

# The Faithful and Hopeful Economic Agent

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The theological virtues are above the nature of man, whereas the intellectual and moral virtues belong to the nature of man. . . . Therefore the theological virtues should be distinguished . . . . The intellectual and moral virtues perfect the human intellect and appetite in proportion to human nature, but the theological virtues do so supernaturally.

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Ia IIae., q. 62, art. 2.

Man doth seek a triple perfection: first a sensual . . . . then an intellectual. . . . Man doth not seem to rest satisfied . . . but doth further covet . . . somewhat divine and heavenly, which with hidden exultation. . . [such desire] rather surmiseth than conceiveth. . . . For although the beauties, riches, honors, sciences, virtues, and perfections of all men living, were in the present possession of one; yet somewhat beyond and above all this there would still be sought and earnestly thirsted for.

Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1593),  
First Book, XI, 4 (pp. 205-206.)

I wrote a book on ethics recently, and in it defended a sturdy little model of the virtues in which hope and faith and the rest are *not* reduced to prudence. Hope and faith and a love of something beyond the profane are instead the transcendent goals that make a human life truly human. The self-regarding virtues are Prudence, Temperance, and sometimes Courage – since the courage sometimes is directed to *self*-preservation. And the other-regarding virtues, which philosophers after and against Adam Smith have taken to be the very definition of goodness, are Love, Justice, and sometimes Courage, the courage sometimes being on the behalf of others. Let's be quantitative about it. The individual and the social virtues are by this reckoning  $2\frac{1}{2} + 2\frac{1}{2} = 5$ . To do the sum the other way, they are the pagan 4 of Courage, Temperance,

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<sup>1</sup> The paper is a version of Chapters 10-13, pp. 151-183 in McCloskey, *The Bourgeois Virtues*, 2006).

Justice, and Prudence, with the Christian virtue of Love added to them, reaching up to the transcendent, making 5. Splendid: it's Adam Smith's view of ethics.<sup>2</sup>

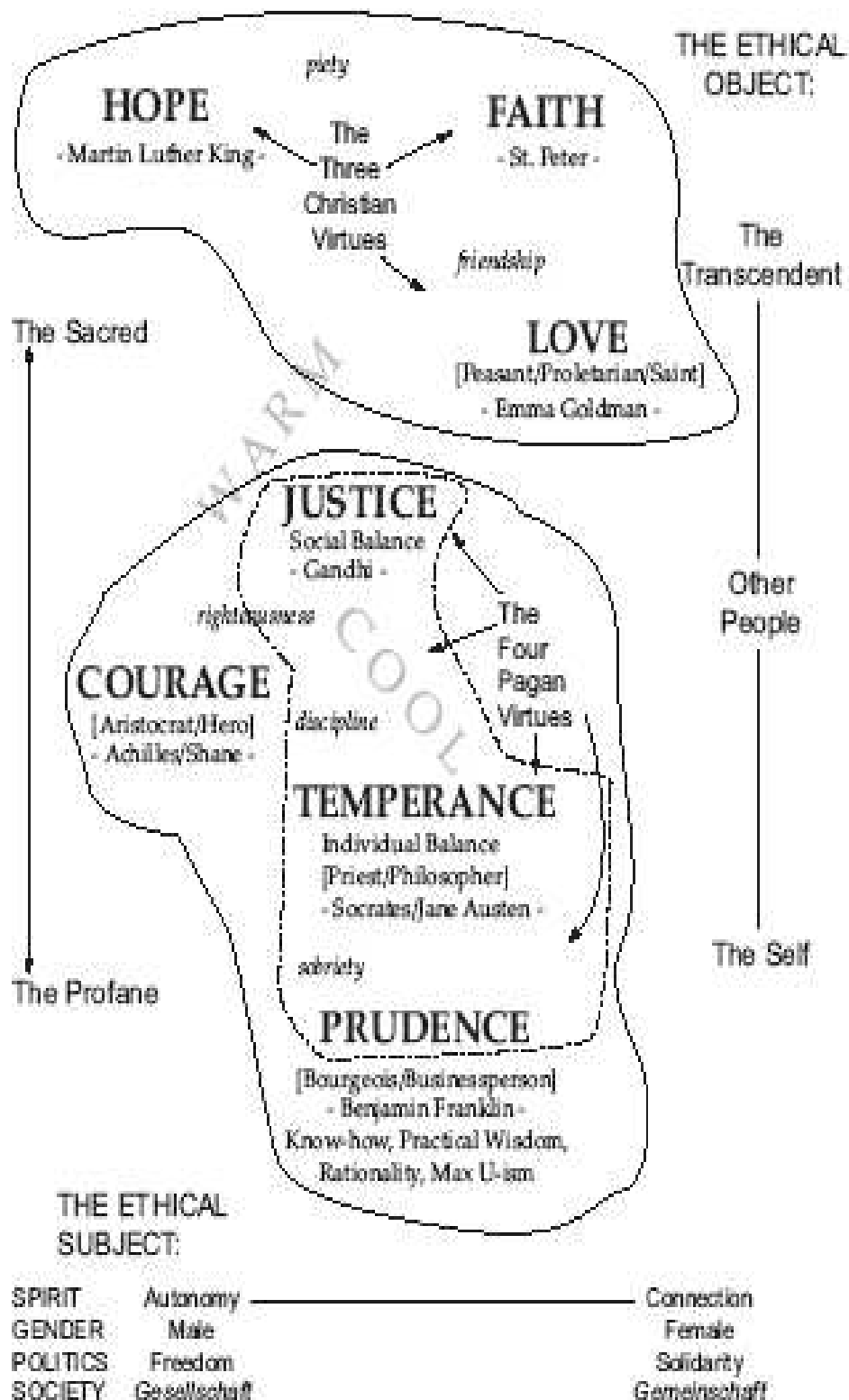
But something's missing. In the analysis of Aquinas and of other Western ethical thinking before Kant, and now sometimes in the revival of virtue ethics, there are *seven*:  $5 + 2 = 7$ , the pagan four plus the human half of Love, *eros*, *philia*, . . . and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  more: Faith and Hope, virtues six and seven, with the transcendent half of Love, *agape*. "Faith, hope, and love, these three abide." They complete the traditional ethical psychology of humans. Hope and faith and *agape* are the transcendent. "They have God not only for their end, but for their object."<sup>3</sup> Here then is the model, with the missing virtues supplied:

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<sup>2</sup> The backing for the claim is provided in McCloskey, "Adam Smith, The Last of the Former Virtue Ethicists," forthcoming

<sup>3</sup> Aquinas, *Disputed Questions*, 1269-72, "Virtues in General," Art. 12, p. 89.

