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How to Inhabit Time: Understanding the Past, Facing the Future, Living Faithfully Now

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How to Inhabit Time: A Précis

James K. A. Smith

How to Inhabit Time is the third volume in what I see as a kind of "invisible" trilogy on spiritual formation that (in my mind, at least!) begins with the argument about "the spiritual power of habit" articulated in *You Are What You Love* (2016).[1] Echoing the seminal work of Richard Foster and Dallas Willard, as well as my colleague Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, *You Are What You Love* focuses on spiritual formation as the habituation of love and desire.

1. James K. A. Smith, *How to Inhabit Time: Understanding the Past, Facing the Future, Living Faithfully Now* (Brazos Press, 2022) and *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Brazos Press, 2016). I should note that *You Are What You Love* is itself something of a distillation of a proper scholarly trilogy, my Cultural Liturgies Project comprised of *Desiring the Kingdom* (Baker Academic: Baker, 2009), *Imagining the Kingdom* (Baker Academic: Baker, 2013), and *Awaiting the King* (Baker Academic: Baker, 2017).

What was perhaps unique in my contribution was a more communal and ecclesial focus on liturgy and collective worship rituals as integral to spiritual formation.

In *On the Road with Saint Augustine* (Brazos, 2019) I tried to articulate what I described as Augustine's "real world spirituality" which recognizes the ongoing dynamics of struggle that characterize the Christian life, eschewing any perfectionism or illusion of purity. We are always on the way; the Christian life is a "refugee spirituality" because we are longing for a home we've never been to. This includes an importantly *eschatological* element to spiritual formation—the need to recognize *when* we are. By God's grace, we know where home is, but we're not there yet.

How to Inhabit Time grows out of a fundamental conviction that was assumed but undeveloped in those earlier books: A spirituality for creatures must be a spirituality attentive to the vicissitudes of time and history. To be human is to be conditioned by time, shaped by history. We don't float above the flux. We are those unique creatures who are shaped by history even as we shape it.

In this sense, I see *How to Inhabit Time* as one more instalment of an argument that I've been trying to make since my very first book, *The Fall of Interpretation* (First edition was InterVarsity Press, 2000; second, revised edition is Baker Academic, 2012): We ought not to conflate finitude with fallenness; or, more positively, to affirm the goodness of creation is to affirm the goodness of finitude. And to affirm the goodness of finitude is to affirm the goodness of embodiment, including our locatedness in time and space. The promise of new creation and resurrection is not redemption *from* embodiment but redemption *of* embodiment. That redemption begins here and now, in the "already" of the kingdom that is among us. So we need a spirituality—and a theology of spiritual formation—that recognizes the goodness of creaturehood and thus affirms and recognizes the significance of time and history.

However, just as some people act as if they have a "God's eye view" of things—a "view from nowhere"—so I think too many Christians and forms of Christianity imagine they have a "view from nowhen." We subtly imagine that because we stand in the truth we are somehow above or immune to history. This leads to all kind of illusions and self-deception, both individually and collectively. More significantly, such "nowhen" Christianities have no way to imagine how and why God *gives* us time and history as a gift.

To counter such "nowhen" Christianities, *How to Inhabit Time* tries to sketch a vision for what I call spiritual timekeeping. This is *not* about "what to do spiritually with your time" or some kind of spiritualized time management. Rather spiritual timekeeping is a renewed temporal awareness that is attuned to the texture of our histories, the vicissitudes of life, and the tempo of the Spirit.

How to Inhabit Time is intended as a wake-up call to the significance of one's own temporality but also the significance of *our* temporality. It is both a matter of awakening to the way history lives in *me* and, at the same time, the way *we* inhabit history and history lives in us—as well as the way futurity pulls us and shapes us. It's not as simple as seeing the spiritual significance of your calendar but rather discerning the spiritual repercussions of a history that precedes you, lives in you, and shapes the future to which you are called.

The pulse of the book has three beats: reckoning, discernment, hope. We need to reckon with our (personal and collective) histories so that we can discern how the Spirit is afoot in the present and thus hear the future to which God is calling us. In this respect, *How to Inhabit Time* does not offer formulas, or even specific disciplines—though it does try to articulate the formative significance of the liturgical calendar from a new angle. Instead, the book is an invitation to a posture of contemplation. I try to commend modes of becoming aware of our temporality in order to occasion new intentionality about how we inhabit time. This includes, for example, appreciating how the *seasonality* of a human life is significant for spiritual formation (chapter 5); or why contentment is found in learning to love what we'll lose (chapter 5); or the importance of tempering political expectations in order to learn how to properly hope.

In some ways, the key question of the book is: What does it mean to be "faithful" if we are creatures of history and conditioned by time?

In "nowhen" forms of Christianity, the watchword is "preservation;" faithfulness is understood as the prolongation and preservation of *what has been*. In nowhen Christianity, "faithfulness" is a matter of guarding against change.

In spiritual timekeeping, the watchword is discernment; faithfulness requires knowing *when* we are in order to discern what we are called to. The goal of spiritual confrontation with our past is precisely to rid us of our delusions and idolatries so that we can finally hear what God is calling us to in the present.

The great Latino theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez once wrote: "To hope in Christ is at the same time to believe in the adventure of history." *How to Inhabit Time* is meant to be an invitation to recognize we're already *in* that adventure and provide a roadmap for the way.

Reckoning and Hope: A Liberation Psychology Lens on Inhabiting Time

Jennifer Abe

> The spiritual dynamics of time and history are at once communal and individual, personal and political. We must attend to our history just as I face my own. Reckoning and hope scale to both soul and society. p. 7

In his compelling book, *How to Inhabit Time*, James K. A. Smith asks the important question "when are we?" to examine the spiritual dynamics of time and history. Specifically, he proposes that "*how* time shapes us, as both history and future" is instructive for how we live out our faith. Faith is presented not so much in terms of doctrinal belief but, as he puts it, more a "mode of participating in the Christ-*event*…which continues to rumble through human history." Smith invites us to consider that "Christianity is less a *what* and more a *how*, a question of how to live given what has happened in Christ." (p. 15). He views this temporal faithfulness as an ongoing habit of *discernment,* so that we are continuously and actively attuned to what God is doing in our *now,* as human

creatures embedded in time and history. Smith describes how we, as part of a human body that is both personal and communal, live within specific "horizons of possibility" that circumscribe our experience. He sees these horizons as "not fencing you out of something but entrusting you to *this* field of possibility" (p. 59). That is, we are entrusted with the particulars of our lives, as God works within us, in and through our time.

Smith helps us imagine a broader horizon to discover what it means to inhabit time, seeking to discern the ways in which God relates to us personally and collectively through time and in our history. His book is wondrous, simultaneously nourishing and deeply thought-provoking. Here, I wish to engage some of Smith's work using a liberation psychology lens to expand on his thinking where it intersects with my own, especially around issues of reckoning and hope.

First, what is liberation psychology and what is the significance of using such a lens? Fr. Ignacio Martin-Baró, S.J., a Jesuit priest and founder of this little-known area in psychology was one of the six Jesuit priests who, along with two women, were killed at their university home in 1989, during El Salvador's civil war. He was also a social psychologist who, given his training, position, and experience in Latin America, rejected many of the prevailing assumptions of psychology as a field of study. When I discovered his writings, they transformed the way I related to my own discipline. I was particularly pierced by his critique that psychology too often helped to preserve the unjust status quo of a society, rather than helping to transform it towards greater justice.[1] Martin-Baró pointed to the critical need to connect individual and social levels of functioning, linking individual psychological well-being to societal justice. He rejected a universalist approach to understanding human behavior, focusing instead on honoring the influence of history, culture, and social realities upon lived human experience. Martin-Baró was also ahead of his time in raising questions about the assumption that psychological research could or should be value-free, instead asking whose interests, whose questions, and whose understandings, are implicit and central to the research process. Influenced by liberation theology, he framed the goal of psychology as seeking liberation from oppression, with an emphasis on action, standing firmly alongside the poor and marginalized in and through his work.

Perhaps the convergence between the precepts of liberation psychology and Smith's way of thinking about time are already noticeable here: paying attention to both personal and collective experience; understanding human experience within the particular parameters in which our lives are embedded; and discerning how we, as both soul and society, may be transformed in ways that respond to Spirit. In this essay, I first provide a brief overview of psychological research on time. Next, I use a liberation psychology lens to consider the idea of wounds related to time, highlighting linkages between personal and collective experience. Lastly, I return to Smith's text to think about how these ideas might inform our understanding of reckoning and hope and how we inhabit time.

1. Martin-Baró, I. (1994). The role of a psychologist. In A. Aron & S. Corne (Eds.), *Writings for a Liberation Psychology.* Boston, MA: Harvard Press.

Psychological Research on Time

In the field of psychology, the study of human experience in relation to time turns out to be a big deal, with a range of concepts developed to shed light on different elements of our subjective sense of time. For instance, the notion of *time perspective* takes an intellectual, cognitive approach to our perception of time, and refers to the ability to project oneself, logically and coherently, into past, present, and future.[2] Research shows that some of the brain areas activated when we think about the future are the same as when we remember the past, leading researchers to conceptualize our capacity to think forwards and backwards like this as a kind of "mental time travel".[3] This capacity to think in time is called *temporal functioning*–yes, functioning in time. Positive temporal functioning requires a "conscious, meaningful, flexible, and balanced integration of past experiences and future expectations into present activities"[4] and is viewed as critical to our sense of continuity in life.[5]

Our attentional preferences, or where our feelings and attention are primarily directed, underlies research on *time orientation*.[6] More precisely, time orientation is a preference for *when* we are drawn, past, present, or future, to capture the emotional valence, positive and negative, associated with each element.[7] *Time perception* relates to our subjective experience of time, including our ability to estimate units of time that have passed, as well as what the passage of time feels like.[8] For instance, *time dilation* that can occur when time slows down and maybe even seems to stop, as can happen in emotionally charged moments.[9] In the case of depression, the flow of time is often

2. Zimbardo, P.G., & Boyd, J.N. (2008). *The time paradox: The new psychology of time that will change your life*. New York, NY: Free Press.
3. Epstude, K., & Peetz, J. (2012). Mental time travel: A conceptual overview of social psychological perspectives on a fundamental human capacity. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 42*, 269-275. DOI: 10.1002/ejsp.1867. Okuda, J., Fujii, T., Ohtake, H., Tsukiura, T., Tanji, K., Suzuki, K… Yamadori, A. (2003). Thinking of the future and past: The roles of the frontal pole and the medial temporal lobes. NeuroImage, 19, 1369-1380. Szpunar, K.K. & Radvansky, G.A. (2016). Cognitive approaches to the study of episodic future thinking. *The Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology, 69*(2), 209-216. https://doi.org/10.1080/17470218.2015.1095213.
4. P. 74, Livneh, H. (2013). The concept of time in rehabilitation and psychosocial adaptation to chronic illness and disability: Part II. *Rehabilitation Counseling, 56*(2), 71-84.
5. see Livneh, 2013; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999, 2008.
6. See Zimbardo & Boyd, 2008.
7. See Zimbardo & Boyd, 2008.
8. John, D., & Lang, F.R. (2015). Subjective acceleration of time experience in everyday life across adulthood. Developmental Psychology, 51(12), 1824-1839. Pennington, G.L. & Roese, N.J. (2003). Regulatory focus and temporal distance. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 83*, 1198-1212. Eagleman D, Pariyadath V (2009). Is subjective duration a signature of coding efficiency? *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences. 364* (1525), 1841–1851. doi:10.1098/rstb.2009.0026. PMC 2685825.
9. Tse, P.U., Intriligator, J., Rivest, J., Cavanagh P. (2004). Attention and the subjective expansion of time. *Perception and Psychophysics, 66* (7): 1171–89. doi:10.3758/bf03196844.

perceived as slowed, stopped, or even assuming a backward flow.[10] Other kinds of *time distortion* can occur for people with severe psychiatric diagnoses.[11] Livneh (2013) describes what happens to time perception in psychosis, for example, as a collapse of past (recollection of past events) and future (expectation of events) tumbles into experiences of the present in an unnerving timelessness, coupled with an inability to distinguish between inner events (recollections and expectations) and outer events (actions and occurrences). In such experiences, "time and space, as such, lose their defining dimensionality and are experienced in a disintegrated, fragmented, and dysfunction manner"(p. 73).[12] This is an extreme example of *temporal disintegration*, where a person is not able to organize the past, accurately perceive the present, nor logically anticipate the future.[13] We don't typically hear about temporal disintegration as a diagnosis, nor entertain the idea of temporal functioning as a potential goal of mental health interventions and healing efforts. But, for a moment at least, let's exercise our imagination with the idea of time wounds, in which our relationship to time itself might represent a problem.

