

The Gravity of Love

Theopoetics and Ontological Imagination

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“I understood love to be the very gravity holding each leaf, each cell, this earthy star together.”¹ This concluding line from a prose piece by Joy Harjo follows, as a kind of explanatory note, on a longer poem entitled “The Woman Who Fell from the Sky.” That longer piece is Harjo’s version of one of the most widely shared narratives by the same name of the eastern woodlands Native peoples of North America. Harjo’s poem is more than a restatement or interpretation of an original. It is a storied response to a particular present, a specific time and place. Among the eastern tribes, “The Woman Who Fell from the Sky” (dubbed the “earth-diver narratives” by anthropologists) is a never-twice-the-same story about how this world of earth, water, sky, and creatures came to be. It generally starts with a young woman who runs off with a star (or other sky person of uncertain character). Eventually she becomes too curious or willful, leans too far out of the sky world, and falls (or jumps) with her twin babies into this watery world. By falling through the sky into the arms of this world’s creatures she becomes an essential element, a necessary ingredient, of *this* world’s creation.

Even in brief summary it is evident that “The Woman Who Fell from the Sky,” along with the other earth-diver narratives like it, disrupts the logic of linear consequence, or at least it disrupts the temporal linearity of absolute beginnings. *By falling into the arms of the creatures of this world, she helps to create this world.* But even more disruptive to linear logic than a creation-by-fall, in a complex tease of tenses this creator-woman falls

even before she started falling: In some versions she was a creature of this world already before it is created by her falling. And she fell then, too. She fell in love with a star/bad boy wizard/eagle/trickster. According to some, she disobeys her mother and follows him to the sky world. She conceives twins, gets curious (or bored, or rebellious) and falls or jumps through a hole in the sky. A group of water creatures see her hurtling toward them and recognize the peril that she is in. They consult with each other, catch her before she can hit the surface, and pull up a bit of earth on which she and her children can stand. The rest, of course, is history.

Historical credibility depends upon the a priori concepts that prefigure horizons of possibility for what can count as real. Whether a world, for example, can be created out of nothing. Whether a world can be created on a sunny morning by its own creatures who spot a young woman tumbling from the sky. Logics of consequence are only disrupted if they apply in the first place. This fundamental insight grounds a range of theopoetic sensibilities, allowing them to illuminate the fissures and creative openings in otherwise foreclosed narratives. Theology has long depended upon the a priori conditions of credibility that make poetics of origin credible.

What is more, how theology understands itself and navigates its own constitutive multiplicity depends a great deal on the tools that it uses. During the millennia of European domination of Western Christian thought (and of Christian domination of European thought), it is not surprising that the codes of rationality forged in that cultural context also served to shape the particular scope and criteria of plausibility in Christian theological inquiry. What is more, the past few centuries of global shifts in populations and colonial overlapping and overtaking of cultures make clear that no theological approach has ever stood alone in a vacuum of influences. The interdependence of cultures (and religions) also makes clear that interdependent modes of reasoning help us to get at the deeper plurality of the world, indeed the deeper plurality of Christian thought itself.

It bears repeating here that “multiplicity” is not the same as “the many.” It does not refer to a pile of many separable units, many “ones,” and so it is not opposed to the One or to ones. “The multiple” (it is ironic how the English language seems to want to make it into a singularity), or “multiplicity,” results when things—ones—so *constitute* each another that they come to exist (in part, of course) *because of* one another. Essential separation becomes incoherence. So does essential wholeness, or oneness. The whole is constituted by its parts, but then, the parts are also constituted by their participation in the whole. As Jean-Luc Nancy points out, the Latin “*plus* is comparable to *multus*. It is not ‘numerous’; it is ‘more.’”² Multiplicity is what happens when something is more than the sum of its parts but

also, by virtue of its necessary participation as a part of other somethings, is not itself therefore completely whole. The multiple is therefore more but also less than whole, or One. And of course, as we have seen, the One fails to be only one, over and over again. Nancy puts it this way:

The One as purely one is less than one; it cannot be, be put in place, or counted. One as properly one is always more than one. It is an excess of unity; it is one-with-one, where its Being itself is co-present.³

This is a mathematical statement, but it is also a qualitative one. Mathematically, “one” is a relational number. It is fully dependent on its relation to and distinction from all other numbers (two, three, and so forth). One has no actual meaning without at least one other. The One comes into being in relation to Other(s), or not-ones. This is the conundrum of the One; why it cannot get away from the One–Many divide, even when it is conceived not as a simple one but as a totality. Nancy’s point is that a “pure” One is impossible because as such it implies no other, no relation. And so the pure One is less than one because it “cannot be . . . counted” since counting requires the defining company of others. This is the mathematical contradiction of the One. At the same time, as Nancy suggests, there is a qualitative contradiction in the One that comes from its moreness, its excess of totality that results from its necessary coming into being in relation.

Jean-Luc Nancy, focusing on the impossibility of totality (substantive or empty), describes pure multiplicity as the “One-minus.” Gilles Deleuze likewise argues that “the multiple” implies subtraction, “always $n - 1$.” And Alain Badiou characterizes multiplicity as “without-one.”⁴ All three are attempting to think multiplicity beyond the One–Many divide by exposing the mathematical (logical/nominal) and spatial (relational) interdependence—or compromise—of the One with its others. There is also an interdependence, or compromise of the One and its others in terms of time. This is the issue of stasis and change. One can only remain One if no change (time) fractures it. In time, the One is without oneness. It is, as Badiou suggests, “without one.” One then and One now can only remain one if there *is* no then and now. From this it is easy to see why the negation of time in eternity became such a firmly rooted doctrinal assertion about God in Christian philosophical theology.

It is one thing to see that the One–Many divide is a projection of the logic of the One. It is another thing entirely to imagine *thought* in some other dimension. Can we imagine multiplicity as a mode that opens a possibility for thought beyond the One–Many divide? We must try, at least, to begin. Again. Any other option, it seems to me, will keep us slipping back

into the groove of opposition to the One, which thereby reinscribes the One–Many divide and its conclusive logic. This is no small task, although the circumstances in which we find ourselves now may demand it. Rosi Braidotti agrees. New modes of thinking that better reflect actual embodied complexity require monumental effort, she claims, because “we live in permanent processes of transition, hybridization, and nomadization, and these in-between states and stages defy the established modes of theoretical representation.”⁵

Thought like this requires sea legs. It must find its rest not in the landlocked stability of conclusions, but in the rhythms of Aionian motion, in the flow continuous. This exercise is not, therefore, about a search for some kind of “pure” multiple, or a “pure” multiplicity, precisely because that effort remains fully within the mode of the One–Many divide, requiring an aim and a dialect of reduction and abstraction. Alain Badiou has already made this point. Pure multiplicity, he argues (against Heidegger and Deleuze), is fundamentally Platonic. It is ideal and mathematical because only mathematics can make a multiplicity without imposing an interpretation (a unity) upon it.⁶ Unfortunately, in his excellent criticism, especially of Deleuze’s claims to a fully immanent philosophy, Badiou is conflating multiplicity with the many, and so makes his point still from within the logic of the One–Many divide. His use of the word *pure* here may be the signal of that entrapment. It may also be that the word *multiplicity* is itself too deeply tied to the mathematics of the One–Many divide (which is, in part, Badiou’s point) to allow us to use it to move into what Braidotti calls a more nomadic mode.⁷

It is entirely possible that Deleuze is right and there is no *ontological* “logic of multiplicity” that is readily available to philosophy or to theology as they have constructed themselves, steeped as both disciplines are in modes of thought that require reduction and simplification, that frown upon contradiction, and that valorize the universal.⁸ But an ontological logic of multiplicity may be available both to philosophers and theologians if they are willing to do three things: to dispense with Eurocentric requirements for European precedent in argument (already I am advocating a departure from accepted understandings of the terms of logic!), to risk meaningful contradiction, and, finally, to consider with Miguel de Beistegui the possibility that “the ontology of the multiple can only be locally circumscribed.”⁹

