

ROLAND FABER AND
JEREMY FACKENTHAL

Theopoetic Folds
Philosophizing Multifariousness



PERSPECTIVES IN
CONTINENTAL
PHILOSOPHY

The Sublime, the Conflicted Self, and Attention to the Other

Toward a Theopoetics with Iris Murdoch and Julia Kristeva

PAUL S. FIDDES

Three Versions of the Conflicted Self and the Sublime

The idea of the “sublime” is widespread in aesthetics and philosophy today. Indeed, it may—as Jean-Luc Nancy suggests—have maintained its popularity for several centuries, as “a fashion that has persisted uninterruptedly into our own time from the beginnings of modernity.”¹ The sublime, as modified by Kant and the Romantics, has become a cipher in our late modern period for what brings thought, reason, or beauty into question. It goes under such other names as “the void” (Jacques Lacan), “difference” (Jacques Derrida), “chaos” (Gilles Deleuze), “otherness” (Emmanuel Levinas), infinity, or even death (Freud). The “sublime” in recent thought is the thrilling event of nothingness and absence that overturns the realm of representation, presence, and stability, so that Jean-François Lyotard finds “narratives of the *unrepresentable*” everywhere in the philosophy of our age.²

Everywhere too are *studies* of the sublime, and here the names of Iris Murdoch and Julia Kristeva are surprisingly absent or very infrequent.³ This is a pity, because both Murdoch and Kristeva have important insights to make for understanding the phenomenon of the sublime, and they offer significant modifications to a prevailing tendency of thought. Of course, a great deal has been said about Kristeva’s psychoanalytical explorations of the second term in my title, the conflict in the self, but very little about the place of the *sublime* in this experience of fragmentation. Again, much has

been written about Murdoch's concern with the third term of my title—"attention to the other." Commentators have rightly focused on the insistence of this philosopher and novelist that we should notice the "other" as he or she really is, and that we should look attentively at the world around us; but there is little comment about her connection of "attending to the other" with the experience of the *sublime*.

So, let us begin on the task sketched by my title by considering the conflict in the self and its relation to the sublime. Here I propose to look at three versions of the conflicted self, including Murdoch's and Kristeva's and beginning briefly with the person to whom virtually all writers on this topic appeal—Immanuel Kant. Kant's sublime is a drama of struggle, and the main actors are imagination and reason, with understanding as an understudy.

For Kant, *reason* always demands that we make a whole of our experience: Reason always works toward totality, though it can never achieve it. *Imagination* seems to have an inner compulsion to seek out those situations in which it *cannot* answer these demands of reason. Though it works in a happy harmony with the *understanding* in the realm of cognition, in another realm—the aesthetic—it comes into conflict with reason.⁴ It finds what Kant calls experiences of the sublime where it struggles and fails to make a whole out of things. Imagination strives after infinity and has some apprehension or intuition of what it is—whether it is an infinite series of things in human cognition (the "mathematical sublime") or whether it is prompted by awesome and terrible objects in nature that seem to have no limits—seas, mountains, skies full of stars, deep ravines, waterfalls (the "dynamical" sublime). Imagination has an *apprehension* of the infinite but cannot *comprehend* it. Faced by the sheer boundlessness of things, the imagination feels terror, and yet it also feels a kind of "negative pleasure"⁵ because finally it will enjoy the sense of the superiority of reason that makes such demands upon it, and which is therefore greater than any phenomena in the world. Here is Kant's brief summary of this mental conflict according to his *Critique of Judgment*:

Precisely because there is a striving in our imagination towards progress *ad infinitum*, while reason demands absolute totality as a real idea, that same inability on the part of our faculty for the estimation of the magnitude of the things of the world of sense to attain to this idea, is the awakening of a feeling of a supersensible faculty [i.e., reason] within us.⁶

For Kant, this is quite unlike the sense of the "beautiful," where the imagination works in harmonious free play with the *understanding*. The same

imagination that assists the understanding to see and grasp objects in the world that come to us through our senses (phenomena) also runs free—without concepts—in fields of taste or aesthetic judgment.⁷ There is no rule we can formulate to categorize an object that appears beautiful: We cannot identify it as either good or purposeful.⁸ Beauty is a matter of form only. It is independent of any moral judgment or even any emotion. Our sense of the beautiful, for Kant, is the freedom of mere playfulness, over against moral freedom.

A second version of the conflicted self is to be found in one of Kant's most profound interpreters and modifiers, Iris Murdoch, who wrote two significant essays on the theme of the sublime and the beautiful.⁹ In Kant, the self is in conflict with *itself*, the imagination struggling with the demands of human reason, a situation very like the experience of respect (*Achtung*) for the inner moral law.¹⁰ For Murdoch the self is in conflict with something *outside* itself, nothing less than the moral demands of a transcendent and sovereign Good. As in Kant, the demands are mediated through phenomena in the world that evoke a sense of the sublime.¹¹ But, as a Platonist, she is clear that the Good exists beyond the self; we cannot commune with it, and it is certainly not a *personal* God, but we must *serve* it for hope of no reward, being "good, for nothing."¹²

Now Murdoch makes a leap of originality. The sublime is not to be contrasted with the forms of the beautiful, as in Kant, but is to be found precisely *in* them. The sense of the sublime is marked by the boundless, the endless, the being without limit, before which we feel awe and even terror. This, Murdoch claims, is exactly the sense evoked by the boundlessness of forms in the world, by the multiplicity of contingent things, and by the diversity of people who fill the world. The sublime shocks and amazes us, but (as she puts it) "what stuns us into a realization of our supersensible destiny is not, as Kant imagined, the formlessness of nature, but rather its unutterable particularity."¹³ Kant, she thinks, was afraid of the messy details of the world and all the bodies in it. To know the world as a reality other than ourselves is to love it. And this love is truly moral, since for Murdoch virtue is apprehending that other persons exist, and letting them be as others. Through the sublimity of the many contingent details of the world, focused especially but not exclusively in works of art,¹⁴ the self is brought into conflict with the Good, and we can break out of an artificial world we construct around ourselves.

