

# Eras

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**Humanities Through the Ages**

## **Editorial**

Faust's Dog: Kierkegaard, Despair & the Chimera of Meaning

**Mason Tattersall**

The Portico Belvedere: An Experience of Iconography, Illusion and Impressions upon the Soul

**Phyllis J. Henderson**

'Serenity' in an Uncertain Age: Reinhold Niebuhr and America's Quest for Responsible Atomic Hegemony

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Nuclear Energy in South Africa: An Opportunity for Greater Energy Efficiency and Energy Security

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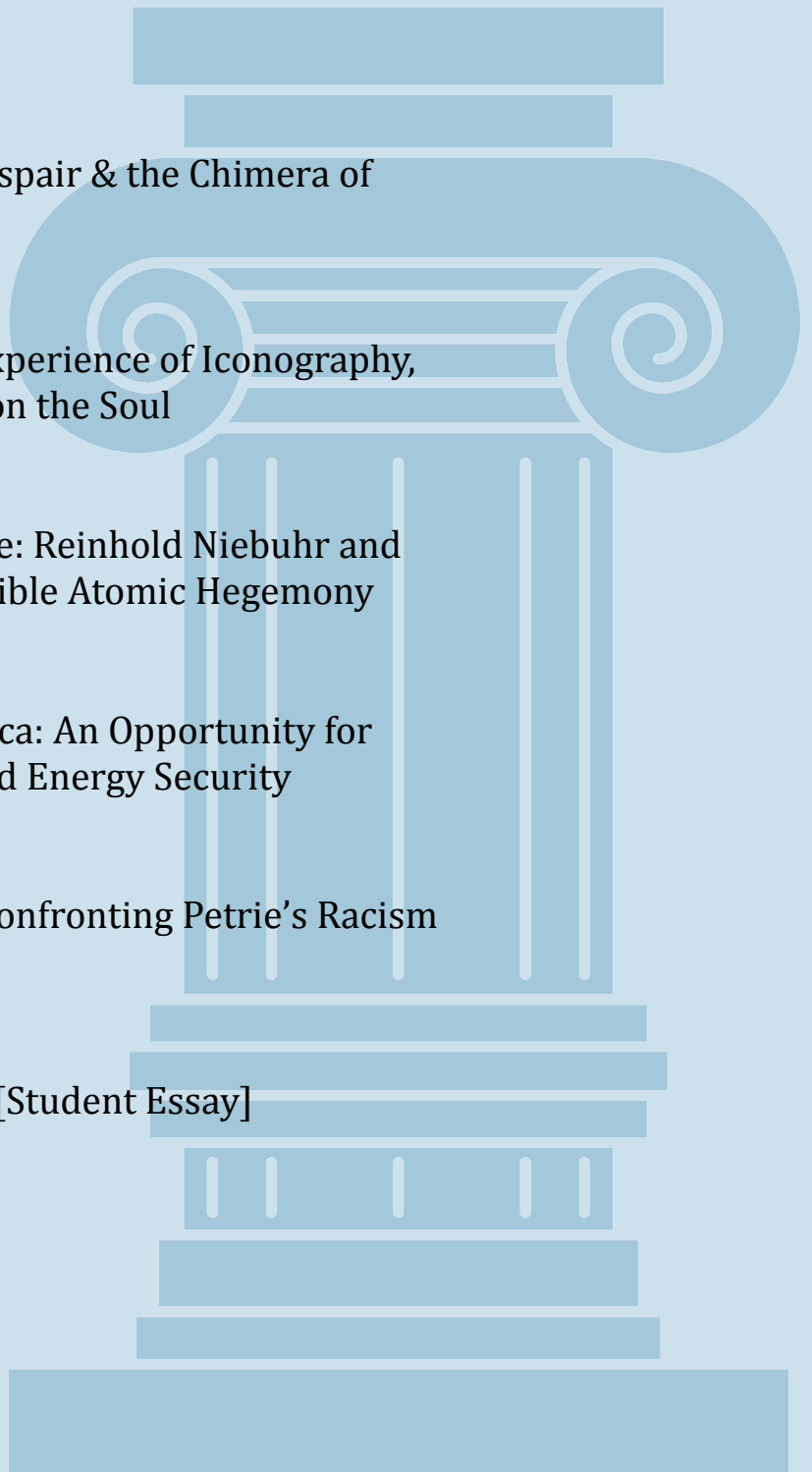
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# Editorial

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*Eras* was founded in 2001 with the intention of facilitating interdisciplinary dialogue among postgraduate and early career researchers working across all areas of history, archaeology, theology and Jewish Civilization. In 2010 our scope further expanded to include the disciplines of international studies and philosophy, particularly when such work also contains significant historical content. The sixteenth edition of *Eras* fully reflects this vision for the journal.

Mason Tattersall's contribution to this issue offers a new perspective on the motivation and meaning of Søren Kierkegaard's interest in the Faust myth. Tattersall argues that the dominant view of Kierkegaard's reasons for drawing on the Faust myth throughout his writings – as a way of working through his ideas about the meaning of doubt – may be incomplete. Tattersall suggests that the nature of Kierkegaard's exploration of essential doubt required him to convey these ideas to his reading public through poetic and indirect means, and that the Faust myth provided him with a means of doing so.

In an article that bridges the disciplines of history, phenomenology and architectural theory, Phyllis Henderson investigates the origins of the belvedere (an architectural structure built to take advantage of scenic views) in the ancient Roman peristyle garden. Henderson argues the portico belvedere was designed not merely to present a static view of the surrounding landscape but to create a transformative space by superimposing multiple shifting planes, ultimately bridging the real and the illusionary for those occupying the structure.

Ian E. Van Dyke explores the evolution of American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr's ethical and political worldview, particularly in the face of the unique moral challenges posed by the creation of atomic weapons. Van Dyke discusses the intricacies of Niebuhr's moral framework, a framework which is perhaps best encapsulated by his *Serenity Prayer*: "God, give me the grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things that should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish one from the other." In addition, Van Dyke discusses Niebuhr's influence on American opinion leaders during the Cold War, as well as the ongoing relevance of Niebuhr's philosophy.

The fourth and final article considers the role that nuclear energy should play in South African energy policy. Ognan Williams discusses South Africa's energy background, the controversies surrounding nuclear energy, and the potential role that nuclear energy seems poised to play in the country's future. Williams ultimately recommends that the South African government commission the completion of a Pebble Bed Modular Reactor – technology that is engineered and developed locally.

In addition to these refereed articles, this issue of *Eras* contains a number of book reviews. Tristan Samuel's provocative review essay questions Debbie Challis' treatment of race in *The Archaeology of Race: The Eugenic Ideas of Francis Galton and Flinders Petrie*, and argues that an engagement with critical race theory would strengthen the book's discussion of Petrie and his contemporaries. The shorter reviews likewise draw on the reviewers' areas of expertise to not only summarise and critique the work being considered, but to also offer fresh insights.

This edition of *Eras* includes our first publication of a student essay. 'Jimmy Carter: A Moral Hero' explores the nature and extent of Carter's moral idealism, as well as the importance of moral malleability in the American political tradition. The essay was submitted to us in early 2014 by Danny Haidar, who was at the time a high school senior enrolled in a college preparatory program. Although the submission was not subjected to external peer review, we are publishing it here in recognition of the high standard of Haidar's work, and in the spirit of encouraging other young scholars to pursue in-depth research and publication early in their careers.

*Eras* would not be able to exist today if not for the generous help of many disparate individuals. The editorial committee for this issue of *Eras* comprised John D'Alton, Stuart John Ibrahim, Stephen Joyce, Iryna Ordynat, Stephanie Rocke and Kathleen Shaw. I would like to offer our gratitude to the numerous publishers that have provided us with review copies of their publications, the authors that have submitted manuscripts for consideration, and the academics who recommended or acted as peer reviewers, without whose anonymous contribution *Eras* would not be possible.

*Julian Koplin*  
*Managing Editor*

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# Faust's Dog: Kierkegaard, Despair & the Chimera of Meaning

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**Abstract.** *Through an exploration of Kierkegaard's journals and papers, as well as his published works, this article explores the questions of the motivation and meaning behind Kierkegaard's well-known preoccupation with the Faust myth. Scholars have been unanimous in noting the Danish philosopher's interest in the German myth, and have likewise been in consensus noting that Faust acts as a symbol for doubt for Kierkegaard. In this paper I ask why this symbolic obsession might have been necessary for Kierkegaard, arguing that Faust offered Kierkegaard both a way of working through his ideas about the meaning of doubt, and a poetic way of expressing these ideas to his reading public, whereby Faust could act as an ironic example to bring individuals to a confrontation with doubt, the prize being transcendent meaning that could only be resolved through a leap to faith.*

**Keywords:** *philosophy, religion, Kierkegaard, Faust, history, doubt, belief, nihilism, meaning, truth*

On March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1835, Søren Kierkegaard remarked in his journal that,

It is indeed curious that the legend has provided Faust with a dog in which the devil conceals himself. It seems to me that the legend thereby wants to suggest that for a man like Faust, for whom all conditions of life were so utterly askew and who had such a canted stance toward everything, that for him, I say, the dog, this usually faithful companion to man, here did in fact retain his character as faithful but also became an evil spirit who, in line with his faithfulness, never deserted him.<sup>1</sup>

Kierkegaard's interest in the Faust myth is no secret. Most commentaries on Kierkegaard's life and work make at least passing reference to "Faustian" interests. And the connection between Faust and doubt in Kierkegaard's works is, likewise, well

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\* I would like to thank my two anonymous reviewers for their exceedingly helpful comments.

<sup>1</sup> Kierkegaard Søren, *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, Hong, H. & E. (Trans.), (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), Entry 5086.

attested. The Faust myth and what the character of Faust represented for Kierkegaard played important roles in his life and thought and are important now for anyone who hopes to come to some sort of an understanding of this difficult thinker. In this paper I want to draw attention to *the meaning behind Kierkegaard's relation to the Faust myth*; not just what the myth represented for the Danish thinker, but why Kierkegaard's use of the myth in his writings might have been necessary.

The Faust myth takes up a lot of real estate in Kierkegaard's journals and papers and plays an important role in two of his major published works,<sup>2</sup> and its importance in regard to the overall project of Kierkegaard's thought would be hard to overestimate. What I want to outline here is the place of Kierkegaard's conception of the Faust myth, as manifested in his journals and published writings, within the predominate theme of his thought: helping individuals move towards God. I argue that this place is determined, in part, by Kierkegaard's conception of the history of philosophy, and in part by what he sees as the timeless realities that underlie the thought represented by this tradition; thus there is both a timely and a timeless aspect to Kierkegaard's thought on the Faustian theme. Faust represents doubt for Kierkegaard, and it is as the symbol for doubt that the Faust myth enters into the overall project of his thought. Kierkegaard's account of the history of the Faust myth is tied to his conception of the history of the manifestations of doubt in different periods. And his conception of the timeless, universal, or ideal Faust relates to his concept of universal doubt. But why is Faust so important for Kierkegaard? And in what way might the myth be something of a necessary philosophical device? Here I will answer in brief that Kierkegaard arrives at his understanding of doubt by dwelling on the myth, and he needs Faust in order to communicate the meaning of doubt effectively through poetic and indirect means.

## DOUBT

The significance of the figure of Faust for Kierkegaard's development is undeniable. Alastair Hannay refers to a "Faustian phase"<sup>3</sup> when Kierkegaard, "at twenty-two, at

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<sup>2</sup> Kierkegaard's journals and papers include 72 entries relating to Faust ranging from brief mentions to in-depth discussions spanning several pages. They date from 1835 to 1839 and include what some commentators argue is an aborted project that was to be composed of letters written from the point of view of a "Faustian doubter" (Argued by Emanuel Hirsch in *Kierkegaard Studien* (Gutersloh: 1933). See Note 245 in Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Vol. 5, p. 481.).

In addition to these entries Kierkegaard had planned to write a concerted work on Faust himself, but was beaten to the punch when H. L. Martensen published a Danish article in 1837 entitled "Observations concerning *the Idea of Faust*, with Reference to *Lenau's Faust*." In despair Kierkegaard abandoned the project, but not the topic.

<sup>3</sup> Hannay devotes a chapter of his *Kierkegaard: A Biography* to Kierkegaard's "Faustian Phase" outlining what Faust represented for Kierkegaard (doubt) and noting the degree of his intense interest during the second half of the 1830's, and Joakim Graff, in his *Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography*, which Bruce Kirmmse has translated, also devotes time to Kierkegaard's "*Studiosus Faustus*." In their chapter on Goethe in tome 3 of *Kierkegaard and his German contemporaries*, Jon Stewart and Katalin Nun look at

large in Copenhagen and freed from his 'home' ... could savour life." And goes on to tell us,

He was making his mark, and new doors hitherto closed were opening. This was to be a Faustian period. The journal entries take up the theme of the legendary German necromancer who sold his soul to the devil in exchange for knowledge and power.

The Faust depicted here is the Faust of temptation. Here Hannay emphasizes the version of Faust as the man tempted by sin and experience, a very attractive figure for a young man who "seem[ed] to have been given no chance to assume responsibility at all" growing up, as he did, in a "theocratic household." Yet the role of the Faust myth in Kierkegaard's life and thought was more than this and Hannay quickly moves on to what Faust signified for Kierkegaard, noting that "it was Faust the thinker in whom Kierkegaard had been first interested, a thinker whose thinking led him to doubt."<sup>4</sup>

Kierkegaard saw Faust as a symbol for doubt. In a letter which may have itself been a part of a planned but unfinished book of fictional letters written by a "Faustian doubter,"<sup>5</sup> Kierkegaard says that, "Just as our forefathers had a goddess of longing, so, in my opinion, Faust is doubt personified."<sup>6</sup> Faust is a totemic symbol through which Kierkegaard comes to terms with, and later, attempts to explain, what it means to doubt.<sup>7</sup> But this raises precisely the question: What *does* it mean to doubt? For Kierkegaard, doubt has meant many things at different historical moments, and, at the same time, there is a universal meaning of doubt that is made manifest in thought either to a greater or lesser extent *by* these particular historical manifestations.

Kierkegaard classified the various versions of the Faust myth that had existed since the earliest chapbooks of the mid to late sixteenth century, at the origin of the myth, according to the sort of doubt that each historical instance of the legend displayed. Each

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Kierkegaard's thought on Goethe's version of the Faust myth in light of his relationships with other Danish thinkers. In his "A Problem in Values: The Faustian Motivation in Kierkegaard and Goethe," Forrest Williams offers an interpretation of Kierkegaard's notion of Faust and the meaning of the myth in Kierkegaard and Goethe's versions. In the upcoming installments of Volume 16 of the series there will be two essays pertinent to the topic: L. Lisi's "Faust: The Seduction of Doubt" in October 2014 and W. Williams' "Mephistopheles: Demonic Seducer, Musician, Philosopher, and Humorist" in January of 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Hannay, Alastair, *Kierkegaard: A Biography*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 60.

<sup>5</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*. Vol. 5, Note 245, p. 481.

<sup>6</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Entry 5092.

<sup>7</sup> There is surprisingly little chronological overlap between the journal entries discussing doubt without using the framework of the Faust myth and entries about the Faust myth at all; that is, in the years 1835-1839, when Kierkegaard wrote nearly all of the entries pertaining to Faust, he rarely (entries 772, 1544, & 1592) discussed doubt outside of the Faustian framework. When he did begin discussing doubt without reference to Faust (1840-1851), I argue that he had already worked these ideas out whilst dwelling on Faust.

age had its own Faust because each age had its own idea of what it means to doubt. In Kierkegaard's own words:

As far as the criticism of the various versions of Faust is concerned, one can find a basis for classifying them and facilitate a survey of them by paying attention to how such an idea must be reflected in various ages, or how every age must look upon this idea through the prescription glasses of its individuality.<sup>8</sup>

These views represent the timely manifestation of doubt; they are views of an eternal condition from specific places and times. Again, in Kierkegaard's words: "for the single individual just as for the individual nation in the development of the world there naturally is one [Faust] for each."<sup>9</sup> But these instances are not random; Kierkegaard's conception of these different Fausts is essentially historical. The form of the myth in a given time "is not a question at all of the poets' conceptions... but of how time lies before us in a world-historical sense;"<sup>10</sup> how Faust is presented is dictated by how doubt is conceived in a given historical period.

Kierkegaard begins a journal entry from 1837 by remarking: "That the Faust who is now supposed to represent the age is essentially different from the earlier Faust and from the Faust of every other age is so evident that one needs only to be reminded of it."<sup>11</sup> He proceeds to contrast the modern Faust's despair with "the original Faust's despair," which "was more practical." The original, Sixteenth century, or "medieval" Faust, as Kierkegaard often describes him, despaired because his doubt rendered the knowledge of his time meaningless. He sought, as each Faust does, something beyond the destructive power of his doubt.<sup>12</sup> This Faust was the man who doubted the knowledge of his day and sought something more in action. Kierkegaard goes on to describe his plight:

He had studied, but his studies had not yielded him any return (what he saw next [the experiences and arcane knowledge that Mephistopheles made available to him] did yield something, even though infinitely little compared with what he wished; Faust's profit from knowledge was a nothing, because in the last resort it was not

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<sup>8</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Entry 1177.

<sup>9</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Entry 1181.

<sup>10</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Entry 2703.

<sup>11</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Entry 1182.

<sup>12</sup> Forrest Williams argues that "the Faustian motivation may perhaps be generalized according to several characteristic features," which he boils down to "the impulsion or force which drives the Faustian figure," which "bears a closer relation to his person than do many other aspects of his activity," as well as a certain "intimacy," both of which manifest themselves as an "intimate force," which drives Faust toward something that is "inscrutable regarding... its ultimate purpose." Williams, Forrest, "A Problem in Values: The Faustian Motivation in Kierkegaard and Goethe," in *Ethics*, pp. 251-261.

this question he wanted answered, but rather the question: *what he himself* should do).<sup>13</sup>

The original or medieval Faust sought meaning in action; he was seeking something beyond his doubt as does the modern Faust, as does every Faust -- the difference lies in what they conceive this something to be.

The most detailed account of this difference in what the modern and medieval Fausts seek, as something outside of their doubt, comes in the above mentioned journal entry. What the early Faust sought, as something outside his own doubt, was the answer to the question: "*what he himself* should do." The character of Faust seeks something; he seeks something beyond his doubt, something that he can hold on to that is more than "a nothing." According to Kierkegaard, the original Faust sought something beyond the knowledge of his day in activity. Faust could see the emptiness of the less advanced sciences of his day, and because his age had the character of "enthusiastic action in order to realize its ideal" he sought his answer here.<sup>14</sup> The first Faust, "with his activist tendencies sank into sensuality," as an alternative to the knowledge, the import and meaning of which his doubt destroyed.<sup>15</sup> This was the Faust that Hannay initially described, the activist Faust who seeks experience because knowledge has crumbled under the onslaught of his doubt. Kierkegaard, in another entry from 1837 remarks on the nature of this quest and what, in the end, it will signify:

Faust did not want to learn to know evil in order that he might rejoice over not being so bad (only the philistines do this); on the contrary, he wanted to feel all the sluice gates of sin open within his own breast, the whole kingdom of incalculable possibilities. Everything, however, will not be sufficient. His expectations will be disappointed.<sup>16</sup>

Thus the original Faust does not find what he seeks in experience, that solid ground that can withstand his doubt; instead, he is left more annihilated than ever; both knowledge and experience, all that sin has to offer, have failed him.

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<sup>13</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Entry 1182.

<sup>14</sup> Kierkegaard argues that the Faustian requires this enthusiasm and activity in pursuit of an ideal such as occurred in the early years of the myth where "a great number of men... turned their heads to investigate a vanished past or immerse[d] themselves in investigating nature" but that the Faustian cannot develop until "first of all... this energetic life be paralyzed in some way or other." We can interpret this passage as saying that this necessary paralysis comes when the enthusiasm for the ideal meets the reality of its ultimate unfulfillment; and it is in our conscious realising of this (as a relation) that the Faustian doubt may be born. (See note 20 below for a description of this triad.) Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Entry 1182.

<sup>15</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Entry 1182.

<sup>16</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Entry 1185.

The modern Faust is a different sort of creature who seeks a different sort of answer. The modern Faust is incapable of resorting to activity like the original Faust. Kierkegaard tells us that those in whom “the Faustian” develops in the modern age are

the type of men who... seek by intuition to comprehend the infinite multiplicity of nature, of life, and of history in a totality-view. But here, too, there is something tragic, for much is already unrolled before their vision and more appears every day, and under all this knowledge of many things dozes the feeling of how infinitely small this knowledge is, and it is this feeling which paralyzes their activity, and now the Faustian appears as despair over not being able to comprehend the whole development in an all-embracing totality-view in which every single nuance is also recognized for its full value, that is, its absolute worth.

Kierkegaard here attempts to give a sense of the sheer volume of new knowledge that separates what the modern Faust is faced with from what the original faced. The original Faust, “on the basis of the far more elementary state of the sciences at that time, by means of a survey... could more easily have been convinced of their emptiness.”<sup>17</sup> The modern Faust does not have this luxury. Instead, faced with the overwhelming amount of data that his world presents him, the modern Faust attempts to make sense of it all.

“Intuition” is what the modern Faust seeks. As the modern world progressed the great storehouse of knowledge filled, and now the only grasp of the totality of knowledge available is an intuitive grasp. This “totality-view” that Kierkegaard tells us the modern Faust seeks, is the view that will provide transcendent meaning, that is, meaning beyond the relativities that go hand in hand with modern doubt. But what does relativity have to do with intuition? “[A]s the world becomes older,” notes Kierkegaard,

The intuitive tendency must take precedence, and the question consequently becomes: how can true intuition enter in despite man’s limited position. But that which drives men on to this demand for a perfect and true intuition is a despair over the relativity of everything... He discerns how the most gifted of his contemporaries squeeze out a little yield (speculative abstracting or historical sketching), and he has a secret fear that this possibility may not be what they assume it to be – the most important – but merely what *they* succeed in comprehending and fathoming. He longs for a view which abolishes all relativities and shows him the absolute worth of even the most insignificant thing, because in the true (i.e., divine) view everything has the same magnitude.

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<sup>17</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Entry 1182.

What Kierkegaard is describing here – that which confronts the modern Faust – is relative meaning. In the face of relative meaning *everything* falls prey to doubt. Any and all knowledge becomes suspect when we cannot say that it is anything more than “merely what *they* succeed in comprehending and fathoming.”<sup>18</sup> The modern Faust is paralyzed by the fact that relativity brings everything under the power of his doubt; and here Faust must despair.<sup>19</sup>

The modern Faust is left without even the hope of finding meaning in pursuing action over knowledge as the original Faust did. Kierkegaard sums up the lack of options in the face of relative meaning when he says:

Herein now lies the despair. The way all of life alters for him now also shows him to be quite different from the first Faust, for while that one with his activist tendency sank into sensuality, this one will back out of everything, forget, if possible, that he ever knew anything, and watch the cows – or perhaps, out of curiosity, transport himself into another world.<sup>20</sup>

When faced with the vast multiplicity of knowledge, answers, meanings, significations that the modern world provides him, the modern Faust is paralyzed. When every question has a multitude of answers, each as valid as the next, all answers become meaningless. Everything becomes relative and everything becomes prey to his doubt.

This historical trajectory that Kierkegaard sketches should be familiar to anyone who looks at the history of modernity, broadly construed. The problem of relational meaning and the overload of information and signification is the great problem of the modern world in which Kierkegaard lived and we continue to live today. This problem lies at the root of what is known as axiological or existential nihilism<sup>21</sup> – when everything is laden with a superabundance of meaning, meaning itself becomes levelled, and the world becomes meaningless.<sup>22</sup> This is also one of the central problems for those

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<sup>18</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Entry 1182.

<sup>19</sup> Doubt is, as Kierkegaard will put it in an unfinished project about a man who takes seriously the claim that for philosophy to begin “everything must be doubted,” a “reflection-category” that is “*tricotomous*” (whereas reflection alone is dichotomous); it is not merely self and content (or knowledge) that are the issue, but self, content, *and the relation* between them in consciousness; “doubt *pre-supposes* reflection” as Kierkegaard puts it. Doubt is then, as a combination of self, content, and relation, specifically an *interested* phenomenon; reflection provides the conditions for doubt but is itself “*disinterested*,” which is why reflection need not always lead to doubt and why doubt cannot “be overcome by so-called objective thinking... for doubt is based on interest and all systematic knowledge is disinterested.” Kierkegaard, Søren, *Philosophical Fragments/Johannes Climacus*, Hong, H. & E. (Trans.), (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 145 & 169-70.

<sup>20</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Entry 1182.

<sup>21</sup> “The feeling of emptiness or pointlessness that follows from the judgement, ‘Life has no meaning.’” Carr, Karen L. *The Banalization of Nihilism: Twentieth-Century Responses to Meaninglessness*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 18.

<sup>22</sup> For more discussion of Nihilism in its various forms see: *Ibid.* esp. pp. 1-24.

thinkers who came after Kierkegaard and loosely fall into the so called “existentialist” tradition such as Nietzsche and Heidegger.

These historical manifestations however, are merely interpretations of a fundamental, universal doubt, based on the prevailing understanding of their times. In a journal entry from 1836 Kierkegaard asks himself: “What does it mean and to what extent is it true that every age has its Faust etc.?” and answers: “No, in the development of the world there is only *one* Faust... but for the single individual just as for the individual nation in the development of the world there naturally is one for each.” He notes that even the striking difference between Goethe’s Faust and the original version of the myth – that Faust is saved in the end – can be explained by this. Goethe can allow his Faust to be saved, “in which case this is the new period’s interpretation – which, please note, is not a conception of Faust but is the idea of the age.”<sup>23</sup> The essential or universal doubt is always there, but each particular age understands it to a greater or lesser extent.

This essential or universal doubt is reflected by what we can call the essential or universal Faust, the Faust of which “there is only *one*.”<sup>24</sup> This is the Faust by which Kierkegaard judges Goethe’s and all other versions of the myth. It is through contemplating this universal Faust that Kierkegaard worked out his ideas about what doubt itself meant, what the essence of doubt was. And it was through this universal Faust that he attempted to convey this idea of doubt at two important points in his published writings.

#### THE ESSENTIAL FAUST’S PLACE IN KIERKEGAARD’S PHILOSOPHICAL WORLD

Doubt, in Kierkegaard’s conception, is a force. Doubt undermines all knowledge and all significations. Against the paralyzing force of doubt all meanings dissolve into meaninglessness. Furthermore, doubt cannot be reasoned with; reason only feeds and strengthens doubt because reason is, in a sense, doubt’s handmaiden. In his uncompleted *Johannes Climacus or De Omnibus Dubitandum Est*, a narrative of a young man who took seriously the claim that “everything must be doubted” and that philosophy must begin with doubt (likely penned in 1842-3), Kierkegaard gives us another account of doubt. This work is partially a lampoon of a different sort of doubt than the Faustian described above. It treats “the problem of systematic doubt” that played its role in the contemporary philosophy, particularly of H. L. Martensen, who espoused a “modern philosophy” that took its point of departure from Descartes and his famous act of doubting, culminated in Hegel, and then claimed to exceed him. The work uses a “*reductio ad absurdum* of the position of universal doubt” and particularly focuses

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<sup>23</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Entry 1181.

<sup>24</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Entry 1181.

its criticism on the dissonance between the claims of Martensen and others to have “doubted everything” and their actual philosophical behaviour and lives.<sup>25</sup>

Kierkegaard's criticism of the *feigned* universal sceptical doubt, a “detestable untruth that characterizes recent philosophy,”<sup>26</sup> is incisive. After naively heeding the words of the “philosophizers,” and attempting to pry apart what they actually mean, Kierkegaard's character comes to the realisation that he must attempt to start out alone and unguided on the path of doubting everything, even if he does not exactly understand what the various statements he has heard about this doubting mean or how they fit together. He “bade the philosophizers farewell forever” and “now followed the method he was in the habit of following – namely, to make everything as simple as possible.”<sup>27</sup>

At this point the tone of the narrative shifts from the more satirical tone of the earlier chapters to a more exploratory discussion of the question “what is it to doubt?” Here reflection is presented as a condition that doubt “*pre-supposes*” while doubt itself is located in the tripartite structure of consciousness,<sup>28</sup> that is: self, object, and the relation between the two, which is one of involvement and interest on the part of the self. This is why knowledge can be no remedy for doubt, because knowledge alone is disinterested, whereas doubt is rooted in interest and impossible without it.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, the text breaks off just at the point where it is becoming intensely interesting in relation to our concern here.

It was through thinking about the Faust myth that Kierkegaard worked out his ideas about what essential doubt means. The Faust entries in the journals derive from the years 1835-1839. The entries discussing doubt in isolation from the Faust myth occur predominately after this period (running from 1840-1851). It is only *after* his detailed study of the Faust myth, and his discussions of Faust in relation to doubt that Kierkegaard begins to make detailed entries and more in depth studies of essential doubt on its own.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Stewart, Jon, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 239.

<sup>26</sup> Kierkegaard, *Johannes Climacus*, p. 117.

<sup>27</sup> Kierkegaard, *Johannes Climacus*, p. 165.

<sup>28</sup> As Strawser puts it: “Consciousness is the third that establishes the relation between ideality and reality, or thinking and being. This relation has the form of contradiction, for to maintain that thinking and being are held in opposition by consciousness is to state the philosophically contradictory. Ideality and reality collide in consciousness and have nothing to say to each other.” Strawser, Michael, “Kierkegaardian Meditations on First Philosophy: A Reading of *Johannes Climacus*,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 32:4 (1994), pp. 623-643, p. 640. Strawser contraposes a “true doubt,” which Kierkegaard discusses here and which, as he points out, “is a recognizably different form of doubt” to the *feigned* universal sceptical doubt of the “philosophizers” (p. 641).

<sup>29</sup> Kierkegaard, *Johannes Climacus*, pp. 169-70.

<sup>30</sup> Martensen's publication of a work on Faust that anticipated Kierkegaard's planned project has been seen as one of the reasons why he may have abandoned the idea of a Faustian publication. See, for instance: Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, pp. 247-8.

This essential doubt is embodied in the person of the essential Faust. “Faust may be paralleled with Socrates,” notes Kierkegaard. “Just as the latter expresses the individual’s emancipation from the state, Faust expresses the individual after the abrogation of the Church, severed from its guidance and abandoned to himself.”<sup>31</sup> There is nothing he can cling to because nothing is safe from the destructive power of his doubt.

For Kierkegaard, the essential Faust cannot be converted, as Goethe allows his Faust to be. He calls it “a sin against the idea” that Goethe offers his Faust salvation. Faust, as the arch doubter could never receive enlightenment in this way.

He approached the devil for the express purpose of becoming enlightened on things about which he was previously unenlightened, and precisely because he addressed himself to the devil, his doubt increased (just as a sick man falling into the hands of a quack is likely to get even worse). Admittedly Mephistopheles let him look through his spectacles into the hidden secrets of man and the world, but Faust could still not avoid having doubts about him, for he could never enlighten him about the most profound intellectual matters. In accordance with this idea he could never turn to God, for once he did that, he would have to say to himself that here was the true enlightenment, and at the same moment he would, in fact, deny his character as a doubter.<sup>32</sup>

The essential Faust’s essential doubt, as we have noted, undermines all knowledge and signification, and thus renders enlightenment null. Faust cannot care about more knowledge, and he cannot be enlightened about the divine. As doubt personified, Faust in a sense, *is the site of and lives* this nullification. Under Faust’s doubting gaze all meanings are rendered meaningless; all meanings are rendered null. Inside Faust is the power that destroys meaning; within him, the annihilation of meaning occurs.

In a journal entry from 1842-43, Kierkegaard notes that “Doubt is produced EITHER by bringing reality into relation with ideality... OR by bringing ideality into relation with reality;”<sup>33</sup> that is, it arises when what we find in the world comes up against our conceptions – when, for instance, Christianity as an ideal is compared with observation of Christianity as an historical and sociological practice (the real actions of real people), or when we attempt to attribute and all encompassing meaning to the multifarious world which confronts us. In an 1851 entry, Kierkegaard notes how doubt relates to Christianity and knowledge. “Nowadays,” he says, “we have swung the whole thing around. Christianity is an objective doctrine – before I get involved it must first justify itself to me.” That is, Christianity, as a defined system of thought confronts the individual. “Good night to Christianity!” continues Kierkegaard, “Now doubt has

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<sup>31</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Entry 1968

<sup>32</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Entry 5092.

<sup>33</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Entry 891.

conquered. This doubt can never be halted by reasons, which only nourish doubt." In fact, "doubt can [only] be halted by 'imitation.'"<sup>34</sup> Only by abandoning thought and knowledge can one escape doubt. And Faust cannot do this without betraying the essence of the idea that he represents because "enthusiasm for knowledge... must be regarded as characteristic of [his personality.]"<sup>35</sup> Because Faust himself personifies doubt, he takes the path of knowledge, of thought, which leads away from and not towards Christianity. He doubts knowledge, and yet, as *the* doubter, it is knowledge that is his path. He has no vain hope that knowledge will lead him anywhere – no hope that it will offer him transcendence of any sort – knowledge simply is all he knows, and all he can know.

In Kierkegaard's time, and for many people in our own, transcendent meaning must ultimately come from God alone. God alone, the argument goes, is beyond all relativities. If we attempt to approach God through thought we will fail because doubt arises through thought where everything is relative. We cannot approach that which is beyond relativity through that which reduces everything to mere relativities. If we fail to see this and try to think our way to transcendent meaning, that is, meaning beyond doubt, as Faust attempted, already "doubt has entered in and, just like cholera, hangs on." We cannot then, Kierkegaard tells us, attempt to argue, or explain, or teach people toward transcendent meaning, in his terms, towards God. He goes on:

Every scholarly argument therefore merely feeds doubt; every organization-minded effort feeds doubt. Only God and eternity are powerful enough to cope with doubt (for doubt is precisely man's rebellious force against God), but if God and eternity are to get the better of it, then every human being must enter into the compression chamber of individuality.<sup>36</sup>

Transcendent meaning then is not something we can seek with our minds, but only can have granted through the essentially miraculous relation between God and the individual. Transcendent meaning, meaning that is beyond all relativities and remains solid, standing firm against our doubt, then becomes a Chimera that we chase after, only giving more and more power to doubt which annuls its very existence, perpetuating the problem in an infinite loop, constantly creating absence and void out of our endeavour.

Doubt ultimately levels all interpretations and leaves the doubter standing before the chasm of meaninglessness where the only solution is a leap to faith. Through Faust we arrive before the leap that leads to Abraham. Doubt itself leads to despair, and it is

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<sup>34</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Entry 1902.

<sup>35</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Entry 1180.

<sup>36</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Entry 1998.

faith, as “the highest,”<sup>37</sup> though thought and knowledge cannot offer reasons for this faith and in fact testify against it, that offers the only path to transcendent meaning. As Kierkegaard puts it, “Christianity is related neither to thinking nor to doubt, but to will and to *obedience*; you shall believe.” We cannot arrive at that which is beyond the relational by an act of, or guided by the light of our reason. “Wanting to take thinking along is disobedience, no matter whether it says yes or no.”<sup>38</sup> The obliterating power of doubt brings us to the edge of where thought can take us and leaves us standing naked before the question of the religious. In this way, though Faust cannot convert, he is the vehicle by which we arrive at the decision that is the moment of the religious.