Meanwhile, from other non-European directions, less plodding modes of thinking multiplicity—not tied, in other words, to the heavy genealogical constraints of dialecticism that burden European thought—come concepts of fluidity, disorientation, change, presence, and shape-shifting

that may go much further than the philosophers in *thinking* multiplicity beyond the One–Many divide. Furthermore, some might say, with good reason, that the tellers of parables have never lost sight of multiplicity and becoming as modes of thought. It is just that their ranks have been thinned by monotheistic evangelism, colonizers’ guns, and the unification of global capital (not necessarily in that order), all of which depend upon the dualistic logic of the One–Many divide for success. And philosophers have begun to see dull poverty of imagination, if not a masquerade of control, at the dualistic true–false center, or mirror, of the One. It is certainly the case that many cultural traditions with their varying modes of reasoning are already embedded within Christianity. The Bible alone contains texts that celebrate different and sometimes conflicting accounts of the world, exposing a range of rationalities that are expressed in a variety of genres. But even more important for theology’s work today is the complicated multitude of cultures within which Christianity is rooted. As Thomas Reynolds neatly points out, “being religious—being Christian—already entails being ‘beyond’ one’s own local faith perspective, [it entails] being interreligious. Pluralism affects religious affirmations from the root.”¹⁰ Pluralism here refers to the polysemic intersections, dissonances, relations, and syncretic accretions of multiple stories, experiences, presences, cultures, religious traditions and modes of reasoning that lead to Christian theology’s positions and aversions. Theology that has grown over the course of millennia cannot help but result, in hindsight, in a kind of “polyphonic bricolage.”¹¹

This assumption of an *originary pluralism* from which Christian theology properly begins, along with the mature awareness of the limitations of Euro-Christian modes of reasoning, form the primary set of presuppositions upon which a theopoetics of the manifold depends if it is actually to redress the deficits resident in dominant Christian theological reasoning today. I have argued that Christian theology suffers from a sensible lack—an anorexic denial even—of humor and of poetry; it wastes from an overreliance on apodictic and deductive modes of reasoning to the exclusion of other pathways.¹² One such other pathway that is informing my own study is illuminated by the work of several Native American writers: Joy Harjo (Muskogee), Gerald Vizenor (anishinaabe), and Thomas King (Cherokee) especially. Although King’s work is largely responsible for my introduction to this mode of reasoning, my discussion in this paper relies primarily on chancy coincidences of insights from Harjo and Vizenor.¹³

Harjo is a Muskogee poet from Oklahoma, though of course the Muskogee people lived for a thousand years in the southeastern woodlands of what is now Alabama and Mississippi before Andrew Jackson drove them on death marches to what is now Oklahoma. Her poetry, like that of

several other Native American writers, deliberately blurs lines between the Euro-modern notion of poetry “as art” and a less bifurcated view of poetry as metaphysical creativity, as invocational, as a power that participates sacramentally in the worlds that it helps to bring into being. This blurred understanding of poetry ignores early Protestant distinctions between art and the sacred, a distinction summed up by the eighteenth-century poet and literary historian Samuel Johnson, who said that art, if it is any good, necessarily embellishes what the artist sees. Understood this way, all art is fiction, and that is Johnson’s point. “Poetry pleases,” he claims, “by exhibiting an idea more grateful to the mind than the things themselves afford,” whereas religion must concern itself exclusively with the truth. This is the reason, Johnson argues, that religion makes for bad art, and vice versa.¹⁴

Aside from the more or less obvious apology for Protestant iconoclasm resident in Johnson’s early modern bifurcation of art from truth (which is not a small aside, but the Protestant dimension is not the direct subject of this paper) the dominant logic resident in that division makes the challenge of thinking theopoetically today all the greater. If poetry is art, and art is fiction, then poetry is fiction. The irony or, more accurately, the problem in this equation is that it only works if fiction means a lie, or misrepresentation (both of which occur as synonyms in mainline thesauri). The equation falls apart if fiction means a particular mode of invoking, creating, or constructing the real.

