

On Theologising Theology within the Secular University¹

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Theology should be theologized. I will argue that theology needs to be prized free of its subservience to the enlightenment model of the university. Theologians are in Babylonian captivity. One way of noticing this Babylonian captivity is in the arguments that are conducted in the modern university about the role of theology. The view expressed by some scientific atheists (Richard Dawkins for example) is that theology has no place in the modern university. It is a vestige of a religious world and society which has long since crumbled and been discredited. It is a disservice to a modern research university to include such a subject in the curriculum.

A similar voice is heard from some who teach in departments of Religious Studies, believing that a scientific, objective, rational study of 'religion', without any privilege being granted to any one religion, is the only intellectually respectable practice in the modern university. Donald Weibe is one such academic. Both Dawkins and Weibe have one presupposition in common, which I shall be calling into question: that there is such a thing as neutral objectivity in any mode of research, either science, Dawkin's own area, or religious studies, Weibe's own specialism. However, in another sense I agree with Dawkin and Weibe's conclusions, but for very different reasons. What are these reasons?

The first is that theology is indeed out of place within the modern liberal university, but this should not make theology defensive, but rather push theologians into arguing for a different type of university that would both support the proper way of studying theology (shorn of many Enlightenment assumptions about historical positivism, neutral studies, the unity of the faculties, rather than the current fragmentation). The second, is that religious studies in such a revisioning of theology would be integrated into theology, just as theology utilizes textual analysis from English, or historical critical methods from history, or feminist philosophies from France, or Marxist analysis in Latin America and now the world over. Hence, I would be saying to Weibe that he is right, theology cannot be accommodated within his view of academic study, but that the telos of his academic

¹ (This talk is from my forthcoming book on the nature of theology to be published by Blackwell in 2005)

discipline falls short of truth, as theology might understand the matter. Or to put it in another way, religious studies, from the point of view of theology, requires to be theologized for the fullness of its orientation to come into view.

In advance I apologise to all those who I am bound to offend, and ask them to consider that I am being pushed to summarise for the sake of brevity.

So let me briefly take you through a brief tour of theology, to highlight some points, first to show why in fact, most theology in the universities is indeed religious studies, and my clarion call in the title is not an act of aggression against religious studies, but more widely a criticism of the modern research university – Bristol included.

In what follows I want to show two things. First, the roots of the process of secularism are very complex and may have sources in pre-Christian philosophy as well as Christian intellectual history. Secularism is a natural outgrowth of trajectories within Christianity, whereby a false reality has been generated: an autonomous secular realm. Second, in so much as this process transformed the medieval university into the modern Enlightenment university, embodied in Berlin, with the Reformation intervening between, modernity has dictated the methods whereby theology has been studied. From queen of the sciences, integrating and harmonising the different disciplines, theology has become a marginalised and contested discipline within liberal arts programmes.

To the first aim. For most of western european history the study and practice of theology was an ecclesial practice, and the university, as such, does not enter the narrative until around the twelfth century. After surveying the patristic period, Aidan Nichols, writes that ‘in the ancient Church there were almost no theological academies dedicated to the systematic study of the subject.’ This does not mean that theology was in any way stifled. On the contrary, practicing bishops and monks, often educated in pagan academies, like Augustine, produced brilliant and important works, adopting a variety of genres that mark one of the high points of Christian theological development. In the early middle ages, the two major institutional locations for theology were the monasteries and convents, and the cathedral schools, the latter usually, but not always, open only to those desiring a religious life. This site of production had a number of strengths and weaknesses. Its greatest strength was the unity of theology with prayer and practice. While some monastic theologians were little interested in life outside the monastery and

the liberal arts of the classical world, many of its best theologians, such as Aelred, William of Auberive, Geoffrey of Auxerre, utilised the disciplines and traditions of the pagan world, Christianizing them through this process. Jean Leclercq argues that this monastic setting allowed such theologians to more quickly discern the abuses in the employment of dialectics in *university* theological reflection, an employment that was soon to be a hallmark of university scholasticism.¹ Leclercq goes so far as to say that scholastic university theology, being wedded to the form of disputation and dialectics, eventually ‘lost contact with the life of prayer.’² This loss would eventually lead to the slow divorce between ‘knowledge and love, science and contemplation, intellectual life and spiritual life’ and it would then become necessary to invent mystical or spiritual theology, the worse for its separation from dogmatic theology. Furthermore, the monastic site of theology allowed a limited theological education to women in some of the convents, whereas the creation of the university established an exclusion of women from the institutions of theological learning.³ It has been noted that the convents were a ‘refuge for female intellectuals, as the monastery was for the male. Although the majority of nuns were at best literate, most of the learned women of the Middle Ages – the literary, artistic, scientific, and philosophical stars were nuns.’⁴ Such stars, bringing together many branches of learning in theological wisdom, were women like Roswitha of Gandersheim, Hildegard of Bingen and Herrad of Landsberg, all trained within mixed convents. Of course, whether women were admitted to the sacred discipline or not, it was nevertheless a *clerical* monopoly.