Kierkegaard worked his way through to this conception of doubt by dwelling on the Faust myth. Faust, as doubt personified, is the levelling force that casts the world into meaninglessness, where we are left with nothing but the chasm over which the leap to faith may lead to the religious. Doubt becomes a force that clears the ground and brings us to the edge. And then there is nothing but the leap. The Faust story illustrates this metaphorically. But why is this story necessary for Kierkegaard? Why not just talk about doubt directly? Why did Kierkegaard feel that he needed Faust?

### WHY FAUST?

As we have noted, the Faust myth provided Kierkegaard with a way of working out his ideas about doubt. But more than that, Faust provided Kierkegaard with a way of presenting doubt to his readers. The two major treatments of Faust in the published writings are in 1843’s *Either/Or* and *Fear and Trembling*, which were published in February and October respectively. A complicating factor is added to the discussion of these works, however, because they belong to the corpus of Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous publications.

The question of just how we are to take the pseudonymous works, along with the question of their relation to the works Kierkegaard published in his own name, has been discussed extensively and permits of a wide range of possible answers. The extent to which we can or cannot attribute the words of the pseudonymous authors to Kierkegaard’s own beliefs is something that we cannot settle here; nor can the question be ultimately settled at all. It has been argued that the pseudonymous works are romantic narratives. It has been argued that they represent varieties of possible incorrect views. Evans has argued that the pseudonymity of *Fear and Trembling*, for instance, points to the need not to take the views expressed in it as Kierkegaard’s own.<sup>39</sup> The idea of a polysemous “Kierkegaard,” where the various parts of his output are not

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<sup>37</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 33.

<sup>38</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Entry 3049.

<sup>39</sup> See Evans, C. S. *Kierkegaard’s Ethic of Love: Divine Commands and Moral Obligations*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 84.

reducible to any sort of “real belief of Kierkegaard” vs. illustrative or otherwise purpose-directed but not “true” representations of Kierkegaard’s own views is also possible and, perhaps, even likely.

The possibility exists that the journal entries, like the works published under Kierkegaard’s own name, are perhaps no more reliable witnesses of what Kierkegaard may have actually believed than the pseudonymous works.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, the journal entries often display the same self-conscious artfulness and communicative purpose (whatever the actual intention of this communication may be) as the pseudonymous works. As Fenger notes, Kierkegaard “conceived of his journals as reports to history early on.” And we should all perhaps carry with us a certain “hearty skepticism toward Kierkegaard’s words.”<sup>41</sup>

Here I would not like to argue that what I am presenting is Kierkegaard’s *real* view, but, rather, that what I present represents a coherent interpretation that is one amongst the many that are possible and defensible. That what I present is *a* strand within the tapestry that is “Kierkegaard” is, I think, a defensible claim. That what I present is any sort of “real Kierkegaard” is not something I wish to claim or even believe is ultimately defensible.

The complex question of the purpose of the pseudonymous works and their role and place within the Kierkegaardian corpus is intimately tied and ultimately subordinate to the great question of Kierkegaardian communication more broadly. Again, there is a wide range of possible interpretations. That the pseudonymous works represent indirect ways to guide the reader towards views directly expressed in the works published under Kierkegaard’s own name is one such interpretation. My own view, while acknowledging the weight of this interpretation, is less schematic and more permissive of the possibility of a polysemous Kierkegaard. I think that a view that presents a hidden vs. exposed “real message” covers over the extent to which complication, paradox, and even relativity and confusion permeate the output that Kierkegaard has left us, and that uncertainty even (and perhaps especially) of that which appears most certain must always be bourn in mind. Kierkegaard’s indirect communication through the pseudonymous writings seems certainly intended to affect the reader. But those of us who do read them, along with the rest of Kierkegaard’s corpus, ultimately have only our own interpretations, which are always either more or less likely, never certain. Bearing that proviso in mind we may delve into *Either/Or* and *Fear and Trembling*.

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<sup>40</sup> Indeed it is possible to “regard the whole of Kierkegaard’s life as a gigantic play in which Kierkegaard acted a profusion of roles, among them that of Søren Kierkegaard in countless versions.” Fenger, Henning, *Kierkegaard: The Myths and Their Origins: Studies in the Kierkegaardian Papers and Letters*, Schoolfield, G. (Trans), (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 147

<sup>41</sup> Henning, *Kierkegaard: The Myths*, pp. 33 & 31

The primary treatment of Faust in *Either/Or* occurs in the “Psychological Diversion,” and appears as an examination of Margarete, Faust’s Gretchen. The section is a psychological profile of the tormented woman that Faust seduces and then leaves to die. What Kierkegaard describes is the role that doubt plays in the relationship between these two characters. Here we find familiar themes from the journal entries of the previous decade. Faust falls into his sensual relationship with Margarete because “he has lost a whole previous world,” And yet,

the consciousness of this loss is not blotted out; it is always present, and therefore he seeks in the sensuous not so much pleasure as distraction. His doubting soul finds nothing in which it can rest, and now he grasps at erotic love, not because he believes in it but because it has an element of presentness in which there is a momentary rest and a striving that diverts and that draws attention away from the nothingness of doubt.<sup>42</sup>

Faust’s interest in Margarete is then nothing more than a longing for a brief distraction, which ultimately is as unsatisfying as every other experience for him. He seeks out a woman like the naïve Margarete because “his sick soul needs what could be called the first greening of a young heart.” Yet the peace he seeks is ephemeral; “he does not believe in it any more than in anything else”, but only hopes that “the plenitude of innocence and childlikeness can refresh him for a moment.” He can only find this in the childlike Margarete because “a so-called refined girl would fall within the same relativity as he himself;” Margarete provides something else: “Immediacy.”<sup>43</sup>

Kierkegaard is careful to note that Faust does not press his doubt onto Margarete. “Margarete soon perceives that with respect to faith there is something wrong with Faust.” And Faust could turn his doubt onto her faith and crumple it if he chose, for Margarete’s faith is untested and simple. She has picked up the certainty of her religion from her upbringing, yet there is power in this childlike faith. “Faust is a doubter, but he is no vain fool who wants to make himself important by doubting what others believe... To wrest [Margarethe’s] faith from her is no task at all for him,” and yet he does not attempt this, but “on the contrary, he feels it is only through her faith that she is the great person she is.”<sup>44</sup> Here Kierkegaard presents us with the “*Either/Or*” of doubt coupled with knowledge or unquestionable and unquestioning faith; doubt cannot be assailed by knowledge and knowledge can never lead to faith. The path to transcendent meaning is a leap over the chasm to faith.

In *Fear and Trembling* Kierkegaard discusses Faust’s doubt in relation to the faith of another character, the Abraham of Mount Moriah. Here he describes Faust as “a

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<sup>42</sup>Kierkegaard, Søren, *Either/Or*, Part 1, Hong, H. & E. (Trans.), (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 206.

<sup>43</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, p. 207.

<sup>44</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, pp. 208-209.

doubter, an apostate of the spirit who goes the way of the flesh.”<sup>45</sup> But Faust is not any doubter; he is “the doubter par excellence.” Kierkegaard notes that all the historical manifestations of Faust still do not attain a true grasp of the *essential Faust*. They “miss a profound psychological insight into doubt’s secret conversations with itself,”<sup>46</sup> Kierkegaard notes, and he proceeds to offer a detailed account of his conception of the essential Faust to his readers:

Only when one turns Faust into himself can doubt take on a poetic aspect; only then does he actually discover within himself all the sufferings of doubt. Then he knows that it is spirit that maintains existence, but he also knows that the security and joy in which men live are not grounded in the power of the spirit but are easily explained as an unreflected bliss. As doubter, as the doubter, he is higher than all this, and if someone wants to delude him into fancying that he has passed through doubt, he easily sees through it, for anyone who has made a movement in the world of spirit, consequently an infinite movement, can immediately hear from the response whether it is a tried and tested person speaking or a Münchhausen.<sup>47</sup>

This is a Faust who knows the nature and scope of his doubt. He knows that he could easily turn his doubt “par excellence” upon the world and burn it down, yet he does not, for “he has a sympathetic nature.” This ideal Faust “remains silent, he hides his doubt more carefully in his soul than the girl who hides a sinful fruit of love under her heart.” In this sense Kierkegaard’s ideal Faust is a knight of infinite resignation, who has devoted his life entirely to an idea. His silence is therefore “a sacrifice to the universal;” there is no malice behind his doubt, for what meaning could malice have?

The ideal Faust with his doubt, as we have noted, levels the ground, renders meaning meaningless and brings us before the chasm of faith. Abraham dares to have faith against the levelling of doubt, not through knowledge or thought, but through a leap and, essentially, by an act of obedience.<sup>48</sup> He cannot think his way to faith “because

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<sup>45</sup> Kierkegaard, Søren, *Fear and Trembling/Repetition*, Hong H. & E. (Trans.), (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 107-108. *Fear and Trembling* (pp. 5-6) actually opens with a version of the criticism of the feigned universal sceptical doubt of Martensen and his “Hegelian” followers found in *Johannes Climacus*.

<sup>46</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 108.

<sup>47</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 108-109. Again, the criticism of the false claimants to real doubt echoes *Johannes Climacus*.

<sup>48</sup> Whether faith in general is a sort of divine command, as Evans argues, or whether the situation is more complex, the narrative of *Fear and Trembling* certainly revolves around the issue of Abraham’s obedience. On divine command see Evans, C. S. *Kierkegaard’s Ethic of Love*. As the reader will note from the above discussion of the pseudonymous works I do not follow Evans in his argument for “the non-identity of Kierkegaard and his pseudonym” in *Fear and Trembling* (p. 305) or in his argument that there is a single true message of divine command at play. Evans is certainly right, however, to stress that there is something of the command to obedience involved in faith. The journals tie Christianity and obedience together (as in entry 3049 above), argue that “the only thing which interests God is

faith begins precisely where thought stops.”<sup>49</sup> And so, taken to the brink by Faust we have “only one movement left, the movement of the absurd,”<sup>50</sup> the movement Abraham makes when he obediently has faith in the light of all-destroying doubt.

Faust then, provides us with a way of envisioning the absolute desolation in which the movement of faith must proceed. The Faust myth offers Kierkegaard a way of representing these essential aspects of human existence poetically; it offers him a way of getting the meaning of doubt across to his readers in a form that is not the sort of philosophical explanation, which, according to Kierkegaard’s understanding, goes hand in hand with this doubt. In an 1847 journal entry dealing with doubt and faith Kierkegaard notes that the category of “the single individual,” who comes into relation with God, through faith and against doubt, “cannot be taught directly.” He notes that “the single individual” as a category, which is his central concept, and which provides the entry way to transcendent meaning through a relation with God, “has been used only once before (the first time) in a decisively dialectical way, by Socrates in disintegrating paganism.”<sup>51</sup> Socrates represented doubt turned upon his society through irony. A Faustian character, as a new instance of the ideal type of the doubter could perhaps do something similar in Kierkegaard’s own day not by leading people to doubt, as a “vain fool” would, but leading people away from doubt and toward faith, as an ironic example.

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obedience” (1436), and argue that in the New Testament “faith is demanded (as an expression of devotedness), believing against reason, believing although one cannot see” and that “the apostle speaks of the *obedience of faith*” (1154). Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*. Whether this connection between faith and obedience fully supports Evans’ overall argument or whether there is more room for other interpretations is another matter (we might, for instance, say that *Fear and Trembling* explores faith *in the context of command*). For alternatives see, for instance, Howland, Jacob, *Kierkegaard and Socrates: A Study in Philosophy and Faith*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), esp. pp. 1-2 & 13. And: Green Ronald “Developing’ *Fear and Trembling*,” In Hannay & Marino (Eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 257-281. Green addresses Evans directly and offers a different approach.

<sup>49</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 53.

<sup>50</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p. 101.

<sup>51</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, Entry 2004.

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# The Portico Belvedere: An Experience of Iconography, Illusion and Impressions upon the Soul

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**Abstract.** Literally meaning “beautiful view” in Italian, the *belvedere* is an architectural construct designed precisely for the enjoyment of a view or intellectual connection to the landscape.<sup>1</sup> The *belvedere* first took shape behind the summer dwellings along the coast of Italy when the architecture of the traditional Italic atrium villa experienced a gradual, yet crucial twist over the course of the second century B.C. Borrowing from Greek public buildings, the Hellenistic suburban villa replaced the static garden located at the rear of the house with the dynamic peristyle garden and the ambulatory portico *belvedere* that critically transformed the most basic function of the garden through the superimposition of physical and metaphysical experience.

The *belvedere* is brought to light through historical hermeneutic interpretation, archaeological analysis and the case studies of the Villa Arianna, the Villa Poppaea at Oplontis and the Villa of the Mysteries with literature from Vitruvius, Cicero, Virgil and Pliny the Younger; each contributing a unique perspective that collectively describe the experience of the ancient Roman portico *belvedere*. Examining first the key physical aspects of the peristyle garden, this analysis explores phenomenological features that underscore the spatial perception and experience of the peristyle portico as a *belvedere*.

Quite different from our present-day understanding of a *belvedere* as a static scenic overlook, the ancient portico *belvedere* is proposed as a physical mediator between the real and the illusionary, between the past and the present, between the human and the divine. The ancient human intention for constructing places for viewing nature is brought to the forefront as a means to advance our understanding about how to create meaningful places through the synchronization of real and phenomenal space.

**Keywords:** *belvedere, garden, Roman, portico, peristyle, phenomenology, history, landscape, nature, architecture, transparency*

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<sup>1</sup> Nicola Zingarelli and Miro Dogliotti. *Vocabolario Della Lingua Italiana*. 10. edizione rielaborata a cura di 109 specialisti diretti e coordinati da Miro Dogliotti, Luigi Rosiello, Paolo Valesio. ed. (Bologna,: Zanichelli, 1970), 188. The definition of *belvedere* remains elusive as numerous inquiries return a wide range of definitions such as an architectural structure, the upper part of a building, a turret, a cupola, an open gallery, a small pavilion or a place for viewing. A *belvedere* can also be a palazzetto or building such as the Belvedere Palace for Pope Innocent VIII in Rome. Bramante linked the Vatican with the Belvedere Palace when he designed the Cortile del Belvedere, which began the fashion in the sixteenth century for “the *belvedere*” as the term officially entered popular use. It is interesting to note that modern discussions persists regarding the exact definition and usage of *belvedere*: <http://english.stackexchange.com/questions/127907/does-belvedere-mean-the-same-as-viewpoint>. Accessed 9/30/2014.

## THE DAWN OF THE PORTICO BELVEDERE IN THE PERISTYLE GARDEN

More than two centuries of excavations in and around Pompeii reveal the desire for the landscape view and the physical constructions that were in place for that purpose. Most compelling was the horticultural archaeology of Wilhelmina Jashemski, which provided evidence confirming the desire for the view and the purposeful cultivation of nature in ancient Pompeii. Jashemski determined that Pompeii was quite different from the crowded, overbuilt city it was sometimes portrayed to be, with nearly 18% of the city dedicated to gardens and green space.<sup>2</sup>

Italian atrium houses before the second century BC featured a garden at the rear that functioned as a terminal space. Accessed as the sole destination, the rear garden had few ancillary rooms and no connecting spaces beyond. By the second century BC, borrowing from the Greek *gymnasium* and *palaestrae* (outdoor courtyard spaces used for exercise, socializing and study with porticoes around the perimeter), the static rear garden was replaced by the dynamic peristyle garden. With it came the ambulatory portico *belvedere* that critically transformed the garden experience during the second century BC. The columned walkway was reconfigured so that it encircled the garden, channeling movement *around* the perimeter while maintaining sightlines along the central axis (Figure 1).<sup>3</sup>

Described by Vitruvius, the peristyle garden introduced square courts surrounded by colonnades that presented delightful views to the internal garden.<sup>4</sup> Vitruvius wrote of spacious atriums and peristyles “with plantations and walks of some extent in them, appropriate to their dignity.”<sup>5</sup> The columned portico in domestic architecture signified a refined citizen who upheld the education and status of a cultured elite.<sup>6</sup> The renowned Neapolitan archaeologist Amedeo Maiuri wrote, “It is above all the ample and spacious square garden surrounded by a great pillared portico that gives this house the appearance of a villa.”<sup>7</sup> The portico *belvedere* that encircled the peristyle garden transformed the villa symbolically, becoming the cultural icon of the villa.

Cicero frequently wrote to Atticus regarding the portico of his new Tuscan villa decorated in a fashion appropriate to that of the Greek *gymnasia* and *palaestrae*.<sup>8</sup> In his garden, sculptures of Hermes and Minerva assured onlookers of Cicero’s elevated social

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<sup>2</sup> Wilhelmina Mary Feemster Jashemski, Appendices, *The Gardens of Pompeii: Herculaneum and the Villas Destroyed by Vesuvius*, 2 vols, vol. 1 (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Caratzas Bros., 1979), 1: 24.

<sup>3</sup> Katharine T. von Stackelberg, *The Roman Garden: Space, Sense, and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 20-21.

<sup>4</sup> Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, Book VI, 3.7, 5.2, 5.3

<sup>5</sup> Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, Book VI, 5.2.

<sup>6</sup> Jens-Arne Dickmann, “The peristyle and the transformation of domestic space in Hellenistic Pompeii,” in *Domestic Space in the Roman World: Pompeii and Beyond*, *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, Ed. Laurence, R., A. Wallace-Hadrill, et al. (1997), 127.

<sup>7</sup> Amedeo Maiuri and Istituto Geografico De Agostini, *Pompeii* (Novara, Italy: Istituto Geografico de Agostini, 1957), 155.

<sup>8</sup> Cicero, Letter to Atticus, 1.4, 1.6, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 1.11; On landscape views: *Epistulae ad Atticum*, 2.3.2.

status and obvious understanding of elite Greek society.<sup>9</sup> Hermes, the great messenger who crossed between the human and the divine, was also the patron of orators and poets. Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom, merited “special appropriateness” in Cicero’s garden.<sup>10</sup>

Symbolically, the peristyle garden embodied the sense of hope through human action -- a physical fusion of past, present and future. If no hope existed for freshly planted seedlings to take root and grow, there would certainly be no point in going through the laborious process of cultivating a garden.<sup>11</sup> Nature was an essential aspect of everyday life and a lush garden exemplified fertility, order and peace. The turning of new soil and the flourishing of vegetation brought new hope each season as the garden represented ideal perpetuity. It provided the setting where Romans could envision themselves as an integral part of a greater metaphysical whole.<sup>12</sup>

By the middle of the first century CE, the peristyle literally unfolded from the confines of the enclosed rectangular garden and stretched out to embrace the landscape (Figures 2 and 3). The developments took place in three stages: in the first stage, rooms of the house assembled around an internal atrium. The second style brought the addition of the peristyle garden as a distinct ambulatory with only one or two ancillary spaces opening onto it. Finally, in the third phase, a fundamental transformation took place: an about-face where the primary reception spaces in the villa reversed direction from the internal atrium and turned their focus to the external peristyle garden.<sup>13</sup> A sense of “view mania” along the coastal countryside ensued and the portico began to flourish as a true ambulatory.<sup>14</sup>

## AMBULATIO

The earliest type of peristyle emerged as a set of walkways (*ambulationes*) that literally transformed the view from of the peristyle into a landscape of motion and the portico into a belvedere.<sup>15</sup> The term *ambulatio* means to stroll or walk about. The ambulatory participation of the visitor in the peristyle garden forever altered the relationship between the landscape view and the experience of the garden. In some cases, when the

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<sup>9</sup> Cicero, Letter to Atticus, 1.4

<sup>10</sup> Cicero, Letter to Atticus, 1.4

<sup>11</sup> Annette Giesecke, *The Epic City : Urbanism, Utopia, and the Garden in Ancient Greece and Rome*, Hellenic Studies 21 (Washington, D.C., Cambridge, Mass.: Center for Hellenic Studies Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2007), 125.

<sup>12</sup> Giesecke, 133.

<sup>13</sup> Jens-Arne Dickmann, 127-130. For a concise overview of the three stages, see Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, “Rethinking the Roman Atrium House,” *Domestic Space in the Roman World: Pompeii and Beyond*, *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, Ed. Laurence, R., A. Wallace-Hadrill, et al. (1997): 235.

<sup>14</sup> John R Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy, 100 B.C.-A.D. 250 : Ritual, Space, and Decoration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 20-21.

<sup>15</sup> Dickmann, 136.

portico turned inside out, the ambulatio stretched out, providing visual access along the outside perimeter of the house to the landscape in the distance in addition to the internal peristyle garden. For example, the portico belvedere at the Villa di Arianna commanded an extraordinary view of the bay and Mt. Vesuvius as it overlooked an ambulatio nearly 230 feet long (Figures 4, 5 and 6).<sup>16</sup> The implications of this shift in spatial orientation were significant as the landscape views were no longer limited to an internally bound rectangular garden. Now limitlessly drawn out into the distance, elongated views merged with traditional garden views from within the villa.

As the ambulatory experience of the landscape intensified, there was an increased effort to associate the experience of the garden walk with the development of one's philosophical and intellectual views. Cicero linked the ambulatio to meditation and philosophical discussion, noting "whatever ability I possess as an orator comes not from the workshops of the rhetoricians, but from the spacious grounds of the Academy."<sup>17</sup> The Academy was a bare and dusty spot, converted into "a watered grove with shady walks" on the outskirts of Athens.<sup>18</sup> Plato's Academy marked the withdrawal of philosophy into the garden.<sup>19</sup> A gymnasium provided places for exercise with alcoves for classrooms and "colonnaded walks for philosophical discussion", recalling Plato's *Lysis* where Socrates walked from the Academy to the Lyceum.<sup>20</sup>

Eighty years later, Epicurus founded his school at Athens commonly known as "The Garden."<sup>21</sup> This launch was a radical move. The Garden was the first to bring nature *into* the city of Athens, creating an oasis of tranquility for moral, educational and contemplative pursuits.<sup>22</sup> Seeking peace of mind from a rapidly growing urban existence and freedom from the anxiety of political crises, Epicureans called for a societal reintegration with nature, whereby the human state of *ataraxy* (a state of tranquility and freedom from fear or physical pain) occurred through service to the greater whole that was Nature.<sup>23</sup>

As cities multiplied in size and number, a pronounced longing for the unspoiled countryside framed the ongoing question of man's true place in a world that was becoming increasingly impersonal.<sup>24</sup> Epicureans looked to the cosmos, with Nature at its center. A frame for all human action, the *parergon* exercised substantial control over the *ergon* or the subject that they framed: in this case, the human race.<sup>25</sup> In other words,

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<sup>16</sup> John H. D'Arms. *Romans on the Bay of Naples; a Social and Cultural Study of the Villas and Their Owners from 150 BC to AD 400* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 128-29.

<sup>17</sup> Cicero, *De Oratore* 3.12.4-8

<sup>18</sup> E. V. Walter, *Placeways: A Theory of the Human Environment* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 196.

<sup>19</sup> Giesecke, 90.

<sup>20</sup> Walter, 196.

<sup>21</sup> Cicero and Walsh, *The Nature of the Gods* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1997), xxxi.

<sup>22</sup> Giesecke, 128.

<sup>23</sup> Giesecke, 239.

<sup>24</sup> Giesecke, 94.

<sup>25</sup> Giesecke, 41-45.

humankind should look to Nature for fulfillment of all basic needs and overall happiness.<sup>26</sup>

As Romans grew wealthier, the villa garden expanded and thrived, symbolizing *otium* and leisure, exemplifying Epicureanism as it became increasingly popular. The Roman upper class combined social and intellectual pleasures through philosophical discussion during the promenade through garden sanctuaries.<sup>27</sup> Ideas of bodily movement, acquisition of knowledge, philosophical contemplation, and the notion of travel permeated Roman culture. Family tales of lineage, fantastical literature and mythological paintings were common topics of discussion while walking after a meal or during the traditional afternoon promenade.<sup>28</sup> Movement, painting, literature and philosophy encompassed the notion of travel and, for Plato and Aristotle, manifested itself in terms of *theoria*. *Theoria* was “a cross between tourism and pilgrimage” and even an analogy for philosophy itself.<sup>29</sup> Philosophers traveled in their minds to contemplate the greater truth. Although *theoria* favored the notion of *theory* (travel in the mind), it was closely related to the Latin word *contemplatio*, to look at or gaze upon, uniting the traveler’s gaze with physical movement, education and metaphysical inquiry.

Walking the length of the portico belvedere, Romans experienced *theoria* as body and mind moved simultaneously. *Theoria* was laden with the notion of traveling to another place to witness some aspect of existence that was not one’s own, thereby learning something of another *reality* by the very act of bodily movement. Designed as a sequential unfolding of views, movement through the peristyle garden enticed strollers to experience both the immediate site and overall grounds, if not entirely by foot, then through views from the belvedere.

The exploratory nature of the ambulatory garden walk created a simultaneous experience of smell, sight, sound and motion through nature. Human senses were the subject of philosophical and scientific debates during the second century BC. Entangled with the study of knowledge and human interpretation, the garden was frequently the setting for dialogue on the existence of the gods, their control of nature and the effect of human senses on everyday life.

Attaining a state of tranquility through the senses became the ultimate expression of joy, as pleasures of the mind were valued over physical gratification.<sup>30</sup> Epicurean philosophy upheld the view that the *senses* were the source of all knowledge – and that they were infallible. If we were misled by our senses, then it was due to our faulty interpretation of the evidence presented. Epicurus believed that all objects constantly

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<sup>26</sup> Giesecke, 133.

<sup>27</sup> Giesecke, 116-117.

<sup>28</sup> Timothy M. O’Sullivan, “Walking with Odysseus: The Portico Frame of the Odyssey Landscapes.” *The American Journal of Philology* 128, no. 4 (2007): 526.

<sup>29</sup> O’Sullivan, 98.

<sup>30</sup> Cicero and Walsh, xxx.

gave off a film of atoms, described as *eidola* or images. These images would strike the senses, creating our interpretive understanding of the object. Occasionally bypassing the senses altogether, some images strike our minds directly, forming the dreams and mental pictures of our subconscious known as *phantasia*.<sup>31</sup>

#### PHANTASIA: IMPRESSIONS ON THE SOUL

Both Stoics and Epicureans accepted the Aristotelian doctrine that all knowledge came through the senses, resulting in *phantasia* or impressions on the soul - sensations stored in our memories, collectively building our perception of the world.<sup>32</sup> To better articulate the relationship between information held in the mind and the actual object, the term *phantasia* aligned with the word for light (*phôs*). Like light, the impression on the soul revealed itself through the senses. *Phantasia* encompassed two worlds simultaneously: the phenomenal experience of an object *and* the representation of the object in the world.<sup>33</sup> Expressly linked with the cognitive understanding of the visual image, the metaphysical effect of *phantasia* was an important aspect of viewing the image of the distant landscape from the belvedere.<sup>34</sup> The phenomenological experience of the body in space affected the processing and interpretation of information taken in through the senses. Sight, smell, taste, sound and touch experienced during the *ambulatio* shaped human cognition, which was thought to be situated somewhere between knowledge and belief.<sup>35</sup>

A visitor invited to enjoy a stroll on the portico belvedere might have had little knowledge of the experiential meaning of the *ambulatio*, but he would have known that the deepest part of the garden designated equal footing in society. By proximity alone, he had risen to a measurable social level in the eyes of the homeowner. He would presume that an expansive place for strolling indicated a preferred leisure activity among the aristocracy; that the cultivated grove in the sizable landscape beyond represented a certain degree of wealth and that the manicured garden indicated a high level of worldliness and control over nature.

Because *phantasia* encompassed the phenomenal and the representational, the exploration of experience through physical movement and theoretical engagement deepened the appeal and function of the belvedere in the second century BC. Experiences of the physical and theoretical engaged simultaneously, creating

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<sup>31</sup> Cicero and Walsh, xxxi.

<sup>32</sup> Cicero and Walsh, xxxiv.

<sup>33</sup> Katja Maria Vogt, *Why Beliefs Are Never True: A Reconstruction of Stoic Epistemology* (Notre Dame, Chicago Area Conference, 2010), [http://www.katjavogt.com/pdf/katja\\_vogt\\_belief\\_2.pdf](http://www.katjavogt.com/pdf/katja_vogt_belief_2.pdf). Accessed February 26, 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Eleanor Winsor Leach, *The Rhetoric of Space: Literary and Artistic Representations of Landscape in Republican and Augustan Rome* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 7n.

<sup>35</sup> Katja Maria Vogt, *Why Beliefs Are Never True: A Reconstruction of Stoic Epistemology* (Notre Dame, Chicago Area Conference, 2010), [http://www.katjavogt.com/pdf/katja\\_vogt\\_belief\\_2.pdf](http://www.katjavogt.com/pdf/katja_vogt_belief_2.pdf). Accessed February 26, 2013.

meaningful associations for the Romans who engaged them. There was a persistent belief that human cognition was beholden to the metaphorical travel of the mind, the multi-sensory data imprinted upon one's soul and the ambulatory movement of the body.<sup>36</sup> The belvedere in the garden became a unique space for the convergence of the real and phenomenal.

The physicality of strolling the belvedere extended from the portico and continued into the villa where wall paintings portrayed a kinetic sense of spatial provocation, satisfying the Roman's persistent desire for illusionary vistas. In Cubiculum 16 at the Villa of the Mysteries, architectural vistas lined the walls, creating motion within the room. The painted angles encouraged viewers to move toward the back of the room to reconcile the image from the main axis of entry (Figure 7). The directional orthogonal angles originate from there, as if the three walls were conceptually unfolded in the artist's mind, and then folded back again to enclose the space of the room.<sup>37</sup> This form of kinetic arrangement was consistent with other perspective constructions that used either this technique or multiple viewpoints to invite a sense of depth and controlled movement within the space.

Negotiating the geometry of the wall, multiple convergence points and overlapping planes, the viewer is shuttled between illusionistic remote views and the landscape views at hand. This system of representation placed the most important emphasis on the experience of the viewer rather than following strict conventions of drawing. The formal structure and composition of wall paintings suggested that artists valued the role of perception and showed an apparent preference for diversified representations of space.<sup>38</sup> Artists conveyed subjective and intellectual aspects of sensory experience through layers of space and perspective as opposed to simply recording external information on a two-dimensional surface.<sup>39</sup>

The experience of the view represented in painting was consistent with that of the physically constructed belvedere. In an illusionary painting where images overlap and distances are indeterminable, spectators within paintings direct our eyes through their glances. Where they look, we look. A glimpse and gesture confirms importance and guides our focus. As external viewers, we enjoy the ability to see and understand without serious consequence. Viewers in the second century BC were also liberated spectators; sightseers released from the bound image who brought individualized meaning to the art. Viewers moved about the room for a better point of view, drawn by light, texture, color and asymmetrical perspective. Within the ancient villa, painted views regularly corresponded to actual openings, compelling the mobile spectator to decide between the outside landscape view and the inside illusion where intangible

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<sup>36</sup> O'Sullivan, 100.

<sup>37</sup> Philip Todd Stinson, "Light and space in the Villa of the Mysteries," a master's thesis of the University of California, Los Angeles (2001), 22-37.

<sup>38</sup> John R Clarke, 33-35.

<sup>39</sup> Stinson, 1.

architecture expanded real space. Here, the task of metaphysical inquiry fell to the viewer as they explored the real and illusionary simultaneously.

Some openings, both painted and real, admitted the eye alone; these spaces were not meant for walking as the eye could travel to places the body could not. The experience of the landscape became fractured with tension as the architecture revealed and concealed. This phenomenon is most readable in the typical atrium villa as one looks from the entrance, through the atrium, past the *tablinium* (the office or drawing room) and finally into the peristyle garden along a central axis that was often physically impossible to travel (Figure 8).

The central axis that ran the length of the atrium house provided varying degrees of views from the entry to the peristyle garden in the rear. In the house of Octavius Quartio, one had to enter the house to enjoy the most impressive view, whereas at the House of Menander, visitors experienced the garden view from outside the main threshold.<sup>40</sup> Some garden views were quite direct, accessed through actual cut openings in the walls. Others required a more mysterious approach and revealed only glimpses of garden while coaxing the visitor through slender dark passages within the house.

The interplay of revealing and concealing views was a part of everyday life. Lucretius observed the recurrence of perceptual images when he wrote that a person never saw an object itself, but instead experienced a complex stream of multiple images emanating from it “in such a constant stream from all things that several qualities are carried and are transmitted in all directions.”<sup>41</sup> We might imagine how views unfolded for the Romans as they strolled through a portico – how a vast panorama was impossible to take in all at once and how perception of space resembled an assemblage of images accumulated over time.

As ‘travelers’ and ‘tourists’ within the villa, ancient Romans negotiated spaces of dark and light that led them to the peristyle garden by following cultural clues and their instinctive human desire to move closer to the indeterminate view naturally illuminated in the distance. Finally arriving at the portico belvedere, the ancient Roman encountered a physical pause that demanded visual reconciliation: the interplay between the foreground of the symbolic ornamental garden and the lure of the boundless natural landscape beyond.

## NEGOTIATING CONFLICTS OF REALITY AND ILLUSION

Meaningful human experience is inseparable from the act of everyday memory making. It is an activity of construction, integrating one image with the next, reconciling each experience with the one before. The Villa Poppaea at Oplontis demonstrated this principle through architecture, gardens and frescos where painted images overlapped

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<sup>40</sup> Stackelberg, 112.

<sup>41</sup> Lucretius Carus, Titus, Epictetus, Aurelius Marcus, H. A. J. Munro, and George Long, *Lucretius: On the Nature of Things* 200-202 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), 130.

successive planes that gave way to framed garden views, both real and imaginary. Themes portrayed in paintings related to garden sculpture; architectural views evoked spectator experiences through purposeful association of related images. Painted architectural vistas framed deep landscapes and correlated to actual openings in the villa walls. Painted architectural perspectives recalled actual villa space and painted landscapes foreshadowed actual gardens beyond immediate reach (Figures 9 and 10).<sup>42</sup>

A mythological garden resides within a recess of contrasting tones of blue bordered by planes of red and yellow (Figure 11). The illusionary garden fluctuates with continuous activity as our eyes move back and forth between three overlapping planes, two real and one illusionary. Above the mythological garden, two miniature panoramic paintings punctuated by peacocks of an entirely different scale appear too large to visualize inside the panoramas and too small to identify with the mythological garden (Figure 12). Peacocks served as both pets and food, again furthering the experience of alternate meaning through multiplicity.

Illusionary marble columns embedded with jewels and wrapped in vines mimicked real columns within the garden, recalling the vines in the landscape (Figure 13). This same vine-wrapped reality repeated throughout the villa through other garden features such as a sacred tree or gold statuary. As the visitor neared the garden, engaged columns painted with twisting ivy stood outside the garden near marble pillars carved and painted with clinging vines. Finally, in the garden itself, one found small pots planted in front of each marble column, slanted, to allow the vines of the clematis, honeysuckle or ivy to climb upward mimicking the lines of the architecture (Figure 14).<sup>43</sup> Near the center of the garden, trees and shrubs revealed their purposeful alignment within this same organizational grid.

Once inside the garden, the visitor experienced firsthand the sculpture that they only glimpsed previously. Interplay between sculpture and painting prompted immediate association while statues communicated through glance and gesture. Returning inside, the illusionary peristyle garden provoked the visitor's most recent memory of the very garden from which they came (Figure 15). Associations of literature, architecture, landscape and painting demanded active participation from the viewer of the second century BC. Through the interplay of objects, illusions and movement the visitor traversed two worlds simultaneously, overlapping the phenomenal and the representational, marking an impression on the soul through the development of memory and the phenomenon of *phantasia*.

