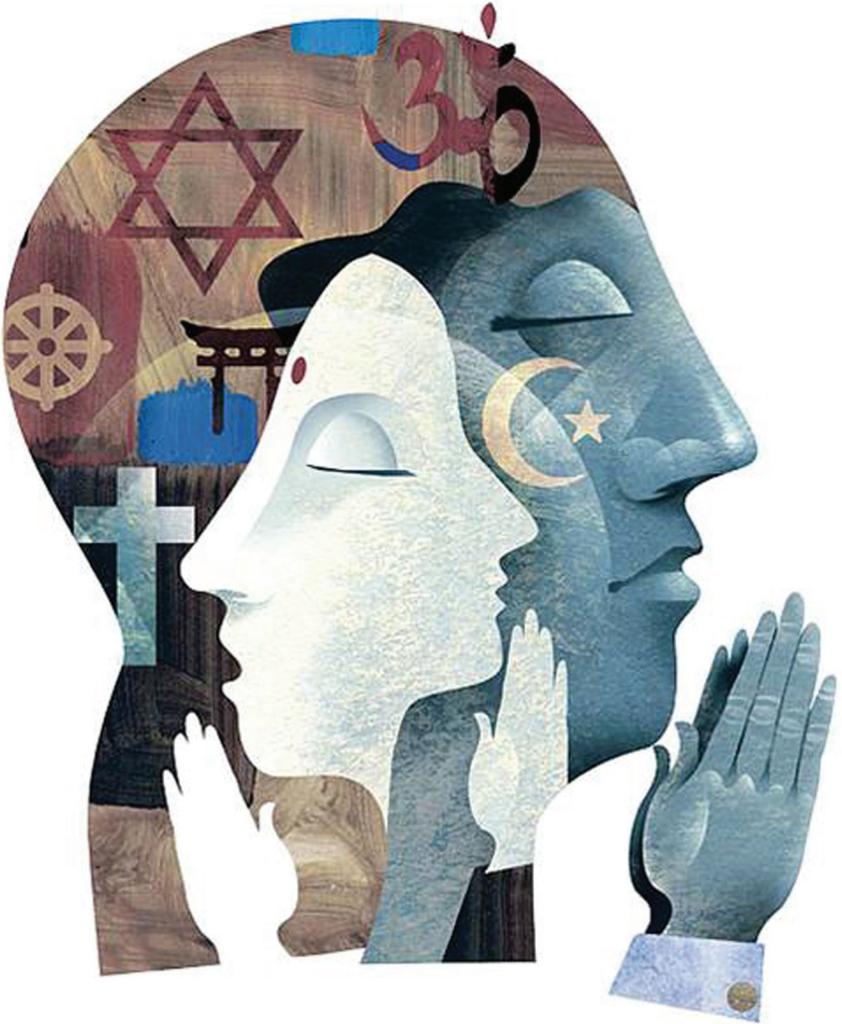


**PERSONHOOD, PRACTICE, AND TRANSFORMATION:
CLASSICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES**

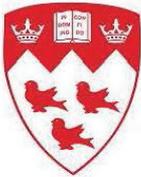


**2012 MCGILL CENTRE FOR RESEARCH ON RELIGION
GRADUATE STUDENTS' CONFERENCE
MONTREAL, OCTOBER 19TH–20TH 2012**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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McGILL CENTRE FOR RESEARCH ON RELIGION
CENTRE DE RECHERCHE SUR LA RELIGION



CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Friday, October 19th 2012 (Birks Building, 3520 University St., Montreal)

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 16h00 | Registration
Birks Lobby |
| 17h00 | Plenary address by Dr. Ravi Ravindra, Dalhousie University
Birks Chapel |
| 18h45 | Wine and cheese reception
Birks Lobby |

Saturday, October 20th 2012 (Thomson House, 3650 McTavish St. Montreal)

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 8h00 | Breakfast (Thomson House Lobby) |
| 8h30 | Session 1 (Thomson House Boardrooms) |
| 10h30 | Coffee break (Thomson House Lobby) |
| 10h45 | Session 2 (Thomson House Boardrooms) |
| 12h45 | Lunch (Thomson House Lobby) |
| 13h45 | Session 3 (Thomson House Boardrooms) |
| 16h00 | Post-conference Mixer (Thomson House Bar) |

	Panel 1 (Rm. 403)	Panel 2 (Rm. 404)	Panel 3 (Rm. 405)	Panel 4 (Rm. 406)
Session 1 (8 h 30 – 10 h 30)	Christian Doctrine and Practice (1) C: Bernier P: Robinson P: Morgan P: Trostyanskiy P: Wood	Personhood in Contemporary Perspective C: Davidson P: Killoran P: Johnson P: Schmidt P: Prewitt-Davis	Japanese Buddhism C: Coughlin (M.) P: Oe P: Rama P: Saito P: Esguerra	Personal Identity in Indian and Tibetan Religions C: Greydanus P: Jones P: Kachroo P: Brown P: Grimes
Session 2 (10h45– 12 h 45)	Christian Doctrine and Practice (2) C: Parker P: Wright P: Cumming P: Wilton P: Waing	Religious, Le- gal, and Social Definitions of Personhood C: Strunk P: Estrada P: Pietrzykowski P: Kirby P: Adams	Art and Literature C: Coughlin (R.) P: Rasmi P: Freeman P: Stroup P: Greydanus	Nishitani Keiji's En- gagement with German Philosophy C: Hori P: Bentley P: Coughlin (M.) P: Menezes
Session 3 (13h45– 16 h 00)	Christian Doctrine and Practice (3) C: Bernier P: Bourguès P: Fisher P: Imperato P: Smith	Trauma and Transformation C: Greydanus P: Webb P: Taylor P: Madarshahi P: Gagnon P: Nagrath	Philosophical- historical conceptions of personhood C: Cumming P: Coughlin (R.) P: Barrow P: Parker P: Wood P: Novis	

ABSTRACTS**Session 1, Panel 1, Room 403****Christian Doctrine and Practice (1)****Chair: Richard Bernier****Daniel Robinson, Graduate Theological Union
Epistemological Agreement between Eastern and Western Christian
Personalisms**

The theological traditions of both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches affirm a special dignity for divine and human persons. In both traditions, Christian Personalism has been defended through the idiom of phenomenology. Despite this similarity between the Catholic and Orthodox traditions, Personalism has also been used by certain Orthodox theologians as a particularly vehement rhetorical tool with which they have castigated the Western philosophical tradition for its inherent objectivization of the person. This paper cannot cover the historical contexts in which this polemical Personalism has developed, but will rather analyze the epistemological contributions of one significant thinker from each camp: Max Scheler (Germany, 1874–1928) and Christos Yannaras (Greece, b. 1935). Despite the noticeable anti-Western polemic in Yannaras, there are significant similarities between the epistemological starting points of the two authors. Scheler and Yannaras both embrace phenomenology as an epistemological alternative to “typical” Western rationalism. After showing the dangers of rationalism, they both move to phenomenology in order to establish an epistemological space for the knowing of persons as non-objects. There is a basic parallel between the Schelerian distinction between objects and acts and Yannaras’s distinction between essence and energies. In both Personalisms, the person is no-thing, and yet known fully in act and energy. Furthermore, in both Scheler and Yannaras, these distinctions require an equivalent replacement of the Modernist, (Cartesian-Kantian) rationalism by a phenomenological empiricism in order for the non-object to qualify as a known content of knowledge. From this methodology, they both argue for the inclusion of “naïve” experience as truth. In Scheler, this enables the person to be known through the immediate experiencing of acts; in Yannaras, this allows the person to know other persons in the ecstasy of hypostatic energies.

**Gabriel Morgan, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia
Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity**

The concept of the person has a developmental history. A major part of that history is the invention of the concept of “hypostasis” by the early church fathers in an attempt to articulate the meaning of the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. It is important to look at the doctrine of the Trinity more closely when thinking about the concept of the person theologically, first because of its historical significance, but also for the dogmatic reason of articulating what is meant by the term “person” with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, since it denotes something more

than an impersonal modalism, but less than the modern notion of the person. This paper focuses primarily on the doctrine of the Trinity in the Theological Oration of Gregory of Nazianzus, and argues that the doctrine is not meant to be an abstract definition of the abysmal being of God as such, but rather to be about *economia* and *soteriology*, or about the manner, strange as it is, of God's interaction with human beings for their salvation. This has significance for the concept of the person because the human person in Christian theology must be defined according to the person of Jesus Christ the Logos and, by extension, the interpersonal communion of love in the divine life with God into which every person is called. This must be seen as fundamental to the meaning of the person theologically, and supports the generally Personalist view that only persons can love.

