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THE FUTURITY OF GOD

This paper deals with the question of temporality within the idea of the Divine. We present two modalities of God as related to the idea of the future – in Raymond Ruyer and within Mormonism. In these two accounts, God is defined as the future itself, projecting into the present. In the second part of our paper, we elaborate on God as a bonding agent. Firstly, as based on Schelling's dialogue *Bruno*, we discuss a new philosophical view of divine and nature principles, or God and nature. This is followed by our elaboration of Giordano Bruno's theory of magic from *A General Account of Bonding (De vinculis in genere)* which is in the forefront of our analyses in this part. In the third part of the paper, we focus on God as the idea of the future through a theological interpretation of Christopher Nolan's *Interstellar* and wind up our article with an attempt of an argument for the existence of God. In the conclusion, our argument is put into a dialogue with the fields of Astrotheology (Ted Peters) and the language of quantum entanglement within theology (Catherine Keller).

I. God is the Future Itself: From Ruyer to Mormonism

God, if we hold to this word, *is the future itself*, or rather the eternal reservoir beyond time and creating time, who constantly projects himself or pours himself into the present (...).¹

In this essay on the futurity of God and futuristic thinking in theology, we wish to begin with the idiosyncratic philosophical and theological thought of Raymond Ruyer (1902–1987). Throughout his career as a philosopher, Ruyer published on topics such as the philosophy of biology and nature, contributed to cybernetics, technology, and information at the very beginning of the era of robotics and computers in the 1940s; and, as an equally important part of his work, he contributed to the philosophy of religion with his equally original conception of the Tao-God or the Unknown God.² In his essay “The Status of the

¹ Raymond Ruyer, “The Status of the Future and the Invisible World”, transl. by R. Scott Walker, *Diogenes* 36 (1980), 43.

² See on this an excellent presentation and analysis of his work in: Elizabeth Grosz, *The Incorporeal: Ontology, Ethics and the Limits of Materialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), ch. 6 (“Ruyer and Embryogenesis of the World”). On Tao-God see “The Status of the Future and the Invisible World” and “Person- God

Future and the Invisible World,” Ruyer presents us with an idiosyncratic account of God, time, matter, and consciousness of the world, reaching towards the entirely new forms of pan(en)theism and futuristic thought in theology. In his thought, Ruyer feels obliged to polemicize with two extremes, here as related to the future – fatalism (astrology, premonition, etc.) and scientific determinism (with its laws being able to define and calculate the results of any movement). Referring to Einstein’s theory of relativity, Ruyer does not want to assert that there is a pre-existing or deterministically fixed future available somewhere out there – i.e., being within reach for someone traveling through space on a super-rapid spaceship. The symmetry is broken during time travel within the laws of gravity for two persons traveling at the same time at different speeds, but the future as such does not yet exist for us and thus remains unknown to any person whatsoever. What kind of temporality of the future can we imagine, then? According to our philosopher, “if existing things did not continue to exist except by freely causing the future and by disrupting their normal functioning, time would be disjointed and the future would no longer be *their* future.”³ But there is more in the concept of future, and it is here that Ruyer’s thought becomes especially theologically interesting and indeed thought-provoking. Thinking theologically now, and placing his thoughts, as it were, *in medias res* of some of the key questions of a new theological temporality, Ruyer introduces and defines his idea of “God” in the following way:

God, if we hold to this word, *is the future itself*, or rather the eternal reservoir beyond time and creating time, who constantly projects himself or pours himself into the present and who transforms the functioning of already created beings into sensible behavior and actions in order to cause the world to evolve in a living manner and not like a great machine which could only finish at a stable equilibrium or with irremedial wear and degradation. (...) God, or the future-as-ideal-control, can only produce minute shifts in direction. His “ideas” steer and guide through ultra-weak interactions. Nevertheless, the universe finally obeys this imperceptible future, but not without enormous failures and catastrophes.⁴

This is an extraordinary piece of theological thinking and we will return to the analysis of this paragraph in the third part of this paper – as its contents are directly linked to the reflections on

and Tao-God”, trans. K. Pender, *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 52, no. 2 (1947), 1-11.

³ Ruyer, “The Status of the Future and the Invisible World”, 42.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 43 (*our emphasis*).

time and time travel in Christopher Nolan's *Interstellar*. Ruyer's God is closely linked to the very concept of time and temporality of the future itself: it is situated beyond time and actually creates time on its own behalf – as proposed by Ruyer. The “unknown God” of Ruyer “envelopes the ‘material’ world which, minus this envelope, would be only ‘thing’ in its purest state, indistinguishable from nothing, or which would be only a present incapable of presence lacking a past and a future.”⁵ But to understand this dense and rich passage, we need to understand the notion of *mnemic theme* in Ruyer. What is defining our search for answers in this world appears twofold – as an inherent creativity of the world and its openness, or “call of the future” – the call that enables us to enhance and re-create ourselves.⁶ Ontologically, this happens within the world of forms of life and among them anti-Platonic “primary forms” are of key importance. Primary forms have self-forming properties and range “from the most elementary forms of matter, the atom and its subatomic ingredients, to the most complex forms of self-production that characterize all forms of life.”⁷ Ruyer is searching for a *link* or *connection* (later, with Giordano Bruno, we will understand this ontological or “cosmic” link as a *bond/vinculum*) that underlines all simple and more complex processes in the world. In this view, he seeks both organic as well as inorganic conditions, and explores into every consciousness, “including those before and *beyond* the human”⁸ – which includes machines, computers (AI), or technology in general. Primary forms are not separated from the material which actually forms them and this view enables Ruyer to direct his reflections very much in line with the developments in quantum physics during his time. They are dynamic structures, repairing themselves, and they are thus forming trans-spatial mnemic themes and their inherently embodied values:

Primary forms can be attributed both a “life” and a “consciousness,” even though they cannot be understood on the models of life and consciousness that we attribute to ourselves. (...) If living things are never stable forms, always undergoing change, nevertheless there is something that subsists in these changes: not anything bodily – for every cell and organ is in the process of self-regeneration or self-replacement – but what Ruyer

⁵ Ibid., 53.

⁶ Grosz, *The Incorporeal*, 211.

