Religion and Realism

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PREFACE

Why Religion? Why Realism?

Is the topic of *religion* and *realism* interesting only for small and rather exclusive academic circles, without immediate relevancy for the broader social, cultural and political context? Can we, on the other hand, approach religion and realism as some of the most pressing issues of our time that deserve our full attention and a serious exploration?

We can certainly offer more than one answer to these questions. It seems to me that religion and realism, with the manifold meanings that these concepts may imply, are in many respects critical nowadays, not only for understanding and interpreting the reality around us but (following the best tradition of the Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach) for *changing* that reality, or even for discovering new ones.

After the experience of both "secular" and "post-secular" times, we can ask is it not the case that a certain "religious real" has always been there, occupying the central place in our societies, our ontologies and our epistemologies? Is it not the case that the big "Other" remains the point of reference, being always present even when formally absent?

Religion remains one of the most significant social forces and cultural constituencies. The relevancy of religious (with or without quotation marks) truths and the way they structure our understanding of "reality" overcomes the sphere of theology and particular religious practices. Religion, truth, and reality, and the way these concepts are approached and understood, continue to be vital for a broader cultural discourse as well, from philosophy and science to politics, mass media and show business.

We often find it necessary to employ various "realisms" to deal with the necessary and yet troubling presence of reality. Are we not all-too-often called to submit ourselves to the "real world," in its alleged (and ideologically highly charged) self-explanatory presence? *Realism* is usually understood as a position and method, which is opposite to "idealism" and the "imaginary." "Realism" implies a certain way of approaching the *reality* and *truth*. Looking from a *positivistic* perspective, many would find it difficult to associate concepts of "realism" or "truth" with the worldview that we can call "religious." However, the experience of the *post-modern* times has taught us that the relationships between "reality," "truth," "knowledge" and "interpretation" are far more complex, and that even the purest "fiction" is sometimes far more effective (and therefore more "real") in influencing our lives and in structuring the world in which we live than most of the things that are directly exposed to our sensuous experience and rational reflection. On the other hand, we have also learned from the experience of modernity that certain metaphysical narratives, and their claims for "absolute truth" and "absolute reality," can be very dangerous in their practical, social and political manifestations. The rigidity of *rational* realisms can be much more harmful than the flexibility of not-entirely-rational beliefs and practices.

Not only religion, but the real and reality are present in front of us in a paradoxical manner. Reality is necessary, and yet it is a challenge to our freedom. We need the authority of *reality* to sustain our existence, to give us the sense of security. When we lose faith in the effective power of the real, the whole world starts disintegrating, as in the famous story "Pay for the Printer" by Phillip K. Dick (1956).

However, the strong presence of reality, and its authority, are compelling. Certain realisms, as modes of approaching the real and reality, are binding. If reality is not the product of our freedom, it is a very fundamental challenge for the existence which aspires to manifest itself as freedom. And yet, without an anchor in the objective, although maybe transcendentally *real*, existence as freedom constantly faces its weaknesses and potential disintegration; it is

constantly questioned by its own consciousness as, potentially, something that is, to paraphrase Slavoj Žižek, "less than nothing."

We are thus trapped between the need to understand and interpret both the necessary and annoying presence of reality, and the desire to create new realities. Can religion help us in this? Can we understand religion as *realism*, a method of approaching the *real* reality? Or is it, maybe, just a useful tool in deconstructing the authority and sometimes even tyranny of reality?

The aim of this volume is to revisit the concepts of *reality* and *realism* in their relation to *religion* and the religious *real*. Graham Ward, Dennis Costa, Maurizio Ferraris, Brian W. Nail, Leonardo De Chirico, Sławomir Sztajer, Louis Arthur Ruprecht, Marco Conti, Ivica Žižić, and the undersigned author of these lines, joined efforts to this end.

The tension between religion and realism, between their constructive and destructive roles, can help us find an anchor in the abyss of freedom, which, I believe, provides the room for an *authentic* existence. In order to be able to cope with the real as something that is related to who we are in the most profound sense, we should learn how to practice the "art of living." It is important in this respect to keep in mind Graham Ward's eloquent advice that we need to practice this art "in the name of a transcendental hope which breaks free of the vicious circularities of the same."

