Proof

Part IV

Beyond the Human

Divine, Post-human, and Animal Gazes

Taylor & Francis
Not for distribution

Proof

15032-3460d-1pass-r01.indd 237 3/16/2020 5:27:23 PM

Proof

Taylor & Francis
Not for distribution

Proof

15032-3460d-1pass-r01.indd 238 3/16/2020 5:27:23 PM

Proof

15 Wondering at the Inhuman Gaze

Sean D. Kelly

The inhuman gaze, in at least one interpretation, is the gaze of whatever is deemed inhuman. Things are inhuman, the gaze of others may be inhuman, and in an important sense the gaze of God may also be considered 'inhuman'. In this chapter, I explore and wonder at this last form of *inhuman gaze* by juxtaposing the medieval understanding of the ground of being with a more familiar early 20th century understanding. Nicholas of Cusa, in the 15th century, proposed using the apparently omnivoyant gaze of certain icons to help those under his care to experience the world as replete with the gaze of God. In Kafka's work, by contrast, we meet a debased image of God, one in which God is presented as an alienated and estranged, but never dying, useless entity. The point is not that either of these experiences is correct. It is instead that there is something extraordinary, something wonderful, in the possibility of such a radical transformation in human experience over the course of history.

Taylor & Francis
Not for distribution

I

The year is 1453, October. In an ancient monastic community, nestled along the banks of Lake Tergensee, in the Bavarian Alps, the brothers have finally received a promised and much anticipated treatise. It has been sent by the Bishop assigned to overseeing the reform of their mountain diocese,[1] the great Renaissance figure Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464). Nicholas' visit to Tergensee the summer before, from June 22–27, 1452, had been met with enthusiasm by the Benedictine community there.[2] The cardinal, Cusa, had received his red hat from Pope Nicholas V, a famous humanist, in 1450. He was delighted to encounter such an open regard for his ideas in this community. The enthusiasm of the Tergensee monks stood in stark contrast with the attacks Nicholas had been receiving for several years already regarding what his interlocutors considered to be a 'mystical heresy'.

This alleged heresy took at least two forms. One early complaint about Nicholas' views, for instance by the Heidelberg theologian John Wenck (ca. 1395–1460), claimed that Nicholas had rejected the laws of

Proof

Proof

Aristotelian logic, laws that stood at the foundation of all traditional late medieval scholastic theology. Nicholas admitted this was true but explained that the rejection was carefully circumscribed. Take the principle of non-contradiction, for example. This applied in the usual ways, according to Nicholas, when dealing with discrete entities: it is logically false of any entity S that it could be both P and not-P for some discrete property P. But God lies beyond all distinction, according to Nicholas: He is not an entity distinct from other entities but is rather the ground of all entities, while not being an entity Himself.[3] Indeed, in His infinity, God is the coincidence of opposites according to Nicholas, and to treat Him as simply another being, another entity, is a form of idolatry.[4] As a result, the principle of non-contradiction does not apply to God, in Nicholas' view, nor to the mystical union with God that is the very goal of the Christian life.

A second complaint about Cusa's mystical theology was more complicated. It centered on the question of the respective roles of affect and intellect in the mystical revelation of the divinely hidden God. The terms of this debate had been set already in the 13th century when Albert the Great, the famous teacher of Thomas Aquinas, argued for an intellective rather than an affective reading of the mystical union with God. The lesson of the mystical tradition for Albert is that 'it is necessary to be united to God through intellect and to praise him by word' (McGinn 2005: 13).[5] Albert's intellective form of mysticism stood in contrast with an affective form that grounded the mystical ascent to union in an experience of love that stands beyond all cognition (McGinn 2005: 443). This debate, depending as it does upon many and detailed interpretations of the work of the original fifth-century mystic Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, extends beyond the purview of this chapter. What is interesting to us, instead, is the way it impinges on many neighboring debates and in particular on the question of what it means *to see* God, in His divine hiddenness, in the form of the face-to-face vision that is promised in several Biblical texts.[6] In His divine infinity, as the coincidence of opposites, Nicholas' God is the essence of what is inhuman. And yet paradoxically to gaze upon Him, and to be gazed upon by Him, is the highest form of human being.

The treatise that Nicholas sent to the community at Tergensee in October of 1453 is devoted to the exploration of this kind of *inhuman gaze*. The goal of Nicholas' book is to provide a series of exercises in seeing, hearing, moving, and speaking that will lead his monastic audience towards what he calls the 'wonders which are revealed beyond all sensible, rational, and intellectual sight' (Hopkins 1985: 680). It is to prove to them, in other words, the 'ready accessibility of mystic theology'. *De Visione Dei* – On the Vision of God – is the title by which we now know this treatise. The genitive form of the Latin word for God – *Dei* – is purposely ambiguous. God is both the subject whose vision is directed towards us, at all times and from all places, and also the object of our own vision in the mystical experience.