The twelfth century saw theology moving out of the monastery and cathedral school into the university faculties of theology. By the thirteenth century, the University of Paris was ecclesiastically established, with what is often called the Magna Carta of the university, Gregory XI’s bull *Parens Scientiarum* (1231). Soon, the new *studium generale*, the places of study open to all, for all things, took root across Europe, and through that, eventually into the new world. Particularly significant about the scholastic theology that developed in the university, although neo-Augustinians and Scotists also flourished, were three characteristics. First, the disputation was the primary form of learning, dependent on dialectics. Hence, the questioning mode was privileged, although Leclercq’s emphasis on disputation alone in his criticism of scholasticism, conceals this massively confessional enterprise of Thomism.⁵ Second, because it was assumed that nature perfects grace, and analogically nature reflects the creator, intellectual interest in the natural world was institutionally enshrined. This would both create the possibilities of the

heights of Christian Humanism as well as lay the seeds for the carving out of the secular, an autonomous realm claiming freedom from religious intervention. Whether these theological categories are indeed responsible for secularism is a matter I shall touch on below. Third, the division of the faculties in the university of Paris generated complex cross-currents. The Faculties were structured into the 'inferior': arts (made up of the *trivium*, where three roads meet, grammar, rhetoric, and logic; and the *quadrivium*, made up of arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy), followed by the 'superior': canon law, medicine, and theology. The benefit of such division was the assumption that all the disciplines were founded on a common unifying principle: that creation was from God, ordered, for the good of man, and to be used as such. Hence all the disciplines were subject to theological unification, and sometimes theological correction. The latter asymmetry was not always fruitful, and sometimes misused. However, in the fragmentation of faculties also lay the seeds for the fragmentation of knowledge.

Nevertheless, at the beginnings of the European university *both* those who taught and those who learnt in the university believed their task was in service to God, church, and society. They were not bound to academic accreditation by secular authorities. In thirteenth century Paris, intellectual theology was integrally a socio-political-religious affair. To speak of the sacred and secular in this context would obviously be anachronistic.⁶ Despite all these complex cross-currents set in motion with the creation of the university there are three important positive elements that followed from thirteenth century Paris. First, the university would be a place of considered disputation, a location for rational argument, embedded within a tradition, to flourish and develop in engagement with rival traditions. The latter is exemplified in the debate between the Augustinians and Thomists. A distorted fragment of this tradition is developed in the modern secular university, a place of rational discussion, without adequate attention to tradition specific forms of enquiry within which rational discussion ensues. Second, even though university theology was the preserve of male clerics, the location of theology in the university meant that eventually in the Enlightenment university, lay theological education could develop, which would also be gender inclusive. Third, theology was given a prime place in harmonising and integrating the four faculties of Arts, Medicine and Law. That this disciplinary unity was unilaterally established by the theologians, the other faculties being banned from speaking of God, was decidedly counterproductive in the long term, but at least the vision of a proper relation between the disciplines had become institutionally embedded.

