

The Theology of Disclosure

ROBERT SOKOLOWSKI

*The Catholic University of America
Washington, DC*

WHEN FR. ANSELM RAMELOW invited me to participate in this colloquium on faith and reason, he suggested that I discuss what I have called the theology of disclosure. I have used this term to name a way of reflecting theologically on mysteries in the faith of the Church, such as Sacred Scripture, the Eucharist, the theological virtues, and especially the distinctive Christian understanding of God, both as Creator and as the Holy Trinity.¹ This approach makes use of the philosophical style of thinking called phenomenology, which exercised a great influence on European thought during the twentieth century. There were many authors in this movement, but I have primarily used the work of Edmund Husserl, its founder and primary inspiration. I have not simply taken over his thoughts and used them in theology. Rather, I have adopted, adapted, and supplemented them in my own philosophical and theological work, just as other writers, both major and minor, have done in their writings in other fields of inquiry. I might have called my approach “a phenomenological theology,” but this would obviously be an unwieldy name for it. Furthermore, such terminology might link this theological style too closely with a particular philosophical movement, and I think it would be better to let it

¹ For example, see Robert Sokolowski, *Eucharistic Presence: A Study in the Theology of Disclosure* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 5–12 and 173–208; Sokolowski, “God the Father: The Human Expression of the Holy Trinity,” *The Thomist* 74 (2010): 33–56; and Sokolowski, “God’s Word and Human Speech,” *Nova et Vetera* (English) 11 (2013): 189–212.

stand on its own, even though it will use some ways of thinking that have originated in phenomenology.

Philosophical Resources

Why should anyone be interested in this philosophical approach in theology? What contribution can phenomenology offer to our reflection on the mysteries revealed in Christian faith? It can help us clarify how Christian things come to light for us, but how it does so can best be shown by going into specific issues, which I will do later in this article. Phenomenology can also help us deal with some problematic theoretical positions in modernity. Modern thinking, the kind that has dominated Western thought for the last five centuries, was inaugurated as an explicit rejection of what went before it. It defined itself as decidedly new and different over against what was in place, whether Scholasticism or Greek thought, and by this rejection it fragmented the history of philosophy into the periods of ancient, medieval, and modern. We no longer had philosophy pure and simple. Instead, we had the philosophy of a certain period, where it was rendered radically historical and relative to its time.²

This modern rejection of the past occurred in two areas. The first was the domain of human conduct, that is, politics and ethics. This project was initiated by Machiavelli and systematized by Hobbes. Other political philosophers, such as Spinoza, Locke, Rousseau, and Hegel, worked in the space opened up by these two modern founders, and they have given us the modern state as a replacement for the ancient city. The second domain was that of science, nature, and truth: the area of ontology and epistemology. This project was introduced by Francis Bacon and Descartes. Hobbes and Leibniz made contributions, and Kant and Hegel were its great synthesizers. In both instances, the political and the scientific, modernity turns to the subject—we might say it *constructs* the modern subject—and it does so in two corresponding ways: it establishes the political subject, that is, Machiavelli's prince or Hobbes's sovereign; and it fabricates the epistemological subject, the subject tailored to mathematical science, the isolated *ego cogitans* who carries out such science and measures everything in its terms.³

² Thomas Prufer has stressed the importance of the fragmentation of the history of philosophy; see his "The Logic of Modernity," in *Recapitulations: Essays in Philosophy* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1993), 66–71.

³ On the modern construction of the political and epistemological subject, see Francis Slade, "Two Versions of Political Philosophy: Teleology and the

I think that there are resources in phenomenology, and especially in Husserl, that can be used to loosen the grip of modern thinking and help us to reactivate both ancient philosophy and the medieval Christian blend of philosophy and theology. It can open a way for us to recover philosophy as such, as opposed to philosophy divided into periods. It is something contemporary that can be blended with the perennial. Perhaps Brentano's work helps explain why these resources can be found in phenomenology; for he exercised a great influence on Husserl, and he was versed in both medieval and Aristotelian thought. I would, however, also want to credit Husserl's own honesty and intensity as a philosopher, which enabled him to see certain things in the philosophical issues themselves and to move beyond the modern understanding. Consider, for example, the way he showed that modern mathematical science does not replace the world we live in; it does not disqualify the apparent world in favor of the world discovered by science. Husserl shows instead that the scientific world is founded on the *Lebenswelt* and nested within it. I do not know any other modern thinker who can help us heal the breach between the ancient and the modern in the way that Husserl can. We will need, of course, to interpret his work if we are to gain these advantages, for he is himself a modern philosopher.

