

**Towards a Christological Realism:
Thinking the Correlation with Teilhard and Barfield
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Preface

Quentin Meillassoux's penetrating text, *After Finitude*, comes at a time when Continental philosophy finds itself engaging more closely with what could be called "poetico-religious" modes of thought. Rationality of the Cartesian sort has been thoroughly deconstructed, shown to be incapable of providing what it once promised: a clear and distinct picture of the substance of the world as it exists outside and independent of the human psyche. Meillassoux admits that Cartesianism seems to have become "irrevocably obsolete,"¹ since, following Kant's transcendental critique of the ontological argument,² the theological ground of Descartes' knowledge of the 'in-itself' has been dissolved. Two centuries of post-Kantian reflection have carried his critique of the organ of knowledge even further, pointing to, among other things, the constitutive role of language for thought and the evolutionary emergence of consciousness as factors severely limiting, if not outright denying, philosophy's access to the Absolute. If Reason, or *Logos*, still has a role to play in contemporary philosophy, it has become all but impossible to conceive of it in abstraction from the body and its cosmohistorical origins.

The Jesuit Paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) was well aware of the need to conceive of psyche and cosmos in less dualistic terms, and did not shy away from

¹ Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 29.

² Kant argued that the necessity of a concept for *thought* does not prove its existence in *fact*.

rejecting religious dogmatisms that could not be squared with the findings of 20th century natural science. Neither were these conditions lost on the philosopher Owen Barfield (1898-1997), who argued throughout his life that Romanticism's poetico-religious conception of humanity's relation to nature and divinity can and must "come of age" in our era. For Barfield, *Imagination*, the favored organ of Romantics, referred not to "the faculty of inventing fictions," but rather to that which,

at its highest level...[inherits] and [continues] the divine creative activity of the Logos,...the common origin of human language and consciousness, as well as the world which contains them.³

Meillassoux argues formidably against such a "return of the religious," lamenting that "the contemporary philosopher has completely capitulated to the man of faith," post-Kantian modes of thought having forced upon him the conclusion that, "if there is an ultimate truth, only piety can provide it, not thought."⁴ A truly adequate response to Meillassoux in light of Barfield's and Teilhard's Christologies would require a longer study. The aim of this brief essay is only to begin exploring the speculative import of the poetico-religious mode Meillassoux so sharply, and perhaps unfairly, criticizes by supplementing this mode's seemingly pietistic justifications with a *logic of incarnation*. Faith need not be contrary to logic; rather, faith may be that which opens logic to being.

Beyond an Abstract Absolute

³ Owen Barfield, *The Rediscovery of Meaning* (San Raphael: Barfield Press, 1977), 20.

⁴ Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 47.

Meillassoux marks Kant's Copernican Revolution as the decisive moment for modern philosophy—that moment when, following Kant's inversion, philosophy was led “to conceive of [the Copernican] de-centering in terms of thought's unprecedented centrality relative to this same world.”⁵ However, it was not until the end of the 18th century that the sciences of deep time began to reveal the paradox of ancestry underlying the brunt of his critique of post-Kantian correlationism.

“By 'correlation,'" writes Meillassoux,

“we mean the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other.”⁶

The force of the paradox of ancestry articulated by Meillassoux consists in the fact that, considering the empirico-mathematical claims of geologists and astrophysicists, there must be an asymmetrical relation between the *being* of the world and the world's being *thought*. The findings of these sciences suggest that a material substance of some kind must have existed prior to the emergence of either sentient life or self-conscious creatures capable of reflecting upon it. *Being*, therefore, *precedes thought*. But how could this be so? Short of hypostasizing the correlation, such that a Universal Mind is deemed to have been present to witness the accretion of the earth and the formation of life, it would appear that a scientific understanding of cosmic evolution requires breaking the “correlational circle” tying psyche and cosmos together.

⁵ Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 118.

⁶ Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 5.

This break, according to Meillassoux, would release thought from its solipsistic contemplation of a

“cloistered outside...an outside in which we’re trapped, only ever finding the correlates of our own acts of consciousness and language.”⁷

A “Great Outdoors” might thereby be revealed to consciousness that is not only external to it, but persists entirely independent of it, existing ‘in-itself’ for no one and, even more radically, *for no reason*. Meillassoux’s Absolute is absolute precisely in that, though it is thinkable, it is indifferent to the light of Logos. It is omnipotent Chaos.