# The Seven Primary Virtues



In spiritual terms Faith, as St. Paul said in part, is "the argument for things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). St. Thomas Aquinas wrote a hymn defining Faith:

*Quod non capis, quod non vides,* What you do not grasp, not see,  
*Animosa firmat fides* A lively faith affirms,  
*Praeter rerum ordinem.* Beyond the order of [material] things.<sup>4</sup>

Even to look at nature one must affirm an order beyond the mere things. Facts without precepts are blind, a blooming, buzzing confusion. "No argument," the political philosopher J. Budziszewski notes, "can be so completely drawn as to eliminate its dependence, conscious or unconscious, on undemonstrable first premises."<sup>5</sup>

The discovery in the 19<sup>th</sup> century of non-Euclidian geometries and in the 20<sup>th</sup> of undecidable propositions should have taught the most scientific among us that faith grounds observation. The mathematicians Philip Davis and Reuben Hersh note that "underlying both mathematics and religion there must be a foundation of faith which the individual must himself supply." Mathematicians, they observe, are practicing Neo-Platonists and followers of Spinoza. Their worship of mathematics parallels the worship of God. Both God and the Pythagorean Theorem, for example, are believed to exist independent of the physical world; and both give it meaning.<sup>6</sup> Faith in what Aquinas called the "eternal" law is nonetheless a faith. Admittedly the faith of the Christian has more. It comes from the grace of God.<sup>7</sup> But who is to say that scientific faith is not also God's grace in action?

The physicist Stephen Barr puts it this way: "Even the atheist. . . asks questions about reality in the expectation that these questions will have answers . . . . It is not because he already has the answers. . . . [I]f he [did]. . . he would not be seeking them. Yet he has the conviction. . . . This is a faith."<sup>8</sup> And a great faithman, Thomas Merton, once wrote that "Faith is first of all an intellectual assent. But the assent of faith is not based on the intrinsic evidence of a visible object. . . . The statements which demand the assent of faith are simply neutral to reason. . . . Faith brings together the known and the unknown so that they overlap: or rather, so that we are *aware* of their overlap. . . . The function of faith is not to reduce mystery to rational clarity, but to integrate the unknown and the known together into a living whole."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Aquinas, *Lauda, Sion, salvatorem*, verse 6, at <http://www.ewtn.com/library/PRAYER/LAUDA.TXT>.

<sup>5</sup> Budziszewski, "Religion and Civic Culture," 1992, p. 51.

<sup>6</sup> Davis and Hersh, *Descartes' Dream*, 1986, for example p. 232.

<sup>7</sup> "Faith" in Cross, ed., 1957, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 491f.

<sup>8</sup> Barr, *Physics and Faith*, 2003, p. 266.

<sup>9</sup> Merton, *New Seeds*, 1962, pp. 127, 135f.

Faith is not an attack on Science or a turn to superstition. But like the assent to the enterprise of Science as a whole, as against particular scientific propositions embedded in the enterprise, it is not based on the visible. Physicists affirm that "God is a mathematician" or "God does not play dice." Such faiths are not against rationality, but complete it.

The faith, in other words, need not be faith in God. Many secular folk believe in a transcendent without God, though approaching Him. "I think all poets are sending religious messages," declared Richard Wilbur, "because poetry is, in such great part, the comparison of one thing to another; or the saying, as in metaphor, that one thing is another. And to insist, as all poets do, that all things are related to each other, comparable to each other, is to go toward making an assertion of the unity of all things."<sup>10</sup>

But why then is faith a *virtue*? Why isn't it sheer epistemology, a matter of how we know, though concerning things not seen, such as a faith in the orderliness of the universe or in the power of reason or in a God of love? Because, C. S. Lewis explains, faith is a kind of spiritual courage, a willed steadfastness against the times when "a mere mood rises up against it." Faithfulness is necessary for epistemology, "thinking with the giving of assent," as Augustine put it. "Belief" in Germanic origin is cognate with "beloved," from Indo-European *\*leubh-*, whence "love." It connoted faithfulness, and only later acquired the meaning of giving credence to a proposition. A physicist who was, as Lewis says, "just a creature dithering to and fro" about whether in designing the universe God, figuratively speaking, is a mathematician would be a poor physicist. An historian who has nothing of "the art of holding on to things [her] reason has once accepted, in spite of [her] changing moods" is going to dither to and fro about whether or not history is caused (figuratively speaking) by the class struggle or by a horseshoe nail. She will not *really* have tested the class struggle or the horseshoe nail. As a historical scientist she will not be wholly virtuous, because as Lewis observes, she will change her mind unreasonably.<sup>11</sup>

Faith is a backward-looking virtue. It concerns who we are; or, rather, italicized, who we *are*, "the mystic chords of memory." In personal and modern terms it is called "integrity" or "identity." "If we create a society that our descendants will want to hold on to," writes Kwame Anthony Appiah, "our personal and political values will survive in them."<sup>12</sup> The faith needs to be instilled, "because children do not begin with values of their own." Though Appiah does not attach his notion of "identity" to religious "faith," perhaps he should. In social and ancient terms it is the virtue of insisting on belonging

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<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Kirsch, "Get Happy," 2004, p. 97.

<sup>11</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 1943-45, pp. 123-126.