Husserl has practically nothing to say about political philosophy, but he has much to say about cognition. In fact, one could say that his major concern was the issue of truth. Aristotle, in the *Metaphysics*, says that being is said in four ways: first, as the accidental; second, as the true; third, as the schemata of categories; and fourth, as the potential and the actual.⁴ I think that Husserl's philosophy is restricted to the two middle senses of being: he deals with being as true and, correlatively, with being as the schemata of categories. Husserl obviously deals with truth in his many writings on logic and judgment, and I would also claim that he deals with something like the categories when he discusses states of affairs or *Sachverhalte*. He treats these as the objective correlates of judgments, the articulated things that make the judgments

Conceptual Genesis of the Modern State," in *Natural Moral Law in Contemporary Society*, ed. Holger Zaborowski (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 242–247. While commenting on Prufer's remark that modernity breaks up the history of philosophy, Slade says, "Taken in the most formal sense philosophy has no past. To the extent that it might be said to have one, it is not philosophy. All philosophy insofar as it is philosophy is contemporary" (238).

⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 5.7 and 6. 2.

to be true or false, and he shows how the origins of both judgments and states of affairs can be found in our pre-categorical experience. He also discusses in an original way how the human subject, which he calls the “transcendental ego,” engages in truth in many different ways besides by making judgments. Aspects of truth occur, for example, in perception, remembrance, imaging, calculation, and the experience of one’s own corporeality. I think that moral action can be clarified if we take it as another way of being truthful and that we can properly understand the human person by considering him as the agent of truth. Phenomenology does turn primarily to subjectivity, but I think we can interpret this as a turn toward “being as the true” and use it as an access to thinking about “being as being.”

I would like to use a remark made by John Rist to illustrate this point. Rist held the Father Kurt Pritzl, O.P., Chair in Philosophy at Catholic University in 2012–2016. He once said in a conversation that the first-person perspective has not been adequately treated in classical philosophy. Most classical philosophy has been strictly objectivist: it restricts itself to ontology and treats the human subject from an ontological point of view. He said that St. Augustine introduced the first-person perspective, the philosophical and theological treatment of the human subject as such, but authors in the medieval period returned to the objectivist viewpoint, and when Descartes introduced the first-person perspective he got it wrong and set it in opposition to the manifestation of things. It has been wrongly handled ever since. It seems to me that phenomenology provides resources for accommodating the first-person philosophical viewpoint in a better way and for reconciling it with the objectivist approach precisely by defining the human subject as being engaged in truth. Truth is, after all, one of the ways in which being itself is said. A proper turn to the first-person perspective does not mean that we merely report how things look and feel. It means that we philosophically explore the activities and structures of subjectivity and show how they are involved in the manifestation and truth of things. Such a philosophical exploration can enter into a theology that clarifies how Christian things differentiate and identify themselves for us.

Some Philosophical Issues

One of the most fruitful topics found in Husserl is what he calls “categorical intuition.” He claims that syntactic structures occur, not just in judgments or propositions “in our minds,” but in our thoughtful experience of things. We syntactically articulate what is given in our

perceptions. We predicate, collect, and arrange what we experience. I can intellectually “take in” not just this colored area, nor even this tree-like shape, each of which is a simple given; I can also take in *the fact that* this tree is swaying in the wind. We articulate the way things are, and as we do so we intuit or perceive not just simple things, but states of affairs in their direct presence. We bring out the parts and wholes of things. A state of affairs is a part of the world articulated by human thinking.

