self-power. I am what another makes me—God is the fundamental reality and what I am is a finite, radically contingent being who exists only at the thought of God. If I am self-interested, it is automatically an interest in what God is interested in, for what I truly am is, in fact, what God makes.

Two observations from Dostoevsky are important. One is that the voluntary act of suffering for someone else is an ultimate act of love. The other is that the slightest bit of ego-fluffing will undo the structure that allows for love. Dostoevsky's point is largely a psychological one, viz., that if we are to learn to love, we must learn to suffer for others, to deny ourselves. But the metaphysical point that lies behind the psychological one is what we are looking for in the kingdom setting. To give up one's ego is difficult if not impossible this side of heaven. But once in heaven, one's ego as we typically think of it, will cease to be. We will have done away with it because we will know our true selves, which is, according to Eckert, total reliance. I will be what God desires me to be and I will do it not by my power but God will do it by divine power. The power of humility is central to the Gospel and central, hence, to the kingdom. Humility has both an attitudinal aspect and an ontological aspect. The former is the psychological component of which Dostoevsky speaks, the latter the truth about ourselves. Compared to God, we are only contingent thoughts in God's mind. Attitudinal humility brings us to the place where we can see our true ontological status. We are made by another.

The attitude of humility, which includes the denial of one's ego, is what is needed for the kingdom to come. The insight from the *Gita* that one can be detached from any personal consequence of one's actions (focusing only on the consequences for the other) leads us to ask

what motivation there is in the first place for acting well toward one's fellows. If I am out of the picture, why bother? In the Christian story, unlike the Hindu story (or at least this version of it), one's own self is not lost in ultimate reality. Rather, my self continues. But it is not untouched. The true self, the one that underlies my daily ego, is not my own. I belong, so to speak, to another. That belonging is not a mere metaphor. What I am is totally dependent on God. Once I recognize that, I become what I was meant to be. I am an extension of God's love and not a self-sufficient entity. There is, so to speak, nothing to me but the sustaining love of another.

One of the features of contemporary psychology is an emphasis on human maturity including the ability not to be overly reliant on others. One shouldn't, for example, worry too much about how one appears to others or what others may think of you. Nor should we live our lives in "co-dependent" relationships. How are these contemporary notions of the self to be aligned with the biblical notions of becoming totally reliant on God and dying to one's self?

Contemporary psychology, of course, has great insights, but it is not the complete story. It is important to note, for example, that in spiritual direction one often comes across people who think so lowly of themselves that they let others and their opinions shape the directee's life too much. Low self-esteem is something that one must first address in spiritual direction before the person can move into truly loving others. That is, love based on the neediness of one's self is not true love. In an odd-sounding sort of way, in order to deny one's self, there must be a self in the first place. In other words, one has to see one's self more clearly in the first place to move to a second stage where one sees one's self clearly enough to set one's self-reliance aside. One cannot deny one's self if one doesn't believe there is a self to begin with. The fallen state is, in

some sense, dependent on good self-esteem. But then to overcome the fallen state, one must have even better self-esteem, trusting one's self entirely to the other.

Now typically we think of the other in this context as God. One must see, as Eckert notes, that what I truly am is not my own. I am, and any value I have is, due to God and God's creative love. But what if, in the kingdom of heaven, other humans are also responsible for what I am? Here the body of Christ language is central, as are the insights noted by Dostoevsky. Jesus is one person who takes on the responsibility for all humanity. The pain and suffering Christ endured is our pain and suffering. If we are to become Christ-like, we must take on responsibility for all. Indeed, the truth is we are responsible for all. But just as much as we are responsible for all, just as much as my suffering is, indeed, the suffering of others, so are the goods of others my goods. True love requires that the suffering and the goods of each of us are, indeed, the same suffering and goods others experience.

Here the fact that love and altruism are not the same is central. Love is more complicated than altruism. One can do an altruistic act for a total stranger. Love, however, seems to require more than merely acting well toward another, even at expense of oneself. To truly love someone requires knowledge of the person loved. How much knowledge? That is the problem of knowing the will (and thoughts) of the other, something we typically don't have access to. To gain such access, we need total transparency.

Paul speaks of knowing fully as I am known when he refers to the kingdom of love. Here we need to explore the role of transparency. Of course transparent people are not like opaque people. To be totally known (like we know hydrogen atoms) would reshape us completely. But that is exactly the point of the Kingdom. I propose that being transparent as humans is not like

the transparency of a hydrogen atom but something more. It is, indeed, the foundation of love as it is found first in God and then in us.