Sergey Trostyanskiy, Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York The Meaning of Personhood in the Letter (101) to Cledonius by Gregory of Nazianzus

The notion of personhood in late antiquity/early Christianity is a topic of great interest among contemporary scholars. This interest is not unexpected and is largely determined by the necessity to decipher the meaning of the Christological controversies of the fourth to eighth centuries, assuming that various anthropological schemas of late antiquity were formative for the incompatible concepts of Christ's personality at the time. Hence the subject matter is not an easy one. A challenge of dealing with both the traditional conceptual dichotomies that came out of late Platonism and the newly emerging notions, associated with the non-accidental particular beings in their inner and outer manifestations, is quite significant; especially in cases where a number of heterogeneous notions coexist within the same discourse (this situation is quite characteristic for the majority of early Christian theologians). Moreover, since the notion of personhood pertains to the issues of metaphysics, epistemology, psychology, cosmology, and ethics at once, a careful distinction of meaning of the term should be made to avoid multiple confusions.

In this presentation I attempt to elucidate the notion of personhood as presented in the letter to Cledonius (101) by Gregory of Nazianzus. I analyze Gregory's understanding of the personal integrity of human beings and of the role of the noetic phase of the soul as responsible for the ontological instability of humanity. The notion of personhood here is framed into the metaphysics of the incarnate soul and is intrinsically connected with the notion of ontological stability. It is my conjecture that, if the notion of personhood is given an ontological significance, the being of humanity in Gregory is clearly impersonal and requires an external support of the Second Hypostasis of the Trinity that is the sole source of its ontological stability.

Nathaniel Wood, Fordham University

Theosis and the Practice of Personhood: Two Eastern Orthodox Perspectives

Personhood has become a central feature of modern Eastern Orthodox Christian theology. This trend has emerged in connection with a resurgence of interest in the traditional doctrine of theosis, or humanity's deification. Contemporary Orthodox thinkers conceive of human personhood as openness to transformative communion with God, which elevates the human being above created nature to participate in the divine life of the Trinity. Personhood as theosis is freedom from natural limitation and necessity, and it is accomplished through the ascetical and ecclesial practices of the Church. But as I argue in this essay, there is a subtle but significant difference between two divergent strands of modern Orthodox thinking on personhood. This difference, which concerns the role of nature in the constitution of personhood, has important influence on how one understands the transformative practices that lead to deification. In one strand, represented by the influential "neo-patristic" theology of John Zizioulas, personhood (divine and human) is constituted independently of nature, exclusively through communion as a free affirmation of personal existence; nature as the "content" of the person is relegated to apophatic silence. Yet in the Russian Sophiological tradition of Vladimir Soloviev and Sergei Bulgakov, nature as content of the person assumes a central role, and human persons attain deification by mirroring the absolute content of God. In this paper, I will show how the Sophiological conception of personhood refigures Orthodox ascetical practice as a this-worldly struggle for social and political transfiguration, freeing the doctrine of theosis from its all-too-typical associations with otherworldliness. My paper will explore the points of divergence between these two theologies of personhood and demonstrate how the Sophiological conception can illuminate the relevance of theosis for modern progressive political practice.

Session 1, Panel 2, Room 404

Personhood in Contemporary Perspective (1)

Chair: Melissa Davidson

Raissa Killoran, Queen's University

Butler's Theory of Performativity and the Formation of Religious Identity

This piece interrogates the Butlerian understanding of performativity and seeks to extend it to a developing concept of ritual in identity formation. Performativity will be evaluated in co-ordinance with religious identity and its preservation through ritualistic behaviours. For Butler, identity is contingent upon cultural conditions that circumscribe acceptable identities. As outlined in Butler's pivotal text, *Gender Trouble*, subverting identity is possible through parody—only in frivolous mimicry of identities can their transparency be revealed. The prevalence of stringent identity categories is, for Butler, fraught; she asserts that women unite on the basis of common oppression, without deconstructing taxonomical lines

imposed upon them in being addressed as “women,” a tenuous category; women seek liberation from patriarchy’s binds while inhabiting identities under its aegis.

My work expands on Butler’s performativity, exploring it in the realm of religious behaviour. Using Victor Turner’s understanding of ritual and identity formation through performance, the theory of performativity becomes applicable to religion. Ritual, or performativity, here, is the anxiety-induced manifestation of religious identity; ritual, in religiosity, affirms both the congregation’s and the devotee’s identity. Just as Butler points to anxiety associated with gender ambiguity, ritual resolves the potential of religious ambiguity. Akin to Butler’s gender performance, religious performance aims to elucidate both self-assertion of identity (“I am a Catholic; I go to mass every Sunday”) as well as collective identity (“We Jews observe the Sabbath”). The troubling aspect of these claims mirrors that explored in *Gender Trouble*—performances and categories fail, resulting in ambiguity of identity. Are Catholics who do not perform “Catholicity” (read through a criteria of ritual participation) still Catholics? Here is found the current cultural climate in regards to both gender and religion—an obstruction of essential claims of ontological status, both rely on performance and ritual for intelligibility, while these performances continually falter.

Bryan Johnson, Concordia University

The Paradox of the Posthuman in Hiromu Arakawa’s *Fullmetal Alchemist*

Posthuman theory seeks to expand the definition of what we consider human. In the face of rapid advances in science and technology, the question of what it means to be human has become increasingly complex and opaque. As human bodies become increasingly intertwined with technology and intermixed with other species, the boundary between human and non-human comes into question. Issues of personhood and identity have been magnified by developments in fields such as medical prosthetics and genetic engineering. How do we separate what is human from what is not? Hiromu Arakawa’s popular manga series *Fullmetal Alchemist* brings these questions of personhood to the fore. The bodies of protagonists Edward and Alphonse Elric have been altered in such a way that their identities are thrown into question. Through an analysis of her depiction of a “posthuman” world we can see how Arakawa has blurred the boundaries of what is human. Modern notions of personhood and identity have been greatly influenced by ideas that gained prominence in Europe during the Enlightenment. Proponents of various strains of humanism have argued for the uniqueness of humans and reserved a special place for them above other beings. These worldviews have shaped our modern notion of what it means to be human. Recent work in the field of posthuman theory has sought to move beyond the traditional definition of “human,” but as scholars such as Julie Clarke have pointed out, has failed to bypass many of the anthropocentric concerns of humanism. The scenarios depicted in *Fullmetal Alchemist* illustrate how boundaries between human and non-human are not as clear as we might assume. Unlike many manga and anime that glorify the possibilities

of posthuman developments, Fullmetal Alchemist is an example of how science fiction can highlight the drawbacks and dangers of living in a posthuman world.

**George Schmidt, Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York
Climbing the Scala Naturae: Contrasting the Bare Existence of the Homo Sacer and the Sovereign Dimension of Corporate Personhood**

The language surrounding human rights makes palpable the presence of a politics of recognition still at work today. The logic of such a theopolitic, originally systematized by Hegel and developed by thinkers such as Kojève and Fanon, claims that personhood exists only in so far as consciousness imposes its existence on another to be recognized as a person. Only a few of the political struggles today are fundamentally fights for recognition where non-persons fight persons to be recognized as persons. However, I hope to offer a portrait of one particularly crucial instance of this struggle for personhood, namely the history of the corporation in the United States. Because of the secularization of the non-believer into the non-person, the internal logic of this fight cannot be understood purely in terms of bare existence, but rather as bare existence demanding the dignity of a soul. For this reason, if Schmitt's famous proposal is true, that "All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development...but also because of their systematic structure," then any proper analysis of the politics of recognition must be studied in parallaxic terms, moving between ideology and theology. I will elucidate the corporate struggle for personhood by putting it in juxtaposition with the struggle of the homo sacer or "sacred man." Drawing upon Giorgio Agamben's theopolitical conception of the homo sacer as "the originary 'political' relation" that operates within an "inclusive exclusion," I will explore the ways in which the sovereign's paradoxical recognition of the homo sacer mimics the logic operating in corporate personhood. By paralleling the recognition of the corporation alongside the homo sacer, I hope to open space for understanding not only the personhood but also the sovereignty of the corporation as a geopolitical entity.

Elijah Prewitt-Davis, Drew University

The Expletive Name: Exploring the Role of The Proper Name for Conceiving Personhood

This paper seeks to explore the role proper names have for understanding personhood. Similar to a persona, proper names reveal certain aspects of how we might wish to appear—we seek to make a name for our self—and thus serve as a phenomenal signifier for certain characteristics of an individual person. In the biblical tradition of Avram/Abraham/Ibraham, Sarai/Sarah, Simon/Peter, the changing of a proper name often marks the moment of personal transformation. The significance of the name change thus reveals its non-essential fluidity, as well as its irreducible importance. As Mark C. Taylor has noted: "Within the western theological tradition, the 'original' scene of nomination involves God and man." As notions of God become ever more complex in postmodern culture, so too does the scene of nomination.