In elaborating such categorial intuition, Husserl distinguishes two kinds of truth: the truth of correctness (*Richtigkeit*), in which a judgment is experienced as conforming to the way things are; and the truth of actuality (*Wirklichkeit*), in which the thing or the state of affairs itself is given to us directly, in person.⁵ The state of affairs is registered, not just reported. This second sense of truth, the truth of actuality, involves what Husserl calls the evidence of self-possession (*Evidenz der Selbsthabe*). Here we have the thing itself, given to us in the thoughtful articulations we carry out in its presence. This second sense of truth, Husserl adds, is “intrinsically first.” It is prior to the truth of correctness because judgments originate in the direct presence of things and depend on it for their verification. In Husserl’s analysis, the center of gravity is shifted from the judgments in our minds to the things being articulated; there is no Kantian “thing in itself” behind its appearances. Things themselves are given to us and identified by us in their direct presence in the manifolds of experience that are appropriate to them. But they are also given—not just to sensory perception, but also to the intellect—as they become “syntaxed” with the help of speech and images. Things are given to us as identities in manifolds of appearance, and some of these manifolds are categorial or syntactic.

The words “disclosure” and “manifestation” are appropriate English terms for the truth of actuality or self-givenness. It is this kind of truth that comes to the fore in the theology of disclosure. In such truth, things come to light for us. They emerge and define themselves out of vagueness and absence, out of confusion and hearsay. I think that this kind of truth is a modern version of what Aristotle describes in *Metaphysics* 9.10, where he speaks about the grasp of indivisibles. In such disclosure, the intelligibility of things is presented to us.

Besides syntax and the kind of intuition associated with it, another theme that is of great importance for both philosophy and theology is

⁵ See Edmund Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, trans. Dorion Cairns (New York: Springer, 1969), §46.

the activity of making distinctions, of letting the essential differences among things show up to us. Husserl himself does not explicitly focus on the making of distinctions, but he uses it and mentions the practice everywhere in his work. It pops up frequently but he does not reflect on it. In fact, it comes to the fore right at the beginning of his writings. It is highlighted in the “First Investigation” in *Logical Investigations*, at the point where he begins presenting his own philosophy. The first chapter of that volume is entitled “The Essential Distinctions [*Die wesentlichen Unterscheidungen*].”⁶ In my opinion, this title stands forth like a trumpet blast or a motto on a coat of arms. Husserl begins his work by making distinctions, and throughout his work he continues making them. He brings things out by distinguishing them one from another. He will, for example, distinguish memory from perception, words from pictures, intending an object in its presence from intending it in its absence, manipulating numerals from actually counting a group of things, and the philosophical attitude from the natural attitude in which we originally live our lives. In each case, he reveals his target by strategically distinguishing it from its proper other. And yet, despite his desire to be fully aware of his own activity as a philosopher, he does not reflect on this omnipresent procedure, so this is an area in which we can complement his work.

In that spirit, permit me to say a few more words about making distinctions. This activity can be related to predication and other forms of syntactic action, which we have identified as the core of human rationality. I would claim that making distinctions is not just one more syntactic form. It deals not with the syntax but with the content of what we know and what we express in our speech. When we think, it is *not* the case that we first collect a number of concepts and then conjoin and disjoin them in our predications, conjunctions, alternations, and quantifications. Rather, what happens is that we first start speaking about things as we interact with other people, but at first we speak vaguely. Our initial words are not yet fully words; they are embedded in larger vocal sounds and are only gradually distinguished as individual words. In our early years of life, baby-talk and childish speech are rehearsals of the use of words, and they involve incipient syntactic structures; they are rehearsals of *language*. We start with proto-sentences. We predicate, but only vaguely and without respon-

⁶ See Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, trans. John N. Findlay, ed. Dermot Moran (New York: Routledge, 2001), 1:183. I have slightly altered Findlay’s translation of this phrase.

sibility, as children predicate. We are not yet responsible in what we say and we cannot be held accountable for what we have said. We have not yet said anything specific or quotable. In the midst of such incipient thinking, things are present to us, but only confusedly.

As time goes on, however, and if we begin to think more distinctly, the differences become sharper, and the things themselves become more and more defined for us. But they become more defined not apart from our syntactic activity, but within it. The sounds we make move from sing-song speech to distinct declarations, and we gradually become accountable for what we say, and we become accountable because what we are talking about becomes more distinctly present to us and to our interlocutors. The contents of our speech become more distinguished as our syntax becomes more responsible, more authentically achieved. The things we are talking about become distinct by being distinguished from strategic other things, and they do so with the help of our grammatical speech and syntactic actions. There is a grasp of indivisibles, as Aristotle and Aquinas call it, and it does involve getting at the *differentiae* of the things in question, but it does not occur one by one in single exposures of things to the intellect; it occurs when one thing is distinguished from another. All this occurs in speech and conversation, and not *before* conversational predication but *within* it. Distinction and disclosure go hand in hand.