The sense of excess here has some resonances with the way that Lyotard reconstructs the sublime in Kant. He suggests that 'the sublime can be thought of as an extreme case of the beautiful' in which there occurs "the proliferation of forms by an imagination gone wild."¹⁵ But, unlike Mur-

doch, Lyotard finds that this excess of form giving results in the *overwhelming* of forms. Personifying the Kantian faculties of Imagination, Reason, and Understanding, Lyotard tells the story of the birth of the Sublime in his own myth: Reason (male) rapes/violates Imagination (female), and the Sublime is conceived. Imagination dies giving birth to the Sublime.¹⁶ Apart from the persistence of a patriarchal violence here,¹⁷ the myth is intended to express the fact that postmodern art “denies itself the solace of form.” Murdoch certainly perceives the dangers of consolation in art: When a particular object is regarded as containing the whole of reality, we are discouraged from dying to the self.¹⁸ But, for her, the self is turned toward the Good and stripped of its self-centeredness by paying attention to a multiplicity of forms that remain in their own integrity. They deliver the shock of the negative sublime, but this is intended to lead to love of others, and finally to the “supersensible destiny” of the Good.

In Murdoch's novel, *Nuns and Soldiers*, Anne Cavidge is a former nun who has lost belief in a personal God and left her convent to serve the Good in the world, though she scarcely knows how. Like many of Murdoch's characters, she comes up against the contingency of the world in the form of the many small stones that litter its beaches and landscapes, and her ability to swim is symbolic of her willingness to plunge into the boundless ocean of the world. At first she is appalled by the stones on the beach, reflecting: “What do their details matter, what does it matter whether Christ redeemed the world or not, it doesn't matter, our minds can't grasp such things. . . . Look at these stones. My Lord and My God . . . there they are.”¹⁹ While she remains under a negative impression of the sublime, she is preoccupied by her self and nearly drowns in the sea, but coming up out of it “she saw, close to her now, the sloe of dark, shifting stones . . . [and] Anne's feet were *again upon the stones*.”²⁰ Later she has a vision of her own, personal Christ, and he shows her a symbol of the world—not a hazelnut as in the similar visions of Julian of Norwich—but a small, elliptical, gray stone.²¹ Toward the end of the novel she feels that she can at that point “call upon the name of the non-existent God” as she touches “the dense . . . stone in whose small compass her Visitor had made her *see* the Universe, everything that is.”²²

For most of the story Anne is staying with an old schoolmate, Gertrude, and the novel begins with Gertrude's husband, Guy, facing an imminent death by cancer. Before he dies, he urges Gertrude to find happiness by marrying again, and much of the plot of the novel is generated by the question of whom she might marry in the close circle of her friends and admirers. Might it be, for instance, a work colleague of Guy's, an upright, well-mannered Polish man who carries the nickname of “the Count” and

who has long secretly and honorably loved her? The successful candidate turns out to be the most unlikely one of all—a feckless and penniless painter called Tim Reede, who has been living for years in an on-off relationship with his punkish girlfriend Daisy. Guy has been a father figure to Tim, and so Daisy persuades Tim to go and see Gertrude after his death to try and borrow some money. Gertrude, however, wants to help him without injuring his pride and so lends him her cottage in France to live and paint in over the summer. There, in the enchanting countryside, Tim and Gertrude fall in love.

Two locations in the country around become occasions for prompting their love—a great “Face” of rock with a crystal clear pool at its base, and a fast-running canal that disappears underground. Both are described in ways that seem to recall the Kantian dynamical sublime but that quickly modulate into what one might call the Murdochian sublime: That is, they have the aspect of the boundless and unlimited that evokes awe and even terror, but they also have the beauty of fine detail. We read of the Great Face, for instance, that “he looked upon it with awe . . . he fled”;²³ “the numinous power of the rock shook him.”²⁴ But he also draws its multiple lines and shifting contrasts of light, a profile that is full of diversity and plurality, and observes the floor of the rock basin as “covered with small crystalline pebbles.”²⁵ It is this contingent detail that actually makes him frightened and brings on a sense of panic. In a period of separation and misunderstanding between Gertrude and Tim before they finally come together in marriage, Tim reflects on the Great Face that “there was absolute truth in the thing, something of wholeness and goodness which called to him from outside the dark tangle of himself. . . . That it should have been accidental [i.e., contingent] did not dismay him.”²⁶ We notice that this is a “thing” in the phenomenal world embodying “absolute truth”: Later, we shall draw a contrast with the Lacanian Thing, which inhabits the Void.

Again, during the miserable time of separation, the breach in their love, Tim moves from a Kantian mood of the negative sublime to a Murdochian sublime. Here is a description of his feeling of the first, echoing Kant:

Sometimes the void gleamed like the sea . . . the external world disappeared. . . . he was a tiny scrap of being . . . a point in empty space . . . the sense of emptiness was occasionally almost pleasurable. It was always awful. . . . pure freedom . . . the cosmos itself, gentle, terrible final . . . also a vision of death.²⁷

After taking a decisive step of leaving Daisy, the mood changes. The detail of the world impinges on him again: We read, “the white light seemed to be with him again but was different now . . . he could *see* the trees . . . he

could *see* in the distance the line of the lake.”²⁸ “He could *see* the Autumn leaves,” and he begins to make collages of them in a period he calls “the time of the leaves”: We read that “little works of art lay around—masterpieces which were lying about free of charge. . . . though he was still afraid to go back to the National Gallery.”²⁹ Finding the sublime in the detail of the world, he will soon be ready to see not only the art in the gallery³⁰ but also Gertrude as she really is, and to recognize her love for him. The story makes clear how, for Murdoch, the essence of both art and ethics is the same, namely love, or a respect for the other and a genuine noticing of the other. As she puts it in her essay on “The Sublime and the Good”: “Love, and so art and morals, is the discovery of reality.”³¹

For all that, there is always the danger of mere consolation in art, a temptation that Murdoch is always ready to admit. There is just a hint of truth in Daisy’s view of the paintings in the National Gallery, that they constitute “a fantasy world where everything’s easy and pretty,” echoing Plato’s judgment that “art is a lie.”³² But when used as a pathway to the Good, the sublime-in-the-beautiful is truth. As the newly married Tim returns to work, his drawings are “coming to him out of a faintly discernible background of relentless *form* which he could apprehend as taking shape behind them.”³³ The sublime for Murdoch does not destroy form but clarifies it. Here Murdoch differs both from Kant and from the postmodern appeal to the sublime. The postmodern mood follows Kant in placing the sublime in opposition to the beautiful, although the recent appeal to the sublime breaks down not only art and forms in the world but also—unlike in Kant—reason itself. Murdoch, however, wants to affirm sublimity *in* the beautiful.

