Thinking Faith: Moods, Methods and Mystery



Anthony J Kelly CSsR

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Thinking Faith:
Moods, Methods, and Mystery:

Selected Essays

Anthony J Kelly CSsR

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and

colleagues over many years,

Brendan Byrne, SJ,

and

Francis J Moloney, SDB

Men of Wisdom

Servants of the Word

Witnesses to the Light

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'Faith Seeking Fantasy: Tolkien on Fairy Stories', in *Pacifica,* 15 (June 2002): 190–208

'Come, Holy Spirit: Renew the Face of the Earth' [given on an ecumenical occasion]

Preface

I first encountered Tony Kelly back in the early 1970s when I was a senior seminarian and he a young theologian recently returned from study overseas and assigned to teach us Christology at Catholic Theological College in Melbourne. Little did either of us know then how closely our lives would interweave through the years.

Tony and I worked together closely through the time he was President of Yarra Theological Union and I the Master of Catholic Theological College. We had a shared vision of what was possible for theological education in Melbourne and beyond. That vision never quite came to pass but the friendship was sealed, and that was achievement enough. Tony was one of my chaplains when I was ordained bishop years later, and he lived with me for a time in Archbishop's House in Canberra when we both ended up there. To me he has been teacher, mentor, friend, adviser and much else to boot.

But Tony has been many things to many people through the years: priest, theologian, preacher, teacher, poet and even painter. He has always been a prismatic presence—turn him one way and you see one thing, turn him the other and you see something else. In that, he is not unlike the founder of the Redemptorist congregation to which he belongs, St Alphonsus Liguori who was himself a man of many parts: pastor, moral theologian, hymnographer and much else. Something of the saint's DNA has emerged in Tony Kelly, as the essays contained in this volume make clear.

The title of this collection, 'Thinking Faith', suggests the intellectual rigor and the quality of belief that have always characterised Tony's work. The sub-title, 'Moods, Methods and Mystery', suggests the more poetic, even lyric impulse which has also marked his writing. In fact, the combination of argument and poetry as voices of faith

lies at the heart of what Tony has offered not only in the essays published here but throughout his long publishing life.

In his writing, teaching and especially his supervising of research, Tony has been an outstanding figure in the academy, but he has also been very much a man of the Church. This was perhaps clearest in the years when he was a member of the International Theological Commission, where his service became more global. It is not always easy to hold academy and Church together; but few have done it as gracefully and successfully as Tony Kelly.

Perhaps the last and best thing that might be said of this prismatic figure is that he is a human being. As I have grown older, I have come to see that the art of being truly human is the most difficult of all to learn. It takes a lifetime, and these essays trace key elements of Tony's own long journey into the humanity from which his work comes and to which it returns. They suggest what it means to be in the world but not of it.

Tony has often mused about the future of theology in Australia, and rightly so as the scene here continues to change in ways we scarcely imagined years ago. One thing is certain: theology in Australia in the future will be different from what it has been in the past. It will not perhaps produce figures quite like Tony Kelly. But what is equally certain is that, in the midst of all the flux, theology in the future will have to learn from what Tony Kelly has taught and seek to embody in new ways the great legacy of wisdom to which this collection attests.



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Introduction

The title of this collection of essays is *Thinking Faith: Moods, Methods, and Mystery*, and it might need a word of explanation. The aim is to suggest something of what is involved in 'thinking faith', while indicating examples of my modest contribution over all these years. Given the exuberant data of faith, beliefs, doctrines and tradition, the task of the theologian is always to reflect on what is so richly given, and to communicate in the most telling fashion its meaning. There are certainly *moods* that colour the way we think, even though theological writing must show an intellectual concentration of some kind. That is quite compatible with a great variety of approaches, sometimes more hopeful, sometimes more sober, defensive and argumentative. But whatever the mood, our theological efforts must always be focused on the inexpressible richness of what the faith has revealed. I hope, then, that the reader will notice the variety of moods and mentalities animating these essays.