I would like to mention two other resources in phenomenology that can be helpful in theological reflection. One is the idea that linguistic grammar can serve as a *signal* of categorial activity. In spoken language, words like “is,” “and,” “of,” “if,” and “therefore” do not name things. They are grammatical terms and they obviously serve in language to link other words. They are connectives. But Husserl points out at the beginning of his *Logical Investigations* that such words also serve to *indicate* (*anzeigen*) or to signal that we are performing a categorial act: they signal that we are predicating, conjoining, partitioning, and inferring even as we speak.⁷ Grammatical words signal intellectual activities,

⁷ Husserl distinguishes between expression (*Ausdruck*) and indication (*Anzeige*) in chapter 1 of Investigation I in *Logical Investigations* (Findlay and Moran, 1:183–198). This material finds its fulfillment in chapter 6 of Investigation VI, where he asks whether the grammatical parts of speech have any objective correlatives. See 2:271–294 (Findlay and Moran), particularly 291: “What intuitively corresponds to the words ‘and’ and ‘or,’ to ‘both’ or ‘either,’ is not anything . . . that can be grasped with one’s hands, or apprehended with some sense, as it can also not really be represented in an image, e.g., in a painting. I can paint *A* and I can paint *B*, and I can paint them both on the same canvas:

and they do so in two ways. They signal *that* the speaker is performing the indicated intellectual act, that he is predicating or conjoining as he speaks, and they also signal *to* the listener to perform the act himself, to be drawn into the intellectual display and reasoning that is being carried on by the one who is speaking. The listener does this immediately as he hears the word in question. The listener thinks what the speaker is saying and he cannot help but do so if he understands the words. Intellectual activity is made tangibly present in the words that we use. The acts of the mind do not occur silently and secretly in the solitary mind of each person, as Descartes would have it. The activities of the mind are exhibited in our speech and they are also supported by our speech. They really cannot happen without the help of spoken or at least imagined words. Our thinking “rides” on our speech. If we want philosophical access to intellectual activity, we need to focus on speech, where thinking becomes tangible (or audible).

The other resource I want to discuss is not mentioned by Husserl himself. It is what I would call the declarative use of the first-person pronoun. We can use the word “I” in two different ways. We can simply state ordinary facts about ourselves, as when a person says, “I am forty-five years old” or “I studied forestry in Colorado.” Such cases are what we might call an “informational” use of the word “I.” But if I say things like “I know the earth is round” or “I see that he is untrustworthy,” I do more than just state facts about myself; I endorse or appropriate, I make more formally my own the opinion or decision that I express. I do not say simply “The earth is round,” but “I know that the earth is round.” Such declarative uses of pronouns are a pre-philosophical expression of the working of our transcendental ego. They do not merely state further facts about ourselves. They are connected to the intellectual activities that are signaled by the grammar of our speech, and just like our grammatical signals they make our intellectual activities palpably present in the words we pronounce. They exhibit and refer to us as what I would like to call “agents of truth.”⁸

I cannot, however, paint the *both*, nor paint the *A* and the *B*. Here we have only the one possibility which is always open to us: to perform a new act of conjunction or collection on the basis of our two single acts of intuition, and so *mean* the *aggregate* of the objects *A* and *B*.”

⁸ On declaratives, see Robert Sokolowski, *Phenomenology of the Human Person* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), chapter 1 (“Two Ways of Saying ‘I’”).

As I have said before, phenomenology can help us overcome the alienation from ancient and medieval thought introduced by modernity, and I hope that what I have just described provides some examples of how it can do so. This does not mean, however, that we can simply restore the ancient and medieval forms of philosophy. Nothing ever comes back just as it was. Phenomenology can add new and helpful themes to the ancient and medieval repertoire. For example, it can add resources in the philosophy of language and the philosophy of picturing, and it can help us to show how philosophical speech differs from ordinary and scientific discourse. It can add further precision to the philosophy of time and history. More generally, however, it helps us return to philosophy as such instead of dividing it into historical periods and leaving ourselves able only to report what other people have said in other times and places. It does so by reflecting on how things show up for us—that is, how their ways of being become manifest—and also by reflecting in greater detail on what we need to do as agents of truth to allow things to appear to us.