Seeking to highlight these complexities while still insisting on the importance of the name, my constructive proposal suggests a theory of what I call the expletive name. Jacques Derrida's reading of Khora, and Catherine Keller's relational theology guide me in this endeavour. Keller suggests that an affirmation of our multiplicitous becoming does not erase the singular person. Similarly, Derrida asserts that Khora is divisible, but that its/her divisibility requires one to always call Khora by the same name. This conversation allows me to highlight the paradoxes inherent to what is proper. To be proper means to be the owner of something unique to myself. But if I am a recognizably proper person, it also means that I am proper only inasmuch as I act within the proper rules of what is proper, which means that I must forsake any property of myself outside of these norms. The unique person, the person with propriety over something unique to their own personhood is, always already improper—or what I call the expletive person.

Session 1, Panel 3, Room 405

Japanese Buddhism

Chair: Melanie Coughlin

Yuta Oe, Sophia University

Kumano Pilgrimage as a Practice of “Death and Rebirth”

Kumano pilgrimage caught the minds of the Japanese people from the 10th century through as late as the 17th century, from the elites of central political power to the rural commoners. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how the image of “death and rebirth” and the idea of asceticism introduced by shugendō, a form of ascetic practice in the mountains, need to be identified as key concepts of the pilgrimage boom to Kumano, a region that lies in the southernmost part of the Kii Peninsula in western Japan. First, I will explore how the deep mountain range of this region was conceived by the first shugenja (the practitioners of shugendō) as an adequate location of practice. Their practice integrated with the aforementioned archaic image of Kumano in such a way that the image coincided with the central concept of their practice, which enabled the terrain to become one of the most prominent locations of practice in Japan. Having established this standpoint, I contend that had it not been for the integration of the two concepts above created by the practitioners, it would have been unlikely for the region to become a destination of pilgrimage, for pilgrimage is in itself an ascetic practice that symbolizes death and rebirth. Therefore, this paper will indicate the significance of the influence of the symbols transmitted from shugendō in the development of Kumano pilgrimage by the Japanese people. At the same time, it could be stated that the archaic image or cosmology of the region was the foundation of the development of Kumano-shugen and its pilgrimage.

Alejandro Morales Rama, Sophia University
Between Kannon and the Fudô Myôô: An Introduction to Izumi Kyôka's
Buddhist Mentality through his Works

Izumi Kyôka (1873–1939) was a writer of novels, novellas, and plays that developed a unique Romantic style opposed to the rise of naturalism in the literature of Meiji Japan. Most of his stories deal with the supernatural and most contain aspects of Buddhism. This paper explores the relationship that Buddhism and literature held in Kyôka's life within the context where Buddhism was persecuted when State Shinto was gaining strength after the enthronement of the Emperor Meiji and Japan's victory in the first Sino-Japanese war. First, through the reading of essays by Kyôka and his pupils this paper explores the author's personal beliefs. Second, this paper analyzes three of his works, *One Day of Spring* (1906), *The Holy Man of Mount Kôya* (1900) and *Yôken Kibun* (1920) side by side with *The Lotus Sutra* and Carmen Blacker's seminal work, *The Catalpa Bow*. By doing so, this paper shows how Kyôka moved from a strict Nichiren Buddhism to a highly personal and syncretic religious thought closer to the Yamabushi and Shugenja. Furthermore, this paper brings to the fore a unique almost symbiotic relationship of religion and literature in Meiji Japan: one where both of them were almost one and the same. It proposes that Kyôka created a mix of Buddhism and a compulsive belief in kotodama (the spirits of words) with literature that were constantly re-shaping each other. Finally, this paper will prove how it was precisely this relationship that gave the author the strength to write, creating a world of images in which he fervently believed he could (figuratively) bring back the dead and be reunited with his deceased mother.

Hiromi Saito, Sophia University
Lambs, Sacrifice, and Transformation: Power Dynamics of Sacrificial
Economy in Marina Abramovic and Yoko Ono's Body Performances

This paper takes precedent theoretical standpoints that recognize correspondence between space of performance and space of ritual; as space of transformation through which participants go through a series of liminal events and come to acquire new perspective on life and personhood. It wishes to offer a structural analysis of performer-participant power relations in contemporary performances whose performers risk their corporeal security and become sacrificial objects to their audience. As Markus Wessendorf suggests in his essay "Bodies in Pain" (1995), the increasing level of violence and pain in contemporary performance has become a highly controversial issue in recent theatrical discourse. Meanwhile, as Erika Fischer-Lichte points out in *Asthetik des Performativen* (2004), performances invoking corporeality through pain, disgust, and uncanniness do not solely recognize the political potentiality of body but also instigate vivid auto-poietic reciprocal creations between audience and artist: This results in what she calls "the re-enchantment of the world (Wiederverzauberung)." To illustrate my point, I will draw examples from Marina Abramovic's *Rhythm 0* (1974) and Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* (1964–1965). Both faced serious challenges when placing their gendered bodies on stage as offerings to their audience: They could cut a piece of

Ono's clothes or play with Abramovic's body with dangerous objects "as desired." These bodies were standing on the critical threshold between playing sacrifice and becoming real sacrificial objects. However, these works exemplify deviations from conventional sacrificial economy since the artists as sacrifice regain their authoritative power after their performance without being entirely consumed. In other words, this paper sees a great potentiality in the power dynamics of these sacrificial performances where sacrificed objects actually survive and are capable of demonstrating their absolute superiority without being "eaten." This analysis wishes to add a possibility to the study of sacrificial economy by outlining the physio-psychological transformations occurring through performing bodies.

Paula Esguerra, McGill University

Buddhist Practice and Poetic Imagery in Dogen's Genjōkōan

Dōgen (1200-1253) placed the Genjōkōan (1233) as the introductory chapter of his magnum opus, the Shōbōgenzō. This authorial decision sheds light into the significance of the Genjōkōan. Moreover, scholars recognize the Genjōkōan, in particular its opening paragraph, as a summarized exposition of the teachings that Dōgen elaborates throughout his Shōbōgenzō. So far, scholarly analysis of the Genjōkōan remains limited in so far as it emphasizes the relevance of the text in terms of an exposition of the Buddhist doctrine, tending to ignore the poetical dimensions of this key piece. In an effort to contribute to available interpretations of the Genjōkōan, this essay highlights its performative and affective dimensions, and contextualizes it within the Zen kōan literary tradition. The main argument presented in this analysis is that in the Genjōkōan, Dōgen successfully implements the Zen strategy of "using language to overcome language"; through aesthetically powerful images the Genjōkōan appeals to the reader's intellectual and emotional faculties, motivating him to sincerely commit to Buddhist practice. The first part of this essay presents the relationship between the Zen kōan literary tradition and Dōgen's perspective on language. The second part suggests a kōan-like reading of the Genjōkōan, followed by a discussion of how this reading enables a deeper understanding of the text's transformative goal.

Session 1, Panel 4, Room 406

Personal Identity in Indian and Tibetan Religions

Chair: Richard Greydanus

Ryan Jones, McGill University

Tibetan Life Writing and Action Beyond Characters

In Tibetan Buddhism, which denies the substantive existence of a self or person, to be a type of person appears problematic, even contradictory. Yet Tibetan Buddhist ritual, practice, and especially literature still seemingly engender a type of personhood: the good Buddhist. I suggest this seeming is just that, a dissonance between what appears as and what underlies Tibetan Buddhist "personhood" or identity. Borrowing from Aristotle's Poetics and Paul Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity,

Large Tibetan Buddhist life writings engender a type of action rather than a type of person, and that rather than persons, karma is the principal focus of Buddhist life stories. It is how persons act, through countless rebirths, which matters most.

In the Poetics, Aristotle argues that plot takes primacy over character. For Aristotle, plot represents men-of-action in action, and Aristotle's action (praxis) is a moral and formative action. In Buddhism, karma literally means action, moral action that entails consequences. Aristotle's vision for poetry's function and Buddhist life writing's apparent function appear similar in that they both engender and give primacy to a type of moral action over and above character. It is their actions that make persons. In the Buddhist context, the primacy of action over character is emphasized and highlighted through depictions of rebirths, multiple persons linked through karma. In essence, karma, or action, is the thread that ties together and thus gives meaning to narrative events. This view of karma as primary to narrative function strongly contrasts with views of karma, such as Wendy Doniger's, in which it is simply a plot device, an explanation without its own explanation, used like a club to keep readers properly contrite.

