

SUMMARIES SIS 31/2021

Bernard Bruning & Anthony Dupont

To Be or Not to Be the Same, That Is the Question – The Augustinian *Idipsum* as the Hinge between Two Modes of Being, the Divine and the Human

In the *Confessiones*, Augustine of Hippo narrates his restless and unhappy state before his conversion. Disordered emotions made Augustine frenetically lose himself in the multiplicity of fleeting *bona*. As such he was not able to find true happiness, which – he discovered at his conversion – is only to be found in the unicity of God, the *aeterna simplicitas*, who is *semper idem ipse*. Augustine describes in *Conf.* 9, 11 how Ps 4:9 instructed him in this theological and existential truth: God is *idipsum*, and only in this *self-same* God peace and happiness is to be found. Subsequent to a *status quaestionis* on the scholarship concerning the Augustinian *idipsum*, the current article offers a close reading of *Conf.* 9 and two earlier occurrences in Augustine's oeuvre of this notion (*Enarratio in Psalmum* 4,2-10 and *De vera religione* 40-41). The theologouemon *idipsum* Augustine of Hippo discovered in Ps 4:9 helped him to come to a hermeneutically linked understanding of God, mankind and their intimate relationship.

Pablo Irizar

Sensing Dislocated Belonging – Augustine on the Image of God and Becoming Church in the *Expositions on the Psalms*

Church membership affords a sense of belonging. However, does a sense of belonging affect membership in the Church? The aim of this essay is to show how the Church, which Augustine identifies with the image of God in the *Expositions on the Psalms*, offers a model to capture dislocated belonging. We proceed by first succinctly elucidating the intimate link between Church membership and salvation (§ 1), which raises the challenge of thinking about belonging in the Church independently of baptism and salvation, specifically in the *Expositions on the Psalms*. Accordingly, we then show that sensing constitutes belonging for Augustine (§ 2) and that suffering is the framework of the Church as the Whole Christ in the *Expositions on the Psalms* (§ 3). In closing, the Church as the image of God is presented as a model to describe the process of dislocated belonging as becoming (§ 4). In short, Augustine construes Church membership as the dynamic belonging of images of the Trinity (humanity), through the perfect divine image (Christ), within the wholesome image of God (the Church). Thus, sensing dislocated belonging affects membership in the Church.

Carmela Leonforte Plimack

Interiority in Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Avila

This article investigates the dimension of inwardness in the works of Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Avila, with special attention devoted to the influence that the Augustinian tradition on the *inner man* plays in their spirituality. It examines the structuring of their imagery, the essence of their mystical language, and analyzes the manner in which they imaginatively present the depth of their theological discourse. It explores, in particular, the Catherinian and Teresian notion of self-knowledge in regard to the functioning of the main symbols of interiority in their works. The paper considers such symbols in light of an overall dynamic iconically involving ideas of *internal* and *external*, of *movement* and *space* that seems to prevail in the shaping and expression of Catherine's and Teresa's mystical thought.

Elizabeth Liebert

Interior Motions from a Female Perspective – Their Role in Guiding the Spiritual Exercises

This essay examines the concept of interior motions in the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola from the perspective of intersectional feminism. Beginning with a foundation in 'second wave' feminism, it adds the perspective of intersectionality to create a hermeneutic that is more adequate for understanding the experience of contemporary women making the Spiritual Exercises than feminism alone. Once the hermeneutic is in place, the essay explores implications for attitudes and behaviors in the one who guides the Exercises and then applies the hermeneutic to selected passages from the First Week of the Exercises, demonstrating that interior motions are heavily dependent on the social system in which individual women live. It concludes with a dual challenge: that those who give the Exercises bring this hermeneutic to their work with women making the Exercises and that they challenge the intersectional dynamics that hinder both individual women and women as a distinct group from becoming the persons God created them to be.