Our Wounded Relationship to Time

In this section, a liberation psychology lens can help in considering individual and collective levels of experience as they relate to trauma and time, as a way of engaging the idea of our wounded relationship to time. This is not a neutral lens. Instead this discussion is oriented towards reckoning with our past and moving into a shared future with hope so we may participate in a continual process of social transformation towards justice. Can we also understand this path as part of our practice of temporal faithfulness? This latter question will be left for the last section of this essay.

Temporal Disintegration and Trauma

At a personal level, trauma can distort our temporal functioning. Specifically, traumatic events can impede our ability to integrate the past into the flow of our lives, leading to a rigid,

10. Rappaport, H. (1990). *Marking Time*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster. Ratcliffe, M. (2012). Varieties of temporal experience in depression. *Journal of Medical Philosophy, 37*, 114-138. doi:10.1093/jmp/jhs010.
11. Holman, E.A., Jones, N.M., Garfin, D.R., & Silver, R.C. (2022). Distortions in time perception during collective trauma: Insights from a national longitudinal study during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy.* https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0001326.
12. See Livneh (2013). Also, Melges, F.T. (1989). Disorders of time and the brain in severe mental illness. In J.T. Fraser (Ed.), *Time and mind:Interdiscipinary issues* (pp. 99-119). Madison, CT: International Universities Press.
13. See Livneh, 2013; Melges, 1983. Also, Edlund, M. (1987). *Psychological time and mental illness*. New York, NY: Gardner Press. Friedman, W. (1990). *About time: Inventing the fourth dimension*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

obsessive focus on the past that dominates the experience of the present.[14] Bessel van der Kolk, a psychiatrist who wrote a book on trauma called "The Body Keeps the Score" describes how traumatic memories are like fragments, encoded as shards of perceptions and emotions that are isolated from each other in the brain, unable to be easily integrated or absorbed into experience.[15] Trauma is linked to "temporal disintegration at the time of the traumatic experience" so that some people can get "stuck" in the past, experiencing high levels of distress as a result.[16] In this way, traumatic experiences can function as barriers to a person's capacity to be fully present in the present.

Might it be that we as a society can also get stuck in the past because of collective trauma that has not been integrated into our collective memory? Put another way, can temporal disintegration occur at a communal level, as well, to the extent that we are unable to collectively comprehend our past, perceive our present, and intentionally move into a shared future? Collective trauma can be understood as "shared injuries to a population's social, cultural, and physical ecologies" and "a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together [impairing] the prevailing sense of communality"[17] Psychological research on collective trauma includes its impact on subsequent generations, including with children of survivors of the Holocaust,[18] families of Japanese Americans incarcerated during WWII,[19] Native Americans

14. van der Kolk, B. (2015). *The body keeps the score: Brain, mind and body in the healing of trauma.* New York, NY: Penguin Publishing.
15. See van der Kolk, 2015.
16. page 76, Livneh, 2013.
17. Erikson, K. (1975). *Everything in its path: Destruction of community in the Buffalo Creek flood. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.* (p 5) as cited in Saul, J. (2022). Collective Trauma, Collective Healing. New York, NY: Routledge Press.
18. Dashorst, P., Mooren, T.M., Kleber, R.J., DeJong, P.J., & Huntjens, r.J.C. (2019). Intergenerational consequences of the Holocaust on offspring mental health: A systematic review of associated factors and mechanisms. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology, 10*(1), 1654065. doi:10.1080/200008198.2019.1654065. Danieli, Y., Norris, F.H. & Engdahl, B. (2016). Multigenerational legacies of trauma: Modeling the what and how of transmission. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 86(*6), 639-651. https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000145. Sigal, J.J. & Weinfeld, M. (1989). Trauma and rebirth: Intergenerational effects of the Holocaust. New York, NY: Praeger Publishers.
19. Nagata, D.K., Kim, J.H.J., & Nguyen, T.U. (2015). Processing cultural trauma: Intergenerational effects of the Japanese American incarceration. *Journal of Social Issues, 71*(2), 356-370. doi:10.1111/josi.12115

experiencing historical trauma,[20] and others.[21] This transmission of transgenerational trauma can even get coded into our genes (an area of research called epigenetics) and transmitted to our children.[22] The consequences of collective trauma can be burdensome indeed, raising questions about the nature of the boundary between past and present. Where exactly, for instance, does historical trauma end and systemic oppression begin?[23] Research also suggests that we are motivated to forget, even deny, such experiences as a society when such narratives appear to threaten our own sense of group identity.[24] Perhaps we find ourselves stuck, unable to integrate traumatic shards of memory experienced by different groups within our society into the flow of our collective narrative. Also, because there are always multiple, contested, intersecting narratives, we struggle over whose perspectives gets to be centered. Regardless, a troubling question remains: do such unnamed fragments of our shared history contribute to a sense of temporal disintegration we might experience as a society?

Future Time Orientation and Hope

Temporal disintegration raises other questions about our society's relationship to time. At the individual level, psychological research suggests that when a person's sense of a future is foreshortened, whether through the stress and uncertainty associated with poverty and racism, chronic pain, or a diagnosis of a terminal illness, the future is "no longer a "safe place" for psychological dwelling.[25] As a result, a lack of a future time orientation can lead to

20. Bombay, A., Matheson, K., & Anison, H. (2014). The intergenerational effects of Indian Residential Schools: Implications for the concept of historical trauma. *Transcultural Psychiatry, 51*(3), 320-338. doi: 10.1177/1363461513503380. Evans-Campbell, T. (2008). Historical trauma in American Indian/Native Alaska communities: A multilevel framework for exploring impacts on individuals, families, and communities. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 23*(3), 316-338. Sotero, M.M. (2006). A conceptual model of historical trauma: Implications for public health practice and research. *Journal of Health Disparities Research and Practice, 1*(1), 93-108. Walters, K.L., Mohammed, S.A., Evans-Campbell, T., Beltrán, R.E., Chae, D.H., Duran, B. (2011). Bodies don't just tell stories, they tell histories. *DuBois Review: Social Science Research on Race, 8*(1), 179-189.
21. Lehrner, A., & Yehuda, R. (2018). Cultural trauma and epigenetic inheritance, *Development and Psychopathology, 30*, 1763-1777. doi:10.1017/S0954579418001153. Yehuda, R. & Lehrner, A. (2018). Intergenerational transmission of trauma effects: Putative role of epigenetic mechanisms. *World Psychiatry, 17*(3), 243-257. doi:10.1002/wps.20568.
22. See Lehrner & Yehuda (2018); Yehuda & Lehrner (2018).
23. Kirmeyer, L., Gone, J., & Moses, J. (2014). Rethinking historical trauma. *Transcultural Psychiatry, 51(*3), 299-319.
24. Rotella, K.N., & Richeson, J.A. (2013). Motivated to "forget"". The effects of in-group wrongdoing on memory and collective guilt. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 4*(6), 730-737. DOI: 10.1177/1948550613482986.
25. (p. 26) Livneh, 2013. Gjesme, T. (1983). On the concept of future time orientation: Considerations of some functions and measurements' implications. *International Journal of Psychology, 18*, 443-461. Kielhofner, G. (1977). Temporal adaptation: A conceptual framework for occupational therapy. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 31,* 235-242. Lilliston, B.A. (1985). Psychosocial responses to traumatic physical disability. *Social Work in Health Care, 10*(4), 1-13.

attitudes and behaviors (e.g., impulsivity, risk-taking) that are associated with negative mental health outcomes.[26] A future time orientation refers to the "degree of involvement in the future; it is a set of subjective expectations and beliefs about one's future" and "the ability to project oneself and plan for the future."[27] Psychological research also supports the idea that a future time orientation is particularly important for psychological well-being. High levels of future time orientation have been associated with higher life satisfaction, perceived social support, optimism, and adaptive coping strategies. It seems that imagining a future with hope makes a difference to our behaviors in the present, even if the research hasn't quite gotten to the point of figuring out all the specific psychological mechanisms by which this might work.[28] Hope is inherently future-oriented, helping to sustain and encourage us even in the midst of struggle.[29] The expression of hope may itself may even represent a form of agency about the future.[30] So, how do we sustain and encourage hope as a way of helping to heal our time-related wounds?

In their research with urban indigenous youth in Canada, Hatala et al., (2017) found that a sense of cultural connectedness was an important part of orienting to the future with hope. They conducted interviews with youth, who self-identified as Plains Cree or Métis, to explore their time orientation to past, present and future, finding that a sense of being supported, including experiencing a sense of belonging and being understood, was associated with a greater future time orientation. Their conclusions included the observation that "…when Indigenous youth have a clear understanding of their cultural past, present, and future, it is easier for them to sustain a sense of connectedness and commitment to their own futures" (p. 1338).[31] Hatala and colleagues (2017) defined this as a sense of *belonging in time* or "knowing where one is going and where one has come from, seeing the 'bigger

26. Johnson, S. R. L., Blum, R. W., & Cheng, T. L. (2014). Future orientation: A construct with implications for adolescent health and wellbeing. *International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health, 26*, 459–468. Ratcliffe, M., Ruddell, M., & Smith, B. (2014). What is a "sense of foreshortened future?" A phenomenological study of trauma, trust, and time. *Frontiers in Psychology, 5*, 1026. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2014.01026. PMID: 25278917. Terr, L. C. (1983). Time sense following psychic trauma: A clinical study of ten adults and twenty children. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 53*, 244–261. Petry, N.M., Bickel, W.K., & Arnett, M. (2022) Shortened time horizons and insensitivity to future consequences in heroin addicts. Addiction, 93(5), 729-738. https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1360-0443.1998.9357298.x. Rothspan, S and Read, SJ. 1996. Present versus future time perspective and HIV risk among heterosexual college students. *Health Psychology, 15*(4): 131–134.
27. (p. 77) Livneh, 2014.
28. Aspinwall, L.G., & Leaf, S.L. (2002). Commentaries. In search of the unique aspects of hope: Pinning our hopes on positive emotions, future-oriented thinking, hard times, and other people. *Psychological Inquiry, 13*(4), 276-321.
29. See Aspinwall & Leaf (2002).
30. Bryant, J., & Ellard, J. (2015). Hope as a form of agency in the future thinking of disenfranchised young people. *Journal of Youth Studies, 18*(4), 485-499, https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2014.992310
31. Hatala, A.R., Pearl, T., Bird-Naytowhow, K., Judge, A., Sjoblom, E., and Liebenberg, L. (2017). "I have strong hopes for the future": Time orientations and resilience among Canadian Indigenous youth. *Qualitative Health Research, 27*(9), 1330-1344. DOI: 10.1177/1049732317712489.

picture' …[including] an ability to incorporate a contemplation of the past as a tool for success in the now and in the future" (p 1338-1339). A sense of belonging in time meaningfully connects persons with both their ancestors and descendants. Still, can such processes of connection occur without some attention to reckoning with past trauma? Indeed, is it possible to truly connect and be connected without such reckoning?