Meera Kachroo, McGill University

“In Srividya, there is nothing to hide”: esoteric identity in contemporary South Indian Tantra

In December 2011, the Trayinyas Foundation of Mysore organized and hosted the “First International Conference on Srividya.” The event marked a significant moment in delineating the current identity of Srividya—a form of esoteric tantric worship that is enjoying a resurgence in contemporary India. Convened in the Senate Bhavan of the University of Mysore, the conference featured complete televised coverage on Shankara TV, dozens of presenters, hundreds of attendees, and sales of glossy printed materials, exclusive souvenirs (e.g. “neo-antique Gadgets”) and proprietary ritual implements like laser-cut crystal sricakras. At the Trayinyas conference, we can observe many aspects of the modernization of Srividya: the public circulation of once hard-to-access esoteric ritual texts; the production and sale of religious commodities such as decorative fine arts; and the use of novel technologies in the creation and distribution of ritual images and implements. Based on ongoing ethnographic fieldwork, this paper will consider two main issues of identity. How do Srividya initiates accommodate the dark reputation of tantra with their highly orthodox caste membership? And, who are the public proponents of this once closely guarded tradition, and how are they regarded by private practitioners? Srividya initiates are consciously and successfully redefining the boundaries of their religious community, reconstructing the apparatuses of their ritual practice, and positioning their tradition as a form of public esotericism.

Jarrod Brown, University of Hawaii

Self and Sums

The Pāli Abhidhamma texts (specifically the Dhammasangani and its primary commentary, the Attasālinī) provide a systematic account of the theory of no-self

(Pali: *anatta*; Sanskrit *anātman*) and an elaboration of the psycho-physical events that constitute experience leading from one in a state of deluded suffering to the obtainment of enlightenment (Pali: *Nibbana*, Sanskrit: *Nirvana*), the extinguishing of desire and suffering. Critiques of the Buddhist theory of *anatta* have generally focused on its inability to explain intuitions we hold regarding the nature of selves. Hence, typical arguments produced range from naïve linguistic realism arguing that “I” demonstrates selves (as the referent of “I” statements) to more sophisticated arguments regarding the need for a self to synthesize experiences both synchronically and diachronically or the essential subjectivity of experience. Less common have been critiques of the ontological assumptions that provide the grounding for the *Abhidhammikas*’ particular reductionism. I will demonstrate that an *Abhidhamma* understanding of *anatta* is parasitic, depending on two metaphysical propositions—first, an event ontology, and second, a rejection of mereological sums. I will demonstrate that a denial of either of these metaphysical propositions opens up more room for the existence of selves.

Samuel Grimes, University of Hawaii

I Remember This “I” as That “I”

This paper examines *Abhinavagupta*’s arguments for the existence of a universal self on the basis of memory in the second, third, and fourth chapters (*āhnikas*) of *Utpaladeva*’s *Īśvarapratyabijñākārikā* (IPK) and *Abhinavagupta*’s commentary on it as found in his *Īśvarapratyabijñāvimarśinī*. This paper also presents comparative arguments from recent Western philosophy regarding self and memory. The view that memory and experience are inherently self-reflexive and contain the same subject finds much support in contemporary Western, as well as more ancient Indian philosophy. *Abhinavagupta*’s position stands more firmly than his Buddhist opponent, and this paper will provide comparative Western arguments from *Russell* and *John Campbell* to further strengthen his arguments. The *Śaiva* uses both the “I”-ness aspect of memory as well as the unification of indeterminate cognitions across time to form the conclusion that there must be a unifying subject. I recognize that the “I” in the memory is this “I” that is remembering. Numerous examples beyond the *Śaiva* arguments show that a single, same subject can be established in past and present. After establishing the single subject, which exists independent of temporal limitations, the *Śaiva* is free to assert that the object and perceiver rest on the single subject. The self-reflexivity inherent in perception and memory is established through the self-luminosity of objects and cognitions. Finally, if the object is self-luminous, it can only be perceived if subject and object share a single consciousness, or sentience. Because it is self-luminous, the object is only available to its own consciousness, which then must be shared by whoever is subjectively perceiving or indeterminately cognizing it.

Session 2, Panel 1, Room 403
Christian Doctrine and Practice (2)
Chair: Eric Parker

Dan Wright, University of Virginia
Divine Personhood and Deification: The Prospect of Human Personhood in the Theological Personalism of John Zizioulas

According to John Zizioulas, the Church Fathers locate divine personhood in the eternal co-existence of the persons of the Trinity; personhood is defined as eternal and indissoluble relationality. The particularity and identity of each person is expressed in the freedom to be with, for, and in others—not in isolation or in opposition to others. For Zizioulas, humans may be called persons only because we are created in the image of God; true personhood belongs only to the Trinity. But humans are not intended to remain mere images. We are called to become true persons by identifying ourselves with the person of Christ via the Sacraments and thereby participate in the divine communion. A concern here is that by uniting oneself with Christ, one's particularity is subsumed or diffused in the infinite personhood of Christ. However, because of our finitude, it is impossible for us to experience the fullness of the infinite divine communion of the Trinity. Indeed, for Gregory of Nyssa, the perichoretic relations of the divine persons are predicated on the incomprehensibility of three infinite persons—three infinities. For humans to experience this level of communion and deification would signal the erasure of any distinction between God and creation, between the infinite and the finite—a distinction Christianity has never been willing to surrender. Zizioulas seems mistaken, then, to affirm with Maximus the Confessor that deification ends in eternal rest in God. On the contrary, deification, or the journey toward realizing true personhood, must entail an infinite process of striving, termed *epektasis* by Gregory of Nyssa, wherein the difference between God and humanity is never overcome and the end is ever deferred. This paper will outline Zizioulas's theological personalism and propose that the prospect of human personhood actually depends on a conception of deification that reconciles eternal rest with infinite striving.

Richard Cumming, McGill University
Freedom in Limitation: Karl Barth's Conception of Personhood in the Context of Engagement with the Philosophy of Religion of Ludwig Feuerbach

Ludwig Feuerbach is renowned as a progenitor of the projectionist critique of religion, according to which the concept of God functions as a projection of human values and as an instrument to human wish-fulfillment. Karl Barth is widely esteemed as one of the most influential Protestant theologians of the twentieth century, and as one of the few theologians who have attempted to grapple earnestly with the challenges of the Feuerbachian critique of religion. Numerous commentators have followed the Feuerbach-Barth encounter, arriving at various conclusions about the overall cogency of Barth's response to Feuerbach, particularly in light of his overt retreat in *Church Dogmatics* Vol. IV

from any attempt to articulate an externally coherent defence of Christianity. This conference paper will explore Barth's engagement with Feuerbach's critique of Christianity under the aspect of his conception of the human person as ordained to limitation in community, arguing that, notwithstanding Barth's suggestion that an externally coherent apologetic framework is neither possible nor desirable, an examination of their encounter drawing upon texts hitherto largely unexplored in this context, such as Feuerbach's *Thoughts on Death and Immortality* (1830), reveal that Barth's conception of personal fulfillment circumvents the criticisms which Feuerbach leveled against Christianity, and thus intrinsically undermines the Feuerbachian critique of Christianity.

Emily Wilton, University of Western Ontario

Karl Barth and Soteriology as the Context of Personhood

Historically, conversation on human nature takes place in Christian theology in the context of discussions on the doctrines of creation and sin. This doctrinal context allows for discussions of an original or primordial human nature and current, post-lapsarian human nature. The human person is largely left unexplored in favour of an ideal humanity in both traditional cases. The question of personhood probes concerns about the lived reality of the person as subject, and this is best addressed in the doctrinal context of soteriology.

The reason is that, while creation and sin tend to make statements about ideal humanity, salvation tends to distinguish between individuals or communities that have experienced a changed situation in relation to God and those who have not. Christian beliefs about this changed situation vary on a number of axes. The extent to which salvation changes the ontology of the saved or reconciled human being is critical for personhood as it answers who is this person, this community and does so by the manner these relate to those outside of their community. Exemplary soteriologies of two broad streams in Protestant theology, Reformed theology, and liberal Protestantism can be useful test cases. Reformed theology tends to connect salvation and ontology more closely, whereas liberal Protestantism tends to view salvation as a change of consciousness or behaviour in a person who, otherwise, remains ontologically the same. The Reformed stance can lead to an, at times aggressive, focus on conversion, whereas the liberal Protestant position is open to charges of relativizing or subjectivizing theological claims.

I will argue that Karl Barth's soteriology addresses weaknesses in both traditions by showing how reconciliation is constitutive of all humanity and so is not grounds for ontological distinction between persons or communities.