In “A Postcolonial Tale,” Harjo writes “Everything was as we imagined it. The earth and stars, every creature and leaf imagined with us.”¹⁵ She writes poetry in a more or less conventional sense of the word. But her “embellishments” on what she sees in the world are not exactly fictional in the modernist, dualistic sense that requires art qua art to be other than real or even representational, something other than presence—a deferral of presence at most. Within a logical framework that grants to nature an independence from human imagining (whether in the Newtonian sense of objective substances governed by universal laws or in the post-Kantian, postmodern sense of a nature/world so wholly independent from human imagining that it can only *be* imagined, which is to say fictionalized, or misrepresented) the possibility that imagination has substantive effect is nonsense. It is a lovely embellishment, a fiction, to say that *everything was as we imagined it* and actually mean *the earth and stars, every creature and leaf imagined with us*. Because of course we cannot *actually* mean that, grant it some kind of objective truth. But process metaphysics edges into the territory of such possibility. Native modernity has always already been in that territory. In the territory of Cartesian metaphysics, however, such a statement can maintain a claim to “truth” only by reducing it to the emaci-

ated, sundered level of art-as-misrepresentation, or to a level of subjectivity in which the word *truth* may apply, but only in an individual, psychological sense. Thanks to Freud, psychology provides Cartesian metaphysics with an outlet for fiction's stubborn comingling with truth in the form of profound subjectivity and of delusion (in either case, it is "true for me" without any necessary reference to an external, shared world) while allowing it to have certain real effects.

Harjo and others like her simply do not begin with the presuppositions of European modernity and Newtonian mechanics. The rationality she inherits perceives a world that is more malleable than the mental-physical poles of western thought allow; it is less law-abiding than that. And poetry not only describes some of that unruliness; it also implicates—folds—us into it. But this implication means that theo-poetics of the manifold, or poetics that engage ontic possibilities according to "other" metaphysics, must also find a way to relinquish a good portion of the Protestant iconoclasm that undergirds conventional meanings of the term *poetics* (not to mention *theos*, not to mention *metaphysics!*) and allow the metaphors of poetics to have more agency and kataphatic resonance than the concept of poiesis heretofore has allowed. Poetry is poiesis in actuality and as such casts possibility backward and forward precisely because it pokes holes in anything solid and ushers productive ambiguity in not just in language, as if language is merely a mode, but in actuality, at least in those realms that understand that stories must be told in season, and carefully, because the story itself, the poem, makes and breaks the world.

The challenge of framing theo-poetics of a divine manifold that does not simply slide back in to the logic of the One is a challenge of undoing the early modern bifurcation of the linguistic from the material, which means a return—for Protestants in particular—to the touchy matter of the sacramental. Theo-poetics is the possibility of a touchy, material, sacramental rationality, which is how I would describe divine poiesis, although I think that Roland Faber's definition from his postscript to *God as Poet* is helpful here: "a creative event of construction and synthesis (Whitehead would say 'concrecence')." He also suggests that God's poiesis "is a relational act of tender patience and saving love."¹⁶ For these definitions to gain traction out of the deep grooves of the logic of the One, however, we need the deep materiality of process thought modified by the trickiness of imaginative concretion. In other words, the potential resident in Whitehead's understanding of the imaginative as origin of self-determination¹⁷ may still be shackled by his own bifurcation of the mental and physical poles so that understanding the imaginative as origin of world-determination (as nexus of self-determinations that are thereby not really *self*-determined) still may

elude us. This is a matter of emphasis, rather than correction, and it exists as a problem, as Whitehead argues, because of the Cartesian emphasis on “the disastrous separation of body and mind.”¹⁸

