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Faith, science, and the wager for reality: Meillassoux and Ricœur on post-Kantian realism

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ABSTRACT

This article compares two attempts to return to realism after Kant's 'Copernican Revolution'. Quentin Meillassoux, representing the 'speculative realism' school, rejects both Kantian and post-Kantian idealism in favour of a materialism based on the epistemology of the modern sciences. But Meillassoux is unaware of the element of choice in his philosophical position, and he does not solve the essential problem posed by idealism which concerns the place of the subject in being. Ricœur, on the other hand, sublates Kant by a deeper embrace of finitude that leads to the self-displacement of the subject, and a 'Second Copernican Revolution', one that he freely admits can only be arrived at by Jaspersian 'Philosophical Faith'. The article concludes by showing how crossing the border into theological faith offers a virtue-ethical perspective on the question of realism and idealism: it is in fact the choice between a childlike humility that receives reality as it is, and an arrogant self-positing that puts the subject in the position of God.

Introduction

When did modern philosophy begin? A number of answers could be given to this question, but among the most common is the one that points to the 'turn to the subject' that sees Descartes and Kant as its founders. Descartes began his quest for certainty by noting that nothing was more certain than his own thinking mind, thus taking the human subject as the starting point for knowledge. Kant famously described himself as inaugurating a 'Copernican revolution' in philosophy, naming it after the revolution in science that had recently taken place. This is how he puts it:

> Up to now it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the objects; but all attempts to find out something about them *a priori* through concepts that would extend our cognition have, on this presupposition, come to nothing. Hence let us once try whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition.[1]

Kant's point is that we can never place knowledge of objects on a secure foundation if it is up to the object to determine its own ontology, because then the object is the fixed point

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and knowledge must adapt itself to correspond, like the planets revolving around the sun. In other words, we can only say anything with any certainty about objects if we situate the determining principle in ourselves, subordinating the object to our conception of it. This means a total reversal in how we understand knowledge: our minds constitute the world around us, forming our knowledge of it even as its appearances reach our senses. With this daring and revolutionary move, German Idealism was born, setting the trajectory for vast swathes of modern philosophy to the present day.

This essay compares attempts by two French philosophers to return to realism after Kant, both of whom use his Copernican analogy to make their point. Quentin Meillassoux sees Kant as little more than a catastrophe that threw philosophy on the wrong track for the last two hundred years. Kant's falsely-named Copernican revolution was actually a Ptolemaic counter-revolution. Meillassoux calls instead for a real Copernican revolution in philosophy, one that follows science in giving centrality to physical matter. Paul Ricœur, on the other hand, preserves Kant's essential insights about the subjective constitution of knowledge, while at the same time moving beyond Kant to a realist philosophy that acknowledges transcendence as the true centre. Ricœur thus calls, not for an undoing of Kant's Copernican revolution, but for its deepening, leading to a second Copernican revolution that gives centrality, neither to consciousness nor to physicality, but to a transcendence that envelops them both. I will argue that, while Meillassoux's critiques of Kant are successful, there are two problems with his proposed alternative. First, he fails to see the ongoing value of idealism in pointing to the subjective dimension of knowledge. Second, he is unaware of the element of free decision, and thus philosophical faith, in his alternative 'speculative materialism/realism'. Ricœur, on the other hand, seeks a return to realism that keeps hold of idealism's insights yet also surpasses them in a Hegelian-style *Aufhebung*. However, this is only possible because Ricœur is not afraid to admit that philosophy can never claim certainty: an element of philosophical faith or trust is unavoidable. These two thinkers represent two ways to arrive at a genuine realism, one by the choice, unaware of itself as a choice, to absolutize science, and the other by the choice, aware of itself as a choice, to disabsolutize all human knowledge, displacing the subject from the centre in favour of a transcendence cannot be controlled or mastered.

A brief note about scope. This article focuses on the early Ricœur up to 1960, with only a couple of passing references to his later works. This is because Ricœur's metaphysical position comes out with greater clarity in his earlier writings. Later on, he suppresses these insights, not because he changed his mind, but because for a number of reasons he strove to be more metaphysically agnostic and focused on philosophical anthropology *tout court*.[2]

Putting Meillassoux in historical context

What had happened to idealism by the twentieth century? It had undergone a number of radicalisations. First of all, post-Kantian idealism had pointed to the contradiction inherent in the idea of the thing-in-itself, which Kant says can be thought but can't be known. The criticism was simply that we cannot conceive the idea of a mind-independent reality because as soon as we conceive it, it is no longer mind-independent, because we are the ones conceiving it. We can never think about things

in abstraction from our thinking about them, because by definition as soon as we think about them, they are no longer in abstraction from our thinking about them. This line of reasoning severed the final mysterious link between the human mind and reality that Kant had been willing to leave open. In continental Europe, this kind of radical idealism was taken very seriously to the point where any kind of statement was considered nonsensical unless it acknowledged the statement's relationship to human thought. A historical anecdote may illustrate this. George Bataille describes a conversation he had in 1951 with Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a French physicist named Georges Ambrosino, and A.J. Ayer, a prominent analytic philosopher from the UK. In the course of the conversation, Ayer made what seemed to him the non-controversial statement that the sun existed before human beings did. This statement, however, was immediately and unanimously rejected by his continental colleagues. This is how Bataille recounts it:

> Ayer had uttered the very simple proposition: there was a sun before men existed. And he saw no reason to doubt it. Merleau-Ponty, Ambrosino, and I disagreed with this proposition, and Ambrosino said that the sun had certainly not existed before the world. I, for my part, do not see how one can say so. This proposition is such as to indicate the total meaninglessness [*non-sens*] that can be taken on by a rational statement. Common meaning should be totally meaningful in the sense in which any proposition one utters theoretically implies both subject and object. In the proposition, there was the sun and there are no men, we have a subject and no object.[3]

Bataille considers the very idea meaningless, literally a 'non-sense', that anything could be truly said to exist before the human mind was able to think about it. The relationship between objects and their conception by human thought has been absolutized such that nothing exists apart from that relationship. We see a similar move made in Heidegger twenty-four years earlier:

> Newton's laws, the principle of contradiction, any truth whatsoever – these are true only as long as Dasein *is*. Before there was any Dasein, there was no truth; nor will there be any after Dasein is no more.[4]

Heidegger has a particular conception of truth which includes its disclosedness to the human subject, or *Dasein*. This means that it is a matter of debate whether or not Heidegger is an idealist.[5] But for Meillassoux there is no doubt that he is.[6]

Who is Quentin Meillassoux? Born in 1967, he rose to prominence after the publication of *After Finitude*. The book made him one of the founding fathers of a philosophical movement that has come to be known as speculative realism (though Meillassoux himself preferred the term 'speculative materialism').[7] The movement sees itself as a radical departure from all philosophical traditions that source themselves in the Kantian frame, including the three with which Ricœur identified himself: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and reflexive philosophy.[8] One member of the movement, Tom Sparrow, argues that phenomenology has failed to achieve its stated goal of giving us 'the things themselves'. This is because phenomenology's own stated methodology is inextricably bound to human perception. For Sparrow, speculative realism has displaced phenomenology and represents the future of philosophy because it has succeeded where phenomenology failed.[9] Similarly, Sebastian Purcell considers phenomenological hermeneutics to be 'in a state of crisis' because 'the recent criticisms by Alain Badiou and Quentin Meillassoux have cut to the heart of the project.'[10] Purcell goes on to argue that Ricœur does not, in

fact, fall foul of the criticisms of speculative realism (which makes his article kin to this one although its purpose is different).