Despite the thoroughness of his arguments, there are post-Kantian alternatives to Meillassoux’s experiment in thinking the Absolute independent of the correlation. Instead of locating the Absolute in an impersonal being outside of and indifferent to human consciousness, philosophy can learn much from Barfield’s and Teilhard’s attempts to Christologize the Absolute. With the help of these thinkers, it may be possible to see how the ‘in-itself’ can become *for us* by approaching the Absolute via a *logic of incarnation*. An incarnational logic challenges both the notion that the Absolute might be grasped through a formal or mathematical proof and the notion that irrational belief alone, no matter how fervent, is enough to secure it.

The realization of the Absolute as Christ demands the participation of the full suite of human faculties, including thinking, feeling, and willing. The philosophical pursuit of the Absolute is as much a theoretical as a practical and aesthetic adventure, since the mere thought of the Absolute is empty unless integrated with a transformed perception of the

⁷ Quentin Meillassoux, “Contingency and the Absolutization of the One” (paper presented at the Sorbonne for a symposium called “Metaphysics, Ontology, Henology,” 2010), 6.

world and a renewed moral calling to redeem it. In Christ, the True, the Good, and the Beautiful each participate, such that through the logic of incarnation Christ transforms not only the conceptual, but also the perceptual and physical registers of reality.

Teilhard's Christological Science

“Until the dawn of the present era,” writes Teilhard,

one could say that man still had the illusion of living ‘in the open air’ in a universe that was penetrable and transparent. At that time there was no hard and fast boundary, and all sorts of exchanges were possible between the here below and the beyond, between heaven and earth, between relative and absolute...Then, with the rise of science, we saw the gradual spreading over everything of a sort of membrane that our knowledge could not penetrate.⁸

The “dawn of the present era” can be equated with the beginning of post-Kantian thought. The impenetrable membrane can then be read as the transcendental limits Kant placed on human cognition. After the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), it became increasingly difficult to justify intuitions of the beyond and all but impossible to imaginatively participate in the angelic ecology tying heaven and earth together, since any supposed knowledge of things or beings outside the pre-established categories of the understanding and sensory experience of time and space could be dismissed as psychological projections or transcendental illusions. The divine was soon to be eclipsed

⁸ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Activation of Energy* (London: William Collins Sons, 1978), 186.

as the source and telos of humanity's concern for reality, becoming but a regulative idea of practical reason—a possibility to be willed or believed in as a guide for moral action, but not a necessity deducible by the understanding or a being graspable by the senses.

Teilhard recognized and championed the post-Kantian discoveries of the new sciences of geology, biology, and astrophysics. But rather than accepting the Kantian or Cartesian paradigms that would wall off the conscious psyche of humanity from the mechanisms of a soulless universe, Teilhard emphasized the extent to which the curvature of the universe is both geometric and psychic: out of the core of our own soul there grow fibers reaching back into the fabric of space-time itself. While Descartes would have us “irrevocably imprisoned” in a “thinking bubble,” Teilhard saw in the still maturing center of the human psyche evidence of the latest phase in a universal process of convergence underway throughout the organic and inorganic cosmos.⁹ He saw the human psyche as the result of a billion year yearning of the “without” for the “within,” the latest product of the axis of evolution toward deeper interiorization. The cosmogenetic phenomenon revealed by science cannot, therefore, be understood in isolation from anthropogenesis. From Teilhard's perspective, cosmos implies anthropos, as though the former were organized just so as to eventually become conscious of itself as the latter.

This is a perspective Meillassoux must of course reject, but less because it is anthropocentric than because of his denial of causality in nature. There can be no self-organization, only what he calls the “stabilist illusion of sensible becoming”

⁹ Teilhard de Chardin, *Activation of Energy*, 189.

characterizing our shortsighted experience of empirical constants.¹⁰ Teilhard would agree that thinking about the universe in terms of fixed laws is shortsighted, since in an evolving cosmos, thresholds of complexity can be reached that irreversibly transform ontological and behavioral norms. Once the earth came to life around 4 billion years ago, its geological and atmospheric dynamics were entirely altered. Similarly, after only a few tens of thousands of years of human civilization, the living planet's dynamics, relatively stable for the majority of its multi-billion year history, have been altered in just as radical a way. But in dismissing fixed causal law with Meillassoux, Teilhard does not then follow him by instating the total reign of Chaos. The universe's punctuated evolution can still be understood as obeying a logic of incarnation, following a general trajectory toward complexity and consciousness through pre-life, to life, to thought, and beyond. The human is not the end of cosmic evolution, but a step along the way to the full incarnation of the spirit of Christ on earth. Anthropogenesis is, finally, Christogenesis.