Regina Schwartz gives a very tidy summary of the problem that faces theologians in particular, which is also a problem of the metaphysics that produced modernity. She is approaching the “disastrous separation” in terms of its effect on sacramentality, which can be a helpful way for those of us within and on the margins of process philosophy to think about theoetics within an ontologic of multiplicity. She calls the problem the logic of secularism, but it is also, no surprise to us, the logic of the One in practical terms. She writes:

Because sacramental thinking is completely alien to the way modern secularism has conceived matter, space, time, and language, in a sense it had to be almost dismantled for modernism to be born. “God’s body cannot be here and at the right hand of the Father,” said a logic of physical space that trumped the sacred space of sacramentality. “Man [*sic*] cannot eat God” said a logic of human physiology that, turning a deaf ear to the liturgy of sacramentality, went so far as to equate the claim of participation in the divine with cannibalism. “A priest cannot sacrifice God” claimed a logic of authority that denied the mystery of sacramental agency and accused man of trying to exercise power over the divine. “A sign can only stand for, that is, stand in for what it signifies, which is necessarily absent” said a logic of representation that defied the participation of the sign in its referent.¹⁹

How can a process theoetics break out of this web of exclusions and maintain its coherence in a world still governed by that logic? It may not be able to do both. But what takes place in the work of poets and other artists like Harjo could provide some wisdom: There is a presupposition in that work of creative relationship between the artist and a world that never listened to the secularists of early modernity like Johnson to begin with—a world that never divested itself of divinity and so never had to justify or mourn the loss of the gods in the world the way the moderns did. At work in Harjo’s writing is a mode of reasoning that is not beholden to Thomistic or Kantian limits. It is a mode of reasoning that Gerald Vizenor, an anishinaabe philosopher, has dubbed “native modernity.”²⁰ Among other things, with this concept Vizenor suggests that the philosophical moves of European and American postmodernity are beginning to approach Native modernity, which has already long understood the malleable, fluid, and interdynamic aspects of narrative construction of reality.

Concerned primarily with survivance—by which he means “an active sense of presence” of Native peoples beyond the tragic nonactuality of a nonhistory called by the misname *indian*—Vizenor argues for a much trickier nomenclature for the “storiers of native modernity.” He builds his argument on Louis Dupré’s observation that “cultural changes, such as the one that gave birth to the modern age, have a definitive and irreversible impact that transforms the very essence of reality. Not merely our thinking about the real changes: reality itself changes as we think about it differently. History carries an ontic significance that excludes any reversal of the present.”²¹ Native survivance is not merely a tattered picking-up of the traditional pieces in the brutal aftermath of colonial devastation, a nostalgic “reversal of the effects by returning to premodern premises.”²² In this exercise in theo poetic thought, I am picking up on Vizenor’s picking up on Dupré to think about theo poetics as a kind of ontic signification that takes seriously the reality-changing trickiness of our work.

Native modernity, as Vizenor develops the concept, emphasizes the vitality of old stories told in new ways, and new stories told in old ways, that indicate chance presences or ontic significations that *effect* (not just affect, although that too) the world. *Life* occurs in the stories we tell and hear, and this seems to me to be something of significance for theo poetics even as it echoes certain aspects of process metaphysics. It includes a recognition of a responsive creativity between world and art. Art—speech—imagination—does much more than describe, embellish, or lie about what is already there. Art—speech—imagination—storytelling—also creates what is there. *This* is the anathema to Euro-modern thought and the logic of the One. It involves multiplicity that is far beyond the realm of numerical reckoning, and into the realms of shape-shifting, responsive, and excessive process—the capacity for reality to respond to our words, for us to respond, rhizomatically, to the world. That is what a theo poetics of the manifold is talking about, especially when it is paired with process thought.