Meillassoux's attack on idealism

After Finitude seeks to overturn the idealist school, and phenomenology with it, as an absurd sophistry. Meillassoux's manner of doing so could be called an 'emperor's new clothes' method: that of pointing to what everyone knows to be the case but nobody dares to say. He points out that modern science, by its very nature, claims to be describing a reality that does not care whether or not you exist to think about it.[11] If philosophy wishes to hold to any kind of idealism (or what Meillassoux calls 'correlationism', referring to its absolutizing of the *correlation* between mind and reality), it is forced to say that all scientific statements are *prima facie* false, and can only be treated as true with certain drastic qualifications: what is being said is only true *for us* within our mental framework. But this, contends Meillassoux, is to deny any literal meaning to scientific statements whatsoever. He insists that science and idealism are radically irreconcilable on this point, and he illustrates this with the same example used by Bataille and Heidegger, namely, the claim that something existed before human beings did, to which he gives the name 'arche-fossil':

> There is no possible compromise between the correlation and the arche-fossil: once one has acknowledged one, one has thereby disqualified the other. ... Confronted with the arche-fossil, every variety of idealism converges and becomes equally extraordinary – every variety of correlationism is exposed as an extreme idealism, one that is incapable of admitting that what science tells us about these occurrences of matter independent of humanity effectively occurred as described by science.[12]

Idealism's inability to speak of a mind-independent reality amounts in Meillassoux's eyes to a complete refutation of idealism, exposing it as an inadequate epistemology. If idealism denies that we can make meaningful statements about what came before our own consciousness, then idealism has failed.

What should we do, then? Should we return to pre-Kantian realism? Absolutely not, says Meillassoux. 'Such a return strikes us as strictly *impossible*.'[13] He says that he is 'as distant from naïve realism as from correlationist subtlety.'[14] We cannot go back before Kant, but have to go forwards in light of Kant. 'On this point, we cannot but be heirs of Kantianism.'[15]

Why can we not return to pre-Kantian realism? Meillassoux gives two main reasons. The first is that pre-critical thought is 'dogmatism' and 'metaphysics'. Both these labels refer to 'the illusory manufacturing of necessary entities',[16] which, Meillassoux tells us, lead inevitably to the positing of a supremely necessary entity (God), and then to the positing of *every* entity as necessary.[17] His problem with necessary entities is that they place necessity before possibility, which he argues cannot be true. Possibility must always precede necessity, because for something to be necessary, it must first be possible. It is out of scope for this article to examine such an argument except to suggest that Meillassoux is confusing epistemological priorities with ontological priorities, which would be ironic considering his anti-idealist stance.

Meillassoux's second objection to early modern metaphysical schemas is that there is an unquestioned assumption underlying them all: the *principle of sufficient reason*. He rejects that principle on the basis that it cannot be proven with certainty.[18] I shall return to this point later on, when I question whether it is irrational to believe something of which one cannot be certain, and whether or not 'philosophical faith' may legitimately play a role, not contrary but supplementary to reason, in establishing a worldview.[19] But here it is worth noting that certainty plays a similar role in Kant's work and it is this that unites Kant and Meillassoux in contrast to Ricœur.

In addition to these two objections to pre-Kantian thought, I want to suggest a further likely *motivation* for Meillassoux to reject it. That motivation is his aversion to religion, with which it was closely allied in its key representatives, Leibniz, Descartes, and Spinoza. This aversion is evident, for example in his comment that the transition from Kantian 'weak' idealism to post-Kantian 'strong' idealism has played into the hands of religion. Strong idealism completely severs the mind's rational capacities from any grasp on ultimate reality, and in so doing, makes it impossible to argue rationally *against* any religious claim, however absurd and illogical. This is why, in Meillassoux's words, 'by forbidding reason any claim to the absolute, the end of metaphysics has taken the form of an exacerbated return of the religious.'[20] Post-Kantian idealism has accidentally left a back door unguarded through which fideistic religious belief may creep in. And this, for Meillassoux, is a disaster, though he does not say why. I suggest that this unexplained distaste for religion is a motivation behind Meillassoux's rejection of idealism, since he points to a causal connection between the two.

But if Meillassoux does not believe it possible to return to a time before idealism, neither does he think we can advance beyond it. He admits that he has no alternative suggestion about how the mind relates to reality. He knows that his critique is 'liable to make us revise decisions often considered infrangible since Kant. But', he goes on, 'it is not our aim here to resolve this problem; only to try to provide a rigorous formulation of it.'[21]

As the book progresses, Meillassoux becomes increasingly hostile towards idealism, and blames Kant for what he calls a 'catastrophe' that has derailed philosophy's proper task for over two hundred years.[22] The catastrophe is that, even as Copernicus took humanity out of the centre of knowledge and being, Kant placed humanity back in the centre. 'It has become abundantly clear,' Meillassoux writes, that

> a more fitting comparison for the Kantian revolution in thought would be to a 'Ptolemaic counter-revolution', given that what the former asserts is not that the observer whom we thought was motionless is in fact orbiting around the observed sun, but on the contrary, that the subject is central to the process of knowledge.[23]

In other words, Kant did the opposite to Copernicus. Just as Copernicus took humanity *out* of the centre of science, Kant put humanity *in* the centre of philosophy. The irony is that, while Kant did this in order to rescue science by establishing its conditions of possibility, in fact he undermined science at its very core.

We need to be set back on the right road, Meillassoux concludes, which means a new revolution that decentres the human subject in philosophy just as Copernicus did in science. We must adopt a realism capable of accepting science and mathematics in their *prima facie* sense, but without bringing with them any troublesome metaphysics or

theology. 'Philosophy's task', he writes, 'consists in re-absolutizing the scope of mathematics . . . but without lapsing back into any sort of metaphysical necessity, which has indeed become obsolete.'[24]

What Meillassoux does not remotely achieve is a new account of the mind-world relationship. As Catherine Pickstock notes, his 'account of interactions within immanence' is 'somewhat under-nourished.'[25] The status of consciousness, of human knowledge, and of human reasoning, is simply left to one side in his efforts to secure the necessity of mind-independent reality. He successfully achieves this, but that is all he does. He can't do more because he is a materialist, and so he cannot bring subject and object, mind and reality, together in a higher synthesis that encompasses both. The two remain estranged from each other. The only difference he has made is that of freeing the mind from being a necessary component of reality.

Furthermore, Meillassoux does not seem to be aware that the lynchpin of his refutation of idealism is not, in fact, a logical argument at all, but an almost emotional appeal on the basis of an intuitive absurdity in idealism's logical implications. As we have shown, Bataille, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, and Ambrosino fully embraced these logical implications without seeing anything absurd in them. The notion that there was no sun before humans existed is not self-contradictory, and all Meillassoux can say about it is that it entails a wholesale rejection of the truth-claims of science. In the final analysis, Meillassoux simply *opts* for science against idealism without giving any reason for doing so. This is a problem because there is no room for epistemological decision-making in Meillassoux's philosophy. He claims to be offering a logical proof without the need for faith, but he is blind to the faith-based decision-making that forms a part of his own thought.[26]

However successful Meillassoux's attack on idealism, it does not show us a way forward beyond it, still less a way to incorporate its essential insights in a higher synthesis that Hegel famously called *Aufhebung*. That is why Meillassoux's book is called *After Finitude*, with an emphasis on the 'after'. What he is really doing is rejecting finitude as incommensurate with a properly scientific approach to the real. Ricœur, on the other hand, keeps finitude central *epistemologically* in order to displace it from the centre *metaphysically*.[27] That is why Ricœur's approach can be named 'sublating finitude', because he does not see that any 'after' of finitude is either possible or desirable.

Sources of Ricœur's approach to idealism

The idea of a 'second Copernican revolution' is an obsession of the early Ricœur. He refers to it in no less than nine separate publications between 1948 and 1984, in five of which it constitutes the climax of his argument.[28] This was a critically important idea for Ricœur, yet very little work has been done on it. The theme makes a handful of appearances in Don Ihde's *Hermeneutic Phenomenology*,[29] Kevin Vanhoozer's *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricœur*,[30] a chapter contribution by Domenico Jervolino,[31] and it is part of the argument of Annalisa Caputo's article.[32] Caputo argues that Ricœur achieves his second Copernican revolution in the books at the end of his life. Whether or not she is right, neither she nor any of these brief mentions attempt an exhaustive exposition of the idea in its philosophical context. What is clear, however, is

that this idea of a second Copernican revolution is the basis for his more well-known idea of the second naïveté.[33]

Already as a teenager, Ricœur was introduced to the war between idealism and realism. His very first philosophy teacher, a Freudian Thomist by the name of Roland Dalbiez, had 'the greatest aversion'[34] to 'idealism in all its forms', which was his 'declared enemy':

> The major argument given against idealism was that it gravely misunderstood the priority of the real in relation to conscious knowledge of it. Our teacher tried to convince us that in idealism consciousness was like a giant pincer stretching out into emptiness and condemned, for lack of anything outside itself, to grasp only itself in a vain redoubling.[35]

He realised soon enough that Dalbiez's portrayal was 'caricaturish' and did not take idealism seriously enough on its own terms.[36] Three years later he wrote his dissertation under the supervision of Léon Brunschvicg, arguably the leading idealist philosopher in France at the time, and the dissertation itself was a comparison between two nineteenth-century French idealists,[37] meaning that he had ample exposure to the strongest arguments in favour of idealism.