I understand this both as a warning and a promise.

D. Dž.

(IN)VISIBLE REALS

Sensing the Invisible

Graham Ward

Let's take yesterday. I awoke in a strange hotel room (it was a two-day conference in Manchester) predawn, but I had an early train to catch so didn't try to sink back into the hypnogogic. Besides, I had dreamt of my youngest brother who I haven't seen for many years for reasons too complex to go into right now though I'm absolutely sure they are pertinent to what I want to demonstrate in this paper. My brother greeted me from some vehicle he was in charge of, full of amusement and health. The recognition that it was really him came slow: his face was slightly tanned and glowed, his smile wide, his eyes bright and focused. He had put on a healthy amount of weight and he looked really happy; happy to see me and happy to register my surprise at seeing him so buoyant and flourishing. So I sat in bed while a thin grey dawn broke over central Manchester and thought about him. We had grown up in Manchester. There was a connection. Then I had to get out quick and catch my train to Oxford. As the train moved through the Cheshire countryside and down towards Birmingham, I sat with a book I was reading on the origins of world mythology, reading a paragraph about Phoenician creation myths and Siberian Shamans, dozing without actually sleeping at the carriage rocks, reading another paragraph about Jungian archetypes and their relation to myths, vaguely planning things I needed to do when I got back home, scrolling through a few emails. Around Wolverhampton I gave in, put my ear plugs in and listened to the soundtrack to *The Great Gatsby*, letting images from the film carry into my daydreams and questions that were never articulated but allowed to linger, morph, drift anyway they would.

Point: we live great chunks of our daily lives in the borderlands between the visible and the invisible. And this isn't weird or unusual,

we have been living like this since the *homo* species became a symbolic species and began to colonize reality virtually.[1] The defining characteristic of the evolving hominid and *homo* is its ability to communicate. Our closest primates are not what the evolutionary anthropologists call "symbolic species." We perceive and sense (something) more. In what is presented to us, there is also an absence, an invisible that adheres to the visible. As such all our experiences are symbolic and experiences of the symbolic. They raise the question of meaning and promote the endless ventures of interpretation: why is there moss on this side of the tree and not on the other? Is that smoke from a fire (and so there are other people here) or mist rising from a river as dawn breaks?

The French philosopher of phenomenology, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, became interested increasingly in the relationship between the visible and the invisible. He describes that absence that pertains to the perception of what is present as "intentional transcendence" (Merleau-Ponty 1968). That is, the way the intentional gaze completes the form of an object not entirely visible in order to make it meaningful. We never see a cube as such, for instance; we only see at most three sides and our gaze "completes the rest" by making what is not visible visible *as an idea*. This notion of how we make the invisible visible is deepened considerably by contemporary science. Take multiverses, for example. Their existence has been demonstrated by some of the most imaginative people alive today – quantum physicists, cosmologists, and pure mathematicians – on the basis of solutions to Albert Einstein's *General Theory of Relativity*, and to problems raised by the operations of gravity, the nature of dark energy, the instability of "nothingness" because of virtual particles, and the fact (I emphasize "fact") that there appears to be more matter in the universe than can be accounted for.[2] This is all mind-boggling stuff. What is suggested is that there are multiple, an uncountable number, of other universes, not existing parallel with this one, but existing simultaneously with this one. Perhaps, there are worlds in which what was only a possibility in this world is a lived actuality of that world. All those decisions you didn't make but could have. All those directions you might have taken but didn't. All those lovers

and liars, friends and foes, relatives and relations you didn't encounter, but might have. Alternative possibilities are all possibly being lived and played right now in some other dimensions of time, space and materiality. The Big Bang at the origin of this universe, our universe, may only be one of many millions of Big Bangs issuing from an infinitely dense singularity. Other Big Bangs might be occurring all the time as multiverses bubble up and dissipate, endlessly. To use the language of scientists as eminent as Stephen Hawking and Stephen Weinberg, there's a "chaotic inflation." Sciences leading current investigations into the nature of things are treating the very molecules of emotions and the dark energies of the material. And none of this is visible as such. They are made visible through highly abstract and computerized mathematics. The point here: we live amidst any number of invisibilities that are made visible for us. They are made visible through the power of the imagination. The basis for all our conscious negotiation of the invisible in the visible is itself an invisible operation: of the imagination.