The Reformation was to shake the structures of university theology in two distinct ways. First, theology faculties, as universities, were now divided according to Protestant (with its increasing variations) and Catholic lines. Hence, ancient universities such as Oxford and Cambridge, from their Catholic foundations, came to explicitly exclude Catholics, just as Catholic institutions excluded Protestants. When such exclusions were eventually repealed at Oxford and Cambridge, with exceptions for the Faculties of Divinity, it reflected the structural implementation of secularism, not an ecumenical renewal with an open Christian university. There were both advantages and problems with this Reformation divide. One such advantage, noted by MacIntyre is that such 'exclusions' 'provided some of the necessary preconditions for the Thomistic revival and thereby for the reappropriation of Aquinas' dialectical enterprise.'⁷ These exclusions allowed for both flowerings of the distinct Protestant and Roman Catholic theological traditions, even if the early Calvinist tradition remained essentially scholastic following Calvin's own Catholic tradition. It was Luther who was to steer the Reformation into a very different mould, with Catholicism only initially reacting defensively, and only in the modern period taking on and developing some of Luther's positive themes (theology as salvation, theology of the cross), while robustly rejecting the anti-metaphysical tradition generated from Luther.⁸ If these denominational universities had very mixed blessings, they both began to have something in common, which takes me to the second point. Nichols writes that 'perhaps the most lasting result of the period from 1500 to 1700 was the rise of theological specialization.'⁹ This was a result of many factors: rapidly expanding knowledge, discoveries (by Europeans) of new worlds, the accelerated emergence of the natural sciences, and eventually, with the emergence of the middle classes in the nineteenth century, the growth of professionalism within the universities.¹⁰ But specialisms would have a huge effect on the internal disintegration of theology, mirroring the greater fragmentation of knowledge reflected (negatively) in the divisions of the faculties.

The University of Berlin at the beginning of the nineteenth century was designed to reflect the 'research university' along the lines of the Enlightenment vision of education.¹¹ In this respect, it intentionally defined itself against the earlier model of *paideia*, that had characterized earlier ecclesial forms of education (and pre-Christian Greek education as at Athens) and instead emphasized a critical, orderly, and disciplined science of research. That is, no texts or ways of reading them were to be seen as authoritative, either

because of spiritual authority or traditions deeming them so. Rather, all texts were to be critically scrutinized, using methods that were accessible to all rational men, and methods that could be allow the repeating of tests to authenticate of establish results. In this sense, theology, whose authority rested on revelation was an obvious problem for the University of Berlin and there was considerable controversy about its inclusion into the new research university. It was only through the genius of Schleiermacher, that theology made it into the university, and on the grounds that it was important for professional training. Just as medicine and law were included into the university, the historical and philosophical study of theology were also justified, for they provided the materials for a theological training that was required for ministers of the church. However, there were strong criticisms of theology from the very disciplines that it sought to ally itself to: history and philosophy. Kant, like Fichte after him, could only tolerate theology as the practical working out of the truths available in philosophy via universal reason in a transcendental mode (Kant), then via an idealist philosophy (Fichte). Later this would be replaced by a positivist historicist mode (Harnack and Strauss) and later still, by various other developments in philosophy (Marxism, feminism, postmodernism). The Enlightenment university began the process of translating theology into its own philosophical, natural scientific, or social analysis modalities. The Enlightenment *Wissenschaft* dictated to theology the preconditions and limits of its enquiry and also regulated its agenda. Both Kant and Fichte reserved pride of place for philosophy, not theology.

The genealogical picture is extremely complicated, but there are two main points I wish to emphasise as an outcome of the above. First, the secularization of theology was a process that reached its culmination in the nineteenth century and we now live in the shadow of the 'great reversal' embodied in the history of the Enlightenment, such that institutional university theology bears many of the marks of this secularized process. The ascendancy of historical positivism also explains the inevitable rise of the history of religions school transferring its hermeneutical strategies designed for reading ancient texts to now interpret living traditioned texts, the New Testament, but without reference to its traditioned form of exegesis (the multiple senses of scripture), which also invoked the aid of the Holy Spirit for proper exegesis. In part, the historical positivist reading of theology would result in the emergence of 'religious studies'. Second, while various intellectuals within the university have constantly alerted theologians to this situation, the significance of this crisis in requiring a new type of university has been less fully explored. This is in part due to very pragmatic pressures: university culture in England

and the United States is in deep recession, with funding ever tighter and a market-led economy becoming pervasive even in the ivy league institutions; departments of theology being a major casualty, such that for theologians to argue for alternative universities might almost seem tragi-comedy, or better, farce. Without minimising these pressures, it must be said that one of the reasons for this crisis in funding and support of university education is precisely because large numbers of the general public and the intelligensia schooled in such institutions, can see very little use for the universities. Apart from professional training (law, medicine, engineering and so on), and scientific research where results are tangible, produce revenue, and finance themselves, the Arts are seen increasingly as a luxury. This year, Charles Clark publicly said that the study of medieval texts was a luxury that could hardly be justified from public funding. This is hardly surprising, for when the university becomes part of the instrumentalist culture of modernity and the fragmentation of the disciplines is so complete, that their importance and interrelation is not even debated by the education minister.