Meillassoux's speculative materialism emerged out of a phenomenological tradition that originally sought to provide a transcendental defense of human consciousness against any scientific reduction to the merely natural. Phenomenology succeeds in this defense (on some accounts) to the extent that it is able to convincingly reduce the objects of "nature" to their human correlates. Teilhard's phenomenology takes the reverse approach, plunging into the uncanny depths of space and time to meet the challenge of scientific realism head on.

¹⁰ Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 83.

Though he remains a correlationist of sorts, Teilhard acknowledges the "de-centering" that humanity has suffered because of Copernicus, Darwin, and Freud, disorienting us in the universe, in the living world, and even "in the innermost core of [our] own self" (AE, p. 187). No longer positioned at the stationary center of a perfectly ordered cosmos, we are forced to look elsewhere for ultimate meaning, if it is to be found at all. Teilhard's solution is not to naturalize or to transcendentalize the mystery of being human by reducing us to contingent biological machinery or points of unified apperception, respectively. Instead, he pleads with his reader in the opening pages of *The Human Phenomenon* to look again at what science has shown us, and "*to see or perish.*"

Teilhard realized that the flourishing of our species depends upon bringing forth a new, scientifically and spiritually informed cosmological orientation. Civilization is not a given, it is a dangerous adventure that would grind to a halt without the narrative renewal offered by each generation. The phenomenological reduction of the cosmos to consciousness provided him with only momentary condolence, if any at all. "The truth is," he writes, "that even at the peak of my spiritual trajectory I was never to feel at home unless immersed in an Ocean of Matter" (HM, p. 8). Teilhard attempted to articulate a way forward that is congruent with the axis of things themselves: he called for conscious participation in the *convergent movement* made evident in the scientific history of our universe.

The emergence of life from matter, and of mind from life, cannot be understood rationally if the universe is "diverging explosively at random" (AE, p. 192). Ours is a living, thinking universe; to deny this is to become trapped in a Cartesian

dualism separating the mechanical extension of the non-human from the spiritual intentionality of the human. Teilhard seeks to overcome this split, a split that provided the common metaphysical foundation for the otherwise divergent paths taken by science and phenomenology since the Copernican Revolution. Despite his desire to re-enchant the universe, he recognizes Copernicus' world-shaking discovery as a "tremendous achievement" that freed human thought from the contemplation of a static cosmos:

With the mere admission of a revolution of the earth around the sun; simply, that is by introducing a dissociation between a geometric and psychic center to things—the whole magic of the celestial spheres fade away, leaving man confronted with a plastic mass to be re-thought in its entirety. It was like the caterpillar whose substance (apart from a few rare cerebral elements) dissolves, as its metamorphosis draws near, into a more or less amorphous product: the revised protoplasmic stuff from which the butterfly will emerge (AE, p. 254).

What makes Teilhard's correlationism unique is his evolutionary perspective. Both the universe and human consciousness are historical processes with a common origin. A transformation in one is always already a transformation in the other. It takes only a bit of speculative imagination to recognize that the cosmohistorical unfolding of the correlation is *progressive* and *convergent*. "The human is not the static center of the world, as was thought for so long," writes Teilhard, "but the axis and the arrow of evolution—which is much more beautiful" (HP, p. 7).

The Copernican, Darwinian, and Freudian discoveries need not be read as disorienting blows to human or cosmic significance. Rather, they are heralds of Omega, of the convergent end toward which all creation tends. By dissolving the ancient division between the fallen terrestrial and divine celestial realms, modern science completed the historical process of spiritual incarnation.

After a million years of reflection, there is a dynamic meeting in the consciousness of man between heaven and earth at last endowed with motion, and from it there emerges not simply a world that manages to survive but a world that kindles into fire (*AE*, p. 280).