The ancients explored the landscape through the experience of the belvedere through a multifaceted balance of artistic representation and conflicting reality, resulting in what architect and philosopher Dalibor Vesely called "a strange sense of

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<sup>42</sup> Bettina Bergmann, "Art and Nature in the Villa at Oplontis," in *Pompeian Brothels, Pompeii's Ancient History, Mirrors and Mysteries, Art and Nature at Oplontis, the Herculaneum "Basilica"*, *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, Ed. McGinn, T. A. (2002): 109.

<sup>43</sup> Bettina Bergmann, 110-112.

unreality.”<sup>44</sup> What made the belvedere experience *unreal* was the superimposition of the ideal vision within the context of realistic nature. The illusionary view of the landscape painted on walls, realistic nature in the distance, and the assembled memory of the viewer synthesized the kinetic experience of the garden into an exploration that was impossible to grasp directly, yet blended without the need for forced justification.

### CONSTRUCTING THE IMAGERY OF ILLUSION

Writing in the first century BC, Virgil, an Epicurean in his youth, put into prose this notion of conflicting multiplicity. Presenting various accounts of pastoral nature within the context of political allegories, optimistic views on childhood and imaginary descriptions of mythological spirits in the earthbound landscape, Virgil overlapped numerous images and depictions of the natural world, reflecting a multi-sided outlook toward nature that is much less common today. In the *Eclogues*, Virgil guided the reader’s eyes around the farm, pausing to frame views beneath a tree:

Fortunate old man, here between the rivers  
 you know and the sacred springs you’ll lie in the cool shade.  
 Here your hedge, as it always has, at your neighbor’s line  
 will pasture on willow buds Hyblaeon bees  
 which soon will coax you to sleep with their light murmuring hum  
 There beneath the high rock the vinedresser  
 will sing to the breeze and all the while your hoarse pigeons  
 and your turtle dove, high in the elm, will murmur and coo.<sup>45</sup>

Virgil presented a decidedly dynamic natural order of the landscape, even though the old man relaxed in the cool shade by the river. His gaze was progressively directed upward, commanding the eye to move from the low river, to the hedge and pasture beyond; to the tops of the trees and finally to the high rocks above.<sup>46</sup>

Virgil used the landscape view as a springboard to imagine a multi-level, multi-image existence in nature, simultaneously considering the past, present and future. While paintings and poetry entangled artifice and reality through representation, constructed belvederes were physically anchored to the landscape, shifting reality by literally positioning the viewer in the most ideal manner. In this respect, there was a unification of the undeniably real and the provocatively illusionary analogous to the multi-sensory experience of the belvedere.

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<sup>44</sup> Dalibor Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation: The Question of Creativity in the Shadow of Production* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 2004), 168.

<sup>45</sup> Virgil, *Eclogues*, Eclogue 1, Lines 51-59.

<sup>46</sup> Eleanor Winsor Leach, *Virgil’s Eclogues; Landscapes of Experience* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1974), 76.

The superimposition of time and space was what painter and Bauhaus professor László Moholy-Nagy in *Vision in Motion* described as “the approach to the practical task of building up a completeness by an ingenious transparency of relationships.”<sup>47</sup> Linguistic transparency arises through metaphor, alteration, distortion, double entendre, illusion and implication. Mohony felt that these particular types of experiences evoked the joyous sensation of “looking through a first plane of significance to others lying behind.”<sup>48</sup> Linguistic transparency is comparable to the experience of the belvedere in the same way that the ancients compressed layered references in painting, sculpture, literature and space to achieve desired ‘completeness’.

### TO DWELL WITHIN THE FOURFOLD

German philosopher Martin Heidegger explored association and completeness through referential complexity in architecture when he wrote about *staying with things*. Similar to the notion of overlapping or superimposing a multiplicity of associations to uncover meaning, Heidegger was interested in how human beings maintained access to the essence of the “fourfold,” or the union between the divine, the human, the earth and the sky.<sup>49</sup> It was Heidegger’s view that humans could achieve this completeness by maintaining a connection to the divine through staying and cultivating space -- protecting and preserving the meaningful and poetic through the passage of time. In this sense, we can infer that to stay in the landscape meaningfully, it is important to cultivate human experience by bringing into nature the tools necessary to encourage one to spend time there.<sup>50</sup> As a receptacle, the belvedere acted as a common place for the gathering of man and the divine through the simultaneous cultivation of the illusionary and the real.

‘Maintaining access’ to the divine was not a new concept for the Romans, as the gods were an omnipresent. Whether presiding over crops or meals, animals or trees, births or funerals, they were a consistent part of everyday life. Multiple household shrines accepted daily offerings. Limentinus protected the threshold, Forculus guarded the door panels and Cardea watched over the hinges. Wax masks of ancient ancestors guarded the entry to the household. Every aspect of domestic life came into play: walls, furniture, dishes, the dining table and the bed. In the countryside, every setting had its

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<sup>47</sup> Colin Rowe, *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa, and Other Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1976)161. See also László Moholy-Nagy. *Vision in Motion*, Id Book, Institute of Design (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1947), 350.

<sup>48</sup> Rowe, 161.

<sup>49</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic writings from being and time to the task of thinking* (New York: Harper & Row, 1999), 325.

<sup>50</sup> Heidegger, 325.

own spirit or *genius loci*. Vallonia oversaw valleys, plains belonged to Rusina and the hills fell under the watchful eye of Collatina.<sup>51</sup>

Just as the villa and landscape accommodated daily interaction with the gods, the garden was the spatial culmination of spiritual and physical transformation defined by the permeable boundary of the portico belvedere. Permeable in the sense that sightlines and landscape views (real and imaginary) allowed multiple simultaneous sensory experiences, the belvedere encompassed a wide, flexible margin that shifted based on the literal ability to see into the distance. Understanding the essence of the belvedere requires us to interpret the Roman garden as a malleable periphery rather than a rigid edge between the villa and the landscape.

The garden was an intensely immersive, complex space that fused symbolic associations through experiential imagery, sound and smell. The portico belvedere made physical demands on the body through suggestive sightlines and evocative views, accommodating a plurality of experiences by guiding movement through exposure and obscurity. Spaces that exhibit this “seduction of the senses” carry the most potential to encourage plural experiences, and plurality of experience encourages the convergence and synthesis of meaning for the individual.<sup>52</sup> The natural world played a transcendental role in the lives of the ancients, where nature prevailed as a live presence whose qualities could not be discovered by inquiry alone, only by the presence revealing itself. In other words, nature was experiential, not merely contemplated to achieve transformative understanding.<sup>53</sup>

#### FANTASY, MEMORY AND THE EXPERIENCE OF THE BELVEDERE

Art and literature in Italy during the first century reflected activity in the garden organized according to the systematic rhythm of the seasons, expectations of nature (planting, growing, harvesting) and tasks associated with everyday life. In the *Silvae*, the poet Statius illustrated the ancient belief that the landscape was a magical opportunity for ordering and restructuring; not only could man *improve* upon nature but he could also *create* nature where none existed before:

Where you see level ground, there used to be a hill; the building you now enter was wilderness; where you now see lofty woods, there was not even land. The occupant has tamed it all; the soil rejoices as he shapes rocks or expels them, following his lead.<sup>54</sup>

The perceptual image of nature in the hands of artist and poets is noteworthy. For the massive amount of physical labor, buttressing and excavation required to construct

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<sup>51</sup> Robert Turcan, *The Gods of Ancient Rome: Religion in Everyday Life from Archaic to Imperial Times* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 38-39.

<sup>52</sup> Stackelberg, 51-52.

<sup>53</sup> Frankfort, Henri, 1967. *Henriche Antonia Groenewegen Frankfort*, John Albert Wilson, and Thorkild Jacobsen. *Before Philosophy: The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man; an Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East*, A Pelican Book. Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 29.

<sup>54</sup> Statius, *Silvae*, 2.2.55-59.

porticos and terraces, the belvedere translated into a mythical construction of sublime transparency. Statius once described a villa in terms of how “the proud mansion floats upon the glassy flood.”<sup>55</sup> By removing the irrepressible weight of materiality, the reader is at liberty to drift, no more anchored to the rocky hillside than a soaring gull. Experiencing an overlap between illusion and reality, the spectator glides upward through the literary descriptions of the water below. In reverse, the sensation of floating corresponds to a view from a terrace belvedere nearby. The panoramic view is unencumbered by framing from a portico or window opening; thus, the viewer is predictably outside, elevated, and removed from the moisture of the sea; able to drift effortlessly into the indeterminate distance.

Likewise, Pliny the Younger wrote about the terrace belvedere from within his garden, displaying an unwillingness to create barriers between nature and architecture. Precisely crafted words reduced artificial division by any means necessary.<sup>56</sup>

My house, although built at the foot of a hill, has a view as if it stood upon the brow of it..On the outside is the lawn, as beautiful by nature as what I have been describing is by art. Farther on, the prospect is terminated by meadows and many other fields, and little coppices of wood. From the extremity of the portico projects a large dining room, from the doors of which you look to the end of the terrace.<sup>57</sup>

Pliny’s tour directs us *around* and *through* the terrace without unfolding the garden from one logical end to the other. With an unnatural hush, the quiet of empty space permeates the villa, discounting the sights and sounds of what was likely a fully operational farm.<sup>58</sup> It is important to recognize Pliny’s primary goal – not to describe the villa and garden realistically, but to guide the reader through his perception of dwelling in ancient Italy.<sup>59</sup> Using “villa lore” Pliny offered a paradisaical ideal that was illustrative of the perception of nature at the time.<sup>60</sup> The desire for the beautiful view infused Pliny’s descriptions of the constructed belvederes that dominated his villas and attest to the strong desire to superimpose the distant view with the foreground. “It is a blend of consciousness; on the one hand the architecture must achieve within the

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<sup>55</sup> Statius, *Silvae*, 2.2.50.

<sup>56</sup> Pierre de la Ruffiniere Du Prey, *The Villas of Pliny from Antiquity to Posterity* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 26-27.

<sup>57</sup> Pliny the Younger, *Letter to Apollinaris*, 5.6.

<sup>58</sup> Bettina Bergmann, "Visualizing Pliny's Villas," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 8 (1995): 409.

<sup>59</sup> Sara Myers, "Representations of Gardens in Roman Literature," forthcoming in *Gardens of the Roman Empire* (Cambridge), 48.

<sup>60</sup> Bergmann, 410.

historical frame...on the other hand, architecture's utopia seeks to acquire its disruptive force and ethical value precisely by *not* being conflated with the real."<sup>61</sup>

Romans repeatedly confronted illusionary space and the persistent challenge of looking both *at* the wall and *through* it in wall paintings and overlapping planes throughout the atrium house. Perhaps this corporeal reality supports the notion that the "ancient, nonliterate society may well have possessed powers of pictorial visualization much greater and more intense than our own."<sup>62</sup> In much the same way that an orator elicited an emotional response from his audience, Pliny constructed particularly striking images to portray the experience of his legendary literary villas, engaging the spectator. Creating an impression on the listener (and presumably the reader) through the "eyes of the mind," the ancient orator used the technique of *evidentia* to describe *visiones*; in other words, mental descriptions created by words that then took up residence as images in the memory of the receiver.<sup>63</sup> Likewise, the images derived from real objects (landscapes included) produced a "lasting physical impact on the mind by means of the eyes...retained in the mind and reproduced from memory."<sup>64</sup>

The ambiguous nature of Pliny's villas presented indefinite details that become conceivable through multi-sensory experience, very much like a memory. Perhaps Pliny aimed to convey a sense of experiential difference, where, like nature, details may not fit together neatly amongst themselves, but unite more effectively when considered as a whole, comparable to the richness of an assemblage of related snapshots rather than the seamlessness of a sweeping panoramic.

#### THE LIMINAL SPACE BETWEEN HOPE AND CERTAINTY

As a place of rejuvenation, the belvedere implied the spatial notion of paradise -- a liminal space where one stands upon the threshold between past and future, seeking transformation through the unification of everyday reality and potential hope. We inherited the notion of paradise from Persian *paradeisos*, where enclosed watered orchards sustained pleasure and production simultaneously.<sup>65</sup> *Paradeisos* merged the home with hunting parks, production places for exotic food, spaces for entertainment and elaborate displays of sophisticated hydraulic mechanisms that kept the garden fantastically lush. Roman elite established country villas and suburban *horti* capable of intensive cultivation for sustenance and entertainment by the second century BC. Symbolically, the Roman interpretation of the paradise garden represented the power

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<sup>61</sup> Manfredo Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance: Princes, Cities, Architects* (New Haven Conn., Cambridge, Mass.: Yale University Press; In association with Harvard University Graduate School of Design, 2006), xii.

<sup>62</sup> Ann Vasaly, *Representations: Images of the World in Ciceronian Oratory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 99.

<sup>63</sup> Vasaly, 94-96.

<sup>64</sup> Vasaly, 95-97.

<sup>65</sup> Purcell, 126.

and prestige of the villa owner. Gardens revealed long colonnaded walks, raised porticos and vast terraces where one could view the productive and leisurely landscape simultaneously. The outward expression of opulence paraded independence, individualism, success, wealth and affluence. For the Romans, the notion of *paradeisos* embraced the logic of practicality, aesthetics, philosophy and economics that did not necessitate psychological or physical separation, but rather surpassed topographical, spatial and historical boundaries.

The Roman lifestyle of pleasure, power, privilege and cultivation appears in bucolic literature, particularly through Virgil, as he articulated a new golden age of political vision through the veil of a newborn child in a series of detailed pastoral images:

For you, little child, spontaneously, as first gifts,  
the earth will lavish creeping ivy and foxglove  
everywhere, and Egyptian lilies with smiling acanthus.  
Goats will come home by themselves with udders full  
of milk, nor will the oxen fear the lion's might.  
Your very cradle will flower with buds to caress you.  
The serpent will die as well as poison's treacherous plant,  
and everywhere Assyrian balsam will come to bloom.  
And when you have learned to read the praises of heroes and deeds  
of your own father and know what manhood is, the plain,  
little by little, will grow gold with waving grain,  
and grapes will redden on the untended vine of the thorn,  
and the hard oaks distill honey-dew from their barks.<sup>66</sup>

Virgil's landscapes in the Eclogues were sometimes as ambiguous as Pliny's terrace views, even though there were plenty of details. Virgil expressed the progression of time through the meticulous naming of plants, flowers and animals. Pliny embellished his description of the view through the dining room doors adjacent to the portico. Holding a narrative together through specificity was quite common, especially in the case of geographical descriptions (*topographia*) or descriptions of imaginary places (*topothesia*). In an oratory where places or monuments were concerned "the speaker was advised to use concrete details in order to create a 'visual image' in the minds of his listeners."<sup>67</sup>

Missing from Virgil's narrative was the greater context of overall topography, an omission that created a sense of uncertainty similar to the experience of a belvedere where nearby garden details were fully comprehensible, yet the limits of the distant

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<sup>66</sup> Virgil and Barbara Hughes Fowler, *Virgil's Eclogues* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 11. Eclogue IV, lines 17-30.

<sup>67</sup> Vasaly, 89-90.

horizon remained allusive. An incomplete context supported a sense of fantasy, recalling literature that decisively distanced itself from reality. Vesely's notion of the unreal celebrated ambiguity that released and extended the meaning.<sup>68</sup> The passage above reads as a hopeful dream for the future with an underlying critique of present reality. In Virgil's Eclogue 4, we are not driven to define a context of time or space, thus, we are at liberty to create our own. A villa owner who viewed the city from a remote belvedere interpreted the reality of the hazy city beyond as he pleased, contemplating his existence in the urban setting. Physical distance exposed a pathway for metaphysical travel in both literature and the experiential landscape view from the belvedere, overlapping the real and unreal as the range of meaning became elongated.

Virgil's writing exemplified the Roman view that civilization and nature were fiercely interdependent: clearly an Epicurean viewpoint illustrating the aspiration of freedom from human toil.<sup>69</sup> Virgil's poems illustrated the coexistence of manmade objects in the landscape and used this context to explore the human condition, emphasizing the interaction between human and natural forces -- very much in keeping with the sacro-idyllic landscape paintings found in actual belvederes of luxury villas to which Vitruvius attested: (Figure 16):

their walks, on account of the great length, they decorated with a variety of landscapes representations of places, copying the characteristics of definite spots. In these paintings there are harbors, promontories, seashores, rivers, fountains, straights, fanes, groves, mountains, flocks, shepherds.<sup>70</sup>

Sacro-idyllic paintings and pastoral poems both dismissed the complete context, preserving the impression that these landscapes were possibly attainable only through one's imagination.<sup>71</sup> Yet in contrast to that notion, one might consider that the belvedere was perhaps the architectural *manifestation* of the sacro-idyllic experience written about by Virgil and painted by artists in the first century BC. The bucolic experience occurred somewhere between myth and reality. The belvedere provided the distant view of the sacro-idyllic painting and the nearby landscape detail of the Virgilian narrative simultaneously, literally bridging the two.

While sacro-idyllic landscapes should not be defined as "Virgilian" (they are missing the appropriate degree of allusion, conversation and song for which Virgil was notorious) the painted image complimented the poetry due to their common origins of the early Augustan age and shared literary background.<sup>72</sup> Both painting and poetry

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<sup>68</sup> Vesely, 170.

<sup>69</sup> Giesecke, 155.

<sup>70</sup> Vitruvius, Pollio, and M. H. Morgan. *Vitruvius: The Ten Books on Architecture* (New York: Dover Publications, 1960), 211. [7.5.2].

<sup>71</sup> Eleanor Winsor Leach, *Virgil's Eclogues; Landscapes of Experience* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1974), 111.

<sup>72</sup> Eleanor Winsor Leach, *The Rhetoric of Space: Literary and Artistic Representations of Landscape in Republican and Augustan Rome* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 198-213.

provide a reasonable frame of reference to explore how the experience of the belvedere might have intensified the prevailing philosophical views of nature. Sacro-idyllic paintings from the first century BC were located within the portico belvederes themselves as they portrayed an idealized world through pause and reflection.

### THE VEIL OF TRANSPARENCY

Positioning the viewer between the literal and the representational, the belvedere united the painted paradise on one side, a constructed paradise on the other and a distant paradise beyond. The triad of simultaneous experience within the belvedere created a unique spatial condition that Colin Rowe called *phenomenal transparency*.<sup>73</sup> The concept of phenomenal transparency hinged upon overlapping systems of organization that provoke multiple outcomes simultaneously. The superimposition of systems encourage multiple experiences of the belvedere through the landscape, the painted illusion and the literary fiction. Here, transparency has little to do with seeing through materiality; rather, it is through the absence of clarity that the image gains strength.

Numerous levels of suggestion imply many possible interpretations through the systematic assembly of definable objects to create form. For instance, Virgil cloaked the unpleasant reality of the world with the mask of an effortless illusion. Pliny superimposed a serene garden upon the tactile materiality of the country villa. At the same time, Pliny unveiled the villa as a symbol of ultimate paradise while the reader overlaid their personal experience of how a working estate really looked and sounded. In Pliny's writing, there was an absence of context, even as deep space emerged through the organizational system of architectural details. Virgil attempted no description of spatial background in Eclogue 4, yet succeeded in creating considerable perceptual depth in his effortless world through detailed descriptions of Egyptian lilies and smiling acanthus that will come to lavish the earth "everywhere."<sup>74</sup>

Superimposed contrast in literature created a transparency of multiple readings, just as literal contrasts of color, light and form created shifting fluctuations of depth where one system of contrasting planes continually shift in front of and behind a second system of smaller, clearly defined objects. Transparency emerges as dark and light planes alternate between foreground and background, creating a sense of depth in a flat volume of space as we attempt to resolve the spatial relationship. Virgil used implication rather than definition to provoke depth of meaning when he described creeping ivy and waving grain. Only the magnified details persist; the overall context is implied through mere suggestion. The buildup of fragments where no physical space existed resulted in a multilayered extension of possible meaning.

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<sup>73</sup> Rowe, 161.

<sup>74</sup> Virgil, *Eclogues*, Eclogue 4, Lines 19-20.

In Virgil's narrative, we shuttle between what was obviously a fantastical description of a carefree paradise and our understanding of a more burdensome earthly reality. A similar experience occurred in the axial arrangement of the atrium house as alternating volumes of light and shadow persistently competed for attention (Figure 8). The large sunlit garden in the distance beckoned one forward while smaller shadowed spaces caused reluctance. Arriving at the belvedere, perception shifted: the peristyle garden became illuminated foreground while the uncertain outlying landscape now commanded attention. A constant shifting of perception took place as the ambiguous reality of deep space contrasted minute details of the garden and illusionary images on the wall. One might have experienced the garden at hand as objective reality while the vastness of the distant panorama became difficult to grasp. Important to the experience of the belvedere, simultaneous perception of overlapping space rearranged insignificant singularities into meaningful complexities evoking Heidegger's call for engagement of the divine, the human, the earth and the sky.<sup>75</sup>

Simultaneous perception of different locations created a sense of space that not only receded, but also fluctuated with continuous activity. At the Villa Arianna, the great peristyle garden not only contained three simultaneous experiences of illusionary, constructed and natural landscapes, but the addition of the ambulatories within the garden set the belvedere in perpetual motion through continuous activity (Figure 5). Integral to the perceptual experience of the landscape, the body in motion prompted an unlimited variety of shifting planes, overlapped with vertical, horizontal and receding space. Moholy described the implications of this phenomenon when he wrote, "some superimpositions of form overcome time and spaces fixations."<sup>76</sup> Thus, in real space, iterations of reality through successive overlapping are not layered in two dimensions like a painting; rather they are blended in our minds by our perception of the unfolding experience.

The realities of time and space simultaneously retreat and expand as the mind shifts between past and present, near and far, real and illusionary. The visitor who walked through the garden at the Villa Arianna might have perceived deep space as the evidence of human intervention diminished from the repetitive colonnade of the portico, to the planted garden and *ambulatio*, finally culminating in the shifting watery view of pristine nature in the distant Bay of Naples. Three distinct systems of organization overlapped to create an ever-changing interpretation of the landscape and man's role within it.

The Villa Poppaea at Oplontis demonstrated phenomenal transparency through successive overlapping of physical planes of landscape experiences. Most apparent in the traditional atrium portion of the complex, the axial sequence from the atrium to the viridarium (the large rear garden) was an expected spatial negotiation (Figure 2). It was

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<sup>75</sup> Rowe, 161.

<sup>76</sup> Rowe, 161. See also László Moholy-Nagy. *Vision in Motion*, Id Book, Institute of Design (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1947), 210.

entirely impossible to physically travel the straightforward path starting from the atrium and ending in the viridarium. Direct access through the internal garden to the viridarium was denied as one was funneled toward an offset narrow passage that compressed both the stride and the garden view. The eye, however, passed freely from the atrium, through the internal garden, past the salon and arrived at the rear garden through a series of optical fluctuations that responded to the axially of the space. Important here is how the experience of the landscape emerged as a series of negotiated overlapping planes and the similarity of that experience to the portico belvedere as repetitive columns formed a series of framed landscape views in motion producing an effect of parallax.<sup>77</sup> The belvedere provoked a constantly changing point of view that directly affected the perceived reality of the landscape in the distance. As the viewer progressed along the portico belvedere, the most distant view served as a backdrop that gradually adjusted to frame the quickly shifting garden view at hand, altering both the frame and the image simultaneously. Alternating viewpoints, overlapping images and multiple lines of convergence recall the wall paintings of the Villa of the Mysteries while the multiplicity of viewing planes through bodily movement encouraged diversity and transparency of meaning.

Phenomenal transparency achieved through the absence of volume, implication in place of definition, and contrast through light, color and form inspires a continuous didactic between real and unreal; in this case, between the known fact of the portico belvedere, the allure of the internal garden and the implication of an inaccessible landscape, both illusionary and distant. The experience deepens through an intensified tension where multiple layers of reality take turns claiming our attention. With this comes many levels of potential meaning that encourage enjoyment through the act of movement within the space of the belvedere.

It is unlikely that the original rear garden of the atrium house would have evoked a phenomenal experience comparable to that of the Hellenistic portico belvedere.<sup>78</sup> A “seduction of the senses” designed with constant visual exchange and a persistent, intentional shuttling between the remote view and the immediate, the portico belvedere provided a transformative space for joyous sensation.<sup>79</sup> The plurality of spatial layering, cultural iconography and artistic illusion overlapped landscape painting and literature, synthesizing the experience. Through layers of significance and Roman rituals and values, the portico belvedere offered an entirely original villa experience where the ancient Roman could situate themselves in the real and phenomenal worlds simultaneously.

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<sup>77</sup> J. A. Simpson, E. S. C. Weiner and Oxford University Press. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 20 vols. (New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>78</sup> Rowe, 171.

<sup>79</sup> Stackelberg, 51-52.

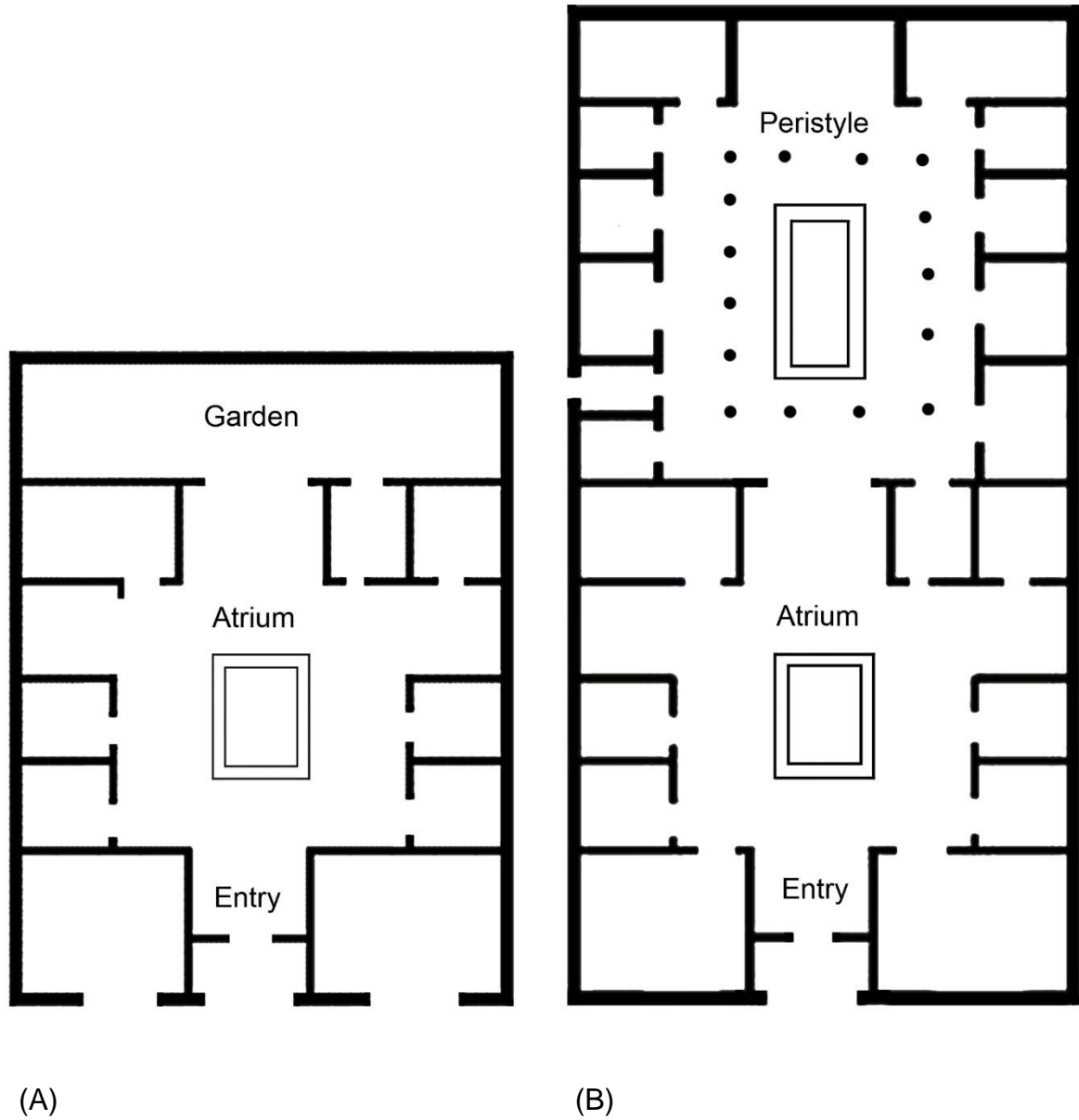


Figure 1. Typical second century BC Roman atrium house comparison between early Roman house with a rear garden (A) and the later modification with peristyle garden (B). Drawing by author, 2014.

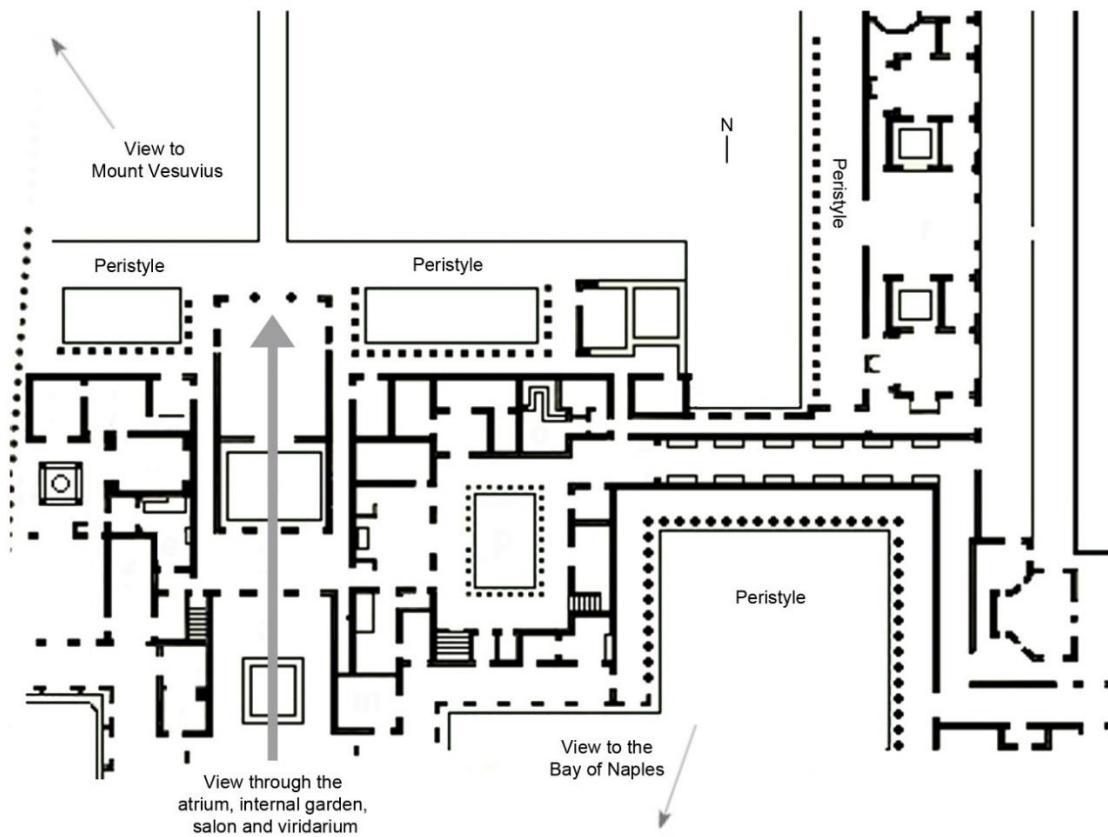


Figure 2. Villa Poppaea at Oplontis. From Wilhelmina Mary Feemster Jashemski, *The Gardens of Pompeii: Herculaneum and the Villas Destroyed by Vesuvius*, 2 vols, vol. 1 (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Caratzas Bros., 1979), Foldout Plan. Labeling modified by author.



Figure 3. Fresco. Castellammare di Stabia, Varano Hill, Villa San Marco First Century A.D. Courtesy of the Superintendency of Pompei and of the Restoring Ancient Stabiae (RAS) Foundation.

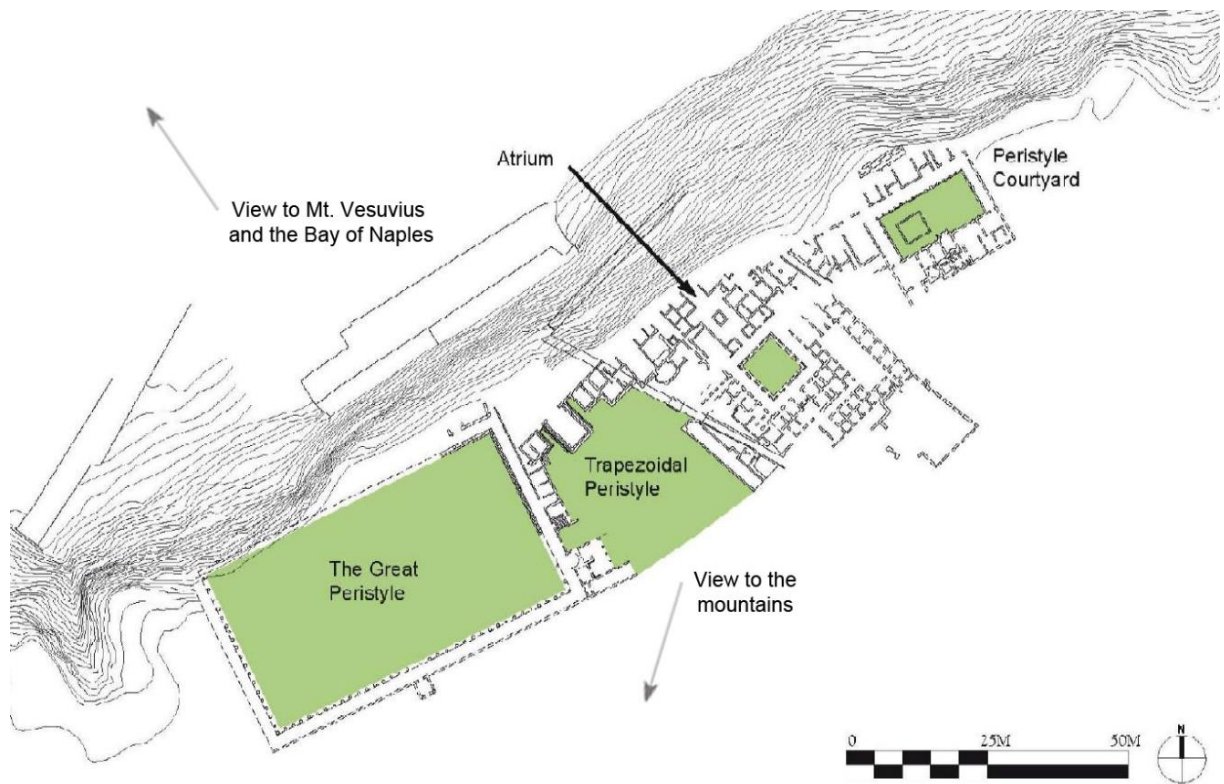


Figure 4. Plan of garden areas at Villa Arianna, Stabiae. From Kathryn Gleason "Constructing Nature: The Built Garden. With Notice of a New Monumental Garden at the Villa Arianna, Stabiae," in *Bollettino di archeologia on line* (Italy, Direzione generale per le antichità, 2008) 10, Figure 1. (Michelle Palmer, Courtesy RAS).