<sup>12</sup> Appiah, *Ethics of Identity*, 2005, p. 137.

to a community, such as a polis or a church. As Tillich put it, faith is “the courage to be a part of,” to share a social purpose. “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,” says the Christian, and does keep the faith steadfastly against many contrary moods.

The political scientist James Q. Wilson uses “duty” instead of faith, though he speaks of duty also as “fidelity,” from of course *fides*, faith.<sup>13</sup> That is: adhere to one’s commitments, do your duty in the face of temptations to take a free ride. As Wilson says, and Lewis said, faithful duty is akin to courage.<sup>14</sup> Indeed all the virtues require courage in the face of attack. But all courage requires faith, in turn, so that the courage is exercised for something enduring. Wilson’s leading example is Admiral James Stockdale’s leadership of the American POWs in the hands of North Vietnamese torturers. But he notes that the signs of faith lie all about. Faith is the who-you-are that finds you contributing to public radio, conserving water in a drought when no inspector will spot a defection, turning up to vote against George W. Bush when your vote was after all of no consequence.

Wilson adopts the view of the Scottish Enlightenment, and the Aristotelian tradition before it, that ethics is a matter of habit and character, not continuous decisions under a rule of Reason. Like other virtues, he argues, faith is behaviorally instilled, working in tandem with genetic predispositions. Once instilled it is a feeling, a complaining conscience, what Smith called the Impartial Spectator. That is why Hutcheson and Hume and Smith in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Scotland claimed that virtues arose from “moral *sentiments*”: virtues are matters of a prepared feeling rather than a decision on the spot.

You begin, though, with a decision to cultivate the moral sentiments. You enroll with a free will at Annapolis and train your ethical muscles. Like a body trained to a sport, the present performance is both forward and backward looking, hopeful and faithful, both. The rule of reason, by contrast, insists on disowning the past, extracting you from your history. Utilitarianism *insists* on faithlessness.

*Fides* was the term by which the Romans described their relationship with allies. In the Roman wars against Carthage, Inc. — so bourgeois as to distribute annually the “profits” of the state to its citizens, in the style of Alaska with its oil revenues — the rule of Faith repeatedly overcame a rule of mere Prudence. In the last stages of the first of three Punic Wars, for instance, the prudent Carthaginians decided to economize on their navy, in the very years in which the extraordinarily faithful if previously not very nautical Romans built and staffed additional war galleys to the number of two hundred.

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<sup>13</sup> Wilson, *Moral Sense*, 1993, pp. 99-117.

<sup>14</sup> Wilson, *Moral Sense*, 1993, p. xiii.

In the Second Punic War the Romans were defeated again and again in Italy by Hannibal, losing 50,000 dead in a few hours at Cannae. But they never ransomed captives, nor hesitated to free slaves to staff fresh legions. They kept the faith at Rome.

The Dutch have a heavy word expressing the tug of the past through faith, *lotsverbondenheid*, solidarity. It means the sharing with solidarity of a common fate, those *bonden*, bonds, to the *lots*—compare English “lot,” as in “your lot in life.” Aristotle’s phrase for it is “another self.” Such friendship is a combination of love and faith directed here below. Love without faithfulness would be called “inauthentic” or “phony” or at best “inconstant, flighty,” the crushes of adolescents or the serial polygamy of adults. In some families Faith without love would be called “having relatives.”<sup>15</sup> Friends of mere use or amusement, Aristotle’s first two types, do not have *lotsverbondenheid*: “such friendships . . . are easily dissolved if the parties become different; for if they are no longer pleasant or useful they cease loving each other.”<sup>16</sup> Friends of the third type, who care for one another as for themselves, do have a bonded lot. The Dutch university students portrayed in Paul Verhoeven’s movie *Soldier of Orange* (1979) go through the Second World War in different ways, one dying as a Nazi officer on the Eastern Front, another shirking peacefully at home and passing his exams to become a lawyer, another escaping to England and becoming an RAF pilot, while several others die in the Resistance to the German occupation. The hero of the movie, played by Rutger Hauer, keeps faith with them all, even with the Nazi and the shirker, embodying *lotsverbondenheid*. In a scene on the beach at Scheveningen, for example, the others walk away from the fellow student who has traitorously joined the German army. The Hauer character, although himself by then leaning towards the Resistance, will not abandon him. Later the two *verbonden* friends, even though they have taken politically opposite paths, exchange postcards. Their lots are bound. You go to your high-school reunion. You say to yourself, “I have nothing in common with these people.” But you do, if you are a person, theologically speaking. You have Faith. *Lotsverbondenheid* is made evident in the technique of psychological intervention called family-constellation therapy. The participants play roles of mother or son or cousin or dead grandfather or anyone else bound by life’s lottery to the person who is the main subject of the therapy. Even someone who murdered a former spouse may have a place in the constellation. It is not a drama viewed in detachment. Faith is called upon, performing a sort of public oath. The exercise of one’s will towards *lotsverbondenheid* is Faith, *Geloof*.

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<sup>15</sup> Cicero, *De amicitia*, 44 BC, v, 20.

<sup>16</sup> Aristotle, *Nich. Ethics*, c. 330 BC, 1156a20, Broadie and Rowe trans.

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Adam Smith, supposedly the inventor of a theory conserving on love, emphatically did not follow with such a theory in his work or in his life. Smith and his friends thought of sympathy as creating a trusting society as by an invisible hand, in the way that Prudence created an efficient one, an argument stressed by the economist Jerry Evensky.<sup>17</sup> As Daniel G. Arce M. put it, citing Evensky, "It is the coevolution of individual and societal ethics that leads to the stability of classical liberal society."<sup>18</sup> The sociologist of friendship Ray Pahl concludes that "sometime in the eighteenth century friendship appeared as one of a new set of benevolent social bonds."<sup>19</sup> It was not in modern times but in the olden times that the life of man was solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

This is no paradox. When a poor man can buy as much for his penny as a rich man, though he have fewer pennies, he is not required to doff his hat to get his daily bread. He does not need to pretend to be an ally of the butcher or the baker. This frees him when the occasion arises to be a real friend, an equal. Allan Silver notes that "the intense loyalties, coexisting with the frank expectation of reward, found in codes and cultures of honor before commercial society" were not nice and were not good for real, that is, bourgeois, friendship. Samuel Johnson described an aristocratic "patron" in his *Dictionary* as "a wretch who supports with insolence, and is paid in flattery," in the fashion of Lord Chesterfield. Johnson found the relationship with his paying bourgeois readers more satisfactory: "No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money."