Turning now to Julia Kristeva, we find our third version of the conflicted self. Here it seems we are back more firmly in the world of Kant, with the sublime as a symptom of a conflict within the self itself, rather than between the self and an external and transcendent Good. The self is riven by many conflicts, as Kristeva perceives it. But this is Kant psychoanalyzed, or perhaps a drawing out of the already incipient psychological character of Kant’s thought. Here, for Kristeva, Freud is mediated through Jacques Lacan. The phenomenal level, the consciousness, is a world of language, a symbolic realm in which the self holds only a fragmented identity. For Lacan, therapy is centered on getting the individual to come to terms with his or her alienated identity. The infant, growing into a sense of individual identity, has had to exchange its preconscious sense of wholeness for a kind of being that is inscribed by language and by a society shaped by language.³⁴ Entry into the symbolic, into the world of words, comes at a price: This phenomenal world fails to satisfy, and we long for the “real

Thing," lost in the world of the preconscious. We have a desire for the "lost object," and yet this can never be possessed. There is a central impossibility, a Void or Thing at the heart of the symbolic realm that can never be represented but that must be recognized if meaning is to be generated by signifiers.³⁵ And those signifiers, according to Lacan, are essentially male in orientation; the symbolic realm unavoidably privileges male symbols and is inevitably patriarchal.

Now, Kristeva has taken on much of Lacan's analysis but wants to draw attention to the role of the woman in all this. For Freud and Lacan, the key point of entry into the symbolic is the Oedipal moment, which is all about the relation of father and son. Daughters and mothers are sidelined, given walk-on parts in this psychodrama. For Kristeva, the key moment for the growing infant is the necessary separation from the mother, or what she calls the "abjection" of the mother, taking up a term from Bataille and a load of theory from Melanie Klein. In the development of human subjectivity, the child must break from the mother: To attain a sense of self-identity the mother must be abjected, sacrificed, violently rejected. This point of separation is the boundary that the growing subject has to pass over to reach the realm of language and meaning, where subject is separated from object.³⁶ According to Kristeva, a person moves from deep, precognitive immersion in the life of the body to a social life.

Yet that preconscious realm remains as a living factor in symbolic life, capable of disturbing the patriarchal realm of symbols. A primary maternal body cannot be entirely suppressed, and this is associated with the realm that Kristeva calls the "semiotic."³⁷ As distinct from the symbolic, the semiotic is prediscursive, expressing an original libidinal multiplicity over against the monolithic tendencies of culture; it has the capacity to irritate and subvert the symbolic. Poetic language, for instance, relies upon multiple meanings and so challenges the law of unity. For Kristeva there is something "in play" beyond or outside rational discourse, something that goes "beyond the theatre of linguistic representations."³⁸

Where the semiotic breaks into the symbolic, there is a resurgence of infantile drives arising from the *jouissance* of the subconscious. This moment of extreme, disruptive pleasure includes sexual pleasure but can also be experienced through art and literature. Kristeva suggests that the language of poetry recovers the maternal body, a field of impulse, full of diversity. Poetic speech is characterized by rhythm, sound play, and repetition, movements that reflect primal movements of love and energy. Here Kristeva envisages the semiotic as flowing from a realm that she denotes as the *chora*, taking the concept from Plato's *Timaeus*, where it refers to an unnameable space that exists between Being and Becoming. She develops

the concept of *chora* as a womb-like, nurturing space of origin, as the pre-linguistic receptacle of subconscious drives and archetypal relations with the mother *and* the father. The *chora*, she writes, “precedes and underlies figuration and . . . is analogous only to vocal or kinetic rhythm.” Poetry, in its rhythms of sound and idea, reflects the *chora*, which is a place “constituted by movements.”³⁹ To this idea of a primal movement I want to return, as it is full of potential for theology.

The essential conflict in the self for Kristeva is thus between the symbolic and the semiotic, at the hinge of which is abjection, a moment of horror and terror. So we come to the place of the sublime, the experience of terror and pleasure, in this psychoanalytic rewriting of Kant. At the very beginning of her book *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva tells us that abjection is “*edged by the sublime*.”⁴⁰ This perception colors everything that follows, but what can it mean? First, it means that abjection is nameless, just as Kant thinks that the sublime cannot be comprehended by the imagination. Anything that is abject is felt as a threat to be repelled, yet (Kristeva confesses) “I feel that it *belongs* to me”; it cannot then be objectified over against me, given a name or even imagined. It is not object but abject. It is, says Kristeva, “a ‘something’ that I do not imagine as a thing” and it “does not respect borders.” It simultaneously “beseeches and pulverizes the self.”⁴¹ The prime instance of the abject is the rejected mother, as we have described her: She is no longer an object of our knowing but coded as an abject.

Second, the abject is “edged by the sublime” because it is the source of excessiveness. Confronted by something felt as sublime, writes Kristeva, “the object dissolves in raptures of bottomless memory.”⁴² The sublime triggers a boundless expansion of memories; echoing Derrida’s notion of a *parergon* (an “addition” or a “frame”),⁴³ she says that it is “something added that expands into an impossible bounding.” The time of the abject is one of “veiled infinity from which revelation bursts forth.”⁴⁴ It is a mark of psychosis, and particular of the “dark sun” of melancholia, to try to regress behind the moment of abjection, to attempt a recovery of undisturbed unity with self and mother. Facing up to the fact of abjection is to shatter the wall of repression, and so one can—in a certain sense—take “joy” in the abject while not knowing it or desiring it. There is what Kristeva calls a “sublime alienation,” which *can* take perverse forms such as taboos in religion, or the attempt to “purify” what is felt to be unclean. Excessiveness, then, is a highly ambiguous state, tending to life or death.