Steven Payne

The Dark Night of the Soul, Yesterday and Today – Revisiting John of the Cross's Classic Text and Symbol

Without always knowing its source, contemporary commentators often invoke some variant of the expression 'dark night of the soul' in trying to characterize the multiple crises of our times, including the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic consequences, global warming and environmental degradation, a renewed reckoning with systemic racism, and political unrest of all sorts. This paper recalls the origins and understanding of the 'dark night' symbol and terminology in the

writings of John of the Cross. After presenting an overview of the relevant Sanjuanist texts, especially the treatise known to us as *The Dark Night of the Soul*, as well as a concise summary of John's main teachings therein, this paper looks at how these have come to be applied (and perhaps sometimes misapplied) today, raising several critical questions and paying special attention to the ways in which John's sixteenth-century message might help us weather our 21st-century storms.

Rob Faesen

Jan 'Pilgrim' Pullen (1520–1608) on the 'Supra-essential' Life

Jan Pullen (c.1520–1608) was a prolific and very interesting late Middle Dutch mystical author, almost unknown to scholarship. Only eight of his treatises have been published, but he wrote many more. Seventy titles have been attributed to him, even though only forty have been identified. He probably came into contact with the Middle Dutch mystical tradition in the period that he was a student in Cologne, namely via the Carthusians and the group around Nicolas Eschius. In this contribution, first a short overview is presented of the content of the eight treatises that have been published until now, and then one central topic is discussed that is present in all these works, namely the 'supra-essential' life. This topic is developed by Pullen completely in line with Ruusbroec's theology. The historical development of this term shows that in Pullen's time, after the censure of Henry Herp's *Mirror of Perfection*, it was usually avoided. However, Pullen maintains the term, in its original meaning, including the harmonious combination of total surrender to God and human activity. In the appendix of this contribution, an overview is given of all Pullen's works.

Marc De Kesel

A Hand that Mystically Writes – On Madame Guyon

This article explores the way Guyon considers mystical selflessness. More precisely, it reads and comments upon some pages in her oeuvre in which she situates the annihilation of her 'self' not so much in the ecstatic mystical moments, as in the very act of writing about her mystical path. There, Guyon's selflessness is incarnated in the pen that writes her texts. In her spiritual texts, it is 'her hand' that writes in a mystical way. This kind of scribal self-annihilation makes Guyon's texts anticipate the literary writings of three centuries later. Many twentieth-century avant-garde authors would do everything to free their texts from any intervention of the writing 'I' or 'self'. Speaking or writing without an 'I': that was what Guyon wanted to do in the seventeenth century, and that is what so many literary authors of the previous century also explicitly intended to do.

Inigo Bocken

Mysticism and Freedom – Alois Dempf's Critique of Alfred Rosenberg's Interpretation of Mysticism

In the first half of the twentieth century, a broad intellectual debate about the meaning of mysticism emerged. This debate also has major political consequences. For the national socialist Alfred Rosenberg in particular, mysticism represents a holistic alternative to a Christian interpretation of reality and thus underpins the naturalistic worldview of national socialism. The German Catholic philosopher Alois Dempf, through his studies of mysticism, aims to show precisely that this worldview cannot be legitimized by reference to mysticism at all. Dempf is a somewhat forgotten thinker with an impressive body of work. In the 1930s he was at the center of the debate about a Christian philosophy. In the discussion about mysticism he sees the battlefield on which the new ideologies of the time can be fought. This contribution describes this debate and also brings out its current relevance for the discussion of holism and naturalism.

François Manga

The Identity and the Divine Incarnation – A Mystical Exploration of the Spiritual Experience of Léopold Sédar Senghor

Léopold Sédar Senghor, the famous French language scholar, has more than one achievement in his life. For instance, his political activities led him to enter history as the first president of the Republic of Senegal in West Africa. These prominent public positions, however, do not say everything about him. As a fruitful writer, Senghor published many texts in which he exposes his understanding of the world. About ten years after his death, several of the letters he sent to Cees Bartels revealed an unknown aspect of his life. In these writings, Senghor dares to speak about his faith, vision of life, and spiritual experience backed by his affinity with the mystical experience of the Spanish Carmelite nun Teresa of Avila. The current article intends to expose this hidden side of Senghor for three main reasons: a better and essential knowledge of Senghor, breaking through the African spirituality, and an understanding of the mysticism from the perspective of the African experience on incarnation.