In a world governed by honor one makes friends to keep from being assaulted, Cicero's "protection and aid." In a world governed by markets one buys protection, one hopes, anonymously with taxes or with fees to ones condominium association, and then is at leisure to make friends for the sake of real friendship. Modern capitalism—though we must not suppose, as many people do, that markets did not "exist" before 1800—was supported by, and supported in turn, a trust in *strangers* that still distinguishes prosperous from poor economies. The division of labor in the modern world, as the economist Paul Seabright has emphasized, is achieved through "honorary friends."<sup>20</sup>

Trust and friendship, further, make possible speculative bubbles, from the tulip mania of the 1630s to the real estate of the 2000s. The very fact of capitalism's speculative instability, therefore, argues for an entirely new prevalence of belief in strangers. "Credit" is from *creditus*, "believed." A business cycle based on pyramids of

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<sup>17</sup> Evensky, "Ethics and the Invisible Hand," 1993 and, Adam Smith's Lost Legacy," 2001.

<sup>18</sup> Arce M., "Conspicuous by Its Absence," 2004, p. 263.

<sup>19</sup> Pahl, *Friendship*, 2000, p. 55.

<sup>20</sup> Seabright, *Company of Strangers*, 2004, p. 8.

credit was impossible in the distrustful 16<sup>th</sup> century. The macro-economy could in earlier times rise and fall, of course, but from harvest booms and busts, not from credit booms and busts. In those pre-modern-capitalist days God's hand, not human beliefs, made for aggregate ups and downs. Medieval and early modern people trusted only allies, and had wise doubts even concerning some of them: "How smooth and even they do bear themselves!/ As if allegiance in their bosoms sat,/ Crowned with faith and constant loyalty."<sup>21</sup> Pre-moderns had to keep faith with God and with their lords temporal. Late moderns keep faith with the market and with their friends.

On this theory the episodes of disorder and unemployment in capitalism from the 1630s in Holland and from 1720 in Northern Europe arose from the virtues of capitalism, not from its vices, from its trustworthiness, not from its greed. To be more exact: the business cycle arose from trustworthiness breaking down suddenly in an environment of quite normal human greed for abnormal gain, the *auri sacra fames* which has characterized humans since the Fall. What is novel in capitalism is the faithful trust, *lotsverbondenheid* writ large.

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Hope is by contrast forward-looking, the virtue of the energetic saint or entrepreneur who seeks "a future, difficult, but attainable good."<sup>22</sup> It is the opposite of *acedia*, spiritual sloth, despair, hopelessness, the "desperation" (< *de + sperare*, to be separated from hoping) that the 17<sup>th</sup> of the Church of England's 39 Articles warns against, "a most dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil doth thrust [curious and carnal persons] into desperation."

Hope is of course essential for eternal life, and for humdrum life, too, as one can see in the lethargy that comes over a human who, as we say, "has nothing to look forward to." Carol Shields, the modern novelist of psychological health, calls hope "the slender handrail."<sup>23</sup> Richard Wilbur, the modern poet of psychological health, repeatedly surprised by joy, puts it this way: "Joy for a moment floods into the mind/ Blurting that all things shall be brought/ To the full state and stature of their kind."<sup>24</sup> The secular, or "natural," version of hope is an egalitarian version of Aristotle's aristocratic and favorite virtue, "great-souledness," *megalopsychia*, translated literally into Latin as "magnanimity."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Shakespeare, *Hen. V*, II, ii, lines 3 ff.

<sup>22</sup> Cessario, "The Theological Virtue of Hope," 2002, in Pope, ed., *Ethics of Aquinas*, p. 234.

<sup>23</sup> Shields, *Dressing Up*, 2000, pp. 46, 50, 53.

<sup>24</sup> Wilbur, "On the Marginal Way," 1969, in *New and Collected Poems*, 1988, p. 122.

<sup>25</sup> Aristotle, *Nich. Ethics* 1123a35 ff.

Christian doctrine and so-called "Austrian" economics agree in stressing that hope is about that ever-unseen future. It cannot be reduced to a mechanical prediction in the style of positivism, or to some easy dream of fey or elf, the assurance of indulgences purchased or chantries financed. "By hope we are saved," says St. Paul in Romans 8:24, "But a hope seen is not a hope, for why hope for something you already see?" It is a notable oddity of non-Austrian, "neoclassical," Samuelsonian economics that it imagines that we *already* have the information to make accurate judgments about the future. In such a case we would be in heaven, or hell, and hope would not exist: "Neither the blessed nor the damned can possess hope," as the theologian Romanus Cessario puts it. Hope is a virtue, Aquinas said, of the wayfarer, not of a person in command of all he is ever going to get.<sup>26</sup> It is, he said elsewhere, "the movement of a spirit aiming at great things."<sup>27</sup>

I am thinking, to change the image, of backward-looking Faith as the rootedness of humans, in their identity as Dutch or female or psychologists or mothers. Then Hope is the forward-looking flower growing from the roots. Lacking roots, one is faithless, having no place from which to grow. Rootlessness is the characteristic American failing, at any rate by comparison with the heavy rootedness of much of the rest of the world. But without the flower one is stuck in the soil. *That* is the characteristic failing of Asia and Europe, an excess of Faith, at any rate by comparison with the crazy, uprooted Hopefulness of America.<sup>28</sup>

Globalization has put Faith and Hope out of balance. The Marxist geographer David Harvey has noted that the "time-space compression" of modernity has eroded identity.<sup>29</sup> Or at any rate it can. It happened in the Europe of old. One can watch the cozy world of self-satisfied and rooted Franks being challenged by successive Others in the Crusades, the age of discovery, the confrontation with the Primitive, the shocks to European provincialism administered by Atlantic capitalism, imperialism, world wars, and finally globalization. Marshall Berman writes: "To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and at the same time threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are."<sup>30</sup> Hope can erode Faith.