But process thought, while still self-consciously employing a mode of reasoning that traces itself through the ontological intuitions of Plato, Leibniz, and Descartes, nevertheless recognizes that a different metaphysical result is needed—especially since Kant. John Cobb writes that “Whiteheadians have been convinced that the cosmology and metaphysics that are now needed are quite different from those that were dominant in the past” and process thought, for Whiteheadians, he claims, is that different metaphysics.²³ Native modernity already functions and thinks from different cosmologies and metaphysics, and there are some interesting points of intersection that cannot be reconciled into a “same” but that can provide some interesting entwining. Process metaphysics does not require a

sensibility of poetry in quite the same way that Native modernity does, although there is no reason why it shouldn't: The structure of prehensions and actual occasions, especially in nexus and the gathering of events in new potentialities all resonate with the responsive and motile quality of reality that comes through Native modernity.

For example, Harjo's thinking of love as the "very gravity that holds each leaf and star together" is not that far from John Cobb's thinking of forgiveness as the creativity that persists even in the narrowest of circumstances, a divine lure and structural openness of every actual occasion to a new outcome. In both cases, a form of natural theology is suggested—gravity as love/love as gravity, new moments as forgiveness/forgiveness as the next moment. But in neither case is natural theology in a *reductive* sense adequate to describe what is going on in the different cosmologies/metaphysics being engaged. A part of what is distinctively shared, at least as I am suggesting it here, between Native modernity and process thought, is an openness to actual presences (as actual occasions according to Whitehead, or as chance associations, conversions, and reversions according to Vizenor) that make a kataphatic difference without reversion or reduction to a problematically substantive stasis.

Harjo begins "A Postcolonial Tale" with the stanza "Every day is a reenactment of the creation story. We emerge from / dense unspeakable material, through the shimmering power of / dreaming stuff."²⁴ The mode of reasoning at work here is utterly serious about the claim, also in this poem, that "earth and stars, every creature and leaf imagined with us." And yet this is not a reductive rationality. She concludes with "No story or song will translate the full impact of falling or the inverse/power of rising up." If natural theology is to apply here at all (and we may not even want to take up that contested charge), it means something altogether other than a mechanistic conflation of "nature" with design. The chancy, excessive, poetic dimensions of reality disrupt the mechanisms of Newtonian nature, making gravity a kind of desire (or vice versa) and love its material memory, its occasion and its objective immortality. Gravity, here, is not a metaphor *for* love, an exchangeable similitude, but its inexplicable presence, its actuality. Every day we reenact creation, become in the context (out of) the dense dreaming stuff, make ourselves and the world into presence by becoming present. This is a narrative, imaginative, ontically significant claim, and it is unintelligible to the "dominant metaphysics" against which, Cobb tells us, Whiteheadians also strive. It could be sacramental, if we see divine manifolding at play here—and how can we not?

According to Native modernity—which I am saying is the mode of reasoning that best describes what is going on in Harjo's theopoetics—

imagination and reality comingle just as they do in process metaphysics. In Native modernity this comingling is less mechanical, more lyrical and unpredictable (and so more tragic, perhaps, than recuperative and therapeutic), but in both cases (Whiteheadian and Vizenorian) “presence” is not the impossibility that it is for Kantians (and self-described post-Kantians), and this is what makes the metaphysics of process thought and of Native modernity overlap in creative ways.

For one thing, presence, or “being-with,” to adopt the phrase that Jean-Luc Nancy prefers, is not a static notion; it requires becoming-present, or presentation. *Presence* is a tricky term for philosophies steeped in the logic of the One, because—as Kant intuited—no thing in itself can fully present itself without remainder, contradiction, or trickery. In the logic of the One, the only resolution to this problem is to deny presence(s) any epistemological or ontological certainty at all. Hence the caricature of postmodern philosophy’s supposed nihilism: There is nothing that can be absolutely asserted, and “presence” requires too many substantive assumptions that simply cannot be supported in the context of so much possibility of error. Whatever one sees or experiences in the supposed presence of another can never certainly refer to anything outside of the narrative one inhabits; in the caricature of European postmodernity, this means that ultimately reality consists only of competing interpretations of texts.