Reckoning and Hope: Liberation Psychology and Inhabiting Time

Smith describes inhabiting time as "awakening to the way history lives in you, the way we inhabit history and history inhabits us, and the way futurity pulls us and shapes us." (p. 9). In his view, this futurity is the work of hope, and an inherent part of Christian faith. Yet, Smith also urges a reckoning with the past as part of a practice of "temporal faithfulness" in our relationship to God in and through time. Smith regards discernment as the core element of practicing temporal faithfulness and in doing so, rejects viewing faithfulness as a means for mere preserving of the past. Here, I want to ask Smith, can temporal faithfulness help to make us more open, able, and willing to face the consequences of reckoning with our past? To be transformed by this reckoning? If we can pay attention to recognizing and acknowledging the impacts of trauma across different communities, for instance, might we begin to help restore social trust, strengthen communal ties, and move into our future in a different way?[32] This is, no doubt, a huge challenge. The existential threat of the climate crisis, collective trauma of the COVID pandemic, and global awakening to racial injustice remind us of the kinds of formidable challenges we face. Are we not called, with increasing urgency, to engage in reckoning for the sake of our future? For the sake of hope?

Perhaps there are approaches to reckoning with time that can encourage us and help us find our way. For instance, Schaepe and his colleagues (2017) engage in collaborative archaeological processes with indigenous community partners so that the archaeological process itself can serve as a form of social connection and healing.[33] Together, they identify and engage in intentional practices that are responsive, inclusive, and respectful of community values and protocols. Careful attention to process and method facilitates how an archaeological recovery of "belongings" can strengthen "connections between descendant people and their ancestries, identities, and worldviews" (p. 503).[34] The language of "belongings," rather than "artifacts" or "material objects" is significant here. Intangible forms of knowledge are viewed as residing in these belongings, providing continuity and

32. (p 4) Saul, J. (2022). *Collective Trauma, Collective Healing: Promoting community resilience in the aftermath of disaster*. New York, NY: Routledge Press.
33. Schaepe, D.M., Angelbeck, B., Snook, D., and Welch, J.R. (2017). Archaeology as therapy: Connecting belongings, knowledge, time, place, and well-being. *Current Anthropology, 58*(4), 502-533.
34. See Schaepe et al., 2017.

interconnectedness across time.[35] As such, this shared archaeological process helps communities reclaim their cultural connections, restoring temporal integration and cultivating a sense of belonging in time. This, too, is an act of social healing.

I see something similar to the idea of temporal integration in Smith's conception of a faith that inhabits time. Past and present are not distant layers separated by centuries, but intersecting, interconnected realities brought into focus and being through the practice of faith, expressed through sacred ritual. Are not the bread and wine symbolic belongings of another meal, once shared in another time and place? Or what Smith might call the "relativization of chronology" in which "the present matters, but *now* is not only the present. Our *now* is pregnant: it bears possibility from a past that will be borne into a future." (p 88). Smith's book provides us with much to consider for how to live in this way, as "soul and society." He reminds us of the invitation that is ever before us "to join and thereby both be transformed and be part of the unfolding transformation" (p 44). The invitation to temporal faithfulness, discerning, not preserving, with a capacity for reckoning, daring to live in hope. And, finally, recognizing *when* we are, inhabiting time.

A Response to Smith's *How to Inhabit Time*

John Swinton

The issue of time and its implications for human living and indeed human being is rich and complex. Time is one of those things that all of us understand until we have to explain exactly what it is, at which point it seems to slip through our fingers. It does not easily yield itself easily to tight conceptual definitions and sharp, conclusive intellectual argument. Like many things in life, time is multivocal; when you tie it down from one perspective another pops up in defiance. Time may be multivocal, but it is also deeply contextual, tied in with the politics and economics of this world. It is not a coincidence that in a capitalist society we find ourselves using economic language around time: we buy time, we waste time, we spend time, we sell time. Everything that we do with our money we do with our time. Time is perceived as a commodity like Snickers bars and Corn Flakes! But time is more than a monitory commodity. When we look in the mirror, when we gaze at the changes in our bodies, the lines on our forehead, the bulges where there were no bulges before, the changes that time has etched upon us, we realise that time is outside the control of the market. It sits beyond our own desires. Time has its own rhythm, within which our bodies are caught up and moved along, shifting and

35. Muntean, R., Hennessy, K., Antile, A., Rowley, S., Wilson, J., Matkin, B.…Wakkary, R. (2015). Belongings: Tangible interactions with intangible heritage. *CITAR: Journal of Science and Technology of the Arts, 7*(2), 59-69.

changing as we do the best we can whilst we have the time to do it. But what might it mean to do the best with the time we have?

In this book James K. A. Smith mentors us into ways of thinking about time that enable us to recognise that the ways in which many of us have been taught to think about time is at best limited and at worst deceptive. For Christians, time should be seen as the arena within which we learn to practice our historical creatureliness. Time as it is experienced within creation is not something to be endured until the Lord returns. Rather it is something to be lived into as we immerse ourselves in the timefull movements of God in the present and move towards the fullness of that immersion in the future. Time can only really be understood if we realise the significance of radical eschatology; an eschatological perspective that recognises that the *now* is as theologically potent as the *still to come.*

The approach by which Smith chooses to draw us into the contours of spiritual time reflects the multivocal nature of time. Rather than providing us with a series of formal definitions and explanations, Smith utilises poetry, music, contemplation, prayer, philosophy memoir and theology. This approach allows us to think clearly about time, but also to *feel* and to *practice* time. The book is therefore an important contribution to the intellectual and the meditative life of the church.

The book's guiding question seems at first to be strangely dissonant. Smith asks: "When are we?" We may know *where* we are, but do we know *when* we are? In other words, are we fully aware of the time in which we live and how we are called to understand and respond to such time. Time, Smith posits, has become a problem for the church. Some within it have come to view Christian theology, Biblical interpretation, and Christian practice as somehow timeless, dislocated, unattached and unaffected by the movement of human history. In failing to recognise the theological and practical significance of its history Christians have failed to tell the present time faithfully. The question "When are we" is designed to reframe our understanding of time and enable us to see the ways in which we are rooted in God's time, a form of time that is fully imbedded in the present flux and flow of a world that is in the process of being redeemed in the now, as well as in the future.

I am grateful for the opportunity to share in the vital insights that Smith has offered to church and world through this piece of creative theological writing. The book seems envisioned as a piece of spiritual writing intended to challenge and draw out spiritual meaning in order that transformation may occur in our relationships with God, creation and one another. As such it is not my intention to approach my response in the way that I might if I was responding to a standard piece of academic writing. Rather, what I would like to do is to pick up and run with some key themes that emerge from book, and to explore some of the wider implications of Smith's thinking for church and world.

Time, Trauma, Culture and Nostalgia

The book opens with a powerful reflection on Smith's personal experience of depression. His reflection is bold, honest and provocative, particularly with regard to the

way in which his trauma from the past continues to intrude on his present. Time feels linear to us, but there is clearly a dimension of the past that refuses to remain in the past. Trauma lingers on in past memories, but it also moves forward in time imposing its presence on his present. His body carries the weight of the trauma of his past; the scars that time has wrought upon his mind continue to impose themselves on his bodily existence in ways that are hidden yet obvious when named properly. "Wounded histories" as Smith puts it, lead to more wounded histories. As I read this, I as drawn to reflect on issues around generational trauma, a form of psychological burden that refuses to remain in the past, but rather tracks forward in time expanding into individuals, communities and cultures. Complex wounded histories lead to complex contemporary problems.

Transgenerational Trauma

Take for example, the generational trauma experienced historically by my own African-Caribbean community. There are many ways in which this is revealed, but if we focus on issues around mental health the point will become clear. There are a number of studies that have indicated marked racial disparities in mental health treatment and prognosis in relation to Afro-Caribbean people. Does this mean that mental health professionals are inherently racist? That of course could be the case, but the situation is far more complex. Historically the Afro-Caribbean community in the United Kingdom has experienced significant racially oriented trauma and abuse for generations. Unsurprisingly people now tend to harbour suspicion of authorities like the police or health services. For this reason, this community tends not to approach health service providers unless they absolutely have to. Inevitably this means that people are often more ill when they engage with services than their white counterpart. So, when research indicates a tendency to medicate people of colour and provide counselling for white people, this does not necessarily reflect explicit racist practices by individual healthcare providers (although it might do). Rather it is indicative of generational trauma and cultural failure to recognise the impact of history on the health seeking behaviors and to deal effectively with the historical wounds of racism that profoundly impact of Afro-Caribbean people today. A poor grasp of history results in racial stereotypes poor practice, misleading research and mental health practices that seriously miss the mark.

The Danger of Nostaligia

The importance of taking history (the passage of time) seriously runs throughout Smith's work. In particular he reflects on the dangers of nostalgia: a naïve retrospective reflection on the past which inspires us, not to move forward, but to look backwards towards an imagined past that *feels* real but never really was. Nostalgia overlooks the fickleness of memory. Psychologists inform us that memory is notoriously unreliable. If 5 people witness a road traffic accident all of them will remember it differently even

though they have seen exactly the same thing. Recall is unreliable, emotional and open to distortion. Think about a time when you were trying to remember something. You can't quite get it to the forefront of your mind and then suddenly it pops up! The next time you remember that thing your memory does not go back to the original memory. It goes to the last time you remembered, that is, a time when you were in a very different place from the original memory, with a different set of feelings, hopes, life expectations etc. So yes, you remember the incident, but you remember it in a different context with a whole new set of connotations. Memory does not simply record the passage of time. Rather it reflects our imaginative construction of events as we see them from the viewpoint of the present. Yes, you remember the past (as best you can), but when that past comes into your present you feel differently, and you construct the situation differently in the light of your current circumstances. Nostalgia reflects something of this imaginative reconstruction of memory. Nostalgia is a form of fiction that is based on truth. A bit like a movie that is "based on real events!" The problem here is that you mistake the present for the past and act accordingly. Distorted remembrances of history lead to distorted practices in the presence. When this happens culturally the results can be devastating.

The Silence of History

In his reflections on the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, Ugandan Catholic priest and theologian Emmanuel Katongole points to the ways in which modern Western people tend to avoid examining difficult and complex issues by remaining silent. The silence sometimes occurs because of geographical distance, but often it is driven by history. The silence of history assumes that tragedies such as the genocide "just happened." The way in which the genocide was reported revealed a terrifying silence with regard to history. People seemed to assume that the genocide came out of nowhere. Buying into that silence abrogated the possibility of historical responsibility for what went on and maintained a thin and narrow historical perspective that placed the blame for the genocide fully on the shoulders of the warring parties. The fact that the genocide was the historical consequence of colonialism and Western silence in the face of extreme violence was and is conventionally overlooked. We can see this kind of historical silence at work today in the ways in which we frame situations such as the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, the conflict in the Ukraine, the tensions with Iran and countless other examples. We simply silence huge swaths of history to make way for a thin political narrative that attributes blame in ways that are simplistic, defensive, and usually destructive. Katongole in line with Smith's arguments points out that if we don't listen to history, we really can't hope to understand the present. Thin, idealistic, nostalgic perspectives on time and history easily leads to tragedy and can multiply human suffering. Smith's reflections on time, trauma and the woundedness of histories has profound contemporary relevance.