Taylor & Francis
Not for distribution

Proof

15032-3460d-1pass-r01.indd 240 3/16/2020 5:27:24 PM

Proof

The gaze of God is inhuman, for Nicholas, not only because God, as the coincidence of opposites, is not an entity. It is moreover because, as a result, there is no single place in space or time from which God gazes upon us. Or rather, He gazes upon us from every place at once – His gaze is omnivoyent.

The vision of the all-seeing God is a staple of mystical visionary texts. One thinks, for instance, of the 'Vision of the Iron Mountain', from

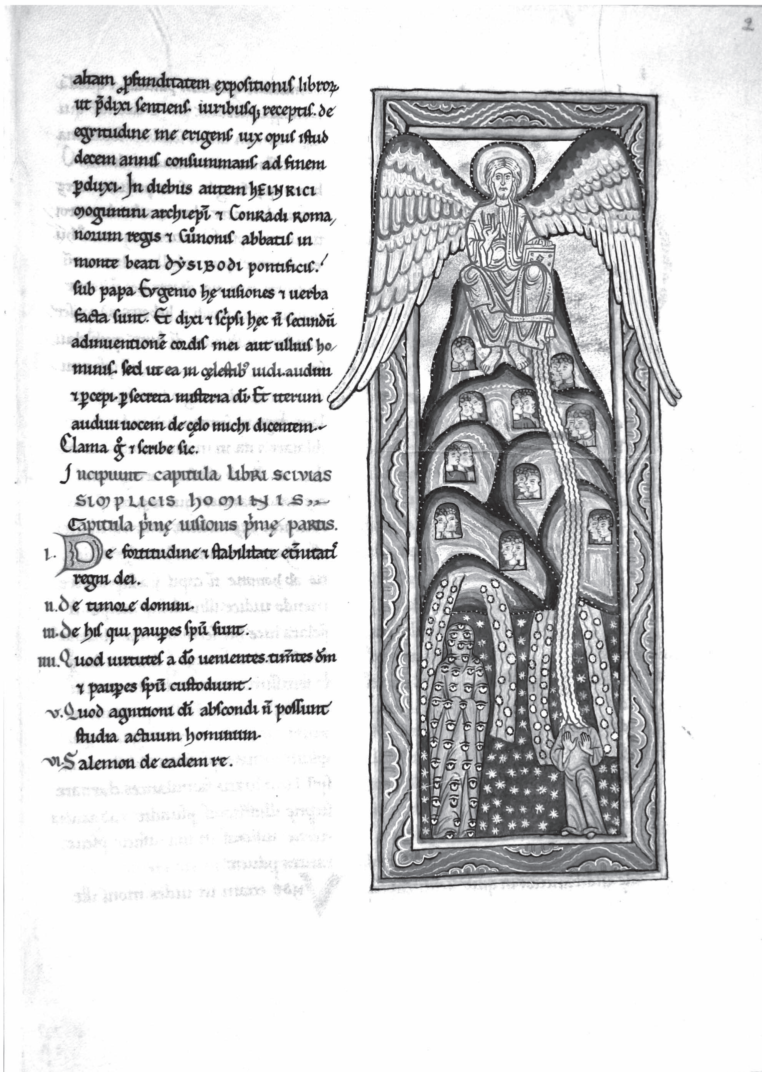

Image 15.1 Image of *The Iron Mountain*, by Hildegard of Bingen from the *Scivias-Kodex* which belongs to Abbey of St Hildegard at Rüdesheim am Rhein, Germany. Permission kindly granted by Sr. Philippa Rath.

Proof

15032-3460d-1pass-r01.indd 241 3/16/2020 5:27:24 PM

Proof

the *Scivias* of Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179).[7] At the bottom of the mountain stands a figure who represents the *Timor Domini*, the fear of God. The image is a reference to the line in Psalm 111: *Initium sapientiae timor Domini*.[8] The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The figure representing the fear of the Lord in Hildegard's vision is a body covered entirely with eyes.