But there is also the question of *methods.* The strange thing about a particular theological method or style of thought is that it is seldom an explicit series of procedures. It is something more spontaneous and formed through the practices of many years. Quite clearly, in this collection of writings a number of methods is implied. The metaphysical and contemplative approach of St Thomas Aquinas is always present, at least beneath the surface, as is Bernard Lonergan's theological method as a framework for collaborative creativity—as outlined in his *Method in Theology*. Lonergan's framework has been of immense value to me over the years, especially in its analysis of the human consciousness implied in all our knowing and willing and doing. Likewise, his presentation of the gift of grace as the transformation of that consciousness has been singularly illuminating. There

are course other methods and in more recent years, I have learnt a great deal from continental phenomenology, mainly in the writings of Jean-Luc Marion, Claude Romano, and Kevin Hart. Kevin has been a friend of many years, and is now resident in America. I remain amazed at his extraordinary poetic achievement and his critical contributions to great swathes of modern theological, philosophical, and literary thought.

Whatever the mood, whatever the method, the *mystery* remains—of God, Christ, and who we are in that light. To this degree, theology is a way of thinking *within* mystery, not outside it. In this respect, doing theology is humbling for us theologians when confronted with the limited span of our knowledge—and our poor capacities to express it. There always remain infinite expanses of what is not yet given us to see, so to leave theologians, inarticulate, in splendid defeat. And yet so much has been given, even in the most routine life of the Church, in its Scriptures its sacraments, and in the luminous witness of the many who have gone before us, and live now in the light.

One of the essays in this collection is called 'By Way of Negation'. It draws attention to the darkness that surrounds the knowledge of faith and the theologies it inspires. That blessed darkness will never allow us to think that we can, in any way, encapsulate the mystery of God in human meaning, try as we may, and even as we must. Anything I might say about theology would be quite defective if it left out an essential awareness of the mystery in which we live and move and have our being.

But it is one thing to talk about the title of this collection, and another to make a few remarks about the origins and influences that have formed the writer. Many years ago, I grew up in the shadow of the Redemptorist Monastery in Mayfield, Newcastle. That happy circumstance resulted in me joining that religious order and in being set on the road to assimilate, ever more deeply, the Redemptorist motto, *Copiosa apud eum redemptio*, ('with him there is plentiful redemption'). Being a Redemptorist meant belonging to an international congregation with its increasing contacts in the many countries of Asia, Europe, America and Africa. Such a form of belonging was a strange blend of the local and the international. In terms of the local, I think it gave me the beginnings of an ecological consciousness in the years I spent at St Clement's College, Galong, NSW, followed by the novitiate set in the bush wonderland around Pennant Hills out-

side of Sydney, and then, Wongarra, on the Great Ocean Road, during the long summers of my student years. Then, in the seven year course of studies in Ballarat at the House of Studies of our order, I was exposed to a number of remarkable teachers, eminent among whom was Kevin O'Shea, CSsR, my first and greatest teacher in theology. Of course this was a time when the Church was building up to the Second Vatican Council, and that made it difficult to fix a date for our ordination by the local bishop. Eventually, that happened and on 30 June 1963, I was ordained by Bishop O'Collins in Ballarat—on the very day that Pope Paul VI was crowned (the last papal coronation). I like to think that somehow I shared in the wisdom of that great Pope, and perhaps even something of his modest infallibility! It is hard to recapture the sense of excitement and novelty that Vatican II brought into the Church. As it turned out, during my time in Rome, the organisation of one of the daily Council masses had been assigned to the Redemptorists, with the result that I found myself reading the gospel to the assembled council fathers. After that, I struggled shamefully in my efforts to put a mitre on the missionary bishop who was presiding—quite a disruption for that good man who, no doubt, was feeling honoured to celebrate Mass in St Peter's on that day in the presence of his fellow bishops.