⁷ Ibid., 212. Secondary forms are composites and aggregates – such as a house, a car, or a bridge, which are all planned and they are also not self-repairing in themselves. What they have is the ability of decomposition or recomposition. But they do not possess auto-affection or consciousness such as do primary forms.

⁸ Ibid., 213. (*our emphasis*).

understands as a melodic or mnemonic theme, not locatable in space or time but that subsists and accompanies life, and all primary forms, through its processes of autoaffection.⁹

We thus see that within Ruyer's embryogenesis of the world, the consciousness understood as a mnemonic theme must already pre-exist in the world. There is a continuity that links things distant or different from themselves as far as subatomic matter and human "values". This means that mnemonic themes (or memory) gain precedence over being(s) and also that "consciousness" (in one of its forms) takes over from evolutionary biology. Finally, according to Grosz, "even God must be understood not as a divine being separate from the world, but as an acting, a mode of self-creation according to an internal ideal."¹⁰ But let us return to the question of temporality in these processes: in Ruyer's thought of the divine, the *future itself* may be the destination. Now, about this process of imagining the future, or projecting back from the pre-conceived future into our deeds or activities – as inherent or immanent in the world – Ruyer writes: "When we imagine, our imagination depends especially on our memory. But there is also a tiny proportion of creativity, of something pulled from nothing"¹¹ – and this *difference* of creativity could be labelled as a *quantum moment* in theology. The growth, arising from our creativity and all of its visible consequences, however, is not all that we have: there exists, by way of comparison, *the invisible world, or the unknown God*, which is like an immense body of underground water [being] under a certain pressure. This underground water (as a reservoir of memories or mnemonic themes) is available to us only as long as we are able to "communicate" on our own account with those layers of these supplies of water which are positioned more closely to the surface. Again: we must make our own future, but – with an important distinction now – nothing can be made without conforming to "an order existing well beyond our own wills", in other words, "God proposes and man disposes. And this gives men, those on the surface, the impression of having to work things out alone in the visible world. Nevertheless, their entire 'substance' is made up of the underground water."¹² Finally, according to Ruyer, this unknown God is the universal framework of the cosmos, planter of the very tree of life, the principle of all channeled memories as well as all possible types of existences that we can imagine. God is beyond all place and beyond all time and envelopes the entire material

⁹ Ibid., 216.

¹⁰ Ibid., 229.

¹¹ Ruyer, "The Status of the Future", 46.

¹² Ibid.

and spiritual world. This now enables us to point at another aspect of divinity – and it is precisely the sentence “As man is, God once was, as God is, man may become”¹³ of the Mormonism that we wish to bring to our discussion now.

With its idiosyncratic but original theological account, Mormonism represents one of the most vital and relevant attempts at redefining divinity in the early post-monotheist and secular era of the 19th century. According to Simon Critchley, Mormonism’s main message consists of an idea that we have to learn how to become gods, and that we indeed have inherited the very same power and glory as God to become exalted like him. We therefore can arrive at the “station” of God, but this can only happen in the future. Incarnation therefore is a two-way street, and a part in each of us that we usually call spirit is in fact co-equal with God. With its feature of a continuing revelation, Mormon theology remains open to the future and reveals a truly *post-Christian* character and message to us.¹⁴ Human deification or apotheosis then represents the most significant part of the teaching of Mormonism. The making of gods, and therefore, the aspiring towards the future as our final destination in achieving godhood – stated more directly, means that there is a capacity in/for us for being a part of the process in which we may indeed become gods. Apotheosis goes both beyond “theosis” as a process of human transformation through becoming united with God, as well as beyond Christological logic, as explained by Davies:

The “two-natures” argument over Jesus’s identity still remains of interest to contemporary Christians, because he is sometimes made so divine as to lose contact with humanity, whilst at other times he is represented as so human as to lose the divine status. For Latter-day Saints this is not a problem, for every individual shares the same “substance”, everyone is a spirit person at some stage of developing their potential as divine, and in this sense Jesus is simply an elder brother who is further along the path of divine development.¹⁵

¹³ These are originally the words of Lorenzo Snow, recorded in Eliza R. Snow’s *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Co., 1884), see pp. 46–47. These words were later confirmed as revelation and preached by the founder of Mormonism, Joseph Smith in his famous “The King Follett Discourse”, *Times and Seasons* (1844), 5: 612-617. See <http://mldb.byu.edu/follett.htm> (accessed June 8, 2021).

¹⁴ Cf. Simon Critchley, “Why I Love Mormonism”, *The New York Times*, September 16 (2012). URL: <https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/16/why-i-love-mormonism/> (accessed June 10, 2021).

¹⁵ Douglas J. Davies, *An Introduction to Mormonism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 80.

As we did take words from Ruyer in a literal sense, and whilst now we are making ourselves gods in the process of apotheosis, to us God now indeed becomes *the future itself*. Now, in *King's Follett Discourse* – perhaps the most inspiring and revealing text ever delivered and revealed by Joseph Smith – the Mormon prophet describes the genesis of a God as follows:

First, God himself, who sits enthroned in yonder heaven, is a man like one of you. That is the great secret. (...) [But] God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth the same as Jesus Christ himself did (...) Here, then, is eternal life – to know the only wise and true God. And you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves – to be kings and priests to god, the same as all Gods have done – by going from a small degree to another, from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you are able to sit in glory as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power.¹⁶

God is our future destination, therefore. As in Ruyer's biogenico-theological innovation, there is a full continuity among human beings and gods (note a transition from a god to gods here as a mark of an inherent-dynamic plurality in the concept of divinity itself). As matter and its elements *precede* creation (and *creatio ex nihilo* becomes obsolete) both in Ruyer and in Mormonism, moreover, according to Joseph Smith, God himself could not even create himself: "God never did have power to create the spirit of man at all. God himself could not create himself. Intelligence exists upon a self-existent principle; it is a spirit from age to age, and there is no creation about it."¹⁷ In a more radicalized spatially-temporalized sense, we can now contend that our divinization is well imprinted into a continuity of present and future spheres.¹⁸ The argument for the existence of God that we would like to present here (this argument will be upgraded at the end of this essay) – would run as follows:

God is the future itself, revealing in a series of revelations through time to other beings as not-yet-gods or evolving-gods. God evolved from the most archaic and still not-fully-disclosed matter and began acting from the primeval chaos in a time moment still not known to us human beings. God as a fully evolved (supreme/super-intelligent) being, reaching its/his/her destination, projects into the present. In this process,

¹⁶ Smith, "The King Follett Discourse".