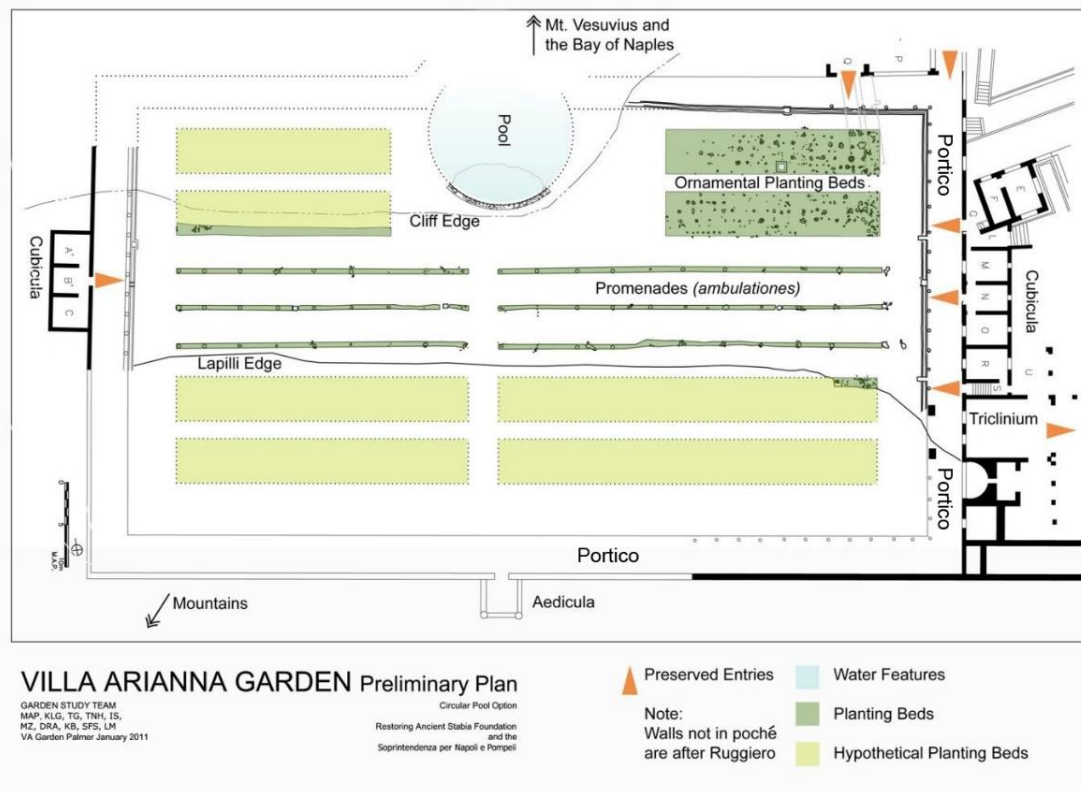


Figure 5. Plan of the Great Peristyle at Villa Arianna, Stabiae. From Kathryn Gleason “Constructing Nature: The Built Garden. With Notice of a New Monumental Garden at the Villa Arianna, Stabiae,” in *Bollettino di archeologia on line* (Italy, Direzione generale per le antichità, 2008) 12, Figure 3. (Michelle Palmer, Courtesy RAS). “Portico” notation added by author.



Figure 6. View of the Great Peristyle showing soil contours defining *ambulationes* at Villa Arianna, Stabiae. From Kathryn Gleason “Constructing Nature: The Built Garden. With Notice of a New Monumental Garden at the Villa Arianna, Stabiae,” in *Bollettino di archeologia on line* (Italy, Direzione generale per le antichità, 2008) 11, Figure 2. (Michelle Palmer, Courtesy RAS).

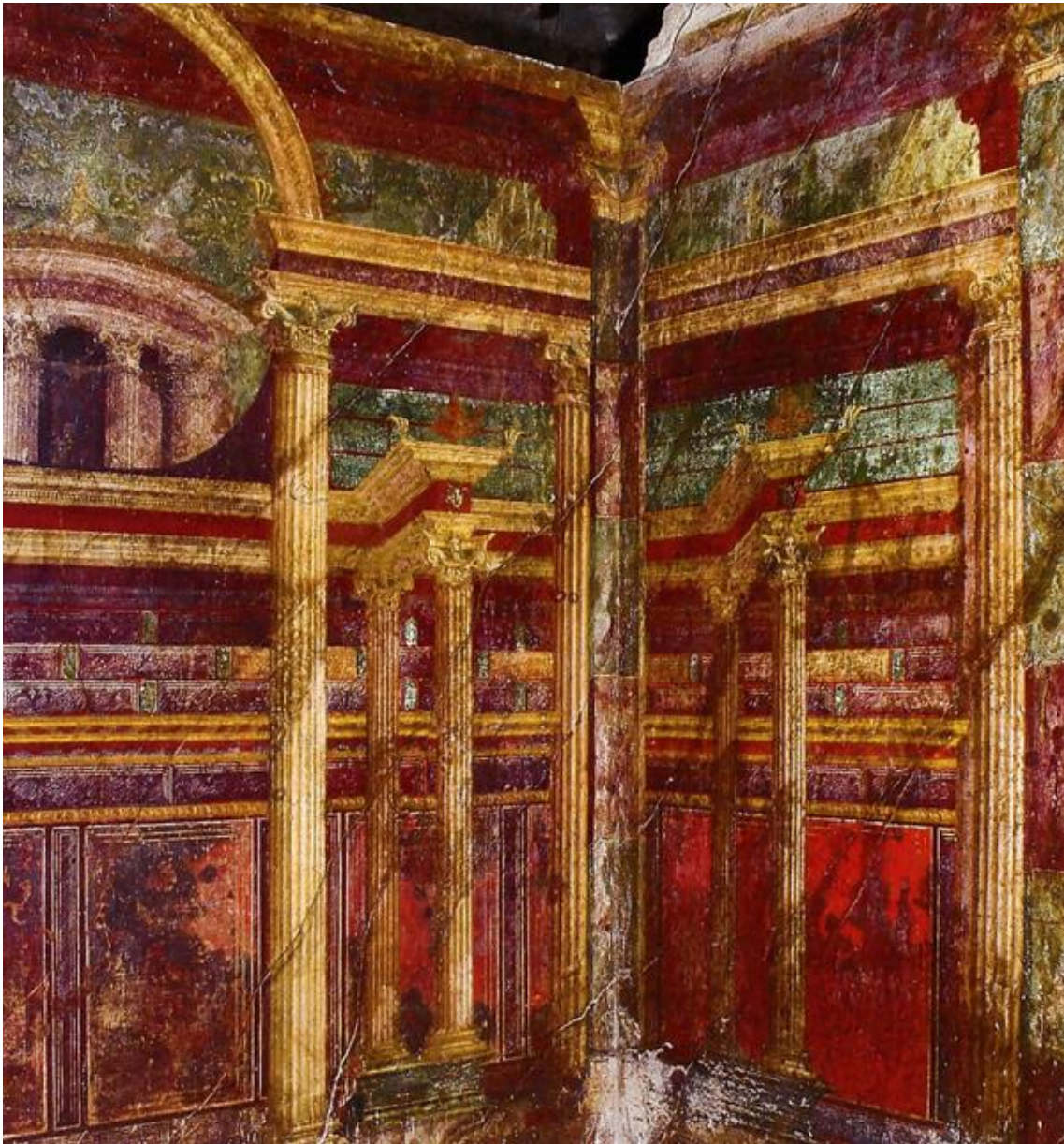


Figure 7. The fresco of Cubiculum 16, Villa of the Mysteries, Pompeii, from Filippo Coarelli, Alfredo Foglia and Pio Foglia, *Pompeii* (New York: Riverside Book Co., 2002), 358.



Figure 8. View from the entry of The House of the Vettii (typical atrium house). Photo by author, Pompeii, 2002.

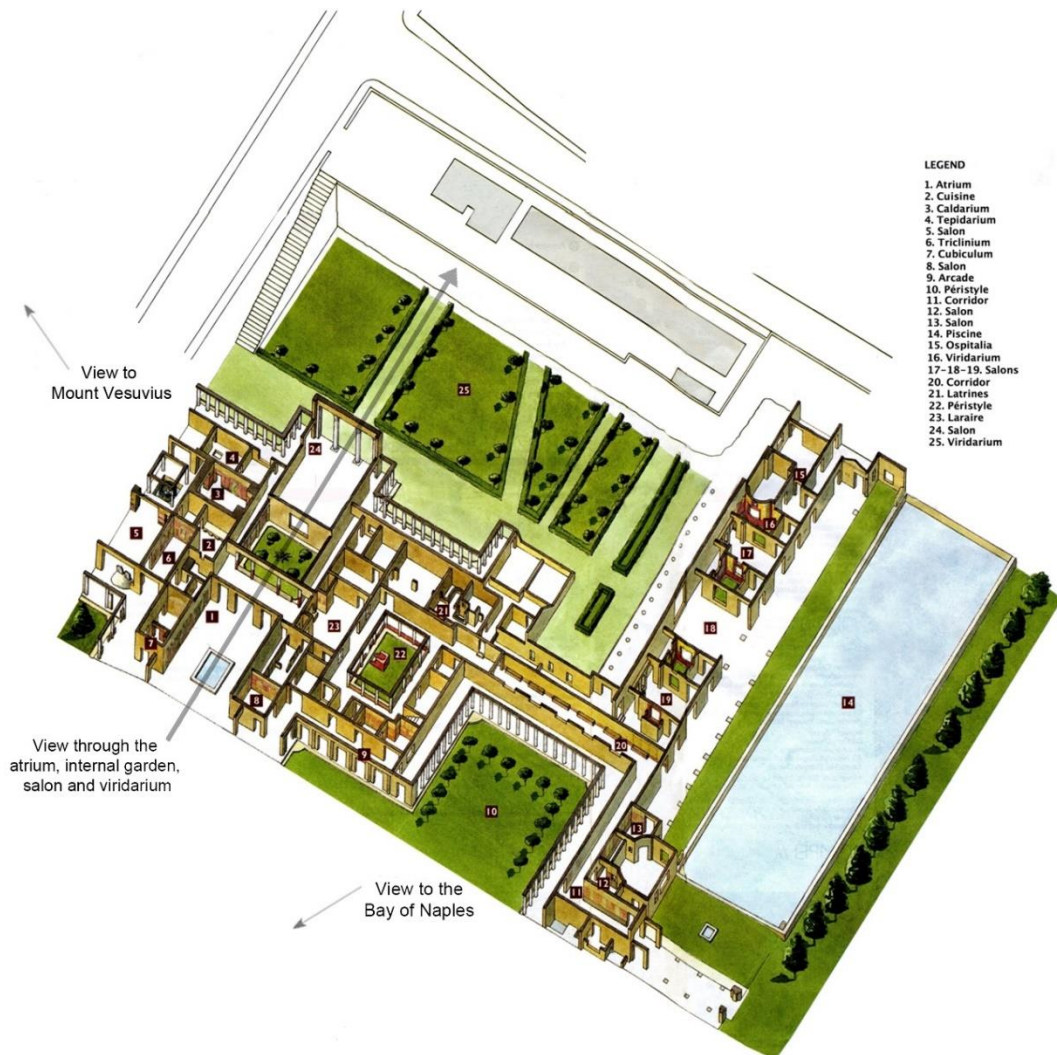


Figure 9. Plan of the Excavations at the Villa Poppaea at Oplontis. Adapted from November 2011 brochure. Soprintendenza Archeologica Napoli e Pompei.



Figure 10. Villa Poppaea at Oplontis. Overlapping planes. Photo by author, 2011.



Figure 11. Villa Poppaea at Oplontis. Mythological fresco in the third recessed plane. Photo by author, 2011.



Figure 12. Villa Poppaea at Oplontis. Left panoramic with peacock in alcove above mythological fresco. Photo by author, 2011.



Figure 13. Villa Poppaea at Oplontis. Detail of a column decorated with gemstones and foliage from the west wall of triclinium 14. From Pappalardo, Umberto, and Donatella Mazzoleni, *The Splendor of Roman Wall Painting* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2009), 78.



Figure 14. Villa Poppaea at Oplontis. Peristyle garden columns with vine pots planted nearby. Photo by author, 2011.



Figure 15. Villa Poppaea at Oplontis. Architectural vista. Photo by author, 2011.



Figure 16. Villa at Boscotrecase. Red Room (16) North wall painting, landscape vignette. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Inv. 147501.

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# ‘Serenity’ in an Uncertain Age: Reinhold Niebuhr and America’s Quest for Responsible Atomic Hegemony

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**Abstract.** *The American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr stands as one of the most important public intellectuals of the mid-twentieth century. A prolific thinker and writer, Niebuhr’s interests ranged far beyond religion. His worldview, encapsulated in the well-known “Serenity Prayer,” framed the conversation of a generation of American diplomats, intellectuals, and politicians concerned with shaping the actions of the most powerful nation on earth. Combining America’s foundational promise with a hard dose of realism, Niebuhr managed to reconcile political ethics with practicable foreign policy. Niebuhr humanized the atomic age by refocusing American opinion leaders on Christian principles, defending his country’s democratic system while offering a much-needed corrective to the dominant religious and political currents of his day.*

*Niebuhr’s thinking significantly influenced the debate surrounding America’s foreign policy throughout the early Cold War, particularly concerning the ethics of the atomic bomb. The creation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), with the power to literally end human existence, made statecraft a matter of life and death for every human being on the planet and gave Niebuhr’s conclusions about the justice of war a previously unthinkable poignancy. This article explores Niebuhr’s intellectual journey from pacifism to acceptance of the use of force, including atomic weapons, detailing his thoughtful appraisal of America’s role in the world, as well as prescient warnings of the dual dangers of pride and inaction.*

**Keywords:** *Reinhold Niebuhr, Christian realism, atomic weapons, anticommunism, political ethics*

At precisely 8:15 on the morning of August 6, 1945, the residents of Hiroshima, Japan, awoke to a blinding flash. This massive explosion out of a quiet, clear blue sky was not the result of a huge bombing raid like the one that had virtually obliterated Tokyo on the night of March 6–7 that year; it was the product of a single bomb that would change

warfare and international relations forever.<sup>1</sup> This device, created and deployed by the United States, would sear itself indelibly into the human psyche as surely as the tens of thousands it had obliterated that morning in Hiroshima.

In a scene reminiscent of the Biblical destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the US had harnessed the elemental energy of nature to annihilate enemy civilians on a scale previously unimaginable, seizing for itself a power once thought the sole preserve of God. In a single stroke, America had introduced the world to weapons of mass destruction<sup>2</sup> – and with them, the heart-wrenching moral and ethical dilemmas of a new age of atomic terror.

Bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki seemed diametrically opposed to the religious and civil bastions of American identity: liberal democracy imbued with a redemptive mission in the spirit of Christianity.<sup>3</sup> Nuclear weapons created a vexing new question: how could the US square the wholesale slaughter of innocents in Hiroshima with its essential, messianic vision of itself as the savior of a sinful world, the “last, best hope of earth”?<sup>4</sup> If the US were to navigate the treacherous challenges of the atomic age (challenges it had created for itself and the rest of the world), it would somehow need to harmonize its newfound God-like power to destroy with its long-held core values. Such an exercise was not merely academic; the assault on Hiroshima demonstrated to intellectuals and policymakers the need for serious reexamination of America’s collective soul. If the debate over the use of atomic weapons to end World War II<sup>5</sup> – a war in which most could draw a clear distinction between the “good” US and “evil” Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan – was contentious, their efficacy in the emerging Cold War proved even more controversial.

Into this frighteningly uncertain time stepped a theologian and public intellectual who could reconcile the paradoxical questions of twentieth century warfare and statecraft. Walking the tightrope between Cold War *Weltschmerz* and nuclear

<sup>1</sup> Michihiko Hachiya, *Hiroshima Diary: The Journal of a Japanese Physician, August 6–September 30, 1945*, trans. and ed. Warner Wells (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1955), 1–6.

<sup>2</sup> Although other highly destructive munitions, such as poison gas (which is usually classified today under the “umbrella” of WMD) existed before the atomic bomb, their use had almost always been restricted to the battlefield. World War II saw the first mass (or “obliteration”) bombing intentionally directed at enemy civilian populations. See Chapter 3 of Joel H. Rosenthal, *Righteous Realists: Political Realism, Responsible Power, and American Culture in the Nuclear Age* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1991), 66–120.

<sup>3</sup> See especially Chapter II, “America as a Chosen People,” in Robert N. Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in a Time of Trial* (New York: Seabury, 1971), 36–60.

<sup>4</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “Second Annual Message,” (December 1, 1862), *The American Presidency Project*, accessed February 22, 2013, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29503>.

<sup>5</sup> President Harry Truman, the man ultimately responsible for the decision to drop the atomic bombs, privately expressed “a strong thread of ambivalence and even horror” about the human cost of the attacks. Nevertheless, he publically maintained his decision was justified by Japan’s staunch refusal to surrender and the prospect of 100,000 Allied casualties should an invasion of the Japanese home islands prove necessary. See Chapter 45, “The Most Terrible Bomb, the Most Terrible Thing,” in Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 562–70.

bellicosity, Reinhold Niebuhr offered an ironic understanding of human nature that paved the way for a measured, sane approach to foreign policy. Niebuhr fell somewhere between the handwringing of Christian pacifists and the bombast of fundamentalist advocates of all-out international confrontation; his theology and ethics would inspire a generation of leaders who prevented both communism's triumph and an atomic Armageddon.

Niebuhr's "principled, hard-headed approach to war and peace" became a mainstay of political and foreign policy thinkers in the years immediately following the Second World War.<sup>6</sup> International theorist Hans Morgenthau and historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. both cited him as a major influence on their thinking.<sup>7</sup> Diplomat George Kennan (referring to Cold War realists) called Niebuhr "the father of us all."<sup>8</sup> The basis of Christian realism, however, was evident long before the beginning of the epochal struggle between East and West.<sup>9</sup>

During the darkest days of World War II, Niebuhr penned, "God, give me grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things that should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other."<sup>10</sup> This simple entreaty, the *Serenity Prayer*, encapsulates the fundamental wisdom of his thinking about America, humanity, and the world. In a single sentence, the self-styled "academic 'circuit rider'" presented not just a prayer but a whole worldview, a lens through which to view, and a tool with which to tackle, the thorniest problems of twentieth century *Realpolitik*.<sup>11</sup> The prayer illustrates Niebuhr's essential assumptions: humans are left to make sense of the world for themselves, striving to do good without the certainty that God is on their side. Rather than laboring, Puritan-like, toward a

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<sup>6</sup> Paul Elie, "A Man for All Reasons," *The Atlantic*, November 2007, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2007/11/a-man-for-all-reasons/306337/1/>.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel F. Rice, *Reinhold Niebuhr and His Circle of Influence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 9–11. Morgenthau was a leading international relations scholar from the 1950s to 1970s and advisor to the John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson administrations who ultimately left government over his disagreement with America's policy in Vietnam. Schlesinger was an historian and advisor to the Kennedy White House whose "Vital Center liberalism" sought to chart a course between acquiescence to the spread of communism and all-out war.

<sup>8</sup> George F. Kennan, "Tribute to the Rev. Reinhold Niebuhr," Box 49, Reinhold Niebuhr Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>9</sup> Niebuhr is by far the best-known "Christian realist," and arguably the most influential. However, the framework of Christian realism was not his sole creation, arising from among social-liberal and socialist Protestants disturbed by the political milieu of the late 1930s. See Chapter 3 of David A. Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Protestant Liberalism in Modern American History* (New York: Princeton University Press, 2013), 56–81.

<sup>10</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *Serenity Prayer*, 1943, quoted in Elisabeth Sifton, *The Serenity Prayer: Faith and Politics in Times of Peace and War* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 7. Though sometimes attributed to thinkers such as St. Francis of Assisi or Friedrich Christoph Oetinger, the *Serenity Prayer* was written by Reinhold Niebuhr sometime during World War II, most likely in 1943. Niebuhr did not publish the prayer until 1951, but used it in his sermons much earlier. The prayer occurs throughout his collected papers, but is rarely dated.

<sup>11</sup> John Patrick Diggins, *Why Niebuhr Now?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 11.

utopian kingdom of God on earth, they should instead work toward limited but realistic goals, trying to “arrang[e] some kind of armistice between competing factions and forces.”<sup>12</sup> Niebuhr recognized that, in the complex twentieth century world, easy distinctions between good and evil, right and wrong, were too often elusive.

Niebuhr’s capacity for paradox, his ability to understand and tolerate human imperfection, made him uniquely able to make sense of the hard realities of his time. His belief “that humanity is afflicted with excessive pride and a self-preoccupation that distorts moral judgment” grew from a theology of crisis into a philosophy of political thought.<sup>13</sup> His affirmation of the doctrine of original sin — the conception of evil as something tragically, inescapably part of human nature — gave him a healthy skepticism of vainglory, whether from demagogues or liberals.

As if the sins and shortcomings of humanity were not enough, atomic weapons added a new urgency to Niebuhr’s pragmatic worldview. By the mid-1950s, the US was engaged in a nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union. War would not only mean devastation and enormous casualties, but possibly the extinction of all life on earth. If America’s leaders wished to avoid repeating the horror of Hiroshima a thousand times over without surrendering their country’s values, they would have to find a way to navigate the treacherous waters of the atomic age.

As the iconic *Serenity Prayer* illustrates, Niebuhr never forgot the giant weight of this responsibility. His wisdom — the “compromise between the rigor of the ideal and the necessities of the day” — was the ability to retain the moral framework of Christianity while allowing policymakers the tools to achieve tangible political results.<sup>14</sup> This fundamentally American dichotomy shaped the nation’s Cold War posture and the response of its leaders to some of the greatest challenges of the century.

#### FIRST ENCOUNTERS WITH POLITICAL ETHICS:

“The richest character is achieved when various, seemingly incompatible, tendencies and functions are fused in one personality.”<sup>15</sup>

As World War I unfolded in Europe, the raw material of Reinhold Niebuhr’s political thought was forged in the foundries of industrial Detroit. As pastor of the Bethel Evangelical Church, the neophyte preacher grew dismayed at what he saw as the “old, cocksure orthodoxy” of the German-American ministry, “intolerant because it is so sure

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<sup>12</sup> Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1935), 39.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Crouter, *Reinhold Niebuhr on Politics, Religion, and Christian Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 41.

<sup>14</sup> Niebuhr, *Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1980), 4.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

that it alone is right.”<sup>16</sup> This “unfraternal spirit,” a combination of insular attitudes and disregard for the plight of the working poor, pervaded the churches in the manufacturing city. German-American Christians’ “indifference” toward the economically disadvantaged in America “in spite of the fact that [they come] from a country that has been a clinic for the world in the methods of humanizing industry,” prompted Niebuhr to excoriate that entire “hyphenated” community in an article written for the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1916, his first foray into the social and political realm in which he later became so famous.<sup>17</sup>

Niebuhr’s time in Detroit, even among his mostly bourgeois congregation, certainly reinforced his leftist political and economic sensibilities. He called it a “pagan city” where “naïve gentlemen with a genius for mechanics [have] suddenly become arbiters over the lives and fortunes of hundreds of thousands.”<sup>18</sup> Niebuhr contrasted the city’s gloriously wealthy captains of industry with the unskilled workers who labored day and night in factories, where “manual labor is a drudgery and toil is slavery. The men cannot possibly find any satisfaction in their work... Their sweat and their dull pain are part of the price paid for the fine cars we all run.”<sup>19</sup>

In addition to his commitment to social justice for the economically disadvantaged, Niebuhr’s feelings about the First World War echoed those of many Progressives.<sup>20</sup> He enthusiastically supported Woodrow Wilson’s aims to use war as a noble quest to make “the world safe for democracy.”<sup>21</sup> Wilson believed American victory could usher in a new, peaceful world order, in which the horror of war would be only a distant memory.<sup>22</sup> To Niebuhr, these idealistic goals, combined with the fact that the US had remained on the sidelines for almost three years as the conflict raged in Europe, justified military intervention as a righteous crusade.<sup>23</sup>

Wilson’s starry-eyed optimism, however, was soon dashed against the hard realities of the Paris Peace Conference, where his high ideals met a chilly reception from British and French delegations. When the President failed to secure his goals, Niebuhr lamented, “Wilson is a typical son of the manse. He believes too much in words.” Like many American idealists, he felt his country’s divine mission had been corrupted by

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<sup>16</sup> Niebuhr, “The Problem of German-Americanism,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, July 1916.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Niebuhr, *Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic*, 123, 136.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>20</sup> Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 259–63.

<sup>21</sup> Woodrow Wilson, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress Requesting a Declaration of War Against Germany, April 2, 1917,” *The American Presidency Project*, accessed April 7, 2013, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=65366&st=&st1=>.

<sup>22</sup> Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism: Woodrow Wilson and His Legacy in American Foreign Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 52.

<sup>23</sup> Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith*, 259–63.

Old World power politics, embodied by “the sly Clemenceau,” who “sneaks new meanings into [Wilson’s] nice words.”<sup>24</sup>

Jaded by the “victors’ peace” reached at Versailles, Niebuhr renounced his pro-war stance and embraced a gloomy, world-weary pacifism.<sup>25</sup> He had not lost his commitment to Progressive principles, noting that “realities are always defeating ideals, but ideals have a way of taking revenge upon the facts which momentarily imprison them.”<sup>26</sup> Rather than jettisoning Wilsonian goals, Niebuhr abandoned his support for Wilson’s methods. Without a clear way forward, he and many others became convinced of the futility of naïve foreign adventures, and gradually came to reject war under any circumstances.<sup>27</sup> As liberal Progressives shifted focus to issues of domestic social justice after the disappointment of 1919, Niebuhr’s first flirtation with “just war” came to an inauspicious end.<sup>28</sup>

Disillusioned, Niebuhr mirrored many of his Progressive counterparts and turned inward – in his case, back to the economic inequity of early 1920s Detroit.<sup>29</sup> In the immediate post-war years, the burgeoning auto industry attracted huge numbers of foreign immigrants, including many Germans, who left their own impoverished country in search of a share in “*das amerikanische Wirtschaftswunder*” (“the American economic miracle”). These immigrants joined the teeming multitudes in Henry Ford’s giant factories; many also found their way to churches like Bethel.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to class struggles, Niebuhr’s years in Detroit were punctuated by growing disapproval of American capitalism and liberal naïveté. Niebuhr, who once considered Henry Ford a pious (if somewhat deluded) do-gooder, now vilified him and his “welfare capitalism” as thinly veiled exploitation.<sup>31</sup> Calling Ford’s labor policies “perilous to civilization” and frustrated by the “standpat complacency” of unions like the American Federation of Labor, Niebuhr moved further away from mainstream liberalism and into the realm of socialism, in deed if not yet in name.<sup>32</sup>

Ironically, as Niebuhr became more intellectually embroiled in the struggles of American labor throughout the 1920s, his move towards radical politics hinted at a more

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<sup>24</sup> Niebuhr, *Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic*, 24.

<sup>25</sup> Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr*, 57–60.

<sup>26</sup> Niebuhr, *Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic*, 24.

<sup>27</sup> Indeed, the 1928 Kellogg-Briand Pact, approved overwhelmingly in the US Senate, legally outlawed war as a means of settling international disputes. Non-interventionism was a mainstay of US intellectual and public opinion during the interwar period.

<sup>28</sup> Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr*, 57–60.

<sup>29</sup> Notable among them Oswald Garrison Villard, publisher of *The Nation*, anti-imperialism activist, and supporter of the NAACP. See Chapter 8, “Victory without Peace, 1918–1919” in Michael Wreszin, *Oswald Garrison Villard: A Pacifist at War* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1965).

<sup>30</sup> Alan Dawley, *Changing the World: American Progressives in War and Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 308.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 94–99.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

important trend in his ethical thinking: the limited justification of violence. Though Niebuhr still considered himself an anti-war activist in the tradition of worldwide socialist solidarity, he conceded that in cases of labor versus management, "nonresistance and nonviolence were in fact noneffective."<sup>33</sup> In a fallen world, humans had to contend with proximate evils with all the means at their disposal. Though this idea had yet to translate fully into the realm of international relations, the basis of Niebuhr's wartime ethics is evident in his thoughts about the struggle against titans of industry to achieve social equity for their workers.<sup>34</sup>

Social justice, for Niebuhr, was becoming as elusive as a satisfying career. Always ambivalent about his post at Bethel, Niebuhr longed for an academic position that would give him the opportunity to reach a national audience. In 1928, he left Detroit for a part-time teaching position at New York City's Union Theological Seminary, and the editorship of the *World Tomorrow*, a Christian pacifist magazine.<sup>35</sup> He would remain at Union for the rest of his professional career, and the people and ideas he encountered there would shape his philosophy from a nebulous, quasi-socialist exposition of American life into a singular doctrine of political ethics applied on a world scale.

#### EMBRACING INTERVENTION:

"It may be necessary at times to sacrifice a degree of moral purity for political effectiveness."<sup>36</sup>

Niebuhr's insistence on the necessity of democracy featured prominently in his political thinking, both in terms of domestic and foreign policy. Within the US, Niebuhr's involvement in the struggle against economic injustice in Detroit, along with criticism of American consumerism at the national level, displayed his unyielding commitment to equality and concern for human wellbeing.<sup>37</sup> In addition to his Detroit activism, Niebuhr gradually drifted toward socialism as he became more and more convinced of the need to radically redistribute wealth to close the gap between rich and poor. His membership in the League for Independent Political Action (a socialist economic

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<sup>33</sup> Preston, 305.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Fox, 110.

<sup>36</sup> Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), 244.

<sup>37</sup> Even as late as 1958, when the emerging Civil Rights Movement had focused American national attention on race relations, Niebuhr still decried Protestant churches' lack of concrete action for equality: "the theater and the sports have done more for race amity, for understanding than, on the whole, the Protestant Church." (Reinhold Niebuhr, interview by Mike Wallace, *The Mike Wallace Interview*, American Broadcasting Company, April 27, 1958, [http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/multimedia/video/2008/wallace/niebuhr\\_reinhold\\_t.html](http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/multimedia/video/2008/wallace/niebuhr_reinhold_t.html)).

organization) and the League for Industrial Democracy prefigured his eventual enrollment in the Socialist Party proper.<sup>38</sup> By 1931, Niebuhr and a small circle of colleagues had even founded the Fellowship of Socialist Christians, a group dedicated to organizing Christian support for the Socialist Party and its radical economic philosophy.<sup>39</sup>

In terms of international affairs, Niebuhr had by the late 1930s established the basis of a theory of moral legitimacy for states informed by social-democratic ideals. His theory centered on the criteria of freedom and justice: first, countries must display “unity and solidarity of the community, sufficiently strong to allow the free play of competitive interests without endangering the community itself.”<sup>40</sup> Second, their constitutions or traditions should enshrine “a belief in the freedom of the individual and appreciation of his work,” and finally harness the power of government to create “a tolerable harmony and equilibrium of social and political and economic forces necessary to establish an approximation of social justice.”<sup>41</sup>

Although Niebuhr’s political and social ideals remained relatively consistent, the methods through which he sought to achieve them did not. His commitment to non-interventionism reflected a trend among liberal Progressives (like editor of *The Nation* Oswald Garrison Villard and pacifist clergymen A. J. Muste and Norman Thomas) who felt betrayed by the Versailles peace settlement.<sup>42</sup> He believed pacifism was the only sure way to prevent another horrendous war, and joined organizations like the Fellowship of Reconciliation to advocate for the peaceful settlement of disputes.<sup>43</sup>

By the mid-1930s, however, events in Europe and Asia forced Niebuhr to reconsider his worldview. He observed, “it is hardly necessary to draw the conclusion...that those who draw their inspiration from Christ’s Kingdom must limit themselves to purely moral weapons in contending against historic injustice.”<sup>44</sup> In *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, Niebuhr held up Gandhi, not Christ, as a model of morality brought to bear on the political realities of the day: “Mr. Gandhi is really saying...that even violence is justified if it proceeds from perfect moral goodwill. But he is equally insistent that non-violence is usually the better method of expressing goodwill. He is probably right on both counts.”<sup>45</sup>

*Moral Man and Immoral Society* marked a sea change in Niebuhr’s ethical and political thinking. In it, he renounced pacifism as the only morally justifiable method of

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<sup>38</sup> Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr*, 115–17.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 128–29.

<sup>40</sup> Niebuhr and Paul E. Sigmund, *The Democratic Experience: Past and Prospects* (New York: Praeger, 1969), 73.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith*, 241.

<sup>43</sup> Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr*, 155–56.

<sup>44</sup> Niebuhr, *Beyond Tragedy: Essays on the Christian Interpretation of History* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 285.

<sup>45</sup> Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, 247.

enacting social change, casting off his idealist past and embracing a doctrine of political realism. Niebuhr's socialist and pacifist friends (particularly Norman Thomas) vilified him for his modified stance, but world events were fast discrediting their prescriptions for geopolitical stability and justice. Japan's 1931 invasion of Manchuria was met by a condemnation by the League of Nations but little effective action. Japan, returning to "power politics," in the most overt aggression since World War I, simply withdrew from the League and consolidated its bloody conquest of Northern China.<sup>46</sup>

The crisis in East Asia not only prompted Niebuhr to resume his direct commentary on world affairs, but also pushed him into a direct (and public) debate with his brother Richard. In the March 23, 1932 issue of *Christian Century*, Richard Niebuhr argued in "The Grace of Doing Nothing" that the US should abstain from any intervention in the Sino-Japanese War; indeed, he wrote, "the problem we [Christians] face is...that of choice between various kinds of inactivity rather than of choice between action and inaction."<sup>47</sup> He succinctly concluded, "The inactivity of radical Christianity is not the inactivity of those who call evil good: it is the inaction of those who do not judge their neighbors because they cannot fool themselves into a sense of superior righteousness."<sup>48</sup> According to the younger Niebuhr, no form of foreign military involvement could be justified because of the inherent sinfulness of the US, a fallen nation morally equivalent to any other.

Taking his sibling to task, Reinhold Niebuhr responded in an essay published in *Christian Century* the very next week. "There will never be a wholly disinterested nation," he noted, claiming, "pure disinterestedness is an ideal which even individuals cannot fully achieve."<sup>49</sup> Niebuhr repudiated the Christian pacifism of his brother, calling the idealistic goals of liberal internationalists (that is, a utopian, "ethical goal for society by purely ethical means") "an illusion."<sup>50</sup>

By the mid- to late-1930s, more and more world crises emerged similar to Japan's naked and unchallenged aggression. In 1935, Adolf Hitler announced that Germany would no longer abide by the terms of the Versailles Treaty, and a few months later Benito Mussolini invaded Ethiopia.<sup>51</sup> The response of the great powers to this mounting adversity was either pious hand wringing or, in the case of the US, almost total inaction. Niebuhr no doubt viewed these developments with increasing anxiety. The liberal world order, imperfect as it was, was threatened by a building wave of totalitarian aggression—and none of those holding the institutional reins of power seemed prepared to respond.

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<sup>46</sup> E. H. Carr, *International Relations Between the Two World Wars (1919–1939)* (London: Macmillan, 1965), 170–72.

<sup>47</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, "The Grace of Doing Nothing," in *War As Crucifixion: Essays on Peace, Violence, and 'Just War,'* ed. John M. Buchanan and David Heim (Chicago: Christian Century Press, 2002), 5–9, 8.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, "Must We Do Nothing?," in *War as Crucifixion*, 10–14, 11.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>51</sup> Carr, *International Relations Between the Two World Wars*, 215–228.