In a similar vein, increasing attention in neuroscience to the complexities of neurotransmitters with respect to thought, feeling and the autonomic regulation of our bodies, has shown how possibly only 5% of anything that goes on within us is well lit enough to become consciousness. 95% of our responding to the world is not available to us. Chiaroscuro, that use of darkness to emphasize how the light illuminates and gives three dimensional volume and texture to an object, is actually a representation of the way conscious issues from the profound and vast obscurities of the deep mind. It allows the visible to emerge from a far greater, darker, invisibility. Chiaroscuro models the very operations of the imagination in its negotiation between the seen and the unseen. We see only *as*.[3] We don't see as such. My argument is that religious faith is one way in which human beings negotiate the invisible in the visible; faith makes the hidden appear and is no different, as a physiological and cognitive operation, than any other human negotiation. It works in and upon the symbolic and the experiences of being a symbolic species.

Let's take a specific example. The creed Cyril of Jerusalem taught in the mid-fourth century, although close, was not the Nicene Creed in the form it was given at the Council.[4] The creed itself was not written down. It was to be memorized and internalized by those about to be baptized in order that they might recite it before the congregation at their baptism. By this act of committing the creed to memory, the Christian faith was to be internalized. It was not a matter simply of imparting knowledge, but participating in an ongoing understanding of the teachings of the faith through the practice of that faith – that is, enfolding one's experience of the world within the tenets of its teachings: being formed in Christ. Cyril's lectures on the creed were first orations. Later they were transcribed and circulated, but we are unsure of when and how. They were delivered on or close to the site of Golgotha because Cyril continually emphasizes the location of his teaching. Place is important or becomes important. The metropolitan bishopric of Palestine was Caesarea, not Jerusalem. But Constantine recognized the powerful symbolism of place with Constantinople as the executive heart of the empire and Jerusalem as its spiritual heart. Cyril, though much younger than Constantine, concurred. Place mattered (literally); and what mattered or materialized was that presence not seen: holiness. With Cyril, Jerusalem was not simply a place of historical importance. It was a place of theological importance because of the universal salvation that had been won here by Christ's crucifixion. It was also understood as the place where the great transformation would occur with the coming of the New Jerusalem, at the end of time. This place, then, for Cyril evoked things not present. Time here was multidimensional: liturgies translated the present city, re-established by imperial patronage and the building of the Basilica, into the ancient city of king David, the city where the great Christ events of death, burial and resurrection occurred and the city that was to come down from above at the consummation of the age. Time zones here were crossed, re-crossed, each echoing the other. As such, Jerusalem was a place set apart; an intensification of the holy. It was a site of God's presence, of sacramental and ontological value.[5]

Cyril's teaching of the faith was conducted within the church. In material space – built as a magnificent basilica by Constantine and housing both Golgotha and the Resurrection tomb. It was a place where the physical bodies of the communicants, the city as a civic and military corporation, the Eucharist and the theological body of Christ overlapped. In this place, prior to their baptism, Cyril would lecture those who wished to become Christians. On eighteen occasions during Lent he expounded to them the meaning of the articles of the creed. It was a teaching in which he made the invisible visible. It was a teaching also that was inseparable from an overall purification necessary as liturgical preparation. The practices of prayer and liturgical participation embed the teaching – mentally, spiritually and corporeally. Each lecture moves towards a concluding prayer of praise, lifting the audience from the local to the universal and Trinitarian. As Cyril puts it in introducing the course of lectures: "Prepare thine own heart for reception of doctrine, for fellowship in holy mysteries" (Cyril of Jerusalem 1994, 5). The doctrine is part of a reception into a holy fellowship; a reception of the invisible. And although it will require a voluntary and intellectual assent, it is received into the heart. As with the sacrament of baptism itself, the teaching and what is taught are means, vehicles for grace. It is, to use a phrase used much later by Aquinas, "holy teaching" that disposes those who are taught towards sanctification (which is a formation in Christ). Doctrine is a therapeutic operation upon the senses, the mind and the heart that facilitates the shift from Catechumen to Believer. "Thou art transplanted henceforth," he tells them, "among the spiritual…made partaker of the Holy Vine" (Cyril of Jerusalem 1994, 8).