Hence, to draw this story to a provisional conclusion, we have seen how theology started as part of the ecclesial practice within small communities of practice, then engaged with the great currents of Hellenistic philosophy, but not from any organized institutional base, but in an ad hoc manner. Later, in the monasteries and cathedral schools it was wedded to prayer and the practice of contemplation and love, and later it became established as the 'Queen of the sciences' in thirteenth century Paris, even if this synthesis was not always achieved well and the university emphasis on dialectics sometimes lost its ecclesial moorings. The Reformation saw denominational flowerings, although perpetuating the scandal of disunity among Christians. However, in an increasingly secularised culture, theology was finally symbolically toppled (even if it had lost its power within the university much much earlier) at the University of Berlin, so that it would, if lucky, eventually be part of the liberal arts, not a faculty on its own, or be eclipsed by religious studies. In a sentence: from Queen of the Sciences to the laughing stock of the Arts Faculty, nicely portrayed in the contemporary Catholic novelist, David Lodge's, *modern city of Rummage*.¹²

And now, I am in a position to move to my suggestion regarding religious studies. But this also requires a narrative account of it in England and its problematic status, at least in my view.

My contention is that Religious Studies in England adapted secular methodologies (positivist history and neutral enquirers) as key to the study of religion, contesting that it,

not theology, was the proper subject to be embedded in the emerging modern university. Clearly, while the contexts are very different, some of the points here will be applicable more widely. The Oedipal configuration of 'bed-fellow' and 'successor' is not random, for at one level religious studies explicitly claims to cohabit the academic territory with theology, but if taken seriously, implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) seeks its destruction for it must rightly and properly claim Christianity as its object of investigation, in the same manner as it claims Buddhism or Islam as its objects. Hence, at best, religious studies subconsciously desires to seize and control the academic territory regarding the 'divine' from theology. At worst, it explicitly seeks to destroy the albatross that drags it down, as a prominent religious studies supporter in notes: the 'theological establishment is therefore, a problem in that it is a kind of conceptual albatross around the neck of religious studies.'

The increasing secularity of theology, both institutionally and methodologically, produced a situation where many felt that actually what existed in the practice of theology was the study of religion. Historical accidents meant that the religion so selected was Christianity. Furthermore, in the context of both England's multi-religious nature, its colonial conquests, and the growth of Indology and Orientalism, many argued that religions other than Christianity should be taught. If the study of religion was an academic specialty, it seemed right and obvious that to limit the menu to Christianity was parochial to say the least. This trajectory was predictable in the Enlightenment's resistance to the particularity of Christian revelation. Furthermore, students in the period of the introduction of religious studies to the universities, in the late sixties were increasingly from secularized backgrounds. The attraction of Buddhism and Hinduism to these consumers, aligned to the Romantic European idealization of these traditions, meant that the market was just right for Religious Studies. The final factor worth mentioning, and perhaps the most significant in the English context, was the introduction of an allegedly scientific, objective and academic method appropriate to the study of religion: phenomenology. It is no accident that the supporter of such a method in this country was also the founder of the first Department of Religious Studies in England, in Lancaster in 1967, and the author of the albatross statement quoted above.

Smart proposed a method which definitely and distinctively should not and could not involve faith as its starting point. Faith as a starting point was both unscientific and unscholarly according to the canons then acceptable to the secular academy and the

cultured despisers of theology. Hence, the phenomenological method started with epoché or bracketing. Epoché meant the suspension of one's own beliefs, attitudes, and values, in order to avoid contaminating objective description with personal prejudice such as one's own personal religious commitments. It was allegedly only in this fashion that the enquirer could really get at the object of enquiry and understand it correctly, be it Hinduism, Buddhism or Christianity.

However, the very notion of different 'religions', related to each other as species of common genus, was itself a seventeenth century invention as Peter Harrison has so persuasively argued.¹³ The construction of such a field ('religion') is a project that is partly located in the Enlightenment's refusal to acknowledge the particularity of Christian revelation. Consequently, there followed the creation of a single secular history whereby different religions were organized within the Enlightenment's own overarching narrative, rather than taking seriously the different organizations of time, space and history within the various religions. Such a taxonomy also failed to attend to the epistemological pre-requisites required for comprehension specified by some of the religions under examination.