Third, the abject is sublime because it leads to *sublimation*. As Kristeva puts it, confronted by the abject, there is an attempt to name it, to keep it under control,⁴⁵ and so to sublimate it. The sublime triggers *sublimation*. This insight is perhaps the most significant for our discussion, and it is here

I believe that Kristeva makes the greatest, but most neglected, contribution to the theme of the sublime. "Sublimation" has a double meaning. First, it is about *elevation*: To sublimate something is to raise it to the level of the sublime, as the reason is raised (*erheben*) by Kant above the sublimity of nature. Second, sublimation has the Freudian sense of *transfer*, the *sublation* of deep, primal impulses of the libido by redirecting them into other pursuits, such as artistic efforts and poetry.⁴⁶ In particular, the unconscious drive toward death is sublimated in objects of art and love. Kristeva merges the two meanings, elevation with transfer, following Lacan's concept of the "ideal."

The Sublime and Sublimation

For Lacan, the mind sublimates its sense of the Void, or the loss of the Thing that is buried deep in the unconsciousness. An object or person acquires a sublime quality when it is raised to the dignity of the Thing or stands in for the Thing.⁴⁷ As sublime, it becomes an ideal, pointing to the Void at the heart of the symbolic world. The ideal object might be an artwork, or it could be a person—and here Lacan takes as a key example the sublime figure of Antigone in Sophocles's tragic drama. For Lacan, the self-willed victim Antigone possesses "unbearable splendour . . . a quality that attracts and disturbs us" and that captivates the chorus.⁴⁸

He has, to be sure, come under a good deal of feminist criticism for using the myth of Antigone to describe the "other" that threatens the identity of a masculinized self, the only "I"; he appears to use the idealized woman simply to support the delusion of male autonomy.⁴⁹ Indeed, let us admit that Kristeva has fallen under the same criticism, for agreeing with Lacan that the lost Thing is to be located in the pre-Oedipal state, before the separation of the child from the mother so that the mother takes on the role of a threat to identity. I should anticipate my later argument by acknowledging that there are all kinds of problems with her notion of abjection, not least what seems to be a feminist capitulation to violence and a patriarchal society,⁵⁰ but I want to suggest that Kristeva's real contribution lies beyond this critique.

Meanwhile, I want to introduce Kristeva's novel *Murder in Byzantium*,⁵¹ with which we can explore themes of abjection and sublimation in an imaginative way. Her detective novels feature Stephanie Delacour, a Parisian journalist and amateur detective whom Kristeva describes as her alter ego. She is sent as a reporter to the imaginary country of Santa Varva, a corrupt seaboard state that appears to be in Eastern Europe but that is presented as the global village. Everything that happens in the world—

terrorism, rampant capitalism, mass-media distortions, the drug culture—happens in Santa Varva. In one strand of the plot there is a murderer at large who calls himself the Purifier and who is killing members of a cult called the New Pantheon, which mixes religion, drugs, and the mafia. The police chief, Rilsky, reflects that the murderer “is the purifier of abjection. . . . not only does he measure the horror, but this figure confronts it with a certain jubilation.”⁵² Later, Stephanie reflects that the murderer is in quest of his “pre-masculine embryo,” an “imaginary infinite” that is the secret abyss, his joy, his love. He wants to return to the preabjective, pregendered time that is “the mathematics of the infinite,”⁵³ and so becomes a murderer without limitation of victims, signing his work with the sign of infinity in their own blood.

In another strand of the plot, a professor named Sebastian Chrest Jones disappears while researching the Byzantine Princess Anna Commena, a brilliant intellectual who wrote a history of the reign of her Emperor father, Alexias. Sebastian is obsessed by two ideals who attain the state of the sublime for him: Anna and a crusader called Ebrard, whom he believes to be his ancestor, and Anna’s lover. Sebastian has disappeared from his university post in order to retrace their steps through his home country—and Kristeva’s—namely Bulgaria. Stephanie reflects, “Sebastian is in love with Anna. He is a dangerous man . . . he’s pursuing a dream,”⁵⁴ and later the narrator adds, “Stephanie was right, Sebastian was in love with Anna Commena; but he loved her as though he were Ebrard . . . the transfusion into his presumed ancestor had become such a strong hallucination and so intoxicating that he hardly took notice of real living people.”⁵⁵ Ebrard is “the ghost or ideal Sebastian, who went back in time”⁵⁶—in fact back not just in history but to the pretemporal state of the psyche.

The two plots are linked romantically, since Stephanie’s lover and co-sleuth is the police chief Rilsky, who also happens to be Sebastian’s uncle. They are linked psychologically, as both Sebastian and the murderer are prompted to their violence and their idealization by loss of their fathers and “the illusory hope of returning to the authentic origin where the mother is awaiting. . . . that unknown mother squashed by the Powers-that-Be,”⁵⁷ a state known especially by exiles in society—among whom Kristeva includes herself.⁵⁸ Like the murderer, Sebastian “projects himself into the black sun” of melancholia⁵⁹—“ah, the sweetness of Byzantine sorrow”—with which Stephanie herself toys: “My own Byzantium is the color of time. . . . Byzantium is nowhere; it is no place.”⁶⁰ The plots are also linked dramatically, as Sebastian has killed his lover, Fa, who turns out to be the sister of the murderer, and he is killed in the denouement by the murderous

brother, in the ruins of the Bulgarian church where he locates his ancestor. Sebastian, we learn, has killed Fa because, in becoming pregnant without his knowledge or consent, she has “dared to become an origin without him,” supplanting the authentic origin he seeks.⁶¹

The novel is a lot of fun, but one can see immediately how it is a vehicle for Kristeva’s psychoanalytic philosophy, and particular of the sublime and sublimation. Indeed, Kristeva sees the writing of novels as a form of sublimation in itself. In addition, we see Sebastian and Stephanie in different ways trying to overcome the oppression of the symbolic order, so that she feels an odd sympathy with him: Both, as exiles in society, speak a “language of silence.”⁶² Stephanie reflects that in times of “emptiness,” she feels the conflict between the symbolic and the semiotic that I have suggested is characteristic of Kristeva’s sublime:

I do not express myself in either words or sentences, even though I like to trace out rhythms and visions . . . More and less than words and sentences, it’s the underside of a language that I sense flowing in my mouth.⁶³