God's inhuman and omnivoyant gaze upon us is the beginning of wisdom, in the mystic tradition, because to experience the world as replete with God's vision is to experience oneself as looked over by, cared for, and in that way dependent upon God. But the *inhuman gaze*, in its omnivoyance, is not entirely reassuring, either: in revealing our dependence upon God, and in this way, therefore, our finitude, it essentially involves the recognition of our lack of control over ourselves and the world and the fear and anxiety that go along with that. The trick of Christian faith, on such an account, is to recognize this utter lack of control while at the same time finding certainty and joy within it. It is an impossible, an absurd, a paradoxical task. Søren Kierkegaard describes it well. It is like, he says, the dancer who, having leapt high into the air, lands straight into a definite position with absolute and unwavering certainty. Indeed, even in the very midst of the leap, at the utter apex of its riskiness, he has already assumed with certainty the final position. '[S]o that not for a second', Kierkegaard writes, 'does he have to catch at the position but stands there in it in the leap itself' (Kierkegaard 2003: 70). God's particular kind of *inhuman gaze*, in this tradition, grounds the possibility of such a leap.

Taylor & Francis
Not for distribution

The temporal nature of this leap, in Kierkegaard's description, is notable. It is as if at every moment of his life the person of faith experiences that moment – even in its utter riskiness, indeed in full recognition of its utter and irrevocable finitude – as a moment that already has in it the future certainty of the unwavering position in which he will land. Indeed, in some paradoxical sense, he recognizes this future position as the one in which *he has already landed*, despite that event's nevertheless remaining in the future. This forward-aiming experience of the present is at the foundation of Augustine's description of time in Book XI of the *Confessions*, and it grounds his understanding of the Christian virtue of hope. But it has a more prosaic application as well. When Merleau-Ponty describes the temporality of the act of grasping an object – 'from the moment of its initiation,' he says, 'the grasp is already at its endpoint'[9] – he too is describing the way the future is already involved in the present (see also Mooney 2020, this volume). And Nicholas' Christian form of this proleptic present, replete with its anticipatory joy, is grounded in the knowledge of God's omnivoyant gaze. The trick, then, the beginning of wisdom, is to be able to recognize that gaze as inhabiting the whole of everything that is.

This is quite a feat. It is one thing to be able to see that the chair is black or that the snow is white. It is one thing to be able to see Beatrice's

Proof

Proof

green eyes or Mary's dark hair. But to see all of that – indeed to see every property of every object as being the way it is – and at the same time to experience in and through each and every one of these objects the very essence of the vision of God: that is quite another thing. It is as if, one must say, everything looks to be the same but nevertheless one experiences it all as utterly different. One experiences not only what it is now, but also the certain joy towards which it is proceeding.

And that is precisely the gestalt shift that Nicholas' exercises are meant to bring about: a shift in the experience of the whole. And these exercises crucially depend upon an icon, a painting, of a figure that sees. Along with his treatise, Nicholas sent to the monks at Tergensee an icon, a picture. The picture itself is of a type that Nicholas says he has seen elsewhere. He lists a now lost painting by Roger van der Weyden[10] along with several others.

What these images all have in common, and what Nicholas finds notable about the icon he has sent to Tergensee, is that the image they depict contains a peculiar feature: it is 'of someone omnivoyant, so that his face, through subtle pictorial artistry, is such that it seems to behold everything around it' (*De Vision Dei*, ch. 2: 680). Using this icon Nicholas prescribes a practice that the community of monks is to engage in. This practice has three phases.[11]

Taylor & Francis

First, having hung the icon upon the north wall of an appropriate room, the brothers are to stand around it, a short distance from it, and observe it. Each brother will have the solitary experience of being looked upon by the image in the painting. Each is to relish and marvel at this experience of being seen in all his particularity by such a being, or at any rate by the image of such a being. He is to luxuriate in the experience of seeing himself being gazed upon. This experience of being seen by the image is not identical with the experience of being seen by God. But it is sufficiently similar that Nicholas hopes, by analogy, the monks will achieve the second experience by means of the first. For one thing, both the icon and God are manifestations of the *inhuman gaze*. But more importantly, the icon's gaze will eventually become, through the kind of miraculous transformation inherent in Nicholas' exercise, the site of the very gaze of God himself. Or at least it will become one of the infinitely many places from which one experiences such a gaze.

Not for distribution

Second, having achieved this experience of being seen, having felt the vision of another upon you, the monks are to take up a different position in the room. As each reaches his new position, he is to attend to the way the icon's gaze still seems to be upon him. Knowing that the icon is stationary, each monk begins to feel a sense of amazement, begins to marvel at, the 'changing of the unchangeable gaze'. Moreover, if the monk fixes his sight upon the icon while walking from one point to another, he should notice the way the icon's gaze 'proceeds continually with him' and does not desert him. 'He will marvel', Nicholas writes, 'at how the icon's

Proof

Proof

Image 15.2 Image of *Portrait of a Woman* by Rogier van der Weyden. Permission kindly granted by Sabine Schumann, Picture Research, bpk-Bildagentur, Berlin, Germany.

gaze is moved immovably' (*De Vision Dei*, ch. 4: 681). The gaze seems directed at the monk in all his particularity, at and throughout whatever points in space and time he happens to occupy.