The Logic of Incarnation

Meillassoux writes of the necessity of incarnation for the transcendental subject: “Granted, the transcendental is the condition for knowledge of bodies, but it is necessary to add that the body is also the condition for the taking place of the transcendental” (*AF*, p. 25). He goes on to conclude that subjectivity is *instantiated*, rather than exemplified, by the body, meaning that embodiment is the “non-empirical condition of [thought’s] taking place” (*ibid.*). Without the body, there could be no such thing as thinking, and so no human being. Teilhard would not disagree, but would add that it is precisely in the reflective, or transcendental, consciousness emerging from the complexity of the human cardio-metabolic-nervous system that the divine finds a suitable portal into the phenomenal world. For God to become man through the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ requires a true mediation of the infinite and the finite, the eternal and the

temporal, the spiritual and the material. The human being has the potential, through the development of transcendental consciousness, to participate in the incarnation of the Word, since only by “taking place at the heart of the world” (ibid.), by living and dying as a physical creature, can the Creator instantiate his eternal love for creation. To love infinitely, God first had to become finite, to enter the horizon of the world. Jesus was not a heavenly example sent by God for men to poorly imitate, but the first historical manifestation of the, until then, dormant Christ-impulse dwelling within the human being. Christ “was in the beginning with God” (John 1:2), but in becoming flesh and walking among us, also carries God into the present and brings hope for the future redemption of earth. God’s omnipotence makes possible the incarnation by “dissolving the apparent contradiction between His complete identity and His difference with His Son” (AF, p. 41). Meillassoux argues that the mystical register within which this statement, and the incarnation itself, is meaningful depends upon the hypostatization of the correlation, such that the possibility of incarnation is justifiable or dismissible not due to the facts of the world ‘in itself,’ as depicted by reason and science, but rather due to the sublime fact that there is a world ‘for us’ at all, a world that carries with it at least the potential for beauty and goodness.

Theology, after Kant, became speculative reflection upon the transcendental conditions of creation, a “faith seeking understanding” (Aquinas: “fides quaerens intellectum”) of creation’s sufficient reason. For Meillassoux, such reflection is fallacious, since, he argues, it is thinkable that the world has come to be for no reason. The world is no more significant, despite its potential for aesthetic and moral order, than any of the evidently

contingent facts occurring daily within it. Meillassoux's "principle of unreason" is a result of his conception of the Absolute as Chaos, a being of pure power without desires or ideals. Teilhard's picture of the universe is not without chaos, since his vision of evolution leaves room for the local randomness of evolutionary groping. But instead of ignoring or marginalizing *cosmos* in favor of *chaos*, Teilhard accounts for the global arc cosmogenesis by understanding it as the gradual incarnation of the Logos into matter through the power of love. Even upon meeting the seemingly absurd resistance of death, love is able to transform it into the necessary condition of the world's redemption. In this sense, the love at work in the logic of incarnation is impossible to understand absent the "logic of extinction."

Without becoming mortal, a disembodied divine being has no need of love, since no separation exists between it and another. Death, then, is the condition for the possibility of agape, or divine love. The power of God is in the service of the wisdom and love of Christ, without whom the creation would spiral blindly into chaos. The logic of incarnation brings Logos into mortal flesh, giving meaning even to death and extinction, since it is only by confronting the possibility of annihilation that the true significance of life becomes apparent. On Teilhard's reading of the cosmological, geological, and biological evidence, in the human, the universe has grown a heart and a mind and is now evolving consciously into the Omega toward which it has always already been bending.

The Logic of Extinction

“The will to know,” according to Ray Brassier, Meillassoux’s translator, “is driven by the traumatic reality of extinction” (NU, p. 239). Even if consciousness survives in some form 4.5 billion years from now, the inevitable death of the sun will annihilate any life still remaining on earth. Acknowledging the truth of extinction, for Brassier, means not only accepting that consciousness *will not be*, but that it *already is not*: “the subject of philosophy must recognize that he or she is already dead.” Brassier argues, against Nietzsche, that despite life being the precondition of thought, the former cannot be privileged over the latter without underestimating the profundity of the challenge posed to life by the will to know (NU, p. 222). Even if life’s only meaning is to survive, knowledge of extinction eradicates even this minimal sense of purpose. There is no reason for conscious life, according to Brassier, since, following Meillassoux, he reads post-Copernican science as having ratified the diachronicity of thinking and being, exposing thought’s contingency for being: “although thought needs being, being does not need thought” (NU, p. 85).

Meillassoux argues, as we’ve seen, that post-Kantian philosophy has failed to fully reckon with the scientifically verified (or at least not yet falsified) asymmetry between being and thought, or the universe and consciousness. He coined the term “correlationism” to mark the philosopheme operative in all thinking that denies the possibility either of a universe that existed in itself prior to consciousness or that might exist in itself after the extinction of consciousness. That consciousness has emerged is an entirely contingent fact with no underlying reason whatsoever, according to this scheme.