In the meantime, I studied for my doctorate at the Anselmianum—in those days quite a centre for theology, under the direction of Benedictines from all parts of Europe and the Americas. My thesis director was a young Swiss Benedictine, Dom Magnus Löhrer, who with wisdom and patience navigated the shoals of having me as his first doctoral student. Within a few years I was doing postdoctoral studies at St Michael's College University in Toronto, at a time when the richness of its faculty was truly extraordinary. Thereafter most of my teaching life was passed in Melbourne's Yarra Theological Union in the Melbourne College of Divinity, and in 1980 I was made president there before going on a sabbatical to Paris. On my return, I continued to be president of that lively institution which was, from year to year, a miracle of improvisation. This was a time when theology was becoming more available option for the laity in the Church and for women in particular. I was always grateful for the energy and inspiration deriving from Yarra Theological Union!

Eventually, after a sabbatical at Boston College, I moved to Australian Catholic University as the Professor of Theology in 1999, and

have been there, one way or another, ever since. These university years gave me the opportunity for a greater productivity in my theological career: there followed many books and articles, some of which appear in this collection.

Over the years, I lived for more or less extended lengths of time in different countries in Europe, Asia and in North America. Owing to the strong involvement of the Redemptorists, in the Philippines and in Malaysia-Singapore, I became aware of cultures and Church struggles that were far from my experience in Australia, or even in Europe. The career of a theologian these days is inevitably marked by international experience, which can serve as a broadening of the mind, along with an increased sensitivity to other cultures and peoples. I have often wondered how my privileged situation was in contrast to the experience of the great theologians who thought and worked and prayed in the cauldron of war in Europe in generations past. It seems to me that the theologians of today, at least in the English-speaking world, have had a more peaceful existence, and perhaps a more international one; though I cannot but think that our distance, historically and geographically, from situations of violence, dramatic conflict, persecution and the horror of war, has left us with a somewhat bland mentality compared to our colleagues suffering behind the Iron Curtain and even in South America.

I realise that to be a theologian is to serve the faith in a given situation and in dialogue with a given culture, so that a certain patience and acceptance is of the essence. At different times, I made considerable effort to identify the religious situation here in Australia, as in my *A New Imagining: Toward and Australian Spirituality*.[1] After all, in contrast to Europe, here Christmas is in summer and Easter in autumn, while the South wind blows cold. A comparatively brief history of European settlement stands against the backdrop is 40,000 year history of indigenous presence in this land. This is beginning to be far more deeply understood and appreciated today—with considerable effect on the theological approach to the present and past reality of the Aboriginal peoples. Today's theologians are beginning to understand more deeply the significance of how these original inhabitants dwelt in this land with song and dance and that exuberant and

1. Tony [Anthony J] Kelly, *A New Imaging: Toward and Australian Spirituality* (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1990).

distinctive symbolic world of the 'Dreaming'. A renewed appreciation of the Aboriginal presence on this continent serves as a model in many ways for the Christian encounter with other faiths and religions in other parts of the world today.

A further influence on my theological career was my appointment to the International Theological Commission (ITC), from 2004 to 2014. Admittedly, its great days were beginning to pass. Under the chairmanship of the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the ITC continued as a deliberative body and produced some influential documents. But times changed, Cardinal Ratzinger became Pope Benedict XVI, and while the theological membership of the commission was increasingly inclusive and international, the time of the great European theologians had passed. Still, the annual meetings of the commission provided an opportunity to meet colleagues from other countries and cultures, and even a succession of popes during that time, not to mention the great variety of visitors who passed through Casa Santa Marta—members of other commissions, visiting cardinals and bishops, and public figures: on one occasion that meant having breakfast with Henry Kissinger!

The dozen or so articles in this collection are interspersed with some of my poems, written over the years and published in various forms. Adding the poems was an editorial suggestion. It was thought to be a good idea, but that remains to be seen. It is true that sometimes, to my annoyance, readers considered that my theological writings were 'poetic'. That may be so, but my intention all along was to give the most worthy expression to the theological topics being considered. Perhaps I gave the impression that my way of writing was not sufficiently academic and too imaginative. I must plead guilty—even while recognising that ordered, expository prose is the usual mode of theological discourse and the most helpful.