Before, then, any doctrinal content is expounded, Cyril prepares them for the *salus*, the salvation, the healing, that is to take place. It is in fact already taking place for those who are receiving his words in a correct manner since the conversion, the *metanoia*, the repentance, is a turning to the unseen Christ. Lecture II concerns that "turning towards" and it is mainly an exposition of examples from the Hebrew Bible of those who made that same turning to God themselves. The *exempla* are illustrative, but while a rhetorical technique the *exempla*

have also theological import with respect to conversion. They are "an initial step towards the refashioning of the soul" because "the faithful practice their faith through imitation… *Exempla* engage the reasoning faculties of the soul and thus shape the inner man" (Ayres 2009, 274-75). They also engage the imagination, another faculty making the invisible visible and in being internalized in this way they aid the shaping of desire and prepare the heart not just to receive the *sacramenta,* but also to experience the sacramental in which the physical is recognized as also spiritual, the temporal as also eternal. The Biblical examples insert the Catechumen into God's story – a narrative of divine dispensation and providence. It is a Trinitarian story culminating in the example of the baptism of Christ that explicitly references the secret operations of the Father and the Spirit on the Son. Cyril is, then, enfolding those listening to him into a Trinitarian ontology: "To Him belongs the 'is,' since He is always the Son of God… He eternally 'is,' but thou receivest the grace by advancement [*ex prokopēs*]" (Cyril of Jerusalem 1994, 17). The Greek noun *prokopē* certainly means "progress" or "advancement." But it is related to the verb *kopeō* that means "to manure" – the *pro* is a prefix adding a sense of direction, even "in favor of." So what seems to be suggested here is "growth" through fertilization and feeding. This rhetorical and theological enfolding then moves into an anticipation of their future state – "[a]ngels shall dance around you" (Cyril of Jerusalem 1994, 18). The Catechumens are brought by language operating upon their imaginations and resonating through the cavernous basilica into the very heart of the creed and its theology – though not one of them has been given either at this point. They are introduced into the way the creed and its theology are lived, before the content of what always remains "holy mysteries" is disclosed.

It is only in Lecture IV that they are introduced to "The Ten Points of Doctrine," opening with the observation that the way of sanctification, the pedagogy of godliness, consists of both "pious doctrines, and virtuous practice" (Cyril of Jerusalem 1994, 19). One cannot be divorced from the other, for perfection lies in their dialogical operation: faith seeks understanding that greater faithfulness and so deeper understanding will follow. It becomes

clear that what Cyril is inaugurating and creating is a pedagogical regime; an order, a discipline that educates and structures sense and sensibilities. His rhetoric is both performative and generative. It conjures not only descriptions of the eschatological state – "Henceforth thou art planted in the invisible Paradise" (Cyril of Jerusalem 1994, 7) and "enrolled in the armies in heaven" (Cyril of Jerusalem 1994, 28) – but what I would call a communal desire; the shared affect of an emotional community. This desire is key to the regime, its operation and its success. The bishop sat on his throne in the basilica with the candidates around him listening and entering imaginatively and emotionally into his vision of the unseen kingdom.[6] There is an imitation, a mimesis, a passing on, a communication. What is personally experienced is socially shared. The bishop and the laity are bonded in the interpersonal communication that operates in, through and with all the materiality of the architectural space, upon the soul as the breath of God; the soul as the image of God's Spirit. Sound circulates, enters those who are receptive, and shapes thoughts and feelings. As such, this speech-act, in the basilica built upon the place where Christ was crucified and the tomb from which he was resurrected, anticipates the sacramental communion by bringing those who are listening into a foretaste of the body of Christ and the New Jerusalem. It is *not* the sacramental communion for these auditors are, as yet, unbaptized. Nevertheless, they are caught up in the dynamics of God's providential love as it works outwardly upon their ears and inwardly through their imaginations, intellects, and the motions of the soul. The pedagogical regime disciplines and re-orientates the senses and the appetites towards a piety, a worship that will fashion various virtuous behaviors.[7] Its *telos* is ethical life.