John Milbank makes an interesting connection between the growth of comparative religion in the discipline of religious studies and the assumption that all religions are equal paths to the one divine. He suggests this connection because in the very creation of the field of 'religion' there is an in-built assumption of different species of a common genus, and with this assumption, the idea that the common genus is our 'own' religion of which others are various manifestations. Milbank writes:

The usual construals of religion as a genus, therefore, embody covert Christianizations, and in fact no attempt to define such a genus (or even, perhaps, delineation of an analogical field of 'family resemblances') will succeed, because no proposed common features can be found, whether in terms of belief or practice (gods, the supernatural, worship, a sacred community, sacred/secular division, etc.) that are without exceptions. The most viable, because most general definitions ('What binds a society together', and so forth) turn out to be so all-encompassing as to coincide with the definition of culture as such.¹⁴

It is no chance coincidence that Smart's phenomenological methodology bears striking resemblance to Descartes and Locke's stripping down process to get to the foundations of knowledge; nor is its similarity to Hume's positivism insignificant. In one sense the new scientific methodology of religious studies that was emulated by theology in its attempt to remain within the academy, was clearly a child of the Enlightenment. Admittedly there has been much debate about Smart's model by practitioners of religious studies in England, but the point I wish to make is this. While the methodology and subject matter of religious studies in its institutional setting was increasingly successful (there are now a number of Religious Studies Departments, while prior to 1967 there were none), intellectually the presuppositions of Smart's approach are deeply problematic. Its problematic nature lies in its Enlightenment marriage to objectivity and scientific neutrality. Hence, and I must make this clear, my argument is in no way directed against the study of Buddhism and Hinduism and other religious traditions in the academic curriculum (far from it), and all the many skills required for such a study, but rather the assumptions about how such subjects are studied and how they are related to theology within the curriculum. In short, the manner in which they are often currently studied serves modernity's agenda, whereas if religious studies were fully theologized, we would have two important outcomes. First, the proper horizons of theology would be embraced: that is all creation. Second, the question of the meaning and purpose of these religions, both from their own internal organic viewpoint and from the Christian viewpoint, could be properly pursued. This would also mean that Christianity's public voice could be thoughtfully sharpened.

There are important objections against *epoché* as a method and subsequently all that follows from it. ¹⁵ As mentioned above, the success of the phenomenological method was in part due to the social episteme which looked favourably upon such an enterprise. Such consensus, though certainly not unanimous, is coming to an end, and the episteme is shifting in our times, in a period that is often described as 'postmodern'. The natural and social sciences have tended to move away from the positivist assumptions they both shared at the turn of the century - and which were imitated by Smart's religious studies. Both the former disciplines have tended to eschew objectivity and neutrality, and increasingly acknowledge that the role of the investigator and her socio-political location is crucial to the production of knowledge. One need only look at the work of Thomas Kuhn in science, Alasdair MacIntyre in philosophy, Bernard McGrane in anthropology, to see that this model is deeply flawed. But the flaw need to be better focused upon, as it

is also one of the great achievements of modernity that it has noted this flaw. To examine this a little more, I turn to MacIntyre's work.

Alasdair MacIntyre has argued persuasively against the possibility of neutral enquiry or a universal rationality, and has tried to show the tradition specific nature of all moral and philosophical intellectual enquiry. John Horton and Susan Mendus provide a lucid summary of MacIntyre's project in its critical stance:

The Enlightenment project which has dominated philosophy during the past three hundred years promised a conception of rationality independent of historical and social context, and independent of any specific understanding of man's nature or purpose. But not only has that promise in fact been unfulfilled, the project is itself fundamentally flawed and the promise could never be fulfilled. In consequence, modern moral and political thought are in a state of disarray from which they can be rescued only if we revert to an Aristotelian paradigm, with its essential commitment to teleology, and construct an account of practical reason premised on that commitment.¹⁶

MacIntyre's first book had many failings, the major one, in my opinion, being that its Aristotelianism required fuller explication and grounding in a community of practice (as opposed to an idealised past, based on heroic violence, as Gillian Rose so pertinently points out), from which it might create an alternative society of virtue.¹⁷ This was slightly remedied in his second work, Whose Justice? Which Rationality? (1988), but would have to await Three Rival Versions (1990) to be most fully explicated. This grounding drove him into Roman Catholic Thomism, as the only intelligible intellectual moral position on offer. Three Rival Versions, finally takes more seriously the social political context which nourishes such practices: the church.