Jon Waind, McGill University

Free to Belong: An Analysis of Barth's Rejection of Infant Baptism

In Karl Barth's *The Teaching of The Church Regarding Baptism* (1948) he argues that the "arbitrary and despotic" practice of infant baptism is "a wound in the body of the Church and a weakness for the baptized." If this is true, then

Barth is identifying a traumatic practice that poses a significant moral dilemma, namely that the nonconsensual baptism of infants exploits their acute vulnerability while at the same time maintaining a place among sacred Church doctrine. This, it would appear, makes the Church a true “school of despotism.” There is, however, another way to view this practice. Rather than seeing infant baptism as the exploitation of childhood vulnerability it could instead be seen as an act of reception that builds the esteem of the child. It does this in the first place by recognizing the situated nature of human freedom that marks all persons from their birth. Such recognition challenges contemporary notions of rational autonomy and self-determination as the real signs of human dignity. Second, this approach establishes the child within an anthropological framework that grounds human dignity in the practice and experience of welcoming and being welcomed into relationships of belonging. In order to support this argument, I will first outline Barth’s theological rejection of infant baptism. Then I will consider how arguments from New Testament theology and philosophical notions of “situated freedom” pose obstacles to Barth’s negative view of infant baptism. Finally, I will contend that the practice of infant baptism is an important means for socializing children into relationships of belonging that nourish rather than constrict their experience of freedom. In this view, baptizing children is hardly a despotic practice but rather one of the first steps in a life of freedom.

Session 2, Panel 2, Room 404

Religious, Legal, and Social Definitions of Personhood

Chair: Nathan Strunk

Keith Michael Estrada, Franciscan University of Steubenville

The Whole Person, from Conception, at Least: A Response to Baker

Professor Lynne Rudder Baker makes an attempt in her work “When does a person begin?” to answer an important element concerning the nature of personhood. She argues for what she calls a “constitutionalist view” of personhood, which maintains that “human persons may come into existence at a different time from the organisms that constitute them,” the time of origin being when certain criteria are met, viz. consciousness, that ability to imitate, and the producing of behaviour solely explainable through the attribution of beliefs, desires, or intentions.

In her work, she rejects what she calls a mere “biological animalism” for reasons pertinent to the fact that the human person is more than just another animal, although she admits there are similarities between the two. At the same time, she objects to what she describes as “Thomistic animalism” as she denies the existence of the immaterial soul. The issue at hand, as Baker explains, is to determine when a person comes into existence, and not defend any position that may have a tendentious background—one being the notion that a human organism, in the biological sense, is a human person, as concluded by those who find that at the moment of conception a person has come to be. In this paper I intend on arguing

for the rejection of her arguments for the “constitutionalist view of personhood” and will critique her arguments against biological and Thomistic animalism. Next, I will argue that Baker, in her accusing others of tendentiousness, makes the same mistake in order to ultimately defend abortion and possibly infanticide. Lastly, as an alternative to her proposed criterion, I will re-examine and uphold the notion of “personhood at conception” and demonstrate it as the most morally consistent.

Tomasz Pietrzykowski, University of Silesia

Five Challenges to the Traditional View of Legal Personhood

Personhood in law relies on an ascription made by the law itself. Relevant rules and doctrines are however based on reasons that support ascribing or denying the status of a person in law to various classes of subjects. On the moral grounds contemporary Western legal systems basically recognize as persons all living human beings. On more pragmatic basis they also ascribe such personhood to some organizational structures of human beings. After centuries of development the very idea of personhood in law seems to face crucial challenges. The first concerns the scientific evidence that at least some animals are conscious or even self-conscious agents. The second is posed by the medical progress enabling to keep alive patients without the active brain as well as developing technical possibility to artificially keep alive the brain without the rest of the body. The third is the rapid progress in experimentation on creating inter-species hybrids and chimeras, including organisms built partially of human and partially of animal genes or cell lines. The fourth relates to advancing technologies of augmenting the human brain by devices replacing or supporting its functions, thus resulting in potential “cyborgization” of human minds and human beings. The fifth is a progress towards realization of so called “strong AI” expected to become reality within several decades. All those present or imminent challenges seem to pose essentially the same question. They force lawmakers to consider whether recognition of legal personhood of a human being should be related to its membership in a specific biological species or—alternatively—to possession of some morally relevant features, such as sentience, self-consciousness, and other higher cognitive and emotional capacities. The progress of science and technology in the twenty-first century may soon make legal systems unable to keep this problem unanswered.

Joseph Kirby, Institute for Christian Studies

The Political and Spiritual Significance of the Person of the Monarch

Philosophic inquiries on the nature of personhood often involve an implicit democratic perspective—even if we have different understandings of what a person is, we can all agree that we are all people. Drawing on the work of René Girard and Giorgio Agamben, this paper considers the political and spiritual significance of the one person that almost all of us are not: the person of the monarch. I begin with Girard’s argument that the monarch was originally a human sacrifice whose murder was deferred. Over time, from a scapegoat whose lynching would have diffused the escalating violence of a blood feud, the monarch transforms into a sovereign authority capable of impartially judging between

the warring tribes. The monarch thus protects human beings from violence, first as the powerless victim of a unifying crime, then as the sovereign power that determines the guilt and innocence of feuding factions. I develop this line of thought with an examination of the rituals that continue even today at the very heart of Westminster system of parliamentary democracy, whereby a succession of scapegoat rituals serve to transfer de facto power from the monarch to the people, without the monarch ceding any de jure power. Then, with reference to Giorgio Agamben's discussion of the sacred, I argue that these rituals serve to pacify the absolute violence of the sovereign power, transforming day-to-day politics into the rational management of civil society. I conclude with a brief comparison between political systems with a monarch, such as Britain, compared to systems without a monarch, such as France and the United States.

Ryan Adams, Western Michigan University

Transformation of Self and Tradition in Taiwan's Falun Gong

My paper approaches the practice of Falun Gong in Taiwan through the template for "the relationship to oneself" as outlined by Foucault in *History of Sexuality*, vol. II. My work seeks to understand, through ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2008–2009 and 2012, the ways in which Falun Gong adherents in Taiwan incorporate the practice into their daily lives, seeking to transform themselves. What is discovered are the ways in which the Falun Gong worldview that practitioners share is performed, generated, and sustained through their social practice(s).

I am concerned both with ethics in Michel Foucault's sense of "morality," which he defines as "the real behavior of individuals in relation to the rules and values that are recommended to them," as well as with the "ethical work" of Falun Gong that, to again quote Foucault, "one performs on oneself, not only in order to bring one's conduct into compliance with a given rule, but to attempt to transform oneself into the ethical subject of one's behavior."

Good and evil in the forms of de and karma are understood in Falun Gong to have physical existence which attaches to the body in unseen dimensions, but nevertheless causes physical, as well as emotional and psychological, health or illness. Through Falun Gong self-cultivation practice, it is believed that these physical substances and the body itself are literally transformed. Practitioners perform their identities as "cultivators," meeting in groups daily for the physical exercises and weekly for reciting Li's texts and reflecting upon, in a sort of communal confessional, their behaviour in their everyday lives in relation to Li's ethical teachings. Fieldwork conducted in these settings allows a glimpse into how practitioners understand their own practice and interpret the events and conditions of their own lives, and how they construct and maintain those understandings through social practice.

Session 2, Panel 3, Room 405
Art and Literature
Chair: Rebecca Coughlin

Mahmoud Rasmi, University of Salamanca

Andrei Rublev: From Trauma to Artistic Creation

This paper will examine in depth the Russian movie *Andrei Rublev* (1966) directed by the eminent Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky. The objective of the paper will be to analyze the voyage that Andrei Rublev sets off on. The point of departure will, for that matter, be the moment in which Andrei is traumatized as he faces the society outside after leaving the monastery on his way to Moscow. The trip serves him as both an adventure during which he is familiarized with the society, on the one hand, and a space for introspection and self-formation and self-development, on the other hand. Whereas he chooses at first to take a vow of silence, he realizes that, in fact, to unite people above all their problems, it is best done through artistic creation (represented by the kid who finds the bell). This consists of an unfolding evolutionary road where Andrei is able to integrate the “real world,” until he reaches a maturity level after which he is conscious of the necessity of a positive action—more specifically artistic creation—as a solution as opposite to a negative action, i.e. the vow of silence which he takes.

Jeremy Valentine Freeman, Concordia University

Poetry, Culture, and Death: Modern Poetry and Interiority

This presentation will engage with how nineteenth and twentieth-century British and American poets imaged, theorized, analogized, and constructed the nature of death in relation to changing cultural and societal forces. This study attempts to tease out how death motivated new poetic works, how cultural forces helped shape individual poet’s conceptions of death and dying, and how poets used death as a potent antidote to cultural ills and as a tableau on which to project an image of their unique historical period. Central to this study will be the attempt to develop how seminal poetic works established strong aesthetic forms through an interpretation and engagement with death and dying. By interrogating the relation between singular poetic artifacts and cultural, societal, and market forces this presentation will attempt to sketch out some of the cornerstones of modern poetics and delineate some of the powerful historical tides that have constructed and influenced modernity and modern interiority. The study will progress by looking at the specific use, usage, and interpretations of death and dying by British and American poets in the nineteenth and twentieth century. These interpretations or images of death and dying will be analyzed in relation to cultural, sexual, societal, and historical forces. Of paramount concern is how the individual poet utilizes death, images of death, and interpretations of dying as a means to guarantee the poetic voice, a sense of personhood, and of sovereignty as a poet.