Theological Issues

How does this study of manifestation work in regard to what we believe in Christian faith? How can we speak, in this domain, not just about the truth of correctness but also about the truth of disclosure? There are, of course, many elements in Christian faith. They are spelled out—they are articulated, as the *articula fidei*—in the Creed and in the catechism of the Church, and they are embodied and illustrated in the lives, practices, and witness of believers and saints. All these truths, things, and persons are essential to its manifestation. The articles of faith, however, should not be seen as disjointed doctrines, assorted beliefs that Christians just happen to have. They are not coincidental. Instead, they all cluster around some basic beliefs that make up God's revelation and action toward us. All of them, furthermore, are intelligible only against the background of the most central of all beliefs, the understanding of God that is revealed in biblical and Christian faith.⁹ This understanding of the God who speaks through the Scriptures

⁹ Robert Spaemann puts this well when he says, "The first question that philosophy asks in relation to religious belief is not, 'Does God exist?' but 'What do we mean when we say that God exists or does not exist?' What do we mean by the word *God*?"; see his "What Do We Mean When We Say 'God'?" in *God: Reason and Reality*, ed. Anselm Ramelow, O.P. (Munich: Philosophia Verlag, 2014), 19.

does not just unify the other doctrines; it also opens up for us the dimension of being that makes them meaningful. For example, the Christian doctrine of grace and the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity cannot be properly understood in a coherent way if God is not understood to be in a certain way, nor can the Eucharist be understood for what it is except against the background of the Christian understanding of God. Christian faith, in its deepest core, is the response to God's revelation of himself to us, and this revelation does not just tell us new facts about the world; it opens up a new dimension of the being of things.

What is this central and definitive understanding? In the faith of the Church, we believe that God exists in such perfection that he could exist with no less goodness and greatness even if he were all that there is. God is not part of the world and he could be without the world. The world, all that there is besides God, exists because God chose it to be, and he chose it out of unconstrained generosity. To use the cryptic phrase of Thomas Prufer, "God does not need to give and does not gain from giving."¹⁰ This is the God who revealed himself in the Old Covenant and who became incarnate in Jesus Christ for our salvation. His transcendence to the world is so great that even the humility of the Incarnation does not diminish it. Rather, the Incarnation intensifies our understanding—our glimpse of an understanding—of God's power and goodness. This distinction between the world and God is the center of Christian revelation, and in Thomistic theology it is expressed metaphysically in terms of God as *esse subsistens*, God as sheer *esse* unlimited by any distinct essence or kind. God's essence is purely and simply "to be." This is a new understanding of divinity, different from what other religions and philosophies present as the divine. God is not just the highest being. Divinity itself is now transformed: it is not one kind of being among many, but the one that could be even if there were no kinds of being, and yet this intense existing does not dissolve the being and truth of the kinds of being, which are now understood to have been created out of nothing. To think about God is to think about existence, not about a kind of entity, no matter how exalted and powerful. This "Christian distinction" between the world and God is

¹⁰ The phrase was used in his teaching, but I have not been able to find it in his written work. For another version, see Prufer, "Creation, Solitude and Publicity," in *Recapitulations*, 32: "The one who is best creates, but creating is not what is best—the one who creates would be just as good if He did not create."

at the core of Christian faith, but it also presents itself as understandable by human reason. But it is not just one among the *praeambula fidei*; it is at their center, at the intersection of faith and reason.

I have presented this understanding in words, and when we discuss it this way it might seem to be primarily an issue for academic speculation, but its original disclosure was to Abraham, to Moses at the burning bush, and to the Jewish people at the Red Sea, on Mount Sinai, in the Temple, and in exile. It was manifested to the disciples in the life, death, and resurrection Jesus Christ and to all of us in the sacramental life and teaching of the Church and in her saints and martyrs. This original manifestation through the Old and New Covenants was and is an understanding. It involves making something present and in an appropriate way understood and it needs words to be made present; it is not just a sensory percept or an affect. It becomes presented or revealed to our minds, not just to our sentiment, and it elevates our intellects by its intensity of truth and being. Our theological reflection on it depends on its initial presentation and distinction in faith.