The same year he finished his dissertation, he met the man who became his greatest philosophical influence and lifelong friend: Gabriel Marcel. Like Dalbiez, Marcel had a lifelong antagonism against idealism, but his criticisms are more developed and specific. His most well-known criticism is the one that derives from reflection on the body as a concrete link between mind and reality that is never acknowledged or discussed by idealists. The significance of the body is that it is both objective and subjective at the same time, and that it constitutes an opening onto the world. It does not serve as a conclusive refutation of realism, but Marcel isn't interested in providing proofs or rigorous rational refutations. He is only interested in restoring a certain openness-to-the-world, that for him is the life-blood of philosophy and has been sadly lost by idealism.

Less well known is another of Marcel's critiques of idealism, one that may have had a greater influence on Ricœur. This critique could be called ethical rather than epistemological, because it focuses on the vices and temptations which accompany idealism. Marcel sees idealism as arising from the lust for control, dominance, and mastery in the intellectual sphere, in other words, from the sin of pride which is self-idolatry. Of Ricœur's Master's supervisor, he asks: 'What are the footholds of a doctrine like M. Brunschvicg's? Pride, first of all, and I am not afraid to say so'[38] Marcel equates it with a self-idolatry that 'deifies itself in fact – without always being fully aware of its act of self-divinization, i.e. when it claims that the world revolves around itself. We cannot stress too strongly,' he continues, foreshadowing Meillassoux's critique, 'that Kant's Copernican revolution could and did degenerate for many into an anthropocentrism . . . where the pride of reason is not counterbalanced by the theocentric affirmation of divine sovereignty.'[39] Elsewhere he puts it this way:

> By a very strange inversion, modern philosophy has come to substitute in the place of this real centre [i.e., the earth at the centre of the physical universe] an imaginary focus existing in the mind. One could even maintain, without being paradoxical, that the 'Copernican revolution' has resulted in the setting-up of a new anthropocentric theory.[40]

Marcel and Meillassoux agree on this point, but Marcel takes it further. Just as in the modern world the human subject is both decentred in science yet autocentric in philosophy, so in the premodern world we find the same paradox inverted. We must not confuse the *scientific* anthropocentrism of premodernity with a *philosophical* anthropocentrism, Marcel warns us:

> To Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas and Saint Bonaventure, God is the centre, and God alone. But today it is the human mind, dehumanised, stripped of all power, all presence, and all existence, and then put in God's place to act as his substitute.

[41] To take oneself as the measure of knowledge and to measure everything else by one's own standard as if it was absolute – this is to accord to the human what belongs only to God.

Instead of this autocentrism which is a form of self-deification, Marcel proposes the path of love, humility, and theocentrism that opens us to a reality that envelops us and that we cannot control or master. 'Love is life which decentralises itself, which changes its centre.'[42] 'For the saint and the artist alike, autocentricity and the self are entirely swallowed up in love'.[43] He goes on:

> I have found it less and less possible to situate myself at some central point of view which would be like that of God. This would be a pretension completely incompatible with our status as creatures, it seems to me. That is why I have always emphasized the importance of humility on the philosophical level, the humility directly opposed to pride, to *hubris*.[44]

Marcel is aware, however, that all he has offered is an ethical critique of idealism, and one that is distinctively Christian in its ethical programme. He writes that he needs to 'find a transposition into speculative terms of the practical theocentricity which adopts as its centre, "Thy will and not mine."'[45] But he does not provide such a speculative transposition. He merely takes some initial steps in its direction by means of his own philosophy of openness to the otherness of reality, an openness that makes any kind of closed or totalising system of thought impossible.

Marcel's philosophy is throughout more suggestive than rigorous. That is precisely what makes Ricœur so brilliant as his disciple. This is not to say that Ricœur did not have a vast amount of his own original thought and ideas of his own. But to place the early Ricœur against a Marcellian backdrop is to see the extent to which Ricœur systematically develops Marcel's ideas, balancing them, nuancing them, and working out their implications more rigorously than Marcel ever did.

How Ricœur sublates idealism

Unlike Marcel or Meillassoux, Ricœur never rejects the core insight of idealism, which, in his own words, is that 'reality never offers itself to us except under the form of elements of thought. We do not know a thing-in-itself that is not a known thing.'[46] All thought about reality bears the indelible mark of the thinker, and this mark cannot be erased or bracketed out to give us reality in abstraction from our concept of it.[47] In *Fallible Man* he puts it like this:

> Heidegger . . . is right in saying that the Copernican revolution is first of all the return from the ontic to the ontological[. As Heidegger puts it]: 'Ontic truth conforms necessarily to ontological truth. There again is the legitimate interpretation of the meaning of the "Copernican revolution".'[48]

In other words, we must not miss the profound truth of Kant's revolution: the ineradicable role of the subject in the constitution of knowledge. Ricœur even goes so far as to call this truth the 'beginning of philosophy':

> The beginning of philosophy is a Copernican revolution which centers the world of object on the Cogito: [this means that] the object is for the subject [. . .]. The whole is the horizon of my subjectivity in the sense of this first Copernican revolution. This entire work [*Freedom and Nature*] is carried out under the sign of that first Copernican revolution.[49]

By saying 'this entire work', Ricœur shows his own willingness to operate within the parameters of subjectivity, something he would not do if he thought they contained no truth. In fact, he sees subjectivity as the distinctive mark of philosophical as opposed to theological thinking. 'The first Copernican revolution', he writes, 'makes phenomena turn like planets around the sun of consciousness, giving philosophy both its dignity and its distinctive *pathos*.'[50]

These references both to the Copernican revolution and to the Cogito clearly show the dual origin of the subjective turn in Descartes and Kant. But it is important to note that Ricœur does not see these two philosophers as equivalent to each other. In fact, one thing Ricœur and Meillassoux have in common is their surprisingly positive reception of Descartes – surprising because of his otherwise overwhelmingly negative reception in twentieth- and twenty-first-century thought.[51]

If Ricœur and Meillassoux both prefer Descartes' conception of subjectivity over that of Kant, it is for different reasons. For Meillassoux, it is because Descartes is not a full-blown idealist. Meillassoux praises Descartes for retaining a conception of an object's 'primary qualities' – meaning features that do not depend on human observation in order to be real.[52] For Ricœur, on the other hand, Descartes is preferable because of the priority he gives to reality (metaphysics) over certainty (epistemology):

> The concern of the *Meditations* is not so much epistemological or transcendental as ontological. Descartes seeks a being, quite as much as a ground of validity; perhaps even more so. If the ego has in fact more being than its objects, it has less being in its *esse objectivum* than the idea of infinity. . . . This concern for ontological evaluation . . . renders the second Copernican revolution possible, which, unlike the first one, subordinates the being of the doubting-thinking subject to the perfect being and does so despite the first Copernican Revolution, which centered everything thinkable upon thinking.[53]

In spite of his subjective turn, says Ricœur, Descartes 'renders the second Copernican revolution possible'. This is because, even if physical objects are centred on the subject, this does not mean that the subject is the *ultimate* centre. As an analogy, we might think of how the moon revolves around the earth even though the earth is not the centre of the solar system. Objects do indeed revolve around the subject epistemologically, but at a higher, metaphysical order of reality, God is the sun around which the subject revolves.