This novel may seem very different from Murdoch’s. But in *Nuns and Soldiers* there is the same sense of the ambiguity of the ideal—of the artwork or the person raised to the level of the sublime. In the face of the loss of the father figure, Guy, both the Count and Tim idealize Gertrude: To the Count she is a “sudden, radiant source,”⁶⁴ and Tim believes that “Gertrude would save him.”⁶⁵ Murdoch is always suspicious of consolation, and especially the making of others into savior figures who will relieve us of the burden of our own dying to self. So Anne asks Christ in her vision, “What shall I do to be saved?” and her “nomadic” Christ replies: “You must do it all yourself, you know.”⁶⁶ As we have already seen, even the things of beauty in the National Gallery can become false consolation, reflecting Kristeva’s statement that, while beauty never disappoints the libido, if it is used to *deny* loss, then it is perishable and mere artifice.⁶⁷

For all the similarity, Murdoch finds the sublime experience of the ambiguous ideal to be pointing toward a Good that exists objectively, beyond the individual. For Kristeva, the sublime ideal points to a preconscious experience of separation and splitting in the psyche that has to be faced and dealt with. There is, however, a further dimension of sublimation, beyond idealization, that Kristeva perceives, and which I believe to be highly significant for the healing of the person—that is, *forgiveness*. On the way to this, we should think a little more about the third term in our title, “attending to the other.”

Attending to the Other and the Sublime

Kant, so Murdoch claims, is not much concerned with the other.⁶⁸ For him, the sublime reinforces the self and especially Reason. By contrast, Murdoch is concerned with the sublime as the occasion for giving attention to the *particular other* and so for embracing a death of the self. "Love," writes Murdoch, "is the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real."⁶⁹ As Guy expresses it, lying on his deathbed in *Nuns and Soldiers*, "death and dying are enemies," and the problem with Christianity is that it "changes death into suffering."⁷⁰ That is, religion can get so absorbed in the glorifying of suffering, even dying, that it neglects actual *death*, which is putting an end to the self, or a life built around the self. In the appearance of Christ to Anne Cavidge, he tells her that "my wounds are imaginary . . . if there was suffering it has gone and is nothing . . . though it has proved so interesting to you all."⁷¹ Instead, "Death is a teaching. It is one of my names." So the "little bit of safety" of Tim's self has to be smashed open by exposure to the details of the world.⁷² Emerging from the underground tunnel into which he has been swept as in a kind of death, he sees the grass and trees around him "with a clarity that remained with him ever after."⁷³ For Murdoch, the sublime is the beauty of particular things and persons in all their diversity, which we are to *see* and love.

Julia Kristeva, on the other hand, seems to inherit a Kantian assertion of the self. She accepts the Lacanian analytical theory that in phobic or depressive regression, the mother is felt to *threaten* the self, which must struggle into its identity through abjection. But the violence of this act (criticized by other feminists) is softened by attention to an "Another" who appears deep within the psyche. At the moment of dawning consciousness, on the verge of language and so of separating from the mother, the self imagines an image of a *father*, a father who belongs to the earliest, pre-linguistic life of the individual.⁷⁴ This is indeed the pre-oedipal "father of prehistory" in Freud's theory, and so not yet a gendered figure. But the key move that Kristeva makes is to privilege *this* kind of "father" or "mother-father" over the definitely *male* father who appears subsequently in Freud's famous Oedipal triangle. Unlike Lacan, *this* is the decisive moment evoked by the experience of the sublime—not the Oedipal pact, which seems to concern only fathers and sons.

The image of the father that arises in the growth of subjectivity is not the demanding Freudian superego but a self-giving father. The subject, says Kristeva, enters the realm of "trinitary logic."⁷⁵ As the subject has to face separation from the mother, it shares in an exchange of gifts of love that is symbolized in the mutual self-giving of the Trinity—Father, Son,

and Holy Spirit. In later life, then, the self can become aware of others and share imaginatively in an interchange with them.⁷⁶

The sublimation prompted by the terrors of the sublime is thus a transfer to the imaginary father-mother, not an Oedipal pact but a tale of love. Most important, this entails forgiveness. In an essay on Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Kristeva stresses that forgiveness is a form of sublimation, substituting the pair eros/forgiveness for eros/death.⁷⁷ Like Murdoch, Kristeva stresses that a preoccupation with suffering is unhealthy, a sign of dependence on the symbolic realm of divine law.⁷⁸ Rather, the sublimation of forgiveness "opens up a strange space in time" that is a counterpart of the unconscious, so that the unconscious may "inscribe itself in a new narrative that will not be the eternal return of the death drive."⁷⁹ Against Lacan, she insists that the unconscious is not structured as a language, not part of the symbolic order. Instead, it is semiotic, marked by identification with the other.

Forgiveness renews the unconscious and rebuilds the personality, affirms Kristeva, because it is empathetic. She writes: "Whoever is in the realm of forgiveness, giving and receiving, is capable of *identifying* with a loving father, an imaginary father, with whom he is willing to be reconciled, with a new symbolic law in mind."⁸⁰ This is not a matter just for the inner life of the psyche but for relation with others in society: Forgiveness, she writes, gives "shape to relations between insulted and humiliated individuals . . . [so] giving shape to signs."⁸¹ Thus the sublime experience of facing up to abjection can lead to forgiveness, which in turn challenges the old law of the father. Kristeva writes: "There is no beauty outside the forgiveness that remembers abjection"; so, she continues, "*forgiveness is essential to sublimation.*" Identification with the other is always "unstable and unfinished" so that the "suffering body of the forgiver (and the artist) undergoes a 'transubstantiation.'"⁸² The language of "unstable identity" and "transubstantiation" betokens, I suggest, empathy. This empathic forgiveness, she proposes, is symbolized by the Orthodox doctrine of the Trinity in which there is "a permanent instability of identity between the persons . . . each person of the Trinity identified with the others in an erotic fusion."⁸³

In *Murder in Byzantium*, as in Murdoch's novel, attending to others involves "seeing" them as they are. Sebastian kills Fa because "he no longer saw her";⁸⁴ we are not surprised to learn that when he was a child he liked to crush the eyes of butterflies. Yet Sebastian knows that the culture of Byzantium, based on icons, was all about seeing: "the eyes, this is the key to Byzantium . . . so many debates about the visible and invisible. . . ."⁸⁵ Viewing Byzantine art at Boyana in Bulgaria, he reflects that "for the people of Boyana the *image* of someone or something meant nothing less than be-

ing in a living relationship with that person or thing," and he understands the roots of this in the Orthodox Trinity: He thinks "there is a whole history of love between the Father and the Son no less than between model and image. . . . the walls of Boyana impressed on Sebastian the economy of love of another age, another way of seeing."⁸⁶