Temporal Dislocation: Anxiety Time and History

We live in anxious times. Across the globe anxiety rates are rising. Perhaps it began with the financial crash of 2008 and the discovery that money "doesn't really exist." Then came the Covid-19 pandemic, bringing with it, amongst other things a 25% increase in the prevalence of anxiety and depression worldwide.[1] No sooner had that "passed" when the war between Russia and the Ukraine brought us the threat not only of war, but nuclear war. Is it any wonder that people are anxious? Surely this is a prime time for the world to hear the peaceful and timefull message of the gospel? Where else can we find hope? Sadly, as Smith correctly points out, rather than digging in and living out its powerful anxiety relieving hopeful message, many contemporary Christians seem to be locked into a world marked by what he describes as *temporal dislocation*. Many Christians seem to imagine that God is not truly a part of time. God, it is assumed, is somehow above the earthiness of time, floating in a timeless realm that pays little if any attention to the messiness of creation time. In the end God will fix it, but for now God steers well clear. Christians who follow such a God similarly conceive of themselves as outside of time. The messiness of the politics of this world is to be avoided as we await the final day when we will enter into God's timeless presence free at last from the passing, trivial time of this world.

Christians, Smith suggests, suffer from "spiritual *dyschromometria*" (I imagine this may well be in the next DSM manual), a lack of awareness of what time it *is* and what time is *for*. Smith calls this "nowhen Christianity," a temporal play on the word "nowhere." Nowhen Christianity leads to a sense of "temporal dislocation." When we fail to recognise how rooted we are in the world and how much we are the products of our histories, we tumble into naivety about our present, and become fixated with the "end times." The world and all of its citizens are experiencing a form of deep anxiety that craves for the healing power of the gospel hope. Instead, what it is offered is a form of timeless Christianity that continually stares longingly past and beyond the world. At a time when people need the hope of the gospel, Christians have forgotten how to tell the time(s). So how are we to deal with such temporal dislocation. What do we need to do to orient ourselves to God's time *in the present?*

Spiritual Timekeeping

Smith's calls for the body of Jesus to develop a form of temporal awareness (knowing when we are) that will enable us to engage in what he describes as "spiritual

1. World Health Organisation: COVID-19 pandemic triggers 25% increase in prevalence of anxiety and depression worldwide. https://www.who.int/news/item/02-03-2022-covid-19-pandemic-triggers-25-increase-in-prevalence-of-anxiety-and-depression-worldwide (Accessed 0700 on Friday 13th January 2023).

timekeeping." Spiritual timekeeping is an awakening to the significance of our historical embodiment and the spiritual significance of our creaturely temporality as individuals and as societies. Spiritual timekeeping is a way of being in the world that asserts that time is an eschatological gift which is the arena for faithful creaturely living. Spiritual time is not marked by fear, anxiety, or a desire to escape from the world. Rather, spiritual time is marked by a faithful assurance that God is with us in our present times and that these times matter. Spiritual timekeeping requires eschatological humility. Eschatological triumphalism simply marks time until the day that Jesus returns. Eschatological humility is the humble recognition that we are Contingent creatures living in a world where the now matters. The current times have deep spiritual significance. We are called to work out our heavenly vocation, even to give up our lives for our friends, *in-the-now* as we hope for what is still to come. Within this kind of time hope becomes possible because we come to see all time as God's time and realise that no time should be wasted. Spiritual timekeeping demands that we pray differently (thy kingdom come, thy will be done *on earth* as it is in heaven), we sing differently (Singing Kingdom songs in the now as Smith suggests), and practice differently, more timefully as we take seriously the working out of our creaturely vocation to care for one another and for God's creation.

What Does Love Look Like?

Let me conclude with one final aspect of spiritual timekeeping that Smith's work stimulated for me. Spiritual timekeeping reminds us of the power of the now, the beauty of the present moment and the gift of slowness (taking time truly to *be* in and with God's creation and our fellow creatures). When we begin to practice spiritual time, when we slow down and notice the present moment, we learn to feel what love looks like. For many years of my life, I worked alongside people with advanced dementia, people who some would label as being a "waste of time." It is easy to pass such people by, walking on the other side of relational connection, not caring to spend time with them, looking past but rarely at them. And yet, when we give people the gift of time things change. We become sensitised to small movements that remind us of the person that they are (not were). We feel the way that, even for a few seconds, we lock into their experience, a touch, a glimmer in someone's eye, a gentle movement to the rhythm of the hymn that we are singing. As their bodies move to the rhythm of worship, we begin to realise that time has etched their spirituality into their bodies. Smith's bodily memory etched into him by his childhood trauma revealed itself in difficult ways. But sometimes bodily memory can remind us of something deep and real within people. People with dementia may not be able to remember Jesus, with their minds, but the time they have spent with Jesus over their lifetime sometimes erupts in embodied spiritual practice that does not require intellectual recall. It is memory here, now, memory that can be seen in this moment. Spiritual timekeeping helps us move beyond our spiritual *dyschromometria* and to see the world and one

another in it in ways that can never happen if nowhen time is the only kind of time we have. In this book Jamie Smith has given us a real and prophetic gift for which I am deeply grateful.

Being-Thrown or Being-Guided into Spiritual Timekeeping: Smith and Willard, Heidegger and Husserl

Brandon Rickabaugh

Introduction

In *How to Inhabit Time*, James K. A. Smith offers a wonderful reflection on the role that being aware of the experience of time plays in the Christian life. More of a memoir than his previous books, Smith shares his philosophical insights often from his own experiences, which I found resonating deep within me. Smith aims to draw our "awareness of what it means to be the sorts of creatures who dwell in the flux of time's flow, who swim in the river of history…to encourage a sort of recognition that is the fruit of contemplation" (xiii). He encourages us: "don't come so much to learn as to dwell" (xiv). "The point isn't to "picture reality" by transcribing it; the point is to transform our attention to reality by reframing our focus" (xv). In particular, Smith draws our attention to the reality, dangers, and moral failures of "nowhen Christianity."

Nowhen concerns one's assumptions about our relationship to time, "the illusion of being above the fray, immune to history, surfing time rather than being immersed and battered by its waves" (4). It stems from the delusion of being unconditioned by time. In contrast, is what Smith calls the art of spiritual timekeeping, which he describes with four convictions: a "working out of our creaturely finitude as creatures in time" (16-17) that "reflects a sense of time shaped by covenant" (17), is "nourished by Jesus's promise that the Spirit will guide us into all truth across time" (17) and is "animated by the future" (18).

During the lockdowns, a group of friends and I read and discussed the work of Julian of Norwich online. Julian lived during the largest pandemic recorded in human history, the Great Pestilence (1332-1357), which killed 75-200 million people across Europe and Asia. How her experience of that pandemic impacted her writings brought comfort during our own pandemic.[1] This practice of spiritual timekeeping blessed our group dearly, and Smith's reflections helped me understand this more profoundly and more transformative.

1. For helpful background on Julian's experience of the plague, see Veronica Mary Rolf, *Julian's Gospel: Illuminating the Life and Revelations of Julian of Norwich* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013), chapter 4.

What follows are reflections on important aspects of Smith's book worthy of deeper exploration. Like Dallas Willard, another philosopher who wrote on Christian spiritual formation, Smith makes great use of phenomenology (the investigation of the nature of consciousness and its relations to objects of various types). Whereas Willard drew heavily from Edmund Husserl's work, Smith does so with Martin Heidegger's. Consequently, I will draw connections between Smith and Heidegger on the one hand and Willard and Husserl on the other. I agree with and was blessed by Smith's book and intend my reflections as a venture with Smith deeper into his work.

Being-Thrown from or Into Spiritual Knowledge?

> A central aspect of Smith's thesis is Heidegger's notion of *thrownness*, which Smith describes as …the way in which even the life I've made for myself, the accumulation of a thousand choices and decisions, still feels like a life I've been thrown into because, in some fundamental sense, the *possibilities* were also decided for me before I ever emerged on the scene (32).

Our *thrownness* refers to our experience of being contingent in a specific time and place, thereby limiting the possibilities and burdens of our lives. This is not a bad thing. "Because," as Smith writes, "I've been thrown into the life and time in which I find myself, I have a future that calls for me to realize possibilities latent in what has been handed down" (33). As Smith rightly observes, "Our past is not what we've left behind; it's what we carry" (33).

Heidegger's thrownness brings much more along with it into Smith's thesis. Our being thrown into the world, our "Being-there," refers to "the subject's way of being," in that we already and always engage with the world in the act of self-interpreting and meaning-giving isolated within our history.[2] As thrown into a particular place and time, we see through the context and concepts of our place and time. Our temporal finitude demands this.

Like Smith, Willard drew much attention to the fact that we arrive in the world already and are always being spiritually formed.[3] Spiritual timekeeping is essential. "Devotion to Jesus Christ," writes Willard, "and to what he is doing in world history then and now is the center of a distinctively Christian version of spirituality."[4] Willard

2. See, e.g., Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 45-52; and 54-56; and Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 123.
3. Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting On the Character of Christ*, 20th Anniversary Edition (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2021), chapters 1-3.
4. Dallas Willard, "Spirituality for Smarties," in Dallas Willard, *Renewing the Christian Mind: Essays, Interviews, and Talks*, edited by Gary Black Jr. (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2016), 102.

often attended to the significance of our place in human history and the profound inheritance we've received from so many spiritual giants before us.[5]

There is, however, a sharp disagreement between Smith/Heidegger and Willard/Husserl. Heidegger's work is a fundamental rejection of Husserl's core philosophy.[6] As an important historical point, Heidegger betrayed Husserl by enforcing Nazi regulations banning Husserl from his university.[7] Husserl's *The Crisis of European Science and Transcendental Phenomenology* includes sustained criticism of Heidegger's work.[8] Most important for my purposes is Heidegger's replacement of Husserl's pure ego with his notion of *Dasein*, thrownness, or "Being-there." Husserl rightly regarded this as reducing phenomenology to anthropology and mechanistic psychologism.[9]

Many have worried that Heidegger's theory of thrownness entails a kind of relativism or constructivism that undermines our communion with reality, including each other. Aware of this, Husserl responds,

But this embarrassment [historical/cultural relativism] disappears as soon as we consider that the life-world does have, in all its relative features, a *general structure*. This general structure, to which everything that exists relatively is bound, is not itself relative. We can attend to it in its generality and, with sufficient care, fix it once and for all in a way equally accessible to all.[10]

No matter when or where one is thrown, there is a profound continuity, a general structure, to reality and one's experience of reality.

Willard argues that Heidegger's thrownness is incompatible with Husserl's objective, realist theory of publicly located meanings—acts of communication—in the world.[11] For example, Willard criticized Heidegger for assuming that logic is fundamentally an issue of human behavior and for failing to defend this view against Husserl's objections.[12] This is no ancillary issue. As we will see shortly, Willard

5. See, e.g., Dallas Willard, "A History of Asceticism and the Formation of Christlike Character," in Willard, *Renewing the Christian Mind*, 115-128.
6. Walter Hopp, *Phenomenology: A Contemporary Introduction* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2020), 273, 294. Hopp references Peter Simons, "Whose Fault? The Origins and Evitability of the Analytic Continental Rift," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 9 (2001): 295-311. I should say that I struggle with assigning Heidegger's work in my philosophy of technology course.
7. David Woodruff Smith, *Husserl*, second edition (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 30.
8. Ibid.
9. Edmund Husserl, *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and The Confrontation with Heidegger (1927–1931)*, edited and translated by Thomas Sheehan and Richard E. Palmer (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1997), 485–500.
10. Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, translated, with an Introduction, by David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 1970/1936), III.A.36.
11. Dallas Willard, *Logic and the Objectivity of Knowledge: A Study of Husserl's Early Philosophy* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1984), 132, fn. 55.
12. Dallas Willard, "Reviewed Work(s): The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic by Martin Heidegger and Michael Heim," *The Philosophical Review* 95 (4) (1986): 628-631.

thought that his understanding of spiritual formation depended on embracing Husserl's view over Heidegger's.[13]

A God's-eye View of the Nowhen Problem?