Three Rival Versions continues MacIntyre's project and his final chapter addresses the question of the university specifically. MacIntyre argues that western European society is confronted by three rival versions of moral enquiry, each with its own epistemological, ontological, ethical and methodological assumptions. While they may seem incommensurable, MacIntyre also seeks to show that there may be the possibility of a historically narrated rational debate between them, such that one might emerge the superior. What are the three rival versions? There is of course the Enlightenment project,

which MacIntyre here calls the 'Encyclopaedic', for he characterises it in its embodiment in the ninth edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. The second tradition, which has always been on the horizon of MacIntyre's project, is that of the 'Genealogical', or the postmodern, typified by Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals. The postmodern is parasitic upon the Enlightenment. Nietzsche was inevitable, given the unresolvable lacunae within the Enlightenment project which replaced the *telos* of the common good with the formal requirements of human freedom. Nietzsche saw that there could be no real foundation for ethics in this stance and consequently celebrated the will to power, which was always the repressed truth within the Enlightenment matrix. For MacIntyre's own argument to work, he develops a further critique of the postmodern or Nietzschean Genealogical 'tradition' which focuses on its internal contradictions regarding the continuities of a narrative self.

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In the final chapter MacIntyre calls for a postliberal university. He notes three characteristics vital to the premodern university, essential to healthy intellectual enquiry. First, the emergence of agreement upon standards of rational justification through the work of enquiry itself, not only in the explicit discussion of the philosophers but also through the intellectual practice of professors of mathematics and history and law and theology.' ¹⁹ MacIntyre recognises that such agreements are never static, but some shared consensus is important. Second, were 'enforced exclusions from the universities and colleges of points of view too much at odds with the consensus underpinning both enquiry and education.' ²⁰ Of course, this system led to losses, and even grave injustices. MacIntyre bemoans the systematic injustice spawned, most notably towards Jews. Nevertheless, such exclusion was also the precondition of great success in building traditions of enquiry, and as MacIntyre wryly notes, the natural sciences have always best succeeded with 'quiet, informal, characteristically unstated policies of enforced exclusion, unacknowledged and unnoticed except by sociologists of science'. ²¹ Third, a counterpart to such exclusions was 'the use of preferments and promotions to ensure that upholders of the consensus, including those who extended, corrected, and otherwise improved the standards of rational justification embodied in it, occupied the relevant professorial chairs.' ²² Again, he is fully aware of 'error and abuse', but notes that this sort of abuse is present in every system. MacIntyre concludes, echoing my earlier arguments:

For those who require sufficient resolution of fundamental disagreements in moral and theology in order that rational enquiry in those areas may proceed, the liberal university can provide no remedy. And by providing no remedy it has successfully excluded substantive moral and theological enquiry from its domain. ... the dethronement of moral philosophy, like the dethronement of theology in an earlier period, would in any case have deprived the curriculum of any but pragmatic principles of ordering.²³

In one sense moral philosophy had already lost the plot with the dethronement of theology, a point that takes MacIntyre's three volumes to reach, but the significance of this loss of ordering, vision, and orientation is all important.²⁴ It is precisely why there is no ability to argue for the 'flourishing of the whole', and a Charles Clark can actually represent 'education'. MacIntyre finally makes clear the implication of his proposals in seeing the real plurality, apparently sought after by liberal moderns, might best be promoted by 'rival universities':

each modeled on, but improving upon, its own best predecessors, the Thomist perhaps upon Paris in 1272, the genealogist upon Vincennes in 1968 [and one might add, the modern, upon Berlin in 1810]. And thus the wider society would be confronted with the claims of rival universities, each advancing its own enquiries in its own terms and each securing the type of agreement necessary to ensure the progress and flourishing of its enquiries by its own set of exclusions and prohibitions, formal and informal. But then also required [sic - according to whom?] would be a set of institutionalized forums in which the debate between rival types of enquiry was afforded rhetorical expression.²⁵

This conclusion, and MacIntyre's reasons for arriving at them, account for my extended attention to his work.