In 1936, Niebuhr announced his support for Franklin Roosevelt a few days before the November election, and by 1938 he came to admire the President's enthusiasm for collective security and his preparation of the American people for war. Ominously, Niebuhr even began to refer to the Fascists as "the enemy," anticipating the coming conflict between democracy and totalitarianism.<sup>52</sup>

Niebuhr's mounting fear of expansionist dictatorships manifested itself in the life of his friend and former student Dietrich Bonhoeffer. After Bonhoeffer helped found the anti-Nazi Confessing Church in Germany, he visited his old teacher in April 1939 with news of Germany's descent into a Nazi police state. Although he held a teaching position in America, Bonhoeffer resigned his post and returned home in July to be closer to his Synod.<sup>53</sup> With many friends being persecuted by Hitler's regime and some already in concentration camps, Bonhoeffer might even have resembled to Niebuhr a latter-day Daniel, returning calmly to the lions' den of Nazi Germany to face whatever fate awaited him.<sup>54</sup>

By spring 1939, Niebuhr had left New York for Britain to deliver a series of lectures at Oxford and Edinburgh Universities.<sup>55</sup> He found war clouds looming menacingly over the island nation, as Europe seemed to unravel bit by bit during his time there. With the Italian invasion of Albania, and German annexation of the Rhineland, Czechoslovakia, and Austria already complete, Western governments seemed impotent to stem the tide. The shocking non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union on August 24 removed the last obstacle to full-scale war, which Britain finally declared on September 2, 1939 in response to the invasion of Poland.<sup>56</sup> When Niebuhr finished his lectures in November, bombs had already begun to fall on Britain's cities.

Fully awakened to the reality of war, Niebuhr returned to an America where public opinion still favored nonintervention by a wide margin.<sup>57</sup> Dismayed by the popular disconnect between Americans' desire to avoid foreign conflict and his hope to thwart totalitarian aggression, Niebuhr channeled his efforts into advocating for the Allied cause. He renounced his membership in the Socialist Party, which still clung to pacifism, and brought together like-minded thinkers and activists in several new organizations to make the pro-intervention message mainstream.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr*, 177–85.

<sup>53</sup> Ferdinand Schlingensiepen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer 1906–1945: Martyr, Thinker, Man of Resistance*, trans. Isabel Best (London: T&T Clark International, 2010), 227–30.

<sup>54</sup> Once back in Germany, Bonhoeffer joined the resistance movement and conspired with members of the military intelligence service to kill Adolf Hitler. He was arrested in 1943 and murdered at the Flossenbürg Concentration Camp on April 9, 1945, just three weeks before the end of the war.

<sup>55</sup> Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr*, 187.

<sup>56</sup> Anthony P. Adamthwaite, *The Making of the Second World War* (Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1980), 89–91, 225.

<sup>57</sup> Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *From Wilson to Roosevelt: Foreign Policy of the United States 1913–1945*, trans. Nancy Lyman Roelker (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 237–38.

<sup>58</sup> Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr*, 194.

Taking aim at Christian pacifists, Niebuhr founded the staunchly pro-intervention *Christianity and Crisis* to mobilize support “in defense of democratic civilization.”<sup>59</sup> The periodical’s alliterative title was no coincidence; Niebuhr intended his new outlet as a direct challenge to the established pacifist journal *Christian Century*.<sup>60</sup> Along with a new publication, Niebuhr sought to unify support for the allied defense of democracy. To that end, he created the Union for Democratic Action (UDA), a “halfway house” for “former radicals in transit toward the liberalism of the Democratic Party.”<sup>61</sup>

Under the direction of Niebuhr and James Loeb, the UDA lobbied for increased aid to the embattled British (the US was not yet officially at war and strict neutrality laws prohibited the exportation of weapons to conflict zones) and more liberal immigration measures that would allow European Jews to escape persecution. Although committed to the fight against Nazism, Niebuhr and the UDA remained apprehensive of Soviet Communism. Recognizing the USSR as a totalitarian state not unlike Nazi Germany, the UDA barred members of the Communist Party USA (directed from the Kremlin by the early 1940s) from membership in its organization.<sup>62</sup>

Many American Jews, conscious of Nazi atrocities, were more receptive to Niebuhr’s early interventionism than the general public. Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, a longtime friend of Niebuhr, noted in December 1941, “too many liberals...are still enslaved by their romantic illusions, and cannot face your clean, surgeon-like exposition of reality.”<sup>63</sup> Frankfurter lamented “that any Jew should be worried about publishing” Niebuhr’s work on international relations. He also urged Niebuhr to distribute his work more widely, publishing in “a much wider, a much more influential, vehicle” such as *Harper’s* or *The Atlantic*.<sup>64</sup>

By the time the US entered the Second World War in December 1941, Niebuhr had renounced both radicalism and pacifism in pursuit of an achievable, moral foreign policy—achievable because of its limited goals, and moral for its recognition that the US, with its vast power and resources, *could be* an effective agent for good. Shaking the nation’s Protestant churches out of their “simple Christian moralism,” he called for critical but decisive action to combat the dual menace of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan.<sup>65</sup> It was this contradictory identity, the ironic balance between America’s Puritanical roots and its newfound obligations, which would shape Niebuhr’s civic theology for the rest of his career, and come to influence America’s international posture in the postwar world.

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<sup>59</sup> Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith*, 311–12.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr*, 200.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Felix Frankfurter to Niebuhr (December 24, 1941), Box 6, Reinhold Niebuhr Papers.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Raymond Haberski Jr., *God and War: American Civil Religion Since 1945* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 16–17.

## CHRISTIAN REALISM COMES OF AGE:

“Love may qualify the social struggle of history but it will never abolish it, and those who make the attempt...will die on the cross.”<sup>66</sup>

If any war could ever be called ‘just,’ World War II seemed so for most Americans. The US had been attacked by a foreign aggressor, and Americans were soon fighting from Morocco to Guadalcanal not just to restore the peace, but to win the freedom of all peoples. Indeed, President Franklin Roosevelt couched the war in such universalistic terms, comparing his vision for the world expressed in the 1941 Atlantic Charter to the Magna Carta and even the Ten Commandments.<sup>67</sup> Although some pacifists (like Norman Thomas, then presidential candidate for the Socialist Party USA<sup>68</sup>) still decried Niebuhr’s support for Roosevelt and the war, for perhaps the first time Niebuhr’s political viewpoint reflected that of a majority of Americans. His repudiation of his antiwar past was complete.

After the US declaration of hostilities, Niebuhr worked to garner support for liberal war aims from Christian opinion leaders, even pacifists. At one notable conference of the Federal Council of Churches at Delaware, Ohio in March 1942, Niebuhr and like-minded thinkers were able to outline propositions for creating a “just and durable peace” after the war.<sup>69</sup> The conference, described by one historian as a “realist-pacifist summit meeting,” brought together ideologically disparate figures (including future Secretary of State John Foster Dulles) to identify broad “Christian principles” in relation to America’s recent entry into the war. Yet even after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Niebuhr’s faction faced fierce criticism from avowed pacifists who declared, “The Church as such is not at war.”<sup>70</sup>

Despite his conviction that the US was fighting the “good fight,” Niebuhr’s support for America’s war effort was not unqualified. It was around this time that Niebuhr wrote arguably his most famous and enduring contribution to ethical thought, the “Serenity Prayer.” The prayer encapsulated Niebuhr’s troubled worldview—a plea for divine tranquility that would temper the vice of human pride.

Niebuhr’s prayer demonstrated, in a few short lines, the maturity of his philosophy of human nature and, by extension, proper political conduct. In an age where

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<sup>66</sup> Niebuhr, “Must We Do Nothing?”, 14.

<sup>67</sup> Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America’s Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2005), 43.

<sup>68</sup> Rice, *Reinhold Niebuhr and His Circle of Influence*, 101–5.

<sup>69</sup> Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues of Fire*, 57.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

technology allowed whole cities to be reduced to ruins within a single night,<sup>71</sup> it hardly seemed the Allies could maintain adherence to principles of *jus in bello* even if they could rightly claim *jus ad bellum*.<sup>72</sup> Instead, they seemed destined to strive mightily toward a moral end achieved through highly immoral means. Engagement with the modern world meant even those doing their utmost to achieve peace and justice on a global scale would necessarily have to violate the very principles for which they fought. Such an ironic dilemma could easily foster cynicism; Niebuhr instead counseled humility, caution, and hope.

If the hugely popular Serenity Prayer introduced Niebuhr's central philosophy to a wide audience, his 1943 *magnum opus* communicated a similar message in timely and stark terms. *The Nature and Destiny of Man* sought to validate Christianity as the only mechanism for moral action in a world gone insane. A theological vehicle for Niebuhr's thoughts about human nature in general, the two-volume work collected Niebuhr's 1939 Gifford Lectures into a (relatively) cohesive whole. Niebuhr stressed the innate sinfulness of mankind and the need for a counterweight to its seemingly limitless hubris—hubris to which a nation busy ridding the world of the Nazis might easily succumb: "Nations may fight for 'liberty' and 'democracy' but they do not do so until their vital interests are imperiled."<sup>73</sup> This emphasis on human limitations would prove prophetic in the shadow of new and horrifying weapons being developed in secret, which would soon come to dominate every aspect of international affairs.

Niebuhr, along with fellow ministers and theologians, decried the terror bombing of German and Japanese cities in a report released by the Federal Council of Churches in the immediate aftermath of the war.<sup>74</sup> In multiple articles published throughout World War II, Niebuhr challenged the efficacy and morality of Allied strategic bombing, which he said represented "a vivid revelation of the whole moral ambiguity of warfare."<sup>75</sup> His uneasy conscience balked at the horrifying massacre of noncombatants, which sometimes ranged in the tens of thousands in a single night.

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<sup>71</sup> Indeed, the majority of World War II casualties were civilians—statistics vary widely, but agree that many more civilians than military personnel died as a result of the conflict. See Hastings, *Retribution*, 541.

<sup>72</sup> To this point, though Niebuhr was deeply troubled by America's unrestricted bombing of civilian population centers, he did note, "once bombing has been developed as an instrument of warfare, it is not possible to disavow its use without capitulating to the foe who refuses to disavow it." ("The Bombing of Germany," 3–4). The compromised morality of total war, reasoned Niebuhr, was justified by military necessity—an early example of Christian realism applied to warfare. See also Rosenthal, *Righteous Realists*, 78.

<sup>73</sup> Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*, volume 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), 213. This is an unambiguous reference to the US and its involvement in World War II.

<sup>74</sup> Davis Brown, *The Sword, the Cross, and the Eagle: The American Christian Just War Tradition* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 40.

<sup>75</sup> Niebuhr, "The Bombing of Germany," *Christianity and Society*, VIII (Summer 1943), 3. On this point, see also Rosenthal, *Righteous Realists*, 76–80.

At odds with the prevailing military wisdom of the time, Niebuhr wrestled with the obvious contradictions of a country brought into the war by a bombing raid meting out the same punishment on its enemies.<sup>76</sup> Atomic weapons raised the moral stakes even higher, though Niebuhr's initial reaction was muted by his desire to avoid delegitimizing the Allied war effort. Niebuhr voiced cautious and qualified support for the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, noting, "the use of the bomb was merely the culmination of our own strategy of total war."<sup>77</sup> Always circumspect about the justification of slaughter, however, Niebuhr also remarked at the similarities between the strategies of the Allies and their enemies in terms of bombing civilian targets—"critics have rightly pointed out that we [Americans] reached the level of Nazi morality in justifying the use" of such destructive weapons "on the grounds that [they] shortened the war."<sup>78</sup>

Ultimately, atomic weapons to Niebuhr were simply another tool that could be brought to bear against a dangerous enemy bent on the destruction of the liberal world order. Despite this acquiescence, Niebuhr's old unease about power and pride remained at the front of his mind: he warned his readers to beware the arrogance of a nation at the height of international military power—what he called in September 1945 "an orgy of the most nauseous self-righteousness."<sup>79</sup>

Thus, Niebuhr embraced the contradictory nature of atomic weapons as a "necessary evil" for the maintenance of democracy, just as he embraced the paradox of "just war." A wartime realist guided by Christian morality, Niebuhr had by 1945 emerged as America's preeminent political ethicist with a growing following of Christian realist policymakers who would inform public debate about America's foreign policy. For these public officials and intellectuals, Niebuhr's assessment of human nature and international realities would serve as a guide through the uncharted waters of international affairs in the Cold War.

#### ADAPTING CHRISTIAN REALISM TO AMERICA'S ATOMIC AGE:

"No redemption has ever been won without heroism."<sup>80</sup>

The concept of heroism is a fundamental part of America's national ethos. From its earliest Puritan beginnings, the US identity has been bound up in a messianic mission

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<sup>76</sup> Rosenthal, *Righteous Realists*, 73–79.

<sup>77</sup> Niebuhr, "The Atomic Bomb," in *Love and Justice: Selections from the Shorter Writings of Reinhold Niebuhr*, ed. D. B. Robertson, 232–35 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 233.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Niebuhr, "Our Relations to Japan," in *Hiroshima's Shadow*, ed. Kai Bird and Lawrence Lifschultz, 275–77 (Stony Creek, CT: The Pamphleteer's Press, 1998), 276.

<sup>80</sup> Niebuhr, untitled sermon, Box 14, Reinhold Niebuhr Papers.

to redeem a corrupt and sinful world in its own image.<sup>81</sup> Niebuhr's civic theology adapted this American creed to the atomic age. For all his talk about limited objectives and dire warnings about the perils of war, Niebuhr's commitment to "redemptive" democratic ideals made him the necessary link between America's historic commitments and the realities of the Cold War. As his daughter Elisabeth put it,

It is implicit in virtually everything Pa wrote on the subject [of a just and durable peace in a nuclear age] that there's little point in having a foreign policy, or an arms policy, unless, as a nation, you know who you are, what sort of nation you are or imagine yourself to be.<sup>82</sup>

Unlike America's previous struggles, the conflict between East and West was not clean-cut—the Cold War did not pit absolute moral purity against unadulterated evil. Niebuhr wryly observed, "We [Americans] find it almost as difficult as the communists to believe that anyone could think ill of us, since we are as persuaded as they that our society is so essentially virtuous that only malice could prompt criticism of any of our actions."<sup>83</sup> At the height of a nuclear arms race, this statement was not a pessimistic criticism, but a call for prudent humility.

For the US to retain its moral legitimacy in the new Cold War, it would need to balance its principled certainties—individual liberty, democracy, and self-determination around the world—with the climate of fear, mistrust, and political uncertainty between itself and the USSR. Indeed, the presence of atomic weapons further complicated the choices leaders would have to make. If the Cold War ever went "hot," destruction of not only the two combatants but virtually all humanity was assured; such a war could never be "won." Yet despite these horrific consequences, the maintenance of a tolerable status quo meant that both sides not only had to develop and maintain ever-growing nuclear arsenals, but seriously consider their use and prepare for such an eventuality.

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<sup>81</sup> This messianic creed is a common theme throughout American politics and culture. A representative example from 1850 reads: "We Americans are the Israel of our time; we bear the ark of the liberties of the world. Seventy years ago we escaped from thrall; and, besides our first birthright—embracing one continent of earth—God has given to us, for future inheritance, the broad domains of the political pagans, that shall yet come and lie down under the shade of our ark, without bloody hands being lifted. God has predestined, mankind expects, great things from our race; and great things we feel in our souls. We are the pioneers of the world; the advance-guard, sent on through the wilderness of untried things, to break a path through the New World that is ours. In our youth is our strength; in our inexperience our wisdom. At a period when other nations have but lisped, our deep voice is heard afar. Long enough have we been sceptics with regard to ourselves, and doubted whether, indeed, the Messiah had come. But he has come in *us*, if we would but give utterance to his promptings. And let us always remember that with ourselves, almost for the first time in the history of the earth, national selfishness is unbounded philanthropy; for we cannot do a good to America, but we give alms to the world." (Herman Melville, *White Jacket; or, The World In a Man-of-War*. [New York: Russell & Russell, 1963], 189). See also Bellah, *The Broken Covenant*, and Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith*, and Niebuhr's own *Irony of American History*.

<sup>82</sup> Sifton, *The Serenity Prayer*, 329.

<sup>83</sup> Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), 1952, 24–25.

Niebuhr grappled with this horrific prospect. To him, violence could be justified, but only when applied “with a surgeon’s skill,” with “healing [that] must follow quickly upon its wounds.”<sup>84</sup> These caveats flew in the face of the indiscriminate killing sure to result from an atomic exchange. Nevertheless, Niebuhr endorsed the use of nuclear weapons as a last resort. His firm if unsatisfying conclusion that atomic bombs were defensible rested on grounds of discrete and achievable political goals.<sup>85</sup>

By 1949, the questions of legitimacy surrounding atomic weapons were not merely academic; the Soviets had detonated their own bomb and confrontation between superpowers made nuclear war look like a real possibility. American religious figures were divided—pacifists condemned atomic weapons, while right-wing Protestants like L. Nelson Bell (father-in-law of the famous evangelist Billy Graham), called for a “first strike” on the USSR.<sup>86</sup>

Niebuhr, for his part, reacted to the development of the Soviet bomb with steely-eyed resolve. In a 1950 Federal Council of Churches report, he allowed for the possibility of a just nuclear war in defense of American democracy against the Soviet Union.<sup>87</sup> In doing so, Niebuhr drew upon his earlier calls for war against the Nazi menace in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Attacking liberal idealists like former Vice President (and devout Christian) Henry Wallace, who favored a conciliatory approach toward the Soviet Union, Niebuhr wrote acerbically, “We are told that a policy of firmness must inevitably lead to war, while conciliation could guarantee peace. In the Nazi days this was called appeasement.”<sup>88</sup>

Although Niebuhr often juxtaposed the danger of Nazism in the 1930s with the postwar Soviet threat, he did not entirely equate the two. Despite his early leftist leanings, Niebuhr nevertheless saw communism as a greater ideological foe because it constituted a “moral-political,” even idealistic doctrine rather than a nihilistic appeal to force.<sup>89</sup> Here, for once, Niebuhr’s dire warnings dovetailed with mainstream Christian opinion of the Godless communist menace.

The divisions within the American Christian community mirrored the debate in the country’s foreign policy establishment. Some, like Henry Wallace, remained convinced a peaceful diplomatic understanding with the Soviets remained possible. On the other hand, proponents of “rollback” advocated an aggressive strategy to reverse communist gains around the world and even effect regime change within their own borders. If rollback seemed an impossibly foolhardy enterprise, it was worth remembering the idea

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<sup>84</sup> Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, 220.

<sup>85</sup> Mark Hulsether, *Building a Protestant Left: Christianity and Crisis Magazine, 1941–1993* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 30–31, and Rosenthal, *Righteous Realists*, 80.

<sup>86</sup> Hulsether, *Building a Protestant Left*, 43.

<sup>87</sup> Campbell Craig, *Glimmer of a New Leviathan: Total War in the Realism of Niebuhr, Morgenthau, and Waltz* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 80.

<sup>88</sup> Niebuhr, “Our Chance for Peace,” *Christianity & Crisis* (February 1947), 1.

<sup>89</sup> Kevin Mattson, *When America Was Great: The Fighting Faith of Postwar Liberalism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 78.

had some prominent backers, including General Douglas MacArthur and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. MacArthur, for example urged for "total victory" over communist China in a letter to Congress, contrary to President Truman's "containment" policy and the wishes of America's European allies. Another advocate of rollback, the conservative commentator James Burnham, called for a "preventive showdown" with the communist world.<sup>90</sup>

Niebuhr charted a characteristically middle course between these two quasi-religious extremes. His offhand comment that "there are many Christians who do not seem to know the difference between being a 'fool for Christ' and being a plain damn fool" perfectly captures his pragmatism.<sup>91</sup> To Niebuhr, calls for total nuclear war against the Soviet Union were as foolhardy as Christian pacifists' refusal to endorse the fight against the Nazis a decade earlier. Driving home this point was Niebuhr's 1952 anticommunist polemic *The Irony of American History*. Niebuhr charged, "In every instance communism changes only partly dangerous sentimentalities and inconsistencies...into consistent and totally harmful ones."<sup>92</sup> He likened the Soviet system to Don Quixote, "determined to destroy every knight and lady of civilization; and confident that this slaughter will purge the world of evil." He went even further, warning of communism's "satanic dimension."<sup>93</sup> In other publications, Niebuhr translated anti-Soviet rhetoric into explicit endorsements of the Cold War. In a 1951 issue of *Christianity and Crisis*, Niebuhr advocated the US "achieving such a preponderance of political, moral and military strength that the Soviets would not risk an attack."<sup>94</sup>

Despite his vilification of Soviet communism, Niebuhr cautioned Americans not to be "driven to hysteria by" the "tragic vicissitudes of history."<sup>95</sup> He feared that "we might be tempted to bring history to a tragic conclusion by one final and mighty attempt to overcome its frustrations."<sup>96</sup> In case the reader was left in any doubt, Niebuhr clarified, "the political term for such an effort is 'preventive war.' It is not an immediate temptation, but it could become so in the next decade or two."<sup>97</sup> Niebuhr's qualification, or restraint, of anticommunism was informed not only by his own desire to moderate the political and religious extremes of his day, but by the stark reality of a global nuclear exchange.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>91</sup> Niebuhr, quoted in Robert McAfee Brown, "Reinhold Niebuhr: a Study in Humanity and Humility," in *The Legacy of Reinhold Niebuhr*, ed. Nathan A. Scott, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 1–7, 3.

<sup>92</sup> Niebuhr, *Irony of American History*, 15.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Niebuhr, "Ten Fateful Years," *Christianity and Crisis* 11 (Feb. 5, 1951), 1–4, 2.

<sup>95</sup> Niebuhr, *Irony of American History*, 145–46.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 146

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

Niebuhr's Christian realism sought to reconcile American ideals with a profoundly dangerous world. Paul Nitze, an admirer of Niebuhr, used the language of Christian realism in his seminal NSC-68 report even while advocating a huge US military buildup:

The free society is limited in its choice of means to achieve its ends. Compulsion is the negation of freedom, except when it is used to enforce the rights common to all. The resort to force, internally or externally, is therefore a last resort for a free society. The act is permissible only when one individual or groups of individuals within it threaten the basic rights of other individuals... The resort to force, to compulsion, to the imposition of its will is therefore a difficult and dangerous act for a free society, which is warranted only in the face of even greater dangers.<sup>98</sup>

Nitze clashed with another prominent self-proclaimed Niebuhrian, George Kennan, on the proper balance between "hard" and "soft" power. The fact that two of Niebuhr's disciples could hold different opinions about US foreign policy highlights the fact that Niebuhr's ideas and ideals only indirectly translate into the realm of practical application.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, both Nitze and Kennan remained ever-mindful of the fact that their opposition to Soviet expansionism could not be considered a pure moral good, heeding Niebuhr's advice that "frantic anti-communism can become so similar in its temper of hatefulness to communism itself."<sup>100</sup>

Christian realism remained a mindset more than a doctrine—what Niebuhr described as "an existential awareness of the limits, as well as the possibilities, of human power and goodness."<sup>101</sup> Critics (beginning with Niebuhr's contemporaries and continuing today) assert this awareness can lead to logical incongruities, as it depends on a nuanced understanding of human nature and a high degree of situational awareness. David L. Clough and Brian Stiltner, for example, characterized the Christian realist position regarding moral limitations on violence:

They express the importance of the moral limit; recognize that in this imperfect and sinful world, holding to the limit can have bad consequences; violate the limit with a mournful attitude if the consequences seem important enough; and then describe how the limit still retains its value as an ideal.<sup>102</sup>

Niebuhr's seeming lack of consistency, however, demonstrated not a confused philosophy, but a rigorous search for moral choices in a very troubled world. He did not seek to definitively *answer* the great moral questions of his day; rather, he urged the

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<sup>98</sup> Paul Nitze, "A Report to the National Security Council by the Executive Secretary on United States Objectives and Programs for National Security (NSC-68)," (April 14, 1950), Box 180, Harry S. Truman Papers, Harry S. Truman Library, [https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/10-1.pdf](https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/10-1.pdf), 10–11.

<sup>99</sup> For more on the relationship between Nitze, Kennan, and Niebuhr, see Nicholas Thompson, *The Hawk and the Dove: Paul Nitze, George Kennan, and the History of the Cold War* (New York: Henry Holt, 2009).

<sup>100</sup> Niebuhr, *Irony of American History*, 170.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> David L. Clough and Brian Stiltner, *Faith and Force: A Christian Debate about War* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2007), 122–23.

continual questioning of America's particular actions and objectives to avoid the twin dangers of hubris and naïveté.

This questioning approach, never taking for granted the rightness of US policy or the evil of its adversaries, was arguably Niebuhr's single greatest contribution. Niebuhr's emphatic focus the premise of a single humanity united in its fall from grace injected a healthy dose of humility into any discussion about the relative superiority of America and its values. Niebuhr's genius was his recognition that America's self-conception as a messianic force for good unlocked its *potential* for moral global hegemony beyond simple pursuit of narrow national interest—by 1945, this meant nothing less than the preservation of democratic civilization.<sup>103</sup> But Niebuhr knew that Americans' consciousness of their duty could backfire—leading to an unmatched capacity to commit (and hypocritically justify) hideous crimes with the latest horrifying technologies.

Niebuhr claimed, "The pride of nations consists in the tendency to make unconditioned claims for their conditioned values."<sup>104</sup> Yet he never lapsed into skeptical iconoclasm. For all searching of America's national soul, Niebuhr displayed a firm commitment to its core idealistic principles of freedom and dignity for all. His critical humility bridged the gap between his country's redemptive liberal vision for the world and the realities of its newfound global dominance. By the beginning of the Cold War, the US possessed the capability to obliterate its enemies in an atomic fireball. Niebuhr reminded American policymakers and intellectuals that unparalleled capability to destroy did not equal God-like ability to bend the world to its will.

Nearly 70 years after Hiroshima, the US has maintained its position of supreme global power, and still retains an unrivaled capability to mete out hellish destruction nearly anywhere on earth. Yet Niebuhr reminds us—through his ironic, even at times tragic ethos encapsulated in the *Serenity Prayer*—that neither the atomic weapons of his own day nor today's "smart bombs" could cleanse evil from the earth. Power and pride unchecked by virtue and humility are useless to a nation conceived as a universal redeemer; Niebuhr challenged his generation (and continues to exhort us today) never to forget the constraints of human fallibility and a moral worldview in the role of global leadership.

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<sup>103</sup> Craig, *Glimmer of a New Leviathan*, 75–76.

<sup>104</sup> Niebuhr, *Nature and Destiny of Man*, 213.

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# Nuclear Energy in South Africa: An Opportunity for Greater Energy Efficiency and Energy Security

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**Abstract:** *The increasing concern raised by the overreliance on fossil fuels such as natural gas, coal and oil has pushed countries around the world to look for alternative sources such as nuclear energy. South Africa is one such country that has, in recent years, begun to strongly consider the prospects of using more nuclear energy as part of the energy mix. The current makeup of South Africa's energy use consists primarily of coal (which accounts for 75% of energy consumption), followed by oil, gas, nuclear and renewables. The inefficiency and highly polluting factor of coal, and the current strain on the power grid, have pushed South Africa to look closer at the prospects of using nuclear energy. With current initiatives of the locally developed Pebble Bed Modular Reactor being put on hold due to financial constraints, South Africa is also looking abroad for possible actors to participate in the construction of a fleet of new nuclear reactors. The development of this industry has substantial possibility to provide job creation, skills development, meeting CO2 reduction targets, greater energy security and better energy efficiency. However, safety considerations and the costs involved are major aspects to take into account. This article seeks to analyse the existing power supply sector in South Africa and note the feasibility that nuclear energy can play in South Africa's energy security and efficiency. An overview of current policy developments will also be provided in order to note the stance of the South African government with regard to nuclear energy and energy security.*

**Keywords:** *South Africa, policy, energy, security, nuclear, efficiency, PBMR*

## INTRODUCTION

The state of energy security in South Africa is an issue of constant discussion, spanning decades. Prior to the end of apartheid in 1994 and in light of the global economic sanctions that were imposed on the country, the South African government was highly reliant on the use of domestic resources such as coal for sustainability. These restrictions also played a role in pushing the South African government towards the development of a nuclear power sector. On 14 March 1984, the first and only nuclear

power station at Koeberg in the Western Cape went operational. It has remained operational since. With the onset of democracy in 1994, and the lifting of international sanctions, South Africa became more open to importing other energy sources such as oil and gas to supplement the highly energy intensive coal sector, as well as to diversify the makeup of energy consumption in the country. Despite this, coal has remained the dominant energy source in South Africa, although, due to its levels of inefficiency and high CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, coal has become less desirable as an energy source. Massive power outages in 2008, alongside South African commitments to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, initiated a renewed interest in nuclear energy.

### SOUTH AFRICAN ENERGY BACKGROUND

South Africa has had a relatively secure supply of energy for a number of decades. Prior to the end of apartheid, economic sanctions forced the country to rely heavily on its domestic energy reserves in order to maintain an operational industrial and manufacturing sector. This trend has continued into the post-1994 era, but has diversified slightly due to the lifting of sanctions and the initiation of oil imports primarily from states that are part of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), as well as natural gas imports from neighbouring countries. By 2010, energy supplies consisted of coal (67%), oil (19%), solid biomass and waste (10%), natural gas (2%), nuclear (2%), and hydro (<1%) respectively.<sup>1</sup> The energy consumption by sector comprises of industry (45%), transport (20%), non-energy (17%; referring to resources such as coal, gas, wood and oil, which are converted to other products such as chemicals and paper), residential (10%), agriculture (3%), commerce (3%), and other (2%).<sup>2</sup>

From the above percentages, it is clear that the primary driver of energy consumption in South Africa is the industrial sector, with almost 50% of energy expended towards aspects of industry such as manufacturing. However, due to policies initiated by the post-apartheid government, residential electrification has become a primary priority in a bid to connect all South Africans to a stable power supply. This has put substantial strain on the electricity grid in recent years, with rolling blackouts being experienced throughout the country in 2008 during a power crisis.

Regardless of the power shortages and inefficiency in power generation, coal remains the dominant source of energy for South Africa. In terms of coal reserves, South Africa has the ninth largest deposit in the world.<sup>3</sup> In 2011, South Africa mined an

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<sup>1</sup> Jo-Ansie van Wyk, "South Africa's Nuclear Future", SAIIA Occasional Paper, No 150, (June 2013), 1-36, accessed October 18, 2013. <http://www.saiia.org.za/occasional-papers/south-africas-nuclear-future>

<sup>2</sup> Ogunlade Davidson *et al.*, *Energy policies for sustainable development in South Africa* (Energy Research Centre: UCT, 2006), 1-223, accessed on 17 October 2013. <http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/erc/Research/publications/06Winkler-Energy%20policies%20for%20SD.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> US Energy Information Administration, "Country Briefs - South Africa", 2, accessed October 20, 2013. [http://www.eia.gov/countries/analysisbriefs/South\\_africa/south\\_africa.pdf](http://www.eia.gov/countries/analysisbriefs/South_africa/south_africa.pdf)

estimated 282 million short-tons (MMst) and consumed 210 MMst, with the majority of supplies coming from the north-eastern fields of Witbank, the Highveld (the area of land on which a portion of the Gauteng province resides), and Ermelo (see map below).<sup>4</sup> The vast mining of coal and the apartheid government's isolation provided indigenous energy giant Sasol with an opportunity to initiate developments towards a new form of fuel from coal. Sasol, established in 1950, has the ability to convert coal-to-liquids, providing approximately 30% of the country's gasoline and diesel consumption.<sup>5</sup> This has made the mining of coal a further necessity for South Africa's energy security needs.

As a result of the substantial coal reserves, the expanded mining capacity and the further add-on necessity for synthetic fuels, South Africa's coal production accounts for nearly 90% of electricity generation and 77% of primary energy needs.<sup>6</sup> This translates into 243,412 gigawatt hours (GWh) generated by coal and peat.<sup>7</sup> However, this has had a negative environmental impact, resulting in South Africa becoming one of the biggest global emitters of CO<sub>2</sub>, and being responsible for more than 90% of Africa's total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.<sup>8</sup> That said, the role played by coal in South Africa's energy supply is unlikely to change much over the course of the coming decade due to a lack of viable alternatives and the costs involved in shifting the energy grid away from coal.

During the period of apartheid, South Africa also sought to develop its nuclear energy industry for both power and security needs. In the early 1960s, Pretoria commissioned the first (and only) nuclear power station at Koeberg on the Cape west coast. Koeberg has two French-supplied reactors, which became operational in 1984 and 1985 respectively.<sup>9</sup> At present, the station provides only 6% of total electricity generation to South Africa. In terms of electric power, nuclear energy accounts for 1840 megawatts electrical (MWe) in comparison to coal's 38,000 MWe.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> US EIA, "Country Briefs – South Africa", 4.

<sup>5</sup> US EIA, "Country Briefs – South Africa", 5.

<sup>6</sup> "Basic Electricity – Overview", accessed October 20, 2013.

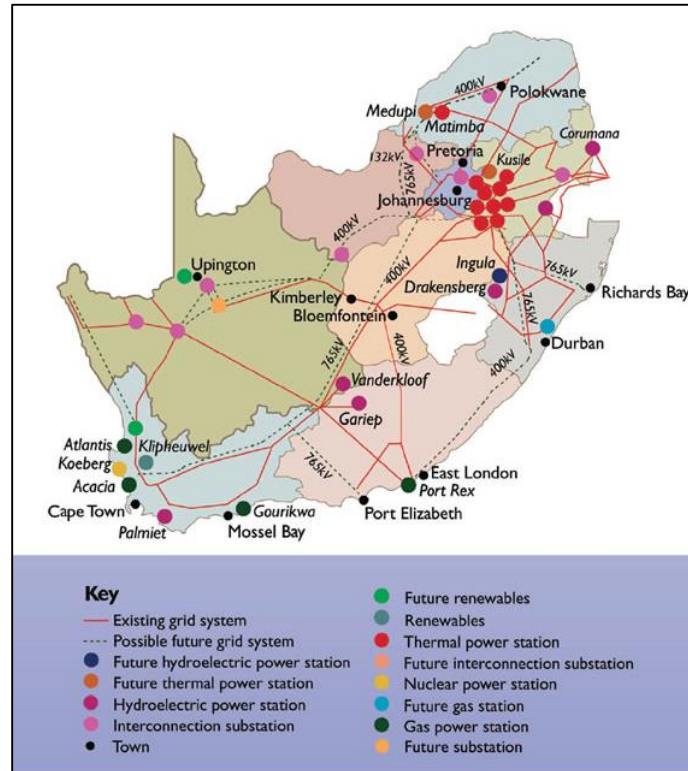
[http://www.energy.gov.za/files/electricity\\_frame.html](http://www.energy.gov.za/files/electricity_frame.html); "Coal Resources – Overview", accessed October 20, 2013. [http://www.energy.gov.za/files/coal\\_frame.html](http://www.energy.gov.za/files/coal_frame.html)

<sup>7</sup> International Energy Agency, "South Africa: Electricity and Heat for 2011", accessed October 20, 2013. <http://www.iea.org/statistics/statisticssearch/report/?&country=SOUTHAFRIC&year=2011&product=ElectricityandHeat>

<sup>8</sup> Renee Greyvenstein, Michael Correia and Willem Kriel, "South Africa's opportunity to maximise the role of nuclear power in a global hydrogen economy", *Nuclear Engineering and Design* 238 (2008) 3031-3040, accessed October 17, 2013. doi:10.1016/j.nucengdes.2008.01.026

<sup>9</sup> Van Wyk, "South Africa's Nuclear Future", 4.