Smith blames nowhen thinking on "renditions of the faith that believe they are above time and history because they've been granted access to a God's-eye view of it all" (5). A "God's-eye view" is a conscious awareness and representation of the world as it is, not mediated, created, or distorted by one's concepts, including those received from one's culture, personal history, or overall worldview. According to a "God's-eye view" or metaphysical realism and its associated epistemological realism, there is an objective reality independent of how we think about it, which is knowable.

To reject the "God's-eye view" view is to hold that no view of reality is independent of how we have shaped it in our thinking, and there is no possibility of knowing reality as it is when our consciousness of it is not shaping it. This is what Heidegger's view entails. Our being thrown into the world, our "Being-there," refers to "the subject's way of being," in that we already and continuously engage with the world not as it is and as what we are, but how we are—always in the act of self-interpreting and meaning-giving.[14] We cannot step outside of this to discover reality as it is.

Unlike Smith, Willard was a staunch advocate of the "God's-eye view."[15] As we've seen, Smith sees his rejection of the "God's-eye view" as central to his understanding of spiritual timekeeping and spiritual formation. According to Willard, rejecting the "God's-eye view" renders spiritual formation and the life, practices, and teachings of Jesus unintelligible. Moreover, on Willard's view, an interactive relationship with God requires the "God's-eye view." We cannot know God at a distance (mediated by our concepts and historical context), only by direct knowledge by acquaintance with God.[16]

For example, Willard argued that, while the theological/political conservatives and moderates have failed to treat Jesus as a brilliant teacher, "the left claimed to regard Jesus' ethical teachings highly." Instead, however, they ascribed to Jesus the ethical teachings of those such as "Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, or Michel Foucault."[17] This failure to treat Jesus as he is and instead inject meaning from the philosophy of

13. See, e.g., Dallas Willard, Knowing Christ Today: Why We Can Trust Spiritual Knowledge (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2009), 1-3, 17-23, 65-93, and 139-166. In relation to the moral life, see Dallas Willard, The Disappearance of Moral Knowledge (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 1-44.
14. See, fn. 2.
15. See, e.g., Dallas Willard, "How Concepts Relate the Mind to Its Object: The 'God's Eye View' Vindicated," *Philosophia Christi* 1 (2) (1999): 5-20; and Dallas Willard, *Logic and the Objectivity of Knowledge* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1984), Chapter 2.
16. See, e.g., Willard, *Knowing Christ Today*, chapter 6. See also, Brandon Rickabaugh, "Eternal Life as Knowledge of God: An Epistemology of Knowledge by Acquaintance and Spiritual Formation," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 6 (2) (2013): 204-228.
17. Dallas Willard, *Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1997), 56.

Heidegger, according to Willard, undermined the actual teachings of Jesus. Now, if we are thrown into the world in such a way as Heidegger, and presumably Smith contends, it is hard to see how we can get at the reality of Jesus's way of life. Publicly available spiritual knowledge seems unavailable to the thrown.

Moreover, Willard argued that views like Heidegger's, and seemingly Smith, face the difficult task of explaining how God's people, within their limitations, did not find God as he is. Willard writes,

> In John 14, Jesus explained to his little graduating class that the "world" cannot receive the spirit of truth because "it neither sees nor knows Him." "But," he continued, "you know him for he resides with you and shall be in you." He talks as if the "world" were blinded to a reality that is there all the same, their empirical language game notwithstanding. Is Christian revelation, and Christian experience today, access to a reality by which the adherents of all language games are to be judged, or not? Acts 17:30–31 suggests it is.[18]

Willard made a similar, more detailed argument against any hermeneutic according to which reality is mediated by language.[19] For Willard, this has nothing to do with Enlightenment or modernist rationalism but with the intuitive commonsense understanding of reality that spans the scope of human history across cultures.

Lastly, Smith's rejection of nowhen Christianity is difficult to understand without a "God's-eye view." Smith explains nowhen as a negative epistemological state, a "delusion," a state of being "oblivious," "have never considered," "they don't realize," "can't hear," "lack awareness of," "a failure to appreciate," "mistakenly imagine," and is similar to brain trauma and color-blindness (4-5). Mistaken concerning what exactly? Without the "God's-eye view," the answer cannot be that nowhen Christians are mistaken about reality as it is. But then what is the delusion, what is not recognized in any universal and objective way?[20] The nowhen problem, as I understand, is far worse than a mistake within one's structured meaning, but a mistake that frustrates concord and communion with reality as it is.

Theodicy, Formation, and Spiritual Time-Keeping

A beautiful theme throughout the book is that not all decay is a disaster, that "not all change is loss and not all is tragic—while at the same time naming and lamenting those losses that ought not be" (105). One question I continually returned to is theodicy. I saw the possibility of a plausible and fruitful account of how God might relate to our suffering, to overcoming or using some forms of suffering having to do without temporal limitedness.

Consider the following insights from Smith.

18. Dallas Willard, "Postmodernism and the Christian Faith," in Willard, *Renewing the Christian Mind*, 388.
19. Dallas Willard, "Hermeneutical Occasionalism," in Willard, *Renewing the Christian Mind*, 411-418.
20. Willard makes a similar point in "Postmodernism and the Christian Faith," 388-389.

> There is something scandalous about the way God takes up this contingency in our lives—all of it, even the heartbreak and sorrow, the evil and injustice—and forgets it into this singular life that is *mine*, that is *me*. It is this *me*, the fruits of zigs and zags, stitches and scars, who is then renewed, empowered, *called*. I am the only one I could be (67).

Smith continues,

> None of this justifies or excuses the heartbreak. To be human is to be the product of a history that should have been otherwise: that's what it means to live in a world off-kilter due to sin and evil. And yet now I am the me with that history, and without it, I would be someone else (67)

It's difficult not to understand Smith as offering some justification for our temporally related suffering. Plausibly, Smith claims that our suffering is partly due to our temporality and thrownness. Without being thrown into the world, we cannot exist as who we uniquely are. The cost of existing as who we are now is that we suffer by dint our thrownness.

> There is only one place Smith explicitly mentions theodicy, and he does so negatively. Within the context of reading history, Smith writes, We will always read history from a time and place. It can be easy to conflate "reading providence" with an exercise in theodicy, as if trying to discern the Spirit's movements in history were the same as justifying that history (156).

Quoting Augustine (*City of God*, 1.28), Smith writes, "To read history in such a way is a risky endeavor for creatures because God's providence is "a profound mystery" (156). Providence is a profound mystery, but Augustine didn't find this as a reason against theodicy. He embraced theodicy. Augustine's theodicy is not explicitly directed at his time (although he did think it applied to his historical moment), but in abstract terms of the entrance of evil into the world through the fall of the devil and the free choice of the will.[21] Augustine appeals to the kind of reasoning Smith rejects: that at least some "biblical ideas are timeless formulas to be instituted anywhere and everywhere in the same way" (5).

One might think Smith's seeming rejection of theodicy is simply a part of the continental and analytic philosophy divide.[22] However, while some phenomenologists

21. E.g., Augustine, *The City of God*, 12.1–9; and Augustine, *On Freedom of the Will*, 3.37–49.
22. I agree with Willard, who sees this distinction as false and unhelpful. See Dallas Willard, "Who Needs Brentano? The Wasteland of Philosophy Without its Past," in Roberto Poli (ed.), *The Brentano Puzzle* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017. First published by Ashgate, 1998), 15-43. See also Mikołaj Sławkowski-Rode, "The Distinction in Question: The Analytic/Continental Divide in Philosophy," in Benedikt Paul Göcke and Ralph Stefan Weir (eds.), *From Existentialism to Metaphysics* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2021), 45-62.

reject the project of theodicy,[23] other phenomenologists embrace theodicy.[24] Or perhaps the problem with theodicy is that it is too abstract and impersonal, which is a common objection to analytic philosophy. This needn't and shouldn't be the case. As Eleonore Stump explains, the problem of suffering is, in a sense, a question about interpersonal relations, insofar as the problem has to do with possible morally sufficient reasons for God, an omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good person, to allow human persons to suffer as they do.[25]

Similarly, Willard argued that what might seem like mere logical maneuvers of theodicy permit us to see the suffering of others and ourselves in the larger world of a great and good God who meets us in the person of Jesus.[26]

Alternatively, one might argue that theodicy is best removed from spiritual formation and soul care issues and that the philosophical and pastoral or clinical responses to suffering should not intermingle. I am not convinced this is correct. Meaning-making in general, and religious meaning-making in particular (including theodicy), constitute a powerful form of coping with difficult life events.[27] One way people employ their religious practices and beliefs is to make meaning of their suffering through the process of what cognitive scientists of religion call "sanctification" or theodicy.[28] Psychological

23. See, e.g., Emmanuel Levinas, "Useless Suffering," Richard Cohen, trans., in Robert Bernasconi and David Wood (eds.), *The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1988), 156-167.
24. See, e.g., Franz Brentano *On the Existence of God: Lectures Given at the Universities of Würzburg and Vienna (1868-1987)*, edited and translated by Susan F. Krantz (Dordrecht: M. Nijhoff, 1987). See also, Roderick M. Chisholm, *Brentano and Intrinsic Value* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), chapter 8.
25. Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 61.
26. See, e.g., Dallas Willard, "The Problem of Evil," in *Renewing the Christian Mind*, 355-356; and Dallas Willard, *The Allure of Gentleness*: Defending the Faith in the Manner of Jesus (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2015), chapter 6.
27. C. L. Park, " Religion as a Meaning-Making Framework in Coping with Life Stress," *Journal of Social Issues* 61 (4) (2005): 707–729.
28. K. I. Pargament and A. Mahoney, THEORY: "Sacred Matters: Sanctification as Vital Topic for the Psychology of Religion," *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 15 (3) (2005): 179–198; and M. E. L. Hall and P. Hill, P. "Meaning-Making, Suffering, and Religion: A Worldview Conception," *Mental Health, Religion, and Culture* 22 (5) (2019): 467–479.

studies have shown the therapeutic benefits of integrating theodicy into trauma treatment for the therapist and those being treated.[29]

> In his essay, "Theodicy from the Perspective of a Radical Phenomenology," Michel Henry observes, The modern world, which carries nihilism to its extreme point, demonstrates vividly that, in spite of appearances and the worldly and allegedly scientific explanations that proliferate today, what is happening in the world can never be explained starting from the world, but only starting from that life of which we are speaking. The interest of a theodicy today is to return us to this ever-present and ever-active source of all that is, and in inviting us to renew the effort to understand, beginning from that source, our own destiny.[30]

This sounds like the beginning of a spiritual timekeeping theodicy. But, of course, nothing I've said is incompatible with Smith's claims, at least not in any way that cannot be clarified. I am curious to hear how Smith considers his work in relation to theodicy.

Being-Thrown, Being-Placed, or Being-Guided?