So long as we believe that there must be a reason why what is, is the way it is, we will continue to fuel superstition, which is to say, the belief that there is an ineffable reason underlying all things (AF, p. 82).

Such a belief in reason (or in *meaning*), according to Meillassoux, is logically unnecessary, since there is no reason that reason must be ontologically foundational. Leibniz' principle of sufficient reason only follows from the belief in a perfect and eternal God whose essence is to exist, and who could not but create the best of all possible worlds. Meillassoux, in contrast, seeks an absolute that is unreasonable because purely chaotic, and argues that nothing is necessary, not God, consciousness, or even the endurance of scientifically verified physical laws. In other words, everything is contingent, and this contingency is not merely a transcendental statement concerning the limits of human understanding and experience, but a speculative statement about the nature of reality itself. For Meillassoux, asking "why is there something, rather than nothing?" is not a silly or unanswerable question: the answer is "no reason." This is Meillassoux's "principle of unreason," a result of thinking through the *logic of extinction* without also discovering its corollary, the *logic of incarnation*. He attempts to devise an argument to dispel the sense of wonder provoked by Leibniz' question in order to prevent the eclipsing of philosophy by religion. But the wonder persists, since consciousness continues to find itself alive to wonder where it has come from and where it shall go. The dialogue between philosophy and religion therefore continues.

Barfield and Participation

“I believe,” writes Barfield,

That the blind-spot which posterity will find most startling in the last hundred years or so of Western civilization, is, that it had, on the one hand, a religion which differed from all others in its acceptance of time, and of a particular point in time, as a cardinal element in its faith; that it had, on the other hand, a picture in its mind of the history of the earth and man as an evolutionary process; and that it neither saw nor supposed any connection whatever between the two (SA, p. 167).

Barfield is best known for his articulation of the *evolution of consciousness*, which is a concept subtler than the *history of ideas* usually offered in its stead. The former is not simply concerned with the progress of thought generated as each age responds to the problems of its predecessors, but with a change at the level of perception, and indeed a transformation in how the world itself is brought forth for consciousness. Like Teilhard, Barfield is an unabashed correlationist who directly confronts the difficulties spelled out by Meillassoux. Meillassoux suggests that, precisely to the extent that he has been “de-Christianized” by rejecting the “metaphysical pretension that [the Christian] belief system [is] superior to all others,” the inheritor of the Western tradition has opened the door to the complete relativization of truth (AF, p. 48). In our post-secular, post-Kantian context, according to Meillassoux, all belief systems are equally legitimated as potential paths to the Absolute, so long as they don't claim to be rational.

Instead of rejecting the structure of history as revealed in Christianity, Barfield recognizes the way in which the emergence of the scientific method is itself the result of

the logic of incarnation. The world alienation and disenchantment brought about following the Scientific Revolution are not the nullification of the Christian mythos, but the culmination of Spirit's fall into matter. If Barfield is right, in the future, it will become "impossible to write a popular manual of science without referring to the incarnation of the Word" (SA, p. 164).

The contingent origins of mind out of life, and life out of matter, are the crux of Meillassoux argument for the priority of being in relation to thought. Barfield is well aware of the paradoxes of ancestrality, but instead of making *non-sense* of them by breaking the correlational circle, he opens up a more coherent possibility. Even the most devout scientific materialists (for whom the Kantian counter-revolution may as well never have occurred) are forced to employ a "crypto-noetic" vocabulary in order to overcome the absurdity of a "pre-perceptual past" (WA, p. 165). "Information" is now an indispensable concept for physicists and biologists alike; "decision-making" capacities are attributed to sub-atomic particles; chemical activity is said to follow order-generating "rules." This hidden correlationism within science itself makes suspect Meillassoux's evocation of the scientific perspective in order to secure his speculative materialist argument.

From a Barfieldian perspective, if after all secondary, or subjective qualities, are removed from matter, only number (or, if you like, "information") remains, then materialists have no reason to believe that earth, prior to life and thought, existed in anything like the solid, physical state it today appears to be in. Solidity becomes as much a secondary quality as color, sound, or value. To his credit, Meillassoux does not insist on

extension or solidity when referring to matter for similar reasons, but only to its mathematical properties. But he fails to realize the implications of this admission. Given that the physicality (or spatial extension) of matter is no longer essential to it, what reason does the materialist have for insisting on the physical origins of consciousness? The body may be *necessary* for our kind of consciousness without being its *sufficient* condition. If what we call matter is really the result of the underlying numerical relations between unseen dynamic forces, does this not imply the reality of some disembodied consciousness capable of holding these relations, or *ideas*, in mind? Meillassoux explicitly denies this possibility: “we know nothing of [an] eternal or disembodied subject” (CAO, p. 3); but his logic seems nonetheless to rest on such an eternal subject’s reality.