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Cf. here an excellent account on Mormon materialism by John Durham Peters titled "Reflections on Mormon Materialism", *Sunstone*, March 1993, 47–52.

which is mediated to us through visible signs (called also “miracles”), God enlightens and transforms the functioning of the primary forms and the secondary-composite beings by causing human beings and beings beyond our reach to evolve into an ever more agapeistically developed species. The esoteric and hidden connection between God and other beings is called a bond, or gravity – and God thus reveals as the bonding agent. This process may finally be labelled as the evolution of materially-spiritual vibration of a cosmic consciousness as revealed in the cosmic presence of God as a bond of love.

But to be able to develop this thought on God’s temporality and futurity and God as the bonding agent more fully, an elaboration on the cosmic/natural bond or *vinculum* is required.

II. The Nolan Philosopher: God as the Bonding Agent

In a letter to K. A. Eschenmeyer from July 30, 1801, Schelling contends that in this year, a light entered his philosophy: it was a new impulse that enabled him to abandon his earlier transcendental thinking.¹⁹ In the 1802 treatise *Bruno*, Schelling already embarks upon a new destination for his thought: in a form of a dialogue, and in response to Fichte’s harsh criticism of his system, Schelling – disguised in dialogue as (Giordano) Bruno (i.e., the Nolan)²⁰ – presents us with a fascinating account on the natural and divine principles of the world – and thus on the nature of reality, matter, God and their ontological yet hidden bond. With this gesture, the center of gravity of philosophy now shifts from Kant and Fichte to Schelling and Hegel in a most direct way. According to Schelling, the aim of this new thought could be described as follows:

To come to know this indifference within the absolute – that character whereby idea is substance, the absolutely

¹⁹ F.W.J. Schelling, *Briefe und Dokumente*, Bd. 3 (Bonn: Bouvier u. Co., 1975), 222.

²⁰ The designation “The Nolan Philosopher” comes from the fact that Giordano Bruno was born in Nola (near Naples) and was called “Il Nolano” (“The Nolan”). By perfecting the art of memory (based on the art of mnemonology of Ramón Lull), he was convinced that he was able to access sacred knowledge in his mind and thus (intellectually) “gain power over the entire universe” (I. D. Rowland, *Giordano Bruno: Philosopher / Heretic*, Chicago / London: The University of Chicago Press 2009, p. 120). We believe that both Giordano Bruno, as well as Christopher Nolan, have procured their insights from the same intellectual source and are thus offering us “material evidence of a universe so mysteriously entangled as to escape the rival classicisms that pit science and theology against each other in the first place” (Keller, *The Entangled Cosmos: An Experiment in Physical Theopoetics*. *Journal of Cosmology*, Vol. 20 (September 2012). Retrieved from: http://journalofcosmology.com/JOC20/Keller_rev1.pdf (accessed July 24, 2021).

real, whereby form is also essential reality and reality is form, each one inseparable from the other, whereby form and reality are not just perfectly similar likenesses, but directly are one another – this is to discover the absolute center of gravity. To know this is to uncover *the original metal of truth*, as it were, the prime ingredient in the alloys of all individual truths, without which none of them would be true.²¹

As a direct consequence to this overturning of German idealism, a new philosophical view of divine and nature principles, God and nature, respectively, a new constellation emerges – now in Schelling’s concluding words from *Bruno* this reads as follows: “And as we move up and down this spiritual ladder, freely and without constraint, now descending and beholding the identity of the divine and natural principle dissolved, now ascending and resolving everything again into the one, we shall see nature within God and God within nature.”²² For Schelling, both the *metal* of truth, as well as the *alloys* of all other truths clearly indicate toward his “material” perception of a dynamic, yet ontologically esoteric nature of, as it were, an elemental-materially underpinned constellation of truth. Now, on this basis, we intend to embark on a more esoteric path toward this constellation by reading Giordano Bruno’s philosophy through the lens of a *magical bond* and related philosophy of a mesocosmic coordination (*bond/vinculum*). With this gesture, we want to prepare the ground for our argument about the divinity as being marked as a spiritually-material process in time, clothing and penetrating the totality of being – of both visible as well as invisible nature.

Apart from his far-reaching innovations in cosmology and its effects on the progress of the scientific revolution, the Nolan philosopher’s main contribution to the history of philosophy might be in proposing an entirely new concept of the divinity.²³ In our attempt to delineate the expansion and liminality of the Nolan’s immanent and temporally-synchronistic cosmic God, his understanding of matter is of vital importance. Following the trail of the Platonists (world-soul), the best “materialist” traditions of Aristotelianism and Neo-Platonism (as regards their treatment of matter), Islamic influences (Averroes) as well as of Nicolas of Cusa’s argument on the impossibility of separating the infinite potency of creating and being created in God, Bruno

²¹ F.W.J. Schelling, *Bruno, or On the Natural and the Divine Principle of Things*, transl. by Michael G. Vater (New York: SUNY Press, 1984), 221 (*our emphasis*). For the Fichte-Schelling controversy, see the “Introduction” by Michael G. Vater.

²² *Ibid.*, 222.

²³ Giordano Bruno, *Cause, Principle and Unity / Essays on Magic*, transl. by Robert de Lucca (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

therefore attempted a higher (“magical”) synthesis of their respective thoughts – only to be able to think God or the divinity in accordance with matter. According to him, Averroes is praised for his elaboration of matter as comprising in itself unlimited dimensions, and if this thought is taken together with his claim that all things “no matter how small and miniscule, have in them part of that spiritual substance”²⁴ then we have come full circle here. Matter therefore is taken as a substrate, a principle indeed which cannot be annihilated; because a soul/spirit is present in all things; as a consequence, God must necessarily be linked to the world: thus *natura est deus in rebus*.