This understanding is related to other Christian mysteries. It provides the context in which they can be seen as coherent and consistent. To illustrate this, let us consider again the Christian doctrine of grace and the theological, infused virtues. Given the radical transcendence of God, it becomes meaningful and even obvious to say that we as human agents cannot enter into the presence of God on our own. We cannot rely on our own strength, virtue, and ingenuity. We cannot stretch that far by ourselves. We need to be elevated and graced if we are going to be able to act in this new dimension. Therefore, the Church has insisted, in the various controversies in which she has been engaged, that our very ability to act toward God, and even our ability to turn toward God in faith, must be God's gift, and yet it must become our action and our disposition as well. Our actions in response to God are not like the good or bad actions we perform as human agents involved in the setting of the world, where we act through our own virtue or strength and can be proud of what we achieve, or where we fail because of our own vice or weakness. The theological virtues are not simply higher forms of human courage, temperance, justice, prudence, and friendship. The categories that we use to describe human ethical and political conduct need to be adjusted when the context is expanded to the world as created and redeemed by God. Things that might seem contradictory or incoherent when they are said about natural human agency and worldly human interactions

can become meaningful here. Our actions toward God are indeed our responsible acts, and yet they are and must be God's actions first and foremost. Their substance is God's grace and not just human accomplishment. We should notice, incidentally, how the theological virtues are presented to us precisely as distinguished from natural virtues. Here, as elsewhere, we clarify by distinguishing.

As a further thought about the theological virtues, consider the declarative use of the word "I" in an act of faith. If we begin the Creed by saying, "I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth," we are not just saying, "I am of the opinion that God created heaven and earth," nor are we saying, "I know that God created heaven and earth." For one thing, in the Creed, we do not just state what we believe. Rather, we begin by saying that we believe *in* God; we have confidence in the one who spoke to us. The articles of faith, the propositions that we believe, follow as descriptions of the one in whom we believe; they express who and what he is and what he has done. It is necessary for us to have such propositions: without them it would not be clear in whom we have placed our faith or why nothing else but faith would be an appropriate response to him. Furthermore, we express our belief as different from the opinions and knowledge that we declare ourselves to have in regard to the things that we experience in the world. These articles are not simply added to our other opinions about the way things are. They are not just more opinions. We believe them as revealed to us by the one whom they describe, and part of our belief is that we are enabled to believe by him. The ability to believe is itself his gift, a gift of grace. The declarative "I" in the act of faith has its own logic. It is not simply ranged along the declarations we make in our natural involvements, and yet it is clarified and defined by being contrasted with them.

Of course, faith alone is not the last word. Faith is obliged to express itself in actions, not just words, so the theological virtue of charity has an ontological priority over belief. Faith opens the context in which charity is possible, but charity is the end and perfection of faith. It bears witness that the faith is genuine. In his epistle, St. James says, "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?" (James 2:14). The apostle does not say, "If someone *has* faith but does not have works." Rather, he says, "If someone *says* he has faith (*ean pistin legēi tis echein*)." Faith is shown, not by the declaration, but by the actions that follow from it and the disposition that underlies the actions: "Demonstrate your faith to me without works, and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my works" (James 2:18). We might

also observe, however, that an act of charity does not declare itself in words. We need to publicly endorse our faith by saying, “I believe,” but it would be inappropriate to say, “I love God and my neighbor in what I am doing.” Speaking this way is uncomfortably similar to the Pharisee’s saying, “I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on all that I acquire” (Luke 18:12). Charity forgets itself when it loves and serves both God and others, whereas the Pharisee is anything but forgetful of himself when he says, “O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of men . . . or even like this tax collector” (Luke 18:11). It is not insignificant that the parable introduces the Pharisee with the words, “The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer *to himself* (*pros heauton*).”