> Hannah Arendt, a brilliant student of Heidegger's, although she often sided with Husserl, made the following objection.
>
> Heidegger is wrong: man is not 'thrown in the world'; if we are thrown, then—no differently from animals—onto the earth. Man is precisely guided, not thrown, precisely for that reason his continuity arises and the way he belongs appears. Poor us, if we are thrown into the world![31]

29. See, e.g., Simon Dein, "Trauma, Theodicy and Faith: Maintaining Religious Beliefs in the Holocaust," *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* 25 (3): (2022): 388-400; A. Hale-Smith, C. L. Park, and D. Edmondson, "Measuring Beliefs about Suffering: Development of the Views of Suffering Scale," *Psychological Assessment* 24 (4) (2012): 855–866; M. E. L. Hall, Jason McMartin, David Wang, Laura Shannonhouse, Jamie D. Aten, Eric J. Silverman, and Lauren A. Deckera, "The Christian Sanctification of Suffering Scale: Measure Development and Relationship to Well-Being," *Mental Health, Religion, and Culture* 24 (8) (2021): 796-813; M. E. L. Hall, L. Shannonhouse, J. Aten, J. McMartin, and E. Silverman, "The Varieties of Redemptive Experiences: A Qualitative Study of Meaning-Making in Evangelical Christian Cancer Patients," *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 12 (1) (2020): 13–25; M. E. L. Hall and Eric L. Johnson, "Theodicy and Therapy: Philosophical/Theological Contributions to the Problem of Suffering," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 20 (7) (2001): 5-17.
30. Michel Henry, "Theodicy from the Perspective of a Radical Phenomenology," translated by Justin Boyd, in Scott Davidson and Frédéric Seyler (eds.), *The Michel Henry Reader* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2019), 236-237.
31. Hannah Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, Notebook 21, 68: 540-60, August 1955, translated by Jeffrey Champlin, in Jeffrey Champlin, "Poetry or Body Politic" in Roger Berkowitz and Ian Storey (eds.), *Artifacts of Thinking: Reading Hannah Arendt's Denktagebuch* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2017), 152.

The details of Arendt's criticism of Heidegger are complex and extend beyond my interests here. I wish to draw from the distinction between *thrownness* and *guidedness*.

Edith Stein, a doctoral student of Husserl, similarly challenged Heidegger's thrownness. While Heidegger's notion of human finitude is derived from attending to the human person, Edith Stein does so by attending to our current need for time and our being completed, albeit finitely, in eternity. For Stein, being thrown can be understood only concerning the one who throws, which is God. Consequently, we must understand that we are not thrown into but are given the gift of Being by God. Our Being is not autonomous but received and "placed into existence and is sustained in existence from moment to moment."[32]

It seems that the "God's-eye view" of reality returns, at least according to how Arendt and Stein understand our coming into Being, our being guided by God into our specific time and place. To be placed or guided into Being is far different from being thrown. Like Arendt and Stein, Willard focuses more on God's filial activity in how God works in each person's place and time.[33]

Does Smith need to side with Heidegger here? I don't think he does. I think there are good reasons that Smith should side with Arendt, Stein, and Willard. I find the alternative thinking of Arendt and Stein better serves Smith's thesis. However, I suspect that Smith's use of Heidegger over Arendt or Stein intentionally serves his purposes in *How to Inhabit Time*. I am curious to understand what that might be.

But How Do We Inhabit Time?

A surprising oversight in Smith's book is the little attention given to how to inhabit time. Instead, our attention is drawn to the life of spiritual timekeeping but without a vision of the depths and dynamics of the spiritual timekeeper's heart, body, and soul. Nor are we given insight into the inner dynamics that make nowhen Christianity attractive and difficult to shake.

I found Smith's tone toward the nowhen too harsh to be productive and without appreciation for significant nuances of our psychological complexity. There is little to no space or time for the nowhen to find themselves on or traveling in a developmental spectrum. Ironically, the tendency toward all-or-nothing thinking and impatience for the growth of others is indicative of our time.

I suspect that Smith's tone and juxtaposition of nowhen Christianity and spiritual timekeeping is mainly rhetorical, intending to jar our attention. Perhaps my worry is unfair in that Smith's polemic is aimed not at the lived experience of psychologically complex people but at the ideologies at work. This concession, however, betrays the phenomenological method of Smith's project. Moreover, it betrays his thesis that we, those who live out our ideology, are embodied persons in a developmental process.

32. Edith Stein, *Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt at an Ascent to the Meaning of Being*, translated by K. F. Reinhardt (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 2002), 54.
33. This is perhaps best displayed in Willard's work on the social dimension of the human person in Christian spiritual formation. See, *Renovation of the Heart*, chapter 10.

Ideas do not live in the abstract. Living our ideas-rejecting nowhen Christianity for spiritual timekeeping—requires that we become different from the inside out. It is a matter of the transformation of the total person. We are left wondering: how do we become spiritual timekeepers; how are we to inhabit time faithfully? We are rightly warned against destructive ways of relating to history: nostalgia (38-40), idealism (40-41), and despair (41). But, perhaps most importantly, we must recognize and discern our temporal situation (44-49). But how are we to live this way?

Willard was focused on drawing our attention to a profound vision of the depths and dynamics of the human person as they take on the image of Christ, which deepens our intention to fulfill this vision, and by understanding and living out the means to do so. Smith's call to temporal discernment is in desperate need. But even more so is the need to become skilled at discernment. Thomas Green observes,

> The problem, I believe, is not that the principles of discernment itself are difficult or obscure, but rather that the climate of discernment—the dispositions of soul necessary before one can even begin to discern—is one of total commitment to the Lord.[34]

In the tradition of Ignatius of Loyola, discernment in the life of the Christian presupposes that one truly desires to accomplish God's work, that one is genuinely receptive to being taught by and led by the Holy Spirit, and that one knows God by lived experience. What I would love to know is what is Smith's vision, intention, and means that reliably aid us in becoming spiritual timekeepers; for how to faithfully inhabit time.

A Response to Smith's *How to Inhabit Time*

Michael V. Di Fuccia

> "Irony limits, finitizes, and circumscribes and thereby yields truth, actuality, content; it disciplines and punishes and thereby yields balance and consistency. Irony is a disciplinarian feared only by those who do not know it but cherished by those who do."[1]

Jamie Smith's *How to Inhabit Time* reads as an attempt to revive Christian humanism in our time.[2] Smith's concern is with what he calls "no when" Christianity, a certain forgetfulness of our temporality. In its many forms, this breed of temporal escapism has a way of alienating us from our individual and collective histories. Smith's

34. Thomas H. Green, S. J., *Weeds Among the Wheat, Discernment: Where Prayer & Action Meet* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1970), 55.

1. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony, with Continual Reference to Socrates* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 326.
2. Although perhaps not as nostalgic, Smith's *How to Inhabit Time* is reminiscent of Jacques Maritain's *The Three Reformers* and Henri de Lubac's, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*.

antidote for "no when" Christianity is the virtue of discernment. Smith, like Kierkegaard, employs irony as a midwife of discernment.[3] It disciplines, bringing awareness to our blind spots and awakens us to our time bound reality. In the unveiling the of the comedy (irony) that is our lives, we become present, discerning, just, and, indeed, more human. By accepting our individual and collective limitations we can better discern God's Spirit at work in the present. In the embrace of our temporality, we are transformed by eternal grace. Like Mary Magdalene at Jesus' tomb, we must dare to look again to discover our redemption (John 20.11–18).[4] This is the spiritual practice of inhabiting time.

Smith's "Thrownness"

How to Inhabit Time reads as a sort of *Confessions* meets the *The City of God*. It is as much personal as it is political. Smith constructs his vision from multiple angles. He is at once an autobiographer, social commentator, art and literary critic, ethicist, liturgist, and ironist. He spans multiple disciplines: psychology, sociology, history, science, biology, politics, philosophy, and theology. At times, he "tells it slant," employing stories and metaphors to convey his message.

Smith acknowledges his indebtedness to the work of Gustavo Gutiérrez whose liberation theology draws upon Marx's critique of religion as the "opiate of the masses." Figures such as Marx and Nietzsche insisted that a religion which separates time and eternity will always yield to the temptation for power, breeding myriad injustices.[5] Thus, Gutiérrez's "liberation" and Marx's "revolution" are a kind of awakening of the oppressed to one's agency in the here and now. Along with Heidegger's "thrownness," I take this to be the philosophical premise undergirding Smith's critique of "no when" Christianity. In following Gutiérrez, Smith is pointing to the political implications (or lack thereof) of a disembodied or "no when" Christianity, wherein the "opiate" of eternity numbs us from taking personal and collective action in the present.

While Christianity remains somewhat ambivalent about the "masters of suspicion,"[6] they should not be ignored. For, like Darwin, they speak to a deep anxiety of the Christian faithful. That is, they remind us that we are "human, all too human."[7] Smith carefully marshals the insights of the "masters" to critique "no when" Christianity by

3. Throughout the work Smith provides helpful contemporary examples of such irony. For example, for all the surface level differences between progressivism and conservatism they are, ironically, two sides of the same coin, idealist aversions from the present.
4. Gregory the Great, *Be Friends of God* (Cambridge: Cowley, 1990), 34.
5. Nietzsche, in his own unique way was critical of this same paradigm. In declaring the weak strong and the strong weak, Nietzsche saw Christianity fomenting its own "revolution," wherein priests become strongmen.
6. In his, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, Paul Ricoeur refers to Freud, Nietzsche, and Marx as the "Masters of Suspicion."
7. Indeed, what is more ironic than accepting a savior God who in his condescension took on human flesh, and then rejecting outright that humans might share a common ancestor with a chimpanzee. See, Conor Cunningham, "Why Study Evolution:" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ijo2lheFDfc

insisting we embrace our finite human nature. However, in turning to Augustine, he overcomes the cynicism and misanthropy of both the masters and "no when" Christians. For Smith, it is in and through our humanity that we find our redemption. The spiritual practice of identifying with our limits is not just a one-off salvific event, it is the essence of our sanctification. This is the heart of the *memento mori* to which Smith calls us.

Against Gnosticism

Smith's polemic against the lingering presence of Gnosticism is *apropos*. The book arrives at time when certain Christian "rites" constitute a complete divorce from reality. Challenging a wayward Christian culture usually doesn't bode well for the prophet. So, I applaud Smith for taking one for the team here.

How is it that we 'believe' and 'profess' that God was "revealed in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3.16) and then go on having deep anxieties about our own flesh? Such is the gnostic irony of "no when" Christianity. Putting it rather bluntly, one author refers to this anti-body heresy as "the Invention of the Anti-Christ."[8] Another speaks of this divisive tendency as pathological, a psychological need to ensure God's distance from nature to create non-porous and exclusive domains. The contemporary spirit of Gnosticism, in which divine truths are something of which only a select few are privy, breeds a kind of "moral obtuseness" wherein the chosen ones become the sole arbiters of power and come to rule over others.[9]

Proper Gnosticism insists on the utter separation of God from creation. In this scheme nature is incapable of bearing the supernatural because anything that enters the divine must be supernatural naturally. For Gnosticism, there can be no "burning bush." The contemporary gnostic tendency of which Smith is critical supplants the central paradox of the incarnation. In Christ, it turns out that our time bound existence is naturally oriented toward a supernatural end.[10] I may be reading too much into Smith, but I take this to be the Christological significance of his humanism. To correct a "no when" Christianity, to inhabit time properly, it seems we must insist on creation's natural desire for the supernatural.[11]

8. Conor Cunningham, "Natura Pura: the Invention of the Anti-Christ: a Week With No Sabbath." *Communio* 37 (Summer 2010): 243–54.
9. "'You Are Gods'" with David Bentley Hart and John Milbank," YouTube Interview, Nov 16, 2021: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHwt6Cf45uU
10. My summary of Gnosticism is indebted to David Bentley Hart. For more on this, see David Bentley Hart, *You Are Gods* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2022), Chapter 5.
11. In a different context, Smith says, " . . . the cultural work of creating polities is demanded by the very nature of creation, ever since creation, and still in this *saeculum* in which we find ourselves" (165). Might we also say that deification is also "demanded by the very nature of creation?" For more along these lines see, Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural* (New York: Crossroads Publishing, 1998).