Ricœur is pointing to the possibility of a threefold metaphysics that does not treat the physical world and God as the same kind of thing simply because both are opposed to consciousness. Meillassoux, on the other hand, is forced to choose between consciousness and the physical world as the centre of knowledge because he denies the possibility of any *tertium quid* that might unify the subject and object in a higher synthesis. That is why, in spite of his protests to the contrary, Meillassoux cannot keep the insights of idealism at the same time as advocating new form of realism. Idealism is nothing but a 'Kantian catastrophe' that has derailed philosophy for over two hundred years.[54]

Nothing could be further from Ricœur's approach. For Ricœur, the way out of idealism is not to posit an 'after' of subjectivity, but rather to *deepen* it:

> The deepening of subjectivity calls for a second Copernican revolution which displaces the center of reference from subjectivity to Transcendence. I am not this center and I can only invoke it and admire it in the ciphers which are its scattered symbols.[55]

In other words, we must not try to go around Kant or reject him: we must *sublate* (*aufheben*) him, meaning that we go *through* him to a finitude that has relinquished its place at the centre and surrendered to a reality that surpasses it. 'The initial primacy of subjectivity', says Ricœur, 'is *transcended rather than annulled. My limits are never compensated for or corrected at the end of a final reckoning.*'[56]

In contrast to Meillassoux, Ricœur does not want to *replace* subjectivity, but only to *displace* it. Objects are indeed dependent on the subject to be actualised as knowledge, but that does not make subjectivity the centre – even though it does in classical Husserlian phenomenology. It is worth noting that Ricœur's second Copernican Revolution is also a rebuke to Husserl, who posited the subject as a self-founding master due to the way it constitutes knowledge in itself. Ricœur accuses Husserl of being insufficiently cognizant of finitude as the 'ontological condition of understanding'.[57] For Ricœur, the subject is not a master but a 'disciple' of a reality that surpasses it.[58] Is this reality merely objects? It could not be, because of the way objects are partly constituted by their subjective perception. There is something else that neither Meillassoux as representative of speculative realism nor Husserl as representative of phenomenology were able adequately to grasp. Ricœur calls that something else *transcendence*, that which envelops both subject and object. Transcendence is not graspable and cannot be reduced to a determinate concept by any kind of philosophy, be it speculative realism or phenomenology. It can only be accessed indirectly via hints and traces, things Ricœur calls 'ciphers' or 'symbols' because they speak to us from outside the dominion of philosophy:

> It is as an index of the situation of man at the heart of the being in which he moves, exists, and wills, that the symbol speaks to us. Consequently, the task of the philosopher guided by symbols would be to break out of the enchanted enclosure of consciousness of oneself, to end the prerogative of self-reflection. The symbol gives rise to the thought that the *Cogito* is within being, and not vice versa. Thus the second naïveté would be a second Copernican revolution: the being which posits itself in the *Cogito* has still to discover that the very act by which it abstracts itself from the whole does not cease to share in the being that calls to it in every symbol.[59]

The Cogito is within being, and not vice versa, says Ricœur, in a pithy summary of all that is wrong with idealism. It is reality, not consciousness, that encompasses all with its

embrace. This reality gives itself to me, not as an object, not in concepts or intuitions, not in forms of consciousness, but in symbols and myths, enigmatic signs that point beyond the perceptible and cognizable realm.

The unavoidability of choice

Because they are not under our control, these symbols do not offer rational certainty of the transcendent realities to which they point. We cannot be led all the way to them by reason alone. Therefore, Ricœur tells us, a leap is required: 'the leap . . . from existence to transcendence.'[60]

What is noteworthy about this concession is that it is precisely one that Meillassoux does not make, indeed cannot make without his entire argument falling apart. The idea that a philosophical position is not provable, but is grounded on the uncertainty of the finite mind, constitutes an admission of the very finitude Meillassoux is so keen to avoid. Yet as Pickstock shows in one way[61] and I have shown above in another, Meillassoux cannot avoid an element of choice in his philosophy whether he is aware of this or not. Ricœur freely admits the very thing that Meillassoux dares not admit: that reason is not sufficient and that at some point a 'metaphysical choice' must be made, one which determines the direction of one's entire philosophy.[62] 'The human condition is one of choosing because consciousness can never be totally one, completely rational.'[63] This is because we cannot survey reality from a neutral or absolute point of view, nor can we examine it in its totality as if we knew everything that can be known. It is, in fact, precisely because of our finitude that reason does not suffice:

> Because man finds himself in a corporeal, historical situation, because he stands neither at the beginning nor at the end but always in the middle, *in media res*, he must decide in the course of a brief life, on the basis of limited information and in urgent situations which will not wait. Choice arises in a context of radical hesitation which is a sign of finitude and infirmity, a sign of the constriction of human existence. I am not divine understanding: my understanding is limited and finite.[64]

Although Ricœur here uses the language of choice, this does not mean he thinks of the choice as arbitrary or lacking evaluative criteria. Criteria are available and every philosophical position can be argued for. But this does not get us any closer to certainty or proof, because even the criteria themselves are open for debate. To say 'position X cannot be proven, but it is more likely than position Y' begs the question, since even the likelihood itself cannot be proven. That is why Ricœur develops his language of 'leap' and 'choice' by turning to the Pascalian language of the *wager*. A wager removes the possible arbitrariness from the idea of 'choice', since it is made on the basis of reasons.[65]

Yet the inability to achieve rational certainty applies also to itself: one cannot prove that one cannot prove anything. One is free to pursue certainty if one wishes. To abandon the quest for certainty and to accept finitude and the need for choice is itself a choice. Thus we see a performative coherence to Ricœur's proposal which is lacking in Meillassoux.

Philosophical faith

The need for choice, or the inevitability of the wager, is embarrassing for a purportedly purely rational philosophy like that of Meillassoux because it leads ineluctably to the language of faith or trust. But this need not be construed as religious or theological faith. Ricœur has at his disposal the notion of 'philosophical faith'[66] a term he inherited from Karl Jaspers,[67] but the idea of which clearly originates, as does Ricœur's earlier language of the 'leap', with Kierkegaard. As Pickstock notes, for Kierkegaard 'one cannot separate reason from modes of trust and faith.'[68] Note that the words 'faith' and 'trust' are identical in meaning and were the same word in Hebrew and Greek, the biblical languages. To have faith means merely to trust, without implying anything about the object or content of such faith: it is *fides qua* and not *fides quae*. *Fides qua* only means holding something – anything at all – as true without conclusive rational proof that it is true. In Ricœur's case, he proposes holding as true that there is a transcendent reality that is the true centre around which both subjectivity and objectivity revolve.

Why is faith needed? Because reason is not sufficient. The call to self-decentring can never be proven on rational grounds. There is no rational route from one to the other. There is no rational way to prove the existence of other minds, let alone the existence of a transcendent reality.[69] Reason cannot even validate itself without circularity. There is no purely rational route out of the solipsistic prison of consciousness. All these things – reason, other minds, the supernatural – require a basis of faith, for without faith there is no reality; indeed, without faith there is no reason.

Kant's mistake lay in his obsession with certainty, which implicitly denies the finitude of the human condition. Kant tried to make up for the lack of certainty about the thing-in-itself by securing certainty about phenomena, changing the meaning of 'objective' to mean only what is universal within the limits of subjectivity. He relegated the content of faith to the realm of the unknowable, thus creating a rift both between faith and reason and between theory and practice.[70] If he had seen that neither faith and reason, nor theory and practice, can be separated even if they can be distinguished – if he had acknowledged the need for faith in theory as well as in practice, understood as a choice of worldview that cannot be verified as certain – then he might have seen a possible route of access to the thing-in-itself and been content to have something other than himself as the centre. It is through faith that one makes the leap from autocentrism to self-displacement and transcendence. No bridge of pure reason can be built over that chasm. You are always free to posit yourself at the centre and to continue to seek apodictic certainty by founding all knowledge on yourself. You cannot be forced by logical argument to do otherwise. But if you are free to do that, it means you are also free to do otherwise, to take the wager of seeing reality from a heliocentric point of view.