There is not much, at least explicitly, about forgiveness in this novel, but there is a great deal about the empathy as well as the seeing involved in love. Love happens in the "silence" that belongs to the inner Byzantium, not in much speaking.⁸⁷ Love is the "intense sensation of proximity, this osmosis between two bodies."⁸⁸ Toward the end, Stephanie reflects on her love affair with Rilsky that

the silence that we love and in which we love each other. . . . preserves my lucidity and yours, incommensurable will and yet not shut off: you're me and I'm you, but we remain quite different inside this reciprocal echo chamber . . . what name shall we give "it"? Nothingness is too melancholic . . . silence is a humble term that doesn't rule out language . . . all the while remaining attentive to my body and yours.⁸⁹

Such a love is one of empathy ("you're me and I'm you"), but this very process is one in which the self or the "incommensurable will" is not lost, for "we remain quite different inside this reciprocal echo chamber."⁹⁰ For both Murdoch and Kristeva, eros is a force that can lead us to notice each other as well as some primordial power. As Stephanie reflects, it is hard to name the place of silence, yet "all the while remaining attentive to my body and yours."⁹¹

For Murdoch, sexual love is a form of the energy of eros, which can sink toward a degraded state or be purified and point toward a higher eros of loving the Good for no reward.⁹² Unlike Kristeva, eros always falls under the suspicion of becoming a false asceticism or an illusory stripping of the self, driven by the fantasy of "being in love." The contingency of all that is not the self is *for a moment* unveiled with a sublime radiance, but it does not last. It must lead on to true asceticism, a flaying away of the self for the sake of the Good. But even this "refined" eros, as a "force that joins us to Good," is not empathetic: There is no question of reciprocal response of the Good. Consequently, as Peter Conradi puts it, "love with the separate world and the separate people it contains" is "a darker, colder, more impersonal commodity."⁹³ Murdoch does raise the issue of forgiveness in *Nuns and Soldiers*, but it seems a mechanical process of adjustment: Daisy forgives Tim, but there is nothing empathetic about it. She remarks "one

bit of wood doesn't ask another bit of wood to forgive it,"⁹⁴ and Murdoch comments that they forgave each other "out of a kind of hopelessness."⁹⁵

What then can we conclude from the connection of "attending to the other" with the sublime? For Murdoch, the experience of the sublime prompts an attention that is a cold, dispassionate kind of love, but that includes attending to a Supreme Good that is not confined to the human self. For Kristeva there *is* no transcendent Good except what lies in individuals and in society, although Trinitarian symbolism is a powerful means of evoking it. Any kind of God, even the Platonist nameless Good, is an illusion.⁹⁶ But the sublime provokes an attention that is a highly empathetic form of love and forgiveness.

The Sublime and Theopoetics

It will come as no surprise that I want to combine *Murdoch's* kind of sublime, where attention to the multiple details of the world prompt attention to the Good, with *Kristeva's* sense of the sublime, where sublimation means empathetic identification and forgiveness. I aim to integrate two kinds of *attending* to the "other," two kinds of spiritual practice. But how shall we achieve this combination? First, by living in the narrative world created by the two novels I have been describing. I have not included them simply to *illustrate* philosophical ideas, as if they are optional extras to the argument. As we inhabit the lives and the thoughts of the characters, as we read both novels together, there begins to stir within us an inkling of how their worlds *might* connect. We begin to see the possibilities of a spiritual practice that is embodied in taking the two narratives together, and that cannot be totally contained in any theory.

But we can also *begin* to think theologically. In so doing, I must resist theological projects that fail to combine the two modes of the sublime that Murdoch and Kristeva together show us. Slavoj Žižek, for instance, adopts a Lacanian reading of the sublime as an indicator of the traumatic emptiness or lack at the heart of the symbolic realm.⁹⁷ Desire for the other (woman, or God, for instance) is the result of this primary deprivation; an object of love becomes sublime when it is raised to the place of the inaccessible Thing, as in courtly love. But, Lacan argues, as soon as woman is encountered in her body, she changes from a sacred object to a transgressive *object*, and sublimation is brought to an end.⁹⁸ Following Lacan, Žižek thus maintains that religious discourse, claiming that God is love, has to avoid the fleshly associations of love, to enable sublimation to continue. Divine love, the totally self-giving love of *agape*, frees us from the realm

of the law and must be distinguished from *eros*, the love that satisfies the body and the self.⁹⁹ Above all, for Žižek *Christ is agape*; he is sublime because his mortality stands in place of the overwhelming glory of God. His abjection in the cross does not contradict the logic of sublimation, since he is not (according to Žižek) presented here as an object of beauty; it is his consequent transformation through resurrection into a sublime object of desire that enables his follows to enter into the inexhaustible dimensions of the sacred Thing.¹⁰⁰

We detect some echoes of Kristeva here, but her stress on love and forgiveness as empathy means that, for her, an *agape*-love cannot be separated out from *eros* in the experience of the sublime. Moreover, she finds (building on the Trinitarian thought of Hans Urs Von Balthasar)¹⁰¹ that *abjection* is to be found in the erotic fusion of the Trinity itself, as separation or splitting (a “hiatus”) enters into the very relations of the Father and the Son. Anyway, the old distinction between *eros* and *agape* has long been rejected by many theologians, who stress the *eros* of God for the world;¹⁰² God opens God’s own self in desire for creation and in dependence on it, though not as an external necessity but as a free choice, as one who desires to be in need.¹⁰³ As the theologian Eberhard Jüngel expresses it, *eros* and *agape* belong together in the being of God as love, as an event of “a still greater selflessness within a very great self-relatedness,” since in giving himself away to the beloved, any lover is related to himself anew.¹⁰⁴ Žižek, an atheist arguing for the indispensibility of Christian symbolism, unfortunately misreads the symbols here. His project also fails Murdoch’s analysis of the sublime, since for him sublime objects do not represent any transcendent “thing in itself” such as the Good, but only a human lack.