Ceaseless travel, made cheap to moderns, is exhilarating. But it is disturbing, too. Dilip Gaonkar points out to me that the dream of "retirement" in modern America has become a parody of the word. The oldsters do not "retire" to Innisfree. They

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<sup>26</sup> Cessario, "The Theological Virtue of Hope," 2002, p. 238.

<sup>27</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologia*, c. 1270, Ila Ilae, c. 1270, q. 161, art. 4.

<sup>28</sup> I am indebted to Marijke Prins for these ideas.

<sup>29</sup> Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, 1990.

<sup>30</sup> Berman, *All That is Solid*, 1982, p. 15.

change residences compulsively, looking for a new life, indulging a Hope at the sacrifice of Faith. The ultimate in such itinerant retirees is someone who owns a condo of the latest kind – on a cruise ship. "Wake up in a new harbor every couple of days" says the teaser in the E-Bay ad for a \$70,000 ocean-going condo on the Norwegian Star. "Living on a ship circumnavigating the globe or catching your ship for a few days when it reaches your selected vacation spots, will raise a few eyebrows. You can hear it now: 'You live *where?*' It is a well deserved opportunity, but not for everyone. You have to love travel, be adventuresome, accept challenges with aplomb and enjoy exploring new places and meeting interesting people."<sup>31</sup>

Yet the European gazing at other cultures as a conqueror or anthropologist, or for that matter a condo owner on a cruise-ship, presents a pathway for non-Europeans out of the tribe or village. Move to Metropolitan France, as Ho Chi Minh did after working on a French ocean liner, living in London and the United States. Work as a pastry chef in Boston's Parker House – baking, one supposes, Parker-House rolls. Then use the capitalist economy of Paris to remake yourself into a founding French communist.

Mobility in space, in other words, offers Hope of a new identity. An American folk song from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century asked, "Oh, what was your name in the States?/ Was it Thompson, or Johnson, or Bates?/ Did you murder your wife and fly for your life?/ Say, what was your name in the States?" – that is, the organized States admitted to the Union, as against the territories. Lighting out for the territories, of course, is the American myth of freedom through movement away from the faith-based oppressions of one's born class or region. It is Ben Franklin moving from fraternal domination in Boston to autonomy in Philadelphia, disembarking at the Market Street wharf carrying three great puffy rolls under his arm, the Frontier Hypothesis, the road movie. It is the blissful literalization of freedom.

Mobility does make for freedom. That's why Adam Smith the egalitarian advocate for freedom{,} was so outraged by British and in particular English restrictions on the mobility of workers. A sharecropper who can move to another Southern county, or North to Bronzeville, cannot be exploited *in situ* by the country store. He's not in place. He's in the wider world. He can yet hope.

The rise of a secular Hope and the fall of a spiritual Faith, in other words, is nothing like always bad. A Faith rooted in the economic importance of land made elders and imagined ancestors powerful, for good or ill. You can see it in the twists of 18<sup>th</sup>-century plays and novels right through Jane Austen, in which the elders control inheritance and therefore the hopeful young. The displacing of land by human capital

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<sup>31</sup> Item 2359006705, category 15897.

as the main source of wealth sharply devalued Faith, the past, the dead hand, the mortgage, the family line, the ancestors. And it upvalued Hope, the future, the children, the individual.

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*Religious* versions of faith and hope and love have been banished from the list of virtues in the West twice, during two waves of anti-Christian revision, what the theologian William Schweiker calls the "banishment of religious resources."<sup>32</sup> Or if you wish there was one long banishment interrupted in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century by a surprising revival of religious enthusiasm, at any rate in Protestant Europe.

The First Banishment happened among the clerisy of Europe in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The New Philosophers reaped the harvest of 17<sup>th</sup>-century natural philosophy. Having learned that comets were not portents and tides were not miraculous, they generalized to a rejection of "particular providence": a rejection of God's restless agency in the world. Prayer for example has no efficacy if God is a remote prime mover. A founding figure is Pierre Bayle (1647-1707), a French Protestant heretic and skeptic who found refuge in Rotterdam to write his *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1696, 1702), the "arsenal of the Enlightenment." Bayle and other deistic or even atheistic theoreticians culminating with Voltaire, Holbach, and Hume were reacting to excessive faith and hope in the wars of religion.

The deists and neo-stoics of the age of equanimity were therefore eager to banish the transcendent. The words 'taste' and 'politeness'," J. G. A. Pocock notes, "for most of the eighteenth century, were freighted with a heavy ideological load. To latitudinarians and *philosophes* they connoted that reasonable and civic [faith] . . . with which it was hoped to replace the enthusiasms and fanaticisms of Puritanism or Christianity."<sup>33</sup> And for a time it did.

The Second Banishment of religious faith and hope gathers force among secularizing intellectuals around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A. N. Wilson attributes the odd hiccup in the Banishment – on in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, then off, then on again in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> – to "Hume's time bomb," that is, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, published in 1779, three years safely after his death and three years, too, after the publication of another anti-Christian bomb with a long fuse, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. In Wilson's view these sat on library shelves until the new *seriousness* of religiosity in England in the 1820s and 1830s caused them to be taken down and examined. In their own time Hume could logic-chop and Gibbon sneer and the

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<sup>32</sup> Schweiker, *Theological Ethics*, 2004, p. x.

<sup>33</sup> Pocock, "Cambridge Paradigms," 1983, p. 241.

cosmopolites of 1776-79 could laugh along with them. Not the sober and intellectually serious Victorians.<sup>34</sup>

Mathew Arnold, for example, though a deist, and a devout student of the Bible, said it ("Dover Beach" was composed about 1851):

The Sea of Faith  
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
Lay like the folds of a great girdle furled.  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar. . . .