The Spiritual Discipline of Inhabiting Time

For Smith, inhabiting time is a spiritual discipline. *How to Inhabit Time* offers some profound spiritual insights that should not go overlooked:

1. Smith's notion of "practical eschatology" speaks to a deficit in contemporary spiritual formation paradigms, and in western Christendom more generally: the privatization of spirituality. For "no when" Christendom, formation tends to be largely apolitical. Smith, however, says that inhabiting time is more "political than personal" (155). Mere "discernment" is not the end game for Smith. Discernment must be actualized in charity. The spiritual practice of inhabiting time has a particular orientation (*telos*), which is the love of one's neighbor.
2. Smith's injunction against Pelagianism goes to the heart of the way in which we understand God's work in our lives. Much of what we speak of as spiritual disciplines are things *we* do. Too much of this tends towards spiritual Pelagianism leaving the impression that it is we who are in control of our spiritual lives. Inhabiting time is about recognizing that much of our formation in Christ takes place passively and often without our knowing.[12] Smith taps into a key spiritual contribution of phenomenological tradition as he highlights the ways in which God uses our context, our history, and our experiences (good and bad) to form us. Smith speaks of the passive dimension of formation as "seasonal" and "involuntary." All reminders that sometimes formation in Christ "befalls" us. We inhabit time when we recall (examen) the passive work of God in our lives. This practice is particularly important in seasons of desolation.
3. Smith models for reader the practice of "discernment" by giving us a glimpse into his interior life. Throughout the work he is self-aware, candid, and brave, as he speaks to the personal and ethical implications of his awakening. Smith models the philosophical way of "knowing thyself," and thereby gives the reader permission to do the same. He balances high intellectual and social intelligence with deep interiority and vulnerability. In this way his person shines through the pages of *How to Inhabit Time.*
4. Lastly, there is not an apolitical bone in Smith's vision of formation. As with Dante, the way down into the dimensions of the soul is the way up to God, and, as with Plato, the way inward is the way outward to justice. Smith is adamant that it is not enough to do soul care in private. We must attend to our societal demons, the things we have done and the things we have left undone. For Smith, historical, cultural, and philosophical genealogies lend discernment regarding our collective histories. They speak to where we've been as a society and where we've come. To achieve personal and political discernment we need to practice

12. Dallas Willard acknowledges this passive dimension of spirituality in his diagram, "The Golden Triangle of Spiritual Growth." See, Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998), 347.

Sabbath. Smith indicates he's grown a bit weary of his own "protestant work ethic." Along the lines of Josef Pieper, Smith stresses the need for more leisure, or rather the blending of leisure with culture and work.[13] To be too busy, even with our spiritual lives, is to take ourselves too seriously, to be too Pelagian.

Clarifying Remarks

For the sake of clarification, I'd like to briefly probe Smith's concept of discernment.[14] Smith's Christian humanism insists upon our historical situatedness and for good reasons. At the same time, he implies that the virtue of discernment achieves a sort of transcendental vantage point between the fate of history and sheer Pelagianism. As previously mentioned, Smith avoids these two heresies by way of paradox: it is in passing through history (facing down who we are personally and collectively) that we achieve discernment.

Nevertheless, this paradigm appears to get somewhat muddled in phrases such as, the "eternalizing of the historical" (83), the "historicizing of the eternal" (83), "eternity *in* history" (84), "to join with history is to participate in God" (44-5), and in his use of the metaphor regarding "human history as the temple of God" (159, riffing on Gutiérrez). Perhaps it is a matter of philosophical preference, but in such instances the vision sounds a bit too Hegelian. At times, Smith's discernment seems to collapse a crucial "difference" worth teasing out.

I wonder if there is there a difference between participation in history and participation in God, or are they one in the same? It was his insistence on the "difference" between participation in history and of the Word of God that Karl Barth discerned that his fellow Christians were drifting towards a Christian nationalism in Nazi Germany. Similarly, it is for the sake of the difference between the flux of history and moral agency that Charles Taylor is critical of Heidegger.[15] If space allotted, more rumination on Smith's concept of "hope" would be helpful here.

Because so much of his critique of Hegel is bound up with this question of difference, and because difference seems to be the central philosophical quandary of Smith's virtue of "discernment," I take Kierkegaard to be the consummate philosophical interlocuter. Additionally, there are glaring similarities between Kierkegaard's use of paradox and irony and Smith's vision. Like Smith, Kierkegaard employs irony and paradox to suspend "sameness" and "difference" and "identity" and "repetition," as he speaks to how one ought to inhabit a life of faith. *Fear and Trembling* is perhaps the most profound philosophical musing on the tension between temporality and eternity going right to the heart of its personal and ethical implications. Abraham, Kierkegaard's "knight of faith," seems the exemplar of Smith's

13. Josef Pieper, *Leisure the Basis of Culture* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009).
14. Let me first say that this was not meant to be an academic book. I would not expect a book of this scale to get to the heart of these questions. I only pose what follows for clarification.
15. Charles Taylor, "Heidegger on Language," in *A Companion to Heidegger*, edited by Hubert Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 452.

vision of discernment who faithfully inhabits the paradoxical tension of the *permixtum*.[16]

Closing Remarks

In the end, the beauty of Smith's practice of inhabiting time is that it bears the marks of a robust Christian anthropology.[17] The analogy between the incarnation and our redemption holds: the journey into our humanity (inhabiting time) is not opposed to the journey into the divine life (eternal life). The path is paradoxically one in the same. Union with God, indeed the heart of the gospel message, is found in a continued coming to grips with our human limitations, and the grace received therein.

A Reply to Respondents

James K. A. Smith

It is an honor and a humbling prospect to reply to thoughtful, charitable scholars like Jennifer Abe, John Swinton, Brandon Rickabaugh, and Michael Di Fuccia. I am grateful that they would take *How to Inhabit Time* seriously and receive it in the spirit it was intended, which was to catalyze a conversation rather than offer any sort of final world. As such, their responses have taught me much and extended my ongoing thinking about such matters.[1] My reply is offered in the same spirit of continuing the conversation.

Liberation and Hope

I learned so much from Jennifer Abe's marvelous response to my book that I'm tempted to just say, "thank you." Indeed, I wish I had been learning from her *before* I wrote the book! It would have been richer and better-informed as a result.

I confess that I didn't know that Martin-Baró had developed a "liberation psychology," but given the impetus that Gustavo Gutiérrez provided for *How to Inhabit*

16. Although Smith mentions his own indebtedness to Kierkegaard, it seems to me that Kierkegaard's philosophical influence is overshadowed by the phenomenologists, which may simply be a matter of philosophical/theological preference.
17. See, Aaron Riches, *Ecco Homo: On the Divine Unity of Christ* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016). From the synopsis: "Riches narrates the development of the church's doctrine of Christ as an increasingly profound realization that the depth of the difference between the human being and God is realized, in fact, only in the perfect union of divinity and humanity in the one Christ."

1. I am also grateful that they recognize that *How to Inhabit Time* is *not* a scholarly monograph and thus don't belabor finer points that scholars love to debate. Indeed, I'll grant that it's a little difficult to say just what sort of book this is. Perhaps we could say it is something like philosophically-informed spiritual counsel offered, mostly, in the mode of testimony.

Time, Abe's suggestions certainly expand, deepen, and extend some of the intuitions in my book.

In particular, it seems that liberation psychology would have helped me to clarify something in the book that I'm not sure I properly resolved. In particular, I try to describe to people how the book sort of "toggles" back and forth between the individual and communal, from the personal to the social. I very much had both of these "registers" in mind while I was writing the book, and almost all the dynamics of reckoning, discernment, and hope that apply to our personal, individual lives also play out on communal and collective levels. The *integrity* and integration of these two facets of our being-in-the-world seem to be at the heart of Martin-Baró's vision for liberation psychology as "the critical need to connect individual and social levels of functioning, linking individual psychological well-being to societal justice." This perfectly describes what I was inchoately grasping for. (I'm already dreaming of how this could enrich a second edition.)

Abe's catalogue of the psychological research on time is a rich invitation of trails to follow. Her suggestion of how we might consider "our wounded relationship to time" feels like a therapeutic outworking of what I was hoping to suggest in *How to Inhabit Time*. I was particularly struck by her discussion of temporal disintegration and trauma when she asks:

> Might it be that we as a society can also get stuck in the past because of collective trauma that has not been integrated into our collective memory? Put another way, can temporal disintegration occur at a communal level, as well, to the extent that we are unable to collectively comprehend our past, perceive our present, and intentionally move into a shared future?

Indeed, and amen. In fact, I think this is precisely what is so powerful in the witness of, say, Bishop Desmond Tutu or James Baldwin. Both of them, it seems to me, emphasized that such reckoning—truth-telling about our collective past—was just as crucial for the transgressors and oppressors as for the enslaved and oppressed. As Baldwin once put it: "The truth which frees black people will also free white people, but this is a truth which white people find very difficult to swallow."[2]

I also found Abe's discussion of future time orientation and hope to be illuminating, particularly in our age of increasing despair. It is powerful to consider how hope represents a form of agency, again undergirding the sense that a psychology of liberation would empower people to inhabit time as *agents*—not agents who are masters of destiny but, more significantly, as agents *of* hope because they have the *capacity* to hope. It brings to mind Hopkins' beautiful refusal in "Carrion Comfort": "I can; / Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be." The empirical research she points to from Canada is heartening and invites multiplication. And what's remarkable

2. James Baldwin, *No Name in the Street* (New York: Dial, 1972), 129.

is that this seems, per liberation psychology, to operate on both a personal and communal register.

Finally—though so much more can be said—the case of collaborative archaeology that Abe describes is a remarkable instantiation of so many themes in *How to Inhabit Time*. (This will absolutely be making its way into my talks about the book!) This is a marvelous picture of empowerment: how the communal labor of reckoning with our past, digging into the layers we live upon, can liberate us for a different future. It is, indeed, "an act of social healing." Would that our revivals integrated such reckoning.

Time Spent

Full confession: I was most intimidated to receive a response from John Swinton! Not because of anything except his stature as a celebrated theologian whose work has been so influential in spaces that we both inhabit. In many ways, Swinton is an exemplar of the sort of scholar I could hope to be: intellectually rigorous and theoretically creative, but pastorally attuned as someone who lives a life in proximity to the vulnerable. He is an Henri Nouwen of our generation.

I am grateful that Swinton was gentle with me, but also for a sense of resonance between our projects and shared concern.[3] We are both, I think, concerned with incarnate theologies of creatureliness, which is why we both have ended up thinking about time. Swinton has undertaken such reflection across several works, but perhaps especially in *Becoming Friends of Time: Disability, Timefullness, and Gentle Discipleship*.[4] We share the sense in which time and temporal conditioning are aspects of our good creaturehood, that time is the arena in which God meets us, and why "taking time" is a way of being human that must be lived in resistance to the dehumanizing commodification of time in modernity under capitalism. His book is especially attentive to something that all of us interested in spiritual formation must remember: formation *takes time*, and more often than not, the most potent and pregnant experience of taking time is the adventure we call "friendship."