Theological faith

Faith in the reality of transcendence does not need to involve revealed religion or theology. It can operate within a strictly philosophical paradigm, as Jaspers shows. All the previous section argued is that, in Pickstock's words, 'trust and faith . . . is unavoidable for a true realism' including the realism of Meillassoux.[71]

But if one chooses to take the leap and adopt a Christian point of view, having not just *fides qua* but *fides quae*, i.e. Christian faith, one finds a fresh angle on the whole question of idealism and realism. The following reflection is only available from a Christian standpoint, and neither Ricœur nor I make any pretence that this standpoint can be arrived at by purely rational means. But it is worth adding because it reveals the reason that Marcel and Ricœur opted for realism over idealism. They did so because, as Christians, they embraced a paradigm according to which pride is a sin and humility a virtue.

We noted earlier Marcel's insistence on an ethical dimension to the question of realism and idealism. This ethical dimension is drawn from a Christian world-view. As Kenneth Gallagher writes, 'Marcel declares that at the origin of philosophy there must be an attitude of humility, of "ontological humility." This is axial: without it, our thought would lose all properly philosophical character.'[72] It takes humility to accept that one cannot base one's life on certainty, that certainty is not available to the human condition. From a theological perspective, the pursuit of certainty that characterises modern philosophy is actually a temptation, the temptation to self-divinisation, to a denial of human finitude. As Ricœur puts it: 'all idealism is Promethean and conceals a secret rejection of the human condition'.[73]

The Christian faith promotes the virtue of humility, considered as a childlike attitude to the world, one that relinquishes the pretention to be independent and accepts that we are necessarily dependent beings by our nature. Kant described the Enlightenment as an emergence into adulthood, an abandonment of the childish reliance on others and the determination to think for oneself.[74] By contrast, Ricœur describes the second Copernican revolution as being born again, returning again to one's mother's womb and re-emerging into the world with wonder, dependence, and trust in another. He opens up a new vista on the relationship between philosophy and theology, viewing it through the lens of Matthew 18:3: 'unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven' (ESV). The philosopher is the adult who has lost his or her naïveté, but 'the theologian', he says, 'is the guardian of this word.' The theologian brings to philosophy the gift of a second naïveté, a second birth. He goes on:

> If a critique of knowledge is possible, it is because the final movement is not to objectivise, to encompass, to reduce, but to receive, to participate, to admire. It is a primary receptivity to the *gift of the absolute* which comes to me under the figure of the world, of the thou, of the 'ciphers' of transcendence. There is a second Copernican revolution by which thought subordinates itself to being and becomes openness.

> This possibility of a new ontology beyond idealism is a possibility of philosophy, not theology. But the theologian, though his own 'pathos', teaches the philosopher the childlike spirit. . . . There is no second Copernican revolution, no reading of the ciphers which encompass me, without this childlike spirit. The childlike spirit is the soul of metaphysics, even if metaphysics tends to lead this soul astray into the adulthood of philosophical logic.[75]

If, from a theological perspective, humility is the source of faith, then pride is the source of autocentrism. This insight derives from the most tragic moment in the Christian story, traditionally called 'the Fall'. Adam and Eve were prohibited from eating of the 'tree of the knowledge of good and evil' (Gen 2:17 ESV). But what does 'knowledge' (Hebrew:

דַעַת) mean in this context? Obviously it cannot mean understanding the difference between good and evil, else Adam and Eve would not have been able to understand the idea of something being forbidden. According to biblical scholarship, the tree represents the temptation *to arrogate to oneself the power to determine good and evil*, in other words, to make oneself the central standard for moral truth. The essence of sin is choosing to decide for myself what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong, what is true and what is false. It is refusing to submit to a standard from outside, and instead making oneself one's own standard.[76] Here biblical scholarship is in harmony with the wisdom of the Christian tradition, which names this temptation *pride* and sees it as the heart of Adam and Eve's temptation. Pride means claiming equality with God, a Promethean self-positing that refuses to acknowledge human finitude. 'Our greatest sin', writes Emmanuel Falque, is 'that we cannot accept not being like God.'[77] From this perspective, the autocentrism that comes with idealist philosophy has its source in the pride that is at the root of all sin, all refusal to recognise the reality that is given to us, a reality that we did not and could not create or determine.

Conclusion

We have seen that for Ricœur, realism depends on faith, humility, and the choice to displace oneself from the centre, whereas idealism is based on pride, and the choice to assert oneself as the centre. Where does that leave Meillassoux? He has helped us in one way, by highlighting the idealism's fatal flaw with exceptional clarity and power. But apart from that, Meillassoux looks to us much more like Kant than he would be comfortable with. Like Kant, he has no room for faith, no ethical component to his epistemology, and no way of uniting subjectivity and objectivity in a higher synthesis. Like Kant, he remains wedded to the quest for certainty, a quest that can lead only to the illusion of having achieved it, or to despair. He has shown us that idealism is not the solution, but he has not shown us what is the solution.

By contrast, Ricœur offers us a choice to embrace realism, or indeed a *wager*, but one that comes with a cost. We must abandon certainty and pride, and accept that we are not the centre of reality. We must abandon the attempt to complete philosophy in a closed system of determinate concepts. Reality contains mysteries that cannot be fully grasped by human consciousness, and can only be testified to by means of symbols. This is because reality is received as a gift; it is not constituted. 'Every philosophy of transcendence', writes Ricœur, 'is realist at heart, in the sense that it conceives being as *given*, and on the other hand a philosophy without transcendence like that of Heidegger is idealist in the sense that it attempts to "found" being.'[78] While Meillassoux tries to escape finitude by means of an unconfessed choice to depend on science, Ricœur embraces finitude more completely than any idealist, deepening it into a humble openness to the reality that envelops me and surpasses my grasp.

Notes

1. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 110. 'Bisher nahm man an, alle unsere Erkenntnisse müsse sich nach den Gegenständen richten; aber alle Versuche über sie *a priori* etwas durch Begriffe

auszumachen, wodurch unsere Erkenntnisse erweitert würden, gingen unter dieser Voraussetzung zu Nichte. Man versuche es daher einmal, ob wir nicht in den Aufgaben der Metaphysik damit besser fortkommen, dass wir annehmen, die Gegenstände müssen sich nach unserem Erkenntnisse richten' (Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* [1787; repr. Leipzig: Hartenstein, 1868], 17–18).

2. For a fuller account of the reasons Ricœur does this, see Barnabas Aspray, *Ricœur at the Limits of Philosophy: God, Creation, and Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 88.

3. Georges Bataille, "Un-Knowing and Its Consequences", trans. Annette Michelson, *October* 36, no. 1 (1986): 80. "Ayer a annoncé cette proposition très simple : il y avait eu le soleil avant que les hommes existent. Et il ne pouvait même pas en douter. Il s'est trouvé que Merleau-Ponty, Ambrosino, (physicien) et moi-même n'étions pas d'accord sur cette proposition et Ambrosino disait que certainement le soleil n'avait pas existé avant le monde. Pour ma part, je ne vois pas comment on peut le dire. La proposition est une proposition qui indique le parfait non-sens que peut revêtir une proposition raisonnable. Un sens commun doit avoir un sens total au sens où l'on annonce une proposition quelconque qui implique en principe un sujet et un objet. Dans la proposition : il y avait le soleil et il n'y a pas d'hommes, il y a un sujet et pas d'objet" (Georges Bataille, *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. 8 [Paris: Gallimard, 1976], 190–91). He must have got 'subject' and 'object' mixed up because I'm pretty sure he meant it the other way round. For some helpful analyses of this encounter, see Andreas Vrahimis, "Was There a Sun before Men Existed?: Ayer, Sartre, Bataille, and Merleau-Ponty", in *Encounters between Analytic and Continental Philosophy*, Language, Discourse, Society (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 87–109; Andreas Vrahimis, "'Was There a Sun Before Men Existed?': A. J. Ayer and French Philosophy in the Fifties', *Journal for the History of Analytical Philosophy* 1, no. 9 (26 April 2013): 1–25.

4. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Bodmin: Blackwell, 1962), 269. "Die Gesetze Newtons, der Satz vom Widerspruch, jede Wahrheit überhaupt sind nur solange wahr, als Dasein ist. Vordem Dasein überhaupt nicht war, und nachdem Dasein überhaupt nicht mehr sein wird, war keine Wahrheit und wird keine sein" (Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* [Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1967], 226).

5. For some worthwhile takes on the question, see *inter alia*: William F. Vallicella, "Heidegger's Reduction of Being to Truth", *The New Scholasticism* 59, no. 2 (1 May 1985): 156–76; Michael E. Zimmerman, "On Vallicella's Critique of Heidegger", *International Philosophical Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (1 February 1990): 75–100, doi:10.5840/ipq199030150; William F. Vallicella, "Reply to Zimmerman", *International Philosophical Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (1990): 245–54; William Blattner, "Laying the Ground for Metaphysics: Heidegger's Appropriation of Kant", in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles B. Guignon, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 149–76; James Orr, "Heidegger's Critique of Aquinas on Truth: A Critical Assessment", *New Blackfriars* 95, no. 1055 (2014): 43–56; Jonathan Lyonhart, "Re-Thinking Truth: Assessing Heidegger's Critique of Aquinas in Light of Vallicella's Critique of Heidegger", *New Blackfriars* 103, no. 1105 (2022): 326–36.

6. For example, Meillassoux writes that "Heidegger … remains faithful to the correlationist exigency inherited from Kant and continued in Husserlian phenomenology" (Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier [London: Continuum, 2010], 8). "Heidegger … reste donc fidèle à l'exigence corrélationnelle héritée de Kant, et prolongée par la phénoménologie husserlienne" (Quentin Meillassoux, *Après la finitude: essai sur la nécessité de la contingence* [Paris: Seuil, 2006], 22).

7. For more on speculative realism, see Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman, *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* (Melbourne: re.press, 2011).

8. See Paul Ricœur, *From Text to Action* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 12, where he describes his philosophy as a confluence of these three methodological streams.

9. Tom Sparrow, *The End of Phenomenology: Metaphysics and the New Realism* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022). Note the pushback by Dan Zahavi in 'The End of What? Phenomenology vs. Speculative Realism', *International Journal Of Philosophical Studies* 24, no. 3 (2016): 289–309; and Sparrow's response in 'Interview with Tom Sparrow', *Figure/Ground*, 12 July 2016, https://figureground.org/interview-with-tom-sparrow/. The substance of the debate leads directly to the question of speculative realism's grounding, to which this article makes a contribution by suggesting that its grounding is incomplete.

10. L. Sebastian Purcell, "After Hermeneutics?", *Symposium* 14, no. 2 (1 October 2010): 160–79.

11. This is even true at the level of quantum physics which might have been considered an exception, since there are features of quantum physics which do change depending on the presence or absence of an observer. He writes that 'the very fact that an observer can influence the law is itself a property of the law which is not supposed to depend upon the existence of an observer' (Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 114); "Cela même qu'un observateur peut influer sur la loi est une propriété de la loi qui n'est pas supposée dépendre de l'existence d'un observateur" (Meillassoux, *Après la finitude*, 158).

12. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 17–18. "Il n'y a pas de compromis possible entre le corrélat et l'archifossile : l'un des deux étant admis, l'autre est de ce fait disqualifié. . . . Face à l'archifossile, tous les idéalismes convergent et deviennent également extraordinaires – tous les corrélationismes se révèlent comme des idéalismes extrêmes, incapables de se résoudre à admettre que ces événements d'une matière sans homme dont nous parle la science ont effectivement pu se produire tels que la science en parle" (Meillassoux, *Après la finitude*, 35–36).

13. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 29. "Un tel retour nous paraît précisément impossible" (Meillassoux, *Après la finitude*, 40).

14. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 27. "Notre question . . . exige que nous nous tenions à égale distance du réalisme naïf et de la subtilité corrélationnelle" (Meillassoux, *Après la finitude*, 38).

15. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 29. "Nous ne pouvons, sur ce point, qu'être des héritiers du kantisme" (Meillassoux, *Après la finitude*, 40). Žižek has made the same point more fundamentally: "after a true historical break, one simply cannot return to the past, one cannot go on as if nothing happened – if one does it, the same practice acquires a radically changed meaning' (Slavoj Žižek, 'Is It Still Possible to Be a Hegelian Today?", in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, ed. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman [Melbourne: re.press, 2011], 202).

16. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 34. 'production illusoire d'entités nécessaires' (Meillassoux, *Après la finitude*, 46).

17. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 32. Meillassoux, *Après la finitude*, 45.

18. See Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 125.

19. See below, section titled "Philosophical Faith".

20. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 45. Italics removed. "*La fin de la métaphysique, en chassant la raison de toutes ses prétentions à l'absolu, a pris la forme d'un retour exacerbé du religieux*" (Meillassoux, *Après la finitude*, 62).

21. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 26. "Susceptible de nous faire réviser des décisions souvent considérées comme infrangibles depuis Kant. . . . Notre ambition n'est pas ici de résoudre un tel problème, seulement de tenter de le poser sous une forme rigoureuse" (Meillassoux, *Après la finitude*, 37).

22. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 120, 124; Meillassoux, *Après la finitude*, 166, 171.

23. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 118. "On sait aujourd'hui suffisamment que la révolution instruite par Kant dans la pensée est bien plutôt comparable à une « contre-révolution ptolémaîque », puisqu'il s'agit d'y affirmer non pas que l'observateur que l'on croyait immobile tourne en vérité autour du Soleil observé, mais au contra-ire que le sujet est central dans le procès de la connaissance" (Meillassoux, *Après la finitude*, 163). Nicholas Adams makes the same point: "In one way, however, Kant's

revolution is significantly anti-Copernican: whereas Copernicus had displaced 'us' from the center of the universe (it is now the sun and not our planet that is the center), Kant emphatically placed 'us[' at the center of knowledge (it is now our thinking and not the world that is the center)" ('Kant', in *The Blackwell Companion to Nineteenth-Century Theology*, ed. David Fergusson [Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010], 6). But we should note that Kant himself saw the analogy to lie in the common intuition to "seek for the observed movements not in the objects of the heavens but in their observer" (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 113); ' … die beobachteten bewegungen nicht in den Gegenständen des Himmels, sondern in ihrem Zuschauer zu suchen' (Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, 20–21).

24. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 126. "La tâche consiste, pour la philosophie, à réabsolutiser la portée des mathématiques … sans reconduire à une nécessité de type métaphysique, en effet périmée" (Meillassoux, *Après la finitude*, 175).

25. Catherine Pickstock, *Aspects of Truth: A New Religious Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 198.

26. This point is similar to the one Pickstock makes about another element of Meillassoux's thought. Pickstock asks 'what renders the election of *chaosmos* to ultimacy any more than a decision?' (ibid., 197).

27. Ricœur's method never involves rejecting outright any idea, philosophy, or philosopher, but rather dialoguing with it, being transformed by it, and then moving beyond it while at the same time keeping hold of the transformations it wrought. We see this clearly in Ricœur's relationship to idealism.

28. Mikel Dufrenne and Paul Ricœur, *Karl Jaspers et la philosophie de l'existence* (Paris: Seuil, 1947), 356; Paul Ricœur, *Gabriel Marcel et Karl Jaspers: philosophie du mystère et philosophie du paradoxe* (Paris: Éditions du Temps présent, 1948), 82; Paul Ricœur, 'Le renouvellement du problème de la philosophie chrétienne par les philosophies de l'existence', in *Le problème de la philosophie chrétienne*, ed. Jean Boisset (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1949), 66; Paul Ricœur, 'The Symbol: Food for Thought', *Philosophy Today* 4, no. 3 (Fall 1960): 207; Paul Ricœur, 'Le Symbole Donne à Penser', *Esprit*, no. 275 (7/8) (1959): 76; Paul Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, trans. Erazim Kohák (1950; repr., Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966), 472; Paul Ricœur, *Le volontaire et l'involontaire*, Philosophie de la volonté 1 (1949; repr., Paris: Éditions Points, 2009), 589; Paul Ricœur, *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology*, trans. Edward Ballard and Lester Embree (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967), 88; Paul Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon, 1969), 356; Paul Ricœur, *Finitude et culpabilité*, Philosophie de la volonté 2 (Paris: Éditions Points, 2009), 576; Paul Ricœur, 'Foreword', in *Hermeneutic Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Paul Ricœur*, by Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), xv; Paul Ricœur, 'Gabriel Marcel and Phenomenology', in *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp and Lewis Edwin Hahn (Illinois: Open Court, 1984), 492.