Shane Stroup, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale
Autonomy vs. Authenticity: William James, Henry Bugbee, and the Novelty of Personhood

This paper addresses the question of personhood through the works of American philosophers William James and Henry Bugbee. Both argue for the necessity of individuality—novelty—as the condition for the possibility of understanding any moral claim, particularly that of what it means to be a person. This leads both to argue for a view of personhood as “authentic” over and against the traditional Kantian account of persons as “autonomous.” I argue this insight is correct, that personhood cannot be limited to autonomy insofar as the argument for autonomy cannot take into account the universal nature of novelty. As James and Bugbee show, when it comes to the flux of existence all we can say with any confidence is that life demands novelty—diversity in E. O. Wilson’s view of ecology. As James and Bugbee argue, autonomy cannot fully address the problem of novelty, for that, we must turn to the idea of authenticity. To be authentic, however, demands an account of “reality,” least individual novelty simply lead back to the conceptual hierarchy of autonomy. For James reality is found in his view of truth as co-created by belief, while for Bugbee reality remains an act of faith. What James and Bugbee show is that while an authentic account of personhood does eliminate many of the barriers created by the concept of autonomy, it also demands a relationship with reality that decentres the persons as human—as rational—and rather, demands that we rethink novelty in terms of where things end and persons begin. As I will show, this is no easy task, but as Bugbee argues, it appears “real,” i.e., necessary.

Richard Greydanus, McGill University
Dialectics of Human Nature in Walter M. Miller, Jr.’s *A Canticle for Leibowitz*

This paper presents a reading of Walter M. Miller, Jr.’s *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1959) that questions how it is understood in the canon of science fiction classics. Written at the height of the Cold War, *Canticle* paints an apparently bleak portrait of humanity’s immediate prospects against the backdrop of a post-apocalyptic future in which humanity repeats the same “old mistakes,” ultimately finding itself back on the brink of all-out nuclear war. Its novelty within the canon of science fiction has to do with the exceptionally positive treatment given to religious authorities, beliefs, and institutions; the three-part narrative follows the career of the Albertian Order of St. Leibowitz across a period of about 1,800 years. I will argue that a careful analysis of the narrative elements and telos reveals a very carefully crafted critique of usual themes explored within science fiction—the triumph of science and technology over religion, the human achievement of mastery over the natural order, or other variants on the theme of perpetual scientific progress—that is built on a carefully constructed exploration of its potentialities and limitations of human nature, which is to say, what the human being is and ought to be. Readers take away from the narrative an estimation of human nature that includes both moral and non-moral

components, correspondent to soul and body in the living human being. As a soul animates all the parts of a body, so every objective, scientific judgment is made with the subjective intention of a moral being. Nuclear apocalypse, in Miller's telling, becomes revelatory of an intentional displacement of moral judgments from the place they are guaranteed by human nature. Only in the absence of an understanding of the human being as a moral, responsible being does the cold, cynical calculus of mutually assured destruction become intelligible.

Session 2, Panel 4, Room 406

Special Panel: Nishitani Keiji's Engagement with German Philosophy

Chair: Prof. Victor Hori

The publication just last year of a landmark work of collected essays on the Kyoto School and its dialogue with Continental philosophy evidences growing recognition for the relevance of the field in contemporary philosophy. But using the school's dialogue with Continental philosophers as a way of understanding the school itself remains a minority approach in both English and Japanese scholarship. Each of our individual contributions to the McGill-CREOR conference evidences the efficacy of this approach by focusing on Nishitani's engagement with Hegel, Feuerbach, Nietzsche, and Heidegger in order to illuminate Nishitani's own religious philosophy of self-transformation. This means that we approach Nishitani's dialogue with Continental philosophy, not only as a comparative endeavour, but also in accordance with the more generally practiced methodology of reading a philosopher in light of her or his influences. The results present well-known figures in the history of German philosophy in a new, and sometimes surprising, light of relevance for a cross-disciplinary philosophy of religion.

Cindy Bentley presents Nishitani's Zen practice-based "three fields" of existence—the fields of reason or consciousness, of nihility, and of emptiness—as a description of a person's transformation from lesser to greater levels of personal freedom and social interconnectedness and investigates the tempting assertion that Nishitani's three fields schema is analogous to Hegel's dialectic as a comparable mechanism of progression towards a person's experience of a social state free of alienation. In his recent book, *The Kyoto School's Takeover of Hegel*, Peter Soares characterizes Nishitani and Hegel as dialectically opposed thinkers who often have differing assumptions, but who nonetheless share common concerns. Nishitani's transformative process moves across or through his three fields where a person reaches the field of emptiness—a standpoint where the duality of subject-object and the abyss of nihility have been overcome and broken through. Hegel asserts the human necessity of passing through processes of alienation and de-alienation where the false subject-object split between the particular consciousness (a human being) and the universal consciousness (Geist or Spirit) is overcome through a person's "consciousness of freedom" that arises via Absolute Knowledge. The resulting reconciliations create harmony for the persons and

their societies. Hegel's theory of alienation is thoroughly grounded in the dialectical progress of Spirit within history, while Nishitani's three fields are presented in a- or trans-historical terms. However, Nishitani is clearly concerned with the actual, historical world, as shown in the final words of his magnum opus, *Religion and Nothingness*, where he claims that the true resolution of humanity's many problems can only occur on a "field" such as his field of emptiness. And Hegel also saw alienation as spiritual, which could arguably transcend history, as well.

Melanie Coughlin asks what motivates Nishitani's distinction between ethics and religion through Nishitani's historical treatment of Feuerbach and Nietzsche. In his 1960 work "What is Religion?" Nishitani describes his own approach to religion as the realization of true reality. Accordingly, she hypothesizes that Nishitani's distinction between ethics and religion has such a realizational significance; in other words, this distinction is not merely categorical, but existential. Following through with Ueda Shizuteru's description of Nietzsche's influence on Nishitani as having affected the way that Nishitani poses the religious question, she highlights the reasons why Nishitani wrote that Nietzsche shared the religious path as a way into understanding Nishitani's own realizational approach. In his 1949 work, *Nihilism*, Nishitani suggests that Feuerbach and Nietzsche changed the nature of atheism when they negated the purportedly transcendent origins of religion. According to Nishitani, Nietzsche's atheism strikes at even greater depth than Feuerbach's, because the latter merely reduces religion to the projection of the ethical needs of the human species. Nietzsche, by contrast, is said to have negated religion on the ground of religious experience itself when he affirmed it as a production of will to power. Insofar as Nishitani emphasizes Nietzsche's moral nihilism, we might presume that Nishitani is concerned with distinguishing between ethics and religion for fear of ending up in nihilism. Contrariwise, Coughlin suggests that Nishitani's way of posing the question "What is Religion?" itself incorporates a kind of ethical nihilism.

Julian Menezes will examine the way in which Nishitani takes up and develops the problematic of responsibility in Heidegger, positing responsibility as the transformation of the self. What is novel about Nishitani's engagement with Heidegger is his ability to engage Heidegger on his own terms while at the same time bringing the latter's thought into dialogue with concepts in Zen Buddhism. Menezes will show that, in so doing, Nishitani is not only able to highlight the problematic of responsibility in Heidegger's thought, but also make explicit the way in which it is intimately related to questions of personhood or selfhood and action. Menezes will argue that by reading Heidegger in conjunction with Zen theories of action, Nishitani's understanding of responsibility breaks from "traditional" ethics, which sees responsibility as the willful action of an autonomous agent and thus ultimately brings forth a different vision of both personhood and responsibility.

Session 3, Panel 1, Room 403
Christian Doctrine and Practice (3)
Chair: Richard Bernier

Nicolas Bourguès, Paris Sorbonne University
Prayer as a Transformative Tool for the Christian Reader—the Example of William Law’s Method

William Law (1686–1761) was an English mystic who wrote many devotional treatises, and later other writings influenced by the works of the German mystic Jakob Behmen (1575–1624). In two of them, “A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life” (1728) and “The Spirit of Prayer” (1749–1750), he defines the effects that prayer can have on the Christian reader. His explanations, from his point of view, should lead the reader to understand the positive impact of a form of communication with God that acts as the revealer of his/her own person. Thus prayer is defined according to a complementary approach based on theory and practice that will be conducive to the development of virtues such as humility, devotion, love, or resignation to the will of the creator. All those are dormant within the Christian, and Law presents prayer as a tool to (re)awaken the real, mystical nature of the individual. This paper would like to examine the definition of a revelatory form of prayer through a close analysis of Law’s rhetoric, to try to understand how he strives to convince his reader that performing prayer activates a deep-rooted process of transformation which ultimately leads the reader to the understanding of his/her real self.