Finally, there is an intersubjective aspect to the experience as well. Although one could not possibly use the resources of one's imagination to apprehend the fact – it is beyond what one could conjecture on one's own – nevertheless at the same time the gaze is following one monk, it is following each of the others as well. To gain the experience of this

Proof

15032-3460d-1pass-r01.indd 244 3/16/2020 5:27:25 PM

Proof

phenomenon, one needs only to partner with another monk, stand some distance apart, and walk towards one another. As the partners walk in opposite directions, each is to behold the continual gaze of the icon upon himself. When they meet, and share their experiences, they will marvel at the way the gaze moves simultaneously in opposite directions. 'You too?' each will exclaim to the other. And through the belief they have in the description of one another's experiences – this trust in the sincerity of one another's speech seems to be crucial – each will come to experience this impossible possibility, that the gaze of the unmovable face not only moves continually, but it moves continually in every direction. Nicholas summarizes the effect as follows:

> And while he considers that this gaze does not desert anyone, he sees how diligently it is concerned for each one, as if it were concerned for no one else, but only for him who experiences that he is seen by it. This impression is so strong that the one who is being looked upon cannot even imagine that [the icon] is concerned for another. [The one who is pondering all this] will also notice that [the image] is most diligently concerned for the least of creatures, just as for the greatest of creatures and for the whole universe.
>
> On the basis of such a sensible appearance as this, I propose to elevate you very beloved brothers, through a devotional exercise, unto mystical theology.
>
> (*De Vision Dei*, chs 4–5: 681–682)

Taylor & Francis
Not for distribution

I conclude this first part of the paper with some observations about Nicholas' conception of the *inhuman gaze* in its godly form.

The point of mystical theology, as Nicholas conceives it, is to bring about the actual experience of the presence of an infinite and infinitely inhuman God, an experience that cannot be had without amazement and wonder. Wonder is, as Heidegger insists, an affective experience of the whole, a mood that pervades everything and stands as the background to and determination of what can be presented as a thing at all.[12] The *inhuman gaze* of God in the mystical theological tradition is pervasive in precisely this way. Because of this, one cannot achieve its experience through imagination or cognition, which are spontaneous acts of the will directed at particular objects. Rather, one must undertake the practical exercise of moving through the world with others attentive to and opened upon the continuous and non-locatable experience of being seen. This reflective experience of seeing oneself being seen is, in its essence, potentially tied up with the mood of wonder. It is one of the many kinds of experience of ourselves as opening out upon the world that can be tied to wonder in this way, even if this is a particular form locatable at a particular point in the history of medieval

Proof

15032-3460d-1pass-r01.indd 245 3/16/2020 5:27:25 PM

Proof

Christianity. Indeed, the relation between wonder and seeing oneself seen is built into the very vocabulary of medieval Latin. It is not an accident that the Latin verb *miror, mirari, miratus sum* – from which our English noun *mirror* derives directly – means to be amazed at, to look at with wonder.

In this way, perhaps, the medieval practice of mystical theology is linked to the original conception of philosophy. As Plato and Aristotle both remind us, philosophy itself begins in wonder (Plato *Theaetetus*: 155d; Aristotle *Metaphysics*: 982b12). If Heidegger is right, then we should read this beginning as an experience of the whole – an experience of everything that is. In particular, it is an experience of its being astonished that everything that is, is there at all, and that it is there in the way that it is. This experience would have involved essentially, at the beginning of philosophy, an experience of the *contingency* of being – of its not having to have been the case that there is what there is, or that there is what there is in the way that it is. This experience of the contingency of being – and the related experience of our dependence upon its being that way – evokes an overall experience of wonder that perhaps gives us a clue to what it might have meant to say that philosophy begins in wonder.

If this is right, it may help to explain Pierre Hadot's famous claim (Hadot 1995) that from the earliest times philosophy in the Ancient World was not a mere intellectual pursuit but a way of life. If the wonder at the beginning of philosophy essentially involves a sensitivity to the contingency of what is and its way of being, then this sensitivity is not achievable through imagination or cognition, but through practice. Whatever the status of Hadot's claim, however, it seems certain that by the time of the High Middle Ages, philosophy had become something quite different. Indeed, in his commentary upon Book X of Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*, Albert distinguishes explicitly between philosophy and the kind of mystical theology he is interested in:

Taylor & Francis
Not for distribution

> The philosopher contemplates God insofar as he takes him in some kind of demonstrative conclusion, but the theologian contemplates him as he exists beyond reason and understanding. . . . The theologian depends upon the First Truth for its own sake and not because of reason, though he has reason too. Hence, the theologian remains in awe, but not the philosopher.
>
> (*Super Ethicam ad Nichomachum*, Liber X, lectio XVI [*Op. Col.* XIV.2:775.3–13]. In McGinn op cit: 18)

Nicholas' devotional practice of attending with others to the omnivoyant gaze of an inanimate object is one of the ways that the *inhuman gaze* may ground the possibility of awe or wonder.