<sup>10</sup> Schalk W. Smith and P.J. Bredell, "Development of a strategy for the management of PBMR spent fuel in South Africa", *Nuclear Engineering and Design* 240 (2010), 2415-2420, accessed 17 October, 2013. doi:10.1016/j.nucengdes.2010.01.025

LOCATIONS OF POWER STATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA<sup>11</sup>

Source: Eskom SA, 2014

Over the past two decades, South Africa has investigated the expansion of its nuclear energy proficiency. Since 1998, it has developed new nuclear technologies in the form of the Pebble Bed Modular Reactor (PBMR), which has the ability to provide greater energy supplies and efficiency to an electricity sector that is currently undergoing stress due to the massive growth in demand and electrification.<sup>12</sup> Recent statements by the South African government have also indicated that it would be pursuing a greater supply of nuclear energy through the commissioning of a fleet of new reactors to meet the goals of energy security, as laid out by the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) of 2010.<sup>13</sup> The IRP mandates that by 2030, an additional 9,600 MW of nuclear energy will be added to the electricity grid in a bid to decrease South Africa's overreliance on coal as an energy source.<sup>14</sup> This policy has not come without criticism

<sup>11</sup> Eskom, "South African Grid Map", 2014, accessed at

[http://www.eskom.co.za/OurCompany/CompanyInformation/Pages/Company\\_Information\\_1.aspx](http://www.eskom.co.za/OurCompany/CompanyInformation/Pages/Company_Information_1.aspx)

<sup>12</sup> Smith and Bredell, "Development of a strategy for the management of PBMR," 2415.

<sup>13</sup> Carol Paton, "State stands ground on SA's nuclear ambitions", *Business Day*, 25 April, 2013, accessed at <http://www.bdlive.co.za/business/energy/2013/04/25/state-stands-ground-on-sas-nuclear-ambitions>

<sup>14</sup> Department of Energy, "Electricity Regulations on the Integrated Resource Plan 2010-2030", 6 May, 2011, accessed 18 October, 2013. [http://www.energy.gov.za/IRP/2010/IRP\\_2010.pdf](http://www.energy.gov.za/IRP/2010/IRP_2010.pdf)

from sectors of academia over the costs involved in the construction of nuclear power plants, as well as the transparency mechanisms used in the procurement process.<sup>15</sup> Further criticism comes from the need for green energy developments such as wind and solar, considering South Africa's coastal regions that generate substantial winds, as well as the abundance of sunlight in the Northern Cape province - both methods that can be used to great effect.

#### POST-1994 DEVELOPMENTS IN THE QUEST FOR ENERGY PROVISIONS AND ENERGY SECURITY

There have been a number of shifts in domestic policy post-1994 concerning energy provisions and energy security in South Africa. The electrification of the country is a top priority for government, considering that, prior to 1994, a large proportion of the urban and an even larger proportion of the rural population in South Africa were without electricity. The White Paper on Energy Policy (1998) has been a backbone of the current ANC government's energy developments since inception. The objectives laid out within the paper note the need for increased access to affordable energy services, improving energy governance, stimulating economic development, managing energy-related environmental and health impacts, and securing supply through diversity.<sup>16</sup> Within these, special emphasis in demand sectors was placed on households; industry, commerce and mining; transport; and agriculture. Supply sectors of electricity, nuclear energy, oil, liquid fuels, gas, coal, renewable resources, and transition fuels (low in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions), were high on the agenda. These objectives formed the foundation for South Africa's energy policy post-1994.

Based on these objectives, certain inroads were made in further policy formulations and enactments. Integrated Energy Plans were formulated in 2003 and 2005, along with a draft Integrated Energy Plan in 2012.<sup>17</sup> Electricity Pricing Policy, Free Basic Electricity Policy, and Free Basic Alternative Energy Policy fell in line with the White Paper's objectives of ensuring electricity for disadvantaged households throughout the country at minimum to no cost. Other electricity acts were also developed for the regulation of electricity use, as well as the formulation of a national regulator to carry out the implementation of acts such as the Electricity Regulation Act, and the Electricity

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<sup>15</sup> Lynley Donnelly, "Academic questions scale of nuclear ambitions", *Mail and Guardian*, 15 August, 2013, accessed at <http://mg.co.za/article/2013-08-15-academic-blasts-sa-neanderthal-power-policy>

<sup>16</sup> Department of Minerals and Energy, "White Paper on the Energy Policy of the Republic of South Africa", December 1998, 1-110, accessed 20 October 2013.

[http://www.energy.gov.za/files/policies/whitepaper\\_energypolicy\\_1998.pdf](http://www.energy.gov.za/files/policies/whitepaper_energypolicy_1998.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Department of Minerals and Energy, "Acts and Legislation – Energy Planning", accessed on 20 October 2013. [http://www.energy.gov.za/files/policies\\_frame.html](http://www.energy.gov.za/files/policies_frame.html)

Regulation Amendment Act.<sup>18</sup> A further initiative for a strong energy efficiency policy was the National Energy Act (2008), as well as an Energy Efficiency and Demand Side Management Policy to regulate energy use intensity through various supply and demand sectors. Natural gas acts were also put in force through Act 48 of 2001 (National), Act 48 of 2001 (Regulations), and Act 75 of 2002 (Levies). In 2003, a White Paper on Renewable Energy Resources was published, in line with the existing Reconstruction and Development Programme of the post-apartheid government. The huge potential of renewable energy was noted in light of wind, biomass, hydro, solar, wave energy, ocean currents, and energy from waste, which could be used to great effect to achieve the goals of managing energy-related environmental and health impacts and securing supply through diversity.<sup>19</sup>

South Africa joined the Kyoto Protocol and ratified it on 16 February 2005 so as to aid the future reduction of GHG's.<sup>20</sup> Hence, the government has initiated the necessary steps to achieve reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, given South Africa's high use of coal within the energy sector. Coal is the only sector within the South African economy mentioned in the 2003 White Paper on Energy Policy that has little to no regulation. This is a disturbing fact, given the precedence of coal in the growth and security of South Africa's energy needs.

The policies formulated in the aftermath of the implementation of the 2003 White Paper on Energy have been evident in a number of areas. For instance, by 2010, substantial inroads had been made in terms of the electrification of the South African population, with just over 75% of people in South Africa having access to electricity, in comparison to the 66% having access in 2001.<sup>21</sup> Other notable differences exist in the makeup of energy resources used within the sector. There is a notable improvement in diversity, in comparison to the make-up of the energy sector 10 years earlier in 2000, consisting of coal (79.8%), petroleum (9.8%), biomass (5.5%), nuclear (3.3%) and gas (1.5%). Hydro did not even feature in the equation.<sup>22</sup> Such improvements are important to note, as they are in line with the White Paper. Thus, certain objectives have been

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<sup>18</sup> Department of Minerals and Energy, "Acts and Legislation – Electricity", accessed on 20 October 2013. [http://www.energy.gov.za/files/policies\\_frame.html](http://www.energy.gov.za/files/policies_frame.html)

<sup>19</sup> Department of Minerals and Energy, "White Paper on Renewable Energy", 1-45, accessed on 20 October 2013. [http://www.energy.gov.za/files/policies/whitepaper\\_renewables\\_2003.pdf](http://www.energy.gov.za/files/policies/whitepaper_renewables_2003.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, "Status of Ratification of the Kyoto Protocol", accessed 21 October 2013. [http://unfccc.int/kyoto\\_protocol/status\\_of\\_ratification/items/2613.php](http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/status_of_ratification/items/2613.php)

<sup>21</sup> World Bank, "Access to electricity (% of population)", accessed 20 October, 2013.

<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.ELC.ACCS.ZS>; Ogunlade Davidson and Harald Winkler, "South Africa's Energy Future: Visions, driving factors and sustainable development indicators", Report for Phase I of the Sustainable Development and Climate Change Project, (Energy and Development research Centre: UCT, 2003) 1-43. [http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/erc/Research/publications-pre2004/03-Davidson-Winkler\\_SA\\_Energy\\_Future.pdf](http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/erc/Research/publications-pre2004/03-Davidson-Winkler_SA_Energy_Future.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Davidson and Winkler, "South Africa's Energy Future," 2.

achieved through the implementation of various control mechanisms and policies for regulation.

Due to the lack of implementation of energy efficiency, South Africa has lagged behind in comparison to other states throughout the world and is responsible for nearly two times the global average of electricity consumption per capita (World: 2,343 kWh; SA 4,533 kWh). As a result of this inefficiency, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are at 2.54kg per 2,000 US \$ of GDP, in comparison to the European Union at 0.38kg, Latin America and the Caribbean at 0.59kg, the OECD at 0.43kg and Sub-Saharan Africa at 1.53kg.<sup>23</sup> Hence, while South Africa has developed substantially in the post-apartheid era with greater access to electricity by both the urban and rural population, stronger mechanisms to govern and regulate energy use, and greater diversity placed on the makeup of energy consumption by type, this has come at a cost of great inefficiency. This has been the partial result of rolling blackouts experienced in 2008 as a result of strain on the energy supply sector.

Despite plans for new coal-fired power stations by the national power provider, Eskom, there is still a massive void that needs to be filled due to the inefficiency of using coal as a major source for electricity. The two new coal-fired power stations currently being built, Medupi and Kusile, will account for over 9000MW of power.<sup>24</sup> However, long delays due to quality of boilers, issues with the instrumentation systems, as well as labour unrest have pushed the completion dates of both stations further and further back; the first unit at Medupi was supposed to be online in December 2013, and the first in Kusile in December 2014.<sup>25</sup> By January 2014, the first unit at Kusile was just over 50% complete. Even when both power stations become operational, conservative estimates note that should demand increase by only 4% per year, South Africa would still need to add more power to the grid at a pace of a power-station, equivalent in size to Medupi or Kusile, every five years.<sup>26</sup> This point was also evident in the president's 2014 State of the Nation address, when he made mention of the government's intent to build a third coal-fired power station (Coal 3).<sup>27</sup> Without adding this new power to the grid, South Africa would be unable to meet the growth targets of 5% set by the 2010

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<sup>23</sup> Kojo Menyah and Yemane Wolde-Rufael, "Energy consumption, pollutant emissions and economic growth in South Africa", *Energy Economics* 32 (2010) 1374-1382, accessed 17 October, 2013. doi:10.1016/j.eneco.2010.08.002

<sup>24</sup> "Is Medupi power plant deadline slipping yet again?", *The Citizen*, (5 February, 2014). Accessed <http://citizen.co.za/121907/medupi-power-plant-deadline-slipping-yet/>

<sup>25</sup> Terence Creamer, "Medupi, Kusile overruns should be probed, NPC commissioner asserts", *Engineering News*, (21 August, 2012). <http://www.engineeringnews.co.za/article/medupi-kusile-overruns-should-be-probed-npc-commissioner-asserts-2012-08-21>

<sup>26</sup> Sue Blaine, "SA needs 'another power station the size of Medupi and Kusile'" *Business Day*, (10 March, 2014), accessed at <http://www.bdlive.co.za/business/energy/2014/03/10/sa-needs-another-power-station-the-size-of-medupi-and-kusile>

<sup>27</sup> Carol Paton, "SA needs nuclear power, says Zuma", *Business Day*, (18 June, 2014), accessed at <http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/2014/06/18/sa-needs-nuclear-power-says-zuma>

National Development Plan (NDP). Former Energy Minister Dipuo Peters has also noted that using coal-fired stations as the primary source of energy is unfeasible in the long-run, due to the locations of the majority of power plants.<sup>28</sup> Thus, diversifying the energy makeup of the power grid has been a major area for consideration by the South African government. As a result, it has launched an initiative of building a fleet of new nuclear reactors to meet the goal of 9,600 MW of nuclear energy by 2030.

#### NUCLEAR ENERGY: HISTORY, ENTERPRISES, POLICIES AND OUTLOOK

As mentioned, South Africa's nuclear developments came about partially through the need for energy self-sufficiency during the apartheid era, and partially as a sense of prestige for the South African government at the time. Out of this need, the two nuclear reactors at Koeberg were commissioned to supply electricity to the South African grid during the worst period of sanctions and isolation in the early to mid-1980s. The two pressurised water reactors (PWRs) together have a net output of 1830 MW of power, which supplies the majority of the Western Cape.<sup>29</sup> A major aspect for the successful operation of the Koeberg nuclear power plant during the period was the extraction of uranium. In South Africa, uranium is readily found while mining for gold and is, in fact, a by-product of the process, as opposed to being mined solely on its own. Current estimated uranium reserves in South Africa are at 261,000 tons, thus leaving South Africa with 8% of global uranium resources.<sup>30</sup> Post-1994, South Africa had to relinquish a large portion of its existing nuclear materials as per agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and following South Africa's signing of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) in July 1991. However, the operation of its Koeberg nuclear plant was left untouched due to the low degree of enriched uranium that the plant uses to generate power. The peaceful purpose of the nuclear power plant is in line with international rules and regulations on the safe use of nuclear energy.<sup>31</sup>

The National Nuclear Regulator (NNR) is the sole enterprise responsible for the oversight and regulation of nuclear energy in South Africa. The NNR is responsible for

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<sup>28</sup> Antonio Ruffini "SA's nuclear power build programme – will it happen?", *ESI Magazine*, (24 May, 2013), accessed at <http://www.esi-africa.com/sa-s-nuclear-power-build-programme-will-it-happen/>

<sup>29</sup> Van Wyk, "South Africa's Nuclear Future", 8.

<sup>30</sup> Ogunlade Davidson et al., *Energy policies for sustainable development in South Africa* (Energy Research Centre: UCT, 2006), 48; Michiel J. Combrink, "Nuclear Energy Security: A critical analysis of the North-South diplomatic discourse on the nuclear fuel cycle, 2004-2011", (MDip diss., University of Pretoria: 2012).

<sup>31</sup> Department of Energy, "Integrated Nuclear Infrastructure review", *City Press*, (3 February, 2013), accessed at

[http://www.energy.gov.za/files/media/Pub/Integrated%20Nuclear%20Infrastructure%20Review%20\(INIR\).pdf](http://www.energy.gov.za/files/media/Pub/Integrated%20Nuclear%20Infrastructure%20Review%20(INIR).pdf)

all assets, rights, liabilities and obligations of the Council for Nuclear Safety.<sup>32</sup> The predecessor of the NNR was the Atomic Energy Board (AEB) formed in 1948, which later became the Atomic Energy Corporation (AEC) in 1986 and was responsible for granting nuclear licenses.<sup>33</sup> The creation of the Nuclear Energy Act in 1982 tasked the soon to be AEC with all responsibility regarding nuclear matters, including enrichment. Through the amendment of the Nuclear Energy Act in 1988, a separate body was also created for the independent jurisdiction of nuclear energy, known as the Council for Nuclear Safety (CNS). “The CNS was responsible for the regulation of nuclear installations and activities involving radioactive material in order to protect persons and property against the harmful effects of ionizing radiation”.<sup>34</sup> There was a necessity to create a distinction between legislation aimed at promoting nuclear activities, from that which was responsible for regulating safety related to nuclear installations, submarines (or other vessels) propelled by nuclear power, and actions involving the use of radioactive material. As a result, the National Nuclear Regulator was officially established in 1999 and was tasked with ensuring the safety of people, property and the environment from nuclear damage. The main subsidiary body to the NNR is the South African Nuclear Energy Corporation (NECSA). Through the Nuclear Energy Act, No 46 of 1999, NECSA is mandated to undertake and promote research and development (R&D) in the nuclear field; process source material, special nuclear material and restricted material, and also reprocess such material; and lastly to cooperate with any person or institution in matters falling within these functions.<sup>35</sup>

Along with the main body responsible for nuclear regulation, South Africa has, furthermore, developed a number of acts to guide the use of nuclear energy. It is a signatory to a number of international obligations for the safe use of nuclear energy. These include the Hazardous Substance Act 15 of 1973, the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials (PPNM) of 1980, the Safeguards Agreement of 1991, the Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Act 87 of 1993 (amended in 1995 and 1996), the Nuclear Energy Act 46 of 1999, the Zangger Committee of 2000, the Additional Protocol of 2000, the National Radio -Active Waste Act 53 of 2008, the Pelindaba Treaty of 2009, and the Nuclear Supplier Group of 2011.<sup>36</sup> In 2008, South Africa developed a Nuclear Energy Policy to supplement the Nuclear Energy Act 46 of 1999, thus laying out the objectives to be met through the use of nuclear energy. A number of the core objectives relating to the paper include the promotion of nuclear

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<sup>32</sup> Department of Minerals and Energy, “Acts and legislation – Nuclear”, accessed 20 October 2013. [http://www.energy.gov.za/files/policies/act\\_nuclear\\_47\\_1999A.pdf](http://www.energy.gov.za/files/policies/act_nuclear_47_1999A.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> World Nuclear Association, “Nuclear Power in South Africa”, (May, 2014), accessed at <http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/country-profiles/countries-o-s/south-africa/>

<sup>34</sup> National Nuclear Regulator, “History”, accessed on 20 October 2013. <http://www.nnr.co.za/history/>

<sup>35</sup> Necsa, Organisational Structure 2013, accessed on 20 October 2013. <http://www.necsa.co.za/Necsa/Company-Information-499.aspx>

<sup>36</sup> Department of Minerals and Energy, “Acts and legislation – Nuclear”, accessed 20 October 2013.

energy as an important electricity supply option; the establishment of governance structures for a nuclear energy programme; the creation of a framework for safe and secure utilisation; exercising control over unprocessed uranium ore for export purposes to the benefit of the South African economy; promoting energy security for South Africa; and the reduction of GHGs.<sup>37</sup>

In light of the discussion thus far, it is evident that South Africa has put in place the necessary measures to regulate and govern the use of nuclear energy in a safe and responsible manner. Certain regulations developed in the late 2000s were the primary result of the rolling blackouts that the country experienced due to the strain on the power grid. In the immediate aftermath of the 2008 energy crisis, the South African government began to look more closely at the possible use of nuclear energy to provide more clean energy, as well as to ensure that energy needs are met in the medium-to-long term. The current chair of the Nuclear Energy Executive Coordination Committee, President Jacob Zuma, has made strong statements that South Africa is taking a very close look at the potential nuclear energy holds. During the 2014 State of the Nation speech, the president expressed the need to promote the standing of the South African nuclear industry in order to add more power to the electricity grid, which would allow South Africa to pursue its growth objectives through secure energy supplies.<sup>38</sup> One of the main reasons for this notion is the dire need for reform and a more stable energy mix in South Africa's electricity sector.<sup>39</sup> However, the price tag on the projects laid out in the IRP sits close to (or perhaps even over) 1 trillion Rand (US\$100 billion).<sup>40</sup> Considering the fact that this is far outside Eskom's reach, the country will have to look towards foreign investors in order to get the nuclear projects off the ground.

Challenges exist in the face of committing to the commissioning of a number of nuclear power plants for South Africa's future energy security, but there exists substantial potential for the country to 'green up' its act and, at the same time, ensure greater provision of energy needs for the foreseeable future. Certain considerations do need to be taken into account during the decision-making process, in order to ensure that the use of nuclear power is, indeed, viable. These include issues of environmental degradation, safety concerns in light of the 2011 Fukushima disaster and previous instances of nuclear reactor meltdowns (Three Mile Island in the US and Chernobyl in

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<sup>37</sup> Department of Minerals and Energy, "Nuclear Energy Policy of the Republic of South Africa", accessed 20 October 2013. [http://www.energy.gov.za/files/policies/policy\\_nuclear\\_energy\\_2008.pdf](http://www.energy.gov.za/files/policies/policy_nuclear_energy_2008.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> Jacob Zuma, "Full text of President Jacob Zuma's state of the nation speech 2014 #SONA2014", *Times LIVE*, (17 June, 2014), accessed at <http://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2014/06/17/full-text-of-president-jacob-zuma-s-state-of-the-nation-speech-2014-sona2014>.

<sup>39</sup> Conrad Kassier, "Behind South Africa's nuclear Ambitions", *News24*, (5 August 2012), accessed at <http://www.news24.com/MyNews24/Behind-South-Africas-nuclear-ambitions-20130802>

<sup>40</sup> Carol Paton, "State stands ground on SA's nuclear ambitions", *Business Day*, (25 April 2013), accessed at 17 October 2013. <http://www.bdlive.co.za/business/energy/2013/04/25/state-stands-ground-on-sas-nuclear-ambitions>

the former USSR), and storage and disposal of nuclear materials. The technology does, however, possess many benefits.

#### MERITS OF USING NUCLEAR ENERGY, STRATEGIES FOR WASTE DISPOSAL, AND CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR ENERGY INITIATIVES

There are a number of positives linked to the use of nuclear energy that need to be taken into consideration. Nuclear energy is, by far, the least polluting, along with renewables such as wind, solar, hydro and biomass, and has a substantial lifespan. For example, the Koeberg reactors are still in operation 30 years after going critical, and have an estimated lifetime of 40 years. Thus, considerations for the use of nuclear energy should go towards efficiency and the decreased carbon footprint. In recent years, coal has contributed a vast amount of GHGs to the South African environment and polluted certain sectors of the country to a point where the air is barely breathable. In 2010, coal was responsible for 87% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, 96% of sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), and 94% of nitrous oxide emissions.<sup>41</sup> Estimates by Greenpeace in a 2012 study conducted by the University of Pretoria, note that the negative externality costs on health, water, mining and climate change just for one coal station the size of Kusile, would amount to over R30 billion per year, potentially even double that.<sup>42</sup> As stated earlier, South Africa is one of the biggest emitters of GHGs in relation to other developed countries, and is far higher than the global average. At the same time, South Africa is looking to substantially boost economic growth in the coming years to alleviate the dire unemployment situation.

There is a major problem which stands in the way, however. At present, there is the belief within trade unions such as the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), that there will be incremental job losses as a result of the increase in high-skilled nuclear energy procurement away from labour-intensive coal mining.<sup>43</sup> The aforementioned study conducted by Greenpeace notes that global demand for coal will drop as a result of the rise in carbon emission standards, and that this has already become evident in South Africa with annual reductions in production of roughly 5%. In the long run, this would mean that jobs in the coal mining sector (accounting for some 57,000 workers), as well as in power generation, will inevitably decrease. Thus, the South African government needs to take into consideration the feasibility of using nuclear energy as a partial alleviator to coal, in order to ensure that emissions do not escalate while the country

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<sup>41</sup> Menyah and Wolde-Rufael, "Energy consumption," 1374.

<sup>42</sup> Greenpeace, "The True Cost of Coal in South Africa - Paying the price of coal addiction", 2012, accessed at <http://www.greenpeace.org/africa/Global/africa/publications/coal/TrueCostOfCoal.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> "NUM against nuclear energy", *News24*, (2 July, 2014), accessed at <http://www.news24.com/Green/News/NUM-against-nuclear-energy-20140702>

begins the process of creating more high-skilled job opportunities and growing the economy.

In the coming years, it will become increasingly feasible to use nuclear energy in sectors of industry to reduce dependence on hydrocarbons as a fuel source and, hence, reduce GHG emissions. An advantage of using nuclear energy for power generation is the production of hydrogen, which can be used in a new global hydrogen-driven economy. While the majority of hydrogen in the world today is produced through the burning of fossil fuels, the hydrogen produced through nuclear reaction is via water. The only challenge that stands in the way of realising a global hydrogen economy is cost-effective technologies for the production of hydrogen. By using hydrogen produced during the nuclear reaction of energy generation, and further developing storage and processing mechanisms for this hydrogen, nuclear energy can provide an alternative sector to the South African economy and, thus, ensure economic growth while maintaining carbon emissions at constantly decreasing levels.<sup>44</sup> The clean hydrogen can also be used in hydrogen -driven motor vehicles, which have already become available on the global market. At the same time, it can be used to produce synthetic liquid fuel cells - in which South Africa is a leader through its coal-to-liquids synthetic fuels - to generate viable alternative fuels in other sectors of the economy, such as petroleum and diesel alternatives.

The hydrogen fuel extraction process can be achieved through the use of the locally engineered and developed PBMR technology. In the short term, PBMR technology can be used as an alternative to natural gas as the main energy type needed to process heat-to-steam-methane-reforming.<sup>45</sup> PBMR can also use process heat (meaning heat generated from the nuclear reaction) to generate hydrogen at efficiency greater than 40%. It can also be used to generate hydrogen from hybrid sulphur while the high-steam electrolysis process can be used to generate hydrogen fuel cells for transportation. This smaller type of nuclear reactor is far more efficient in relation to other energy sources. In comparison to pressurised water reactors (PWRs) and coal-fired power plants, it is nearly 10% more efficient, with a 40 year lifespan.<sup>46</sup> It also provides better safety as the design rules out core-meltdown, even in the worst case scenario of all systems failing. It has the ability to produce a 400-500 MWt (thermal) energy, which is enough to power a number of towns.<sup>47</sup> This reactor technology is well suited for developing countries and can, in the long term, be exported to other nations. Construction time is substantially shorter, with roughly 24 months needed for the construction of each

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<sup>44</sup> Greyvenstein et al., "South Africa's opportunity to maximise the role of nuclear power," 3032.

<sup>45</sup> Greyvenstein et al., 3033.

<sup>46</sup> Emily Grubert, Brian Parks, Erich Schneider, and Srinivas Sekar, "Pebble Bed Modular Reactors Versus other Generation Technologies: Costs and Challenges for South Africa", GLOBAL Discussion Paper, (2011), accessed at [https://www.academia.edu/2014701/Pebble\\_Bed\\_Modular\\_Reactors\\_Versus\\_Other\\_Generation\\_Technologies\\_Costs\\_and\\_Challenges\\_for\\_South\\_Africa](https://www.academia.edu/2014701/Pebble_Bed_Modular_Reactors_Versus_Other_Generation_Technologies_Costs_and_Challenges_for_South_Africa)

<sup>47</sup> Greyvenstein et al., 3034.

module. In terms of costs, it also proves more feasible to procure as opposed to other energy sources. To this end, PBMR fares better and is cheaper than photovoltaic solar power (PV), concentrated solar power (CSP), and PWRs.<sup>48</sup> The waste disposal system is substantially better due to the silicon and graphite fuel form, both of which are materials that are geographic and stable in nature.<sup>49</sup>

The waste management system for the PBMR continues to undergo research and testing. It includes the interim storage of spent fuel at the reactor site (approximately 40 years), followed by either reprocessing or interim storage, and then deep geological disposal or storage at a central site, followed by spent fuel conditioning and treatment and interim storage and deep geological disposal.<sup>50</sup> The utility of using PBMR in the long run is highly dependent on the ability to get rid of nuclear waste as well as to ensure the least amount of environmental damage possible. While at present the PBMR project has been cut from the budget due to the high costs involved, should investors be willing to fund further R&D into PBMR technology, it could prove of great benefit to, not only South Africa, but the world at large. Skills and job creation have been evident in the running of the PBMR project. Shortly before severe budget cuts in 2010, the project employed over 700 highly skilled workers and sought to also meet equity demands. The breakdown of the workforce included some 400 Whites, over 200 Africans, nearly 30 Coloureds, and 50 Indians.<sup>51</sup> While this labour force is substantially lower than that employed by the coal sector, it has the ability to create further job opportunities in other areas such as microbiology, geology, botany, chemistry, physics, materials sciences and engineering. All of these are highly-skilled areas that South Africa needs to further develop. This is also consistent with the notion that South Africa seeks to use nuclear energy in sectors of health, nutrition and agriculture, which falls in line with its national obligations.<sup>52</sup> PBMR technology stands to change the face of nuclear energy and its benefits globally if given the opportunity to showcase its ability. There is, however, a need for support from the South African government to put the project back into commission, as well as the need for investment to continue driving R&D forward.

In the meantime, the South African government has also taken additional steps to further enhance its prospective nuclear energy developments. For the better part of 2013, South Africa initiated talks with a number of countries for the construction of six new nuclear power plants. Among bidders are Russia, China, the US, Britain and most

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<sup>48</sup> Grubert et al., 5.

<sup>49</sup> Greyvenstein et al., 3034.

<sup>50</sup> Smith and Bredell, "Development of a strategy," 2416.

<sup>51</sup> PBMR Annual Report – 2010.

<sup>52</sup> "SA has a right to nuclear research, say minister", *News24*, (27 March, 2014), accessed at <http://www.news24.com/Green/News/SA-has-a-right-to-nuclear-research-says-minister-20140326>

recently, France.<sup>53</sup> According to former Energy Minister Dipuo Peters, the construction of the six new nuclear power plants has the potential of creating an additional 70,000 new jobs.<sup>54</sup> In mid-2013, Peters further affirmed that the South African government is taking a closer look at the Eastern Cape province as a possible location of the power plants, due to its proximity to the Indian Ocean and its current status as a major energy hub.<sup>55</sup> Greater safety measures have also been undertaken by the South African government following the Fukushima disaster in 2011. The NNP conducted safety reviews at the Koeberg nuclear power plant and the Safari-1 research reactor located at Pelindaba, west of Pretoria, both of which have had positive feedback with only minor changes required.<sup>56</sup>

### CRITICISMS OF USING NUCLEAR ENERGY

Despite the notable benefits of using nuclear technology and energy to diversify South Africa's energy mix, there has been some opposition to the notion of using this type of energy. As mentioned earlier, one of the biggest hurdles is the impact that this may have on the existing labour force in the coal sector. However, as already noted, global demand for coal is decreasing, as is the production of coal in countries with the highest GHG emissions (China being one of them). Therefore, South Africa will lose jobs in the coal production sector regardless, be it the result of a drop in global demand or the procurement of other forms of energy.

Safety has been cited as a major issue. As also mentioned earlier, previous nuclear disasters are always on the minds of environmental protection groups as well as concerned citizens. However, as pointed out above, should the PBMR project receive a capital injection to continue with R&D, there is substantially less safety risks in the use of the technology as opposed to importing foreign and much larger nuclear reactors. Other countries have already seen the possibility that PBRM can offer, with offers coming in from the US and Indonesia for the purchase of the existing patents.<sup>57</sup> In this sense, the fact that other countries are willing to invest in the technology should signal the viability of the PBMR project and thus the need to continue with R&D.

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<sup>53</sup> Ayesha Ismail, "France eyes nuclear contract in South Africa", *France24*, 15 October 2013, accessed 20 October 2013. <http://www.france24.com/en/20131015-south-africa-france-eyes-contract-build-nuclear-plants-hollande>

<sup>54</sup> "Six nuclear power stations planned", *Fin24*, 8 September 2010, accessed 20 October 2013. <http://www.fin24.com/Business/Six-nuclear-power-stations-planned-20100908>

<sup>55</sup> Keith Campbell, "SA looks nearly set to start new nuclear power station build programme", *Engineering News*, 5 April 2013, accessed 20 October 2013. <http://www.engineeringnews.co.za/article/sa-looks-nearly-set-to-start-new-nuclear-power-station-building-programme-2013-04-05>

<sup>56</sup> Campbell, "SA looks set to start," 5 April 2013.

<sup>57</sup> Martin Zhuwakinyu, "Indonesia expresses interest in SA's dormant PBMR", *Engineering News*, (4 July, 2014), accessed at <http://www.engineeringnews.co.za/article/pbmr-2014-07-04>.

A final criticism which has emerged with an aim to curb nuclear development is the costs of the proposed fleet of new reactors. The R1 trillion price tag is far outside Eskom's reach and will therefore necessitate substantial foreign investment (hence the mentioned actors such as Russia and China who are very interested in developing this fleet). However, in hindsight, the costs of the Medupi and Kusile coal-fired power stations have together amounted to over R220 billion since the start of construction.<sup>58</sup> Considering that Kusile is only half - built, the overruns could easily amount to R400 billion, and this is for building two coal-fired power stations instead of six nuclear stations. With a simple calculation, one can note how the costs of four additional coal-fired stations (with Coal 3 to be built as mentioned by President Zuma), could easily go over the R1 trillion projected for the proposed nuclear fleet. In this regard, the price variation may not be as great as many sceptics assume.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Looking back in hindsight, there are a number of relevant issues that have been ascertained in relation to South Africa's current and future energy mix. As noted, the South African government is seeking to diversify the makeup of energy in the country for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the country is at present far too reliant on coal for energy production and power generation. The main driving factor for this trend has been the historic isolation that South Africa endured during years of apartheid. Post-1994, however, new policies sought to delve deeper into diversifying this trend. Among the factors cited for the diversification is the inefficiency of using coal for power generation. As pointed out, South Africa uses twice as much energy to produce manufactured products as the majority of the developed world (and even in some cases, the developing world). This leaves South Africa lagging behind in terms of efficiency and productivity in both the manufacturing sector (which is the largest consumer of power) as well as electricity generation. To this end, South Africa has to diversify its energy mix in order to stay competitive in the global business environment.

Secondly, the South African government is aware of the fact that in the long run using coal as the main power supply is highly polluting and costly. Current GHG emissions place the country in the upper echelon of global emitters. As a result, the ramifications to health, mining, water and the environment will prove far more costly than securing more coal-dependant power. The fact that the new coal-fired power stations of Kusile and Medupi are located near massive coal fields will compound this

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<sup>58</sup> David McKay, "Eskom faces Medupi cost surge as project delayed", *MiningMx*, (8 July, 2013), accessed at <http://www.miningmx.com/page/news/energy/1631229-Eskom-faces-Medupi-cost-surge-as-project-delayed#.U87QzZSSw2Y>.

issue and are likely to elevate the noted effects. At the same time, the high costs of transmission systems to get power from the source to sectors of the economy are unfeasible and unsustainable over a long period.

Thirdly, global policies on reducing greenhouse gases are driving down the production of coal in developed (and even some developing) countries. As South Africa is looking to play a greater role in global politics as well as stand as a leader in African affairs, the government is conscious of the need to include less polluting aspects to the energy mix. At the same time, the decrease in global demand for coal has been impacting production for a number of years and thus the labour force in coal mining and power generation has decreased. To this end, the government has had to look closer at how to diversify the energy make-up of South Africa in order to provide opportunities for growth and employment in other energy related sectors (such as renewables, oil, gas, biomass and nuclear).

Lastly, the government has had to weigh its options quite carefully. While renewable energy has great potential to decrease GHGs and provide room for economic growth, it is only partly feasible. The reason for this is the base load capacity of renewable energy. It will take many years to bring up the share of renewables to levels necessary to sustain economic growth. Thus, the options left on the table are more coal-fired power plants or introducing more nuclear energy as part of the diversification. The reasons why the South African government is adamant on using nuclear energy are quite straightforward. Firstly, there is an already existing knowledge of nuclear technology in South Africa through the operational reactors at Koeberg in the Western Cape. Both reactors have been in use since the mid-1980s and have proved stable and efficient in providing 5% of South Africa's energy needs. Secondly, the base load carrying capacity of a nuclear reactor is equal to that of coal-fired power plants, yet only fractionally as polluting. To this end, the government sees the opportunity to hit 'two birds with one stone'. On the one hand, there is an opportunity to increase the contribution of alternative energy away from coal, which would be able to substitute the current output of coal-fired plants. On the other hand, South Africa would be able to decrease the current levels of GHG emissions while still providing the necessary power needed for economic growth.

Combined, the above factors have pushed South Africa closer to the procurement of more nuclear power plants in a bid to diversify the energy mix, decrease GHG emissions, provide stable power that will stimulate growth and foreign investment, and lower the overwhelming dependency on coal that currently exists. While the government has taken steps in moving this issue forward by opening up rounds of bidding by international nuclear suppliers (like China and Russia), a certain home-grown aspect has been overlooked. As mentioned, the locally developed PBMR reactor has great potential in meeting SA's energy needs while cutting out the risks of maintaining and operating larger reactors. It has been proven to be more efficient than other nuclear energy power generation units, less costly, easier to maintain and operate,

and has, in fact, been targeted by foreign investors for purchase of patents and development rights. Using PBMR as opposed to procuring from abroad would also allow for greater technological and skills transfers to the local workforce, provide room for economic development through stable power supplies, and allow for indigenous growth in other sectors of the economy such as science, physics, biology, health, and agriculture, among others.