Matthew Zaro Fisher, Claremont Graduate University
Toward an Evolutionary Theological Anthropology: Reconsidering the Paradox of Human Identity

I critically examine the role Christian theological anthropology has in defining human nature as *imago Dei* and propose a theo-evolutionary alternative to the traditional static conception of body/spirit hylomorphism. Through an appropriation of emergence theory and Karl Rahner’s metaphysics of being I argue for an evolutionary theological anthropology that allows for a dynamism in human nature where one approaches inter-subjective relationships with God, the world, and others through the material variation constitutive of individual corporeal existence. Because of the fundamental relationship between spirit and matter in the constitution of the person as *imago Dei*, persons are at once defined by, and transcend beyond, individuating terms of predication because personal nature analogically reflects the fullness of God’s being in creation.

Robert Imperato, Saint Leo University
The Person According to Thomas Merton

Thomas Merton, arguably the most influential North American Catholic writer, conceptually centred much of his thought in the notion of the person. He drew from spirituality traditions to help liberate the concept from Patristic theological controversy. Person primarily meant image of God, a thoroughly relational term

that implied conscious presence to God. With help from his long time teacher and friend Daniel Clark Walsh, Merton used such distinctions as person and individual to focus on what unites people rather than divides. He also distinguished between nature and person, which is to say the person as relational source of being manifests through human nature. Person is transcendent, while nature is the way of realization. His contemplative orientation was nurtured by aligning his everyday experience with a deeper self that was not clamouring for affirmation, hence the language of deeper and superficial selves. One of the goals of personal life is freedom: from utility, from the minds of others, and from self-concern. Merton's personalism was more than a matter of interiority; his social commentary on violence and contemporary society emanated from his recognition that persons could neither be reduced to enemies nor to biophysical links in the production system. A related aspiration is to move the mind beyond both categorization and focus on objects to personal presence. Is another person reducible to my categories, or is personal presence a fruit of non-dominating awareness? Merton's personalism offers easy access to contemplative traditions as well as to broad social critique. He was neither a professional philosopher nor theologian, but his brilliance as a writer engaged a wide audience.

Jesse Smith, Atlantic School of Theology **Insight from and Outside: How Can the Tensions within Philosophy of Neuroscience Inform Theological Soul Talk?**

During the twentieth century there was an architectonic shift in the understanding of the nature of the human self that was in large part attributable to the emergence of neuroscience. The intellectual assault on dualist interpretations of the self, held by much of society at an intuitive level, began with Gilbert Ryle but was most forcefully championed by Daniel Dennett. Dennett denies the existence of a rational monad at the core of a person and instead has proposed an alternate theory of consciousness known as the Multiple Draft Model. This model is hotly debated within the neuroscientific community because it conflates the mind with the brain. For Dennett this is perfectly acceptable, but for others such as the authors of Blackwell's *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience* the two are distinct and any conflation actually commits a mereological fallacy. Theology sits outside this debate and yet can learn much from the discussion. In common parlance the self is closely tied to the soul (though they are not identical) and the Christian doctrine of the eternal soul has often used the language of philosophy of mind to describe the soul as an ethereal monad controlling the body.

This paper (which reflects part of my MA thesis research) will briefly outline the aforementioned debate and look at possibilities for talking about the soul that allow for a non-monistic description without falling prey to pure scientific materialism.

Session 3, Panel 2, Room 404
Trauma and Transformation
Chair: Richard Greydanus

Melanie Webb, Princeton Theological Seminary
Redite Ad Cor: Trauma and Contingency

Our humanity makes all of us vulnerable to trauma. In her groundbreaking book, *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman writes that “to hold traumatic reality in consciousness requires a social context that affirms and protects the victim and that joins victim and witness in a common alliance” (9). Christian theology can shape a social context with the capacity for such holding by offering a conception of created personhood that joins victim and witness in a humanity that is both shared and unfragmentable.

One of Christianity’s driving theological insights is that, as creatures, we are irreducibly contingent. The Latin *con-tingere* means “to touch on all sides”—to be contingent is to be made through touch and held whole. I shall argue that traumas lay bare the vulnerable reality of our humanity, exposing something that is dizzyingly true of each of us: we are not the source of our own existence. Traumatic aftermath—characterized by disconnection, dissociation, and fragmentation—poignantly displays the disturbing and destructive possibility of our unmaking.

My exploration of human contingency seeks to hold together both our capacity for experiencing destruction in various traumas and our responsibility for cultivating wholeness in ourselves as well as in one another. Yet, we may cling to the unmade one who was made one of us and whom we find at our own core. In my consideration of contingency, I shall proceed from creation and preservation to incarnation and communion, drawing insights from scriptural sources (Genesis 1–3; Psalm 139; Isaiah 46; 1 John) as well as theological sources (Nicene Creed; Augustine; Simone Weil) in order to consider what it means to be human and to seek salvation in a traumatized and traumatizing world.

Zachary Taylor, Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York
The Short Lived Life: A Dialectic Theology of Suffering among Freud, Job, Frankl, and God

Some traditions of Christianity have encouraged a bifurcation demarcating the sacred spirit and the unclean body. This division among the bodies and souls of people has created a sense of meaning and worthlessness based upon physical successes within our world while encouraging either compassion or crushing and willful disdain towards individuals who are not “successful.” While Christianity addresses issues of the body in terms of cleanliness and uncleanness, this folksy interpretation of Greek philosophy has led to a repetition of moral-act consequence within our cultural unconscious. Further, people who suffer and live a short life often try to derive meaning from their existence, and for the most part, modern science and religion fail them in providing answers.

The purpose of this study is to reclaim the sacredness of the human body and to remark upon the pitfalls that come with living within mortal coils. I will sew a common strand narrative of suffering that deftly weaves through the agony of Job in his suffering, the tragedies and edifications of Victor Frankl, Death of God philosophy by Nietzsche, the schadenfreude of religion as illustrated by Freud in his *Future of an Illusion*, Cheryl Townsend Gilkes' perspective on *The Black Church as a Therapeutic Community*, and *Why Bad Things Happen to Good People* by Rabbi Kushner. In addressing common themes in these works, I seek to help all spiritual beings elevate the human body as a sacred creation as well as give a voice to those who suffer needlessly either in the short or long term. I also hope to provide further insights about the form and function of God within our mortal contexts.

Monir S. Madarshahi

Conflicting Symptoms of Historical Trauma: Trauma of Karbala

On October 10, 680, around the sixty-first year of Islam manifestation, a religious political massacre occurred in the desert of Karbala, in present day Iraq. In this the grandson of prophet Mohammad, Imam Husain, and a small group of supporters and relatives and friends were brutally murdered by the large military forces of the Umayyad dynasty. In this battle women and children were taken as prisoners. Since then certain religious rituals have been practiced by Shi'ah as well as many Sunnis to revive and simulate this historical trauma for the next generations. The sorrow of reviving the event of Karbala plays a role in promoting guilty, incapable, and passive personalities. Moreover, although the practice of such rituals may contain actual physical self-injury ceremonies, a temporary means of relaxation will result at the end. However, in other cases it stimulates the power to build active, hopeful personalities capable of creative intentions to make great changes in other people's life within the society. In other words, symptoms of Karbala trauma have the ability to change frequently from possessing negative thoughts about self and pleading for salvation to a sense of responsibility to act upon making changes on existing social and political orders. Thus, it is the purpose of this paper to explore the historical conflicting interpretations of Karbala trauma and how they contribute to the changes of individuals' character.

Brigitte Gagnon, Université de Montreal

Trauma, Healing, and Transformation: The Compassionate Listening Method for Reconciliation

The intimate interconnection of contexts, meanings, and people in the choice to use either violence or resolution in conflict situations, needs to become commonplace observation if we want to move beyond the failings of destructive reflexes witnessed in the last century, considered to be one of the most violent in human history. Based on participant observation, interviews, document analysis, and a questionnaire that will be administered in the fall of 2012, I will present a tool that assesses the extent to which an "agenda of the heart" is present in conflict transformation and peace-building activities. This, under the Compassionate

Listening Method for Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding (Green, 2007), that has been applied most importantly in Israel-Palestine for the last 20 years, but that can be applied in any situation where there is interpersonal relationships or conflicts. I will present and show the interdependence of three (3) variables and nine (9) indicators into a detailed description of the integration of a “response of the heart” linked to compassionate love, a notion adopted by the World Health Organization related to quality of life (Underwood, 2002), that I believe can shed light on the quality of presence in dialogical initiatives. They serve to present spiritually progressive and person-centred ways to humanize conflicts and foster emergent healing modalities that shed light in the interface between trauma, healing, and transformation. Definitions will be provided, as well as links to scientific literature and research data, for a comprehensive understanding of this tool that bridges classroom study to the practice on the field.