Proof

15032-3460d-1pass-r01.indd 246 3/16/2020 5:27:26 PM

Proof

II

This brings us to the second, and shorter, part of my exploration/investigation/chapter. It begins with the observation that wonder is not the only possible mood in which to experience the inhuman and omnivoyant gaze of God. One might come to experience it instead, and to experience the aspect of our finitude that it brings to the fore, not with wonder but with a certain kind of impatience. One might, for instance, experience it as an inappropriately felt limitation upon human possibility.

Friedrich Nietzsche feels the possibility of an all-seeing God this way. He tells a characteristic story in the Preface to the *Gay Science*. Commenting upon a famous poem by Schiller about some Egyptian youths who sneak into the town center to uncover a perpetually and symbolically veiled statue, Nietzsche writes:

> And as for our future, one will hardly find us again on the paths of those Egyptian youths who endanger temples by night, embrace statues, and want by all means to unveil, uncover, and put into a bright light whatever is kept concealed for good reasons. No, this bad taste, this will to truth, to 'truth at any price,' this youthful madness in the love of truth, have lost their charm for us: for that we are too experienced, too serious, too merry, too burned, too *profound*. We no longer believe that truth remains truth when the veils are withdrawn; we have lived too much to believe this. Today we consider it a matter of decency not to wish to see everything naked, or to be present at everything, or to understand and 'know' everything.
>
> 'Is it true that God is present everywhere?' a little girl asked her mother; 'I think that's indecent' – a hint for philosophers.
>
> (Nietzsche 1974)

Taylor & Francis
Not for distribution

Nietzsche's aim is the opposite of Nicholas'. Nietzsche believes that there is something indecent, appalling, something in *bad taste*, about the idea of a God who sees everything. And he believes that the related idea of a pure and unveiled truth is naïve. Truth understood in this way is tied inexorably to the idea that God's view reveals things as they are, reveals, as Nicholas says, 'the substance of things'. But the will to truth, the will to see things in their unvarnished form, as one might in the context of the mystic union with God – this will to truth is a kind of madness, a kind of disease for Nietzsche. Indeed, it is a disease that hides the true health of humanity, the health grounded in a positive nihilism that recognizes no limitation or boundary that the world places upon us, seeing it instead as a canvas upon which one must paint a masterpiece. 'Give style to one's existence!' Nietzsche exhorts (Nietzsche 1974: §290). Experience the

Proof

15032-3460d-1pass-r01.indd 247 3/16/2020 5:27:26 PM

Proof

whole not as thoroughly invested with the omnivoyant gaze of God but as the unbounded sea waiting for us to will a meaning upon it (Nietzsche 1974: §124).[13]

Like Nicholas, Nietzsche recognizes that one cannot bring about this gestalt shift, this change in the mood of existence, through an argument. Nietzsche's writing – from his genealogies to his aphorisms to his parables and poetry – are all meant to 'soften the heart' of his reader, to use Montaigne's lovely phrase (de Montaigne 2003: 3).[14] Like Pascal before him, Nietzsche knows that one cannot will oneself to a whole new mood, nor can one be argued into it. To achieve a whole gestalt shift in our experience – to bring it about that people see the world as fully replete with God's gaze or indeed as fully lacking it – one must use rhetoric and practice, not argument and will. Furthermore, one must be called to bring about such a change, experience it as necessary or 'needful', as Nietzsche himself does when he aims to bring about our experience of ourselves as the site of will to power. 'For one thing is needful', he writes. '[T]hat a human being should *attain* satisfaction with himself, whether it be by means of this or that poetry and art' (Nietzsche 1974: §290).

Nicholas and Nietzsche both experience the world as already demanding of them that they bring others to see it in the way they do. And in a sense, they were both successful – the world looked different, as a whole, after Nicholas' work took root and after Nietzsche's did as well. It is Nietzsche's success, for instance, that explains Camus' ability to articulate so well the experience of our existence as absurd: on the one hand demanding the world to be meaningful and significant, while on the other hand recognizing its utter incapacity to be that way. And it is why in the contemporary world we can come to have experienced the utter lack of God's infinite and *inhuman gaze*, or else to have experienced it as having taken an utterly debased form.