Then again, the connection between poetry and theology is a complex subject. Some of the poems suggest as much, expressing 'a strange confiding gift/flowing with a more elements,/and welling up from where forgotten things/are felt, and spell, in a giving too deep to be one's own/existence, if only for the moment,/ irresistibly ecstatic' (*Address for a Special Occasion*). There is some grace in simply waiting for something to be given: '. . . to write freely/not knowing what you have to say,/but being written in a way . . . /Lowercase inspiration you might call it . . .' So that, 'the times being as they are,/to wait, pen-

cil poised, or fingering a keyboard,/listening . . .' (*Beginning Again*). Or, with John the Baptist, realising that 'it's different now:/reality is so climactically appalling' (*John the Baptist*).

Karl Rahner has written movingly on poetry as a kind of training and sensitising of the mind for faith.[2] More to the point, if theology is to be based firmly on experience, then that experience can often be evoked only in a more imaginative and phenomenological manner before the exercises of analysis and critical thought can occur. Here, I am much influenced by my good friend and colleague, Claude Romano, a noted phenomenologist now teaching at the Sorbonne. His recent book *At the Heart of Reason*, is an extended treatment of how to intelligence is earthed, as it were, in a totality of experience that precedes and founds all intellectual activities.

A couple of years ago, friends, colleagues and former doctoral students presented me with a celebratory volume (commonly called a *Festschrift*). It was edited by two eminent theologians, Neil Ormerod and Robert Gascoigne, and entitled *Priest, Poet, and Theologian: essays in honour of Anthony Kelly CSsR*.[3] I am most grateful for the way the various writers contributed different responses to my work, while expressing any number of ways in which it could be extended into new areas. For me to read those fourteen essays was very instructive, and suggested a rich collegial context shaped by the eminent and generous scholars involved. Of particular relevance is an essay by Meredith Secomb, entitled, 'Speaking from experience: A Theologian in the Presence of the Revealed God'. Not only did this essay incorporate the title of my original doctoral thesis completed in the late '60s, but also it suggested how that thesis was destined to remain ever unfinished in the years ahead. My concern of not wanting to be too abstract and academic, but to serve more immediately the life of the Church and its communities of faith, had its own outcome. It is now clearer, to myself and others, as to how I was understanding theology in the course of my academic career. It entailed a constant insistence on experience, however indefinable that might be. That insistence may have resulted simply from the fact that I am a Redemptorist, and, therefore, marked by the spirit of St Alfonso, 'the most Neapolitan

2. Karl Rahner, 'Poetry and the Christian', *Theological Investigations IV* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966), 357–367.
3. *Priest, Poet, and Theologian: Essays in Honour of Anthony Kelly CSsR,* edited by Neil Ormerod and Robert Gascoigne (Melbourne: Mosaic Press 2013).

of the saints and the saintly of Neapolitans', as they say. His practical orientation in every area in which he worked (moral theology, devotional writing, meditations and pastoral communications of all kinds, hymns, music and painting)—all contributed eventually to his being declared a Doctor of the Church in 1900.

On the other hand, there is a more academic reason for this insistence on experience: theological and philosophical methods have advanced. That is now a widespread insistence on giving much greater weight to the singular character of experience in contrast to promoting any kind of finished system expressing itself in more abstract concepts and refined definitions. In this respect, a phenomenological and experiential emphasis does not replace metaphysical reflection, but grounds and sustains it. One can note also that an experiential emphasis evident in the towering achievements of such theologians as Karl Rahner, Bernard Lonergan, and in the critical expositions of the life of faith in the writings of Blessed John Henry Newman. Some of the essays making up this collection bear explicitly on the experiential substrate out of which we think and in which we communicate. See, for instance. the essays, 'Making the resurrection intelligible—or intelligence resurrectional?', And, more explicitly, 'Refreshing experience: the Christ-event as Fact Classic and Phenomenon'. Each of the essays making up this collection grapples, one way or another, with the question of how to think within experience, and in the manner in which experience might be enriched and gain critical assurance. Consider for example the Marian experience in the life of the Church, or the continuing efforts to clarify what we mean by 'natural law'.