In a chapter titled “The Magic of Being Mormon”,²⁵ Stephen H. Webb presents us with an account on magic within Mormonism and its theology. Within Christianity, calling something magical, or the magic label itself, clearly, can only serve as a designation for various spells and empty incantations or, more straightforwardly, as a means to ridicule someone simply for holding this position. But it is precisely Mormonism with its peculiar sense for both ancient magic and new evolutionary science that enables us to rethink the meaning and the theological sense of these allegedly non-Christian or simply “pagan” elements. Webb is right that among many objections and prejudices against magic, the strongest is that magic “clashed with the belief that God is absolutely sovereign and thus in complete control of all events.”²⁶ But against such a prejudice, for Webb, “the sacrifice of Christ was sufficient to *repair* our relationship to the divine.”²⁷ In the era of quantum thinking in physics but also in philosophy and theology, we know that by using strictly *causal* thinking it is not possible to reveal more hidden layers of both physical and spiritual reality that surround us. If we take only one example of such an enhanced view of our intellectual abilities, then we can contend that this way of thinking reveals “an innate ability of the human brain and psyche, drawing its deepest resources from the heart of the universe itself.”²⁸ As furthermore visible within the quantum field theory,

the universe and all its constituents consist of energy in different states of excitation. People, tables, chairs, trees, stardust and so on are patterns of dynamic energy set against a background (the quantum vacuum) of still,

²⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 80 (for Averroes) and p. 44 (for spiritual substance).

²⁵ See Stephen H. Webb, *Mormon Christianity* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 46–76.

²⁶ Webb, *Mormon Christianity*, 48.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

²⁸ Danah Zohar & Dr Ian Marshal, *SQ: Connecting with our Spiritual Intelligence* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), 9.

unexcited energy (...) [W]hen two metal plates are placed very close together, they are attracted to each other because of the subtle pressure that the quantum vacuum exerts on each. The kind of transcendence illustrated by the quantum vacuum is similar to that described as the *Tao* or the Void (*Sunyata*) in many Taoist, Hindu and Buddhist texts.²⁹

Two consequences can be inferred from this: firstly, we have now come close to our initial definition of God as based on Ruyer's elaborations: it was a relation to the primeval chaos/ ungrounded abyssal ground in a time moment still not known to us; secondly, magical thinking appears now to be much more complex and dynamic than expected. The divine, or God, can now be viewed as a "kind of pervasive energy that can be tapped into."³⁰ As such, God is not immaterial in relation to space nor eternal in relation to time:

Mormons believe that there is an essential continuity between this world and the other world, so that there are no gaps or gulfs between matter and spirit. God is not a unique entity who stands outside of the world and requires us to do likewise if we are to know anything about him. God is very much a part of the cosmos (or the cosmos is a part of him), which means that the way we come to know God is not different from the way we come to know anything else in the world.³¹

Reality as becoming, and the goal – "the perfectly dynamic creativity that God has already achieved"³² – is the core of Mormonism's radical theological invention. For Stephen H. Webb, the message of Mormonism as a branch of Christianity could now be described as follows:

If I am right that magic and religion are close relatives, then it simply makes sense that a new and exuberant religious tradition like Mormonism would mix the two together, but it also makes sense that Mormonism can show the rest of Christianity how to retrieve a truly magical (in the sense of wonder and awe at the works of God and the beauty of Christ) way of being in the world.³³

²⁹ Ibid., 69f. This is known in physics as "the Casimir Effect".

³⁰ Webb, *Mormon Christianity*, 57.

³¹ Ibid., 58. Also note the following: "Matter, according to Mormonism, exists according to gradations of spiritual refinement, so that even spiritual entities like God, angels and the soul are composed of some kind of matter." (59)

³² Ibid., 60.

³³ Ibid., 70.

It is now time to turn to the Nolan philosopher's magical way of knowing the immense cosmic divine, or God.

As a 16th century man, Giordano Bruno still believed in demons. Since his childhood, he had been encountering them as spiritual forces, being able to throw stones or snatch cloaks in the night. They were living creatures consisting of a subtle body, having the ability to fuse and contract themselves into various shapes, having also the ability to see the future.³⁴ But the magic of the Nolan philosopher soon became more intellectual and philosophical. By perfecting the art of memory (based on the art of mnemonology of Ramon Llull), he was convinced he was able to "connect" or "bind" the sacred knowledge in his mind and thus, intellectually, "gain power over the entire universe."³⁵ Now, for the Nolan, the world-soul causes matter to be formed in infinite ways and it is the working of this connection or bond between both entities that interests our philosopher. Further, for the Nolan philosopher, all the bonds "can be reduced to the bond of love."³⁶ This *vinculum* or hidden bond therefore cannot be found in visible things and is somehow secretly present in the cosmos:

[T]he vinculum [is] that which links to an ever-changing degree the operator (the *vinciens*) to the *vinciendum*. The original unity of the All, therefore, establishes the conditions for the success of magical action, because it allows us to understand how a magus can restore an existing apparent multiplicity to its underlying unity. Human beings, too, are presented as matter over whose surface pass infinite forms, and clearly each one of them is a *vinculum*, one of the many which we all, in fact, encounter.³⁷

Clearly, Bruno's use of magic is of the kind that we initially delineated within the context of the Mormon theology. Consequently, Bruno deals only with the magic in its divine, physical and mathematical types. Within contemporary scientific thought, this would imply contributions from theology, cosmology and religious studies (for the *divine field*), physics and astrophysics (for the *quantum field*) and logic (for the *field of*

³⁴ Ingrid D. Rowland, *Giordano Bruno: Philosopher / Heretic* (Chicago / London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), see chapter 15. For those of a more skeptical character, let us only mention the existing practice of exorcism in the Catholic Church. For rites of exorcism see the document *Of Exorcisms and Certain Supplications* (*De Exorcismis et Supplicationibus Quibusdam*; revised in 1999).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 120.