Taylor & Francis
Not for distribution

Perhaps the best example of this is found in a short story by Kafka, a story that was central to Adorno's argument for what he called an 'inverted theology'.[15]

In the story, Kafka presents the debased image of God in a creature called Odradek. Far from being omnivoyant, Odradek sees the world from a completely neglected and estranged point of view. His gaze too is inhuman, however, not because it is omnivoyant as the gaze of Nicholas' God was, but because it is the never-dying manifestation of a suffering that makes our own actual despair seem insignificant. The story portrays, as Adorno writes, 'hell seen from the perspective of salvation' (Adorno 1984: 269).

AuQ1

I end with this story not because I think, as Adorno does, that the mood of estrangement in which Kafka experiences the world is the correct one. Nor do I think, as some nostalgic types might, that the mood of wonder at God's omnivoyance in which Nicholas experiences the world is to be retrieved. Rather, it is the juxtaposition of these opposites that

Proof

Proof

strikes me as worthy of note. Perhaps, in the recognition that both of these moods are possibilities for us, and that therefore each is contingent and dependent upon both our practices for evoking them and our sensitivity for the need to do so, we can find the courage to stand in wonder before what is. Perhaps, in other words, we can manage to adopt the posture of the phenomenological reduction, as Merleau-Ponty understands it: the posture of 'wonder in the face of the world'.[16]

I end therefore, with Kafka's story, in its entirety, which is called 'The Cares of a Family Man'. It is short.

The Cares of a Family Man

Some say the word *Odradek* is of Slavonic origin and try to account for it on that basis. Others again believe it to be of German origin, only influenced by Slavonic. The uncertainty of both interpretations allows one to assume with justice that neither is accurate, especially as neither of them provides an intelligent meaning of the word.

No one, of course, would occupy himself with such studies if there were not a creature called Odradek. At first glance it looks like a flat star-shaped spool for thread, and indeed it does seem to have thread wound upon it; to be sure, they are only old, broken-off bits of thread, knotted and tangled together, of the most varied sorts and colors. But it is not

Taylor & Francis
Not for distribution

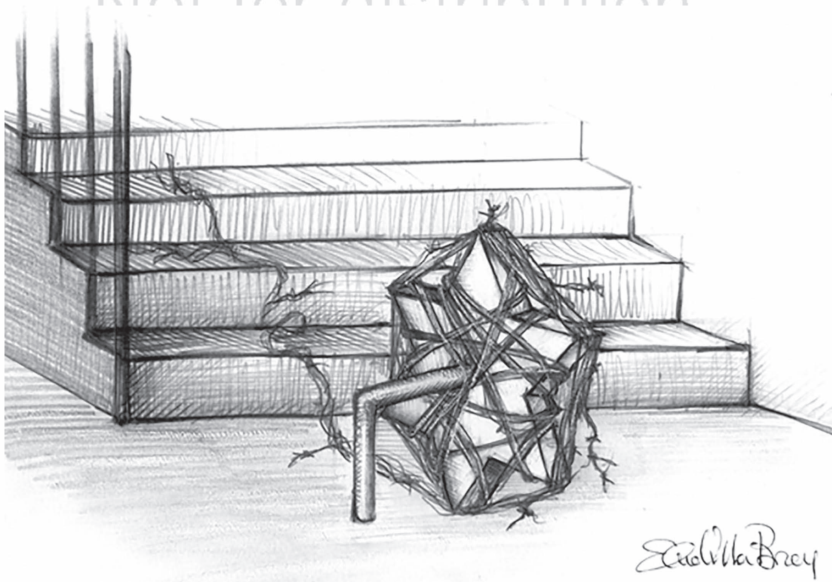

Image 15.3 Image of Odradek by Elena Villa Bray. The artist has generously made this image available through the creative commons.

Proof

15032-3460d-1pass-r01.indd 249 3/16/2020 5:27:26 PM

Proof

only a spool, for a small wooden crossbar sticks out of the middle of the star, and another small rod is joined to that at a right angle. By means of this latter rod on one side and one of the points of the star on the other, the whole thing can stand upright as if on two legs.

One is tempted to believe that the creature once had some sort of intelligible shape and is now only a broken-down remnant. Yet this does not seem to be the case; at least there is no sign of it; nowhere is there an unfinished or unbroken surface to suggest anything of the kind; the whole thing looks senseless enough, but in its own way perfectly finished. In any case, closer scrutiny is impossible, since Odradek is extraordinarily nimble and can never be laid hold of.

