

# Preface

THERE IS A LONG-STANDING tradition of disputation concerning the nature and significance of literary art (as well as of the other fine arts). Perhaps because our daily lives are suffused with language used for practical purposes we find it necessary to remind ourselves of the power inherent in language to bring us into contact with qualities that transcend the world of practical affairs. And perhaps because we know that language can be used to deceive we find it prudent to exercise caution when invited to submit ourselves to the rapture of aesthetic experience. Plato in *The Republic* found it necessary to build upon what he has Socrates call the ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy in order to open up space within a culture dominated by epic and tragic poetry for the dialectical use of language in philosophy, although Socrates includes a plea or challenge for the defense of poetry while conducting a critique of the limitations and dangers of poetic language. Aristotle in his *Poetics* clearly seems to be responding to this challenge, arguing (among other things) that poetry is “more universal” than history. The Greek word used by Aristotle when making this claim is the very word from which the English term “catholic” in the sense of “universal” is derived. The Catholic intellectual tradition retains this respect for the power of language to convey a larger universe of meaning within which our lives unfold, and then vastly expands this understanding of the power of the word by contemplating as well the incarnational mystery of language: “In the beginning was the Word,

and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Readers will recognize that the name of this journal points to the complex interaction of faith and reason to be found in such a view of human language.

An eloquent reaffirmation of this Catholic trust in the power of language and the power of art is provided by John Paul II in the 1999 “Letter of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to Artists.” The letter, in spite of its brevity, sketches both a theoretical defense of the power of art to serve the Church as well as a historical overview of the varying relationship between art and faith in different periods of history from ancient to contemporary. Although the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar in *The Glory of the Lord* is not directly cited in the letter, the letter’s claim that “[t]he theme of beauty is decisive for a discourse on art” and the letter’s condensed reflections on “[t]he link between good and beautiful” bring to mind the deep explorations of such concepts provided by von Balthasar. The letter moves stirringly toward both a meaningful reaffirmation—“the Church needs art”—and a question anticipated by the letter to be viewed by some as a “provocation”—“But can it also be said that art needs the Church?” This letter is yet another contribution by John Paul II to a contemporary reengagement between faith and culture.

Readers might also recall in this context the arguments of Dietrich von Hildebrand in his article “Beauty in the Light of the Redemption” reprinted in the previous issue of this journal (Volume 4: 2). Von Hildebrand in that article explores the lines of connection that enable a person of faith “to seek and find in all the sublime beauty of the visible and audible world the Countenance and the Voice of the God-Man, Christ.” Surely for a Christian no stronger reaffirmation of the significance of art can be imagined.

The dispute concerning the value and significance of art provides a paradigm for the broader questions concerning the relationship between faith and culture, and this is the territory explored in a variety of ways by the articles in this issue of *Logos*. What is the rela-

tionship between poetry and transcendence, as explored in the poetry and reflections of poet and Catholic convert Denise Levertov? In what ways does novelist Muriel Spark evoke the connections between sound and religious belief in her novels? What is the relationship between the work of Shakespeare and Christian belief? Broader questions concerning the relationship between faith and culture include the relationship between the Catholic Church and modern democracy, the relationship between Catholic belief and modern science and technology as applied to the issue of cloning and research employing human embryos, and the inadequacies of human self-understanding when our concept of the person is bereft of the dignity that comes most fully to light in a recognition of the human person as made in the image of God. These and other questions receive illuminating analysis by our authors in the ten articles collected in this issue.

We open this issue with a sharp but thoughtful rejoinder by **Paul J. Griffiths** to the recent provocative book titled *Papal Sin* by Garry Wills. Griffiths conducts a careful scholarly reexamination of the historical investigations undertaken by Wills as the basis for the claims about the mendacity of a number of popes that form the core of Wills' book, and Griffiths finds deep problems that thoroughly undermine the accuracy and credibility of the claims made by Wills. Identifying the genre of *Papal Sin* as "diatribe" (which is in itself a long-standing tradition going back as far as Jeremiah), Griffiths shows that Wills is either mistaken or deceptive concerning the account of the nature of lying in the thought of St. Augustine (an argument that Wills wants to build upon in moving toward his own conclusions). The article concludes that the heat of diatribe in Wills' book prevents the book from making a contribution to an important question raised in the book: "It is the question of how developments in the extraordinary magisterium's understanding of its own authority affect its relation to and understanding of its own past teachings."

**George Weigel** examines the historical turn of events and the development of Catholic teaching that result in the Catholic Church becoming an important defender of the modern democratic project, in spite of a long history of tension between the Church and modernity. In **“Catholicism and Democracy in the Age of John Paul II”** (presented as the millennial Acton Lecture in Sydney in October 2000), Weigel traces the stages of development over a period of more than two hundred years leading up to the affirmations made by the Second Vatican Council and Pope John Paul II that view democracy as the form of government “most likely to give effect to the core principles of Catholic social ethics.” Weigel goes on to show that John Paul II’s critiques of modern utilitarianism, of freedom understood as radical personal autonomy, and of exercises of technological power without proper ethical guidance provide a defense of principles without which democracy itself would be in serious jeopardy.