We must add another level here so that we might appreciate more fully how Cyril's teaching operates with the invisible, and the theology of that operation. Cyril repeatedly emphasizes the voice of the instructor (Yarnold 2000, 39). As I said the creed promised to the would-be neophytes is delivered orally and they are explicitly told not to write it down. In the final lecture they are told to tell no one of the instruction they have received. In the catechesis which followed

their baptism, conducted throughout Holy Week, and an example of which is found in Cyril's much later work *Mystagogic Catechesis*, they are also explicitly reminded not to reveal the teachings and practices of the church concerning the sacramental "mysteries" to those outside the church. The emphasis on the vocal and the voiced reaches its climax at the Easter Eve Vigil and the rite of initiation. In the darkness before dawn, those at the second stage (between catechumen and believer), those being illuminated, assemble in the basilica and face west towards the cave of the crucifixion. From out of the darkness of Golgotha a voice calls upon them to stretch forth their arms and renounce Satan. It is only when they have done this that they can then turn east towards the rising sun, and the site of the resurrection tomb (the Anastasis). After this they walk towards the baptistery and strip naked. This immersion within the visible materiality of the liturgy is continued as their bodies are anointed with holy oil and they descend into the waters. On being baptized they emerge and are given a white robe, then anointed again on the forehead, ears, nostrils and chest, this time with a perfumed holy oil. The initiation rite sought to be "awe-inspiring"; that is to evoke human wonder at the incomprehensible depths of the godhead.[8] Throughout his lectures, Cyril pays attention to the emotive power of the liturgy in which all the senses are engaged.[9] The pilgrim known as Egeria, who witnessed the Easter liturgies in Cyril's time (around 380 AD), describes the interior of the cathedral, observing its ornate decoration: the gold, the silks, the embroidery, sacred vessels, candles, candelabra, incense, the cries and groans of the congregation, the recitation of Scripture and the singing of Psalms and hymns as they encounter that which transcends them. Listening to and following the voice is part of an elaborate, theatrical, participative and profoundly theological pedagogy.[10] What Cyril defines as the sound structure of the teaching is a much lesser concern. The explicit teaching is governing by an overriding sense of the apophatic and an anagogical experience of that which cannot be spoken and cannot be known.

What I am emphasizing here is the way the theological teaching engages with material culture, human sensing and affections, the

sacredness of the place, the complex temporal interweave of the place and the ecclesial space, encouraging participation in that which is not seen. Making the invisible visible. Participation in the divine is made visceral through sensory reception: hearing the voice of the speaker, seeing the light of candles, being touched by the sign of the cross and the water of baptism, tasting the salt given as a preliminary to admission, and smelling the scents of olive oil, incense and the perfumed oils. The senses receive these impressions internally as they remain foundational for any knowledge or truth, but Christians were taught their spiritual significance. And so, in what we might term a pedagogy of the senses, the spices of the baptismal ointment release the allusive and enchanting scent of Paradise that reforms the senses and the soul. This involves "a total renewal which brings about a return to the original paradisiac state" (Van Engen 1989, 103). We are told in other Patristic sources that this was the incorruptible smell of creation only known to Adam and Eve before the Fall – of flowers and trees, of rain water and fruit, of feathers and fields: the incense of the Kingdom. The invisibility of fragrance was understood (and being understood recognized) both as the presence of God and the odor of sanctity. To smell was to participate in that sanctity, and the scents of worship heralded the life-giving breath of the Holy Spirit. Participation *is* revelation.[11] Through the process of sanctification, the liturgy taught not only *how* to experience God with the body, but further, *what* to experience. Imaginations are fired, liturgical movements are performed, and the world outside (its seasons, its history, light and darkness) is enfolded into the world inside, written on the body and formed within the heart. The episcopacy of Jerusalem developed an elaborate stational liturgy in which holy sites and churches erected on or near them formed the basis for ceremonial processions that publicly and literally took possession of the topography beyond the Constantinian basilica: processions going through the streets of Jerusalem and moving from one sacred site to another were an essential part of the presence and visibility of Christianity.[12] Jerusalem's urban space became ritualized in this way. With Cyril we see the mobile frontiers between the

historical sites, the reading and exposition of the Scriptures, doctrinal teaching, ecclesial liturgies and spiritual operations.