There are two particular intersections between MacIntyre's and my own argument that I'd like to highlight. First, religious studies as I have been charting it above is part of the Encyclopedic tradition and is properly located within that mode of enquiry. In this sense its murderous Oedipal desire towards theology can now be located within a wider picture. Theology must rightly contest religious studies' autonomous existence and its claim to objective production, although any sensible theologian would also recognize that there

are invaluable skills, tools, methods and insights present within the phenomenological approach of Smart's religious studies. The only point I am contesting is Smart's epistemological claims for religious studies. It is not an objective and dispassionate methodology by which to approach 'religions', but a highly biased and historically and philosophically situated enterprise. Second, MacIntyre's material account lacks attention to the intellectual traditions of enquiry within other religions. Rather than MacIntyre's isolation of three traditions of enquiry (liberal modernity, parasitic genealogical criticism, and neo-Thomism), each requiring their own institutions of learning as their conceptions of education vary so profoundly (even if genealogy can only exist parasitically on the other two and in this sense, could not exist on its own), there are good reasons to consider further traditions for institutional developments within the formal, rather than material, terms of MacIntyre's discussion.

Indeed, this very point has been made by a sympathetic Muslim critic of MacIntyre's, Muhammad Legenhausen. He notes Islam's relationship to the Aristotelian tradition upon which MacIntyre is so dependent, and therefore criticises MacIntyre's inexplicable omission of Islam in the debate. Furthermore Legenhausen, writing in Iran, also suggests that Islam can account for the aporia within MacIntyre's argument in After Virtue, whereby MacIntyre's espousal of the necessity of small sectarian communities to counter barbarianism, after the order of St. Benedict, fails entirely to engage with the problem of nation states that MacIntyre identifies as one of the roots of the malaise. Susan Mendus and John Horton make the same point: 'Moreover, given the importance which MacIntyre attaches to the social embeddedness of thought and enquiry, his largely negative view of modernity continually threatens to undermine any attempt to root his positive proposals in the contemporary world of advanced industrial societies.'

According to Legenhausen, Islam, on the other hand, is able to offer a theocratic solution, allegedly avoiding both 'nationalism and liberalism', an alternative that is 'not taken seriously by Western theorists.'²⁶ Hence, Legenhausen takes up MacIntyre's critique of modernity, but points to the same weakness located by Horton and Mendus within MacIntyre's alternative, and at that point thereby commends Islam. In institutional terms, given MacIntyre's premises, this would amount to an argument for an Islamic university. But I have strayed, from the theologizing of religious studies to the theologizing of the university, but I have intentionally strayed to make clear the context of my overall argument.

I should register a couple of points before concluding. First, I am well aware that in England the Smart model has come under considerable criticisms from academics who classify themselves as doing Religious Studies. Second, Religious Studies as practiced, incorporates many methodologies and strategies, often stemming from postmodern currents that are not afraid of declaring themselves: semiotic, political liberative and feminist strategies are popular. Third, I have not had time to engage with this huge plurality within religious studies in what I have presented here, but venture to suggest (which I try to unpack in my book) that these different strategies can be located within modernity's and postmodernity's grand narratives, and in this sense alone, I still argue for a theologized form of religious studies.

Let me recall the second step of my argument. Religious studies was born into English universities: partly because of the anachronism of theology being located within the secular academy; partly due to the search for scientific and objective ways of carrying out research in religions to avoid theological sectarianism (but nevertheless creating another form); and to gain the approval of the secular academy (which has, in many other disciplines, moved on). Put together with part one of my argument, the cumulative case will require, if it is accepted, at least one of three possible responses, only the third of which I support. One would be to abolish both theology and religious studies departments altogether and integrate them into history, literature, politics and so on. On secular grounds, this seems to be logical and possibly inevitable. Second, one could rename theology and religious studies the historical critical study of religion and carry on with what went on previously. On secular grounds this option is attractive for two reasons. First, no hermeneutical privilege is given to any one religion in the study of 'religions'. Second, the world is full of religions and therefore justifies a field related to this social reality. Clearly, both these options are not attractive to theology as presented here. Or thirdly, one might allow specific starting points to flourish, label them clearly, and allow them to interact. Within this third option, many different models are possible. My own specific theological option would be to argue for a Roman Catholic University or in England, a Christian university within a pluralist academy on the lines advanced by Alastair MacIntyre. Roehampton University of Surrey, along with the University of Gloucester are, within the University sector in England, the nearest we have to Christian universities.

I thank you for your patience in listening, and now look forward to engaging in conversation.

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³ For the contribution of women to theology in this period, see Caroline Walker Bynum, 2 books.