Final Remarks

In this fourth and final part of my article, I will briefly indicate three other issues in the theology of disclosure. The first concerns the mystery of the Holy Trinity. God is initially revealed to us as creator, as the origin or cause of all things, the one who gives the world and each of us our being. But through the coming of Christ, God becomes also understood as an origin in a different way. He is God the Father, the source of the Eternal Word. He is not just the creator of the world, but the origin of the Son and the Holy Spirit. This relationship is not like creation, and it needs to be distinguished specifically from creation. In the Trinity, God does not engender something less than himself, but expresses *himself* as spoken or imaged. In God’s life such an expression is not external to himself, as words and images are external to us. God’s expression of himself is the second person, the Son; the Son is not another God, but God again, God spoken or God imaged. A distinction, therefore, needs to be made between two kinds of origination, a distinction that Arius failed to make, as he considered the Son to be the first of creatures. The mystery of the Trinity is disclosed to us precisely in this contrast between God as creator and God the Father as the principle of the Holy Trinity. Through the revelation made in the New Testament, we come to know that God *could not be* except as Trinitarian. God does not choose to be three persons, as he chooses to create; he *is* that way, and this divine way of being has been revealed to us. We come to know that, without the Holy Trinity, our sense of God is truncated.¹¹

¹¹ I owe this term to Francis Slade.

A second issue is the Eucharist. The words of the Eucharistic Prayer are directed toward God, and specifically toward God the Father. As the prayer moves toward the consecration, the priest calls down the Holy Spirit on the gifts, but he does not address the Holy Spirit as such; he continues to address the Father and asks him to send down the Spirit, and while addressing the Father he speaks about “your most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.” Then, in the narrative of institution, the priest speaks about Jesus Christ and describes his actions at the Last Supper, but he still addresses the Father. Finally, in the formula of the consecration, the priest stops speaking in his own voice and repeats the words of Christ himself. It is important to note that the literary form of these words is that of a quotation. The priest does not say *that* Jesus said these words. Rather, he says the words that Jesus said, and he says them as being said by Christ. The institutional narrative gives way to a quotation, which allows Christ himself to be the authoritative speaker at that moment of the Eucharist. Note also that every quotation needs a narrative to introduce it. We always need to say something like “he said . . .” when we wish to quote someone, when we wish to let our voice become the vehicle for the speech of someone else, and we need to identify the speaker whose authority we are making present and effective. Quotation is one of the extraordinary resources of human language and speech, the ability that defines the rational animal. The quoted words of Christ, speaking through the Church, achieve what they achieved when they were originally spoken on the night before he suffered.¹²

This quotation is within a speech directed toward the eternal Father. Even the Eucharistic narrative and the words of consecration embedded within it are spoken by the priest toward the Father, though it may at the moment seem that they are directed toward the congregation. This orientation toward the eternal Father helps us see how the present Eucharistic sacrifice can be the same as that achieved by Christ on Calvary and anticipated by him at the Last Supper. Time present and time past are identifiable in God’s eternal now. The Christian distinction between God and the world opens a logical or theological space within which the Church’s teaching on the nature of the Eucharist is meaningful: the Eucharist is not just a sign and a symbol, but the same sacrifice of our redemption. The Eucharist is not only the reenactment of the one sacrifice of Christ; it is also a perpetual reminder of the

¹² See Robert Sokolowski, 2014 Edward Cardinal Egan Lecture, “The Eucharist: Words of Christ, Words of the Church” (https://www.magnificat.net/foundation/cardinal_egan_lecture_2014.asp).

transcendence of God. The quotation of Christ's words is sacramental; it is not just dramatic, literary, or conversational.

A third and final point deals with ethics and moral theology. I think it would be very helpful to appeal to the philosophy of friendship in working out the ontology of moral action. Friendship is given a very prominent role in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. It is placed higher than justice, it is treated later than justice, and two entire books are dedicated to it. Friendship involves a special moral syntax, just as justice does. In friendship we wish the good of another and make it, as such, our own good in what we do, and this disposition and activity enlarges our moral reason and our moral virtue. We are more rational and more human the more we are capable of friendship. Friendship can also provide a natural analogue and basis for charity, the highest of the infused theological virtues. I only briefly mention this theme as yet another area for the theology of disclosure.

The theology of disclosure shows how appearances are involved in the truth of things and shows that things do truly appear to us, even though we must also account for such things as error, deception, and camouflage. Discussing such topics leads us toward concrete, particular analyses, which Husserl called the *Kleingeld*, the "small change" of philosophy. It enhances our appreciation of what things are and how they differentiate or define themselves for us. Such an approach complements the ontology of Thomism and medieval philosophy, and it would be important to show how the two approaches differ. It helps us deal with skeptical treatments of appearance in modern thinking, but its value is not just therapeutic or historical. It enriches our contemplative understanding of the truth of things and the truthfulness of the human subject.