We are brought, I suggest, to what might be called a “theopoetics,”¹⁰⁵ a vision of God as the poet-maker of the universe, creating all its particular details in an excess of divine generosity and love and relating to them in compassionate imagination. Indeed, just as a poem is generated within what Kristeva identifies as the inner space of the person, her very own Byzantium, we may think of the whole of created reality (this universe and probably many others) as existing within God. It exists not in a mind but in the space made by the interweaving of the divine persons who—as Augustine and Aquinas hinted¹⁰⁶—are nothing other than movements of relationship. As Leibniz proposed, and as is increasingly affirmed by modern science, relations do not exist in a Newtonian receptacle of space and time, but space is what is created *by relations* themselves.¹⁰⁷ So, we may say, finite beings share in the movements of love and justice that are happening within God, like movements of relationship between a father and a son.¹⁰⁸ And because these are movements of giving and receiving in love, it

is *also* appropriate to say that they are like relations between a mother and a daughter, deepened and opened to the future by the rhythm of a shared love.

This triune imagery of space *within* God picks up what Kristeva calls “trinitarian logic” in the preconscious state and relates it to her description of immersion in the deep rhythmic movements of the *chora*. This rhythm, she affirms, is a constant semiotic challenge to the old law of the symbolic realm of society; it is embodied in the revolutionary power of poetry. So, I suggest, we can only think of God in terms of our participation in rhythmic, triune movements of love and justice, which are greater than we are: Like the *chora*, the movements that open the space for us to dwell cannot be objectified or conceived as a supreme subject—and certainly not three subjects. The idea of God as an interweaving of relations is of course kataphatic, but it is also apophatic, since we are not thinking of personal subjects who *have* relations but only movements of relation themselves that defeat all attempts at observation and objectification. This is a participatory kind of thinking, not a subject–object relationship. God as sublime disrupts all human, objectifying speech; thus far there is a truth in the postmodern experience of the negative sublime, and we should be wary of theologies that dismiss it as inauthentic.¹⁰⁹ Yet this sublime also makes possible an *analogy of beauty* with relations in the created world—analogy, that is, with various kinds of relations but not with created *beings* who have relations.

This kind of theopoetics takes up Kristeva’s emphasis that the sublime means *sublimation* in empathetic forgiveness. For Kristeva, of course, “trinitary logic” is only useful symbolism for exploring the psyche. Here I am combining her insights on *sublimation* with Murdoch’s insistence that the experience of the *sublime* turns our attention toward a Good that is a reality beyond the individual self. For Murdoch this Good is not a person; but then, I am myself only using the metaphor of personal relations to enable us to *engage* in the rhythms of a God who cannot be objectified as a Person or Supreme Subject. As in both Murdoch and Kristeva, spiritual growth involves increasing attention to the other, and a theologian will understand this to be both the created and the uncreated Other. Experiencing the sublime, rejoicing in the beautiful and participating in movements of unconditional forgiveness, we who are the creations of the divine poet of the world can become poets too.

The Sublime, the Conflicted Self, and Attention to the Other: Toward a Theopoetics with Iris Murdoch and Julia Kristeva

Paul S. Fiddes

1. Jean-Luc Nancy, "The Sublime Offering," in *Of The Sublime: Presence in Question*, Jean-Francois Courtine et al., trans. Jeffrey Librett (New York: SUNY Press, 1993), 25.
2. Jean-François Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime: Kant's Critique of Judgment*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994), 50–58.
3. Neither appear in Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*; Courtine et al., *Of The Sublime*; Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 2008); Clayton Crockett, *A Theology of the Sublime* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Philip Shaw, *The Sublime* (New York: Routledge, 2006). Passing references to Kristeva appear in Neil Hertz, *The End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 231–33, and Christine Battersby, *The Sublime, Terror, and Human Difference* (London: Routledge, 2007), 116. More attention is given to Kristeva in some articles: see Charles I. Armstrong, "Echo: Reading The Unnamable Through Kant and Kristeva," *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 1, no. 1 (June 2002): 173–87; Judy Lochhead, "The Sublime, the Ineffable, and Other Dangerous Aesthetics" in *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture*, 12 (2008): 63–74.
4. Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), First Part, § 26 (pp. 98–109).
5. *Ibid.*, First Part, §§ 23, 29 (pp. 91, 120).
6. *Ibid.*, First Part, § 25 (p. 97); cf. § 29 (p. 119).
7. *Ibid.*, First Part, §§ 1, 6, and 7 (pp. 41–42, 50–53).
8. *Ibid.*, First Part, §§ 7–8 (pp. 51–56); § 16 (pp. 72–74); § 22 (pp. 84–85).
9. Iris Murdoch, "The Sublime and the Good" (1959), reprinted in Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, ed. Peter Conradi (London: Chatto & Windus, 1997), 205–20; "The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited" (1959), reprinted in *Existentialists and Mystics*, 261–86.
10. Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, First Part, §§ 25, 29 (pp. 96, 123).
11. Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), 81–82.
12. Iris Murdoch, "Existentialists and Mystics" (1970), reprinted in *Existentialists and Mystics*, 233; cf. Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, 58–61, and her novels, *The Nice and the Good* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1968), 350, *The Good Apprentice* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1985), 245.
13. Murdoch, "Sublime and the Good," 215.
14. Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, 64–66, 69.
15. Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, 75.
16. *Ibid.*, 180.
17. See the critique by Judy Lochhead, "The Sublime, the Ineffable, and Other Dangerous Aesthetics," *Women & Music* 2 (2008): 66–68.
18. Iris Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1992), 81–88.
19. Iris Murdoch, *Nuns and Soldiers* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1981), 107–8.
20. *Ibid.*, 111–12, my italics.
21. *Ibid.*, 292.
22. *Ibid.*, 500.
23. *Ibid.*, 152.
24. *Ibid.*, 271.
25. *Ibid.*, 154.
26. *Ibid.*, 272.
27. *Ibid.*, 385.
28. *Ibid.*, 388.
29. *Ibid.*, 400–403.
30. *Ibid.*, 474.
31. Murdoch, "Sublime and the Good," 215.
32. Murdoch, *Nuns and Soldiers*, 129.
33. *Ibid.*, 475.

34. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: a Selection*, trans. A. Sheridan (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1977), 104–5, 218.
35. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. A. Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), 54–55; Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 7 of *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, trans. Dennis Porter (London: Routledge, 2008), 65–68, 130–31, 160.
36. E.g., Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 5–6; Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (New York: Columbia, 1989), 9–30.
37. Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, trans. T. Gora, A. Jardine, L. Roudiez (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), 133–36.
38. Julia Kristeva, *In the Beginning Was Love: Psychoanalysis and Faith*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 5.
39. Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. M. Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 25–30.
40. *Ibid.*, 11–12, my italics.
41. *Ibid.*, 2, 4–5.
42. *Ibid.*, 12.
43. Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian Macleod (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987), 58–63. Derrida takes up the term from a passing use by Kant.
44. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 9.
45. *Ibid.*, 11.
46. This relies on the Hegelian sense of sublation (*Aufhebung*), which takes its point of departure from the Kantian *Erhebung*. In Hegelian idealism, two antitheses are sublated and the resulting synthesis takes place at a higher level. Freud, however, denies both Kant and Hegel: He disallows the raising of an individual or group onto some spiritual plane above the material.
47. Lacan, *Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 122–23, 136–37.
48. *Ibid.*, 305, 310.
49. So Christine Battersby, *The Phenomenal Woman* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 88–89.
50. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 93.
51. Julia Kristeva, *Murder in Byzantium*, trans. C. Jon Delagu (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).
52. *Ibid.*, 32.
53. *Ibid.*, 208–11.
54. *Ibid.*, 136.
55. *Ibid.*, 157–58.
56. *Ibid.*, 205.
57. *Ibid.*, 67.
58. *Ibid.*, 68.
59. *Ibid.*, 116.
60. *Ibid.*, 83.
61. *Ibid.*, 100.
62. *Ibid.*, 51.
63. *Ibid.*, 63.
64. Murdoch, *Nuns and Soldiers*, 45.
65. *Ibid.*, 214.
66. *Ibid.*, 290–91.
67. Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 98–100.
68. Murdoch, "Sublime and the Good," 213–14.
69. *Ibid.*, 215.
70. Murdoch, *Nuns and Soldiers*, 69–70.
71. *Ibid.*, 290–91.
72. *Ibid.*, 419.
73. *Ibid.*, 424.
74. Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 23–30, 42–50.
75. Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 135. This must be a reference to Von Balthasar's "trinitarian self-giving"; see her footnote 42. 28

76. Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, 140.
77. Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 184, cf. 97–98.
78. *Ibid.*, 185.
79. *Ibid.*, 204.
80. *Ibid.*, 207.
81. *Ibid.*, 206–7.
82. *Ibid.*, my italics.
83. *Ibid.*, 211.
84. Kristeva, *Murder in Byzantium*, 14.
85. *Ibid.*, 121.
86. *Ibid.*, 172.
87. *Ibid.*, 69, 72, 74.
88. *Ibid.*, 119.
89. *Ibid.*, 182.
90. *Ibid.*
91. *Ibid.*
92. Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, 75, 102–3; *Metaphysics as a Guide*, 494–96.
93. Peter J. Conradi, *The Saint and the Artist: A Study of the Fiction of Iris Murdoch* (London: HarperCollins, 2001), 142.
94. Murdoch, *Nuns and Soldiers*, 381.
95. *Ibid.*, 368.
96. Cf. Kristeva, *Murder in Byzantium*, 224.
97. Slavoj Žižek, *Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York: Verso, 1997), 227–34.
98. Lacan, *Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 158–59, 185–97.
99. Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute: Or Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (London: Verso, 2008), 91–92, 132–34, 136–37.
100. Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute*, 147–49; cf. Žižek, *Sublime Object of Ideology*, 227–29.
101. See Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 132: "a caesura, which some have called a 'hiatus.'" See further Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 272n28. Kristeva references *La Gloire et La Croix* (1975), 3:2 = *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, trans. Brian McNeil, vol. 7, *Theology: The New Covenant* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989); she mentions no pages, but relevant sections are on "self-abandonment" (142–61), "the time of discipleship" (188–201; see "hiatus," 190), and "trinitarian self-giving" (391–98).
102. For instance, Daniel D. Williams, *The Spirit and the Forms of Love* (London: Nisbet, 1968), 52–90; Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, combined vol. (Wiley: James Nisbet, 1968), 1:310–16; 3: 143–47.
103. Paul S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 66–68; so, in agreement, Vincent Brümmer, *The Model of Love* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993), 237.
104. Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, trans. D. Guder (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983), 317–18.
105. For the term, see, e.g., Amos Wilder, *Theopoetic: Theology and the Religious Imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976); Roland Faber, *God as Poet of the World: Exploring Process Theologies*, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 14–15.
106. Augustine, *De Trinitate* 5.6: "the names . . . refer to relations"; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*: "person signifies relation."
107. G. Leibniz, *Die Philosophischen Schriften*, ed. G. J. Gerhardt, vol. 7 (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1890), 389–20.
108. See Paul S. Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000), 28–55.
109. For example, David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 43–92; cf. John Milbank, "Sublimity: The Modern Transcendent," in *Transcendence*, ed. Regina Schwarz (New York: Routledge, 2004), 211–34.

Paul S. Fiddes is professor of systematic theology and University of Oxford Director of Research at Regent's Park College. Paul Fiddes took undergraduate degrees in both English literature and theology at the University of Oxford, and he continues to have a particular interest in the interface between theology and literature. After gaining a doctorate (DPhil) in theology from Oxford, he spent a year of postdoctoral study in the University of Tübingen, Germany. He taught as a fellow of Regent's Park College from 1972 to 1989 and then became principal of the college for eighteen years, recently moving into his new position, in which he is mainly occupied with supervising postgraduate students and coordinating research projects of the college. He gained the degree of doctor of divinity (DD) of the University of Oxford for his published work in 2005. Professor Fiddes is an ordained minister of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and serves as the chair of the Doctrine Commission of the Baptist World Alliance. He is very active in ecumenical conversations and is at present the cochair of the international conversations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Baptist World Alliance, as well as an ecumenical representative on the Synod of the Church of England. This mixture of academic and church life has been focused on a double concern: to connect Christian faith with the culture of the modern world and to connect the local church with the riches of faith and tradition in the Church Universal.