For these reasons, as a recommendation for future initiatives, the South African government should take a much closer look at existing nuclear technology, as opposed to opening up bidding for foreign technology to infiltrate the domestic nuclear market. Rather, more effort should be placed on acquiring the necessary funding for the completion of a working PBMR module, and then replicate the process once the initial reactors come online. While it will be near impossible to secure funding for more than two reactors at first, the payoff will be evident once they start generating power and South Africa begins to increase its energy efficiency. The South African government should also strongly consider the implications of importing such technology. Without the necessary skills transfer from the prospective companies involved in the construction process, the construction of the nuclear facilities will create a dependency on imported labour to maintain the facilities and ensure the stable operation of the reactors. As a recommendation, the South African government should ensure that the contracted enterprises adequately transfer skills and knowledge to the South African workforce in order to ensure local growth within the sector.

A further recommendation would be to not let the future of a hydrogen-driven economy pass South Africa by in the same way as the commodity boom did a few years ago. The opportunity needs to be seized now, as the rewards to be reaped will be substantial. South Africa needs to take the initiative on this end rather than allowing other countries to do it and reap the benefits. This will only be realised through a strong policy for the commissioning of the PBMR through either a massive government capital injection or foreign direct investment. However, this is currently unfeasible, hence the same guidelines should apply when foreign companies enter the South African market to construct the nuclear plants. Harnessing hydrogen as an alternative clean energy source will prove of major benefit to the South African aim to decrease CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and ensure greater energy security. Time will tell how the aspect of nuclear energy will unfold. One thing is certain, however: nuclear energy is about to start playing a big role in South Africa's energy security.

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# The Elephant in the Room: Confronting Petrie's Racism

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Egyptologists have recently begun thorough discussions of the overt racism of early Egyptology.<sup>1</sup> Challis' work is an important contribution to a growing discussion. This book, made up of ten chapters and foreword by Kathleen L. Sheppard, discusses the personal and academic relationship between eugenicist Francis Galton and Egyptologist William Flinders Petrie with an emphasis on the eugenic-thinking in Petrie's intellectual and personal life. In addition, Challis places Petrie's thought within the context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century racial thinking. The historical context shows how Petrie's eugenic-thinking was both in line and, in some cases, at odds with the overt racist academic views of his time. Challis shows that Petrie's racist theories played a major role in the linking of anthropology, archaeology and, most notably, Egyptology through his archaeological interpretations. This book succeeds in demonstrating Petrie's racism, but the deeper issues surrounding race and *Kemet* (ancient Egypt) in the works of Petrie and his contemporaries, which still impact Egyptology today,<sup>2</sup> are not adequately addressed.

The initial problem is that Challis misinterprets race. Challis correctly acknowledges that race is a social construct, but makes race and racism contingent on biology. Challis defines racist as:

the point of view in which a biological concept of race is systematically used to be the main determining factor in explaining the actions and a characteristics of a person or a group of people (p. 3).

However, race and racism are social constructs that are *not* contingent on biological concepts. Race is a symmetrical identity based on a state of consciousness and being,

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<sup>1</sup> For examples see Ambridge (2012), Manley (2011).

<sup>2</sup> For further discussion see Ashton (2011), Bernasconi (2007), Martin (1984)

rather than a program or pattern of action.<sup>3</sup> In addition, racial identification is an ongoing dialogue between groups which, in turn, makes it a tool of domination and resistance.<sup>4</sup> Racism, in contrast, is an imposition of inferior category to a people to determine their social, economic, civic, and human standing on that basis.<sup>5</sup> The racist eugenics theories assumed a biological validity in the equivalence of skin color and physiognomy to the type of civilization of non-European peoples (or lack thereof), especially those of African descent. In other words, eugenics used biology to justify White supremacy and was based on racist presuppositions. The notion of race itself, being a social construct, was not biological. The problem with Challis' approach to race and racism is that there is no use of critical race theory.<sup>6</sup>

Challis, due to this misinterpretation, loosely dismisses the possibility of race and racism as valid analytical tools for studying ancient identities. She argues that "race and identity in the ancient world was about more than skin color" (p. 6). Some of the ancient sources noted in her study suggest otherwise. For example, Challis mentions the dismissal of Herodotus' description of Kemetians by Richard Knox (p. 36), but she does not detail Herodotus' statement which clearly illustrates the anti-Black racism in Knox's dismissal. Herodotus (2.104) describes Kemetians as having black skin color (μελάγχροες) and kinky hair (ούλότριχες). This passage shows that the Greeks saw the Kemetians as a Black racial group. Moreover, Challis does not acknowledge the debate on race in antiquity even though these discussions appear in her bibliography.

Challis is open to the concept of ethnicity as an analytical tool for identity (p. 211), but this is another consequence of her misinterpretation of race. Challis treats ethnicity as the culturally based identity in contrast to the biological assumption of race (p. 211). However, her distinction between race and ethnicity later becomes ambiguous. Commenting on the difficulties in interpreting the ethnic identity of the 'Memphis heads' (terracotta heads examined by Petrie found in Memphis), Challis says "physical appearance was not the only way of distinguishing *ethnic* groups" (p. 212). This concession mirrors her argument against the issue of race in antiquity and it contradicts her distinction between race and ethnicity. In addition, she observes that language and custom have been treated as racial characteristics in modern contexts (p. 212) which is correct, but this observation further contradicts her argument against race in antiquity. It seems likely that Petrie and other early antiquities scholars were not wrong to attribute racial thinking to antiquity. Rather, the problem is that they projected *their* racist views onto ancient material culture instead of contextualizing ancient racial thought. The undermining of this possibility overlooks the fundamental problem with Petrie's use of race.

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<sup>3</sup> Fields (2001), 48

<sup>4</sup> Fields (2001), 49

<sup>5</sup> Fields (2001), 48

<sup>6</sup> For further discussion of critical race theory, see Delgado and Stefancic (2012)

Challis does not clearly specify the type of racism that connected these divergent racist analyses of Kemet. Anti-Black racism was clearly central in the racist scientific discourses. For example, Challis points out that Galton confidently asserted that the 'African Negro' was the lowest race (p. 55). Challis also does not specify anti-Black racism as a fundamental presupposition in Petrie's eugenic thinking. For example, Challis argues that Petrie's abandonment of his 'New Race' Theory for the Naqada I population of Kemet showed that Petrie corrected his views when solid archaeological evidence was presented and that his mistake was a result of 'racial thinking' (p. 171). Yet, she acknowledges that Petrie never accepted Kemet as an indigenous African development (pp. 184-85). It is quite clear that anti-Blackness consistently underlined Petrie's analysis which is why he could not accept Kemet as an African civilization, but Challis does not specify this aspect of Petrie's racism.

Challis is hesitant to acknowledge Petrie as racist, preferring a "more nuanced portrait" (p. 190). However, Petrie was an unapologetic racist and no "nuance" should undermine this. This is not to dismiss the importance of his historical context which is, of course, undeniably important. The influence of eugenics in his work and personal life reflects the particularity of his time which she demonstrates throughout the book. Her precaution, however, frames Petrie as a victim of his time. This is problematic because it downplays Petrie's personal agency in his racist actions. More importantly, racism is still a problem today. Thus, her appeal to "nuance" is apologetic rather than critical. Historical particularity notwithstanding, the evidence conclusively demonstrates that Petrie was a racist. There should be no hesitancy in stating the obvious.

Challis' analysis of African-centered scholarship is problematic. Challis follows the loose usage of 'Afrocentric' by Dominic Montserrat who *imposes* his own definition of African-centered discourse,<sup>7</sup> rather than using definitions by actual Afrocentric scholars. There are multiple *African-centered* discourses. The discourse of Afrocentricity, articulated by Molefi Kete Asante, is *one* of these African-centered perspectives.<sup>8</sup> The two Black scholars she critiques do not identify as 'Afrocentric'. Black scholars who maintain the Black Kemet position are stereotyped as 'Afrocentric', often in a pejorative tone, by Egyptologists even when these scholars do not make such identification. As Exell explains, there are often simply Black historians as is the case in this situation.<sup>9</sup> Challis cautions that she is simply critiquing one Afrocentric reading of Queen Tiye and Nefertiti (p. 165). However, a thorough analysis would cover multiple African-centered readings. Moreover, if she supports African-centered research she should *also* emphasize its importance to the de-centering the Eurocentric biases in

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<sup>7</sup>Montserrat (2000), 115

<sup>8</sup> See Asante (1990)

<sup>9</sup> Exell (2013), 136

Egyptology.<sup>10</sup> Yet Challis makes no such argument, which makes her claim of support seem more like a shield from criticism. Furthermore, her claim that Tiye and Nefertiti are focal points of ‘Afrocentric’ reclamations of Kemet (p. 164) is based on the work Dominic Montserrat, not African-centered scholars. African-centered discourse on Kemet does not focus on specific individuals. It is unfortunate that Challis did not engage actual African-centered studies of Kemet.<sup>11</sup>

Challis assumes that Sonia Sanchez and Virginia Spottswood Simon, the alleged ‘Afrocentric’ scholars, use the same eugenic-thinking as Petrie (p. 165). She argues that they assume intellectual and ethical traits of Nefertiti and Tiye based on their physical appearance in anachronistic manner (p. 165). There is, however, a clear contextual difference between Petrie and the analyses of Sanchez and Simon. Petrie’s analysis of the physical appearance Tiye and Nefertiti is based on entirely on racist assumptions as he assumed them to be west Asian rather than African which Challis points out (pp. 148-58). In contrast, Sanchez and Simon clearly base their interpretations of Nefertiti and Tiye on the success of their reigns, textual sources, and the high esteem of queenship in Kemet. In addition, their judgements are based on Nefertiti and Tiye as individuals.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, there is no reason to dismiss the fact that modern Black aesthetics had some commonalities with Kemet. Queen Tiye’s hairstyles (e.g. afro and braids) and hoop earrings are common material characteristics in African and African diasporic cultures. The only problem is that Simon assumes Queen Tiye was Nubian, but that problem is not addressed by Challis. Challis overlooks the contextual difference between Petrie and the analyses by Sanchez and Simon.

Challis’ approach to the Kemet race controversy is evasive and fraught with contradictions. She emphasizes that the book “is not about what racial or ethnic group [the people of Kemet] were”, but then insists that “different uses of ancient Egyptian images only tells us about the assumptions of the user and their social context” (p. 5). It is perplexing to dismiss the Kemet race controversy as irrelevant, but then claim its identity to be ambiguous. Challis does, at least, acknowledge that the Kemet race controversy is tied “to racism and the colonial legacy over the last two hundred years” (p. 6). However, she does not emphasize the possible on-going influence of anti-Black racism in the debates on Kemet’s identity.

Challis assumes that anti-Blackness in right-wing politics leads to “the *perceived need* to reclaim [Kemet] as a black African civilization obvious” (p. 164, emphasis added). Again, Challis’ approach to this issue downplays the *obvious* influence of anti-Black racism in the dismissal of a Black Kemet. However, it is clearly illustrated by the racist twentieth century intellectuals whom she discusses. Zoologist Earnest Warren downplayed the correlation between the limb proportions of the Naqada population and

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<sup>10</sup> Ashton (2011) 105, 108-110; Exell (2013), 133-37

<sup>11</sup> For an example see Carruthers (1995)

<sup>12</sup> See Sanchez (1984), Simon (1984)

'Negro' skeletons by emphasizing their alleged 'European' physical characteristics which was based on Eurocentric assumptions about the human body (p. 176). Petrie resorted to racial mixing (pp. 179-80) which lead him to this Semitic dynastic race theory (pp. 184-85) because he believed that a white ruling class had to guide an indigenious Black population. A Black Kemet is not a "perceived need" created by modern politics. Rather, it is corrective approach as it de-centers Eurocentric interpretations of Kemet. Challis' downplaying of the intellectual basis of the Black Kemet position is unsubstantiated.

Though Challis supports Sally-Ann Ashton's African-centered approach, she overlooks the issue of Black identity. Ashton openly accepts of Kemet as *both* Black and African.<sup>13</sup> In fact, Ashton makes a very revealing assessment of the Kemet race controversy:

It is perhaps significant that when you say ask if the Ancient Egyptians were African, the majority will say yes on account of the country's geographical location. *However*, if you ask 'Were they Ancient Egyptians Black?' you will get a different response.<sup>14</sup>

While Challis dismisses race as a modern question, Ashton correctly explains that the ancient world was not color-blind.<sup>15</sup> Also, Ashton realizes that the dominance of white scholars in the discipline has a deep impact on this debate.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, Challis does not address the impact of racism in the denial of Kemet's Blackness.

This book is important as it encourages further discussion on a sensitive subject matter, but it does not delve deep enough into the key issues. An engagement with critical race theory would have provided a much better understanding of race and racism. The misinterpretation of race was a fundamental reason for some of the problems. It would, for example, demonstrate that Petrie was not problematic for discussing race, but for being racist. Secondly, Challis does not specify anti-Black racism as a major factor in work of Petrie and his contemporaries. It was clearly the reason why Petrie could easily shift from his 'New Race' to his 'Dynastic Race' theory. In addition, anti-Black racism connects past and present discussions about Kemet's racial identity. An effective discussion of race demands engagement with controversy. Unfortunately, Challis' analysis avoids thorough discussion of such issues. This book would have been significantly better had these issues been addressed in greater depth.

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<sup>13</sup> Ashton (2011), 106

<sup>14</sup> Ashton (2011), 106. Emphasis added.

<sup>15</sup> Ashton (2011), 106

<sup>16</sup> Ashton (2011), 105, 107

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# Jimmy Carter: A Moral Hero (*Student Essay*)

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**Abstract.** *Following the end of Jimmy Carter's first and only term as President of the United States, historians scrambled to put his presidency in the proper context. More than thirty years later, Carter has become associated with failed presidencies. To be compared to him is to be insulted. Even so, Jimmy Carter has had one of the most prolific, philanthropic post-presidential lives of any former American president. This is inconsistent with the image of his single term in office that the media has painted—a good man should have been a good president. To better understand this irony, this investigation shall seek to answer the following question: how did Jimmy Carter's pre-presidential experiences affect his leadership as President of the United States of America (1977-1981)?*

*This article will draw on apolitical, supportive and critical accounts of Carter's presidency, as well as Carter's own accounts of his beliefs and childhood experiences. While historians interpret Carter's life events differently, each interpretation reveals important influences on Carter's leadership in the White House.*

*I will argue that Carter held too tightly to his morals to be suited to presidency. Carter's childhood and pre-presidential political experiences created a man who was, indeed, unfit for the White House. The problem was less with his political vision than it was with his execution of that vision. Carter's tragic presidential tale serves as a reminder that moral malleability is a necessity in the highest office of a government.*

## INTRODUCTION

When Jimmy Carter is mentioned in American politics, he is used as an example of what not to be. Jimmy Carter has become the punching bag of the political right, exemplifying a failed liberal presidency. In a pre-election interview on NBC's *Nightly News*, Republican presidential candidate John McCain had the following to say about his opponent:

Obama says that I'm running for a Bush's third terms. It seems to me he's running for Jimmy Carter's second. (LAUGHTER)<sup>1</sup>

The Democrats' instinct wasn't to reject the comparison's fundamental premise that Carter's second term would have been bad—it was to reject the comparison. This interpretation of Carter's presidency has become commonplace within modern political discourse. Instead, the Obama campaign team, with the Democratic Party behind it, responded by pointing out the differences between Carter and Obama.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Carter's very own political party has accepted that the insult to modern politicians is more easily deflected than the insult to the good peanut farmer.

A mere three decades since Carter's presidential farewell, U.S. cultural memory has it that he was a failed president. Politically conservative historian Steven F. Hayward, F.K. Weyerhaeuser Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and Senior Fellow at the Pacific Research Institute, has praised conservative leaders. In his examination of the Carter years, *The Real Jimmy Carter: How Our Worst Ex-President Undermines American Foreign Policy, Coddles Dictators, and Created the Party of Clinton and Kerry*,<sup>3</sup> Hayward accused the former president of quixotic idealism. He argued that Carter wasn't enough of a realist to be president, and that Carter's moral compass too often pointed him in the wrong direction. On the other end of the political spectrum, politically liberal and revisionist writers Frye Gaillard and Douglas Brinkley assert that the former president had only good intentions, and should be given credit for that. Brinkley, history professor and director of the Eisenhower Center at the University of New Orleans, wrote an entire book about Carter's post-presidential successes titled *The Unfinished Presidency: Jimmy Carter's Journey beyond the White House*.<sup>4</sup> Brinkley used Carter's post-presidential successes to rectify the former president's reputation. Frye Gaillard, writer-in-residence for the History department at the University of South Alabama and winner of the Lillian Smith Book Award, wrote his own account titled *Prophet from Plains*.<sup>5</sup> Gaillard asserted that Carter's "greatest asset [was also] his greatest flaw: his stubborn, faith-driven integrity",<sup>6</sup> which put Carter in a more positive light. Carter himself admits to his steadfast commitment to his faith in his own account of his morals, *Our Endangered Values: America's Moral Crisis*.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> NBC News. "McCain: Obama means 2nd Carter term - First Read." *First Read*. Published June 9, 2008, Accessed September 2, 2013, [http://firstread.nbcnews.com/\\_news/2008/06/09/4437354-mccain-obama-means-2nd-carter-term?lite](http://firstread.nbcnews.com/_news/2008/06/09/4437354-mccain-obama-means-2nd-carter-term?lite)

<sup>2</sup> Julian E. Zelizer. *Jimmy Carter: the 39th president, 1977-81* (New York: Times Books, 2010)

<sup>3</sup> Steven F. Hayward. *The Real Jimmy Carter: How Our Worst Ex-President Undermines American Foreign Policy, Coddles Dictators, and Created the Party of Clinton and Kerry* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Douglas Brinkley. "Preface: Citizen Carter." In *The Unfinished Presidency: Jimmy Carter's Journey Beyond the White House* (New York: Viking, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Frye Gaillard. *Prophet from Plains: Jimmy Carter and his legacy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Jimmy Carter. *Our endangered values: America's moral crisis* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005).

Some cite Carter as an idealist, whose quixotic aims led his presidency to ruin. Others argue that he was a man with good-intentions in the wrong place at the wrong time. Instead of relying only on the history of Carter's four years as president or his years of philanthropy that followed, this essay seeks to examine the challenges of the Carter presidency through the lens of Carter's pre-presidential experiences.

## INVESTIGATION

Farming in Archery, Georgia, the Carter family lived in a rustic environment. The young James Earl Carter Jr. grew up with all of the boyhood responsibilities of a small-town farm. Earl Carter, the father of the would-be president, demanded much from his three children, not abstaining from physical discipline on occasion.<sup>8</sup> As a result, Carter spent his childhood motivated to gain his father's approval.

Carter's childhood work ethic was refined by his experiences on the farm and—no doubt—by his relationship with his father. Earl Carter relied on tough love to catapult his son into manhood, which only intensified the young Jimmy's desire to please his father. Further, the young Carter learned to mask his anger toward his father by hiding behind his smile.<sup>9</sup> Rather than birthing a Georgian, arm-twisting, Lyndon Johnsonesque politician, the atmosphere of Carter's childhood home created a man who was often unwilling to expose his inner feelings to advisers and legislators. Not necessarily creating a man with a permanent poker face, Earl's influence on the young Jimmy likely gave the president a constant reminder that he can never really succeed unless he performs perfectly.

Carter's rustic childhood didn't only frame his political challenges as opportunities for perfection, but also developed him into a fiercely independent problem-solver. Steven Hochman, a three-decade-long research assistant to the former president, explained in an interview that "[Carter] is very independent. If you grow up on a farm, you have to do things for yourself. When some problem comes up, he's used to solving it".<sup>10</sup> This independence made Carter unlike many of his political peers. In his many political posts, it has been argued that Mr. Carter was less interested in listening to others than he was in trusting his own discretion. Indeed, Carter's maverick politics—the politics of self-induced isolation—were born from his time on the farm. To the young Jimmy—and to the 39<sup>th</sup> president—-independent problem-solving was more of a way of life than a way out of teamwork.

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<sup>8</sup> Julian E. Zelizer. *Jimmy Carter: the 39th president, 1977-81* (New York: Times Books, 2010), 8.

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth Earl Morris. "An Imperiled Self and Search for Community." In *Jimmy Carter, American moralist* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 70.

<sup>10</sup> Carole Cadwalladr, "Jimmy Carter: 'We never dropped a bomb. We never fired a bullet. We never went to war'." *The Guardian*. Published September 10, 2012, Accessed August 31, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/sep/11/president-jimmy-carter-interview>.

Before entering the political ring, Carter spent a few years as a nuclear engineer. Leaving Georgia to study at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Carter's competitive edge quickly surfaced. Francis Hertzog, one of his closest friends at Annapolis, recalled that "Jimmy just hated to lose...He wanted to be the best at whatever he did".<sup>11</sup> Enlisting in the Navy following his studies at Annapolis, Carter would go on to work under the then and still legendary Admiral Hyman Rickover as an engineer on a new nuclear submarine program. Zelizer posits that "all of these years as an engineer helped to shape Carter's approach to tackling issues. He developed a technical and managerial...mind-set to problem solving that would inform him throughout his career".<sup>12</sup> This pre-political career path sets him apart from most career politicians, who have traditionally been lawyers and business owners and managers.<sup>13</sup> Carter's problem-solving methods isolated him from many of Washington insiders during his presidency. He didn't seem to understand the game of politics. His time as an engineer was in part responsible for his reputation as a political klutz.

Following Carter's promising naval career came his decisive time as a full-time peanut farmer in a segregationist community. After his father's death, Carter left the Navy to fill in the void left by his father.<sup>14</sup> The family farm now became Carter's livelihood. Following the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, the segregationist White Citizen's Council attempted to enlist as many local white men as possible. When the local White Citizen's Council demanded that Carter join them, even threatening to boycott his farm's goods and consequently his livelihood, Carter stood his ground and refused. He rejected the status quo and was a maverick among prominent local white men. He accepted that he was one of the only nonmembers in all of Sumter County.<sup>15</sup> To Carter, dissension was more of a rule than it was an exception.

With decades' hindsight, Carter reflected that his "commitment to human rights came, [he guesses], from [his] personal knowledge of the devastating effect of racial segregation in [his] region of the country".<sup>16</sup> This admission is made even more poignant when one considers the obstinacy with which Carter approaches infractions of human rights. Incidents like the encounter with the White Citizen's Council display Carter's steadfast confidence in his morals and willingness to stand by them even when it jeopardized his very livelihood. Throughout his time in Plains, Carter consistently found himself on the moral high ground, even if that meant being in the moral minority. This, very likely, was an attitude toward morality that Carter carried with him throughout his life.

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<sup>11</sup> Douglas Brinkley. "Preface: Citizen Carter." In *The Unfinished Presidency: Jimmy Carter's Journey beyond the White House* (New York: Viking, 1998), xii.

<sup>12</sup> Julian E. Zelizer. *Jimmy Carter: the 39th president, 1977-81* (New York: Times Books, 2010), 12.

<sup>13</sup> David B. Magleby, Paul C. Light, and Christine L. Nemacheck. "State Legislatures." In *State and local politics: government by the people* (15th ed. Boston: Longman, 2012), 98.

<sup>14</sup> Julian E. Zelizer. *Jimmy Carter: the 39th president, 1977-81* (New York: Times Books, 2010), 12.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Jimmy Carter. *Our endangered values: America's moral crisis* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 8.

Carter's political acumen was very much developed by his early years in Georgia politics. The Georgian political system was riddled with corruption. Coming to prominence under such circumstances was the first hurdle over which Carter jumped, running into the Georgia political machine along the way. Carter dove into "the belly of the beast" and ran for a seat in the Georgia State Senate in 1962. Carter's opponent, a well-known local businessman, was an incumbent with the support of Joe Hurst, "one of the state's most powerful bosses".<sup>17</sup> Carter narrowly lost the election because of Mr. Hurst's overt vote manipulation: "[d]ead men voted, 126 people voted in alphabetical order, and more votes were cast than there were registered voters on the rolls".<sup>18</sup> Carter, an ever-tenacious man, challenged the incumbent's underhanded victory and demanded a recount. Miraculously, he marshaled enough media attention to shed enough light on the corruption to secure a seat in the senate.<sup>19</sup> Carter's battle scars from this episode never healed, serving as a reminder that fellow politicians cannot always be trusted.

Carter entered the senate lacking not only a comfortable legislative alignment with the party system, but also lacking a comfortable alignment with the legislators themselves. During his first year as a state senator, Carter was unusually hardworking, even among his peers. Unusual for a Georgian senator, he "did not enjoy the horse trading and socializing that also constituted part of legislative life".<sup>20</sup> Such activities were proper for a senator to fulfill his duties fully. Unfortunately for him, he would maintain this asocial temperament through his political career. Hamilton Jordon, a lifetime political adviser and presidential chief of staff, noted that Carter didn't "understand the personal element in politics".<sup>21</sup> Perhaps stemming from his tenure as a nuclear engineer, Carter was more interested in getting the job done today than he was in building relationships for tomorrow. Immersed in a political system that he presciently regarded as corrupt, Mr. Carter's belief that his way was the right way was galvanized during his senatorial stint. This, for better *and* for worse, was an attitude that he would long retain after he left the senate.

From the inception of his political career, Carter needed to work *against*, and not *with*, the political system to gain power. In his 1970 bid for governor of Georgia, "Carter's campaign focused on his promise to help the average Georgians, to make government more efficient, and to be responsive to citizen concerns".<sup>22</sup> To the average Georgian voter, corruption was nearly synonymous with politics. Carter's appeal in this

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<sup>17</sup> Julian E. Zelizer. *Jimmy Carter: the 39th president, 1977-81* (New York: Times Books, 2010), 15.

<sup>18</sup> Steven F. Hayward. *The Real Jimmy Carter: How Our Worst Ex-President Undermines American Foreign Policy, Coddles Dictators, and Created the Party of Clinton and Kerry* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2004), 29.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>20</sup> Julian E. Zelizer. *Jimmy Carter: the 39th president, 1977-81* (New York: Times Books, 2010), 17.

<sup>21</sup> Peter G Bourne. *Jimmy Carter: a comprehensive biography from Plains to post-presidency* (New York: Scribner, 1997), 206.

<sup>22</sup> Julian E. Zelizer. *Jimmy Carter: the 39th president, 1977-81* (New York: Times Books, 2010), 23.

race was that he was antigovernment.<sup>23</sup> He was an outsider. When he won the gubernatorial race, he further refined his image as an outsider.<sup>24</sup> To combat the inefficiencies of Georgian government, one of Carters goals was to “streamline the state government by eliminating unnecessary agencies and centralizing control under the governor”.<sup>25</sup> Carter built a career on beating the system, redesigning the system, but not working with the system.

Governor Carter’s initiatives were noteworthy for another reason: they were difficult to label. This wasn’t unusual throughout Carter’s political career, as he often “refused to be pinned down by preconceptions of what a liberal or conservative should do”.<sup>26</sup> Since Mr. Carter spent much of his pre-Washington political career fighting against a corrupted political system, he developed his own set of beliefs that occasionally deviated from party platforms. He never felt the need to conform to the Democratic Party both within his state and within the nation. A political maverick from day one, Carter would have a particularly difficult time garnering support for his many legislative proposals from the people who had ultimate authority over them: the legislators. Because he never comfortably aligned with his own party, Governor—and President—Carter often hobbled across the chamber pigeon-toed.

This exploration would be incomplete without a discussion of Carter’s faith. In his 2005 book, *Our Endangered Values: America's Moral Crisis*, Carter sheds light on his Christian faith and how it affected his presidency. In the introduction of the book, he admitted that “[his] own religious beliefs have been inextricably entwined with the political principles [he has] adopted”.<sup>27</sup> While religious beliefs often underpin many of the morals that politicians have, Carter’s religious underpinnings ran much deeper than most presidents’. Carter submitted that he “was born into a Christian family, nurtured as a southern Baptist, and [had] been involved in weekly Bible lesson all [his] life, first as a student and then, from early manhood, as a teacher”.<sup>28</sup> This level of intimacy with the church is nearly unparalleled in presidential history, as Mr. Carter even maintained his Bible lessons through his presidency.<sup>29</sup> For Carter, religion wasn’t merely a part of life—it was a way of life. Carter himself contends that one of his “most fervent commitments was to the complete separation of church and state”,<sup>30</sup> but his religion no doubt found its way into many of his ethical dilemmas while in office in ways few presidents had before experienced. In response to concerns about his private, religious beliefs conflicting with his political, secular duties, Carter submits the following:

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>27</sup> Jimmy Carter. *Our endangered values: America's moral crisis* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 6.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 18.

There were a few inconsistencies, but I always honored my oath to “preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.” For instance, I have never believed that Jesus Christ would approve of either abortions or the death penalty, but I obeyed such Supreme Court Decisions to the best of my ability, *at the same time attempting to minimize what I considered to be their adverse impact*.<sup>31</sup> (Emphasis added)

Carter’s faith was the lens through which he examined the world. This isn’t a bias from which an actively practicing Christian can separate. To the researcher’s advantage, Carter wrote this analysis of his morality more than two decades after leaving office. His retrospection produced an honest self-assessment. For Carter, faith-based considerations were much less the expectation than they were the rule.

It might be said that Carter’s faith-based perceptions might have been compatible with those of the conservative right. Though Carter was indeed religious, he belonged to the religious Left—“a very different beast”.<sup>32</sup> Carter supported many of the positions around which the Left rallied, such as environmental legislation, healthcare, and a dovish aversion to military intervention. Even so, Carter examined certain issues, such as abortion, through the same religious lens that the right would. These political incongruities made for a slightly awkward leader of the Democratic Party. Indeed, Carter’s religious identity made him more of an outsider once in Washington, standing between even him and his party.

One of the most heavily-criticized episodes of the Carter administration was the energy crisis of 1979. In the wake of the Iranian Revolution, Iran cut the world’s oil supply by two million barrels per day in December 1978. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) took the opportunity to hike oil prices. OPEC quickly moved to 50% increases by the summer of 1979.<sup>33</sup> As a result, gas station lines spread and caused panic across the nation.<sup>34</sup> This sudden scarcity may not have been the fault of the president, but required him to soften the blow to the nation’s morale. As was, and still is, customary of an American crisis, nearly all matters of national concern fell on the president’s shoulders. Carter’s public response to the price hikes and station

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<sup>31</sup> Jimmy Carter. *Our endangered values: America’s moral crisis* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 57.

<sup>32</sup> Carole Cadwalladr, “Jimmy Carter: ‘We never dropped a bomb. We never fired a bullet. We never went to war.’” *The Guardian*. Published September 10, 2012, Accessed August 31, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/sep/11/president-jimmy-carter-interview>.

<sup>33</sup> Steven F. Hayward. *The Real Jimmy Carter: How Our Worst Ex-President Undermines American Foreign Policy, Coddles Dictators, and Created the Party of Clinton and Kerry* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2004), 141.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

lines was to deliver what was to be known as the “malaise” speech.<sup>35</sup> Within the address, Carter’s moralistic underpinnings did more than shine through and in between each line. A few notable excerpts from the address are more than adequate to display this point:

It’s clear that the true problems of our nation are much deeper—deeper than gasoline lines or energy shortages, deeper even than inflation or recessions.

[A]fter listening to the American people I have been reminded again that *all the legislation in the world can’t fix what’s wrong with America.*

The threat is nearly invisible in ordinary ways. It is a crisis of confidence. It is a crisis that strikes at the very *heart and soul* of our national will. We can see this crisis in the growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives and in the loss of a unity of purpose for the nation.

Our people are *losing that faith*, not only in government itself but in the ability as citizens to serve as the ultimate rulers and shapers of our democracy.

The symptoms of this *crisis of the American spirit* are all around us.<sup>36</sup>

(Emphases added)

Within these excerpts from the speech, Carter projected his own spiritual perception of the issue onto the nation. Instead of focusing on the nation’s crisis of oil, Carter focused on the nation’s crisis of confidence. He didn’t look to the typical explanations for the oil crisis, but instead relied more on faith and principles. What followed the address invited trouble: the purge of the presidential cabinet.

Following the “malaise” speech, the president ordered the pro forma resignation of his entire cabinet, with an additional twenty-three senior White House staff.<sup>37</sup> Though Carter would only accept five of the resignations, the purge was supposed to be an extension of the spirit of his recent address. The peanut farmer’s intentions fell on infertile soil. *Time* described it as “the most thoroughgoing, and puzzling, purge in the history of the U.S. presidency”.<sup>38</sup> It wasn’t only puzzling to the public, as Washington

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<sup>35</sup> Steven F. Hayward. *The Real Jimmy Carter: How Our Worst Ex-President Undermines American Foreign Policy, Coddles Dictators, and Created the Party of Clinton and Kerry* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2004), 146.

<sup>36</sup> "Jimmy Carter's Full "Crisis of Confidence" Speech (July 15, 1979)." *YouTube*. Published May 2, 2012, Accessed September 8, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kakFDUeoJKM>.

<sup>37</sup> Steven F. Hayward. *The Real Jimmy Carter: How Our Worst Ex-President Undermines American Foreign Policy, Coddles Dictators, and Created the Party of Clinton and Kerry* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2004), 153.

<sup>38</sup> "Carter's Great Purge." *Time*, July 30, 1979.

legislators also had doubts about the purge.<sup>39</sup> *Time* also judged that “the house cleaning...provoked new doubts about Carter’s understanding of the federal government and about his own leadership ability”.<sup>40</sup> To Carter, an antigovernment change was a gesture of democratic faith, almost inviting the public into the White House to clean up the government personally. Similar to his time in Georgia, Carter regarded government officials as corrupt and inept. However, the same political machine that functioned in Georgia didn’t function in Washington. Carter’s purge suggested to the public not that he was tending to *the* government’s inadequacies, but that he was tending to *his* government’s inadequacies. He was responsible for appointing the officials from whom he requested resignations. Carter’s position as the appointer of these officials made the culpability mutual, and the public responded as such: “by end of the week, his approval rating had fallen back to the pre-malaise speech 25 percent”.<sup>41</sup> This episode illustrates that though Carter’s moral rectitude may have been well-meant, its extremity was not well-taken.

Very likely the most nightmarish episode within Carter’s foreign policy was the Iranian hostage crisis. This incident tested Carter’s political acumen with both the public and his advisers. On November 4, 1979, “as many as three thousand militants who hated America for its support of the Shah poured across the [U.S.] embassy walls and took control of the compound”.<sup>42</sup> Fifty-two American hostages became mere puppets in the theatre of an Iranian revolution, forcing the Commander-in-Chief to undertake a series of negotiations for their release.<sup>43</sup> This crisis would indelibly stain the Carter administration in its last year by undermining Carter’s legitimacy as Commander-in-Chief. Carter, a dovish head of the U.S. Military, refrained from the use of military force through each of the 444 agonizing days of the hostage crisis. This, Carter admits in a 2011 interview for *The Guardian*, “was not a popular thing among the public, and it was not even popular among [his] own advisers inside the White House. Including [his] wife”.<sup>44</sup> Instead of military intervention, Carter maintained a personal moral high ground through Operation Eagle Claw. Intended to be a peaceful alternative to hawkish force, the operation only made matters worse by ending in a

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<sup>39</sup> Steven F. Hayward. *The Real Jimmy Carter: How Our Worst Ex-President Undermines American Foreign Policy, Coddles Dictators, and Created the Party of Clinton and Kerry* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2004), 154.