Giving witness to the breathtaking temporal scope of the Catholic tradition, the next article moves back about eight centuries to consider the significance of images of male and female in relation to Church authority in the teachings of Pope Innocent III between 1198 and 1216. **Robert W. Shaffern** in **“Mater et Magistra: Gendered Images and Church Authority in the Thought of Pope Innocent III”** explores the rhetorical richness of the use of metaphor and analogy with regard to gender in the theological writings of Innocent III, images drawn from the Scriptures and employed by Innocent III to provide a profound theological view of church authority. Shaffern shows that Innocent III was especially interested in using metaphors of wife and mother as guiding images to convey the true nature of authority in the church, drawing upon marriage as “the ultimate paradigm of Christian teaching,” and constructing through his rhetorical use of such images an “allegorical framework by which the nature and application of church authority could be interpreted.”

In **“St. Thérèse: The Mystic and the Renewal of the Christian Tradition,”** **Sister Agnes Cunningham, S.S.C.M.,** explores the

themes of Christianity, tradition, mysticism, and renewal in the writings of Thérèse of Lisieux, establishing why this recently proclaimed Doctor of the Church will provide continued spiritual leadership in the twenty-first century. The article locates St. Thérèse both in the lineage of theological influence and also within the culture of the Martin family and the Norman character of the region in which she spent her childhood, helping us to understand the strength that enabled Thérèse to identify herself powerfully with love in the body of Christ. “Thérèse’s insight into the mystery of the Father whose love she experienced through so many and such diverse meditations may prove to be a source of healing and peace for many persons, in surprising and unexpected ways.”

**Peter Milward, S.J.**, offers a far-reaching critique of a much-noted book on Shakespeare by critic Harold Bloom. In **“Shakespeare’s Secular Bible: A Modern Commentary,”** Milward demonstrates the persistence with which Bloom denies any affiliation between Shakespeare’s work and Christianity, Bloom arguing that Shakespeare should be regarded instead as resolutely agnostic. Milward’s view is that Bloom imposes upon Shakespeare the many post-Christian assumptions of the prevailing “orthodoxy” in modern academia, leading to the celebration of Bloom’s book by that same academic establishment. Milward helps us to recognize the diminishment suffered by the plays of Shakespeare when such anti-Christian prejudices are imposed upon his work.

We then offer an elegant and historically well-informed reading of Shakespeare’s *All’s Well That Ends Well* provided by law professor **A.G. Harmon**. In **“‘Lawful Deeds’: The Entitlements of Marriage in Shakespeare’s *All’s Well That Ends Well*,”** we find that a reading of the play in the context of a historical account of marriage law in the time of the play illuminates the themes of the play and shows us Shakespeare’s deep interest in bringing to life the profound implications of the Christian sacramental view of marriage.

Novelist Muriel Spark displays an ear acutely sensitive to sound in her novels, argues **Angus P. Collins** in **“‘Listening to the Silence’:**

**Sound and Religious Belief in Muriel Spark's *A Far Cry From Kensington*.**" Such sensitivity to sound displays the novelist's attunement to the Judeo-Christian tradition in which voice and sound are strongly linked to divine spirit. Spark portrays the sound of the voice in this novel (and in others) as an "index of spirit," and presents sound in the form of music as possessing the power to be "a testimony of grace." Collins' sensitive reading of the novel displays the manner in which the Christian sensibility of a writer can find expression in the artistic techniques through which the novelist brings a world to life.

American poet Denise Levertov died in 1997 at the age of 74, having become a Roman Catholic in the last few years of her life. **Ed Block's "Poet, Word, and World: Reality and Transcendence in the Work of Denise Levertov"** explores a number of significant themes in the work of this important contemporary writer. Block argues that a dialectical mode of understanding is necessary for appreciating the poetry of Levertov, poetry that engages at a deep level the complex experiences of faith and doubt and that moves us toward a direct encounter with the grace that fills the world in spite of the pain and suffering that we encounter. The article shows why it is likely that Levertov's significance as a modern poet is likely to be sustained into the future, and it may well be that her poems on religious themes will be seen increasingly as a major contribution to contemporary poetry.

The issue of research using human embryos has been much in the news lately and has been widely debated on ethical grounds, and **Paul J. Wojda** steps forward in "**On Embryos, Clones, and Catholic Wisdom**" to examine what constitutes a distinctively Catholic understanding of the issues at stake. Wojda argues that Catholic vision is embedded in the sacramental practice of the Mass, proposing that "it is better to say that the 'Catholic point of view' is enacted or performed rather than propositionally enunciated." Wojda contrasts this Catholic wisdom nourished by communal participation

in the Eucharist with the technological dissociation from human contexts imposed upon human embryos by the practices of researchers who then, unsurprisingly, find no reason to regard the embryo in human terms. Those who live within the wisdom enacted in the rituals that form the center of Catholic Christian life derive from their participation in such rituals “a knowledge that both cloning and stem-cell research are contrary to what is truly and authentically good for us as human beings.”

The final article in this issue, **Gary Atkinson’s “What Else Could I Do? The Self-Definition of Consequentialists,”** subjects the view that regards as an ethically relevant consideration only the foreseeable consequences of an action to a thorough critique and displays the grave shortcomings of such a view. In a witty examination of the typical scenarios depicted by those arguing for a consequentialist view of human action, Atkinson shows that the consequentialist position demeans the human person, regarding the person as in principle subject to any kind of debasement as long as the foreseeable consequences that seem to require such debasement can themselves be justified. Atkinson leads us to consider how such debasement violates our sense of dignity, and although he does not venture beyond the boundaries of philosophical considerations in the essay, the article reaffirms the wisdom of viewing the human person as created in the image of God.

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