I must mention, albeit in passing, what a privilege and resource it has been for me over these long years to have worked in the company of remarkable scriptural colleagues such as Frank Moloney, SDB, and Brendan Byrne, SJ. Their erudition and love for the Scriptures offered sure guidance and inspiration at a time when biblical studies were in a state of transition and somewhat removed from theology.

I conclude in the hope that something of the various moods that animate theology and the variety of methods that are used will be clarified, along with the depths of mystery from which theology begins and to which it returns. I know, however, that theology can appear peripheral to busy people in the Church and more so, to those outside it. Nonetheless, there is some consolation in being involved in the things that truly matter and in contributing to the way these deep

matters might be best understood and spoken of—if not for now, then for some future generation. The basic objection to faith is that it is too good to be true; and it is amongst the more humble services of theology to remind oneself and others that 'the too good to be true', is true! There lies our hope.

In what follows, each the of twelve essays will be followed by a poem—without implying too great an association in terms of subject matter. I am grateful to Hilary Regan and ATF Press for suggesting this format.

Address for a Special Occasion

How the bishop gamely tried
to tickle the plump sense of occasion
into a little wriggle of transcendence!
-- to take a step beyond
the mundane of the heat, summer frocks,
smart suits, and rows of polished cars
beyond where family values are secure,
spouses faithful, children obedient,
motherhood a treasure, and even fathers
have a special role –
to that other region . . .
In the religious perspective
the vanishing point
makes all meaning shrink:
old bird-words are no longer winged;
no more abiding the open air
they roost moulting,
pecking seed from the preacher's hand.
Some wild amazing thing has flown away:
once reachable in a bound of hope or praise,
or in the dart of love or pang of guilt.
Piety lives here now
as a drugged bird of paradise,
smuggled in, and revived,
allowed to live decoratively,
at least as a specimen
in the ecology of a cage.
Customs check the contraband
when importing exotic fauna
is against the law:
the safer option is taxidermy . . .
But jokes get by –
ironic resonance
with what we barely know,
as everything comes tumbling down,
and nothing sure can stand
against the earthquake tilt from nowhere.
For all I know, tears may be

a surer path, a strange confiding gift
flowing with more elements,
and welling up from where forgotten things
are felt, and spell,
in a giving too deep to be one's own,
existence, if only for the moment,
irresistibly ecstatic.

The Incarnation and Human Sensibility

From whatever perspective, the Incarnation is the singular constitutive event for Christian identity, 'for in him the whole fullness of the deity dwells bodily' (Col 2:9; see Jn 1:14). This implies neither negation nor diminishment of the human but rather shows forth its potential under the power of God. As a culminating event in divine self-communication, it has a transformative effect on Christian consciousness and its awareness of God, the self, and the world.

In what follows, I wish to explore the reality of the Incarnation as a source of distinctive Christian sensibilities. This exploration will be presented under the following five headings:

1. Humanity—the Open Question;
2. Creation and the Incarnation of the Word;
3. The Word Embodied in the World;
4. The Body-Language of the New Testament
5. The Analogical Language of Body

Humanity—The Open Question

Humanity is a question to itself.[1] The dynamics and structures implied in who we are and what we experience allow for no one simple response: nature and person, male and female, body and soul, individual and community, society and culture, cosmos and history, God

1. For a classic treatment on the theme of the questioning character of human existence, see Eric Voegelin, *Order and History IV: The Ecumenic Age* (Baton Rouge: Louisiania State University Press, 1974), especially 316–330.

and the universe—these are just some of the dualities encountered by anyone disposed to look for answers—above all, in the domain of theology. Alert to the polarities inherent in any discussion of the human, the great saint of East and West, Maximus the Confessor, speaks of the human being as 'the laboratory in which everything is concentrated and itself naturally mediates between the extremities of each division, having been drawn into everything in a good and fitting way through its development'.[2]