<sup>40</sup> “Carter’s Great Purge.” *Time*, July 30, 1979.

<sup>41</sup> Steven F. Hayward. *The Real Jimmy Carter: How Our Worst Ex-President Undermines American Foreign Policy, Coddles Dictators, and Created the Party of Clinton and Kerry* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2004), 154.

<sup>42</sup> Frye Gaillard. *Prophet from Plains: Jimmy Carter and his legacy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 25.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>44</sup> Carole Cadwalladr, “Jimmy Carter: ‘We never dropped a bomb. We never fired a bullet. We never went to war.’” *The Guardian*. Published September 10, 2012, Accessed August 31, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/sep/11/president-jimmy-carter-interview>.

“terrible confluence of extreme circumstances involving a sandstorm in the desert and a helicopter crash, [in which] eight US servicemen were killed”.<sup>45</sup> Ironically, Carter’s attempt to preserve lives resulted in lives lost. To the public, this was an unacceptable failure. Indeed, it was accident from which his presidency would never recover.<sup>46</sup> Gaillard even held that without this accident, “[Carter may have been reelected] if [he] had been lucky—if, for example, a navy helicopter and C130 transport plane hadn’t collided in a swirl of Iranian dust”.<sup>47</sup> Even so, Carter would never regret his dovishness. The following excerpt from a 2011 interview with *The Guardian* illuminates how inextricably entwined the president’s morals were, and still are, with his leadership:

Rosalynn has been quoted as saying that, had her husband bombed Tehran, he would have been re-elected. [The interviewer] put this to Carter. "That's probably true. A lot of people thought that. But it would probably have resulted in the death of maybe tens of thousands of Iranians who were innocent, and in the deaths of the hostages as well. In retrospect I don't have any doubt that I did the right thing. But it was not a popular thing among the public, and it was not even popular among my own advisers inside the White House. Including my wife".<sup>48</sup>

Carter’s current cost-benefit analysis perfectly illustrates the relationship between his morals and his politics: he regarded human life as infinitely more valuable than a political victory, making his failed rescue plan a small cost for the benefit of preserving tens of thousands of innocent human lives.

Also inconveniently occurring within Carter’s nightmarish final year in office was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Carter’s predictably diplomatic response was in the form of “a grain embargo, an Olympic boycott, and a backing away from the SALT II treaty”.<sup>49</sup> Despite all of these dovish and sincere efforts to halt the Soviet occupation, the Soviets continued with their mission anyway.<sup>50</sup> Carter once again affirmed the notion that he was willing to put his morals well above what was clearly more viable. Carter was by almost no accounts an unintelligent man. Indeed, it is conceivable that he consciously neglected the viable to uphold his principles. He led this nation as Commander-in-Chief with a set of bulletproof morals, even at the gunpoint of politics.

With his presidency three decades behind him, Carter proudly submitted that “[w]e kept our country at peace. We never went to war. We never dropped a bomb. We never

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Frye Gaillard. *Prophet from Plains: Jimmy Carter and his legacy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 13.

<sup>48</sup> Carole Cadwalladr, "Jimmy Carter: 'We never dropped a bomb. We never fired a bullet. We never went to war'." *The Guardian*. Published September 10, 2012, Accessed August 31, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/sep/11/president-jimmy-carter-interview>.

<sup>49</sup> Frye Gaillard. *Prophet from Plains: Jimmy Carter and his legacy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 25.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

fired a bullet. But we still achieved our international goals".<sup>51</sup> Carter's present perception of his single term suggests no pangs of regret for his moral obstinacy. Though he may not have been the president for the political system, he remained content with his decisions. It should come as no surprise that Carter holds his moral underpinnings in high regard. Carter didn't just massage the conventions of presidential moral fidelity – he rejected them. To his demise, his moral fidelity was incompatible with the jungle of Washington. It was incompatible with the jungle of American politics, but it wasn't incompatible with the farmland of Plains, a fact which Carter may have overzealously applied throughout the rest of his political career.

### CONCLUSION

The collective American memory may be that Mr. Carter was a failed president. Some historians reduce his failure to mere political ineptitude. But the decisions made and patterns of behavior exhibited can be explained by Carter's pre-presidential experiences. Earl Carter's demands led his son to aim for perfection, even in the White House. Young Jimmy worked hard and independently to solve issues of personal relevance, and so too did President Carter to solve issues of international relevance. The Navy required Carter to solve problems systematically, and so too did he as president. The Baptist faith required that the weekly Bible school teacher preserve human life, and so too did President Carter by avoiding war. Perhaps Carter's biggest concern wasn't that he was unfit for command, but rather that he was too fit for command. The Oval Office requires an at least slightly malleable occupant, one who is willing to bend personal ideals. The 39<sup>th</sup> President was simply too rigid for office. Though it might be said that the White House's demand for malleability is only par for the course, there is a more important point hiding within this truism: moral malleability has always been a requisite to the American political tradition.

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<sup>51</sup> Carole Cadwalladr, "Jimmy Carter: 'We never dropped a bomb. We never fired a bullet. We never went to war'." *The Guardian*. Published September 10, 2012, Accessed August 31, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/sep/11/president-jimmy-carter-interview>.

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## Book Reviews

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### **The Old Testament in Syriac according to the Peshitta Version, Part IV Fasc. 4 Ezra and Nehemiah, 1, 2 Maccabees**

M. Albert and A. Penna (eds.)

Brill, Leiden: 2013; Hard Cover; 203 pages; RRP A\$175; ISBN: 978-9-00-418430-5

The Syriac Peshitta is an important source for understanding Syrian Church history and the texts that were used to shape their particular theology. The similarities between Syriac and Hebrew make these works essential for Biblical and Syrian studies, so this is a welcome addition to the growing corpus. This particular volume contains the full Syriac text of four Old Testament books in a clear font. The work includes an extensive critical apparatus and good introductions. Each part also includes concise but thorough summaries of the manuscript evidence, and clear tables document important differences.

The Maccabean story was an important foundation for Syrian Church understandings of martyrdom and, thus, ascetic practice. The story of the mother and her 7 sons martyred by Antiochus was celebrated as a motivation to imitate their bold and courageous stand. This story also exhibits important Stoic ideas of overcoming the emotions by reason and, thus, is a foretaste of Syrian Stoic emphasis. The righteous stand against Gentile idolatry and leading to martyrdom is also frequently found in deuterocanonical books, which also often show evidence of the influence of Greek philosophy. These works were well known in Syrian circles and display Semitic elements not so current in Greek or Latin tradition. Also of significance is the role of the woman as ‘greatest in faith’, a role reprised by Mary in the Syriac worldview but one that sounded quite peculiar to Greek ears. Thus the Syriac language around this and other stories reveals fascinating insights into Syrian theology and culture.

The Peshitta uses words that capture specifics not always present in the Greek. For example in 2 Macc 7:15 we see the fifth son being “mangled” or “tortured” depending on the English translation. Yet the Syriac has mangrīn and alšīn, which mean “stretched on a mangonel” and “pressed”, evoking the imagery of specific torture devices. This is somewhat different to the Septuagint version which uses prosagontes (from agon), which certainly captures the meaning but does not convey the same literal machine imagery. It will be interesting to see what other differences are revealed.

The book is well bound and a separate one page insert explains the various symbols and abbreviations used, though this might have been better included in the text itself. This first academic edition of these important texts is a welcome addition to Brill’s

nearly complete Syriac Old Testament Series, and will be studied with interest by the small but determined band of Syriac scholars.

*John D'Alton*  
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### **The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity**

Scott Fitzgerald Johnson (ed.)

Oxford University Press, Oxford: 2012. Hard Cover; 1248 pages; 20+ colour and black and white illustrations, maps; RRP A\$170; ISBN: 978-0-19-533693-1

Handbooks can be pedestrian compendiums of mediocre articles, but this OUP publication is a refreshing contribution to the study of Late Antiquity. Many of the chapters address expected themes, but they are unusually helpful, providing insightful contextual material and discussion of current debates. Packed into a weighty 1248 pages are 36 articles grouped into the four broad categories of 'Geography and Peoples', 'Literary and Philosophical Cultures', 'Religion and Religious Identity', and 'Law, State and Social Structures.' A final section on the wider world adds perspective and connects these themes to the Italian Renaissance. Every article is rich in detail and well presented, clearly articulating major themes and often using intriguing detail. There are extensive endnotes and bibliographies with each article, making this handbook almost encyclopedic in breadth. The topics, of course, cannot cover every people nor every religion, but the ones chosen are vibrant cameos and quite representative.

As well as the typical articles on the barbarians and Western kingdoms, the first section contains great pieces on the Balkans, the Syrians, Egypt, Arabia, Ethiopia, Armenia, and the Silk Road. On the Balkans, Caldwell discusses how the geography of Pannonia, Thrace and Dalmatia affected events and even the assassination of emperors. He discusses rainfall, rivers, and city walls, and many other aspects of life in this region, leaving the reader with an appreciation for the difficulties of travel, rule, and commerce. Philip Wood's article on the Syrians focusses on the enormous Syriac literature of Late Antiquity and summarises the recent changes in the historiography of Syriac writing. The Syriac tradition is a vastly understudied field given that it is the legacy of a third of the population of the Church of Late Antiquity. Wood discusses the *Doctrina Addai*, Jewish influence, Jacob of Serugh, the social and political context, and other texts and issues. This is a solid introduction to the field of uniquely Syriac Christian thought.

In the second part of the handbook, we find articles on Greek and Latin Poetry, Education, Travel, and Cosmology among others. Of special note is the piece by Gregory Smith on Physics and Metaphysics, which is unusually clear and insightful when dealing with Greek metaphysics. He discusses several of the main themes of Late Antique metaphysics and how they developed and influenced modern thinking. Smith

draws on many sources and his analysis is insightful and engaging. His writing provides the context for reading Proclus and Pseudo-Dionysius in a concise yet comprehensive way. Smith explains how 'the ancients' understood the body-soul relation, the importance of Plotinus, and why philosopher's faces "shone" in a way that is compelling reading. This is certainly how philosophy should be introduced. Also good is Rubenson's article on monasticism, as it avoids many of the usual simplistic tropes and discusses monasteries as schools in the classical Greek tradition. Rubenson shows that paideia pervaded many monasteries, as demonstrated in the texts produced there, and this informs our understanding of monasteries as preservers of classical Greek culture.

A wide variety of articles feature in the third section, ranging from Marriage and Family to Economics, Rural issues, Citizenship and Roman Law. Andrew Gillett's contribution is *Communication in Late Antiquity: Use and Reuse*. Gillett discusses various aspects of epistolary practice including the cultural significance of the letter within the broader concerns of the elite's approach to maintaining their social status. He also notes the various political and social functions of letter collections and provides readers with many examples. In a similarly analytical work, Peregrine Horden surveys the rise of hospitals from Basil of Caesarea and Pachomius onwards, and the theological motivations and social impact of this innovation. Horden discusses the various Greek terms used in relation to the care of the sick, and traces literary evidence for their effectiveness and extent. There are 122 endnotes in this twenty-two page piece: this is a good example of the density and informativeness of all the Handbook's articles.

Section Four is another fascinating collection of articles on Religion and Identity, with contributions on Sacred Space and Visual Art, Paganism and Christianisation, and Episcopal Leadership. Hoyland's piece on Early Islam as a Late Antique religion is very insightful for contextualising Islam within the broader theological and social currents present on the Eastern fringes of the Roman Empire. His critique of trends in the modern historiography of Islam that 'other' Islam is clear, relevant and poignant. Hoyland's analysis shows that Islam was very much a part of Late Antiquity in many ways, from its emphasis on personal piety, its use of political power, and its widespread appropriation of Greek classical thought. Arabia is shown to be an integral part of the cosmopolitan world of the time, a point previously made by Irfan Shahid but still ignored by too many scholars.

This handbook is definitely worth a read. Every article has valuable insights and makes connections to a wide range of topics. It is not an encyclopedia per se, but covers such a broad range of people, places, trends, and events that the overall effect is of a many-windowed view of the world of Late Antiquity. Scholars will find it full of useful reference material and many jumping-off points for further research.

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**Lost Letters of Everyday Life: English Society, 1200-1250**

Martha Carlin and David Crouch (eds.)

University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia: 2013. Hard Cover; 360 pages; 19 BW illustrations; RRP USD79.95; ISBN: 978-0-8122-4459-5.

At the turn of the millennium, Mary Garrison charged medieval historians, and indeed, historians of literacy in any age, not to assume that a lack of survival of ephemeral correspondence necessarily implied a lack of production.<sup>1</sup> Medieval letters, she argued, were not about only high politics and theology, with oral communication sufficient for every other form of human interaction and commerce. More likely, structural and social forces conspired against preserving the documentary traces of low level exchanges. Therefore, she suggested, by looking for accidental survivals, such as in archaeological contexts, some of these epistolary ephemera might be recovered. One such locus of unexpected survival can be found among the example letters in medieval formularies, that is, books of 'forms' of correspondence. In the volume under review, Martha Carlin and David Crouch edit and translate one hundred letters drawn from two early thirteenth-century English formularies: Oxford, Bodleian Library, Fairfax MS 27 and London, British Library, Additional MS 8167. Probably produced for or by students in the Oxford business schools which taught practical skills for administrative careers, these collections include almost every kind of model letter an aspiring scribe or secretary might need. Some appear to be copies of real letters, amended for general application; all are credible letters, since even the fictional examples needed to be relevant to the working life for which students were preparing. Together they substantially increase the evidence available in print for the kind of ephemeral letter writing that Garrison urged us to believe could have existed in the medieval period.

The principles of selection at work in this collection explicitly favour the everyday, since there are many other places where the interested reader can find diplomatic, royal and papal letters of this period in print. Indeed, more than a book about letters *per se*, this is a book about what letters like these can demonstrate about daily life in England in the thirteenth century. It will prove a treasure trove of sources for undergraduate teaching, but is equally valuable as a scholarly resource of such material, since careful editions of the Latin are provided together with a translation of and brief commentary on every item. To facilitate using these letters as sources, the collection is organised thematically, in five chapters: Money; War and Politics; Lordship and Administration; Family and Community; and A Knight's Correspondence. Searching within each of these thematic chapters can be further refined by reference to subheadings such as 'Credit, Debt and Commerce', 'The Jews', or 'Accounts'. A concise and useful

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Garrison, "'Send More Socks': On Mentality and the Preservation Context of Medieval Letters," in *New Approaches to Medieval Communication*, ed. Marco Mostert, *Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy* 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999).

introduction gives background on England, and especially Oxford in this period, and to the manuscripts, the medieval art of letter writing, or *ars dictaminis*, the formulary genre, and the underlying question of the extent of practical literacy in medieval society to which I have already alluded. Together, the introduction, structure and editorial principles of this volume make it highly accessible to the non-specialist while retaining key features expected by academic readers.

This collection is presented principally as a gathering of rare evidence for daily life, and functions well on that level. However, it seems likely that its most significant scholarly contribution will be to advance research in medieval pragmatic literacy, its utility and social penetration. Strikingly, many items in these formularies, and most of those selected for publication, reveal how much more widely literacy was used and expected to be used in early thirteenth-century English society than received views have implied.<sup>2</sup> For instance, the examples published here include letters from an earl to a vintner, to a draper, and to a skinner, as well as example replies from both the vintner and the skinner, suggesting that both noble households and trades-people could credibly have used writing to transact quotidian business. Interestingly, these examples envisage possible replies of both agreement and refusal, implying that there was no expectation that a nobleman's superior social status necessarily determined the outcome of an epistolary exchange with his creditors and suppliers – merely its appropriate expression and tone.

Of similar interest are the letters published here that envisage correspondence between men and women, for example, between a knight and his wife. Predating famous collections of household correspondence among the gentry, such as the Paston letters, by 200 years, these examples show that women were credible participants in epistolary exchange of this ephemeral kind much earlier than is generally recognised. They also call into question the traditional arguments around the adoption of the vernacular in letters as an explanatory factor in women's epistolarity. The thirteenth-century students of Oxford evidently anticipated producing letters in Latin for women as well as men. They also anticipated that correspondence would pass among members of a household separated by the practicalities of estate governance and life at court, just as it would later pass among the better-known members of the English gentry in the fifteenth century.

The thematic arrangement has many advantages for the main audiences of this useful book. However, it does obscure the original arrangement of these letters in their formulary context. This issue would no doubt be of interest to some readers. One desideratum would have been a system of annotation allowing those interested to reconstruct the original order of the selected letters. Full manuscript references are

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<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

given in each case, but each manuscript folio no doubt includes many of these brief items. Furthermore, consulting the British Library and Bodleian catalogues indicates that both formularies contain substantial materials beyond those printed here. Hence, it is not possible to reconstruct satisfactorily their original order. This is, however, a minor cavil, and perhaps one specific to scholars interested in the medieval theory and practice of letter writing itself, rather than the wider readership which this volume will surely reach. Overall, I strongly recommend it to anyone interested in medieval letters, commerce, social relations, and the lives of people beyond the more familiar royal and ecclesiastical courts. There is something here for everyone.

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### **A Story Waiting to Pierce You: Mongolia, Tibet and the Destiny of the Western World**

Peter Kingsley

Golden Sufi Centre Publications, Point Reyes: 2010, second printing 2011. (Hardcover) ISBN 13:978-1-890350-20-8; (Paperback) ISBN: 13: 978-1-890350-21-5.

Books on the exchange of religious and mythic ideas between the cultural spheres of the Classical world and the steppe regions of Inner Asia remain a rarity, even now, long after the return to comparative studies in the Classics through the agency of Burkert and West and Morris. Bolton's *Aristeas of Proconnesus*, Littleton and Malcor's *From Scythia to Camelot* and Mayor's various publications on the gryphon myth's connections with dinosaur skeletons in Mongolia, are perhaps among the most well known works on such topics, but often go undiscussed by wider audiences. It is for this reason, as someone with a profound interest in both of these fields, that Kingsley's most recent book, *A Story Waiting to Pierce You*, is a very welcome find indeed and invites much rereading, in spite of its considerable weaknesses.

At the centre of *A Story Waiting to Pierce You* is the simple thesis that the mysterious wandering Hyperborean-Scythian sage Abaris, most familiar in the short dismissive passage given by Herodotus (IV.36), travelled around the world on an arrow, met with Pythagoras, and thereby gave rise to the roots of Western Philosophy through mutual recognition of one another as the reincarnation of Apollo through the gifting of Abaris' arrow. In order to substantiate these claims we must turn to Kingsley's extensive endnotes, far longer than the compelling yet slim narrative, wherein the author attempts to elevate this meeting from its obscurity in the Pythagorean corpus to what he takes to be a key juncture in the development of mutual recognition between Western and Eastern philosophies.

In order to substantiate the idea that the Abaris-Pythagoras meeting was genuine, Kingsley is obliged to argue that it is much older than the conventional fourth century BCE dating of Pythagoreanism's enthusiastic appropriation of just about every *goes* (wonder-worker) figure in Greek tradition, and indeed the author has done this very well. There is no doubt that reassessment of the layers of these texts in order to pinpoint the age of the traditions involved is definitely needed, and Kingsley has begun and defended strongly in many cases his position on the importance of the arrow in this meeting (pp. 35-48; notes: §5, 8, 12, 19, 21). Whether, however, Kingsley's (pp. 40-3; notes: §11, 14, 15, 17, 20) theory that the arrow can be taken to represent the Tibetan *phurba* and the *tulku's* identification of property from a previous life would seem a little far fetched and requires a greater study of what can be known of Tibetan culture during antiquity and its relation to Inner Asian beliefs, for which there is next to no evidence to work with.

My main difficulty with this book, however, is the matter of a rather irksome assumption made by the author, which to my knowledge, no reviewer has of yet dealt with. This is the bald statement made early in the piece (p. 6-7), that due to similarity of names, the figure Abaris was in fact an ancient Avar, an Inner Asian people recorded by the Byzantines from the sixth century CE, and possibly the Chinese from the fourth under the name Juan-Juan or Var as dwelling in Mongolia. In his very first endnote (§1), Kingsley expends a great deal of energy on insisting that Abaris was not a Scythian, but a "Mongolian" - though the more obvious decision would have been to have linked Abaris more strongly to the heterogenous network of "Scythic" cultures emerging into the Greek cultural sphere from the sixth century BCE. Even more dubious are Kingsley's sources for the Abaris-Avar link: a nineteenth century geographical dictionary which inexplicably puts the Avars and Türkic peoples in Tobol during antiquity,<sup>1</sup> and a corrupt *Suda* entry (s. v. Ἀβαρίς) which has conflated Abaris with the "*hapax*" Abaris (Avar) - strangely the same in nominative and accusative plural. This appears to have been taken from Porphyrogenitus' tenth century CE *de Legationibus* (p. 74), where it supposedly represents a fragment of Priscus' (fr. 30) work from the fifth century CE. As well as being prior to any Avar migration, according to Mänchen-Helfen<sup>2</sup> the fragment in question has been judiciously rewritten where this term occurs *in situ*, and moreover - the term used is not the lexically awkward *Abaris* for Avars here, but the fairly regular *Abaroi*. The problem remains with the *Suda*. Why such a thin idea has been leant upon so heavily by the author is a mystery, though the Avar-Abaris link has been noted

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1 Latham, R.G. A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography (London: Walton and Maberly Publishers, 1856), 349-350

2 Mänchen-Helfen, O. In the World of the Huns: Studies in their History and Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 436.

before by other scholars such as Szádeczky-Kardoss<sup>3</sup> and Pohl,<sup>4</sup> but little trust has seemingly ever been put into it due to the highly anachronistic act of imagining Inner Asia unchanged between the sixth century BCE and CE. Indeed during the sixth century BCE, when Abaris is suggested by the *Suda* to have lived, there is little evidence of the Scythic or Pazyryk cultures penetrating into Mongolia and little is known of the *kereksuur* and slab-grave cultures that existed there at that time either side of the Khangai Mountains, beyond some archaeological remains and evidence of South West Asian cultural influence in Western Mongolia.<sup>5</sup>

In recent years, it has been common for Von Stuckrad<sup>6</sup> and Bremmer<sup>7</sup> to insist that we know very little of Scythian religious practice in reference to its similarity with the beliefs of the living shamanic traditions of Mongolia, Tibet and Siberia - mostly as a reaction to the perceived ahistorical liberties taken by previous thinkers such as Meuli, Dodds and others, including Burkert, who unsurprisingly is found endorsing this book on its cover. Kingsley builds on these prior thinkers and their notions of Ancient Greek “shamans” influenced by Inner Asian culture. Some of his excesses mirror theirs: a disregard for history such as in his assumption that the Avars possessed a myth of lupine origin (p. 83) like later Türkic-Mongolian peoples, and an almost free association with any “primordial” people from Tibet to the Iroquois, when even the slimmest of parallels seems to appear reasonable enough to throw into the stew to restore the story of Abaris to the prime position in human history that Kingsley seems to find it worthy of representing. Even though Kingsley has largely pitched *A Story* towards a New-Age readership living in hope for a global oneness, and in spite of several good reviews on the book’s cover in praise of the “message” this work has been seen to convey, it is hard to find anything truly solid even for one of a spiritual bent in what Kingsley conjures up. We have the meeting with Pythagoras, much discussion on the influence of the Mongols and Tibet upon western thinking from Abaris to the present, but even in the final chapter, aside from a preconceived numinousness towards globalisation, after several reads the whole “future” that the text is in search of remains thoroughly opaque. This is a book to be judiciously sorted through, and aside from my own work I am yet to even find it cited by anyone, either positively or negatively. I find this rather disappointing, for on matters such as the symbolism of arrows, the dating of the Pythagorean traditions and returning the Classical-Inner Asian cultural intersection to

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3 Pohl, W. 1998 “Conceptions of Ethnicity: in Early Mediaeval Studies,” in Little, L. K. and Rosenwein, B. H. (eds) *Debating the Middle Ages: Issues and Readings*. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 18.

4 Szádeczky-Kardoss, S. “The Avars,” in Sinor, D. (ed.) *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 206.

5 Jacobson, E. *The Deer Goddess of Ancient Siberia: A Study in the Ecology of Belief* (Boston: E.J. Brill Academic Publishers, 1993); Skrynnikova, T. D. “Shamanism in Inner Asia: Two Archetypes,” *Sibirica* 2.1 (2002) 69-87.

6 Von Stuckrad, K. *Schamanismus und Esoterik* (Leuven: L. Peeters Verlag, 2003), 106-16.

7 Bremmer, J. N. *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 34-50, *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife* (London and New York: Routledge Publishing, 2002), 33-9.

the table, this book remains an invaluable first step towards some very fertile future ideas.

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**Music, Piety, and Propaganda: The Soundscapes of Counter-Reformation Bavaria**

Alexander J. Fisher

Oxford University Press, Oxford: 2014. Hardcover, 384 pages, 23 black and white line drawings, and 8 black and white halftone images. RRP US\$55, ISBN: 9780199764648

In style and ambit, *Music, Piety, & Propaganda: The Soundscapes of Counter-Reformation Bavaria* is a surprising and modern historical book that takes the notoriously difficult path of interdisciplinarity but actually delivers what it sets out to do. Undergirded by a level of research that should satisfy musicologists, historians and scholars of Christian religion alike, Alexander J. Fisher describes the soundscape of Counter-Reformation Bavaria, homing in upon those sonic outputs – particularly music, bells, guns, and silence – that can be understood to be direct responses to the challenge of Protestantism in a realm that is defiantly Catholic. Beginning with the public spaces of religious worship in Counter-Reformation Bavaria, Fisher moves to the more private spaces of devotion, then to the civic spaces in which religious spectacles, processions and pilgrimages are manipulated to reinforce the determination of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Bavarian rulers to impose Catholic doctrine and morality upon all elements of life, whether every-day or festive. While the propagandist angle is explored, Fisher does not deny the genuine piety of participants at all levels of society, accepting that pilgrims were motivated by a genuine desire to view the relics of saints, that the transubstantiated Eucharist, or Host, was perceived as a genuinely mysterious and awesome evocation of the triune God's love, and that the rulers of Bavaria were not only motivated by a desire to assert their earthly power, but also by a genuine faith in the Catholic teachings.

Always coming back to sound, Fisher writes about canons that are fired by Bavarian troops accompanying a Corpus Christi procession in Protestant-sympathising, officially Catholic, Weiden, the reverberations breaking windows in an inadvertently symbolic gesture of violence against heresy. The singing for alms of itinerant beggars and children is eventually prohibited to avoid immoderate sounds and to protect the incomes of duly accredited (and duly inculcated) student church choristers. The chattering noise of everyday life is silenced by the requirement to kneel and pray when the Turk bell, mimicking the Call to Prayer of the religion it is designed to warn against,

rings out. Civic musicians in pipers' towers perform motets and other religious songs on Sundays, facing outwards in all four directions to maximise their ability to sacralise otherwise secular space. A great bronze bell peals at 4am on the day that the new St Michaels' Jesuit Church in Munich is consecrated. Followed by salvos of gunfire and the discharge of canons, it calls the faithful to proceed to the church where five choruses of singers and instrumentalists provide the music of a high mass in accordance with the dictates of the Counter-reformative Council of Trent. A great feast follows and leads into an eight-hour drama involving 900 participants (including musicians), which concludes with St Michael the Archangel slaying a dragon, the latter symbolic of both Satan and heresy.

These are but a small sprinkling of the rich panoply of sounds and occasions covered by Fisher in order to make his point that aurality transcends the boundaries of sight. The ability of sound to travel through walls and across great distances enables the temporary transformation of entire cities and their surrounding countryside into sacred, Catholic-indoctrinated spaces.

Leaving aside the arguments and the content of the book, another of its surprising features relates to the potentially risky decision to write a book that is not only interdisciplinary, but also acceptable to both academic and general readers. What is surprising is that it, in most aspects, it succeeds. Certainly, the Catholic theologian might balk at the title's reiteration of the out-dated idea of a Catholic Counter Reformation, arguing that the Church was not directly countering the Protestant movement, but rather was engaged in an ongoing process of reform that dealt with issues that the Protestants may well have highlighted, but of which the Church was already well aware and working towards finding appropriate solutions. Similarly, the academic reader may wish for a more circumspect use of words like "opulent" and "sumptuous", and the general reader might skip over some of the more detailed archival information; nevertheless, the quality of the content and the easy, enthusiastic writing style exhibited throughout countermand any tendency to make such criticisms. The book is always engaging and always reliant upon a formidable level of research. Further, with roughly seventy percent of the references cited being in the German language, Fisher brings to the English-speaking world a wealth of knowledge held in otherwise inaccessible primary and secondary sources.

For these, and for the English-language texts, Fisher provides the expected citations in the book itself, but Oxford has taken advantage of modern technology to give the scholarly reader access to further information. Taking the form of extended references, tabular data, an extended bibliography, and transcriptions of the texts of various songs (in both German and English), these items can be accessed via the book's promotional webpage on the publisher's website. While such resources do cater to the needs of experienced scholars, and the writing style is accessible to the generalist, these factors make it particularly suitable for any undergraduate student interested in early-modern European history, who has yet to gain a broad understanding of the role religion and

music played in the cultural and devotional life of the various stratum of societies at the time. While Fisher deals with a very specific place and time, and local variances do matter, the book provides an excellent entrée into the types of religious events and sounds that are encountered across Europe, giving the reader a visual and aural model into which knowledge acquired later can be inserted.

Mitigating a little against this suggestion, however, is the final surprising element of the book, albeit a less positive one. Oxford appears to have put the book to press without a conclusion. It stops with a “reconstruction” of a four-day pilgrimage of parishioners from St Martin’s in Landshut to the shrine of St Benno in Munich in 1603. Comprising a raft of suggestions and surmises, the story of the pilgrimage simply peters out. Even as a chapter ending it seems incomplete. This is disappointing because it leaves the reader having to try to pull all of the threads of Fisher’s argument together for her/ himself. Having found the book entirely satisfying to that point, it simply feels as if the final chapter was accidentally left out of the book.

Admittedly, Fisher does begin the book with a gripping anecdote of Protestants infiltrating a Catholic mass in 1558, and perhaps he was trying to conclude in a similarly anecdotal vein. But whereas the opening anecdote is dramatic and leads to an exposition of the conceptual framework and scope of the book, thereby providing the expected introductory chapter, the reconstructed pilgrimage is not a gripping tale, and, unlike the sacred walking journey it describes, leads the reader nowhere. Perhaps Fisher could write a conclusion now, and upload it to the website that contains all of his excellent extended reference material. Readers would surely thank him for doing so.

Nonetheless, whether he does this or not, the book’s contribution to the field of early modern scholarship transcends the omission. Fisher’s book may be an un-iced cake, but the cake itself is delicious.

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### **Once, Only the Swallows Were Free: A Memoir**

Gabrielle Gouch

Hybrid Publishers, Melbourne: 2013. Paperback, 416 pages; RRP \$30.  
ISBN- 978-1922166598

*Once, Only the Swallows Were Free* is a memoir by Gabrielle Gouch of her Jewish family’s struggle in post-war communist Romania as they seek to imagine a new life in Israel. It is a narrative about life in two systems, communism and capitalism, but Gouch

more strongly conveys how family relationships are reconceptualised over time - their tensions, capacity for love, patience and compromise.

Gouch's memoir is not chronological. It shifts geographically from Romanian villages to Israeli suburbs, from childhood to adulthood remembering. The structure in some places feels disjointed as it jumps timeframes and countries. But Gouch's writing style is picturesque. It is filled with glorious anecdotes and written with fiction-like narrative flair and its overall impact is a beautiful story, notwithstanding the trauma it describes.

Gouch's memoir is less about herself and her life and more about her search to fill gaps in her family history. Most important is her estranged and disabled step-brother Tom, who stayed in Romania with his deceased mother's family, while the rest of the Leitner family migrated to Israel.

To learn more, a quarter of a century after she left, Gouch returns to Romania in the early 1990s and makes subsequent visits in the following decades to stay with Tom. During these visits and conversations with Tom, Gouch's understanding of her family changes as she integrates her recollections with Tom's perceptions. It is a story of deep sadness, hardship and compromise. It is also a narrative that demonstrates how memory and oral history reshapes understandings of family life.

Gouch's family – mother Roza, father Stefan, older step-brother Tom and younger brother Yossi – wait for just under a decade to receive passports to migrate to Israel. According to Gouch, the Romanian government relinquished Jews for Israel, not out of magnanimity or humanitarian motivations to reunite Jewish people, but because there was money to be made in the migration scheme. By the time the family migrated in the mid-1960s, Gouch recalls that the rumours they were being “sold” to Israel had “turned into fact” in their minds.

During this period, the family was profoundly influenced by the restrictive social and political conditions of Romanian life and the waiting and the longing to migrate. But each family member experienced the circumstances differently.

Roza had an aching need to leave Romania for Israel. Her daily ritual is focused on waiting for the postman who is a leitmotif of escape for Roza, where passports mean a new life and reuniting with her siblings. Gouch describes her anticipation of life in Israel as a place of warm winters, open borders, medical cures and travel. For Stefan, the move holds more pragmatic concerns, “It will be difficult, the hot climate, a new language”.

While waiting, Gouch is expelled from University. It is not a private affair but a public expulsion in front of 500 students. Her family's application to migrate is seen as traitorous against Romania and there is no place for Gouch's education.

As the memoir unfolds, Gouch discovers details of her mother and father's life before and during World War II that gives Gouch more vivid emotional details helping her understand her parent's decisions and actions. For example, Roza's desperation to leave Romania is understood in the later parts of Gouch's memoir where she describes that many of Roza's family were murdered by Nazis, and Roza survived because her

family gave her their savings which she used to bribe border guards on a train from Hungary to Romania. Roza's becomes a nanny for a wealthy family in Romania, caring for a disabled boy Tom whose mother died in childbirth. Tom's father Stefan, and Roza eventually marry. They have two children, Gabrielle and Yossi.

Gouch's writing is emotionally honest and shows a great depth of contemplation and mediation as she learns, through Tom's memories and those of her parents, to reshape her interpretations of her family's life. Gouch considers that war destroyed her mother's sense of belonging and that her parent's marriage was likely "of necessity and compromise". She wonders what might have been had she been the child of two people who loved each other. As Gouch explores Roza and Stefan's life, partly through her memories and those of Tom, she begins to understand her parent's partnership and what led to Tom's estrangement from the family.

Gouch's memories also provide a first-hand account of the migration experience from communist Romania to Israel – the Promised Land. Israel's heat, poverty and war dominated Gouch's recollections, "... we were poor – not the Romanian way, the Israeli way. There was food on the table, but not much else. No phone, no washing machine, no hot water in the kitchen, and of course no air conditioner". Gouch's father Stefan commuted five hours each day to work six days a week in to his 70s and Roza struggled with the language so different in grammar and symbols she rarely spoke Hebrew outside the home. But by Gouch's account of her parent's perseverance, "they were Jews in a Jewish homeland, and that was enough for them".

Whilst Gouch is descriptive about the evolution of her understanding of family life, she is often silent about her own decision making, such as her choices about education in Romania and Israel and most noticeably her decision to later migrate to Australia. At times this is frustrating. I wanted to know more about Gouch. But her memoir is not about her, it is about her family and she brings an extraordinary depth of emotional understanding to the dynamics of her family relationships, particularly how war, wealth, poverty, Jewish persecution and communism shaped their interactions.

The memoir is an engaging study for those interested in memory studies or oral history. Gouch's recollections appear formed both from her own memory and those of her brother Tom, and demonstrate how remembering is integrated and tempered by new understandings of similar events. It is rich in detailed descriptions of family interaction complicated by religion and political forces. The memoir may interest researchers of Jewish, migrant or World War II history.

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