³⁶ Bruno, *Cause, Principle and Unity / Essays on Magic*, xxviii (Introduction).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, xxix (Introduction).

bonding) respectively. This constitution is fully in accordance with the nature of “Truth”, which, for the Nolan, is “‘ideal, natural, and notional’;” or, in more general terms, appears as metaphysics, physics and logic.³⁸ Truth, therefore, is “manifest in all living things, operating through the eternal laws of an immanent God identified with a timeless universe.³⁹ Now, the most important feature of his theory of magic is, that

various spirits occupy the bodies of humans, animals, stones and minerals [and that] there is no body which is completely devoid of spirit and intelligence. (...) Finally, it must be consciously accepted and firmly asserted that all things are full of spirits, souls, divine power, and God or divinity, and that the whole of intelligence and the whole soul is everywhere, although they do not do everything everywhere. (...) As a result, the philosophers say that in the original state of things there was one matter, one spirit, one light, one soul and one intellect.⁴⁰

A General Account of Bonding (De vinculis in genere) brings a more detailed account on bonding agents and their effects in both visible as well as invisible cosmos or nature. For Bruno, the main bonding agents are God, demons, souls, animals, and nature. But essentially there are four things which are located around God, and they are mind, soul, nature and matter. They circle or rotate around God and are bound to the divinity with more or less attraction. Metaphysically, humans are most powerfully bound by the bond of love, and in physics, the bonding agent could be designated either as gravitational force, electro-magnetic force, strong force and weak force as far as to the gravitational force of dark matter (we think of electro-magnetic and gravitational fields as collections of force lines that drive or pull objects towards other objects⁴¹). Humans may be attracted by humans or animals, and vice versa; music can bind in a profoundly aesthetic way, and, last but not least, on a completely other scale, stars and galaxies are bound to other stars and galaxies with gravitational force. According to Bruno, and to come full circle with our preliminary elaborations on the principles of co-ordination:

Things in the universe are so ordered that they constitute one definite co-ordination in which there can occur a transition from all things to all things in one continuous

³⁸ Giordano Bruno, *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*, transl. by Arthur D. Imerti (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 31 (Editor's Introduction).

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Bruno, *Cause, Principle and Unity / Essays on Magic*, 125 and 129.

⁴¹ See Kip Thorne, *The Science of Interstellar* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), 22ff.

flow. (...) And just as there are various species of things and differences between them, they also have various times, places, intermediaries, pathways, instruments and functions. (...) If there were only one love, and thus only one bond, all things would be one.⁴²

In all things there is one fundamental (divine) force, according to Bruno, and this force is called love. This bond reveals as the “hypostasis of things”⁴³ both visible and invisible. But it is not possible yet to develop a full theology, as based on bonding or *vinculum as love*. The missing link still needs to be discovered – and here we can only hint at a possibility of a cosmic Christ as highest among the bonding agents – to be revealed as the *cosmic vibration of love*.⁴⁴

III. The Futurity of God in Christopher Nolan’s *Interstellar*

It is our aim now to reconnect both the idea of a futurity of God as well as a materially underpinned bond/*vinculum* of nature, human, and God into a new theological synthesis, enabling us to affirm our initial thesis from the conclusion of the first part of this essay – on God as the future itself and fully evolved Being, projecting into the present/past by the mediation of visible/material signs or divine gestures, based on a cosmic bond. Let us now embark on a journey into this future by looking more closely at Christopher Nolan’s *Interstellar*.

Nolan’s *Interstellar* represents one of the most original possibilities for imagining the bond of love and futurity of God on the background of time travel, quantum physics and postapocalyptic thinking.⁴⁵ Since the beginning of cinematic history, time or cinematic temporality has featured as one of the most central settings for imagining alternative visions of life and reality or imagining alternative futures. This especially holds for Christopher Nolan to which cinema itself is “a time machine” of

⁴² Bruno, *Cause, Principle and Unity / Essays on Magic*, 170f.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁴⁴ It is perhaps not coincidental that the term *vinculum* only reappears in Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s 1959–60 course notes known under the title *Nature*, which represent a rare, yet supreme attempt to think along Bruno’s realms of thoughts. This is fully attested in the following observation: “There is a unique theme of philosophy: the *nexus*, the *vinculum* ‘Nature’ – ‘Man’ – ‘God’. Nature as a ‘leaf’ of Being, and the problems of philosophy, are concentric”. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France*, transl. by Robert Vallier, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1995, 204.

⁴⁵ The screenplay of *Interstellar* was written by brothers Jonathan and Christopher Nolan in a close collaboration with the Nobel peace prize winner for physics, Professor Kip Thorne. Thorne’s parents were members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) and raised Thorne in the LDS faith, as well, although he now describes himself as an atheist.

its own kind.⁴⁶ The plot of *Interstellar* itself is worth special attention and its postapocalyptic setting is intrinsically related to one of the most pressing issues of our time – the climate crisis. In the near future, humanity is facing a catastrophe and, being on the brink of starvation, seeking a new home in space. In the center of the plot is the story of the Dust Bowl – the worst man-made ecological disaster in American history, and actually the first ecological catastrophe in the world, caused by human beings' activities and deeds. The Dust Bowl represents one of the saddest epochs in American history, causing an unprecedented mass exodus of desperate Americans in search of shelter and food.⁴⁷ For Nolan, the catastrophe represents an impetus for an idiosyncratic cinematic journey into the future, based on the best possible scientific accuracy as well as an extremely rich philosophical imagination. At first it seems that Nolan is not interested in the theological consequences of his story (there is no mention of God or divinity in the movie) but actually all of the main elements of the film hint at a profound level of thinking which could imply more than an imaginary journey into the cinematically arranged future: from Murphy's "ghost", manipulations of time and matter, and quantum dimensions of a space-time continuum to five-dimensional (bulk⁴⁸) beings (gods, perhaps?) and a tesseract; from the uncertain destiny and despair of the apocalyptic future and love being the strongest of all bonds to the redemption of humanity marked in the final scenes of the movie by *green fields and new life* – all these elements indicate Nolan's initial constellation that we wish to interpret along more theological lines. By adding quantum physics itself and its quest for ultimate answers concerning the nature of the universe (featuring so importantly in this movie), all that implies that we cannot fully understand various facets of reality beneath the visible and tangible world. It might come out that the effects of physical quantum laws could indeed help us to understand what we have earlier described as the effects of a "magical" bond. Christopher Nolan meets our Nolan philosopher here.