It is Swinton's sensitivity to our "anxious times" that I find compelling, and in particularly his lovely articulation (echoing his own book) of why *slowing down* is such a crucial aspect of spiritual timekeeping: "When we begin to practice spiritual time, when we slow down and notice the present moment, we learn to feel what love looks like." I resonate with this deeply. It is a wonderful expression of a holistic vision: we learn to *feel*, not just think; we learn to feel something about *love*; and in particular, we learn what love *looks like*—not just what love feels, but what love *does*. And then the wonderful multiplication of time given: "when we give people the gift of time things

3. I was especially grateful that Swinton "got" the strange genre of my book: he's right that the goal wasn't just to "think clearly about time, but also to *feel* and to *practice* time."
4. Baylor University Press, 2016. Since John shares my attentiveness to the good, creaturely realities of finitude, I trust he'll understand why I couldn't engage his work in *How to Inhabit Time*. The list of books on time I *don't* address in my little book is very long! (As they say: so many books, so little time.)

change." Here is precisely why time is not just a commodity to be exchanged; because time, like love, is the sort of thing that multiplies when you give it away. When we "take time" to *give* time and attention to others—especially the vulnerable—love comes back to us. When we make time to spend with those suffering from dementia, we get back the beauty of their *life*time because we can experience those moments when "the time they have spent with Jesus over their lifetime sometimes erupts in embodied spiritual practice." How much spiritual formation would happen if we all made more time for such encounters?

Gnosticism and Timekeeping

I don't' think I deserve it, but I absolutely love Michael Di Fuccia's impression that "*How to Inhabit Time* reads as a sort of *Confessions* meets the *City of God*." In reality, of course, my book doesn't deserve to be mentioned in the same breath; but as a description of its *aspiration*, Di Fuccia has helped me understand my own ambitions in a way that is illuminating. Akin to what Abe highlights about liberation psychology, I think this twining of *Confessions* and *City of God* is another way of describing my hope that the book works on both a personal and social register.

Di Fuccia is right to see "nowhen" Christianities as instances of enduring Gnosticism. As a theologian, I imagine he gets a little frustrated that I don't spend more time delving into these themes, but I'm happy to receive his theological assist in pointing to the Incarnation as the ground for the "humanism" of my project.

I also appreciate Di Fuccia's willingness to point to a "deficit in contemporary spiritual formation paradigms" insofar as they pretend to be "largely apolitical." In this respect, we should probably qualify and say many evangelical or (white) Protestant "spiritual formation paradigms," since Roman Catholic streams show us a different way. I'm thinking, in particular, of the strain of "liberation spirituality" noted in Abe's contribution and developed more fully in Gutiérrez, Boff, and others; or the contemplative spirituality of a Thomas Merton or the Berrigan brothers or Richard Rohr in which disciplines of contemplation are twined with political activism.[5] And, of course, the "Beloved Community" of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the civil rights movement was rooted and grounded in a formative set of spiritual disciplines and practices.[6]

All of these examples only serve to highlight Di Fuccia's point, though: the absence of social or political facets to evangelical spiritual formation or the Enneagram industry underscores his concern. I concur that "it is not enough to do soul care in private. We must attend to our societal demons." Indeed, it strikes me that such an exhortation has long been part of the spirituality of the desert dwellers or the Cappadocians, but that we

5. See, for example, Gutiérrez's discussion of "A Spirituality of Liberation" in *A Theology of Liberation*, rev. ed., trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (New York: Orbis, 1988), 116-120.
6. For a succinct account of this, see Charles Marsh, *The Beloved Community: How Faith Shapes Social Justice, from the Civil Rights Movement to Today* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

moderns have sifted their legacy to fit American individualism. So perhaps we could start by just remembering better and retrieving more fully.

I will be spending a lot of time thinking about Di Fuccia's questions about discernment. I say that as an expression of appreciation: he raises a question that I will take a first stab at answering, but the answer is a draft at best.

The question is whether discernment—a central task and calling in *How to Inhabit Time*—seems to harbor some "sort of transcendental vantage point." At first I thought he was catching me out in a kind of performative contradiction: that I was trenchantly critical of any form of idealism and the notion that we could get above the flux of time, but then when it came to discernment, I seemed to be availing myself of some supra-historical vantage point in order to discern what is expected of us in the now.

But I don't think that's Michael's concern. Instead, he seems to be worried that I *don't* have some sort of "transcendental vantage point" and, therefore, lack a criterion for discernment. Because if God is just synonymous with history, then are we just left to ourselves and thus aren't we likely to fall back into a Pelagian claustrophobia, of sorts? Or, as he hints more starkly, following Barth: weren't the Christian nationalists in Nazi Germany "discerning" history? (Whew, who wants to be guilty of *that* charge?)

Di Fuccia's worry is summed up as a wondering: "I wonder if there is a difference between participation in history and participation in God, or are they one and the same?" The shorter version: he's worried my project "sounds a bit too Hegelian."[7]

This is an important concern. I might translate it this way: Just how does discernment work? If the point of discernment is to be attuned to God's presence in history, to try to recognize where the Spirit is afoot and hence what we are called to *now*, then don't we still need to get some sort of access to something—or Someone—outside of history in order to speak *into* the now? Otherwise, aren't we always just going to be prisoners of the Zeitgeist?

As I say, I think this is a very good and important question. I'm not sure my reply here will be satisfactory, but let me say what is swirling for me as I try to answer.

I think Di Fuccia's question—"if there is a difference between participation in history and participation in God"—is slightly malformed. For me, discernment is not simply synonymous with "participation in history;" rather, discernment is predicated on our embeddedness in history and then seeking to see how and where the Spirit is afoot in our now. That is very different than simply "participating in history" as if we are riding the wave of current trends or something like that. Indeed, sometimes—probably often—discerning the path of God's Spirit in history is going to look *counter*-cultural.

But I don't think "participation in God" is a- or supra-historical precisely because the God we know is the God revealed in the Incarnation, and the agent of our participation in the life of God is the Spirit sent as the fruit of Christ's ascension. In other words, I don't think we have any way of participating in God that isn't always already historical

7. Since I don't have space to take up some of his questions about Kierkegaard, let me note that I'm deeply sympathetic to much of Kierkegaard (who makes several appearances in *How to Inhabit Time*). However, I'm also still a little miffed that Kierkegaard taught me to read Hegel so poorly.

and temporal. That's not because God's transcendence is evacuated into history but rather because history is an arena of God's *real* presence and thus an arena of *communion*. The core conviction of spiritual timekeeping is God's with-ness with us in time.[8]

So in that sense, the problem was not that the "German Christians" were listening to history instead of God but rather that they failed discern how God was present in history and the future the Spirit was calling them toward. In other words, they settled for the Zeitgeist and failed to hear the Word of God *in* history.

This, I'm afraid, is the necessary risk that God has left to us: the work of discernment is fraught and never done. But its difficulty doesn't absolve us from the task in the meantime of our waiting.

Phenomenology and Spiritual Formation

I'm not sure that the *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* is the venue to have the sort of conversation that Brandon Rickabaugh wants to have about Husserl and Heidegger. But, at the risk of boring some of our readers, let me address some of his queries and concerns, which get at important questions of just what philosophical sensibilities we bring—or ought to bring—to the way we think about spiritual formation.

Rickabaugh rightly discerns an important difference between my project and Dallas Willard's. Where I think we disagree is whether this is a problem.[9]

I take this opportunity to note that, while I have long felt a kinship to Dallas Willard's contributions to spiritual formation, the relationship is one of resonance rather than influence.[10] I have long found it interesting that as philosophers trained in phenomenology, we both ended up interested in the dynamics of spiritual formation. But as Rickabaugh rightly notes, we gravitated to very different streams of phenomenology: Willard to a more classically Husserlian paradigm, whereas I took up with Husserl's critics, particularly Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur, Levinas, and Derrida.[11] I have

8. With respect to Barth's point, I think this is also true of "the Word of God." For relevant discussion, see James K.A. Smith, "Limited Inc/arnation: Revisiting the Searle/Derrida Debate in Christian Context," in *Hermeneutics at the Crossroads*, eds. Kevin Vanhoozer, James K.A. Smith, and Bruce Ellis Benson (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 112-129.
9. Rickabaugh's method or procedure here tends to assume that agreement with Willard is a criterion of correctness. In other words, the procedure tends to be something like this: Smith says X; Willard says Y, not-X. Therefore, Smith is wrong. I won't belabor why this is not a valid inference. And the ad hominem concerning Heidegger's behavior as Rector of Freiberg is a distraction from the substance of the questions at hand.
10. Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline* was a direct and significant influence on me while I was teaching at Loyola Marymount University from 1999-2002 (as well as my encounter with Ignatian spirituality while I was there). It might seem strange, but I didn't really encounter Willard until later somehow.
11. I still recommend Levinas's *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology* as a stellar, critical introduction to Husserl.

long wondered aloud if that also explains why Willard and I have different emphases in our account of spiritual formation. Generally speaking, I think Willard's approach—or at least his sensibility—still tends to prioritize the personal and individual, whereas my account centers and privileges the ecclesial and the communal. I have long thought these are *complementary*, but the differences could perhaps be traced back to different phenomenological sensibilities.

I don't know that we should wade too far into the weeds on these questions. But let hint at where such a philosophical conversation could go.

Rickabaugh is right that Husserl and Heidegger have profound disagreements regarding philosophical anthropology. He is also right that my philosophical anthropology is more akin to Heidegger.[12] Just one reason I side with Heidegger is because I think Husserl's "pure ego" is a fiction that is detrimental to an incarnational account of selfhood and spiritual formation.[13]

Rickabaugh suggests that Heidegger's account of thrownness "entails a kind of relativism or constructivism that undermines our communion with reality," whereas Husserl emphasizes "a *general structure*" to reality. I'm afraid this doesn't really land as a criticism for me, for two reasons. First, Heidegger also discerns *structures* to reality—indeed, Dasein's experience of thrownness is part of the existential structure of the human condition. But it is our experience of contingent differences *within* the scaffolding of these structures that makes a difference, for Heidegger, which is why we need to be attuned to particularity and contingency. This is, unapologetically, part of my brief in *How to Inhabit Time*: "generic" formulas for spiritual formation won't cut it; we need to get more fine-grained and specific and attend to the contingent differences of our various "nows."

The second reason I don't find Rickabaugh's (i.e., Willard's) concern concerning is because I don't share his metaphysics or his epistemic commitment to realism. And I certainly don't think that Christian commitments entail a commitment to metaphysical or epistemic realism of the stripe that Willard commends.[14]

I suspect that some of the difference between me and Rickabaugh, and perhaps me and Willard, is that I am more of a philosophical pluralist. There is wisdom to be found across the rich history of the conversation we call philosophy, and in the service of human fullness, spiritual formation, and lives well-lived, I'm happy to see many philosophical flowers bloom. I

12. Anyone who really wanted to track this down should look at discussions of Heidegger (and Merleau-Ponty) in my *Fall of Interpretation*, *Desiring the Kingdom*, *Imagining the Kingdom*, and *On the Road with Augustine*. In several places I articulate how much of Heidegger's early phenomenology owes a debt to Augustine.
13. It is true that Husserl articulated criticisms of Heidegger in *The Crisis of the European Sciences* (in response to Heidegger's critique of the Husserlian ego in *Being & Time*). What is even more significant, however, is actually how much of Heidegger's critique Husserl *absorbed* in that later work. For important discussion, see Anthony Steinbock, *Home and Beyond: Generative Phenomenology after Husserl* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1995). I don't think I've taken the full measure of how much I was shaped by Steinbock's work.
14. This, obviously, deserves much more discussion. That's why I wrote a book on it. See James K.A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Relativism? Community, Contingency, and Creaturehood* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), in which I commend Richard Rorty for Christian philosophers. On theodicy, see the chapter on "Justice" in *On the Road with Saint Augustine*.

have enlisted the likes of Foucault and Derrida as catalysts for the community of faith to reflect on our calling. I don't think there's one philosophical school of thought that aligns with faithfulness—which is also why I still think I have a lot to learn from Husserl and Willard.