Or Thomas Hardy (1866):

If but some vengeful god would call to me  
From out the sky, and laugh . . . .  
But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,  
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?  
—Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain.  
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan . . . .

A. N. Wilson has given a lively and touching portrait of the European and especially British men and women of the clerisy – and often enough of the clergy – who lost their faith then. John Maynard Keynes, writing in the 1920s, portrayed the late 1860s as "the critical moment at which the Christian dogma fell away from the serious philosophical world of England, or at any rate of Cambridge."<sup>35</sup> Early in the 1860s the soon-to-be economist Alfred Marshall was preparing for holy orders; by the end of the decade he and his fellows could not, Keynes writes, be called Christians. In praising the passage, Joseph Schumpeter notes that in the 1860s "Christian belief, gently and without any acerbities, was dropped by the English intelligentsia."<sup>36</sup>

Wilson takes his title, "God's Funeral," from another poem by Hardy, a poem written fifty years after "Hap." Hardy in 1908-10 envisions Christians, as Feuerbach had some 70 years before, projecting their anxieties into their God:

I saw a slow-stepping train –  
Lined on the brows, scoop-eyed and bent and hoar –  
Following in files across a twilit plain  
A strange mystic form the foremost bore. . . .

Yet throughout all it symbolized none the less  
Potency vast and loving-kindness strong. . . .

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<sup>34</sup> A. N. Wilson, *God's Funeral*, 1999, p. 25.

<sup>35</sup> Keynes, "Marshall," 1924, p. 134.

<sup>36</sup> Schumpeter, *History*, 1954, p. 772 n 2.

"O man-projected Figure, of late  
Imagined as we, thy knell who shall survive?"

This was a quarter century after the sad doubt in England had begun to spread beyond the clerisy. In the 1880s "the loss of faith which had hitherto tormented only a few of the better-informed," Wilson reports, "had reached the suburbs" through among other routes a best-selling novel *Robert Elsmere* (1888), by Mrs. Humphrey Ward — *née* Mary Augusta Arnold: her uncle was Matthew Arnold; her nephew Aldous Huxley).<sup>37</sup> Not that everyone became a skeptic. The Great War was still on the British and the German sides a religious crusade. By the Second World War, though, religion had been squeezed out of war.

Also in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century one sees the sharper French turn of the clerisy against the clergy in, say, Flaubert, or in Baudelaire. Progressive thought in France was from the time of Voltaire and Helvétius anti-clerical, reinforced by the reactionary stance of the Church during the Revolution. It was therefore anti-Christian and in the end anti-theist. Progressives in France were and are dismally existentialist in their celebration of Crass Casualty. Wilson attributes the harsher anti-clerical turn in Catholic Europe also in part to the reaction of former seminarians, "kept in genuine ignorance of biblical scholarship or of the developments of modern philosophy. . . who therefore suffered easily explicable crises when, in later life, they started to read books."<sup>38</sup> Compare Catholic Ireland, as in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

In Britain, as in Germany and the United States, advanced thinkers often kept a worshipfully Christian tone even in their plans for the new society. Schumpeter attributes the tone to the Englishmen "having started their intellectual travels with a thorough grounding in Anglican theology (and, owing to the constitutions of Cambridge and Oxford colleges, with definite obligations towards it)." In consequence they "arrived at their final positions by way of conscious wrestling rather than by a growing agnosticism through indifference."<sup>39</sup> Note the contrast with Wilson's hypothesis of crisis in Catholic countries. In any event, there is a quasi-Christian cheerfulness about, say, George Bernard Shaw's English socialism which one does not find in Bertold Brecht's Continental version.

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<sup>37</sup> Wilson, *God's Funeral*, 1999, p. 125. Compare Novak, *Catholic Social Thought*, 1989, p. 64.

<sup>38</sup> Wilson, *God's Funeral*, 1999, p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> Schumpeter, *History*, 1954, p. 772 n 2.

In their official Christian vestments, Hope and Faith were often unwelcome after 1848 in the salons and ateliers of European and especially Continental sophisticates. So still. Even the excellent philosopher Rosalind Hursthouse seems embarrassed by the Transcendent Two. Her exposition of virtue ethics in 1999 mentions in its index the virtue of Love 90 times under various headings: benevolence, charity, compassion, generosity, kindness, loyalty, friendship.<sup>40</sup> The last two, I've said, have perhaps an element of Faith in them. The virtue of Justice, the male philosophical obsession, she mentions 28 times. Temperance (and self-control) 18. Courage 24. Moral wisdom, that is, *phronēsis*, that is, Prudence, which underlies all the virtues, 26 times. The typically modern and bourgeois philosopher's virtue of Honesty (= Justice with Faith and Courage) 22 times. That covers five of the classical seven, reproducing the secular pentad analyzed by Adam Smith and others in the Scottish Enlightenment.

But where *are* the other two, sacred Hope and Faith? Hursthouse ends her book with an appeal to "Keep hope alive." Her only other mention of the two is a page attacking "piety" as irrational, not characteristically human, "based on a complete illusion" from an atheist's point of view.<sup>41</sup> One wonders. Is the physicist's pious but entirely atheistic faith in the orderliness of nature, which Hursthouse elsewhere notes is essential for a scientific world view, therefore also irrational? Is science, then, "based on a complete illusion"? Hursthouse's own project – of justifying the virtues piecemeal from within a cultural set of them – is likewise undercut. It depends on philosophical Faithfulness and Hopefulness that such a procedure makes some sense, which she herself says is not justifiable philosophically, a mere piety.

That is, we humans live on air. My suggestion to my good colleagues of the modern clerisy is that they get used to it. The most characteristic virtues of humans are not a Rationality or a Persistence that one can see plainly in ants and bacteria as well. They are Hope and Faith. So late in the age of Banishment, I wish that the advanced members of the clerisy would recover from being embarrassed by the most characteristically human virtues.