He lurks by turns in the garret, the stairway, the lobbies, the entrance hall. Often for months on end he is not to be seen; then he has presumably moved into other houses; but he always comes faithfully back to our house again. Many a time when you go out of the door and he happens just to be leaning directly beneath you against the banisters you feel inclined to speak to him. Of course, you put no difficult questions to him, you treat him – he is so diminutive that you cannot help it – rather like a child. 'Well, what's your name?' you ask him. Odradek,' he says. 'And where do you live?' 'No fixed abode,' he says and laughs; but it is only the kind of laughter that has no lungs behind it. It sounds rather like the rustling of fallen leaves. And that is usually the end of the conversation. Even these answers are not always forthcoming; often he stays mute for a long time, as wooden as his appearance.

Taylor & Francis
Not for distribution

I ask myself, to no purpose, what is likely to happen to him? Can he possibly die? Anything that dies has had some kind of aim in life, some kind of activity, which has worn out; but that does not apply to Odradek. Am I to suppose, then, that he will always be rolling down the stairs, with ends of thread trailing after him, right before the feet of my children, and my children's children? He does no harm to anyone that one can see; but the idea that he is likely to survive me I find almost painful (Kafka, 'The Cares of a Family Man').

Notes

1. Michel de Certeau. See pp. 2–3 for some discussion of the context of Cusa's *De Visione Dei*. Certeau's paper brought about a revival of interest in Nicholas, who had been introduced to the modern world by Ernst Cassirer in his 1927 book *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance*, first translated into English in 1963. For a more recent philosophical account, see Jean-Luc Marion, 'Seeing, or Seeing Oneself Seen: Nicholas of Cusa's Contribution in *De Visione Dei*.'
2. See McGinn 2005, Chapter 10, 'Nicholas of Cusa on Mystical Theology,' pp. 432–483, esp. p. 452 for the description of Cusa's 'great legation.'
3. See McGinn, (*op. cit.*) p. 446 for a brief discussion. This kind of non-ontotheological account of the ground of being bears an important, and non-accidental, family resemblance with Heidegger's critique of ontotheology, and

Proof

Proof

his proposed alternative to it. Heidegger's position is often traced back to his reading of Meister Eckhart's (1260–1328) mysticism, and indeed, Wenck drew an explicit connection between the 'learned ignorance' that Nicholas proposed as the key to mystical theology and the 'detachment' (*Gelassenheit*) that Meister Eckhart had described nearly two centuries earlier. Wenck heaped vitriol upon them equally. He says, for instance: 'From this it is clear how much poisoning of knowledge and morals this most abstract understanding, called learned ignorance, or in the vernacular "detached living", has caused' [From Wenck, *De Ignota Litteratura*, 31: 22–24. Quoted in McGinn 2005: 447]. The importance of Eckhart's term *Gelassenheit* for later Heidegger is well-known. It would be interesting to think of Heidegger's discussion, however, in the context of Nicholas' work.

4. See McGinn's discussion (*op. cit.*) at p. 443. Nicholas' idea that God is the coincidence of opposites recalls Kierkegaard's related account of God. For Kierkegaard, God is *that all things are possible*. It would be worthwhile to think more about the relation between the possibility of all possibilities and impossibilities, on the one hand, and the coming together of all things and their opposites on the other.
5. *Super Mystica Theologia 2* (*Op. Col. XXXVII.2: 465:8–9*). Quoted in McGinn, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
6. The power of seeing God and the face of God – see, Exodus 33:20; Matthew 5:8; John 3:2; John 1:18; Isaiah 6:5; Hebrews 4:13; Ezekiel 1:1; Genesis 46:2; Genesis 32:30; Psalms 68:2.
7. Hildegard von Bingen. The title *Scivias* is from the Latin phrase *Sci vias Domini*: 'Know the Ways of the Lord'. The passage describing the vision of the Iron Mountain (*Scivias* I.1) reads as follows:

Taylor & Francis

> I saw the likeness of a great mountain the colour of iron, and on it sat a figure in great brightness, so bright that it dazzled my eyes. Light-filled shadows stretched out on either side: they were wings of astounding breadth and height. And before this figure, at the roots of the mountain, there stood an image covered with eyes, and because of the eyes I could not make out the human form beneath. And in front of her was the figure of a child dressed in a pale tunic and white shoes. I could not see her face because of the bright light pouring down on her head from the man seated on the mountain. But many living sparks sprang forth from the man on the mountain and hovered round these figures most pleasingly. In the mountain itself many small windows were visible, at which there appeared the faces of men, some pale, some pure.