We need not enter the lectures that explicitly treat each of the creedal formulas. The examination has indicated the manner in which the visible truth that the body experiences becomes the invisible truth that refashions the soul. "For since a human being is twofold, being a composite of soul and body, the purification also is twofold: incorporeal for incorporeal, and bodily for the body. And the water purifies the body, and the Spirit seals the soul" (Cyril of Jerusalem 1994, 15). In the *Mystagogic Catechism*,[13] with respect to the Eucharist, Cyril writes: "Just as the bread is suitable for the body, so the Word is adapted for the soul" (Doval 2001, 152). The focus of his pedagogy is that the sensed becomes the spiritually sensuous: sweat glistening in the pre-dawn darkness of Good Friday in a procession of a thousand candles streaming down from the Mount of Olives to the garden of Gethsemane. Sweat on the foreheads and the bared arms of those enrapt. The pre-baptism anointing of olive oil on naked flesh, smoothed into intimate spaces. The point of the teaching then is to glorify the Lord, not to explain him: "For we explain (*ezēgoumetha* – teach, interpret) not what God is but candidly confess that we have not exact knowledge (*ouk oidamen*) concerning Him. For in what concerns God to confess our ignorance is the best knowledge" (Cyril of Jerusalem 1994, 15). Cyril's teaching is orientated not primarily towards knowledge (though there will be understanding), because God is the Unsearchable and His works incomprehensible. Cyril's teaching is oriented towards a material, pastoral and liturgical pedagogy that finds its fulfillment in the immaterial imaginings, even pregnant silence, of worship. "Ascend, I say, in imagination even unto the first heaven, and behold there so many countless myriads of Angels. Mount up in thy thoughts, if thou canst, yet higher; consider, I pray thee, the Archangels, consider also the Spirits; consider the Virtues, consider the Principalities, consider the Powers, consider the Thrones, consider the Dominions," but "inquire not curiously into [God's] nature or substance" (Cyril of Jerusalem 1994, 121). He seems to place his faith for the transportations of his congregation in communication itself – both

divine (through the Holy Spirit "who gives wisdom of speech, Himself speaking, and discoursing" (Cyril of Jerusalem 1994, 118) and his own divinely inspired rhetoric. And thus the system and order of the creed itself becomes the vehicle for a participation in the invisible in which those being illuminated glimpse their true destiny – eternal life. The invisible is made visible. Deliberated upon, the creed performs a preparation of the soul "for the reception of the heavenly gifts" (Cyril of Jerusalem 1994, 142).

What I have sought to do in this brief essay is introduce you to how the senses engage invisibility. The question is: are there different forms of invisibility – thought, multiverses, God? I doubt very much whether we can talk about different qualities of invisibility. Though I can see how we might distinguish different logics for the inference of the invisible: when brain activity is evidenced in MIRF scans, followed by an articulation, we have to infer the presence of thought; gravity's attractive pull in an expanding universe suggests there is a cosmological constant or dark energy that makes life itself possible at all, so, unless we concur with the anthropic principle, then, as Steven Weinberg insists, we have to infer a multiverse. These are different modes of inductive argument, philosophically speaking, that begin from empirical observation. Okay. But Cyril of Jerusalem, as we have seen, conjures the presence of the divine and its salvific operations out of what is sensed. The invisible things of God are never divorced from the sensed, the experienced and the practiced. True his is not an inductive argument; he is not trying to prove that existence of God in whom he already believes. The invisible is inseparable from the visible; participating in the mysteries is a material phenomenon. The invisible is not a "going beyond" but an "entering more deeply into" the visible. Faith does not demand a sacrifice of reason, but an entrustment to those invisibilities, those very ordinary invisibilities like imagination and cognition, the molecules of emotion and the fields of virtual particles that, for quantum physics, compose the material. But the making visible of all three invisibilities depends upon the one same activity: the imagination. And yet, for the evolutionary anthropologist, Terrence Deacon, it is this capacity to

imagine, work with and within symbolic realities, that defines the evolution of hominid to homo sapiens. From about 2.2 million years ago, with the first conscious manufacture of tools, human beings have been living with and negotiating the invisible.