29. Don Ihde, *Hermeneutic Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Paul Ricœur* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971).

30. Kevin Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricœur: A Study in Hermeneutics and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 275, 280.

31. Domenico Jervolino, "In Search of a Poetics of the Will", in *Paul Ricœur: Honoring and Continuing the Work*, ed. Farhang Erfani, trans. Amin Erfani and Carrie Golden (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), 152–53.

32. Annalisa Caputo, "A Second Copernican Revolution. Phenomenology of the Mutuality and Poetics of the Gift in the Last Ricœur", *Studia Phaenomenologica* 13, no. 1 (2013): 231–56.

33. "Hence our second naïveté is a second Copernican revolution" (Ricœur, "The Symbol', 207). See also Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 356; Ricœur, "Gabriel Marcel and Phenomenology", 492.

34. Paul Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction: Conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 7; Paul Ricœur, *La Critique et La Conviction : Entretien Avec François Azouvi et Marc de Launay* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1995), 17.

35. My translation: "L'argument majeur opposé aux idéalismes était qu'ils méconnaissaient gravement la priorité du réel par rapport à la connaissance consciente d'elle-même. Notre maître cherchait à nous convaincre que dans l'idéalisme la conscience était semblable à une pince tendue dans le vide et condamnée, faute de prise extérieure, à se saisir elle-même dans un vain redoublement" (Paul Ricœur, 'Mon premier maître en philosophie', in *Honneur qux maîtres*, ed. Marguerite Léna [Paris: Critérion, 1991], 221–22).

36. Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 7; Ricœur, *La Critique et La Conviction*, 17.

37. Paul Ricœur, *Méthode réflexive appliquée au problème de Dieu chez Lachelier et Lagneau* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2017).

38. Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having*, trans. Katharine Farrer (1935; repr., London: Dacre Press, 1949), 184. 'De quelles prises dispose une doctrine comme l'idéalisme de M. Brunschvicg? L'orgueil tout d'abord, je n'hésite pas à le déclarer' (Gabriel Marcel, *Être et Avoir* [Paris: Aubier, 1935], 268).

39. Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, trans. Robert Rosthal (1940; repr., New York: Crossroad, 1982), 30. UNFINISHED CITATION.

40. Marcel, *Being and Having*, 235. 'Par un renversement singulièrement curieux, à ce centre réel ... la pensée modern est amenée) substituer un foyer imaginaire situé dans l'esprit ; et l'on pourrait soutenir sans paradoxe que la « révolution copernicienne » a eu pour conséquence l'instauration d'un anthropocentrisme nouveau' (Marcel, *Être et Avoir*, 349).

41. Marcel, *Being and Having*, 184. "Pour saint Augustin, saint Thomas ou saint Bonaventure, c'est Dieu, et Dieu seul, qui est le centre. Mais ici, c'est cet esprit humain déshumanisé, destitué de toute puissance, de toute presence, de toute existence, qui prend la place de Dieu et se substitue à lui" (Marcel, *Être et Avoir*, 267). Meillassoux is aware of this feature of premodern thought, noting that 'contrary to what is often claimed the end of Ptolemaic astronomy does not mean that humanity felt itself humiliated because it could no longer think of itself as occupying the centre of the world. In actuality the centrality of the earth was then considered to be a shameful rather than glorious position' (Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 136). In short, ancient cosmological anthropocentrism cannot be seen as a form of pride. See further Dennis R. Danielson, "The Great Copernican Cliché", *American Journal of Physics* 69, no. 10 (October 2001): 1029–35. But Meillassoux is unwilling to see any value to be recovered in premodern thought because of its dependence on the idea of God, which, for him, makes it irredeemably obsolete.

42. Gabriel Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal*, trans. Bernard Wall (1927; repr., London: Rockliff, 1952), 222. UNFINISHED CITATION.

43. Marcel, *Being and Having*, 174. "Soit dans l'ordre de la sainteté, soit dans celui de la création artistique où la liberté resplendit, il apparaît de tout évidence que la liberté n'est pas une autonomie : ici et là, le soi, l'autocentrisme est entièrement résorbé dans l'amour" (Marcel, *Être et Avoir*, 254).

44. Gabriel Marcel, *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*, trans. Peter McCormick and Stephen Jolin (1968; repr., Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 252. 'Il m'est apparu toujours plus clairement qu'il était impossible pour moi de me placer à un point de vue central qui serait en quelque sorte le point de vue de Dieu, qu'il y avait là une prétention qui me semblait tout à fait incompatible avec notre statut de créature : d'où la place que j'ai été amené à accorder à l'humilité sur le plan philosophique, l'humilité par opposition à l'orgueil ou à *l'hybrisme*' (Paul Ricœur and Gabriel Marcel, *Entretiens* [Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1968], 117–18).

45. Marcel, *Being and Having*, 128. Translation modified: "Ce dont il s'agit ici, c'est de trouver une transposition spéculative de ce théocentrisme pratique qui adopte comme centre Ta Volonté et non la mienne" (Marcel, *Être et Avoir*, 186).

46. My translation: "La réalité ne s'offre à nous que sous forme d'éléments de pensée. Nous ne savons pas ce qu'est une chose en soi qui n'est pas une chose connue" (Ricœur, *Méthode réflexive*, 34).

47. It is worth noting in passing that this insight was already known to premodern thought. See, for example, Aquinas: "The thing known is in the knower according to the mode of the knower. Hence the knowledge of every knower is ruled according to its own nature" ("Cognitum autem est in cognoscente secundum modum cognoscentis. Unde cuiuslibet cognoscentis cognitio est secundum modum suae naturae" [St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Laurence Shapcote (New York: Benziger Bros., 1911), I 12.4c]).

48. Paul Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, trans. Charles A. Kelbley (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), 39. "Heidegger . . . a raison de dire que la révolution copernicienne c'est d'abord le renvoi de l'ontique à l'ontologique. . . . « La verité ontique se conforme nécessairement à la vérité ontologique. Voilà à nouveau l'interprétation légitime du sens de la révolution copernicienne »" (Ricœur, *Finitude et culpabilité*, 78). The quotation is from Heidegger's *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. James Churchill (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), 22. "Die ontische Wahrheit richtet sich notwendig nach der ontologischen. Das ist erneut die rechtmäßige Interpretation des Sinnes der „Kopernikanischen Wendung"" (Martin Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, Gesamtausgabe 3 [1929; repr., Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1991], 17).

49. Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature*, 471–72. "Le commencement de la philosophie est une révolution copernicienne qui centre le monde des objets sur le Cogito : l'objet est pour le sujet . . . . ; c'est au sens de cette première révolution copernicienne que le Tout est l'horizon de ma subjectivité. Tout cet ouvrage est sous le signe de cette première révolution copernicienne" (Ricœur, *Le volontaire et l'involontaire*, 588–89).

50. My translation: "L'idéalisme, en opérant la révolution copernicienne qui fait tourner les phénomènes comme des planètes autour du soleil de la conscience, consacre techniquement la dignité de la philosophie en même temps que son « pathos »" (Ricœur, 'Renouvellement de la philosophie chrétienne', 55–56).

51. John Cottingham speaks of the "anti-Cartesian thrust of contemporary philosophising" ("General Introduction", in *Meditations on First Philosophy*, by René Descartes, ed. John Cottingham, 2nd ed. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017], xxxviii).

52. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 1–3.