In the way that Barfield describes the evolution of consciousness, the relevant question is no longer “how did matter make consciousness?” but rather, “how did consciousness ever come to be so intimately tied up with matter?” (WA). This shift in emphasis is a result of Barfield’s thoroughly participatory approach, which has it that being exists for thought, and vice versa, not in a relation of asymmetrical dependence but of co-creative evolution. From this perspective, Copernicus’ heliocentric insight represents not simply “a new idea of the relation between man and nature [or thinking and being],” but rather “an idea of the new relation between them” (WA, p. 178). The Copernican de-centering of human consciousness in relation to the cosmos was not simply a scientific correction of a primitive age’s misperception; it was thought entering into and transforming being in order to usher in a new epoch in the history of the world.

The Scientific Revolution in some sense represents the climax of the evolution of consciousness, that historical moment when Spirit first fully recognized its distinctness from matter. Descartes is perhaps the most articulate thinker to experience the tremendous existential force of this new condition by ontologically separating the *res cogitans* from the *res extensa*. The separation was so radical that it seemed all but impossible to understand how the two might relate, leading Kant to declare that knowledge of the supersensible conditions underlying thought was impossible, not only in fact, but in principle. By articulating the transcendental conditions of knowledge, Kant created a situation in which Spirit could only enter further into the body and the world in pursuit of a solution to its dualistic situation.

If we are able to inquire into Spirit's, or consciousness', situation as Barfield was, we realize that

We are not studying some so-called "inner" world, divided off, by a skin or a skull, from a so-called "outer" world; we are trying to study the world itself from its inner aspect. Consciousness is not a tiny bit of the world stuck on to the rest of it. It is the inside of the whole world (HGH, p. 18).

As all philosophers since Kant, Barfield is unable to conceive of the physical world independent of the participation of consciousness in its evocation (SA, p. 12). As modern science has forced us to expand our understanding of the universe, philosophy and religion have been forced to intensify the reach of the human spirit.

Conclusion

In the final pages of Owen Barfield's fictional dialogue, *World's Apart*, the narrator (Burgeon, a philologist) shares a letter from one of the seven other participants (Hunter, a theologian) received a week after their wide-ranging conversation had ended. Along with thanking Burgeon for organizing a successful experiment in cross-disciplinary conversation (in which an engineer, a physicist, a teacher, a biologist, an analytic philosopher, and a psychiatrist also took part), Hunter shared a strange and obscure dream that was provoked by the discussion. The dream involved three distinct humanoid figures that appeared and disappeared in turn, each bearing their own verbal message. The first had a round box with two holes in it for a head, with "light blazing out of its eye-holes in all directions" (p. 275). The words "Subjective Idealism" were associated with this figure. The second figure had the head of a lion with an emphatic mane that spread out, ray-like, in a way emblematic of the sun. Associated with this figure were the words "The Key of the Kingdom." The third and final figure appeared without any head at all, carrying only the message "The Kingdom." "In spite of the touch of alarm," concludes Hunter, "the whole dream, from beginning to end was somehow "like a breeze blowing from excellent places, bearing health" (p. 276).

The dream, though enigmatic, would seem to be a symbolic summation of Barfield's entire philosophy. The contemporary thinker must begin his or her pursuit of Wisdom from within, as a free individual mind (Subjective Idealism). This subjective beginning is then strengthened by the Christ-impulse (The Key to the Kingdom), transforming its inward light into the light of the universe. Finally, the individual mind is entirely taken up and absorbed into the eternal life of a redeemed cosmos (The Kingdom).

The dream sequence reveals the Christological foundation of Barfield's thinking. For him, the truth of reality, if there be one, is revealed in Christ. Philosophy without Christ can think only the skeleton of the Absolute, leaving the blood and guts of the world in the margins of its treatises. Without the logic of incarnation (which is both a practice and a theory), spirit is unable to reconcile itself with sensation or gain the reign of its will, and though in thought it may grasp the formal structure of the thing-in-itself, it cannot feel its warmth or see its light. Faith need not be in opposition to knowledge, for is that movement that prepares and opens the soul to the incarnation of the Logos.

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