⁴ Frances Gies & Joseph Gies, Women in the Middle Ages, Thomas Y. Crowell, New York, 1978, p. 65.

⁵ See MacIntyre's insistence that Thomism was both confessional and dialectical, in Three Rival Versions, p. 201.

⁶ See Hastings Radshall, The Universities in the Middle Ages, 3 vols., new ed., Clarendon, Oxford, 1963, esp. vol. 1, ch. 5. See also Stephen C. Ferruolo, The Origins of the University, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1985, and for the parallel origins in the UK see Alan B Cobban, The Medieval English Universities: Oxford and Cambridge to c.1500, Scholar Press, Aldershot, 1988, esp. pp. 209-38 where Cobban surveys the composition of theology in both universities. In its origins, ordained men were the only masters and scholars of theology.

⁷ MacIntyre, Three Rival Versions, p. 224.

⁸ Some references for Luther's Protestant theological tradition: see McGrath and 2 books in office.

⁹ Nichols, Shape, p. 318.

¹⁰ This latter is perceptively traced in American culture by Burton J. Bledstein, The Culture of Professionalism. The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America, W W Norton, New York, 1976.

¹¹ For the situation of the German universities at the time, see Daniel Fallon, The German Univeristy, Colorado Assoc. University Press, Boulder, 1980.

¹² David Lodge charts the secularization process within Roman Catholicism with wit and insight in How Far Can You Go?, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1981. The theology lecturer in Rummage is to be found in Paradise News, Secker & Warburg, London, 1991.

¹³ Peter Harrison, 'Religion' and the Religions in the English Enlightenment, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, and also Fitzgerald, The Ideology of Religious Studies. See also Wilfred Cantwell Smith, The Meaning and End of Religion, Macmillan, New York, 1962, pp. 15-30, where Smith shows the modern construction of the notion of 'religion'. However, Smith perpetuates this reification of modernity in his problematic notion of 'faith' as the common generic 'essence' of each tradition. See my criticism of Smith on this count: 'A Christian Reflection on some problems with Discerning "God" in the World Religions', Dialogue and Alliance, 5, 1, 1991, pp. 4-17.

¹⁴ John Milbank, 'The End of Dialogue', in ed. Gavin D'Costa, Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered, Orbis, New York, 1990, pp. 174-91; pp. 176-77. Milbank's point is precisely that of Fitzgerald, The Ideology of Religious Studies, that religion is power and cultural construction. Milbank, however, argues that theology has lost its sense that this is its proper concern.

¹⁵ António Barbosa da Silva, The Phenomenology of Religion as a Philosophical Problem, Gleerup, Lund, 1982.

¹⁶ eds. John Horton & Susan Mendus, After MacIntyre: Critical Perspectives on the work of Alasdair MacIntyre, Polity Press, Oxford, 1994, p. 3.

¹⁷ See Stout's balanced and thoughtful critique of MacIntyre's earlier work, much of it rectified in MacIntyre's later work: Geoffrey Stout, Ethics after Babel. The Languages of Morals and their Discontents, James Clarke, Cambridge, 1988, pp.191-220; and Milbank's charged differentiation between the Christian and antique polis, which was written before Three Rival Versions, Theology and Social Theory, pp. 326-76.

¹⁸ Admittedly, this criticisms is only focussed upon Foucault and Deluze, and de Mann's unmasking, and cannot be said to be an exhaustive engagement with postmodern texts. Milbank, in this respect, is more thorough: Theology and Social Theory, pp. 278-326.

¹⁹ Three Rival Versions, p. 223.

²⁰ Three Rival Versions, p. 223.

²¹ Three Rival Versions, p. 225.

²² Three Rival Versions, p. 224.

²³ Three Rival Versions, p. 227.

²⁴ This lack of theological sensibility is raised in a balanced manner by David Fergusson, Community Liberalism and Christian Ethics, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, pp.135-37.

²⁵ Three Rival Versions, p. 234.

²⁶ Muhammad Legenhausen, extended book review of Whose Justice? Which Rationality?, in Al-Tawhid, 14, 2, 1997, pp. 158-76, p. 169. See also H. H. Bilgrami and S. A. Ashraf, The Concept of an Islamic University, Hodder & Stoughton, The Islamic Academy, Cambridge, 1985, esp. pp. 16-39 for a helpful perspective on the matter.