Kick Bras

Thomas Merton and Hagia Sophia

Thomas Merton (1915–1968) in 1960 wrote his 'Hagia Sophia'. In this prose poem he describes in lyrical language a feminine dimension of God, his Holy Wisdom with which he dwells in creation and in our inner self. This wisdom became human in Jesus Christ through the virgin Mary, and transforms humanity and creation through the Holy Ghost. In this essay I will investigate the sources Merton used for his concept of 'Holy Wisdom'. He found them in the Wisdom

literature of Israel. But also the concept of *theoria fysike* of Evagrius Ponticus and Maximus Confessor inspired him. And he was deeply influenced by the Russian Sophiology of Soloviev, Bulgakov, Berdyaev and Evdokimov. Merton had several spiritual experiences and dreams about Hagia Sophia that manifested the deep existential meaning of this concept for his contemplative life. In a letter and in his famous poem he explored the different meanings of this spiritual image of unification of God and manhood. I will end with some suggestions of the relevance of Merton's conception for our spiritual questions of today.

Theo van der Zee

Language and Silence as Ways of Participating in Educational Practices with a View to Subjectification

From an existential perspective, the educational task consists in awakening the desire in students to exist in the world in a grown-up way, that is: as a subject. Subjectification therefore is at the core of the educational task. In order to enhance subjectification, teachers have to provide students opportunities to be responsive to and responsible for the other.

The contribution of this article to the theory formation on the educational issue of subjectification consists in the exploration of the pedagogical value of silence with a view to an operative model of educational practices. Silence is a phenomenon in itself with a rich potential to enhance educative practices of responsiveness and responsibility. From a participatory perspective, teachers and students are invited to participate in such practices in which silence is present as well language is used. Based on characteristics of mystical practices of silence, a teacher – student conversation is analysed in order to find an operative model of educational practices with a view to subjectification.

Herman Westerink

The Subversive Practices of the Desiring Subject – Michel de Certeau between Lacan's Psychoanalysis and Foucault's Genealogy

Michel de Certeau is one of the most important scholars theorizing the place, status and character of mysticism and spirituality in the modern secular age as an era of vast decline of established religious institutions and bodies of knowledge. In this context mysticism and spirituality are seismographs of a crisis. They emerge outside or in the margins of new orders of power and knowledge, and are characterized by eruptions of melancholic desire for the lost presence of the divine. On this point, Certeau distances himself from Michel Foucault's focus on the production of subjects through subjection to power-knowledge regimes. Instead, Certeau stresses individual tactics for thinking, speaking and acting 'differently'. This article explores and compares Certeau's and Foucault's views on

modern mysticism, counter-conducts and tactics, arguing that the most fundamental point of discussion between the two ‘genealogists’ concerns the issue of desire. Whereas Foucault will develop his thought through a critique of the primacy of law and desire in Western disciplining practices, notably in the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss and Lacan, Certeau will focus on the subversive and performative potential of desire, thus remaining closer to the Lacanian views of the subject as desiring being.

Macario Ofilada Mina

Reading and Thematizing the Spirit – Topicalization of Spirit as Knowledge (Science) and Discipline (Art) of the Spirit

This article is a journey, making use of new categories and schemas, through concentric circles, with each repeated visit bringing forth an enriched notion of Spirituality or the spiritual path vis-à-vis the Absolute, the Transcendent, the Immanent, History, Eschatology and the Human Spirit and an attempt to break new ground by proposing the key concepts of Reading, Thematizing, Topicalization in order to define Spirituality, thematically understood as Approaching the Absolute. At the same time, the study proposes dimensions, processes that underlie the dynamicity of the process, of the way, of the itinerary. The result is a novel way, with new terminologies, of understanding Spiritually, both as lived and studied, especially with its epistemological pretensions. Our key concepts bring about a new interpretation of Spirituality, as an opera (work), drama, to be executed, to be lived out. This is the dynamicity of Spirituality which is necessarily mystagogical!