53. Ricœur, *Husserl*, 88–89. "Son souci n'est pas tellement épistémologique, transcendantal, qu'ontologique. C'est un être qu'il cherche, autant et plus qu'un fondement de validité. Si effectivement le moi a plus d'être que ses objets, il a moins d'être que l'idée d'infini . . . . C'est ce souvi [*sic*] d'évaluation ontologique qui . . . malgré la révolution copernicienne qui centre tout le pensable sur la pensée, rend possible la seconde révolution copernicienne qui, en sens contraire, subordonne l'être du dubitant-pensant à l'être parfait" (Paul Ricœur, 'Étude sur les « Méditations Cartésiennes » de Husserl', *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 52, no. 33 [1954]: 81). By contrast, As William Desmond notes, 'it is not being as being that interests Kant but our knowing of beings' (William Desmond, 'The Metaphysics of Modernity', in *The Oxford Handbook of Theology and Modern European Thought*, ed. Nicholas Adams, George Pattison, and Graham Ward [Oxford University Press, 2013], 552).

54. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 124. See also Anthony Morgan, ed., *The Kantian Catastrophe?: Conversations on Finitude and the Limits of Philosophy* (Newcastle: Bigg Books, 2017).

55. Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature*, 471–72. "L'approfondissement de la subjectivité appelle une deuxième révolution copernicienne, qui déplace le centre de référence de la subjectivité à la Transcendance. Ce centre, je ne le suis pas et ne peux que l'invoquer et l'admirer dans ses chiffres qui sont ses signes épars" (Ricœur, *Le volontaire et l'involontaire*, 589).

56. Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature*, 472. Italics added: "Le premier primat de la subjectivité . . . est non point annulé mais transcendé. Jamais mes limites ne sont compensées ou corrigées au terme d'une addition algébrique ou au bas d'un bilan final" (Ricœur, *Le volontaire et l'involontaire*, 590).

57. Paul Ricœur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, ed. and trans. John Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 65. " ... la condition ontologique de la compréhension" (Paul Ricœur, "Phénoménologie et Herméneutique", ed. E. W. Orth, *Phänomenologische Forschungen* 1 [1975]: 38).

58. Ricœur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, 73.

59. Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 356. Translation modified: "C'est donc finalement comme index de la situation de l'homme au cœur de l'être dans lequel il se meut, existe et veut, que le symbole nous parle. Dès lors la tâche du philosophe guidé par le symbole serait de rompre l'enceinte enchantée de la conscience de soi, de briser le privilège de la réflexion. Le symbole donne à penser que le *Cogito* est à l'intérieur de l'être et non l'inverse ; la seconde naïveté serait ainsi une seconde révolution copernicienne : l'être que se pose lui-même dans le Cogito doit encore découvrir que l'acte même par lequel il s'arrache à la totalité ne cesse de participer à l'être qui l'interpelle en chaque symbole" (Ricœur, *Finitude et culpabilité*, 576).

60. Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature*, 468.

61. See footnote 22 above. Pickstock uses the word "decision" instead of "choice".

62. Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature*, 466. "options métaphysiques" (Ricœur, *Le volontaire et l'involontaire*, 582).

63. Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature*, 174. Translation modified: "La condition humaine est de choisir *parce que* la conscience ne peut être totalement unifiée, totalement rationnelle" (Ricœur, *Le volontaire et l'involontaire*, 13).

64. Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature*, 174. Translation modified: "Parce qu'il est en situation historique et corporelle, parce qu'il n'est ni au commencement ni à la fin, mais toujours au milieu, in medias res, l'homme doit décider au cours d'une vie brève, dans le cadre d'une information bornée et dans des situations d'urgence qui n'attendent pas. La choix surgit dans un contexte d'hésitation radicale qui est un signe de finitude et d'infirmité, le signe de l'étroitesse de l'existence humaine ; je ne suis pas l'entendement divin ; mes clartés sont bornées et finies" (Ricœur, *Le volontaire et l'involontaire*, 224–25).

65. Ricœur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 355; Ricœur, *Finitude et culpabilité*, 574.

66. Ricœur in fact uses the term "philosophical faith" ('foi philosophique') earlier in *Freedom and Nature*. See Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature*, 446; Ricœur, *Le volontaire et l'involontaire*, 557.

67. Karl Jaspers, *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Harper & Row, 1967); Karl Jaspers, *Der Philosophische Glaube Angesichts Der Offenbarung* (Munich: Piper, 1962).

68. Pickstock, *Aspects of Truth*, 240.

69. Marcel already saw this with great clarity. When writing about 'the problem of the reality of other selves', he writes: "It seems to me that the problem can be stated in such a way as to exclude in advance any solution which can be accepted or even understood; that is, by centring my reality on my consciousness of myself. If we begin, like Descartes, by assuming that my essence is self-consciousness, there is no longer a way out" (Marcel, *Being and Having*, 113).

70. As Marcel notes, certainty and faith are incompatible and mutually exclusive: "were faith converted into certitude it would be denied as faith" (Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal*, 41). 'La foi se nierait en se convertissant en certitude' (Gabriel Marcel, *Journal métaphysique* [Paris: Gallimard, 1927], 42).

71. Pickstock, *Aspects of Truth*, 189.

72. Kenneth T. Gallagher, *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1962), 5.

73. Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature*, 464. "Tout idéalisme est prométhéen et recèle un secret refus de la condition humaine" (Ricœur, *Le volontaire et l'involontaire*, 579).

74. Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment? (1784)", in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 11–22.

75. My translation: "« Si vous ne devenez comme de petits enfants, vous n'entrerez pas dans le Royaume de Dieu »: le théologien [est] le gardien de cette parole. . . ..

Si une critique du savoir est possible, c'est précisément parce que le dernier geste n'est pas d'objectiver, d'englober, de réduire, mais d'accueillir, de participer, d'admirer. En elle est une réceptivité première au don d'absolu qui vient à moi sous la figure du monde, du toi, des « chiffres » de la Transcendance. Il y a une seconde révolution copernicienne par laquelle la pensée se subordonne à l'être et se fait ouverture.

Cette possibilité d'une nouvelle ontologie au-delà de l'idéalisme est une possibilité de la philosophie, non de la théologie. Mais c'est à travers son propre 'pathos' que le théologien enseigne au philosophe l'esprit d'enfance. . . . Il n'est pas de seconde révolution copernicienne, de lecture des chiffres divins qui m'englobent, moi l'englobant, sans esprit d'enfance. L'esprit d'enfance est l'âme de la métaphysique, bien que la métaphysique tende à dissiper cette âme dans la plus extrême maturité de la logique philosophique' (Ricœur, 'Renouvellement de la philosophie chrétienne', 55–56).

76. "The wider biblical text lends support to interpreting this knowledge as a moral discernment of good and evil" (E. Baez, "Tree of Knowledge", in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. [Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016]). "The knowledge of good and evil represents wisdom and discernment to decide and effect 'good' (i.e. what advances life) and 'evil' (i.e. what hinders it). . . . Thus, the tree represents knowledge and power appropriate only to God" (Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001], 86). See also W. Malcolm Clark, "A Legal Background to the Yahwist's Use of 'Good and Evil' in Genesis 2–3", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88, no. 3 (1969): 266–78; J. H. McIlvaine, *The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil* (New York: Dodd, 1847); Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary 1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2014), 87; Shalom Paul, 'Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil', in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*, ed. Adele Berlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

77. Emmanuel Falque, *The Guide to Gethsemane: Anxiety, Suffering, Death*, trans. George Hughes (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 12. 'Ne pas accepter . . . de ne pas être comme Dieu, . . . probablement est-ce donc là notre plus grand péché' (Emmanuel Falque, *Triduum philosophique: Le Passeur de Gethsémani. Métamorphose de la finitude. Les Noces de l'Agneau* [Éditions du Cerf, 2016], 36).

78. My translation: "toute philosophie de la transcendance est au fond réaliste, en ce sens qu'elle pense l'être comme donné; et au contraire une philosophie sans transcendance comme celle de Heidegger est idéaliste en ce sens qu'elle tente de « fonder » l'être" (Dufrenne and Ricœur, *Karl Jaspers et la philosophie de l'existence*, 47n61).

Disclosure statement

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