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Explaining Personhood through Suffering as per Indian Schools of Thought

To be a person is to be protected by a series of God-given rights and constitutional guarantees such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Happiness is essential for God-realisation and the basic tenet of personhood. In this pursuit of happiness that is man’s ultimate goal, suffering is a must, say some classical schools of thought. In contradistinction to other studies, this paper gives a comparative study of different schools of thought of Hinduism: (i) Vedantic school of thought which accepts the fact that the world is mixture of happiness and misery, there will never be perfectly good nor bad world; (ii) Bhakti yoga (Path of Devotion) which discusses the importance of suffering in leading us forward; and (iii) Concept of Maya and freedom which deifies the sufferings and show us our real nature. Suffering is a universal characteristic of human existence. Indian saints have always put suffering on a high pedestal and as an essential element of liberation. Gandhi, Vivekananda, and Sri Aurobindo exhorted their countrymen that without suffering, attainment of self-realization or nationhood is a dream. Intense suffering and prolonged struggle is the only way to national emancipation and realization of the self. The paper discusses in detail how suffering transforms an individual and plays a key role in fulfillment of personhood. Different schools of thought in Hinduism do not admit to the theory of Maya and suffering but they all believe that human life has a purpose and that is to attain happiness or bliss (Ananda). Dualists say it is simply the will of God and we have to submit to the sufferings imposed on us quietly. There is no liberty for human soul. Discussing these diverse schools of thought in Indian context, a conclusive idea is reached which answers the complex term of personhood.

Session 3, Panel 3, Room 405**Philosophical-historical conceptions of personhood****Chair: Richard Cumming****Rebecca Coughlin, McGill University****Unity and Difference: Personhood in the Works of Proclus and Dionysius the Areopagite**

Within the Neoplatonic tradition the ground of the individual person is its unity; this unity has as its source the absolute unity of the One. Paradoxically, the One is also the source of all difference and distinction. It is within this paradox that personhood is conceived. Proclus and Dionysius the Areopagite are two excellent examples of this tradition, one pagan and one Christian, and both show how it is possible to maintain the soul's individual identity, or personhood, while promoting a philosophical or theological system that advances divine union—henosis, or deification—as the ultimate goal for all human beings. What is it that is preserved or even perfected in the attainment of divine union? Is this rightly called the human person? Jan Vanneste and John Rist have both made connections between Proclean and Dionysian mysticism with respect to the soul's capacity for divine union. They have both suggested that this faculty is used to describe the soul's prior union with the One. Yet, I will argue that more than describing its prior union, these notions describe the individual soul's capacity to be self-constituting and to be preserved in its difference, while being united with God. Finally, what constitutes personhood for these authors, such that union with the divine principle is so often described as "ecstatic," a stepping outside of oneself and of one's relation to others? I will suggest that the ecstatic moment is precisely the moment in which true human personhood is realized.

Mike Barrow, McGill University**The Divine Eyes of the Created Person: John Scotus Eriugena's and William of St. Thierry's Pursuit to See the Face of God**

How does the created person see the face of the divine? In an effort to answer this question, John Scotus Eriugena and William of St. Thierry examined the dynamics of the human persona. Consequently, in their view, in doing so they also examined the persona of the divine. They undertook their examination because they both accepted the notion that the created person is a microcosm of the divine cosmos; as they understood it, human beings were made in the image and likeness of God and, therefore, they could reflect the nature of the divine in the cosmos. Understanding divine personhood, then, was integral for understanding the human person and vice versa. How is any understanding of the divine, to any extent, accomplished? For Eriugena and William, it is learned in contemplation. Yet, the process of contemplation is not one in the same for both theologians: whereas Eriugena sees the divine through philosophical understanding, William sees the divine through spiritual understanding. It is the purpose of this essay, then, to examine the differences between these ways of discovering or seeing the divine and how these differences uniquely impact and influence ideals

about the nature of the created person. In addition, this essay will examine if these differing approaches are complementary—that is, to see if these “two eyes of contemplation” are in any way similar in their sharing of a common source.

Eric Parker, McGill University

Delighted by Truth: “Faith” as a Virtue in the Thought of Thomas Aquinas and Robert Kilwardby

Aristotle states in his *Nicomachean Ethics* that a virtue is a quality that perfects a particular faculty of the soul with regard to right action. In the veritable renaissance of Aristotelianism in twelfth and thirteenth century Europe, philosophers and theologians wrestled with the difficulty of applying this definition of virtue to what previous tradition had termed the “theological virtues” of faith, hope, and charity. The problem is particularly acute in reference to faith. If, as Aristotle argues, intellectual virtue perfects the intellect with regard to an object that is seen or understood, then how is faith, which the Apostle Paul refers to as vision “through a glass darkly” and an “enigma,” able to perfect the intellect? I compare two similar but different ways of dealing with this problem in the thirteenth century by way of the Dominicans, Thomas Aquinas and Robert Kilwardby. According to Aquinas, faith is able to perfect the intellect only when “formed” by the will perfected by charity, which directs the will to God as the highest good (*summum bonum*). Kilwardby, on the other hand, follows Augustine’s Neo-platonic concept of ontological priority of mind over body more closely and argues that faith, hope, and charity are all types of intellectual love (*amor*). Thus, complex problems of the relationship of the various faculties of the soul and the idea of human fulfillment (i.e., personhood) in thirteenth century thought are brought to light through an examination of the theological virtues.

Daniel Wood, Villanova University

God’s Relation to Dialectical Volition According to Blondel and Hegel

While the analysis of volition and its proper end has been discussed under a variety of metaphysical and natural frameworks throughout the history of philosophy, two of the nineteenth century’s most original philosophers, Maurice Blondel and Georg Wilhelm Hegel, both characterized a person’s will as fundamentally dialectical and inherently related to God. This essay will first examine the “Introduction” to Hegel’s *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* in order to not only see how his post-Fichtean account of the “I” wills and exists dialectically, but also to grasp how such personal freedom relates to and emerges from the spiritual as such (*das Geistige überhaupt*). If this “idealist” formulation of subjectivity exhibits the “*exitus/reditus*” pattern of the *Encyclopedia*, which claims to provide the actualized categories of God, then the completed dialectic of the human subject’s (free, rational) will constitutes a particular manifestation of this same, dynamic *Geist*. In this practical philosophy of the will, then, one glimpses the peculiar radicality of the Spirit’s immanent unfolding. In Blondel’s famous and then-controversial dissertation, *L’Action*, one also finds that the will in dialectic comprises the very means and movement by which one approaches (the

question of) God. His (existentialist) phenomenology of action charts the movement of this dialectical will through its various spheres of living, however, not in order to demonstrate its concretization in completed acts of willing, but rather to demonstrate a constitutive privation of the will's actions which can only be fulfilled by God. After comparing and contrasting Blondel's ascendant, centrifugal phenomenology of action to Hegel's practical philosophy of the (free) will, it will be argued that the manner in which each sees the possibility of the free will's fulfillment provides an essential—and possibly complementary—clue to the immanent (Hegel) and transcendent (Blondel) aspects of God highlighted by each.

Edward Novis, Graduate Theological Union

Between Hegel and Today: Kojève and Hyppolite on Self-Consciousness

After Kant's absolute rupture of subject and object prevented the human from having access to knowledge of self, world, and God, Hegel attempted a mediation of the subject and object that created an internal link between them through a common Logos immanently located in both and as both. Defining this Logos as self-consciousness, Hegel develops his system that presents both the human and the Absolute as possessors of self-consciousness. He leaves the problem there, as the relationship between the two remains ambiguous. Faced with this problem, Alexandre Kojève and Jean Hyppolite attempted to transmit an authentic vision of the philosopher's system, reflecting on Hegel's philosophy to unify the plurality of his work into a coherent system. A study of these two thinkers becomes important, as both are transitional figures between Hegelianism and Contemporary Continental Philosophy. They were the first to systematize Hegel and present his ideas to the major thinkers of the late twentieth century. Georges Bataille, Jacques Lacan, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty were students of Kojève, and Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze were students of Hyppolite. As transitional figures, their diverging interpretations of Hegel, Kojève's humanism and Hyppolite's anti-humanism, reveal not only the conflict inherent to Hegelianism but also point the way to attempts at its resolution in Contemporary Philosophy. Kojève's humanism describes human self-consciousness as the absolute, demonstrating its god-like power in the freedom to imagine future possibilities and bring them into existence. Criticizing humanism by focusing on the condition of possibility for the human's freedom, Hyppolite's anti-humanism negates human freedom to present a self-conscious Logos that speaks of itself through the human, thereby decentering the individual and dissolving it into the matrix from which he emerges and into which he returns.