The story of *Interstellar* is about Cooper, a NASA-trained pilot and engineer, his ten-year-old daughter Murph, and their family (Cooper's father-in-law, and Murphy's fifteen-year-old

⁴⁶ Jacqueline Furby, "About Time Too: From *Interstellar* to *Following*, Christopher Nolan's Continuing Preoccupation with Time-Travel", in: Jacqueline Furby & Stuart Joy, eds., *The Cinema of Christopher Nolan: Imagining the Impossible*, pp. 247-267 (London and New York: Columbia University Press, 2015). See p. 249 for the citation.

⁴⁷ On the history of the Dust Bowl see: Dayton Duncan, *The Dust Bowl: An Illustrated History* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2012) and Timothy Egan, *The Worst Hard Time* (Boston / New York: Mariner Books, 2006).

⁴⁸ See Thorne's *The Science of Interstellar* on the quest of many physicists to understand the so called "singularities": "That quest produced superstring theory, which in turn led to a belief that our universe must be a brane residing in a higher dimensional bulk." (227)

brother Tom). They live in times of great environmental crisis and farm corn, as this is all that is left for agriculture in 2067. It is already clear that even farming corn will soon not be possible anymore. Now, Murph comments that her room is haunted by a *ghost* (we may remember Giordano Bruno's faith in "demons" here) sending her secret and encoded messages by using books as they move and fall from the book shelter in various patterns. One of these messages carries a secret code (it turns out that this holds the GPS data of a secret location) which takes her and her father to a highly secret NASA base. Cooper and Murph are introduced to Professor Brand and his team and their top-secret program for finding an extraterrestrial solution – new inhabitable planets for humanity. Professor Brand asks Cooper (he is the last on the Earth with such expertise) to embark on a secret intergalactic mission towards three planets in distant galactic systems beyond ordinary reach. Three pioneers – Miller, Mann and Edmunds – were earlier sent to these planets (now named after their founders) by NASA since these planets were identified as the best candidates for humanity. Cooper knows that he would put his entire family in great danger by embarking on such a dangerous journey but he accepts it. His daughter Murph feels abandoned but her father promises to return to her. But during the intergalactic journey Cooper's timeline is thrown out of synch with Murph's due to a time dilation in intergalactic travel and their bond is radically endangered. By using a tesseract (a hypercube presumably placed there by some advanced beings) Cooper is able to travel intergalactically as well as back in time to the ten-year-old as well as to the forty-year-old Murph's bedroom. Such a journey is possible because humans discovered some fifty years earlier that some unknown (future) beings positioned the wormhole near the planet Saturn and thus enabled humanity to travel with the speed of light to distant galaxies with habitable planets. These planets are located near a black hole called Gargantua, which is ten billion light-years away from the Earth. Being in a tesseract, now docked near Murph's bedroom, Cooper actually reveals that he is her "ghost," and, by giving her a secret NASA location as well as necessary quantum data, actually enables humanity to be rescued. The tesseract is not positioned only alongside Murph's bedroom, but "has potentially infinite facets, each one docked alongside the bookcase at a particular moment, the whole representing Murph's bedroom at every possible moment."⁴⁹ Now, it is important to add that the rules of *Interstellar* do not allow Cooper to travel to his own past, but they allow that the "gravitational forces can carry messages

⁴⁹ Furby, "About Time Too, 250ff. See also about the full plot and other details about "Interstellar (film)" from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_fiction_film (accessed June 28, 2020).

into our brane's past."⁵⁰ Tesseract thus appears to be a symbol for a quantum synchronicity beyond our brane's time and space continuum. Theologically, tesseract appears as a plane of immanence of love, place of divine providence, a symbol of a future dwelling of evolved beings-gods.

Now, one of the most original ideas of this film is that humanity indeed lives in a five-dimensional bulk inhabited by hyperspherical or five-dimensional beings. Upon the impending catastrophe, it is these beings that help the inhabitants of the Earth to survive by populating new inhabitable worlds of the universe.⁵¹ But *who* are these bulk beings? In *Interstellar*, these beings are referred to as "They" – and nobody knows who they were. According to Christopher Nolan's imagination, these beings "are actually our descendants: humans who, in the far future, evolve to acquire an additional space dimension and live in the bulk."⁵² It might thus be so that these beings *exist*: if they

⁵⁰ Thorne, *The Science of Interstellar*, 263.

⁵¹ In episode four of the second season of *The Expanse*, we witness the launch of the giant spaceship *Nauvoo*, which has been designed by the Latter-day Saints: "The *Nauvoo* was originally commissioned by the Mormons to take thousands of their members on a generations-long trip to Tau Ceti, a G-class star located approximately twelve light-years from our solar system." See on this K. Murnane, "Science and Tech in Syfy's 'The Expanse': The Spectacular Launch of the 'Nauvoo'" *Forbes* (Mar 1). *The Pearl of Great Price* – one of the sacred texts of Mormonism – describes the planet Kolob as a location that is geographically closest to God while also being the planet which Latter-day Saints head to in their afterlife (see *The Pearl of Great Price*, Abraham 3:2-16). The creator of the postapocalyptic series *Battlestar Galactica* (1978-79), Glen A. Larson, was himself a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and he has incorporated Mormon elements into the series – most notably by introducing a planet called Kobol (i.e., Kolob) as the dwelling place of gods. The very idea of an intergalactic trip is unusual for Christianity because of its scepticism towards critical or technological posthumanism. But, it "should [also] not be forgotten that in the depths of Christian history, remote settlements such as monasteries preserved civilization during dark times" (B. P. Green, "The Catholic Church and Technological Progress: Past, Present, and Future", in: N. Herzfeld (ed.), *Religion and the New Technologies*, Basel: MDPI 2017, 25), and that, from the very beginning of the history of the Church, exploration – both physical and intellectual – was encouraged. See also Barry H. Downing's *The Bible and Flying Saucers* (New York: Avon 1970) in which he links UFOs with angels as well as defends the possibility that life could have been brought to Earth by extraterrestrials. Similarly, we can find thoughts on UFOs as being a part of God's angelic host in Billy Graham's *Angels: God's Secret Agents* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1975). For a more recent account on astrotheology by Ted Peters see Conclusion of our paper. Peters designates Downing's theological efforts as "a hermeneutic of scripture based upon an extraterrestrial interpretation." See Ted Peters, *God – The World's Future: Systematic Theology for a New Era*, 3rd edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 714.