As I am suggesting here, other modes of reasoning exist (other than the logic of the One, that is) that have never required “presence” to instantiate static, unverifiable substance prior to linguistic or narrative implication. They do not assume language, narrative, and story to be inert building blocks and tools for reporting, memory, or instruction. In other words, these other modes of reasoning do not assume language, narrative, and story to be disembodied, without agency on their own. Perhaps there is a fundamental tendency in book cultures toward the negligent idea that language and narrative can be reduced to utility and thereby bound (as in shelved). The error lies in forgetting the innate agency of stories, their capacity to be bound *for* something, for mischief and creation beyond any storyteller’s ability to predict or manage. Ontic significance coimplicates story and presence(s), assuming a world-creating aspect to narrative that cannot be restricted or entirely managed. But this idea is intelligible only within a mode of reasoning that begins with multiplicity or, more specifically, does not presume a prior logic of the One wherein an ontological separation between truth (as one) and fiction (as multiple) must be rigidly maintained.²⁵

It is significant that some European and Euro-American philosophers have finally begun to turn energetically toward theories of multiplicity as

a starting point for postmodern rationality. They are doing so in part because the general global milieu for writing has allowed the possibility of different modes of reasoning (along with very different kinds of stories) to circulate and pollinate hybrid species of thought. They also have begun to reach some of the logical limits of negation in postmodern thought and seek more supple grounds for thinking about reality without reactivity about presence and ontology. This has led them to theories of multiplicity and a new willingness to entertain ideas of presence. Unlike the logic of the One, the logic of multiplicity is an openness that is not blank because it is not mesmerized by possession but is poised for passage, for shape-shifting. Just as porosity is meaningless in a void, multiplicity must be an affirmation of what is, even as the pores of what *is* receive and exchange possibility, and in so doing shift and pass away. A posture of divine multiplicity must not get stuck either in a paralytic stupor over that which is always already inexorably (and heart-breakingly) passing away, or in a naive embrace of what is always already to come, an “eternal sunshine of a spotless mind.” Both positions resist openness, both oppose the “is” and the “isn’t” as if the passing-away does not constitute the coming or as if being does not constitute its own absence. Mary Daly charged Paul Tillich of necrophilia in his favoring—to the point of obsession, perhaps—the angst of existential nonbeing over wonder at beings that surge all around. She argued, years ago, for a posture of multiplicity that she called biophilia, charging the theologians of existentialism with too little love of life *lived*, mourning instead of what they could not hold onto, or control. The “Verb of verbs,” as she described divinity early in her philosophical career, is an ontological expression of existence-in-flux that demands openness to the new even as what is now passes away.²⁶ And Keller adds, “Let us draw the tehomic inference: the God who is not a Being does not exist over against nonbeing, as the opposite of nothing . . .”²⁷

The natal Open is also the porous Deep. Keller names three “capacities”—*implicatio*, *complicatio*, *explicatio*—for the tehomic divine that, following Deleuze, she takes from the medieval theologians Giordano Bruno and Nicholas of Cusa. *Implicatio* refers to the creative, interconnected fluidity of the Deep.²⁸ She discusses the *plis*—fold—at the etymological heart of the three terms, which I take to be more like the folding of batter than the folding of sheets, though I would hate to diminish the potency of such rich language through an overly tedious translation. Porosity, I want to suggest, is related to this provocative suggestion of Keller’s—the porousness of the divine is, in the dialect of multiplicity, a kind of open *implication*, an unfolding, complicating interconnection that confounds the One–Many divide.

Native modernity, as I have already said, starts with this assumption, taking from it the structures of plausibility that incorporate ambiguity (which is a kind of multiplicity) into the core of its mode of reasoning. Without ambiguity there are no stories, and without stories, as King asserts, there is no truth. Which means that truth, in truth, is multiple. It also means that, without stories, there is no world and, if we are to follow Whitehead (and Faber), without world, there is no God.