They are part of human life, and keep barging in. The reason they do so is that Faith and Hope, and *agape* too, are the *verbal* virtues. They require the symbolism of words. The invention of language c. 50,000 B.C.E. and with it metaphor and other art made theorizable an imagined past and an imagined future. "The peculiar power of the human mind," wrote Stuart Hampshire, following his master Spinoza, "is the power to think about its own states and processes, and, by this reflective thinking, to modify

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<sup>40</sup> Hursthouse, *Virtue Ethics*, 1999, index. I am counting multiple pages at their total: thus "benevolence, Humean, 99-102" counts as four pages in the sum

<sup>41</sup> Hursthouse, *Virtue Ethics*, 1999, p. 232f; compare 218: "But what could this fifth end be?"

them."<sup>42</sup> The cave painters of Lascaux, or the earlier painters of rocks in Ubirr in northern Australia, to give the usual interpretation, made hopeful images of the animal bodies they hoped to kill and the animal spirits they kept faith with. We cannot be sure of the details of their hope and faith precisely because we lack their words.

The other virtues can flourish without speech, even in non-humans. Think of White Fang in the team, or finally at home in California, exhibiting canine Courage, Justice, Prudence, Love, and even perhaps Temperance, though I suppose *that* one is a little hard to see in a dog. Aristotle noted that "so in a number of animals we observe gentleness or fierceness, mildness or cross temper, courage, or timidity, fear or confidence, high spirit or low cunning, and, with regard to intelligence, something equivalent to sagacity."<sup>43</sup>

But not Faith or Hope. We say a dog is faithful; and is hopeful for the bone. But in a dog these are reducible to solidarity with the pack and pleasure in the marrow. Is human faith or hope so reducible? Marx and Freud to the contrary, I think not. The aborigine's Dreaming or the tales of the Great Spirit, the holy text, the Johnny Cash song, the language in our lives spin out and out. Humans can't leave ideas alone. "The animals do not live in the world," sang Edwin Muir,

Are not in time and space  
From birth to death hurled.  
No word do they have, not one  
To plant a foot upon,  
Were never in any place.

For with names the world was called,  
Out of the empty air,  
With names was built and walled,  
Line and circle and square. . . .<sup>44</sup>

Think of a human mother before language who Courageously overcomes her fear of bears and so with Prudence finds some berries close to the bear's cave, which she shares Lovingly with her child, exercising Temperance in not gorging on them all herself, and then gives some to her child's playmate, too, in Justice. Yet without a language in which to symbolize the transcendent she cannot be said to exercise Faith in the historical identity of her Clan of the Cave Bear, or Hope for an afterlife in the sky. And she can't pass on her faiths and hopes. Perhaps this is why recognizably modern customs of burial and art appear rather suddenly together, worldwide, when language appears to have spread rather suddenly out of Mother Africa, worldwide.

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<sup>42</sup> Hampshire, "Postscript," 1982, in Hampshire, *Thought and Action*, 1959, p. 283.

<sup>43</sup> Aristotle, *History of Animals*, Bk. VIII, Part 1.

<sup>44</sup> Muir, "The Animals," 1956.

The heroine of the David Lodge novel *Thinks . . .* (2001) faces a conference of confidently positivist and behaviorist brain scientists. She gently notes to them the literary axiom they may perhaps have overlooked, "that human consciousness is uniquely capable of imagining that which is not physically present to the senses," instancing Marvell:<sup>45</sup>

The mind, that ocean where each kind  
Does straight its own resemblance find;  
Yet it creates, transcending these,  
Far other worlds and other seas,  
Annihilating all that's made  
To a green thought in a green shade.

There could be no religion without language. That is clear enough. What is not clear is the outcome of our two- or three-century old experiment in language without religion. Perhaps the two are inseparable. I think; therefore I believe.

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From the aborigines of the songlines and the cave painters of Lascaux to the plastic present, then, people have not lived without the transcendent. We are unique in this. Or at least so we imagine, lacking access to the spiritual world of whales and gorillas.

"If [faith] was not directed towards the true God," A. N. Wilson points out, noting the logic of the First Commandment, "it would be directed towards idols."<sup>46</sup> And therefore the modern Westerners rejecting God found other gods, in Will or Despair or History or Spiritualism or Science or the Environment. Giuseppe Mazzini had declared in 1835 that "the republican party is not a political party; it is essentially a religious party," and he declared again in 1848 that Young Italy "was not a sect but a religion of patriotism. Sects may die under violence; religions may not."<sup>47</sup> In the same revolutionary year he wrote: "Young men of Italy, it is time that you should comprehend how grand, how holy and religious is the mission confided to you by God."<sup>48</sup> By the end of the century Puccini's Tosca, who "lived for art, lived for love," and her lover Caravadossi, similarly motivated – and somewhat accidentally a nationalist revolutionary, too – explore the limits of these substitute religions among the Italians.

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<sup>45</sup> Lodge, *Thinks . . .*, 2001, p. 318.

<sup>46</sup> Wilson, *God's Funeral*, 1999, p. 59.

<sup>47</sup> Mazzini in Ganulee, ed., *Selected Writings*, pp. 106, 103.

<sup>48</sup> Mazzini in Ganulee, ed., *Selected Writings*, p. 105.

The Age of Substitution begins among a handful of advanced European souls as early as 1700, is widespread among them in 1800, is a passion among a wider clerisy after 1848, and takes hold among the newly educated masses after 1880 and especially after 1968. Interestingly, Japan embarked on the first part of this history a little earlier. In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century it had its own secular phase, in a Japanese version of the Enlightenment, against Buddhism. And in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, somewhat in advance of similar Romantic nationalisms in Europe, some Japanese substituted National Learning for a China-worshipping and classicizing Confucianism.