⁵² Thorne, *The Science of Interstellar*, 22. There are three options here: (A) Bulk beings are our descendants, caught in a disastrous and slowly closing time-loop due to an impending catastrophe awaiting them if they are not able to communicate vital data to us. They can travel back in time but they are restrained by the rule that they can never travel to their own past. (B) Bulk beings are gods, or a God, which as intellectually-materially-technologically evolved supreme being(s) communicate(s) back in time from the hyper-space between two singularities. They act like Buddhist Bodhisattvas, refusing to enter their final enlightenment (i.e., a point beyond the singularity's edge) from their highest ethical vow not to reach *nirvāna* until someone

do, and if they pass through our worlds, we could be affected by their gravity: “for example, if a hyperspherical being appears in my stomach and has a strong enough gravitational pull, my stomach may begin to cramp as my muscles tighten; trying to resist getting sucked to the center of the being’s spherical cross section.”⁵³ On a spatial level, one of the hypotheses is that the universe as a membrane (called “brane” by the physicists), is “residing in a higher-dimensional ‘hyperspace’ to which the physicists give the name ‘bulk’.”⁵⁴ As the brane necessarily has three space dimensions, the bulk would have at least four. The scientists do not yet know if the bulk or hyperspace really exists but the 1984 announcement of a “superstring theory” by Michael B. Green and John Schwarz (of the theory that might reconcile the laws of quantum physics with Einstein’s relativistic laws), demanded that apart from our three-dimensional membrane, there must be a multidimensional bulk (according to the superstring theory, the bulk actually would have six more dimensions).⁵⁵ Our thesis would now be the following: analogously to the “mysterious” or scientifically still undisclosed relationality of brane and bulk, analogously, the same relationality appears between two temporal moments: our time (as human beings) must be related in a yet unknown manner to the temporality of a “God”, which, as it were, interferes with our “ordinary” worlds through the effects that we learned to call “miracles”. In an analogous manner – as in spatial terms – it might now be so that this God exists (as a supreme bulk being): if it does, and if it somehow (mysteriously) *passes* through our worlds, we could be affected by this “gravity” in ways we do not yet know to apprehend or describe. God, which *is the future itself* (Ruyer), messages as a super-humanely and technologically evolved being into the past. The tesseract will represent the cosmic “vehicle” of God’s supreme love for humanity and nature (thus revealed both ethically and ecologically).

Apart from the postapocalyptic setting and science of intergalactic and time travel, we wish to turn our theological attention to Murphy (Cooper’s daughter) and Dr Amelia Brand (Professor’s Brand daughter). Their stories are stories of *love, faith and hope* – and it is here where the *theological* aspects as siding with the overly *scientific* setting of the film may be introduced

else is able to achieve enlightenment. (C) Bulk beings are extraterrestrials with an advanced technology, communicating with us through tesseract.

⁵³ Ibid., 192f.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 32.

⁵⁵ See Green, M. B. and Schwarz, J. H., “Anomaly cancellations in supersymmetric $D = 10$ gauge theory and superstring theory”, *Physics Letters B*, 149: 1-3 (1984): 117-122. For more about the superstring theory see Brian Green, *The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010, 2nd ed.). We do not yet possess available means for the scientific experiments that could prove the validity of this theory.

and taken into consideration. Murph and Amelie are two daughters in search of love and trust in dangerous times. Murph has faith in what she claims to be messages from the “ghost”, and her love and hope for her father, and for humanity, is immense. Similarly Amelie – despite a constant dismissal of her faith from the side of Cooper and his own faith in Mann’s planet (which turns out to be a catastrophic mistake) – is guided by her love towards Edmunds, and hope for his mission and for his planet stays with her until the end; also Amelie (intuitively) “knows” that, out there in the universe, there exist sympathetic bulk beings, and she states accordingly: “And whoever They are, They appear to be looking out for us.”⁵⁶ As a ten-year-old, Murph is convinced that there is a ghost in her bedroom, messaging something to her. Despite the fact that her intuitions are being constantly rejected by her father (in line with our previous elaborations, we could assume that Cooper sees her faith as belonging to some unjustified magical beliefs...), Murph still insists on what she believes might be a sign of a mysterious communication from some unknown source, perhaps even from some god. In this way, her faith intervenes two times in a most decisive manner: firstly, by her faith in a ghost she discloses a secret code that actually enables humanity to embark upon its journey towards the new habitable world, and, secondly, again by her hope for her father’s return, a forty-year-old Murph finds the decisive quantum data from the watch in her bedroom, which he gave her upon his departure and which now enables humanity to escape the dangerously suffocating atmosphere of the Earth. As regards Amelie – the final scenes of *Interstellar* confirm her important role – after meeting an older Murph, who is now nearing her death, Cooper returns to Edmunds and rejoins Amelie on her habitable planet.

Let us now finally return to our Nolan philosopher, his theory of bonding agents and the theological consequences that may be inferred from this teaching. According to Bruno, we know that

[T]he vinculum [is] that which links to an ever-changing degree the operator (the *vinciens*) to the *vinciendum*. The original unity of the All, therefore, establishes the conditions for the success of magical action, because it allows us to understand how a magus can restore an existing apparent multiplicity to its underlying unity. Human beings, too, are presented as matter over whose surface pass infinite forms, and clearly each one of them is

⁵⁶ Cit. after Thorne, *The Science of Interstellar*, 193.

a *vinculum*, one of the many which we all, in fact, encounter.⁵⁷

Translated into the theological language, this now means that the *vinculum* may be represented by the tesseract as a quantum field of the bonding agent. The magical action of the bonding agents – i.e., futuristically evolved humans or gods – represents the process of restoration of ever broken connections of love – from the more elemental nature, towards connections between other sentient beings, and all the ways towards nature as an elemental whole. Beings of the brane are, in the exact words of the Nolan, *presented as matter over whose surface passes infinite forms, and clearly each one of them is a vinculum*. The addendum to our argument on the existence of God from the end part of our first section, updated by our reading of *Interstellar*, would now finally run as follows:

On the background of the existence of brane beings and objects, God exists as a supreme bulk being. God passes through our worlds which are affected by this “gravity” in ways we do not yet know how to apprehend or scientifically describe. These events can be designated as cosmic constellations of a *vinculum* or bond of love that are affecting our agapeistic activities. As an enhanced spiritually-material being, God subtly passes through the surface of brane beings which report these weak passings as “mystical experiences”. The interactions of God with brane beings establish secret or hidden correspondences between microcosmic (brane beings, objects) and macrocosmic (Gods, other bonding agents) “deities”.