An essential cultural task for theology is to provoke an uninhibited conversation on the meaning of our shared humanity. The current revulsion against the flat, quantitative, purely economic description of society, so favoured in modern politics, demands a larger frame of reference. More deeply still, the increasing robotisation of human language is a cause for irritation if not for alarm. Terms such as stimulus and response, conditioning, input and output, turned on and switched off, being burned out or blowing fuses, individual magnetism and the right chemistry, being programmed or brain-washed or hardwired, developmental cycles or stages, projecting the right image, software and hardware, and so on, figure in a current vocabulary. There is the obvious danger of linguistically reducing the total range of consciousness to the model of the machine, the computer, the camera, and chemical, physical or electrical interaction. A total explanation of human consciousness is ever elusive—as instanced in Richard Tallis' vigorous, informed debunking of the idea that neuroscience can offer a complete explanation of what makes us human in his book *Aping Mankind: Neuromania and Darwinitis, and the Misrepresentation of Humanity.*[3] His work is all the more persuasive since the author is both a materialist and an atheist!

Whatever the range of language and the variety of perspectives it provokes, the Incarnation is the necessarily focal meaning of the Christian understanding of humanity. In Christ, the world's path to God and God's way into the world are embodied: 'the Word became flesh and lived amongst us, and we have seen his glory' (Jn 1:14). Though the Word is uttered into the human history, it does not stop

2. Maximus Confessor, *Difficulty* 41:1305B. See Andrew Louth, M*aximus The Confessor* (London: Routledge, 1996), 19–33. I follow Louth's translation. See also, Lars Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos. The Vision of St Maximus The Confessor* (New York: St Vladimirs's Seminary Press, 1985), 132–137.
3. Richard Tallis, *Aping Mankind: Neuromania and Darwinitis, and the Misrepresentation of Humanity* (Durham: Acumen, 2011).

the human conversation, but provokes it to further questioning: '. . . what we will be has not yet been revealed' (1 Jn 3:2). In this respect, the first words of the Word in John's Gospel are instructive. They are in the form of a question: Jesus turns to the two disciples of the Baptist following him, to ask, 'What are you looking for?' (Jn 1:38).

The Incarnation is God's personal entry into human history. That must mean being part of the cosmic process of emergence and evolution, a divine affirmation of all the variety of agencies involved in the genesis of life, humanity and the emergent world. In the world of God's creation and incarnation, nature possesses its own dynamism working in the complex interactions of atoms and molecules, DNA and molecules, cells, neurons, organs, organisms, bodies, bondings, populations, eco-systems and the biosphere of this planet. Because God's infinite creative Act is involved in each of these activities, because the creative process is initiated and finalised 'in Christ' (*cf* Col 1:15–20), a higher integration is entailed at each step in the process of emergence. Without such successive integrations, there could be no higher self-realisation in the emergence of the human, and in the awareness of human minds and hearts made open to the Word made flesh in this terrestrial milieu.

Whilst the Incarnation is an ultimate point of integration, being human is to be involved in complexity. Levels of living and non-living things exist below and before human consciousness. These levels of hierarchically related to one another, not as closed, but as open systems.[4] Whilst each level has its own laws and schemes of recurrence, there are instances of randomness, openness, even of 'chaos', as entropy is dissipated, and possibilities of higher realisation occur. Each level looks beyond itself to something more. Sub-atomic particles assemble themselves into the elements of the periodic table. Chemical elements come together into increasingly complex compounds as in the structure of enzymes and acids within the living cell. Cells come together in all the variety of plant and animal life. Cellular structures, in turn, are subsumed into the astonishing emergence of the brains of the human beings, just as they participate in the ecological biosphere in the food we eat, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the wine of our celebrations.[5]

4. Ian G Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion: Enemies, Strangers or Partners?* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), 90–118.
5. See Arthur Peacocke, *God and the New Biology* (London: JM Dent and Sons, 1986), 120–127.