In Europe for about two centuries now a secular religion of Beauty has been fashioned out of one or another Art. Wagner's remark that "I believe in God, Mozart, and Beethoven" is not merely a secular witticism. It is a serious invitation to beatitude through Art, a faith reaching its height in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It persists. Lucy bothers Schoeder over his piano with an earnest question: "I'm looking for the answer to life, Schoeder. What do you think is the answer?" Next panel, he replies with screaming capitals: "BEETHOVEN!" Next panel, more screaming: "*Beethoven is it, clear and simple!! Do you understand?!*" The fourth panel fills with notes from a piano piece, presumably by Beethoven, and Lucy's subdued "Good grief!"<sup>49</sup>

And it is new. The musicians in Mozart's time, or the painters in Vermeer's, or the poets and playwrights in Shakespeare's, had viewed themselves as crafts- and business-people, not as secular saints. All those craftspeople, further, were, most of them, believing Christians, if only because believing in Christianity was not viewed as optional. They did not need Art, capital A, or screaming block capitals, because they already had a transcendent, called God, capital G.

The shift comes with radicalism and Romance. Consider, for example, the modern public art museum, which begins in 1793 with the opening of the Louvre to all citizens. The Vatican had started occasional public exhibitions in 1773. But the Louvre was an aggressively populist project, a project transferred by the Bonaparte brothers to the Accademia of Venice in 1807 and to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam in 1808.<sup>50</sup> The museum was transformed in a revolutionary age from a plaything for aristocrats into a democratic temple to Beauty, replacing God. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the museum came to be devoted to the admiring of Genius and in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century to the anticipation of Shock. But anyway "devoted."

That is, museums since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century have been temples for the worship of some God-replacing transcendent. One is quiet in them, contemplative, worshipful, impressed by the presence of The Sacred. One carries home trinkets from the museum

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<sup>49</sup> *Classic Peanuts*, *Chicago Tribune* March 24, 2005.

<sup>50</sup> Johnson, *Birth of the Modern*, 1991, p. 600f.

gift shop like crucifixes from the shops around St. Peter's. "As people desert the churches to fill the galleries," writes Nathalie Heinich, "art is no longer an instrument, but instead an object of sacralization. . . . Widely circulated reproductions are but substitutes . . . in those places where the ordinary person can experience the presence of the originals, preserved as relics."<sup>51</sup> Indeed the literal churches of Christianity have been turned into museums, especially in Italy. The skeptical tourists swoon before Christian frescoes. How odd/ Of God/ To be crazy/ About Veronese. But not so crazy/ As those enticed/ By Christian Veronese/ Who spurn the Christ.

Charles Hutchinson, one of Chicago's pork kings, and Martin Ryerson, a lumber baron, made the Art Institute in the 1890s a democratic cathedral of culture. The bourgeois Chicagoans acquired European paintings by the square yard—for example El Greco's *Assumption of the Virgin*, urged on the Paris agent of the Institute by Mary Cassatt. Hutchinson replied, "We have made our money in pigs, but is that any reason why we should not spend it on paintings?" Hutchinson in fact spent fully half his large annual income from meatpacking on civic projects, such as the Art Institute, and on Jane Addams' Hull House.

Addams herself is sometimes said to have used Art to raise the immigrant poor of Halstead Street. That was a typically Progressive project, the bourgeoisie bending down to impart bourgeois values to the poor. In truth Addams was skeptical of the notion favored at Toynbee Hall in London (1884-) that Art was elevating. But a mile away from Hull House and far up the social scale Hutchinson certainly did have in mind civilizing the millionaires of Prairie Avenue with the Art Institute.<sup>52</sup> Neither project in the short run would achieve its end, since art is not so powerful in the short run. But the point is that they tried, viewing Art as their god.

It is hardly surprising nowadays to find art museums very common in, say, the progressive Netherlands. Bookstores in the sophisticated neighborhoods of Rotterdam or Amsterdam or Gouda shelve their many books of poetry next to their few books on God. Until the 1960s half of the titles issued by Dutch publishers were religious. No longer. But the old stock of cultural capital, formerly religious, is re-appropriated now for non-religious ends of a secular and yet still transcendent Faith and Hope.

The Noorderkerk was the first church built in Amsterdam for specifically Protestant worship. It is still used sometimes as a church in the sober fashion of the North Hollanders. But mainly it is now a meeting hall to celebrate *secular* faith and hope. On the day of remembrance for the Amsterdam Jews, at 8:00 p.m. exactly, a little band outside the Noorderkerk in the yuppified neighborhood of Amsterdam's Jordaan

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<sup>51</sup> Heinich, *Glory of Van Gogh*, 1991 (1996), p. 148.

<sup>52</sup> Miller, *City of the Century*, 1996, pp. 387-391, 422.

plays a few songs, the hymns so to speak for the largely gentile congregation, and then god's service moves inside for communion with transcendent Faith and Hope and *Agape*, the reading of secular poems and the playing of classical music.

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In other words, we humans, even we bourgeois humans, cannot get along without transcendence – faith in a past, hope for a future, justified by Larger Considerations, namely, the love of a transcendent. If we don't have religious hope and faith we'll substitute hope and faith and love in Art or Science or National Learning. If we don't have Art or Science or National Learning or Anglicanism we'll substitute fundamentalism or the Rapture. If we don't have fundamentalism or the Rapture or the local St. Wenceslaus parish we'll substitute our family or the rebuilt antique car. It's a consequence of the human ability to symbolize, a fixture of our philosophical psychology.

We might as well acknowledge it, if only to keep watch on transcendence and prevent it from doing mischief, as did once a Russian hope for The Revolution and as now does a Saudi Arabian faith in an Islamic past. The Bulgarian-French critic, Tzvetan Todorov, who has seen totalitarianism, warns that "democracies put their own existence in jeopardy if they neglect the human need for transcendence."<sup>53</sup> Michael Ignatieff, a philosophical member of parliament in Canada, put it well: "The question of whether . . . the needs we once called religious can perish without consequence . . . remains central to understanding the quality of modern man's happiness."<sup>54</sup> Evidently the answer is no. There are consequences and there will be more. That is not a reason to return to the older sureties. It is a reason to take seriously the transcendent in our bourgeois lives.

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<sup>53</sup> Todorov, *Hope and Memory*, 2000, p. 32.

<sup>54</sup> Ignatieff, *Needs of Strangers*, 1984, p. 21.

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