Conclusion

With Ted Peters we were introduced into a new sub-field within systematic theology: astrotheology. In Chapter 13 of his *God – The World’s Future* (“Astrotheology”), Peters presents us with the most elaborate presentation of this new field so far.⁵⁸ According to him, astrotheology has four main tasks – (1) to reflect on the scope of creation beyond geocentrism; (2) to set the Christological parameters under the new astrotheological view; (3) to analyze and critique astrobiology from within; and, finally (4) to cooperate with leaders of other religious traditions and with scientists in order to prepare the public for a possible

⁵⁷ Bruno, *Cause, Principle and Unity / Essays on Magic*, xxix.

⁵⁸ See Peters, *God – The World’s Future*, pp. 699-734. The term “Astro-Theology” was originally coined by William Derham (1657–1735).

extraterrestrial contact. These arguments do not overlap so directly with what we aimed to present in this paper. But Peters concludes his presentation of the field with the following thought on our cosmic future, and it is here that our arguments on the temporality of God indeed overlap quite directly:

Our present creation will be consummated in God's promised new creation. Or, to reverse it, God's new creation will *retroactively* determine and define the present creation. *God is the future of all things*, the galaxies and their stars included.⁵⁹

This passage indeed closely relates our question of the temporality of God with the question of astrotheology. So let us now finally summarize our argument in the vicinity of this field.

The core argument as presented within our philosophical theology, dealing with Bruno's and Ruyer's philosophy on one side, and Mormonism's and *Interstellar's* rich scientifico-religious imagination on the other, was that God is the future itself: projecting into the present and affecting or guiding "us" as a bonding agent through various ultra-weak interactions. As based on a philosophico-theological imagination (and thus being related to Dewey's original idea of God as a future unification of ideal values⁶⁰), God as the temporality of the future is an enigmatic sign of continuity and interdependency on the field reaching from subatomic matter to higher human values through time. As an idea of a supreme intelligence, God reveals to us (as *not-yet-gods*) through philosophy, religion, science and art: through these revelations of ideas, scientific laws and artworks, retroactively-synchronistically, as it were, the world we are inhabiting is revealed to us as a part of his ongoing creation. Within these multiple revelations, God is attested to be a pervasive cosmico-quantum energy that can be tapped into – and living beings are the material entities, whose bodies can encounter, absorb, and distribute this energy: they can induce agapeistic action on a basis of these encounters. As a way of an announcement of a future bond, unifying all, these encounters

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 733f. (*our emphasis*). Cf. also: "Because God is the world's future, the eyes of faith can foresee a better world coming. This vision includes a new creation, a harmonious whole, a home of healthy interconnectedness. (...) In short, we do not have a whole until the eschaton. Yet the power of the eschatological whole is effective in the present. It is effective proleptically. It is the power of God's grace calling us forward and empowering us to center our existence through trust in the future that will be God's." (336f. and 338f.) This is how God exists as our future within Ted Peters's systematic theology.

⁶⁰ See John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1934), 50. The idea of God, in Dewey's view, stands for the unification of ideal values, with imagination intervening into the very core of our beliefs and values, and unifying our attitudes and conduct into a signifying whole.

are discernable in humans as signs of *love*. These encounters are a mark of our divinization, and God-the-future is the vibration of a cosmic web of love of which we are a part. Our argument could now finally be summarized as follows:

(A) God-the-future acts in this world through a series of revelations which are felt by beings as ultra-weak interactions, inducing shifts in their orientation and action.

(B) In humans these revelations are felt as signs of a future creation, retrospectively projected into the present from the God as bonding agent.

(C) The highest cosmic co-ordination between all-encompassing God and beings (matter over whose surface passes infinite forms) is called a plane of love.

(D) On the basis of divine revelations and cosmic coordination, human beings are able to induce and share agapeistic action.

* * *

According to Catherine Keller, the universe is so mysteriously entangled that its particles actually “coordinate instantly, precisely and at any distance whatsoever – even across the galaxy” and that “the events far away seem to feel each other.” In our argument this was understood as an example of hidden and mysterious correspondences between microcosmic and macrocosmic beings, underpinned or initiated by God as bonding agent. In the language of Nicolas de Cusa, Keller asserts that “through all things God is in each thing.”⁶¹ And she adds – in a way of a beautiful quantum-theological metaphor:

We are learning of an immediate connectivity operating across the widest distances, where there is not empty void but rather an infinitely plastic body of mysterious energy. And the very energy of the expansion may flow from the intimacy of the entanglement. Never mind the math. Consider the metaphor! The ancient mystical trope of the “brilliant darkness” – the glowing darkness of the infinite whom we have nicknamed God – seems to be growing (in theory) a subtle body. A body of energy, no thing, but pulsing webs, strings, and fields, the entangled intensity of everything that is, in some sense, everywhere.⁶²

⁶¹ Catherine Keller, “The Entangled Cosmos: an experiment in physical theopoetics”, *Journal of Cosmology* (Sept 2012). Retrieved from: http://sdcc3.ucsd.edu/~ir118/JOC20/Keller_rev1.pdf (accessed August 24, 2021).

⁶² Catherine Keller, “The Energy We Are: A Meditation in Seven Pulsations”, in: Donna Bowman and Clayton Crockett, eds., *Cosmology, Ecology, and the Energy of God*, pp. 11-25 (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 23.

The world is full of gods.

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