All this is far from a world of fixed and static natures whether these are imagined as more or less blended—or as adversarially juxtaposed. What emerges is a kind of participatory interlinking of all levels of reality in the makeup of our humanity.[6] But a distinctively human consciousness has a universal range: indeed, from a cosmic point of view, the universe has become conscious of itself in the human body, mind and heart. As a result, the emergent and evolutionary dynamics of reality inevitably affect faith's understanding of the Incarnation.

The Word and Creation

A contemporary theology of the Incarnation must develop in a world immeasurably more vast, intricate, and disenchanted, compared to what previous generations could have imagined. As a result, the classic New Testament perspective of the prologue of John's Gospel, for instance, can be interpreted at a new depth and breadth, given its sense of the universe of God's creation centred in the Word made flesh.[7]

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being (Jn 1:1–3).

For John, the divine *Logos* is all-creative and inclusive: 'all things' came into existence through him, and depend on him, in some causal sense, in their origins, just as all meaning and intelligibility derive from God's self-meaning in the *Logos*. The verses which follow suggest the quality of human consciousness as 'light' and 'life' derived from the Word:

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6. See Rupert Sheldrake, *The Rebirth of Nature: The Rebirth of Nature: The Greening of Science and God,* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 100–108, for another, but associated vocabulary: *holons* as successively 'nested hierarchies'. At each level, the *holons* are wholes containing parts which are themselves wholes containing lower-level parts, and so on.
7. For a fuller theological consideration of the prologue, see John Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* (London: SCM, 1990), 105–122. Macquarrie's own translation of this passage, especially his use of 'meaning' for *Logos* is particularly imaginative. For a fuller discussion, see Anthony J Kelly and Francis F Moloney, *Experiencing God in the Gospel of John* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2003), 29–60.

> All things were made through him, and without him, nothing was made. What took place in him was life, and the life was the light of humankind. The light shines in darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (Jn 1:3–5).

In the vocabulary of faith, the meaning of 'God' begins from, and returns to, this Word who is 'with God' in the beginning. Nonetheless, the Word is not an abstract principle, but 'he', *this one* (Jn 1:3–4, 10–11). An actual addressable subject is implied, one whose original identity will unfold only in the conversational world of human subjects. The people he meets, confronts and calls will know him as 'you', and all the ages of history refer to him as 'he', Jesus of Nazareth.

'All things were made through him' (Jn 1:3a): despite the differences existing among all created things, and despite their difference, even alienation, from God, the *Logos* is the genetic and unifying principle of the universe. The diversity of creation is a 'uni-verse' because of its origin and coherence in the Word. All of creation is a field of divine communication, being 'Word-ed' into being. This is the fundamental 'logic' of the Gospel: nothing has meaning outside the divine *Logos*. Nothing and no one stands, in its own right, outside the primordial Word.[8]

The *Logos*, by reason of the incarnation and the mission of the Son, creates a *dialogical* space in which Jesus will enter into conversation with all the range of *dramatis personae* involved in the dramatic unfolding of the Gospel narrative. Addressed by this Word, they will evince acceptance, incomprehension, hesitation, doubt, questioning or rejection, or any combination of such attitudes. The Word, dwelling among us (Jn 1:14b), thus opens a unique field of communication. Indeed, the 'God-ward' (*pros ton theon*) status of Word in the first verse of the prologue presumes a certain dialogical dimension within the divine mystery itself.

The extremes, on the one hand, of enclosing God and creation within the sameness of human experience, and, on the other, the sense of an unbridgeable gulf permitting no communication between God and the world, are met with what is always implicit in the Johannine vision. In the light of the incarnation, the ultimate meaning

8. Aquinas, *STh* 1, 34, 3: 'Because God understands both himself and all things in one act, the single divine Word is expressive, not only the Father, but also of all creatures.'

of God and the radical meaning of the universe—and of ourselves within it—are ultimately intelligible only in reference to the incarnate *Logos*. The knowledge of faith is, therefore, in the deepest sense, 'ana-*logical*', governed and proportioned in accord with the concrete singularity of the One who has chosen to share the flesh of this world and to live 'among us'.