Let me conclude by returning to Merleau-Ponty. In his last published essay, "The Visible and the Invisible," the French phenomenologist insists he is not treating "an absolute invisible" such as God, "but the invisible of *this* world" (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 151). His examination is not into transcendence *per se*, but rather intentional transcendence. Nevertheless, in an important lecture to the *Société française de philosophie* in 1946, having outlined his thesis on the relationship between the visible and the invisible, transcendent horizons within the immanent, Merleau-Ponty draws a direct comparison between phenomenology and the Christian worldview:

> My viewpoint differs from the Christian viewpoint to the extent that the Christian believes in another side of things where the '*renversement du pour au contre*' takes place. In my view this 'reversal' takes place before our eyes. And perhaps some Christians would agree that the other side of things must already be visible in the environment in which we live.
> (Merleau-Ponty 2007, 103)

Indeed, some Christian theologians, such as Marie-Dominique Chenu and Henri du Lubac to name just two of them, would agree, and any number of Christian phenomenologists influenced by Merleau-Ponty (most of them French). For these philosophical theologians there is no *renversement* as such, for there is nothing *contre* in the transcendent to the world as it is. Nevertheless, this is a remarkable statement by Merleau-Ponty – a statement that begins by distinguishing phenomenology from Christianity but ends by re-framing both intellectual projects.

The statement was picked up in the discussion that followed the lecture, leading Merleau-Ponty to spell out one of the implications of his analysis. "As to mystical experience, I do not do away with that

either," he told his audience (Merleau-Ponty 2007, 111). If we accept the "mystical experience" as the experience of what is invisible and *Nichtsurpräsentierbar*, the enigma within and inseparable from the material, then, on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological terms, who *a priori* can decide whether with such an experience we are treating not "an absolute invisible" such as God, "but the invisible of *this* world"?

Notes

1. See Deacon 1997.
2. For a lucid account of current cosmology within the context of its theological history see Rubenstein 2013.
3. For more on "seeing as" and its implications for the formations of belief see Ward 2015.
4. Their catechetical lectures followed, not necessarily owing anything to either Cyril or each other: Ambrose of Milan, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and John Chrysostom. For a study of each of these series see Riley 1974.
5. For much more on Cyril's theology of place (and its distinctiveness from Eusebius's theology of "holy sites"), see Walker 1990. Cyril not only developed liturgies for pilgrimage and the spirituality of holy places, but building on a long Biblical tradition he made Jerusalem the first major "heritage center."
6. For a broader discussion of the relationship between rhetoric, teaching and listening, see Harrison 2013, 87-116; also Harrison 2011, 27-45.
7. Speaking of the fruitful olive-tree in Psalm 52.10, Cyril explains that this is "an olive tree not to be perceived by sense, but by mind [ouk aesthētēt, alla noēti]" [I.4].
8. For a more detailed appraisal of these rites, see Yarnold 1971.
9. See Yarnold 2000, 51.
10. See Wilkinson 1999. Scholars have drawn attention to the way Cyril draws upon the rites and rhetoric of the pagan mystery cults and without any embarrassment, despite his clear criticism and refutation of paganism. "The very terms 'mystagogic' and 'mystagogy' are borrowed from the pagan mysteries" Yarnold 2000, 53. For a reconstruction of the Easter liturgies and Egeria's travelogue see Drijvers 2004, 72-95. Cyril's use (both theologically and liturgically) of pagan mystery religions and the ascent towards true illumination or Gnosis can be found much earlier of course in work of Clement of Alexander. In *Protrepticus*, while disassociating the Greek mystery cults from Christianity (1-2), he draws extensively on the language of such cults for the development of his own account of Christian formation.
11. See Harvey 2006, 118. Harvey reminds us that "Corporeality and incorporeality were both forms of material existence" (102), for a number of fourth century theologians.
12. See Drijvers, 2004. 77. For a more detailed account of some of this "street theatre" see also Baldovin 1989, 45-104.

13. There have been debates over the authorship of the Mystagogical Catechism since a manuscript with "J" [John of Jerusalem, Cyril's successor] written on it was catalogued in 1574. We need not enter these debates because attribution has no impact upon this argument here. A detailed study of the authorship can be found in Doval 2001. Doval decides in favor of Cyril's authorship. The quotations from the Mystagogical Catechism are also taken from Schaff and Wace 1994.

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