Not for distribution

8. Something close to this line is repeated at Proverbs 1:7: *timor Domini principium scientiae sapientiam atque doctrinam stulti despiciunt*. The fear of the Lord is the foundation of knowledge; It is fools who scorn wisdom and instruction. And again at Proverbs 9:10: *principium sapientiae timor Domini et scientia sanctorum prudentia*. The first step to wisdom is the fear of the Lord, and knowledge of the Most Holy One is understanding.
9. 'While listening to beautiful music: the impression that this movement that starts up is already at its endpoint, which it is going to have been, or [that it is] sinking into the future that we have a hold of as well as of the past – although we cannot say exactly what it will be. Anticipated retrospection – Retrograde movement *in futuro*: it comes down towards me entirely done' (Merleau-Ponty 2001).
10. Nicholas recalled, 'Rogier van der Weyden's self-portrait (now lost except as a copy in a tapestry in the Brussel's town hall), the eyes of which seemed to follow the observer no matter where one stood' (Smith 2004: 41).

Proof

15032-3460d-1pass-r01.indd 251 3/16/2020 5:27:27 PM

Proof

11. The three phases of the exercise are described in *De Visione Dei*, chapters 3–5, pp. 680–682.
12. See Martin Heidegger, *Basic Questions in Philosophy: Selected "Problems" of "Logic"*. This is the lecture course from 1938. See especially the discussion of wonder, and its distinction from curiosity, in Chapter 5, pp. 131–164.
13. See §124 of *The Gay Science* for some discussion of the freedom of the sea.
14. See Essay 1, 'We reach the same end by discrepant means', the initial essay in Michel de Montaigne, *Complete Essays*, p. 3.
15. See Peter Gordon's book *Adorno and Existence* for a discussion of Kafka and Adorno.
16. 'Perhaps the best formulation of the reduction is the one offered by Husserl's assistant Eugen Fink when he spoke of a "wonder" before the world' (2006: xv, 2012: lxxvii).

Reference List

Adorno, Theodor. [1967] 1983. Notes on Kafka. In *Prisms*. Samuel Weber and Shierry Weber (trans.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 269.

Aristotle. 350 BCE. *Metaphysics*. W.D. Ross (trans.). http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/metaphysics.html

Cusa, Nicholas. [1453] 1985. De Visione Dei. In Jasper Hopkins (ed.) *Nicholas of Cusa's Dialectical Mysticism: Text, Translation, and Interpretive Study*. Minneapolis, MN: The Arthur J. Banning Press.

de Certeau, Michel. 1987. The gaze of Nicholas of Cusa. *Diacritics: A Review of Contemporary Criticism*, 17 (3): 2–38.

de Montaigne, Michel. 2003. *Complete Essays*. M.A. Screech (trans.). London and New York: Penguin Books.

Gordon, Peter E. 2016. *Adorno and Existence*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hadot, Pierre. 1995. *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Arnold Davidson (ed.). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Heidegger, Martin. [1984] 1994. *Basic Questions in Philosophy: Selected 'Problems' of 'Logic'*. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (trans.). Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Kafka, Franz. [1948] 1971. The cares of a family man. In *The Complete Stories*. Willa Muir and Edwin Muir (trans.). New York: Schocken Books, 469–470.

Kierkegaard, Søren. [1843] 2003. *Fear and Trembling*, 1st ed. Alastair Hannay (trans.). London: Penguin Classics.

Marion, Jean-Luc. 2016. Seeing or seeing oneself seen: Nicholas of Cusa's contribution in *De Visione Dei*. *The Journal of Religion*, 96 (3): 305–331.

McGinn, Bernhard. 2005. *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany*. New York: Crossroad Publishing.

Merleau-Ponty, M. [1945] 2006. *The Phenomenology of Perception*. Colin Smith (trans.). New York and London: Routledge.

Merleau-Ponty, M. [1945] 2012. *The Phenomenology of Perception*. Donald Landes (trans.). New York and London: Routledge.

Merleau-Ponty, M. 2001. Deux notes inédites sur la musique. Two Unpublished Notes on Music. Leonard Lawlor (trans.). *Chiasmi International*, n.s., 3: 18.

Taylor & Francis
Not for distribution

Proof

15032-3460d-1pass-r01.indd 252 3/16/2020 5:27:27 PM

Proof

Mooney, Timothy. 2020. On eliminativism's transient gaze. In A. Daly, D. Moran, F. Cummins, and J. Jardine (eds.) *Perception and the Inhuman Gaze: Perspectives from Philosophy, Phenomenology and the Sciences*. New York: Routledge.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1887. *The Gay Science*. 1974. Walter Kaufmann (trans.). New York: Vintage Books and Random House.

Plato. *Theaetetus*. Benjamin Jowett (trans.). http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/theatu.html

Smith, Pamela H. 2004. *The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Taylor & Francis
Not for distribution

Proof

15032-3460d-1pass-r01.indd 253 3/16/2020 5:27:27 PM