Since *he* is the Word both of God, and of the universe of all that exists because of him, a new way of speaking about God is set in motion. The classic themes of Word, being, life and light common to all ancient philosophies and religions are subsumed into a new mode of meaning. God is not known by a further refinement or extension of notions inherent in human traditions. All such are given a new twist by being tied to the singular and the personal—'earthed', as were, in the story of the man, Jesus Christ. Divine revelation entails an encounter with the Word made flesh, and with the story he tells and embodies. God is thus 'ana- *logically*' knowable as the One revealed in the expressiveness and resonance of this Word.

In contrast to an exclusive understanding of the Word as an englobing cosmic presence, the focus is shifted to an event within creation and its history. Where before all things came to be in the Word, now the Word comes to be within that universe.[9] The singular advent of the Word as the source and form of true life has occurred. This life is evidenced in the new consciousness made possible by what has happened: 'and the life was the light of humankind' (Jn 1:4). The Word, therefore, throws light on who God is, on what the world of creation is, and on the promise inherent in human destiny.

We pass now to the expanding cosmic horizon in which the Word is made flesh.

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9. For this interpretation of 1:3b-4, see FJ Moloney, *Belief in the Word: Reading John 1–4* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 30–34. For a magisterial overview of the Word's coming to be within the becoming and evolving universe, see Karl Rahner, 'Christology within an Evolutionary View of the Word', in *Theological Investigations* V, translated by Karl-H Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966), 157–192. Rahner's article can be read as a particularly effective transposition in an evolutionary world-view implied in Aquinas' words: 'The mission of divine person can be taken as implying, from one point of view, a procession of origin from the sender; and from another perspective, a new way of being in what is other. Thus the Son is said to be sent by the Father into the world, in that he begins to be in the world in the visibility of the flesh he has taken to himself' (*Summa Theol*, 1, 43, 1).

Humanity Within the World

The universe envisaged in traditional theological doctrines was inevitably limited to a worldview of a fixed, hierarchical order. But that way of looking at the world has changed. There are dimensions of time and space, and relationships between mass and energy that were previously unimaginable. The world of our present understanding is a process, unfolding through billions of years in increasing differentiation of physical, chemical and biological forms. There are successive levels of organisation, from the quantum behaviour of particles to the formation of increasingly complex molecules to the emergence of life, from the protozoa to the millions of species we now classify. The path of emerging differentiation heads to the phenomenon of the human, and its consciousness of the universe as a vast interrelated whole.

The emergence of the human is connected to its capacity to register meaning beyond sense impressions, to respond to value beyond instinctual attractions, and, with the progressive awakening of consciousness, to transcend the enclosure of a habitat into an ever-growing sense of a world and the universe in which we live. In that respect, there is a distinctiveness of the human which, however much it shares a genetic inheritance with other animals, must be respected—and defended. After all, there have been no reports so far of a pod of whales holding a conference on the declining quality of plankton; or of leopards gathering to plan a cosmetic makeover in order to change their spots; or of dolphins who, after meeting in prayer, have decided to assert the rights of fish. We have no information of on lemmings exploring less wasteful organisational procedures, or of the higher apes writing monographs on the meaning of life . . . Any developments in such a direction have so far escaped detection. As a result, questions of meaning and value, of a universal sense of the totality and of our responsibility within it, seem to be left to the human.

Even though we *are* animal with the animals, it belongs only to the human among this planet's life-forms to experience the capacity for reflective intelligence and global responsibility. With all other animals, the human being breathes the air of this planet; but human consciousness inhales the atmosphere of another realm—that of spirit which exceeds the generative capacities of matter, and intimates the presence of ever-active, infinite source of intelligence and goodness.

From Aristotle on, previous generations spoke of the human as the 'rational animal' (*zoon logikon* in Greek, *animal rationale* in